

GEORGE WASHINGTON

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. DELAWARE RIVER, NJ - DUSK

TITLE: AMERICAN RETREAT FROM NEW JERSEY, 1776

GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON, driven beyond exhaustion, struggles to load the last of his militia into boats crossing the swollen Delaware River. British artillery shells slam to earth like freight trains, showering the terror-stricken troops with debris.

Washington wears a tall-collared woolen coat buttoned to his throat, a drenched hat. He's forty-three years old, face scratched up from smallpox.

FOREST

Continental running, tree to tree, firing, reloading on the run. They're a hard-core bunch only giving up ground an inch at a time. A red line of British Rangers suddenly appears in the deep green forest and looses a fusillade that blots out the world with smoke.

RIVER BANK

At the sound of the concentrated musket fire men panic, some heave away their muskets and leap into the river. Washington throws his hat on the ground, screaming at these ragged men.

WASHINGTON

It's just an advance party! Show
some guts! Damn it! Officers keep
your men in line!

Washington turns as GENERAL NATHANAEL GREENE rides up.

Greene is a young thirty, filthy, exhausted and spooked... his eyes show he's seen horrors he once could have only imagined. Greene dismounts, points up the slope toward a wagon.

NATHANAEL GREENE

Sir, the wounded... up here!

But Washington moves toward an ARTILLERY CAPTAIN loading his caissons onto a barge. Just a kid, lean, red-brown hair, eighteen years old, his name is ALEXANDER HAMILTON.

WASHINGTON

Captain!

Hamilton runs to Washington's side as it starts to really POUR. Face smudged with powder, his nose bleeding from cannon concussion.

HAMILTON
Captain Alexander Hamilton, sir!

WASHINGTON
Hamilton, you're going to have to
cover our asses as we cross.

HAMILTON
We've got powder but no ball!

WASHINGTON
Then use rocks!

Hamilton salutes and runs back as another incoming artillery round explodes in the river. As the downpour rages, Washington follows Greene up the greasy slope to the wagons.

EXT. WAGON OF WOUNDED

Washington climbs onto the first wagon, looks into the mass of tangled limbs. Greene climbs up behind, immediately turns away. MEN with faces half shot off, burned raw, limbs gone... a pile of living guts. He hates seeing this.

Washington climbs down, then up onto the other wagon, then comes down and joins Greene.

WASHINGTON
We can't take them. Are you all
right?

NATHANAEL GREENE
We're leaving them?

WASHINGTON
They're finished, they can't help us
anymore!
(face-to-face)
They've done their duty, General
Greene, now you do yours!

NATHANAEL GREENE
Yessir!

THE SHORE

Last SOLDIERS in the last boat watch as Washington moves to the shore for his boat. He feels their eyes on him. He returns the stare and the men look away.

A CONGREGATIONAL MINISTER confronts Washington, points at the wounded.

MINISTER

General it is against the law of God
to leave these men!

WASHINGTON

Is it? Then, by God, you stay with
them...

The Continental rearguard scramble out of the forest.

Washington frantically waves them toward the boats.

WASHINGTON

C'mon, my brave boys! Get in these
boats!

(to the reverend)

It's these men or those wounded,
reverend, and these men can fight.

MINISTER

Those men did fight for you, sir!

But Washington's already moving toward his boat.

ALEXANDER HAMILTON

and two GUNNERS roll their last cannon back into the river.

A Gunner smashes bottles into the muzzle, then picks up stones
from the river, jamming them in.

When the cannon is over its hubs in the water, Hamilton sights
it point-blank at the edge of the forest.

WASHINGTON'S BOAT

Washington and Greene push-off in a bateau flying the BLUE
AND GOLD FLAG OF THE COMMANDER AND CHIEF. SHOUTS rise up
from the forest...

THE FOREST SEEMS TO BLEED

as BRITISH RANGERS gush out of the woods.

HAMILTON...

fires his cannon -- the rock and glass hit the rangers like
a massive shotgun, ripping their pretty uniforms to shreds,
staggering their line back into the trees. Hamilton spikes
the cannon by breaking off a bayonet tip in the touch hole --

his crew runs into the water, splashing after one of the
last boats.

WASHINGTON'S BOAT

Washington with Greene being rowed into the mist.

ON THE SHORE

the Minister stands over the wagons of wounded, praying and talking to the men. A heap of burning gear throws off BLACK SMOKE.

Rangers swarm onto the shore in their arrogant, black trimmed red tunics. They're a cocksure hard-looking killing machine.

Some fire at the boats as they sweep through. One knocks the Minister off the wagon, bayonets him on the ground. Rangers climb on the wagons, look down on the wounded... the shore disappears in the mist.

EXT. WASHINGTON'S BOAT - DUSK

Washington lowers his eyes. Greene watches Washington for a while, then they hear MUSKET FIRE from shore, and their boat is swallowed by the MIST...

INT. CONGRESS - AFTERNOON (PAST)

TITLE: 2ND CONTINENTAL CONGRESS, 6 MONTHS BEFORE

SAM ADAMS in our face -- eyes red, long stringy hair; he looks like a mad man howling from the podium. Sam is fifty three, but anger has kept him young.

SAM ADAMS

We have come here to tear down the world! Knock out its teeth! Smash its ribs! Rip out its heart and throw the damn thing to the dogs!

Howls and applause from the delegates...

GEORGE WASHINGTON ENTERS

wearing a bright pressed uniform of a VIRGINIA MILITIA COLONEL, Washington's vigorous presence immediately commands attention.

JOHN ADAMS OF MASSACHUSETTS is by his side. John is forty, with the well-fed look of a prosperous lawyer. Entering on their coat-tails, and attending Washington, is a young black man dressed in the immaculate livery of a gentleman's personal slave. His name is BILLY LEE and he seems proud of his position.

SAM ADAMS

You all know me. Governor Gage of Massachusetts has called me 'Sammy the Malster'! So, I accept his christening: I stand before you, then, not as a delegate to the Continental Congress, but as Sam Adams, Boston's town drunk!

(cheers)

Tonight I am drunk on the beer of revolution!

Applause and shouts surge around the hall accompanied by shouts of 'TREASON' -- 'SIT DOWN, YOU FOOL'! Sam nods, welcoming the love and the anger.

WASHINGTON

Well, John Adams, your cousin has a marvelous gift.

JOHN ADAMS

Yes, an astonishing power over weak minds.

DELEGATES DELUGE Washington, and he starts enthusiastically shaking hands like a politician shaking out votes.

A tall, heavy-set man -- HORATIO GATES -- pushes through the circle of fawning delegates, shakes hands earnestly with Washington.

WASHINGTON

Horatio! Horatio Gates, of course you know John Adams of the Massachusetts Delegation.

HORATIO GATES

Good day, Mister Adams... George, what's the word from Boston?

WASHINGTON

The last I heard, a bunch of drunken militia have dug in on Breed's hill. With one stroke the British could cut them off and apparently their leaders are too dumb to see it.

HORATIO GATES

Who's in command out there?

WASHINGTON

Who the hell knows? Everyone's giving orders. It's all very democratic.

HORATIO GATES

George, we've got to get you out
there before we lose our whole army.

Exactly what John Adams wants to hear, he steps up to make
the point.

JOHN ADAMS

With your support, Horatio. As one
of our own who has seen combat with
the British, your opinion counts.

WASHINGTON

As does your ability, Horatio. We
must talk further, when it's more
convenient.

They shake hands again and then wade deeper into the morass
of delegates. Washington is instantly the politician again,
vigorously shaking hands, giving each delegate an earnest
nod, a smile. Sam Adams' voice rises above the hall.

SAM ADAMS

This is The Great Chance! To make a
world where all men and all women
may be equal, and may vote equally!
(hoots from the crowd)
Where we of European stock may live
in harmony with the natural natives
of this New World and learn from
them...

SHOUTS of RAGE. A furious delegate leaps up.

DELEGATE 1

Learn what, Adams? How to steal
cattle and drink till you puke!?

SAM ADAMS

Why, no! You in Delaware are already
passing excellent at that!

John Adams steers Washington toward a LEAN MAN smoking a
thin pipe. He's JOSEPH REED. John Adams speaks fast and
low as they approach.

JOHN ADAMS

Joseph Reed, from Philadelphia; a
first class administrator George and
he's got a heart set on being your
aide. Pennsylvania has the wagons
and teamsters you'll need for an
army, so his importance goes beyond
today's vote.

(MORE)

JOHN ADAMS (CONT'D)

(all over him)

Ah! Joseph! Colonel Washington.
I'm extremely pleased to introduce
you to Joseph Reed, one of
Pennsylvania's most prominent
citizens.

Washington does his part, steps right up, shakes that hand,
flashes his smile.

WASHINGTON

I hear Pennsylvania is the only
northern state that doesn't do
everything Massachusetts tells it.

Reed and John Adams swap surprised looks and sly laughs.

JOSEPH REED

In that case sir, today will be that
exception.

More music to John Adams' ears.

WASHINGTON

We must talk at length, sir, when
it's more convenient.

They nod, smile, hand-shake and John Adams helps Washington
slip away. But then they're aggressively confronted by a
slim YOUNG RHODE ISLAND OFFICER: he's NATHANAEL GREENE in
his very best dress uniform. Greene walks alongside, limping
slightly.

NATHANAEL GREENE

Colonel Washington? Colonel Nathanael
Greene, Rhode Island Militia.

WASHINGTON

Yes, yes, happy to meet you.

NATHANAEL GREENE

I... I'm possessed of the idea of a
command in your army, sir.

WASHINGTON

It isn't my army yet, Colonel Greene.
Looks like you've seen some action --
did you hurt your leg, in a fight?

NATHANAEL GREENE

I was born with a limp, sir.
(MORE)

NATHANAEL GREENE (CONT'D)

(laughs)

The Militia used to hate it when I
marches with them because my pike
would always sway...

Shows him with his arms. Washington doesn't really know how
to react to this kid, keeps looking around the room.

WASHINGTON

But, you do come from a military
family?

NATHANAEL GREENE

I have commanded the Rhode Island
Militia for a year now.

(pause)

My father is an ironmaster. As was
I.

They arrive at the table seating the VIRGINIA DELEGATION
directly in front of the dais. Washington's about to sit
when he gets it; he turns to look at Greene.

WASHINGTON

A horseshoer?

NATHANAEL GREENE

Yes, but I've spent the last winter
studying all the great battles of
history. And I read the lives of
Caesar, Alexander, Hannibal...

(pause)

Sir, I'm volunteering you the
wholehearted support of the Rhode
Island army.

John Adams decides it's time to get rid of him.

JOHN ADAMS

Thank you Colonel Greene, for your
support. Colonel Washington will
decide about his officers later.
Thank you...

They shake hands as Washington and John Adams sit. Greene
nods, unsure, fades reluctantly into the crowd.

JOHN ADAMS

You won't be needing his largess,
Rhode Island is already committed to
your appointment.

WASHINGTON

I don't know: delivering men and
delivering men with their goodwill
are two different things. And, if
he's popular with his men...

Now Sam Adams delivers this DIRECTLY AT WASHINGTON and his
fellow Virginians. Washington listens as he and John sit,
but refuses to be ruffled.

SAM ADAMS

Our new world is for the Black slave
forced by British greed to work like
an animal! It is necessary that we
abolish this tyrannical practise
once and for all! And not doing do,
we make a mockery of this whole
business!

Before he's even finished, he's CRUSHED by CRIES, JEERS --

HUGE BOOS. But seventy year old BENJAMIN FRANKLIN jumps up,
spry as a kid, impatient to get the floor.

FRANKLIN

Gentlemen, gentlemen... It seems to
me that certain delegates here are
demanding England grant us rights
they're not willing to grant their
own people.

Everyone on the Virginia Delegation immediately turns to
Washington who speaks for them all.

WASHINGTON

Ben, you know many of us in Virginia,
including Thomas Jefferson, have
tried to outlaw slavery. But the
Burgesses will not have it!

FRANKLIN

(unimpressed)

Perhaps they would 'have it', Colonel
Washington, if those who proposed
the laws in the first place set an
example. I should like to ask this
question of your fellow delegate,
Thomas Jefferson, who is conveniently
absent.

VOICE

What's your argument, Franklin?

FRANKLIN

My point being: we've been sharpening our damned theories for years, but now reality is on us like the furies! Is there truly support for war -- all out bloody war! -- for the nearly intangible principles of the 'rights of man' that no one in this room seems to be able to agree on? Or is this just some filthy scramble for power?

DOGS CHARGE INTO THE HALL...

Big, tongue-slobbering hunting hounds leap onto tables, chase a DELEGATE, raise hell. The tension cracks and the whole place breaks into laughter. A LANKY MAN enters grandly behind his dogs. Washington laughs with the rest, but then John leans close.

JOHN ADAMS

Colonel Charles Lee... Hounds and all. Quite the character. He's got a tremendous reputation.

WASHINGTON

I think many would like to see him commander-in-chief.

Lee struts around, getting greeted like he was The Pope.

Seeing Washington and John, Lee salutes them with a glass of Madeira. Washington and John nod politely.

JOHN ADAMS

Alas for Colonel Lee, he was born in England, so no one quite trusts him. He's not our problem, George. All these men will fall into line, if Sam does. But Sam's going to fight us, he's too powerful and too righteous not to. And he still wants Hancock over you.

(pause)

Well, let me talk to him one last time...

John Adams heads across the room, shaking hands with other delegates as he goes.

WASHINGTON

focuses on Sam Adams as he finishes his speech. The crowd hushes, getting swept up. Washington is moved, despite himself.

SAM ADAMS

The child of a dock worker who dreams
of entering parliament, is beat down.
A blacksmith's son who would dream
he could become a governor, or a
general, is beat down. Under the
system of the European Kings, all
who dream are beat down... for
centuries we have been beat down!
And now, we want a new world!
(howls of support)

So, today we must confront the King,
his lords and ladies and ministers
and parliament and his army... and
kick them all in the rump!

The place goes NUTS, people SCREAM Sam's name. Washington
looks around at the mesmerized mob, sees Greene applauding,
bursting with youthful passion. At this emotional peak, a
MILITIA CAPTAIN bulls through, holds up two flags in his
trembling hands.

MILITIA CAPTAIN

Listen! Listen to me! Colonel
Benedict Arnold and Colonel Ethan
Allen have taken Fort Ticonderoga!
By God, these be the British flags!

A unanimous GASP, then the congress breaks into CATERWAULING.

Washington shoves past the delegates, confronts the Militia
Captain.

WASHINGTON

Captain, how did the British fight?

MILITIA CAPTAIN

Fight? One man done got popped on
the head, then they fell on their
knees and begged for mercy -- The
British all be cowards.

With that the Captain turns to continue into the hall, but
Washington stiffens, won't move out of his way.

WASHINGTON

Don't you salute a superior officer?

MILITIA CAPTAIN

You be from Virginia, Mister. I be
a New Hampshire man!

Washington's miffed. But the Captain has no time for him
and shoves his way into the hall.

Billy Lee enters, but now Washington sees John cornering Sam at the far end of the hall.

BILLY LEE
Colonel, sir, Mrs. Washington inquires
if you are going to join her for
dinner?

WASHINGTON
Tell Mrs. Washington I am compelled
to stay a while longer.

JOHN & SAM ADAMS

shouting as they push through the delegates. It's Dante's
Ring Of Hell For Politicians; a gauntlet of groping hand
shakes, back slaps, cheering sycophants whipped up by the
news...

JOHN ADAMS
Washington is perfect. He's a
Southerner, he's a war hero and he's
rich!

SAM ADAMS
He's from Virginia -- there is no
more classist, elitist... English
place on earth than Virginia. And,
what in hell has he done for our
cause? Washington has been preaching
compromise, compromise, compromise!
Hancock acts, he led the Boston Tea
party! That's why New England loves
him.

JOHN ADAMS
Hancock led the Boston 'tea party'
because he's a goddamned tea smuggler!
He wasn't protesting inequality, he
was eliminating competition. Now,
you listen to me: we need to get a
Southerner elected commander-in-chief,
or the south will not fight! What
have we been struggling for all these
years? For this moment! And, if we
fail now, remember: you stopped us!

Sam turns away and locks eyes with Washington...

EXT. OUTSIDE PHILADELPHIA - LATE AFTERNOON

WILD-EYED LOOTERS ransack a country estate -- rocks crash
through windows, furniture smashed in heaps.

BENEDICT ARNOLD rides out of the dark on a jet black horse.

He wears a Connecticut Militia uniform and a wool great coat.
He's classically handsome with severe blue eyes.

Suddenly three armed MILITIA block his way with muskets and pikes. Uniforms can't hide backwoods yokels raised with a mistrust of anyone 'different'.

MILITIA MAN

Who are you? Come forward! Why are
you traveling alone!?

Arnold relaxes in the saddle and a BRACE OF PISTOLS shows
just beneath his coat. He suddenly radiates a deadly samurai
presence.

ARNOLD

Colonel Benedict Arnold.
Connecticut Militia, headed for
Congress in Philadelphia...

Awesome silence as LOOTERS gather around to view this man.

MILITIA MAN

Colonel Arnold! The same who took
Ticonderoga?

ARNOLD

The very same.

MILITIA MAN

Well, sir. We are honored.
(they stand aside)
Welcome to Philadelphia...

Arnold looks at the burning house, at the men, spurs on.

INT. CARPENTERS HALL (LIBRARY) - DUSK

Sam leans back against the edge of a bookcase, the volumes
loom over him like the boundless, bookish contents of his
mind. Washington stands beside a tall window. They face
off, arms folded.

SAM ADAMS

You are a slave owner! You have
been illegally surveying lands beyond
the Ohio Valley! That land belongs
to the natives!

WASHINGTON

That land belongs to the strongest.

Sam blinks, wasn't expecting Washington to fight back.

SAM ADAMS
All people have rights!

WASHINGTON
Just because they are born?

SAM ADAMS
Yes!

WASHINGTON
Who says so?

SAM ADAMS
I say!

WASHINGTON
I see...

SAM ADAMS
And 'others', say... have you even
read Locke, Vattel, Voltaire,
Diderot...

WASHINGTON
Are these philosopher going to be
here to help you fight your war?
You know why I don't trust
revolutions? Because each of us is
who we are: we make speeches, print
pamphlets, and we never change. The
world is not a philosophical
abstraction, Mister Adams, it's us.
And, I don't believe you can ever
change human nature.

Sam is horrified.

SAM ADAMS
Are you telling me that your opinion
is this revolution can never succeed?

Before he can answer there's GUN FIRE from the street --
then yowls and cheers.

EXT. BALCONY - DUSK

Sam and Washington rush out onto a balcony overlooking
Philadelphia. People in the streets are cheering wildly.

Washington yells down at the Militia guard on the front steps.

WASHINGTON
Soldier! What's all the shouting
about?

SOLDIER

Boston! Boston! The British have
attacked the militia on Breeds Hill
in Boston! It's war! War!

Washington and Sam stare at each other. Sam takes a long
breath, sees they've come to the inevitable.

WASHINGTON

I know a bit about you, too, Sam.
To get us here, you've lied,
bullied... when there were no
revolutionaries, you hired thugs to
riot and pretend they were. Now
there are real revolutionaries in
Boston, and they're really fighting.
Why hesitate?

Off in the distance comes the SOUND OF PEOPLE blowing hunting
horns, beating pots and pans, singing: the noise of a
multitude camped on the outskirts of the congress.

SAM ADAMS

You hear that?

WASHINGTON

That? I hear a mob: unemployed,
drunkards, vagabonds... the world's
dregs.

SAM ADAMS

Well, I hear 'The People'.

(pause)

Indentured servants, freed slaves...
escaped slaves. The world's
castaways.

(pause)

And, my fear is, in the scramble for
power that's coming, you will betray
them.

ANOTHER ROAR moves through the crowd as BENEDICT ARNOLD rides
down the main street. His name is shouted by the crowd and
Washington leans over the edge as Arnold approaches.

WASHINGTON

Arnold! Benedict Arnold!

Arnold look up, sees Washington and salutes from his horse.

