

THE SEVENTH

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Based on stories, myths, and legends about Custer's Last Stand.

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In 1876, the government of the recently reunified United States sends word to the Lakota Sioux Nation, demanding the Sioux retreat to the agreed-upon reservation boundaries.

The Sioux never respond.

The Seventh Cavalry regiment of the United States Army is discharged to the Dakota territories to ensure the Sioux comply with the order.

The Seventh is led by Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer, a brilliant officer with 215 elite soldiers under his direct command. These men had never lost a battle.

On the banks of the Little Bighorn River, every single one of these men will die, in a battle that will be remembered as "Custer's Last Stand." Their final months on the plains are shrouded in mystery.

All we are left with is the evidence -- that one of the most renowned battlefield commanders of his time led his men into one of the worst military defeats in history.

...So what happened?

"There aren't enough Indians in the world to defeat the Seventh Cavalry."

-Colonel George Armstrong Custer

A chyron informs us that we're in:

THE DAKOTA TERRITORIES, Winter 1876

OVER BLACK we hear --

The occasional violin STRING PLUCK and short BLAST of air from a trumpet. Instruments being tuned.

VINATIERI (OVER BLACK)
The time to prep was yesterday,
lads. Make ready. Garryowen to play
us in.

We open on a LOW SWEEPING SHOT over a DESERT, which we quickly leave for a lush FOREST, which leads us to a LAKE --

Exploring the geographical diversity of the land, all the while the sound of an ORCHESTRA preparing for an epic piece --

As we go faster and faster and start a climb over a HILL --

The musical fidgeting begins to wind down as we come up and over onto --

EXT. SOUTHWESTERN DAKOTA TERRITORIES - DAWN

A FULL REGIMENT OF THE U.S. ARMY.

An ARMED SIOUX FORCE staring them down.

We cut in close to --

FELIX VINATIERI (50s, weathered, but with the twinkle of a full life in his eye), standing at the head of a contingent of TWENTY MUSICIANS.

Vinatieri marches down the line, coming to stop in front of the youngest, JOHN PATTON (19, slight, as green as they come) looking concerned. He fusses with his TRUMPET.

VINATIERI
Private, what are you doing? We're going into battle any second.

PATTON
Sorry sir, my valve is stuck.

VINATIERI
You should be oiling twice daily on the range. When you're sleeping outside, the wind and the cold dry them out quicker.

(MORE)

VINATIERI (CONT'D)
 A little more thought to your
 instrument wouldn't hurt, Patton.

Patton hangs his head, disappointed in himself. Vinatieri softens, leans in --

VINATIERI (CONT'D)
 Slip to the back and just make sure
 the Colonel doesn't see you.

Vinatieri steps out to the conductor's spot in the middle of the semicircle.

Patton's gaze moves past Vinatieri to --

Lieutenant Colonel GEORGE ARMSTRONG CUSTER. His bushy auburn mustache seems to glint with stolen light. Arms crossed, famously long hair flapping against his neck. He looks *regal*.

Custer stands behind a line of CAVALRYMEN, all of whom load their rifles or pull their sabres out of scabbards.

He begins to trot his horse back and forth across the line. He lifts his sword --

COLONEL CUSTER
Uncle Sam gave us cause! The Good
Lord fortified us, gave us purpose!
Fate allowed us to send the Rebs
 back to Dixie in defeat! It is time
 to claim the land that is
 rightfully ours...

We move to Patton, mouthing the words of the speech as Custer says them. He's heard this countless times.

COLONEL CUSTER (CONT'D)
 ...So that America may stretch on
 from sea to shining sea!

The MEN OF THE SEVENTH cheer. Patton turns to the DRUMMER standing next to him.

PATTON
 I'm gonna miss this.

DRUMMER
 I won't. I can't wait to go home.
 Don't you have anyone waiting for
 you?

Patton reddens, but before he can answer --

HARROW (O.S.)
 Colonel, they're charging --

We move from Patton to Custer's second-in-command --

Sergeant Major WILLIAM HENRY HARROW is in his mid-30s, buttoned-up, the quintessential company man. Scars all over prove his service.

COLONEL CUSTER
 Sergeant Major Harrow! Take them into battle!

Harrow nods to Vinatieri --

Vinatieri raises his baton --

Patton moves to the back --

HARROW
 (yelling to the men)
 When I call for it, we break. We dodge their first volley, we'll be okay. As always, watch the back of the man next to you.

Then, Harrow raises his saber and spurs his horse forward --

HARROW (CONT'D)
 Garryowen!

THE SEVENTH
 GARRYOWEN!

The band starts to play -- and with that, they CHARGE down the hill to meet the onrushing Sioux.

[Note: This fight will be bloodcurdling and violent, but strangely we will experience the battle over an upbeat army march, just as the men would have. Yes, in the 1800s, bands would play as soldiers fought.]

The young trumpeter, Patton, watches as the row of men move to clash with the Sioux. Wishes he could join the fight.

Colonel Custer doesn't charge. He's still. Straight-backed. Observing.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - CONTINUOUS

Harrow leads the regiment as they gallop down the hill. He bounces in the saddle as he sees the SIOUX let loose a barrage of arrows --

HARROW
BREAK!

At Harrow's command, the regiment splits into TWO GROUPS like some gigantic beast opening its jaws. The ARROWS fall in-between the two groups.

Harrow leads the group on the left, as the regiment now approaches the Sioux force in a pincer formation.

The cavalry thunders closer, closer, until both groups CRASH into the Sioux force simultaneously with the raucous clatter of sabers on tomahawks.

They crest through the Sioux lines. Harrow swings his sword, SLASHING the arm of a SIOUX BRAVE clean off --

As he rides through, there's a great NEIGH from his horse as an ARROW buries in its neck. The horse bucks, and Harrow is THROWN from the saddle --

He lies on the ground, wind knocked out of him for a moment --

A Young Sioux rushes at Harrow, ready to finish the job --

But the blow never comes.

A BLADE blossoms from the Young Sioux's chest. With a SQUELCH it disappears, leaving only a hole. The Young Sioux looks down, then falls dead.

In his place stands CAPTAIN THOMAS CUSTER (30s, gigantic, a true warrior, with the fire of a rabid wolverine), blood dripping from his saber.

Tom is Colonel Custer's younger brother and a war hero in his own right.

Tom Custer puts a hand out to help Harrow to his feet as they hear shouts from nearby --

Harrow turns to see one of his MEN being ripped off a horse by a female Sioux commander. This is MOVING ROBE (30s, strong and athletic, war paint almost as ferocious as she is).

She pulls the man to the ground, and quickly collapses his throat with the THUNK of a GUNSTOCK WAR CLUB on flesh --

Then she sees Tom Custer and Harrow.

She starts towards them as a SIOUX WARRIOR nearby yells, urging her on --

SIOUX WARRIOR
 (pointing at Tom Custer)
That's his brother!

[Note: Bolded italics will be translated from Lakota. These lines will have subtitles.]

Moving Robe roars, and SPRINTS straight at Tom Custer. Harrow rushes around, looking for a weapon.

Tom Custer sets forward to meet her, and they clash. She swings her club and he his saber, which buries in her club --

They each try to yank their weapons back, and instead the connected pieces BOTH go flying.

Moving Robe whips out two KNIVES as Tom Custer dashes after his saber. She throws one at him, it BURIES into his leg, he stumbles --

Harrow finds a pistol, YELLS as he's about to fire --

But when Harrow pulls the trigger, the pistol fires NOTHING, it's out of ammo --

Moving Robe turns, sees her window, charges at Harrow --

Harrow tries to scramble away, but trips and FALLS BACK --

Moving Robe is upon Harrow, about to stab him, when --

HSSSS. A glint. Tom Custer slashes Moving Robe from shoulder to hip. Her breathing becomes labored and she falls to her knees.

Tom Custer and Harrow look up to see a contingent of SIOUX WARRIORS rushing to avenge their fallen commander. No time to escape, but then --

MEN OF THE SEVENTH
 GARRYOWEN!

More than A DOZEN MEN on horseback gallop past Tom Custer and Harrow, leaving them unscathed and scattering the Sioux.

Harrow goes to pick up his pistol from where it fell. He stoops over as the Sioux retreat. The sounds of battle seem to fade away into the distance.

He glances back up the hill, where Colonel Custer stands, striking against the morning light.

The CHEERS begin. This was a rout.

INT. COLONEL CUSTER'S TENT - LATER

Colonel Custer's tent is crowded. HARROW, TOM CUSTER, and a VARIETY OF OTHER OFFICERS stand in a loose circle. In the center of that circle are THREE people --

- A SIOUX BRAVE captured during the fight, tied up against the central tent pole. He's injured. Bleeding from his leg. Woozy.

- COLONEL CUSTER. Standing above the Sioux. Menacing.

- ISAIAH DORMAN. An older black man who works for the regiment as a Sioux interpreter. He stands next to Custer.

The Sioux Brave mutters to himself in Lakota, proud and defiant. He spits.

SIOUX BRAVE

Invaders.

Dorman crouches to the Sioux Brave's level.

DORMAN

We are not invaders. The Sioux were gifted a plot of land by the government of the United States. Your leaders signed a treaty agreeing to sole ownership of the Black Hills.

SIOUX BRAVE

Not all of our leaders. Not Sitting Bull.

Dorman continues --

DORMAN

In return, the Sioux were supposed to relocate to the reservation boundaries, but most never arrived. Your reservation lands are empty.

(beat, then)

That was supposed to be your new home.

The Sioux Brave is losing so much blood he's having trouble focusing on Dorman. But he struggles through the pain --

SIOUX BRAVE

Where we make our home is not a matter of compromise. The Black Hills do not belong to any man. They are not yours to give.

Dorman turns to Custer.

DORMAN

He says they don't recognize the authority of the treaty.

COLONEL CUSTER

Find out where his people are.

Dorman turns back to the Sioux Brave --

DORMAN

Where are your people?

SIOUX BRAVE

(ignoring him)

Sitting Bull had a vision.

There's something disturbing about the way the Sioux Brave just spoke. The whole tent goes silent.

COLONEL CUSTER

What did he say?

Dorman is about to translate, but he's cut off--

SIOUX BRAVE

**He saw the sun rise over our camp.
Bright and peaceful. Like before.**

The Sioux Brave continues speaking, but his voice fades into the background as Dorman translates for the assembly --

DORMAN

"Sitting Bull had a vision. The sun rising over our camp. Bright and peaceful. Like before. But then the sun disappeared. It was drowned in darkness, as soldiers fell from the sky... thick as grasshoppers..."

The men in the room glance at one another. Harrow looks skeptical.

DORMAN (CONT'D)

"As the soldiers fell, we raised our spears to meet them..."

The Sioux Brave coughs. A violent cough. Then continues --

DORMAN (CONT'D)

"One after the other they kept falling. Impaling themselves on our weapons.

(MORE)

DORMAN (CONT'D)

Finally, after it had been raining
soldiers so long that we forgot
what the sky looked like... it
stopped.

(beat)

And there was sun again."

Dorman finishes his translation a few moments after the Sioux Brave.

The Sioux Brave looks straight at Custer, who looks back, eyes burning.

Harrow steps out from the crowd --

HARROW

...These sound like nothing more
than the mad words of a dying man,
Colonel. We may want --

But Custer raises a hand to silence Harrow.

There's a darkness in the room now. Nobody's breathing.

COLONEL CUSTER

Where is Sitting Bull?

Dorman quickly translates. The Sioux doesn't answer. Just stares at Custer.

Custer takes a knife out of his boot and kneels before the Sioux Brave.

COLONEL CUSTER (CONT'D)

(quiet, deadly)

Where. Is. Sitting Bull.

Dorman translates again. Still no answer. The Sioux Brave smiles. Custer looks at his knife for a beat, then --

PLUNGES it into the warrior's wound and TWISTS. We hear it SCRAPE BONE. The Sioux Brave CRIES OUT.

Custer leans forward, grabs the Sioux's head in his hands and WRENCHES it up violently so that they're eye to eye.

COLONEL CUSTER (CONT'D)

WHERE IS HE?

Harrow steps forward --

HARROW

Sir --

But it's too late. Custer rips the knife out of the leg and stabs the Sioux Brave through the throat.

The Sioux Brave slumps over, dead. Harrow jerks involuntarily from the sudden execution. The other officers turn away.

COLONEL CUSTER

Harrow, go outside and do a headcount. Find out how many we lost.

HARROW

...Do I ready them for the return march?

COLONEL CUSTER

(ignores the question)

Dismissed.

Custer walks away. All of the officers move to leave the tent. And off Harrow, disconcerted, we cut to --

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - LATER

The aftermath. BODIES of Sioux warriors litter the field.

A young private, JAMES EZEKIEL PORTER (20s, well built, high-strung), lies on the ground groaning.

He's approached at a jog by DR. GEORGE EDWIN LORD (40s, respected by everyone).

PORTR

My leg...

LORD

Let go.

Lord slowly pulls Porter's arms away from his leg. He inspects Porter's calf.

PORTR

What's wrong with it?

LORD

Best I can tell, just a cramp.

PORTR

It feels like it's going to fall off --

LORD

It isn't. Promise.

PORTER
Doc, I swear --

LORD
Alright. Hold still...

Lord holds Porter's leg and takes a BONE SAW out of his bag. He makes a motion like he's going to CUT PORTER'S LEG OFF --

PORTER
What the hell!

Porter jumps to his feet and scrambles backwards.

Lord gestures to Porter, standing on his "injured" leg.

LORD
See?

They hear retching from further upfield. Lord looks at Porter.

LORD (CONT'D)
Go on then, Private.

Porter scowls. Embarrassed, he heads in the direction of the other men.

Lord hurries towards the retching, and comes upon --

Moving Robe, the Sioux warrior from the fight. Still somehow holding on to life after Tom Custer nearly killed her.

Lord stands there for a beat, looking down at her. A moment of hesitation but --

He sets his bag of supplies down. Crosses himself.

Moving Robe tries feebly to fight him off. But she's too weak.

DR. LORD
Hold still.

And off the sight of the cavalry doctor *administering aid to his enemy*, we cut to --

EXT. ELSEWHERE, BATTLEFIELD - LATER

Harrow approaches a young PRIVATE, whose HORSE is drinking from a puddle on the ground. This is CHARLES SCHMIDT (20s, German, impish).

HARROW
(annoyed)
Glad to see you're alive, Schmidt.

SCHMIDT
Far as I can tell...

HARROW
(pointed)
You missed headcount.

SCHMIDT
All due respect sir, Bessie here's been whining to me for a drink since this morning. Eventually got to a point I couldn't refuse her. You're a married man, you get it.

Despite himself, Harrow laughs. Then --

SCHMIDT (CONT'D)
Did we *actually* lose anyone?

HARROW
(gets serious)
Lacy and Williams.

SCHMIDT
Damn. And on the last day of the campaign...

Harrow nods.

TOM CUSTER (O.S.)
Harrow!

Harrow looks up, sees Tom Custer striding for him.

HARROW
Captain.

TOM CUSTER
George said that we're to start making camp now.

HARROW
But we've got six good hours of sunlight left. Weren't we going to start marching home today?

TOM CUSTER
No.

HARROW

No?

Schmidt frowns. Harrow looks surprised.

HARROW (CONT'D)

(low voice)

Is this about that "vision?" The Sioux was just trying to wind the Colonel up --

TOM CUSTER

It doesn't matter *why* we're making camp. We're making camp.

