

the battle of new orleans.

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based on the book PATRIOTIC FIRE by Winston Groom
Madhouse Entertainment

01/30/15

FADE IN:

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. - DUSK

The sun sets as 4,500 BRITISH REDCOATS march onto Washington.

TITLE: AUGUST 24, 1814

The British soldiers are a sight to behold. Professional, well-trained, orderly. Several haphazardly-dressed AMERICAN MILITIA run from the capital, not even bothering to fire back in defense. The sound of BRITISH WAR DRUMS fills the city.

GENERAL SIR EDWARD PACKENHAM (36) rides forward on his horse. Handsome and strong, Packenham has earned the respect of his veteran troops. He comments after the retreating militia --

GENERAL PACKENHAM

Such cowardice! Their bellies are
as yellow as their teeth!

The men cheer. Packenham eyes the surrounding buildings -- THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, THE CAPITOL, and in the far distance across a great field, THE WHITE HOUSE...

GENERAL PACKENHAM (CONT'D)

Captain, fire your torches! All
public buildings, we shall burn
them straight to the ground!

EXT. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS - DUSK

The British troops approach lighting TORCHES. Several LIBRARY WORKERS are pulled out the front of the building.

Around back, the matronly LIBRARIAN OF CONGRESS meets with an OLD FARMER in the alley. The farmer has a line of PRODUCE CARTS pulled by a tired donkey.

LIBRARIAN OF CONGRESS
For the Patterson farm in Manassas.

The librarian hands over a STACK OF PAPERS. The farmer unceremoniously places the stack in a cart full of apples.

And as the farmer covers the cart with a tarp, we see these aren't just any old papers -- these are the original copies of THE CONSTITUTION and the DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.

The farmer pulls away. The building burns.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - HALLWAY - DUSK

A SERVANT uses a LOOKING GLASS to survey the chaos across the city. The redcoats turn toward the White House.

SERVANT

Mrs. Madison, we best be leaving!

The servant hightails it down a hall and into --

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - MEETING ROOM - DUSK

Where FIRST LADY DOLLEY MADISON (46) is supervising a quick collection of important items from the house.

DOLLEY MADISON

With care, gentlemen! Let's keep it a painting worth our efforts.

Two WORKERS cut out a full-length OIL PAINTING of GEORGE WASHINGTON from its frame hanging on the wall. Other workers carry in sacks full of silver and other wares.

SERVANT

Mrs. Madison, the redcoats.

DOLLEY MADISON

(to the workers)

Carry everything we can. Who knows what they'll see fit to pillage.

VALET

Dinner's already been served ma'am.

DOLLEY MADISON

Then leave it for them. May it be the last hospitality they receive.

EXT. THE WHITE HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Packenham watches as the redcoats use a BATTERING RAM to break down the FRONT DOOR. The British storm the castle.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

The redcoats move from room to room, ransacking as they go. No table is left unturned, no artifact intact.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Packenham arrives at the STATE DINING ROOM. He gives pause -- indeed, a full DINNER has been left served on the table.

SOLDIER
Sir?

The soldiers wait as Packenham tries the soup...

GENERAL PACKENHAM
A fouler meal never tasted so well.
Shame to let it waste.

The soldiers help themselves. Packenham finishes his soup, revealing a victorious scene from THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION etched on the bowl bottom. Packenham SMILES at the irony.

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. - NIGHT

The city is on FIRE. Flames climb high into the sky. The British abandon the WHITE HOUSE and light the exterior walls.

It's unlike anything we've seen... and it actually happened.

Packenham overlooks the carnage from atop his horse. And as a BRITISH UNION JACK is raised over the American capital --

FADE TO BLACK.

THE WAR OF 1812. FORTY YEARS AFTER GAINING INDEPENDENCE, THE UNITED STATES IS ONCE AGAIN AT WAR WITH GREAT BRITAIN.

AFTER RECENTLY DEFEATING NAPOLEON'S ARMIES IN EUROPE, THE BRITISH HAVE REFOCUSED THEIR MILITARY EFFORTS IN AMERICA.

WITH PUBLIC SUPPORT WANING AND THE BURNING OF WASHINGTON, THE UNITED STATES IS IN DANGER OF SURRENDERING TO THE REDCOATS.

THIS IS A TRUE STORY.

EXT. COTTON FIELD - DAY

Deep in the South. A handful of SLAVES works the fields.

TITLE: MOBILE, ALABAMA

A young BOY turns his head and sees a THOUSAND AMERICAN TROOPS making their way down a country road. The boy waves to the troops, but the troops are too tired to wave back.

They've been on a journey. Of the thousand, about 400 are regular enlisted men, while the rest are ragtag militia.

And even though some look like they'd be pretty good in a fight, just from their disposition marching through the hot sun, it's clear -- the British redcoats, these men are not.

CAPTAIN
Company, halt!

The men do, a few immediately taking a knee and drinking from dry canteens. The CAPTAIN surveys an area over the ridge ahead of them as a man rides up on his HORSE from the rear...

Distinguished, but considerably rough around the edges, this is MAJOR GENERAL ANDREW JACKSON (47). Once a militia man from Tennessee, Jackson is now a commissioned officer in the UNITED STATES ARMY and for lack of a better word, a hard ass.

ANDREW JACKSON
Captain, these men aren't scheduled
to break for another --

But Jackson stops when he sees it. The quaint French-Spanish city of MOBILE sits before them on a bay off the GULF COAST.

CAPTAIN
We're here, General.

ANDREW JACKSON
Good. I need a drink.

EXT. MCKINLEY'S ALE HOUSE - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING

A corner TAVERN. Quite a rowdy crowd has gathered inside.

INT. MCKINLEY'S ALE HOUSE - NIGHT

A wide swatch of TOWNSPEOPLE. A few of Jackson's OFFICERS and ENLISTED MEN drink at nearby tables, happy to have reached their destination. Dependable BRIGADIER-GENERAL JOHN COFFEE (45) finishes his beer and looks across the room...

And sees Jackson sitting ALONE at the bar separated from his men. The BARTENDER pours Jackson a shot. Jackson drinks.

ANDREW JACKSON
Again.

Down the bar a few LOCALS are engaged in drunken discussion. Jackson can't help but listen with half an ear.

MUSTACHE

Invade Canada -- that was their
brilliant plan? The currish louts!

WIRE RIM GLASSES

Brits turned us away at Montreal,
marched straight through Maine --

MUSTACHE

Maine has fallen by God! Maine is
gone! I barely even knew her.

MUSTACHE raises a glass in a faux-toast. Everyone drinks.

TALL MAN

Word from Washington is ten times
worse. The nancy boy Northerners --

MUSTACHE

Couldn't even hold the damn capital
city! Their militia run like dogs
without even firing a shot!

TALL MAN

Dolley Madison a better leader than
her windbag husband. The rest of
the lot, throw 'em into the fire.

WIRE RIM GLASSES

Best be practicing our salute to
the King and the Queen. Up yer
ass, yer Majesties, our leaders
were no better than you I reckon.

One of the men with them is an eager NEWSPAPERMAN (22). He
eyes Jackson at the bar. The newspaperman sidles over.

NEWSPAPERMAN

My apologies. General Jackson?
Don't mean to be interrupting --

ANDREW JACKSON

Then you've failed already.

NEWSPAPERMAN

Saw your men march in town today.
Came from Fort Jackson after the
battle with the Creeks. Big deal
there, sir. Lots of land had.

Jackson shoots the newspaperman an annoyed look over his
glass -- *who are you and why are you bothering me?*

NEWSPAPERMAN (CONT'D)

Pardon my manners. Bertram Iger, sir, *Mobile Register*. As long as you're here, would appreciate a quote about the state of the war --

ANDREW JACKSON

(re: the locals)

Your companions know more than I. Put their names in the paper.

But the newspaperman won't be denied.

NEWSPAPERMAN

The British strong through Canada and the Atlantic, the Spanish with a hold in Florida and the Indians still terrorizing the West. There are whispers the redcoats who defeated Napoleon himself have already set sail --

ANDREW JACKSON

Exactly how old are you, Mr. Iger?

NEWSPAPERMAN

Twenty-two.

ANDREW JACKSON

And what have you done besides ask questions of this war? Ever fired a pistol or been in battle?

NEWSPAPERMAN

No, sir.

ANDREW JACKSON

Then seeing as you have nothing substantial to add, tell your friends there and readers thus -- the blood of our Founding Fathers was not shed to kneel before a King and Queen forty years hence. And any man who disagrees is as stupid as he is a burden to the air I do breathe. Now if you'll excuse me, I will return to the manner I was before your admitted interruption.

Through this an ARMY MESSENGER has arrived behind Jackson and handed Brigadier-General Coffee a long-winded LETTER. Coffee reads as the newspaperman steps away from the bar --

But the newspaperman just can't let it go. He turns back --

ANDREW JACKSON (CONT'D)
You're a down-right nuisance.

NEWSPAPERMAN
(a bit of gossip)
The Benton Brothers? Your duel?
Please, General, the story lives to
be passed in rooms like this. Will
you confirm, even off the record --

JOHN COFFEE (O.S.)
General.

Coffee is there with the letter. He hands it to Jackson.
Jackson reads. The newspaperman is keenly interested...

Jackson finally finishes. He slams his fist against the bar.

NEWSPAPERMAN
Good news?

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Jackson walks the hall with his officers from the bar. They knock on bedroom doors, waking the rest of his high-command.

A door opens revealing prim LIEUTENANT DANIEL ADLER (38) in his bed-clothes. Adler fusses with his glasses.

DANIEL ADLER
This couldn't wait until morning?

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - ROOM - NIGHT

A room too small for so many men. Everyone is gathered around a table as Coffee reads the letter by candlelight.

JOHN COFFEE
"Natives of Louisiana. On you the
first call is made to assist in
liberating from a faithless and
imbecile government your paternal
soul. The American usurpation in
this country must be abolished --

ANDREW JACKSON
Usurpation my bleeding arse.

Jackson is pouring SHOTS OF WHISKEY for the officers just woken out of bed. Adler shakes his head in refusal.

JOHN COFFEE

-- I am at the head of a large body of Indians, well armed, disciplined and commanded by British officers."

OFFICER

An Indian in a redcoat! That would be a sight!

The officers laugh at the prospect.

JOHN COFFEE

"Seconded by the powerful aid of numerous British and Spanish Ships and Vessels of War." And it goes on like this... for quite awhile. Sent to every town and city two hundred miles within the Purchase.

ANDREW JACKSON

When did the British move onto Pensacola?

JOHN COFFEE

Our spies have them boarded six weeks ago in the Spanish garrison.

This point riles Jackson.

ANDREW JACKSON

The *comandante* there, Garcia, as spineless a man I ever met. Had nerve to call me "impertinent".

DANIEL ADLER

General, this is not an unexpected development. The British were want to encroach on the South, our orders are still to remain here.

Jackson unfurls a MAP of the southern U.S. on the table.

ANDREW JACKSON

Our orders are months old. If the British have indeed moved here -- (points to Pensacola)

They will most certainly move here.

JOHN COFFEE

New Orleans.

ANDREW JACKSON

The key to the Mississippi and this country's future freedom.

(MORE)

ANDREW JACKSON (CONT'D)

If the British take the River, they will surround us on all sides. And with this "proclamation", a declaration to turn our citizens against us -- I've seen it tonight in that tavern, these men have the constitution of a hot house flower. The people will fall if we let them, not to say anything of the British sending the same Indians we've defeated against us. We must march onto Pensacola immediately.

Furtive glances around the room. That was unexpected.

JOHN COFFEE

Sir, while I principally agree, the men are tired. We've fought many battles and travelled many miles --

ANDREW JACKSON

And I was there for all of them, General Coffee, lest you forget.

DANIEL ADLER

At least send word to Washington --

ANDREW JACKSON

Or Philadelphia or New York or wherever the government now sits and wait three months for a reply? If so there will be tea down our throats by New Year.

DANIEL ADLER

Perhaps. But Mobile is between Pensacola and New Orleans, General. Let us gather, rest and prepare, then we will fight. It's the most prudent course of action.

ANDREW JACKSON

Wars, like women, Lieutenant, are rarely won with prudence.

And as the men realize their stay here will be short-lived --

ANDREW JACKSON (V.O.)

My dearest Rachel --

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - ROOM - MORNING

Jackson in his dressing clothes. He writes a letter.

ANDREW JACKSON (V.O.)

I write with apologies, my beloved wife, for circumstances have changed and we must delay our inevitable reunion.

EXT. STAGING GROUND - DAY

Jackson's men preparing to MARCH. They are not happy.

ANDREW JACKSON (V.O.)

The British have moved onto Florida and I have no recourse but to move them out. The men, of course, are disagreeable, but our duty does not care for our disposition.

Jackson rides through the yard. The soldiers are respectful with their greetings, but there's clearly no love lost here.

DANIEL ADLER

(as Jackson passes)

Old Hickory bastard.

EXT. SPANISH GARRISON - DAY

In Pensacola. The BRITISH and SPANISH FLAGS fly at the same height over the stronghold. COLONEL EDWARD NICHOLLS (36) confers with COMANDANTE FERNANDO GARCIA (54) behind the wall.

ANDREW JACKSON (V.O.)

I wish only to be with you and the children again, but Colonel Edward Nicholls, a British scant of a man, a fly, has made that impossible.

Behind them two dozen RED CREEK INDIANS are being trained by BRITISH COMMANDERS. It's not going well for either party.

EXT. MOBILE BAY - MORNING

The sun rises over the water. Jackson watches from shore as he fingers a small COLONIAL COIN. It means something to him.

ANDREW JACKSON (V.O.)

How is it I've found myself here?
A simple man of the militia. But I shall not stand idle like so many others and watch my country fall.
I have sacrificed far too much for history to remember me as such.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - ROOM - MORNING

Jackson finishes dressing. He is meticulous.

ANDREW JACKSON (V.O.)
I miss you, my love, and my heart
yearns. Please hold me in your
prayers and pass my love to the
children. Your dearest, Andrew.

There's a knock at the door. John Coffee enters.

ANDREW JACKSON
I'm ready.

Jackson heads for the door, but not before --

JOHN COFFEE
Sir -- if I may -- there's over
three hundred miles of shore on our
coast, with myriad routes into New
Orleans, while Nicholls commands
but a small legion of troops --

ANDREW JACKSON
You believe I'm the fool.

JOHN COFFEE
I believe if we move to Pensacola,
the British will move to Mobile or
Biloxi or straight into the River.
They have options, sir, we have
none. And we know no one will come
to our assist. How many times have
we called for reinforcements this
past year and received nothing in
return? No matter how many battles
won, no matter how much land had.

Coffee speaks candidly with Jackson and Jackson, unlike with
others, listens. A friendship formed over many years.

ANDREW JACKSON
We must not let them gain solid
ground, John. Not even a moment.

JOHN COFFEE
The British Armada has sailed,
General. 20,000 troops. Perhaps
more. They have finished with
Napoleon and now they come for you.

ANDREW JACKSON

No. They come for us.

(beat)

Myriad routes, yes, by land and by sea. But with the sea comes marsh. Swamps. Inlets as wide as a man. We move to Pensacola and force them off dry land so into the River they must go. I have seen the British march and I will take my chances with the bog and the mud any day.

JOHN COFFEE

My concern, General, is they are aware of this as well. If we force them into the River, what will we find when we meet them there?

ANDREW JACKSON

The Devil himself But fear not, John, we shall fight.

And as we hear the sound of a BOAT fighting against the sea --

EXT. BARATARIA BAY - MORNING

A BRITISH LONGBOAT is rowed through the rough waters of the Gulf. Behind it waits the imposing brig-sloop *HMS SOPHIE*.

TITLE: BARATARIA BAY - FORTY MILES SOUTH OF NEW ORLEANS

CAPTAIN NICHOLAS LOCKYER (36) and two other BRITISH OFFICERS are on the boat. Lockyer looks through a SPYGLASS toward --

Another BOAT being rowed out to meet them. A tall, handsome WELL-DRESSED MAN (32) stands in the bow while four other men do the rowing. The other men are dressed like, for lack of a better word, PIRATES. Bandanas and brightly colored shirts.

Lockyer shares a look of trepidation with his officers.

EXT. BARATARIA BAY - MORNING

The two boats converge. The British are aghast by the appearance of the disheveled rowers. Lockyer stands --

NICHOLAS LOCKYER

(in French; subtitled)

My name is Captain Nicholas Lockyer, British Royal Navy. I am here to gain audience with the pirate Jean Lafitte.

(MORE)

NICHOLAS LOCKYER (CONT'D)
*We offer your men no harm, though
 we caution you of the closeness of
 our brothers.*

The well-dressed man considers Lockyer a moment. And then --

WELL-DRESSED MAN
I will take you to Lafitte.

EXT. GRAND TERRE ISLAND - BEACH - MORNING

The two boats come on shore at a nearby ISLAND -- an eighteen square-mile sliver off the coast of Louisiana. They are greeted by several hundred men, women and children.

These are the BARATARIANS OF GRANDE TERRE ISLAND. Like the rowers of the boat, they are best equated with traditional PIRATES. Free men of the seas, mostly French in descent.

The island is a WONDERLAND. There are huts and thatched cottages as well as larger homes. Music is played on the beaches, men passed out in the sand from the night before. A fleet of battle-worn PIRATE SHIPS is anchored just off shore.

It is a paradise of a certain kind. To the British, they are decidedly uncomfortable by their surroundings.

WELL-DRESSED MAN
Welcome to Grande Terre.

Lockyer has his hand on his PISTOL as the well-dressed man leads the officers through the CROWD. A few of the rougher Baratarians greet them with jeers and cigar smoke.

The men head up a PATH into the woods. Lockyer eyes a FORT built at the end of the beach well-armed with rows of CANNONS and HEAVY ARTILLERY. They continue onto the island.

EXT. GRAND TERRE ISLAND - LAFITTE'S HOUSE - MORNING

The men finally arrive at a GRAND HOUSE in the trees. It's tastefully constructed with a magnificent wraparound BALCONY.

NICHOLAS LOCKYER
*Is this where we will meet Lafitte?
 I do not wish to be delayed
 further, we are on official
 business of the Crown.*

The well-dressed man turns... then SMILES gregariously. He switches to a slightly French-accented English --

WELL-DRESSED MAN

Messieurs, I am Lafitte. And if it's business you have, we will do so only after a proper breakfast.

EXT. LAFITTE'S HOUSE - DAY - ESTABLISHING

A few hours later. Many of the BARATARIANS from the beach have taken position around Lafitte's house in the trees.

They are clearly interested by what's happening inside. And as LAUGHTER wafts out the open FRENCH DOORS of the balcony --

INT. LAFITTE'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

Lockyer and his officers are finishing up what could only be described as a FEAST. A long dining table has remnants of every type of breakfast food imaginable -- MEATS, FRUITS, PASTRIES -- all served on fine silver with accompanying WINE.

Lafitte sits at the head of the table, relaxed and charming. Next to him are his two brothers -- PIERRE LAFITTE (40) is nebbish and not as handsome as Jean, while DOMINIQUE YOU (33) is Pierre and Jean's half-brother and just a bull of a man.

And while Jean and Pierre are dressed somewhat like businessmen of the time, Dominique is pure RUFFIAN PIRATE.

JEAN LAFITTE

-- we found the sailor shivering in a row boat wearing nothing but his dressing clothes. He paid twice as much to tow him back to his ship!

More laughter. A SERVANT BOY fills Lockyer's cup.

NICHOLAS LOCKYER

Monsieur Lafitte, we must give thanks for such warm hospitality.

JEAN LAFITTE

Please, Captain. It is our nature.

NICHOLAS LOCKYER

Fruit from the West Indies, the best wines of Old Spain. And your wares of the house -- Chinese silk on the table, French silver and crystal. Even -- yes, I'm quite sure -- is that not a British chronometer in the corner?

(MORE)

NICHOLAS LOCKYER (CONT'D)

I believe it is actually, one issued to Her Majesty's trading ships just this past year. Quite rare to be found in residences such as these.

That was casually direct. Lafitte plays it cool.

JEAN LAFITTE

I see we have arrived at the business portion of our encounter.

Lockyer nods -- *and so we have*. One of Lockyer's OFFICERS places a worn HAND-BILL in the center of the table.

JEAN LAFITTE (CONT'D)

Shall I read it or am I to assume --

NICHOLAS LOCKYER

It's a bill. Offering \$500 reward for anyone who may deliver you to Governor Claiborne of Louisiana.

