

Baltimore

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ONLY TWICE IN HISTORY HAS A CITY IN THE CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES BEEN ATTACKED BY A FOREIGN ENEMY.

THE SECOND TIME WAS SEPTEMBER 11, 2001.

THE FIRST WAS AUGUST 24, 1814.

THIS IS A TRUE STORY.

INT. HMS TONNANT CABINS - NIGHT

Close on a hand writing in block letters with a grease pencil. The words are GIBBERISH.

EWGHT ADS A3DG SGHJ77GFH SD FA00S.

We pull out to see the writer. It's a YOUNG BRITISH SAILOR, writing anxiously in his bunk, by candlelight.

A SNORING SAILOR stirs, and our YOUNG SAILOR freezes, then continues. He writes another line, quickly rolls his paper up.

INT. HMS TONNANT LOWER DECK - NIGHT

This is our CREDITS SEQUENCE. We follow behind as our Young Sailor walks down a corridor, his sea legs adjusting for the motion of the ship.

In front of him there is a MAN SWABBING THE DECK with a mop. Detail as the YOUNG SAILOR passes the rolled message to the MAN SWABBING, who accepts the hand-off without breaking his mopping motion or making eye contact.

The Man Swabbing looks around, unscrews the top of his mop. It's a COMPARTMENT, and he puts the rolled message inside it, screws it back on, and keeps mopping, and we hear the sound of the sea outside...

EXT. HMS TONNANT MAIN DECK - DAY

More CREDITS. Our Man Swabbing is now mopping the open deck of the H.M.S. Tonnant. Gulls swoop down with great expectations.

The Tonnant is a majestic three-masted British frigate out on open sea, and at the moment is being re-supplied by a smaller COMMERCIAL SUPPLY SHIP pulled up alongside it. On deck several sailors transfer foodstocks to the Tonnant, including carcasses of RECENTLY BUTCHERED PIGS, dripping blood. A BRITISH SAILOR uses a dead pig's snout as a puppet.

PIG VOICE

Blow boys blow! BLOW!

His small audience laugh -- this counts for entertainment after six months at sea -- while a CIVILIAN SAILOR from the supply ship mops up the black pig blood.

NOW our Man Swabbing bumps into the Civilian Sailor, and they both drop their mops. Two hands reach across each other to grab the other man's mop. They have SWITCHED MOPS.

EXT. BREEZY POINT, MD. - DAWN

The Civilian Sailor is underneath a dock, unscrewing the top of the SWITCHED MOP. He retrieves the rolled message from the compartment and hands it off to a waiting MAN, who climbs a rope ladder, mounts a waiting HORSE, putting the message in a LEATHER POUCH.

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. - EARLY MORNING

CREDITS continue as the Man on Horseback GALLOPS through the streets, the LEATHER POUCH containing the message strapped over his shoulder.

Welcome to Washington D.C. in the late summer of 1814, where the air is thick with possibility and stagnant Potomac heat. Hot as hell, thriving: the era of wigs and idealism and revolution is over. This new American city looks more like a Third World capital than the white marble mausoleum we'd recognize today. A grid of streets in a swamp trying to improve its lot with Greek Revival buildings among functional wooden ones. There's something of the Wild West about it.

We ride with our Man on Horseback down Pennsylvania Avenue, an artery of Lombardy poplars. DIPLOMATS with attache cases hurry down the street, WELL-DRESSED WOMEN lead their children by the hand, LABORERS sweat in the Chesapeake sun.

The Man on Horseback turns a corner. The newly completed TREASURY and LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, all marble and Corinthian columns, rise above the street. The U.S. CAPITOL BUILDING, its construction nearly finished, towers in the background.

INT. NAVAL OFFICES, WASHINGTON DC - DAY

Through a window, we see the Man on Horseback hurry down from his horse. The camera pans past two CRYPTOGRAPHERS hard at work, sweating and fanning themselves, and catches him entering through the door, handing the leather pouch to a MAN IN UNIFORM.

INT. NAVAL OFFICES, WASHINGTON DC - LATER

DETAIL: EWGaHT ADS A3DG SGHJ77GFH SD FA00S. The GIBBERISH we saw on the Tonnant.

A CRYPTOGRAPHER is expertly using a machine with multiple wooden wheels arranged on a central metal rod and he spins the wheels like a virtuoso tackling difficult Mozart. The machine is Jefferson's Cipher Wheel, a de-crypting device. The Cryptographer is transcribing the real message contained in the gibberish.

DETAIL: The words BRIGADE-- TONNANT -- AUGUST -- IMMINENT -- take shape in the message.

CUT TO:

The Cryptographer folds the transcription, seals it with RED WAX, stamps it with a sigil, and hands it off to a waiting Messenger.

INT. U.S. DEPARTMENT OF WAR - DAY

The red wax sealed message is in the hand of a NAVAL OFFICER. Who knocks at the door and enters the office of SECRETARY OF WAR ARMSTRONG, and we enter with him.

NAVAL OFFICER

Sir, we have an urgent message from the Pelham Spies.

ARMSTRONG (O.S.)

Put it here.

The Naval Officer puts the message on Armstrong's desk, and we pan up to see the man himself. JOHN ARMSTRONG: heavy-lidded, heavy-set, in his fifties, finishing an orange as he looks at a newspaper.

Now, an Undersecretary of War appears at the door.

UNDERSECRETARY

Mister Secretary, Cabinet meeting in ten minutes.

Armstrong gets up from his desk, placing the orange peel next to the message. He and the Undersecretary are halfway through the door when a CLERK CARRYING PAPERS, a high pile of documents, stops them.

CLERK CARRYING PAPERS

Sir, I have last month's commissary invoices from New Hampshire.

ARMSTRONG

On my desk, on my desk.

The CLERK CARRYING PAPERS, followed by another Clerk with even more papers, enters Armstrong's office. They put their stacks DIRECTLY ON TOP OF THE DECODED MESSAGE, hopelessly burying it, and we linger on the stacks.

END OF CREDITS SEQUENCE.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - DAY

A CARRIAGE pulls up to the President's House, recently nicknamed the White House, a grand Greek Revival mansion. Armstrong emerges and walks up the stairs.

TITLE: WASHINGTON D.C., AUGUST 8, 1814

We begin to hear a voice off screen.

SAM (O.S.)

I am agitated, Mr. Secretary. The greatest military power since Rome is ten miles off our shores.

INT. WHITE HOUSE CABINET ROOM - DAY

A Cabinet meeting in progress. Armstrong takes his seat among seven other seated men, and one who is standing and speaking. On a podium in the corner of the cabinet room is a gold sculpture, LAFAYETTE'S EAGLE, which watches over the proceedings. Thus far, we have seen only the speaker's back.

SAM

Fishermen along the Bay have been terrified for months, more so since the Norfolk fleet was locked in. They won't even venture out anymore. They're desperate.

The man speaking now pauses for emphasis. The reverse: he leans forward, puts his hands on the table, and we now see his face clearly. It is SAM SMITH, 56. Rugged and plain-speaking, a senator from Maryland. A Revolutionary War hero thirty years ago. His directness and candor are in marked contrast to the airs put on by the lifelong bureaucrats in the room.

SAM

The Chesapeake has become an English lake. We've allowed this.

GEORGE CAMPBELL, the Secretary of the Treasury, speaks up.

CAMPBELL

Senator, the temporary blockade of our ports is not news to this government. It's an intimidation technique the British have used before, and our policy of patience and restraint has always been effective, not least....

SAM

(interrupting)

And I would respond, Mister Secretary, that this time their tactics are too deliberate and too calculated. I think it's more than intimidation. I think they're planning something.

CAMPBELL

Planning what? Tea with the Queen?

SAM

Invasion.

A general grumble. DONALD FLEMING, an old turtle-like Secretary of Agriculture, speaks.

FLEMING

They're still chasing after the Monster in France, land invasion is not only impractical, it's--

Overlapping, with ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARD RUSH.

FLEMING

They know they don't stand a chance on our soil. They would have to be mad --

RUSH

The public already is already balking over the Macon tax.

SAM

In my experience, it's a mistake to assume your enemy will act as rationally as you would.

Discomfort in the room.

SAM

If they do attack, our militia isn't ready. They're under-trained and under-supplied. Appropriations hasn't provided for back-pay, the force is small--

CAMPBELL

Sir, are you questioning the ability of our men in uniform?

SAM

Mister Secretary, most of our men in uniform don't have uniforms. You yourself cut the money for those.

Campbell shifts in his seat.

SAM

If they attack, we'd be up against the army that defeated Napoleon. There's a reason they're called Wellington's Invincibles. There are three-hundred thousand reasons, dead on the battlefield.

ARMSTRONG

(to Sam)

Senator, do you have a pack of tarot cards the rest of us lack? Tell us where the British will mount this invasion.

Smith has been waiting for an opening. He nods, spreads out a map on the table.

SMITH

Sailors out of Baltimore have been attacking them at sea for months. They'd rather fight us here than at sea. We'd be the first target. I'll bet the bank.

The map is one of the CHESAPEAKE.

SMITH

Now my theory is, when they do land in the city, the natural place would be here, at North Point, and their ships can bombard us from the harbor --

GEORGE WINDER, a young-ish General, speaks.

WINDER

The harbor's not deep enough for warships. They couldn't get anywhere close.

MADISON (O.S.)

Senator Smith.

A quiet voice has spoken up, hushing the room. It is PRESIDENT MADISON, 62, small and delicate. He has been taking notes, and stops to speak.

MADISON

Do you have any evidence to support these "theories"?

Sam takes a deep breath, swallows.

SMITH

Not exactly, Mr. President. No.

Silence. Madison goes back to writing.

ARMSTRONG

Why don't you put your concerns in a report and we'll take them up at a future time.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - DAY

DR. DANIEL BANNISTER, 55, a jolly and avuncular D.C. bachelor, is waiting outside for his old friend Sam. Sam emerges, carrying his maps and notes.

Bannister starts walking with him through a ROSE GARDEN.

BANNISTER

How did it go?

SMITH

Barbarians are at the gate and they're too busy shuffling papers to take notice.

BANNISTER

So you dazzled them, as usual.

SMITH

The hounds of hell could bite Armstrong in the ass, and he'd want to see it in writing.

Sam has dropped his stack of papers.

SAM

Goddammit--

BANNISTER

Easy, Sam. Easy.

Sam bends to pick them up, Bannister helps.

SAM

I should go back and see Margaret tonight. I'm sorry. But go to the dinner without me.

BANNISTER

You'd leave me to face the Prussian ambassador alone?

They stand up.

SAM

He's never alone. There's always a new Fräulein at his elbow.

They start walking again. A beat. Sam looks at Bannister.

SAM

Well, out with it then.

BANNISTER

(innocently, unconvincing)
With what?

Sam stops and looks at Bannister. He can read Bannister's face. Bannister shrugs, comes clean.

BANNISTER

People are people. They get nervous in the examining room, so they chatter. One hears things.

SAM

What does one hear?

BANNISTER

That you're out on a limb on this one. No one thinks the Redcoats are coming, and no one wants to spend more money on an unpopular war.

SAM

The only popular war is a war that's over. Or one that hasn't begun.

BANNISTER

All I'm saying is, you're up for re-election in a year and you might give it some thought.

(a moment)

And you look like all hell. Get some rest tonight. Have you had any more of those episodes?

Sam doesn't answer.

BANNISTER
Make sure you eat something.

SAM
Are you my doctor or my mother?

Bannister breaks a rose off one of the bushes.

BANNISTER
Does the Ambassador ever bring an
extra Fräulein?

EXT. BELMONT - DUSK

BELMONT, Sam's family home. A well-appointed though not grand estate on the outskirts of Baltimore.

Sam rides down the path and stops in front of his house, a two-story neo-Classical building with a widow's walk, where he is met by a STABLE BOY, whom he greets.

JONESY, his twelve year-old retriever, meets him and the door. Sam scruffs Jonesy's neck and goes into the house. Jonesy follows him.

INT. BELMONT - DUSK

MARGARET SPEAR SMITH, 48, beautiful, intelligent, is sitting in the dining room with ledgers spread in front of her. Her cheerful disposition belies the underlying sadness of a woman who has buried more than one of her children. She is wearing spectacles, doing the family accounts.

She looks up when Sam walks in.

SAM
Late, late, I know, I know...

MARGARET
Your letter said you'd be here at five, which by your clock means seven, so dinner will be ready in ten minutes.

He kisses her, smiles.

SAM
Well then, I'm ten minutes early.

Margaret feels something tug at her dress.

MARGARET
(to Sam) Did you let him in? He's
covered in mud! (to Jonesy) Out,
Jonesy! Come on, both of you, wash
up!

Pre-lap the sound of clinking silverware.

INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

Sam and Margaret are eating.

MARGARET
How was the meeting with Madison?

SAM
Fine. Good. Nothing to tell,
really.

They eat in silence for a moment. Margaret doesn't know what
to say. She changes the subject.

MARGARET
I've been thinking it might be a
good idea to let Annie go.

SAM
I thought she was working out well.

MARGARET
We hardly have anything for her to
do here, I can do the wash and
vegetables myself. I like it, in
fact. Clears my mind.

Sam looks at her pointedly.

MARGARET
We can't afford her, Sam. I've been
doing the books.

Sam takes a deep breath.

MARGARET
Will the blockade go on much
longer? There's no money coming in.

SAM
We'll cut costs some other way. The
tea. We'll reduce the order by
half--

MARGARET

I've already done that. And the wine, and the butcher.

They eat in silence.

MARGARET

(a new thought)

Why don't we have an outing to Gold Hill on Saturday? The mountain air would do us good.

SAM

Saturday's the First Lady's ball in Washington. I can't imagine you've forgotten.

MARGARET

The invitation hasn't come.

SAM

Have you spoken with Paul? He's always losing things --

MARGARET

We're not invited, Sam.

Sam drops his fork. He's angry.

SAM

Whatever the Party's opinion of me, they've no right to insult you.

MARGARET

Who wants to see old Mrs. Fiske in her moldy dress again, anyway? They take her out of the closet every year, like the cutlery.

She can't make Sam smile, which is unusual.

MARGARET

Sam?

He looks up.

SAM

The Cabinet meeting was a disaster. I've lost their ear.

The concern is plain on Margaret's face, but she quickly recovers.

MARGARET

What you need is to get your thoughts out of Washington for a day. Take Jonesy out on the *Cormorant*. No work for a day. Go fishing.

EXT. BALTIMORE HARBOR - MORNING

The third-largest city in the U.S. A thriving maritime town, but at the moment the British naval blockade has brought much of the commerce to a standstill.

SAILORS are trying to keep their boats yar, scrubbing the decks, mending their sails. Stevedores and out-of-work sailors crowd the wharf, some of them already drunk.

People recognize Sam as he walks down the wharf, a satchel over his shoulder, followed by Jonesy. A DRUNKEN MAN shouts.

DRUNKEN MAN

Starving!

Sam turns.

DRUNKEN MAN

Your wars are starving us!

Sam keeps walking, angry eyes falling on him as he heads to his boat, a small, weathered but sturdy boat, the *Cormorant*.

CUT TO:

A WHITE SAIL in the wind.

EXT. BALTIMORE HARBOR - DAY

Sam's hand is on the rudder of his boat, in full sail, and Jonesy is tugging at a rope. It is a bright day, and Sam appears less burdened, at least for the moment. He lowers the sail and drops anchor, baits a hook.

TIME CUT:

The fishing line is hanging over the end of the boat, while Sam is leafing through papers in a stack of documents. He puts down the paper he's reading, rubs his eyes. Now, his fishing line jerks slightly.

SAM

(to Jonesy)

What's that? We've got a bite? Huh?

Sam puts the stack down in the boat, placing a ROCK on top as a paperweight. As he leans to investigate the fishing line, the boat tips slightly and a WAVE splashes Sam, Jonesy, and Sam's stack of papers.

Sam swallows his curse and reaches out to rescue his soggy documents. When he lifts the stack, there is one DRY SPOT, dead center, where the paperweight had been.

In the shape of the rock is a DRY SPOT whose edges circumscribe a diagram of a British ship, stamped with a Dept. of the Navy insignia.

DETAIL of the dry spot on the blueprint: a British ship of war with an oversized main mast, a small mizzen mast and shallow draft, notated with various measurements.

Sam looks at the drawing carefully. He leans in to look at the measurements of the ship's draft. He looks up and out at the water. He's just realized something.

We pull out to a wide shot of Sam in his boat on the bay, as we begin to hear a voice with a thick Massachusetts accent declaiming in a large room.

MASSACHUSETTS SENATOR (O.S.)

The forts at Detroit and Dearborn
defend Indian wasteland.

INT. FLOOR OF THE SENATE - MORNING

MASSACHUSETTS SENATOR

It's nothing but ice and savages,
and if the British want it, I say
let them have it, and good luck to
them!

Some chuckles, some groans of disapproval. We're in a session of the U.S. Senate, which, in style, more resembles the oratory and vocal give-and-take of the British Parliament than the dry C-SPAN monotony we're accustomed to in Congress.

INT. FOYER OUTSIDE THE SENATE FLOOR - MORNING

Sam stops at the door to the chamber and collects himself. He looks as if he's been awake all night. The Massachusetts Senator's speech can be heard echoing in the next room.

MASSACHUSETTS SENATOR (O.S.)

Families in Boston are suffering
because of this, and I say, Enough!

INT. FLOOR OF THE SENATE - MORNING

Through the large doors at the back, Sam enters the chamber, a resplendent room, richly carpeted and draped, girded by Ionic pillars that rise to support a double-arched dome.

MASSACHUSETTS SENATOR

I yield the floor.

The Massachusetts Senator grabs his sheaf of papers from the podium and returns to his seat.

SENATE PRESIDENT PRO TEM

(referring to his notes)

The Senator from ... Maryland has the floor. Senator Smith?

Murmuring in the room as Sam comes down the aisle, places his documents on the podium. Begins to speak.

SAM

You'll forgive me if I don't look my best today. I haven't been sleeping well this week. But, then, it seems to me that we all have been sleeping too easily. Too long. We've slept while the King's navy has grown stronger, more and more familiar with our shores.

A general murmur of impatience. Here he goes again.

SAM

The incursions on the Potomac and Patuxent weren't for sport. They've been watching us. Testing us. And while we've slept, their engineers have been hard at work.

Sam raises a piece of paper, the tea-stained ship diagram from the previous evening.

SAM

This ship is called a bomb ketch, a new vessel in the British fleet. It fires mortar rounds, not cannons -- much more accurate and more deadly. But that's not what worries me. What keeps me awake is this.