HARROW

(still pressing)

I should have been consulted. I'd have told the Colonel that --

TOM CUSTER

My brother doesn't need your opinion on every decision he makes.

(beat)

You have your orders.

Tom Custer leaves. Up the hill, Colonel Custer can be seen watching Tom head back his way.

HARROW

(to Schmidt)

Tell the men we'll be making camp.

Harrow turns to go --

SCHMIDT

When are we heading home?

Off Harrow, not sure --

EXT. 7TH CAVALRY CAMP, BATTLEFIELD - NIGHT

It's nighttime. Tents with "PROPERTY OF U.S. ARMY" stamped on their sides are established where the battle took place earlier that day.

Dozens of the men mix and mingle around a few, large bonfires. Officers and privates alike hang out in the loosely celebratory atmosphere.

We come onto a game of poker being played between Porter ("injured" leg), Patton (trumpeter), Schmidt (thirsty horse), Dorman (translator), and A MAN we don't recognize.

SCHMIDT
I'll raise.

He throws in a handful of DRIED BEANS (used as poker chips).

PATTON
Fold.

PORTRER
Why do you always do that? Don't be
a scared little boy. He doesn't
have anything.
(to Dorman)
I'll call.

DORMAN is the dealer. He discards Patton's hand, and --

DORMAN
Action's to you.

He points to the final player at the table: YOUNGHAWK (20s, a Sioux scout for the regiment, clever but often overlooked).

PORTRER
(accusatory)
What's he saying to you, Younghawk?

DORMAN
I'm just telling him that it's his
turn to play. Calm yourself.

YOUNGHAWK
Do you think Schmidt has him beat?

DORMAN
I do.

PORTRER
Come on. No funny business.

DORMAN
(holds up his hands)
We aren't doing anything.

YOUNGHAWK
I fold.

DORMAN
Wise choice.

Dorman takes Younghawk's cards and looks around the table.

DORMAN (CONT'D)
Show 'em boys.

Porter slaps down his five cards.

PORTER
(Triumphant)
Three of a kind.

Schmidt looks sad as he rests his cards on the table. But as he turns them over, his faux-sadness gives way to a grin.
Dorman reads --

DORMAN
A straight.
(pushes beans at Schmidt)
Hand to the German --

Schmidt does a little dance.

SCHMIDT
Thank you for your contribution to
my engagement ring fund.

PATTON
Guess I was right to fold...

PORTER
Bullshit.

He stands aggressively and leaves the table.

DORMAN
This is going on your ledger.

Porter gives them the finger as he heads off.

DORMAN (CONT'D)
(calling after Porter)
Pay by the end of the week or we'll
hold you out. Campaign's ending.

SCHMIDT
Maybe.

PATTON
What do you mean? Of course it is.

SCHMIDT
We were supposed to be headed home
today. We're still sitting here.
You do the math.

Schmidt raises his eyebrows at Patton.

DORMAN
Next hand. Ante up.

And as Dorman finishes shuffling, we cut to --

EXT. COMMAND TENT - A LITTLE LATER

We follow Harrow as he walks away from the main camp and up the hill to Colonel Custer's tent.

BOSTON CUSTER (30s, Colonel Custer's other younger brother, regiment scout leader, shrewd) smokes a cigar outside.

HARROW
(as greeting)
Boston.

Harrow goes to pass him and enter the tent --

BOSTON CUSTER
He's busy.
(beat)
But maybe I can help you.

Boston takes a puff of the cigar.

HARROW
Do you know when we're heading home?

BOSTON CUSTER
Whenever the Colonel says we are.

HARROW
Tomorrow?

BOSTON CUSTER
Maybe, maybe not. I don't know.

HARROW
Why I need to talk to *him*.

BOSTON CUSTER
He's asleep.

HARROW
(lashing out)
Busy. Asleep. Which is it?

Harrow immediately regrets saying that.

Boston sits for a beat. Anger rising. Then --

BOSTON CUSTER
I understand that you want to go home to see the birth of your son.
(MORE)

BOSTON CUSTER (CONT'D)

Very touching.

(then)

But *some of us* actually feel like
there's some good to be done on
this land.

HARROW

I wasn't implying that the Colonel
is wrong to stay --

BOSTON CUSTER

You were. Even if you didn't mean
to... you were.

Boston stands. Harrow can't help himself. One last time --

HARROW

So we're not going home.

BOSTON CUSTER

Not until he says so.

Boston takes another puff.

BOSTON CUSTER (CONT'D)

Goodnight, Harrow.

Off Harrow, unsettled --

EXT. CAMPFIRE - LATER

Harrow walks to the campfire and sits on a felled log nearby,
fiddling with an EMBROIDERED KNIFE.

A few feet from him, Vinatieri leans against the same log
with his eyes closed. Harrow clocks him before shifting his
attention to the men playing poker.

He watches them. The men he's sworn to lead and protect --

VINATIERI (O.S.)

The finest force west of the
Mississippi and they still can't
tell when they're being hustled.

Harrow startles. Looks over at Vinatieri, his eyes open now.

HARROW

I'm sorry, what?

VINATIERI

The men in that poker game.

HARROW
Hustled by who?

VINATIERI
Dorman and the scout. Every night.
Every game. Like clockwork. Split
the winnings square even.

As if on cue, Younghawk wins the next hand. A dejected Schmidt slugs from a bottle of whiskey and passes it to Patton.

HARROW
You watch this happen every night
but you never say anything to them?

VINATIERI
Correct.

HARROW
Tax on the stupid?

VINATIERI
No, I don't think so. Services
rendered.
(explaining)
Out here, just having the game to
play... that's worth something.

Harrow shrugs.

HARROW
I suppose.

Vinatieri clocks Harrow's mood.

VINATIERI
You alright?

HARROW
We're not going home yet.

VINATIERI
Ah.
(beat)
And your little one's due soon.

Harrow nods.

VINATIERI (CONT'D)
Have you thought about a name?

HARROW

(shaking his head)

I'm sure Anna has. She -- she's the only one who can handle that sort of thing.

VINATIERI

What does that mean?

HARROW

I don't know. I'm good at being a soldier. Being a father... that terrifies me.

He stares off. Vinatieri puts a hand on his shoulder.

VINATIERI

It shouldn't.

Harrow looks at him. Vinatieri grins.

VINATIERI (CONT'D)

(nodding at the men of The
Seventh)

You're already a father.

Vinatieri gets up, and walks away.

Harrow watches him leave. Then turns back to watch his men.

EXT. POKER TABLE, CAMPFIRE - LATER

Everyone's gone off to sleep except for Dorman and Younghawk. Dorman counts the beans from the various piles left.

DORMAN

*So we add in Patton's losses...
that means we each take... five
dollars. Not including the money
Porter owes.*

Younghawk whistles. Dorman grins. He counts out some coins and hands them to Younghawk.

YOUNGHAWK

*What are you going to do with your
share? When this is over.*

Dorman pockets the cash. Turns back to the fire. Slowly burning down.

DORMAN

Years ago, I was property. I worked the same field in Missouri for more years than I could count. I knew it better than my master did. I would bury things in the field sometimes. Letters to myself, once I learned to write. It made it feel like the land was mine.

(pause, then)

After a bad harvest he sold me off to fund a crop change, and from what I heard the farm fell apart.

He brushes the remaining beans off the table and into a small pouch.

DORMAN (CONT'D)

Thirteen years ago, Lincoln brought us out of bondage. Said that we were all equal under the law. Said even black men can own land.

(then)

In a few weeks, I'm going to go back to Missouri and buy that field. Reclaim it. Make it mine. For real this time.

With that, Dorman stands and goes to put more wood on the dwindling fire.

Off Younghawk, impressed --

INT. HARROW'S TENT - NIGHT

Harrow is lying on his cot, restless. He sits up. Rubs his eyes. Lights a candle.

He takes out a fountain pen and a piece of paper. He dips it in an inkwell and starts writing --

Anna, my love...

His hand starts to shake. He stops. Collects himself.

I've been thinking about names...

EXT. HARROW'S TENT - NEXT MORNING

Harrow exits his tent to some commotion outside. He pulls a PRIVATE hurrying by --

HARROW
What's going on?

HURRIED PRIVATE
The new additions are about to
arrive, sir.

HARROW
New additions?

HURRIED PRIVATE
Sir, I'm supposed to --

HARROW
Go.

The private runs off.

Harrow walks to the edge of camp. Holds his hand up to shield his eyes from the sun. There are some FIGURES in the distance. He shakes his head, confused.

Then turns around to go prepare.

EXT. THE PLAINS - DAY

A SMALL PARTY ON HORSEBACK. In the distance, we can see the 7th's encampment.

Leading the party is Captain MICHAEL VINCENT SHERIDAN (30s, open and fair, but a chip on his shoulder).

He's followed by a dozen or so PRIVATES and a minimal wagon-full of supplies.

One of the horses from the back comes up to Sheridan --

Riding it is HENRY "AUTIE" REED (17, Colonel Custer's nephew, arrogant, whiny, and proud of himself for no reason in particular).

AUTIE
Are we there yet?

SHERIDAN
You have eyes, don't you? You can see the encampment.

Autie gives him a sour look.

AUTIE
Have you met my uncle?

SHERIDAN
I haven't had the pleasure.

AUTIE
Did you know the Colonel hates
General Sheridan?

Sheridan glances back at him.

SHERIDAN
Everyone knows that.

AUTIE
Yes but, I was just thinking...
since General Sheridan is your
brother, chances are good the
Colonel will feel the same about
you.

(beat)
Don't you think?

Autie gives a self-satisfied look and fades back into the pack.

Sheridan rolls his eyes.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - DAY

Harrow (on horseback) waits with a welcome committee. Tom and Boston Custer approach Harrow.

HARROW
(to the Custers)
Did you know about this?

TOM CUSTER
(affirmative)
General Sheridan said he'd be
sending a small contingent.

Harrow's about to respond when Colonel Custer comes riding to meet the new party. Harrow swallows his rebuttal.

The camp waits quietly. And as the party approaches --

A grin spreads across Harrow's face.

HARROW
I'll be damned.

Sheridan, leading the envoy, charges ahead towards Harrow --

SHERIDAN
Will!

They dismount and embrace in a big, brotherly hug.

HARROW
Michael Sheridan, as I live and
breathe.

SHERIDAN
It was a last minute thing.
Otherwise I would've written you.

They step back to look at each other as the rest of the welcome committee helps the new additions dismount and unload.

HARROW
(seeing his rank)
You're a Captain now. I had no
idea.

SHERIDAN
Before you say anything -- not
Phillip's doing.

HARROW
Wasn't even thinking it.

Lord comes over to them.

HARROW (CONT'D)
Michael, this is George Lord. The
doctor for the Seventh.
(then)
Lord, meet Michael Vincent
Sheridan.

LORD
Pleasure. Any relation to General
Phillip Sheridan?

SHERIDAN
My brother.

Lord raises his eyebrows. A moment. Then --

LORD
Fantastic. Glad to have you with
us, Captain.

SHERIDAN
Glad to be with such a legendary
company.

LORD
Welcome to the Seventh.

Lord leaves.

HARROW
You need help setting up your tent?

SHERIDAN
Actually...

He pulls a LETTER out from his jacket pocket. Emblazoned with the seal of the US ARMY. Unopened.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
Is the Colonel around?

Harrow nods towards Colonel Custer, surveying the new additions to his camp. Sheridan begins walking over to him. Harrow joins.

HARROW
A good trip?

SHERIDAN
(curt)
Not too hard.

Sheridan's not engaging. Harrow notices. His friend is singularly focused on Colonel Custer, as though trying to read his mind on the approach.

When they finally get to the Colonel --

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
Sir.
(salutes)
Captain Michael Vincent Sheridan.
At your service.

Colonel Custer seems to burn with a quiet intensity at the mention of Sheridan's name. He doesn't dismount to greet Sheridan. He just nods, slowly.

COLONEL CUSTER
Phillip's baby brother.
(then)
I'm surprised to see you so far
from West Point.

Sheridan swallows the insult and proceeds --

SHERIDAN

I have a letter, sealed by my brother in Washington. I was told to hand deliver it to you.

Colonel Custer nods. Leans down from his horse and takes the letter from Sheridan's outstretched hand. He pulls out a hunting knife and cuts the letter open. Begins to read.

Sheridan's party continues unloading supplies while the officers stand silently around the Colonel.

Harrow watches Sheridan, whose eyes never leave Colonel Custer.

Colonel Custer's face shows the slightest traces of a frown as he finishes reading. Then --

He trots his horse to the nearby embers of a FIRE from the night before, and DROPS the letter into it. Sheridan's jaw clenches.

The paper quickly catches. It burns to ash in a matter of seconds.

Colonel Custer begins to trot back to the camp. Followed closely by Boston Custer, Tom Custer, and a contingent of the other officers.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
(calling after them,
pointed)
What did it say, sir?

Colonel Custer stops his horse. The others follow suit.

Slowly, Colonel Custer turns around and stares down Sheridan.

COLONEL CUSTER
That's between me and Phillip.

Without another word, he turns back to camp and rides off.

Harrow glances at Sheridan and notices that his friend's expression is dark.

HARROW
Everything alright?

A moment. Sheridan regains his composure.

SHERIDAN
Everything's fine. What were you saying about setting up my tent?

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Harrow leads Sheridan over to the welcome committee. Then beckons to John Patton, standing in the greeting line --

HARROW
Patton, come here.
(as Patton approaches)
This is Captain Sheridan.

Patton snaps to attention and salutes.

HARROW (CONT'D)
If you could show him a spot to set
up his tent --

PATTON
Right away, sir.

HARROW
(to Sheridan)
I'll come see you after you're
settled --

SHERIDAN
(a thought)
Actually, come help me set up,
Will.

Harrow looks confused, but nods.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - MINUTES LATER

Patton leads Sheridan and Harrow to an open spot where there's a tent waiting to be set up.

SHERIDAN
Thank you, Patton. If you could
just...

PATTON
Right away, sir.

Patton sets about putting the tent up. Sheridan's nervous.

HARROW
(to Sheridan)
What's going on?

Sheridan makes sure Patton is out of earshot. Then --

SHERIDAN
We have a problem.

Harrow frowns.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

The letter I gave the Colonel. The one he burned...

(beat)

It was an *order*. Insisting that he turn the Seventh around and march back to St. Louis immediately.

Patton overhears this. Looks over. Neither Harrow nor Sheridan notice.

HARROW

How do you know that?

SHERIDAN

Because my brother wrote it in front of me.

Harrow's silent.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

This is what Phillip was afraid of. You saw the way Colonel Custer looked at me when he realized who I was. He isn't going to follow Phillip's orders...

HARROW

The Colonel's strong-willed, but I hardly think --

SHERIDAN

Explain why Phillip felt the need to send me to bring home a regiment that was *supposed to be headed that way already*.

(beat, then)

Explain why it *isn't*.

Harrow doesn't respond, so Sheridan presses.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

The Colonel was sent here to ensure the Sioux were adhering to the terms of the reservation treaties. He wasn't sent here to butcher them.

HARROW

We're not *butchering* them. They're attacking us when we try and relocate them.

(MORE)

HARROW (CONT'D)

(then)

Colonel Custer is a commander in an active theater. You know as well as I do that the man on the ground knows more than the man behind the desk. And "in times of disputed strategy the man on the ground --

SHERIDAN

-- Has every right to assert authority for the good of his men." I know, but --

HARROW

(resolute)

I'm going to pretend this conversation never happened.

Harrow puts a firm hand on Sheridan's shoulder.

HARROW (CONT'D)

(drop it.)

