

Glory

by

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rewrite

by

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"If we meet no more in this world,
May we meet in Glory, where forgiveness abounds."

-- Traditional spiritual

FADE IN:

1 THE LUSH WOODS 1

of Concord, Massachusetts. 1849. Cathedral light filters through ancient trees onto a glen -- where fifty men and women, dressed rather formally in black-and-white, are tilling the dark soil. This is the Utopian collective known as:

2 BROOK FARM 2

A stone's throw from Walden pond -- spiritually as well. Two eight year-old BOYS -- one black and one white -- are playing "soldiers". The black child wears distinctively thick GLASSES. They chase each other through the fields, wrestling as the glasses go flying. Over this, a WOMAN'S VOICE:

WOMAN (V.O.)

There is Perfection in these fields. In the miracle of the harvest. In the beauty of the dawn. Yet it is not for this that we call it a Utopia.

We FOLLOW the little boys as they creep on their bellies through the tall grass toward A SPREADING OAK where a group has gathered for the reading hour. Passionate faces, men, women and children listen in rapt attention to:

3 SARAH BLAKE STURGIS SHAW, 32 3

Her cultured voice and manner reflect her patrician background, her beauty is unmistakably Brahmin, yet there is nothing rarified or fragile about her. In fact, if one were forced to choose one word to describe her, it may well be...fierce

SARAH

What we seek here is a New Awakening. To live not according to the laws of Man, but to follow a Higher Law. To recreate the world as God intended it.

THE TWO BOYS

creep closer, whispering and giggling.

SARAH

But we are practical men and women. And we know that there is a world beyond this place. A world that is far from perfect.

Suddenly, she looks up and calls out to the two boys:

SARAH

Robert. Come here.

Caught, the white boy sheepishly walks forward to join her.

SARAH

My son, Robert Gould Shaw, will
read for us today.

She opens the book in her lap and points out the place.

YOUNG SHAW

(reading)

"...It is impossible to
conceive of a human creature
more forlorn than Eliza. By
morning, the cruel slave traders
would come and take her son away
forever."

From nearby, the black boy makes a face -- trying to make
him laugh. Sarah shushes him.

SARAH

Thomas. Behave.

YOUNG SHAW

"--And so she set off North from
Uncle Tom's cabin, wondering at
the strength that seemed to come
upon her as she lifted her grown
boy as if he were a feather."

As Sarah watches him approvingly, we...

CUT TO:

4 ROBERT GOULD SHAW -- TEN YEARS LATER

Now aged 18, slender and handsome, almost Byronic. He is
reading to a parlor full of women. We are in:

THE SHAW FAMILY HOME.

SHAW

"...Cold and hungry, she walked
on, slacking not, pausing not...no
matter how her arms trembled and
her back ached--

At the back of the room, Thomas, also grown, stands among a
GROUP of well-dressed free men, some black, some white. He
makes the same face -- as Shaw continues:

SHAW

"--For she was seeking that singular thing which all of us take for granted. Eliza was walking toward Freedom."

As he concludes, the ladies applaud politely.

SARAH

Thank you, Robert.

(closes the book)

Mothers of Boston, we are all such as Eliza. Women of conviction and courage. But for an accident of birth it could be our own children who are ripped from us and sold into bondage. And yet we sit idly by as the foul sin of slavery endures.

As Sarah continues, Robert edges imperceptibly out of the room.

5 IN THE FOYER

5

Robert closes the door behind him and streaks up the stairs.

6 IN HIS BEDROOM

6

On the bed is a large box. As Shaw tears into it, Thomas appears in the doorway.

SEARLES

Let me see...

SHAW

Wait a minute, wait a minute...

Shaw furiously unwraps the tissue to reveal a hand-tailored CADET'S UNIFORM. He holds it up.

SEARLES

I don't know...

SHAW

What, the braid? You think it's too much--?

He puts on the jacket, tries a variety of poses before the mirror. Searles tisks and shakes his head.

SHAW

(adjusts the shoulders)

Too big?

SEARLES

Jacket's fine. It's the little pipsqueak that's wearing it.

SHAW

You're just jealous.

SEARLES

Absolutely.

He takes the cadet's cap and puts it on, mimicking Shaw's poses.

SEARLES

... 'ten-SHUN!

As Shaw snaps to, A VOICE mocks them from the doorway:

FORBES

Nothing like a whiff of patriotism to bring out the bloodlust of supposedly civilized men.

FORBES is Shaw's best friend. A genial, if sarcastic Brahmin.

SHAW

Forbes!

FORBES

Hello, Robert. Thomas. Off to war, are we--?

SHAW

Only a matter of time, friend.

SEARLES

A steamer left Boston harbor today to relieve the blockade. Sumter can't hold out forever.

SHAW

It's not just the union, Forbes. Democracy, itself, is at risk.

FORBES

(falls down on the bed)
Democracy? This is business.

SHAW

The institution of slavery--

FORBES

--is a commodity. The price of cotton goes up, so does the value of a slave. The south--

And so the argument escalates: "--this isn't just political"
"--moral basis" "--your mother's stupid platitudes," etc.

SEARLES
Ladies, ladies...

FORBES
It must be hard, Rob, being such
a visionary among blind men.

SHAW
(ignoring the sarcasm)
Truly.

Forbes hits him with a pillow.

SHAW
--Something must be done--!

FORBES
I agree. Let's all have a war.
We can play dress up.
(picks up the rest
of the uniform)
Nice fabric. Paris?

SHAW
Come with me.

FORBES
Leave school? Never.

SHAW
School is pointless.

FORBES
Oh. And marching back and forth
while some idiot yells commands
in my ear...that's meaningful.

SHAW
Disunion is inevitable. Sooner
or later, you'll join me.

FORBES
Not...in...a...million years.

SMASH CUT TO:

7 FORBES, IN UNIFORM

Marching in the ranks. At the head of the column, Shaw gives
marching orders. We are in:

THE MASSACHUSETTS STATE ARMORY

where the local Militia is drilling. Their clear-eyed look and finely-cut uniforms reveal this to be what it is: the Beacon Hill version of the R.O.T.C.

8 UP ABOVE - IN THE GALLERY

8

Red-white-and-blue bunting reads, "SUPPORT OUR UNION". And peering over the balustrade, several YOUNG WOMEN who have turned out to watch them drill. Searles watches, as well.

RUSSELL and MORSE, two schoolboy chums, march with them.

RUSSELL

Forbes, where'd you get your uniform? Capital drape!

FORBES

Ulman's on Boylston Street. But Shaw's comes from Paris.

They all make "ooh-la-la's."

SHAW

Quiet in the ranks. Shoulder...
ARMS!

FORBES

Doesn't he just ooze authority--?

RUSSELL

(batting his lashes)
I'm a fool for a man in uniform.

Shaw tries to ignore them and continue the drill.

MORSE

(looks to the balcony)
There's the little brunette,
what a corker!

They all strain their necks to get a look at her.

SHAW

STEP RIGHT, GENTLEMEN!

FORBES

Boring, Shaw. Very boring.

RUSSELL

(to Shaw)
Your family knows Lincoln. Tell him to stop all this posturing and get on with the damned show.

MORSE

Pssst... When we swing right,
look up, it's quite a view.

Shaw frowns as they move under the ironwork lattice of the gallery and look up where:

THE PETTICOATS AND BLOOMERS

undulate above them -- revealing more than one WELL-TURNED ANKLE. As each recruit passes beneath, he strains to get an eye-full. Finally, as Shaw passes beneath, he cannot resist:

SUDDENLY, UP ABOVE, THE PETTICOATS

begin to SWIRL and COLLIDE. LADIES converging on SOMEONE who's just run in. There is yelling and some tears, and though Shaw cranes his neck to see, none of it can be made out.

THE MESSENGER

pushes his way through the ladies and leans over the balustrade.

MESSENGER

(breathless)

Sumter-- Fort Sumter's been attacked.

The playful looks and horseplay suddenly ceases. They all look at one another, uncertain of what to do next. Finally:

RUSSELL

(raising his rifle)

To the Union!

MORSE

To bloody death!

ALL

To bloody death!

CUT TO:

9 AN ARTILERY BURST

9

but without SOUND. Something ominous about the effect.

10 SHAW

10

stands at his bedroom window. Below, a FIREWORKS display over a hastily-erected bandstand with banners urging all young men to "TO ARMS ALL MEN OF UNION." The door opens and his mother enters.

SARAH

I wanted to give you this... I
thought--

She holds up a leather "lap desk" with an ingeniously-designed inkwell and quill penholder.

SHAW

Thank you.

SARAH

(padding it in his duffel)

Father has written to Amory Houghton, he's serving as aide to the Quartermaster General. If there's something you need--

SHAW

I know.

(starts to get out of bed; hesitates)

--Mother..?

She turns away so that he can wrap a robe around himself; he notices his uniform hanging on the door.

SARAH

I had it pressed.

Shaw takes it from her. For the briefest moment, she clings to it, sensing perhaps that giving him the uniform may be sending her son to his death.

SARAH

If only there were some other way...

She looks at him with such tenderness. She is tempted to hug him, but instead girds herself with the noble crusade:

SARAH

Your grandfather...gave his life at Bunker Hill... And now you... offer yourself to the same cause.

(how to say it)

I am so... deeply proud of you.

Shaw looks at her. This kind of emotional moment is difficult for both of them.

SHAW

(picks up his uniform)

Don't worry, Mother. What bullet would dare disturb so fine a fabric...?

CUT TO:

11 OUTSIDE THE HOUSE

11

as Shaw gets into a waiting carriage. Searles comes running down the street. He and Shaw exchange a silent goodbye.

12 FROM AN UPSTAIRS WINDOW

12

Sarah and her husband watch him drive off down Beacon Hill.

SHAW (V.O.)

"Dear Mother,
Life in the Army of the
Potomac is just grand!"

13 SHAW STANDS IN THE POURING RAIN

13

outside a commandeered house somewhere in:

THE VIRGINIA COUNTRYSIDE

Forbest stands beside him. And behind them, an entire regiment awaits its orders. As we MOVE CLOSER, we see that Shaw -- and in fact everyone -- is shivering convulsively.

SHAW (V.O.)

"What a thrill to meet men from
all the States, East and West, joined
together in this common purpose."

THE DOOR OF THE HOUSE OPENS

And four brevet COLONELS and a GENERAL emerge onto the protected veranda from the warm light inside, laughing amongst themselves, lighting cigars.

Shaw looks up. The entire regiment leans forward expectantly.

SHAW (V.O.)

"Our officers are splendid
fellows, many of whom are West
Pointers, veterans of the war
with Mexico and the Indian
campaigns. Our trust in them is
unwavering."

The officers look out -- see that it's still raining, and head back inside -- leaving Shaw to freeze.

14 LATER - THE REGIMENT

14

is camped for the night. By the light of a single candle, Shaw -- wrapped in a blanket -- writes the letter. Rain DRIPS through the canvas of his tent, smearing the ink.

SHAW (V.O.)

"I must thank you for the splendid dress uniform. I plan to wear it for the next regimental inspection -- if ever it stops raining."

A large RAT emerges from the mire underfoot and cautiously approaches Shaw's dinner, uneaten on the table beside him.

SHAW (V.O.)

"And a special thanks to Aunt Nell for the croquet set. It is certain to provide us many long hours of spirited fun and healthy recreation."

The rat sniffs the dinner -- the exact nature of which is difficult to determine -- and turns away. In the brazier, THE CROQUET SET is being used for kindling.

15 IN THE SHAW FAMILY PARLOR

15

Sarah reads Shaw's letter in the sunlit bay window.

SHAW (V.O.)

"But most of all, thank you for your inspiring words, Mother."

16 ON A COUNTRY ROAD

16

A column of fugitive SLAVES moves down a country road with Union GUARDS on either side, herding them forward. The slaves -- wretched and barefoot -- trudge along hopelessly. Shaw and Forbes march at the head of the column.

SHAW (V.O.)

"We are indeed embarked on a noble crusade. Our purpose is clear, our will unbending.
Your son, Robert"

An OLD SLAVE speaks up:

OLD SLAVE

Say, Boss Man, thought you Yankees's'posed to set nigger free.

SHAW

Law says all runaway slaves must be returned to their owners.

OLD SLAVE

Wha' law?

SHAW
Fugitive Slave Act.

OLD SLAVE
But Mr. Lincoln say he free the
slave.

FORBES
(wry)
Mr. Lincoln can't afford to
antagonize the Border States.

OLD SLAVE
De wha'?

SHAW
The states that still have
slaves but remain loyal to the
Union and support it in the war.

OLD SLAVE
But wha' sense de war if it don'
free de slave?

FORBES
Good question.

SHAW
(gives him a look)
Believe me, I know how you feel.
I, myself, am an abolitionist.

OLD SLAVE
Ab'lish'nis? Wha' dat?

SHAW
It's a movement that advocates
the abolition of slavery.

OLD SLAVE
Huh?

SHAW
We want to free the slaves.

The old slave chews on that for a moment, then:

OLD SLAVE
Den why doncha?

Shaw looks to Forbes, who is no help. They have arrived at:

in the Virginia countryside. Forbes and Shaw stand by as a

white FARM OWNER signs a receipt. In the b.g. we SEE a white OVERSEER herd the the Old Slave toward the smokehouse, giving him quick little swats on the rump with a switch.

OVERSEER

Git up there, bo', you making my life miserable. Git, nigga'...

The Old Slave does as he's told, every so often looking back at Shaw. His yellow eyes burn into Shaw's soul as the farm owner hands the receipt to Forbes. Shaw looks away.

SHAW (V.O.)

"Dear Mother, Sad to say, our invading army has turned thousands who were once provided for into a homeless, wandering multitude."

18 THE REGIMENT

18

on the move. They pass one wagonload after another of dispossessed black families -- the boat people of their day.

SHAW (V.O.)

"What a lick it would be to the Successionists to call all the slaves to come enlist on our side, and fight against their old masters. At the very least they'd make wonderful spies."

19 A TROOP TRAIN

19

full of soldiers steams through the tree -- past Shaw's regiment, who slogs through the mud.

SHAW (V.O.)

"Meanwhile, another day spent in what has come to seem one endless and boring march. Every night the rumours spread that tomorrow the regiment will at last see action. And then word of yet another far-off defeat."

20 A SEA OF EQUIPMENT

20

They march past the engines of war, as far as the eye can see.

SHAW (V.O.)

"But we are not disheartened: I am honored to be part of such a splendid Company -- especially now that they have seen fit to promote me to Captain."

21 A SHREDDED FOREST

21

stark, obscenely denuded trees, and a roadside lined with mounds of abandoned equipment. In the distance, A CLOUD of BLACK SMOKE rising over the hills.

SHAW (V.O.)

"My only hope is that we get to see some real action soon. That is what we joined up for, and that is what we want."

SMASH CUT TO:

22 A BODY RIPPED APART

22

by shrapnel. We are in:

THE CORN FIELD (ANTIETAM) - DAY

23

The CRASH of rifles, the dull THUNDER of artillery, SHOUTS and SCREAMING, the weird WAILING of shells ripping overhead.

Through the haze of smoke, a blue LINE of UNION INFANTRY moves forward, heads down, rifles with fixed bayonets held before them, trampling down the high cornstalks as they go.

24 A TREE EXPLODES

24

as shells begin to rain down among them.

25 SHAW

25

walks beside them, sword in hand, face stretched taut and chalky white.

SHAW

Steady, steady now, keep your interval...

26 THE SMOKE

26

has become so thick that the carnage takes on an almost surrealistic quality. This is the bloodiest day in American history -- when belief in the God of the frontal infantry assault came to an ignominious end. When twelve thousand men died within the space of an hour. When the value of a human life took a plunge from which it has never recovered.

27 BODIES PILE UP

27

and are left SCREAMING underfoot as the regiment presses on.

28 IN A THICKET

28

Shaw spots a squad of Confederate SKIRMISHERS. With skill

and precision, he quickly turns his line, directs fire, and commands an advance as the skirmishers retreat. The men CHEER as they run forward.

29 SHAW

29

stumbles over something.

VOICE

Watch it!

Shaw looks down and recoils. A SOLDIER lies at Shaw's feet with a gaping belly wound. His intestines slither through his fingers like so many slippery blue snakes.

30 SHAW

30

is horrified yet unable to look away. Morse hurries forward.

MORSE

(above the din)

Come on, Rob! They're on the run!

Shaw can't take his eyes from the pleading SOLDIER. But somehow he begins to move forward. Russell joins them.

RUSSELL

For God's sake, we can't stop--
Come on--!