JEAN LAFITTE

Surely you're not here to arrest me -- not after a feast such as this.

NICHOLAS LOCKYER

You're no friend to America.

Dominique You scoffs. He speaks rapidly with heavy accent.

DOMINIQUE YOU

It ain't worth the paper that prick Claiborne had it printed on. We put our own bounty on him! \$5000 anyone delivers *le gouverneur ici!*

NICHOLAS LOCKYER

Yes, quite diplomatic. And he sent word to the President himself about such worrisome "hellish banditi". You are outlaws and always shall be.

Lockyer enjoys being a prick. Dominique is riled further, but Lafitte calms him with a raise of his hand.

JEAN LAFITTE

Captain Lockyer, you say you have business here -- what is it?

NICHOLAS LOCKYER

My colonel, Edward Nicholls, is the first to arrive in the area of many of Her Majesty's men and ships. We are to take New Orleans by land and by sea, conquer the Mississippi and push the inbred Americans into the Atlantic. Now despite your plundering of numerous British and Spanish vessels and disenfranchised status, I am here to offer peace. A full pardon to each of your men, citizenship, protection from all enemies, and for you, Monsieur Lafitte, enlistment as captain in Her Majesty's Royal Navy as well as land in these here colonies.

JEAN LAFITTE

What generosity. And in return?

NICHOLAS LOCKYER

You shall be the key to her front door. You will provide knowledge of these dreadful swamps and guide Her Majesty's forces to the city supplying as many men and munitions as necessary. And for that, Monsieur, you will be invaluable.

There it is. If Lafitte is surprised by Lockyer's offer, he doesn't show it. Pierre and Dominique, not so much.

There's a long beat as Lafitte considers. And then --

JEAN LAFITTE

Do you know, Captain, why earlier I chose not to reveal you my true identity?

NICHOLAS LOCKYER

I assume you preferred to negotiate at your table rather than at sea.

JEAN LAFITTE

(congenial)

Indeed. But it also allowed me to have your throat slit on the beach if I saw fit. I'm no fool, Captain, and neither are you. Invaluable holds little use to me.

Now it's Lockyer who smiles -- he's enjoying this game.

NICHOLAS LOCKYER

In addition, the Crown is willing to pay a generous bounty of thirty thousand British pounds, half before and half after taking the city. That should be more than ample for a man such as yourself.

And for the first time, Lafitte's facade cracks -- if only a little. He quickly regains his composure --

JEAN LAFITTE

What kind of man is that?

NICHOLAS LOCKYER

A pirate, Monsieur Lafitte. One of the most wanted men in the world. Consequently if you do not accept our offer, we will have no choice but to end your existence on this island and hold you and your men accountable in Her Majesty's courts for all prior improprieties.

(beat)

Your table or mine, the deal is a fair one. I suggest you take it.

EXT. LAFITTE'S HOUSE - BALCONY - DAY

Late afternoon. Lockyer and his officers smoke CIGARS on the balcony overlooking Barataria Bay, waiting...

INT. LAFITTE'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

As Lafitte discusses his options with Pierre and Dominique. Dominique spits tobacco into a spittoon.

DOMINIQUE YOU

Bastards, all of 'em. I don't trust 'em one bit.

PIERRE LAFITTE

It's not a matter of trust. Thirty thousand is too large a sum to --

DOMINIQUE YOU

I ain't saying turn it away. Take half and sail, better that than nothing. The rest is shit.

But Pierre is clearly in favor of taking the deal.

PIERRE LAFITTE

They will defeat the Americans with
or without us. Then where will we
be with them hunting us down?

DOMINIQUE YOU

The men will go where Jean tells
'em to go and if you don't think we
can out-sail those cock-suckers --

PIERRE LAFITTE

The Americans have shown us no
allegiance whatsoever. How long
before they roost us from this
nest? We take the deal absolutely.

A moment of silence. Lafitte is deep in thought.

DOMINIQUE YOU

What do you consider, *mon frere*?

JEAN LAFITTE

There is a third option.

EXT. LAFITTE'S HOUSE - BALCONY - DAY

Lockyer notices the growing crowd of BARATARIANS surrounding
the house. Lafitte opens the door behind him.

NICHOLAS LOCKYER

(re: the crowd)

Like moths to the flame.

JEAN LAFITTE

They don't trust you to be with me.

NICHOLAS LOCKYER

I offer sanctuary, Monsieur. You
will be British citizens. You will
finally have a place to call home.

JEAN LAFITTE

Some of my men are American. They
will not take kindly to treachery.

NICHOLAS LOCKYER

The money will help with that.

Lafitte studies Lockyer for a beat, then looks over the bay.

JEAN LAFITTE

You were wrong before, Captain. We
are not pirates. We are
privateers.

NICHOLAS LOCKYER

Is there a difference?

JEAN LAFITTE

Yes. And it is everything.
(beat)
A fortnight. To convince them.
After that, my men and I will be
entirely at your disposal.

Lockyer extends his hand. As Lafitte takes it in his own --

JEAN LAFITTE (V.O.)

Governor Claiborne --

EXT. GRAND TERRE ISLAND - BEACH - DUSK

The BARATARIANS watch as Lockyer and his officers return to
the *HMS Sophie*. Lafitte and his brothers stand to the side.

JEAN LAFITTE (V.O.)

As I am sure my correspondence will
come as a galloping shock, I begin
by professing I am a stray sheep
returning to the fold.

And as Lockyer's LONGBOAT disappears in the distance --

DOMINIQUE YOU

So it begins.

INT. LAFITTE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

By candlelight. Lafitte finishes writing a letter. He puts
the letter in a LEATHER FOLDER with several other DOCUMENTS.

JEAN LAFITTE (V.O.)

I have recently been approached by
one Captain Nicholas Lockyer of Her
Majesty's Royal Navy and was
informed of an immediate plan for
the British to attack New Orleans --

Behind him a sumptuous RED-HEAD enters. She's ready for bed.

EXT. SWAMP - DAY

Dominique You and a few of his LIEUTENANTS trek through the marsh and bog. Dominique carries Lafitte's LEATHER FOLDER.

JEAN LAFITTE (V.O.)
-- the details of which are
enclosed within. Fortunately I
have managed to gain a fortnight
for us to consider them.

The men move with confidence. They come to a fork in the water and take a seemingly harder path over an easier one.

EXT. SWAMP - THE TEMPLE - DAY

The half-way point between Grand Terre and New Orleans. This raised piece of land has been turned into a makeshift BAZAAR.

Several BARATARIANS have set up shop selling smuggled goods to members of NEW ORLEANS HIGH SOCIETY. BARATARIAN WOMEN snuggle up to LAWYERS and DOCTORS as their HOUSEWIVES watch burly PIRATES move purchased wares. It feels like a party.

While the United States government may not shine to the Baratarians, it's clear the people are far more accepting.

JEAN LAFITTE (V.O.)
I have been offered a healthy bribe
to assist in this attack, but I
assure you that my men and I pledge
allegiance only to our home, these
United States of America.

Dominique You arrives. He hands the LEATHER FOLDER to pragmatic lawyer and Lafitte ally EDWARD LIVINGSTON (50).

EXT. FRENCH QUARTER - DAY

Livingston rides on his horse into the FRENCH QUARTER. The Quarter is alive with activity, a multicultural MELTING POT.

JEAN LAFITTE (V.O.)
As to any prior discrepancies, I
would be more than willing to
overlook our differences in order
to save the city we both do love.

INT. GOVERNOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Tempestuous and dramatic GOVERNOR WILLIAM CLAIBORNE (40) finishes reading the letter to his inner-circle of ADVISORS.

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE

"You may speak to Edward Livingston as my representative on this matter as I stay in Barataria and await your orders. With humbleness, Jean Lafitte." That utter scoundrel!

EDWARD LIVINGSTON

Sir, as Monsieur Lafitte's council, I urge you to consider his offer --

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE

From that man?! Never! I should have you disbarred, Livingston, for even speaking with him.

EDWARD LIVINGSTON

If the British do plan to attack, Lafitte can provide intelligence. His men know the swamps, they --

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE

They are wanted by the United States government and it is improper for the Governor of this great state to even enter correspondence with such a man!

Claiborne holds the DOCUMENTS Lafitte received from Lockyer.

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE (CONT'D)

And these "British" letters -- at best forgeries! Lafitte is trying to weasel his way out from justice.

A sycophant LAWYER looks them over as well.

LAWYER

A pirate's trick, obviously. He may be with the British already.

EDWARD LIVINGSTON

I assure you he is not. You and Lafitte have had your battles --

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE

He put a bounty on my head! Commodore Patterson, this here is your impetus. Clear the island.

COMMODORE PATTERSON (32), the local NAVAL COMMANDER, nods in the affirmative. Livingston can't believe what he's hearing.

EDWARD LIVINGSTON
Governor, you're making a mistake.
Please reconsider --

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE
If the British are indeed coming as you say, we will not have a snake in our own house. I want Lafitte delivered to me here now.

INT. LAFITTE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

Lafitte looks out on a cloudy morning. He hasn't had much sleep. A WOMAN comes up behind him -- this one a BRUNETTE.

BRUNETTE
(in French; subtitled)
Come back to bed, my sweet.

But Lafitte's distracted. Suddenly there's a knock on the door. Lafitte opens it revealing Pierre and Dominique.

DOMINIQUE YOU
Someone *est ici*.

EXT. GRAND TERRE ISLAND - BEACH - MORNING

Lafitte looks through a SPYGLASS. There are ten large SHIPS OF WAR closing quickly on the horizon.

PIERRE LAFITTE
Is it the Americans?

DOMINIQUE YOU
Is it the British?

Lafitte can't tell. The Baratarians stand loyally behind Lafitte on the beach, awaiting orders. Finally --

JEAN LAFITTE
We must leave this place. Everyone grab what they can, quickly.
Dominique, you and your hundred best will stay to defend the fort.

DOMINIQUE YOU
What are your orders?

JEAN LAFITTE

If it's a Union Jack, they have
heard of my letter to Claiborne.
Fire on them with all hell, fire
and brimstone and destroy anything
of value left behind on the island.

DOMINIQUE YOU

And if it's the Americans?

Lafitte has to make a decision -- it's a big one.

JEAN LAFITTE

Do not fire on any American ship.

PIERRE LAFITTE

(incredulous)

They will take the island, Jean --

JEAN LAFITTE

Do not fire. That is an order.
Surrender peacefully and I will see
to it you are released. Everyone
else, to the swamps.

EXT. GRAND TERRE ISLAND - FORT - MORNING

Dominique and his hundred best have manned their HEAVY ARTILLERY, ready to fire. The encroaching ships sail closer.

Dominique watches intently. Finally, he sees their FLAG.

DOMINIQUE YOU

Aye. Stand down.

EXT. GRAND TERRE ISLAND - BEACH - MORNING

A WHITE FLAG has been planted in the sand. Dominique stands with his men as Patterson and his TROOPS storm the beach.

Patterson was ready for a fight. He approaches Dominique.

COMMODORE PATTERSON

A white flag of surrender. As
spineless a pirate I have known.

(to his troops)

This island is now property of the
United States government. Raid the
fort of all artillery, guns and
worthwhile personal property.

And as Patterson's men move onto the island --

DOMINIQUE YOU
Why do you do this? We try to help
you. Why won't you believe us?

COMMODORE PATTERSON
We will never trust a pirate.

EXT. ISLAND HILLTOP - MORNING

Across the BAY. Lafitte and Pierre look on as Patterson's men raid the fort and set FIRE to the surrounding buildings.

PIERRE LAFITTE
They will never trust a pirate.

Lafitte has no response. He watches his paradise burn. And as we hear the sound of incongruous HEAVY ARTILLERY FIRE --

EXT. SPANISH GARRISON - DAY

Jackson's artillery BOMBARDS the SPANISH GARRISON in Pensacola. The BRITISH and SPANISH FLAGS still fly overhead.

These are just the opening salvos but the Americans have been met with little resistance. Jackson commands with authority riding behind the line, pressing his men with commands.

Jackson makes his way to John Coffee and the waiting CAVALRY.

JOHN COFFEE
General, where are the British?

INT. SPANISH GARRISON - COURTYARD - DAY

SPANISH SOLDIERS run around like chickens with their heads cut off. A few uniformed RED CREEK INDIANS do the same.

COMANDANTE GARCIA frantically approaches a SPANISH CAPTAIN as EXPLOSIONS rock the garrison. The captain has bad news...

COMANDANTE GARCIA
(in Spanish; subtitled)
Tell me! Where is he?!

SPANISH CAPTAIN
Captain Nicholls. He has sailed.

EXT. SPANISH GARRISON - DUSK

Quiet now. The SPANISH FLAG flies alone over the garrison.

Jackson, Coffee and a few others discuss terms with Garcia and his high-command under another WHITE FLAG in a large field outside the walls. Garcia is a babbling fool.

COMANDANTE GARCIA

I was left no choice, General.
None! The British, they meant to
march straight to New Orleans, but
word of your arrival --

ANDREW JACKSON

Where will they attack next?

COMANDANTE GARCIA

Nowhere! Their plans have changed!

ANDREW JACKSON

You're lying. They will move over
land to encroach on the city --

COMANDANTE GARCIA

I promise you -- Nicholls and his

men sailed south. All of them.

(conspiratorially)

The armada, it is here, General.
Quicker than they thought possible.
With your advance, they will not
risk a march to New Orleans.

Jackson and Coffee share a look -- this was Jackson's plan...

ANDREW JACKSON

Very well. Captain Baines, take
the Comandante into custody --

COMANDANTE GARCIA

(grabs Jackson's hand)

Please, General. We were tricked!
We were bamboozled! We never meant
to assist the British --

ANDREW JACKSON

You housed them in your walls.

COMANDANTE GARCIA

They took us by force! Let us keep
the garrison. It is our duty!

Jackson studies the groveling Garcia a moment. And then --

ANDREW JACKSON

I wouldn't want to be impertinent.

EXT. SPANISH GARRISON - DAY

And now an AMERICAN FLAG flies over the garrison. It's the next morning. A small LEGION of Jackson's men hold the fort as Garcia and his command are kept prisoner in the courtyard.

Jackson and the rest of his troops are already drudging back to New Orleans. Again, the men don't look terribly pleased.

Coffee rides up next to Jackson.

JOHN COFFEE

"To the sea they shall return and we will meet them on the banks of the River." You've gotten exactly what you hoped for, General.

ANDREW JACKSON

Then let it not be the death of us.

EXT. JAMAICA - DUSK - ESTABLISHING

The awe-inspiring BRITISH ARMADA anchors just off-shore in the calm, azure waters of the Caribbean.

TITLE: NEGRIL BAY, JAMAICA

More than sixty vessels total. From eighty-gun BATTLE SHIPS to FRIGATES to ARMED TROOP TRANSPORTS, the ships packed so close you could seemingly walk from one deck to the other.

It is quite simply the greatest naval force ever assembled.

Local JAMAICANS stand on the beaches greeting boarding parties with various items for purchase. BRITISH OFFICERS have pitched tents to relax for a night on the sand.

MUSIC draws us toward the grandest ship in the fleet --

EXT. HMS TONNANT - DUSK

Where a REGIMENTAL BALL is in progress. OFFICER'S WIVES dance with their husbands, a STRING QUARTET playing on deck. Colorful lanterns swing from the shrouds and other rigging.

It's clear the British don't think much of the war or the men they've come to fight. A confidence gained over many years.

We follow a young DECKHAND hustling with several bottles of BRANDY through the bowels of the ship and into --

INT. HMS TONNANT - COCHRANE'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

The STATE ROOM. NAVAL ADMIRAL SIR ALEXANDER COCHRANE (56) has just finished a festive meal with his high command.

ADMIRAL COCHRANE
Good Christ, son. You have to swim back to England for that?

Cochrane is rather pompous and slovenly, a man who relishes the power and forced respect his position provides.

DECKHAND
Apologies, Admiral. We've run dry six casks already.

ADMIRAL COCHRANE
(to the others)
Bloody drunkards, the lot of you!

Laughter fills the room. The brandy is poured as Cochrane moves to his position at the head of the table. There are several maps and charts of lower LOUISIANA spread about.

MAJOR GENERAL JOHN KEANE (31), despite his age and boyish looks, is in command of the BRITISH ARMY. He's in discussion with COLONEL EDWARD NICHOLLS from the Spanish garrison.

MAJOR GENERAL KEANE
They will have but two small forts in opposition. Shouldn't require more than a fortnight really.

ADMIRAL COCHRANE
That right, ya' young buck? No more than a fortnight to sail up the mighty Mississip. And how many of my ships will get over the bar at the River's mouth? How long will we waste plodding upstream?

MAJOR GENERAL KEANE
Admiral, I was only saying --

ADMIRAL COCHRANE
(dismissive)
Yes, yes. You're in charge of the boys on the ground, Keane -- with no help from your father I'm sure -- but let a man who knows say first.

COLONEL NICHOLLS
Which route do you prefer, Admiral?

Cochrane points to a large LAKE directly east of New Orleans.

COLONEL NICHOLLS (CONT'D)
Lake Borgne?

ADMIRAL COCHRANE
Aye. She's the one.

MAJOR GENERAL KEANE
But these charts -- the lake is far
too shallow! My men will have to
row a hundred kilometers or more --

ADMIRAL COCHRANE
We are British. If we must row, we
will row. Besides haven't got much
of a choice now, do we? Not with
your tottering gambit for Lafitte
up in smoke and any march ruined by
that ill-conceived debacle in
Pensacola. We shall anchor here --

Cochrane points to an area near southern Mississippi.

ADMIRAL COCHRANE (CONT'D)
-- row the length of Lake Borgne,
drop ourselves down the canals into
the river below the city and she
shall be ours. Now do either of
you foresee a problem with that?

MAJOR GENERAL KEANE
(cowed)
No, sir.

Cochrane slaps them both on their backs.

ADMIRAL COCHRANE
Then tilt your glasses back, boys.
Beauty and booty as they say -- the
riches that await us, we shall be
in New Orleans by Christmastime.

And as Cochrane slams his empty glass down onto the map --

EXT. FRENCH QUARTER - DAY

A SHOP OWNER finishes hammering nails into a board covering his shop window. All through the Quarter there's a sense of uneasiness as preparations are made for the coming invasion.

A PAPER BOY sells the last of his supply and hustles through the muddy streets straight past --

INT. GOVERNOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Where Claiborne has again gathered his inner-circle. There's a copy of today's NEWSPAPER on his desk with the headline "BRITISH SAIL PAST CUBA HEADED FOR THE CITY".

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE
 How do they -- how does this
newspaper -- know more than the
 Governor of Louisiana?! And why do
 they see it fit to tell the people?

EDWARD LIVINGSTON
 Jean Lafitte --

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE
 Not that name again, Livingston!

EDWARD LIVINGSTON
 Jean Lafitte has many spies on the
 shores of Havana. This information
 was offered but you so declined.

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE
 So he took it to the paper?! There
 will be panic in the streets!

EDWARD LIVINGSTON
 Governor, our citizens have a right
 to prepare themselves for battle.

The same sycophant lawyer from before finishes the article.

LAWYER
 If this is correct and they will be
 here by the end of the month then
 we must consider unconditional
 surrender of the city.

Livingston can't believe what he's hearing.

LAWYER (CONT'D)
 They burned Washington to the
 ground. I do not wish to see the
 same happen to our hallowed walls.

More than a few agree with him. Livingston turns to MAJOR GENERAL JACQUES VILLERE (54), head of the Louisiana militia.

EDWARD LIVINGSTON
 Major General Villere, will your
 militia be ready to fight?

MAJOR GENERAL VILLERE

Aye. But without conscription our numbers have waned. We've also asked this legislature many times to properly provide munitions --

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE

You've received all that we have! A defense against an army of this magnitude is simply not feasible.

EDWARD LIVINGSTON

And is that what you will tell General Jackson when he arrives?

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE

I am in command of this city --

EDWARD LIVINGSTON

(rising)

They have yet to raise a rifle and already we raise the flag! The people deserve to be lead.

A fat-cat BUSINESSMAN comes to Claiborne's defense --

BUSINESSMAN

Jackson is a scoundrel and from Tennessee at that. He was only given command after all else in uniform refused his men. If he's the help the government sends, at least the British would be civil.

EDWARD LIVINGSTON

Do you not remember past atrocities suffered at their hand? Jackson is a general in the United States Army and we are under attack!

