

Zulu
Day of the Dead Moon

Original Screenplay by
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FADE IN:

EXT. RIVER CROSSING - BRITISH NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA -
EARLY MORNING

It is early morning, the time of day that the Zulu's call the 'Horn of the Morning' when the sun peaks above the horizon and the horns of the cattle can be seen poking through the top of the low lying mist.

TITLE OVER: Inspired by true events.

TITLE OVER: British Natal, border with Zulu-land, South Africa, 1878.

There is a river flowing nearby. Dome shaped grass huts squat a few yards from the drift (Boer word for river crossing). There is some activity. Early morning routines being followed, fires being lit.

A YOUNG BOY is running. His feet are NAKED and they barely touch the dried earth as he SPRINTS at full pelt across the ground.

He is shouting, not in panic, but in fascination and fear. He speaks the language of the people here, ISIZULU, but his one word needs no translation.

YOUNG BOY

Zulu!

His feet pound the ground.

YOUNG BOY

Zulu!

He is running towards the small settlement by the river. His cries are heard by those quietly going about their business. They all look at him in wonder, then across the river, which is not yet in flood.

YOUNG BOY

Zulu!

He is heading for one hut in particular. He disturbs chickens as he approaches the hut and barely pauses for breath as he goes in.

INT. BORDER GUARD'S HUT - SAME

YOUNG BOY

Zulu!

A man is asleep on his cot. This is the local BORDER GUARD, employed by British officials to monitor the border with Zululand.

The young boy rushes to him and starts to try and shake him awake.

YOUNG BOY
Zulu! Zulu! Zulu!

The border guard wakes up, evidently annoyed at the rude awakening. He tries to slap the boy away.

BORDER GUARD
(in isiZulu, subtitles in English) What is it boy? Why all the noise?

The young boy is overjoyed to be the first to tell him. With ever growing excitement he points out of the door.

YOUNG BOY
Zulu!

EXT. RIVER BANK - BRITISH NATAL - MOMENTS LATER

The border guard stands at the edge of the river. The young boy stands nearby, still excited by this fascinating adventure. The border guard is holding a spear and a shield made from cow's hide. Like most people in this land he wears nothing but a simple loin cloth. He is watching the other side of the river. He is watching Zululand.

On the other river bank, separated by nothing more than the river crossing, are four men sitting astride horses, clearly ZULU. Behind them are 200 young Zulus, armed with SPEARS, ASSEGAI and SHIELDS. The horsemen are dressed like the border guard with some notable exceptions. These are men of AUTHORITY. The older man of the group has a head-band made of black gum. It distinguishes him as a married man. The other three horsemen wear headbands of feathers of varying extravagance.

One of the younger men, MEHLOKAZULU, instructs his horse to move on, and they enter the river and begin to cross. The other horsemen follow, and in turn are followed by the large force of men behind them.

The people on the British side react with fear. Those who have no reason to stand their ground, run.

Our Border Guard is joined by another man who is clutching a shield and a spear. The two look at one another and then at the small army that is making its way across the drift towards them. They are terribly outnumbered.

Mehlokazulu guides his horse through the river and up the bank. He comes to a stop before the Border Guard.

Now we see that as well as traditional weapons, Mehlokazulu is holding a EUROPEAN RIFLE across his lap. Although he is one of the younger men, Mehlokazulu oozes all the power. There is a tense moment as the small army gathers in front of the Border Guard.

The following scene takes place in isiZulu with English subtitles.

MEHLOKAZULU

My name is Mehlokazulu, son of inkosi Sihayo KaXongo Ngobese, favourite of Cetshwayo, King of all the Zulus.

BORDER GUARD

(Cautiously)

I know who you are.

MEHLOKAZULU

Then you also know why I am here.

BORDER GUARD

You cannot be here. This is not Zulu land. Your laws do not apply here. You must go back.

MEHLOKAZULU

This is the land of my ancestors. The great Mzinyathi river is no more a border to me than the snowy mountains to the north or the great desert to the west. Our laws apply to all Zulus wherever they hide...

The Border Guard looks at the man standing next to him. They know they are on dangerous ground.

MEHLOKAZULU (CONT'D)

There is a woman in your homestead who does not belong there. She is MaMtshali, wife of Sihayo, my mother, and she has betrayed our people. She must be returned to us.

BORDER GUARD

(Nervously)

I beg you. Return to your land. You cannot be here. This is white man's land. The woman you speak of seeks sanctuary. She seeks protection from the English.

MEHLOKAZULU

And where are your white masters? The nearest white man is a day's walk from here.

(MORE)

MEHLOKAZULU (CONT'D)

The Redcoats several day's walk.
 (pause) I am here now.

The Border Guard pauses a moment and realises the truth of his situation. Mehlokazulu nods his head and his Zulu Impi (army) flood forward and move into the small settlement.

There is much confusion and panic as the Zulus move from hut to hut, pulling out the occupants and searching within. Chickens and children are sent screaming. One or two men stand their ground but are forcibly pushed to one side. There are simply too many Zulus.

Then a woman SCREAMS. Two Zulus have found the woman they are looking for and drag her out from her hiding place. She is treated POORLY. They drag her by her hair and haul her towards where Mehlokazulu is waiting on his horse. They beat the woman, hitting her with the un-bladed ends of their spears, and kick and punch her.

BORDER GUARD

Please. I beg you. Not here. The English will come. There will be trouble.

MEHLOKAZULU

Leave her! As wife of inkosi Sihayo she is entitled to a bloodless death. Bring her to the other side.

Mehlokazulu pulls the reigns of his horse and leads the other three horsemen back across to the other side of the river.

They are followed by the Zulu impi and the captured woman. They have tied a rope around her neck and are dragging her through the water.

The Border Guard and his companion and the young boy watch as they cross back into Zulu-land.

CUT TO:

EXT. ZULU-LAND - THE BUSH - LATER THAT SAME DAY

It's the hottest part of the day. The African sun is high in its zenith and beats down on the earth. The sky is a deep blue, un-troubled by clouds.

The landscape is lush and green. As we close in we come across a clearing. The heat shimmers off the ground. Above the clearing, vultures hover, riding the thermals and circling a shape that can be seen on the ground.

There's a BODY in the clearing. It's the body of the captured woman. The rope is still wrapped around her neck. Zulu justice is swift and absolute.

EXT. BISHOP JOHN COLENZO'S HOUSE - THE VERANDAH - DAY

It is AFTERNOON TEA in British Natal. A table is laid out on the verandah of a colonial house. Six people are sat at the table drinking tea and eating small cakes. They are BISHOP JOHN COLENZO, FRANCIS COLENZO, HARRIET COLENZO, LIEUTENANT COLONEL ANTHONY DURNFORD, MR ROBERT HALFPENNY AND MRS JULIA HALFPENNY.

Open on the cover of a newspaper dated January 10th 1879. The newspaper is the NATAL WITNESS. The lead story on the newspaper reads: INVASION. BRITISH SOLDIERS PREPARE TO INVADE ZULU-LAND.

Harriet Colenso is sat next to her father, Bishop John Colenso, who occupies the seat at the head of the table. Opposite Harriet is her sister, Francis who is sat next to Durnford. Mr and Mrs Halfpenny sit opposite each other, with Mrs Halfpenny next to Durnford and Mr Halfpenny next to Harriet.

Durnford's left hand is tucked INSIDE his tunic. Whenever we see Durnford his hand will ALWAYS be tucked into his tunic. It is very Napoleon-esque.