And then:

31 RUSSELL'S HEAD EVAPORATES

31

in pink vapor and the headless corpse pitches over backward. Shaw flinches as his face is sprayed with flecks of blood.

32 THE ADVANCE

32

is faltering now as more and more men are CUT DOWN.

33 MEN PANIC

33

and begin to flee. Shaw tries to stop them by waving his sword and exhorting them back into line.

34 A DESERTER

34

is shot by a Union Officer as he tries to run away. Shaw cannot bring himself to SHOOT his own men and instead watches helplessly as the charge becomes A ROUT and the officers are overwhelmed by the rush of terrified men.

35 A REBEL COMPANY

35

suddenly appears nearby. As they raise their rifles--

36 TIME SLOWS DOWN

36

as Shaw frantically tries to rally his retreating company.

37 THE REBS FIRE

37

and men FALL in bunches around Shaw, leaving him exposed and vulnerable.

38 AN EXPLOSION

38

knocks him to the ground. He grabs his neck, feeling blood. But he is not dead. He is surrounded by:

39 CORPSES

39

One of which opens his eyes and stares back at him.

40 ABOVE THEM

40

FEET run back and forth, first GREY and then BLUE, as the tide of battle ebbs and flows in an ever more abstract hallucination of severed limbs, dead horses and piled corpses.

DISSOLVE TO:

41 INT. DUNKER CHURCH - DAY

41

The battle is over and this is what purgatory looks like: a tiny one-room country church filled with desperately wounded men laid out end-to-end in the pews and on the floor. Their SCREAMS and MOANS gather into one long continuous wail.

Mist-laden sunbeams shining through shell-holes in the roof fall on the altar which serves as an operating table where TWO SURGEONS in bloody aprons work on a young SOLDIER. Naked except for his shoes, with eyes like a wild animal, ORDERLIES struggle to keep him flat so the Surgeons can cut.

SURGEON

Hold the son of a bitch, damn it! Where's the chloroform--!?

SHAW, with his oozing neck wound, watches the scene with macabre fascination -- as a HOSPITAL STEWARD walks up to him:

STEWARD

So, it's the neck, right, Captain?

SHAW

What? Oh, yes.

STEWARD

Well, the surgeons're all busy
but I'll fix you up right enough.

(probes the wound)

Hmmm...let me know if I hurt
you... Get this in the fight today?

(Shaw nods)

Biggest yet. Hear the latest?

SHAW

(wincing)

What's that?

STEWARD

Well, I had it from a friend
who's a dispatch rider who got
it from a friend of his who's
one of Stanton's clerks in the War
Office. He says Lincoln's gonna
issue what he calls an
Emancipation Proclamation. Gonna
free the slaves.

SHAW

What?

STEWARD

Well maybe not the ones in the
Border States or something, I
don't know, but he's gonna free
some of 'em anyway...

SHAW

My God...

STEWARD

Yeah, says he would've done it
sooner only he was waiting on a
big victory...

(looks around: dry)

...which is I guess what this is.

A makeshift SCREEN is set up to hide the surgery. Somehow,
the backlit shadowplay is all the more hideous.

STEWARD

Think they'll give a rat's ass?

SHAW

Who?

STEWARD

The slaves.

SHAW

I don't know. Probably. Yes.

STEWARD

They better. I never even saw a
ni-gro 'fore I joined up.

From behind the screen, the Naked Soldier is sobbing now, wailing:

SOLDIER

Please don't cut anymore, please
don't cut, please, PLEASE...

Tears well up in Shaw's eyes:

STEWARD

Am I hurtin' you, Captain? I'm sorry.

As if in a trance, Shaw walks away and heads:

42 OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

42

where dead bodies line the path. Shaw stops an ENLISTED MAN.

SHAW

The 2nd Massachusetts?

The man just looks blankly at Shaw and walks past. All
around them:

SOLDIERS OF BOTH SIDES

have come together under flags of truce -- tying ropes to
the legs of the dead in order not to have to touch them.
They eye each other warily, forced by the moment to regard
one another in the sunlight.

Shaw presses on, looking for some sign of his regiment.

43 TOPPING A RISE

43

he looks out over the smoking cornfield. It is literally
covered with bodies, two and three deep. Over the hills, the
MOON is rising. The black powder from thousands of muskets
still hangs over the fields, turning the moon BLOOD-RED.

44 BY THE SHADE OF A SPREADING OAK

44

He sits down and buries his face in his hands.

VOICE

You hurt, son?

Shaw has momentarily lost the power of speech. He squints
into the sun to see a big, bearded, middle-aged black man.
If God is black, this is what he looks like. JOHN RAWLINS
watches him calmly until Shaw can no longer stand it:

SHAW

What!?

RAWLINS

You sittin' on my shovel.

Shaw looks down and discovers a large shovel wedged into a crevice

SHAW

Sorry.

The man takes the shovel and starts off.

SHAW

Excuse me... I'm sorry. You wouldn't happen to know where I might find the 2nd Massachusetts?

RAWLINS

(scrutinizing him)

...Same place y'find all the others.

(lifts his shovel)

Right where I puts 'em.

Shaw stares at him, suddenly realizing this man is a gravedigger.

SHAW

Do you...remember where you... where they...

RAWLINS

My line of work, son, they all commence to look pretty similar.

CUT TO:

45

A COUNTRY ROAD - LATER

45

Shaw and Rawlins are walking among the dazed remnants of the Army of the Potomac. Shaw steps past a wagonload of wounded to a burly COLONEL walking alongside.

SHAW

Colonel, excuse me--

COLONEL

(edgy)

Colonel's dead, I just needed a coat is all. Here, take it...

SHAW

It's all right, I'm just trying to find an officer.

COLONEL

(calming down)

Hardly a one left. 'Cept him up there. And he don't know if it's day or night--

On the wagon, a CAPTAIN whose entire head is swathed in bandages. Shaw notices that Rawlins has moved on ahead and hurries to catch up.

SHAW

I really appreciate your help.

RAWLINS

You finds your army, I finds more work.

A battery of HORSE-DRAWN ARTILERY roars past. Any intention of finding out anything from them is pointless.

46 UNTOUCHED FIELDS OF CORN

46

Shaw and Rawlins are tiny specks in a vast landscape.

47 IN THE FOREST -- LATER

47

Shaw watches hungrily as Rawlins eats an apple. Shaking his head slightly, Rawlins digs out another and flips it to Shaw.

SHAW

Mmmmm....it's been...I don't know... I haven't eaten since--

RAWLINS

Whole day without food--?

He tisks. Shaw looks up, sensing the sarcasm.

SHAW

Say, Rawlins, I wonder if you've heard about Lincoln... the proclamation? Complete freedom for the slaves, it's terribly bold.

RAWLINS

Piece a paper.

SHAW

No, no, a presidential proclamation is binding.

RAWLINS

Piece a paper don make us free.

Shaking his head he walks on. Shaw hurries to catch up.

48 COUNTRY ROAD -- DUSK

48

Way in the distance, they see a BLUR of BLUE uniforms. Shaw hesitates. Rawlins puts a hand on his back.

RAWLINS

Know how ya feel, son, but don' even think about it...

Shaw swallows hard and they walk forward. A PICKET challenges them from behind a large rock.

PICKET

Who goes there--?

SHAW

Shaw. 2nd Massachusetts. I don't know the password.

A RUSTLING in the brush as the picket hurries off. Shaw turns to Rawlins, uncertain as to how to say goodbye.

SHAW

I'm deeply indebted to you, Mr. Rawlins. ...I have money in my kit, if you'd allow me to show my appreciation--

The look on Rawlins face is difficult to describe: somewhere between disappointment and loathing.

FORBES (V.O.)

Shaw?!

Forbes can be seen running forward from across a field.

FORBES

We thought you'd been--? How--

As Forbes runs up, Shaw turns around to introduce him to Rawlins, but the big man is already walking away.

SHAW

Rawlins...! A pleasure to--

RAWLINS

(raises his shovel without looking back)
Pray we don meet again, son.

He continues on into the woods. Shaw can only watch him go.

CUT TO:

A SILVER TEA SERVICE

as it is poured into Limoges china cups. We are:

INT. SHAW FAMILY PARLOR - AFTERNOON

A reception in honor of Shaw's first leave. The same earnest, well-bred FACES and tasteful conversation as have always made up Shaw's world now seem vaguely other-worldly -- juxtaposed with the horrors Shaw has lately seen.

PARTY GUEST #1

--Twelve thousand casualties on
a single day...

PARTY GUEST #2

Terrible. Will this ordeal
never end?

(tasting a canape)

Mmmmmmm..... Have you tried these?

SHAW

takes refuge by the punch bowl -- where Searles finds him.

SEARLES

There's stronger in the kitchen...

SHAW

Thomas!

SEARLES

Captain Shaw. I was so proud
when I heard.

SHAW

They had no choice, all the
other officers are dead.

(on Searles' look)

I'm joking.

SEARLES

Is it as bad as they say?

SHAW

I'm fine. Really.

SEARLES

And Forbes...?

SHAW

Impossible as always. He's here
somewhere. What are you up to?

SEARLES

Doing what I can. Working for
the Freedman's bureau. There's
so much that needs to be--

Nearby, a servant closes the shutters with a sharp CRACK.
Shaw FLINCHES, the ladle in his hand clattering against the
glass punch bowl, red punch staining the white tablecloth.

SEARLES

Robert? Are you all right?

Before he can respond, his mother appears at his side.

SARAH

There you are! Robert, darling,
there's someone we want you to meet--

50

IN THE LIVING ROOM

50

A distinguished-looking man is holding court -- GOVERNOR JOHN
ANDREW. And by Shaw's father's side, the leonine, graying
eminence that is FREDERICK DOUGLASS.

DOUGLASS

--finally the great opportunity
is at hand.

GOVERNOR ANDREW

--If Lincoln will accede to such
a politically fraught--

FRANCIS SHAW

Then damn Lincoln, we'll do it
ourselves.

(sees Shaw)

Ah, Robert -- You know the
Governor. Have you ever met
Frederick Douglass...?

SHAW

--Mr. Douglass.

GOVERNOR ANDREW

I understand you were at Antietam.

Those chatting nearby fall silent. There is something
public, something of an annointment in this encounter:

SHAW

(a slight pause)

Yes.

GOVERNOR ANDREW

A great and terrible day.

GOVERNOR ANDREW (CONT.)

I could use your help, Robert.
As an experienced officer who is
above any vulgar contempt for
color.

FRANCIS

(beaming)

The Governor is proposing to
raise a regiment of black
soldiers.

Shaw's reaction is more muted than he, or the Governor, expects.

GOVERNOR ANDREW

The enlistment of colored
soldiers will be the greatest
thing ever done for the Negro.

DOUGLASS

We will offer pride and dignity
to those who have known only degradation.

SARAH

Colored soldiers, Rob. Think of
it!

SHAW

(subdued)

-- Wonderful.

GOVERNOR ANDREW

I have submitted your name to be
commissioned Colonel of the 54th
Massachusetts Infantry.

SHAW

Thank you, Governor, but I must
respectfully decline.

(looks around)

Will you excuse me--?

He turns and walks away, ignoring the murmurs of those
around him. Sarah takes the Governor aside.

SARAH

I'm sorry, he's... lost many
friends. Let me talk to him.

GOVERNOR ANDREWS

Of course.

She hurries out to find him.

Shaw looks out over the bell towers and spires.

SARAH

Robert, I know what you've been through--

SHAW

I'm fine.

SARAH

But you seem so... I haven't once seen you smile--

Shaw looks at her, does his best imitation of a smile.

SARAH

Darling, can't you see what this means? To our cause?

SHAW

Of course I can.

SARAH

Then you must do your part.

SHAW

Mother, I can't--

(stops himself)

I am not...qualified. To command.

SARAH

Of course you are.

SHAW

No. I-- I'm sure I'm not.

(looks away)

I'm sorry.

The disappointment in her eyes is beyond description. When she speaks it is from someplace inside rarely touched:

SARAH

Every morning I go downstairs to fetch the newspapers. On page three, the names of the dead are in a long column bordered in black... Every morning I search that column expecting to see your name. And when it isn't there, I take no solace, knowing that I must awaken the next morning and look again.

SARAH (CONT.)

Why has he lived and others died, I ask myself? To what purpose has he been spared?

(almost to herself)

From the time you were a little boy, Robert, there has always been something...aglow...about you. I used to think it was only because I was your mother-- but others saw it, too.

(with growing intensity)

--as if you...embodied all the beliefs and dreams your father and I have devoted our lives to. As if you and I--

She is trying not to cry now -- certain things that can never be said, and so she stops.

SARAH

You are destined to accomplish great things, Robert.

Shaw moves a few steps away, smiling almost ruefully.

SARAH

Governor Andrews is expecting you to accompany him to Washington on the morning train. Do not disappoint us.

52 IN THE PARTY

52

Shaw brushes past party guests, several of whom call out their congratulations: "Well done, Shaw!"

53 IN THE GARDEN

53

Shaw breathes deeply in the crisp night air.

FORBES (V.O.)

Silliest damn thing I've ever heard.

Forbes has followed him outside. Shaw turns around.

FORBES

It'd be joke of the army, you know. You'd be ridiculed.

SHAW

I'm going to do it.

FORBES
Of course you are.

SHAW
Join me.

FORBES
(laughs)
Picture me in command of a
colored regiment. No. Picture
me in command of anything.

SHAW
I would be honored to have you.

FORBES
Then you're an idiot.

Shaw looks at him for a long moment. Then:

SHAW
Truly.

Forbes shakes his head, the man is hopeless.

SEARLES (V.O.)
Robert--

Searles stands framed in the kitchen doorway, the SOUNDS of
the party muted from with.

SEARLES
...Is it true? There's to be a
black regiment?

FORBES
(sighs)
So it seems.

SEARLES
Then I am your first volunteer.

As we HOLD on Searles' face, flushed and lit from within:

VOICE
The black man...has had his
manhood crippled for two hundred
years. Who's to say that he is
capable of fighting for anything?

We are in:

54 AN IMPOSING ROOM IN THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE BUILDING

54

A graying Union GENERAL is joined at an immense oak table by

several STATESMEN in dark suits. Governor Andrew faces this august group. Shaw and Forbes sit nearby, serving as aides-de-camp.

SENATOR

General Hunter's experiment with the coloreds was a disaster...

GOVERNOR ANDREW

General Hunter rounded up a bunch of freed slaves, called them "contraband" and kept them in a camp like cattle. The War Office then decided they would be armed with pikes rather than guns.

(coloring)

Of course they deserted, so would I.

CABINET MEMBER

Gentlemen, please. Our purpose is to reconcile the wishes of the State of Massachusetts with the interests of the Union -- not to debate politics.

SENATOR

Nevertheless...arming the Negro is a deliberate provocation.

STATESMAN #2

(heated)

To whom, Senator--?

Shaw has been observing the squabbling with the fascination of one made privy for the first time to such rarified proceedings.

SENATOR

There are those in my constituency whom the ghost of John Brown continues to haunt. The fear of servile rebellion--

Finally he can't help but speak up:

SHAW

We're talking about soldiers--!

SENATOR

Now, yes. But after the war...?

Andrews places a calming arm on Shaw as if to say, let me handle this:

GOVERNOR ANDREW
Perhaps it will reassure the
Senator to know that this regiment
will naturally be commanded
entirely by white officers...

Forbes catches Shaw's eye, winks.

GENERAL
The army doesn't need symbolic
gestures. Let the coloreds
work, for God's sake. They're strong.
They can build roads...

A PAGE hurries in to whisper a message to the Cabinet Member.

CABINET MEMBER
If you'll excuse me for a moment--

He steps outside the room, where in the distance, we can SEE
a very tall and familiar SILHOUETTE. Shaw whispers to Forbes:

SHAW
It's him.

FORBES
My God, who's his tailor?

The Cabinet Member returns.

CABINET MEMBER
Gentlemen, there will be no
further discussion -- a charter
is granted for the 54th Massachusetts
to begin accepting volunteers.

Off Shaw's look, we:

CUT TO:

55 A TORCHLIT GATHERING

55

FREDERICK DOUGLASS stalks back and forth across an impromptu
stage like a lion preparing to strike:

DOUGLASS
When this war began the colored
man was denied a place in the
line of battle. The arm of the
slave would not defend the Union
against the arm of the
slaveholder. But now Massachusetts,
first in the war of Independence,
first to break the chains of her
slaves-- Massachusetts calls you
to arms as her soldiers...