He points to the bottom of the diagram, where he has circled a detail.

SAM

The ship's draft. This boat can sail in eight and a half feet of water.

Groans, eye-rolling. A Virginia Senator heckles.

VIRGINIA SENATOR

Are we a senate or a naval yard?

Laughter. Sam continues speaking, unfazed.

SAM

I'm not an authority on much of anything, but I grew up on the waters around Baltimore and I know every inch of that harbor. The shoals aren't deep, but they're deep enough. With these boats, Wellington's Invincibles can sail right up to our doorstep. These ketches will clear the way for land invasion.

A murmur in the chamber as Sam looks up.

SAM

They're coming.

Heckling, derision. Sam puts down his papers and addresses the room.

SAM

We need to prepare, we need to raise a better standing army.

More shouting.

NEW YORK SENATOR

And where do you propose to deploy this army? As guards for your own back yard?!

SAM

If they take Baltimore, they won't stop at my back yard, Senator. New York is no safer.

KENTUCKY SENATOR

(turning to the chamber)

Falling skies, alarmism...!

Heckling. Smith is now raising his voice to be heard.

SMITH

The signs are clear if you bother
to read them!

A chorus of boos.

GEORGIA SENATOR

Does he read tea leaves as well?

NEW YORK SENATOR

Ghosts in the cupboard, Smith!

Laughter. Finally, an elderly SOUTH CAROLINA SENATOR stands,
with difficulty.

SOUTH CAROLINA SENATOR

Do you mean to tell this chamber,
and do you expect us to believe,
that the might of the British
empire is to be leveled against the
crab boats of Baltimore Harbor?

Snickers and laughter. Smash cut to:

EXT. CHESAPEAKE BAY - DAY

The might of the British Empire. The hulls of TWELVE COLOSSAL
FRIGATES sail toward us, their decks red with the coats of
soldiers. Cutters, sloops, and bomb ketches flank the
imposing ships of the line like attendants.

EXT. H.M.S. ALBION - DAY

We cut to a man leaning down to look through a SPYGLASS, and
realize that we have been sharing the POV of REAR ADMIRAL
GEORGE COCKBURN (pronounced COE-BURN), 38, the commander of
the British Navy in the Chesapeake. Eton-educated, as much at
home drinking port in a club as he is giving orders on deck.

LIEUTENANT MCGRATH, a tall, efficient officer, approaches
him, salutes.

MCGRATH

General Ross's forces have arrived,
Sir.

Cockburn raises the spyglass again.

COCKBURN

Go and get a bottle of the second-best wine.

CUT TO:

LATER

A ROWBOAT has pulled alongside the Albion, and several OFFICERS embark. They are led by ARMY MAJOR-GENERAL ROBERT ROSS, 36. Ross is a lifelong military man, formal, reserved. The perfect soldier. He approaches Cockburn and salutes.

ROSS

Admiral Cockburn.

Cockburn goes through the motions of saluting back.

COCKBURN

General.

They begin walking down the deck.

COCKBURN

How'd they treat you at Port Royal?
I hope you've brought rum, we're
running low.

ROSS

I don't partake, Admiral.

Cockburn stops. So this is Ross.

COCKBURN

First Bermuda sloop we see, we'll
liberate a case. Though the
quality's not so good.

ROSS

Isn't that a bit irregular?

COCKBURN

This isn't Drills Week at
Sandhurst, General. Nothing's by
the book on this continent, because
there isn't a book.

He begins casually walking down the deck with Ross again.

COCKBURN

I think you'll find all this dull
after your Pamplona days. But we
make our own fun here. We may yet
show your men a good time.

Ross stops.

ROSS

To be clear, Admiral. I'm here to carry out this campaign and get my men home safely. They'll see a good time when they're back at Southampton. We'll review the plans at eight bells?

Cockburn nods his head.

COCKBURN

(as Ross walks away)
Pity about the rum.

EXT. BELMONT - EVENING

A SERVANT BOY is lighting the LANTERNS on the front porch of the house. He hears a horse and turns his head. It's Sam on horseback.

INT. BELMONT - EVENING

Margaret intercepts Sam at the door of the house.

MARGARET

You weren't due back until tomorrow.

As Sam steps in, he sees that Margaret's face is serious.

SAM

What is it?

MARGARET

John is home.

Sam begins to hear the sound of VIOLIN PLAYING from a parlor room.

INT. PARLOR ROOM - EVENING

In a large, tastefully-decorated room, JOHN SPEAR SMITH, 26, handsome, slender, is playing a violin, a new BEETHOVEN SONATA. He sees his father enter, but doesn't acknowledge him. He keeps playing. Sam listens for a moment, then interjects.

SAM

You can't have grown tired of Paris already. What's the saying?
 "When a man is tired of Paris, he is tired of life." Or is that London? ... You didn't write.

John continues to play, not answering his father.

Sam thumbs the corner of the hundred-odd page sonata book on a music stand in front of John.

SAM

I guess I'd better get comfortable.

John stops suddenly, takes the violin from his chin.

JOHN

I was in the Upper Lounge in New York yesterday and a queer thing happened. When I entered the room, people began to whisper. The whole room, holding its collective breath and saying "There goes Smith's son."

Sam is silent.

JOHN

Have you read the papers today?
 You've become a joke, Father.

SAM

Did the ambassador give you leave?

JOHN

That's one way of putting it. I've been discharged.

It's dawning on Sam: this is the Party's retribution.

JOHN

Thanks to you. First your objections undid the Bank Bill, and now you're embarrassing the President with this delusional talk of invasion. You're playing right into the hands of the Federalists.

SAM

(angrily, more to himself
 than to John)
 (MORE)

SAM (cont'd)

I'll go and have a word at the State Department. I'm still on Foreign Affairs, the Senate has--

JOHN

The Senate? Are you deaf as well as blind? Father, every pageboy in the Senate knows you're not going to be re-nominated! Pinkney is already grooming your replacement. You've become a liability. You're drowning, and you're pulling me down with you.

Sam is silent. He opens his mouth to speak, but nothing comes out. There is a terrible silence. Then John begins to play his sonata again and Sam walks out of the parlor.

INT. SAM'S STUDY - NIGHT

A bottle of port on his desk, Sam is sitting by candlelight in his shirtsleeves. It is late, and the house is asleep.

Sam reaches in his desk drawer and takes out a SMALL OAK CASE, dusts it, opens it. Inside the case, a bronze medal and a letter.

He fingers the medal and looks at the letter.

Detail on letter: It is a LETTER OF COMMENDATION to Sam.

TO CL. SMITH, FOR EXTRAORDINARY COURAGE IN THE FACE OF GREAT ODDS. GOWANUS CREEK, 1777.

--GENERAL ISRAEL PUTNAM

--GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON

A long pause. Sam, with the careful movements of a man who is nearly drunk, folds the letter, replaces the medal, and closes the case. He reaches for a fresh sheet of paper from a drawer, dips his tortoise-shell pen in ink, and begins to write.

INT. BELMONT - MORNING

An empty kitchen. Sam comes down the main stairs, looks into the drawing room, then pokes his head into the kitchen.

SAM

Margaret?

Sam enters the kitchen. On the table sits an OPEN LOCKET. Sam picks it up.

DETAIL: the locket contains a miniature painting of a YOUNG MAN, about 15, who has Sam's hair and Margaret's eyes. Sam stands in the empty kitchen looking at it, and we begin to hear the sound of a spade digging. We are in the ...

EXT. FAMILY GRAVEYARD - MORNING

In the small graveyard on the family estate, Margaret is tending to a shrub, on her knees, wearing gardening gloves. Sam approaches her quietly, she sees him, and goes back to tending.

MARGARET

The azaleas are full this year.

Sam nods, doesn't say anything.

MARGARET

Had you forgotten?

SAM

No.

MARGARET

Three years.

Now Sam bends down on his knees, and Margaret stops gardening. They both look at the gravestone. It reads:

ARTHUR SPEAR SMITH. 1792 - 1811. BELOVED SON.

MARGARET

You know he hates this time of year. It's hard for John.

SAM

It's hard for all of us.

MARGARET

Paris took his mind off this. For a while at least.

She makes an effort to change the tone.

MARGARET

You're awake early.

SAM

I've written my letter of resignation.

(MORE)

SAM (cont'd)
I'm delivering it today. I won't
ask you to suffer the indignities
anymore.

Margaret turns and looks at him.

MARGARET
It's just politics, Sam. It's not
suffering.

SAM
Let them find someone they have
more confidence in, someone
younger. I'm too tired to fight a
battle I'm going to lose.

MARGARET
(softly)
Too tired or too proud?

Sam looks away. He's not sure himself. He stands and begins
to leave.

MARGARET
Sam?

He turns.

MARGARET
Nothing can bring Arthur back, but
John's here now. He's here now.

Sam hesitates a moment, then leaves. Margaret goes back to
gardening, her thoughts miles away.

EXT. BELMONT - CONTINUOUS

Sam gets on his horse, a ROAN MARE, looks back at Margaret.
He spurs the horse on, and rides down the path.

EXT. BENEDICT, MARYLAND - MORNING

A BOOT SINKS INTO THE SAND. A British boot on American soil.
The Redcoats have landed.

Quick glimpses of the hive of activity.

Soldiers disembark from 12 LANDING BARGES, each holding about
30 men.

The hoisting and lowering of CANNONS from larger ships onto
smaller ships' boats, using block and tackle.

A few HORSES neigh as they are pulled through surf to shore.
In the distance, shouts of SERGEANTS to ENLISTED MEN.
The British war machine is assembling.

CUT TO:

ROSS is holding the reins of his horse while the company
BLACKSMITH re-shoes it. The blacksmith hammers with great
force into the horse's hoof.

ROSS
(stroking the horse)
Shhhh, Ajax. Shhhhhhh.

COCKBURN, in a jaunty mood, rides up to Ross.

COCKBURN
Not a shot fired. They've sent no
welcome committee, I feel almost
insulted.

Another stroke of the hammer; Ross calms the horse again.

ROSS
We should go cautiously and brace
for a stand.

COCKBURN
In twenty-four hours, we'll be
standing on the steps of their
Capitol building. I'll bet my
boots.

Ross is unconvinced.

BLACKSMITH (O.S.)
Sir?

The Blacksmith nods at Ross. His horse is ready. Cockburn
turns his horse to depart.

COCKBURN
Better yet, Ross, I'll bet your
boots.

He spurs his horse.

CUT TO:

THE RIDGE ABOVE THE LANDING SITE

An 8-YEAR-OLD BOY carrying a CRAB TRAP in his hand, takes in the scene, wide-eyed. He drops the crab trap and RUNS back to raise the alarm.

EXT. PUBLIC HOUSE - DAY

A pub on the Baltimore/Washington road. Sam's ROAN MARE rests outside, tethered to a rail, drinking from a trough. A few other horses stand nearby.

INT. PUBLIC HOUSE - DAY

A PUB OWNER serves a PINT. There are two EMPTY PINTS in front of him.

Across the room, LEVERETT, a bearded man ten years Sam's junior, catches Sam's eye, approaches.

LEVERETT

Smith! What are you doing here?
They're going to eviscerate
LaSalle's bill on the Floor. I love
a good massacre! Ride down with me.

SAM

Not today, Leverett.

Leverett shrugs, gestures at the Bartender. We can tell from Sam's speech that he's been drinking.

LEVERETT

(to Sam)
Come, I'll buy you a pint. What are
we toasting?

Sam considers for a moment.

SAM

(as the Bartender serves)
To failure, Leverett.

Sam raises his glass to the room.

SAM

To regret. To waking up one day to
find that your son loathes you,
your career is over, and you
haven't a dollar in the bank. To
discovering that everything you've
touched in your life has turned to
shit. To knowing when you're
licked, and to giving up.

Leverett looks on, puzzled.

SAM
To that. Cheers.

Sam drinks, and drinks more.

CUT TO:

Detail of RIFLES coming off a rack. We are in...

EXT. BLADENSBURG, MARYLAND - DAY

Bladensburg, a town outside Washington D.C., in a state of alarm.

A CHURCH BELL rings out a warning.

MEN rush from their houses, some with RIFLES, or SPADES, PITCHFORKS, OLD MUSKETS, anything resembling a weapon. Some are dressed in militia uniforms, some in their own clothes. They are fumbling to muzzle-load their rifles.

INT. PUBLIC HOUSE - AFTERNOON

SAM has joined couple of DRUNKEN MEN, singing an English drinking song, *To Anacreon In Heaven*.

SAM AND DRUNKEN MEN
(sung)
The news through Olympus
immediately flew,
When old Thunder pretended to give
himself airs...

There is a sudden stir in the pub as a PANICKED MAN rushes in and spreads news from table to table.

PANICKED MAN
We're under attack! We are under
attack!

A WOMAN stands and covers her mouth.

INNKEEPER
What do you mean, attack?

PANICKED MAN
Brits are marching! They're headed
for the city!

A couple of the Drunken Men continue singing, taking up the lyrics "We're under attack," drunkenly working them into the song.

But Sam suddenly sobers up.

SAM

Where did they land? Have they
reached the harbor?

PANICKED MAN

Harbor? They're not in Baltimore.
It's the capital. They're marching
on Washington.

Sam stands abruptly and sways for a moment. He's having one of his VIOLENTLY DIZZY EPISODES, what Bannister was concerned about earlier, and he reaches to the table to steady himself.

SAM'S POV: The people in the room seem to SLOW and BLUR, and the sound in the room seems like it's coming from an echo chamber.

Then Sam draws a breath and the room returns to normal. Sam grabs the Panicked Man by the collar.

Then, to a GROOMSBOY, waiting at the door.

SAM

Saddle my horse.

EXT. BLADENSBURG WOODS - DAY

MILITIA MEN are advancing quick time through the woods.

They emerge, a ragged company, joining others, ascending a gentle slope, perhaps 400 TROOPS, irregular in appearance and deployment.

Confusing shouts of distant officers.

MILITIA CAPTAIN

Form your companies!

Detail of an UNSHAVEN MAN who swallows hard.

Detail of FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD soldier, who drops his flint, takes another.

Now, four BRITISH HORSEMEN ride over the crest of a hill. Their horses START, the horsemen try to control them. A long, tense moment as the militia and British stare each other down. Suddenly, a MILITIA CAPTAIN calls out...

MILITIA CAPTAIN

Fire!

Shots ring out and smoke billows from the guns, then spreads to briefly obscure the view. When it clears, TWO BRITISH HORSEMEN lie dead, their horses struggling to rise, and the two others are disappearing back over the crest of the hill.

A HUZZAH! from the American ranks, and a great release.

YOUNG MILITIA MAN

(to the man next to him)

Is that the best Old King George
has to offer?

The Young Militia Man and others now walk to the top of the ridge to inspect the damage. But they are stopped dead in their tracks.

The camera rises behind them and we see what they see:

A RED SEA. THOUSANDS of British troops in perfect formation
over the hill; CANNONS behind them; ROCKET TUBES; OFFICERS
galloping around them on horses: WELLINGTON'S INVINCIBLES.

The Young Militia Man and the others stand transfixed. A puff of smoke, and the scream of the first CONGREVE ROCKETS from the British ranks. They make a terrifying sound unlike anything these men have ever heard.

Then there is a volley of GUN and CANNON FIRE from the British ranks. Beside the Young Militia Man, a MILITIA FARMER is hit with a CANNON SHOT, severing his torso from his legs. The Young Militia Man is covered in gore, his face red with the warm blood of the Militia Farmer.

A new round of rockets screams overhead.

The Americans we've been watching turn and RUN.

INT./EXT. AROUND WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY

There is CHAOS in the city.

ON PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE

People are piling their belongings into wagons, running everywhere.

A LOST BOY, 4, stands crying, apparently separated from his family.

INSIDE BANNISTER'S HOUSE

Bannister slides various surgical instruments from a table into a black bag. He goes to a shelf and shoves stoppered vials and bottles into the bag. He uncorks one of the bottles, takes a deep draught, continues packing.

ON CONNECTICUT AVENUE

A MAID carries a CRATE that breaks, scattering dozens of pieces of SILVER FLATWARE into the mud. The Maid gathers the pieces desperately into her skirt.

The GEORGIA SENATOR we saw earlier hurries from his house with his wife and children, their arms full of belongings.

ON H STREET

An OLD WOMAN with a BIRD IN A CAGE.

Well dressed BUREAUCRATS running through the mud are nearly trampled by HORSES spooked by the alarm bells and commotion.

INSIDE THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE

A CLERK rolling a piece of parchment. We may catch the first words of the parchment, in enlarged cursive script: WHEN IN THE COURSE OF HUMAN EVENTS... The Clerk ties the parchment with a piece of twine, and tosses it into a LINEN SACK, where it joins dozens of other PARCHMENT ROLLS.

ON PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE

There is now a BOTTLENECK near the White House as scores of carriages, coaches, wagons, and people on foot try to leave the city at once. It is a free-for-all evacuation.

Bannister, who is being swept along with the crowd, notices the LOST BOY we saw earlier. The boy is holding on to a tree, nearly crushed by the tide of people. Bannister is swept past the BOY, then fights his way back and goes to the child, who is still crying. Bannister seems to be asking him a question, inaudible to us, but the boy doesn't respond. The doctor looks around with great concern -- no parents in sight. He takes the boy by the hand and the two of them disappear into the mob.

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. RESIDENTIAL STREET - AFTERNOON

And now it's quiet. A horse's hoof steps on strewn clothing and a broken dish in the street.

Title: August 24.

We pull out to see that the hoof belongs to the WHITE HORSE of GENERAL ROSS, who has now entered the city with two mounted officers riding alongside him. They are COCKBURN and COLONEL BROOKE, 35, a nervous Welshman. A LINE OF INFANTRY is behind them.

The street seems eerily quiet. Ross doesn't like it. He motions for the troops to stop.

BROOKE
What is it, sir?

Ross's POV as he looks from side to side at the three-story buildings.

A SHOT RINGS OUT in the silence.

An INFANTRYMAN grabs his shoulder. He's been hit. The troops raise their weapons: there is a SNIPER in one of the buildings. Ross points to a window in a house on his LEFT.

ROSS
(calmly)
There.

BROOKE
I'll go in, sir.

FOUR SOLDIERS, led by BROOKE with his pistol raised, kick down a door and go into the building where the shots originated.

INT. WASHINGTON HOUSE - AFTERNOON

The soldiers storm into the dark building and up the stairs where a WOMAN, who is fiftyish and black, a slave, is standing in front of a bedroom door, waving her arms.

WOMAN
There's no one here! There's no one here!