COLENZO

Bloody Bartle Freere! Most damnable man that ever lived.

FRANCIS

Daddy, lets not talk about the war. You know how it makes you. Think of your blood pressure.

COLENZO

Damn my blood pressure. Think of all the blood that will be let over this infernal affair. Bartle Freere's a damned warmonger.

ROBERT HALFPENNY

People in Natal are worried you know. They do rather fear the Zulus.

COLENZO

Well, they have no reason to. There's nothing to fear from them.

ROBERT HALFPENNY

And yet, this affair on the border. They shouldn't have crossed. It was in direct violation of the law...

COLENZO

Whose law? Ours? Imposed on a nation that have been here a thousand years before us?

ROBERT HALFPENNY.

Yes. But we have agreements...
Treaties and the like.

COLENZO

Damn the treaties!

HARRIET

Daddy. Your blood pressure...

COLENZO

(Slightly calmer)

Treaties are all well and good for
Europeans. Our treaties and
agreements mean little to the
native man. He has lived freely
and un-exposed to our ways and
laws for centuries. Our ways of
life are incompatible with theirs.

ROBERT HALFPENNY

And there, I think lies the
problem. Our worlds have collided.
The Zulu people threaten our
borders and have little respect
for our laws. It must be forced
upon them. With force if
necessary. God only knows how many
guns they hold.

JULIA HALFPENNY

But how do they get those guns?

DURNFORD

Traders, I'm afraid.

JULIA HALFPENNY

Isn't it illegal to trade weapons
with the natives?

DURNFORD

Illegal, certainly. Which, I'm
afraid, only furthers the Zulus
interests in them.

ROBERT HALFPENNY

And there's such a black mass of
them, a few miles away, with
nothing separating us from them
but a few swollen rivers and miles
of bushland. Good God, if
Cetshwayo rallies a mere third of
his people against us, we could be
facing down twenty thousand souls
all armed with assegais and
rifles, determined to push the
white settlers all the way into
the sea!

DURNFORD

I think you rather over-estimate the Zulu's desire for a fight. As we speak Lord Chelmsford is amassing his forces for a tremendous show of strength. The Zulu King is no fool, he will see what force he faces and sue for peace, of that I am sure.

ROBERT HALFPENNY

I think you rather under-estimate their resolve. They will not go quietly without a fight.

COLENSO

For once, I agree with Robert. I fear Bartle Freere has made an almighty blunder. His ultimatum to Cetshwayo is tantamount to an abdication request. Cetshwayo must fight. Bloody Freere has seen to it that he has no choice. A weak Zulu King wouldn't survive the afternoon.

HARRIET

Oh dear, this does all rather sound like a fait accompli.

(she looks concerned
at Durnford)

Will you be terribly involved, Colonel Durnford?

DURNFORD

I had command of number Three Column. I'm afraid the British Government in London has not sent the forces that Lord Chelmsford has requested and my column has been split up. I will now be attached to Number One Column, in a supporting role, commanding the native contingent.

ROBERT HALFPENNY

Bringing up the rear, eh, Durnford? By the time Chelmsford's invaded you'll most likely have missed all the action!

Francis watches her sister and notes the way in which she looks at Durnford. There is a great deal of AFFECTION and FEAR there.

HARRIET

It sounds like you'll have a very safe war, Colonel.

There is relief in Francis' eyes but she has failed to grasp the mind of the soldier before her. Durnford is not pleased at the suggestion he may have a safe war. He is visibly annoyed by the suggestion.

INT. COLENZO HOUSHOLD - KITCHEN - DAY

The two young women, Harriet and Francis, stand in the kitchen. Native servants mill about, cleaning and sorting plates. Francis and Harriet stand by the open window. The voices outside, engaged in idle conversation, drift in. From her vantage point Francis can see Durnford, who is engaged in conversation with Robert Halfpenny and John Colenso.

HARRIET

He's rather dashing, your young Colonel...

FRANCIS

(blushing)
He's married Harry.

HARRIET

But still. I'm told he's quite estranged from his wife..

FRANCIS

Really Harry, you say the most dreadful things. What would father say? And besides. Anthony is a gentlemen. he would never...

HARRIET

(teasing)
Anthony...

The two girls mock fight in the kitchen. It is clear that Harriet is not so far from the truth.

EXT. COLENZO'S GARDEN - DUSK

Francis Colenso and Durnford stroll arm in arm among the flower beds of John Colenso's home. Behind them, the colonial building that is John Colenso's home swarms with activity as native servants tidy up and make the home ready for the night. Harriet, John Colenso and Mr and Mrs Halfpenny can all be seen lounging on chairs on the grass.

Despite being quite alone, it is clear that Francis and Durnford are being chaperoned by the people beyond. Their conversation, however, is quite private.

FRANCIS

Will they fight?

DURNFORD

The Zulus? Yes.
(MORE)

DURNFORD (CONT'D)

I believe they will.

FRANCIS

And will it be quite so easy as you say? Will they run away so easily?

DURNFORD

No. No, I don't believe they will. If they fight, they will ultimately lose. The British Empire is a far superior beast, and once in motion, an unstoppable force. If they don't stand and fight, they will lose something far greater than a scrap of land. They will lose their honour, their history, their dignity.

The two walk quietly side by side for some moments.

FRANCIS

Do you believe the Zulus are as bad as people say. Daddy seems to think that they aren't. He says they are a mostly peaceful tribe. They prefer to farm and trade, than to fight.

DURNFORD

Your father is a wise man, Francis. He has held the black man in high regard for many years. It has made him some enemies in Natal. Not everyone agrees with his sermons on the equality of the black man and the white man.

FRANCIS

But you do?

DURNFORD

Yes. Yes I do. The Zulu soldier is no less a man than a British soldier. The black farmer toils on the land in much the same way as the white farmer. He has led a different life, but no less a noble one. People fear them because they don't understand them.

FRANCIS

Do you understand them?

DURNFORD

I try.

FRANCIS

But you're happy to go to war with them. To kill them? And you will kill them. I'm afraid the British can be quite violent when their blood is up.

Durnford stops and turns Francis to face him.

DURNFORD

Yes. You're quite right. And I can see how it could be quite difficult for you to understand...

FRANCIS.

Understand what? That you can understand them and respect them, but go to war with them at the same time?

DURNFORD

I am many things, Francis. A man, a husband, a father. But I am also an officer in Her Majesty's Army. First and foremost I am that man. It is my duty, and I take my responsibilities very seriously.

FRANCIS

Even if it gets you killed?

Durnford wraps his arm around Francis' shoulders.

DURNFORD

Now look. I have no intention of getting killed. Besides. Robert is quite right in one respect. By the time I get there, it will probably all be over.

EXT. THE SS EDINBURGH CASTLE - DAY

We see the Steam Ship the EDINBURGH CASTLE sailing through a large ocean. We see her from a distance, her SINGLE STACK bellowing out black smoke and a long wake behind her.

On deck we see that the passengers are mostly men, dressed in typical Victorian dress. It is COLD and most sport a large overcoat and all the men have BEARDS of varying stages of growth. The men are at leisure because there is nothing else to do. They smoke, play cards, walk the deck, play bowls and some have gathered at the rear of the ship and are shooting at debris they have tied to rope and let float behind.

From behind the ship bullets zip harmless into the water while some slap into the target. When a target is hit there is a roar of approval from the men on board.