Shaw stands in the background, listening intently. The crowd is so silent we can hear the crackle of their burning torches.

DOUGLASS

The cowards among us will tell
you this is the "white man's war."
Believe them not. Liberty won
by white men would lack half its
lustre. Who would be free must
themselves strike the blow.
Better even to die free than to
live as slaves...

We PAN the spellbound faces. One of them, an open-faced runaway, JUPITER SHARTS, with tears running down his face.

DOUGLASS

By every tie that binds you, by
every dream you cherish for the
freedom of your children, by all
the ties of blood, I urge you to
rise up and smite with death the
power that would bury the
Government and your liberty in
the same hopeless grave. There
is not time for delay. The day
dawns. The iron gates of our
prison stand half open. One
gallant rush will fling it wide
and millions of our brothers and
sisters shall march out into
Liberty! Do not doubt, do not
hesitate -- MEN OF COLOR, TO ARMS!

The church ERUPTS with cheers. The MUSIC heard over comes from:

56 A REGIMENTAL BAND

56

playing at one end of a blocked-off BLOCKED-OFF STREET. We PAN past these spirited musicians to:

A TATTERED ASSEMBLY

of BLACK MEN, some in rags, some without shoes, They stand purposelessly, roughly formed into companies, uncertain of what to do next.

57 AN IMPOSING SORREL MARE

57

rides into foreground, snorting steam in the cold morning. We TILT UP to reveal Shaw, ramrod straight in the saddle, studying the recruits, who watch in awe and apprehension. Some of them are moved to speak: "That must be the Colonel"; "Ready to whup the Secesh, Gen'ral"; "Hey, Boss, when do we gets the blue suit?" Among the sea of faces, one stands out:

58 RAWLINS

58

returns Shaw's stare, giving only the slightest nod. Up ahead:

59 SEARLES

59

stands among a group of better-dressed Boston blacks. As Shaw passes he WINKS conspiratorially. Shaw doesn't quite know how to respond and so he doesn't.

FORBES AND MORSE

greet Shaw as he reaches them at the head of the line.

SHAW

Good morning, gentlemen.

They ad lib their greetings, and then stand there awaiting his orders. Shaw looks around, as if he, too, is waiting. Finally

RUSSELL

(stage whisper)

Close order drill...

SHAW

We will commence with close order drill. To your posts please.

The officers try to suppress their grins as they carry out his order. Shaw looks around, decidedly ill at ease.

60 ALONG THE STREET AND IN THE WINDOWS

60

Groups of LOCALS have come to gawk. Teenagers hang from the trees. There are also several REPORTERS.

61 ON THE PARADE GROUND

61

Forbes is attempting to lead the men in the most elementary maneuvers. It is clear from the chaos that ensues that many of them don't know their right foot from their left.

62 ON HIS HORSE

62

Shaw is justifiably upset by what he sees. Wistfully, he looks down the street where the REGULAR ARMY is smartly proceeding with close-order drill.

63 A DOG

63

breaks free of its master and runs out into the street to BARK at the recruits. Many of them are genuinely TERRIFIED and any semblance of order breaks down completely.

64 THE LOCALS

64

laugh openly at the confusion. As do many of the Regular Army soldiers. Forbes comes to stand beside Shaw, salutes:

FORBES

(wry)

Colonel, I present the regiment.

As Shaw gives him a look, we:

DISSOLVE TO:

65 AN ABANDONED LARD FACTORY

65

Dead tired from a long march, the 54th trudges on: Searles reads as he walks. JUPITER SHARTS, an eighteen year-old with gap-toothed smile watches him closely:

SHARTS

Good book, brother?

SEARLES

Yes, it is. The name's Searles.
Thomas Searles.

SHARTS

Jupiter Sharts. What's it
'bout, that book?

SEARLES

It's a collection of essays,
actually. Fourier, Emerson, all
the transcendentalists, you know...

SHARTS

Huh. It got pictures?

UP AHEAD

Crumbling and forlorn is READVILLE CAMP -- training site of the 54th. Outside, a shanty town of suttlers, laundry and burning rubbish.

FORBES

(to Shaw; dry)

Home.

DISSOLVE TO:

66 A BARRACKS TENT

66

Rawlins and Searles and Sharts fall in, exhausted. Already in the tent, having staked out his place, is SILAS TRIP. He has a canny grin and a wild look in his eye as he watches Searles unpack a large trunk.

TRIP

My space, nigger.

(Searles stiffens)

I sleeps better close on the door.

SEARLES

If you don't mind, I'd prefer
someplace with sufficient
reading light.

TRIP

Ooooh, I love it when niggers
talk good as white folk.

SEARLES

I'd be glad to teach you. It
would be my pleasure.

TRIP

Lissen, Snowflake, I ain't got
nothin' to learn from no house
nigger.

SEARLES

I happen to be a free man, as
was my father before me.

TRIP

That so? Then how 'bout you
move those free buns 'for I bust
'em up.

RAWLINS

Easy, son.

TRIP

Easy yourself, pap.

SEARLES

(backing down)

It's all right. I'll be fine
over there.

He lugs his trunk across the tent. A YOUNG BOY wanders in
and sits in the corner on the floor, tentatively beating on
his new Army drum.

SHARTS

Wonder when dey gonna give us de
blue suit.

TRIP

They don' give no blue suit to
no nigger. Blue suit fo' the
white soldier.

SHARTS

But we soldiers now.

TRIP

Hey, where you from, field hand?

SHARTS

Lou'siana.

TRIP

Then you oughtta know better.

(to the boy)

Hey, quit that drummin', boy...

I said, quit--!

The boy stops and moves away, frightened.

TRIP

What's your name, runt--?

(the boy just stares)

I said, what's your name?

SEARLES

Can't you see he's mute.

TRIP

Say what?

RAWLINS

Come 'ere, honey.

Rawlins comforts the boy. Trip paces:

TRIP

Dummies and field hands. Oh, I like this man's army.

RAWLINS

(to Trip)

How 'bout you, young buck?

Where you from?

TRIP

Tennessee. Run away when I's twelve and never looked back.

SHARTS

What you doin' since then?

TRIP

Oh...I run for President.

(smiles)

I didn' make it.

CUT TO:

in a smokey gutted factory building. Shaw watches them wolf down their food. Many of the men eat with their hands; SHARTS lifts his plate to his mouth and guzzles his stew, the gravy dripping down his chin.

Searles approaches Forbes:

SEARLES

Major...?

(Forbes doesn't turn)

Forbes... That's you.

FORBES

(smiling)

How was dinner?

SEARLES

The remoulade was somewhat tart but the souffle for dessert more than made up for it.

FORBES

--And the company?

SEARLES

Charming. Extraordinary conversationalists, every one.

AMONG THE ENLISTED MEN

Trip sees Forbes and Searles chatting. He points and makes a joke to those sitting around him. They LAUGH uproariously.

Shaw has observed this. He calls to Forbes:

SHAW

Major. A word, please.

Forbes excuses himself and joins Shaw.

SHAW

I won't have that kind of fraternization.

FORBES

It's Thomas.

SHAW

He's an enlisted man. This regiment will have discipline.

It takes Forbes a moment to realize that Shaw isn't kidding. He swallows the pill.

FORBES

You're right, of course.

Nearby, Searles tries to catch Shaw's eye. But Shaw turns on his heel and walks away.

CUT TO:

68 OMIT

68

69 ON THE PARADE GROUND

69

Mulcahy is losing patience as they practice close-order drill.

MULCAHY

Squad halt!

He approaches them and slaps Sharts on top of the head:

MULCAHY

For God's sake, don't you know your left from your right?

SHARTS

(pauses; looks down)

No, sir.

MULCAHY

How many here don't know left from right?

Three or four others raise their hands. Trip snickers.

MULCAHY

Jesu, have pity.

(to Sharts)

Do you know what hay looks like?

SHARTS

Yes, sir.

MULCAHY

Good. Do you know what straw looks like?

As he nods, we--

SMASH CUT TO:

70 SHARTS

70

and the others now have clumps of hay tied to their left feet and straw tied to their right -- as Mulcahy calls cadence:

MULCAHY

Hay foot, straw foot, hay foot--

ON THE PARADE GROUND (MONTAGE)

IMAGES of Mulcahy inspecting a squad at attention, slapping stomachs. When he jerks Trip's head to front, Trip bristles. Mulcahy teaches facings by gripping Searles by the ear and roughly slapping him into position. He stands within inches of a young recruit and SCREAMS into his face.

Shaw and Forbes are watching, aware that some white OFFICERS are watching, too:

SHAW

(in answer to Forbes)

--The man's record is impeccable. Wounded twice, decorated for bravery at Bull Run and Manassas.

FORBES

He's also Irish, a group not noted for their fondness for the colored.

SHAW

A Sergeant-Major is supposed to be hated, that's his job.

FORBES

Yes, but...

SHAW

(cutting him off)

What about the uniforms--?

FORBES

No word.

SHAW

And the rifles--?

(Forbes shakes his head)

See to it.

Shaw turns on his heel and strides off. Forbes watches him go -- perplexed by the changes taking place in his friend.

INSIDE SHAW'S TENT

where Shaw sits alone, writing on his lap desk.

SHAW (V.O.)

"Dear Mother, Training began today. These men learn quickly. I am pleased with their progress."

71B ON THE PARADE GROUND

71B

Having drilled all day, the men are on the brink of collapse. But Mulcahy is relentless. As he inspects them we can SEE in their faces an extraordinary intensity.

SHAW (V.O.)

"Unlike white troops, they seem willing to endure the indignities of training without complaint. And yet this is not borne out of subservience--"

72 AMONG THE TENTS

72

Rawlins helping recruits learn correct facings. Searles teaching Sharts to read. Trip shooting dice in a circle.

SHAW (V.O.)

"--It occurs to me there is something inherently noble in lives that have been defined by physical toil -- no matter how ironic the cruel circumstances that engendered it."

73 IN SHAW'S QUARTERS

73

He sits finishing the letter:

SHAW (V.O.)

"In closing, thanks again to Aunt Nell for the fudge. In future, however, it may be wise to send items that are somewhat less perishable. As ever. Your son, Robert."

Forbes enters, carrying a sheaf of orders. He looks upset as he hands them to Shaw.

FORBES

(as Shaw reads)

What do we do...?

SHAW

(thinks a moment)

Assemble the men.

74 DARK CLOUDS

74

are gathering as Shaw faces the ragged columns.

SHAW

(reading)

In accordance with the President's wishes, you men are advised that the Confederate Congress has issued a proclamation which reads in part: "Any negro taken in arms against the Confederacy will immediately be returned to a state of slavery."

As he continues, we PAN from Rawlins to Trip to Sharts and finally to Searles. A light RAIN begins to fall.

SHAW

Any negro taken in federal uniform will be summarily put to death. Any white officer taken in command of negro troops shall be deemed as inciting servile insurrection--

(meets Forbe's look:)

--and shall likewise be put to death. Full Discharges shall be granted in the morning to all those who apply. That is all. Dismissed.

THE RECRUITS

break formation, buzzing with reaction to the announcement. Shaw speaks to Forbes as he lowers his head and walks away.

SHAW

If you're not here in the morning, I'll understand...

Nearby, Sharts just stands there, reeling.

TRIP

Still want the blue suit, nigger?

DISSOLVE TO:

75 A PICKET ON GUARD DUTY IN THE RAIN (MUSIC OVER) 75

in the middle of the night. A CLOSER LOOK shows it to be Rawlins. He is looking at a DAGUERROTYPE of his family.

76 IN THE TENT (MUSIC OVER) 76

Sharts lies sleepless, listening to the rain. He looks past Trip, who is sound asleep, to see Searles -- crying softly.

77 OMIT 77

77A SHAW'S PRIVATE QUARTERS

77A

where Shaw, too, lies awake.

DISSOLVE TO:

78 DAWN

78

Reveille is sounded as Shaw emerges from his quarters. Forbes is there to salute him. Shaw acknowledges the formality.

FORBES
Formed and ready, sir.

SHAW
How many are left?

Forbes points to where:

THE ENTIRE REGIMENT

is assembled for morning inspection. Shaw shakes his head:

SHAW
(in wonder)
Goddamn'...

DISSOLVE TO:

79 THE PARADE GROUND

79

has become a SEA of MUD as the men slog through regimental drill. Back and forth, up and down, WHEELING and PIVOTING until at last they get the command to parade rest. Mulcahy studies them clinically, and after a long moment:

MULCAHY
Again.

80 LATER -- SHAW AND FORBES

80

watch as Searles drops to the ground, puking from exhaustion. Mulcahy is on him in a second.

MULCAHY
Yer not dismissed, boyo. Get up!

Searles sees Shaw watching. His eyes plead silently.

MULCAHY
You'll fall out when I say and
not before, d'ya understand English?
(prods him in the
side with his boot)
I said, GET UP!

Finally, Shaw can't take it:

SHAW
(calling out)
Sergeant Mulcahy.

Mulcahy turns and SNAPS to attention.

MULCAHY
Sir--!

SHAW
Can you-- I'd like to speak to
you for a moment. Please.
(to Forbes)
Major-- Have the men fall out
until evening mess.

Mulcahy strides over and stands rigidly at attention. In the background, Forbes gives the command for the men to fall out.

SHAW
At ease, Sergeant.

Mulcahy stands at parade rest -- fiercely.

SHAW
...I have no doubt you are a
fair man, Mulcahy. Yet I wonder
if perhaps you are pushing these
men a bit too hard.

Mulcahy says nothing, only stares straight ahead.

SHAW
Do you disagree--?
(still, the stare)
You may speak freely.

MULCAHY
(after a long moment)
The boy's yer friend, is he--?

SHAW
(taken aback)
We grew up together. Yes.

MULCAHY
Let him grow up some more.

SHAW
I see.

MULCAHY
Will that be all, sir--?

SHAW

Yes. I mean, dismissed.

Mulcahy turns on his heel and strides off.

CUT TO:

81 THE BEAUTIFUL BOOK

81

that we have seen Searles reading -- as Trip flings it through the air, pages flapping, to a laughing RECRUIT. Searles chases them frantically through THE CAMPGROUND.

SEARLES

Give it back!

Trip laughs maniacally, ripping pages at will.

SEARLES

For God's sake, it's mine!

Trip holds it up, just out of reach.

TRIP

Jump! Good doggie! Whoops!

The hand-stitched cover TEARS AWAY from the binding. Searles picks it up almost tenderly. Looks at Trip.

TRIP

Oooh, Snowflake mad now. You gonna hit me, house boy--? Gonna tell the Colonel--? No?

(leans in)

Boo-hoo-hoo. You gonna cry?

Searles turns away and hurries into:

82 HIS TENT

82

to throw himself, face down, on his bedding. Outside, we can HEAR Trip and the others laughing. Rawlins sits in his place in the corner, watching Searles, saying nothing.

DISSOLVE TO:

87 AN ARMOURER'S WAGON

87

that has been pulled onto the parade ground. As Forbes calls each recruit's name, a rifle is thrust into his hands.

SEARLES

.58 caliber Enfield rifled musket. Best in the world.

SHARTS

Wwwwoooooeessss...

RAWLINS

Know how to work one of these,
do you...?

SHARTS

Believe I do.

TRIP

(fondling it)
Beautiful.

Inevitably, some of them begin play-acting with the guns --
pretending to shoot, acting-out dramatic deaths.

ON HORSEBACK

Shaw watches their antics. We MOVE CLOSER and see in his
eyes that each mock-death recalls a nightmarish memory --
perhaps we see a FLASH CUT of Antietam, or perhaps the music
will be enough -- but it is too much for him to take.

88

TARGET PRACTICE

88

has begun. Sharts is on the line and he is a fine shot. As
he knocks cans from a fence, the men WHOOP and CHEER.
Shaw dismounts and strides forward, watches a moment as Sharts
takes careful aim -- and knocks another can from the fence.
The men stiffen as Shaw approaches.

SHAW

You are a good shot, Private.

SHARTS

Thank you, sir. Squirrel huntin'.

SHAW

Have you ever killed a man?

SHARTS

No, sir.

SHAW

--But you're handy with a gun?

SHARTS

Yes, sir.

SHAW

(nods)
Reload.

Sharts takes a cartridge from his box, tears it with his teeth, pours powder and ball into the muzzle, rams it home.

SHAW

Faster.

(Sharts fumbles a bit)

Faster.

After a bit more fumbling, Sharts manages.

SHAW

Discharge your weapon and do it again. Only this time, I want it done quickly--!

Sharts is beginning to sweat now. As he begins all over again, Shaw turns to Forbes.