Arnold throws off the infectious confidence of youth like
beams of light.

ARNOLD

We've got to attack the British!
Now! Have they put you in charge
yet? Do we have an army yet? What
is happening?

WASHINGTON

Patience, Colonel Arnold.
(with a smile for Sam)
Active personalities terrify these
men. But, congratulations on your
victory at Ticonderoga...

Sam Adams gets the message.

SAM ADAMS

Give me an hour to talk with the New
England delegates.

They keep staring at each other, then Washington offers his
hand and they both manage a very lukewarm handshake.

EXT. PENNSYLVANIA STREETS - DUSK

Washington and Arnold are surrounded by the crowd, hands
reaching out to touch these men as Arnold and Washington
themselves shake hands.

Billy Lee walks ahead, helping to force a passage through
the people as Washington and Arnold walk Arnold's horse
through the streets toward the stable.

ARNOLD

I believe we can bring the British
to their knees in a single stroke.

INT. STABLES - MORNING

Arnold, stripped to the waist washing his horse and drawing
a combat map on a mirror with a bar of soap. Washington's
fascinated by Arnold's burning personality. They're drinking
rum. All the while there's continual cheering and gun fire
outside.

ARNOLD

I capture Quebec leading an Army by
river fordings through Maine... If
we don't do it, the British will
come down Champlain, take back
Ticonderoga and attack us in the
spring.

WASHINGTON

You'd have to travel hundreds of
miles through the wilderness.

ARNOLD

Over three hundred miles.

WASHINGTON

You seem pleased by the prospect.

ARNOLD

Exceedingly. Besides, if I had half the wagons that were used to lug the rum to Philadelphia for this congress, I could move a whole army to the moon!

Arnold returns to scrubbing his horse with a boar's hair brush. Washington leans on the stall containing TRAVELER, his white gelding. As they speak, Washington strokes Traveler's mane. These are clearly two very 'hands-on' men, as competent with horses and weapons as they are leading soldiers.

WASHINGTON

What's your frank estimation of the British?

ARNOLD

Well, you fought with them against the French and Iroquois, how good were they then?

WASHINGTON

They died well. Otherwise, they didn't do much right. But if we have war, the British will surely send their best troops: right now they have no other enemies.

ARNOLD

And a French alliance?

WASHINGTON

Ben Franklin's going to Paris, but I think the French will be long on talk and short on guns. Our troops are mobs, they won't take orders, have no equipment... could they beat the British?

ARNOLD

It comes down to leaders. If our leaders are ordinary men who truly believe; if they go into the forests with the troops, eat what they eat, fight with them, perhaps to die? The most common soldier will defy your most depressing expectation.

Washington smiles, drains his glass.

WASHINGTON

My experience is, the ones who know
the least will be the bravest.

Billy cautiously enters.

BILLY LEE

It's time, Colonel.

INT. CONGRESS - AFTERNOON

John Adams reads the great role of states. As he does, and DELEGATES give their 'ayes', the names resound through the hall. As he reads we pass over FACES: fearful, joyful, tearful...

JOHN ADAMS

New Hampshire; Massachusetts; Rhode
Island; Connecticut; New York; New
Jersey; Pennsylvania; Delaware;
Maryland; Virginia; North Carolina;
South Carolina; Georgia...

He pauses to let the echoes die. John Adams savors the moment. Then he spots Washington hanging back in the shadows. Smiles.

JOHN ADAMS

There is a gentleman among us whose
skill and experience as an officer,
whose independent fortune, great
talents and excellent universal
character, command the approbation
of all America. I speak of Virginia
Delegate and Militia Colonel, George
Washington.

The hall breaks into roaring applause...

HALLWAY

Washington sits alone on a settee,
listening to the applause... clearly
wracked with doubt.

EXT. STREETS OF PHILADELPHIA - DAY

DEMONSTRATORS carrying a hanging effigy of King George III.

They beat drums, shout slogans.

INT. WASHINGTON APARTMENT - DAY

Washington stands at the window watching the demonstration.

He's in his best regimentals, still doing up the ridiculously tight collar.

MARTHA enters wearing an ornate gown that's not quite completely tied up. Martha is about the same age as George, handsome, but together the pair look strangely formal.

WASHINGTON

It's another demonstration against the king. This is the wildest yet.

MARTHA

My God, these people mean to go to war! They really mean it.

WASHINGTON

Surely you knew this was coming.

MARTHA

War? No! I did not! When you said compromise was possible I believed it was probable. There's no middle ground at all? We're the King's children!

Washington embraces her and makes her sit.

WASHINGTON

Our beloved father, the King, also refuses to bend.

MARTHA

But to go to war over trade, over money? Surely there's still time for a compromise.

WASHINGTON

Of course, if it were that simple.
(indicates the window)
These people? They're after something else...

MARTHA

My God, what?

WASHINGTON

The eternal dream of the disenfranchised, my dear: a classless world. Not a very real expectation.

As Martha fumbles with her buttons, Washington helps.

MARTHA

Well, a very real expectation is the British will hang you! They'll burn Mount Vernon and they'll hang you! Our marriage is a business just as surely as...

WASHINGTON

I'm very aware of that.

MARTHA

I can not allow the fortune in slaves my first husband created and what our partnership has elevated, to be destroyed...

WASHINGTON

Don't be ridiculous, of course that won't happen.

MARTHA

Have you been reading what Minister Jefferson has to say? If he had his way, all our slaves would be freed no matter what the outcome. And that would destroy us as surely as a British victory.

Washington smiles at the notion.

WASHINGTON

The day Tom Jefferson frees a slave I'll ride naked through the streets of Williamsburg on a mule.

(pause)

Tom Jefferson is one of those people who talks big and acts small. The only man out there who really does what he says is Sam Adams and everyone thinks he's crazy.

(pause)

Believe me, this 'disturbance' isn't going to last long. You have to understand, congress is a chicken coop full of foxes, Martha, each and every one has his eye on a nice, fat prize.

MARTHA

And, what 'prize' do you see? What could we possible gain?

WASHINGTON

Everything.

(MORE)

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)

If we force Britain into concessions
it will open up the western lands --
and that would be a boon for our
family. We already have more slaves
than we need, but we need more land.

Then, in the chaos of cheering Washington hears people calling
HIS NAME. Martha watches Washington's expression as he
listens to the cheering.

MARTHA

And, if after all this is over and
the 'disenfranchised' want the freedom
you and everyone else promised them?
Our lives, our fortunes, my children's
future depends on our slaves. George,
freed slaves are in the streets
demonstrating!

More sounds from the street: chanting, singing. Washington
smiles, trying to soothe her...

WASHINGTON

When my mother married my father,
she believed she had fulfilled her
dream of marrying 'up', like a child's
dream of going to heaven... Yet the
truth is, she just pulled my family
down. So, I'm still seen as the
badly-bred, half-educated son of a
failed landowner and a social climbing
barmaid... Each of us -- Jefferson,
John Adams... each of us has found a
way to climb over the barriers that
keep us from real power... everyone
is finding a way to the top in this
crisis.

(pause)

The south trusts me because I'm one
of their own as a slave owner, land
owner, I'll protect their 'rights';
the north because -- they claim --
I am about to lead an army in a fight
for absolute freedom... Or at least
the right to absolute free trade.
So, when it's over, we will be
positioned very, very well indeed.

Washington rises now, crossed back toward the window. Seems
very sure about all this. Then a CHANT goes up from the
street: "Washington! -- Washington! -- Washington!"

WASHINGTON

But, as usual, it will not go well
for... them.

(pause)

Martha, you must trust me.

MARTHA

You're no fool, George. You never
have been.

They hold on each other a moment, embrace.

THE STREETS

The People... standing on wagons, one another's shoulders --
waving flags, yelling and cheering. A chant goes up:

"FREEDOM -- FREEDOM -- FREEDOM!" Among them is a solitary
BLACK MAN, cheering and waving a flag over his head.

GREENE passes on horseback, leading a color guard of Rhode
Island militia.

Washington nods as Greene salutes. Suddenly his eyes jerk
back to a GROUP OF MEN carrying a hand-sewn banner that reads
"OH, LIBERTY -- OH, VIRTUE -- OH, COUNTRY!"

Jarred by this image, Washington smiles, as if his mind were
momentarily free of his ambitions.

WASHINGTON

"Liberty, Virtue, Country"...
That's from Cato... you know, that
play about the noble Romans? As I
was riding up to Philadelphia, I
found myself thinking about the old
days...

MARTHA

When you lived with the Fairfaxes?

WASHINGTON

When I was a young man we used to
recite Cato... We would come together
recite it like they were words from
heaven. Devotion to country, duty,
purity of heart... Purity of heart.
I was drunk on something then...

MARTHA

That's when Sally Fairfax was tutoring
you...

Washington smiles despite himself, remembering.

WASHINGTON

That's right...

MARTHA

And have you heard anything from our dear friend, Sally?

(off his look)

What with all the rumors getting back to England. I thought she might inquire after us.

(pause)

But then I believe she always looked down on us.

Washington winces at this remark. It seems that at this moment he can't look at Martha.

WASHINGTON

Are you ready?

INT. CARPENTERS HALL - THAT NIGHT

Washington and Martha make a royal entrance, he in his perfect uniform, she in her splendid gown. Fawning delegates and their wives applaud. Billy Lee follows, holding their coats, the loyal slave. They pass famous faces: John Adams; Sam Adams; Benjamin Franklin... those oil paintings, but alive and applauding. George and Martha are like KING AND QUEEN.

INT. PALACE LIBRARY, LONDON - DAY

Chaos -- as if a war were already being fought. Wiry KING GEORGE III stands beside LORD GERMAIN who looks like a ferret. King George sucks furiously on a long, ivory pipe, coughing as he smears the air with greasy smoke. The library is packed with the spoils of world conquest: an Iroquois canoe; African shields... AIDS scamper in and out shuffling rolls of waxed canvas maps, tack hammers banging.

Stout and heavy GENERAL CORNWALLIS sits at the table sipping tea, his red regimentals glow in the gloom like some demon.

Near a globe, standing in the corner like he might be stuffed and on display, is the KING'S SECRETARY. He reads from the 'trades'.

KING'S SECRETARY

"General Washington is a man of means. Not only does he risk all but has insisted that he serve without salary; a noble gesture." So says the Times.

KING GEORGE

When you're rich you can afford to be noble. The American's battle cry is 'the rights of man' -- God help us! Tell me, Cornwallis, what the hell are we fighting for?

CORNWALLIS

We fight for the glory of England, sire.

KING GEORGE

What!? Are you out of your mind? Savages fight for glory -- I'll tell you what we fight for:

He jabs at Cornwallis' uniform.

KING GEORGE

(jacket)
Cotton, from Egypt.
(blouse)
Asian silk...
(buttons)
Indian copper...
(insignia)
African silver. Shit, you're a walking advertisement for empire now aren't you, General? Commerce is empire! The British East India Company against the French and Dutch East India Companies. Hudson's Bay Company against the French West India Company... we live in a world run by empires of companies.
(pause)
And, what we mean to resolve is: who owns the greatest repository of raw materials the world has ever seen. I'll tell you, it had better be us! If these stupid people gain independence they could trade resources for immense power...

KING'S SECRETARY

(continues reading)
"We must recall that General Washington is one of our own. An aristocrat, a lord over vast lands, a slave holder..." So says the News...

KING GEORGE

He's not a 'general'; he's a disloyal subject! So, shut up! This is the most... ghastly... occurrence... in the whole history of mankind. These people have gone completely berserk! I am descended from God! God! Clearly, they want to wage war against God!

King George slams his fists on the table.

LORD GERMAIN

Our army sailing for New York is over thirty thousand strong.

KING GEORGE

Thirty thousand! You hear that, Cornwallis!?

LORD GERMAIN

That is, my Lord, the largest single overseas force this nation has ever dispatched.

Cornwallis crosses to the map, points at Lake Champlain.

CORNWALLIS

Our plan is to come down from Canada by boat on Lake Champlain; beats walking. Should get us into Ticonderoga right on schedule. Then, if our New York campaign doesn't completely crush Washington before winter, by spring, our two armies will link up and... it will be over.

KING GEORGE

Except for a lovely series of treason trials. Should we bring Washington to England?

LORD GERMAIN

Not if you want him to hang -- Parliament will likely make him their darling and pardon him. Turn him over to the American Congress; they'll hang him to save their own necks!

King George breaks into a torrent of laughter -- slaps his knee, wipes tears from his eyes. There's a bright sparkle of madness in his eyes. Turns to his Secretary.

KING GEORGE

Let's hear more! Come on, come on!

KING'S SECRETARY

"Washington's distinguished himself during the so-called 'French and Indian War'. Fighting with Braddock he had two horses shot from under him, several bullets pierced his coat -- yet he was never scratches. Savages who fought against Washington that day claim he is under an eternal spell of a protecting manitou. They believe the gods have preserved him for eternity..." So says the Guardian.

They all laugh. Then the King gets dead serious.

KING GEORGE

General Cornwallis, I want you to punish these criminals, and this peculiar Mister Washington...

CUT TO:

EXT. PENNSYLVANIA, DELAWARE RIVER - DAWN (END FLASHBACK)

Washington's boat run ground and empty, his blue and gold Commander and Chief's flag looks forlorn amid growing SNOW FLURRIES.

EXT. PENNSYLVANIA COUNTRYSIDE - MORNING

Washington rides Traveler to the rear of his troops, the now GENERAL NATHANAEL GREENE Washington met at Congress and Joseph Reed ride with him. Reed dispassionately ticks-off the terrible news.

JOSEPH REED

Fifteen hundred killed, wounded or missing in battle. Three thousand men taken prisoner when the Hudson forts surrendered. Another one thousand five hundred lost to desertion. And more than two thousand lost on our retreat... because their enlistments expired.

Washington stops his horse and turns away, overwhelmed by the enormity of the disaster.

WASHINGTON

Any word from Canada?

JOSEPH REED

Spies from Quebec confirm that the British are sending an entire fleet down Lake Champlain...

WASHINGTON

A fleet?

NATHANAEL GREENE

How could they get a fleet onto Lake Champlain? It's landlocked!

Reed eyes Greene as if he were an annoying imbecile.

JOSEPH REED

General, the enemy sailed the ships in from England, took them apart plank by plank and rebuilt them on the lake. They have bomb ships, mortar barges, the ship-of-the-line Inflexible... altogether it is estimated a fleet of some thirty or more ships. The Iroquois have joined them with one hundred war canoes carrying more than a thousand Mohawk sharp-shooters.

Staggering news. For a moment no one can speak, just the sound of wind whipping around their horses.

WASHINGTON

My God... They mean to finish us. What about Arnold? He's up there.

JOSEPH REED

What can he do? The British have massive superiority.

Greene angrily circles his horse around to Washington's other side.

NATHANAEL GREENE

I doubt Arnold will be afraid.

JOSEPH REED

If he isn't, then he's stupid.

Greene is taken aback, doesn't know how to respond to Reed's slap. Washington turns Traveler and continues. Reed spurs ahead and rides just behind Washington, stalking like a terrier. Greene glumly follows.

HILL TOP

Washington, Reed and Greene view the disheartening spectacle of the retreating army as it slogs agonizingly through the mud.

JOSEPH REED

Did God ever make such a pitiful army?

NATHANAEL GREENE

These men have suffered but I believe they will fight.

Reed spurs his horse, cutting in between Greene and Washington.

JOSEPH REED

No officer is going to get these men to fight! They had the life crushed out of them on Long Island. At the most, perhaps we could make a feint at an outpost, then retire to protect Congress.

NATHANAEL GREENE

I hear General Lee is holding seven thousand fresh infantry back in New York -- why won't he come on!?

JOSEPH REED

General Lee is detained captain...

NATHANAEL GREENE

Detained by what?

JOSEPH REED

The British army, sir!

NATHANAEL GREENE

The British Army is right back there, across that river! Sir! I think it must be something else that detains General Lee.

WASHINGTON

Gentlemen!

(pause)

Nathanael, would you have one of your men prepare a bodyguard for Colonel Reed. Joseph, get to Congress...

(hands him an envelope)

Here is a list of supplies in detail.

(MORE)

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)

If Congress has to divert food, weapons and powder from the troops around Philadelphia, then I order them to do so. I'm also ordering any free troops to join our forces here as fast as possible. That includes General Lee. Tell him he can bring his damned dogs, but tell him to get here.

Washington pauses, considering what he's about to say. He looks at Greene, then to Reed.

WASHINGTON

I'm ordering that Negroes be allowed to join the army.

Greene's eyes get real big.

JOSEPH REED

Congress is bitterly opposed to allowing Negroes in the army!

NATHANAEL GREENE

We already have black soldiers in our army...

JOSEPH REED

Unofficially, General Greene.

NATHANAEL GREENE

What's the difference?

Washington suddenly explodes -- sick of the bickering.

WASHINGTON

If we're going to last the winter I need men! Make Congress understand that two powerful British armies are going to converge on this spot come spring. One from the north and one right across that river.

Washington wants to talk with Reed alone.

WASHINGTON

General Greene, will you please see to that bodyguard.

Greene salutes, wheels his horse and canters off. Alone, Washington confides in Reed.

WASHINGTON

If we have any hope for a compromise or truce with England now, we have to hold on here: our men must believe they can win -- the British must believe that somehow, in some mad, impossible way we might actually be able to hurt them.

JOSEPH REED

I understand, George.

Washington salutes -- Reed returns it, then shakes Washington's hand a little too vigorously, turns his horse and rides off.

FURTHER UP THE LINE

Two MILITIA OFFICERS fight, rolling in the crap. Militia howl at them, throwing rocks, snowballs. Snow flurries whirl around them as they roll in the slush.

Washington PLOWS into them with his HORSE, knocks one officer down, jumps off his horse, grabs the other officer by the collar. Washington swings one around as the other drops his sword, staggers back.

WASHINGTON

You are officers! Officers! Come to attention! What is your regiment!?

MARYLAND OFFICER

I'm from Maryland, sir! That scum sucker from Connecticut...

WASHINGTON

You both are under arrest!

FIVE ARMED MILITIA close around the Connecticut Officer to protect him, some actually lift their guns, threatening Washington. Washington looks WILD.

HAMILTON

GUARD!

Mud-caked Alexander Hamilton appears with a handful of filthy artillery men holding pistols on the Connecticut Militia.

Washington pulls one of his matched flintlock pistols, cocks it.

WASHINGTON

Mutiny and you will be shot!

By now they're surrounded by SOLDIERS, CAMP-FOLLOWERS -- everyone watching. Could go either way. Then, RHODE ISLAND MILITIA appear, flanking Greene.

NATHANAEL GREENE

Ready!

Like a well-oiled machine they drop to one knee, muskets leveled.

Washington shoves one mutineer back, then another, another...

WASHINGTON

You are all soldiers in the American Army, you are no longer just state militia! Get that through your thick, backwoods skulls! You all signed up for an enlistment, and you will stay or be shot as deserters!

(a breath)

Any man caught rioting will earn himself fifty lashes! Any man convicted of mutiny will receive one hundred and fifty!

Gaping silence. These are extreme measures. One of the would-be MUTINEERS scoffs, turns and heads back to the line.

The rest back off.

Washington gets a hard stare from the troops. Then he turns and Greene follows.

WASHINGTON

The only way to get discipline into these men is to beat it into them! Fifty lashes each!

NATHANAEL GREENE

Sir, Congress hasn't issued their pay for two months, many have not eaten properly for at least that long. You're being a little hard on them, don't you think?

WASHINGTON

Nathanael, someone bred to station, bred to being a gentleman -- unlike these men -- his sense of duty naturally prevails over the baser needs.

NATHANAEL GREENE

Well sir, I was an ironmaster before you got me. Maybe I will let you down yet.

Greene turns to go, but Washington stops him.

WASHINGTON

I certainly didn't mean you. Of course you are a gentleman, an officer and a gentleman.

NATHANAEL GREENE

You wrong me, general; I am an officer and a horse-shoer.