A Soldier pushes her aside with great force and bursts open the bedroom door. Brooke enters. A YOUNG MAN drops his rifle and stands at the window with his arms up.

Brooke fires his pistol at the Young Man point blank.

CUT TO:

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. RESIDENTIAL STREET - AFTERNOON

SOLDIERS pull the body of the YOUNG MAN out onto the street.

COCKBURN

There's your "stand," Ross. A boy
in a window with a turkey rifle.

BROOKE

It's all clear, sir.

ROSS

(to BROOKE)

Burn that house.

(then, on second thought)

Burn this block.

EXT. ROAD TO WASHINGTON - AFTERNOON

Sam's horse is at full gallop, approaching a bridge over the Patuxent River. Suddenly, as the horse's hoofs first strike wood, Sam pulls back hard on the reins. Where the Patuxent Bridge should be, there is only a blackened skeleton.

We pull out to a wider shot and see that the bridge has been burned, and that Sam's horse has nearly plunged into the water. Sam has pulled it back just in time.

He takes a deep breath, turns his horse around, and begins riding north.

INT./EXT. D.C. RESIDENTIAL STREET MONTAGE - AFTERNOON

INSIDE A HOUSE

SOLDIERS with bayonets drawn enter a hallway. A DOG barks.

OUTSIDE A RESIDENTIAL ROW

An ARTILLERYMAN lights the fuse of a Congreve rocket, and it screams from its rocket tube, setting the rooftops of the rowhouses ablaze.

ANOTHER HOUSE

British Soldiers enter a BEDROOM where an OLD MAN is confined to his bed. He begins to shout.

OLD MAN

*Ik ben een oude mens! Ik ben een
oude mens!*

The OLD MAN is dragged from his bed, out of the room. One of the Soldiers pours LINSEED OIL on the bed and LIGHTS IT ABLAZE.

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. RESIDENTIAL STREET

The ENTIRE BLOCK is now ABLAZE.

INT. FLOOR OF THE SENATE - DUSK

The Senate chamber we saw earlier is now empty and the doors at the rear swing open. The glint of BAYONETS and a company of BRITISH SOLDIERS and MARINES move into the Senate Chamber, holding torches that give each man an eerie, firelit glow. ADMIRAL COCKBURN is at their head, ROSS not far behind.

COCKBURN

(to ROSS)

For a country that boasts of its
simple democratic values, their
taste runs more toward Versailles.

The soldiers look up, momentarily impressed by the splendor of the room as they spread throughout it.

A grin spreads across Cockburn's face, and he steps up to the chair of the Senate President Pro Tem.

COCKBURN

(addressing the chamber)

Gentlemen. The motion before the
Senate is whether or not to torch
this building to high hell. All
those in favor say "Aye!"

A hearty chorus.

BRITISH SOLDIERS

AYE!!!!

COCKBURN

All those opposed, "Nay."

Silence. Cockburn raises his eyebrows in mock-surprise.

COCKBURN

The motion passes. Gentlemen?

Cockburn nods to a SOLDIER IN THE UPPER GALLERY. Who lights a TORCH, and goes to the draperies. He sets them ablaze, and the fire catches quickly.

The other soldiers begin to set fire to the papers, desks, anything that will burn. Cockburn leafs through some papers, tosses them into the fire.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP - NIGHT

On the other side of the Potomac, a makeshift CAMP and HOSPITAL have been set up. BANNISTER is bandaging a soldier's arm.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Sam is riding hard, exhausted, and comes upon the fires and torches of the refugee camp.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP - NIGHT

Sam stops and dismounts, nearly COLLAPSES on the ground.

YOUNG MAN

Are you ill, sir?

Sam shakes his head, regains his balance. Sam hears a familiar voice.

BANNISTER (O.S.)

Sam!

Bannister approaches him

BANNISTER

What are you doing here?

SAM

What's happened? What do you know?

CUT TO:

LATER

Sam and Bannister are sitting by a fire. The Lost Boy we saw earlier is sleeping nearby. Sam is drinking from a flask of water.

SAM

Where did we make our stand?

BANNISTER

It wasn't much of a stand. They're calling it the Bladensburg Races. The men just turned and ran.

(MORE)

BANNISTER (cont'd)
Shameful. You were right, Sam.
They've been planning this all
along.

SAM
But I was wrong about where. Of
course they'd attack Washington
before Baltimore. First the
symbolic target, then the strategic
one.

BANNISTER
The Redcoats marched into the city
unopposed.

CLOSE on Sam's eyes, with the campfire reflected in them.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. - NIGHT

Scenes of destruction around the city as Bannister's V.O.
continues.

An OLD MAN, a bottle in hand, stands alone in the middle of
the street in front of a line of BRITISH TROOPS. He won't
move. He is carried away by a two soldiers.

BANNISTER (V.O.)
The government's in shambles. The
cabinet is scattered, the defenses
are crippled.

The U.S. Capitol Building is burning in the background.
Outside a tavern, MAN WITH A RIFLE fires on a group of
British Soldiers then runs, but he is SHOT in his tracks by
an expert marksman Redcoat.

A LIBRARIAN is pleading with Soldiers, but they are ignoring
him and torching the LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

The hulls of three nearly-finished warships in the D.C. Naval
Yards are consumed in flames, and 12 U.S. SAILORS, taken
prisoner, are marched away from the docks under guard.

BANNISTER (V.O.)
The flames are so bright in the
city that it looks like day.

MONTAGE continues.

A hand lifts a wineglass. It is the hand of COCKBURN, who is raising a toast. The camera pans over to ROSS who, surprisingly, is also drinking.

BANNISTER (V.O.)

No one knows where the President is
or who's in charge.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

We pull out and watch the toast continue through a window and we realize that Ross and Cockburn are in the banquet room of the WHITE HOUSE. Other SOLDIERS are also seated around the table where, in the haste of evacuation, a meal has been left untouched.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

The ROSE GARDEN we visited with Sam and Bannister earlier is now on FIRE, the flowers falling off as the branches burn.

Soldiers carry out the last of the plunder, LAFAYETTE'S EAGLE, which we saw earlier in the Cabinet meeting. An Infantryman launches a torch into the window of the Cabinet Room, and a blaze ignites.

BANNISTER (V.O.)

They're firing rockets onto
rooftops. No idea how many dead.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP - NIGHT

Sam is silhouetted on a high bank of the river, looking toward the city. The glow of the fires in Washington lights up the night sky.

In the reverse, Sam thinks, watching the city burn, the orange glow reflected on his face.

He hears someone running, turns, looks toward the campfire. A TEARFUL WOMAN breaks away from a SOLDIER HOLDING A LANTERN and runs toward the Lost Boy, sleeping. The SOLDIER catches up and holds the lantern down toward the boy's face, illuminating him and the Tearful Woman, who has now been reunited with her son. Sam watches her cradle him fiercely and kiss him as the Soldier leads them away.

Now Sam reaches into his coat pocket and takes out his LETTER OF RESIGNATION. He looks down at it.

Sam walks over to the campfire. He tosses the letter into it.

The paper darkens and the flames eat away at it until it is no more than ashes.

EXT. VIRGINIA COUNTRYSIDE HOUSE - MORNING

Sam and Bannister gallop up to a colonial-era house and dismount. The two men hurry to the front door.

There is a SOLDIER STANDING GUARD at the door, who stops them from entering.

SAM
Is the Secretary of War staying
here?

SOLDIER
You can't go in, sir.

SAM
(to Bannister)
Wait for me here.

Sam brushes past the Soldier, who is startled and hurries after him. Sam looks to his left, sees the dining room, and enters.

The LADY OF THE HOUSE stands up, alarmed. There are several other people seated around the table, and at its head is WAR SECRETARY ARMSTRONG, eating bacon.

Armstrong's fork stops midway to his mouth.

SAM
(to Armstrong)
I want you to give me control of
the defense of Baltimore.

ARMSTRONG
Baltimore?

SAM
Baltimore's their next target.

Sam feels the tip of a bayonet at his back. Armstrong motions with his fork to the Soldier who has followed Sam to lower his gun, and he finishes his bite of bacon. Chewing.

ARMSTRONG
Baltimore is under General Winder's
jurisdiction. He's drawing up plans
as we speak.

SAM

Like he drew up plans for Washington? That was also his jurisdiction. Give me the commission.

ARMSTRONG

You're a private citizen.

SAM

I was an officer in the army of the Revolution.

Armstrong keeps eating. The family around the table are embarrassed. Armstrong finishes chewing, wipes his mouth with a napkin.

ARMSTRONG

Mr. Smith. Senator. We're aware of your record, we know you were a hero. That was a long time ago.

SAM

(quietly)

I know when it was, Armstrong. But if I have one more fight left in me, this is it. I won't see another city burned.

ARMSTRONG

Leave the business of war to men in uniform. Go home, Senator.

Sam rushes at Armstrong and grabs him by the collar.

SAM

Not until you give me the commission!

The SOLDIER STANDING GUARD leaps into action, pinning Sam's arms behind him and pulling him away toward the door.

ARMSTRONG

Take him out of here!

SAM

Armstrong--!

Sam is now resisting, and being forced from the room.

We hear the sound of Sam protesting and struggling in the hallway, then the sound of the front door. Armstrong smooths his collar and attempts to regain composure. He nods to the Lady of the House.

EXT. ROAD IN MARYLAND - DAY

REFUGEES from Washington, loaded down with their belongings, look up at us. They are OLD and YOUNG WOMEN, CHILDREN carrying dolls, MEN pulling carts. The kind of scene one more expects to see in Eastern Europe than in America, then or now.

It is the POV of Sam, on horseback.

He is riding with Bannister, their progress slowed by the MASS OF REFUGEES.

SAM

After Yorktown, I never thought we'd have to fight an enemy on this soil again. I can still see the masts of their ships retreating.

Sam looks down at an OLD MAN being given water by a GRANDSON, or maybe he's just a KIND STRANGER. Sam is distracted by it.

BANNISTER

Sam, what was your rank?

Sam looks back to Bannister.

SAM

You mean in the Revolution?

BANNISTER

No, in the horse races. Yes, when you retired, what was last your rank in the militia?

SAM

Major General.

BANNISTER

Major General?

Bannister thinks for a moment. When he resumes, there is a hint of mischief in his tone.

BANNISTER

Sam, if you were re-instated you would outrank Winder. You would run the show.

SAM

The President defers to Armstrong. He would never re-instate me.

BANNISTER

Of course not, old man. But the President has no say over the state militia. The Governor controls that, not the President.

Sam stops his horse, and Bannister follows suit.

BANNISTER

Now if the governor called you up, then, technically, your rank would carry over. You'd outrank them all. And you'd have authority to take control of the city's defense.

Sam thinks, and then he smiles.

SAM

You're not suggesting that I assume command on a technicality?

Bannister raises an eyebrow. Shrugs.

BANNISTER

Of course, I can't *imagine* why the Governor would do you such a favor.

He looks mock-innocently at Sam, who smiles.

CUT TO:

A HAND SIGNS A DOCUMENT. We are in the...

INT. GOVERNOR OF MARYLAND'S OFFICE - DAY

GOVERNOR (40s) has just signed an order to activate the militia.

GOVERNOR

So I trust this means you'll forget about that little business in Annapolis.

SAM

Governor, it is already forgotten.

Sam takes the signed document, begins to leave.

GOVERNOR

Sam.

He turns.

GOVERNOR

My boys wouldn't close their eyes last night. They're afraid their beds are going to be burned while they're sleeping.

Sam nods.

GOVERNOR

Don't let us down.

SAM

I don't intend to, Jack.

INT. BELMONT - DAY

Margaret is in the parlor room sewing while John, next to her, reads a Baltimore newspaper: INVASION -- WASHINGTON IN FLAMES.

She hears the gallop of a horse outside, rushes from her seat to the window. It's Sam. She catches her breath, and John joins her at the window.

MARGARET

Thank God.

John goes back to his seat, returns to his newspaper, but he is looking at the margins, not at the words.

INT. BELMONT, SAM'S BEDROOM - DAY

Sam is putting on his old military uniform shirt. Margaret hurries in, carrying a military coat.

MARGARET

I re-did it. This should fit better now.

Margaret holds the coat up against Sam.

SAM

There's already talk of surrendering.

MARGARET

Here, put it on.

Sam begins to put on the coat. Margaret speaks as she adjusts his coat in the mirror.

MARGARET

Johnny says it's suicide to oppose them if they march on the city.

SAM

Do you believe he's right?

Margaret finishes adjusting Sam's uniform, smiles. He looks good.

MARGARET

I don't know... There. Much better.

They both look in the mirror at the crisply attired Sam.

MARGARET

I do know that I'd take a hot iron to any Redcoat who tried to enter my house.

SAM

We'll have to keep them out of your house, then. For *their* sake.

MARGARET

Go on, you'll be late.

Sam kisses her and exits. In the mirror, Margaret watches him leave the room. She looks down, and thinks.

CONTINUOUS TO:

INT. BELMONT HALLWAY - DAY

Sam walks down the hall and sees JOHN, who has stepped from his bedroom at the same time, on his way down the stairs. John looks at his father in his military uniform. Neither speaks, and another window closes between them.

Sam heads down the stairs and John enters the bedroom, where his mother is replacing her sewing materials in their basket. He sits next to her.

JOHN

(quietly)

He looks ridiculous, mother. A dog wouldn't obey his commands, let alone an army.

MARGARET

He says he'll fight them. He says there's no choice.

Margaret is trying to return her sewing basket to a high shelf. John helps her do so. Then, a quiet moment.

JOHN
Martyrdom is just suicide dressed
up in pride.

EXT. STREET NEAR BALTIMORE COMMON - MORNING

Sam is heading toward the Common on foot when a young man comes up behind him and says his name.

ARMISTEAD
General Smith, sir!

Sam turns around and the young man salutes. It is George Armistead, 29, seems older. A fresh-faced though serious young soldier.

ARMISTEAD
Major Armistead, sir.

SAM
As in George Armistead?

ARMISTEAD
Yes, sir.

SAM
I knew you when you were in short
pants. What have you been doing
with yourself?

ARMISTEAD
I've been to West Point, sir.

That makes sense. Armistead looks and sounds like West Point.

ARMISTEAD
I'm on my way to the Common. The
whole city's abuzz.

SAM
Do you think they'll fight?

ARMISTEAD
I don't know, sir. But I know I
will.

SAM
Well. At least there'll be two of
us.

They turn the corner toward the common. In front of them is a MASS OF PEOPLE. Men and women, white and black, adults and children. All of Baltimore seems to be gathered.

The LEADERS of the Baltimore Committee on Vigilance and Safety are gathered on a platform, speaking to the crowd.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

In the event--

Shouting.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

In the event of attack, the recommendation of the Committee of Vigilance and Safety is to cooperate fully--

Members of the CROWD are shouting and heckling.

CROWD 1

Never!

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

...to cooperate fully with all demands and try to negotiate a peaceful surrender of the city.

CROWD 2

Aye!!!!

Sam approaches the platform and climbs the stairs. Armistead stands at the platform's edge. Sam gives a piece of paper, his COMMISSION from the Governor, to a Committee Member, who reads it. Meanwhile, the Chairman keeps speaking.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

The capitulation should be carried out in an orderly fashion, and we will need a--

The Committee Member taps the Chairman on the shoulder and whispers something to him, indicating the piece of paper.

Sam is now standing behind the Chairman, who ignores him.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

What we are trying to determine is how far and how long they--

SAM

Thirty miles.

The Chairman turns. A voice from behind and a moment of silence. Sam steps forward, surveys the crowd, face after expectant face.

SAM

They're no more than thirty miles
from where we stand.

The crowd is hushed. Now Sam takes center stage.

SAM

They took Washington without a
fight. They'll take time to re-
supply and re-group, but they
believe they've already won this
city too. That we're unprepared.
That we can't defend ourselves.
That we will seek terms and mercy.

A few nods, a few shaking heads.

SAM

But I don't think the British will
be merciful. Not to us. And if
Baltimore falls, the whole eastern
seaboard falls with us.

The faces of the crowd. Some dissenters.

SAM

This enemy is the wealthiest, best-
supplied, best-trained military the
world has ever known. They have
every possible advantage in their
pocket -- except one. They don't
live here. You live here.

The faces of the crowd, silent.

SAM

If we work night and day, all of
us, if we risk everything, I think
we have a chance -- not much of
one, maybe -- but a chance of
turning them back. And that's
enough.

No one moves. Sam waits for a dissenter, but none speaks. He
breaks a slight smile.

SAM

Let's get to work.

CUT TO:

An AMERICAN FLAG being lowered. A WHITE FLAG is raised.

EXT. HMS ALBION DECK - DAY

It is a POV from Admiral Cockburn's spyglass. He is standing on the deck when McGrath approaches.

MCGRATH
(looking toward the shore)
Should we fire on them, sir?

COCKBURN
Fire over them. They've already
surrendered.

MCGRATH
Aye aye, sir.

COCKBURN
We're going to market, McGrath. You
won't need your cash-purse.

EXT. ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA - DAY

The WHITE FLAG we just saw flies from a small building above from the wharf.

Title: Alexandria, Virginia. August 29

We are on a wharf where British ships have pulled into port and are resupplying, enforcing the heavy terms of surrender.

The MEN OF ALEXANDRIA have been made to load supplies onto British ships and onto their own ships that the British will tow away.

British soldiers with bayonets stand guard over them.

Cockburn and Ross are walking down the wharf, inspecting the progress. Furniture, sacks, supplies are being carried all around them.

COCKBURN
Send some men to find cordage.

MCGRATH
They've already shown us to a
warehouse full, sir.

COCKBURN

Have that one brought directly to
my quarters.

Cockburn quietly watches the chair's progress down the dock.

EXT. HAMPSTEAD HILL, BALTIMORE - DAY

A hill just beyond the city limits on the eastern side,
within view of the city. An ENCAMPMENT has been set up near
the hill, the most likely overland route to Baltimore from
the bay.

A GROUP OF MILITIA is being led in a drill by AARON CLAY, a
DRILL SERGEANT from the Army regulars.

CLAY

STEP TWO THREE FOUR... ABOUT FACE.
PRESENT ARM!

And so on. The MILITIA GROUP is awkward and out of practice.

Some are very old, some very young. Half of them have OLD
RIFLES, but half are going through the motions using
BROOMSTICKS or anything else that resembles a rifle.

AT THE EARTHWORKS NEARBY

A MAN WITH A WHEELBARROW dumps a load of earth on top of a
pile. He turns to go back to what looks like a construction
site, hundreds of people of all different ages, including
Armistead, are assembling BARRIERS and BULWARKS on the hill.
A few fathers with their young sons -- no more than boys.