Good to have you here, Michael.

And then, without waiting for a response, he leaves. Sheridan watches him go for a moment, before --

PATTON (O.S.)

I heard what you said.

Sheridan turns to find Patton waiting there. Sheridan looks at him -- *is this going to be a problem?*

SHERIDAN

That was confidential.

PATTON

-- But Sitting Bull is leading the Sioux resistance. If Colonel Custer thinks we can get him, is it wrong to try?

SHERIDAN

The Colonel is disobeying a direct order to chase a ghost.

PATTON

But if he finds Sitting Bull... why is that a problem?

SHERIDAN

There was a report that Sitting Bull is amassing an army. Maybe a thousand men strong.

That lands. Patton is in shock.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

We haven't confirmed it -- but if it's true, and this unit engages with a force anywhere close to that size, everyone here will die.

PATTON

Why didn't you tell that to Sergeant Major Harrow?

SHERIDAN

Because it's unconfirmed. Harrow always needs proof.

(beat)

But that's not what this is about. This is about Custer disobeying orders. Recklessly pushing his men past their limits. Everyone's worried about this regiment.

A moment. Patton awkwardly steps back.

PATTON

I should finish setting up your tent, sir.

And off Sheridan, alone --

EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

Harrow sits surrounded by his men (Schmidt, Porter, Younghawk), eating dinner and drinking by the fire. Having a laugh.

We see Sheridan watching from a distance. Studying them.

Finally, he approaches with his bowl of food.

SHERIDAN

May I join?

Harrow nods curtly. Then, opening up --

HARROW

Men -- Captain Michael Vincent Sheridan. You've never seen such a man unleashed at a saloon. The women who have fallen to him... innumerable.

SHERIDAN
Seeing me in combat, on the other
hand... travesty.

The men around the fire laugh. Sheridan smiles. Sits next to Harrow.

SCHMIDT
You think you're useless in battle,
you've clearly never seen Porter
try to hit a target.

Oooooohs from the group. Off Sheridan, laughing along. And off Harrow, studying him --

EXT. CAMPFIRE - LATER

It's just Sheridan and Harrow now. The rest have gone to bed.
They share a pipe of tobacco.

SHERIDAN
So I hear we're marching tomorrow.
(pointedly)
West.

HARROW
I thought we were done with this,
Michael.

SHERIDAN
Sorry.
(then)
How's everything with Anna?

HARROW
She's well.

SHERIDAN
And the pregnancy?

HARROW
Right on schedule.

Harrow nods.

SHERIDAN
And you're fine missing the birth
because your commanding officer has
a trophy he covets?

HARROW
(rolls his eyes)
You mean Sitting Bull?

SHERIDAN

Have you heard that he's gathering
an army?

HARROW

I've heard the *rumor*.

SHERIDAN

But if it's true, and this regiment
ends up in a lopsided battle on the
whim of an egomaniacal --

HARROW

Jesus, Michael. You're talking
about the Colonel. Have some
respect --

SHERIDAN

Here's a question. Is Colonel
Custer's respect more important to
you than that of your own son? --

HARROW

(snapping)

Michael!

Sheridan puts his hands up. Truce.

A beat. He takes a drag of the pipe. Then --

SHERIDAN

I just don't want this unit in a
fight we can't win.

HARROW

That fight doesn't exist.

Harrow stands to leave. And off Sheridan, frustrated --

EXT. MARCH TRAIL, DAKOTA TERRITORIES - NEXT DAY

Midday. The whole of the Seventh marches across the plains. A procession of wagons, horses and tenting supplies brings up the rear.

EXT. SEVENTH CAVALRY ENCAMPMENT - EVENING

A flurry of activity -- they're making camp. Sheridan walks through the tents, taking in his new regiment.

People don't really acknowledge him as they pass. We get the sense that he's lost in his own head until he's pulled out of it by --

AUTIE (O.S.)
 Make sure the flaps are secured extra tight. Yesterday there was a terrible breeze and I could hardly sleep.

Autie Reed surveys from the side while a sweaty Patton struggles to raise Autie's tent alone.

PATTON
 Alright...

AUTIE
 (harsh)
 Why is this so hard for you, private?

Sheridan notices that SOLDIERS are seeing this play out. A general sense of indignation and discomfort at the whole thing. He seizes the moment --

SHERIDAN
 (loudly)
 Patton. What's going on here?

Patton looks nervously to Autie. Autie interjects --

AUTIE
 I just ordered this private to help me put up my tent --

SHERIDAN
 Ordered? Patton, get up.

Patton stands up.

PATTON
 I'm okay to do it, Captain. It's fine --

SHERIDAN
No it isn't.

People are openly watching now. Sheridan gives them what they want --

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
 You'll set up your own tent, Autie.

Autie steps forward, incensed and blustery --

AUTIE
I am a Custer --

SHERIDAN
You're not even an enlisted man.
You give orders to no one.

AUTIE
Now, see here *captain* --

SHERIDAN
Don't you dare condescend me.

The soldiers watching look at each other -- *oh shit.*

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
If you want to glom onto this
regiment, that's fine. You have the
connections to make that happen,
but make no mistake --

He puts a threatening hand on Autie's shoulder and pulls him close.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
You don't get special treatment. If
you're here, you follow orders,
like anyone else.
(beat)
No matter what your name is.

Sheridan releases Autie, a little more forcefully than what would be comfortable. Walks past him --

Up to the tent --

And KICKS the main support beam, sending the whole thing COLLAPSING into a heap. A few soldiers whistle.

Sheridan passes by Patton and puts a hand on his shoulder. Patton looks at him gratefully.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
Dismissed.

Patton nods and runs off. Autie goes to the tent and begins picking it up, chastised.

HARROW (O.S.)
Captain Sheridan!

Harrow stands a few feet away with Boston Custer and Younghawk. He's frowning. Waves Sheridan over.

Sheridan approaches tentatively.

SHERIDAN
Sir.

HARROW
What was that about?

SHERIDAN
Discipline. Need to make sure we aren't allowing nepotism --

HARROW
Captain, these are our scouts.
Younghawk and Boston Custer.

Boston Custer extends his hand to shake.

BOSTON CUSTER
General Sheridan's brother, right?
(beat)
Thank you for making sure we avoid any nepotism in this army.

Touché. Harrow jumps in --

HARROW
Younghawk and Boston found a Sioux encampment outside of the agreed upon reservation lands. A few miles west of here.

SHERIDAN
Sitting Bull?

HARROW
No.
(then)
Small village. Relatively unguarded. We don't need another blood bath, of course. We'll march with them to relocate.

SHERIDAN
Why are you telling me this?

HARROW
Because the Colonel wants you to take point on the relocation.

Sheridan is surprised, but covers --

SHERIDAN
...Very good, sir.

HARROW
Boston and Younghawk will brief you
on the situation.

Sheridan nods, gives a salute. Harrow leaves.

SHERIDAN
How many men are we dealing with --

But Boston Custer is already walking off.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
Officer?

BOSTON CUSTER
I'll make sure you know what to do
after I help my nephew set up his
tent.

And off Sheridan, unsettled by the quick promotion --

EXT. MEDICAL WAGON - THAT NIGHT

It's late. Lord sits in front of a small fire.

From out of the darkness, someone approaches.

LORD
Schmidt. It's been a long time
since I've seen you.

Schmidt walks into the light. Takes a seat by the fire.

SCHMIDT
Yeah, God must be in a good mood.
I've been lucky in battle. No
arrows chose me as a lover.

LORD
Well, as my father used to say,
luck and savvy tend to go hand-in-
hand... unfortunately he was
neither lucky nor savvy.
(beat)
What do you need?

SCHMIDT
I can't sleep. I'm just... anxious.

LORD
Anything in particular?

SCHMIDT

I don't know. Maybe my body is
rebelling from sleeping in a cot
for months on end.

LORD

You want me to give you something?

SCHMIDT

(nodding)

Opium, if you have it.

Lord frowns thoughtfully.

LORD

I believe we do. But I don't like
to prescribe it unless all other
options have been exhausted...

SCHMIDT

They have. I've counted sheep,
drank herbal tea at night, I've...
exerted myself in bed --

LORD

-- Okay, alright. Let me go get you
some.

He stands, and walks towards his wagon. Schmidt gets up and follows him over, when --

LORD (CONT'D)

Stop!

The outburst startles Schmidt.

SCHMIDT

I -- what?

LORD

(calming)

I'm -- I'm sorry. I just don't like
people in the wagon. Too many
supplies have "gone missing" after
I bring visitors back.

SCHMIDT

(hands up)

Alright. I can wait.

LORD

Thank you.

We follow Lord as he enters the --

INT. MEDICAL WAGON - CONTINUOUS

And we see the TRUE reason he didn't want Schmidt inside:

In a pool of dried blood, carefully patched up but seemingly comatose, lies MOVING ROBE. The Sioux commander from the opening battle.

Lord shuffles past her, careful not to wake her up, finds a supply of opium in a marked medical container, and exits.

EXT. MEDICAL WAGON - CONTINUOUS

Schmidt's warming his hands by the fire when Lord emerges.

LORD

Here you go. Take nightly and in small doses. A little bit should still be effective.

SCHMIDT

Thanks, Doc. You're a lifesaver.

Schmidt pockets the opium and heads away. Lord watches him go and then heads back inside --

INT. MEDICAL WAGON - MOMENTS LATER

Lord stares down at the sleeping warrior. Her chest heaving with labored breath. Sweaty, fevered, fighting off infection.

He brushes her hair from her face and administers a wet cloth to cool her down.

INT. SHERIDAN'S TENT - SAME TIME

Sheridan's sitting at his desk, alone.

Patton enters. Secures the flap.

The two of them share a look. A long moment. Finally --

PATTON

What can we do?

SHERIDAN

We?

PATTON

We.

Sheridan nods.

SHERIDAN

We have to get the rest of the men
on our side.

PATTON

Okay.

SHERIDAN

But I've been put in charge of the
relocation tomorrow.

PATTON

That's perfect. It'll help your
standing in the regiment.

SHERIDAN

Maybe... but if something goes
wrong, I'll be to blame.

(then)

Colonel Custer knows that.

He looks at Patton.

PATTON

You think he wants you to fail.

SHERIDAN

Of course. If I do, he's got cause
to bury me.

A beat. Patton shakes his head.

PATTON

The Colonel may not like you, but I
don't believe he would set you up.

(beat)

I think this is a good thing.

Off Sheridan, not so certain --

EXT. SIOUX ENCAMPMENT - NEXT DAY

WOMEN wail. CHILDREN cry.

We open back up as the Seventh force the Sioux to pack their camp.

Sheridan oversees, looking nervous. The atmosphere is tense.
Tom Custer is a little ways away.

TOM CUSTER
(yelling)
Come on, move it.

The camp is packed up and ready to move. The Sioux are lined up next to their possessions -- members of the Seventh surrounding them on all sides. Ready.

Sheridan surveys the situation. Then gives the order.

SHERIDAN
Okay. Let's march.

At first, nothing. Then the Sioux begin to shuffle forward.

EXT. HILL - SAME TIME

The command group is on horses, observing from above. We see Harrow, Boston Custer, and the Colonel. Autie Reed in the place of honor right next to his uncle.

HARROW
Why are there so few men...?

BOSTON CUSTER
Who cares.

Harrow looks to Colonel Custer.

No response.

EXT. SIOUX ENCAMPMENT - SAME TIME

Sheridan is breathing a big sigh of relief as the Sioux finally begin marching.

Further down, Tom Custer is trying to get a particularly sluggish woman to catch up with the group.

A SIOUX MAN approaches, tries to get Tom Custer to stop.

SIOUX MAN
It's her leg, she --

Tom Custer knocks him down. The Sioux man gets up and spits at him.

Sheridan sees what's about to happen before it does, but he's too far away --

SHERIDAN
Captain, no --

Tom Custer slashes the man open. The woman next to him cries out. And then ALL HELL BREAKS LOOSE as the Sioux see their comrade die. They start to fight back --

EXT. HILL - SAME TIME

Harrow sees the chaos erupt. Sounds of the fracas reach them.

HARROW
Permission to assume command?

A beat.

Then Colonel Custer shakes his head.

COLONEL CUSTER
Let's give Captain Sheridan a chance to prove himself.

Harrow shifts uncomfortably.

EXT. SIOUX MARCH - SAME TIME

TOM CUSTER
Men! With me!

A group of privates flock to Tom and dismount.

SHERIDAN
No! Stand down!

But no one can hear him. They move through the Sioux ranks, CUTTING DOWN the men who fight back (without weapons). The WOMEN try to get in the way --

SIOUX WOMAN
Please!

TOM CUSTER
MOVE!

Tom grabs her, and THROWS her out of his way. She gets back up, and then he KILLS HER TOO.

He continues SLAUGHTERING his way through the Sioux.

EXT. HILL - SAME TIME

Harrow sees the situation going to shit.

HARROW
Sir!

Colonel Custer nods.

Harrow takes off down the hill.

EXT. SIOUX MARCH - MOMENTS LATER

Back on Tom Custer, caught up in his blood rage. The privates are following his lead.

Until Sheridan ARRIVES, wheeling his horse out in front of Tom --

SHERIDAN
CAPTAIN CUSTER. STOP.

Tom stops. Bodies litter the ground around him. The remaining Sioux cower. Tom approaches Sheridan, still seeing red --

TOM CUSTER
Get out of my way --

Sheridan dismounts, SHOVES Tom back.

SHERIDAN
(furious)
They're unarmed.

Tom Custer raises his blade, enraged, and it looks like he and Sheridan might come to actual blows.

HARROW (O.S.)
Enough!

Tom Custer and Sheridan look at Harrow, who rides up to them.

Sheridan looks to him for some kind of outward support but Harrow whips on him.

HARROW (CONT'D)
What happened here?

SHERIDAN
(accusatory)
He started slaughtering them --

TOM CUSTER
They were threatening me. Menacing.
I had to retaliate.

SHERIDAN

They were unarmed! I didn't order --

HARROW

CAPTAIN.

Authoritative. Disappointed.

HARROW (CONT'D)

I will be assuming command of this march. Captain Sheridan, to the back. Captain Custer, to the Colonel...

He pauses. Looks around at all the men.

HARROW (CONT'D)

(declares)

Continue the march.

Silence. Only whimpering tears can be heard from the decimated Sioux.

Sheridan stares at Harrow. Studying him. Questioning him. Harrow avoids eye contact.

The march continues.

EXT. SOMEWHERE IN THE DAKOTA TERRITORIES - DAYS LATER

The Sioux are marched north.

Harrow is at the front of the contingent. Sheridan is relegated to the rear.

Sheridan glares at Harrow's back as they march. Unspoken tension between the two.

EXT. RESERVATION BOUNDARY - DAYS LATER

Harrow stands at the edge of the reservation boundary. He watches as the sad contingent of Sioux pass by a sign reading: **Great Sioux Reservation.**

The men of the Seventh work to make camp at the boundary.

Sheridan approaches and stands next to Harrow. Harrow doesn't acknowledge his presence.

SHERIDAN

What now?

Harrow doesn't respond.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
You're just going to ignore me?
(beat)
You know as well as I do that Tom
is impossible to control --

HARROW
You were in command. Take
responsibility. It was *your* job --

SHERIDAN
What would you have done?
(beat)
What would you have done
differently, Will? You tell me that
and I'll admit I was wrong.

A moment. Harrow's at a loss. Sheridan continues --

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
Whose idea was it for me to lead
the march?
(off Harrow's silence)
I was set up. They knew that you
would blame me if something went
wrong.