Greene salutes, gets a salute back and retires. Washington swings into the saddle rides a few paces and finds Hamilton up to his knees in mud with two of his gunners trying to get one of the caissons unstuck. Washington studies Hamilton a second as if trying to figure this kid out.

WASHINGTON

How old are you, Captain?

HAMILTON

I'll be twenty next year, sir.

WASHINGTON

I'll expect you for dinner this evening, Captain Hamilton. For Christ's sake, have a bath.

HAMILTON

Delighted, sir.

Washington wheels into the saddle and continues up the line.

INT. DESERTED BARN - NIGHT

Candles and oil lamps that rim the inside of the old barn shimmer and flicker as wind wheezes through the walls. A handful of OFFICERS range around the barn, on barrels or benches around a table made from spare boards. Hamilton sits beside Greene.

Washington sits at the head of this plank table, face burnished by flickering candles. He looks tired.

WASHINGTON

I have just heard that General Cornwallis is being recalled back to England. He's leaving with his wife for an extended... vacation. I assume this means we are no longer feared.

Silence broken by a few coughs, uncomfortable men clearing their throats.

WASHINGTON

In the north General Arnold with a handful of badly supplied men is all that stands between us and a second British army.

(some muttering)

Come Spring the British will be unstoppable.

(dead silence)

So, my question to you is: retreat, fight, or dig-in and prepare for whatever may come at us in the Spring. Each of you has command of a body of men, you should know their spirit. What do you say?

(more throats clearing)

Speak up! I want to know what you really think!

A tubby officer on his left rises.

TUBBY OFFICER

If I'm to judge from the mood of my men...

WASHINGTON

Yes...

TUBBY OFFICER

Well then, retreat.

Washington nods to the next, a LEAN OFFICER.

LEAN OFFICER

Retreat and fall back on Congress. If we can save Philadelphia and our political leaders the British will have to negotiate a peace.

Officers in all manner of uniforms respond, and as they go around the room all say 'retreat'. Then it's Hamilton's turn.

HAMILTON

We must fight! -- fight! -- fight!!! Attack them wherever they hide! Burn their fleets, massacre their armies -- drive them off the continent!

Ringling silence. Greene, happily surprised refills Hamilton's glass with rum.

TUBBY OFFICER

How many men in your command, Captain?

HAMILTON

Five, sir.

Laughter around the barn. But Washington smiles at Hamilton's spirit.

WASHINGTON

General Greene?

NATHANAEL GREENE

I'm with Captain Hamilton.

WASHINGTON

Yes, I thought that's how you'd feel, Nathanael.

HAMILTON

Excuse me, General, but may I ask how do you feel?

WASHINGTON

No one wants to turn the table on the enemy more than I. But if victory is remote and there's any hope for a negotiated peace, we must keep this army intact.

HAMILTON

Therefore, retreat.

Washington glares at Hamilton; he's rude.

WASHINGTON

I'm so inclined.

HAMILTON

Well, sir, then is it possible you called us all here just to hear what you wanted to hear.

A few officers chuckle at this silly alliteration.

WASHINGTON

I am open to your strategies, captain.

More officers chuckle.

HAMILTON

Well, sir, my strategy would be to arm people who want freedom and have them attack people who want to enslave them.

LEAN OFFICER

Which is exactly why no damned Negros
should be allowed in our armies!

TUBBY OFFICER

Ridiculous! New England has had
African men in her Militias for years.
You southerners are just a'feared
'cause you're slave owners.
(correcting himself)
Beggin' your pardon, sir.

Washington feels the cut for just a second, goes on. But,
like a good politician, he's prepared.

WASHINGTON

I want to remind you all that black
minutemen fought alongside white
troops at Lexington and Concord.
Not in separate divisions -- they
fought together. Black and white
troops also fought together at the
battles of Breed's and Bunker Hill.
It was a black sharpshooter who killed
the British field commander, Major
Pitcairn.

LEAN OFFICER

A lucky shot!

WASHINGTON

We could use some luck!

AFTER LAUGHS:

NATHANAEL GREENE

What are we going to do then, General?
Retreat further or...

WASHINGTON

turns away from his officers. He stands in the dark a moment
as a wind moves through the barn flickering the candles. He
crosses to a window.

HIS POV

Camp fires of his army flicker against the cold wind, as
fragile as candles.

RESUME WASHINGTON

Finally turning to face his officers. Hamilton immediately
catches his eye -- Hamilton and Greene side by side like a
pair of hopeful kids.

WASHINGTON

After giving the question careful consideration I must agree with Colonel Reed's original assessment: our troops are too dispirited for a counter-attack. For the present, we'll continue our retreat toward Newtown.

Hamilton looks dejected. Greene refills his glass.

HAMILTON

Sir, what am I going to tell my men?

LEAN OFFICER

You tell them to march! All five of them!

Howls of laughter from the other officers. But his time Washington doesn't laugh.

EXT. BARN - NIGHT

All the officers are shuffling off into the night, but Hamilton stays behind.

HAMILTON

General Washington, is there actually going to be a compromise, I mean, a 'deal' with England?

WASHINGTON

And is that the most horrible thing in the world?

Hamilton starts to say something, but just salutes and starts to go.

WASHINGTON

Captain, I want you to know that I respect your openness. It would make me happy if you'd join our table for dinner from now on.

HAMILTON

With pleasure... and an honor.

(pause)

Did you hear about Nathan Hale?

WASHINGTON

That young school teacher... I heard the British hung him as a spy.

HAMILTON

But it's what he said, just before they killed him: "I regret that I have but one life to give to my country."

Hamilton salutes again and heads off into the night.

Washington watches him a while, begins to return inside when a SENTRY escorts a ROUGH LOOKING LIEUTENANT dressed in a long, flannel jacket.

LIEUTENANT

Yessir. I am first lieutenant Birdie McMullen. Jimmy -- my best rifleman -- done shot a big buck, sir. And our company of New Hampshire volunteers is offerin' it for your table.

WASHINGTON

Well, we have no table, but... come on closer.

Three 'MILITIA' move into the light dragging a buck on a litter. Washington looks them over: a ragged trio, no hint of uniform, simple men. One is a MULATTO.

WASHINGTON

Thank you men, I accept.

LIEUTENANT

We'll dress it for you sir. Be ready in the morning.

He salutes, Washington returns it.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Alone, Washington walks to the back of the old barn, still lit by the remaining candles. He pours himself a tall glass of rum, leaves the glass and crosses back to the window.

OUTSIDE

A YOUNG GIRL with a YOUNG SOLDIER, walk together toward the encampment. They hang on to each other, warming each other in the bitter cold; can just hear their laughter in the wind.

WASHINGTON

Watches them with a longing bordering on anguish. He moves away from the window, picks up his glass and drains it. Then a powerful wind RUSHES against the old walls SNUFFING OUT the last candles.

INT. BELVOIR MANSION, VIRGINIA - DAY (FLASHBACK)

IMAGES FROM GEORGE WASHINGTON'S PAST...

Eighteen year old SALLY FAIRFAX is introduced by her husband, handsome WILLIAM FAIRFAX. Slim figure, pale face, jet hair; Sally has a mythic sensuality, the classic fearless face of youth.

WILLIAM

George! George, here she is; George, the prize of my heart! This is Sally Cary! Now, Mrs. Sally Fairfax.

Her black eyes home in on us. Seeing everything from Washington's POV as she slowly circles him.

SALLY

So, you are William's wild young neighbor? Or should I say, 'brother'; William claims you as a member of his family. I have heard so many unflattering tales about you, and I understand, that except for you, this 'family' is quite cultivated.

WILLIAM

George, I'm sorry.

SALLY

Oh, but you must not mind my talking about you! In fact, William says my main job here at Belvoir is to civilize you; to make an honest English gentleman out of you.

WILLIAM

That's not what I said! Now, Sally, you're embarrassing me!

(to Washington)

Watch out for her, George; she talks refinement, but she has a barbarous soul!

INT. BELVOIR MANSION - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Sally's slim, provocative figure outlined before a blazing hearth. In her lap is a tiny, gold-embossed book.

As she reads, we CIRCLE HER, seeing her from young Washington's POV. She lightly places her small hand over the top of her cleavage.

SALLY

"Let no torrent of impetuous zeal
transport thee beyond bounds of
reason: True fortitude is seen in
great exploits that justice warrants
and wisdom guides."

She pauses, looks up at young George Washington to make a point.

SALLY

"All else is tow'ring frenzy and
distraction."

(pause)

George? It's your line...

NEW ANGLE

YOUNG GEORGE WASHINGTON hesitates. Other in the room chuckle; they're rehearsing James Addison's CATO.

YOUNG WASHINGTON

Ah... "Pity that I have but one life
to lose for my country..."

William Fairfax laughs, loves play acting.

WILLIAM

Hey -- that's my line! Why, I think
George is infatuated with you, Sally.

Sally smiles shyly, but is uncomfortable with the notion.

SALLY

Don't tease George.

More smiles, a girl giggles. Finally George Washington looks down into Sally's deep eyes.

YOUNG WASHINGTON

I'm sorry, I am hopelessly lost...

Everyone laughs.

EXT. ROAD TO NEWTOWN - MORNING (PRESENT)

Washington in the saddle, surrounded by the gloom of a growing storm, but his mind in the transcendence of memories.

Washington looks back at Billy Lee riding behind on Nelson --

Washington's black horse -- leaning into the icy wind and snow. Washington looks ahead again, back into his memory.

EXT. FAIRFAX ESTATES - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Sally, William and George in the company of what are best described as members of Virginia's upper crust -- New World Landed Gentry.

They stroll through the fields of endless grain, the men with walking sticks.

Compared to the willowy William, and the other men, George looks tough. He leads his and Sally's horse. Because Sally's excited to see the estates, the three walk ahead of the rest. A fifty year old Protestant MINISTER trails by just a bit.

WILLIAM

The land here is best for grain and corn.

YOUNG WASHINGTON

Though, sometimes we get frost and that can cut the season.

SALLY

It's marvelous. To see wealth pour forth from the land.

MINISTER

A bounty from the bosom of heaven.

WILLIAM

We can grow three primary crops in a season and, if we have some luck, we get a forth. The temperature is generally mild.

SALLY

Except for that, quite like home; England, that is.

WILLIAM

Hear that, George? Sally's actually taken to thinking of this clod of earth as her home. And it's her first tour. We're gratified, aren't we George?

NEW ANGLE

They break clear of the wheat field onto a rolling field.

SLAVES hand cut, bail and stack wheat. WHITE THUGS patrol the fields. Those on the perimeter carrying muskets, those who walk among the slaves, pistols and short swords.

WILLIAM

Of course we have slaves here instead of tenant farmers to make the land pay. Our harvest is about fourteen percent higher this year.

Sally is stunned silent, appalled by what she sees.

SLAVES

Struggle in the hot sun under tremendous loads of bailed grain heaving them into wagons. One has a terrible limp; another pocked from disease; all toil like animals.

SALLY

violently pushes past William, seems disoriented.

MINISTER

Oh, dear...

WILLIAM

Are you well, Sally?

Washington sees she's faint, drops the horses' reins and rushes to her side. He takes her arm, moves her ahead as fast as he can. William is just annoyed.

WILLIAM

God's sake, Sally...

NOW THEY ARRIVE AT THE SLAVE HUTS

WOMAN and CHILDREN, mostly naked, living in unbelievable filth. As they move out of the field toward the pastures, Washington does all he can to block Sally's view.

YOUNG WASHINGTON

We're almost away from here.

Sally nods, thankful, moves closer to Washington as William and the Minister catch up.

WILLIAM

The crowding is hard to bear, but in the fall we consolidate the work camps. Sally?

MINISTER

It's the wealth of the land, Mrs. Fairfax. The slaves and indentured servants. It's part of the system of Virginia's wealth.

Sally doesn't want to hear more, and George is getting more and more fed up with William.

EXT. PASTURES - DAY

Away from the squalor of the slave camp, Sally suddenly sprints ahead to a stream where she sits on a rock, just staring at the pure flowing water.

William smiles at George, but wants to get on.

WILLIAM
Come on, Sally, we have so much more
to see. Show a little mettle!

Finally George turns to William, furious, fists clenched.

YOUNG WASHINGTON
Damn it, William! Damn it!

Minister backs off. William instantly composes himself.

WILLIAM
Well, George, we're going on then.
Stay with her a bit, all right?
There's a good man.

He continues on with the others, the Minister talking happily as they go.

EXT. STREAM - DAY

George sits beside Sally, sees she was crying and is just wiping her eyes.

YOUNG WASHINGTON
I should take you right back to
Belvoir.

Sally wants to burst out weeping or shouting, instead she seals her emotion.

SALLY
Where... do those men come from,
George?

YOUNG WASHINGTON
Africa, of course.

SALLY
Africa? That's so far? How do they
get here?

YOUNG WASHINGTON
Slavers capture them and bring them here.

SALLY
Capture them? Well, I've never seen anything like it, so... of course I'm curious.

YOUNG WASHINGTON
Sally, our slave system is a British law...

She suddenly pulls away from him, stands, glaring.

SALLY
Did I say anything? We must be... who we must be.

She turns away and George can't tell if she's crying again.

He stands and reaches out to hold her -- but she pulls loose and runs off down the dirt road. As she does she pulls off her scarf and her long, black hair flows free in the wind...

INT. BELVOIR LIBRARY - DAY

Sally's delicate hand arches out in front of a monumental bookcase. George's rough hand reaches out, can't quite bring himself to touch Sally's. Through the window one can see, hear a summer storm raging.

SALLY
I shan't break.

George and Sally face each other in the library as his hand finally touches hers. George seems to feel that touch through his whole body.

SALLY
The word 'minuet' finds its source in minitus, which is Latin meaning 'small' or 'orderly'.

YOUNG WASHINGTON
Or, 'civilized'.

SALLY
In the minuet, George, every movement is significant, like the strut of cranes...

Sally does a half-revolving, staggered walk using his hand as a pivot point.

YOUNG WASHINGTON
Cranes? Who needs to walk like a crane?

SALLY
That's just my interpretation.
Actually it's a dance designed as a sentiment of courtly manners.
You see? Walk in a gently 'Z'.
There are four distinct movements...

Washington reaches out, puts his hands on her waist.

YOUNG WASHINGTON
I've seen them do this.

Sally holds back when she sees the look in George's eyes.
She deftly moves away.

SALLY
It's less a true dance than an expression of polite deportment...

Duly rebuffed George lower his hands.

YOUNG WASHINGTON
What do you really think of the minuet, anyway?

SALLY
It's stupid, of course.

Washington is thrown by this, as if a whole new facet of her personality just lurches out.

YOUNG WASHINGTON
Then why are you teaching me...?

SALLY
Perhaps you best ask, why you wish it. You asked William to teach you manners, philosophy, decorum... as I said, it's completely stupid.

A clock strikes in another room.

SALLY
Stupid tea time...

NEW ANGLE

Sally and George seated, properly, quietly, sipping tea.

SALLY

What attracts me and frightens me
about America... it's the wildness
that's so different from England,
from English culture. That's what
it's about back there: insulating
yourself from whatever might really
touch you. Anything you can heap
between you and... that.

She points out the window. George looks out as the summer
storm rages, rain beating against the glass.

YOUNG WASHINGTON

Well, you get storms in London.

Feeling her eyes on him he turns back and finds she's staring
at him.

SALLY

No, we have weather. Sometimes, if
things get completely out of hand,
we have actual gusts. But we never,
ever allow this to happen.

They listen to the storm for a time as it whips the trees,
eyes locked as if in an embrace. Finally, embarrassed, he
toys with his cup.

YOUNG WASHINGTON

I always thought London was the place
to be: capital of the world, the
most spectacular city on earth.

SALLY

The place to want to be is America.
Every English child dreams of it.
I dreamt it.

YOUNG WASHINGTON

I think America suits you.

She angles her head as if moment by moment she were looking
at him with 'different eyes'.

SALLY

Do you? When I saw those men
yesterday in the field... and the
women and children in those hovels?
I'm not so sure if America is as far
from England as I'd hoped.

YOUNG WASHINGTON

It's the freest land on earth.

SALLY

Is it? Well, I'm scared of what we've become in our freedom.

YOUNG WASHINGTON

Well, we must be who we must be...

Sally finally loses patience with him, rises to the window.

George follows.

SALLY

And to think I am teaching you to become one of them...

YOUNG WASHINGTON

What else should I become? There's no difference between Virginia and England. I must be educated if I'm to take my place in society. My father couldn't afford to send me to England for school -- he made a shambles of our fortunes. Everyone laughs at me.

She turns to face him and their bodies press together... not expecting him to be so close. She gazes at him a moment, seeing just how vulnerable he really is.

SALLY

I don't laugh at you, George. I like you.

(long pause while
this sinks in)

I like you because you will never, ever make it as an aristocrat... and that's because you're completely incompetent at hiding your feelings.

YOUNG WASHINGTON

I think I will disappoint you.

But Sally laughs. They're very close now nearly kissing.

SALLY

Oh, George, I think you and I have very little control over what we are going to do...

Then she gets a grip, turns and walks straight out of the room.

INT. MOUNT VERNON/MAIN ROOM - EARLY EVENING

William stands before his family.

Two HOUSE HOLD SLAVES like fixtures in the rear. The Upper Crust is present tonight, the same strolling gentry from the slave camp, Minister and all. William primes them with a chorus-like prolegomenon.

WILLIAM

Ladies and gentlemen, for your entertainment and elucidation, our unpretentious company of dramaturgic artisans, presents that Tale of the celebrated protector of Rome. The man who dared resist the wretched tyrants Crassus, Pompey, and Caesar in his fatal fight to uphold the Roman Senate and save sacred democracy: We give you Joseph Addison's Cato... My lovely wife herself plays Marcia, daughter of Cato, young George Washington, Numidia's hero Juba! And I, myself, ever your humble servant, as Cato!

Crackling applause.

INT. KITCHEN - EARLY EVENING

Sally and George as George checks his buttons and collar in a mirror. Sally gets a wicked smile, reaches onto the cold fire pit beneath the stove and comes up with handfuls of soot, straddles his lap. George can't believe that she could be so bold, and Sally pauses just a second to give him a lustful smile -- the second he's distracted she smears the charcoal on his face.

YOUNG WASHINGTON

What are you doing?

SALLY

Let's get you darker!

YOUNG WASHINGTON

You're out of your mind!

SALLY

Why? Juba was an African and you want to look the part -- hold still.

YOUNG WASHINGTON

They can use their imaginations.

SALLY

Those people? I doubt they'd think of this. Ooo, you're wonderful this color!

She keeps smearing as fast as she can, then turns George around to face the mirror.

SALLY

Behold! Juba of Numidia! African warrior and defender of liberty!

AND GEORGE

Fascinated and terrified.

INT. DRAWING ROOM

William as Cato, Sally as Marcia and George as Juba -- on 'stage' before the room of spectators. William is not amused as the elite of Virginia giggle at George's wild war-paint smear of charcoal, giggle more at George and Sally's obvious friendship.

SALLY (AS MARCIA)

I've been surprised in an unguarded hour, But must not now go back; the love that lay, Half smothered in my breast, has broke through all, Its weak restraints, and burns in its full lustre. I cannot, if I would, conceal it from thee.

YOUNG WASHINGTON (AS JUBA)

I'm lost in ecstasy! And dost thou love, Thou charming maid?

SALLY

And dost thou live to ask it?

WILLIAM (AS CATO)

My daughter, I ask only...

YOUNG WASHINGTON (AS JUBA)

(cuts him off)

This, this is life indeed! Life worth preserving, Such life as Juba never felt till now.

SALLY

Juba, thy arm! Oh, let me rest upon it -- The vital blood that had forsook my heart, Returns again in such tumultuous tide, It quite o'ercomes me. Lead me to my apartment!

People TITTER.

WILLIAM

'Tis true, ofttimes...

But George cuts him off again, and it's really just George and Sally 'getting it on' through their lines.

YOUNG WASHINGTON (AS JUBA)
 I am so blest I fear 'tis all a dream.
 Fortune, thou now hast made amends
 for all Thy past unkindness; I absolve
 my stars. Juba will never at his
 fate repine; Let Caesar have the
 world, if Marcia's mine!