Among the workers, giving directions and orders, is Sam. He
is muddied and sweaty.

Sam looks to a group of PEOPLE DIGGING WITH THEIR FINGERS. He
walks over to Armistead.

SAM

Why are those men digging with
their hands?

ARMISTEAD

There are no more shovels, sir.

SAM

We're out of shovels?

ARMISTEAD

Not only shovels. There's not enough powder, rifles, flints, shot, barrows, carts, nails... We need equipment, sir.

Armistead gestures to the far end of the camp.

SAM's POV: The GROUP OF MILITIA we saw earlier, drilling with their broomsticks.

SAM

Haven't we been supplied by the War Department?

ARMISTEAD

The War Department burned to the ground, sir. There's no communication and there's no money.

Close on Sam's face.

INT. FIELDING'S BANK - DAY

Sam bursts through the doors of a richly furnished bank room, all mahogany and bronze.

Sam is still in his soiled clothes from the earthworks -- he looks like a laborer. Bank business is tense but continuing in spite of the gathering storm.

He approaches a CLERK.

SAM

Where is Mr. Fielding?

CLERK

(eyeing Sam's clothes)
He's in a meeting.

SAM

Interrupt him. I need to see him now.

CLERK

Impossible. Mr. Fielding doesn't --

Doors to an INNER OFFICE open and out come three men: CHARLES FIELDING, 55, the bank president, dressed in a fine coat; and two BANKERS.

Sam goes to him. It takes Fielding a moment to register who he is.

FIELDING
Senator, what happened? Did you
fall from a horse?

The two Bankers begin to laugh but Sam cuts them off.

SAM
I need money, Fielding. I need
\$20,000 and I need it now.

FIELDING
(archly)
Has your credit improved?

SAM
It's for the city. We need shovels,
rifles, candles --

Fielding begins to move toward the door of the bank.

FIELDING
That's a government matter. We're a
private bank. That's not our
business.

SAM
It's everyone's business if they
take the city.

Fielding stops, addresses Sam formally.

FIELDING
Senator, we're having enough
trouble trying to protect our own
assets in all of this. We can't
take on the debt of the nation as
well.

SAM
There's no time, Fielding--

FIELDING
I'm sorry, Smith. Try Merchant's.
Maybe they can help you.

SAM
Fielding?! Fielding!

The front door shuts. Fielding has left.

EXT. ROAD FROM BELMONT - DAY

John is on a draft-horse, harnessed to a cart full of freshly-cut logs. He is heading back toward the house, when an open carriage comes around the bend and stops next to him. The carriage's driver, PAUL, stops and nods at John. Inside the carriage is Margaret.

MARGARET

I looked for you all morning. Where have you been?

JOHN

(gesturing at the cart)
We were nearly out of firewood.

MARGARET

I'm going to see your father. Will you come?

He shakes his head.

JOHN

Someone's got to look after the house. Or I suppose we could starve while he's off fighting his crusades.

Her expression immediately cools.

MARGARET

(sternly)
Enough.

JOHN

... but I suppose by now we should have learned to fend for ourselves. That we're just bit players in the saga of Samuel Smith, right? Duty and glory first, all else be damned.

Margaret collects herself, then speaks quietly, with resolve.

MARGARET

For four years, I've read your letters and listened to your outbursts and not said a word, but I won't listen any more. You never miss an opportunity to heap your scorn on him. These tantrums -- you're like a child. Arthur's death wasn't your father's fault.

JOHN

My father chose to stay in
Washington debating a bill about
postal roads while his son was
dying.

MARGARET

He was needed in Washington.

JOHN

He was needed *here*.

Margaret looks away.

MARGARET

No one knew how bad it was, and
even if he'd been here, what could
he have done?

JOHN

We'll never know, will we, because
he *wasn't* here?

She holds John's gaze and speaks loudly to her carriage
driver.

MARGARET

I'm ready, Paul.

Margaret turns from him as her carriage departs.

EXT. BALTIMORE - DAY

A group of 12 CHILDREN collect STONES from a field on the
outskirts of the city. They are loading the stones into a
BARROW.

Past the children rides a carriage. Inside it is Margaret.

EXT. HAMPSTEAD HILL ENCAMPMENT - DAY

Sam is pouring a pail of water over himself, trying to clean
up. Margaret stands, silently watching him. He doesn't
notice her until she speaks.

MARGARET

Is this where I apply to be in the
fire brigades?

Sam turns around.

SAM

Well, that depends. Have you brought a bucket?

They begin walking together.

SAM

What are you doing here?

MARGARET

I haven't seen you in three days. I thought I'd pay a visit.

Margaret looks around at the bustle of activity.

MARGARET

How does it go, all this?

SAM

The men are drilling better every day. Spirits are high, equipment is low. There's not a cent from the War Department and no one will loan it.

MARGARET

Have you been to see Charles Fielding?

SAM

He says no, as does Ellery, Bartlett, and the Richardson brothers. I guess they're betting their money on a different horse winning this one. Probably ironing their Union Jack flags.

Margaret thinks for a moment.

MARGARET

You know, it's curious, but the executor of the Fielding fortune isn't actually Charles Fielding. It's his mother.

SAM

Old Eleanor Fielding?

Margaret nods. A SERGEANT approaches Sam.

SERGEANT

Sir, the convoy is ready to visit Fort McHenry.

SAM

I have to go.

He kisses her on the cheek and leaves. We hold on Margaret.

EXT. ROAD TO FORT MCHENRY - DAY

Sam, Armistead, and THREE SOLDIERS ON HORSEBACK ride down a road on the opposite side of the harbor from Baltimore. They emerge from the woods into a clearing, and stop and stare ahead.

They have arrived at FORT MCHENRY. A stone bastion with walls that are 15 feet high, angled into a star pattern, overlooking the funnel from Chesapeake Bay into Baltimore Harbor. A SMALL AMERICAN FLAG flies over the fort.

As the men head inside, a LOUNGING SENTRY jumps to attention and SALUTES.

EXT. INSIDE FORT MCHENRY - DAY

MAJOR TOM ORTH, 42, unshaven and his shirt tucked hurriedly into his trousers, is giving a tour of the facilities to Sam and Armistead. They come upon a CANNON facing out to sea through the ramparts, a 24 POUNDER.

ARMISTEAD

What's the firing angle to reach the Lazaretto?

ORTH

Oh, about-- Thirty-five degrees. That's to say forty... five?

ARMISTEAD

(incredulous)
Forty-five degrees?

Armistead shakes his head.

ARMISTEAD

And what's your lateral to the east?

ORTH

That'd be a lot, lot of lateral, sir.

Armistead looks at Smith: this guy is a clown.

SAM

Are they maintained? When was the last time these cannons were fired?

ORTH

That I'd have to check for you, sir. But they're good weapons, these.

Orth smacks the cannon and a SEAGULL squawks and emerges from the barrel, flies off.

SAM

Major Orth, would you excuse us?

Orth smiles and awkwardly walks off into the background.

SAM

Congratulations, Armistead.

ARMISTEAD

What for, sir?

SAM

You've just assumed command of Fort McHenry.

In the background, a LOCAL WOMAN HANGS HER LAUNDRY on the battlements, and ORTH, embarrassed, unsuccessfully tries to shoo her away.

INT. FIELDING MANSION, BALTIMORE - DAY

ELEANOR FIELDING, 80 and still sharp, is sitting in her parlor being read a novel by her MAID. A BUTLER opens the parlor door.

BUTLER

Mrs. Smith to see you, Madame.

Eleanor looks up to see Margaret, dressed well and smiling, holding a cloth satchel wrapped with blue string.

ELEANOR

Margaret, what a nice surprise. And you've brought one of your pies!

MARGARET

I know you like blackberries.

Eleanor reaches her hands out for the pie, and Margaret approaches.

ELEANOR
What brings you here, my dear?

MARGARET
As a matter of fact, Mrs. Fielding,
I need your advice on a small
financial matter.

CUT TO:

An armful of GLEAMING NEW RIFLES hoisted from a wooden box
packed with straw.

EXT. HAMPSTEAD HILL ENCAMPMENT - DAY

We pull out to reveal piles of SUPPLIES, pine boxes full of
CANDLES, SHOVELS, CARTRIDGES.

Sam comes out of a tent with an OFFICER, both looking at a
MAP, and he finds this scene of Christmas-come-early for the
militia.

CAPTAIN FINLEY, 30, is walking by Sam.

FINLEY
Well done, Sir.

SAM
Where did all this come from?

FINLEY
The loan from Fielding's Bank came
through, sir.

Sam smiles, shakes his head. Margaret.

ARTILLERY OFFICER
Sir!

Sam turns. An Artillery Officer hands Sam a piece of paper.

ARTILLERY OFFICER
We've had a message from the War
Department.

SAM
I thought they'd forgotten us.

ARTILLERY OFFICER
No, sir. They've directed us to
relinquish all of the 18 pounders
to the 68th in Philadelphia.

SAM

But those cannons are needed at McHenry. Those are our cannons, aren't they?

ARTILLERY OFFICER

I'm afraid they're War Department property, sir.

Sam looks at the 12 CANNONS lined up at the encampment. Each weighs two tons, and they sit on WHEELED CARRIAGES. Sam thinks for a moment.

SAM

Who do those carriages belong to?

ARTILLERY OFFICER

Carriages, sir?

SAM

The wheels the cannons are sitting on, who owns those?

ARTILLERY OFFICER

Those are ours, sir.

SAM

Well, I'm ordering our wheels to be brought to Fort McHenry. Whatever's sitting on top of them is not our concern, is it?

Sam has a twinkle in his eye. Artillery Officer smiles.

ARTILLERY OFFICER

No it isn't, sir.

INT. HMS ALBION OFFICER'S MESS - DAY

Ross is sitting reading a newspaper with the headline CAPITAL BURNS when Cockburn enters.

COCKBURN

Ah, you've got the papers. Don't read your own reviews, Ross. It's unlucky.

ROSS

The *Boston Gazette* is calling me a "savage monster."

COCKBURN

"Savage monster"? Why do you get
"savage monster"?

ROSS

Don't worry, they call you Atilla.

Cockburn raises his eyebrows, trying his new name on for size. McGrath hurries in.

MCGRATH

Admiral. General. I think you
should come on deck.

EXT. HMS ALBION - DAY

ROSS and COCKBURN are standing at attention at the end of an HONOR GUARD on the deck for the arrival of LORD ADMIRAL NORRIS.

CANNONS are fired in salute, the admiral's banner is hoisted, and the MEN OF THE ALBION stand at attention.

NORRIS ascends the deck, climbing from the starboard-side ladder, followed by his MANSERVANT. Norris is 62, cold and calculating. His Manservant hands him a brass-nobbed walking stick. His presence is both powerful and sinister.

As Norris embarks, Cockburn steals a glance at Ross.

Ross and Cockburn salute Norris.

NORRIS

At ease.

Norris begins walking down an INSPECTION LINE OF TROOPS, Cockburn and Ross following behind.

COCKBURN

Lord Admiral Norris, this is a
surprise. To what do we owe this
pleasure?

NORRIS

I am sent by personal order of the
Prime Minister to oversee the
campaign. Whitehall is
underwhelmed by your fireworks
displays.

COCKBURN

With all due respect, Your Grace, we thought the Washington campaign went as well as expected. Indeed, better.

NORRIS

Kindling some buildings in a swamp doesn't win a war, Admiral. What is your plan?

Norris stops walking and looks at Ross and Cockburn.

ROSS

We have drawn up a more substantial assault on Baltimore, Your Grace, and made plans for a full occupation of the city. And in my opinion--

NORRIS

I didn't ask your opinion, General. I asked your plan. For Charleston and Providence and Boston and New Orleans and New York.

COCKBURN

Are those His Majesty's wishes?

Norris freezes Cockburn with a cold look.

NORRIS

We're dealing with a new kind of enemy in these people. They don't fight like men. They spread terror on merchant ships then flee like cowards. These aren't soldiers, Admiral. They're criminals. Their cities are nests of snakes and we will root them out where they live.

Ross looks at Cockburn.

NORRIS

We will take the war to *them* before they bring it to our ships again. By Christmas we'll have taken their entire eastern coast.

Norris looks down to the main deck, where the TWO DESERTERS we saw earlier are being led in shackles toward the mizzen mast.

NORRIS
Who are those men?

COCKBURN
Nothing serious, Your Grace. A couple of blues got drunk and stole some horses at Alexandria. They're going to be flogged.

NORRIS
Stole horses? Deserters.

COCKBURN
They were captured immediately, Your Grace.

Norris looks down at the two men, then at Cockburn.

NORRIS
Hang them.

EXT. HAMPSTEAD HILL ENCAMPMENT - DAY

CLAY
READY YOURSELVES!

A DOZEN MEN line up, readying their rifles. More stand behind them. It is TARGET PRACTICE for a group of MILITIA.

CLAY
AIM YOUR WEAPONS!

The TARGETS: MELONS and SQUASHES of various sizes set on wooden boxes.

CLAY
FIRE!

A cloud of smoke as the DOZEN RIFLES DISCHARGE at the same time.

In the reverse, we see that the targets have not been disturbed. Nearly every shot has missed.

CLAY
That's not good enough! Unless your first shot finds its target, you will not have a second!

He approaches PUTNAM, a bookish 25-year-old wearing spectacles.

CLAY
You, soldier, what's your name?!

PUTNAM
Putnam, sir.

CLAY
Putnam, destroy that target.

Putnam reloads, with difficulty, and holds the rifle awkwardly against his chest.

CLAY
Brace with your shoulder. Haven't you ever held a rifle before?

PUTNAM
No, sir!

CLAY
What is it that you do, Putnam?

PUTNAM
I work down at the customs house, sir. I count things.

CLAY
Good God. Release your breath as you pull the trigger, Putnam. FIRE!

Putnam fires, but hits the ground ten feet in front of the target. Clay shakes his head, moves on down the line.

CLAY
Company reload!

The men reload.

CLAY
FIRE!

Clay is now standing behind a 17-YEAR-OLD MILITIA RECRUIT. Blond, tanned, confident. He's from the backwoods of Maryland, speaks with a rural accent.

The 17 year-old has hit his target, and Clay takes notice.

CLAY
All right, buckshot.

So we'll call him BUCKSHOT. Now Clay looks at a target beyond the one Buckshot has just hit.

CLAY

You see that target over there?
That's 50 yards. Can you hit it?

BUCKSHOT

Yes, sir.

And he quickly loads and lifts his rifle, fires, and the
MELON EXPLODES. Clay points at a further melon.

CLAY

The next one. Hundred yards.

Buckshot loads, lifts, and shoots. We hear the sound of the
bullet smashing the rind, the impact on the flesh of the
fruit.

And now we look at the 100 yard MELON, but it's INTACT.

Then the camera pans to the right, and throws focus to the
REMNANTS OF A WATERMELON AT 150 YARDS. Buckshot has skipped
the 100 YARD TARGET and gone straight to the most difficult
one.

BUCKSHOT

Thought I'd save you the trouble,
sir.

Clay is impressed with this kid, turns to the others.

CLAY

Company reload!

INT. ARMY HQ, BALTIMORE - DAY

Baltimore's FOUNTAIN INN has now been converted into the
Army's Headquarters. A crowd of men gathered around a map
table parts to let Sam through. He is being led by CAPTAIN
FINLEY. As they walk through the crowd.

FINLEY

He insisted on speaking with you,
sir.

Sam gets to the table and nods to COLLINS, a 25 year-old
Irishman, who speaks with a lilting accent.

SAM

All right. You have my ear.

Collins points to the place on the map where Chesapeake Bay
funnels into Baltimore Harbor.

COLLINS

I was down at the docks, General, and I was thinking that in order for their guns to reach the city, their ships have to pass through the Narrows first.

SAM

Which is why we have to stop them at Fort McHenry.

COLLINS

That we do, sir. But since as we have no navy to confront 'em, surely some of their vessels will get past our guns. So then I got to thinking, see, *this* is the shallowest point in the harbor.

He points to the FUNNEL from the BAY into the Harbor.

COLLINS

Now if we were to create a barricade of merchant ships across the Narrows --

SAM

They'd just burn the ships.

COLLINS

No, begging your pardon sir, we *sink* the ships.

SAM

Sink our own ships?

COLLINS

Yessir. We create an artificial reef. They can't burn ships underwater.

Sam thinks.

COLLINS

That way, even if some of their ships got past the fort--

SAM

They couldn't get close enough to fire on the city.

COLLINS

Exactly, sir.

FINLEY
 (to SAM)
 But General, do you really think we
 could convince merchants to sink
 their own ships? You might as well
 ask them to smite their firstborn.

EXT. HMS ALBION - DAY

The two DESERTERS we saw earlier are HANGING from the
 yardarm. The camera tilts down from them to a system of ROPES
 and PULLEYS that are unloading a MASSIVE CANNON from another
 ship.

The CANNON is lowered through an opening in the main deck to
 the deck below. We begin to hear a cockney voice.

KELLOGG (O.S.)
 Straight from the foundry. Oh,
 Admiral Norris has brought some
 lovely toys. She's the best of 'em.

CUT TO:

INT. LOWER DECKS - DAY (LATER)

There is a buzz of activity on deck as more CANNONS are
 brought aboard. KELLOGG, the munitions expert, is lovingly
 describing the new machine.

KELLOGG
 Forty-two pound shells, 7.08 inch
 caliber, Blomefield design. With
 nine men working, can fire three
 times a minute, range of 183 yards
 point blank or out-angle of 1.7
 miles.

Kellogg is in love. This is a Super-cannon. Ross turns to
 Cockburn.

ROSS
 Could he say that in English?

COCKBURN
 It means, Ross, that we are going
 to blow Baltimore to Kingdom Come,
 and they can't reach us.

BROOKE (O.S.)
 This is North Point, Maryland.

INT. PLANNING QUARTERS, HMS ALBION - DAY

Charts on the walls. Sextants, various nautical maps. COCKBURN, ROSS, NORRIS, and BROOKE are standing around a map table.

BROOKE

The ships can anchor here, and there's a protected inlet to Sparrows Point.

COCKBURN

(to ROSS)

That's where we land your men. The *Diadem*, the *Thames*, the *Tonnant*, and the *Menelaus* disembark here. When the bomb ketches reach *here*, they can support the troops from the harbor.

NORRIS

Have you scouted the route to the city?

ROSS

There are reports that the roads are unprotected until Green Creek.

NORRIS

And the redoubts?

ROSS

They'll have fortified here, surely.

He points to Hampstead Hill.

NORRIS

That is plain from the map, General. I want to know the conditions of the ground. Have you no spies?