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE

And his assistance, unlike Lafitte's, will be appreciated. But Jackson comes to bear the burden of our surrender and nothing more. It was his superiors, Mr. Madison especially, who started this cursed war and he will be the one to finish it. For now we focus solely on our self-preservation.

EXT. FRENCH QUARTER - DAY

The day is cold and damp. Jackson and his men approach the outskirts of the Quarter after another arduous journey.

TITLE: DECEMBER 1, 1814

The troops are covered in mud. Even the uniformed soldiers look like backwoods castaways. Jackson himself is tired and weak. Lieutenant Adler comments to another officer nearby --

DANIEL ADLER
Heard he's shit blood for a week.

Jackson turns on to ROYAL STREET and is surprised to see hundreds of faces looking in his direction. The PEOPLE OF NEW ORLEANS are here to witness his arrival...

But it's far from a hero's welcome. The diverse crowd -- from French and Spanish Creole to African to transplanted northerners -- ranges from curious to scared to indifferent.

A concerned HOUSEWIFE turns to her friend --

HOUSEWIFE
They're just so -- dirty.

Jackson ignores the crowd and heads for Claiborne's office.

INT. GOVERNOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Claiborne is dressed for the occasion. He introduces Jackson to several of his advisors who have formed a greeting line.

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE
-- Edwin Tolliver, Bank of New
Orleans. Morris Van Percy, 3rd
Ward. Dr. Julien Bouchard --

DOCTOR BOUCHARD
General, you seem pale. If you
wish to stop by my office --

But Jackson has no time for formalities. He sees Livingston relegated with Major General Villere across the way.

ANDREW JACKSON
Edward Livingston, as I do breathe.

Jackson steps away from the line. They're old acquaintances.

EDWARD LIVINGSTON
General, thank you for coming.

ANDREW JACKSON
A soldier goes where he is needed.

EDWARD LIVINGSTON
The sentiment has never meant more.
This is Major General Villere, head
of the Louisiana militia.

MAJOR GENERAL VILLERE
A true honor, sir. My men and I
are at your service.

Jackson and Villere shake hands. Claiborne is quick to guide Jackson back toward the rest of the room --

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE
As are we all, General. You will
witness we are doing our absolute
best during these terrible times --

ANDREW JACKSON
Is that why my men found nary a
defense as we approached the city?

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE
Our resources have been utilized in
the most efficient manner possible.

ANDREW JACKSON
Then perhaps we have differing
definitions of efficiency.

Jackson isn't exactly making friends here. He walks to the window. There's quite a CROWD gathered under the balcony.

ANDREW JACKSON (CONT'D)
Have you told them our intent?

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE
General, please -- we are a diverse
population. I felt it best to wait
for your arrival before making any
considerations. Now perhaps you
would like to rinse the dirt from --

But before Claiborne can finish, Jackson steps out onto --

EXT. GOVERNOR'S OFFICE - BALCONY - DAY

Where a few hundred people murmur at the sight. Jackson raises his hand for silence. A pregnant pause, and then --

ANDREW JACKSON

Citizens of New Orleans. I am Major General Andrew Jackson and I am humbled to be in your presence. I wish the circumstances different, for the task before us is great, but I pledge to you now this -- I have come to protect your fair city and will drive the vile and reprehensible British into the sea or I will perish in the effort.

Jackson speaks with a commanding voice. The crowd is in awe.

ANDREW JACKSON (CONT'D)

You are a people of many origins, but know that we are not bound by geography in this battle, but by loyalty to our Fore Fathers and the disparagement of tyranny. It is time to cease all differences and unite to save not only this city, but the country at large. And for those unwilling to sacrifice, I give fair warning -- if you are not with us, you are against, and whether you sit at the head of the table or the foot, you will be dealt with as such. New Orleans must not and will not fall.

A long beat. And then a CHEER rises from the back of the crowd. Slowly at first, starting with the poor and working class, but then it overtakes the city. "Jackson has come!"

At last, the people have found their leader. And as a worrisome PIERRE LAFITTE watches the scene from afar --

INT. GOVERNOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Claiborne and his advisors are dumbstruck.

LAWYER

What have we wrought?

EDWARD LIVINGSTON

A storm.

Jackson finally enters from the balcony --

ANDREW JACKSON

Make no mistake, Governor -- our only consideration is to fight.

(MORE)

ANDREW JACKSON (CONT'D)
(to the room)
Where shall we begin?

EXT. SWAMP - DAY

The next day. A CROCODILE swims past in the water. Jean Lafitte meets with his brother Pierre and a few lieutenants.

The lieutenants have brought Lafitte a TRUNK with a sampling of fine MENSWEAR -- bright whites and beiges, very plantation chic. Lafitte dresses using a mirror hung from a tree.

Pierre has, as always, a slightly nervous energy about him.

PIERRE LAFITTE
It was a sight, *mon frere*. Jackson
will surely come for us now.

JEAN LAFITTE
But we are not against him, Pierre.
In fact we are the opposite.

PIERRE LAFITTE
(that's not the point)
Claiborne was a gnat to be toyed
with, Jackson is decidedly not.
The marshals have surely doubled
their efforts in our pursuit.

Lafitte tries on a hat. He isn't taking this as serious as Pierre would like. Pierre tries another tactic --

PIERRE LAFITTE (CONT'D)
These stories of Jackson -- he's a
hard man, a swindler. Said to be
the best shot in all Tennessee --

JEAN LAFITTE
And if I believed half the stories
told about me?

PIERRE LAFITTE
Most are true! And even if they
weren't, Jackson is one man against
20,000. There is still time, Jean.
The bounty is gone, yes, but the
British would listen to reason --

JEAN LAFITTE
They would hang us from their
gallows. Our path has been struck.

PIERRE LAFITTE

And look where it has led us! You in hiding wearing that ridiculous costume, the rest of us to follow. Dominique, he still sits in shackles! Our people will follow you to their death, Jean. You must bear that responsibility.

(softens)

These men, this society -- they will buy our goods and drink our wine but they will never invite us into their homes. No matter what we may offer. We are who we are.

Jean finishes dressing -- now the perfect SOUTHERN GENTLEMAN.

JEAN LAFITTE

We are who we are and Jackson is who he is. There are many ways through this storm, Pierre. Claiborne was blinded by pettiness, but with Jackson we hold a distinct advantage.

PIERRE LAFITTE

What's that?

JEAN LAFITTE

We know what he has to fight with.

EXT. PLACE D'ARMES - COURTYARD - DAY

And what he has isn't much. Jackson and his high-command get their first look at the men who will defend the city.

It's a sorry lot. Roughly 3,000 troops stand in formation around the courtyard. Jackson and Coffee ride through as Major General Villere handles introductions. Livingston is there, but Claiborne and his cronies are noticeably absent.

MAJOR GENERAL VILLERE

This battalion was raised just this past month. Local businessmen and the like, planters and their sons.

The WORKER BATTALION wears brightly colored but mismatched uniforms. Their eagerness betrays their experience.

ANDREW JACKSON

You've known the British to be ascending and these are your only recruited numbers? 250 at best?

MAJOR GENERAL VILLERE

Most men are unwilling to fight or
have been told they need not to.

ANDREW JACKSON

By unpatriotic morons. It is now
our duty to compel them. And what
of these regiments here -- they
seem better equipped to plow
through crops than fight an army.

MAJOR GENERAL VILLERE

(swallows his pride)

They are mine, sir. Louisiana
State Militia at your command.

While in greater numbers than the worker battalion, the
unkempt MILITIA inspires only slightly more confidence.

ANDREW JACKSON

Fowling pieces. Muskets. I've
seen better arms in a bar fight.

MAJOR GENERAL VILLERE

I have personally sent a request to
Secretary Monroe. A shipment of
munitions is purportedly on its way
from Pittsburgh but so far --

ANDREW JACKSON

We have been left to fight by hand.
And who commands this unit?

Jackson has stopped in front of a group of FREE MEN OF COLOR.
Mostly Haitians, the 200 men are the most ill-equipped yet.

JEAN DAQUIN

I do, sir.

JEAN DAQUIN (54) is a proud man, a former plantation worker.

ANDREW JACKSON

You have formal military training?

JEAN DAQUIN

I do not, sir. I'm a baker.

Villere whispers into Jackson's ear --

MAJOR GENERAL VILLERE

The Governor thought it a placating
gesture to have a colored unit but
felt it unnecessary to give them
arms or actual paid wages.

Jackson doesn't have time for this. Back to Daquin --

ANDREW JACKSON
Are your men willing to fight for
the freedom of this country?

JEAN DAQUIN
Absolutely, General. We are.

ANDREW JACKSON
General Coffee, distribute to them
proper weapons -- wherever you may
scrounge to find them -- and see to
it the legislature pays these men
an equal wage through and through.

This brings a smile to a few of the Haitian faces. Jackson
quickly puts them in their place --

ANDREW JACKSON (CONT'D)
This is not a time for giddiness.
1,800 of my volunteers from
Tennessee. The 7th and 44th
regiment of the United States Army
loyally under my command. And the
rest of you. With no money for
pay, no weapons for arms and no
experience to lead. General
Coffee, our final numbers?

JOHN COFFEE
Just under 3,000.

ANDREW JACKSON
Against 20,000 or more. And what
of our requested reinforcements?

JOHN COFFEE
1,400 from Kentucky but we have
heard nary a word.

Jackson speaks to everyone in the square now, firm --

ANDREW JACKSON
You men are all there is. With
only days to prepare. In those
days, you will be trained within an
inch of your life. If we are to
have any hope, you must provide it,
and by God, if I must crack the
whip myself I will see to it that
you do. Begin the drills.

Those smiles have quickly disappeared. And as Coffee and his lieutenants shout forceful orders through the square --

EDWARD LIVINGSTON
General, may I have a word?

EXT. PLACE D'ARMES - DAY

Livingston has pulled Jackson aside. Jackson is incredulous.

ANDREW JACKSON
The pirate Jean Lafitte?

EDWARD LIVINGSTON
Yes, sir. He has much to offer in
way of men, knowledge, munitions --

ANDREW JACKSON
Do you see what I have to work with
now, Livingston? As inept a force
as I've been put in charge of. I
only have so much trust and to
trust these men is enough.

EDWARD LIVINGSTON
A simple meeting is all I ask --

ANDREW JACKSON
A man never allies with someone who
would shoot him in the back. We
work with what we have.

And as Jackson turns back to the task at hand, Lafitte's
offer for help through Livingston once again denied --

ANDREW JACKSON (V.O.)
My fairest Rachel --

EXT. PLACE D'ARMES - COURTYARD - DAY

Coffee and his men put the troops through their paces. The
weather is cold and wet, the men undisciplined.

ANDREW JACKSON (V.O.)
It has been far too long since you
lay by my side, and that is what I
dream, but first I must write with
tails of misfortune from the city.

Coffee yells at the men to hold a line. To march in time.
Lieutenant Adler shakes his head at Coffee's efforts.

EXT. PLANTATION FIELD - DAY

The FREE MEN OF COLOR and WORKER BATTALION are being instructed on how to fire and reload a rifle. An OFFICER demonstrates, then passes the rifle to the next man over.

ANDREW JACKSON (V.O.)

The men are no more soldiers than I a socialite. At times fifty train upon a single rifle. If given a year we would still not be ready.

EXT. SWAMPS - DAY

Soldiers use HATCHETS to cut down trees around the bayou. They lay the felled trees across any exposed WATERWAYS.

ANDREW JACKSON (V.O.)

The city itself is indefensible. With as many streams, inlets and canals we have resigned ourselves to covering all routes badly.

Two STATE MILITIA stand guard at each major waterway as the rest of the soldiers move on to the next inlet.

EXT. FORT ST. PHILLIPS - DAY

A rundown FORT on the Mississippi. Jackson takes a tour with COMMODORE PATTERSON, the commander who raided Barataria.

ANDREW JACKSON (V.O.)

Even key forts on the Mississippi have been left to rot by this insipid legislature.

Jackson is not impressed. He notices a few of Patterson's men off-loading HEAVY ARTILLERY CANNONS from a river barge.

COMMODORE PATTERSON
(proudly)
Captured from Lafitte.

EXT. FRENCH QUARTER - RESIDENTIAL AREA - DAY

A row of MANSIONS in residential HIGH SOCIETY. SERVANTS supervise the loading of LUGGAGE onto waiting CARRIAGES.

ANDREW JACKSON (V.O.)

Additionally the very men who sent for my services do not seem fit for the task at hand. They have spent more time packing their houses and sending their wives to the country than leading their own city.

A few of Claiborne's advisors say goodbye to their FAMILIES. Claiborne kisses his prim and proper wife SUZETTE (38).

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE

I shall join as quickly as I can.

MARY-ANNE DERN (O.S.)

We're sure that you will.

That was said with mild derision from Suzette's cousin MARY-ANNE DERN (26). Suzette shushes Mary-Anne with a look.

INT. URSULINE CONVENT - DAY

A group of elderly NUNS have turned their convent into a MAKESHIFT HOSPITAL. They prepare bandages and setup beds.

ANDREW JACKSON (V.O.)

Thankfully those that remember our bloody history with the British have shown much more character than their elected officials.

The same HOUSEWIFE who commented on Jackson's "dirty" troops sits with a few others sewing and cleaning UNIFORMS.

EXT. FRENCH QUARTER - BOURBON STREET - DAY

Three OLDER MEN walk the streets as a recruited POLICE FORCE. One of them uses a CANE. A BAR FIGHT spills out of a TAVERN.

ANDREW JACKSON (V.O.)

Now only if I were granted the power to conscript those that have forgotten to do the same.

WALKING CANE fires his PISTOL into the air. The fighting drunks startle to a stop -- the old guy means business.

INT. JACKSON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Jackson finishes a bottle of whiskey while studying maps of the bayou. He's clearly been at it for awhile.

ANDREW JACKSON (V.O.)
Regardless, the battle comes
quickly, and until their true path
of attack is known, I am left
simply to wait and wallow.

Jackson takes a BREATH -- a moment alone to be exhausted.

EXT. ELMWOOD PLANTATION - DAY

The carriages carrying SUZETTE CLAIBORNE and MARY-ANNE DERN
arrive at a picturesque PLANTATION in the countryside.

ANDREW JACKSON (V.O.)
But know as I do, my thoughts often
drift to you and your warm embrace.
I will see you again, my dear. I
must. With love, Andrew.

The women are greeted by affable owner MILES ELMWOOD (63).

MILES ELMWOOD
Mrs. Claiborne, it's an honor.

SUZETTE CLAIBORNE
You're too kind, Mr. Elmwood. Your
hospitality is appreciated.

MILES ELMWOOD
I do have to confess, my wife
insisted on housing another guest
as well at this time. I hope it
won't be much an inconvenience.

A MAN emerges from the house and heads down the front steps.

SUZETTE CLAIBORNE
Surely it won't.

MILES ELMWOOD
Mrs. Claiborne, may I introduce
Monsieur Jacques Clement.

And as Suzette offers her hand to this man --

SUZETTE CLAIBORNE
Monsieur Clement, my pleasure.

JEAN LAFITTE (O.S.)
The pleasure is indeed mine.

We reveal JEAN LAFITTE wearing the same plantation clothes we
saw him choosing in the swamp. Lafitte smiles mischievously.

It's clear Suzette has no idea who he is. And as Lafitte's lips touch her skin, MARY-ANNE watching with a curious look --

EXT. LAKE BORGNE - MORNING

Five AMERICAN GUNBOATS sail off the coast of Mississippi.

TITLE: DECEMBER 10, 1814 - THE BATTLE ON THE LAKE

CAPTAIN THOMAS JONES (37) uses a SPYGLASS to scan the horizon to the east. There's nothing out of the ordinary, until --

CAPTAIN THOMAS JONES
Great hell.

A row of never-ending WHITE SAILS emerges in the distance.

SAILOR
Is that -- sir, is that --

CAPTAIN THOMAS JONES
The British. They are here.

EXT. HMS TONNANT - MORNING

Thirty miles to the east. The armada drops ANCHOR along a line of marshy ISLANDS that form a passageway into the lake.

Admiral Cochrane is on deck with his high-command including Colonel Nicholls and Major General Keane. They have yet to be made aware of the American presence across the way...

ADMIRAL COCHRANE
We shall make anchorage and reconnoiter quickly the far side of the lake. End of the line for the ships, the rest we'll row by hand. Reds'll be ready, yeah, Keaney-boy?

There's still no love lost between Cochrane and diminutive Keane. A CAPTAIN hustles over with a SPYGLASS.

BRITISH CAPTAIN
Sir. Five American gunboats, fifty kilometers dead ahead.

He hands the glass to Nicholls who reconfirms the assessment.

ADMIRAL COCHRANE
Bastard Jackson knew we're coming?

COLONEL NICHOLLS

Our spies say no. These boat are
simply lucky scouting the Gulf.

ADMIRAL COCHRANE

Or unlucky as the case may be.
There's a pheasant in our path,
lads. Clear the lakes.

EXT. AMERICAN GUNBOAT - MORNING

Jones notices MOVEMENT on the decks of the British ships.

CAPTAIN THOMAS JONES

We must retreat hastily to warn
Jackson and the others.

But there's a problem on his own deck --

SAILOR

Captain.

The SAILOR motions upward -- not a lick of wind in the sails.

SAILOR (CONT'D)

Worse yet, we always meant to sail
in to the Gulf. The current pushes
us out now squarely to the east.

East meaning toward the armada. This is not good news.

DECKHAND

(naively)

Perhaps they won't see us.

But Jones uses the spyglass to witness the first of many
BRITISH BARGES being lowered from the ships into the water.

CAPTAIN THOMAS JONES

They see us. We're left no choice.
Drop anchor and prepare for battle.

EXT. LAKE BORGNE - DAY

A few hours later. FORTY-FIVE BRITISH BARGES race toward the
American boats. The barges carry almost 1,500 troops and
form a line half a mile wide. CAPTAIN NICHOLS LOCKYER, last
seen negotiating with Lafitte, is in the lead position.

The American boats have spread into a defensive formation,
but it's fairly clear they don't have much of a chance.

EXT. AMERICAN GUNBOAT - DAY

The sailors watch with varying degrees of helplessness. The men arm their RIFLES and cover the boats with BOARDING NETS.

Suddenly the WATCHMAN sees something through his spyglass --

WATCHMAN
Sir, they've stopped!

Dispositions perk up. But then Jones looks himself --

CAPTAIN THOMAS JONES
Yes. To eat lunch. They've
stopped to eat lunch.

Oh. Indeed they have -- right in the middle of the lake. And the deafening sound of CANNON FIRE brings us to --

EXT. LAKE BORGNE - DAY

The opening conflict in THE BATTLE OF NEW ORLEANS. Jones' men fight bravely at the outset, managing to SINK two of the barges with their long-range CANNON fire...

But the Americans are simply overmatched. The British barges quickly break-off and PLOW FULL-SPEED into Jones' boat. The men fight hand-to-hand as the British cut through the NETS and climb onto the deck. Lockyer leads the bloody charge.

It's only a matter of time now. Captain Jones fires on Lockyer, but Lockyer SHOOTS Jones in the belly. Jones falls. The redcoats turn the boat's cannons on the other Americans, creating chaos, allowing those boats to be boarded.

And as a handful of American SAILORS jump into the cold waters of the lake, a BRITISH VICTORY easily in hand --

INT. JACKSON'S OFFICE - DAY

Jackson receives word from Coffee on the state of their troop preparations. Coffee is unenthusiastic to say the least.

JOHN COFFEE
As little progress as we've made,
the harder we push, I fear the men
may break before any actual battle.

Jackson works at his desk, undeterred --

ANDREW JACKSON

Broken is not an option, John. We must make them soldiers.

JOHN COFFEE

Even our men -- those that marched from Mobile to Pensacola to here -- their spirits have waned. No one believes we can win.

ANDREW JACKSON

Their only belief should be in killing the miscreant British standing in front of them.

Suddenly there's a RAUCOUS coming from the street below --

EXT. FRENCH QUARTER - ROYAL STREET - DAY

Where two of the AMERICAN SAILORS have trudged their way back to the city. A CROWD gathers to hear their report --

TALL SAILOR

Aye, it was a bloodbath! Ships as far as the eye could see!

SHORT SAILOR

They swarmed us like locusts, the barges did. Captain Jones shot straight through the belly --

ANDREW JACKSON (O.S.)

What of our gunboats?

The crowd parts for Jackson and Coffee. The sailors try to stand a little straighter --

SHORT SAILOR

Gone, sir. Captured. All five.