George sweeps Sally up in his arms and carries her off to loud applause and chuckles from the pack of friends. William looks around, smiles sickly.

INT. KITCHEN

Still angry, William nearly throws a wet cloth into George's hands.

WILLIAM
 For God sake, get that horrid stuff
 off your face. You look like a damned
 slave! It's damned humiliating.

YOUNG WASHINGTON
 Juba was a Numidian.

WILLIAM
 He was not black! He was... tan!
 Weathered!

George tries not to laugh as he wipes the soot off his face.

YOUNG WASHINGTON
 I see, so if you squint hard enough,
 Juba of Numidia becomes an Englishman?

MORE applause O.S. Sally runs in, grabs his hand tugs him back out.

SALLY
 Come on! It's our second bow!
 (to William)
 Weren't we wonderful?

INT. DRAWING ROOM

The Upper Crust have gathered around Sally and George, some holding drinks. They're fascinated by the pair as if they could smell a scandal.

SALLY
 Think what the play means, William.
 (MORE)

SALLY (CONT'D)

Perhaps these words have a place in the real world.

WILLIAM

Words, words, words!

(some laughs)

Sally has been tutoring George in the philosophies, isn't that right?

YOUNG WASHINGTON

William, we've been studying hard, I really know my stuff.

WILLIAM

Don't be silly, you have whole worlds to fathom.

Sally smiles right at George.

SALLY

Remember, George, "It is dangerous to be right in matters on which the established authorities are wrong."

YOUNG WASHINGTON

That's good... who?

SALLY

Voltaire, of course...

Some appreciative chuckles. George is into it now.

YOUNG WASHINGTON

"I can be expected to look for truth but not find it." Diderot.

More laughter; Sally senses they think it's all very 'cute'.

She looks from George to the others, eyes fixing in the end on the Minister.

SALLY

Ah! Well, here's my Diderot: "I have only a small flickering light to guide me in the darkness of a thick forest. Up comes a theologian and blows it out."

William is mortified. Minister's face contorts, finally spews a laugh...

MINISTER

Come now, that's not philosophy it has no context. Philosophy is the thinnest, most concisely rendered portion of the whole of life as can possibly be embraced by the cognizant spirit of the Christian mind.

A spattering of applause and all seem impressed... but not George.

YOUNG WASHINGTON

Voltaire says: "When he who hears doesn't know what he who speaks means, and when he who speaks doesn't know what he himself means -- that is philosophy."

Sally breaks into a fit of laughter, grabs William's arm.

SALLY

Well, I think George has got it!

But William would love to get them gone.

WILLIAM

George, would you be so kind as to see Sally home? Yes, and here's a challenge for you both -- and I'll bet you can't beat it -- walk all the way home speak not one single word!

Laughter and applause from the drawing room set.

EXT. DIRT ROAD TO BELVOIR - NIGHT

In the night so black they could be drifting in outer space, Sally and George walk together in silence. An OWL hoots in the forest that seems to be closing in on them as the road narrows entering the woods. They swap looks, laugh. Then she grabs her mouth, tries to stifle her laugh and that makes them laugh more. But they don't talk. Suddenly they stop.

THEY'VE COME ON...

The moon rising over the river -- in this primal landscape where there are no artificial lights, it looks like it's setting the forest and water on fire.

GEORGE & SALLY

turn to each other, then smile because they can't talk... then they just GRAB EACH OTHER, kissing, hanging on to each other.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Sally and George mauling each other beneath a huge oak. Her skirt shifted up as George runs his hands up her thigh. Her long, pale leg nearly glows in the dark. Kissing wildly, groping: two kids who've been aching to get their hands on each other. He pulls her blouse open, shifting aside the cotton to get his hands on her breasts.

In his frustration he finally has to tear through all that cotton and silk and suddenly she's naked -- and it's startling seeing her naked after all the layers.

CLOSER...

Two feral souls, both naked. George is not loving her like a gentleman; his hands all over her. But she responds to this wild child, lifts her leg around him and pulls him in tight between her thighs.

EXT. ROAD TO NEWTOWN - DAY (PRESENT)

Washington, alone on Traveler, memories biting into him like the freezing wind and snow... on a journey back into his soul.

EXT. MOUNT VERNON - DAY (FLASHBACK)

It's ten years later, and an OLDER GEORGE WASHINGTON rides out of the horizon on a grey mare. He wears the deep blue, gold and crimson trimmed uniform of a colonial officer.

As he gets closer, we see George is now a man with a powerful physique. His face shows scars from smallpox, and his eyes, those of a man who has seen awful things. Very much like the Washington of the Revolution.

NEW ANGLE

SALLY FAIRFAX, now a woman of classic beauty and stature, waves her hiking staff when she sees Washington. Sally's hair has gotten long and her eyes still shine with that keen intelligence.

As Washington nears he reins-in, dismounts. If Sally thought she was going to be collected she gives that up, throws down her staff and they embrace, kiss...

INT. BEDROOM, MOUNT VERNON

The pair in bed, but Sally facing away from Washington as he lies beside her toying with her hair; they've just finished making love.

SALLY

Well, the widow Curtis will bring you riches, position, land, even half-grown children. You won't have to do anything at all! You shan't have to do another thing to prove yourself.

WASHINGTON

You know very well who it is that I love.

SALLY

Is that the truth? Well, we can't carry on like animals any longer.

She's out of bed, pulling on her clothes. Washington watches her. Then he rises, tries to take her in his arms but she turns away, crosses to the window.

SALLY

George, you know I only love you, but...

WASHINGTON

But not more than your comfort.

SALLY

And what is this, then? Been off to fight the French because you are a patriot? Or is this you, gaining your long sought after rise in society by becoming victorious in war!?

WASHINGTON

That's a lie!

SALLY

Is it? William says now you have requested a British Commission, why not colonial? I'll clear it up for you, sir, because as a British officer you can lord over colonial yokels -- more than that, it will even get you into polite society! Your dream come true, George, the only dream that really matters to you.

WASHINGTON

Perhaps you've been counting my acres, Mrs. Fairfax, and discovered exactly how poor I really am.

SALLY

Now that is a lie! See how much you want to create a scandal in exchange for a glowing reputation and polite society laid at your feet! When you break off your engagement to Martha Curtis, I'll divorce William! Do you hear? You get what you want from this world, then throw it all away on love!

WASHINGTON

I'd throw everything away for you.

Sally laughs bitterly, then turns to look out the window.

SALLY

You remember, George, when we were 'studying' the great philosophers?

WASHINGTON

I remember a pair of young philosophers once, who laughed at the world.

SALLY

Well, I remember a philosopher who said something that I used to think was just another of those stupid class denouncements... but which I now see means us all.

WASHINGTON

Really? Which precious homily was it?

SALLY

"Mankind is born free, but everywhere he is in chains..."

INT. MOUNT VERNON - DAY

WASHINGTON, immaculate in his uniform, escorts MARTHA down a line of upper crust Virginians who've come to welcome them home after their wedding. The line of beautifully dressed, BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE applaud, smiling at this land and slave rich couple.

Washington loves this adoration symbolic of the whole line of Washingtons finally breaking through into the aristocracy.

All those perfumed, smiling bodies, bejeweled and starched.

But then he comes on over-smiling, over-applauding Sally Fairfax.

She's with her husband, William. Washington hesitates, just long enough for the two to connect. Martha connects too, instantly and intuitively. They move on down the line.

Martha all smiles, Washington only trying now. He pauses, looks back and sees that Sally looks like she might cry...

THOSE UPPER-CLASS PEOPLE...

wonderful, careless smiling faces, filled with hidden hatred and contempt. As if those mocking faces knew that George and Sally had finally succumbed.

EXT. NEWTOWN - EARLY EVENING (END FLASHBACK)

The American Camp: make-shift shelters and tents rise out of the midst of the men crowding around camp fires.

A TINY CABIN sits in the center of this activity, a thin line of smoke drifting from the old stone chimney.

INT. CABIN - AFTERNOON

Washington alone at a plank table, nursing his memories and a glass of Madeira. Slowly he realizes there's someone knocking at the door. Washington rises, opens the door and comes face-to-face with Benedict Arnold. Arnold flashes a huge smile and a snappy salute. Though clean shaven, uniform spotless, he looks like he hasn't slept in days.

WASHINGTON

Arnold!

ARNOLD

I've come to report that we've had a bit of luck!

Suddenly Greene and Hamilton are in the doorway, Hamilton carrying Arnold's pack.

NATHANAEL GREENE

General Arnold attacked the whole British fleet on Lake Champlain -- and he stopped them!

HAMILTON

He attacked them with old converted barges and fishing boats -- and he stopped them!

INT. WASHINGTON'S CABIN - AFTERNOON

Arnold, Greene, Hamilton and Washington, drinking as they warm themselves by a miserable hearth. Hamilton and Greene mesmerized by Arnold's account.

As he talks, Arnold rolls up his pant leg and agonizingly removes a bloody dressing showing a terrible musket wound.

ARNOLD

I anchored those tubs in the lee of Valcour island, spread them in a crescent to concentrate their fire. The British sailed around the island and we bushwhacked 'em! In the end, of course, they were too strong for us, but we hurt them and we delayed 'em long enough. When they realized they'd have to conquer Ticonderoga in the dead of winter. Well, they packed everything up and sailed back to Canada. So, we had some luck.

It's like a staggering weight has been lifted from Washington's shoulders.

WASHINGTON

Damn-it! You've given us a whole new season, Benedict! And Congress thinks that the British are going to ride right over us come spring. Now half their army is back in Canada.

ARNOLD

Congress has picked up it's skirts and is racing for Baltimore. They're not waiting for spring! Of course, they still had time to deny my promotion. Even John Adams voted against it...

WASHINGTON

Why in hell would John do that? Why in hell would any of them do that? After all you've done, it's unbelievable!

ARNOLD

Oh, they have reasons... there's a lot of confusion these days.

WASHINGTON

They don't trust me, that's the truth isn't it? Sam Adams never did.

ARNOLD

But trust you to do what?

(MORE)

ARNOLD (CONT'D)

One side in Congress wants compromise;
another glorious battle; some
surrender --some, of course, just
want power and money.

(pause)

But if you don't mind my asking,
George, what are your plans?

Washington hesitates, then...

WASHINGTON

We're in bad shape, Benedict, moral
is low. Before I can do anything, I
need Lee and his seven thousand
troops. I've ordered him to join us
three times. In my last letter I
all but begged him to come here.
The man is insubordinate.

ARNOLD

The man's waiting for you to get
wiped off the stage so he can become
commander and chief.

Washington takes a deep drink, rises and tosses another scrap
of wood on the fire. Arnold seems to be hiding something.

WASHINGTON

What else? Come on, Benedict.

There's a knock -- Hamilton opens the door and a BODYGUARD
enters, salutes.

BODYGUARD

Colonel Reed's returned, sir. Says
he brings greetings from Congress.
And a scout's come in from New
Jersey...

WASHINGTON

I'll be along presently.

They wait for the bodyguard to leave, Washington stands in
front of Arnold, indignation rising.

WASHINGTON

Go on... I want to hear everything.

ARNOLD

Congress is talking -- openly --
about replacing you with Lee.

WASHINGTON

Is that a fact.

ARNOLD

It is.

NATHANAEL GREENE

But it was General Washington who sent you north and you were victorious.

ARNOLD

No, no! Congress says that I failed and that George is responsible.

Washington is struck silent. He turns away from the group for a moment.

ARNOLD

What do you think, George, shall I resign? It's what they want.

WASHINGTON

Don't do anything rash, please, Benedict.

NATHANAEL GREENE

They're just disgusting, jealous, bottom-feeding swine. It's their nature.

WASHINGTON

You have a free tongue, Captain Hamilton.

Hamilton shuts up, drinks. Washington continues to Arnold.

WASHINGTON

The army needs you.

ARNOLD

The army can survive without me.

WASHINGTON

Then, I need you. We all do. Without your victory the men would have no hope at all.

ARNOLD

Someday, George, you may need to act for the good of the people no matter what Congress thinks that is. It may come down to us, or them someday. You or them. Cicero was right: was is 'a time when the laws are silent'.

WASHINGTON

I hope I never have to believe that.

ARNOLD

Christ, George, Joseph Reed's been
writing letters back to Congress
attacking you. Your own aide!

Arnold rises, stretches his wounded leg and suddenly his
exhaustion shows through; he casts a longing look at
Washington's small bed.

WASHINGTON

Make yourself at home, Benedict.

Arnold just collapses down on the bed, and as he falls asleep.

ARNOLD

Say, are there any women in this
town?

Hamilton unfolds a blanket, but Washington takes it from him
and covers the sleeping Arnold.

EXT. NEWTOWN CAMP - AFTERNOON

An ORNATE COACH is 'parked' just inside the picket lines.

Washington checks it out, then spots Joseph Reed talking
with his bodyguard. Reed's uniform has transformed into a
garish, custom-made thing almost dripping braid. His
bodyguards look like professional hit men. Reed suddenly
spots Washington as he walks up behind him. He steps back
and they trade salutes.

WASHINGTON

Colonel Reed...

JOSEPH REED

George! So good to be back!

Washington walks ahead. Reed hesitates, then strides to
catch up.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - AFTERNOON

Washington and Joseph Reed walk through the camp, flanked by
his bodyguard; they make Washington uncomfortable.

Though it's bright sunshine outside, it's bitter cold and
the wind SIGHS. Washington barely feels it, Joseph Reed
hugs himself against the cold.

JOSEPH REED

That damned Arnold is here, isn't
he? Did you know he lost all his
ships? Outrageous and completely
unacceptable.

WASHINGTON

Joseph, the British spent thousands of pounds and precious months putting together a fleet that Arnold stopped by sacrificing a heap of old barges. In my opinion he saved my army.

JOSEPH REED

Well, George, Congress just passed a resolution censuring Arnold for destruction of government property. I wouldn't cast my fate with that man.

Now they stop to overlook the camp; snow falls; men and women struggle to make shelters. Then he sees Hamilton at the bottom of the hill talking with an IROQUOIS SCOUT.

JOSEPH REED

The winds of change are blowing fierce, George! Congress is making marvelous friends. A whole grand scheme is being forged that will finally set this country right.

Washington eyes Reed like he's lost his fucking mind.

WASHINGTON

A grand scheme?

JOSEPH REED

A ground swell-Christian movement, George, you see?

WASHINGTON

No. As a matter of fact I haven't the slightest idea what you're talking about.

JOSEPH REED

To assert the rights of our founding fathers! This country was colonized by Christians! This shall become a Christian revolution. Surely as a good Christian you understand that!

Washington looks Reed over as if trying to decide how to deal with this. Hamilton rushes up, running so fast he nearly stumbles -- salutes...

HAMILTON

Sir! Cornwallis has moved a whole German mercenary army into Trenton.

JOSEPH REED

Hessians! That's right across the river from us! Right there! And behind them, a days march, is the whole British Army. Sir, we are kicked out of New Jersey forever! Blocked from ever returning to New England!

HAMILTON

We are not blocked! Except by the congress and their lack of support!

WASHINGTON

That will do, Captain Hamilton!

Furious, embarrassed, Hamilton salutes, turns and leaves.

Reed just shakes his head.

JOSEPH REED

Be careful of that one. He's a Jew, you know. Yes, it's true! The bastard son of some Jewess, and a drunken peddler. No wonder he identifies with these creatures.

Washington's revolted by Reed, but says nothing. Reed turns, looks down at the men and women in the camp.

JOSEPH REED

Look at these people! They must be freezing. Hard to imagine why they stay at all. Do you think it's got to do with the animal in their nature? I mean to say, this class of mankind is half way between Negroes and real humans. As half animals, perhaps the elements don't bother them so much. That's why we must make us a purely Christian land...

Washington eyes this piece of human dogshit.

WASHINGTON

I'm not a Christian, Joseph. So please, let's not insult one another by continuing this conversation.

Washington starts back, Reed at his heels.

JOSEPH REED

What do you mean you're not a Christian? Of course you're a Christian, we're all Christians...

WASHINGTON

I mean, I'm a Deist. A belief I share with the likes of Tom Jefferson and Ben Franklin. Surely you knew that.

JOSEPH REED

No, I did not. Really? Well, what the hell is a deist, precisely?

Washington turns on him.

WASHINGTON

One who believes that God sent this world spinning, then got the hell out of the way, just to see what mankind would do to itself.

Washington stands back, gives him a curt salute, turns and is gone. Reed holds his salute over-long...

INT. TAVERN - NIGHT

OPEN on a PRETTY RED HAired GIRL, about twenty, flirting with a couple of FARM BOYS. Her eyes STRAY our way...

AT A CORNER TABLE...

Washington, Arnold, Greene and Hamilton, drinking and eating.

The four are separated from a full house of FARMERS and YOUNG PEOPLE by a pair of armed BODYGUARDS. By now everyone seems used to their presence.

The Red Head catches Washington's eye; he smiles slightly, looks away. Arnold's refreshed, ready to take on the world again. Washington is drinking heavily, but Greene is drunk and quiet -- seems to be just an observer.

HAMILTON

Some say that Hessians are invincible.

ARNOLD

They always say that.

WASHINGTON

They're among the best divisions the British have. No conscripts, no impressed recruits, just professional killers.

HAMILTON

It's a wonder they find the British cause worth dying for.

Arnold eyes the sharp little Red Head.

ARNOLD

Well, now there's something worth dying for. What do you think?

HAMILTON

Hmmm... she's beneath me, I'm afraid.

ARNOLD

I wish she was beneath me.

Drunken laughter. They watch as the Red Head, flirts viciously with the farm boys.

ARNOLD

Unfortunately, I'll never get the chance. I'm leaving in an hour for Congress to scream like a violated virgin about my promotion. Wasting my time, naturally... Look at her teasing those bumpkins.

HAMILTON

What does she see in them?

WASHINGTON

Well, as any farmer knows, a jenny always enjoys being penetrated by a disproportionately sized jackass.

Arnold and Hamilton howl.

ARNOLD

After visiting Congress I know what it's like being violated by come disproportionate asses!

(pause)

Ah, if she only knew that the most important men in the country -- possibly the world -- are sitting at this table...

WASHINGTON

We're so damned important! Look at us -- Nathanael, you were a horse-shoer, Benedict, before this?

ARNOLD

Well, truth be told? I was a pharmacist. Alexander?

Hamilton hesitates.

HAMILTON

I was a clerk's apprentice on Saint Croix. But, then I went to King's College.

WASHINGTON

To learn to shoot cannon?

ARNOLD

Well, George, who were you?

WASHINGTON

I? You all know my history.

For a moment everyone seems satisfied, or at least that they're going to let this pass. But Greene's not satisfied, and he's innocent and drunk enough to finally speak his mind.

NATHANAEL GREENE

Sir, if you don't mind my saying, I don't understand your history at all. I mean, why would you want to win the war? You're not after glory, like Benedict...

(pause)

You're a slave owner, and yet you invite blacks to fight in your army.

WASHINGTON

You don't believe I can fight from a sense of duty and patriotism?

NATHANAEL GREENE

No. We're all of us after something. It's easy for me to fight for the common man. My father could only dream that I would be... a general someday? And what of my daughter or son? I know what I'm after.

(pause)

But now, with all this talk about compromise? It means the rich will just be more wealthy and the common man has no hope.

WASHINGTON

I will not betray you, Nathanael.

NATHANAEL GREENE

But you are an aristocrat and a slave owner. Sir.

Washington lets this sink in.

WASHINGTON

At one time I could have chosen not to be.

NATHANAEL GREENE

Then, maybe I do see what you're after -- perhaps... you get to chose again...

Washington just stares at Greene; the kid is right and he knows it.

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

Washington goes down into the camp, just looking at his soldiers. When they recognize him, some jerk to attention and he casually returns their salutes.

-- A BLACK MAN and his YOUNG WIFE work together cleaning his musket and bayonet...

-- A GROUP OF MEN sit around a fire, playing cards.

-- An OFFICER plays his fiddle while enlisted men dance.