ROSS

We've already prepared them, Your Grace.

Ross gestures to two waiting men, who bow to Norris. Spies. One SPY is pock-faced, the other SPY tall and rail-thin.

NORRIS

Do they spy for us or the Americans?

ROSS
(puzzled by the question)
For us, Your Grace.

NORRIS
Then why are they still standing
here? Dispatch them.

Ross motions to Brooke, who escorts the spies from the room.

NORRIS
I had expected more boldness in
your tactics, General Ross. I
wonder if your father would have
begun this campaign by treading so
lightly.

Ross stiffens.

ROSS
My father?

NORRIS
I served with your father in the
Sinai. His approach was bloody,
bold, and resolute. I wonder what
he'd make of yours. Good day,
General. Admiral.

Ross and Cockburn salute and leave the room. Ross has gone
pale, visibly affected.

EXT. SKIFF ON BALTIMORE HARBOR - DAY

Sam and a Baltimore MERCHANT are looking at a row of a TWENTY
ANCHORED BOATS at the Narrows. They are at full sail, and
tethered to each other, a web of ropes from mast to mast.

A SOLDIER in a rowboat shouts to Sam.

SOLDIER
It's all ready, sir!

Merchant turns to Sam.

MERCHANT
I built that boat myself. You
couldn't have convinced me if yours
wasn't out there too.

Sam looks back at the boats. His POV: among the boats
tethered together is the smallest in the row. Sam's sloop,
the *Cormorant*.

SAM
 It's the only way, Jesse.
 (calling out to the
 SOLDIER on the rowboat)
 Light the fuses!

The SOLDIER signals via a FLAG to the TETHERED SHIPS. A bustle of activity.

Then the men aboard clamber down into rowboats and row hard away from the TETHERED SHIPS.

An EXPLOSION aboard one of the ships. Followed by ANOTHER. And ANOTHER. Like dominoes.

The TETHERED SHIPS' hulls are breached and in a terrible din of planks snapping and air escaping, as if protesting their own deaths, the ships disappear quickly into the bay. The tops of their masts stick out of the water like fenceposts tangled in a net.

SAM
 Unless their ships can fly, they
 won't be getting past that any time
 soon.

EXT. ROAD FROM NORTH POINT - DAY

Two MILITIA PATROLMEN ON HORSES come upon a couple of FISHERMEN walking on foot, carrying fishing gear.

WE DO NOT SEE THE FISHERMEN'S FACES.

PATROLMAN 1
 You men going down to the Point?

FISHERMAN 1
 Yes, sir.

PATROLMAN 1
 Be careful down there. Limeys out
 on the bay. If you see anything,
 report back.

FISHERMAN 1
 Will do that, sir.

The PATROLMEN ride away.

Now, we see the reverse. The TWO FISHERMEN are in fact the SPIES we saw on the ship earlier, including the one with the POCKED FACE.

EXT. AROUND BALTIMORE, MONTAGE - DAY

AT A WELL

A group of WOMEN WITH BUCKETS receive their orders for the FIRE BRIGADE. A WOMAN IN CHARGE separates them by fire district.

WOMAN IN CHARGE

No, York Street goes in the second district, which is Mrs. Scott's. Miss Willoughby, you have King's Hollow.

We pull back to see CHILDREN CARRYING PILES OF WOOD, running past the women.

Everyone in Baltimore seems BUSY, INTENT, ORGANIZED.

IN A PUBLIC HOUSE

OLD MEN are sitting at a long table, measuring powder into rifle cartridges.

AT A HOUSE

A dining room full of women and girls are SEWING BLUE UNIFORM COATS. One woman breaks a blue thread with her teeth and knots it.

ON THE COMMON

KELLOGG is drilling a rifle brigade. The men look more professional: uniforms crisper, steps quicker, movements synchronized. Even Putnam has improved.

KELLOGG

Better, Putnam. Better!

CUT TO:

Now we pull out and watch the drilling from a distant vantage point. The reverse reveals that it is the POV of John. He is standing on a hill on the outskirts of the city, holding his horse by its rein, watching.

EXT. HOSPITAL CAMP - DAY

BANNISTER

War injuries are not easy to look at.

A group of VOLUNTEER NURSES are being briefed on duties. The women represent all stations of Baltimore society: bakers' wives and bankers' mistresses, housewives and barmaids, white and black.

BANNISTER

Even those of you who've worked as nurses and midwives will have to have strong minds and stronger stomachs.

The women nod.

BANNISTER

Now. Can we have a volunteer to be bandaged?

A hand goes up in the crowd. It belongs to MARGARET. She and Bannister smile in mutual recognition.

BANNISTER

Well, let's see your injury.

EXT. HAMPSTEAD HILL - DAY

Buckner's militia group are resting after a long drill, drinking water. PUTNAM is rubbing his sore feet, full of blisters. His thin boots are scuffed and tattered. Buckshot sits off to the side. His boots, simple leather homemade wellies, are still on his feet and undamaged. The two are joined by two other Militiamen, a BURLY MAN and his SIDEKICK. Burly Man looks at Putnam.

BURLY MAN

The bean counter.

Burly Man starts to roll a cigarette.

BURLY MAN

You gonna put a tariff on my tobacco?

PUTNAM

Oh, I don't tax anything, I just count inventory.

Buckshot is sharpening his knife, off to the side. He shakes his head.

BUCKSHOT

(to Putnam)

Don't you get tired of it, just countin' things all day?

PUTNAM

Oh no. I love it. I'm good at it. I
can count a shipload of oranges in
half an hour.

BURLY MAN

Oh yeah?

Burly Man reaches into his pocket, pulls out two handfuls of
rifle shells, throws them on the ground.

BURLY MAN

How many are there? Quick.

PUTNAM

(not missing a beat)
Thirty seven.

SIDEKICK

(to Burly Man)
He right?

BURLY MAN

(shrugs)
Had forty, shot three.

Buckshot, listening, breaks a rare smile. Clay stops in front
of them.

CLAY

Our unit has west-end sentry
tonight. Morgan, you've got the
roof of the Guildhall. Putnam,
you're the courthouse, Buckshot,
you're on St. Paul's spire.

Hold on Buckshot: he looks worried.

EXT. THE EARTHWORKS - MAGIC HOUR

Sam is out on the field in front of the earthworks, looking
back at them. He has the POV of the enemy approaching the
defenses.

He sizes up the approach, looks at the flanks. As he looks to
the south, something catches his eye, and he walks in that
direction.

EXT. STONEHENGE - MAGIC HOUR

Sam approaches a group of BOULDERS on a rise. The boulders are large and prominent -- natural, though so artfully arranged that they suggest the temple of an ancient civilization. Sam rubs the side one of the larger boulders, and thinks.

EXT. AROUND BALTIMORE - DUSK

SENTRIES on the rooftops, towers, and belfries, silhouetted against the last light of the day.

Buckshot is standing at the foot of a steep ladder that ascends to St. Paul's steeple. He looks up, 85 feet to the top. He is sweating profusely. He tries to mount a step, then another, but he is unable to proceed upward.

INT. BELMONT - NIGHT

John is pacing in the parlor, where we earlier saw him play the violin. He looks into the next room, where his Margaret, sunburnt and exhausted from the day's exertions, has fallen asleep with sewing in her hand.

QUICK CUT TO:

EXT. BELMONT, STABLES - NIGHT

John mounts his horse and rides into the night. Pre-lap the sound of a man speaking near a fire.

LOWRY (O.S.)

Meantime, New England says it's Mr.
Madison's War and the Federalists
say it's the Republicans' War.

EXT. EARTHWORKS - NIGHT

BANNISTER approaches the fire with a bowl of stew, joining a group of SOLDIERS, including Clay and a young man named LOWRY. They are already eating.

MILITIA MAN

And I say it's the war of whatever
poor bastard is staring down the
barrel of a rifle.

BANNISTER
Mind if I...

The men gesture for him to join them.

LOWRY
You're the doctor from Washington.

Bannister nods.

BANNISTER
That's right.

LOWRY
Then go on, you tell us what this war's on for. Taxes and trade and -- between us we can't figure it.

BANNISTER
I don't think the grandees understand it any better than you do.

A moment of silence.

CLAY
Well, what I understand is that some foreign army is trying to march into my wife's garden. She loves that garden.

SOLDIER
Good a reason as any.

BANNISTER
Good a reason as any.

From a distance, we see that, by another fire, a well-dressed young man is asking a SOLDIER a question. Now we recognize the young man as JOHN. The Soldier turns and points toward the earthworks.

There, on the earthworks, is Sam. Trying to stay awake, but catching a moment of rest against an earthen wall. John goes toward him, and lightly taps his father's shoulder.

Sam opens his eyes, surprised.

SAM
John.

JOHN
I've brought you some things from home.

A basket of baked goods, fruit, a pie.

SAM
(straightening up)
You didn't need to come down here.
They do feed us.

JOHN
(awkwardly)
Mother sent me. She doesn't trust
that you've stopped long enough to
eat.

Sam is starving and begins eating a biscuit. They are quiet for a moment. John looks around at the earthworks. His tone is hard to read.

JOHN
This is quite an operation.

SAM
We could use another six months.
But war never waits until you're
ready, does it?

JOHN
The answer of a born soldier.

SAM
Born soldier?

Sam smiles to himself, shakes his head.

SAM
You know, when I was a boy, all I
wanted to be was a fisherman. I was
never happier than when I was out
on the water. Then the Revolution
came and everything changed.

A silent moment.

SAM
I guess we don't choose the paths
before us. We just choose among
them.

Sam feels that he's said too much. He changes the subject, looks off into the distance.

SAM
I haven't been down this way since
you were a boy. You remember, we
used to go fishing near here?
(MORE)

SAM (cont'd)
 And then we'd have a picnic down by
 the rocks. You called them
 Stonehenge. You and Arthur...

An interruption by a YOUNG LIEUTENANT.

YOUNG LIEUTENANT
 General Smith? You're needed on the
 northern end.

Sam stands up, touches John on the shoulder, and leaves with
 the Young Lieutenant.

John sits for a moment, thinking.

CUT TO:

A clean hand releases GOLD COINS that fall into cupped and
 soiled hands beneath. We are on the...

INT. HMS ALBION ROSS'S QUARTERS - MORNING

The clean hand belongs GENERAL ROSS. He is paying off the TWO
 SPIES we last saw on the road. The POCKFACED SPY looks down
 at the coins.

POCKFACED SPY
 You told us we'd get twice this.

ROSS
 Perhaps you think you're being
 treated unfairly?

The SPIES are silent.

ROSS
 You'll get the rest when you guide
 us there. His Majesty thanks you
 for your service. You may wait
 below.

They nod, leave, and Ross turns to look down at diagrams the
 SPIES have drawn for him.

ROSS (V.O.)
 They're dug in at two lines on
 Hampstead Hill, a quarter of a mile
 long and 40 yards apart.

EXT. HMS ALBION QUARTERDECK - DAY

Ross's demeanor is markedly changed. He is all resolve.

ROSS

The bulwarks overlook a decline and a thick forest, from which we can launch the attack. The trees will conceal our numbers and provide a staging ground.

NORRIS

And what about the undergrowth?

ROSS

Clear. Easy movement of guns and troops.

COCKBURN

Caesar says never to fight with a forest at your back.

ROSS

Caesar had more on his hands than a rabble of militia. With the forest cover we can fire with impunity.

Cockburn holds his tongue. Ross points to the map.

ROSS

(to Cockburn)

While the 42 pounders hold the fort at bay, you slip the bomb ketches through the Narrows into the harbor. I'll mount the assault on the hill, and they'll be under attack from two fronts. It should be over quickly.

(to Norris)

Your Grace?

Norris looks at Cockburn.

NORRIS

You are uncharacteristically quiet, Admiral Cockburn. Do you have reservations about the plan?

COCKBURN

No, Your Grace. No reservations.

NORRIS

Good. Then you will accompany General Ross for the land assault. I'm assuming command of your fleet.

Cockburn is taken aback, then recovers himself, and nods.

COCKBURN
Yes, Your Grace.

NORRIS
We attack tomorrow.

EXT. HAMPSTEAD HILL - AFTERNOON

Sam is inspecting the earthworks, which are now nearly complete. It is a sturdy and deeply entrenched bulwark in two lines that spans the quarter-mile breadth of the slope.

Building is still going on around Sam as he walks the length of the redoubt, accompanied by COLONEL JACK STRICKER, 46, a round-faced man with a high forehead. A competent, cool-headed leader.

SAM
It's good, Stricker. It'll hold.
You have how many positions?

STRICKER
Eight hundred sir, and more every
hour.

Sam looks over the edge of the breastworks, at the VIEW DOWN THE HILL. It's the view that a soldier would have of the advancing army in front of him.

Sam looks troubled.

STRICKER
What is it, sir?

SAM
That forest.

STRICKER
What about it?

SAM
It gives them too much cover. I
don't like it.

STRICKER
But what can we do, sir? We can't
very well just pick up a forest and
move it.

C.U. of Sam.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST NEAR HAMPSTEAD HILL - AFTERNOON

A TREE falls.

Men are CHOPPING DOWN TREES everywhere. Hitching LOGS to horses and mules. It is a massive operation.

A sweaty SOLDIER stops and reports to Stricker.

SWEATY SOLDIER

We've had three dozen trees down in the last hour, Colonel.

Stricker looks exhausted.

STRICKER

Good work. Only five hundred to go.

INT. ST. PAUL'S CHURCH - DUSK

A YOUNG MAN is sitting in a pew with his head bowed.

Clay enters, approaches the man, taps him on his shoulder. The Young Man looks up. It is BUCKSHOT.

CLAY

There'll be time for praying tomorrow, son. You're supposed to be keeping watch in the spire. I need your eyes.

Now we see that Buckshot is sweating and shaking. Not praying but trying to gain his composure.

CLAY

What is it?

BUCKSHOT

I can't, sir.

CLAY

What do you mean, you can't?

BUCKSHOT

I'm terrified. Terrified of heights.

CLAY

What about last night?

Buckshot is silent.

CLAY

You mean to tell me you haven't been at your post in the last three nights?

BUCKSHOT

I'm sorry, sir.

CLAY

You get yourself up there, and that's not a suggestion.

BUCKSHOT

I tried, sir. I just-- can't.

Buckshot is still shaking, pale.

Clay shakes his head, disgusted. He stalks off.

Buckshot looks down again, ashamed.

EXT. HAMPSTEAD HILL ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT

INSIDE SAM'S TENT

Sam, half asleep, opens his eyes to the energetic sounds of a fiddle, a fast Scottish air, mixing with the chirp of crickets and other sounds of the night. He sits up.

IN THE CAMP

Sam walks from his tent toward the boisterous scene of dozens of men clapping their hands around a fire. Some are dancing arm in arm with women, or with each other, or dancing alone.

The sound of the fiddle is vigorous and exhilarating. All the tensions of the preparations seem drowned out for the first time by the men's dancing and clapping. Sam looks to Clay, Lowry, and others, who are clapping their hands. Sam smiles. He begins clapping with them, and looks over the head of someone in the crowd to see the fiddler.

It is ... JOHN. In uniform. No Beethoven melancholia this time as his fingers fly over the fretboard and he dips and sways with the music. Sam smiles.

EXT. HMS TONNANT - NIGHT

In the pre-dawn hours, British troops wait for first light, the invasion light. Every square foot of the deck is occupied by a SOLDIER in uniform.

The mood is tense and somber. Even this war machine is made up of individual men, anxious before battle.

We find a few closely-packed men sitting toward the bow of the ship.

BRITISH SOLDIER 1
Give a smoke?

British Soldier 2 shakes his head.

BRITISH SOLDIER 2
That's the last of it. Ask Buckner.

BRITISH SOLDIER 1
Buckner's gone off to pray.

BRITISH SOLDIER 2
To what?

British Soldier 2 looks over toward the side, where Buckner, a soldier in his 30s, is bowing his head and mouthing words.

BRITISH SOLDIER 3
(nodding toward the shore)
They're the ones what should be prayin'. Hadley's makin' book on how long til they scatter to the bushes.

Nearby, an Old British Soldier, who seemed to have been asleep, opens his eyes and listens.

BRITISH SOLDIER 1
Two quid says they don't last an hour. Simple maths. Look at the size of us an' the size of them.

Now, in response, the Old British Soldier speaks. Quietly, to no one in particular.

OLD BRITISH SOLDIER
When I was 18 I was stationed in the fort at Madras, edge of the jungle. Nothin' to do at all but sit up in there in the tower on lookout. An' every day while I'm on guard, an elephant -- big bloody thing, a bull I think -- come out of the trees to drink at the pond.

The Soldiers look at each other quizzically, but they keep listening.

OLD BRITISH SOLDIER

Well one day, a wild cat, no bigger'n a housecat, is drinking there and the elephant comes along to have *himself* a drink, expects the cat to run off scared-like. Cat don't go. Elephant kicks up dust. Cat *still* don't go. I'm thinking, cat gotta be crazy. That's a bloody *elephant*, for Christ's sake. But pretty soon I see comin' out of the jungle two more cats, three cats, then a dozen, two dozen of 'em. The cats work together. They surround the elephant. They're *under* him, they're *on* him, they're everywhere. Ten minutes' time, the cats have him down. Hour's time, elephant's dead.

A moment of silence. The Old British Soldier lights his pipe.

OLD BRITISH SOLDIER

Most extraordinary thing I ever seen.

The camera rises, following the smoke of his pipe, to reveal: Cockburn is standing on the deck directly above them, listening to the conversation.

EXT. OVERLOOK BY THE BAY - DAWN

TITLE: SEPTEMBER 11

A LOOKOUT is peering into the morning mist toward the water.

His POV: the ghostly WHITE SAILS of a dozen BRITISH SHIPS of various size approaching the shore.

The Lookout grabs a pole with a RED FLAG attached at the end, runs up to the high point of a promontory, and waves it.

CUT TO:

EXT. RUST COLORED BARN - DAWN

Another LOOKOUT is sitting on the apex of a BARN ROOF, ringing a DINNER BELL. He is looking south to where there is a RED FLAG being waved on the horizon.

Beneath, a FARMER, his WIFE, and their CHILDREN are seeing off a HORSEMAN, who goes galloping toward Baltimore.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEAR CREEK - MORNING

The Horseman rides across a LOW WOODEN BRIDGE spanning a creek, where a few MEN are pouring GUNPOWDER around the bridge's supports.

EXT. HILL ON THE BALTIMORE ROAD - MORNING

A LOOKOUT on a bluff sees the HORSEMAN riding in the distance, waving a RED BANNER. The LOOKOUT taps a SECOND LOOKOUT on the shoulder, who also registers the RED BANNER.