HARROW
(warning)
Michael...

SHERIDAN
You have to see that, Will. I need
you on my side.

HARROW
Your *side*? We're all on the same
side here.

A long pause.

SHERIDAN
Are we?

Sheridan leaves.

Harrow watches the Sioux march onto the reservation,
unsettled. As he watches, sounds of a confrontation from
behind him --

Harrow goes to investigate...

EXT. CAMPSITE - MOMENTS LATER

Harrow arrives at the scene, where THREE SOLDIERS are PUMMELING James Porter.

When they see Harrow, the men instantly stop. Spring into salutes, guilty. Porter lies on the ground groaning.

HARROW
(quietly furious)
Explain.

BEARDED SOLDIER
(stammering)
This is the third time he's stolen
rations of mine. I told him to stop
but he didn't.

Harrow turns to Porter, still on the ground.

HARROW
Is this true?

PORTRER
No...

Harrow senses Porter's lying.

PORTRER (CONT'D)
I didn't --

HARROW
Porter.

A moment. Then Porter tears up.

PORTRER
Our portions have been getting
smaller for weeks. How are we
supposed to fight if we're not
being fed?
(beat)
I thought we'd already be back in
St. Louis by now. I didn't sign up
for this. None of us did.

Harrow softens.

HARROW
I know this is hard, but we have to
remember all the good we're doing
here.

PORTER
 (under his breath)
 Like killing unarmed women?

He shakes his head. Harrow pretends not to hear.

Bearded Soldier reaches down, offers his hand to Porter. Porter takes it and Bearded Soldier helps him climb to his feet.

HARROW
 I had better not hear about any other squabbles. We're the Seventh Cavalry. We're better than that.

Porter glares, while Bearded Soldier looks down in shame --

BEARDED SOLDIER
 Sorry, sir. I guess being out here for so long is wearing all of us thin.

Off Harrow, concern growing --

EXT. SEVENTH CAVALRY CAMPSITE - LATER

Nighttime again at the fire. A new group plays poker with Dorman and Younghawk. Porter scowls at them from afar, clearly being held out of the game.

The mood around camp is noticeably more sour.

At the fire, we see Vinatieri strumming a GUITAR.

Harrow stands across the fire from him, studying. This goes on for a while until Vinatieri gestures to a seat next to him. Harrow obliges. Sits.

VINATIERI
 Is everything okay?

HARROW
 It's fine.

Vinatieri strums for a minute. As the fire burns, the numbers of men dwindle. Then --

VINATIERI
 Is it true that Captain Sheridan was the one who introduced you and Anna?

HARROW

(nodding)

After the war Michael and I spent a few years in New York City. He was seeing friends of hers.

VINATIERI

Friends? Plural?

HARROW

Yeah, but never Anna. Second he saw her, he knew she was perfect for me.

Vinatieri laughs. Another beat.

VINATIERI

Sounds like you two are close.

HARROW

We are.

(then)

But now we may have some irreconcilable differences.

VINATIERI

Really?

HARROW

...He doesn't trust the Colonel.

VINATIERI

And you fault him for that?

HARROW

Colonel Custer is one of the greatest commanders to have ever lived.

VINATIERI

Oh, I've heard.

Harrow frowns at Vinatieri.

VINATIERI (CONT'D)

I'm sure we could both list off his accomplishments. All the battles he's won for America. The things that have earned the respect you have for him. But do you know what I respect about you, Sergeant Major?

(off Harrow, listening)

(MORE)

VINATIERI (CONT'D)
You look after every last soldier
in this unit.

He continues talking as we CUT TO some of the men --

INT. PATTON'S TENT - SAME TIME

Patton and Schmidt lie on adjacent spots in the tent.

VINATIERI (V.O.)
From the lowest privates --

Schmidt is passed out, his latest dose of opium lies next to him.

Patton's awake. Practicing sword swings with Schmidt's saber.

We move to --

INT. MEDICAL WAGON - SAME TIME

Where Lord is taking care of a still-comatose Moving Robe --

VINATIERI (V.O.)
-- to the support staff --

And now we move to --

EXT. OUTSIDE COLONEL CUSTER'S TENT - SAME TIME

Where Sheridan silently SPIES on the Custers from a distance as they sit in a tight knit circle.

VINATIERI (V.O.)
-- To your fellow officers.

Suddenly Sheridan lets out a small cough. Tom and Boston look in his direction, but he ducks low, protected by the darkness. As he huddles, we hear --

BOSTON CUSTER (O.S.)
What was that?

TOM CUSTER (O.S.)
Nothing...

And off of Sheridan's relief, we cut back to --

EXT. CAMPFIRE - SAME TIME

Where Vinatieri's put down the guitar.

VINATIERI

Do you really think the Colonel
shares your concern for their well-
being?

HARROW

Of course.

VINATIERI

You care about the men, Will. Above
all else. And you think that
Colonel Custer's a good commander
because you believe he feels the
same way you do.

HARROW

He does.

Beat.

VINATIERI

I'd heard it said that the Colonel
admires Andrew Jackson.

HARROW

(so?)

A brilliant military strategist.

VINATIERI

A President.

Harrow's eyes narrow.

VINATIERI (CONT'D)

Jackson won the presidency on the
back of his military
accomplishments.

Harrow's silent. First time he's ever considered that.

VINATIERI (CONT'D)

I'm not saying the Colonel doesn't
care about the men. I'm saying
there are things he cares about
more.

(beat, then)

"Ambition can blind a man to the
fortunes of those around him."
- Aristotle.

A poignant pause.

HARROW
That's not Aristotle.

Vinatieri shrugs, gives a small smile.

VINATIERI
Doesn't mean it isn't true.
(then)
Maybe your friend Sheridan has a point.

Off Harrow, thinking --

EXT. COLONEL CUSTER'S TENT - LATER

Harrow walks up the hill to Colonel Custer's tent. He reaches it. Raucous voices come from within. He hesitates, then announces --

HARROW
Sir, it's me.

COLONEL CUSTER (O.S.)
Enter!

Harrow opens the flap.

INT. COLONEL CUSTER'S TENT - CONTINUOUS

Harrow comes in to find Colonel Custer sitting around a table with Boston Custer, Tom Custer, and Autie. Tom and Autie are drinking from BOOTS OF BEER.

Tom finishes his boot first, slams it down, roars triumphantly, then SMACKS Autie across the face.

Beer spurts out of Autie's mouth. Boston laughs. They're all drunk.

AUTIE
(frustrated)
Another round!

The Colonel looks to Harrow, a grin still on his face --

COLONEL CUSTER
Yes, Harrow?

Harrow's uncertain. Put off by the tone of what he just walked into. But he steps forward --

HARROW
I had to break up a fight today,
sir.

A beat, then --

COLONEL CUSTER
You seem concerned.

HARROW
Well, morale is sagging. This is a
real issue --

COLONEL CUSTER
Come, Harrow. Have a drink.

HARROW
I'm here to talk about the men --

COLONEL CUSTER
*Sit with us. It's good beer. My
private stock. Plenty of it.*

There's something dangerous in Custer's voice. Harrow
considers continuing anyway, but instead --

He sits down, hiding his frustration. Colonel Custer refills
the boots with beer.

COLONEL CUSTER (CONT'D)
Do you boot race, Harrow?

HARROW
(short, hiding annoyance)
I used to.

COLONEL CUSTER
Well our family plays with a twist.
It's the same race to the finish.
But then the winner...

He looks to Tom, who MIMES slapping Autie again. Autie
instinctively ducks. Tom and Boston laugh. Colonel Custer
continues --

COLONEL CUSTER (CONT'D)
It highlights the *competition*.
Power or pain? Dominance or
humiliation? You find out all you
need to know about a man.
(then)
Boston?

Boston nods. The Colonel and Boston cheers the refilled boots, and Boston starts drinking. The Colonel watches him for a moment, regarding him like prey. Then he CHUGS.

It rushes out of the boot and down his throat. Boston never stood a chance.

Within seconds, the Colonel is finished. He unleashes a booming SLAP onto Boston, who falls out of his chair. Harrow winces. Tom and Autie hoot and holler.

COLONEL CUSTER (CONT'D)
I've never lost.
(beat)
Your turn, Harrow.

Colonel Custer stares Harrow down until Harrow nods.

COLONEL CUSTER (CONT'D)
Autie, refill us.
(then, to Harrow)
Did you know I finished 34th out of 34 at West Point? All those cadets "ranked higher" spent all their time polishing their shoes to a shine and sucking up to our instructors. But what good is that in war? I'll tell you -- none of them ever took me in a boot race.

BOSTON CUSTER
Didn't you graduate first in your class, Harrow?

Harrow nods, teeth gritted. Colonel Custer laughs.

Autie hands them both their boots of beer. Tom and Boston start POUNDING on the table. Harrow and Colonel Custer touch boots. Then Harrow starts CHUGGING.

Again, Colonel Custer waits. Toying with his victim. The table bounces as Tom and Boston pound it. Autie joins in.

Then the Colonel starts to realize Harrow is drinking *fast*. The Colonel races to catch up -- Harrow doesn't let up --

Colonel Custer keeps pressing, almost there --

But Harrow is already done. The thumping stops. Tom, Boston, and Autie are in shock. The Colonel looks at Harrow, his face unreadable. Then, slowly --

COLONEL CUSTER
Well, aren't you going to...?

He takes a step towards Harrow, offers up a side of his face. Harrow just looks at it.

COLONEL CUSTER (CONT'D)
(a command)
Do it.

Harrow's hand lifts, tenses. The room is airless. Everyone watching, waiting. But Harrow can't do it. Finally --

Colonel Custer smiles, and then suddenly SLAPS Harrow. Harrow stumbles back, stunned.

COLONEL CUSTER (CONT'D)
I win because I seize my moments.
You lose because you don't.

He laughs. Nods at Harrow.

COLONEL CUSTER (CONT'D)
Goodnight.

And off Harrow, gathering himself --

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Harrow walks back through the camp, rubbing his cheek. Very few men still awake.

He passes a still-lit campfire with nobody around it. He shakes his head. He goes over and throws a bucket of dirt on it, extinguishing it.

EXT. PLAINS - DAWN

The entire camp is shrouded in a soft MIST. It's very quiet.

INT. HARROW'S TENT - EARLY MORNING

It's dark. Harrow is asleep, curled up on his cot under a blanket. His breath is visible in the cold. He shivers.

We hear the sound of his tent flap opening. Harrow bolts awake, scaring the YOUNG PRIVATE at his entrance.

PRIVATE
I'm sorry sir --

HARROW
What is it?

The Private hesitates. Harrow feels a pit in his stomach.

HARROW (CONT'D)
What's wrong?

EXT. MIDDLE OF THE ENCAMPMENT - MOMENTS LATER

The camp is still mostly asleep. The dawn is just starting to break through.

Harrow, fully clothed, approaches a group of MOUNTED SOLDIERS.

Seven, including Younghawk, Boston Custer, and Tom Custer. All armed. Harrow's horse saddled and waiting.

Tom Custer stares Harrow down as he reaches them. Harrow doesn't meet his gaze.

TOM CUSTER
It's okay, take your time.

Harrow swings himself up onto his horse. Ignores the bait.

HARROW
How many of them?

BOSTON CUSTER
We're not sure.

Harrow glances towards the Custer command tent, where the Colonel himself stands, watching them, just a figure in the early morning mist.

HARROW
Let's go.

He looks to Younghawk, who nods EAST. Towards home.

The horses take off, storming through camp. Tom Custer leading them.

As they gallop past Sheridan's tent, he walks out. Cocks his head curiously as the hunting party rides off.

His brow furrows.

INT. FOOD TENT - MINUTES LATER

Sheridan enters, scans the tent. There's a line of sleepy men forming for breakfast. He spots Patton.

Sheridan walks up to him. Patton sees him and straightens, trying not to look tired.

SHERIDAN
Did you see that hunting party go out?

PATTON
Yes sir.

SHERIDAN
Do you know what they're going after?

PATTON
Deer, sir.

SHERIDAN
Sergeant Major Harrow is going on a deer hunt?

Patton reddens, feeling foolish.

PATTON
It's just what I heard.

Sheridan's unconvinced.

A SOLDIER IN LINE next to them taps Sheridan on the shoulder.

SOLDIER IN LINE
There's a line, cap'n.

SHERIDAN
(distracted)
Right, sorry.

He goes to leave. Patton gets out of line and quickly follows Sheridan. Reaches him.

PATTON
Captain...

Sheridan turns --

PATTON (CONT'D)
I was wondering if you might be able to teach me how to ride. With a blade.

Sheridan considers him.

SHERIDAN
You're a trumpeter.

PATTON
For now, sir. But I want to be a
cavalryman.

Sheridan raises his eyebrow. A painful beat of anticipation for Patton.

SHERIDAN
Come see me later. Something I have
to do first.

PATTON
(hiding his elation)
Thank you sir.

Sheridan leaves.

EXT. PLAINS - MORNING

The hunting party slows to a stop as Younghawk studies the dirt in front of them. He gets off his horse and kneels to the ground.

The others look on silently.

Younghawk stands. Ponders.

TOM CUSTER
Did you lose them?

BOSTON CUSTER
Quiet down.
(beat, as he studies the
dirt as well)
The tracks split.

TOM CUSTER
Then we split.
(to Harrow)
I'll take three men and you take
three.

Harrow shakes his head.

HARROW
We're not splitting up.

Younghawk studies the tracks. Tom Custer spits.

HARROW (CONT'D)
We don't know how many of them
there are and we don't want one
party to end up in a fight we could
lose.

Tom Custer nudges his horse towards Harrow to get up in his face.

TOM CUSTER
I don't lose fights.

HARROW
As the commanding officer --

TOM CUSTER
I don't give a damn about your
rank, Harrow --

BOSTON CUSTER
Tom.

TOM CUSTER
(snarling)
What?

Boston nods towards Younghawk and everyone looks. He's pointing towards a thick WOODS, where one set of tracks leads.

YOUNGHAWK
All of them.

They have the trail again.

EXT. STABLES, SEVENTH CAVALRY CAMP - SAME TIME

Sheridan moves with purpose to the makeshift STABLES. He stops in front of them, counting the empty stalls --

SCHMIDT (O.S.)
Oy, Captain.

Schmidt's standing off to the side. Rifle up.

SHERIDAN
What are you doing?

Schmidt shrugs.

SCHMIDT
I was posted here.

Sheridan turns his eyes back to the empty stalls. They're bothering him. He nods slightly as he continues to count.

SCHMIDT (CONT'D)
What are you --

SHERIDAN
One moment, Schmidt.

SCHMIDT
Alright.

Sheridan finishes counting. A darkness comes over his face as he does. Schmidt notices.

SCHMIDT (CONT'D)
Is something the matter, Captain?

Sheridan rubs his temples and sighs.

SHERIDAN
Deserters.

EXT. WOODS - SAME TIME

Two horses run at a desperate pace. Two men on each, including PORTER. He's terrified, his face caked with dirt and sweat.

He rides with a SERGEANT. Two PRIVATES on the other horse.

The horses gallop around trees and jump over rocks, reaching a small clearing --

Porter's head swivels, he glances back, a shout? -- it's hard to hear over the stampeding hooves --

Nothing behind them --

He looks back ahead --

As several horses suddenly CUT OFF THEIR PATH, led by Tom Custer who fires a deafening GUNSHOT into the ground.

Porter and the Sergeant's horse WHINNIES and BUCKS them. They tumble to the ground.