Suddenly Washington comes across a long line of CONTINENTALS squatting on the ground. A CONTINENTAL MAJOR leaps to attention, salutes. Washington returns Continental Major's salute.

WASHINGTON

Major, who are you? Your orders, please.

The Major gets real nervous...

CONTINENTAL MAJOR

Done got no orders sir... we're General Lee's division.

WASHINGTON

What? Where is General Lee? Who ordered you to march here?

CONTINENTAL MAJOR

Nobody done. The British done captured General Lee in a New Jersey whore house... then, well, we couldn't find nobody home down at Congress so we come to see you. Ain't this where the war be?

Washington looks like he might kiss him.

WASHINGTON

Yes! This is where the war be!
I'll bet you men could use some hot
rum!

Continental Major BEAMS.

EXT. WASHINGTON'S CABIN - DAY

Officers scurry, maps pulled... Joseph Reed looks up with his best lost puppy look.

JOSEPH REED

Trenton!? But the enemy is there!

Some nervous laughter.

JOSEPH REED

But the Hessians are there! No one can beat them! That's why Cornwallis stationed them there! They have the post of honor! They are invincible!

WASHINGTON

They are also very religious. So, we will attack them three days from now, on Christmas. One force under me, and another to the south under Colonel Cadwalader...

JOSEPH REED

George, I'm afraid if you go through with this madness I must tender my resignation as your aide. I see where we're headed, you're putting your trust in the likes of Hamilton and Arnold...

WASHINGTON

How many generals do we have like Arnold? He's got guts -- he's vain, and he fights!

JOSEPH REED

And, Hamilton? Greene?

WASHINGTON

(after a pause)

They help me understand why we fight.

JOSEPH REED

Understand? You need to be listening to people like John Adams, and to keep the best interest of the country first in your mind!

WASHINGTON

Joseph, are you afraid to cross that river with me?

(long pause)

I accept your resignation. With regret. You have leave to return to Philadelphia...

NATHANAEL GREENE

We've come for the password, sir.

Washington looks at Reed, then Greene.

WASHINGTON

'Victory or death', tell everyone.
In two hours I will address the men.

EXT. CAMP - DAY

Washington sits on Traveler facing the parade-rest lines of

Militia: Washington on his white horse, state Militia in rags or wildly disparate uniforms. Hear only the wind.

WASHINGTON

Today your country and I, your commander, ask you to be brave. On Christmas day we are going to cross back over the Delaware River, into New Jersey and attack the German mercenary forces at Trenton. These men are the best the British have got. But the Germans are good Christians and as it's still Christmas, I'm betting they're still a little drunk when we pay our visit.

Some laughter from the soldiers. Encouraged, Washington goes on.

WASHINGTON

Of course, they're not expecting us to come back for a visit, but as it's Christmas, and we being good hosts, we wouldn't think of letting another day pass without dropping by and exchanging musket and cannon balls with them. But to make this party a success, I must ask each and every one of my soldiers -- no matter where in America you are from -- to work for the good of the whole. Cooperate, listen to your officers and remember that this is a surprise party so for God's sake, keep quiet!

Pause for more laughter.

WASHINGTON

We've had some hard luck. But that's changing. If you value your freedom, be brave.

(pause)

I have here a poem that was taken from the journal of a Hessian Major at the battle of Long Island describing our army: "The rebel clowns, oh what a sight, So awkward was their figure. 'Twas yonder stood a filthy wight, And here and there a nigger."

Washington shuts the journal which is ornate, obviously expensive, and drops it in the mud. He turns his horse and rides toward the river. At orders, the men march after him, trampling the journal into oblivion.

EXT. DELAWARE RIVER - NIGHT

Washington's boat, slipping through the darkness. Washington sits in the bow, hat off, scarf wrapped tight, keeping low.

Creaking oars of the small fleet.

Washington looks back at the lights on the Pennsylvania shore, bobbing, far off. He takes a close look at the men in his boat...

Terrible mess of men. Two wear RED RIBBONS on their arms.

Not one has a uniform. There's two BLACK SOLDIERS.

Washington knows he's being weighed, knows he's nearing a moment of truth with these men.

PILOT

Ice ahead!

The ROWERS slow. The PILOT moves up to sit right beside Washington. Everyone holding their breath. First a sound like tiny bells TINKLING. The sound is loud, stretching up the river. It goes on and on, eerie and beautiful. But the soldiers swap terrified looks.

WASHINGTON

Just a little music, boys!

PILOT

Shell ice, sir...

Now ice blocks CLUNK against the sides of the boats.

The chunks get bigger, jarring the boat. The Pilot looks at Washington, but Washington just keeps watching the river.

A wind kicks up, snow swirling around them. Suddenly they're swallowed by white.

PILOT

We can't see ahead, General.

WASHINGTON

We can't see going back, either.

PILOT

What if the others turn back?

Washington doesn't answer. A Black Soldier comes forward with a pole, starts the tedious process of pushing aside the chunks of ice.

A massive floe materializes off the starboard bow. The Pilot holds up his hand and the rowers slow. He moves downstream and the rowers veer around the floe. As they pass the floe, a heavy WIND nails them. The boat heels, heads up, for a second it might capsize. The leeward rowers strain.

Washington wipes away the snow from his hair and face. He hangs to the bow as the boat swings leeward and settles against the wind. Freezing spray douses everyone. The wind eases back.

SOLDIER 1

I don't see any other boats!

WASHINGTON

Steady men. It won't be long now.

PILOT

Keep rowing!

SOLDIER 2

I can't hear their oars. We're alone... they've all turned back!

The MOON half breaks through lighting up the river downstream. All eyes strain, but the boats below are gone.

SOLDIER

God they turned back! Colonel
Cadwalader turned back!

For a moment, everyone stops rowing. Then the moon breaks completely through and everyone looks UPSTREAM... And as far as the eye can see, are BOATS. Washington nods, gratified...

Way off, from the bow of a barge, someone is waving his hat.

WASHINGTON

Come on boys, the rest of the army
is still here! Row, damn-it! Row!

EXT. BARGE - NIGHT

It's Alexander Hamilton, waving. Looks half frozen to death.

AND WASHINGTON...

Smiles grimly, making contact with this kid. He waves his
hat back.

EXT. NEW JERSEY, ROLLING LANDSCAPE - DAWN

Frozen ruts of a dirt road dusted with white. It leads past
a broken-down cottage and vanishes behind snowy hills. In
the distance we hear feet CRUNCHING in the snow.

NEW ANGLE

CLOSE-UP -- feet heavily wrapped in rags followed by others
in boots and more rags... crunching in the snow. Hands clutch
muskets.

EXT. SENTRY COTTAGE

A HESSIAN emerges from the cottage carrying a musket. A
COMRADE follows, still buttoning up his shirt; he does not
want to be up. They scan the hills as the wind hustles the
sound around and away from us.

Now the sound is gone. The second Hessian turns back, the
first keeps listening... Suddenly a fast-beating military
SNARE DRUM hammers at them from the distance, shattering the
silence.

WASHINGTON'S FORCES

... a scarred military drum, gloved hands holding the sticks
in clenched fists -- hammering. Behind is MOVEMENT: hands
on muskets, sword hilts, the steam and breath of an army in
motion.

RESUME HESSIANS

The first Hessian struggles to fix a bayonet to his musket.

A BUGLE begins a sharp, staccato cry from the horizon.

The second Hessian falls to his knees in the snow, starts
the painfully complex task of loading his musket.

As the Hessians wheel, a mass of ragged, filthy, half-starved
SOLDIERS howls over the crest of a hill.

For a second the Hessians are stunned by what they see!
It's Washington's army, a pitiful mass of half-dressed, half-armed men.

At the crest of the hill, mounted surrealistically on a white charger, is WASHINGTON.

TRENTON OUTSKIRTS

Hessians try to form, slipping on the ice. A single troop struggles to swing a cannon into place as the AMERICAN ARMY pours into the narrow streets. Most carry muskets, bayonets.

But many have swords, even axes, knives; a barbarian horde.

Greene leads the right wing: wide-eyed a kid but a vet.

The Hessians have wheeled their cannon, OFFICERS ordering fire.

Greene sees them, points his sword, screaming orders. Men drop to their knees around him, FIRE... the world is smothered in SMOKE.

A sixty caliber musket ball sleet hits the cannon. Hessians drop, the cannon carriage DISINTEGRATES.

HAMILTON

cannon in place, rakes the streets with grape shot...

IN THE STREET

the fighting is hand-to-hand, bayonets and axes crashing.

The Hessians start to give, falling back.

WASHINGTON

rides through the streets on Traveler, urging his men on as they mop-up. Resistance melting.

To his left, Nathanael Greene leads his men on foot, going house-to-house, routing out Hessians, marching them down the street.

Suddenly a handful make a SUICIDE bayonet charge, straight at Washington. Spontaneous fire from the Continentals stops them.

Washington stops his horse, wipes the sweat and snot off his face, surveys the town. Suddenly, all the firing has stopped. HE OWNS THE TOWN.

INT. DARKENED ROOM - NIGHT

Someone RAPS urgently on the door.

ORDERLY (O.S.)
My Lord! My Lord!

A hand turns up an oil lamp, and we see Cornwallis, in his bed, shaking off sleep.

CORNWALLIS
Yes...?

ORDERLY (O.S.)
My Lord, Washington has attacked
Trenton! The whole Hessian army is
prisoner!

Cornwallis heaves out of bed in his underwear, crosses to the door. He opens it and the bright winter sun pours in, BLINDING HIM.

EXT. TRENTON - DAY

BRIGHT SUN on a bitter cold day as Washington slowly rides his white charger through the center of town, surrounded by flanks of his soldiers. They wave hats, scraps that could be flags. The bell of the old church at Trenton clangs over and over.

Washington gets to the center of the square, trots in a circle, waves his hat in a salute to his troops. His uniform is stained with mud, hair messed. Greene and Hamilton ride

beside him, cheering with the rest. Finally the crowd makes it impossible for them to continue. While Hamilton and Greene hold back, Washington dismounts and hands the reins to Billy Lee.

He walks among the cheering men, Billy staying close, leading the horse. Men and women mob him, but never quite getting up the nerve to actually touch him. The cheering goes on and on and on...

SAM ADAMS (V.O.)
My God, we have a hero on our hands!

INT. TAVERN, BALTIMORE - DAY

Gloomy Sam Adams, John Adams and Joseph Reed sit at a corner table, hammering down ale. Looks like they've been at it a while.

JOHN ADAMS
Let's not over do it...

SAM ADAMS

I tell you every damned place I go
the man is adored! "General
Washington! Champion of Trenton!
Savior of the Republic!" And you
should hear the way people are
deprecating Congress!

JOHN ADAMS

Makes you gag.

SAM ADAMS

Gag on your own invention, then.

JOHN ADAMS

Oh, come now...

SAM ADAMS

You invented this, this...

JOSEPH REED

This 'king'...

Pause as they digest Reed's remark.

JOHN ADAMS

You think that?

SAM ADAMS

He has the soul of an aristocrat
who'd like nothing more than to become
a king in the minds of the people!

An AIDE dashes in, out of breath. He leans on the table,
talks low.

AIDE

Cornwallis left last night by forced
march for Trenton! He has a huge
force -- as we speak -- he's
maneuvering to trap Washington.

SAM ADAMS

As we speak? Does the Congress know?
(Aide nods)
Tell us when you hear for certain.

Aide scampers off. All swap looks, trying to look dismayed.

JOHN ADAMS

No one wants another failure right
now, God knows. But people like
Arnold and, God knows, I'm having
my fears about General Washington.

SAM ADAMS

Finally!? It's people like these who, as soon as they get a little power, want more and more.

(waves to Barkeep)

More ale, here!

JOHN ADAMS

Again, just to touch on a touchy subject, but... would the people accept another leader over Washington?

JOSEPH REED

It sounds like after today, they may not have that choice.

EXT. TRENTON - MORNING

Washington's pitiful army lined up 'on parade'. We see now truly awful they are clothed, armed. Greene and Hamilton stand to the flanks as Washington pleads with his men.

WASHINGTON

I know how you feel -- I do! We all want to go home! I know your enlistments are up, but we beat the Hessians, boys! We can beat them again!

Washington looks for a sympathetic face as he moves down the ranks. All he gets are hard stares.

WASHINGTON

Cornwallis is coming here now, you licked his best troops! He's scared boys! Are we just going to hand him back all we've won?

(pause)

Come on! Come forward! Who will volunteer to save America? Do it for me, boys!

No one. Washington throws his hat on the ground in disgust.

He crosses to a trough and splashed his face with cold water.

He looks at them.

WASHINGTON

I'll offer ten dollars a man who will stay beyond the end of his enlistment. Ten dollars! Just to stay one month beyond his time! One month!

Sudden buzz in the ranks; men swap looks. Washington nods, smirks bitterly. But still the men hesitate.

WASHINGTON

If this army goes home before its business is finished, then your comrades died for nothing! I'm begging you!

And he really is begging. The men must feel it because a New Hampshire Militia MAN swaps looks with his companions, hesitates, then steps forward. Another and another.

Finally, the whole army. Washington takes a deep breath, smiles and pats the New Hampshire boy on the shoulder.

But there's no cheering; the way the men look at him Washington knows he still has to prove himself.

EXT. CORNWALLIS' CAMP, OUTSIDE TRENTON - NIGHT

From a hill outside his camp, Cornwallis watches the horizon of campfires burning in the distance from Washington's encampment. An ANXIOUS OFFICER stands beside him.

OFFICER

Will we attack tonight, sir?

CORNWALLIS

I don't want my tired men fighting this dark. Listen, what's that?

Silence. In the distance the sound of SHOVELS and PICKS from Washington's lines.

CORNWALLIS

They're digging in. That's my man. Predictable... to the end.

EXT. WASHINGTON'S LINES - NIGHT

A SOLDIER stands nervous guard while a COMRADE feeds a bonfire. Another SOLDIER sits on a rock, whacking the ground with a SHOVEL. But he's not digging. Weary, he passes the shovel to his friend who starts whacking too... they're just making NOISE.

EXT. ROAD TO PRINCETON - NIGHT

A WAGON rolls over the icy road, its rim wrapped in rags to kill the sound. Those ragged feet shuffling in the snow.

They pass a hand-cut road sign: 'PRINCETON'.

EXT. TAVERN, BALTIMORE - MORNING

Sam and John Adams with Reed, devouring a huge breakfast -- sausage, breads, butter, fruit... The Aide rushes in, breathless, nearly hysterical with happiness.

AIDE
My God! My God! My God!

SAM ADAMS
My God, what?

Aide's eyes get wet, the kind of eyes that only see VISIONS.

AIDE
Washington! He out flanked Cornwallis
in the night, attacked the British
army at Princeton!

EXT. PRINCETON - MORNING

Bright day dazzling off snow. Washington on a hilltop, astride his white charger, sword raised, his army rallying around him, fearless. Every button on Washington's coat beams back sunlight, his sword flashes like silver.

AIDE (V.O.)
At Princeton, he rallied the entire
American Army in the face of death!

Washington points downhill with his sword...

BELOW

Grenadiers shooting up at the rebel commander: every sharpshooter trying to bring him down. British COLONEL MAWHOOD -- blond, arrogant -- points his sword back up at Washington.

AIDE (V.O.)
Every enemy sniper was shooting at
him! But he never got a scratch!

AMERICAN TROOPS

charge down the hill with a vengeful passion, collide with the Grenadiers and sweep them into oblivion.

AND WASHINGTON

He sees the men on the offensive, turns once to look scornfully down into the muzzles of all the muskets in the universe.

AIDE (V.O.)
It's a miracle! A miracle!

INT. TAVERN

Silence as the panting aide grabs a cup of milk and gulps it down. Then, outside, the sound of CHURCH BELLS. First one, then three then more.

JOHN ADAMS
Gentlemen, it's not a hero, we have
on our hands; it's a god!

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF PRINCETON - DAY

In the distance, smoke trails up from the horizon. Colonel Mawhood sits on his horse beside a mounted Cornwallis on a snowy field. Mawhood's two spaniels yip annoyingly at the horse's heels. They ride through the bodies of Washington's dead.

CORNWALLIS
No uniforms. No coats, even? In
this weather?

MAWHOOD
No, my lord.

CORNWALLIS
What sort of boots would you say
he's wearing? I should say, no sort
of boots at all. Aren't those rags
wrapped around his feet? Is that
what he marched here in?

MAWHOOD
Yes, my lord.

CORNWALLIS
And, is that a pitchfork beside him?

MAWHOOD
(hesitating more)
Many of them, many did not possess
proper arms. My lord.

Disgusted, Cornwallis lets this sink in, nudges his horse along. Mawhood trails. They come upon the body of a BLACK MAN.

CORNWALLIS
Negroes? Washington has black men
in his army? Are they good fighters?
(MORE)

CORNWALLIS (CONT'D)
(not waiting for an
answer)
What's that red ribbon on his arm,
Colonel?

MAWHOOD
Because they have hardly any uniforms,
they designate officers with colored
ribbons. My lord.

CORNWALLIS
By red, what rank would you say this
black, officer, soldier is, Colonel?

MAWHOOD
I, don't know what color is what
officer, my lord...

Cornwallis gives him the hard stare.

CORNWALLIS
But not a general, surely?

Not needing nor wanting a reply, Cornwallis spurs on, and as
he crests Millet's Hill he discovers the slope is COVERED
with dead British soldiers in their nice, bright uniforms.

Cornwallis reins-in, surveys the slaughter with humiliation
and awe.

INT. BRITISH PALACE - NIGHT

King George leans over his map of the colonies, his fingers
on the edges of his empire as if he could hold the whole
thing together with his bare hands. He sits in the room
which is in half light, staggered, worried, drinking. With
him is GENERAL 'GENTLEMAN JOHNNY' BURGOYNE, one of God's
great elitist fops.

KING GEORGE
Where have all my champions gone?
My Gawain? Galahad? Who among my
nobles will defend the realm? I am
bleeding for some pure man, some
virtuous poet to do us this great
service... for our country. For our
kind.

GENERAL BURGOYNE
I am that man, My Lord.

KING GEORGE

What do these people want, General Burgoyne? Right? Unqualified natural freedom? There is no such stupid state of being. The Garden of Eden? Is that what they think they've found? Man is an animal whose natural states is that of unremitting barbarism. They steal from each other; they kill each other; they even eat each other! Without the structure of an enlightened, ruling class, they will plummet into a hell of greed. Where, in the end, they will simply rename something else, 'upper class'.

EXT. FORESTS, NEAR MORRISTOWN - DAY

Washington rides slowly at the head of his soldiers. Greene and Hamilton beside him. Long coats with ice-caked collars wrapped to their chins, breath steaming. BILLY LEE trails behind Washington, riding NELSON, carrying his own small pack of goods.

WASHINGTON (V.O.)

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the Powers of the earth the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them...

The army staggers against slashing winds that shake ice and snow from the trees. Coughing, limping, freezing they march.

Towering pines surround them. Rag-wrapped feet leave a trail of blood in the snow.

EXT. WASHINGTON'S TROOPS - MORRISTOWN - DAY

Washington's army standing at attention on the snow dusted fields of the encampment at Morristown. Moving up the line, we focus on the BLACK FACES amid the whites.

WASHINGTON (V.O.)

A decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

WASHINGTON...

Stands on a hill overlooking his troops and the new camp -- proud of these men. Hamilton and Greene flank him at attention.

WASHINGTON (V.O.)

We hold these truths to be self
evident, that all men are created
equal, that they are endowed by their
Creator with certain unalienable
Rights, that among these are Life.
Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

EXT. MORRISTOWN ENCAMPMENT - MORNING

STARVED MEN rushing from shelters made of planks, canvas, old doors and branches... reaching out begging as a fancy painted CARRIAGE drawn by two horses clatters through the encampment.

Martha Washington leans from the window as the soldiers flock around her carriage. She's putting pennies in their outstretched hands.

MARTHA

Go forth and sin no more... go forth
and sin no more... go forth...

Martha nods grimly to these wretched souls. She is an absolute embodiment of aristocracy.