TALL SAILOR

They come from the east, General. Lake Borgne. With as many troops as you could count. We were slaughtered. It was a slaughter.

The crowd murmurs in panic. They look to Jackson for words of comfort. A long beat, and then --

ANDREW JACKSON

At least we know now from which way they will attack the city.

The people protest even louder. Jackson is losing them. And that's right when GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE arrives --

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE
What the hell has happened?!

It's a stand-off between Claiborne and Jackson. And as Claiborne waits for an explanation --

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE (V.O.)
You are stubborn as a mule!

INT. GOVERNOR'S OFFICE - DAY

The discussion has moved indoors. Claiborne is furious.

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE
Did you not hear their reports?!
We are less than two weeks from our
demise and you fail to acknowledge
the obvious -- we do not want to
fight! You want to fight!

ANDREW JACKSON
This was our first skirmish, and
while unfortunate, more than an
acceptable loss --

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE
There is no acceptable loss! Again
the men who started this war, they
do not represent us! They are not
French or Spanish or --

ANDREW JACKSON
We are Americans first and always!

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE
In theory, yes. Not in practice.
And not here. I was elected to
represent my people and as a body
we are shaken to the core!

And whether Jackson agrees or not, he knows he's not winning this argument. Claiborne moves in for the kill --

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE (CONT'D)
This remains my jurisdiction,
General. And while your motivation
may be just, I must insist we end
this charade. You have lost the
people. And without them -- the
British have already won.

EXT. FRENCH QUARTER - ROYAL STREET - DAY

As harried as we've seen it. The loss on Lake Borgne has sent the people into a frenzy. Many abandon the city.

Jackson is UNSETTLED. He walks through the crowd, unsure if -- or even how -- he can continue. Jackson watches as the elderly POLICE FORCE struggles to maintain order...

And in that struggle, an IDEA. Jackson smiles wryly.

INT. LIVINGSTON'S OFFICE - DAY

Nicer than either Claiborne or Jackson's office. Livingston pours himself a whiskey as Jackson enters --

ANDREW JACKSON
I need a lawyer and a drink.

EDWARD LIVINGSTON
You've come to the right place.

EXT. THE CABILDO - DUSK - ESTABLISHING

The grand building that houses the LOUISIANA LEGISLATURE.

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE (V.O.)
The terms of our conditional
surrender are thus --

INT. THE CABILDO - ASSEMBLY ROOM - DUSK

Claiborne and his advisors draft a letter to the British.

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE
-- that state and local officials
shall remain in power and serve as
your loyal servants during
occupation while every effort is
made to maintain our city walls --

Claiborne is interrupted by the sound of HEAVY DOORS opening. Jackson stands in the doorway with Livingston and Coffee.

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE (CONT'D)
General, as I said before, if your
assistance is required I shall --

But Livingston walks over and hands Claiborne a DOCUMENT.

EDWARD LIVINGSTON

Governor Claiborne, as a representative of the second district court I hereby serve notice to you and this legislature a declaration to institute martial law within these city limits.

A bombshell. Claiborne and his advisors are flabbergasted.

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE

(to Jackson)

Son of a bitch, you have no right!

EDWARD LIVINGSTON

As the highest ranking military official in the city, the Constitution is his right. Writ of habeas corpus shall be suspended as well as curfew established and conscription of all men to enlist --

But Jackson cuts straight to the heart of the matter --

ANDREW JACKSON

We are forcing the men to fight, Governor. It's no longer a matter of what they want. It's only a matter of what I want.

Claiborne stares at Jackson, his eyes cold --

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE

You are a soulless bastard.

ANDREW JACKSON

Yes. But I am yours.

INT. BOURBON STREET TAVERN - DAY

The same DRUNKS that were fighting in the street are now carousing at the bar. The elderly POLICE FORCE enter --

WALKING CANE

All men currently of age not enlisted or without excuse must report to the Place d'Armes tomorrow morning at dawn.

DRUNKARD

Who will make us, old man? You?

Ten fully-uniformed ENLISTED MEN enter behind the police.

WALKING CANE
I believe I shall, yes.

EXT. FRENCH QUARTER - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING

A GHOST TOWN after curfew. There's not a single civilian on the streets. SOLDIERS on horseback patrol the city.

EXT. JACKSON'S OFFICE - BALCONY - NIGHT

Jackson enjoys the silence and a drink with Livingston and Coffee. Livingston and Coffee are still in disbelief.

JOHN COFFEE
If I did not bear witness --

EDWARD LIVINGSTON
I would not believe. Governor William Claiborne removed from power in his own state house.

ANDREW JACKSON
Temporarily.

Jackson can't help but smile -- he can't believe it himself.

EDWARD LIVINGSTON
You are aware, General, your legal basis is shaky at best.

ANDREW JACKSON
Throw me in shackles when the British have been sent packing. I did what was necessary -- if those elected shall not lead then I will.
(finishes his drink)
Our enemy sits on Lake Borgne, gentlemen, and there are still many ways to the gate. Tonight we rest. Tomorrow we rise. And then we continue the impossible.

EXT. ELMWOOD PLANTATION - MORNING - ESTABLISHING

The sun rises on a new day.

INT. ELMWOOD PLANTATION - DINING ROOM - MORNING

MILES ELMWOOD and his wife ELEANOR have breakfast with their guests -- Suzette Claiborne, Mary-Anne Dern and Jean Lafitte. Lafitte is still incognito as Jacques Clement...

But right now the focus is on Suzette. She's in a tizzy over a NEWSPAPER ARTICLE she's just finished reading --

SUZETTE CLAIBORNE

This is -- I'm so sorry -- this is just unsettling news! William will be so displeased. Martial law!

MILES ELMWOOD

Unconscionable. Truly.

ELEANOR ELMWOOD

That man Jackson is a beast.

SUZETTE CLAIBORNE

He is! He just -- my husband is the governor and this man has no right! It's just awful. Awful.

Everyone at the table is in agreement -- everyone except Mary-Anne, who rolls her eyes. Even Lafitte gets into the act --

JEAN LAFITTE

You have my sympathy, Suzette. Your husband is a treasure to the great state of Louisiana and this is the worst news I've heard.

SUZETTE CLAIBORNE

Why thank you, Monsieur Clement. You are too kind for saying so.

But Lafitte barely keeps a straight face. Mary-Anne notices.

INT. ELMWOOD PLANTATION - DINING ROOM - MORNING

After breakfast. The dishes are being cleared. Lafitte pours himself a coffee. Mary-Anne leans in to his ear --

MARY-ANNE DERN

Next time you should try harder to hide your joy at the suffering of a bitter rival, Monsieur Lafitte.

Mary-Anne walks away coquettishly. She has his attention.

EXT. LAKE BORGNE - FISHING VILLAGE - DAY

No more than a few STILTED FISHING HUTS on the marsh. A dozen SPANISH FISHERMAN are finishing up work for the day.

Two BRITISH REDCOAT SPIES suddenly appear from around the bend. The head FISHERMAN quickly grabs a KNIFE, but the spies hold up their hands -- *we mean you no harm.*

SPANISH FISHERMAN
(in Spanish; subtitled)
British, yes?
(the spies nod)
We've got no problem with that.

BRITISH SPY
We need a route into the city.

SPANISH FISHERMAN
They've all been blocked by felled trees. Makes fishing impossible.
(spits)
Of course, a few of them aren't.

A beat. Then one of the spies takes out his COIN PURSE.

EXT. PLACE D'ARMES - COURTYARD - DAY

It's mid-morning and already a LINE OF UNHAPPY MEN stretches into the Quarter waiting for time at the ENLISTMENT TABLE.

Jackson has an extra spring in his step. He walks through with his high-command -- Coffee, Livingston, Major General Villere, Commodore Patterson...

ANDREW JACKSON
We've made sure all pathways from Lake Borgne are covered?

MAJOR GENERAL VILLERE
As sure as we can be.

ANDREW JACKSON
Commodore Patterson, the heavy artillery at Fort Phillips -- with the British encampment to the east we should move them up river.

COMMODORE PATTERSON
Yes. Unfortunately, General -- regarding the cannons -- while in working order, we've found we have little to fire them with.

ANDREW JACKSON

Of course not. Because heaven
forbid anything goes right for long
in this damned city. What of our
munitions shipment from Pittsburgh?

MAJOR GENERAL VILLERE

We've sent scouts. Still no word.

ANDREW JACKSON

The bastards in Washington are as
unreliable as Claiborne says.

Jackson stops for a moment to think. And then --

ANDREW JACKSON (CONT'D)

These artillery -- you captured
them from Lafitte, yes? Were there
no munitions on Barataria?

Patterson shakes his head -- *not that we found.*

ANDREW JACKSON (CONT'D)

A pirate would never leave himself
a gun without a bullet.

Livingston sees another opportunity --

EDWARD LIVINGSTON

General, if you wish to speak to
Lafitte directly, I can --

ANDREW JACKSON

I will not beg, Livingston. Not
now. Besides, there may be another
option for us to consider.

INT. CITY JAIL - CELL - DAY

DOMINIQUE YOU and a few LIEUTENANTS sit in a cramped, dark
cell. They've been here since the day they were captured.

Dominique hears footsteps. Jackson and Livingston approach.

DOMINIQUE YOU

Well lookee here -- if it ain't the
new man in charge. I don't believe
we've met -- *je suis Dominique You.*

ANDREW JACKSON

Major General Andrew Jackson.

DOMINIQUE YOU
The pleasurest of pleasures.

Dominique offers his hand through the bars. Jackson refuses.

ANDREW JACKSON
Mr. You, I am here regarding your
artillery munitions. Your brother
must have known an attack was
eminent and squirreled them away.
I want to know where.

Dominique studies Jackson a moment, then starts to LAUGH --
loud and boisterous, until finally --

DOMINIQUE YOU
I see it now, coming from you!
Martial law! If there was ever a
move made by a pirate *il est que!*

Dominique continues. Jackson seethes. Livingston steps in --

EDWARD LIVINGSTON
Dominique, please --

ANDREW JACKSON
You and I are not the same.

DOMINIQUE YOU
I wouldn't be so sure, *Général*. I
wouldn't be so sure at all.
(regains his composure)
Regardless, we tried to help you
once -- no one would listen.

Jackson steps closer to the bars --

ANDREW JACKSON
Circumstances have changed. If you
ever wish to see outside this cell
you will be more than forthcoming.

DOMINIQUE YOU
And if you ever wish to see those
munitions, speak to my brother!
You think these bars scare me?
Remember -- I was the one who
surrendered *pour vous!*

ANDREW JACKSON
Your brother is a fugitive.

DOMINIQUE YOU

It's his deal to make. I had my way, you pignuts would get shit and be quite happy about it. Now tell the guard I'm ready for my lunch.

EXT. CITY JAIL - DAY

Jackson and Livingston exit. Livingston looks at Jackson -- do you want me to speak to Lafitte? A beat, then simply --

ANDREW JACKSON

No.

And as Jackson walks back toward the Place d'Armes --

EXT. ELMWOOD PLANTATION - GARDENS - NIGHT

Mary-Anne reads by candlelight in the well-manicured garden. Jean Lafitte approaches. Mary-Anne looks up from her book.

MARY-ANNE DERN

Well hello, Monsieur Clement. Or should I say --

JEAN LAFITTE

How did you know?

MARY-ANNE DERN

Magic.

(and then)

I've seen you before. At one of your soirees in the city.

INT. FRENCH QUARTER MANSION - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

A decadent affair. New Orleans HIGH SOCIETY revels at one of Lafitte's famous parties. Mary-Anne mingles in the crowd as JEAN LAFITTE, handsome in a tuxedo, walks down the stairs.

MARY-ANNE DERN (V.O.)

With as many suitors who bat their eyes and flip their skirts, I'm sure you wouldn't remember me.

Indeed, all female eyes are seemingly on Lafitte --

EXT. ELMWOOD PLANTATION - GARDENS - NIGHT

Leaving Lafitte to smile knowingly at Mary-Anne's assumption.

JEAN LAFITTE
The parties -- they are wondrous.

MARY-ANNE DERN
And yet here you sit -- stashed
away as Monsieur Clement, wanted by
your government as well as others,
smuggler of the high seas.

JEAN LAFITTE
Such is the life.

MARY-ANNE DERN
I'm sure.

JEAN LAFITTE
(beat)
You don't believe me?

MARY-ANNE DERN
You say "such is the life" as if it
wasn't your choice. As if you
didn't decide at some point in your
past to actually become a pirate.
I would think hiding in shadows
came with the territory.

Lafitte's not used to being talked to like this. He smiles --

JEAN LAFITTE
Privateer. There is a difference.

MARY-ANNE DERN
And is that what you whisper to all
those girls to make them swoon?

JEAN LAFITTE
A man whispers many things -- as
I'm sure you know.

MARY-ANNE DERN
You're making assumptions now.

JEAN LAFITTE
If you can, my dear, so can I.

Touche. A charged beat, then Mary-Anne regroups --

MARY-ANNE DERN
Then perhaps we've both misjudged,
Monsieur. I'm here only because my
esteemed father thinks I need
"seasoning" to find a husband.
(MORE)

MARY-ANNE DERN (CONT'D)
I'd rather be anywhere but high
society, I assure you.

JEAN LAFITTE
And why is that exactly?

MARY-ANNE DERN
Shall I make a list or is our
riveting breakfast conversation
enough? They're idiots, mostly.
My cousin and her husband --

JEAN LAFITTE
Our intrepid Governor.

MARY-ANNE DERN
Is he still? Or is it former
governor. I'm not familiar with
the intricacies of martial law.

It's only taken a minute, but Lafitte is clearly intrigued by
this girl. Mary-Anne moves on in conversation --

MARY-ANNE DERN (CONT'D)
So tell me, Monsieur Lafitte, why
are you here?

JEAN LAFITTE
Elmwood is an old friend. Or his
wife is, I should say -- he doesn't
even know who I am. But until
Jackson wants my help, I'm lost.

Mary-Anne shakes her head -- she finds something ridiculous.

JEAN LAFITTE (CONT'D)
What?

MARY-ANNE DERN
You think he would really ask? A
man with ego enough to remove the
governor from power?

JEAN LAFITTE
I've offered my services --

MARY-ANNE DERN
Let me guess -- you offered to be
the white knight coming to save the
city, your sail full of wind --

JEAN LAFITTE
(incredulous)
So now I'm the one with ego?

MARY-ANNE DERN

You sleep fifteen feet from the Governor's wife! Your ego is as grand as his. And tell me -- do you often accept the help of others in your moment of possible triumph?

Mary-Anne has him and Lafitte knows it. He's amazed --

JEAN LAFITTE

Who are you?

MARY-ANNE DERN

Mary-Anne Dern, a simple girl from St. Louis...

JEAN LAFITTE

You're far from simple.

MARY-ANNE DERN

And yet still a girl.

(beat)

So why do it? Why pledge your help? I've seen the handbills. Is it simply to buy your freedom?

Lafitte thinks for a moment. And then --

JEAN LAFITTE

You said I had a choice earlier, to become a pirate. There was no such choice. My brothers and I, born into poverty in Port au Prince. Our father killed over a debt for bread. We lived through a tyranny of another kind. This way of life was the only way of life.

(beat)

We may be wanted men in America, but it's by our choice. I don't want to buy our freedom, I want to protect that which we already have. So now tell me, knowing that -- if I offered you my help -- would you ever trust a pirate?

MARY-ANNE DERN

Only if I kissed him first. And only if he's earned it.

Both flirtatious and true. Lafitte considers her a moment --

JEAN LAFITTE

Perhaps yours is the help I need.

INT. ELMWOOD PLANTATION - DINING ROOM - MORNING

The next morning. Everyone has gathered except Lafitte.

MILES ELMWOOD
Shall we wait?

MARY-ANNE DERN
I saw Monsieur Clement earlier. He received word of an urgent business matter and apologized he would be gone several days.

ELEANOR ELMWOOD
Well then, lets begin.

They sit. Suzette turns to Mary-Anne --

SUZETTE CLAIBORNE
You know, Mary-Anne -- Monsieur Clement is the most interesting fellow. You should hope to marry someone from such good stock.

And as Mary-Anne struggles to hide her smile --

EXT. MISSISSIPPI RIVER - MORNING

Jackson sits on the shore of the river, conflicted. He fingers the same COLONIAL COIN we saw him with in Mobile.

Again, this coin means something to him. Jackson finally makes a decision. He stands.

EXT. LIVINGSTON'S HOUSE - MORNING

Jackson knocks on the FRONT DOOR. Livingston answers in his bed clothes. Two young CHILDREN play at Livingston's feet.

EDWARD LIVINGSTON
Is there a problem, General?

ANDREW JACKSON
I want to meet Lafitte.

A beat, then Livingston steps to the side. Lafitte is there.

JEAN LAFITTE
The feeling is mutual.

EXT. ROYAL STREET TAVERN - MORNING - ESTABLISHING

Coffee and two ENLISTED MEN stand guard at the door.

INT. ROYAL STREET TAVERN - MORNING

The bar is empty. Jackson and Lafitte sit across from each other at a table. Livingston is there to mediate.

There's a long, awkward silence. Finally --

EDWARD LIVINGSTON
Shall I begin --

But Jackson jumps in full bore --

ANDREW JACKSON
This is what I shall require,
Monsieur Lafitte -- all munitions,
all weapons, all able-bodied men to
be delivered to my command no later
than the day after next.

JEAN LAFITTE
Require? For what exactly?

ANDREW JACKSON
Compliance.

JEAN LAFITTE
Delivered to your command.

ANDREW JACKSON
I'm the one in charge am I not?

That was definitive. Lafitte considers Jackson a moment -- he's heard the stories, but to face Old Hickory himself...

JEAN LAFITTE
No.

ANDREW JACKSON
I beg your pardon.

JEAN LAFITTE
(congenial)
I do not accept your requirements.

ANDREW JACKSON
You don't have much of a choice.

JEAN LAFITTE

But see, I do. This "delivery"
isn't why I've come to the table.

ANDREW JACKSON

Then I shall have you arrested.

JEAN LAFITTE

Is that really the proper use of
your resources as the British
breathe down your neck? I'm here
to offer you partnership.

ANDREW JACKSON

The government of the United States
does not partner with a pirate.
The city is under martial law and
whatever I want, I shall have.

JEAN LAFITTE

By all means! Of course, there's a
reason you found yourself knocking
on Livingston's door this morning.
But if you know where the munitions
are, who am I to stop you?

This isn't off to a great start. Livingston nervously sips
his whiskey. And now it's Jackson who studies Lafitte...

ANDREW JACKSON

I have no time for cleverness.

JEAN LAFITTE

I wasn't trying to be. Tell me,
General -- why won't you trust me?
I've given you no reason not to.
My letter to Claiborne. We didn't
fire on a single American ship.

ANDREW JACKSON

You were taken by force --

JEAN LAFITTE

You know as well as I we would
never go down without a fight.

ANDREW JACKSON

It's what I've heard about you.
Your history. You're a thief. You
have no code.

Lafitte leans forward here --

JEAN LAFITTE

And you think I haven't heard the same about you? A scoundrel. A man who will duel at the first false word. The Benton Brothers? The fact is, General, I shouldn't be sitting with you.

EDWARD LIVINGSTON

Gentleman, please -- let us return to the matter at hand --

But Jackson isn't going to let that last accusation stand --

ANDREW JACKSON

I have no shame. Have I shot many men? Yes. All of whom deserved their fate. All of whom agreed to the battle before them. I do not hide in the shadows. I have honor.

JEAN LAFITTE

As do I. But for all that we've acquired and by all the means which we've acquired it, we both know who we are when we sleep at night.

ANDREW JACKSON

(scoffs)

A pirate.

JEAN LAFITTE

A man who gets what he wants. And what I want is to send the British back to their tea and crumpets. What is it you want, General?

(Jackson doesn't answer)
You think we're so different, perhaps that's the case. But this city -- we are Creole, we are Spaniard, we are northerners. You want to save the country? We are this country. This table here. We may fight when we are at peace, but because we are allowed to is why we must come together during war.

Jackson doesn't have an argument for that. Finally --

ANDREW JACKSON

What comes with this partnership?

JEAN LAFITTE

I will stand by your side and
defend this country that I love.
And I will earn your trust as long
as you earn mine.

ANDREW JACKSON

You will earn my trust or I will
shoot you were you stand. Do not
think for an instant this makes up
for any past transgressions.

JEAN LAFITTE

I wouldn't have it any other way.