Porter grabs his ankle in pain. More horses rush up behind them.

The privates on the other horse keep their saddle but throw up their hands.

They're surrounded.

Harrow, leading the rear unit, dismounts.

HARROW
Get off that horse, privates.

The privates obey, scared for their lives.

TOM CUSTER
On your knees. All of you.

The four runaways kneel next to each other. Harrow moves to stand in front of them.

HARROW
(pained)
Why run?

TOM CUSTER
(calling out)
Come on, Harrow. Kill them and be done with it.

Porter breaks down --

PORTR
It was his idea.

Porter nods to the Sergeant. The Sergeant doesn't even look at him, just stares straight ahead.

Harrow takes a step towards him.

HARROW
Is this true, Sergeant Johnson?

Sergeant Johnson turns to Harrow. Resigned but resolute.

SERGEANT JOHNSON
I couldn't do it anymore.

HARROW
Do what?

SERGEANT JOHNSON
I couldn't keep justifying it to the men. Every day for the past few weeks they've asked me why we're still out here. They worried about not having enough rations. About losing their friends. About our place in this war.
(MORE)

SERGEANT JOHNSON (CONT'D)
 They asked me why, and eventually I
 had no more answers.
 (then)
 So we left.

Tom Custer dismounts. Takes out his SWORD.

Strides towards the deserters.

DESERTING PRIVATE
 (near tears)
 Please don't kill us.

Harrow cuts Tom off at the pass. A hand to his shoulder. Tom Custer bristles. Younghawk and Boston Custer tense, ready to intervene.

TOM CUSTER
 (growl)
 Get your hand off of me.

HARROW
 (quiet)
 We're not killing these men.

Their voices stay low, they're just talking to each other.

TOM CUSTER
 And then tomorrow four more leave.
 And the day after, eight.

HARROW
 We need every man. Did you not hear
 him? The unit is tired. Depleted.
 We can't afford to demoralize them
 further.

TOM CUSTER
 How do you know they won't run
 again if we let them live?

HARROW
 I don't.
 (then)
 But we need them. Mercy, Tom.
 That's an order.

Beat as they face off, neither backing down.

TOM CUSTER
 Fine.

He takes a step past Harrow. In a swift motion, he lifts his sword --

Sergeant Johnson sees it coming, shuts his eyes --

As Tom Custer DECAPITATES him.

Blood spurts onto Porter, who shudders. One of the privates whimpers. Everyone's frozen in shock.

TOM CUSTER (CONT'D)
Today, we are merciful.

He turns and walks past Harrow, who looks sick.

TOM CUSTER (CONT'D)
Now back to camp. We'll see what
the Colonel thinks of them.

Harrow looks to Younghawk and Boston Custer, but neither will meet his eye.

EXT. SHERIDAN'S TENT - DAY

Sheridan sits outside of his tent. Lost in thought.

Periodically, he glances east, in the direction that the "hunting party" went.

He's pulled out of his worrying by the sight of Patton walking his way, struggling to carry two saddles.

When Patton finally reaches Sheridan --

SHERIDAN
Are you sure you want to be a
soldier?

Patton stands there obstinately.

PATTON
I don't have a family. Grew up in an orphanage, no friends. Never belonged anywhere. Never felt a purpose. But I joined the army and I see these men who would die for one another. They matter more than anything to each other. They're a family. I believe in that. I want to be a part of that.
(beat)
Please, sir.

Sheridan sighs.

SHERIDAN

Go get your horse. Meet me at the western edge of the camp.

Patton nods vigorously and starts lugging his equipment towards the stables.

EXT. WESTERN EDGE, ENCAMPMENT - LATER

Sheridan holds a bundle of long STICKS under his arms. He watches as Patton runs up to him with a horse.

SHERIDAN

Follow me.

He pats the horse on the nose to greet it and starts walking.

They go in silence. Just the faint sound of camp in the distance. A cold, sharp wind. And their breathing. Until --

PATTON

Did you find out where they went?

SHERIDAN

They're chasing deserters.

On Patton, this hitting him hard.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

This is an opportunity. The men are losing faith in Colonel Custer.

PATTON

...What do you want to do?

SHERIDAN

I need to talk with Harrow when he gets back.

EXT. PLAINS - SAME TIME

Harrow and Tom Custer's unit rides back to the encampment with the three remaining deserters. Everyone is quiet.

Porter, riding a horse alone, moves over to Harrow. In a low voice --

PORTR

What's gonna happen to us?

Harrow doesn't answer.

PORTER (CONT'D)
Sergeant Major?

HARROW
I don't know, Porter. That's for
the Colonel to decide.

Porter shakes his head. Mutters to himself.

PORTER
You've heard the rumors right?

Harrow ignores him.

PORTER (CONT'D)
That Sitting Bull has an army of a
thousand men? That we're not
stopping until we find Sitting
Bull?

(beat)
That the Colonel ignored a direct
order from General Sheridan to pull
us back?

Beat. Nothing from Harrow.

PORTER (CONT'D)
You must have. You're not deaf.
You're not dumb. What Sergeant
Johnson said...
(beat)
You don't have those same
questions?

Harrow turns to him and gives a searing glare.

HARROW
(in increasing intensity)
I know what we're doing here isn't
exactly the Lord's work. Does this
feel good, to be out here
"relocating" the Sioux? Of course
not. I fought a war to end slavery.
I know what it feels like to be on
the right side of a war. But this
is my job. To protect you. To get
you home to your family. I can't do
that if I ask questions.
(calms)
The Seventh is great because we
follow our leader. So no. I don't
question. For the sake of my own
life. And yours.

Porter stares at him, then shrinks away, back to the center.

Harrow glances over at Boston and Tom Custer, talking to each other a little further up.

The unit continues on in silence.

EXT. WESTERN EDGE, ENCAMPMENT - SAME TIME

Sheridan has staked the ground with the long sticks he was carrying, creating what looks to be an obstacle course of sorts. Patton watches him.

SHERIDAN

So. Here's the goal.

He vaults himself onto the horse. Takes out his SABER. Trots some feet away. Turns around. CHARGES at the sticks.

He gets low, takes the saber and lifts it behind him and high. He SLICES through with a vicious swing, taking the upper half off one of the sticks.

He switches hands deftly as the horse approaches the next target, seamlessly moving his weight to the other side -- slices -- another perfect hit as the wood topples over.

He stops the horse. Patton's jaw is practically on the floor.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

Mount.

Patton dutifully climbs the horse. Sheridan hands his SABER to Patton. Patton takes it.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

Feel the weight. Try both hands.
You'll need to be able to switch.

Patton feels it out. Moving the blade from hand to hand.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

Now start taking swings.

Patton swishes the blade through the air. A grin spreading across his face.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

The tenets are simple: know how to shift your weight and utilize momentum. The biggest advantage you have on horseback is your inertial mass.

(MORE)

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
But if you don't use it properly,
it can work against you. You could
get your blade stuck, and then
you're dead.

Patton is distracted by the excitement of being on a horse
with a sword. He wasn't listening.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
Do you understand?

PATTON
Ready to try!

Sheridan sighs -- no he isn't.

SHERIDAN
Go for it.

Patton happily trots the horse the same distance as Sheridan.
Turns, gets a determined look on his face. He CHARGES.

He approaches one of the sticks, raises the saber high and
back like Sheridan, but doesn't go low --

Swings the saber --

It gets STUCK in the wood --

Patton holds onto the saber, the horse keeps moving, the
momentum completely unsaddles him --

His shoulder twists and he falls to the ground with a THUMP.
Patton groans.

Sheridan rushes to Patton. Patton's grabbing his shoulder.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
Let's get you to the doctor.

EXT. MEDICAL WAGON - MINUTES LATER

Patton lies on a makeshift cot outside Lord's medical wagon,
moaning in pain, while Lord inspects his shoulder and
Sheridan observes.

LORD
(pokes)
Ah no.
(prods)
Oh no.

Lord looks at Sheridan, winks.

SHERIDAN
 (catching on)
 Is it what I think it is?

LORD
 I believe so, Captain.

Patton's terrified.

PATTON
 What is it...? What --

LORD
 We're gonna have to amputate.

Patton wails. Tries to pull away from Lord as Lord puts Patton's shoulders between his hands.

PATTON
 It can't be that bad! Please --

Lord makes a quick, strong move -- POP.

LORD
 It isn't. Dislocated shoulder.
 You'll be better in a couple weeks.

Patton looks at his shoulder, dumbfounded.

PATTON
 But...

LORD
 I'll give you a bandage to keep it compressed.

Sheridan walks over to Lord's medical wagon.

PATTON
 I'm gonna be alright?

LORD
 Are you sure you're meant to be a soldier, Patton?

Sheridan opens the flap -- looks in, freezes --

Lord realizes what's happening --

LORD (CONT'D)
 Captain!

Sheridan pulls back the flap to reveal MOVING ROBE, lying in a restless sleep. Patton's eyes go wide.

Sheridan whips on Lord.

SHERIDAN
What were you thinking?

LORD
Please... don't tell...

Moving Robe COUGHS. She's conscious.

SHERIDAN
Go get Dorman.

LORD
Captain, I beg --

Sheridan silences him with a look. Lord runs off, head down.

EXT. PLAINS - SAME TIME

The camp is still aways off, but in sight. Harrow and Boston lead the group side by side. Harrow glances at Boston --

HARROW
We need these men, Boston. If Tom --

BOSTON CUSTER
(without looking at him)
I know.

Harrow's surprised.

BOSTON CUSTER (CONT'D)
Tom can get... overzealous.

HARROW
You'll have a word with the
Colonel?

BOSTON CUSTER
Yes. But this isn't a favor to you.
It's what best for the unit.

Harrow nods. Whatever gets him the result.

EXT. MEDICAL WAGON - LATER

Sheridan waits with Patton in front of the wagon.

PATTON
Are you going to turn him in?

SHERIDAN
I don't know yet.

Lord arrives with Dorman.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
(to Dorman)
This stays between us.

Dorman nods.

Sheridan climbs into the wagon, the other three close behind.

INT. MEDICAL WAGON - CONTINUOUS

Moving Robe is sitting up.

As Sheridan goes to sit near her, Moving Robe makes a lunge at him with a pair of ARTERY FORCEPS --

But she's slow and weak from injury --

Sheridan easily disarms her and shoves her back, pinning her down. She struggles.

SHERIDAN
Give Patton something to bind her arms.

Lord hands Patton a tourniquet cloth --

LORD
You're crushing her.

Sheridan ignores him, holding Moving Robe down while Patton ties her wrists. Sheridan passes the forceps to Lord with a warning look.

Moving Robe glares at the four men sitting around her.

SHERIDAN
Who is she?

Lord doesn't have an answer. Looks to Dorman.

DORMAN
What is your name?

MOVING ROBE
Thasina Mani.

Dorman raises an eyebrow.

DORMAN
This is Moving Robe.

Off Sheridan's face, he knows the name well --

EXT. CAMP - SAME TIME

The hunting party enters camp. SOLDIERS stand next to their tents, watching as the horses pass between them. They stare at the blood still drying on Porter.

TOM CUSTER
Boston and I will take them to the Colonel.

The other members of the unit disperse. The deserting soldiers look terrified. Harrow nods. The party moves off.

Harrow rides his horse to the stables. He dismounts. Schmidt is still on guard.

SCHMIDT
You alright, sir? You look a bit sick.

HARROW
Yes, thank you Schmidt. I'll --
I'll go see Lord.

Schmidt takes his horse and Harrow walks in the direction of Lord's wagon.

INT. MEDICAL WAGON - SAME TIME

The men watch Moving Robe. Dorman listens carefully.

She never stops glaring at them as she finishes her speech.

DORMAN
(translating)
As soon as she's healthy she will leave and rejoin the Sioux forces.

LORD
(quiet)
So we, what, kill her in cold blood?

SHERIDAN
What would you have us do?
(beat)
(MORE)

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
You brought us into this
predicament, Doctor. There's a
Sioux commander in your medical
wagon.

LORD
I'm a doctor. It is my duty to
preserve life.

SHERIDAN
Not hers. Ours.

LORD
I don't make that distinction.

MOVING ROBE
**You should've killed me when you
had the chance.**

Sheridan eyes Dorman.

SHERIDAN
What did she say?

Dorman shrugs.

DORMAN
"Fuck you."

Lord looks to Sheridan, hesitant.

LORD
What if -- what if we release her?

Silence. Sheridan stares Lord down.

Then, the wagon flap opens --

HARROW
Doc --

HARROW stands there, shocked by the sight.

For a second, we think he might be understanding, but when he
speaks, his tone has an undercurrent of rage --

HARROW (CONT'D)
Who is that?

LORD
Sir. This is my doing, they had
nothing to do with it --

HARROW
Does Colonel Custer know?

LORD
No, and I beg you to consider --

HARROW
He must be told immediately.

SHERIDAN
(jumping in)
You can't tell him.

HARROW
(furious)
He is our *commanding officer!* Why
are you protecting her?

SHERIDAN
I'm not. I'm protecting him.

He points at Lord.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
If you tell Colonel Custer, you're
signing his death warrant.

He's right and Harrow knows it. A beat, and then Harrow
abruptly leaves the wagon --

LORD
(scared)
No...

Sheridan quickly follows Harrow.

EXT. MEDICAL WAGON - CONTINUOUS

SHERIDAN
Will.

Sheridan jogs to catch up. Harrow doesn't slow down.

HARROW
What the hell is happening? Our own
doctor...

He trails off. They walk side by side. Sheridan can tell
there's something more. Presses --

SHERIDAN
What happened?

Beat.

HARROW

Four men, Michael. This morning, four men chose to desert rather than follow our command. That's never happened to the Seventh.

SHERIDAN

(tentatively)

Things are falling apart because the Colonel isn't listening to anyone else.

Harrow looks at his friend. He doesn't argue.

HARROW

Maybe.

SHERIDAN

If he finds out about that Sioux he'll have Lord hanged for treason.

They've reached Harrow's tent.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

It's true, Will. You know it is.

(beat)

You can't tell him.

After what seems like forever --

HARROW

I won't.

SHERIDAN

Thank you --

HARROW

But Lord needs to kill her. She's dangerous.

Sheridan sighs.

HARROW (CONT'D)

What do you think will happen if she escapes?

A moment between them.

HARROW (CONT'D)

She'll lead the Sioux back to us. They'll attack.

Sheridan nods, understanding.

SHERIDAN
I'll handle it.
(then)
Thank you.

Harrow enters his tent, and Sheridan turns to head back to the medical wagon.

INT. MEDICAL WAGON - LATER

Sheridan enters the wagon. Lord, Patton, and Dorman all look to him.

SHERIDAN
He's not going to say anything.

Looks of relief. Dorman quickly exits.

LORD
Thank you so much, captain --

SHERIDAN
But he's ordered you to kill her.

A long beat.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
There was no other way out.

Lord swallows hard.

LORD
I -- I can't do that. Please...

Sheridan regards him, thinking. Then --

SHERIDAN
Okay.
(beat)
I'll take care of it.

Lord looks up at him, grateful.

LORD
Thank you.

SHERIDAN
You don't have to be here.

Lord glances at Moving Robe one last time. Then leaves.

Sheridan and Patton look down at Moving Robe. Patton looks to Sheridan.

PATTON
...Are we really doing this?

Sheridan looks to Patton. Then back down at Moving Robe. Off Sheridan, thinking --

EXT. HARROW'S TENT - NEXT DAY

Harrow takes a shower using a bucket of water, scrubbing himself vigorously with a sponge.