EXT. SS EDINBURGH CASTLE - SHOOTING GALLEY - SAME

Thirty two year old WILLIAM COCHRANE observes the men shooting from the rear of the ship. He loads .45 calibre BULLETS into a pistol and moves into position and prepares to fire. His stance is odd to us today. He holds his left fore-arm in front and rests his pistol arm upon it. It is a typical Victorian style. He fires several times and his shots fall short of their target. A man holding a MARTINI HENRI rifle, standard issue to the British Army, watches and mocks Cochrane.

BILLINGTON

You'll not be needing that,
Cochrane! Good God, man, they'll
not be getting close enough to use
one of those.

Billington fires the rifle. A puff of powder smoke erupts from the rifle. The target receives the bullet and shatters.

SMYTHE

Good shot, old boy.

Cochrane slips his pistol into its holster.

COCHRANE

You may rue the day, sir!

BILLINGTON

Nonsense. If they get that close
then they'll feel the sharp end of
my little friend here...

Billington pulls a large, shiny BAYONET from his pocket and locks it menacingly onto the end of his rifle. The rifle is now as long as a fully grown man.

INT. SALOON BAR, SS EDINBURGH CASTLE - NIGHT

The ship has hit ROUGHER waters and the oil lamps sway from side to side. The saloon bar is not as full as it usually would be with just one or two gentlemen sat at tables and chairs, drinking and smoking.

On one table sits CHARLIE HARFORD (28) and HORACE SMITH-DORRIEN (20)

As Cochrane enters Harford smiles and stands to greet his old friend.

HARFORD

Cochrane you old devil. I thought
I might find you on board!

COCHRANE
 Charlie Harford as I live
 and breathe.

The two embrace fondly.

HARFORD
 May I introduce you to my cabin
 mate, Lieutenant Smith-Dorrien...

Smith-Dorrien rises and shakes Cochrane's hand warmly.

COCHRANE
 How do you do?

SMITH-DORRIEN
 How do you do?

COCHRANE
 Who are you with?

SMITH-DORRIEN
 The 95th, attached to Centre
 Column. Transport duties.

Cochrane notes the disappointed look on Smith-Dorrien's face.

COCHRANE
 Oh, well. Don't worry yourself too
 much. You're a young man. You'll
 make a name for yourself, I have
 no doubt.

HARFORD
 Please, will you join us?

Hartford pulls up a carafe of wine and pours a third glass.

HARFORD (CONT'D)
 I have a month's supply. It should
 be enough until we reach Cape
 Town. My sister will resupply me
 there, I am sure!

Cochrane joins the two men and they sit.

COCHRANE
 Of course, your sister lives in
 Cape Town. She's well, I hope.

HARFORD
 Very well, thank you. Better than
 our shipmates I see...

The ship leans precipitously to one side as if on cue. The
 three men are unbothered by it.

COCHRANE

The Bay of Biscay will see off the
hadiest of stomachs!

HARFORD

I'll toast to that.
(picks up his glass)
To the Bay of Biscay!

ALL THREE

To the Bay of Biscay!

INT. SALOON BAR, SS EDINBURGH CASTLE - SOME TIME LATER

Time has passed in the saloon bar. The ship still rocks from side to side and the three men are still sat at their table, drinking wine. There is another carafe of wine on the table and the ashtray is full.

COCHRANE

So this is your first
posting overseas?

SMITH-DORRIEN

Yes sir.

COCHRANE

Please, none of that
'sir' business.

HARFORD

Cochrane was with the 32nd when
they were posted in the Cape a few
years back.

COCHRANE

And never a shot fired in anger!
There's talk that the Zulus may
put up a bit of a fight. Can't say
I don't relish the opportunity...

HARFORD

Looking to make your reputation
eh, Cochrane?

COCHRANE

Well what better place than the
crucible of war? We're not getting
any younger, Harford, not like
this young chap here! Why else do
we find ourselves on this ship,
right now, if not to chase our
destinies? You'll not find a man
on board who doesn't hope to
improve his lot and test his
mettle in the fire of combat.

SMITH-DORRIEN

What's it like? Battle, I mean.
How do you know how you'll be? How
you'll react?

COCHRANE

Men are different. They cope in
different ways. But you're an
officer... The men will look to
you for direction. They'll expect
you to lead them. Even in to the
pits of Hell, if needs be.

HARFORD

I feel the same, you know. I often
wonder how I'll cope when the
fighting starts. No man truly
knows how he'll react that first
moment the bullets fly...

SMITH-DORRIEN

You've never been to war?

HARFORD

Spent most of my days with the
99th in Kent. I resigned as
Adjutant to be here.

COCHRANE

Men like Harford here, are the
backbones of Empire. Speaks their
language too.

SMITH-DORRIEN

You speak Zulu?

HARFORD

isiZulu, to be correct. And yes, a
smattering. I grew up on the Cape.
I've come to know a bit about
them. When I heard there was a
campaign starting, well, I just
couldn't let the chance pass me
by.

COCHRANE

I got a posting with old Colonel
Durnford on the Middle Drift.
Staff Officer. Bloody unlikely
I'll see any action if Chelmsford
gets his way. It will all be over
by the time we arrive. Old Harford
here's only gone and landed a job
with the Centre Column. Will be
right in amongst it when the
spears start flying.

HARFORD

(Modestly)

I had an advantage... Speaking the language as I do... And you know, I don't think the Zulus will give in quite so easily...

COCHRANE

Well, you may be right. God only knows if Durnford will lead us all to slaughter again...

HARFORD

I think that's terribly unfair.

(looks at Smith-Dorrien)

You know of Colonel Durnford?

SMITH-DORRIEN

I can't say that I do.

COCHRANE

Led his men to a slaughter at Bushman's River pass in '73. He survived by the skin of his teeth. Took an assegai here, in his left elbow. Can't use his hand to this day...

HARFORD

Colonel Durnford was hamstrung by poor orders, bad maps and bad weather. He was doomed to fail from the start...

COCHRANE

Well I hope for my sake he's not doomed any more!

HARFORD

Perhaps that's why he's in a defensive role?

The three men quietly ponder the doomed Durnford as the ship continues to roll about the ocean.

INT. SALOON BAR, SS EDINBURGH CASTLE - SOME TIME LATER

Another carafe sits on the table. The three men are the only ones left in the saloon bar.

SMITH-DORRIEN

Do you think they will fight?

Harford takes a slug from his drink. He ponders the question.

HARFORD

They're not like the Punjabis.

(MORE)

HARFORD (CONT'D)

Much less disorganised than the Afghans. Prouder, too. I should say they will stand, if only to protect their land.

COCHRANE

Bloody good fighters too. They know their land. Much better than we ever could, even with chaps like Harford here, on our side, telling them to bugger off in their own language. A bloody fearsome reputation as warriors. Rightly feared across the continent. You'll be hard pressed to find a living soul that ever survived the 'Horns of the Bull.'

SMITH-DORRIEN

The Horns of the Bull?

Harford moves an ashtray so that it is directly in front of him, and pulls out a small pocket book.

HARFORD

'The Horns of the Bull' is a traditional Zulu tactic.

Harford pushes forward the ashtray to the centre of the table.

HARFORD (CONT'D)

The main Zulu army... anything up to twenty thousand men will hit you head on... thus.

Harford pushes his small pocket book up to the ashtray.

HARFORD (CONT'D)

The Zulus fight hard and fight quick. As you are engaged with them here, the Left Horn sweeps around to the right of our positions, thus...