INT. WASHINGTON'S CABIN - MORNING

Washington stands at the window, paper and pen in hand watching this pitiful scene.

INT. WASHINGTON'S CABIN/LATER - DAY

George Washington and Martha in the midst of an argument, both on their feet, pacing around the inside of the room like caged animals.

MARTHA

Did you know that Jefferson has
proposed a law in Virginia aiming at
an absolute separation of state from
the church?

WASHINGTON

I think I heard that.

MARTHA

It's an anti-Christian dogma!
(MORE)

MARTHA (CONT'D)

I cannot believe you are so calm
about it!

WASHINGTON

What else? From Virginia?

MARTHA

Well, I wouldn't want to trouble you
with this now.

Washington shakes his head; knows she's been saving the best
for last.

WASHINGTON

Martha... what?

MARTHA

Virginia is outraged with your order
allowing Negroes to fight in the
army. There's a deep feeling of
hurt and betrayal. They wanted you
commander because they expected you
would look out for our interests.

WASHINGTON

To win this war I need an army.

MARTHA

Oh, indeed? You know very well people
are frightened of arming the Negroes!
They beg you to consider the future.
What good is a revolution if it
overturns those things we cherish!?

WASHINGTON

What's the point of a revolution if
it doesn't?

MARTHA

Some things must never change.

WASHINGTON

Is that why you come in here tossing
pennies to my starving men? It's
damned condescending!

MARTHA

Don't condescend to me! We have
both of us prospered from the
arrangements of our kind...

WASHINGTON

Our 'kind'?

(MORE)

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)

What is that supposed to mean? These men are all I have left and they stay because they will fight! They desire it! They seek it! Of course Virginia is terrified! For my soldiers this is a war to obliterate the 'upper class' from the face of the earth! Should I tell them all to go home because if they win it will ruin me!? It is impossible for me to imagine that Negroes are fighting so that only white men may be free! If we win this war they will own this country too!

Martha just gawks at him.

MARTHA

Well, we must keep in mind the Dower Laws. One third of everything we have is mine and since our Negroes have been interbreeding, it would be legally impossible to distinguish them.

WASHINGTON

Martha! For God's sake!

MARTHA

Leave me, now sir, I am tired.

WASHINGTON

Come out and meet my soldiers.
They're good people.

Martha looks away, as if trying to imagine this.

MARTHA

Not today.

WASHINGTON

I want you to see our hospital.

MARTHA

I don't want to see your hospital.

She grabs her cape and leaves. Washington follows her.

EXT. CAMP - DAY

Martha starts to get into her coach, but then stops. She crosses to the edge of the slope looking down on the camp and pauses to look it over.

Hanging laundry and half-torn tents. Men dressed in tattered uniforms: WHITES, BLACKS... and then a pretty young GIRL in uniform passes below.

Then Martha turns, finds Washington is watching her. For a moment they hold on each other, then she climbs into her coach and is gone.

EXT. WASHINGTON'S QUARTERS - AFTERNOON

Washington comes in to find Billy Lee singing to himself, pointing a pistol at the wall. With two huge strides Washington crosses the room and grabs the gun. The hammer drops as he yanks it away but doesn't fire.

WASHINGTON

Will! What the hell are you doing!?

He grabs Billy by the collar, pulls him so they're face-to-face. Washington takes a deep sniff of his breath. He winces.

WASHINGTON

My God, have you been drinking!?

He shoves Billy away. Billy staggers a bit, then points at the pistol.

BILLY LEE

You, you just need a new flint, General.

WASHINGTON

You are never, never to touch my guns! Do you understand!?

BILLY LEE

Yes, General. But if you have to shoot somebody, you can't.

WASHINGTON

None of the servants is to touch a gun! You know that!

BILLY LEE

Well... I misunderstood, then.

Billy turns away.

WASHINGTON

Misunderstood what!?

BILLY LEE

A lot of years have gone by.

WASHINGTON

What? What are you talking about?

BILLY LEE

That you would have known you can trust me.

Billy turns to a dress jacket hanging on a chair, starts the tedious work of shining the uniform buttons. Washington gets a grip, examines the pistol; sees he's right.

WASHINGTON

I'm sorry, Wil.

Billy looks up at Washington like he's never been apologized to before in his life.

BILLY LEE

Me? You apologizing to me?

WASHINGTON

Yes, William. I am apologizing.

EXT. CAMP - DAY

A VERY YOUNG MAN in an extraordinary ornate, custom-made officer's uniform stands outside Washington's cabin, pacing.

He's got bright red hair, and is nineteen years old. He is the MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE. As soon as Washington emerges from his cabin, Lafayette salutes.

LAFAYETTE

Good afternoon, mon general, I am the Marquis de Lafayette. I am here both as an official and unofficial emissary of his Majesty Louis VI, King of France. I have been commissioned major general in the American army... by Congress, in that capacity I am but a humble volunteer in your army...

Washington frowns, keeps moving. Lafayette hesitates, then catches up.

LAFAYETTE

However, through my relations with members of his majesty's court, I am a representative of the French government whose deepest desire is to be one people, united with our American brothers in arms to defeat the rapacious armies of King George of England. Vive la France! Vive l'Amerique!

WASHINGTON

We have more officers created by Congress than we know what to do with.

LAFAYETTE

But, general, I assure you my motives are sincere.

As Lafayette follows Washington, he fumbles for papers.

Finally Washington stops to deal with Lafayette.

LAFAYETTE

Sir, please accept my commission from Congress... and...

(a little picture)

You must see this portrait of my beautiful wife, Adrienne, we had the most perfect little baby girl just before I left. Her name is Henriette...

WASHINGTON

What I want to know is sir: where is your daddy?

Lafayette takes this, then:

LAFAYETTE

My father died when I was a tiny child. He was killed at the battle of Minden -- in Europe. He was fighting against the British troops led by Lord Germain -- the present advisor to King George. I assure you that from that day forward I have been a man.

This gets Washington's attention. He nods, continues with Lafayette following again.

INT. OFFICER'S MESS - DAY

Washington, Nathanael Greene, Arnold, Hamilton and other OFFICERS are pressed into the small room. Bread is passed, glasses of rum. Lafayette wilts into a chair. As Washington speaks it's clear these men are too overwhelmed by the grinding day-to-day misery and frustration to believe in much anymore. Washington indicates Lafayette who springs to his feet as Washington consults his commission papers.

WASHINGTON

Gentlemen, my I introduce a French gentleman, recently appointed major general by Congress...

(some groans)

Marie Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette. General Lafayette has brought us the greetings and goodwill of his countrymen, and... how many cases of muskets, Mon petite Marquis?

LAFAYETTE

Uh... none just now, but...

Hoots, laughs and sarcastic applause. Lafayette wilts back into his chair.

WASHINGTON

Now, news about what has been holding up the shipment of coats for the men. It seems they are done but have no buttons because Congress is debating over what the buttons should say on them.

(groans)

But, they're anxious to know what we think. Some suggestions are: "Unity and Peace"; "Freedom and Peace"; "Unity, Freedom and Peace"; "Christ's Army"; "God's Army"; "Don't Tread on Us"; and "The Holy Alliance of Mankind and Christ made Manifest On Earth", which would be a very large button, indeed.

More groans, a few chuckles. Lafayette is stunned.

WASHINGTON

Now, the questions of boots... they were produced at enormous expense by a 'friend of Congress', crated, and -- just before they were to be brought here -- they vanished.

NATHANAEL GREENE/OTHERS

What!?

WASHINGTON

All we know is the British have discovered that it's sometimes cheaper to buy supplies from friends of Congress than to ship them here from England.

(to Lafayette)

As you can see, we are one people, under God, united in greed.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - DAY

Washington leads Lafayette to the corrals.

WASHINGTON

The men rely on Congress for pay. But Congress won't pay the men with gold, because they would have to authorize a general tax and they won't because they refuse to trust the notion of a centralized government.

He reaches into his coat, hands Lafayette two bank notes, stops, faces Lafayette while he examines them.

WASHINGTON

'Continental', Congress' paper money. It was worthless to start with, but as you see, counterfeits have made them even less than worthless. Can you tell which one is fake?

LAFAYETTE

I... they look both the same.

WASHINGTON

The one with 'Philadelphia' spelled correctly is the counterfeit.

Washington continues to the nearest corral. As they arrive, Lafayette hands him back the Continentals.

WASHINGTON

No, please; an advance on your salary.

LAFAYETTE

Mon General, I have come here to learn and to give, not to take. I am serving without salary.

WASHINGTON

You must be very rich.

LAFAYETTE

I am. Then, I understand you too serve without salary. You know, since your charming little victories at Trenton and Princeton, the French court is softening. I expect any time now a ship load of supplies...

WASHINGTON

'Charming little victories?' Please don't expect much more of us, Monsieur.

LAFAYETTE

I only meant...

WASHINGTON

These supplies...?

LAFAYETTE

Muskets and uniforms and Bayonets.

WASHINGTON

And how rusty are these muskets?

LAFAYETTE

Sir, these are our finest firearms from the armory at Charleville! They are a gift from the people of France!

Washington gives Lafayette the once-over. Still can't believe the kid is for real.

WASHINGTON

Well, we will accept these charming little gifts. When we see them. Meanwhile, please, take your pick of a horse.

LAFAYETTE

I rode here, on my horse.

WASHINGTON

Chose another. Any general worth anything should have a brace of horses.

They salute and Washington walks off leaving him at the corral. Hamilton and Greene intercept him, walk.

HAMILTON
Are you going to keep him, sir?

WASHINGTON
We better, Congress invented him.

NATHANAEL GREENE
Maybe he can fight...

THEIR POV

Teamsters gathered around Lafayette perched on a rail, telling them a joke -- the teamsters crack-up.

AND WASHINGTON

Reassessing this kid...

NATHANAEL GREENE
The men seem to like him. Maybe he could shake off some of our gloom. And, he's the only real evidence we have that anyone else in the world cares about our revolution.

HAMILTON
Nathanael's right.

WASHINGTON
If we can get coats and boots for these men I don't care if they're made in France or hell.

Lafayette races up, wants to walk with the big boys; smiles, salutes. Washington completes his thoughts.

WASHINGTON
Because, if the British got off their asses and came up here, now, we would be smashed. And the revolution would be finished.
(to Lafayette)
Tell King Louis, it's that bad.

LAFAYETTE
Yes, I will write him and tell his ministers and the court.

They form a little circle around Lafayette.

NATHANAEL GREENE
We need muskets, powder!

HAMILTON

And the men need to believe that
someday France will join us.

As he speaks, they watch soldiers.

THOSE FACES...

Filthy, humiliated humanity. A group sharpens logs into
punji stakes, others stitch tattered uniforms.

WASHINGTON

It's impossible to stop these men
deserting in winter, you might as
well stop geese from migrating.

HAMILTON

They go back home to keep their
families alive, stay into the spring
to plant. Then, they start coming
back to us.

LAFAYETTE

Like flowers after the snow melts.

WASHINGTON

When the snow melts, mon petite
Marquis, I suspect the only thing
blossoming will be bright red British
soldiers.

INT. KING'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Lord Germain and King George sit at a long table laden with
fruit, drink, meat and bread -- LORDS and LADIES adorn the
table like baubles.

At the head of the table stand two SERVANTS. One is made up
as an IROQUOIS, the other as an American MOUNTAIN MAN. They
are, naturally, absurd sketches. Each servant holds a paint
pot and a thick brush. Between them is a map of the thirteen
colonies. King George meanders to his feet, wine in hand.

KING GEORGE

My Lords and Ladies, tonight's
entertainment will be the slaughter
of the American Rebel Armies.

Applause. King George gestures to the Iroquois Servant who
dips his brush into his pot. It comes back dripping RED...
he slowly, delicately, paints a THICK RED LINE dripping down
from Quebec, along the west bank of Lake Champlain...

KING GEORGE

Seven thousand strong, our magnificent
 army of the North, as we drink, is
 rolling down the Champlain Valley
 like the mighty Juggernaut, crushing
 all resistance before it.

EXT. FOREST, NORTHERN NEW YORK - DAY (SPRING 1777)

MOHAWK BRAVES dressed in thick deer skin cloaks, carrying muskets, walk slowly, easily through the forest. Beyond, in a primeval glory, is the Champlain Valley with Lake Champlain stretching out forever. The BAGPIPER of a HIGHLANDER DIVISION gently plays the 'Ode to Saint Brendon'.

AMERICAN SCOUTS

Run from the onslaught, some are massacred by a concentrated fusillade from the British muskets.

EXT. KING'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Lords and Ladies are applauding as if they could actually see the slaughter taking place in upstate New York. Now the Mountain Man lifts his dripping red brush and draws a bloody line in from the Chesapeake toward Pennsylvania...

KING GEORGE

To the south of New England, our
 second, vast host of fifteen thousand,
 will thrust inland, smashing Mister
 Washington's army -- perhaps taking
 the rebel capital -- and swing up to
 link with our northern force.

EXT. BRANDYWINE CREEK - DAY

Washington at the head of his army, drowning in black powder smoke as they slowly give ground to an irresistible British force. All around him men fight and die. Washington shouts orders over the explosions, trying to hold the line. Smoke, screaming, chaos... Lafayette reins-in, yelling and gesturing toward their right -- a hail of musket balls rakes the ground and Lafayette tumbles from his horse.

Washington jumps down from Traveler, shoves Militia into a ragged line -- in line, he yells and they blast into the British line. Then they continue to retreat, Hamilton helping carry Lafayette from the field.

EXT. PHILADELPHIA - DAY

TITLE: PHILADELPHIA, SEPTEMBER, 1777, British ENTER
 PHILADELPHIA FROM THE SOUTH...

Lord Cornwallis leads his splendidly dressed regiments as bagpipes howl, snare drums snap, marching into Philadelphia.

ANOTHER PART OF TOWN TITLE: PHILADELPHIA, CONGRESS EVACUATES TO THE NORTH...

Terrorized civilians fleeing out the other end of the city like rats. The lead rats are MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, their wagons packed to overflowing.

INT. KING'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

More applause. Then, the Iroquois Servant continues the southward run of his bloody brush, toward Albany. But the brush SLIPS north of the goal, at SARATOGA...

EXT. SARATOGA BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Benedict Arnold screams in our face and CHARGES.

In a BALLET OF CARNAGE, Arnold rages through the British lines on his charger, sword sweeping as he leads an attack.

He seems to be everywhere, and men unhesitatingly follow him into the lines of British Bayonets...

As the British line disintegrates and the beaten redcoats throw down their muskets in defeat, Arnold is shot out of the saddle.

CLOSER ON ARNOLD

Being carried off the field in a litter. He's a bloody mess, half conscious, groggy, trying to joke with his men who carry him like he was the dying Christ. He manages to salute them with his cap -- and the men break into CHEERS -- it's glorious, heroic...

ARNOLD (V.O.)

Congress wants to court martial me...

INT. WASHINGTON'S HQ, VALLEY FORGE - NIGHT

Washington, Greene and Arnold around a table in the dingy light of oil lamps and candles. Arnold has just arrived.

Billy Lee takes his cape and Arnold comes the rest of the way into the room, hobbling on a crutch.

WASHINGTON

I'm ashamed to say, I'm not surprised to hear it.

Washington is absorbed by a large map on the table. A bottle of Madeira is open and all drink.

A fire from a stone hearth barely seems to light the room. Arnold comes closer to the map and only then does Washington turn to shake his hand.

WASHINGTON

Welcome, Benedict; splendid work.

Arnold accepts his greeting, but is puzzled by their gloom.

Washington turns back to his map.

WASHINGTON

I received the request for your court martial three days ago. Amazing how rapidly Congress can act when motivated.

Arnold feels a bit guilty.

ARNOLD

I'm accused of using some government wagons to ship personal property.

HAMILTON

Congress has been using our supply wagons for years to ship their black market goods -- probably their whores!

WASHINGTON

They're after both of us, Benedict. There is a plot in Congress to have me replaced, perhaps with General Horatio Gates.

Washington circles out of the way, then brings a lamp to give Arnold a better view of the map.

WASHINGTON

Have a look.

THE MAP

Oiled canvas that shines slightly in the light. It's a fairly crude but comprehensive rendering of the Pennsylvania countryside.

WASHINGTON (O.S.)

The British are going to evacuate Philadelphia in the spring.

ARNOLD HOLDS UP A CANDLE

has a close look. Hamilton and Greene join them.

WASHINGTON

Our plan is to hit them as they leave.

ARNOLD

While they're strung out?

WASHINGTON

Exactly. We'd attack the baggage wagons and the rear guard. It would cause the line to buckle. Then we hit the center with our main force and cut them in half.

NATHANAEL GREENE

What do you think?

ARNOLD

Lovely, but your men can't get weak knees.

WASHINGTON

They're ready. Believe me, the ones that stayed on here at Valley Forge are ready for anything. Of course, we get nothing from Congress. They need boots, coats... we desperately need food.

ARNOLD

Same old story.

Washington pours himself a fresh glass, nearly downs the whole thing with a gulp. Now Arnold sees how drunk he really is.

WASHINGTON

Except I believe it's pointed and intentional now.

Washington hesitates, whether it's his boozy head or that he just can't find the words...

WASHINGTON

There was this anonymous pamphlet circulated at Congress which says I am personally responsible for all our hardships. And... that I have encouraged the people of America to make me into a God! Benedict, it says that I have gone mad!

ARNOLD

That can't be.

WASHINGTON

There's this whispering campaign against me ever since Gates won at Saratoga.

ARNOLD

Gates? He used my battle plan and I humbly submit that without me he'd still be back at Saratoga waiting for the British to attack.

(pause)

George, why haven't you moved into the Potts' house back at the creek? Much more befitting of a Commander and Chief than your field tent. And... you could entertain. I think you need to entertain more. Seriously! Get a few New Jersey whores up here, invite some Congressmen... couldn't hurt.

WASHINGTON

As soon as the men have good shelters I'll move. Perhaps Martha will join me this winter.

ARNOLD

There, then, you can have sort of a normal life.

But immediately its clear that Washington is absorbed with fear of treachery.

WASHINGTON

Have you heard? The British are negotiating to make a trade for General Lee.

ARNOLD

I'm sure his dogs will be overjoyed.

WASHINGTON

The point being: he's also a candidate for my job.

(turns back to the map)

If we can pull this off, maybe I can restore their faith in me.

Arnold sees that Washington is truly shaken. Arnold pours himself a glass and Washington toasts him.

WASHINGTON

Well, Benedict, here's to the two
most hated men, on both sides of
this war.

Hamilton and Greene rise, join the toast. Lafayette burst through the door -- full of his usual exuberance, but leaning on an ornate cane with a carved silver head. Lafayette LIMPS up, shouting, waving his cane and a packet of letters over head.

LAFAYETTE

My people! My people! My people
have declared themselves for America!
France will fight with us as comrades
against England!

Washington and Arnold shake hands. Lafayette's tears of joy suddenly turn to sobs.

WASHINGTON

What is it, Marquis?

LAFAYETTE

(holds up a letter)
My baby daughter has died... my
baby... mon petite Henriette...

Washington doesn't know what to do. He approaches Lafayette, clumsily, wants to comfort him. But Lafayette nods, turns.

He walks away, then stands, back to Washington and Arnold, leaning on his cane. If he's crying, he doesn't want anyone to see. Greene approaches, watches Lafayette, hands Washington a letter...

NATHANAEL GREENE

From Congress...

EXT. VALLEY FORGE - DAY

A double line of CONTINENTALS, drilling. It's flesh cracking, lung-stopping COLD here. Everyone's breath clouds.

When men aren't handling their muskets they bury their hands in their armpits, pockets. It's a bad eastern winter.

Arnold, Hamilton, Greene and Lafayette follow Washington, but it's like a gimp parade: Arnold on crutches, Lafayette hobbling with his cane, and Greene with his congenital limp.

Washington turns, frowns at them and they stop. Arnold strikes a majestic pose. Washington smiles grimly and shakes his head.

EXT. PARADE GROUNDS - DAY

Washington addressing the army. Men in the cold, waiting, rubbing their hands.