The TWO LOOKOUTS lift a LARGE MIRROR, angle it to catch the sunlight, in the direction of BALTIMORE.

CUT TO:

EXT. ST. PAUL'S CHURCH TOWER, BALTIMORE - MORNING

A YOUNG LOOKOUT in the church tower (not Buckshot) goes to the south side, sees the GLINT OF A MIRROR flashing on the horizon.

He pulls a rope and, with great effort, begins to ring the CHURCH BELL again and again, raising an alarm.

The camera booms down from the church tower and lands on a CLOSE UP of SAM.

SAM

They're on their way.

EXT. AROUND BALTIMORE - DAY

A HIVE OF ACTIVITY. The alarms are sounding and the city is on alert.

ON CHARLES STREET

An OLD MAN is being helped into the back of a cart for evacuation. The camera pans past him to reveal a LINE OF CARTS transporting the OLD, INFIRM, and VERY YOUNG from the city. Orderly and organized.

ON THE COMMON

MILITIA and SOLDIERS march double-time toward Hampstead Hill.

IN ST. PAUL'S CHURCH

A PRIEST is saying Mass alone before the altar. Praying for the city.

AT FORT McHENRY

A SOLDIER runs into the PROVISIONS SHED of the fort and retrieves an armful of BANDAGES. *In the foreground, we may or may not notice many stacks of bags marked FLOUR.*

The Soldier carries the bandages outside, where he passes MAJOR ARMISTEAD.

ARMISTEAD

18 pounders elevate to 37 degrees!

An ARTILLERYMAN cranks a lever, changing the angle of a cannon, and another places a CANNONBALL on top of a PILE OF CANNONBALLS pre-set to be fired.

IN THE FIELD HOSPITAL

WOMEN, including MARGARET, are on their knees scrubbing water basins next to the hospital cots. Margaret is wearing a plain linen dress, her hair tied back with a head-wrap, her sleeves rolled up. Margaret turns to see that Sam is sitting on his horse, watching her.

He dismounts and goes toward her. She stands and meets him, throws a rag around her neck like a scarf.

MARGARET

I thought I'd wear this to the First Lady's Ball next year. What do you think?

SAM

You'd still be the prettiest in the room.

MARGARET

You're going to the front?

Sam nods.

MARGARET

But you'll stay out of range.

SAM

Margaret.

MARGARET

They need your mind, not your arms.
You've wound up the watch. Now let
it run.

SAM

Last report they were less than a
day away. There's still so much to
do.

MARGARET

Sam, it gets worse when you're
under duress.

SAM

I feel fine, Margaret.

He kisses her.

SAM

I feel fine.

EXT. NORTH POINT - MORNING

Eight abreast, the Redcoats are marching inland from the
beach. A FORCE OF ABOUT 5000. In the distance, the landing
barges are returning to the ships.

ROSS and BROOKE ride alongside the troops.

ROSS

How are the men, Brooke?

BROOKE

They followed you to Italy and
Egypt, sir. They'd follow you
anywhere.

Ross looks ahead to where Cockburn has stopped his horse and
seems to be staring at a TREE. ROSS rides up alongside him.

ROSS

The road is in better condition
than I'd expected.

Cockburn doesn't answer him. He's distracted. Ross follows
Cockburn's gaze

ROSS

What are you looking at?

COCKBURN
Why are all those blackbirds
sitting on that branch?

Three RAVENS are sitting quietly on the branch of a tree.

ROSS
What, don't tell me you're
superstitious, Cockburn?

COCKBURN
I don't like them looking at me.

We are looking at Cockburn's face when we hear a GUNSHOT.

Cockburn starts, then turns to see that Ross has fired his
pistol into the air. The RAVENS disperse.

ROSS
There. Now you don't have to worry.

Ross rides forward, and Cockburn spurs his horse and rides
after him.

EXT. ARMY HQ, BALTIMORE - DAY

A CARRIAGE pulls up to the Fountain Inn, the temporary
military headquarters for the city.

Out of the carriage steps an ATTENDANT, who holds the door,
and out hurries SECRETARY OF WAR ARMSTRONG. Armstrong enters
the Army HQ.

INT. ARMY HQ, BALTIMORE - DAY

The HQ is buzzing with activity. A PRIVATE hurrying down the
hall turns and sees Armstrong entering the building. The
private, without breaking stride, barks cursorily.

PRIVATE
All auxiliary fire volunteers
report to Blake's! You're late,
they've already started!

Armstrong is speechless. The private keeps moving.

At a desk, an officer is gathering maps. Armstrong
approaches.

ARMSTRONG
You! Soldier!

The officer stops and looks up. We recognize him as MAJOR ORTH, formerly of Ft. McHenry.

ARMSTRONG
Where is the General?

ORTH
I couldn't say. Probably down at Hampstead.

ARMSTRONG
Take me to General Winder, that's an order.

ORTH
Begging your pardon, sir, but on whose authority?

ARMSTRONG
On my own, as Secretary of War.

Orth jumps to attention.

ORTH
I'm sorry, sir. I didn't know. I can take you to him, but I don't know any Winders. We've got a General Smith.

ARMSTRONG
General Smith?

Something dawns on Armstrong.

EXT. BEAR CREEK - DAY

THE COLUMN OF BRITISH TROOPS, seemingly without end, reaches Bear Creek Bridge, which is now a smoking wreckage. It has been blown up.

The British infantry wade through the creek, some up to their chests, holding their bayonets above their heads.

EXT. HAMPSTEAD HILL - DAY

Sam walks through the crowd of SOLDIERS and MILITIA who are gathered at the earthworks. He claps a couple of them on the shoulder. Shakes hands with others. Among the men is BANNISTER.

BANNISTER

I hear you're going to make a speech.

SAM

A speech?

BANNISTER

The men expect to be inspired. You know, "We band of brothers" and so forth.

Sam looks at Bannister, at a loss.

BANNISTER

We're waiting.

Sam looks at the crowd. Indeed, they are. He climbs up the bulwarks and stands surveying the men. They grow quiet when they see him there.

SAM

I've talked a lot of talk in my life, but right now, I can't recall a single speech that mattered. Now that there's a real occasion for talking, I don't know what to say.

He takes a moment.

SAM

I told you two weeks ago that we could turn back this invading army. At the time, I'm not sure I believed it myself.

Cut to the faces of the assembled crowd. Putnam and Buckshot. Collins and Clay.

SAM

But now I do believe some things. I believe this enemy was mistaken when it measured your resources. I believe this enemy was wrong when it judged your worth. Now we will make *them* believe.

A cheer in the crowd.

SAM

It's been said there would never be a generation like the generation of the Revolution. That the age of giants is over.

(MORE)

SAM (cont'd)
 But I tell you today -- you are the equals of those men. Wellington's so-called Invincibles will be defeated by the sons of those who fought at Saratoga and Yorktown. What your fathers won you will preserve. And if I fall, I fall defending a city that would not be brought to its knees. Because this city, because Baltimore, stands between that army and the fall of a nation. And you stand between that army and Baltimore.

A VOICE from behind the crowd.

ARMSTRONG
 That man has no authority to lead you!

Armstrong is making his way through the assembled crowd on horseback.

ARMSTRONG
 The United States government denied his commission! Samuel Smith has no authority to command an army!

Murmur in the crowd. The men look at each other.

ARMSTRONG
 As Secretary of War, I am taking charge here. I expect your full and immediate cooperation.

Armstrong lets that sink in.

ARMSTRONG
 Now, form ranks by company!

No response. Dead silence. No one moves, or even whispers.

ARMSTRONG
 I said, form ranks! Fall in!

Still, nothing. Then someone moves. But he doesn't form ranks or fall in. He climbs the redoubt and stands next to Sam: it is JOHN SMITH, who is holding a rifle and prepared to fight. He plants himself next to his father. Sam looks at him, and John looks straight ahead.

Armstrong shouts in the direction of Sam and John.

ARMSTRONG

Anyone disobeying my orders is
guilty of treason and will be shot!
Do you understand?

Now STRICKER breaks from the crowd and stands next to Sam and John. Next, an OLD WAR VETERAN does the same. Then LOWRY, then PUTNAM. Then Clay and a GROUP OF HIS COMPANY, including Buckshot. Soon the ENTIRE CROWD has turned and is standing with Sam. Defiant, proud, and loyal.

Armstrong can't believe his eyes. He starts to speak, checks himself, and starts again, irate.

ARMSTRONG

This will not be countenanced in
Washington. You are all in defiance
of a federal order! You...

Armstrong takes measure of the situation. There's nothing for it -- he turns his horse and rides off.

Sam looks at his son. John faces his father and raises his hand in slow salute.

JOHN

General.

EXT. HAMPSTEAD HILL BULWARKS - LATER

CLAY

I need two scouts to ride out. We
need to know how far they are and
when they'll be here. I'd be lying
if I said it wasn't dangerous.

BUCKSHOT raises his hand. Clay looks at him. A moment between them.

CLAY

All right, then. That's one.

Putnam, next to him, raises his hand as well.

A GROOM leads two horses, already saddled, to them. Buckshot and Putnam mount.

CLAY

Do not engage them, you hear me?
Those targets aren't watermelons.
They shoot back. Flank 'em to the
south and get back safe.

Clay nods to Buckshot. The young man is redeeming himself for his fear-of-heights episode. Buckshot nods back and the two soldiers depart.

EXT. HAMPSTEAD HILL ENCAMPMENT - DAY

Sam has gathered STRICKER and the COMPANY CAPTAINS around him.

SAM

Here are our lines.

He draws two lines in the dust with a stick.

SAM

And here's where they'll come.

He draws an arrow toward the lines.

SAM

The slope angles to the east, but there's also a ravine to the north that's hard to see from the bottom of the hill. Colonel Stricker, I want three companies of men in the ravine, on their bellies and out of sight until I give the order. Watch for a green flare in the sky, that'll be the signal to attack. We'll draw them into the open and then, on my sign, we'll squeeze them from two sides.

He draws an arrow from left to right, and another from the top down. Stricker points to the bottom of the diagram, the place where Stonehenge is.

STRICKER

But won't they just flank to the south?

SAM

They'll try. There's rocky ground here.

CAPTAIN

That won't stop them, sir.

SAM

No, it won't -- but for an army in battle, the worst enemy is doubt. We just have to plant the seed.

(MORE)

SAM (cont'd)
(to Stricker)
I'll need all your men's uniforms.

EXT. WOODED HILL JUST OUTSIDE BALTIMORE - DAY

British troops can be seen advancing on the road below.
Buckshot and Putnam are looking down from the ridge.

CLOSE on Buckshot, and his POV. He is staring at Cockburn and Ross, who are conspicuous on their BLACK and WHITE HORSES, respectively, riding along the side of the column.

BUCKSHOT
(half to Putnam, half to himself)
How come in wars the ones that end up dead are the regular folk? How come nobody aims for the head?

Putnam looks down at what Buckshot sees, but Putnam doesn't understand what he's saying.

BUCKSHOT
I can get him.

PUTNAM
Get who?

BUCKSHOT
I'm gonna pick him off.

Buckshot dismounts.

PUTNAM
What are you talking about?

Buckshot looks down toward the advancing army.

PUTNAM
We have to report back. "Do not engage," remember?

BUCKSHOT
(to Putnam)
Get outta here, Putnam.

PUTNAM
We had an order!

BUCKSHOT
I'll see you around.

Putnam is bewildered, shakes his head, then rides off.
Buckshot slaps his horse's flank.

BUCKSHOT

Git!

The horse runs away. Buckshot, holding his rifle, quickly, quietly slides down the slope until the trees have obscured the British column from his view.

EXT. NORTH SLOPE OF THE BATTLEFIELD - DAY

STRICKER

Whatever happens, I want you to
stay down until you hear my order!

THREE AMERICAN COMPANIES -- wearing plain clothes, without uniforms -- get into position in the ravine to the north of the main field. They lie on their bellies, their rifles gripped in front of their faces.

EXT. HAMPSTEAD HILL - DAY

The MEN on the earthworks are taking their positions.

JOHN, among the artillery men, loads his rifle.

AMERICAN FIELD CANNONS are moved into place by crews of FOUR MEN.

Sam loads his FLARE PISTOL.

EXT. WOOD - DAY

Buckshot is running through the forest. He reaches the edge of a clearing and sees the road. Buckshot looks around him, and then... he looks UP. At a VERY TALL TREE towering over him.

Buckshot thinks. He looks up again at the tree -- it's perilously high, and HIS OLD FEARS RETURN. Buckshot takes a deep breath, straps his rifle under over his back, and begins to CLIMB.

EXT. ROAD TO BALTIMORE - DAY

Ross and Cockburn, leading the troops, come around a bend in the road.

COCKBURN'S POV: in the deep distance is the American position.

He stops. Ross and Brooke ride up next to him, and Ross calls for a HALT. The TWO SPIES (now GUIDES), who are also mounted, ride up behind them.

ROSS, followed by Brooke, takes in the scene: 100 YARDS OF FOREST HAVE BEEN CLEARED ON EACH SIDE OF THE ROAD, UP TO THE BASE OF HAMPSTEAD HILL. AN OPEN WASTELAND OF STUMPS AND SLASH. NO COVER AT ALL.

Brooke turns sharply to POCKFACED SPY, who is looking on in shock.

BROOKE

You said there was a forest here.

POCKFACED SPY

I swear to you, sir, there was a forest here two days ago.

EXT. TREE - DAY

Buckshot is settling into one of the top branches of the tree, trying to steady himself and his gun.

He is breathing heavily and sweating. His POV: it's a long way down, and he swallows hard, and tries to make his hand stop shaking.

Buckshot unstraps his gun, braces it against his shoulder, and now can see the approaching column.

VIEW ALONG THE SIGHT OF HIS RIFLE: focus on COCKBURN in the distance, obscured by foliage in the foreground.

Then Buckshot moves the rifle to try and get a clear shot of ROSS, but he too is obscured by some plants and trees. Then back to COCKBURN.

CONTINUOUS, DOWN ON THE ROAD.

COCKBURN

You'll need to re-write the orders.
We didn't plan for an open assault.

ROSS

This isn't Drills Week at Sandhurst, Cockburn. On this continent, nothing's by the book.

COCKBURN

Ross, there will be needless casualties!

Ross looks ahead at the clearing and the hill beyond. Far in the distance, the spire of St. Paul's in Baltimore.

ROSS
Tonight I'll dine in Baltimore or
in hell.
(to BROOKE)
Prepare the attack.

He begins to slowly ride forward, ahead of the troops.

EXT. TREE - DAY

Buckshot, breathing heavily in his tree, steadies himself, and now finally has a CLEAR SHOT. It is of ROSS, who is riding out confidently, dangerously, into the clearing ahead of the men.

Buckshot pulls the trigger.

CONTINUOUS TO:

DOWN ON THE ROAD

A SHOT. ROSS slumps forward, and slowly falls from his saddle.

The TROOPS HALT.

COCKBURN scans the trees from which the shot must have come. A RAVEN, frightened, flies from the canopy.

COCKBURN
There!

Several troops ready their guns, and charge in the general direction of Buckshot's tree.

CONTINUOUS TO:

IN THE TREE

Buckshot, sweating, starts to move back behind foliage, and to re-load. As he leans back, a BRANCH SNAPS.

CONTINUOUS TO:

DOWN ON THE ROAD

The British guards see the branch SNAP. They fire a VOLLEY OF SHOTS at the tree with the SNAPPED BRANCH.

Buckshot falls out of the tree, his body striking branches on the way down. He is DEAD.

BROOKE has now ridden up to the fallen ROSS, and leaps down. There is a trickle of blood at Ross's mouth. Brooke cradles the general in his arms. ROSS is already dead.

Now, WHISPERING among the troops. Word is spreading that the General has been killed. Cockburn watches Brooke lower Ross's body to the ground.

A Lieutenant looks expectantly at Cockburn.

LIEUTENANT

What should we do, sir?

Cockburn shakes his head.

COCKBURN

I'm an Admiral, soldier. I have no authority over a land force. Colonel Brooke is next in command. It's his army.

He looks to a Captain riding up to Brooke, whose face is a picture of grief and rage.

CAPTAIN

Sir?

BROOKE

We attack.

EXT. HAMPSTEAD HILL - DAY

Sam is on horseback, looking out through a spyglass, when Putnam, also on horseback, returns to the second defensive line.

PUTNAM

They're coming up quickly, sir!

SAM

Any idea of how many there are?

PUTNAM

Four thousand eight hundred seventy-three, sir!

Smith lowers the spyglass and takes in Putnam, proud customs house employee, who nods.

EXT. ROAD TO BALTIMORE - DAY

British ARTILLERY SPECIALISTS are spreading to the sides, and setting up ROCKET LAUNCHING TUBES while the main column advances and forms lines of attack.

Brooke is shouting at the men. He is impulsive and distraught, lacks the cool head of Ross.

BROOKE
Fire the rockets!

ARTILLERY OFFICER
We're almost ready, sir...

BROOKE
FIRE THE ROCKETS!

The Artillery Crew lights fuses on the rocket tubes.

EXT. HAMPSTEAD HILL - DAY

There is suddenly a flaming CONGREVE ROCKET that SCREAMS over the heads of the men. It sounds like a banshee, like a soul in hell.

The MEN are spooked and agitated. They DUCK, cover their ears, not knowing what this weapon is, or where it will land.

We see another Congreve Rocket fly over from Sam's point of view. He spurs his horse, and rides out between the lines.

SAM
They're only to scare you! They're
Congreves, they're just fireworks!
Keep your nerve!

EXT. THE BATTLEFIELD - DAY

INTERCUT BETWEEN BRITISH COLUMNS and AMERICAN LINES

Through the smoke of the Congreves, the British lines begin to advance toward the American earthworks.

BROOKE
First and Fifth, forward!

Brooke's order is echoed by Captains, who charge in front of the men.

CAPTAIN
Forward, First and Fifth!

The FEET of the British soldiers, mechanical, precise.

CAPTAIN
Present weapons!

A line of gleaming guns.

CAPTAIN
Double-time!

The FEET of the soldiers moving TWICE AS FAST.

Sam has ridden back to the second line, is waiting at his position. He shouts forward to the first.

SAM
Pick your targets!

Watching, watching...

SAM
On my command!

Brooke swings his sword forward.

BROOKE
CHARGE!

The British break into full run and with a roar, the First and Fifth brigades charge the American position. Now the first American firing line stands and aims.

SAM
FIRE!

Thunder and smoke. A line of advancing British FALL.

SAM
FIRE!