INT. CITY JAIL - CELL - DAY

Dominique You is taking a nap. Suddenly, the cell door swings open. Jackson and Lafitte are there.

DOMINIQUE YOU

Mon frere.

JEAN LAFITTE

Send word. It's time to fight.

Lafitte helps Dominique to his feet. Dominique brushes past Jackson as they head for the exit --

DOMINIQUE YOU

(with a smile)
Wasn't so hard now was it, *Général*?

And as Jackson wonders what he's gotten himself in to --

EXT. PLACE D'ARMES - COURTYARD - MORNING

It's two days later and the courtyard has been overrun by over three hundred PIRATES. They take great joy in being let out of exile and greet each other with hugs, wine and cigars.

The rest of Jackson's troops look on with disdain. Even the WORKER BATTALION and FREE MEN OF COLOR, with their limited training, think they're better than this disorganized lot.

DANIEL ADLER

For Christ's sake on a cross...

Jackson and Coffee observe from across the way. A few of the ENLISTED MEN trade words with the BARATARIANS. A FIGHT soon breaks out. The officers struggle to maintain order.

ANDREW JACKSON

We were hardly making progress to begin with.

JOHN COFFEE

You did what was necessary. Rest assured, they will be watched.

As if on cue, Dominique You oversees the unloading of several WOODEN CRATES. The crates are covered in dirt. Dominique opens one of the crates and reveals a stash of RIFLES.

But the MUNITIONS aren't what amazes Jackson the most --

ANDREW JACKSON

I had to invoke martial law to raise an army -- Lafitte had simply to whisper to the wind.

Lafitte greets a few more of his men near the gate. Suddenly his brother PIERRE is there. The brothers share an embrace.

JEAN LAFITTE

I know you had your doubts, Pierre. But we are here on equal ground. I need you by my side.

PIERRE LAFITTE

Then that is where I will be.

But the moment Lafitte turns away, Pierre's face FALLS. He's still clearly skeptical about siding with the Americans.

Lafitte approaches Jackson and Jackson's high command --

JEAN LAFITTE

How's this for "delivery", General?

ANDREW JACKSON

Your men need to be disciplined.

JEAN LAFITTE

And they will be. The fight will bring it out of them.

ANDREW JACKSON

Our scouts have the British across Lake Borgne in barges. Their entire army has made camp.

JEAN LAFITTE

Are they into the canals?

ANDREW JACKSON
 (re: their troops)
 For our sake let us hope not.

EXT. MARSH - MORNING

Unfortunately, that's exactly where they are. The SPANISH FISHERMAN leads a legion of REDCOATS through the bog.

They pass an unblocked CANAL and find themselves standing --

EXT. VILLEURE PLANTATION - MORNING

On the edge of a magnificent plantation ORANGE GROVE.

TITLE: VILLEURE PLANTATION - 8 MILES SOUTH OF NEW ORLEANS

The redcoats move quickly toward the MAIN HOUSE.

EXT. VILLEURE HOUSE - VERANDA - MORNING

Two of General Villere's sons, GABRIEL and CELESTINE (both late teens), are on the porch cleaning fowling pieces. Celestine munches on an APPLE...

Suddenly Gabriel sees a flash of RED in the orange groves.

GABRIEL VILLEURE
 (in French; subtitled)
Did you see that?

Another flash. The REDCOATS move through the trees. Gabriel turns to his younger brother --

GABRIEL VILLEURE (CONT'D)
Run. *Tell Father.*

CELESTINE VILLEURE
 (scared)
What will you do?

GABRIEL VILLEURE
All that I can to stop them.

EXT. VILLEURE HOUSE - MORNING

The redcoats approach the front of the house with arms at the ready. Suddenly the door opens and Gabriel and the HOUSE STAFF step out with their hands raised...

COLONEL WILL THORNTON (32) motions his men to take the house. As they do they don't notice CELESTINE sneaking out the back.

But just as Celestine reaches the swamp TREE LINE --

COLONEL THORNTON
What was that? Back there.

Four REDCOATS move toward the trees. Gabriel tenses.

EXT. SWAMP - MORNING

Celestine has a little bit of a head start. He approaches a massive LIVE OAK tree. He looks up into the branches and finds the perfect spot. But just as he starts to climb --

He hears a WHIMPER. The family SETTER has followed him into the swamp. The setter wags its tail with a low BARK.

The redcoats turn. Celestine doesn't know what to do.

EXT. SWAMP - MORNING

The REDCOATS approach the LIVE OAK. They pass under the tree's criss-crossing branches, searching...

Only they never look up. For if they did, they would see Celestine sitting on a branch feeding the dog his APPLE.

Celestine holds his breath. The redcoats finally move away.

EXT. VILLEERE PLANTATION - DAY

It's a few hours later and the British have made CAMP. Over 1,600 TROOPS with many more presently trudging through the canal onto the grounds...

After the hard journey through the swamps, the plantation is a refuge. Many have never seen such a place, the MISSISSIPPI RIVER running wide along the western border of the property.

The UNION JACK flies high from a tree branch. MAJOR GENERAL KEANE finally arrives. He's approached by COLONEL THORNTON --

COLONEL THORNTON
Sir, there's news.

INT. VILLEURE HOUSE - STUDY - DAY

The house study has been turned into a WAR ROOM. Keane and Thornton are there with the two BRITISH SPIES --

BRITISH SPY

The Americans are surely blind, General. The grounds lead straight to the Quarter with little defense. The canals were a godsend.

COLONEL THORNTON

It will take days to move the rest of the army to meet us here, but we could be in the city by nightfall.

This is an unexpected development, but Keane waivers...

COLONEL THORNTON (CONT'D)

Sir, pardon my forwardness -- I know Admiral Cochrane was clear in his orders to wait but --

MAJOR GENERAL KEANE

The numbers are our strength, Colonel. We haven't waded through this bog to move carelessly now.

COLONEL THORNTON

I don't believe this careless.

Keane still isn't convinced. But then he notices a PAINTING on the wall of MAJOR GENERAL VILLEURE in full uniform.

MAJOR GENERAL KEANE

I want to speak with the prisoner.

INT. VILLEURE HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

GABRIEL VILLEURE is tied to a chair. Keane paces in front of him. Keane's imposing -- or at least trying to be...

MAJOR GENERAL KEANE

To believe we sailed the Atlantic, we sludged through your treacherous swamps, all to wind up here -- in the house of the head of the Louisiana State Militia!

GABRIEL VILLEURE

Please, Major General -- I will assist in any way possible -- do not harm the staff of the house --

Gabriel is groveling a bit. Keane is emboldened.

MAJOR GENERAL KEANE
You are a disgrace to the family
name, Gabriel! But I am not
surprised. There is a saying,
heard first in your own capital --
militia don't attack. They run.

Gabriel fights back tears. It's rather dramatic.

MAJOR GENERAL KEANE (CONT'D)
You want to protect those in the
house, tell me now -- how many men
has Jackson assembled in the city?

Gabriel looks pained. He doesn't want to say. Finally --

GABRIEL VILLERE
17,000.

That's when we realize -- Gabriel's been putting on a show.

MAJOR GENERAL KEANE
Our spies say no more than five.

GABRIEL VILLERE
Jackson sent for reinforcements.
Enlisted men from Kentucky and
Tennessee. They have come.

EXT. VILLERE HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Keane exits, his mind racing. Thornton is there. Finally --

MAJOR GENERAL KEANE
I will not risk our position. We
wait for Admiral Cochrane.

And as Keane heads down the hall, Gabriel's plan a success --

EXT. DOCKYARD - DAY

Jackson and Patterson oversee the loading of the ninety-nine
foot schooner *LOUISIANA* with Baratarian HEAVY ARTILLERY.

ANDREW JACKSON
How many of Lafitte's men do you
need to set sail?

COMMODORE PATTERSON
As many as you can spare.

Just then MAJOR GENERAL VILLERE and his son CELESTINE arrive on horseback. Both are nearly out of breath --

MAJOR GENERAL VILLERE
 General! The British are eight miles hence without a fort, a gun or a man between here and the city!

INT. JACKSON'S OFFICE - DAY

Things are rather disorganized from the news. Jackson is with his high-command, but there's a lot of cross talk --

ANDREW JACKSON
 If it's true -- why haven't they marched all the way to our walls?

Major General Villere gives Celestine a look -- *speak up.*

CELESTINE VILLERE
 My brother -- he had idea to misinform them of our numbers --

EDWARD LIVINGSTON
 He may have saved us all.

ANDREW JACKSON
 He very well may have, but the British shall not sleep on our soil. We fight them tonight!

JOHN COFFEE
 Sir, we're not prepared to --

Jackson SLAMS his fist on the table. Everyone quiets.

ANDREW JACKSON
 We've prepared for weeks. If Celestine is indeed correct -- if these men are only the advance guard -- now is the time to strike.

MAJOR GENERAL VILLERE
 It will be dark within the hour.

ANDREW JACKSON
 They wish to fight to the beat of the drum, we must dictate our own terms. Commodore Patterson, enlist the men you need and send the *Louisiana* down to their position.
 (MORE)

ANDREW JACKSON (CONT'D)

When they have been sufficiently
bombarded, light the sky and we
shall answer your call.

Patterson is hesitant. So are the rest. Jackson sees this --

ANDREW JACKSON (CONT'D)

Do I have none of your support?

A long beat of silence. But then LAFITTE steps forward -- he crosses to a nearby desk, making himself a DRINK --

JEAN LAFITTE

You have mine. If only because all
else here would so decline. The
British will never expect it.

That support, from Lafitte no less, is all Jackson needs --

ANDREW JACKSON

We disembark as soon as we can.
The British may indeed dine for
Christmas in the city, but I shall
be seated at the head of the table.

EXT. FRENCH QUARTER - DUSK

Jackson's ARMY has been assembled. There's a nervous energy as the men march through the city. From the ENLISTED MEN and MILITIA, confident and trained, to the WORKER BATTALION and FREE MEN OF COLOR, excited but scared for their first combat.

And then there are the BARATARIANS, not so much marching in line as walking with swagger to the battlefield, the ENLISTED MEN casting them the occasional sideways glance. WOMEN and CHILDREN line the streets waving HANDKERCHIEFS, the BELLS of the nearby CATHEDRAL echoing in time...

Jackson rides at the front, high on his horse in FULL DRESS UNIFORM. Lafitte is next to him. Lafitte leans over --

JEAN LAFITTE

It's clever. Our first battle and
no need for the men to hold a line.
They may fight as savages.

ANDREW JACKSON

We are who we are.

And as the army leaves the gates of the city, the ELDERLY POLICE FORCE left to SALUTE and guard the CITY WALLS --

EXT. VILLEIRE PLANTATION - NIGHT

The BRITISH relax on the plantation. CAMPFIRES dot the landscape. The men feast on wares taken from nearby farms.

TITLE: DECEMBER 23, 1814 - THE NIGHT BATTLE

A group of REDCOATS sits around the fire drinking near the river. One of them wraps the SORES on his hands --

SORE HANDS
Never shall I row again.

PIPE SMOKER
Aye, until we've gotta go back!

Laughter around the circle. But then --

SORE HANDS
What the hell is that?

A SHIP floats down the river in the darkness. The men move to get a better look, but it's hard to see through the FOG.

PIPE SMOKER
Cochrane sent a schooner to guard
our flank?

SORE HANDS
That or a merchantman surely. She
looks like a ghost.

Indeed she does. There's the sound of her ANCHOR splashing in the water. The ship is only a few hundred yards away.

PIPE SMOKER
We need to raise her.

A few of the soldiers FIRE their rifles, trying to get the ship's attention, but the ship sits silently unlighted...

And then, several small FLICKERS OF FLAME on her deck.

SORE HANDS
Are those firing matches?

But the words are barely out of his mouth before the GUNPORTS are snapped open and a voice bellows from the darkness --

AMERICAN SAILOR
For the honor of America!

And then the LOUISIANA OPENS FIRE WITH A HAIL OF GRAPE SHOT.

The redcoats dive for cover anywhere they can find it. The shot tears through the campfire circles, the plantation now under relentless barrage from the *Louisiana*'s port-side guns.

As the ARTILLERY fires, the flames light up the faces of the men manning the cannons -- many of Lafitte's top LIEUTENANTS.

INT. VILLE RE HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Major General Keane and his high-command are eating dinner as the shots rain down. Keane rushes to the window --

MAJOR GENERAL KEANE
What kind of fighting is this!?

COLONEL THORNTON
The American kind.

EXT. VILLE RE PLANTATION - NIGHT

The BOMBARDMENT has lasted almost an hour. The British hide in ditches and behind trees. CASUALTIES litter the field.

Suddenly, the firing comes to a halt. And then --

SORE HANDS
What could possibly happen now?

THREE ROCKETS light up the sky -- one RED, one WHITE, and one BLUE. Jackson's signal from the *Louisiana*.

And then all hell is unleashed.

Jackson's men OPEN FIRE from the darkness just north of the plantation. They boldly CHARGE onto the field where they meet the weary and bloody British forces. The BATTLE is on.

It's unlike any the British have ever seen. No drums, no marching lines. Jackson's ENLISTED MEN lead the charge, but soon the MILITIA and WORKER BATTALION join. The FREE MEN OF COLOR attack near the swamps, cutting free British horses.

Through this Jackson leads with Lafitte not far from his side. They are impressive. And as the battle continues --

EXT. VILLE RE HOUSE - NIGHT

Major General Keane is outside the main house trying to find some semblance of order in the chaos.

MAJOR GENERAL KEANE
How many men!?

COLONEL THORNTON
Impossible to tell through the
smoke and fog!

MAJOR GENERAL KEANE
Form a line as best we can and send
word into the swamps -- all other
legions, get them here now!

EXT. VILLEIRE PLANTATION - NIGHT

The battle has broken into vicious little FIGHTS all over the field. A BRITISH MAJOR slays a member of Villere's MILITIA, then turns to a sound in the smoke and darkness --

BRITISH MAJOR
Are you the Ninety-third?

SOLDIER (O.S.)
Aye, that's right!

The major is relieved. He walks forward only to have a hand slap down on his shoulder. It's one of Jackson's ENLISTED --

SOLDIER (CONT'D)
Apologies, Major. I was mistaken.
And now you're my prisoner.

Across the way the BARATARIANS battle with a legion of REDCOATS. The pirates fight with anything available -- RIFLES, BAYONETS, KNIVES, HATCHETS, SABERS, FISTS. A few of Jackson's ENLISTED MEN are impressed by the show.

One of the WORKER BATTALION hears footsteps in the dark. He turns and fires, only to find he's killed one of his own.

Across the way Jackson reconvenes with Coffee and Lafitte. As the battle drags, it's becoming harder to tell who's winning and where. Casualties mount on both sides.

JOHN COFFEE
There are two six-pounders coming
up from the rear!

But Jackson sees more and more BRITISH REINFORCEMENTS coming through the canal, meeting up with MAJOR GENERAL KEANE...

And in a moment of battlefield clarity --

ANDREW JACKSON

Save the guns, General! With their reinforcements, the tide can only shift in their favor.

JEAN LAFITTE

A retreat?

ANDREW JACKSON

Hardly. We shall camp to the north and see what daylight brings. Our message has been duly received.

And as Jackson leads them back through the plantation, the SCREAMS of those injured or dying shouting into the night --

EXT. VILLERE PLANTATION - MORNING

The sun rises on a dreary and horrific scene. Over 500 casualties from both sides, over 70 men killed in action, but the British have clearly gotten the worst of it.

Many bodies lay where they fell. Bayonets protrude, bones are broken, limbs torn apart with shot. War from this time is not kind to the men who must fight it...

Keane and Thornton walk the grounds. Keane is aghast --

MAJOR GENERAL KEANE

Never in all my years...

COLONEL THORNTON

It seems the Americans have found a new sense of boldness.

The *LOUISIANA* is still up river just out of musket range. She's been joined by another American schooner, the *CAROLINA*. The boats trade off firing GRAPE SHOT onto the front lines.

MAJOR GENERAL KEANE

Yes. And his name is Jackson.

Suddenly ADMIRAL COCHRANE arrives through the canal with his travelling party. Cochrane takes one look around --

ADMIRAL COCHRANE

Oh, good Christ, Keaney. What the hell have you done?

INT. VILLERE HOUSE - STUDY - MORNING

Cochrane and Keane now in the study. Cochrane is livid.

ADMIRAL COCHRANE

And this is the position you've
left us in -- on this godforsaken
farm with the river to one side,
the swamps on the other!

MAJOR GENERAL KEANE

The Americans -- they attacked out
of the darkness --

ADMIRAL COCHRANE

I don't care if they attacked out
your ass, Keane. You should have
marched your way to the city!

MAJOR GENERAL KEANE

You instructed me to wait here!

ADMIRAL COCHRANE

You're a fool. A daddy's boy with
a silver spoon. And now I'm left
to clean up your mess!

Keane hangs his head. Cochrane takes a breath, and then --

ADMIRAL COCHRANE (CONT'D)

To maintain decency, you must give
the orders. But for as long as it
takes, we shall bring forth all of
her Queen's fury and unleash.

EXT. MACARTY PLANTATION - MORNING - ESTABLISHING

Jackson's men have made camp a few plantations north.
Makeshift HOSPITALS house the wounded. Several BARATARIANS
self-medicate with pulls from a bottle of whiskey.

From the ground the Americans can hear the guns of the
Louisiana but the camps are out of sight with the naked eye --

INT. MACARTY HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - MORNING

Not so from here. Jackson and his advisors have setup a WAR
ROOM on the third floor of the MACARTY HOUSE. Jackson uses
an ASTRONOMER'S TELESCOPE to spy on the British down river.

EDWARD LIVINGSTON

Dare I say -- none of them slept.

MAJOR GENERAL VILLERE
Even with casualties the men are
invigorated. Shall we prepare to
strike again at nightfall?

But Jackson ignores Villere. There's something on his mind.

ANDREW JACKSON
At the widest point the plantations
are a mile from the swamp to the
river. But from their current
position, as they move north --

Lafitte figures out where Jackson is going with this --

JEAN LAFITTE
The river bends. They are squeezed
into a size half that with no other
recourse.

EDWARD LIVINGSTON
What are you saying, General?

ANDREW JACKSON
To get to the city, the British
must now come through us.

EXT. MACARTY PLANTATION - RODRIGUEZ CANAL - MORNING

Moments later. The meeting has moved onto the RODRIGUEZ
CANAL -- a ten-foot wide DRY CANAL that runs the length of
the MACARTY PLANTATION from the river to the swamp.

ANDREW JACKSON
With their numbers and our lack of
cover another attack carries too
great a risk. So we shall build a
line and guard our flanks. Here,
along this canal. With every man,
woman and child, every piece of
barn and tree, the entire city
behind it. They can't move through
the River. They can't move through
the swamp. They can't move through
us. What we build here will be our
last hope to save a nation.

And as Jackson's advisors share looks of skepticism over the
task at hand, PIERRE LAFITTE the most skeptical of all --

JEAN LAFITTE (V.O.)
My fairest Mary-Anne --

EXT. MACARTY PLANTATION - DAY

The weather has turned rainy and cold. In the hours since Jackson's orders his ARMY has become a CONSTRUCTION CREW.

JEAN LAFITTE (V.O.)

I write to you now with your sage advice taken, and as such I find myself covered in mire and filth on this dreary Christmas Eve.

Men literally DIG a DITCH in the canal. SLAVES work side by side with SHOP OWNERS as the ditch keeps filling with water. BATTALIONS tear down nearby BARNS for usable wood. There's a line of HORSES and OXEN carrying in supplies from the city.

It's a truly back-breaking operation. Jackson supervises from the mud, barking orders. Lafitte watches down the line.

EXT. MACARTY PLANTATION - RODRIGUEZ CANAL - DAY

A few hours later. BALES OF COTTON are being laid the length of the canal as foundation for an eight-foot high BREASTWORK.

JEAN LAFITTE (V.O.)

You were astoundingly correct in your assessment of Jackson as I have never met a man as determined as he. No one wishes to build the wall we are to build, but no one dares face his wrath if we don't.

Men switch out in shifts, too tired to move very far to find a place to lay. A group of BARATARIANS share steaming coffee with a few of Jackson's ENLISTED MEN. A BOND is formed.

Jackson surveys the progress from the middle of the canal --

ANDREW JACKSON

General Coffee, we need a flag.