WASHINGTON

Men, I just received an urgent communication from Congress and they asked that I read it to you... please stand at ease.

(pause)

"Today, King Louis of France has formally recognized the sovereignty of the American Colonies." This means we can finally expect help from France!

Men break into cheering. Washington silences them.

WASHINGTON

But there's more: "This day, to demonstrate heart-felt gratitude for the suffering of our forces for the sake of liberty and freedom, it is decreed... it is decreed that all troop observe a day of fasting."

Moment of silence. Then the men laugh. A few at first, but it spreads instantly through the whole line. Some even applaud at this madness.

Washington laughs too, stands in front of his troops sharing a good, heart-warming belly laugh. For the first time the men and their leader have genuinely connected and it has a psychological healing effect on him. Washington turns, puts his big hands on Lafayette's shoulders.

WASHINGTON

Marquis, as of today, you will have command of your own cavalry division.

Lafayette gawks at Washington, overwhelmed. Then he turns to face the rapped heap of soldiers on parade -- grins like a kid seeing his first piece of ass. Washington continues with Arnold.

WASHINGTON

Benedict, soon as the British vacate, I want you to take a division and march to Philadelphia. Until you're sure order has been restored I'm declaring martial law. It's bound to be a quiet job and this is one time Congress will be happy to see you.

EXT. NEW JERSEY TOWN, SPRINGTIME - DUSK

The American Army marching through a devastated town, Greene and Lafayette leading. Lafayette prances at the head of his

new cavalry division: they're polished to the max, every man wears a white PLUME in his hat... Lafayette's proud of them.

Now they see the brutal destruction: bodies, crying women, houses in flame. A lone COLT stands braying over its dead mother in a field.

LAFAYETTE

The British are not very happy at giving up Philadelphia. They take it out on the whole country.

NATHANAEL GREENE

As soon as we contact their rearguard, we fight. George will be up with the main force by noon.

EXT. FIELD, NEW JERSEY - DAY

Washington on horseback, riding slowly with Hamilton at the head of Continentals. Another RIDER trots up along the line, DOGS hustling around his horses hooves. It's GENERAL CHARLES LEE. He salutes. The two eye each other with ill-disguised disdain.

WASHINGTON

General Lee, welcome back. I'm happy you've decided to join us.

GENERAL LEE

More than that, sir... my orders from Congress.

He hands Washington a paper. Washington reads, looks ill.

Hands it back.

GENERAL LEE

I am to take command of Major General Lafayette's division and lead the attack.

WASHINGTON

Lafayette will not be happy...

Lee is immediately defensive and antagonistic.

GENERAL LEE

Congress made me second in command,
you have no right to deny me.

Washington looks the man over.

WASHINGTON

General, I believe our men are going
to destroy Cornwallis' army tomorrow.
They've looked forward to that
pleasure for a long time, so I highly
recommend you pay strict attention
to General Greene's plan of battle.

But all Lee does is salute.

GENERAL LEE

If I'm going to catch up by tonight,
I'd best get going.

Lee turns his horse and canters off, dogs barking at his
horse's heels.

HAMILTON

What are we going to do?

WASHINGTON

Get the body of our army up to
Greene's vanguard as fast as we can.
All the damned fool has to do is hit
the British rearguard and then hold
for us.

EXT. GENERAL LEE'S TENT - NIGHT

Lee, drinking heavily, throwing scraps from his plate to his
coven of dogs. Laughing. Lafayette and Greene enter but
hold back.

GENERAL LEE

What is your pleasures, General Greene
and Major General Lafayette?

NATHANAEL GREENE

We would like to consult with you on
your plans, sir.

GENERAL LEE

Quel sort de plan?

Lafayette hesitates over the clumsy French, over the question.

LAFAYETTE

Why, your battle plan, sir.

GENERAL LEE
(drunk and angry)
I do understand your language
Monsieur!

LAFAYETTE
Oui, General, certainement...

He dismisses the pair with a brisk gesture.

GENERAL LEE
You're nothing but children, and you
question me? Gentlemen, we hit the
British rearguard at dawn; then my
plan will become clear to you as it
unfolds. Good night.

They hesitate, but Lee hunches over, stroking one of his
hounds, seems lost to the world.

EXT. MONMOUTH - MORNING

HEAD-ON of Washington at a full gallop -- hair whipping,
coat open to a sweat drenched blouse. O.S., sounds of musket
fire and cannons.

Washington brutally reins-in his horse skidding on its hind
legs to a stop in the face of retreating Continentals.

Lafayette rides in their midst, trying to stop their retreat
from becoming a rout.

WASHINGTON
My God! Who ordered this retreat?!

LAFAYETTE
General Lee, sir!

WASHINGTON
Get these men back in line!

Washington reels his horse, charges off.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

Washington gallops into the retreating troops. It's not a
rout; they look pissed-off.

WASHINGTON
All right men! Stop and reform your
ranks! Officers! Bring your men
around!

The men immediately stop, turn, assembling before their
officers. General Lee rides on the scene, looks wild.

They're in a 'sea' of men, and as they shout, the men listen.

WASHINGTON

What the goddamned hell do you think
you are doing!?

GENERAL LEE

The British! These men cannot stand
against them!

WASHINGTON

What do you know about these men!?
They can stand against anything!
They've seen more war than most field
generals! They are not cowards,
sir! They are not afraid!

Hamilton charges into the pack. Yells at Lee.

HAMILTON

We will stand here! Stand and die
on this spot!

GENERAL LEE

Oh? Fine, let's get these men turned
and then I will be delighted to die,
right here, on this spot.

Washington points below, to a line of Continentals, holding
back a wave of redcoats.

WASHINGTON

Who is that!?

GENERAL LEE

That's Greene. He's supporting our
reconsolidation.

WASHINGTON

Marquis! Get these men reformed,
send Steuben and Wayne out on the
left...

Washington curses, spurs ahead.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Washington full gallop, balls whizzing around his head, fog
banks of black-powder smoke gathering. Washington arrives
at Greene's line, reins in.

Greene and a thin line of men -- black and whites -- hunker
down behind a hedgerow. They're hard-pressed, bodies on all
sides, dead horses -- many soldiers are shirtless in the
deadly heat. Greene shouts up to Washington.

NATHANAEL GREENE
What the hell are we doing?

WASHINGTON
You've got to stop them here or our
whole line will cave-in!
(yells to all)
It's all right boys, I'm here!

Men CHEER Washington as he waves his hat.

A BLACK OFFICER rushes up to Greene, keeping low.

BLACK OFFICER
General! Fresh enemy unit!

Through the haze and blur of battle can be seen an approaching line of RED. Colors fly, bagpipes wheeze, drums beat. It's terrifying. THE LINE COMES ON.

EXT. HEDGEROW - DAY

Washington fearlessly trots up and down the American lines.

WASHINGTON
Boys! These men coming are the Royal
Fusiliers!

As he trots he unbuttons his tunic, sweating in the intense heat. He wipes sweat off his forehead with his hat, then throws it away. Excited, happy to see his men take on these British gems, taking this very personally, hating all these aristocratic gentlemen's guts.

WASHINGTON
They're Noblemen every damned one!
From the best families in England!
Knights and barons! The cream of
the British army! And you know what
they think of us! Come on, men!
Show them who we are!

Washington, too emotional to go on; wants them to hold, to win. Looks down to see faces of the American Soldiers locked on him.

And at that moment, for the first time, they know Washington is one of them. And Washington knows it too...

NATHANAEL GREENE
Ready arms!

THAT RED LINE...

erupts in SINGING, a song-chant like a soccer rally.

Flawless, Oxford Voices ringing out in the hot air. They level bayonets. Bag pipes HOWL. It happens FAST.

HEDGEROW

Greene stands up beside Washington's horse, screams so he can be heard over everything.

NATHANAEL GREENE

FIRE!!!

The hedgerow vomits musket fire. Fusiliers grab their faces, their ripped-out guts. The bagpipe goes out like the grotesque farting of a punctured balloon. The Fusiliers waver, fall back.

Their handsome young COMMANDING OFFICER rallies them, his back to the American lines. He extolls them, holding his sabre on high. He has a beautiful voice.

BRITISH COMMANDER

For shame, Royal Fusiliers! For shame!

AMERICAN LINES

men reloading, fixing bayonets... listening to the British Commanding Officer. Black and White soldiers exchange looks...

BRITISH COMMANDER (O.S.)

Is the finest blood of England to be spilled by an army of Niggers and Mongrels!? Never! On to the day, boys! On to the day!

Washington watches his men, sees their reactions, knows he doesn't have to say a thing.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

British Commander whips his sabre in a circle over his head.

BRITISH COMMANDER

Our England!
(his men cheer)
Our King!
(cheer again)
On to the day!!!

The Fusiliers start coming. Determined. Washington sits on his horse, watching, letting Greene handle it. Greene grabs a man who rises to fire, pulls him back.

NATHANAEL GREENE

Wait boys! Wait!

The Fusiliers get closer, closer; maybe too close. They start singing.

NATHANAEL GREENE

FIRE!!!

Smoke and flame blast the British lines. Then the Americans charge out like a spontaneous gush of emotion.

Fighting is bloody hand to hand -- bayonets rip out guts, men scream, swords flash. The Fusiliers fight, their colors go down and they break and run.

EXT. HILLTOP - DAY

Troops cheering, Lafayette waves his hat. Hamilton looks like he'll wet his pants for joy. Greene's men surge after the retreating British. Washington on his white horse rushes forward with them.

ON WASHINGTON

Charging on, having the best day of his life, chasing England and all she represents back into hell. Chasing the ghosts of his past, the addiction to aristocracy...

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Cornwallis arrives, corpulent and sweating. But he brings Ranger reinforcements.

Washington and Greene call the men back. They fall back reluctantly, standing and firing as they do. Cornwallis' AIDE tumbles from his saddle. Another OFFICER goes down.

Cornwallis is stunned by the accuracy. His Rangers take cover, crouching behind rocks and trees. Cornwallis hesitates stymied. Then he sees a man on a WHITE HORSE galloping across the battlefield. Knows who it is.

CORNWALLIS

Sharp-shooters! Kill that officer --
that man on the white horse! Kill
him!

Sharp-shooters FIRE...

EXT. HILLTOP - LATE AFTERNOON

Washington gallops toward the crest, when he and his horse go DOWN. Men shout, Hamilton rushes forward. But Washington stands, unhurt.

He leans over Traveler, feels for a pulse in its throat.
He's dead.

BILLY LEE
General Washington?

Washington looks up: Billy Lee has come forward on NELSON.

Billy dismounts, hands Washington the reins. Billy looks genuinely terrified for his own ass and for Washington.

Washington heaves up onto the horse.

AND CORNWALLIS...

Sees it's Washington being cheered by his men, can't believe his eyes.

CORNWALLIS
Shit! Shit!!!

EXT. WASHINGTON'S CAMP - NIGHT

Soldiers lying on the ground, exhausted, passing buckets of water, crusts of bread and rum. But Washington's still got the stench of the hunt in his nostrils, out among the men.

WASHINGTON
You did good, boys! You beat them!
Don't be broken hearted! Tomorrow!
We'll get the bastards before they
get away! Tomorrow! Tomorrow!

Washington comes to Lafayette and his division, the one Lee took over. They're shot to hell. Lafayette walks through them, hugging men, steadying them with strong words. His uniform is SATURATED with the blood of the wounded he's been embracing. Washington is moved.

EXT. WASHINGTON'S CAMP - DAWN

Washington, Hamilton, Greene, Lafayette and Lee stand on the hilltop above the battlefield. It's empty.

NATHANAEL GREENE
They're gone. Pulled out in the
middle of the night. They got away
from us.

Washington looks out at the dawn, bitterly disappointed.

EXT. NEAR MONMOUTH - DAY

Washington and Billy Lee ride along together ahead of the army.

WASHINGTON

Will...

BILLY LEE

Yes, general?

WASHINGTON

You've served me loyally, year after year, without complaining. I've thought hard about you this past winter. I want to free you, Will. I want to give you your freedom, after this battle is fought.

BILLY LEE

Yes, general.

WASHINGTON

Will, I'm giving you your freedom. Do you understand?

BILLY LEE

No. I guess.

WASHINGTON

You'd have money every year, so you wouldn't have to work. You can stay at Mount Vernon as long as you want...

Billy nods, but just keeps riding in silence. Washington rides alongside again, trying to pursue the issue.

EXT. STREETS OF PHILADELPHIA, 1778 - DAY

A MOB surges around the outside of a house, pelting the windows with rocks, screaming out of control. They're supported by half a dozen PENNSYLVANIA MILITIA. In the midst of the shouting crowd, someone carries a huge CRUCIFIX.

Behind them, in an unbelievably ornate coach, is JOSEPH REED, dressed in expensive finery, obviously directing the mob. On the roof of his ornate coach a MAN with a trumpet and a blue uniform shouts orders from Reed to the mob.

BENEDICT ARNOLD

suddenly trots out onto the street on a grey horse. At first no one notices him, then a few point his way until finally, awed by his presence, they fall silent.

A DOZEN CONTINENTALS move in from the sides, supporting Arnold. The Continentals stand, bayonets, poised, war veterans all, black men and white -- look incredibly hard core compared with the over-primped, candy-ass Pennsylvania Militia. Reed shouts at Arnold, furious.

JOSEPH REED

Clear those men out, Arnold! We have come to arrest a Tory and confiscate his estate! We are here to cleanse this town of all Tories!

ARNOLD

As military commander of Philadelphia, it is my duty to protect the lives and property of all civilians. Under whose direction beside your own do you operate, mister Reed?

JOSEPH REED

I take my orders from God!

ARNOLD

Well, my orders come from a higher authority: General Washington. Disperse or die!

Pennsylvania Militia getting nervous. Reed gestures and the man on his coach blasts his trumpet -- the Militia charges, screaming, waving swords and bayonets. Arnold's men calmly take aim and FIRE. The Pennsylvania Militia scream back in retreat, flooding around a furious Joseph Reed.

EXT. STREETS OF PHILADELPHIA, NEXT DAY - NIGHT

Washington and Arnold ride through the eerily quiet Philadelphia streets, Billy Lee behind. They're flanked on each side by three BODYGUARDS who wear long white leather dusters and carry short muskets in one hand braced on their knees. The only sound is the clack-clack-clack of their horses' hooves.

ARNOLD

That scum Joseph Reed... they're calling him the 'King of Pennsylvania'. The man's a budding Cromwell. He condemns rich Tories to death and then 'appropriates' their property for himself. Naturally, the pig hates me for every Tory I've saved.

WASHINGTON

Couldn't you have appealed to Congress?

Arnold barks a laugh.

ARNOLD

They love Reed and his inquisition!
(MORE)

ARNOLD (CONT'D)

I think they hope to share in
his disgusting profits! It's becoming
the American way!

WASHINGTON

You go too far, Benedict.

They rein-in. Just above them TWO BODIES dangle from ropes,
hanging right over the main road. Each has a sign around
his neck: "DEATH TO TORIES".

ARNOLD

These men were taken from their homes
at night, tried by Reed's courts --
which Congress recognizes -- and,
well, you can see.

WASHINGTON

(to his bodyguard)

Cut those men down.

(and Arnold)

Congress is pushing ahead with your
court-martial. Benedict, trust me
to handle this.

Arnold looks away, too furious to reply. One of the
bodyguards stands in his stirrups and cuts the bodies down
with his sabre.

EXT. PHILADELPHIA ESTATE - NIGHT

Martha Washington sits as the person of honor among the row
of 'upper class' LADIES. Two SLAVES stand behind Martha,
waiting on her every need.

Washington dancing while CONGRESSMEN and their WIVES WATCH.

There's another crowd here: Wealthy MEN and WOMEN who look
all the world like aristocrats.

Washington dances with a very pretty, very young woman.

Finally the music ends, and everyone applauds. Washington
bows to his partner. There's a hint that he'd like to
continue this dance behind closed doors, and it's clear she's
willing... but, he keeps his composure.

John Adams approaches, shakes hands with Washington, whispers
in his ear. Washington follows him, but snags another glass
of Madeira on the way.

EXT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

Sam Adams and Joseph Reed are waiting.

They all rise, all shake hands with Washington. Washington smiles, sits. It's clear from the start that he's had a lot to drink.

WASHINGTON

Gentlemen, let me get to the point,
I can't see the wisdom of pursuing
this old court-martial against General
Arnold.

JOSEPH REED

The man is a traitor!

WASHINGTON

How can you say that?

Sam Adams cuts in, trying to tread lightly.

SAM ADAMS

Did you know he is engaged to Peggy
Shippen? She's the daughter of a
Tory, George.

JOSEPH REED

Arnold supports the British cause!

WASHINGTON

If he supports the British why is it
that every time he gets near them he
kills so many of them?

(pause)

Unlike General Lee... who you and
Congress backed for second in command
and who is a goddamned incompetent!

JOHN ADAMS

Lafayette is a child!

WASHINGTON

Lafayette is my friend!

(laughs)

He believes in glory and truth and
the freedom of all mankind; so, of
course he's a child. But he would
have died before he would have let
me down.

SAM ADAMS

Is that your test of patriotism,
George; if a man will die for you?

WASHINGTON

God damn you, Sam Adams!

(MORE)

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)

You wanted a revolutionary army and now that we've really got one it scares you more than it does the British!

JOSEPH REED

You are a pagan criminal!

Washington grabs Reed in his huge hands, slams him up against the wall as John and Sam try to hold him back.

WASHINGTON

I swear to your God and my God, Reed, if you sponsor any more terrorist acts in Philadelphia I will send in the army!

Just then, an attractive woman enters. ABIGAIL ADAMS. She just stares at this scuffle, maintains totally.

ABIGAIL ADAMS

My dear, are you keeping General Washington all night?

JOHN ADAMS

Abigail... You know Abigail?

Everyone cools-it. Washington turns, nods politely.

WASHINGTON

Mrs. Adams. I promise I'm nearly done here.

As she turns for the door, Washington happily escorts her.

ABIGAIL ADAMS

Well, no more secrets, all the ladies want to know: who was that darling young woman you were dancing with?

WASHINGTON

She's a mechanic's daughter, Mrs. Adams, as a matter of fact.

Uncomfortable moment while Abigail sorts this out.

ABIGAIL ADAMS

Well, I suppose a working girl stays pretty healthy; I can see why she can keep going all night. I mean...

WASHINGTON

Martha rarely dances, so she can hardly deny me the pleasure of a good dance now and again.

Abigail smiles weakly... what does he mean by that?

JOHN ADAMS

My dear, tell the ladies I'll return the general to them shortly. Please.

She nods, Washington opens the door for her, then turns on the others.

WASHINGTON

Arnold is indispensable, do you understand? I need Arnold to help me win this war!

JOSEPH REED

Well, I shall deny him to you! He is evil on earth!

WASHINGTON

Are you all going insane!? Benedict Arnold! The man who stopped the British on Lake Champlain! Who carried the day at Saratoga! Goddamn-it, Joseph, you own two mansions, ride in an expensive, Tory coach! You are all nothing but a pack of greedy pigs!

Washington's mouth starts BLEEDING; he coughs, chokes on the blood; rushes to a ceramic basin and gags up the blood that rushes out like his anger. Reed shouts at him while he's defenseless.

JOSEPH REED

You will court-martial Arnold the traitor! Or I will deny your army teamsters and wagons for your spring offensive! Congress will back me, George.

Reed turns and stalks out of the room. Silence. Washington recovers as John hands him a towel. Can tell John doesn't feel right about this.

JOHN ADAMS

George, I'm sorry. We all know the army will acquit Arnold...

WASHINGTON

Of course the army will acquit him,
that's not the point... Arnold is a
man and will understand. What I
need to understand is, John, Sam...
what is happening here?

(no answer)

Who are those people in there? The
fat ones in silk?

JOHN ADAMS

They are... friends of Congress.

WASHINGTON

Is that where our meat and boots and
uniforms and muskets went?

John looks Washington in the eye, looks away.

JOHN ADAMS

Partially...