The second American line fires.

Back at the British lines, an Artillery Division is positioning CARRONADES, or short-barreled cannons, and HOWITZERS.

An AMERICAN SOLDIER lights a fuse, a CANNON fires, and we watch a cannonball land in the midst of the British infantry, taking down several men. But the ranks don't break.

SAM
Fire at will!

The first American line, then the second, shoot in a barrage of smoke and bullets, and one, then another, and another, of the advancing British soldiers fall.

An American Soldier is hit in the chest, and falls.

JOHN, on the first American line, stands and fires.

When the smoke clears, Captains are pulling back the survivors who remain after the charge. THE FIRST ADVANCE HAS BEEN HELD OFF.

AT THE BACK OF THE BRITISH COLUMN

BROOKE
Pound them!

Now, the British CARRONADES are prepared to fire, and a Captain gives the signal. A Carronade DISCHARGES. Then another, and another.

ON THE EARTHWORKS

A shell strikes the area between the two lines.

Then another lands straight in the midst of an AMERICAN CANNON and its crew, destroying the cannon and killing the men in a terrible blast of heat and metal.

A YOUNG MAN near Putnam stands to shoot and is shot in the forehead. Blood spurts from the back of his head.

The British Column has now fanned out into orderly lines.

Brooke shouts commands from his horse.

BROOKE
Advance the 44th, the 7th, and the
Fusseliers!

With a shout, another British advance. This time a LARGER MASS of men.

CUT TO:

IN THE RAVINE

The American men under STRICKER's command are on their bellies. They can hear the sounds of battle nearby.

One man, a WIDE-EYED SOLDIER, watches, paralyzed, as a KING SNAKE slithers right past his eyes, down in the dirt.

A WIDE SHOT of all of STRICKER'S COMPANY lying still, waiting for the signal to attack...

CUT TO:

BACK AT THE EARTHWORKS

Sam watches the new British advance.

SAM

First line, fix bayonets! Second line, take aim!

The Men affix their bayonets. A SOLDIER looks nervously at Sam.

SAM

Fire!

The second line fires, taking down a few British.

Sam looks out. The British are now close enough for a charge. He nods at Clay. Clay yells to the men.

CLAY

Let's go!

The first American line, led by Clay, rushes over the earthworks with a yell and launches a DIRECT ATTACK on the advancing British troops. Among the attackers is JOHN.

CONGREVE ROCKETS scream overhead, but the advancing Americans pay no mind.

An AMERICAN SOLDIER is shot in the neck, falls.

Soldiers on both sides FIRE, and some fall, and then the awful chaos of HAND TO HAND COMBAT begins.

The sharp points of bayonets thrust into flesh, the crushing sound of rifle butts against skulls.

In the British advance we make out a very large, towering soldier. Let's call him GOLIATH. GOLIATH plunges his bayonet into the neck of an American MILITIA MAN. He withdraws it, SMASHES the face of another with his rifle butt. He pivots and FIRES at another. He is a machine.

CUT TO:

IN THE RAVINE

The men are sweating, growing impatient and anxious. A SOLDIER looks at STRICKER.

STRICKER

Not yet. We wait for the green flare.

CUT TO:

BACK IN THE BATTLE

Collins, our Irish dockhand, SHOTS a British Soldier.

The BURLY MAN we met earlier is about to bayonet a British Soldier when he himself is shot in the chest.

An American Cannon Shot destroys a British HOWITZER.

Clay kills a British Soldier.

ALL HELL HAS BROKEN LOOSE. There is mayhem and killing everywhere.

COCKBURN sees an American, LOWRY, about to strike a British Soldier from behind. He spurs his horse, and slashes Lowry with his SWORD. Lowry falls dead.

BACK WITH THE BRITISH COMMAND

Brooke is talking to CAPTAIN CONAWAY, 26.

BROOKE

Send in the rest! Overwhelm them!

Conaway gives the signal and the remaining regiments, about a thousand men, march forward to join the battle.

CUT TO:

AT THE EARTHWORKS

TWO MEN pull an INJURED SOLDIER, who is screaming, from the earthworks and place him on a makeshift stretcher. He is covered in dirt and blood, the skin burnt from him arm.

SAM, on his horse, sees that the British are now using the last of their reserves. Just as he'd hoped. He lifts his FLARE PISTOL from his saddle and raises it into the air.

Just then, a CANNONBALL falls in his immediate vicinity, missing him but enveloping him in dust and noise. And then... the world BLURS. Sam is having one of his VIOLENTLY DIZZY EPISODES. It's worse than last time at the pub, worse than ever before. Margaret was right.

His POV: the BLURRED WORLD he experienced earlier, made worse by the sounds and flashes of the battle.

Sam reaches out and almost falls, but grabs a fistful of his horse's mane to steady himself.

CUT TO:

IN THE BATTLE

GOLIATH is still doing his terrible work. He plunges his bayonet into FINLEY, killing him.

A British Soldier stabs an American Militia man in the eye with a bayonet.

IN THE RAVINE

A CAPTAIN crawls on his elbows, approaching STRICKER.

CAPTAIN

Sir, they need us, we can't wait any longer.

Stricker looks up to the sky, anxious. Still no flare.

CUT TO:

THE BATTLE

Collins is fighting TWO BRITISH SOLDIERS at the same time. He is fending them off. Then, suddenly, he GASPS. A THIRD British Soldier has pierced him in the spine, and he falls.

CUT TO:

THE EARTHWORKS

SAM is clutching the knob of his horse's saddle, breathing hard. With extraordinary effort, he pulls himself together, and his vision comes into focus in a single moment of clarity.

Just then, he steadies the FLARE PISTOL and... FIRES. Then he faints. He falls from his horse and his head hits a ROCK with a violent impact.

CUT TO:

THE RAVINE/THE BATTLE

From the POV of Stricker's company: Sam's GREEN FLARE streaks into the air and slowly falls. Stricker's face brightens. He turns his head to his men ...

STRICKER

NOWWWWW!

The men shout and FLOOD FROM THE RAVINE into the battle, taking the British by surprise. The Americans are now attacking from two sides. From overhead, we see that there are American lines from the north and from the west.

The BATTLE is growing more intense.

GOLIATH slashes his way through American ranks. In the foreground, Clay is fighting, unaware of GOLIATH's approach. GOLIATH raises his bayonet to strike Clay, and suddenly FREEZES. He falls to his knees, gargling blood, and we see behind him ... PUTNAM. The bean counter. The tip of his bayonet is red with blood.

Goliath topples face first to the ground. He's DEAD.

Clay looks into the eyes of the shaken Putnam.

JOHN, in a struggle with a British Soldier, loses his bayonet and is knocked to the ground. The British Soldier is about to spear him when John rolls over to avoid the thrust, grabs a sword from the hand of a DEAD BRITISH OFFICER, and slices across the torso of his assailant, who is trying to pull his bayonet out of the ground.

WITH THE BRITISH COMMAND

CAPTAIN CONAWAY

Sir, we're being hit from the north
and the west. Should we direct
ranks to the south?

Brooke looks off and sees the south end, where the ground rises slightly to the PATCH OF BOULDERS we saw earlier. It is STONEHENGE.

Brooke's speech and gestures are growing more and more erratic.

BROOKE

Re-form lines by those boulders!

Conaway goes to give the order.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL CAMP - DAY

The AMERICAN WOUNDED are starting to be brought in. Battlefield sounds can be heard in the distance. The injuries are as gruesome as Bannister promised.

Bannister is working feverishly trying to remove SHRAPNEL from a SOLDIER'S CHEST.

Margaret is carrying a pitcher of water when she sees a MAN BROUGHT IN ON A STRETCHER. Blood stains the white sheet that covers him.

A gust of wind blows the part of the sheet concealing his head, and Margaret sees ... THE BACK OF SAM'S HEAD. Sam's hair, Sam's neck. Lying motionless, lifeless.

Margaret rushes over to the body, and turns the head of the dead man. IT IS NOT SAM. Margaret lets out a breath.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE BATTLEFIELD

AT THE EARTHWORKS

Sam is collapsed behind the second line, his horse nowhere to be seen. A SOLDIER sees him lying there. There is blood on Sam's face from the impact of the rock.

SOLDIER

Sir? Sir, are you shot?

The Soldier shakes Sam, who opens his eyes. Sam is groggy but conscious.

CUT TO:

ON THE FIELD

CAPTAIN CONAWAY

Regroup at the boulders! Regroup!

An overhead of the British, some confused, some beginning to flank to the south, toward Stonehenge. Those who haven't heard the order continue to fight.

Brooke rides toward Stonehenge.

His POV: behind one of the boulders, he sees the BLUE HAT of an American Army regular. And another behind another rock, and the same behind a third.

Then, behind a boulder, the corner of a COAT. And the BLADES OF BAYONETS glisten in the sun, peeking out from behind a another large rock. It seems as though there's an enemy waiting behind every boulder.

BROOKE
(his voice rising to near-hysteria)
It's a trap! They're trying to box us in! Cease your advance! Fall back!

Now the ranks are in chaos.

BROOKE
They're behind the ridge! They're going to cut us off!

And now we look back on the field from behind the ridge, behind the boulders, and see the troops who are hidden there, Sam's seed of doubt... The troops are ARMY CAPS PLACED ON POLES, KITCHEN KNIVES AFFIXED TO BROOMSTICKS, a COAT FITTED AROUND A SHRUB. A TRICK, A PHANTOM ARMY.

IN THE BATTLE

The British army is more and more confused, getting contradictory orders.

COCKBURN fires at an American soldier advancing on him. He reins his horse to the side and looks in the direction of the harbor.

COCKBURN
Their lines should be under fire from the harbor. Where the devil are the ships?

EXT. CHESAPEAKE BAY - DAY

From above, the massive British fleet, perhaps 40 ships, fills the screen. Towering masts rigged at full sail. This is our first view of the British Navy in force, the navy that rules the oceans and has built an empire.

EXT. HMS ALBION QUARTERDECK - DAY

Norris is standing on deck, attended by Lieutenant McGrath.

NORRIS
Take the flotilla into position.

CUT TO:

ON DECK

A MIDSHIPMAN hoists SIGNAL FLAGS to inform the other ships of the command. A GREEN and WHITE banner, a prearranged signal.

CUT TO:

UP IN THE CROW'S NEST

A LOOKOUT with a SPYGLASS sees something ahead, then takes another look without the glass.

LOOKOUT
Lieutenant!

EXT. HMS ALBION QUARTERDECK

McGrath hurries to Norris, surrounded by several other Officers.

MCGRATH
Your Grace. I think you should take a look at this.

McGrath hands Norris his spyglass.

MCGRATH
It's a reef, Your Grace.

NORRIS
There are no reefs here. They'd be on our charts.

He lifts the spyglass. His POV: the MASTS AND TANGLE OF THE SUNKEN MERCHANT SHIPS OF BALTIMORE. Poking out of the water, a nautical graveyard. A barricade.

MCGRATH
Our bomb ketches can't pass through that, Your Grace.

NORRIS
We will have to take the city from the west.

MCGRATH
That course takes us straight beneath Fort McHenry.

NORRIS

Then we will destroy it.

He steps forward, speaks to the Officers.

NORRIS

All ships set course for the fort.

MCGRATH

But the troops, Your Grace. They're counting on the cover of our guns.

NORRIS

General Ross's army can fend for itself.

EXT. HAMPSTEAD HILL - DAY

THE BATTLEGROUND

A British Soldier falls, his cap coming loose on impact. He can't be more than 16 years old.

The Americans are gaining the upper hand on the field.

British dead lie on the ground, stepped on by other struggling British troops.

POV as Cockburn surveys the scene: the famed British military precision has utterly broken down. The men are fighting on their heels, the Americans continuing to press at them.

Finally, Cockburn turns his horse and rides to Brooke.

COCKBURN

You must order the retreat!

Brooke flashes at Cockburn.

BROOKE

The bombardment from the harbor is about to begin! We have to hold!

COCKBURN

Something's gone wrong, Brooke! The ships aren't coming! Call the retreat!

Brooke shakes his head. He's like a man possessed. He won't do it. Cockburn turns to the BUGLER who is attending Brooke.

COCKBURN
(to the BUGLER)
Sound the retreat!

The Bugler doesn't move. He only has ears for Brooke.

Cockburn pulls out his PISTOL, cocks it, points it at the Bugler's head. Now the Bugler lifts his horn. He sputters at first but then SOUNDS THE RETREAT.

The British Army begins to pull back, in the direction it came from.

CUT TO:

AT THE EARTHWORKS

From the POV of the Second Line, the remaining regiments can see that the British are RETREATING. The Americans raise their rifles and HUZDAH.

ON THE BATTLEFIELD

The fighting diminishes as the British retire, and the Americans on the field, exhausted, huzzah as well.

A Soldier grabs PUTNAM and kisses him on the cheek.

Clay shoots his gun in the air in celebration.

JOHN, someone else's blood on his face, his uniform disheveled, catches his breath and shakes his head in disbelief.

A MILITIA MAN falls to his knees, praying.

An OLDER MAN cradles a DEAD YOUNGER MAN in his arms. They might be father and son.

EXT. HOSPITAL CAMP - AFTERNOON

SAM's POV: He comes to. Margaret's face is staring down at him.

MARGARET
(quietly)
How do you feel?

She takes his hand and he squeezes hers.

SAM
(Have you seen) John?

Margaret shakes her head. She hasn't seen him.

MARGARET

They're retreating, Sam. Everyone's saying that we've won. We've turned them back.

Sam's expression turns grave.

SAM

No, we haven't. Not yet.

MARGARET

Shhh. Rest. Take a drink.

Sam is in pain and exhausted. He whispers.

SAM

Now their ships will head straight for the Fort. And if that falls, they'll enter the city from the west, where we haven't any defenses. They'll punish us for the defeat on the field. They won't take prisoners.

Margaret looks spooked.

SAM

Everything hangs on Fort McHenry.

EXT. FORT MCHENRY - LATE AFTERNOON

VIEW THROUGH A SPYGLASS: the WHITE SAILS of 40 ships turn in unison, like a flock of birds in formation. The ships are turning to face us head-on.

It is the POV of MAJOR ARMISTEAD.

ARMISTEAD

They've figured it out. Looks like our dance card is full-up.

Armistead turns to CHANDLER, an Officer, standing next to him.

ARMISTEAD

Prepare the 18 pounders, but hold your fire. They're still out of range.

Just then, there is a WHIRRING SOUND above them followed by a MASSIVE EXPLOSION.

A CANNONBALL from a British ship has not only reached the fort -- it's OVERSHOT it, and DETONATED beyond it.

CHANDLER

That's impossible. There isn't a cannon in the world with that kind of range.

Armistead is bewildered.

ARMISTEAD

Apparently, there is now.

Another WHIR, another OVERSHOT CANNONBALL.

ARMISTEAD

And more than one.

INT. ARTILLERY DECK - DUSK

A HULKING MUNITIONS OPERATOR loads a 42 POUND CANNON, one of the Super-cannons we saw unloaded earlier. Six other SAILORS roll it forward through its gunport. Another SAILOR lights a fuse. They cover their ears and brace for the ... KABOOM!

CUT TO:

EXT. HMS ALBION - DUSK

Now we see the DISCHARGE from the ship, which jolts the entire massive vessel.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHESAPEAKE BAY - DUSK

And now, we pull out to see that FOUR OTHER SHIPS OF THE LINE are discharging shots with their own 42 POUNDERS, their own Super-cannons.

EXT. FORT MCHENRY - DUSK

Back at the fort, the shots have begun to find their targets. KABOOM! A huge EXPLOSION at a BACK WALL of the star-shaped fort. Stone and earth fly up into the air.

Meanwhile, FIFTY SOLDIERS are manning their positions at the front walls.

The shots are getting closer. And then, a sudden IMPACT at the front of the fort, and the stone walls SHAKE.

EXT. HOSPITAL CAMP - DUSK

The camp grows more crowded as the WOUNDED from Hampstead Hill are brought in large numbers. BANNISTER ties off a SUTURE on a SOLDIER's ARM, and a VOLUNTEER NURSE begins to clean the wound, pouring alcohol on it.

A NEW WIDOW weeps over the body of her husband, laid out on the ground among the rows of casualties.

Margaret, washing a compress, looks up and sees JOHN, still in his muddy, bloody battle uniform. She immediately embraces him, holding back her tears.

JOHN

How is he?

MARGARET

(quietly, gently)

He's in the back. Go and see him.

She points to the far end of the camp.

CUT TO:

SAM watches VOLUNTEER ORDERLIES place a sheet over the head of the BLOODIED MAN IN THE COT NEXT TO HIM. They take the body away.

John arrives at his father's cot to find Sam wearing a bandage on his head, looking at the empty cot.

JOHN

Being a Senator is a perilous job these days.

Sam turns his head and sees his son.

SAM

Well, I got a paper cut.

The Volunteer Orderlies are moving a NEW PATIENT onto the newly vacant cot.

Sam and John look at each other for a moment. They still haven't quite learned to master these quiet father/son moments.

JOHN

I'll get you some water.

John leaves, revealing that the NEW PATIENT in the cot next to Sam is ... TOM ORTH, the former commander of Fort McHenry.

ORTH

What happened to you, General?

Sam turns and sees Orth. Of all the possible neighbors. Sam ignores the question.

SAM

I heard your company was hit pretty hard, Major.

ORTH

Well it wasn't afternoon tea.

Orth stares at the roof of the tent.

ORTH

They'll be having quite a night at McHenry. No hard feelings, mind you.

SAM

Just pray they can hold out.

ORTH

Aw, they'll hold out. Those walls are rock-solid. Our guns can fire all night with all that extra powder.

SAM

What extra powder?

Orth turns to Sam and whispers conspiratorially.

ORTH

See, whenever the Inspector General came round, I hid our gun powder in the provisions shed. That way he'd re-supply us.

SAM

Provisions shed?

ORTH

We had these empty flour sacks, stacked 'em ten high in the back--

SAM

(overlapping)
How many sacks?

ORTH

Oh, bout three years' worth. Seventy or eighty I reckon.

Sam looks stunned. He's doing a calculation in his head.

SAM
You mean to tell me there are two
tons of explosives in an
unprotected shed?

ORTH
Yah, bout two. Maybe two and a
half.

John has now returned with a bowl of water.

JOHN
I couldn't find any mugs, so I--
John realizes he's walking into a tense situation.

SAM
(to Orth, dangerously)
If anything happens to those men,
you will answer for it.

He turns to John.

SAM
I need to ride out to Fort McHenry.