The grime and sweat wash off, and the scars on Harrow's chest become visible. Crinkled skin where an arrow pierced, a stark white line of skin where a blade slashed.

A man who's dedicated the better part of his life to war.

EXT. CAMP - THAT NIGHT

Campfire. All the men together around the pit.

Porter approaches, wanting to be back with them. Everyone goes silent. Uncomfortable beat. And then Schmidt pats his hand on the log next to him. Porter walks over. Sits down.

Everyone goes back to their conversations.

EXT. MEDICAL WAGON - DAY AFTER

Lord administers treatment on a SOLDIER.

He walks over to his wagon. Pulls open the flap to grab some supplies. Sees the spot where Moving Robe once laid.

He stares at it sadly before returning to the soldier.

EXT. COLONEL CUSTER'S TENT - ANOTHER DAY

Colonel Custer speaks to Boston and Tom, while Sheridan watches them from a distance. Apprehensive. Like he can sense something is coming.

INT. HARROW'S TENT - LATER THAT WEEK

Harrow sits at his desk. A piece of paper before him. He pauses, as if building resolve.

Then he writes --

Dearest Anna, we are fast approaching your expected delivery date and I'm growing more fearful that I will not be back in time...

EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

Soldiers around the campfire. Hunched over their dinner soup bowls. Everyone eats quietly, exhausted.

Harrow sits off to the side, among the men but not mentally present. He plays with his EMBROIDERED KNIFE.

SCHMIDT (O.S.)
Look at this.

Patton, Porter, and Younghawk are gathered around Schmidt. He has a wood board with a TEN CENT PIECE on it. Trying to cheer everybody up.

SCHMIDT (CONT'D)
I call it "Die Hexe und der
Zauberer." Whoever grabs it first,
gets it.

Porter tries to pluck it off quickly, it turns out it's GLUED to the board, and he flops to the ground from the pushback. Schmidt smiles. Harrow looks over.

SCHMIDT (CONT'D)
"Sword in the stone!" It's my new
plan of how I'm going to propose to
my girl. Instead of a ten cent
piece, I glue the ring to the
board. When she tries to take it...

Porter chuckles, clapping him on the shoulder. Younghawk forces a smile. Patton nods, his mind elsewhere.

PORTR
Good luck, Schmidt.

SCHMIDT
(winks at him)
I'll win her over yet!

As the privates sit back down around the fire, Sheridan walks in. Sits next to Harrow. Hands him a cigar. He notices Harrow's knife.

SHERIDAN
You still have that old thing?

HARROW
Of course. It was my father's.
Soon, it will be my son's.

He puts the heirloom back in its scabbard on his belt. The two of them smoke quietly for a beat.

HARROW (CONT'D)
Is everything alright?

Sheridan doesn't answer for a moment. Looks like he wants to say something... but doesn't.

SHERIDAN
Yeah.

HARROW
Okay.

Harrow exhales. Looks at the fire. Then hands the cigar back to Sheridan.

We pan up to the STARS. Not many out. It's dark tonight.

INT. TENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Patton and Schmidt duck under the flap and enter the tent they share. Schmidt claps Patton on the shoulder.

SCHMIDT
You okay? You seem off.

PATTON
Just tired. Haven't been able to sleep lately.

They get ready for bed, taking off their uniforms. Schmidt lights his OPIUM PIPE. Offers it to Patton.

PATTON (CONT'D)
No thanks.

SCHMIDT
Suit yourself.

Schmidt takes a hit.

SCHMIDT (CONT'D)
Take me, Hypnos.

He lies on his cot. Takes another hit. Then inhales deeply, puts his pipe down, and closes his eyes.

Patton lies awake.

EXT. 7TH ENCAMPMENT - MIDNIGHT

We see the whole encampment, completely asleep but for a couple WATCHMEN nodding off by torches.

We come in on ONE GUARD, strolling over to a tree. He undoes his fly when -- movement from out on the plains. He peers into the night, unsure of what he's looking for, when --

An ARROW comes out of the darkness and THUNKS into his heart, killing him instantly. He drops.

We stay on his lifeless body and hear the rustle of many feet moving past him.

INT. TENT, 7TH ENCAMPMENT - SAME TIME

The men are asleep. Close on Patton, finally about to drift off. When suddenly --

A WHOOPING CRY. Patton jolts back up.

The sound of FIRE. The sound of ARROWS flying. The sound of STEEL. GUNSHOTS.

The entrance flap moves slightly --

Patton grabs the RIFLE next to him.

It opens and a SIOUX WARRIOR bursts in, armed with a TOMAHAWK axe --

He sees Patton still in his cot and runs at him, HOWLING --

Patton yells, fires off a SHOT that misses --

The Sioux warrior HACKS at him with the axe, but Patton blocks it with the body of the rifle, it nicks his arm anyway, drawing blood --

He pushes the warrior back and rolls away --

The warrior runs at him again, seeing Patton on his heels --

But Patton flips the bayonet out just in time, IMPALING the warrior, who falls to the ground.

A BATTLE carries on outside. Patton is about to join it, but realizes he's leaving Schmidt.

Patton rushes over to Schmidt, who's still asleep --

PATTON
Schmidt!

He slaps him across the face, but Schmidt remains unconscious, completely knocked out from the opium.

PATTON (CONT'D)
SCHMIDT!

He shakes him again, but nothing. A YELL from outside. Patton clenches his jaw --

He takes his rifle and runs out --

EXT. PATTON'S TENT - CONTINUOUS

There are a few tents burning, and soldiers dash around, trying to organize. It's a disaster.

Sheridan dashes by with a group --

SHERIDAN
Patton, with us!

Patton hurries to join them. He and Sheridan exchange a look and they sprint off into the night --

EXT. ELSEWHERE, 7TH ENCAMPMENT - SAME TIME

Harrow is in the middle of a skirmish with a group of SIOUX WARRIORS. A FEW SOLDIERS with him.

Out of the corner of his eye -- the glint of a spear. He turns to see --

MOVING ROBE. She's pulling her spear from the chest of a CAPTAIN. Lord's bandages still around her midriff.

Harrow pauses. Unsure of what he's seeing. Then ANOTHER SIOUX SWINGS at him. Harrow PARRIES and STABS, killing the Sioux quickly.

When he turns back, Moving Robe is gone.

EXT. CAMP - LATER

The Sioux raid is over. The men are in disarray, trying to sort through the dead and wounded.

Lord tends to several SOLDIERS simultaneously. Sheridan and another SOLDIER prop up a damaged tent. A FEW WEARY PRIVATES carry a DEAD BODY to a freshly dug mass grave.

In the midst of the destruction, we find Harrow. Storming through camp. Looking for --

HARROW
Lord!

Lord turns, confused.

LORD
Over here, Harrow.

Harrow marches up to him.

HARROW
I need a word.

LORD
Not now. These men need my help --

HARROW
NOW.

Harrow's look ends further protest. Lord stands. Follows Harrow. Sheridan sees them leave.

Harrow leads Lord out of eyesight from the rest of the men. Turns a corner around a tent.

Lord's right behind Harrow when all of a sudden Harrow spins around and GRABS HIM.

HARROW (CONT'D)
You let her go, didn't you.

His voice is deadly.

LORD
What?

Lord's visibly confused.

HARROW
The Sioux woman. I saw her. I ordered you to kill her and you let her go.

LORD
I didn't let her go! I swear. I think --

SHERIDAN (O.S.)
It was me.

Harrow and Lord turn. Sheridan followed them. Harrow puts Lord down.

Lord looks between the two men. Scurries away.

HARROW
(betrayed)
How could you do such a thing?

SHERIDAN
The men are hanging by a thread.
They're ready to turn against him.
They needed a push.

HARROW
(quiet, furious)
Men are dead because of you. Wives lost husbands. Children lost fathers -- all so you could... start a mutiny?!

SHERIDAN
No. So that we could save everyone else.
(beat)
You know what happens if we follow him to Sitting Bull. Won't be a single one of us left to make it home. I'm preventing that.

HARROW
By killing our men.

SHERIDAN
If this unit was infallible, we would have been ready for that attack.

Harrow's seeing red.

THUMP. Cold cocks Sheridan. Sheridan falls to the ground.

Harrow drops on top of him, RAINING blows. Sheridan refuses to defend himself -- he just keeps taking the hits. One after the other.

By the time Harrow rolls off of Sheridan, exhausted, Sheridan has been beat to a pulp.

Harrow stands. Looks down at Sheridan. And then leaves.

Off Sheridan, lying with the pain --

EXT. CAMP - PRE-DAWN

Patton wanders back to his tent, exhausted. Blood on his face. The slash on his arm still open, but he clearly can't feel it.

There's a commotion near the center of camp. Patton passes by, sees Tom Custer roaring with anger. Taking his rage out on some poor SENTRYES.

Patton moves on to find --

Lord, still shaken, bent over a WOUNDED SOLDIER leaned up against a metal stake. The wounded soldier's leg is purple.

LORD
-- poison in the arrow, it will
spread and you will die unless I
amputate --

WOUNDED SOLDIER
(whimpering)
This is one of your jokes, right
doc --

Lord takes a tenacula out of his kit, clamps down on the man's leg. Then Lord *actually* amputates his leg with a capital saw right there and then. The wounded soldier HOWLS.

Patton shuts his eyes and looks away, keeps walking.

He reaches his tent some moments later, relieved and almost surprised to have made it. He enters the tent, his nose crinkling at a putrid smell --

INT. PATTON'S TENT - CONTINUOUS

Patton enters to find --

Schmidt. Throat slit. Blood soaking his cot.

Patton starts to hyperventilate, his eyes well up. He slowly falls to his knees.

PATTON
Schmidt...

His lower jaw quivers. He can't hold it back.

He starts to sob.

Then he becomes angry at himself. His fist clenches. He pounds the ground. Then pounds it again. And again.

Until he's completely worn out.

He collapses.

EXT. THE 7TH ENCAMPMENT - NEXT MORNING

We sweep over the tents of the 7th in daylight.

Some of them are charred from the fire attacks. There's a line of MEN near the medical wagon. Soldiers walking around are weary and depressed. The mood is dour.

We finally reach Colonel Custer's tent...

INT. COLONEL CUSTER'S TENT - SAME TIME

All of the leadership is gathered around the war table. Colonel Custer sits at the head. Everyone else (Harrow, Sheridan, all of the Custers, OTHER OFFICERS) stands.

Sheridan is bruised, bearing scars and welts from earlier, but he doesn't stand out. Many of the other officers have injuries from the ambush.

The mood is grim. Harrow is running down a list of their losses --

HARROW

-- Our pork supply is almost completely gone and two of our potato storages were burned to the ground. We were short anyway, now we probably have three days worth of food left.

Heads are buried in hands. Colonel Custer listens impassively. We see Sheridan in the very back. Watching. Waiting.

COLONEL CUSTER

The men?

Harrow shakes his head and looks at a list.

HARROW

We lost Boggs, Yarbrough,
Dougherty, Smart, Springer --

COLONEL CUSTER
Enough. How *many*?

A beat.

HARROW
Thirty two, Colonel. Twenty nine soldiers, one of Vinatieri's, a cook, and a stable boy.

One of the Captains speaks up --

CAPTAIN
Sir, we've never suffered losses like this. We're no longer equipped to --

Tom Custer silences him with a look. The Captain cowers, retreats.

But Sheridan isn't afraid.

He steps forward and stares down Tom Custer.

SHERIDAN
How many more men? How many more battles?
(turns to Colonel Custer)
Sir, we have no supplies. Morale is in a pit. If we don't turn back now... who knows how much damage the next attack could do?

Everyone in the room is nodding along to Sheridan's point.

Then, as Custer considers this --

COLONEL CUSTER
(very slowly)
It's time for us to head home...

SHERIDAN
Yes.

The room holds a collective breath, for a second it appears that Sheridan has gotten through to Colonel Custer, until --

HARROW
No. We can't turn tail and let Sitting Bull declare victory after one setback. We can't end our campaign like that.

Sheridan stands there. Shocked.

SHERIDAN
The campaign is finished --

HARROW
We can't leave our men unavenged.
We won't.
(Sheridan tries to speak)
You don't understand. You couldn't
possibly. You're not really one of
us.

Sheridan has no response. Reeling. The room is silent.

Sheridan tries to appeal --

SHERIDAN
Be reasonable, Will. It is
foolhardy to continue given the
present conditions! The men, the
food supplies, the morale --

HARROW
(cutting him off again)
We'll have food. I'll lead a
buffalo hunt myself. Sir?

He looks to Colonel Custer for affirmation. The Colonel gives it to him with a nod, impressed. Harrow has erased Custer's doubt about the mission.

Sheridan looks at Harrow in disbelief. His most powerful ally. Gone.

COLONEL CUSTER
(renewed vigor, turning to
Boston)
Boston, that ambush party is
wounded, bleeding, and in retreat.
Chances are good they're leaving an
obvious trail right now. While
Harrow restocks our food, take a
scouting party and don't come back
until you *find me Sitting Bull.*

Sheridan starts to leave, furious.

COLONEL CUSTER (CONT'D)
Sheridan.

Sheridan stops.

COLONEL CUSTER (CONT'D)
You'll go with your friend on the
hunt.

Sheridan walks out without responding.

The room is palpably tense. Then --

COLONEL CUSTER (CONT'D)
What are you waiting for?

The tent empties.

EXT. COLONEL CUSTER'S TENT - SAME TIME

We follow Sheridan as he storms away from Colonel Custer's tent. He spots Patton. Runs up to him.

SHERIDAN
Patton. I don't know what happened
in there. We lost Harrow. We have
to --

PATTON
There is no we.

Sheridan's taken aback.

PATTON (CONT'D)
Not anymore.

SHERIDAN
I thought it would be worth it.

PATTON
It wasn't.

Sheridan looks like he's been slapped.

Harrow, Boston Custer, and the rest of the officers come out of the tent. Patton rushes up to Harrow --

PATTON (CONT'D)
Sir. I have a request.

Harrow nods but keeps walking. Patton follows him.

PATTON (CONT'D)
We're going after them, aren't we?
I want to come. I'm tired of being
a trumpeter, I'm bad at it anyway
and I want to be a real soldier.

He's got a new determination, a fierceness to him.

PATTON (CONT'D)
Let me prove --

HARROW

You can go.

PATTON

I -- really?

HARROW

(calls back to Boston)

Take Patton with you.

Boston Custer, talking with some other officers, shrugs.

BOSTON CUSTER

Be ready to ride at the hour.

He turns back.

PATTON

Thank you, Sergeant Major.

HARROW

Be careful.

Harrow watches Patton run off. Patton's enthusiasm momentarily lifting Harrow's spirits... until he sees Sheridan watching.

HARROW (CONT'D)

(an order)

Ready the horses, Captain.

Sheridan shakes his head and walks away.

EXT. PLAINS - DAY

We sweep over a hunting party of a DOZEN MEN on horseback, led by Sheridan and Harrow. The men are slumped, the horses move slowly. They've been riding a while.

Harrow moves through the party, he pats one man on the shoulder, jokes with another. Morale boosting.

Sheridan rides ahead, alone. Slowly getting farther and farther from the unit. Harrow notices.

HARROW

Captain Sheridan.

No response. Sheridan starts riding faster.

HARROW (CONT'D)

(yelling now)

Captain!

Now Sheridan's pushing his horse. Fully sprinting away. The men look at him, tense -- *is he deserting?*

HARROW (CONT'D)
(sotto)
Fuck.
(to the men)
With me. After him.