SHAW

Hand me your Colts revolver.

Shaw takes the gun, COCKS it and AIMS it at Shart's head.

SHAW

Faster.

(fires)

Faster--!

(fires again)

Do it! DO IT--!

Shart's hands are shaking so he cannot handle the task.

SHAW

Play time is over, Captain Forbes.
Teach them properly.

As he turns and walks away, Rawlins shakes his head. But Forbes watches in quiet fury.

DISSOLVE TO:

84

VARIOUS KINDS OF CORPORAL DISCIPLINE (MONTAGE)

84

as they are meted out. Some men have their heads shaved and wear barrels, others are bound-and-bucked. As the offense demands. Through it all, Shaw watches impassively. Forbes, however, is reaching the breaking point.

ON A MISTY HILLSIDE

83

at Dawn. Shaw, on horseback, is slashing pumpkins from a rail, again and again. As he turns and trots back for another pass, he finds Forbes standing there.

SHAW

You're up early, Major.

FORBES
I wonder if I might have a word
with you--?

SHAW
Of course.

FORBES
If you'd be good enough to get
down from your horse--

Shaw notes the sarcasm, then dismounts.

SHAW
...Better?

Forbes stares back at him for a moment, then plunges in:

FORBES
These are good men, Robert. Why
do you treat them this way?

SHAW
What way is that?

FORBES
Like some kind of--

He stops himself.

SHAW
Some kind of...?

FORBES
Slavedriver.

SHAW
(stung)
And how would you would have me
treat them, Forbes? With
kindness. More delicately than...
("whites")
--other men? I will not
patronize them.

FORBES
Are you sure?

SHAW
You know what's waiting for them
out there. They are utterly
unprepared for it.

FORBES
--But you will make them ready.

SHAW

Yes.

Forbes shakes his head and kneels to pick up one of the split gourds from the ground.

FORBES

Why did you accept this
commision, Rob?

SHAW

(after a moment)
To do what was asked of me.

FORBES

No other reason?

SHAW

To win the war. To preserve the
union.

FORBES

And--?

SHAW

To help the black man.

FORBES

Nothing else? Admiration, perhaps.
Veneration?

(pointedly)
Deification?

SHAW

(flatly)
No.

FORBES

(musing)
Have you ever lifted up a rock
and looked at what was underneath?

SHAW

What are you talking about--?

FORBES

There comes a time in everyone's
life, Rob, when they get to see
what's really underneath. Some
look, Some turn away.

(looks at him)
Do you know what I'm talking about?

SHAW

I'm not sure I do.

FORBES

Never mind...

He turns and starts away. Shaw calls out to stop him.

SHAW

Forbes....

Forbes stops, looks back.

SHAW

I'm doing the best I can.

He and Forbes look at one another.

CUT TO:

84A RAWLINS AND HIS GOAT

84A

as he bends down to feed the animal a carrot. A BUGLER sounds the call to muster, interrupting the oddly tender moment. As Rawlins STRAIGHTENS up, we can see the toll this constant drilling is taking on his back.

85 GROUPED INTO TWOS

85

facing each other with pikes, they take bayonet practice under Mulcahy's direction. Searles is extremely timid about striking his opponent -- even in mock combat.

MULCAHY

On guard, advance and thrust!
Lunge and left low parry! Withdraw
and recover...

(to Sharts)

This isn't dancing school, boy.
Take his head off..!

Despite Mulcahy's exhortation, Searles still seems tentative.

MULCAHY

You there. Step forward.
(Searles joins him)
Now, stab me.
(Searles tries again)
I said, stab, not tickle.

Again, Searles lunges half-heartedly.

MULCAHY

Come on you little piss-ant brown
baby. Is it true they cut your
balls off at birth?

At last, Searles really goes for him. In one lightning move, Mulcahy ducks, rolls to his left, comes up and SNAPS his staff into Searle's face, knocking him flat on his back.

Shaw watches intently, as the other recruits begin to murmur. On the ground, Searles is fighting back tears. Mulcahy leans down to offer his hand:

MULCAHY

No shame, son. Get up.

(he hesitates)

I said, get up...

FROM THE REAR RANK

Trip mutters loud enough for others to hear:

TRIP

Nigger forgot to duck.

The men LAUGH. All except Rawlins. Shaw, who has also heard it, steps forward and points to Trip.

SHAW

Sergeant, strike that man.

Mulcahy instantly jerks Trip out of line and SLAMS a hard left into his gut, knocking him gasping to the ground. Trip jumps to his feet, ready to take on Mulcahy. Rawlins grabs him.

RAWLINS

Save it, son.

Trip glares at him. Shaw turns to the men.

SHAW

You men will practice close combat today from sun-up to sundown. You will then do it again tomorrow. You will do it until it becomes your nature to do it. To inflict pain and death upon the enemy.

(to Mulcahy)

Carry on, Sergeant...

AS HE WALKS AWAY

Searles, who has picked himself up and is nursing a gash beneath one eye, whispers:

SEARLES

Robert...

SHAW

What is it, Private?

SEARLES
 (looking around uneasily)
 I wonder if I could speak to you
 for a moment?

Shaw knows that Mulcahy and the others are keenly observing
 this moment -- no matter how private Searles tries to make it.

SHAW
 Those enlisted men wishing to
 speak to the Commanding Officer,
 must first seek permission, or
 else be put on report. Do you
 understand, Private?

SEARLES
 Yes, sir.

Smartly, he salutes and does an about-face. As Shaw watches
 him go -- try though he might, he cannot entirely hide the
 price he has paid for this behavior.

CUT TO:

86 THE BARRACKS TENT - THAT NIGHT

86

The Mute practices his drumming -- as Trip, Sharts and
 Rawlins fall in, exhausted.

SHARTS
 Some thing never change. Guess
 de whole world hate a nigger.

Trip can barely walk -- he painfully pulls off his shoes, examining
 his blistered feet.

TRIP
 Told you to quit that drummin'
 in here, dummy!

The mute stops and looks up, worried. Rawlins takes him
 gently by the shoulder.

RAWLINS
 It's all right, honey. Just take
 it outside.

As the Mute exits through the tent door, they can see Shaw
 trot by in the distance on horseback.

SHARTS
 That Colonel, he a hard man.

TRIP
 He a swell, like to beat a
 nigger.

SHARTS

But he in the same boat wid us.
Secesh take 'im, they kill him too.

TRIP

Not him. He a swell, a
nigger-beatin' swell.

RAWLINS

He's just a boy. Only know fun
all his life. War come, make
him hard. Now there ain' no fun
left in him.

TRIP

What you know about it, gravedigger?

RAWLINS

I know.

TRIP

Yeah? Well, I say he a weak
white boy. Beating on the nigger
make him feel strong.

As he speaks, Searles enters, his eye now swollen almost shut.

TRIP

(on a roll...)

Ain't that right, Snowflake? He
never went to no West Point.
Only reason he in charge is his
Momma and Daddy greased it... I
said, ain't that so--?

Searles throws himself down on his bedding without speaking.
Trip kneels down beside him.

TRIP

Thought he was different, didn't
ya? What you think now...?

(Searles turns away)

You thought you so smart,
Snowflake? You learnin', now.
You in the real school now.

He limps back across the tent and bites into a piece of hardtack.

TRIP

Damn' this pig shit! How we
expected to eat this slop?

He sits and rubs his feet.

TRIP

Man say there a farm not two miles from here. Nigger lady give him biscuits and gravy, says he bring his friends, she feed them, too.

RAWLINS

Don't even think about it.

TRIP

(to Sharts)

What you say, buck? Biscuits and gravy sound good to you?

(rubs his feet)

Maybe find myself some real shoes...

RAWLINS

They find out, they shoot you.

TRIP

You an old man or an old woman, I forget...?

RAWLINS

Don't push it, son.

Trip senses the reality of the threat and backs down.

TRIP

(closing his eyes)

Collard greens, sour mash. Come on, dream... I'm waiting on you.

DISSOLVE TO:

89

THE CAMPGROUND - NIGHT (MUSIC OVER)

89

It has begun to SNOW. The men huddle around their campfires, blankets around their shoulders. It is Christmas Eve. Searles reads aloud to a small group:

SEARLES

"...And then poor Ichabod Crane rode home through the marshes, the ghosts in the shadows shrieked with laughter as he tried to escape them..."

PAN the their faces, rapt to the spoken word. Sharts, in particular

IN THE SHADOWS

Trip listens, his face a mask.

RAWLINS

appears, carrying a steaming pot -- from which he hands out pieces of meat and fat.

RAWLINS

Merry Christmas, children.

We can tell from their enthusiasm that this kind of meal is indeed a special treat.

SHARTS

Say, pap, this good. What this called?

RAWLINS

(without feeling)

Goat.

Trip turns away and heads away from the tents. Approaching from the other direction is Shaw. Trip averts his eyes and walks on. We STAY with Shaw:

SHAW (V.O.)

"Dear Mother, News today of the defeat at Fredericksburg. If things continue to go badly, I wonder if I might not end my days as an outlaw leader of a band of fugitive slaves."

89A As he watches the men huddled together around their little fires, playing cards, cooking, laughing, their obvious sense of community only serves to heighten his own alienation.

89A

SHAW (V.O.)

"Try as I might, I do not know these men. Their songs and smells, everything about them still seems foreign and forbidding..."

Shaw pauses in the shadows, watching Searles.

SHAW (V.O.)

"I miss the easy companionship of my schoolmates, the predictable niceties of home. It being Christmas, I deeply miss you and father. Most of all, I miss your certainty."

89B Shaw approaches the Regular Army Mess nearby. One of the camp WHORES catches Shaw's eye as he approaches.

89B

Christmas decorations. A boisterous atmosphere of cigar smoke and hale-fellow-well-met. Shaw sits at a long table surrounded by white officers.

QUARTERMASTER

You're Shaw, aren't you?
Kendrick. Division quartermaster.
And this sack of shit is Haggis,
he signs vouchers.

SHAW

Pleasure.

PAYMASTER

How's it going down there?

SHAW

Well. Thank you.

QUARTERMASTER

It's all right...the brass are
all up at Division planning the
next disaster.

(leans in)

You're among friends.

PAYMASTER

How much longer you figure they
last--? I hear they're
deserting ten at a time.

SHAW

You're misinformed. We haven't
had a single incident.

QUARTERMASTER

(to the paymaster)

See...? I figure the nigs never
had it so good. Three square a
day. Roof over their heads.

(to Shaw)

Am I right--?

Shaw looks at these smiling men: how to respond to the depths of their ignorance and prejudice when he, himself, is so confused. He chooses to ignore it:

SHAW

Yes.

QUARTERMASTER

If there's anything you need...
A bottle for the cold nights..?

SHAW

Actually, I put in a requisition for shoes over two weeks ago and haven't heard a word.

The quartermaster and paymaster exchange a perplexed look.

QUARTERMASTER

For the niggers?

SHAW

Yes.

QUARTERMASTER

Well, uh...provisionally speaking, we're extremely...limited as to footwear. I'm afraid that kind of item has to be reserved for...those units whose fighting readinesss, uh, supercede yours. You understand, I'm sure.

SHAW

I understand.

(puts down his napkin)

If you'll excuse me...

QUARTERMASTER

Stop by tomorrow... I've got my hands on the most delicious local jam. Myrtleberry, isn't it?

PAYMASTER

Blueberry.

QUARTERMASTER

Right, right. Nice meeting you Shaw...

(after he walks off)

Twit.

CUT TO:

91 OUTSIDE THE OFFICER'S MESS

91

Shaw stands breathing in the cool night air. The Camp WHORE emerges from the shadows. Her regard is at once a defiance and a debasing invitation. Shaw cannot look away.

HARD CUT TO:

92 RUNNING FEET

92

race through the camp. Forbes, Morse, and Mulcahy arrive outside Shaw's quarters.

FORBES

Robert--?

He lifts the blanket and pokes his head:

93

INSIDE

93

to discover Shaw, buttoning his tunic. Behind him, the whore sits on his cot.

FORBES

Excuse me.

SHAW

What is it...?

FORBES

(trying not to stare)

We've...caught a deserter.

On Shaw's look, we:

CUT TO:

94

TRIP

94

bound with rope, paraded through camp to the beat of a drum.

94A

THE RECRUITS

94A

stare as he is marched past -- as if through a gauntlet.

SHARTS

Oh, Lord... This bad. They ain't gonna shoot him, is they?

SEARLES

It'll be all right.

(to Rawlins)

...Won't it--?

At the moment, Rawlins can find no comforting words.

SHAW AND FORBES

stand apart, watching as Trip is led onto the snowy parade ground. Mulcahy salutes them.

MULCAHY

The prisoner is in place, sir.

In his hand is a gnarled CAT-O-NINE TAILS.

FORBES

What is this--?

MULCAHY

The prisoner is to be flogged
before the entire regiment.

FORBES

Robert, you're not serious--?

SHAW

He has been disciplined
repeatedly. And it has
accomplished nothing. An example
must be made.

FORBES

Not with a whip. Not on them.

SHAW

(to Mulcahy)
Excuse us, Sergeant.

MULCAHY

At your pleasure, Colonel.

As he walks off -- Shaw turns on Forbes.

SHAW

(furious)
Never...question my authority in
front of others.

FORBES

I's sorry, massa... You be de
boss man now, and all us
chilluns must learn t'obey...

SHAW

They do not obey me because I am
White. They obey me because I am
their commanding officer.

FORBES

You'll lose them, Robert.

SHAW

You agreed to serve under me.
Serve under me--!
(turns away)
Sergeant Mulcahy. Yoy may commence.

THE STAKE

at which Shaw tethers his horse now serves as a lashing
post. As Shaw approaches, a SNARE DRUM begins a roll

TRIP

looks up unblinkingly as Mulcahy unfurls the cat-o-nine tails.

TRIP'S TUNIC

is removed. And as he is turned to face the post, Shaw SEES that the black man's muscular back is already CRISS-CROSSED WITH SCARS. This is not his first whipping.

Mulcahy hesitates, looking to Shaw for guidance. So does Forbes. And everyone else. Shaw's face is wracked with pain. Has he become what he most despises? Yet he must command.

IN THE FRONT RANK

he sees Rawlins -- who NODS almost imperceptibly.

SHAW

(a long moment, then:)

Proceed.

AT EACH CRACK OF THE LASH

Trip's look burns directly into Shaw's soul. Never once does he cry out, or even wince.

CUT TO:

95 SHAW

95

sprawled across his tent, VIEWED almost objectively from OVERHEAD.

SHAW (V.O.)

"Dear Mother, I feel...

(starts again)

--I feel..."

We SEE that pen and paper lie discarded on the ground.

96 NEAR THE HOSPITAL TENT - THAT NIGHT

96

Shaw approaches Rawlins, who is on guard duty nearby.

RAWLINS

(snaps to attention)

Sir.

SHAW

Rawlins, I... This morning. I---

(finally:)

Thank you...

(no response)

For understanding.

For a long moment, it is as if Rawlins has not heard. Then:

RAWLINS
(almost inaudible)
Man's got to do his job.

SHAW
(awkwardly)
It would be a great...help if,
from time to time, I might...talk
to you...about the men.

Rawlins stares straight ahead, giving nothing away. Shaw sighs.

SHAW
That's all, Rawlins. Dismissed.

As Shaw starts to walk away.

RAWLINS
Shoes.

Shaw stops. Rawlins is hardly even looking at him.

RAWLINS
Men need shoes.

SHAW
Oh, I know, I've been pestering
the quartermaster but you know
how bollixed up these things get--

RAWLINS
No. Today. Boy was out lookin for
shoes. Wants to fight just like
the rest of us. Maybe more.

98 INSIDE THE HOSPITAL TENT

98

Shaw pulls aside the blankets from Trip's legs and finds A
SHINY NEW PAIR OF SHOES. Rawlins stands impassively nearby.

98A OUTSIDE THE TENT

98A

Shaw stops a group of men. Orders them to remove their
shoes. One by one, they reveal a bloody mass of CUTS,
BLISTERS, and RUNNING SORES.

Shaw looks up at Rawlins -- only beginning to realize the
enormity of his error.

CUT TO:

99 SHAW, RAWLINS, AND FIVE OF THE BIGGEST RECRUITS

99

as they march into the Union camp. White soldiers gape in
surprise as the purposeful group parades by and bursts into:

100

THE QUARTERMASTER'S OFFICE

100

where the quartermaster looks up in alarm.

QUARTERMASTER

Evening, Colonel. Change your mind about that bottle I was talking about--?

Shaw walks up to within inches of the man's face.