Harford's left hand sweeps around the ashtray.

HARFORD (CONT'D)

The Right Horn, usually smaller in number... normally a few thousand men... sweeps around to the right, thus...

Harford sweeps his right hand around until his fingertips touch.

HARFORD

When the Horns meet everything within is slaughtered.

(MORE)

HARFORD (CONT'D)
They show no mercy.

Harford draws his hands around the ashtray.

HARFORD (CONT'D)
It is not a position in which you
would ever want to find
yourself... No-one survives...

EXT. DECK OF THE SS EDINBURGH - DAY

The passage of time is noted by the change of dress on board the SS Edinburgh. They are now in clothes more suited to the tropics. Cochrane and Smith-Dorrien are walking the deck, enjoying the sun. Ahead of them, Harford is bobbing about with a NET. He is stalking a blue butterfly that has taken to resting on the ship's handrail. He pauses a moment before lunging at the creature and catching it in the net.

HARFORD
There you are my beauty. Now,
let's take a look at you...

COCHRANE
(To Smith-Dorrien)
He's an infernal bug hunter!

Harford is busy extricating the butterfly. As he is fiddling with the net a welcome sight pops into view a few miles off the ship. At first we see little but the net and the butterfly, the distance is obscured. Cochrane and Smith-Dorrien join Harford by the rail as we pull back from the ship and see what the men have seen.

In the distance, TABLE TOP MOUNTAIN breaks into view.

EXT. CAPE TOWN DOCKS - DAY

As with all docks there is much confusion and work going on, with people and goods off-loading from the SS Edinburgh. Cochrane, Smith-Dorrien and Harford stand isolated from the scene, amidst their belongings and the throng of humanity, on the DOCKSIDE.

COCHRANE
Well, here we are.

Cochrane puts out his hand and the three men shake hands.

COCHRANE (CONT'D)
My best wishes to your sister.

HARFORD
Thank you. Good hunting.

Cochrane climbs aboard a cab.

COCHRANE

Good luck, young man. Perhaps we shall meet again some day.

SMITH-DORRIEN

Thank you. God's speed.

Cochrane's cab pulls away and disappears.

HARFORD

Well, this is me.

Harford loads his belongings, including his bug net, onto a cab and climbs in. He pops his hand back out of the cab. Smith-Dorrien takes it.

HARFORD

Good luck. Drive on!

Smith-Dorrien stands looking a little lost as his companions leave, stood next to a single valise. He suddenly realises he is all alone, and not entirely sure where to go.

SMITH-DORRIEN

Well, what the bloody hell do I do now?

EXT. MZINYATHI RIVER - EARLY MORNING

ZULU SIDE OF THE RIVER

AFRICA in the morning. A low MIST hugs the ground as the sun rises in a burst of vibrant colours in the East. The air is still. An eagle rides the thermals high in the sky. Wild animals are drawn to the river for its life giving waters. Herons wander nearby, fishing in the fast flowing waters. The river is in full FLOOD after recent heavy rains. All is quiet, but for the sound of the river.

BRITISH SIDE OF THE MZINYATHI

This side of the river is a hive of ACTIVITY. The sun is not yet fully up and a low mist hugs the riverbank. Beyond the mist is a row of neatly placed white tents, ten deep, their peaks rising out of the mist. Redcoats go about their morning routine, washing, chatting, drinking tea. There is an element of organised chaos to the scene.

Now there is a collection of scenes depicting the British army preparing to invade: Oxen haul huge 9 pounder ARTILLERY guns guided by native wranglers and white officers. Black soldiers shiver in the early morning cold. They are lined up several deep at the water's edge. White officers on horseback sit idly by. As they wait for the time to cross the river the native soldiers, all wearing a distinctive RED BANDANNA across their heads, break out into a traditional African war song.

A little upstream a hundred REDCOATS wait to board two flat bottomed PONTOONS that will guide them safely across the swollen river.

A white tent sits at the head of the other white tents. It is different from the others. It is larger and a UNION FLAG flies from its apex.

INT. LORD CHELMSFORD'S TENT - SAME

There are several men in the tent. They are standing around a large CAMPAIGN TABLE upon which lies a MAP of Zulu-land. The men are LORD CHELMSFORD, COLONEL GLYN, COLONEL PULLEINE, MAJOR CLERY, LT-COL CREALOCK,

Lord Chelmsford pulls out a pocket watch from his coat and reads the time. Satisfied, he closes it shut and puts the watch back where it came from.

CHELMSFORD

Right now Colonel Pearson will be commanding Number One Column over the Tugela at Lower Drift, here.

Chelmsford points to the map which shows the location of the Lower Drift.

CUT TO:

LOWER DRIFT

As Chelmsford speaks we see an invading British force cross the TUGELA River at Lower Drift.

CHELMSFORD (V.O)

Pearson commands a force of some three hundred Mounted Infantry.

A large force of mounted horsemen break the waters of the Tugela and cross into Zulu-land.

CHELMSFORD (V.O)

They'll be accompanied by men of the 3rd Battalion the 3rd Regiment and men of the Duke of Edinburgh's regiment.

Two PONTOONS laden with men of the regiments mentioned above are hauled safely across the Tugela River. As they land in Zulu-land the heavily armed men spread out in skirmishing order with bayonets fixed. They push on into the African bush and dig in, ready for a Zulu counter attack.

CHELMSFORD (V.O)

They will be reinforced by a company of Royal Marines with two 7-pounders, a Rocket Trough and a Gatling gun.

The MARINES land in Zulu-land. Four men carry the ROCKET TROUGH together and make it ready for a Zulu attack on a small HILLOCK overlooking the drift. The two 7-pounders are hauled across the river by oxen and a company of Royal Marines who rapidly deploy them in support of the invasion. A small company of Marines dig in on another nearby hillock and make the GATLING GUN ready.

CHELMSFORD (V.O)

They'll be followed by a company of the 11th Battery, the 7th Brigade Royal Garrison Artillery, who will cross with another two 7-pounders and another Rocket Trough.

The 11th Battery lands and the large guns, hauled by oxen, move deeper into Zulu-land. Another company of men carrying the second rocket trough set up their weapon in preparation for a Zulu counter attack.

CUT TO:

CHELMSFORD'S TENT

CHELMSFORD

Colonel Wood will land Number Four Column here.

Chelmsford points to an area further up the map shown as BEMBA'S KOP.

CHELMSFORD

Wood has two Battalions of native soldiers he calls Wood's Irregulars..

CUT TO:

BEMBA'S KOP

COLONEL WOOD is sat astride a BASUTO Pony. Before him several hundred native soldiers, dressed in traditional clothing and carrying spears, assegais, clubs, and ageing rifles, slowly cross the BLOOD RIVER. They are singing a traditional native war song. The Blood River is not as deep in flood as the Mzinyathi or Tugela, and the crossing is not as difficult.

CHELMSFORD (V.O)

He has six troops of mounted horsemen, made up of the Frontier Light Horse, Baker's Horse and Boer's Burghers.

Two hundred armed men on horses cross the Blood River downstream from the native crossing. Behind them lumber FOUR 7-pounder ARTILLERY guns and two companies of ROCKET TROUGHS.

CHELMSFORD (V.O)

They'll be reinforced by the 7th Brigade of the Royal Garrison Artillery and a company of 90th Light Infantry.