JOHN
Father, you're in no shape to--

SAM
(quietly)
You don't understand. One direct
hit, and the Brits won't have to
take the fort -- because the whole
place and everyone in it will blow
to the sky.

JOHN
What do you mean?

SAM
They're sitting on a powder keg out
there and they don't know it.

INT. FORT MCHENRY - NIGHT

INSIDE THE PROVISIONS SHED.

EXPLOSIONS rock the ground like a series of earthquakes as a
SOLDIER rushes into the provisions shed to grab a skin of
water.

In the foreground are the SACKS MARKED FLOUR that we saw earlier, stacked ten high. They have now taken on a sinister aspect -- a powder keg in plain view.

EXT. ON THE RAMPARTS - NIGHT

An AMERICAN ARTILLERYMAN lights a fuse and a CANNON discharges.

CUT TO:

BENNETT, a tall ARTILLERY CAPTAIN, rushes up to Armistead, keeping low behind the fortress walls, and trying to stay steady amidst the impacts. The men have to shout to be heard above the detonations.

BENNETT

Sir, our shots aren't hitting!
They're still out of range!

ARMISTEAD

Keep firing! We can't sit here like
pigeons in a cage to be shot at!

EXT. HOSPITAL CAMP - NIGHT

It has begun to rain. Sam and Margaret are at the edge of the hospital camp. John has gone to get two horses.

MARGARET

Send someone else.

SAM

I can't, Margaret. They know me.
They know my face.

MARGARET

Write an order.

SAM

There isn't time.

MARGARET

You want to go riding into a
bombardment? For God's sake, you've
done everything that anyone could
ask of you, more--

SAM

It's not over yet--

MARGARET

God is cruel, Sam, but He's allowed you to survive this. Don't tempt Him to change His mind. (turning to John) John, don't let him go!

JOHN

(quietly)

He has to go, mother. He's needed.

Now Sam steps forward, kisses Margaret on the forehead, and then Margaret is alone.

John tries to help Sam up onto his horse, but Sam stops him.

Sam mounts the horse by himself, to prove that he can, and he and John go riding off. Margaret, wet from the rain, puts her hand over her mouth and turns. She can't bear to watch them go.

EXT. HMS ALBION - NIGHT

Admiral NORRIS is watching the bombardment from the deck of his ship. Periodically the ship SHAKES with the detonations of its cannons, but he stands like a pillar, the axis of the 40 ships around him.

EXT. FORT MCHENRY - NIGHT

In the thick of the bombardment. Rain, smoke and fire.

An AMERICAN CANNON is hit head-on from an incoming EXPLODING SHELL, and the Cannon and its Operator are BLOWN TO BITS.

Another SHELL hits, and a piece of the fort's SOUTH WALL COLLAPSES.

CHANDLER

Sir, what should we do?

Yet another shell EXPLODES directly against the wall next to Armistead. The fort absorbs the shock.

ARMISTEAD

Nothing. Except wait, and hope she'll hold.

Armistead's eyes move down the fort's wall and back, as if assessing its strength. Against the wall, he sees BENNETT crouched, terrified. BENNETT sneaks a DRINK from a FLASK.

Armistead gets an idea.

ARMISTEAD
(sharply)
Bennett!

Bennett turns, discovered.

ARMISTEAD
Give me that flask!

EXT. ROAD TO FORT MCHENRY - NIGHT

John and Sam gallop as fast through the rain. Sam is weak, and holds the reins, using them to steady himself as much as to steady his horse.

The thunderous SOUND OF THE BOMBARDMENT can be heard in the near distance.

Suddenly, a HERD OF DEER bound out onto the road, fleeing the sounds of the attack. Sam's HORSE starts and rears up, nearly throwing him off.

John turns to try and help, but Sam has already regained control. They gallop onward.

EXT. FORT MCHENRY - NIGHT

A hand throws an American UNIFORM COAT on top of a pile of twenty other coats. And then douses the pile using Bennett's FLASK, which we saw earlier. The hand belongs to Armistead.

Down the wall of the fort, there are TWO OTHER PILES OF COATS, and Coat-less Soldiers are pouring RUM from large bottles onto those piles.

Armistead lights a match, throws it onto the pile. He lights another, does the same. Soon the pile of coats has ignited into a blaze. The men struggle to keep the flames alive in the rain.

ARMISTEAD
Cease your fire! All positions,
cease your fire!

EXT. HMS ALBION - NIGHT

POV from a SPYGLASS: Fort McHenry by the light of rockets and explosions. THREE FIRES are burning on the battlement. It is the point of view of McGrath.

McGrath puts down his glass, rushes to Norris.

MCGRATH

Sir, there are flames on the ramparts and their cannons are silent. We must have taken out the eastern guns.

NORRIS

Halt the rocket fire and send in the *Weser*, *Tonnant*, and *Trave*.

MCGRATH

Aye aye, sir.

NORRIS

We'll move in for the kill.

EXT. FORT MCHENRY - NIGHT

The rain has begun to abate and the MEN are trying to keep the FIRES going, throwing in anything that will burn.

A SOLDIER is chopping up a WOODEN BARROW with an axe, and another SOLDIER is tossing the pieces onto the fire.

ARMISTEAD

They're not firing their rockets.
They're taking the bait.

The rain clouds have begun to move out to sea, and the moon peeks out between them. By the faint moonlight, Armistead, through a gun port, can see the THREE BRITISH SHIPS approaching.

CHANDLER

Sir?

ARMISTEAD

(looking through a gun
port)

Not yet. Wait till they're in range.

EXT. HMS TONNANT - NIGHT

The *Tonnant* is moving quietly through the Bay on its approach to Fort McHenry, followed close behind by the *Weser* and the *Trave*. Through the fog, like ghost ships.

It is eerily quiet as they sail toward the fort, which seems to be dead except for the FIRES burning.

EXT. FORT MCHENRY - NIGHT

Armistead and his men are playing possum, laying low.

A tense moment. Then another. Then Armistead looks out at the three approaching ships, lifts his finger... points at Chandler.

ARMISTEAD

NOW!!!!

CHANDLER

FIRE!!!!

ALL THE CANNONS ON THE EASTERN RAMPART OPEN FIRE.

EXT. HMS TONNANT - NIGHT

And the cannon shells begin hitting with pinpoint accuracy.

EXPLOSIONS on the British Ships.

Cries. SAILORS thrown overboard.

The SPLINTERING sound of a shell piercing the foredeck.

A shell CUTS THE MAIN MAST of the Trave, and the entire MAST FALLS, crushing several MEN.

EXT. HMS ALBION - NIGHT

NORRIS is on deck, watching at a distance as his three attack ships are shelled from the fort. He realizes he's been tricked. For the first time in the film, Norris loses his cool.

NORRIS

Resume the bombardment! Double your fire!

EXT. WOODS BEHIND FORT MCHENRY - NIGHT

Sam and John are nearing the fort, where the SHELLING is now almost unbearable.

The WOODS around the fort are ablaze. It seems as if Sam and John's horses are taking them into an inferno. The ground itself seems to be on fire, and the noise of the bombardment is maddening.

They ride into the clearing behind the fort and dismount. A shell EXPLODES nearby, spraying them with dirt and rock. Sam winces. Something has hit his leg. But he keeps going.

The two SENTRIES at the entrance to the fort aim their rifles at the two shadowy figures coming toward him. Then a rocket lights up the field and the faces of the figures. One of the Sentries squints at the nearest figure.

SENTRY 1

General?

EXT. INSIDE FORT MCHENRY - NIGHT

The fort is sustaining its WORST BOMBARDMENT YET. All the furor of Norris's firepower.

A SHELL bursts through the wall defenses, explodes, and severs the leg of a Soldier. Dazed, the man tries to stand up.

Sentry 1 leads Sam -- half-running, half-limping -- and John toward the front wall, where Armistead is positioned. Armistead turns recognizes Sam, is shocked.

ARMISTEAD

Sir, what are you doing here?!

SAM

Where's the provisions shed?!

Right as Sam says this, a SHELL explodes nearby, drowning out the words, so Armistead can't hear him.

ARMISTEAD

Sir?

SAM

The PROVISIONS SHED!

ARMISTEAD

It's there, sir!

He points to a nearby ROUND BRICK STRUCTURE WITH A WOODEN ROOF. Another SHELL explodes.

SAM

It's full of gunpowder! Empty it out!

ARMISTEAD

WHAT??!!!

SAM

The sacks of flour are gunpowder!
Get them out of there!

Yet another SHELL EXPLODES just feet from the Provisions Shed. Armistead looks terrified.

CUT TO:

INT. PROVISIONS SHED/EXT. FORT MCHENRY - NIGHT

A HAND-TO-HAND MOVING OPERATION. ALL AVAILABLE MEN, including Sam, John, and Armistead, are tossing GUNPOWDER SACKS from man to man, sandbag fashion. The bags are passed from inside the shed, down the line, and are placed in an underground cellar in the courtyard of the fort.

The ground shakes as SHELLS continue to explode around them.

Trickles of GUNPOWDER are falling from two of the sacks. Every bit as dangerous as Sam said.

Now, the unbearable sound of the shelling fades out, and the motion slows so that the movements of the men become almost balletic.

We begin to hear the sound of a BEETHOVEN VIOLIN SONATA, the one John was playing earlier.

SLOW-MOTION MONTAGE as we cut to:

A British SHELL explodes next to a SOLDIER on the ramparts. His entire body CATCHES FIRE and we see him SCREAM and FLAIL.

The GROOM SHED where the fort's HORSES are kept has caught fire and the hay burns. A YOUNG GROOM opens a wooden stable door and lets the horses go. One of them rears up -- a detail from Guernica.

The sonata montage continues in BALTIMORE:

The FACES of WOMEN and CHILDREN at windows, the window panes shaking, their faces illuminated by the distant rockets' red glare.

In ST. PAUL's CHURCH SPIRE, a PRIEST watches the distant lights.

A MOTHER holds her CHILD in the child's bedroom, as outside the night illuminates, like flashes of morning.

On the earthworks, a TIRED, BLOODIED SOLDIER is lit by the deadly fireworks, his expression haunted.

And at the Hospital Camp, we settle on a CLOSE UP of MARGARET, and the lights of the distant battle are reflected in her eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. HMS ALBION LOWER DECK - NIGHT

Now the HULKING MUNITIONS OPERATOR we saw earlier loads a 42 POUNDER and...

WE TAKE ON THE POV OF THE CANNONBALL:

WE GO INTO THE BARREL.

KABOOM! THE DISCHARGE, and the sonata ends.

FOR A SPLIT SECOND, WE ARE BLINDED BY SMOKE.

AND THEN WE ARE IN THE NIGHT SKY, ABOVE THE SMOKE.

RISING TOWARD THE FAINT STARS.

AND NOW WE ARE COMING DOWN.

ROCKETS BURST BENEATH US.

THE FORT IS FAST APPROACHING.

THERE IS THE DISTINCTIVE ROUND ROOF OF THE PROVISIONS SHED.

CLOSER, CLOSER. THE ROOF IS RUSHING UP TO MEET US.

If we find our target and explode, Sam dies, John dies, Fort McHenry falls, Baltimore falls, and the re-conquest of America begins...

AND SURE ENOUGH WE CRASH THROUGH THE ROOF... A SPLINTERING IMPACT ... AND ALL GOES SILENT.

INT. PROVISIONS SHED - NIGHT

A GHOSTLY WHITE MIST.

A tableau. Sam, John, and the other men are frozen, sacks in their hands, staring at the place where the CANNONBALL struck a pile of sacks.

What are these white clouds? Is this a dream sequence? Are the men in heaven?

The ghostly dust settles, covering each man with a white film. A SOLDIER rubs the film in his hand.

SOLDIER

Flour.

Now Sam, John, and the men realize what's happened. The shell has hit a pile of ACTUAL FLOUR SACKS, not gunpowder. The men begin shouting, crying, clasping each other. For a moment, they look like children playing in snow. Sam and John look into each other's eyes. They are alive.

EXT. CHESAPEAKE BAY - DAWN

Seagulls are beginning to call.

The first signs of dawn in the eastern sky.

EXT. HMS ALBION - DAWN

Cockburn arrives at the Albion on a rowboat, and climbs the LADDER to the deck. The ship shakes with the FIRING of a cannon on the port side.

CUT TO:

THE UPPER DECK

Norris is standing where we last left him, almost in a trance. Cockburn approaches him. Norris takes in Cockburn and turns back in the direction of Fort McHenry, speaks without looking at him.

NORRIS

Briefly, Cockburn, why did you fail?

COCKBURN

Briefly, Your Grace, we were left to hang. Briefly, we received no support from your ships.

Norris shakes his head.

NORRIS

You and Ross were turned back by farmers and shopboys with guns.

McGrath approaches Norris.

MCGRATH

Your Grace?

NORRIS
Increase the fire.

MCGRATH
We can't, Your Grace. Our 42
pounders are out of shells.

NORRIS
Then increase the fire from the
Royal Oak and *Meneleus*.

MCGRATH
They shot their last ten minutes
ago. The only way to continue the
bombardment is to go in closer.

Just then, we hear the near-simultaneous sound of FIVE
CANNONS FIRING from Fort McHenry. And in the near distance,
FIVE impressive SPLASHES leap from the water, as if daring
the ships to cross a line.

COCKBURN
How about it, Your Grace? Just a
bunch of farmers and shopboys with
guns.

A long pause. Norris taps against the deck with his walking
stick.

NORRIS
(to McGrath)
Turn the ships around.

EXT. FORT MCHENRY - MORNING

SOLDIER
They're turning around! The ships
are turning around!

EXULTANT CHEERS ring out among the men in the fort.

Sam, looking much the worse for wear, smiles broadly, though
he could probably fall asleep on his feet. John throws his
arms around his father and they share a warm and exhausted
embrace.

Armistead looks up at the battered STORM FLAG flying above.
He turns to Bennett, standing nearby.

ARMISTEAD

Raise the large flag. I want the
British to have no trouble seeing
it from a distance.

CUT TO:

The tattered STORM FLAG, flying against the early morning
sky, is lowered from its pole.

DETAIL of MEN attaching another banner to a rope.

EXT. HMS ALBION QUARTERDECK - MORNING

Norris and Cockburn face back toward the fort as their ship
departs.

We can see by the dawn's early light a GIANT AMERICAN FLAG
slowly, deliberately, rising over the ramparts in the
distance.

Norris puts one hand behind his back and walks off, and the
sound of his walking stick striking the deck grows gradually
fainter.

Cockburn remains, continuing to look at Fort McHenry.

CUT TO:

EXT. FORT MCHENRY - MORNING

A landscape image of the Fort standing, unbroken, at the edge
of the promontory, waves breaking beneath. We can hear the
dimming of CHEERS inside the structure, and finally all grows
quiet, only the sound of waves and seagulls. Snapping in the
wind, the FLAG is still there.

And we begin to hear the sound of a BROOM sweeping a floor.

FADE TO:

INT. BELMONT - MORNING

Margaret is in the kitchen, industriously cleaning her house.
She rubs sweat from her brow. She is trying to keep busy as
she awaits news, perhaps bad news.

She hears Jonesy begin to bark.

Margaret leaves the kitchen, still carrying the broom, and
goes to the front door, opens it.

EXT. BELMONT - MORNING

Margaret stares down the path. A mist has settled on the woods beyond. She freezes, her knuckles white on the broom. She keeps her eyes trained on the mist, and a FIGURE ON HORSEBACK emerges.

And then ANOTHER.

Close-up of Margaret.

She lets the broom fall out of her hand, and we track with her, out of the doorway, down the porch stairs, down the path, over grass, and finally into the arms of SAM, who has dismounted. She holds fast to Sam, then reaches out to embrace John too. They remain like this for a long time.

At last John steps back and Margaret turns to Sam. He takes her face in his hands and kisses her. Behind them, John holds the reins of his horse, watching his parents together.

CUT TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK, WE BEGIN TO HEAR THE SOUND OF A VOICE IN FULL ORATORY.

GEORGIA SENATOR (V.O.)
What I would ask my distinguished
colleague from New Hampshire is the
following.

We are in the ...

INT. FLOOR OF THE SENATE - DAY

We begin looking at the BLUE SKY through a charred opening in the roof. A session is taking place inside the ruins of the United States Senate Chamber.

GEORGIA SENATOR (O.S.)
What good is a tariff on textiles
if the excise tax remains at seven
percent?

We pan down to see that all the rich tapestries are gone, the chandeliers aren't there, and the entire upper balcony is missing. The finely-hewn chairs we saw earlier have been replaced by simple benches. Daylight entering through the roof gives the room a brighter aspect.

GEORGIA SENATOR
How will our molasses trade be
supported by such draconian
measures?

The back door of the chamber opens, and SAM SMITH enters.

Sam now uses a walking stick and moves with a slight limp. There is a MURMUR in the crowd as those nearest the door take note of his entrance.

As he proceeds down the aisle someone STANDS UP to see him.

Now ANOTHER SENATOR stands up, then another, then another, until the entire assembly is on its feet, turned to face Sam Smith.

GEORGIA SENATOR
Now, in the bill before this
chamber, there are explicit
provisions for --

Now noticing the change in the room, the Georgia Senator stops mid-sentence. He looks at Sam. He nods, and for a moment there is a hush in the room, all eyes on Sam, all Senators standing in quiet respect.

Sam, visibly moved, nods back at the speaker. Then at the rest of his colleagues. And then he takes his seat. We linger on him.

Now we pull out to a wide shot of the charred, daylit room as the Georgia Senator proceeds with his speech, the imperfect machinery of democracy again in motion. The voice of the Senator fades.

TITLES appear over the scene:

After being turned back at Baltimore, the British abandoned plans for further attacks on the east coast of the United States. On December 25, 1814, the U.S. and Great Britain signed the Treaty of Ghent, ending what is now known as the War of 1812.

Secretary of War Armstrong was removed from his post amidst calls by the press to try him on charges of treason for his incompetence and mishandling of the war.

The picture fades out.

British Admiral George Cockburn retired from the Royal Navy shortly after the defeat at Baltimore.

The identity of the young American sniper who shot General Ross remains a mystery. His name was never learned.

EXT. BALTIMORE HARBOR - MAGIC HOUR

A small, lone fishing boat on the harbor. Sitting inside, with his line cast, nearly in silhouette, is Sam.

Sam Smith was re-elected to the U.S. Senate in November of 1814. He went on to serve in the Senate until his death, fifteen years later.

Now, another figure leans up with a newly-baited fishing rod to join him. It is John.

In the light of the setting sun, it seems inconceivable that those still waters had ever been disturbed by cannon fire.

His only memorial is a small statue on Baltimore Common.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END.