Harrow starts to gallop after Sheridan. The men follow. Chasing him down.

Harrow's gaining on him.

HARROW (CONT'D)
Michael! Stop.

Nothing. Sheridan continues his sprint --

HARROW (CONT'D)
I won't ask you again...

Harrow's almost caught Sheridan. His hand goes to the pistol on his side, when he hears a LOW RUMBLE in the distance.

Finally Sheridan calls back --

SHERIDAN
(pointing)
Buffalo.

EXT. PLAINS - DAY

A HERD OF BUFFALO. Some run, some walk.

A GUNSHOT rings out -- a buffalo collapses to the ground, blood blossoming out of his hide.

The buffalo begin a STAMPEDE --

As the hunting party descends on them from a nearby hill --

They chase down the buffalo expertly, corralling them and firing at will.

After they've taken six, Sheridan stops --

SHERIDAN
We have enough.

HARROW
We're to kill as many as we can.

SHERIDAN

We'll never be able to carry back
more than what we already have.

HARROW

Colonel's orders. The Sioux rely on
these beasts for food as much as we
do.

Sheridan looks sick.

HARROW (CONT'D)

(shouts to the party)

As many as you can!

The men keep chasing and continue to fire on the retreating
buffalo. It's a massacre.

EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE PLAINS - DAY

The scouting party (Boston Custer, Younghawk, Patton, OTHER
SOLDIERS) is at the edge of a forest.

Younghawk is off his horse, leading it, following a trail
only his sharp eyes can see.

He bends down, and we can suddenly see what he sees:

SMALL SPECKS OF BLOOD. The trail they've been following.
Younghawk looks off. Scans the treeline and the plains.

He glances back at Boston, who's in a foul mood.

BOSTON CUSTER

What is it?

Younghawk gestures in two directions.

YOUNGHAWK

Trail goes both ways.

BOSTON CUSTER

Pick one.

Younghawk doesn't know what to do. He looks for support from
others in the scouting party, but everyone looks away. Except
for Patton. Their eyes meet.

Younghawk looks back down for a moment. Then slowly lifts his
arm and points in one direction.

Boston rides past Younghawk, who doesn't look happy. Younghawk climbs back onto his horse. Patton comes up to him, impressed.

PATTON
How did you figure it out?

YOUNGHAWK
I didn't.

EXT. PLAINS - LATER THAT DAY

Harrow's hunting party lumbers back towards camp. Every horse has sacks on both sides, loaded with cut-up meat and bones.

Everyone looks completely exhausted. Sheridan and Harrow at the head of the party. After riding for a while --

HARROW
I actually thought you were running off.

Sheridan looks at him.

HARROW (CONT'D)
I was worried I was going to have to explain to the General why I shot his brother.

A moment. Sheridan rides away from him without responding.

EXT. CAMP - DUSK

The men WHISTLE as Harrow's party enter camp and their comrades come out. People start to CHEER as they see the food. It's the first sign of joy in a while.

SOLDIERS start helping unload the horses.

Harrow looks on at the men with a smile, when --

SHERIDAN
Nothing tastes sweeter than a dead man's last meal.

Sheridan trots his horse past Harrow. Harrow's smile now faded.

This doesn't feel like a victory anymore.

EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

MEN cook meat on makeshift spits over fires. There's a general air of energy. Men are starting to line up for the finished meat. Little pockets of laughter in the line.

Harrow watches from the edge.

COLONEL CUSTER (O.S.)
You did it.

Colonel Custer walks up and stands next to Harrow. Harrow turns and looks at him.

HARROW
(as greeting)
Sir.

They watch the men. As they do --

COLONEL CUSTER
I must admit. There was a moment...
I doubted myself.

He trails off.

COLONEL CUSTER (CONT'D)
But you brought me back.

He puts a hand on Harrow's shoulder.

COLONEL CUSTER (CONT'D)
You've always been my rock, Harrow.

HARROW
Thank you, sir.

Colonel Custer nods and walks away. Harrow watches him go, then turns back to the campfires and the men -- a conflicted look upon his face.

We go CLOSE on a CAMPFIRE and seamlessly cut to:

EXT. CAMPFIRE, PLAINS - NIGHT

The flames of another, smaller campfire. Gathered around this one is the scouting party. Younghawk roasts a small rabbit. Patton brings wood to feed the fire.

Boston stares into the flames, upset.

PATTON
Smells good.

He smiles at Younghawk, who nods.

A silence.

Boston turns to Younghawk.

BOSTON CUSTER
We rode all day and found nothing.

Younghawk meets his gaze.

BOSTON CUSTER (CONT'D)
You never find nothing.

YOUNGHAWK
Could be the other way...

BOSTON CUSTER
Could be you *meant* to lead us the
wrong way.

Patton is caught between them.

Boston stands up, menacing.

Younghawk holds his ground.

YOUNGHAWK
I wouldn't.

BOSTON CUSTER
How do I know that?

Boston takes out his PISTOL. Everyone at the campfire tenses.
Even Younghawk looks scared.

Younghawk says nothing. Boston COCKS HIS GUN.

Suddenly Patton leaps up --

PATTON
Stop it.

Boston raises his eyebrow, surprised by the audacity of the
young private. Patton stands between Younghawk and Boston.

PATTON (CONT'D)
He's one of the Seventh, like any
of us.

Boston regards him.

BOSTON CUSTER
Us?
(viciously)
You're a trumpeter, Patton.

Patton just stands there. Then Boston puts his gun away. And goes off to his tent.

Patton exhales.

EXT. PLAINS - NIGHT

Boston Custer is asleep, snoring lightly.

Patton cleans up the plates and Younghawk is snuffing out the fire with dirt.

Younghawk comes over to Patton after he's done and starts to help. A silent moment of bonding.

Patton glances over to Younghawk. A pause, then --

PATTON
Why do you work for us? For the army?

Younghawk looks over at him.

YOUNGHAWK
How do you think this war is going to end? The Sioux will be gone.

Patton's silent. Embarrassed.

PATTON
I'm sorry.

YOUNGHAWK
They have no future. But I will.

Patton's uncomfortable.

YOUNGHAWK (CONT'D)
You think I'm a traitor to my people?

PATTON
No. I just... we don't treat you well.

Patton tilts his head over at the sleeping Boston Custer.

YOUNGHAWK
He doesn't bother me.

PATTON
Okay...

He trails off. Squints.

PATTON (CONT'D)
Is that -- I think that's smoke?

Younghawk turns to look.

It's faint, but there is a small grey cloud in the distance.

YOUNGHAWK
It is.

PATTON
Sitting Bull?

YOUNGHAWK
Maybe.

Younghawk goes over to Boston Custer. He shakes him awake. Boston arouses, angry.

BOSTON CUSTER
What? I swear to God, if --

YOUNGHAWK
Look.

He points off to the distance. Boston squints, sees the smoke. Off Boston, disbelieving --

EXT. PLAINS - SAME TIME

The scouting party races along the plains towards the smoke. The cloud now looks like it might block out the sky.

Patton's eyes are wide, scared even. It's bigger than he thought.

EXT. PLAINS - SAME TIME

The scouting party reaches a hill. The smoke cloud is directly above them now.

They hop off their horses and walk up towards the top of the hill.

A sense of foreboding on all of their faces, even Boston.

EXT. PLAINS - SAME TIME

The scouting party reaches the top of the hill, their horses stay behind while Patton, Boston Custer, and Younghawk crawl up to look over the ledge --

Where they see HUNDREDS of SIOUX TENTS. Smoke billowing from the multitude of campfires. As far as the eye can see.

There are thousands of Sioux here.

A deep fear comes over Boston.

BOSTON CUSTER
The rumors were true...

Close on Patton, his eyes wide. They found Sitting Bull's army.

EXT. COLONEL CUSTER'S TENT - EARLY MORNING

Looking out across the plains, a small plume of dust can be seen rising in the distance.

Tom Custer stands outside the Colonel's tent, looking at it. Walks into the tent. Comes out a moment later with the Colonel.

INT. HARROW'S TENT, MAIN CAMP - MINUTES LATER

Harrow is shaken awake by Tom Custer. His eyes snap open, he's sweating as if waking from a nightmare.

TOM CUSTER
Scouting party's back.

EXT. EDGE OF CAMP - MINUTES LATER

Boston leads the party back into camp. Harrow, Tom Custer, and Colonel Custer are waiting for them when they arrive.

Boston Custer dismounts. He and Colonel Custer hug. Then --

BOSTON CUSTER
(quietly)
We found them, George.

COLONEL CUSTER
Sitting Bull?

Boston nods.

BOSTON CUSTER
They're camped. Not on the march.
They're... waiting.

Colonel Custer grabs him. Excited.

COLONEL CUSTER
Good job. Harrow, Tom -- ready the
men to march.

Harrow and Tom salute and leave.

COLONEL CUSTER (CONT'D)
(to Boston)
How many men?

Boston looks to the others. Patton's quaking. Colonel Custer notices. He takes Boston by the shoulder and they walk off alone.

INT. COLONEL CUSTER'S TENT - LATER

Light shines in from the tent opening. Colonel Custer sits alone at his desk.

We're with him for a time as he puts the finishing touches on A LETTER.

When he's done, he holds it up. Glances over it for a moment, when Sheridan enters.

SHERIDAN
(wary)
You requested my presence, Colonel?

COLONEL CUSTER
I did.

He looks up. Stares Sheridan down.

COLONEL CUSTER (CONT'D)
Did you know I was there when Lee
surrendered to General Grant?
(then)
The way everyone looked at Grant in
that moment... you could tell he
was destined for greatness.
(MORE)

COLONEL CUSTER (CONT'D)
That he would be a man who would
live throughout history. That, in a
way, he would be immortal.

Sheridan doesn't engage. He just lets the Colonel speak.

COLONEL CUSTER (CONT'D)
We found Sitting Bull.

Sheridan stiffens.

COLONEL CUSTER (CONT'D)
He's camped on the banks of the
Little Bighorn. We're marching on
him within the hour. I'll have his
head by this time tomorrow.

SHERIDAN
...How many does he have?

Colonel Custer doesn't answer.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
How many?

COLONEL CUSTER
It doesn't matter.

SHERIDAN
It's an army isn't it? I knew --

COLONEL CUSTER
You won't be there.

Sheridan's shocked.

COLONEL CUSTER (CONT'D)
You'll be joining Major Reno fifty
miles south of here. I'm removing
you from my regiment, effective
immediately.

SHERIDAN
You don't have the authority. I was
appointed by my brother --

COLONEL CUSTER
I know.

Colonel Custer hands Sheridan the LETTER. Sheridan takes it.

COLONEL CUSTER (CONT'D)

That's for him. It details how you've been undermining my leadership from your first moments under my command, how you've systematically destroyed the company's morale, and how you've even caused men to desert.

SHERIDAN

You know that had nothing to do with me.

COLONEL CUSTER

We never had these problems before you arrived --

SHERIDAN

I arrived because you had these problems! You're leading these men to their deaths --

COLONEL CUSTER

You will leave this regiment *right now* or I will hang you for open mutiny.

SHERIDAN

Mutiny? This whole regiment is in mutiny!

(beat)

I know Phillip ordered you to return.

A slight smile curls around the Colonel's mouth.

COLONEL CUSTER

Really? Can you prove it?

Sheridan's silent.

COLONEL CUSTER (CONT'D)

Go pack up your tent.

Sheridan stands there, helpless. No recourse.

He turns and leaves.

EXT. HARROW'S TENT - MOMENTS LATER

The camp's still asleep for the most part, but Harrow's dunking his head in a bucket of water to wake up.

Sheridan approaches.

SHERIDAN
Will...

HARROW
What.

Sheridan walks up to Harrow like he's in a daze.

SHERIDAN
Colonel Custer reassigned me.

HARROW
And you want me to convince him to
let you stay --

SHERIDAN
No.

Harrow's taken aback.

HARROW
What then?

SHERIDAN
You need to come with me.

A beat. Harrow recovers --

HARROW
No.

SHERIDAN
This will cost you your life --

HARROW
Just go.

But Sheridan can't. He has to keep trying --

SHERIDAN
Think of your child. Doesn't he
deserve to know his father?

HARROW
You've lost the right to talk about
my son.

Sheridan shakes his head.

SHERIDAN
You cannot win this fight.

HARROW

Yes we can.

SHERIDAN

Will --

HARROW

We have the element of surprise. We have superior weaponry. We're better trained, better organized, and we've never lost a battle.

SHERIDAN

You've never faced an army.

HARROW

You know what the difference between the two of us is? You'd kill your own men to prove you're right. I'd die for mine.

Sheridan wells up, he can't help it. The two men stand in silence for a moment. Finally --

SHERIDAN

You have to stand up to him. For the men.

A glimmer in Harrow's eyes -- but he hardens.

HARROW

You know the most pathetic thing?
(beat)

I wanted to name him Michael.

Sheridan looks at Harrow one last time. Then walks off.

EXT. EDGE OF CAMP - MINUTES LATER

Sheridan is on his horse, pack bags strapped to its flanks. Riding out of camp.

The MEN watch as he rides through. Silent observers.

Sheridan sees Patton off to one side. They make eye contact. Sheridan stops beside him. Looks down.

SHERIDAN

Can I give you some advice, Patton?

Patton doesn't respond.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
Stick with the band.

PATTON
Shouldn't you get going?

He's resolute.

SHERIDAN
I'm sorry.

Then Sheridan giddyups his horse and starts south, in the direction of Reno's camp.

Patton watches him go. Once Sheridan starts to disappear in the distance, Patton turns around to prepare for the march.

He takes a few steps before spotting --

The entire Custer clan, clustered a ways off on the edge of camp, watching Sheridan leave.

EXT. PLAINS - LATER THAT MORNING

Camp is packed and stored behind them.

The whole regiment is lined up and ready to travel.

Harrow is finishing a final sweep when Tom Custer approaches, Boston hot on his heels --

BOSTON CUSTER
(to Tom)
-- You didn't see them. There were too many... we can't let this happen --

TOM CUSTER
(ignoring Boston)
Harrow, come on, we're leaving --

BOSTON CUSTER
Tom --

TOM CUSTER
(spins on him)
Don't you think I know we won't win?

Boston looks surprised.

BOSTON CUSTER

If you agree with me, then we have
to go to George. Maybe together we
can convince him --

TOM CUSTER

We can't convince him. He's George.
He wants his glory. And I want
mine.

(beat)

No place I'd rather die than next
to my brothers on the battlefield.

He grins, his eyes crazed. Boston shakes his head in
disbelief.

Tom turns to Harrow.

TOM CUSTER (CONT'D)

Let's go.

Harrow looks at Boston, thinks about saying something... but
doesn't.

EXT. BANKS OF THE LITTLE BIGHORN - LATER

The Seventh marches in formation. It's a sight to behold as
they arrive at the eastern banks of the Little Bighorn River.

Harrow directs the men to line up on the hill, and the band
to ready their instruments.

The band begins to play as Harrow dismounts his horse and
splashes water on his face in the shallows of the river.

As he does, Vinatieri approaches.

VINATIERI

We're at the end.

Vinatieri smiles sadly.

HARROW

Don't bet against the Seventh yet.

He starts walking away. Vinatieri calls after him --

VINATIERI

Sergeant Major.

(Harrow turns)

If you don't stop him, no one will.

Beat.

HARROW

Play double time today. We could
use some energy.