SHAW

I want six hundred pair of boots, twelve hundred pair of socks, and anything else you've been holding out on us, you piece of rat filth.

QUARTERMASTER

On whose authority...?

Shaw glances back at the five imposing figures behind him.

SHAW

These men come from darkest Africa, a land where cannibalism and human sacrifice is a way of life. As you might imagine, they are extremely difficult to control -- particularly if they believe they have been lied to or in any way mistreated...

(leans in)

But I'll let you explain it to them.

He walks out, leaving the terrified quartermaster behind.

CUT TO

101

A WAGONLOAD OF SHOES

as it rolls into camp. Recruits poke their heads out tents and fall in behind the wagon -- in an impromptu

102

ON THE PARADE GROUND - MOMENTS LATER

A recruit gingerly walks about in his new shoes; a tries to figure out how to lace them up -- evident never worn shoes before.. In the background, others from a mountain of government issue.

THE HOSPITAL TENT

... kneels at the boy's bedside
... wrapping them in

SEARLES AND FORBES

are standing nearby, observing what appears an almost ritualistic act of contrition.

103

THE PARADE GROUND

DISSOLVE TO:

103

Where we can tell that the 54th has begun to coalesce. Shaw looks over at Mulcahy, who nods approvingly. We watch them wheel and pivot, listen to the smack and crackle of rifles slammed against shoulders. Watch their by-the-numbers firing.

Forbes approaches, handing Shaw a telegram:

FORBES

From the War Department.

Shaw reads the cable and crumples it in his fist.

FORBES

Can anything be done--?

But Shaw is already riding forward. Worn out, muddy and dressed in rags, they SNAP TO ATTENTION as he stops before them.

SHAW

You men enlisted in this regiment on the understanding that you would be paid the regular Army wage of 13 dollars a month. This morning I have been notified since you are a colored regiment you will only be paid 10 dollars a month.

(a rumble of disapproval)

However, considering your performance here during training, I have decided that until further notice you will be paid...nothing!

A general cry of outrage. Mulcahy shouts like a bullhorn.

MULCAHY

Silence in the ranks!

When Shaw speaks, it is with something new in his voice:

SHAW

You men will take the same pay as white soldiers or you'll take no pay at all. If there is anyone here who will take the nigger's wage, then fall out now!

The men fall silent. Shaw waits. Not a man moves.

SHAW

Sergeant Mulcahy, have these men strip to the skin, take them to the river and give them a bath.

MULCAHY

Sir?

SHAW

Do it.

As Mulcahy shouts orders, the confused recruits begin to undress.

CUT TO:

104 A BONFIRE

104

has been built at the edge of the parade ground to greet the NAKED MEN as they are marched back into formation. Suddenly a cry goes up: "Hey, that's our clothes! Our clothes on fire!"

MULCAHY

Quiet in the ranks! Come to attention.

The men reluctantly come to attention, naked and vulnerable.

SHARTS

Man, this beats all.

Shaw rides past the ranks, inspecting his naked charges.

SHAW

Wherever you came from, whatever came before... all that is over. Whoever you were, you are him no longer. Today you are soldiers. Today, you are born...

SMASH CUT TO:

105 BEACON STREET - BOSTON

105

This is the first time we have seen the regiment in UNIFORM and the change is stunning. Resplendant in dress blue, they march smartly up Beacon Hill to teeming, cheering CROWDS.

The Mute, out in front with the other drummer boys, beats the cadence. Rawlins and Sharts look sharp. Even Trip holds his head high. Among the crowd, Mulcahy stands proudly at attentio

Shaw rides beside them, his black stallion prancing, a glittering sabre in his hand -- the flower of grace and chivalry. As they pass the reviewing stand with Douglass and Governor Andrew standing beneath the Stars and Stripes.

SHAW
54th Massachusetts, Present Arms!

Forbes echoes the command -- and the entire regiment, acting as one, slap the stocks of their rifles with a resounding "crack."

SHAW
Sound "Give Us a Flag!"

SQUADS OF RIOT POLICE

line the parade route to dissuade those who are none-too-pleased by the sight of a thousand blacks with guns.

106 AS THEY PASS 44 BEACON STREET

106

Shaw's family stand proud, hands held over their hearts. Shaw meets Sarah's eyes and raises his sabre respectfully.

SARAH
What have I done that God has
been so good to me.

She watches as her son marches off to war.

107 A RUGGED COASTLINE

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

107

Waves crashing on white sand beaches. Port Royal Island.

108 EXT. - ROAD NEAR PLANTATION - DAY

108

A troop barge carrying the 54th through the narrow channel between Port Royal and Lady Islands. The men crowd the gunwales and watch as they steam past an old, once grand plantation, now a ruin overgrown with moss and vines. Seeing it sends a shiver of remembrance through the men.

TRIP
(bitter)
Welcome home.

RAWLINS
Don' worry, buck. Take a good
look. That just a memory now that
the northman come.

SHARTS
(proudly)
Now that we come.

FORBES (V.O.)
(calling out)
Rawlins, front and center--!

Rawlins looks over to where Forbes stands beside Shaw.

TRIP

You in trouble now, grandpa.

As Rawlins approaches, everyone quiets down in order to listen.

FORBES

Mister Rawlins, in addressing your commanding officer without first seeking permission, you expressly violated an important protocol. Such actions cannot go unrecognized—

The men stiffen -- what new punishment is to be meted out.

FORBES

--especially when they reveal extraordinary initiative taken not for yourself, but on behalf of the regiment.

(looks at Shaw, who nods)

Therefore...it is with great pleasure that you are hereby awarded the rank of Sergeant-Major.

SHAW

(handing the chevrons)

Congratulations.

Behind them, the men of the 54th give a CHEER.

RAWLINS

Don't know that I'm wanting this, sir.

SHAW

I know exactly how you feel.

CUT TO:

109

EXT. - BEAUFORT DAY

109

Beaufort, South Carolina, gem of the Sea Islands, an elegant little town of white and yellow colonial houses. The 54th marches in, passing a group of ragged black CHILDREN, their mouths agape at the sight of armed black men in uniform. Rawlins marches proudly before them.

RAWLINS

That right, chilluns, ain' no dream. We run away slaves but we come back men o' war! So tell the people how Kingdom come in the year of Jubilee..!

It's the first time we've seen him grin, and it's a sight to see; the children are tickled by him.

110

EXT - BEAUFORT CAMP DAY

110

A lovely home suffering the indignities of occupation. As they march into camp, the men are surprised to see other BLACK SOLDIERS contrabands of the 2nd South Carolina Volunteers. In contrast to the spruce military appearance of the 54th, these men in their blue jerseys and baggy red trousers cast-off by some white Zoave regiment, look more like unmade beds than soldiers.

TRIP

Who those ragamuffins?

RAWLINS

Contrabands. Right out the fields.

A TALL CONTRABAND and a SHORT CONTRABAND walk alongside the marching 54th men. They speak in the thick "Gullah" slave dialect of the Sea Islands:

SHORT CONTRABAND

Hey, ol' man -- where from?

SEARLES

Massachusetts.

TALL CONTRABAND

Oona march better'n we. Oona march like de buckra sojers.

SEARLES

I beg your pardon?

RAWLINS.

He say we march like white men.

SHORT CONTRABAND

Eben talk like de buckra, ol' man.

SEARLES

And where are you from?

SHORT CONTRABAND

Oh, roun' and 'bout yere. We slaves in de field when de Yankee-men come say we sojers.

RAWLINS

And how you like the Army, contraband?

TALL CONTRABAND

Oh, we lub it. We tank de Lord
ebra day fo' dee good vittles
and dese beautiful clothes.
Tell truth, ol' man, dis yere
ebra day like Kismis!

SEARLES

Like what?

RAWLINS

Christmas.

SEARLES

Oh.

Shaw walks past a group of children being taught to read.
Their TEACHER is very beautiful, with coffee-colored skin,
and thick hair pinned up in soft, glossy waves. She looks up
and meets Shaw's gaze with an unwavering, forthright regard.

The SOUND of CHILDREN'S VOICES leads us into:

111

THE TORCH-LIT LAWN

111

of the gracious island home. The black CHILDREN are performing
for an appreciative group of Northern civilians. Also
present are a number of white officers and Southern ladies.
A whiskered senior officer, COLONEL HARKER, turns to Shaw, beaming

SHAW

...Splendid.

HARKER

They've worked for weeks in
anticipation of your arrival. We're
all very excited to have you
here, Shaw.

SHAW

Thank you, sir.

HARKER

(re: the children)

Lincoln's idea. Hired a group
of New Englanders to teach the
negroes here how to read and
write. Just your sort of people
I should think, Colonel. The
regiment should enjoy their stay.

SHAW

I'm sure we'll have a fine time
as long as we get to see some action.

HARKER

(taken aback)

Yes, well... Can't promise you much. Just having the coloreds around seems to have scared the bejesus out of the rebs.

A middle-aged New England MINISTER approaches with some OTHERS.

MINISTER

Colonel Shaw, I'd like you to meet some of our instructors: Dr. Rogers of Boston, Dr. Thorpe of Salem...

Shaw politely exchanges greetings with each, then:

MINISTER

And our prize teacher, Miss Charlotte Forten of Philadelphia.

From the center of the group steps the woman with whom Shaw met eyes earlier. CHARLOTTE FORTEN offers her hand:

CHARLOTTE

Colonel Shaw. Your presence here means a great deal to us all.

He takes her hand. Their eyes meet and something is kindled. But it is felt only for a moment before Shaw withdraws into his soldier's shell:

SHAW

A pleasure, Miss Forten.

MINISTER

Colonel, have you noticed our famous Sea Island moon? As you can see, it's unusually lustrous and has an almost violet tinge.

Shaw stares up at the moon for a moment:

CHARLOTTE

I have heard that after a battle the moon turns the color of blood.

Shaw turns and looks at her, jolted, something touched for the first time since Antietam...

Shaw and Charlotte walk. They are shy and awkward together.

CHARLOTTE

--When I'm not teaching I generally keep to myself.

SHAW

You must have friends...

CHARLOTTE

Not many, no. There aren't many people that I...I keep to myself, generally. I like to go riding. There are some lovely roads here.

SHAW

Oh?

CHARLOTTE

What did you do before the war?

SHAW

Nothing, really. School. I was never interested in anything much. I liked Europe.

CHARLOTTE

Oh, Europe must be wonderful. I've often thought about it. It's very different there I'm told.

Shaw pauses, sensitive to her meaning. A few beats, then:

SHAW

It's hard, isn't it? Being in your situation, I mean?

CHARLOTTE

Yes, sometimes.

SHAW

But you're not bitter?

CHARLOTTE

(after a beat)

Yes, I'm bitter.

SHAW

But all this will change, Miss Forten.

CHARLOTTE

Will it Colonel?

SHAW

It's inevitable. It's already started.

CHARLOTTE
Yes, your regiment. Wonderful.
Will you see action, do you think?

Before Shaw can answer, a VOICE speaks up from behind:

VOICE
All that they can handle.

Shaw turns to find Harker standing beside COLONEL JAMES MONTGOMERY.
A leathery, bearded man with a fixed smile and a rustic accent.

HARKER
Shaw. Meet Colonel Montgomery,
your brigade commander.

SHAW
Honored, sir.

HARKER
The Colonel's a real Jayhawker from
Kansas. The contraband regiment
is his brainchild.

MONTGOMERY
--Didn't think yours were the
only coloreds around, did you Colonel?

SHAW
I did, actually.

MONTGOMERY
Ah. Well, I'm sure they'll all
get along just fine. They seen
any mischief?

SHAW
No, sir.

MONTGOMERY
Then what do you say in the
morning we put together a couple
of companies and hike over to
the Georgia coast--? Secesh
town there. We'll hit for
supplies. Maybe stir things up
in this backwater. How'd that be...?

SHAW
(this is it...)
Outstanding, sir.

Shaw glances back at Charlotte, it's as if her question has
been prophetic. Montgomery takes Shaw's arm and turns to Harker:

MONTGOMERY
 This is the kinda young man I
 appreciate. Educated, committed.
 Ready, willing and able--
 (a wink re Charlotte)
 --in more ways than one.

Before Shaw can respond, Searles enters and salutes Shaw:

SEARLES
 Beg to report, Colonel, sir.
 Major Forbes says to tell you
 the regiment is fed and bedded down.

SHAW
 Very good, Corporal. Pass the
 word along to A company - we're
 going into action tomorrow.

SEARLES
 (struck by the news)
 Very good, sir.

SHAW
 And have some punch before you go.

SEARLES
 (steely)
 No, thank you, sir.

As Searles salutes and exits, the BAND strikes up a WALTZ
 and the men choose partners. Within moments, the outnumbered
 few women are taken, leaving Charlotte the lone outcast.
 Seeing this, Shaw straightens his uniform and steps up to her.

SHAW
 Would you care to dance, Miss Forten?

Charlotte looks at him in shock for a moment, then:

CHARLOTTE
 All right.

SHAW
 (to Harker and Montgomery)
 --That is if I may be excused--?

HARKER
 By all means, Colonel.

Shaw leads Charlotte to the dance floor. Harker and Montgomery
 exchange a knowing glance:

At the refreshment table Searles has paused to watch as the
 dancing begins. A BLACK BUTLER greets him:

BUTLER
Hey, colored brother, how 'bout
some punch?

SEARLES
...All right.

The butler pours him a glass. Searles sips for a moment. Suddenly he catches sight of Shaw and Charlotte dancing.

BUTLER
Lookie lookie-- Things getting
passable strange 'round yere.

Nearby, Harker and Montgomery are watching, too.

HARKER
(wry)
Lincoln's idea.

Shaw and Charlotte dance across the floor, both too shy and proper to look each other in the eye for more than a moment, but both smiling in spite of themselves...

113

EXT - BEAUFORT - NIGHT

113

A campfire around which the men of the 54th are clustered, having a "shout", or prayer meeting. While Sharts stands on a barrel, declaiming shyly, the other men clap and answer with "Shout it, brother", "Amen, soldier", deeply excited at the prospect of going into battle tomorrow.

SHARTS
Tomorrow we goes into action!
So Lord, let me fight with the
rifle in one hand and the Bible
in the other! That if I die at
the muzzle of the rifle, die on
the water, die on the land, I
may know I have the blessed
Jesus in my hand an' have no fear!

A last clap and round of amens and Sharts steps down. Rawlins steps on, speaking slowly. The men listen in total silence.

RAWLINS
Lord, I have left my wife and
babies in the land of bondage.
My lil' one say every night,
"where is my father?"
(growing more passionate)
But when I die, when the blessed
mornin' rises, when I stand in
the glory, with one foot on the
water, and one foot on the land...

RAWLINS (CONT.)

...then, O, Lord, I shall see my
wife and chil'en once more--

(transported)

--and I shall tell them that I
died fightin' to make them free.

He steps down to a chorus of "amens". They all slap him on the back. It has been an important moment for him; finally emerging from his gravedigger's shell. Rawlins turns to Trip:

RAWLINS

Your turn.

TRIP

I don't pray...

RAWLINS

Get up there, young buck!

After some more coaxing, Trip grudgingly steps onto the barrel.

TRIP

All I pray is...I gets to kill
...as many white men as possible.

A silence descends over them: he has given voice to an unspeakable secret. And now each of them, in turn, must examine his heart to determine the degree of its truth.

114 EXT - JETTY - DAWN

114

Dawn is breaking over the marshes as Shaw and Charlotte sit under a gazebo. In the background, guests are leaving.

SHAW

--and then in my third year, I
left. I was never much of a
student anyway.

(she smiles)

You were straight A's, of course.

She laughs and then nods. They sit quietly for a moment, listening to the faint echo of a waltz from the ball.

CHARLOTTE

Dawn. The night went so fast.

They look out at the sun rising over the water.

SHAW

So beautiful. And the music. It
all seems so...inappropriate.

CHARLOTTE
(after a moment)
You have seen much that is horrible.

SHAW
No more than others.

CHARLOTTE
--And were you afraid?

SHAW
(looks at her)
Yes.

CHARLOTTE
I suppose it is good that a
leader be afraid.

SHAW
I'm not sure I know how a leader
is to behave.
(on her look:)
I have made many mistakes.

CHARLOTTE
It is your first command.

SHAW
Yes.
(pauses, blushes)
I can't believe I'm being so
personal. I hardly know you.
Please forgive me.

CHARLOTTE
It's a condition of the war.
Personal things, one's past,
somehow they don't seem very
important anymore.

SHAW
That's right.