EXT. LAKE BORGNE - DAY

And as the Americans work, so do the BRITISH. BARGES as far as the eye can see are rowed carrying a seemingly endless supply a SOLDIERS and MUNITIONS. The rain is relentless.

JEAN LAFITTE (V.O.)

Fortunately the British must deal with the same unbearable conditions as they prepare to meet us here.

The men are miserable. But then we find a barge carrying a different kind of soldier. VETERAN TROOPS hardened by battle. And riding in the lead with a STEADFAST glare --

GENERAL SIR EDWARD PACKENHAM. The man who burned DC to the ground. The man who's come to New Orleans to do the same.

INT. THE CABILDO - ASSEMBLY ROOM - NIGHT

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE and his advisors eat CHRISTMAS EVE DINNER.

JEAN LAFITTE (V.O.)
And as the city dines under the
burden of what is to come, I think
often of our time together.

A MESSENGER enters. He heads straight for Claiborne --

MESSENGER
Governor. From Washington.

INT. ELMWOOD PLANTATION - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Mary-Anne reads Lafitte's LETTER in a quiet corner. Suzette Claiborne and the rest dance the night away behind her.

JEAN LAFITTE (V.O.)
I have never met a woman who so
quickly was able to find the heart
of the matter. I hope one day to
earn the trust of which you spoke --

EXT. SWAMP - NIGHT

Near the plantation front lines. CAPTAIN NICHOLAS LOCKYER and a few REDCOATS wait in the darkness...

JEAN LAFITTE (V.O.)
-- because what has become clear to
me now is that trust allows us to
move mountains. I shall see you
soon. Yours loyally, Jean.

There's a rustling in the trees. And then --

PIERRE LAFITTE STEPS OUT OF THE SHADOWS.

Lockyer smiles a knowing smile -- he's been expecting him. And as Pierre's true ALLEGIANCE is revealed --

INT. MACARTY PLANTATION - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Jackson and his high-command, still dirty from a day's work, sit at the table. A SERVANT delivers a TURKEY to eat.

Lafitte is at the window. The men outside continue to build the BREASTWORK by moonlight. The servant passes close by --

JEAN LAFITTE

Whatever you can -- make sure every man has something to eat tonight.

Jackson takes note of this. Lafitte comes to the table. Jackson raises a glass for a toast --

ANDREW JACKSON

To America. Happy Christmas.

INT. MACARTY PLANTATION - STUDY - NIGHT

The men have broken into small groups for drinks. Jackson is again alone with a bottle of WHISKEY. He's had quite a few.

JEAN LAFITTE (O.S.)

May I join you?

Lafitte has come up behind him. Jackson considers Lafitte a moment, then waves at a nearby chair -- *if you must*.

JEAN LAFITTE (CONT'D)

(re: the whiskey)

And partake?

Again Jackson nods curtly -- not the warmest of invitations. Lafitte is left to pour a glass himself. He drinks.

JEAN LAFITTE (CONT'D)

Ah! I think now I understand the fire in your belly.

ANDREW JACKSON

Kentucky mash.

JEAN LAFITTE

For a man from Tennessee. Is that even allowable?

Lafitte is joking but Jackson's clearly not in the mood.

JEAN LAFITTE (CONT'D)

Come now, General. Where's your holiday spirit? Dinner with twelve of your closest military advisors --

ANDREW JACKSON
There is much to be done.

JEAN LAFITTE
And we are doing it, I believe.

ANDREW JACKSON
As are the British.

JEAN LAFITTE
Something tells me they're not
quite as cheerful.

Another joke. Jackson studies Lafitte for a moment.

ANDREW JACKSON
I'm not a scoundrel.

JEAN LAFITTE
I don't believe I called you one.

ANDREW JACKSON
In our meeting at the bar. A man
who duels at the first false word.

JEAN LAFITTE
It's what I'd heard about you. It
wasn't what I said.

ANDREW JACKSON
Yes but your meaning was the same.

Jackson finishes his drink, then pours himself another. He's drunk. Lafitte realizes he must tread carefully --

JEAN LAFITTE
Then I must apologize, General. No
offense intended. Though I'm sure
if I spent my days at the bottom of
a bottle of Kentucky mash I would
find myself a duelist as well.

Jackson takes a moment, seemingly sizing Lafitte up --

ANDREW JACKSON
Have you ever been married,
Monsieur Lafitte?

JEAN LAFITTE
Many have tried.

Jackson drinks again, then begins a story he normally wouldn't, but with the circumstances as such --

ANDREW JACKSON

My wife, she was born in Kentucky actually. Her father married her to a man twice her age when she was only sixteen. He was a lout. A scab. And when he left her after a year and a half of hell he was to file their papers with the court only he put them in his pocket and forgot them there forever.

(drinks again)

She's the love of my life, she is. But after our vows were said, rumors spread of her infidelity. She was called a bigamist. She was called a whore. She was called much worse. And as you say, when such happens in moments of ill-clarity at the bottom of the bottle my wife's name had to be defended.

JEAN LAFITTE

Your first duel was for her honor.

(realizes)

General, are you a romantic?

ANDREW JACKSON

What was said was patently untrue. I had to correct them.

JEAN LAFITTE

By shooting them with your pistol.

ANDREW JACKSON

By settling our discrepancies honorably. And as the safety of a duelist is based on his reputation - - once I was, I continued to be.

Lafitte has been amazed by this entire exchange.

JEAN LAFITTE

I want to see how you do it.

ANDREW JACKSON

It's not for show.

JEAN LAFITTE

But it can be. I just hope I'm not on the receiving end.

And is that a smile from Jackson? If it is, it's a small one. But it's a start. Jackson changes gears --

ANDREW JACKSON

The food. For the men earlier. I
would never think to do as you did.

JEAN LAFITTE

Show the men love and they will
love you in return.

ANDREW JACKSON

A leader of men isn't always
afforded that luxury.

JEAN LAFITTE

You're saying I'm not?

ANDREW JACKSON

This war has been fought because
the men who stood up to be counted
sat down when it did. I have many
burdens above my own popularity.

Lafitte leans forward here --

JEAN LAFITTE

I think you're worried they won't
love you back. I think fear is
easier. But I promise you this,
General -- if you walk with the men
on that line you won't have to
stand to be counted. They will
hold you on their shoulders.

Jackson stares at Lafitte. And then --

ANDREW JACKSON

I never knew a pirate to talk as
such.

JEAN LAFITTE

(with a smile)

I'm a privateer.

ANDREW JACKSON

Either way, to have everyone's
acceptance or no one's is the same.
When I close my eyes at night
there's only one name that matters.
I recommend you find that yourself.

JEAN LAFITTE

(beat)

You are a romantic.

ANDREW JACKSON
And a scoundrel, apparently.

JEAN LAFITTE
We are who we are.

Lafitte finishes his drink. He reaches to pour another but Jackson GRABS the bottle. And in a meaningful gesture --

Jackson POURS Lafitte a fresh glass. An act of FRIENDSHIP. And as these two men drink into the Christmas Eve night --

EXT. MACARTY PLANTATION - MORNING

The sun rises on CHRISTMAS MORNING. Jackson checks on the line's progress. Dominique You approaches holding a PACKAGE.

DOMINIQUE YOU
Joyeux Noël, Général.

Jackson unwraps the gift. It's a large AMERICAN FLAG.

ANDREW JACKSON
How was this procured?

DOMINIQUE YOU
(with a wink)
Old family heirloom.

Meaning -- *I stole it from somewhere.* And then --

ANDREW JACKSON
We shall raise it to the heavens.

EXT. VILLEERE PLANTATION - MORNING

The BRITISH ARMY reconvenes five miles south. The troops have been supplemented with men and artillery, but the north end of the grounds are still under constant BOMBARDMENT from the LOUISIANA and CAROLINA. Cochrane and Keane walk through.

ADMIRAL COCHRANE
We may not arrive for Christmas but
by God we will not be out-gunned by
those lily-skinned --

Cochrane stops mid-sentence. He's amazed to see his LEGIONS OF REDCOATS suddenly STANDING at attention --

ADMIRAL COCHRANE (CONT'D)
What in God's sacred name --

Cochrane turns. GENERAL PACKENHAM and his VETERAN TROOPS have just arrived at the plantation. The REDCOATS stand now like statues, saluting their commanding officer.

Cochrane's face falls. He knows what this arrival means.

GENERAL PACKENHAM
Admiral Cochrane. Major General
Keane. Happy Christmas.

INT. VILLERE HOUSE - STUDY - MORNING

Packenham has immediately taken control. The WAR ROOM is being completely rearranged by Packenham's ASSISTANTS to meet Packenham's exacting specifications...

Packenham sits at a desk studying a large MAP of the area. Cochrane and Keane wait for their orders. And wait. And wait. Packenham is very deliberate. And then, simply --

GENERAL PACKENHAM
I have never seen such a disaster.

ADMIRAL COCHRANE
General, I was not made aware of
your arrival -- if I had known --

GENERAL PACKENHAM
You would have magically changed
our position in the field? You
would have rowed back to the ships
and conceived an actual sound plan
of attack? This is a failure at
every conceivable instance.

Cochrane might not be in charge at this stage, but he has too much pride to go down without having his say --

ADMIRAL COCHRANE
I was left to work with what we
had. If Major General Keane had
marched to New Orleans --

GENERAL PACKENHAM
I've read the log, Admiral. Your
orders were to wait for you here.
Our place now is directly a result
of your utter incompetency.

Keane can't help but smile at this turn of events. The house SHAKES from a GRAPE SHOT landing nearby. Cochrane regroups --

ADMIRAL COCHRANE

I apologize, General. But my sailors will gladly continue forward if your men are not up to task. I'm sure the Crown will understand why you turned back a mere stone's throw from glory.

Packenham seethes. He goes to the window. He obviously doesn't like the hand he's been dealt but to reshuffle now...

The house SHAKES again as another grape shot lands close by.

GENERAL PACKENHAM

If we are to do anything, we must first end this despicable racket. Major Keane, bring up the guns.

EXT. VILLERE PLANTATION - LEVEE - NIGHT

That night. A legion of REDCOATS painstakingly move four heavy CANNONS to a position near the American ships.

A FIELD FURNACE burns red in the night, warming up shot.

EXT. LOUISIANA - NIGHT

Two BARATARIANS stumble on deck after a few too many drinks. They relieve themselves over the rail and into the river --

And that's when one of them notices the GLOW of the furnace.

BARATARIAN

Holy shit.

The men race back below deck, YELLING to wake the others --

EXT. VILLERE PLANTATION - LEVEE - NIGHT

The REDCOATS hear the raucous onboard. They rush to get the shots ready as OARS from the *Louisiana* hit the water --

The *Louisiana* manages to retreat, but the men on the *Carolina* are just starting to get their bearings. As they do --

The REDCOATS fire rounds of glowing HOT SHOT toward the deck.

EXT. CAROLINA - NIGHT

The ship doesn't stand a chance. The SHOT tears through the deck and shatters the MAST. One of the shots lodges itself just below the steering cables and ignites a terrible FIRE.

The deck is rapidly ENGULFED. SAILORS jump into the water. The fire spreads toward the MUNITIONS HOLD...

INT. LOUISIANA - ROW DECK - NIGHT

The BARATARIANS row quickly, making their escape. They hear the cheers of the REDCOATS behind them and then --

THE CAROLINA EXPLODES ON THE WATER. It's deafening.

EXT. MACARTY HOUSE - NIGHT

The EXPLOSION can been heard loud and clear at the American camp. The FIRE from the *Carolina* rises above the trees.

Jackson and his high-command rush out of the house --

MAJOR GENERAL VILLEIRE
One of ours?

But no one needs to answer. Suddenly JEAN DAQUIN, the leader of the FREE MEN OF COLOR, approaches out of breath --

JEAN DAQUIN
General! My men were on patrol. A new British commander has arrived.

JOHN COFFEE
Did you hear his name?

JEAN DAQUIN
Packenham, sir. It was Packenham.

EDWARD LIVINGSTON
The man who burned Washington.

A dark pall washes over the plantation. Everyone knows what this means, especially Jackson. Finally --

ANDREW JACKSON
Our stakes have been confirmed.
Spread word to the men -- we are to be tested.

And as Jackson stares at the FLAMES growing in the distance --

EXT. VILLEIRE PLANTATION - NIGHT

Packenham does the same. A die has been cast between them.

GENERAL PACKENHAM

They fight for their freedom. We
fight for something greater. If we
are to break Jackson's line, we
must start with the obvious.

MAJOR GENERAL KEANE

What's that, sir?

GENERAL PACKENHAM

To find out what he's made of.

And the RAT-TAT-TAT of BRITISH WAR DRUMS bring us to --

EXT. MACARTY PLANTATION - MORNING

Where two mighty COLUMNS OF REDCOATS march through the morning FOG heading steadily toward the AMERICAN LINE.

TITLE: DECEMBER 28, 1814 - THE GREAT RECONNAISSANCE

Eighty men across, almost thirty deep, each column is an incredible sight. Packenham leads, taking pride in the show he is providing. These are the greatest soldiers alive.

EXT. MACARTY PLANTATION - RODRIGUEZ CANAL - MORNING

While these men are not. At least by way of organization and uniform. There's an impending feeling of doom as JACKSON'S ARMY waits for the British to come out of the fog...

And then, across the plantation, the REDCOATS appear.

DANIEL ADLER

God Almighty.

The men haven't seen anything like it. The BREASTWORK they stand behind is impressive but incomplete. The eight-foot high wall stretches from the river to the swamp fronted by a MOAT, but there are still stretches waiting to be reinforced.

The British are out of rifle range, so the men can only stand and wait. Jackson rides behind the line --

ANDREW JACKSON

Hold position! They mean only to
test our courage!

JEAN LAFITTE

I would hate to see a test of anything else.

The redcoats close. The drumming gets louder. A few of the WORKER BATTALION vomit in anticipation. Jean Daquin moves behind the FREE MEN OF COLOR, imploring them to stand firm.

Dominique You and his men man FIVE HEAVY ARTILLERY CANNONS spread throughout the line. Dominique spits, unimpressed.

DOMINIQUE YOU
Bring it, ya' bastards.

The British fire several CONGREVE ROCKETS toward the line. More like FIREWORKS than anything, the rockets scream through the air and EXPLODE loudly over the Americans' heads. A few of the men jump at the sound, none more than PIERRE LAFITTE.

ANDREW JACKSON
Hold! Hold!

Dominique You is tired of waiting. He FIRES his cannon --

EXT. MACARTY PLANTATION - MORNING

But the shot falls SHORT of its mark. Packenham is amused.

ADMIRAL COCHRANE
I'm surprised they haven't run.

GENERAL PACKENHAM
They will.

And as Packenham leads his men now double-time toward the line, both sides opening FIRE with a hail of bullets --

EXT. MACARTY PLANTATION - RODRIQUEZ CANAL - MORNING

We're several hours into the BATTLE. The British encroach and trade rifle and cannon fire with the American line...

It's not going well for the Americans. In full daylight they have far less success against the British war machine, and despite their superior position, the men are failing.

Even Jackson's ENLISTED, who have seen this kind of fighting before, are being bested by Packenham's SHARPSHOOTERS.

Several BRITISH SHOTS land near the BREASTWORK scattering men, mud and wall. Jackson rides behind the line, shouting for his men to hold form. More than a handful turn and run.

John Coffee quickly assesses the situation --

JOHN COFFEE
The artillery are our only defense!

Meaning Dominique You and the five BATTERIES the Baratarians man along the line as well as bombardment from the *LOUISIANA* stationed on the river. Dominique You fires and takes out an entire row of REDCOATS, Lafitte shouting orders behind him.

But as Jackson struggles with his men to hold the line --

EXT. MACARTY PLANTATION - MORNING

Packenham calmly observes from the battlefield. He notes the position of the ARTILLERY and the *LOUISIANA* on the River...

And then he spots JACKSON. And while Packenham can't see behind the wall, he knows the Americans are struggling.

GENERAL PACKENHAM
Stress the center line!

EXT. MACARTY PLANTATION - RODRIGUEZ CANAL - MORNING

And stress it they do. The REDCOATS pepper the American wall with cannon fire. CASUALTIES mount as several sections of the wall BREAK apart with no structural reinforcements...

A team of BARATARIAINS, MILITIA and ENLISTED is forced to hold the patchwork breastwork together with their hands.

MAJOR GENERAL VILLEIRE
It won't hold much longer!

The British columns close. If the breastwork were to fall now, leaving the Americans fully exposed...

Jackson needs a plan and fast. He peers over the wall, finding PACKENHAM still observing from high on his horse --

And through the smoke-filled chaos there's a MOMENT between these two men. Jackson's eyes narrow. And then, an idea --

ANDREW JACKSON
Long rifles and artillery! On the officers' heads! Stand tall now, men! Stand tall!

It's literally a long shot, but a group of Villere's MILITIA fire their LONG RIFLES at the BRITISH OFFICERS --

EXT. MACARTY PLANTATION - MORNING

Just as the officers move toward the American line. Two of the officers are immediately SHOT through the head and fall.

ADMIRAL COCHRANE

Down! Down!

Packenham and the others take cover as the American ARTILLERY follows suit. The officers are covered by dirt and grime.

Keane shouts to Packenham over the sound of the cannons --

MAJOR GENERAL KEANE

The center of the line is failing!
Shall we continue?!

But Packenham eyes Jackson and he knows -- the Americans are prepared to cut the head off the snake to spite the body.

GENERAL PACKENHAM

I have seen what we need! They are
five guns and one man. Leave the
cannons to fire and fall back!

Admiral Cochrane shoots Packenham a questioning look --

GENERAL PACKENHAM (CONT'D)

Patience, Admiral. All is well.
We know now how to end them.

EXT. MACARTY PLANTATION - RODRIGUEZ CANAL - DUSK

The sun sets. The AMERICANS have been beaten soundly. TRIAGE has been setup in one of the barns while the DEAD are loaded onto horse carts to be brought back to the city.

Jackson and his high-command somberly walk the line. The wall is held together in places by a single nail or board.

JOHN COFFEE

To think this was only for show.

ANDREW JACKSON

Our artillery held well. If I were
to assume, the British will bring
forth more guns to match us.

JEAN LAFITTE

And how do we suppose to stop them?

ANDREW JACKSON

With all the men we can afford.
Pull in the flanks from across the
river and send word to our legions
at the forts or other batteries.
We must hold this line at all cost.

This is a HAIL MARY play. PIERRE LAFITTE keenly takes note.
Unbeknownst to Pierre, JOHN COFFEE does as well...

MAJOR GENERAL VILLERE

We shall be exposed, General. If
the British send even a single
battalion across the river --

ANDREW JACKSON

We're left no choice. They have
weakened us here and Packenham will
take great pride in trying to
finish the job. Monsieur Lafitte,
you and Dominique shall procure all
possible artillery reserves. I
trust you implicitly to provide the
cover our men will need.

This vote of confidence is not lost on Lafitte or the others.

JEAN LAFITTE

We shall not let you down, General.

ANDREW JACKSON

There is comfort in this defeat,
gentlemen. The next time we face
them, it shall be our last.

INT. MACARTY HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The officers sit for another HOLIDAY DINNER but the mood is far from festive. Lafitte and his brothers are absent.

A SERVANT brings in the TURKEY. The men wait for Jackson to make a toast, but instead Jackson wordlessly starts to eat.

And so it goes. Until suddenly the DOOR opens. To the shock of everyone in the room GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE is there --

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE

Happy New Year, General.

INT. MACARTY HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT

After dinner. Claiborne holds court for Jackson's officers. Jackson listens halfheartedly across the room.

And while Claiborne's clearly tempered, he knows what's happening here and he has a carrot he's excited to dangle...

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE

The cannon fire shook the windows, the women and children prayed their hardest. I know the outcome wasn't what you hoped, but we were behind you men. The entire city was.

Jackson doesn't have time for platitudes --

ANDREW JACKSON

Why have you come, Governor?

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE

I've come about peace.

That gets the room's attention. Jackson's not buying it --

ANDREW JACKSON

The only peace will be when the British leave our shores.

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE

There's word from Washington. We have sent a commission to Belgium.

EDWARD LIVINGSTON

A treaty?

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE

Discussions. But I have it on good authority all land and boundaries will likely be restored to where they stood before the war.

EDWARD LIVINGSTON

Status quo ante bellum.

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE

A strategic surrender now, with provisions not to burn the city, may be our wisest option.

Normally most of these men would never consider such a thing, but after the beating they just took...

ANDREW JACKSON
(skeptical)
Discussions.