EXT. HILL, LITTLE BIGHORN RIVER - MINUTES LATER

The entirety of the Seventh Cavalry stands in formation on the hill. Vinatieri walks through his men, preparing them for the upcoming march.

VINATIERI

We'll be playing double time, boys!
Keep it tight, keep it chipper.

He stops in front of Patton, as he did in the opening scene. Patton's trumpet is down.

VINATIERI (CONT'D)

Everything all right?

Patton shakes his head.

PATTON

I want to fight.

VINATIERI

We all have our place in this, son.
Yours is here with me.

Patton nods reluctantly. Vinatieri steps to the head of the band. As he gets there, murmurs start, and he turns around to see --

Colonel Custer. On his horse. Trotting to the head of the regiment.

When Colonel Custer arrives at the front, he turns to face the men.

COLONEL CUSTER

History is written by the victors.

Harrow and Tom Custer stand in front of their columns. Listening.

COLONEL CUSTER (CONT'D)

All the remaining forces of the Lakota Sioux nation are across this river. I know it's been long, I know it's been hard, but victory today will mark the end of our legendary campaign.

The men grip their weapons. Ready for the fight.

COLONEL CUSTER (CONT'D)
 People will tell stories about this conquest. There will be a march in every city in the land. In Boston. In Chicago. In Washington. You left St. Louis as soldiers. You will return as heroes.

Harrow sees one of the MEN crying. The Colonel is getting to them. They're inspired.

COLONEL CUSTER (CONT'D)
 When we kill Sitting Bull, their resistance will be over. And you will be remembered as the men who served under George Armstrong Custer, in the Seventh cavalry, the greatest military force ever assembled!

Tom Custer lets out a hearty roar. The rest of the men join him. Harrow's chest puffs out.

COLONEL CUSTER (CONT'D)
 Vinatieri?

The old conductor raises his arm and the band starts to play.

COLONEL CUSTER (CONT'D)
 Garryowen!

THE MEN
 GARRYOWEN!

They march towards the water, and ford the river on horseback.

Once they're through the river, they pass around a hill and SITTING BULL'S ARMY COMES INTO FOCUS.

Harrow's breath catches at the sight --

There are so many you can't see the land beneath them.

Sheridan was right. They can't win this.

Harrow tries to remain calm, but it's now clear to him that this mission is suicide.

A great PANIC fills him. He looks around, finds BOSTON CUSTER, urges his horse towards him --

HARROW
Boston!

BOSTON CUSTER
Harrow.

HARROW
We have to stop this.

Boston looks resigned.

BOSTON CUSTER
(gently)
It's too late.

HARROW
I heard what you said to Tom --

BOSTON CUSTER
You can't choose your family.

He shrugs.

BOSTON CUSTER (CONT'D)
And I'm not abandoning mine.

There's no help to be found here.

Harrow sees Colonel Custer at the head of the troop, grits his teeth --

EXT. LITTLE BIGHORN RIVER - MINUTES LATER

The Colonel's giving orders from the front. Harrow rushes up to him --

HARROW
Colonel.

Custer looks at him, but doesn't see him. He's beyond. Claps Harrow on the shoulder.

COLONEL CUSTER
My rock. The man we need.
(beat)
What is it?

Harrow draws in a breath -- ready to say something -- but all that comes out...

HARROW
...We're ready sir.

COLONEL CUSTER
(glint in his eye)
That's what I wanted to hear.

Harrow trots over to his column, while the Custers take their positions. Suddenly, the ground begins to shake.

The SWARMING ARMY of Lakota Sioux charge their way. A sonic wall of BATTLE CRIES arrive.

Harrow looks to the Colonel, who shows no signs of the fear that their men are showing. He just raises his saber and --

COLONEL CUSTER (CONT'D)
Garryowen!

MEN
Garryowen!

And with that, they charge.

EXT. SUPPLY CARAVAN - SAME TIME

Autie Reed is alone, back with the supplies. As a civilian, he isn't allowed in battle.

He perks up when the sounds of the Sioux charge reach him from far away.

As he tries to listen to the battle, he's distracted by the sounds of someone entering a supply cart. He takes out his pistol.

AUTIE
Who's there?
(then, scared)
This camp is the property of the
Seventh cavalry of the United
States Army --

PORTER (O.S.)
Put down that gun before you hurt
yourself.

Porter emerges from behind some tents.

AUTIE
What are you doing here?

No response.

AUTIE (CONT'D)
...You're deserting. Again.

PORTER
I'm saving myself. There's a difference.

Autie levels his pistol at Porter.

AUTIE
You're a coward.

PORTER
(shaking his head)
I'm just the only person left with any sense in this whole unit.

AUTIE
You should be ashamed to call yourself a soldier.

PORTER
If you're so brave, why don't you go join your family.

A moment of silence. Sounds of the din can be heard in the distance.

PORTER (CONT'D)
That's your battle out there. Not mine.

Autie looks at him. Lowers the gun. Then sprints to the last remaining horses. Unties and mounts one.

We watch him gallop towards the fray from Porter's perspective. After Autie fades into the distance, Porter walks over to the horses and grabs one for himself.

Then takes off in the opposite direction as the battle.

Back east. Towards home.

EXT. ACROSS THE RIVER FROM THE BATTLE - MOMENTS LATER

The band continues to play, even though the regiment is out of earshot and the din of the charge is drowning out the music.

Vinatieri looks to Lord, stationed next to him, who nods.

VINATIERI
Alright men.

The music peters out.

VINATIERI (CONT'D)
 Instruments away, we'll need all
 hands on deck.

Patton jumps forward.

PATTON
 We're joining the fight?!

VINATIERI
 No.
 (gestures to Lord)
 We'll be medics for the wounded.
 Dr. Lord?

Lord gestures to his supply caravan.

LORD
 We'll need to set up operating
 tables and treatment tents. If you
 could all just lend a hand...

The musicians put down their instruments, and begin unloading materials.

Patton stares at the battle unfolding just across the river as he begins to help Lord and the others.

Meanwhile --

EXT. BATTLE - SAME TIME

Harrow leads his men in their charge. Seen from above, it looks like a small droplet of blue is about to be swallowed in the maw of some great beast.

The battle begins.

Harrow slashes a SIOUX FIGHTER in front of him. The fighter falls dead beside his horse. He surveys the battle in the midst of the chaos.

DORMAN
 Harrow!

Harrow spots Dorman about 10 feet away. Dorman is dragged off his horse by a team of FOUR SIOUX WARRIORS.

Harrow kicks his horse, and charges towards Dorman.

As the battle rages around them, Harrow reaches Dorman. Harrow swings wildly, injuring three of the Sioux. The last one retreats. Harrow helps to pull Dorman to his feet.

DORMAN (CONT'D)
We have to fall back. They've
nearly surrounded us.

Harrow spins, searching for Colonel Custer.

Harrow finally spots him about a hundred yards away, swinging at any Sioux within reach. Caught up in a bloodthirsty rage.

EXT. ACROSS THE RIVER - SAME TIME

Patton watches the battle and feels powerless as he sees the Sioux surround their men.

AUTIE (O.S.)
Where is my uncle?

Vinatieri and Lord look -- Autie Reed arriving from the east.

Lord points to the battle across the river.

Without a second's hesitation, Autie takes off towards the fight.

Patton's eyes go wide. Turns to Lord and Vinatieri.

PATTON
We have to go with him.

VINATIERI
We can't do that.

PATTON
(to the whole band)
They need every last one of us!

VINATIERI
We're not soldiers, Patton.

PATTON
But we can be today.

He takes out his saber, determined.

The band looks to him. Slowly, they all follow suit.

Lord and Vinatieri share a look of resignation. They both pick up rifles.

The men are ready. Patton looks to Vinatieri.

VINATIERI
 What are you looking at me for?
 Give the command.

Patton draws in a breath. Then yells --

PATTON
 GARRYOWEN!

He charges. The rest follow.

EXT. BATTLE - SAME TIME

Harrow rides quickly through the battle to Colonel Custer. Harrow reaches him as the Colonel DECAPITATES the warrior he's fighting.

HARROW
 We need to fall back across the river!

COLONEL CUSTER
 We stay.

Colonel Custer dispatches another Sioux with a stab through the chest. Wrenches his blade back out, and the man falls.

HARROW
 They're flanking us. We'll be surrounded in moments!

DORMAN (O.S.)
 We need help!

EXT. ELSEWHERE, BATTLE - SAME TIME

We move to where Dorman fights.

He's next to Younghawk, who has abandoned his dead horse and is fighting on foot. They're being overrun.

Dorman dismounts, and the two of them go back to back as about sixty SIOUX surround them --

THUNK.

A thrown tomahawk buries itself in Younghawk's skull.

The scout falls dead.

Dorman spins around. Tries to jump back on his horse, but one of the Sioux grabs his leg. He's pulled down and SLASHED from shoulder to crotch.

Blood sprays out of his exposed lung. He falls to the ground. Resting in a sitting position against Younghawk's dead horse.

His breaths are short and panting.

The Sioux aren't attacking him. They are letting him sit there. Dorman looks up as a powerfully-built, older chieftain approaches -- this is SITTING BULL.

Sitting Bull walks up to Dorman. Kneels down.

SITTING BULL
Like grasshoppers.

Sitting Bull gestures to one of his deputies, who brings a canteen. He gives it to Dorman who drinks deeply.

Dorman nods in thanks. Sitting Bull takes back the canteen. Stands. Looks down at Dorman --

Who's slumped over. Dead.

EXT. BATTLE - MOMENTS LATER

Back with Harrow, now --

VOICES
GARRYOWEN!

Harrow spins to see Patton, Autie, Lord and the band charging out of the river. The reinforcements provide a surprise boost as they crash into the Sioux lines.

A surge of momentum. Harrow turns to Colonel Custer --

HARROW
Sir! We have a chance! We have to retreat now!

COLONEL CUSTER
(yelling at the Sioux)
Give it up! There are not enough Indians in the world to defeat the Seventh!

The band fights alongside the remaining soldiers, but Harrow sees --

It's hopeless.

We see Vinatieri go down, speared on all sides, old and overmatched.

Patton is fighting valiantly, but nearly surrounded.

Autie Reed gets shot in the leg, falls off his horse.

Tom Custer sees this, and immediately charges over.

TOM CUSTER
AUTIE!

Tom gallops through the Sioux, SLASHING HIS SABER left and right. He's cut a path of fifteen men by the time he reaches his nephew --

But he's too late. Autie's already dead.

TOM CUSTER (CONT'D)
NOOOOOOO!

Tom lets loose a guttural scream. He's a sight to behold.

The Sioux fire arrows into Tom, but he doesn't fall, even as they pierce him through the shoulder, through his leg, and through his stomach...

With arrows protruding from him, Tom charges headfirst into the Sioux line.

He manages to get about ten feet before his horse is killed.

Even as it falls sideways, trapping his leg underneath its full dead weight, Tom continues to fight on the ground. Swinging at anything that gets close.

He kills still more Sioux before finally being disarmed.

He tries to use his bare hands, fighting 'til the last, but then he's stabbed. Over and over and over again.

EXT. ELSEWHERE, BATTLE - SAME TIME

Harrow and Colonel Custer are fighting next to each other. Harrow continues to plead --

HARROW
We've lost the battle! We have to retreat!

They hack through more men.

HARROW (CONT'D)
You have to give the order.

A moment. The Colonel turns to him. His resolve is absolute.

COLONEL CUSTER
I'll never give that order.

And he turns back to the fight.

Harrow is stunned for a moment. But then realizes --

There's only one way to save what's left of the men.

He CHARGES AT COLONEL CUSTER --

Takes out HIS KNIFE --

Lets out a PRIMAL ROAR --

And with a forceful STAB to the side, Harrow buries his knife INTO THE COLONEL.

Colonel Custer falls. Betrayal and shock on his face, and the Sioux descend on him.

Harrow turns, now in command --

HARROW
The Colonel has fallen! RETREAT!

Boston, fighting nearby, sees Colonel Custer's body.

BOSTON CUSTER
(echoing Harrow)
Retreat!

LORD/PATTON
Retreat!

HARROW
With me!

Harrow jumps on his horse and begins to ride towards the river. The surviving soldiers racing after him.

As they sprint, gallop, and fight their way out of the battle, Lord glances over his shoulder. Stops. Turns --

And we see Moving Robe among the Sioux, bearing down on him.

She cuts a path through the battle, finally reaching Lord. Lord looks at her, pleading, and she DECAPITATES HIM with a quick strike. Keeps moving without a second glance.

Boston and Harrow lead the remaining men. They're almost to the river.

BOSTON CUSTER
Go! I'll buy some time --

Harrow nods, forges across the river with the remnants of the unit. When he reaches the other side he turns back to see Boston, swarmed.

Boston takes a few shots before being cut down in seconds.

HARROW
(to the men)
Keep going! Retreat!

He looks to the river and sees --

Patton. Waist deep. Nearly across. But facing the fight.
Harrow's heart drops.

HARROW (CONT'D)
PATTON! KEEP GOING! YOU'RE ALMOST
ACROSS!

PATTON
(calling back)
I'm gonna die a soldier!

He faces the whole Sioux army. Three thousand strong surge across the Little Bighorn.

He fights bravely for a moment, before succumbing.

HARROW
NO!!!

Harrow looks around. Sees the rest of his men falling.

He looks east. Behind him, the open plains...

But he turns back to the battle.

There's no one left.

He watches the wave of Sioux racing towards him.

Then lets his saber drop.

It clatters to the ground.

He dismounts his horse and goes to his knees.

The Sioux reach him. Cut him down. No ceremony, no honor...

Just the last man to fall.

EXT. MAJOR RENO'S CAMP, FIFTY MILES SOUTH - SAME TIME

Without sound, we see Sheridan come racing into the camp. He charges straight up to MAJOR RENO. With frantic energy, we see Sheridan appeal, gesturing north. Reno shakes his head.

EXT. PLAINS - THAT NIGHT

Sheridan lies on his back. Staring up at the stars.

EXT. PLAINS - MORNING

Reno's men pack their tents under Sheridan's supervision.

EXT. PLAINS - NEXT FEW DAYS

Reno's men slowly plod north. Sheridan leads the caravan, a look of dread on his face. Afraid of what he might find.

EXT. "LAST STAND HILL", LITTLE BIG HORN RIVER - DAYS LATER

We slowly pan over the battlefield. It's stained red with blood. The landscape is so littered with dead bodies that the normally smooth rolling hills appear rocky and jagged.

Sheridan is the first to arrive. The entirety of Major Reno's regiment fanned out behind him.

There is hardly a patch of grass not covered by a mutilated corpse. But the Sioux are gone.

Sheridan steps over bodies, searching.

Finally he stops walking. He's found what he was looking for.

He sinks down next to the body of his friend.

SHERIDAN

Will.

From the distance we hear --

YOUNG PRIVATE (O.S.)
He's over here!

Sheridan looks across the river. A group of men gathered.

He gets up. Crosses the river. Finally reaches the throng.

He pushes through, the soldiers part for him. He gets to the center.

YOUNG PRIVATE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Captain Sheridan knew him! Give
them some space.

The men step back, allowing Sheridan a moment alone with --

Colonel Custer. In death, he looks like everyone else.
Scared. Vulnerable. Powerless.

Sheridan looks down. Something catches his eye.

HARROW'S KNIFE. Still stuck in Colonel Custer's side.
Sheridan sees it. Recognizes it. Tears fill his eyes.

He kneels down and stares at the knife...

Then discretely pulls it out, and pockets it.

Stands up. Straightens his back. And we --

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END