SAM ADAMS

It's the political 'cost of doing
business', George.

WASHINGTON

Tell me, John, Sam: are all
revolutions doomed to be won by the
young and then ruined by old fools?
Or is it just old fools using the
young to get fat?

(pause)

I will notify General Arnold of our
decision. Good night...

Washington walks out.

EXT. CONGRESS BALCONY - DAY

To the sound of drums and fife, the American Army marches
through Philadelphia. Washington stands in his best uniform
on the balcony where he and Sam Adams once discussed the
revolution. Behind Washington, and at all the windows and
other balconies, wealthy men and women and members of Congress
view the passing troops.

The army is proud, but in rags. They carry their home-made
flags and muskets proudly. March like heroes. A TITTERING
starts behind Washington; a couple of high-class ladies
giggling at this rag-tag army. The tittering spreads
uncontrollably, though people try not to laugh, they can't
help it. When the American Flag passes, Washington stands
tall and salutes. The SOLDIERS look up at him as the
tittering continues behind Washington...

EXT. ARNOLD'S HOUSE, PENNSYLVANIA - NIGHT

And Benedict Arnold, reading a letter. He rises, hands shaking, puts the letter down and limps across to the window.

He opens it and lets the wind blow in his face. His wife, PEGGY SHIPPEN enters. She's blond, young, beautiful and pregnant. Arnold puts a strong arm around her.

ARNOLD

General Washington has thrown me to the dogs.

EXT. FORT ARNOLD/WEST POINT - MORNING

Washington opens the door and enters, followed by Hamilton and Lafayette. The room is quiet. As they come all the way in, a CAPTAIN rises, hands Washington a sheath of papers.

CAPTAIN

General Washington?

WASHINGTON

Where is General Arnold?

CAPTAIN

You had better read these.

Washington takes the papers, crosses the room and sits near a window. He unfolds them, starts to read. Peggy Shippen SCREAMS from O.S. The screams get louder, everyone rushes toward them except Washington who is staggered by what he's reading.

Peggy half falls into the room. Her gown is ripped open, she clutches her baby to her breast and she SCREAMS. She points at Washington.

PEGGY SHIPPEN

There's the man who will kill my baby! Murder my baby!

Hamilton and Lafayette hold her back as two servants cover her with a blanket and drag her screaming from the room.

LAFAYETTE

My god, what has happened?

As Peggy's wailing voice continues O.S., Washington slowly hands the papers to Hamilton.

WASHINGTON

A British spy was caught with the plans to West Point in his boot, written in General Arnold's hand.

Colonel Hamilton, send the guard and see if they can catch up with Arnold.

Hamilton bolts for the door. Washington continues to Lafayette. All the while Peggy's plaintive howl continues O.S.

WASHINGTON

He included a copy of our agenda.
So, the British could ambush us.
He set us up to be killed. You, me
and Alexander. Do you understand?
We can expect a British attack at
any time.

EXT. FORT ARNOLD/WEST POINT - NIGHT

Greene's troops camped outside in the cold, fires burning, food cooking. No complaints. The army is mature.

Greene paces, rubbing his hands together. He paces to the main wall. Colonials, two ranks deep, face the Hudson River.

Among the mostly white troops are black faces. The men surround Washington, fiercely protective in a way that suggests both intense love and extreme paranoia...

EXT. FORT OFFICE - NIGHT

Washington at the window watching the troops. Hamilton and Lafayette enter with Greene.

HAMILTON

General Greene is here. There are
two other divisions here.

WASHINGTON

Colonel Hamilton. Anyone who served
under Arnold, I want them shipped
north. I don't want any troops here
who served under Arnold.

Hamilton hesitates, swaps a look with Lafayette. Salutes.

HAMILTON

Yessir.

WASHINGTON

Did you know that Arnold left the
entire defenses of this fort in
complete disrepair? Most of our
cannons are so neglected they may as
well have been spiked!? You realize
what would happen if this fort fell?

(MORE)

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)

The whole Hudson would be open to them!

Washington moves forward, falters. Hamilton and Lafayette see he's been drinking. They say nothing. Washington returns to the window, looking into the blackness, clings to a glass of Madeira, two pistols on the table. He's watching LIGHTS on the Hudson.

WASHINGTON

Colonel Hamilton, you think this is all my fault, don't you?

Hamilton is stunned.

HAMILTON

Sir, I think no such thing.

WASHINGTON

Don't lie to me, Hamilton! If I had not court-martialed Arnold...

HAMILTON

Sir, Arnold is a traitor.

WASHINGTON

I must tell you sir you treat me with disrespect!

HAMILTON

I am not conscious of it, sir! But since you have thought it necessary to tell me so, we part!

Horrendous silence. Hamilton waiting for a way out of this, Lafayette and Greene waiting for Washington to give it to him.

WASHINGTON

Very well, sir; if it be your choice!

Stunned, Hamilton straightens. He looks at Lafayette and Greene. He spins, and walks off. Silence.

WASHINGTON

Nathanael, I'm sending you to Virginia to head the southern army, to harass Cornwallis. Marquis, you must go with him.

NATHANAEL GREENE

I'm honored, but, reluctant to leave you.

LAFAYETTE

I feel the same, sir.

WASHINGTON

I will continue with our French allies, concentrating on New York.

NATHANAEL GREENE

Sir, I have to act on instructions from you ordering thirty copies of your own dress uniform...

WASHINGTON

(defensive)

They're for my bodyguard. I have an absolute conviction that Arnold is planning to have me assassinated! It will be harder if I am surrounded by a body of men who look like me, don't you think?

NATHANAEL GREENE

Yes sir, it's a wise idea...

EXT. TAVERN - NIGHT

Washington and a pair of FRENCH OFFICERS, flanked by BODYGUARD that all look JUST LIKE WASHINGTON. One of the officers has a girl on his lap, laughing. Washington looks around, seeing a fairly sophisticated crowd, not rustics.

His eyes LOCK with those of a BLONDE. Beautiful, blue eyed...

INT. WASHINGTON'S ROOM - MORNING

Washington wakes to discover the young girl standing at his window, watching the sunrise. She's naked. Washington sits up in bed, leans his head on his knee, admiring her.

EXT. BELVOIR - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Sixteen year old George Washington and eighteen year old Sally Fairfax making love in a field, in the bright southern sunshine.

INT. WASHINGTON'S ROOM - MORNING (PRESENT)

Washington stands at the window as if he were looking directly out on the past.

BLONDE

What are you looking at?

WASHINGTON

The sunrise.

He turns around to face her and smiles.

BLONDE

Will you ever think of me again?

Washington laughs, smiles.

WASHINGTON

My dear, I can never stop thinking
about you.

EXT. CORNWALLIS' HQ, YORKTOWN - DAY

Lord Cornwallis sits at a badly scarred table, in a filthy uniform, needing a shave, drunk.

TITLE: 'YORKTOWN, VIRGINIA, OCTOBER 1781'

Cornwallis stands as an aide who is clean-dressed and shaved arrives on horseback. Cornwallis hesitates, summons his strength: he straightens and salutes. It is the most miserable moment in his life. All around are the ruins of his HQ.

EXT. YORKTOWN - DAY

On one side of a field, a line of French Infantry. The French look perfect, their magnificent uniforms glow in the afternoon sun.

On the other side, American Infantry -- Continentals and Militia. They are a ragged mob, filthy, patched and mismatched. But they stand just as rigid as the French.

At the end of the field, between both lines, George Washington sits on Nelson. French officers nearby.

Hamilton, Lafayette and Greene are mounted and near Washington. All GLOW with the glory of the moment.

Down the line march the defeated forces of Cornwallis. Their colors furled in shame, without arms, their band plays 'The World Turned Upside-down'.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF YORKTOWN, ONE WEEK LATER - DAY

Washington and Lafayette ride toward each other. Behind Lafayette are four French Officers and a wagon with his luggage. Two armies face one another: American and French and these two men ride between. Hamilton and Greene are mounted, with the American force.

When they are together, they dismount. Lafayette wears a great coat, ready for a long overland trip. Washington in a perfect uniform, but open at the neck.

They stand, just watching each other. Finally they smile.
They step forward.

Two men who have seen and sometimes done unspeakable things.

LAFAYETTE

Ah, les bons vieux temps ou nous
etions si malheureux!

(smiles, translates)

Oh, the good old times when we were
so unhappy!

They embrace.

EXT. THE ROAD OUT OF YORKTOWN - DAY

Lafayette mounted on a dapple grey, turns and waves his plumed
hat to the armies standing at ease. All CHEER.

AND WASHINGTON

waves his sword on high. As Lafayette turns and goes he
lowers the sword...

EXT. WASHINGTON'S HQ, NEWBURGH NY - DAY

Soldiers, led by their officers stand before Washington's
HQ, musket barrels down in the dirt. They shout as Washington
rides through the camp on Nelson. He's horrified by the
demonstration.

INT. WASHINGTON'S HQ, NEWBURGH NY - DAY

As Washington climbs the stairs, Hamilton is waiting for
him.

WASHINGTON

What is this?

HAMILTON

Congress has informed the army that
it is bankrupt and cannot pay the
soldiers pensions.

Washington is staggered. Hamilton hands him a letter.

Washington starts reading, is appalled.

WASHINGTON

This is a declaration of insurrection!
Who wrote this!?

HAMILTON

No one knows...

INT. WASHINGTON'S ROOM - DAY

Washington stands by the window, sipping Madeira while Hamilton 'works on him'.

HAMILTON

After all these men have done!
Many have lost everything! Their
loved ones, their property! That
pension was the single thing that
kept them going!

Hamilton gets near Washington, getting personal, summoning emotional spirits.

HAMILTON

George, remember that night when we
were drinking with Arnold?

WASHINGTON

To hell with Arnold...

HAMILTON

He warned you some day you might
have to act for the good of the people --
even if it was against Congress.

(pause)

George, the time has come for you to
declare yourself king of America.
Listen to me, the whole army would
rise up as one and place you on a
throne! George, you must declare
yourself with us or against us.

WASHINGTON

Is this a coup? Alexander, are you
trying to tell me that I might be
assassinated if I don't agree?

Hamilton says nothing, doesn't have to. Washington sits, thinks.

WASHINGTON

What's your advice, Alexander?

HAMILTON

March on Philadelphia! Get Joseph
Reed, and the pigs in Congress, the
speculators, who've grown fat off
the war! Get them all! Sweep them
aside!

Silence. Washington stares hard at Hamilton.

WASHINGTON

I want to address the officers, all the officers. Next Friday. Can we arrange it at the mess?

HAMILTON

Yes, I believe so.

WASHINGTON

Well, if it's my last order, then I order them to be there!

(softer)

Tell them I will give them my decision then.

Hamilton salutes, leaves. Washington sits in silence, can hear the shouting, chanting men outside.

INT. WASHINGTON APARTMENT - LATE AFTERNOON

Martha stands at the open window; Washington on a love seat, watching her.

MARTHA

Do you remember, eight years ago, when you stood at that window in Philadelphia, the night before your appointment, and you told me what this was all about?

Washington smiles, thinking.

MARTHA

It's just as you said, then: you ended up with everything. What are you going to do with it? Eight years ago you were sure you knew.

Washington rises, veers directly to the window. But now Martha's genuinely curious, wants to understand and she moves to his side.

MARTHA

Share it with me, George. What is it that's out there now, eight years different? The men who were in power at the beginning are still in power; the big landowners and slave holders haven't changed. What really has changed?

We MOVE IN ON WASHINGTON...

INT. PALACE LIBRARY, LONDON - DAY

King George III toying with a globe as if he could see the changes sweeping the world. Benedict Arnold, dressed in full British regimentals, and two fretting MINISTERS sit across.

KING GEORGE

Washington has got everything...
and I have lost it all: beautiful
America. America the treasure we
fought so long and so hard to keep.
We burned their towns; we captured
their cities; we blocked their ports;
we beat them repeatedly in open
combat. How did it end like this
after eight years?

MINISTER 1

My Lord, Parliament and the people
simply lost the will to fight.

King George gestures impatiently.

KING GEORGE

If you're going to lie, then convince
me that I should not abdicate.

BOTH MINISTERS

My Lord! My God, no!

King George scoffs at their groveling support.

KING GEORGE

Good, good; that's better.
(Ministers continue
to protest)
I am beginning to see that it would
be an error for me to abdicate.
General Arnold?

ARNOLD

Your Majesty, it is not too late to
defeat the Americans; if you have
seen my proposal...

KING GEORGE

Yes, General Arnold, I have seen it
and Cornwallis tells me it's a
brilliant campaign plan. But, it
seems you left the Americans too
soon and came over to me too late.
(rigid smile)
Because now, the game is up.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

King George and Benedict Arnold walking together past seeming endless paintings of British Monarchs.

KING GEORGE

I wonder what 'General' Washington will do. They say he plans to retire, just leave the stage. What do you think, Benedict?

ARNOLD

After fighting eight years? I know Washington, I know his soul, I know his mind: he's an aristocrat.

They pass heading toward the shadows of the lower hallway.

KING GEORGE

You think he'll seize power?

ARNOLD

Well, if he doesn't he'll be better than us. In fact he'll be the greatest man in the world...

They disappear into the shadows.

INT. NEWBURGH MESS - DAY

Washington steps before the gathering of officers. He clears his voice and the officers go quiet. He looks at them for a long time. Takes a speech from his coat.

WASHINGTON

I have noticed by my calendar that today is the Ides of March.

(deathly silence)

I believe that when we all leave here, the world will look differently upon that date.

(reads)

"A scrap of paper has circulated recently through our ranks. This dreadful alternative of either deserting our country or turning our arms against it has something so shocking in it that humanity revolts at the words.

(MORE)

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)

(pause)

Are we here today going to cast a shade over that glory which we have so justly acquired and tarnish the reputation of an army which is celebrated through all Europe for its patriotism?

(pause)

I say we must not. I have been asked to consider becoming dictator or king of America. I say we cannot allow this to happen here! For if we do, we again set in motion the endless wheel of revolution, betrayal and despotism.

(pleading)

As you value your own sacred honor; as you respect the rights of humanity, you must give eternity at least one distinguished proof of unexampled patriotism and virtue! And if you will -- by the dignity of such conduct -- you will afford occasion for posterity to say: had this day been wanting, the World had never seen the last stage of perfection to which human nature is capable of attaining."

Washington puts down his paper. Looks up at his officers.

THE OFFICERS...

a sea of cold, heartless stares. Hamilton, in particular, looks away.

RESUME WASHINGTON

Unnerved by their utter lack of emotion. He takes a deep breath, reaches into his coat and produces another paper.

He's getting desperate.

WASHINGTON

I have here a letter from the Congressional Delegation of Virginia. They asked I read this...

(starts to read)

"With heavy heart and good conscience we implore you to trust in our sincerity..."

Washington hesitates, squints at the text. The Officers get restless.

Frustrated, and almost without thinking, Washington reaches into one pocket, then another... and comes up with a tiny set of silver framed spectacles. As he puts the silver bows over his ears the irony catches him and he breaks his sternness and smiles to his men.

WASHINGTON

You have seen me grow grey in your service. Now you see me growing blind.

Men GASP. It's like they've been shaken from a dream and suddenly remember who and where they are. Several hide their eyes and WEEP. Washington just looks at them, understands what has happened, understands that he has won.

INT. WASHINGTON'S ROOM, NEWBURGH - NIGHT

Washington, alone, drinking. There's a knock, the door edges open and Alexander Hamilton comes in. He looks for all the world like an admonished son. Washington smiles, then Hamilton.

HAMILTON

The officers have voted unanimously to support you sir... and Congress.
(after a moment)
I support you too, George.

Washington stands, they look at one another for a moment, then they embrace.

EXT. NEWBURGH CAMP - DAY

Washington astride Nelson, bidding good-bye to his troops.

All are assembled. He removes his hat, lifts it in salute, turns, and trots away.

The soldiers raise their hats... then just watch this man who has led them through eight years of untold hardship, vanish from their lives...

EXT. ON THE ROAD - DAY

Washington and Billy riding slowly through the pristine New Jersey countryside.

WASHINGTON

Will, I want to remind you of a conversation we started just before Monmouth...

BILLY LEE

I ain't forgot about the freedom.

Ride in silence for a time. Billy just looks angry.

WASHINGTON

Well, what have you thought?

BILLY LEE

Well, general, I think I ain't got no school learning, I ain't got no trade... and I'm a drunk. So, I think there ain't much left to be set free.

Billy just keeps riding. Washington wants to say something, but clearly he doesn't know what he can possibly say.

FADE TO:

EXT. MOUNT VERNON - DAY

As George Washington -- now dressed in civilian clothes -- rides up to the mansion on Nelson he slows. On the porch are Greene and Hamilton.

TITLE: MOUNT VERNON 1786 (3 YEARS LATER)

Washington dismounts and glad to see them, shakes hands all around.

WASHINGTON

Well, this must be about something!

NATHANAEL GREENE

It is; we need you George.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Washington, Hamilton and Greene walking, talking; Washington leading Nelson to cool him down. The air is crisp and windy, but it's a beautiful day, and the image is like some gorgeous American primitive -- heavenly and essential.

HAMILTON

Have you decided if you are going to join the Virginia Delegation to the Constitutional Convention?

WASHINGTON

I'm not sure.

HAMILTON

George, you're the only man the people trust... trust with power. They know you won't betray them.

WASHINGTON

But it's more than just that, am I right?

NATHANAEL GREENE

If the constitution is ratified... we'll have a country. They'll want to elect you president of the convention, which means president of the country.

WASHINGTON

You know, I came back to Mount Vernon to retire. I don't need to be in government.

HAMILTON

That's why the people trust you George. Without someone at the convention, who has the people behind him, everything will fail. Will you do it?

WASHINGTON

You're asking me to be president of a republic, not king? Not a dictator over subjects?

NATHANAEL GREENE

That's right.

Washington turns away for a moment, strokes Nelson's forehead, thinking...

INT. PRESIDENTIAL RESIDENCE, NYC - EVENING

George Washington stands before a mirror, adjusting his formal jacket. Martha helps him, getting his sleeve ruffles right.

Billy Lee brings him a glass of Madeira. Billy is dressed almost more magnificently than Washington, walks with a limp.

BILLY LEE

Lots of people out there, general.

MARTHA

There should be, General Washington's guest list, contrary to Mister Hamilton's suggestion, isn't very particular.

WASHINGTON

Well, this party is open to everyone, isn't it? Isn't it just open to America?

INT. GREAT HALL - EARLY EVENING

GUESTS mingle, clearly they're from all stations of life. A SOLDIER, dressed in the simple blue with trim uniform of an American militiaman, steps up to an open door, clears his throat. And for the first time utters these words:

MILITIA MAN
Ladies and gentlemen. May I
present... the President of the United
States of America...

Washington enters. There's a moment of dead silence, a few breaths taken... the moment where, for the first time since the destruction of the Roman Republic by Caesar, a true democracy again exists on earth. The room breaks into applause.

ON WASHINGTON
Humbled by the overwhelming
responsibility he's taken on.

Yet beaming, knowing that a great quest has been so perfectly fulfilled. His eyes stray around the room. Suddenly they come to rest...

HIS POV

It's William Mercer's nearly psychedelic primitive painting of the battle of Princeton.

FADE TO:

EXT. MOUNT VERNON, 1798 - DAY

Washington walks the fields outside Mount Vernon. Sleeves rolled back, shirt unbuttoned, wind in his hair. He carries pen and paper -- thinking and composing... like a kid again.

WASHINGTON (O.S.)
"My dear Sally, years have passed
since we were last together.
They've been times of astonishing
change, sometimes tragic and sometimes
truly wonderful. But I wanted you
to know, that nothing will ever
destroy my memory of those happy
days -- the happiest in my life --
when we lived together in our youth.
(MORE)

WASHINGTON (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I have wondered often that you should not prefer spending the Evening of your life among us, your dear friends, in the country you so dearly loved, rather than close the final scene in a foreign place.

(pause)

A Century hence if this Country keeps united, it bids fair to be one of the greatest and happiest nations in the world."

FADE OUT:

THE END