REDCOATS carrying MARTINI HENRI rifles enter the Blood River on foot and cross into Zulu-land. They spread out in skirmishing order, bayonets fixed, and seek cover among the rocks of Bemba's Kop.

CUT TO:

CHELMSFORD'S TENT

CHELMSFORD

Number One Column will push north and establish a base at Eshowe. Wood's irregulars will continue to push north from Bemba's Kop and contain the Zulu's there. That will give us a free run up to Isispizi Hill where we will establish a forward base from where we will take Cetshwayo's capital, oNdini. Colonel Glyn, you have command of Number Three Column.

GLYN

Thank you.

Colonel Glyn moves to the campaign table.

GLYN

Gentlemen, our intelligence suggests that the Zulus have evacuated from the border lands and have moved deeper into their own territory. We believe that the vast majority have mustered at oNdini to protect Cetshwayo and his capital. I do not believe they will meet us at the crossing, but be aware that there may be pockets of Zulu resistance left behind to impede our advance.

Glyn pauses to gather his words.

GLYN

(Continued)

All Zulus are to be met with the full force of arms at our disposal. Their kraals are to be burned to the ground and their cattle seized. Show them no mercy...

The room hums with the gruff approval of the others.

GLYN

Very well, Colonel Pulleine. If you would be so kind as to sound the advance.

PULLEINE

Very good, sir.

EXT. OUTSIDE CHELMSFORD'S TENT - MOMENTS LATER

Colonel Pulleine exits the tent. Outside several officers wait for orders.

PULLEINE

(Nods to a Officer nearby)
Very well Lieutenant, you may sound the advance.

LIEUTENANT MELVILLE

Yes sir. (shouts) Sound the advance!

A YOUNG man, smartly dressed in his REDCOAT and WHITE HELMET, stands sharply to attention and draws his TRUMPET to his mouth. Moments later the sound of the advance roars through the camp.

The scene at this, the third crossing, is LARGER and more important than the other two. This is the MAIN invading army. The other two crossings are support acts, and have nothing like the numbers of men and machinery that cross the Mzinyathi.

FIVE companies of the 1st Battalion the 24th Regiment and SEVEN companies of men of the 2nd Batt, the 24th, cross the river in flat bottomed pontoons, aided by men of the Royal Engineers. They land in Zulu-land and spread out in defensive order, rushing forward with fixed bayonets to protect what follows. It is a fearsome display of military might and a visual spectacle as men in redcoats and white hats storm EIGHT deep into the AFRICAN BUSH.

At the river crossing men of the NATIVE contingent, all with RED BANDANNAS across their heads, join arm in arm as they wade into the waters. Most will not be able to swim and they hold each other for protection. They will be HOUNDED and SHOUTED at by their NCOs who will be sat astride Basuto Ponies.

The natives reach the other side gripping their native weapons and some older rifles. They are freezing from their crossing.

MOUNTED INFANTRY follow them into the river and across to Zulu-land. Most will be white soldiers with Martini Henri rifles, but some will be native horsemen carrying shields and spears.

Behind them lumber SIX 7-POUNDER guns hauled across the river by OXEN. They are accompanied by TWO ROCKET TROUGHS and 70 men of the 5th Brigade Royal Field Artillery. As they land on the other side men of the Rocket Trough rush forward in support of the Redcoats, and make their weapons ready for action.

EXT. DISTANT HILLTOP - SAME

Two horsemen sit astride their horses at the crest of a distant hill. We recognise one as Mehlokazulu, who executed the woman at the beginning.

The following scene will be spoken entirely in isiZulu with subtitles in English.

MEHLOKAZULU

So. They come.

MKHUMBIKAZULU

We must make ready for them, brother. We must defend our father's kraal. Our honour depends upon it.

MEHLOKAZULU

The King has called the Amabutho to oNdini. The largest army the white man has ever seen awaits them beyond the hills. Nothing but death awaits you at our father's kraal.

MKHUMBIKAZULU

I cannot let our home fall to the invaders without a fight. They must see that we will meet them wherever they walk.

MEHLOKAZULU

Very well. Take 100 men. Hide our cattle in the hills behind. When the British come you must meet them face to face. Let your sword and spear eat them up. Show them how the Zulu will fight.

MKHUMBIKAZULU

I will, brother.

MEHLOKAZULU

You will not defeat them there.
 When the battle is lost, take to
 the hills and hide among the rocks
 and caves. Make them come to you.
 When all is finally lost, make
 haste to oNdini. Together we will
 ride again.

Khumbikazulu nods and guides his horse down from the crest of the hill, back towards the west. Mehlokazulu watches him as he disappears out of sight.

Behind them stands a rocky hill called ISANDLWANA. It is ominous and foreboding. Behind it clouds gather on the horizon.

EXT. SUPPLY ROUTE - DAY

A large convoy of supplies is snaking it's way through the African bush. CARTS, loaded with SUPPLIES, FOOD and AMMUNITION are pulled by dozens of OXEN and native servants who tend to the animals. The drivers are invariably AFRIKAANS with a low tolerance threshold for both the oxen and the natives.

Smith-Dorrien is passing a long trail of stationary carts. Their drivers and the servants are milling about on the track, doing nothing in particular, waiting for the convoy to restart. Smith-Dorrien rides ahead to find the cause of the hold up. He turns a bend in the track to find his route blocked by a cart that has spilled its load. One of the wheels has COLLAPSED under the cart and it leans precipitously to one side. There are two natives ARGUING in their native tongue amidst the spilled supplies.

SMITH-DORRIEN

What the bloody hell's going on?

An Afrikaan driver is leaning on the broken cart smoking a gasper.

AFRIKAAN DRIVER

Ah. Bloody road's cut up bad.
 Broke an axle.

SMITH-DORRIEN

Can you fix it?

AFRIKAAN DRIVER

Not tonight.

SMITH-DORRIEN

What are they arguing about?

AFRIKAAN DRIVER

About who's walking the ten miles
 to get a new axle and who's
 picking this mess up.

SMITH-DORRIEN

Send them both to fetch a new axle. Have the others pick this up.

As he speaks there is a roll of thunder overhead. The skies are darkening.

SMITH-DORRIEN (CONT'D)

We'll stop here for the night. Pass the word along. If the axle isn't fixed by first light have the load transferred to the other carts and pitch this one to one side. We can't allow one cart to hold up the entire convoy.

EXT. CETSHWAYO'S HOMESTEAD, ONDINI - NIGHT

TITLE OVER: oNdini. The Zulu capital. Sixty miles ahead of the British Front Line.

The Zulu capital is a HUGE native village of grass domed huts and pens for cattle. We only get a sense of its vast expanse from the thousands of campfires that burn brightly among the Zulu huts. At its centre stands a LARGE imposing homestead that is far and away the most superior structure in the camp. Heavily ARMED Zulu warriors stand guard at its entrance. They are soaked wet by the storm.

INT. CETSHWAYO'S WAR COUNCIL - SAME

KING CETSHWAYO sits at the head of a room full of Zulu warriors. Cetshwayo is a large man in his early forties, dressed in traditional Zulu clothing. He holds a large staff in one hand. It is the only weapon in the room. All the other Zulus are dressed smartly in their finest attire as befitting an audience with the King. Most of the room is made up of older men, though a few younger men are dotted here and there.

We find the Zulus engaged in heated arguments. There is a great deal of tension among the men in the room, everyone talks at once, with many shouting to make themselves heard amid the din.