CHARLOTTE
Only the present matters. And
the future.

SHAW
Yes, the future... .

A frisson of expectation runs through Shaw. She intuits this.

CHARLOTTE
You will do well tomorrow. I
know it.

115

EXT - OUTSIDE DARIEN - DAY

115

The two companies enter the outskirts of a sleepy coastal village. Montgomery, pleasant as always, rides alongside Shaw.

MONTGOMERY

Your men march real handsome,
Colonel. My compliments.

SHAW

Thank you, sir.

MONTGOMERY

Take it all around, I'd call 'em
the best lookin' buncha niggers
I ever saw.

(Shaw bridles at the
word "nigger" but
tries not to show it.)

Wouldn't've figured you'd know
how to handle 'em, bein' from Boston
and all. Now me, I'm from
Kentucky originally, used to own
a few so it comes natural.

SHAW

I thought you were an abolitionist.

MONTGOMERY

Yeah, well things went sour in
Kentucky. Had to sell my
niggers and head out for Kansas.
But there were so many slave
owners from Missouri movin' in and
farmin' with nigger labor it
sent the price of crops to hell
and a white man couldn't even
get a job. So I threw in with
the Free-Staters and became a
abolitionist.

They pass a poor farm with a weather-beaten barn. Some of the
CONTRABANDS point to it.

1ST CONTRABAND

Look, Moss' Cunnel, that Secesh
farm?

MONTGOMERY

Could be.

2ND CONTRABAND

De musket, Moss' Cunnel, nebber
shoot him. Shoot now?

MONTGOMERY

Don't see why not. Go ahead.

He FIRES at the barn, followed by the other contrabands. Bullets whiz all over, splintering its old timbers and knocking a tin washtub off the wall. A COW runs out, frightened and mooing piteously. The contrabands giggle delightedly and keep firing.

FARMER

Don't shoot! We ain't Secesh here, just folks. Don't shoot!

SHAW

Aren't you going to stop them?

MONTGOMERY

What for? They can't hit anything.

The firing continues. The cow takes a round and falls over dead. The farmer starts running. The contrabands cackle.

115A RAWLINS

115A

leading a scout detail, trots up to Shaw and Montgomery.

RAWLINS

Town's clean, sir. Ain't no Rebs here, just a few women.

MONTGOMERY

All right, boys, -- clean 'er out!

The contrabands move forward into the square with a whoop and start kicking in doors, entering houses...

SHAW

What are you doing?

MONTGOMERY

Liberating the town in the name of the Republic.

SHAW

But they're civilians.

MONTGOMERY

Secesh are all the same, son, you'll learn that soon enough. Now tell your men to jump to it.

SHAW

I think we'll decline, thank you.

MONTGOMERY

Don't you wanna share in the booty?

SHAW

I think not.

MONTGOMERY

You didn't really think anybody was gonna use these men for real combat, did you? Did you!?

SHAW

(after a moment)

No, I suppose not.

Searles is standing near enough to have overheard.

MONTGOMERY

They're children for Gods'sake!
I mean look at 'em.

The contrabands are emerging from the houses carrying food, clothes, bedsheets-- giggling in utter joy. Two contrabands are lugging a grandfather clock out into the square.

MONTGOMERY

What're you gonna do with that,
you fools?

They dump the clock in the dirt as a STOCKY CONTRABAND comes out carrying two large family daguerreotypes with silver frames. The occupants of the house, a middle-aged BLACK WOMAN and a frantic young WHITE WOMAN follow after him:

WHITE WOMAN

Not those! Please!

The stocky contraband ignores her. The black woman grabs him by the shoulder and tries to grab the pictures back.

BLACK WOMAN

Get out, you trashy nigger! Git!

As they wrestle, the other contrabands CHEER and for a moment it looks as though the woman might get the upper hand, until the stocky contraband hauls off and lays her out with a clumsy right. Shaw and his men exchange glances.

MONTGOMERY

See what I mean? Children.
Five Rebs'd put a whole division
of 'em to flight. Nobody's ever
gonna put 'em in a battle.

Enraged at the treatment of her companion, the white woman leaps on the stocky contraband, kicking and scratching.

WHITE WOMAN
Animals! Leave her alone!

The contraband tries to push her away. They struggle.

MONTGOMERY
Uh-uh-uh! That's enough of that!

The stocky contraband pulls the white woman by the hair...

MONTGOMERY
I said get your hands off the
white lady!

The stocky contraband can't hear above her screams.
Montgomery draws his pistol and FIRES. Everyone freezes.
The contraband falls in a heap, clutching his wounded shoulder.

MONTGOMERY
Wouldn't have happened if that
Secesh woman hadn't started it.
They never learn.
(looks around, nods)
I'll just have to burn this
town. Have your men set torches
and prepare to fire the buildings.

Stunned reactions from Shaw and his men.

SHAW
I will not.

Montgomery leans close to Shaw, his face friendly as ever.

MONTGOMERY
It's an order, you rich little
Yankee pissant... Do it or I'll
have you brought up on charges
for disobeying your superior officer.

SHAW
It is an immoral order and by
the Articles of War I am not
bound to obey it.

MONTGOMERY
Explain that at your court
martial. After your men are
placed under my command. How
would you like that, you college
son of a bitch?
(Shaw is silent)
I say, how would you like that?
(Shaw looks down)
Well then?

Shaw looks back at his men. Searles and Rawlins look away.

SHAW
1st squad, 2nd platoon - fall
out to set torches and prepare
to fire town.

Rawlins echoes the command and the squad falls out into the square. The white woman, kneeling in the dirt and holding the unconscious black woman in her arms, shrieks at them:

WHITE WOMAN
Nigger soldiers, nigger soldiers....

116 EXT - COUNTRY ROAD - LATE DAY

116

A column of SMOKE from the burning town drifts skyward as the 54th trudges homeward. The 1st Contraband, arms full of booty, passes Searles who looks at him with contempt.

1ST CONTRABAND
What you lookin' at?
(Searles stares at
him silently)
I say what you lookin' at?
(no answer)
Think you better'n me? You ain'
nothin'. Think you my judge? You
ain' God! You just a nigger!

Shaw rides up and points to the unfurled regimental colors.

SHAW
Case the colors, Sergeant.

RAWLINS
(very quietly)
Yes, sir.

Searles gives a last look to the 1st Contraband then watches as the colors are rolled up and lowered.

117 EXT - ROAD NEAR BEAUFORT CAMP - DAY

117

A road lined by tall spreading oaks dripping with Spanish moss. Shaw gallops his black hunter while Charlotte rides side-saddle on a little bay. They rein to a walk.

CHARLOTTE
It's nice here. Shall we stroll
awhile?

They dismount and lead their horses. Charlotte pats the neck of Shaw's horse. It nuzzles her affectionately in return.

CHARLOTTE
Beautiful horse.

SHAW
He likes you. Strange, he
doesn't often like women...

Shaw walks on, pre-occupied. After a few moments:

SHAW
Miss Forten, I tell you, words
cannot describe the hatred I
feel for that man. Talking that
way about my men, making them
take part in that outrage, treating
them like animals. They're soldiers!

CHARLOTTE
Negro soldiers. There's a difference.

SHAW
There's no difference. They're
good men, good soldiers, at
least as competent as many of
the Irish I've had under my command.

CHARLOTTE
Really?

SHAW
Well, I certainly don't mean to
denigrate either race, I simply
mean that...well you know what I
mean.

CHARLOTTE
What will you do about it?

SHAW
I don't know... This business of
color. It's so... oppressive.
This kind of thing never happens
in Europe. In Europe the whole
thing's not even an issue.

CHARLOTTE
No?

SHAW
Not at all. I knew of a poet in
Paris, Philippe De Monchy. He
married a very charming, very cultured
Algerian quadroon, and it was
never questioned, never even
remarked on.

CHARLOTTE

A quadroon?

SHAW

Yes, she was like you, you know...

CHARLOTTE

Like me?

SHAW

Yes, well, you know what I mean, like you she was...more light-- well she had a great deal of mixed...you know what I mean.

CHARLOTTE

Yes, I think I do.

Charlotte looks at him sadly. He is completely unaware that he's just insulted her.

SHAW

But all this must be doubly awful for you, Miss Forten. How do you deal with it? How do you deal with a man like Montgomery?

CHARLOTTE

(stops, looks at him)

You have a beautiful face, Colonel.

SHAW

(stops, non-plussed)

What?

CHARLOTTE

It's so much finer, more exquisite than a man's face usually is, yet it's also full of courage and intelligence. Simply beautiful.

SHAW

Well, thank you, but--

CHARLOTTE

It's not hard to deal with a man like Montgomery. In fact it's easy. With a man like that, everything he is is there to see, so it's easy to meet contempt with contempt and hatred with hatred.

CHARLOTTE (CONT.)

--What's difficult, Colonel Shaw, is dealing with one whose ugliness is buried so deep it only comes to light when cloaked in noble emotions like kindness and pity and righteous indignation.

(pause)

But you have a beautiful face, Colonel.

SHAW

Well, I...I beg your pardon.

CHARLOTTE

You do? How kind.

Shaw holds her clear gaze for a moment, then suddenly seems to sag, as if the weight of the truth were too much to bear. He stares down at the ground for a moment, then:

SHAW

(takes her arm)

Miss Forten, I--

CHARLOTTE

Please don't bother, Colonel Shaw. It's not your fault. It's all so enormous, there's no point.

Shaw steps back. He knows that she's right. She turns away. Suddenly Shaw spins her around, holding her by the arms, face-to-face, his eyes pleading, agonized. She touches his face.

CHARLOTTE

No point....

She remounts her horse, then gently arranges the folds of her riding skirt for a moment...

SHAW

I don't suppose I'll be seeing you again, will I?

She brushes her hand lightly across his cheek, then spurs her horse and rides off. As Shaw watches her recede in the distance, his face seems to age before our eyes....

Forbes sits at a table, writing letters. Shaw enters and unceremoniously starts rifling through Forbes' belongings.

FORBES

Bob. What are you doing?

Shaw opens a small chest and finds a flask of brandy. He pours himself a drink, knocks it back, pours another.

FORBES

What is it, what happened?

Shaw takes another drink, grimacing as it goes down.

SHAW

(quietly)

I just looked under a rock.

118A OUTSIDE THE TENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

118A

Shaw careens out, holding the flask. He RUNS INTO Trip, who flinches instinctively.

SHAW

Sorry.

(on Trip's look:)

I'm SORRY!

Trip lowers his head and hurries off. As Shaw watches him:

SHAW (V.O.)

"Dear Mother, I am in need of your help. Despite my many protestations to the contrary it has become clear that we are to be used only for manual labor."

119 A RELENTLESS SUN

119

beating down on the men of the 54th as they pull against heavy chain harnesses -- dragging felled trees across a mosquito-laden marshland. The effect is that of human drey horses.

SHAW (V.O.)

"Morale is low, the men's natural good humour darkened by idleness and despair."

120 ONE SOLDIER PICKS LICE

120

off the scalp of another.

SHAW (V.O.)

"Why keep drilling if they are never to be given the opportunity to prove themselves?"

121 TRIP AND A FEW OTHERS

121

huddle by a fire, grumbling seditiously. As Shaw walks past, they stop talking and stare in silent accusation.

SHAW (V.O.)

"I have written to Governor Andrew, as well as to the general staff in Washington, but I suspect only a letter directly from Father to Lincoln himself can have the desired effect."

122 IN HER PARLOR

122

Sarah writes at a chippendale desk, Shaw's letter open beside her.

SHAW (V.O.)

"I can think of no other recourse, Mother. I'm sure you pray, as I do, that all this has not been in vain."

123 TRUDGING DOWN A MUDDY ROAD

123

The 54th marches back from a work detail, passing a company of WHITE SOLDIERS (10th CONN) going in the opposite direction. Trip calls out to his unarmed comrades.

TRIP

Hey, we goin' the wrong way! They's headed for the real war!

The white soldiers, battle-hardened veterans, move wearily on, ignoring him. Trip calls out to them:

TRIP

Buck up, boys, buck up! Someday they let the 54th get into it, your troubles be over!

The WHITE SOLDIER mutters something to his COMRADE, who laughs scornfully.

TRIP

Say what--?

2ND WHITE SOLDIER

He said, in a pig's eye.

TRIP

No way, brother, pig march better than you white boys.

1ST WHITE SOLDIER
What'd you say, boy?

SEARLES
Shut up, Trip.

TRIP
You shut up, snowflake.
(to the White Soldiers)
--Way you boys look, war'd be
over in a jiff if we was going
that way and you was goin' this.

The white soldiers stop, and a closer look at their ravaged
faces reveals just how burnt-out they are:

2ND SOLDIER
There's men dyin' up that road.

TRIP
Only Rebs be dyin' if they let
us at 'em!

In an instant, one of them steps up to Trip and PUNCHES him
in the face. Trip goes sprawling.

2ND SOLDIER
Nigger clown!

The other whites struggle to restrain him. Trip springs to
his feet, ready to fight, but Sharts holds him back.

TRIP
Lemme go!

A commanding voice barks out an order:

RAWLINS (V.O.)
'ten-Shun!

The 54th immediately snaps to ATTENTION. So do some of the
white soldiers -- until they see who the command has come from.

1ST SOLDIER
Stripes on a nigger--? That's
like tits on a bull.

The other white soldiers laugh.

RAWLINS
You lookin' at a higher rank,
son. Obey it and like it.

1ST SOLDIER
Make me...darkey.

As Rawlins stiffens, the 54th steps forward, already raising their shovels and spades. Facing them, the white soldiers cock their weapons. Violence is only moments away when --

SHAW rides up, furious:

SHAW

What's going on here--?

(to the white soldier)

What's your name, soldier? I'm putting you up on charges.

RAWLINS

None of that now, sir, none of that. Soldier's fight... No need to bother yourself.

Shaw looks at the angry whites, then the blacks:

SHAW

All right then... Move along.

They march on. As the two regiments pass each other, the white soldiers sneer contemptuously: "Go dig a latrine. This is men's work!" -- keeping up their abuse while the 54th marches past in silence...

124

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

124

The men sit silently around their campfires. Their mood is dark, tense. Searles comes up to Sharts, buttoning his collar.

SEARLES

I've got the guard. Let me borrow your looking glass.

Sharts hands him his mirror and Searles straightens his uniform.

TRIP

Yeah, that's right. Button that collar, suck in that gut, pull in that chin...

(steps closer)

Tuck in yo' lips, lighten yo' skin.

A beat. Searles turns away. Trip steps in front of him.

TRIP

Tell you somethin' half-breed, you can march like the white man, talk like 'im, learn his songs, and wear his clothes -- and all you ever be to him is a ugly chimp in a blue suit.

SEARLES

I don't have to listen to this.

Obviously wounded, Searles turns away again, again Trip jumps in front of him. The mute drummer boy backs away, frightened.

TRIP

Where you goin'?

SEARLES

Let me by.

TRIP

(blocking his way)

You wanna fight me, nigger? Come on, one time! You won't fight, nigger. White man done take all the fight outta you!

Trip pushes Searles again, but suddenly Rawlins grabs Trip from behind, and spins him around.

TRIP

Get yo' hands off me, gravedigger!

RAWLINS

Fool! Do the whole world gotta mash in yo' face?

TRIP

Get yo' hands off, nigger!

Rawlins throws Trip to the ground. Trip tries to get up, but Rawlins puts his foot on his chest.

RAWLINS

Ain't no niggers 'rounds here, 'cept you.

TRIP

Oooh...! White man give you a little suck-ass job, next thing you know you you hollerin', orderin' folks about actin' like the 'man hisself. You nothing but the white man's dog!

Rawlins bends down, grabs Trip by the collar:

RAWLINS

And what're you, son? Ready to kill all the white folk 'cause you been whipped and chased by the hounds?

RAWLINS (CONT.)

Maybe that ain't livin', but
son, it ain't dyin'. And dyin's
what the white man been doin'
for three years, dyin' by the
thousands, dyin' bout you, fool!

(paying a price)

I know. I dug their graves. And
all the time I'm diggin' I'm
thinkin' -- black man gonna be
the only one ever get his
freedom without doin' nothin'
for it, just have it handed
to'im. Then I think, no, man,
ain' gonna be that way, we gonna
ante up and kick in -- like men!
So don't be callin' no man here
nigger. You the nigger not us,
you a smart mouth, stupid-ass
swamp-runnin' nigger, and that's
all you ever be!

A pause while this sinks in, then Rawlins releases Trip and
walks off. Trip looks at the others, but they look away.
All are unaware of Shaw, who stands on the edge of camp, his
expression grave -- having overheard the whole thing...