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE
In Belgium, yes. If you wish me to
speak with the British --

ANDREW JACKSON
I wish you to go back to your
office in the city and leave the
men to do what needs to be done.

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE
General --

ANDREW JACKSON
Words mean nothing. Discussions
mean nothing. There are men five
hundred yards from where we stand
meaning to murder each and every
last one of us. We will hold this
line now or we will die.

And as Jackson leaves the room, his position made clear --

EXT. ELMWOOD PLANTATION - FARM HOUSE - NIGHT

Lafitte has snuck away from preparations to meet with Mary-Anne on the outskirts of the plantation.

They sit together huddled by a camp fire. It's romantic.

JEAN LAFITTE
Who would have believed the man now
most responsible for our acceptance
is the one who hated us the most?

MARY-ANNE DERN
I believe it was I who actually
said you weren't so different.

JEAN LAFITTE
Yet another in a line of sterling
observation.

Mary-Anne smiles. They have a growing comfortability.

MARY-ANNE DERN
So will you finally end the mystery
and tell me why you wanted this
secret meeting in the night?

JEAN LAFITTE

You are the reason.

MARY-ANNE DERN

Just another of your "whispers"...

JEAN LAFITTE

Perhaps. Or perhaps the sight of
ten thousand British soldiers
marching straight for you leads to
a readjustment of one's priorities.

Lafitte's being honest here. A somber moment --

MARY-ANNE DERN

What will happen?

JEAN LAFITTE

I have no idea. But I promise you
this, whatever the outcome, I shall
find you again. I will take you
from this place and we will run.

MARY-ANNE DERN

(quietly)

But what if you are --

JEAN LAFITTE

I won't be. Trust me.

MARY-ANNE DERN

You know my requirements for that.

They finally KISS. And from the FLICKERING of that fire --

EXT. VILLEIRE PLANTATION - NIGHT

To the flickering of the FIRE at the British camp. Packenham
waits patiently with Cochrane and a few others...

NICHOLAS LOCKYER and four REDCOATS arrive escorting PIERRE
LAFITTE. Pierre is clearly nervous to be in such company.

A long beat, then Pierre fills the silence --

PIERRE LAFITTE

Jackson has pulled all support from
his flank across the river. If you
were to cross there, your men could
come up behind Jackson's line, take
out his artillery and destroy him.

Packenham studies Pierre for a moment. And then --

GENERAL PACKENHAM
Why should I believe you?

PIERRE LAFITTE
I stand for our survival. My
brother stands for something else.

EXT. SWAMP - NIGHT

Pierre rushes back toward the American camp. He moves carefully through the swamp, covering his tracks...

He doesn't see JOHN COFFEE watching him from the shadows.

INT. MACARTY HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Lafitte returns from his dalliance with Mary-Anne in good spirits. He steps into his bedroom at the end of the hall --

INT. MACARTY HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

And is promptly AMBUSHED by a pair of burly ENLISTED MEN --

JEAN LAFITTE
What the hell are you --

But before he can finish Lafitte's met with a STRAIGHT RIGHT from Jackson and falls to the floor. Coffee is also there.

The men hold Lafitte as Jackson PUTS A PISTOL TO HIS HEAD.

ANDREW JACKSON
I should never have trusted you,
you lying, no good, son of a whore!

Jackson is furious. Lafitte has no idea what's happening.

JEAN LAFITTE
General -- please -- stop --

ANDREW JACKSON
I shall spit on your grave for what
you've done.

JEAN LAFITTE
What have I done?! What?!

ANDREW JACKSON
What I knew you were capable of the
moment I heard your cursed name --

JEAN LAFITTE

I have no idea what you're talking
about -- please, tell me --

ANDREW JACKSON

Your brother. Pierre. We caught
him scurrying away from the British
lines. I was to hang him for
treason if not for your arrival.

JEAN LAFITTE

Treason?! I promise you, General --
we have been firmly on your side --

Jackson presses the pistol to Lafitte's head. HARD.

ANDREW JACKSON

No more lies!

JEAN LAFITTE

I'm not lying! What was said in
his defense, what did he --

ANDREW JACKSON

There is no defense for treachery.
Goodbye, Monsieur Lafitte.

Jackson actually looks like he's going to pull the trigger.
Coffee and the enlisted men turn their heads --

But Lafitte says the one thing he thinks might save his life.

JEAN LAFITTE

You're a man of honor!

Jackson hesitates. It's a window, and Lafitte jumps through.

JEAN LAFITTE (CONT'D)

You said so yourself, General. A
man of honor would hear a defense.
Please. Let us go and listen to
what Pierre has to say.

ANDREW JACKSON

Why should I believe anything that
comes from either of your lips?

JEAN LAFITTE

Because you have seen how we fight.

ANDREW JACKSON

(rising)

You fight only for the empty virtue
you hope to receive from it!

JEAN LAFITTE

And why do you?! Why do you build this line?! Why are you standing with a pistol to my head?!

(pleading)

You have honor, General. But you know as well as I there is no way you can win the battle without us. If you do this, I swear to you, my men will walk. There must be an explanation. Let us hear it.

This is Lafitte's last stand. It's on Jackson to decide. A long beat. Finally, Jackson lowers the pistol.

INT. MACARTY HOUSE - CELLAR - NIGHT

Pierre Lafitte sits on the cold floor of the CELLAR. Two GUARDS stand at the door. Pierre has been roughed up a bit.

The door opens and Jackson, Coffee and Lafitte enter. Lafitte stares daggers at Pierre. Pierre has to look away.

ANDREW JACKSON

If you wish to speak, do it now.

Pierre struggles to hold back tears. And then --

PIERRE LAFITTE

I don't know what I was thinking. I meant not to be a spy. I was simply trying to protect our best interest if we lost.

ANDREW JACKSON

By being a traitor.

PIERRE LAFITTE

I gave them nothing, I swear it. Not at first. I had a relationship with Lockyer. I gained his trust with bread crumbs. But they brought me to Packenham. They told me I had to earn my keep or they would... I was scared. I broke.

ANDREW JACKSON

Broke how?

PIERRE LAFITTE

I told them of your plan to call in your flank during the next assault.

(MORE)

PIERRE LAFITTE (CONT'D)
I swear to you -- no one else knew.
I did this all by my own hand.

Jackson can barely contain his anger. To Lafitte --

ANDREW JACKSON
Your brother is a traitor.

PIERRE LAFITTE
(begging now)
I'm not! Please, I made a mistake!
Tell him, Jean -- make this right --

JEAN LAFITTE
Arrêtez.

Lafitte's as mad as Jackson. A long beat, and then --

JEAN LAFITTE (CONT'D)
Do what you must, General. The
only thing I ask is to spare my
men. They clearly had no part.

ANDREW JACKSON
So you admit it then?

JEAN LAFITTE
(pointedly to Pierre)
I admit only he is my brother.

Pierre is CRUSHED. Jackson finally turns to Coffee --

ANDREW JACKSON
I need a moment.

Jackson and Coffee exit. It's just Lafitte and Pierre.

PIERRE LAFITTE
Je suis désolé. I'm sorry, Jean.

Lafitte simply STARES at him. And then from out of nowhere --

Lafitte GRABS Pierre by the neck. The guards immediately
intervene but Lafitte is able to pull Pierre's ear close --

JEAN LAFITTE
(with vitriol)
Blood is thicker than water,
Pierre, but it still runs out. If
you wish to live you will do
exactly as I say or I will shoot
you myself. Mon frere.

Lafitte KISSES his cheek, then leaves. Pierre is stunned.

EXT. MACARTY HOUSE - VERANDA - DAWN

The sun rises. Jackson sits on the steps holding the same COLONIAL COIN he had before. He takes a pull from his FLASK.

Across the way Jackson can hear sounds of the British starting to bombard the line with GRAPE SHOT. It's not the main attack, more something to annoy Jackson and his men...

Lafitte comes out and stands behind him. Finally --

ANDREW JACKSON

My brother was only three years older. When I was 13 we both volunteered with a battalion on the Carolina line, but the Revolution, it had turned. Soldiers were shown no quarter on either side. The brutality we saw... My brother and I were captured on patrol. When I refused to clean a British officer's boots I was struck with his saber across my face and my brother beaten to the ground.

(drinks)

We were held in a filthy, bedless prison cell and given bread and water. I cried often. My brother had smuggled this coin in his pocket and we prayed over it. When our release came, Robert was so weak he was strapped to a horse as I walked shoeless next to him the forty miles home. And then he died all in the name of British tyranny.

(beat)

I don't know if there's a way for me to trust you again.

JEAN LAFITTE

Hang him then.

Jackson can't believe Lafitte said the words...

JEAN LAFITTE (CONT'D)

We have given too much, you and I. I have stood by your side and I will continue to do so if you'll have me, but this isn't about our brothers anymore. There might not be another two people in the entire world who think we can win and that is what we must do now.

(beat)

(MORE)

JEAN LAFITTE (CONT'D)
Hang him or let him earn his
freedom.

For the first time, Jackson turns back to Lafitte --

ANDREW JACKSON
How?

JEAN LAFITTE
By giving you the chance to put
your men where they're needed.

And as the sound of EXPLOSIONS bleeds from the front lines --

ANDREW JACKSON (V.O.)
My fondest Rachel --

EXT. MACARTY PLANTATION - RODRIGUEZ CANAL - DAY

Jackson's men rebuild the BREASTWORK. Jackson supervises on his horse as the line is constantly pestered by GRAPE SHOT.

ANDREW JACKSON (V.O.)
This will be my last correspondence
before the finale of this battle,
and only then will I know if it has
been worth while or I am the fool.

Jackson pays particular close attention to the BARATARIANS reinforcing the ARTILLERY STANDS -- *can he trust them?*

EXT. VILLE RE PLANTATION - DAY

As Jackson supervises, so does Packenham. Soldiers push huge ARTILLERY CANNONS through the mud and muck. It's awful work.

ANDREW JACKSON (V.O.)
The man against us now is the man
who burned Washington. It is
thusly my duty to make sure he pays
for those reprehensible sins.

Over 3,000 REINFORCEMENTS have arrived including 500 SCOTTISH HIGHLANDERS. The Highlanders wear KILTS with their uniform.

EXT. VILLE RE PLANTATION - LEVEE - DAY

Packenham watches as BRITISH ENGINEERS fashion a makeshift DAM on one of the CANALS that runs down to the MISSISSIPPI.

ANDREW JACKSON (V.O.)

As such, I must put my faith in a man who does not deserve it. But with the storm that is to come, I find that the least of my concerns.

As the dam is struck, the WATER rises in the canal. REDCOATS carry in BARGES that will move the men across the RIVER.

With enough water, the barges FLOAT. Packenham approves.

ADMIRAL COCHRANE

The west bank shall be ours.

GENERAL PACKENHAM

And with it, we will burn this country to the ground.

EXT. MACARTY PLANTATION - NIGHT

Jackson's men continue to work through the night -- finishing the wall, strapping KNIVES to RIFLES to make BAYONETS. And as they do, we notice a strange occurrence happening --

The men no longer stick to their own. BARATARIANS work alongside ENLISTED work alongside the WORKERS and FREE MEN.

ANDREW JACKSON (V.O.)

I must confess, as a whole, I am more than pleased with the effort of our men. We are an army now, even more so with the addition of much needed reinforcements.

2,500 KENTUCKY MILITIA arrive on the line with COONSKIN CAPS and HUNTING RIFLES. They've never seen anything like it.

JOHN COFFEE

My God -- you actually came.

EXT. FRENCH QUARTER - ROYAL STREET - DAY

The city itself makes its final preparations for the possible invasion. Businesses have been boarded up. A few have hung SIGNS welcoming the British and asking not to be burned.

A member of the ELDERLY POLICE FORCE walks through and tears the signs down. A group of MEN, WOMEN and CHILDREN have gathered at the end of ROYAL STREET with makeshift weapons.

It's a sight, these CITIZENS compelled to duty. If the men fall on the line, those here won't go down without a fight.

ANDREW JACKSON (V.O.)

Through it all, I have not forgotten that it isn't just a city we endeavor to save. It is all of America -- a place where anything is possible. We are the proof.

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE watches from his balcony. He's surprised to see a few of his ADVISORS standing with the men below.

INT. MACARTY HOUSE - CELLAR - NIGHT

Jackson and Lafitte have just informed Pierre Lafitte what he needs to do to earn his freedom. They wait for his response.

ANDREW JACKSON (V.O.)

And now as daylight comes, it is on each of us to see what we may do. This is not goodbye, my sweet. I shall hold you again, either now or in eternity. With love, Andrew.

It's clearly a daunting task. Pierre hesitates...

JEAN LAFITTE

You're the only one who knows the British lines, Pierre, and every man we have will be needed to hold the wall. It has to be you.

A long beat. Then Pierre finally looks up --

PIERRE LAFITTE

I shall not let you down.

Whether Jackson believes him or not, he has no choice.

INT. VILLEIRE HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT

The night before battle. Packenham meets with his high-command to go over their final preparations.

GENERAL PACKENHAM

The west bank shall be our key. Colonel Thornton, you will float the boats in the canal across the river before sun rise. Your 1,500 men will march to a place beyond the wall, await our signal, then fire on Jackson as we begin our forward attack.

(MORE)

GENERAL PACKENHAM (CONT'D)

General Keane, to breach the breastwork, your men will be responsible for bringing the scaling ladders to these points here weakened by our last offense.

MAJOR GENERAL KEANE

It will be my pleasure, sir.

Keane takes pride in being asked. Cochrane rolls his eyes.

GENERAL PACKENHAM

As for Jackson, if at all possible, I will take the honor of laying him down myself, if only as punishment for delaying our inevitable victory. The city shall be ours, gentlemen. And so the country. We will welcome our wayward brothers home with open arms.

And the sound of AMERICAN WAR DRUMS brings us to --

EXT. MACARTY PLANTATION - RODRIGUEZ CANAL - NIGHT

It's a few hours before daybreak and the Americans are taking their final positions behind the wall.

The BREASTWORK is complete and it is massive. Over eight feet tall and twenty feet wide in places, almost a MILE LONG stretching from the River to the swamp. Giant LOGS reinforce its structure while sharpened SPEARS line the top.

Jackson rides on his HORSE next to his high-command. The men are four deep for much of the wall, and most are taking a quiet moment to themselves -- readying RIFLES and POWDER BAGS, stacking SHOTS and CANNONBALLS. A few PRAY. Others write LETTERS. It's almost calming, their demeanor.

And as Jackson watches them, these men who have already done the impossible, something compels him to stop. Right there in the middle of the line, Jackson gets down off his horse --

AND THE GENERAL STARTS TO WALK AMONGST HIS TROOPS.

It's a sight. The men greet Jackson with friendly nods and hellos. Jackson reaches out to shake hands. Thanking the men, slapping them on the shoulder. This is the first time we've seen him as such, not just a general but a true leader.

Lafitte watches from across the way. He has a sense of pride almost, to see Jackson like this. And then Jackson stops --

ANDREW JACKSON
What's the meaning of this?

There's a line of ENLISTED MEN standing in front of DOMINIQUE YOU and his lieutenants. Dominique is brewing COFFEE and frying BEIGNETS under the AMERICAN FLAG. Dominique smiles --

DOMINIQUE YOU
Can't fight the damn Reddies
without a proper breakfast.

ANDREW JACKSON
Smells better than what we get in
the officer's tent.

DOMINIQUE YOU
Parce que ce est, le Général.

Dominique offers it to Jackson. Jackson drinks. And that's when he notices the CROWD that has gathered around him...

They wait for Jackson to say something, but for the first time, Jackson is SPEECHLESS. And then, simply and honestly --

ANDREW JACKSON
I have never been prouder than this moment. To see you here. To see what we've built. I raise my glass in your honor, and all that I ask, no matter what is to come, is that you stand and fight for the man beside you. If we do that, we cannot lose. Take time now boys, the battle begins at daybreak.

For all the blustery speeches Jackson has given, this means more to the men than all of them. The love is there.

And as Jackson finds himself standing next to Lafitte --

JEAN LAFITTE
You're wrong, General. The battle has already begun.

ANDREW JACKSON
Then God save us all.

EXT. SWAMP - NIGHT

Pierre Lafitte treks through the swamp near the BRITISH LINES. He carries a SATCHEL full of TOOLS on his back.

Pierre hides in the bog. He looks through the trees toward the CANAL on the VILLERE PLANTATION. COLONEL THORNTON is there with his men waiting to row down into the RIVER.

And as the first BRITISH BARGES are launched, Pierre moves.

EXT. VILLERE PLANTATION - LEVEE - NIGHT

Pierre sneaks down to a point next to the makeshift DAM near the end of the canal. He lowers himself into the water.

It's FREEZING. And there are REDCOATS everywhere. Pierre shivers in the cold. He eyes the dam thirty yards away --

But in these conditions, behind enemy lines, it might as well be thirty miles. Pierre tries to summon the courage...

And it looks like Pierre will move, it does. But then Pierre sees the line of BARGES floating down the canal toward him.

Pierre hesitates. And then he hesitates again. And then --

HE JUST CAN'T DO IT.

Pierre starts back toward the swamp, defeated. But then he STOPS as a CROCODILE swims past not far in front of him.

There's something about that animal. Pierre's eyes NARROW.

EXT. VILLERE PLANTATION - CANAL - NIGHT

The next BARGE is launched. Thornton turns to a MESSENGER --

COLONEL THORNTON
Tell General Packenham we are
proceeding according to schedule.

But then there's SHOUTING from down near the river. The water level in the canal suddenly DROPS --

BRITISH CAPTAIN
Sir! Something's wrong!

EXT. VILLERE PLANTATION - LEVEE - NIGHT

Thornton arrives to find the DAM destroyed. The water from the canal RUSHES into the surrounding fields as the BARGES bottom out short of the river. Thornton is furious.

COLONEL THORNTON
How many made it to the river?

BRITISH CAPTAIN

Only three, sir.

COLONEL THORNTON

We must carry the rest of the
barges to the shoreline.

BRITISH CAPTAIN

We'll never make it in time for the
first assault.

Thornton knows it's the truth. His frustration boils over --

COLONEL THORNTON

Find whoever did this now!

EXT. SWAMP - NIGHT

But Pierre has already DISAPPEARED, moving back through the
darkness. And in the moonlight, we see Pierre SMILE.

EXT. MACARTY PLANTATION - RODRIGUEZ CANAL - DAWN

Daylight comes quickly now. The men are in their positions,
nervous but not scared. A SCOUT approaches Jackson --

SCOUT

The British have yet to make land
on the west bank, sir.

Jackson and Lafitte share a look -- *Pierre did his job.*

ANDREW JACKSON

Then they shall be too late. Tell
the Major to bring the rest of the
men here to the front line.

Lafitte tries not to show it but it's clear -- through it
all, he's proud of his brother. And then three BRITISH
CONGREVE ROCKETS shoot into the sky, exploding...

Jackson takes a BREATH. The battle is about to begin.

EXT. MACARTY PLANTATION - DAWN

The entirety of the BRITISH ARMY moves toward the American
line. They march in three MAJOR COLUMNS, twice as many men
as the last assault. It's a truly breathtaking sight.

TITLE: JANUARY 8, 1815 - THE BATTLE OF NEW ORLEANS

Packenham and his command advance steadily to the beat of the DRUMS. Packenham turns to Admiral Cochrane --

GENERAL PACKENHAM
No word from Thornton on the bank?

ADMIRAL COCHRANE
Nothing. And we should have
already heard of his attack.

Packenham knows -- this day is not off to a great start.

GENERAL PACKENHAM
This is why we never trust a
pirate. We shall wait no longer.
On my mark! God Save the Queen!

Packenham gives the signal and another ROCKET fires in to the air. The drumming speeds up, the men march faster. The Americans wait, putting the British in their sights. The tension builds and builds until finally --

The BRITISH open FIRE. Then so do the AMERICANS.

The cacophony is DEAFENING. It's a CONFRONTATION almost a mile long, with more MEN, more GUNS and more ARTILLERY in the largest, loudest spectacle of war you have ever seen.

And as the mayhem of the FINAL BATTLE begins here --

EXT. FRENCH QUARTER - MORNING

It's a quiet SUNDAY MORNING in the Quarter. The ELDERLY POLICE FORCE stands at attention, waiting with the others that have gathered to protect the city. The sound of CANNON FIRE mixes with nearby CHURCH BELLS. The fight is on.

And then from down the street, GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE approaches.