We see Mehlokazulu standing defiantly next to his father, SIYAHO. Mehlokazulu is gesticulating at an older Zulu across the floor. This man is NTSHINGWAYO.

The following scene takes place entirely in isiZulu with subtitles in English.

MEHLOKAZULU

I have seen the white man's army.
(MORE)

MEHLOKAZULU (CONT'D)

Thousands of Redcoats have crossed the Mzinyathi and yet we sit here, like old women, afraid to face our enemies! Soon they will fall upon my father's kraal and steal our cattle, rape our women and burn our village to the ground!

NTSHINGWAYO

You dare to chastise us, your elders, your King's War Council, while you run from the enemy and hide behind your father's skirts!

Many of the older Zulus find this rebuke satisfying and jostle with the younger men.

MEHLOKAZULU

My brother has remained to defend our kraal and to protect our cattle. He will willingly die to protect our land while our elders dither under pretence of action! I am here in answer to our King's call to arms. I am here to join my regiment and face the Redcoats in battle. What say you, old man, do you still have the stomach for a fight?

NTSHINGWAYO

If I were ten years younger I would rip out your heart and feed it to my chickens.

The older men find this second rebuke of the younger man hilarious. They take up the Zulu war cry. SUTHU! Mehlokazulu is RATTLED. His face contorts with RAGE. There's a reason why weapons are not permitted at the King's War Council. King Cetshwayo sits in a state of calm at the head of the arguing men. He slowly raises his hand and it is a few moments before this is noticed and the general din fades away to silence.

CETSHWAYO

Mehlokazulu, son of Siyaho, tell me of the white man's army.

MEHLOKAZULU

I saw several thousand Redcoats cross the Myzinyathi, the river the white man calls the Buffalo river. They have many guns, large and small. They carry much equipment and their progress is slow.

CETSHWAYO

And what of your brother?

MEHLOKAZULU

He has taken two hundred men and will meet the British at my father's kraal. The rest, some two thousand of us, rode here at once to join the Amabutho.

CETSHWAYO

We do not hide here from the British. They have superior weaponry while we have superior numbers. We must choose our battles carefully. We cannot beat the British if we rush to fight them. We must fight clever. We do not move slowly. We move like the spirits of the forest with a lightness of foot that will surprise our enemies. We can cover ground that they cannot, at a speed that they cannot, and we can live off the earth like they cannot.

Cetshwayo stands and his war council anticipate his words.

CETSHWAYO (CONT'D)

I have called the Amabutho and my people have taken up the call. This evening, forty thousand Zulu warriors wait outside under a thunderous God, for the opportunity to avenge a great wrong inflicted on our people. We desire no fight with the white man, and yet still he comes.

Cetshwayo walks over to where the NTSHINGWAYO sits and places his hand on his head.

CETSHWAYO (CONT'D)

Old friend, commander of my Impi. The time has come to meet the British. Take my army and gather on the Nqutu Plateau and wait patiently. Light fires a great distance away, beyond the Mangeni River, in the hills of the Magogo, and lure the main British army away from our men. You will know when the time is right. The spirits will guide you. We cannot defeat the British in a long war. We must find their weakest point and let our Impi eat them up. Only then can we possibly hope to force them to talk with us, and save our land.

NTSHINGWAYO

I will, my King.

Cetshwayo walks over to Mehlokazulu.

CETSHWAYO

You are young and keen. Tomorrow your brother will face the British and show them that we will fight them if we need to. Maybe they will sue for peace. Maybe. If they do not I ask that you take your regiment and show the British some of that Zulu fire that burns in your heart. Hunt down the men in their Redcoats and kill them all. May the spirits guide you safely to your destiny...

EXT. SUPPLY ROUTE - NIGHT

Most of the men that have accompanied the supply route are now huddled under makeshift tents erected over the sides of the carts and wagons. Amidst the storm that rages overhead they huddle beneath the canopies and sit near small fires for warmth and sustenance. Smith-Dorrien sits alone under one such canopy. He is drinking tea and a small fire is his only light.

SMITH-DORRIEN

Welcome to Africa, Horace ol' boy.
Welcome to Africa.

EXT. REARGUARD CAMP - NIGHT

TITLE OVER: The Sandspruit. Rearguard Camp. Several miles from the Zulu border.

Rain is falling HEAVILY on the rearguard camp. Gas-lights cast everything in a yellow glow. The camp is still awake and soldiers walk around.

INT. DURNFORD'S TENT - NIGHT

Colonel Durnford is sat at a small CAMPAIGN TABLE. He is writing a letter in the light cast by a nearby oil lamp. LIEUTENANT GEORGE, Durnford's right hand man, pours Durnford a glass of wine. Durnford acknowledges silently and George slips out of the tent.

DURNFORD (V/O)

Dearest Francis.. The deadline for King Cetshwayo to abide by the terms of the ultimatum has passed, and Lord Chelmsford's forces have crossed into Zulu-land at three points.

(MORE)

DURNFORD (V/O) (CONT'D)

For my part I am holding my forces at the Sandspruit on the road to Jim Rorke's old trading post on the Buffalo river, close enough to almost taste my destiny, and yet so far away that I fear the war may be over before I am called upon to act. My men are anxious not to miss the action, for what point does a soldier exist if not for war? For the moment we hold fast, and bide our time in the dull minutes of inaction by reading and drinking
 (takes a drink from a nearby glass of red wine)
 and hoping that the Zulus may yet put up the fight that I suspect they will.

Lt Cochrane enters the tent, dripping wet from the storm that rages outside. Durnford looks up as he enters.

DURNFORD

Good evening Lieutenant Cochrane.

COCHRANE

Good evening sir. If there's nothing more sir, I think I may turn in for the night.

Durnford glances at his pocket watch.

DURNFORD

Good lord, is that the time? Yes, of course, Cochrane. That will be all for today. Oh, Lieutenant...

COCHRANE

Yes, sir?

DURNFORD

How are the men fairing? I know it's a bind, being so far from the front. One can't let morale slip you know.

COCHRANE

As you say, we are so far from the front, but the men seem to be in good order. But... Well, no-one wants to miss the fight, and it's particularly hard on the officers. We all fear that the war may be over before we even step foot inside Zulu-land. Goodnight, sir.

Cochrane salutes and braces himself for the storm. He leaves, and the flaps of the tent catch in the wind.

Durnford returns to his writing.

DURNFORD (V.O)

Tomorrow, Chelmsford will begin his push to oNdini. He must first pass Sihayo's Kraal and it is here, I am certain, that we will discover whether or not the Zulus are determined to fight us...

EXT. SIHAYO'S KRAAL - MORNING

TITLE OVER: The Batshe Valley, Sihayo's Kraal, January 12th, 1879

Sihayo's Kraal is a HOMESTEAD of some two hundred grass domed huts spread out in a lush green valley called the Batshe Valley. In the way of the British is a horseshoe shaped valley which ends at a small hill called Ngedla Hill littered with CAVES. VINES hang from the hill, affording the hiding Zulus some cover. The valley and the hill are also littered with large BOULDERS behind which a man can hide.

EXT. NEARBY HILL - SAME

Lord Chelmsford and his staff of officers gather on this vantage point to oversee the action. A campaign table and several chairs are supplied for the most important men to sit at.

CREALOCK

Glasses sir?

Crealock offers Chelmsford a pair of binoculars.

CHELMSFORD

My God, man, we're not at the opera.

CREALOCK

These are field glasses, sir. I'm told they're much improved from opera glasses and give one an enhanced depth of field.