125

INT - HEADQUARTERS BUILDING - DAY

125

Shaw enters Harker's office. Harker is sitting at his desk
with Montgomery. They smoke cigars and seem in a cheerful mood.

HARKER

Ah, Shaw. Sit down. Have one of
these excellent cigars. Spoils
of your raid the other day.

SHAW

Oh?

MONTGOMERY

I just want to go on record that
this young officer performed most
ably during operations against
Darien and is deserving of the
highest praise.

HARKER

Duly noted and logged. Now what
can I do for you, Colonel?

SHAW

You can give me and my regiment
a transfer to a combat command.

HARKER
 Couldn't do that, Colonel.
 You're too valuable to us here to--

Suddenly, Shaw draws his REVOLVER, puts it to Harker's head.

HARKER
 Have you lost your--

SHAW
 ...Or I'll blow your head off.

Harker and Montgomery exchange looks.

HARKER
 Suppose I gave you the transfer...
 -- What's to stop me putting you
 under arrest the instant you
 leave this room?

Shaw takes a letter from his blouse and throws it on the desk:

SHAW
 Copy of a letter I've written to
 the President, a family friend,
 advising him in most scrupulous
 detail of your progressive
 projects down here.
 (cocking the revolver)
 Make up your mind, General. The
 mailboat leaves in twenty minutes.

HARKER
 (to Montgomery)
 Would he do it--?

MONTGOMERY
 How the hell do I know--?
 They're all crazy, these New
 Englanders, think helping the
 nigger means their shit don't st--

Before he can finish the word, Shaw BACKHANDS him with the
 gun, sending him sprawling. Harker isn't about to help; he
 leans back in his chair, contemplating Shaw.

HARKER
 Combat command, Colonel Shaw?
 (almost a smile)
 Very well.

Almost subliminally, we HEAR the SOUND of distant cannon fire...

DISSOLVE TO:

A TROOP BARGE, OUTSIDE CHARLESTON HARBOR - NIGHT

The dark prow slices through moonlit water as the 54th parallels the Carolina coast. Searles, Trip, Sharts, and Rawlins listen gravely to the ominous CANNON FIRE. Far off, we can SEE the bright flashes of a bombardment lighting up the clouds over the spit of coastline.

RAWLINS

'Bout time we met the elephant.

Nearby, Shaw, too, stares out intently at the terrible beauty. PIERCE, the journalist, stands beside him.

PIERCE

Sumter.

SHAW

Yes.

PIERCE

(offering his hand)

Edward Pierce, on special assignment from Harper's Weekly.

SHAW

(unconsciously straightening)

How do you do. Harper's Weekly, you say?

PIERCE

Serving an entire nation. A million loyal readers want to know what happens when the men of the 54th see action.

SHAW

(turning to him; wry)

A million and one.

DISSOLVE TO:

A PICKET LINE

A loosely strung line of campfires guarding the outside perimeter of the army. Sharts measures off the paces of his watch, frightened and alone. HEARING A RUSTLING in the bushes, Sharts tenses -- until Rawlins steps into frame.

RAWLINS

Challenge me, soldier--! If I ain't got the password, you shoot first and ask later. See that?

Rawlins points. 600 yards in the distance we can just make out a loose line of flickering LIGHTS - the Confederate pickets.

RAWLINS

Bear's out there, son. So stay sharp or he come git ya.

Rawlins disappears. Sharts takes a breath and keeps walking back and forth. In the distance, the incessant hammering of artillery. Suddenly, Trip trots forward out of the shadows.

SHARTS

(cocking his rifle)

W'as de password--?

TRIP

Liberty... LIBERTY! It's me, Trip, ferchrissake...

(blows out air)

Shee-it. We finally get a crack at Johnny Reb and I almost shot by a field hand.

Trip paces alongside Sharts. He's excited, can't stand still.

TRIP

Man, listen to them guns. Don't they never let up?

Trip listens for a while, then looks out at the Confederate picket line for a few beats. Suddenly:

TRIP

Hey, buck, let's us go see what's what...

SHART

Not me.

TRIP

Afraid?

SHARTS

No.

TRIPS

--Well then?

Trip starts out into the thicket. Shart reluctantly follows....

128

EXT - THICKET - NIGHT

128

A small moonlit clearing 100 yards beyond the picket post. Trip and Sharts creep forward, rifles at the ready.

SHARTS

Mayhap we should get back to--

We HEAR an O.S. SOUND. They freeze. A beat, then Sharts whispers:

SHARTS

Lord, let's go--

TRIP

Shh! Look there!

On the opposite edge of the clearing two indistinct SHAPES appear, moving slowly. Trip raise his rifle, whispers:

TRIP

Got 'em in my sights.

(tracks with rifle)

Should I do it?

(no answer)

Should I do it?

Trip FIRES, flinching in surprise. The BLAST lights up the clearing for an instant and one of the shapes CRUMPLES in a heap. The other disappears into the thicket.

SHARTS

You got one!

1ST O.S. VOICE

(shouting in the distance)

Hey! Who's shootin' over there?

SHARTS

(shouting)

We got one!

2ND O.S. VOICE

It's the coloreds on the right.

The SOUND of crunching leaves precedes two white SOLDIERS of the 10th Connecticut, who step into the clearing.

WHITE CORPORAL

Dammit, you're not supposed to shoot at their pickets unless they shoot first.

TRIP

We got one!

Trip points. The white private walks across the clearing and kneels down next to the fallen shape.

WHITE PRIVATE

Well, Judas.

The others come over and we SEE the now visible form of a CONFEDERATE SOLDIER, almost a child, chest heaving, mouth opening and closing involuntarily, dying. As the Private turns the boy over, several apples spill out on the ground.

WHITE PRIVATE

Apple picker. Not 15 years old.
(to Trip; dry)
Good shootin'.

TRIP

He alive. Maybe he be all right.

WHITE CORPORAL

Sure, he'll be fine.
(turns to Private)
Come on.

The white soldiers start back to their picket post, muttering.

WHITE CORPORAL

Jee-zus....

Shaw rides up just as Rawlins and several others run into the clearing. Shaw sees the mute evidence and understands. Trip kneels down close to the boy.

TRIP

Hey, boy. Hey, boy. Here now,
how you feel, huh?

Trip stares down at the boy, stricken as the boy's eyelids flutter and his breathing stops. After a beat:

RAWLINS

He gone.
(pats Trip on shoulder)
Come on, Trip. We goin' back now.

TRIP

Wait....
(pauses)
I better bury him.

THE CRACKLE OF SMALL ARMS FIRE

from nearby causes them all to reach for their weapons. A CAVALRY OFFICER rides forward and reins to a halt with a message for Shaw.

CAVALRY OFFICER

10th Connecticut's being
flanked, sir!

Shaw turns to Rawlins and barks an order:

SHAW
 Doubletime march by companies. I
 want a defensible position in
 fifteen minutes.
 (to the Cavalry Officer)
 Show me--!

Together, they race off into the marsh as Rawlins starts calling orders and the regimental BUGLE begins to blow.

129 IN THE MARSH

129

The regiment doubletimes it through the high grass, the SOUNDS of battle growing imminent. Searles stumbles over the DEAD BODIES of several white SKIRMISHERS. But he has no time to react as they plunge on.

130 UP AHEAD

130

Shaw is already overseeing the deployment of his troops as they arrive. Sharts wedges his musket into the hollow of a rotting palm stump; Rawlins supervises a squad digging into the soft red earth.

131 AND THEN THE SILENCE

131

that precedes every engagement. Trip wipes away beads of sweat from his eyes; Forbes looks up into the palms undulating so tranquilly above and listens to a SONGBIRD, full-throated and blissfully ignorant of what is to come. He looks down and sees that Shaw has heard it, too. They share a silent look. And then:

132 OUT OF THE MIST

132

a squadron of CONFEDERATE CAVALRY appears at a walk. As they inch forward, Shaw gives the signal to hold fire. But someone is too eager. The POP of a musket alerts the cavalry to what they presume to be yankee SKIRMISHERS. At the leader's signal, they advance at a trot.

133 SHAW AND HIS MEN

133

raise their rifles.

134 THE REBEL CAVALRY

134

breaks into a charge -- and the 54th opens fire. Horses and men go down under a TREMENDOUS VOLLEY. Within seconds, the charge is broken and the cavalry retreats into the smoke.

135 AS THE CAVALRY RETREATS --

135

The men of the 54th give a cheer. Trip stands up and waves his cap. Even Shaw manages a smile. Until Rawlins calls out:

RAWLINS

Here they come...

136 OUT OF THE SMOKE

136

comes a column of confederate INFANTRY, their ineluctable walk forward reminiscent of the bloody cornfields of Antietam.

137 SHAW

137

catches Forbes glancing at him and gives a gallows wink.

138 THE ENSUING SKIRMISH

138

is no different than so many that preceded it and so many that were to follow -- men are shot, fall and die -- except that these are men we have come to know and care about:

139 SHARTS

139

picks off one reb after another with uncanny accuracy. After each round, he purposefully reloads and fires again.

140 RAWLINS

140

staunchly relays the commands to ready, aim and fire.

141 TRIP

141

has found his true calling at last. He is a killing machine.

142 SHAW

142

hurries up and down the line, giving orders, encouraging his men. Indeed, so great is his intensity and purpose that he is unnecessarily exposing himself to fire. At one point, Forbes pushes him down to a crouch, and thus crouched over, Shaw continues up the line.

143 AT THE HIGH WATER MARK

143

of the battle, the rebs threaten to break the line. Trip joins in the HAND-TO-HAND combat like a man possessed.

SEARLES

has not fought particularly well, flinching every time he has had to fire. Yet as one of the Rebs takes aim at Trip, he instinctively BAYONETS him in the back. Trip sees the man fall -- revealing Searles as his saviour.

144 AS THE REBS RETREAT

144

The men holler their delight like the boys they really are. Their sheer exultation is so contagious that Shaw, too, is soon caught up in it. He and Forbes grab each other by the shoulders and jump up and down, screaming into one another's dirty, grimy faces.

Shaw sees Rawlins and does the same to him -- linking his arm through Rawlins' and forcing him into an impromptu little jig. Soon even Rawlins is GRINNING like a child. But as the cheering fades, we begin to hear:

145 THE CRIES OF THE WOUNDED

145

Already, men are staring in shock at their dead and dying comrades. Others are kneeling to offer help to the fifty-odd who lay bleeding.

SHAW

walks slowly up the line, instantly sobered by the sight -- particularly as he comes upon:

146 SEARLES

146

whose bloody shoulder is being tended by a FIELD DOCTOR. Shaw kneels beside him.

SHAW

Thomas...

SEARLES

(squinting)

Sun's...bright.

Shaw moves so that his body shades the sun from Searle's face.

SHAW

Better?

(Searles nods)

Hurt...?

Searles shrugs noncommittally and stares up at Shaw; Shaw stares back across the chasm that separates them, desperate for some kind of healing words.

SHAW

Well...I am extremely jealous that you'll be back in Boston before me. Reading Hawthorne by the fire, having those long meaningful discussions with my mother...

I'm not...going back.

SHAW

What do you mean you're not going back--? You're shot.

SEARLES

(suddenly fierce)

No! Let me stay-- Promise me...

Shaw looks at him curiously. What kind of change has been wrought in this man whom he once presumed to know. As he kneels there holding Searle's hand, the SONGBIRD in the trees above once again begins to sing.

CUT TO:

147

THE UNION CAMP

147

abuzz with an air of celebration. Flags waving, men randomly shooting off black-powder caps into the air, some dancing. The 54th marches in -- virtually unnoticed.

AT THE HEAD OF THE COLUMN

Shaw sits erect in the saddle. Pierce, the journalist, hurries forward to walk alongside. He offers Shaw an open bottle of champagne.

SHAW

...What's all this--?

PIERCE

(breathless)

You haven't heard...? Lee was turned back in Pennsylvania -- little town called Gettysburg. Now today, Grant's taken Vicksburg. And all on the Fourth of July--!

SHAW

My God...

PIERCE

I know. Looks like it'll all be over by Christmas.

(looks back at the regiment)

So, how'd they do--?

SHAW

(still reeling)

Uh... Well. Very well.

PIERCE

Casualties?

PIERCE
Casualties?

SHAW
(after a moment)
--Yes.

PIERCE
Well...give me the details and
I'll wire it in. But I don't
think we've got a prayer of
making the paper.

Shaw looks down at him, full of such contradictory feelings.
Inexplicably, what he most feels is anger.

SHAW
Excuse me, Mr. Pierce, I'm
obliged to make my report.

He spurs his horse and trots forward.

148 IN HIS TENT - LATER

148

Shaw sits motionless on his cot -- while outside, the
celebration continues.

DISSOLVE TO:

149 A CLEARING OVERLOOKING THE OCEAN - DUSK

149

Trip sits on a log in the clearing, staring at the ocean,
lost in thought. Sensing someone behind him, he turns to
discover Shaw, staring at him. Trip starts to get up but
Shaw motions for him to sit. After a while:

SHAW
Trip, isn't it?

TRIP
That's right.

SHAW
You fought well yesterday, Trip.
Sergeant Rawlins has recommended
you receive a commendation.

TRIP
(flat)
That so...?

SHAW
Yes. I thought perhaps you might
bear the company colors...

TRIP
(after a moment)

No.

SHAW
It's considered quite an honor.

Trip looks up at him warily, then shakes his head.

SHAW
Why not--?

TRIP
I'm wanting to say something,
Colonel, but I besn't.

SHAW
Go ahead.

TRIP
(slowly, carefully)
I ain't fighting...for you...
sir.
(choosing his words)
I 'magine it's real important
for you to feel you're helping
the Ni-gro but I don't want any
part of it.

SHAW
I see.

Shaw nods and looks out at the ocean for a moment:

SHAW
I know you hate me.
(Trip just looks at
him)
With some justification, I
suppose. Although, had you been
a white soldier who deserted,
the punishment would have been
the same...
(Still no response,
then:)
Do all the men feel as you do--?

TRIP
(after a long moment)
You'd have to ask 'em.

SHAW
No. No, I can't do that...

Finally, he sits down on the opposite end of the log.

SHAW

You understand this all means a great deal to me, too?

(again, no answer)

So what do we do, Trip--?

TRIP

Don' know...stinks, I guess.

SHAW

Yes...certainly does.

TRIP

It all stinks and we all covered in it. Ain't nobody clean.

And now it is Shaw who just looks at him -- letting this sink in.

TRIP

Be nice to get clean.

SHAW

Get clean. Yes..but how?

Trip throws a stick toward the ocean then faces Shaw:

TRIP

Ante up and kick in.

SHAW

Precisely.

They look at each other for a moment and then stare out at Charleston Bay as a VOICE shouts to be heard above a high wind:

GENERAL STRONG (V.O.)

No one will ever take Charleston without first silencing the forts that protect its harbor.

150 EXT. BEACH - DAY

150

General Strong stands with Shaw and several other OFFICERS on the beach. In the distance is what looks like a wide, flat mountain - Fort Wagner. The wind whips the skirts of the officers's coats and curls the rims of their hats.

GENERAL STRONG

And the first one that must be taken is...that -- Fort Wagner. Guarding every approach it is reputedly, the strongest earthwork ever built.

As he continues, we study the faces of the UNION OFFICERS -- weather-creased and hardbitten, old before their time.

GENERAL STRONG

Wagner mounts a 10 inch Columbiad, three smooth-bore 32-pounders, a 42-pounder carronade, a 10-inch coast mortar, four 12 pound howitzers, plus a full garrison of 1700 men.

(pauses)

Headquarters has determined our attack to be a direct frontal assault tomorrow evening at dusk.

Shaw's reaction is curiously compared to those around him.

GENERAL STRONG

The problem is the approach: the ocean and the marsh leave only a narrow strip of sand, a natural defile through which we can send only one regiment at a time. Our best hope is that the leading regiment will keep the others occupied long enough for reinforcements to exploit the breach. Needless to say, casualties in the leading regiment will be extreme, so if you gentlemen have no objections, we'll choose it by lot.

SHAW

General Strong...

Shaw steps out, looming into the foreground:

SHAW

...the 54th Massachusetts requests the honor of leading the attack on Fort Wagner.

Strong and the others look at Shaw as if he'd gone insane.

STRONG

Colonel Shaw, isn't it--?

(Shaw nods)

Do you know what you're saying?

SHAW

Yes, sir.