There are furtive glances amongst the group. CLAIBORNE'S ADVISORS look away, not wanting to meet the Governor's stare.

Claiborne stops in front of them. A beat, then Claiborne pulls an antique PISTOL out of his pocket --

GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE
I'm here to serve.

The men consider Claiborne, then nod. Claiborne joins them.

INT. CITY CATHEDRAL - MORNING

The rest of the WOMEN and CHILDREN have gathered to pray. There are the HOUSEWIVES who knitted uniforms and the NUNS who manned the hospital. We find a WOMAN dressed in rags --

She has a VOODOO DOLL of a BRITISH SOLDIER in her lap. The woman sticks the doll with needles. An ELDERLY NUN approves.

EXT. MACARTY PLANTATION - RODRIGUEZ CANAL - MORNING

The BRITISH REDCOATS stand tall through the hail of bullets, continuing their advance. Jackson shouts behind the line --

ANDREW JACKSON
Give them everything! Now!

The Americans switch out on the front line so the rifle fire is constant. One man fires, two men reload. The ARTILLERY is a force, Dominique You smiling and smoking his cigar.

The firepower builds into a concentrated effort. After a loud volley, the morning light is blocked out by thick SMOKE.

Almost all at once, the Americans take a BREATH. They can't see anything past their line. Even Jackson looks ahead hopefully, waiting for the smoke to clear...

It's silent. Have the British been defeated? But then a member of Villere's MILITIA is shot through the head. And then ANOTHER and ANOTHER and as the haze rises they see --

THE BRITISH ARE STILL THERE, FIRING THROUGH THE FOG.

ANDREW JACKSON (CONT'D)
Prepare your bayonets!

Dominique You spies Keane and his men carrying LADDERS in a nearby SUGARCANE FIELD. Dominique motions toward them --

DOMINIQUE YOU
Take 'em out, boys!

EXT. MACARTY PLANTATION - MORNING

Packenham and his men advance despite taking heavy casualties. It's clear with as many bodies that litter the field, Packenham is content to simply outman his opponent.

GENERAL PACKENHAM
Ready the charge!

But one of his LIEUTENANTS notices something ahead --

BRITISH LIEUTENANT
General, where are the ladders?!

EXT. MACARTY PLANTATION - SUGARCANE FIELD - MORNING

MAJOR GENERAL KEANE and his men are PINNED DOWN by DOMINIQUE YOU. A group of REDCOATS tries to rush the wall but they're TORN APART by cannon fire. Keane is in a bad spot.

MAJOR GENERAL KEANE
Hold here! Hold the ladders!

Some of his men simply drop their ladders and run for safer ground. Keane shouts after them through the artillery fire --

MAJOR GENERAL KEANE (CONT'D)
Colonel Mullins! Pick up your --

But Keane is drowned out. The BARATARIANS are making any advance an impossibility. Keane doesn't know what to do.

EXT. MACARTY PLANTATION - MORNING

And with the constant barrage from the Americans, Packenham can't wait any longer. He turns to his men --

GENERAL PACKENHAM
We shall do it ourselves!

BRITISH LIEUTENANT
Sir, shouldn't we wait for --

GENERAL PACKENHAM
We are Her Majesty's Royal Army!
We have brought down Napoleon! We
shall not lose to these ingrates!
We shall liberate them! Onward,
men! Onward to victory!

Unlike with Keane, Packenham's men heed the call. A SHOUT rises as THOUSANDS OF BRITISH REDCOATS CHARGE THE LINE.

EXT. MACARTY PLANTATION - RODRIGUEZ CANAL - MORNING

Jackson's men prepare for the onslaught. MAJOR GENERAL VILLEIRE and GENERAL COFFEE take up positions with their men on the wall, BRACING themselves --

AND THEN THE BRITISH ARE THERE.

It's a tremendous CLASH. What was once a fight across a great field has become much more intimate as the British try to break through Jackson's BREASTWORK.

A REDCOAT makes it to the top of the wall only to be blown away by rifle fire. American MILITIA are grabbed by the SCOTTISH HIGHLANDERS and summarily PULLED over the line.

ANDREW JACKSON
Hold! Hold!

But the British are STRONG. And with the fighting too close for the American artillery, the tide turns.

The British TOPPLE an American ARTILLERY STAND. More and more REDCOATS scale the wall and fight on the American side. Behind the charge, BRITISH CANNONS pepper the line. Several SUPPORT LOGS start to STRESS and CRACK from the impact.

Across the way, JEAN LAFITTE valiantly leads a group of BARATARIANS fighting to hold back the British. Lafitte uses a SABER to show off his SWASHBUCKLING skills, slaying a pair of BRITISH OFFICERS when suddenly he's TACKLED from behind --

It's NICHOLAS LOCKYER. Lockyer takes pleasure fighting the man who lied to his face. Lockyer gains an advantage --

NICHOLAS LOCKYER
You should have taken our deal,
Monsieur! Now you shall die!

Lockyer SLICES Lafitte's arm with a BAYONET. Lafitte drops his SABER allowing Lockyer to KICK out Lafitte's leg. Lafitte crumples, Lockyer ready to deliver the DEATH BLOW --

BUT THEN LOCKYER'S CHEST EXPLODES IN RED.

Lockyer falls, revealing PIERRE LAFITTE with a pistol behind him. Lafitte can't believe it. Pierre pulls Lafitte up --

PIERRE LAFITTE
Mon frere.

The reunion is short-lived. Lafitte shrugs off his injury, and as he picks up his saber to continue the fight --

EXT. MACARTY PLANTATION - SUGARCANE FIELD - DAY

The REDCOATS have been emboldened by their progress at the wall. Several of Keane's men CHARGE ahead --

But Keane can only watch. The carnage of bodies, the smell of blood. Keane buries his head as the battle rages.

EXT. MACARTY PLANTATION - RODRIGUEZ CANAL - DAY

The British fight desperately now on the other side of the line. The BREASTWORK starts to give way as JOHN COFFEE and JEAN DAQUIN race to keep the wall standing.

Jackson fights through the melee when suddenly two SUPPORT LOGS crack under the pressure of BRITISH ARTILLERY FIRE. The REDCOATS push their way through that section of the wall --

AND IN A MATTER OF MOMENTS, THE BREASTWORK HAS BEEN BREACHED.

It's a small GAP in the fence, maybe big enough for three men to come forward at a time, but it's all the British need.

REDCOATS stream through, fighting Jackson's men hand-to-hand. Jackson knows he has to plug that gap. He CHARGES on his horse, ready to push the British back whence they came --

WHEN SUDDENLY PACKENHAM IS THERE. Packenham slices Jackson's horse with his SABRE. Jackson and his horse TUMBLE into the dirt. Jackson barely has time to gain his bearings before Packenham ATTACKS. Jackson tries to defend himself --

But Packenham is an ANIMAL. He lands blow after blow, and as the BATTLE continues around them, these two giants are at the center. The Americans have failed to stop the British at the breach, more and more REDCOATS coming through the wall...

It's only a matter of time now. And as we see the faces of our heroes -- DOMINIQUE YOU with his cannon, VILLERE and COFFEE with their men, JEAN DAQUIN fighting bravely -- there is a sadness there. Goliath was simply too strong...

Even JEAN LAFITTE, wielding his sabre through the pain, can only bare witness as Jackson is simply PUMMELED. Packenham beats Jackson with his fists, throwing Jackson to the dirt.

Jackson is done. And as Packenham leans down into his ear --

GENERAL PACKENHAM
One man cannot win a war, General.

Packenham SPITS into Jackson's face. Jackson is ENRAGED. He manages to push Packenham away, but as he stands to attack --

JACKSON IS OVERRUN BY THE BRITISH.

The REDCOATS are moving now toward the MACARTY HOUSE and the city beyond. Packenham leads the charge, and as he looks back, Jackson swallowed by the fight, they both know --

It's over. Packenham almost smiles, turning away. And as much as he struggles, there's nothing Jackson can do. But then from out of nowhere, a SHOT SOUNDS IN THE DISTANCE.

And it's like time stops. A single BULLET tears through Packenham's SHOULDER. Jackson turns and sees JEAN DAQUIN of the FREE MEN OF COLOR standing across the way with his rifle.

But before Daquin can get off another shot, another BULLET tears through Packenham's LEG, this time fired from one of Villere's MILITIA. And then another BULLET plunges into Packenham's horse, knocking Packenham to the ground.

Then there's another bullet and another. The men have not given up hope. The sight of Packenham on the ground pulls Jackson to his feet, and with all he can muster --

ANDREW JACKSON
Give it to them, boys! We finish
this business today! For America!

It's the call to arms the men need. The BRITISH are suddenly disorganized by the sight of their commanding officer down, while the Americans are inspired by Jackson's lead.

JEAN LAFITTE and a group of BARATARIANS arrive to stop the flood of REDCOATS through the gap. JOHN COFFEE and his men work to reinforce the wall. It takes only a matter of moments, but suddenly the British are on the defensive.

Through the chaos, Jackson heads to Packenham. Packenham lies prone, his eyes closed. Jackson stands a few feet away, wanting to make sure he's dead, when suddenly --

PACKENHAM DRAWS A PISTOL FROM HIS BELT.

Jackson DRAWS quicker, but it's all for naught. Packenham is too weak. The pistol simply falls from Packenham's hand. And as Packenham struggles for breath, Jackson leaning down --

ANDREW JACKSON (CONT'D)
Luckily, we're much more than one.

That they are. The American have now risen from the brink, fighting the British back. And as Jackson returns to battle, a group of BRITISH SOLDIERS dragging Packenham's body away --

EXT. MACARTY PLANTATION - MORNING

Keane watches from afar. More soldiers are coming back over the wall than the opposite. A frazzled CAPTAIN finds him --

BRITISH CAPTAIN
Packenham is dead! Lambert is
dead! They fight like savages.
This isn't war, this is --

But the captain is SHOT straight through the head and killed.
Blood splatters onto Keane. That's all Keane can handle --

MAJOR GENERAL KEANE
Retreat! Retreat!

And as they do, we see the absolute terribleness of this war.
The field is RED with fallen British soldiers. The
casualties on both sides have climbed into the thousands...

Keane retreats back past a GIANT OAK TREE in the field. He
doesn't notice that the soldiers from earlier have left
GENERAL PACKENHAM to sit alone under the tree...

Mortally wounded, there's nothing Packenham can do but watch
as the British flee the battlefield. He's DISGUSTED.

GENERAL PACKENHAM
(his last breath)
Shame. Shame. We are British.

Packenham finally DIES. And as the AMERICAN FLAG flies, the
lone, sad song of a BRITISH BUGLER brings us --

EXT. MACARTY PLANTATION - DAY

The BUGLER stands with a BRITISH LIEUTENANT under a WHITE
FLAG. EDWARD LIVINGSTON rides out to meet them.

The lieutenant hands Livingston a LETTER.

INT. MACARTY HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Jackson and his high-command. Jackson reads the LETTER over.
A long beat, then Jackson NODS to Livingston --

EDWARD LIVINGSTON
The city has been saved.

A CHEER goes up in the room. The men are relieved, sharing
hugs and handshakes. Lafitte and Dominique You are there.

But as happy as the occasion is, Jackson is still Jackson --

ANDREW JACKSON

It is now our responsibility to
make sure the British make good on
their word and leave our shores.

JEAN LAFITTE

We will, General. I assure you.

EXT. MACARTY PLANTATION - DAY

The next day. Both sides are in process of burying their dead. It's a sorrowful and enormous task.

Men from both sides collect PERSONAL ITEMS from the fallen. Many soldiers break down in tears over their comrades. A MASS GRAVE has been dug in one of the fields.

Andrew Jackson solemnly watches body after body deposited there. Jackson holds his brother's COLONIAL COIN...

Finally, Jackson throws the coin in. It's covered in DIRT.

EXT. LAKE BORGNE - DAY - ESTABLISHING

The British are in the midst of a terrible RETREAT. For all the hardship they endured to get here, they must do the same to go back. Drudging through canals, rowing across the lake.

EXT. HMS TONNANT - MAIN DECK - DAY

Keane, still dirty from battle, climbs on board after the journey. He finds a line of GRIEVING WIDOWS wearing black, no longer dancing, hoping for their husbands' safe return.

Keane feels awful. And to make matters worse --

ADMIRAL COCHRANE

Pick it up, Keany-boy. Your knight
in shining armor may be dead, but
we still have some fight, yah?

It's ADMIRAL COCHRANE, smugly back in charge. But before Keane can even muster a response --

BRITISH SAILOR

Sir.

The SAILOR hands Cochrane a looking glass. On the horizon six of Lafitte's PIRATE SHIPS have arrived. They fly both an AMERICAN and PIRATE FLAG and are ready to engage if need be.

Keane sees the ships as well. He's had enough --

MAJOR GENERAL KEANE
It's over, Admiral. We've lost.

EXT. PIRATE SHIP - DECK - DAY

The BARATARIANS watch the armada from afar. The British finally raise their anchors and sail away.

And the sound of hundreds of people CHEERING brings us to --

EXT. FRENCH QUARTER - DAY

Where a glorious VICTORY PARADE winds through the streets of the FRENCH QUARTER. The city is alive again. Jackson and his army, now clean from battle, are the guests of honor...

Even the BARATARIANS are feted with flower petals thrown from BALCONIES. BANDS play through the streets, a celebratory CANNONADE firing from the shores into the MISSISSIPPI.

Jackson is next to Lafitte and the rest of his high-command --

ANDREW JACKSON
This is what it's like to be loved.

JEAN LAFITTE
No, General. This is something else entirely.

They pass GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE applauding with his wife SUZETTE and MARY-ANNE DERN. Lafitte immediately walks over and, to the dismay of Claiborne, KISSES Mary-Anne.

Mary-Anne swoons. Lafitte shakes Claiborne's hand --

JEAN LAFITTE (CONT'D)
Governor. Mrs. Claiborne.

Lafitte heads back and rejoins the parade. Suzette Claiborne is confused. She turns to Mary-Anne and her husband --

SUZETTE CLAIBORNE
Why is Monsieur Clement marching in the victor's parade?

Jackson is lead into what will be known as JACKSON SQUARE. A row of girls in WHITE DRESSES hold up an ARCHWAY OF FLOWERS.

The city cheers as Jackson walks through, their savior.

EXT. FRENCH QUARTER - BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

The party has spilled over into the night. CROWDS fill the streets. Jackson and his high-command congregate outside a grand BANQUET HALL in the middle of the Quarter.

The DOORS to the hall are thrown open and Claiborne and the legislature form a GREETING LINE for the men. First Jackson, then Coffee and Villere. Livingston, Patterson and Daquin.

Finally, JEAN LAFITTE and his BARATARIANS are alone outside. Claiborne GESTURES them to enter. Pierre turns to Lafitte --

PIERRE LAFITTE
I was wrong, *mon frere*.

And as Lafitte leads his men through the welcoming doors --

INT. BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

After dinner. A JAZZ QUARTET plays. Jackson walks through the crowd, pouring shots of whiskey for his troops. ENLISTED MEN, MILITIA, the FREE MEN OF COLOR, a group of BARATARIANS. Even Lieutenant Adler gets into the act...

Lafitte walks over to Mary-Anne Dern at Claiborne's table --

JEAN LAFITTE
May I have this dance?

INT. BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

A few minutes later. Lafitte and Mary-Anne DANCE in the middle of the room. Jackson shares a shot with Dominique You. Dominique watches his brother with pride.

Lafitte and Mary-Anne notice all eyes are on them --

MARY-ANNE DERN
I've never felt so many stares.

And as Lafitte looks around at those faces, HIGH SOCIETY now seemingly at his beck and call, something clicks...

JEAN LAFITTE
Come with me.

Lafitte takes her hand. And as the song continues, Lafitte leads Mary-Anne back out the doors and into the night.

FADE TO:

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY - ESTABLISHING

The city is slowly being rebuilt from the British invasion.

A PAPER BOY stands in front of the WHITE HOUSE selling papers with triumphant headlines about the victory in NEW ORLEANS.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - DAY

PRESIDENT JAMES MADISON (63) and his staff are moving back in to the WHITE HOUSE. His wife DOLLEY is there directing the same SERVANTS that helped her save the wares of the house --

DOLLEY MADISON

The color in here was always so drab. Perhaps we should try something bluer.

WAR SECRETARY JAMES MONROE (56) appears in the doorway with a MESSENGER. Monroe can barely contain his excitement --

SECRETARY MONROE

Mr. President. Word from Belgium.

EXT. THE TEMPLE - DAY

Jackson and Lafitte meet in the swamp. Lafitte finishes reading a LETTER. He shakes his head --

JEAN LAFITTE

It was all for naught.

ANDREW JACKSON

Nonsense.

JEAN LAFITTE

The commissioners signed a peace treaty on Christmas Eve! The war had been over for two weeks!

ANDREW JACKSON

A piece of paper only stops the war if the men stop fighting it. Had we not fought that day, Packenham takes the city. With the city, who can say what land would have fallen north of the River. And at that point, with those conditions, a treaty is as worthless as if it had never been signed.

JEAN LAFITTE
You saved the country.

And in a moment of honesty and friendship --

ANDREW JACKSON
We both did. I could not have done
this without you or your men.

JEAN LAFITTE
Or a declaration of martial law.

Jackson smiles contemplatively --

ANDREW JACKSON
I've learned there are times that
call for bold decisions, Monsieur.
That was the right one. One day it
might not be the case.

(beat)

You and your men haven't been seen
much in the city after our victory.

JEAN LAFITTE
Nothing's changed. The legislature
lauded us for days, then I went to
reclaim what was stolen from Grand
Terre and they wouldn't give it.
Claiborne has already accused us of
war profiteering and there's a
marshal on my tail as we speak.

(beat)

I'm a pirate, General. And so I
shall always be.

ANDREW JACKSON
And so I shall be as well.

The men sit in silence for a moment. And then --

JEAN LAFITTE
Show it to me. Please.

ANDREW JACKSON
What?

JEAN LAFITTE
How you duel. I've heard the
stories -- the Benton Brothers --

ANDREW JACKSON
The Benton Brothers were fools.

JEAN LAFITTE
It's all I ask.

ANDREW JACKSON
All right.

EXT. THE TEMPLE - DAY

Jackson and Lafitte stand back to back. They begin pacing an equal distance apart. And as they do --

ANDREW JACKSON
The key to a duel isn't always to fire first, but fire best. Thomas Benton had challenged me after his brother Jesse was embarrassed by one of my junior officers outside of Nashville. After much goading, I arrived at the designated location but Thomas had acquired a bit of cold feet. Not taking kindly to that ungentlemanly like behavior, I told a local reporter the next time I saw Thomas Benton, I would whip him like him a mule.

Lafitte smiles -- he loves that he's hearing this story --

ANDREW JACKSON (CONT'D)
Ten more paces. Don't be nervous in the turn -- the key is to be level and fire straight. One night I received word Benton was in the hotel next door. So I retrieved my whip and headed over. He begged my forgiveness, but seeing as how a whipping was better than a shooting, I was ready to commence. Only the original brother was there hiding in a coat closet. He drew on me, and as I dispatched of him, Thomas Benton ran through the streets blathering for his mother. It was said he could be heard for blocks in every direction. And now we're here, and then we turn --

But when Jackson does, Lafitte is GONE. He's disappeared into the swamp. Jackson knows he will never see him again.

EXT. FRENCH QUARTER - BOURBON STREET - DAY

Jackson rides back into the QUARTER at sunset. He sees someone waiting for him by his office...

Jackson can't believe it. He gets down off his horse and runs into her arms. It's RACHEL JACKSON (48).

ANDREW JACKSON
Rachel. My love.

RACHEL JACKSON
I am here.

ANDREW JACKSON
And so am I.

And as they finally KISS in the middle of the city he saved --

FADE TO BLACK:

ANDREW JACKSON WAS LAUDED AS A HERO ACROSS THE NATION. HE WAS SWORN IN AS THE SEVENTH PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES ON MARCH 4, 1829.

JEAN LAFITTE AND THE BARATARIANS WERE EVENTUALLY FORCED OUT OF LOUISIANA BY GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE. AFTER RELOCATING TO GALVESTON, LAFITTE WAS AGAIN PURSUED BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

LAFITTE MARRIED MARY-ANNE AND THEY LEFT TEXAS TO SETTLE IN THE MIDWEST. HE CHANGED HIS NAME AND LIVED OUT THE REST OF HIS DAYS THERE, A MAN NO LONGER A PIRATE.

FADE OUT.