Chelmsford reluctantly takes the binoculars and presses them to his eyes. Most of the other officers in the party take out more traditional telescopes and press them to their eyes.

CHELMSFORD

Who's that? There. At the far end of the valley?

Crealock puts a glass to his eye and we see 150 or so mounted horsemen, CARBINEERS, edge across the valley floor.

CREALOCK

Mounted Infantry, my Lord. I'm afraid they might be quite useless in this terrain.

CHELMSFORD

And there?

We see Lt Harford at the head of several hundred native infantry edging towards the valley.

CREALOCK

The third Regiment of the Native Contingent, sir.

CHELMSFORD

So where in all that is holy is Hamilton-Browne? I thought he was commanding this attack.

As Chelmsford speaks TWO HUNDRED isiGqoza Zulu fighters march past, a SPECTACULAR sight with their feathers flapping in the wind and their colourful shields moving in hypnotic rhythm by their sides. Behind them are several hundred more native warriors carrying basic weapons and spears and blades. They are all in good spirits, SINGING war songs as they pass.

CREALOCK

I believe this is him now, sir.

CHELMSFORD

Ah, yes. Very good.
Commandant Browne!

Hamilton-Browne is marching with his soldiers past Chelmsford when he hears his name called. He steps out from the march and pauses by Chelmsford.

HAMILTON-BROWNE

Good morning, my Lord.
General Glyn.

He SALUTES and nods respectfully in Glyn's direction.

CHELMSFORD

Now look here, Browne. This native lot. Think they're up to it?

HAMILTON-BROWNE

I can only speak for the isiGqoza, my Lord. Brave fighters and easy to command. They are keen to equal a few scores with the Zulus. The other lot...

Browne looks wistfully at the other native warriors as they march by.

HAMILTON-BROWNE (CONT'D)

I'm afraid I don't hold them in high regard.

CHELMSFORD

Well, I suppose time will tell. Now look here, Browne, I need you to go down to Sihayo's village and clear the lot out. But look here, and mind my words... You are not to fire until fired upon, do you understand? And woman and children... There could be woman and children among the Zulus and I will hold you personally responsible that not a one is hurt, do you understand?

HAMILTON-BROWNE

Of course, my Lord. On my honour. As for the others, I'm afraid their fate is their own.

CHELMSFORD

But of course, Browne. But of course. Put them all to the sword if it comes to it. And then burn their village down. Raze it to the ground!

EXT. BATSHE VALLEY - 3RD NNC - DAY

Lt Harford is walking ahead of his native troops accompanied by a handful of British NCOs. They are encouraging their men along the valley but as they approach the hill they come under intermittent RIFLE FIRE that SPOOKS the troops.

HARFORD

This is it men. Follow me!
(Then in isiZulu with English subtitles)
With me! Keep your lines straight!
Keep in formation!

The NCOs encourage the men on with THREATS and FORCE when necessary. They can be very UNKIND to the native soldiers who are historically terrified of the Zulus.

EXT. TOP OF NGEDLA HILL - SAME

Mkhumbikazulu crouches low in the grass and watches his enemies approach. He is with THIRTY heavily armed Zulus all of whom sit crossed legged in the grass. Next to Mkhumbikazulu is a slightly older Zulu. His name is LOMBO.

The following scene is held entirely in isiZulu with English subtitles.

MKHUMBIKAZULU

See there! The traitorous dogs the isiGqoza fight with our enemies!

LOMBO

The white man offers the dogs the spoils of our land and our best women for his pleasure. Our spirits roar with fury! Send me, my Lord, and I will cut open their bellies and plunge my sword into their hearts. The isiGqoza will not forget my face in a hurry!

MKHUMBIKAZULU

It is a very ugly face, Lombo!

The group of warriors snigger at the joke.

LOMBO

Look! See how they come on in a line. The English has trained his dogs well! It will not last. The isiGqoza will more readily squat and lick his own balls than fight like the English!

Once again the hiding warriors laugh at the joke.

EXT. BATSHE VALLEY - 1ST NNC - DAY

Browne's fearsome looking isiGqoza warriors are spread out in strict FORMATION in the Batshe Valley. The other native soldiers follow behind. They are supposed to remain in strict lines but the rocks in the valley begin to DISRUPT the march and the soldiers start to intermix with each other. As they do so they begin to receive incoming fire from among the rocks and on the hill. Every now and then Browne's ARMED soldiers take to the knee and fire at the Zulus who begin to come out from their hiding places. While they are still some distance apart the fighting is all done with GUNS.

As the firing intensifies CAPTAIN DUNSCOMBE walks over to Browne for a conference.

DUNSCOMBE

I'm afraid our lines have collapsed. The NCOs are having the devil of time getting the blacks to walk on.

As Browne looks across at his lines, or what's left of them, he can see a number of black soldiers going the wrong way and having to be encouraged back to the fight by several mean looking NCOs.

HAMILTON-BROWNE

For God's sake!
(MORE)

HAMILTON-BROWNE (CONT'D)

A South African native cannot walk in a line, draw a line, or form a line and if placed in a line will soon mob himself into a circle!

As they approach the Zulu lines the Zulus start to shout from their hiding places in the rocks. Browne listens to one Zulu shout something and looks across at Dunscombe.

HAMILTON-BROWNE

What are they saying?

DUNSCOMBE

It's a traditional Zulu challenge. They are asking why we are here.

Another shout drifts across the valley, clearly heard by Dunscombe and Browne.

DUNSCOMBE

This man asks under whose orders we come.

HAMILTON-BROWNE

Tell him under orders from the great white Queen.

Dunscombe shouts back the reply in isiZulu. There is an instant reply from the hiding Zulus.

HAMILTON-BROWNE (CONT'D)

Well. What did he say?

DUNSCOMBE

Something rather derogatory about your mother...

From out of the rocks that lay on the valley floor TWO DOZEN Zulu warriors emerge and CHARGE at Browne's lines. Browne is pleased to see that his isiGqoza warriors meet the charge head on, firing their rifles and throwing their weapons. Browne and Dunscombe pull their pistols and draw their swords and join in the fray, lunging at once with their swords and firing their pistols into the mass of men in their midst. The fighting is MEDIEVAL in spirit, and a number of Zulus are cut down viciously before they turn and head back to the safety of the hill. Many do not make it and are shot down climbing the hill, their bodies falling and laying ENTANGLED in the climbing vines that grip the rocks.

Hamilton-Browne chases the retreating Zulus. Here and there a Zulu emerges from his hiding place but is mercilessly brought down by Hamilton-Browne's bullets or the sweep of his sword. Amidst the fighting we can see the true warrior spirit in Hamilton-Browne. He is quite comfortable in the killing, as only a Victorian soldier can be. There is steel in his heart but it is the steel in his hands that does so much damage to the Zulus.

EXT. TOP OF NGEDLA HILL - SAME

The following scene takes place in isiZulu with English subtitles.

MKHUMBIKAZULU

The Englishman fights like a true warrior.

LOMBO

And the spirits will be pleased when we send him to them!

MKHUMBIKAZULU

We are terribly outnumbered. Our guns do not have the same range as the English.

LOMBO

They will fight from the caves for as long as they can, my Lord, but they cannot hold the English back for long. We should think about leaving...

MKHUMBIKAZULU

NO! Not yet. Let me watch how the English fight...