STRONG

No, Shaw, I'm sorry, I can't--

SHAW

General Strong, Fort Sumter has great meaning for my men. It is a symbol of their oppression. It was here that others began the war to win their freedom. And it is here that they have returned to earn it for themselves... They have waited and now is their time.... Who better than they to lead the assault....

General Strong takes a long look at Shaw...

STRONG

All right, Shaw.

Hold on Shaw's face, and then:

DISSOLVE TO:

151 EXT 54TH CAMP LATE DAY

151

The men sit in silence, cleaning rifles, preparing. Shaw walks into camp, feeling the need to be among them, perhaps to have their blessing. For a long moment no one speaks, then:

RAWLINS

We're ready, Colonel.

The rest of them nod grimly.

152 IN A HOSPITAL TENT

152

Shaw looks in on the wounded. He pays particular attention in Searles, who is sleeping -- a large bandage across his chest.

153 INT - FORBES' TENT - LATE DAY

153

Forbes sits on his cot, alone in his tent. Shaw enters.

SHAW

Getting late, Major. The other regiments have already formed. Better move the men out.

Forbes doesn't answer.

SHAW

Forbes?

(no response)

Forbes, what is it?

FORBES

Nothing....

Shaw comes to sit beside him on his cot. And now we can see that Forbes has been crying.

SHAW

Forbes. Are you afraid?

FORBES

Afraid?

Even amidst his tears, he manages a laugh.

SHAW

Wagner has been bombarded for weeks. Fifty ships, mortars, rockets. We'll walk in and be back in time for tea.

Forbes cocks an eye at him:

FORBES

It's all right to ask me to die, just don't take me for a fool...

Shaw looks at his friend, trying to think of what to say:

SHAW

...Remember that summer in Concord, that day up in your Uncle's barn when we built the flying machine--

FORBES

Oh, God...

SHAW

--and you didn't want to try it out. Even though it was your idea, and your design, and--

FORBES

--I let you convince me, and broke both ankles and you ended up with a concussion and a fractured jaw.

(looks at him)

Is this supposed to make me feel better?

SHAW

(after a moment)

No. I guess not.

He looks up at Forbes, where the slightest glimmer of a smile threatens to break through.

FORBES

It must be hard being the only
visionary among blind men.

Shaw looks at his friend with such affection, perhaps even
goes so far as to touch his arm.

SHAW

Truly.

154 EXT - ON TEL BLUFFS OVERLOOKING THE BEACH - DAWN

154

The regiment is formed and waiting as Shaw and Forbes take their
positions for the final review.

RAWLINS

All present or accounted for.

(Shaw nods)

Sir...the government paymaster
is here.

Shaw looks. Nearby an ARMY PAYMASTER has his table set up and
hands out vouchers to the contraband troops.

SHAW

And?

RAWLINS

Don't you think it might be a
good idea to let the men have
their pay? Not all of them will
be coming back and well,
many of these men have families
and...full wage or not, sir, I
think they should be paid.

SHAW

(pauses)

Very well, Sergeant.

RAWLINS

Very good, sir.

(turns to men)

Regiment fall out by company to
receive pay.

A cheer goes up from the men as they line up in front of the
paymaster's table. Sharts grabs Trip by the arm:

SHARTS

Where you goin', fool?

TRIP

To get paid!

PAYMASTER

That's right, just make your mark right there.

Trip makes his mark in the tally book and is handed a pay voucher. The others follow suit. Sharts is next in line:

SHARTS

That the full \$13, Mr. Paymaster?

PAYMASTER

No, \$10. Standard pay for colored troops.

SHARTS

That the nigger wage, you mean?

The paymaster ignores him and motions for the next man in line to step forward. Sharts turns back to the others.

SHARTS

That's right, niggers! Make your mark, get your nigger wage!

His words hit like a bombshell. The men freeze for a moment, then following Shart's example, step away from the table and tear up their vouchers. Shaw and Forbes watch the scene, stunned.

FORBES

Astonishing.

Shaw looks at the men, his gaze finally settling on Sharts. who snaps to attention, salutes, and stares right back at him, grinning.

155 EXT - ROAD TO BEACH - LATE DAY

155

The 54th moves down through the dunes. Shaw rides beside them.

SHAW

"Dear Mother, I am humbled to be among such brave men. Without hesitation they answer the call to battle."

UP AHEAD

The columns of men silhouetted against the sparkling bay.

SHAW

"...It isn't until the last of the regiment moves forward and I see the other officers -- that I am reminded that my own face is not the color of coal."

A column of white soldiers lines the road, watching solemnly as the 54th marches to the head of the assault column.

SHAW

"Their blood, too, is the same color as mine. And today, once again, I fear I shall be reminded of this truth."

Marching by the white soldiers, Trip catches the eye of the same tall soldier who struck him. They hold each other's glance for a moment until Trip passes. A beat, then:

TALL SOLDIER

Give 'em hell, 54th.

And the cry goes up from the other white soldiers - "Give 'em hell 54th"; "Right behind you, 54th"; "Get it done, 54th"- as the regiment moves down the beach and out of sight...

156

EXT - HILL OVERLOOKING BEACH - DUSK

156

A few spectators have gathered on the hills overlooking the beach. Correspondent Pierce watches as the 54th takes its position at the head of the column. Shaw rides up:

SHAW

Ought to be quite a show, Pierce.

PIERCE

(the blackest humor)

Best seat in the house.

SHAW

Would you do me a favor? some letters and personal here. I was wondering if-

PIERCE

Certainly, Colonel.

Shaw takes out a bundle of papers, handing them to Pierce, and we SEE that his hand is trembling.

SHAW

And my horse, if you could send it to Miss Charlotte Forten in Beaufort?

PIERCE

All right.

SHAW

Thank you.

Shaw turns and starts off, but reins up suddenly:

SHAW

Could you do something else for me, Pierce?

PIERCE

Of course.

SHAW

Remember what you see here today.

Shaw spurs his horse and takes off at a gallop as...

157

EXT BEACH DUSK

157

Almost dark. The wind blows hard now and purple clouds fill the sky. The regiment - 650 men in two ranks - forms for attack. Morse looks at the silhouette of Fort Wagner looming in the distance, then up at the sunset:

MORSE

...Pretty.

Forbes turns to the drummer boys:

FORBES

You men are relieved. Report to the rear as stretcher-bearers.

(they protest)

Move!

They start back to the rear reluctantly. The mute stops for a moment next to Rawlins, looking up at him uncertainly.

RAWLINS

Go on, honey. We be by directly.

The mute leaves. Trip straightens his collar, turns to Searles:

TRIP

Hey, snowflake, I look all right?

A long moment as Searles stares at him, finally shakes his head.

SEALES

You look fine.

General Strong gallops up. Forbes snaps to attention and salutes.

FORBES

54th Massachusetts formed for attack, General.

STRONG

All right, 54th - quick time till

within 200 yards of the fort then
double-quick and charge. The
rest of us will come up as fast
as we can...

158 EXT - BEACH BEHIND THE 54TH DUSK

158

Shaw gallops up the beach, reining in and stopping a few yards behind the regiment. Just then, the clouds roll back, letting through the last of the sun's rays and illuminating Shaw's face - and we see that he is shaking like a leaf. Tears run down his cheeks and he puts his hand over his mouth, utterly terrified...

But suddenly the INCESSANT BOMBARDMENT CEASES. And in the strange silence a gull's cry can be heard. Looking out over the water, Shaw sees a school of DOLPHIN running -- utterly unconcerned with whatever ignominy may occur on land.

And Shaw stops trembling -- his face taking on an expression of luminous, almost angelic repose -- and we know that the whole cost has been counted...

Shaw dismounts and slaps his horse's hind quarter. It takes off at a dead run back up the beach. Shaw watches as it recedes in the distance -- black coat shimmering in the sunset, empty stirrups swaying -- exactly as he had watched Charlotte Forten ride away, only this time...Shaw draws his sabre and turns toward the regiment...

159 EXT BEACH DUSK

159

Shaw stands beside the color-bearer, puts one hand on the flag and raises his voice above the wind and surf:

SHAW

If this man should fall, who
will lift the flag and carry on?

After a moment, it is Searles who steps out from between the ranks -- the heavy bandage barely visible beneath his tunic.

SEARLES

I will.

Shaw looks at his friend. There is so much that needs to be said and now they may never have the time.

SEARLES

(quietly)

You won't always be leading us,
Robert. Look back there.

Shaw looks back: to where the 54th stands proudly before the other white regiments.

SEARLES
We've already won.

SHAW
(nods)
I'll see you in the fort,
Thomas.

Shaw calls out in a clear, loud voice.

SHAW
Officers to their posts.

The officers take their positions, then:

SHAW
Order arms - fix bayonets!

In unison, the men clamp their bayonets to their rifles with
a resounding "clank."

SHAW
Charge bayonet!

The men step into attack position with rifles held out in front
of them. Sharts closes his eyes and whispers to himself:

SHARTS
Here it come...

SHAW
54th Massachusetts - forward march!

159A THEY MOVE FORWARD

159A

in the defile formed by the ocean on the right and the marsh
on the left, the men on the edge of the right flank wading
through the surf. Fort Wagner looms closer, dark and silent.

SHAW
Quick time - march!

The men march faster, the right flank wading deeper in the surf..

SHAW
Move up on the right, keep your
alignment...

With thundering suddenness come four bright FLASHES from the
fort, then a WAILING overhead and four EXPLOSIONS as the
shells, hit, two in front, two in back, bracketing for range...

SHAW
Steady, steady now...

Suddenly the face of the fort ERUPTS into a blinding SHEET OF FIRE. The shells HIT square on the right flank and OBLITERATE the right end of the front rank. SCREAMS and SHOUTING...

SHAW

Rear rank, close up!

The men in the rear rank move up, filling in the gap, stepping over the dead and wounded rolling in the surf....

SHAW

Double quick - CHARGE!

The men break into a run just as the guns of the fort FIRE again, this time with a wierd, piercing, WHISTLING sound -- grapeshot. The shot pattern hits the left flank, SHREDDING the front rank...

SHAW

Move up on the left!

More cannon fire from the fort, this time accompanied by the ragged crash and rattle of RIFLE FIRE. Men drop all around. Others scatter in confusion as buried land-torpedoes EXPLODE in a shower of sand and shrapnel.

MORSE

Keep together, you men!

One PRIVATE holds his leg, now a bloody bundle of rags, shrieking:

PRIVATE

OH, MY GOD....

Morse takes a piece of shrapnel in the eye. He holds a bloody hand over the empty socket while several men come to his aid.

MORSE

(garbled, mouth open)

Never mind, keep going!

They are now within 20 yards of the curtain, but the ranks have been thinned so badly that the advance slows to a crawl. Men still drop everywhere. Shaw waves his sword frantically:

SHAW

Come on you men! Forward!
We're almost there!

Now, they're dropping like flies. The moat fills up with the dead and drowning. What's left of the regiment, perhaps 150 men, staggers forward to the edge of the sloping curtain. Shaw runs part way up and waves to the men:

SHAW

Over the top! Let's go!

Suddenly, THE FLAG BEARER is hit and drops the colors. Those left alive are exhausted and the advance falters. The men are frozen, demoralized, until:

TRIP

picks up the colors, jumps up the slope and starts waving them madly. Beside him. Shaw sees it. They exchange the briefest glance which is the final acknowledgment of something that can never be spoken.

TRIP

Come on! Come on! MOVE!

Suddenly Trip's chest EXPLODES into red mist and he drops to his knees. Shaw grabs his arm...

Horrified reactions from the men.

Shaw tries to pull Trip up. Trip stares at him, wide-eyed, holding out the flag. Shaw takes it. Still looking into Shaw's eyes, Trip pitches over dead. Shaw holds the colors and calls to the men, his voice breaking, almost moaning:

SHAW

Forward 54th! Oh, God, forward...

The men still stand frozen...

Shaw suddenly stiffens as three bullets DRILL into his breast. Shaw's mouth drops open, the colors slip from his hand, and he drops face forward into the fort...

Stunned reactions from the men. Forbes lets out a sob:

FORBES

Rob...

A moment while the reality sinks in, then....

As one, the men let out a roar, a HOWL -- and in the next instant, with the wild courage of despair, they BURST forward up the slope...

A group of CONFEDERATE SOLDIERS jumps over the parapet, and plunges down the curtain to meet them....

The 54th hits them like a freight train, FIRING and BAYONETTING hand to hand...

A RAGGED CONFEDERATE moves on Searles, hissing through his teeth:

RAGGED CONFEDERATE

Come on, bo'! Git your time!

They parry each other's thrusts. The Confederate swings with his rifle butt. But true to his training, Searles rolls under it and SLAMS his rifle butt into his face, then HAMMERS down on him over and over, clubbing him to death.

A huge, muscular, SHIRTLESS CONFEDERATE stands at the top of the parapet, fighting like a demon, bayonetting blacks left and right, screaming at the top of his lungs:

SHIRTLESS CONFEDERATE
You're just niggers! Niggers,
hear me? NIGGERS....

He keeps up his tirade while 30 feet away, Sharts, Rawlins, and Searles line up side by side, take deliberate aim, and FIRE in unison, blowing the Confederate off the parapet.

RAWLINS
Come on!

The few remaining men, including Sharts, Seales, Rawlins, and Forbes charge up the last few feet, finally, cresting the top, but FREEZE as....

160 FROM THEIR P.O.V.

160

We SEE what they see: the huge, yawning MUZZLES of six CANNONS pointed right in their faces. Then, as if in a nightmare:

O.S. VOICE
Fire!

The cannon FIRE one-two-three-four-five-six times in rapid succession, drowning out all sound, and for an instant the screen goes WHITE...

Then we HEAR the SOUND of rolling surf and...

161 EXT - BEACH BEFORE WAGNER - MORNING

161

TILT down from the clear morning sky, the circling gulls, to the ocean and finally to the cratered beach before Wagner, strewn with the bodies of black and white men.

We FOLLOW two anonymous pair of GRAY TROUSERS as they walk among the carnage.

1ST O.S. VOICE
Hurry it up, we gotta get this
done 'fore they start to stinkin'.

MANY OF THE BLACKS

have been stripped and lie naked in the sand. As they pick one up by the arms and legs:

2ND O.S. VOICE
What happened to their clothes?

1ST O.S. VOICE
Riff-raff. Don't like to see
niggers in uniform.

2ND O.S. VOICE
Oh.

They walk on until they arrive at:

162 A HUGE SANDPIT

162

A mass grave full of the black, torn bodies of the 54th...
And toss the body into the grave, heaved in like garbage.

2ND O.S. VOICE
Over here. Look!

He stands before the naked body of a young white man lying
face down: Shaw.

1ST O.S. VOICE
Must be an officer.

And as they stand there, we CUT, just for the briefest,
silent glimpse of:

163 SARAH SHAW

163

as she awakens and sits up in bed.

164 BACK TO THE MASS GRAVE

164

2ND O.S. VOICE
What do we do with him?

1ST O.S. VOICE
I don't know. Bury him with his
niggers, I guess.

165 SARAH DESCENDS THE STAIRS

165

and crosses the gleaming marble floor, as:

166 SHAW'S NAKED WHITE BODY

166

tumbles into the grave in slow-motion, its whiteness accentuated
by the black bodies around him.

167 SARAH TAKES THE NEWSPAPER 167

from a gleaming silver tray, opens it, and begins to search the columns of names.

168 MORE BODIES 168

tumble in upon Shaw, a tangle of arms, legs, faces, pitiful in their naked vulnerability, but all together just the same.

169 SARAH'S FACE 169

as she comes upon her son's name. She lifts her head, eyes shining fiercely through her tears.

170 SHAW'S FACE 170

beautiful, even angelic, in repose.

171 EXT - BOSTON COMMON - DAY 171

A moment from the past as the 54th, resplendent in Union blue, marches with Shaw riding at their side. The mute drummer boy marches at the front, beating the cadence. Suddenly SOMETHING overhead catches his eye and he looks up as we...

SMASH CUT TO:

172 THE SHAW MONUMENT, BOSTON COMMON - DAY 172

The moment frozen forever in bronze -- Augustus Saint Gaudens' magnificent monument to the 54th marching as in life, with Shaw at their side on horseback, all eyes fixed on the same point...

But now the Angel of Victory hovers over their heads.

NARRATION/END CRAWL

"After the assault on Fort Wagner and the sacrifice of the 54th Massachusetts, Congress at last authorized President Lincoln to raise black troops on a large scale. Finally numbering some 180,000, Lincoln credited them with tipping the balance in favor of the Union and assuring her final victory."

FADE OUT.

THE END