EXT. THE BATSHE VALLEY - A SHORT TIME LATER

As Hamilton-Browne approaches the foot of the hill he is joined on the battlefield by Harford and his troop of Native Infantry.

HAMILTON-BROWNE

There you are, Harford. Decided to see what all the fuss was about, eh?

HARFORD

My compliments Commandant Browne. I see they have taken to the hills. How many do you reckon on? A hundred?

HAMILTON-BROWNE

Possibly so. There are caves in the hills. God only knows the number that remain.

The shooting continues on in the background, back and forth from the valley and the hill. One CAVE in particular receives a large number of rounds and the Zulus within return in kind. Hamilton-Browne is watching the Zulus firing from this cave and is about to instruct Harford to climb the hill and take the cave when he turns to see Harford lying FACE DOWN in the ground.

HARFORD
 (groans)
 Ahhh!

BROWNE
 Good God, man, are you hit?

Harford is concentrating his focus on a small colourful BEETLE that he is trying to coax into a matchbox.

HARFORD
 No, no! I'm not hit. Such a beautiful example. Quite rare I should think.

BROWNE
 Lieutenant Harford, I would be eternally grateful if you would attend to matters in hand. Be a good chap and take a couple of your men up to that cave and clear out the Zulus. When you're ready, of course.

HARFORD
 Eh? Oh, yes. Of course.

Harford pockets his matchbox and stands up. As he does so a Zulu bullet whips into the ground where moments before he had been lying prostrate.

HARFORD (CONT'D)
 Right then. Sergeant. Five of your best, if you please.

Harford draws his pistol.

HARFORD (CONT'D)
 Follow me.

Harford is followed onto the hill by his Sergeant and five RELUCTANT native soldiers. He is eager to join the fight and positively runs up the steep incline. As he passes a large boulder a hidden Zulu POPS UP and charges at Harford. Harford cuts him down with a single shot from his pistol. The Zulu falls over the edge of the rocks and disappears from view. As Harford approaches the cave the incoming fire intensifies but all the bullets ping harmlessly from the rocks. Harford moves QUICKLY from rock to rock, all the time keeping his head down for fear he should lose it. Any fears he may have had about his courage under fire are now forgotten in the excitement. Harford edges ever closer to the cave. As he turns a corner he is STARTLED by a Zulu warrior sat with his back to a boulder, his eyes wide open and a single bullet wound to his forehead. This man's stomach has been CUT OPEN and his entrails lie about as if in some obscene painting. As Harford watches the dead man another Zulu appears, very much alive, holding an ageing rifle. He is barely four yards from Harford when he pulls the trigger...

Fortunately for Harford the rifle CLICKS HARMLESSLY and the look of fear spreads from Harford's face to that of the Zulu, who drops his weapon and dashes off towards the cave. Harford unleashes his weapon at the retreating Zulu and one bullet is seen to HIT the poor man, but it is not enough to stop him and he makes it to the cave just as Harford's pistol clicks onto an empty chamber.

HARFORD

Here, Sergeant, let me have
your weapon...

Harford turns and finds himself very much ALONE. Neither his Sergeant nor the native soldiers have followed him on his adventure. From below he can hear his Sergeant call out.

SERGEANT (O/S)

Poor old Harford's dead!

HARFORD

(shouts)

No, he isn't. Poor old Harford is
very much still alive, thank you.

(to himself)

Bloody furious, but still alive.

Undeterred by the lack of support Harford approaches the mouth of the cave. As he does so he can see feet poking out from within.

HARFORD

(In isiZulu with English
subtitles.) Come on out. You
there. I can see you. Come
out. I promise you will not
be hurt.

ZULU SOLDIER

(In isiZulu with English
subtitles.) I won't. You will
kill me.

HARFORD

(In isiZulu with English
subtitles.) You have my word
as an Englishman. You will
come to no harm.

The Zulu comes out of the cave slowly. He is badly wounded and DRENCHED in blood.

HARFORD (CONT'D)

(In isiZulu with English
subtitles.)

How many more inside?

ZULU SOLDIER
 (In isiZulu with English
 subtitles.) None. I was alone

HARFORD
 A likely story!
 (In isiZulu with English
 subtitles.)
 Now look here. In a short while
 some soldiers are going to come up
 here and set fires at the mouth of
 this cave. When you are forced out
 by the smoke they will shoot you,
 and leave your bodies to rot in
 the dirt. Come out now and you
 will be under my protection. No
 harm will come to you. We will
 treat your wounds and look after
 you.

Harford draws his sword and approaches the mouth of the cave.

HARFORD (CONT'D)
 (In isiZulu with English
 subtitles.) Throw out your
 weapons and come out.

Harford is surprised to see a number of sinister looking
 weapons fly out of the cave and land harmlessly in the dirt.
 They are followed by several Zulus, mostly wounded and
 bleeding, who help each other from the cave. Harford BEAMS
 with pleasure.

EXT. NGEDLA HILL - DAY

The following scene takes place in isiZulu with
 English subtitles.

LOMBO
 The battle is lost, my Lord. If we
 stand and fight here today, we
 will surely die...

MKHUMBIKAZULU
 I would rather die than see our
 lands lost to the invader.

LOMBO
 Better to live today, so that we
 may fight them tomorrow.

MKHUMBIKAZULU
 You are a wise man, Lombo. Ugly,
 but wise. Very well. Let's leave
 here before the English come. We
 will have our tomorrow on some
 other battlefield.

The thirty Zulus and Mkhumbikazulu and Lombo edge away from the edge of the hill unseen by the army in the valley. They disappear into the bush and move at speed. A few hundred yards from their hiding spot they break out into open country. Ahead of them MOUNTED CAVALRY, a hundred in number, are moving in on them, guns drawn. Mkhumbikazulu notices them too late to take shelter or to run. The Zulus gather about him, watching the approaching cavalry. Mkhumbikazulu RAISES his assegai defiantly.

MKHUMBIKAZULU
USUTHU!!!

The Zulus about him join in the war cry and follow their leader's charge into the cavalry. It is a devastatingly one sided affair. The first volley from the cavalry knocks down a DOZEN of the warriors. Mkhumbikazulu is hit in the arm but his pace doesn't falter. Neither do his fellow warriors who continue to charge with him. The second volley brings the rest of the Zulus down. Mkhumbikazulu falls, FATALLY shot.

Lombo DID NOT follow the charge. He HIDES in the bush where his legs took him the first second he saw the cavalry.

LOMBO
Foolish boy. Stupid, brave,
foolish boy.

EXT.THE BATSHE VALLEY - MOMENTS LATER

Lt Harford has descended the hill with his PRISONERS. The Zulus are in a bad way, bleeding from many wounds, and one or two look like they may not survive the day.

HAMILTON-BROWNE
Excellent work,
Lieutenant Harford.

HARFORD
Thank you. I've questioned my
prisoners. The majority of
Sihayo's followers left yesterday
for oNdini, to join their King's
muster. The kraal is empty.

HAMILTON-BROWNE
We've had the same information. It
seems the Zulu King may put up a
fight yet.

Harford watches as his prisoners are escorted at the point of bayonets back to British lines.

HARFORD
What will happen to them?

HAMILTON-BROWNE

Lord Chelmsford's orders are to take the very best of care of them. We'll bandage them up, send them back to their farms once the war is over.

HARFORD

What about the dozen or so lying wounded in the valley?

HAMILTON-BROWNE

If they can't get up, they'll die where they lay...

EXT. DISTANT HILL - SOME TIME LATER

Lord Chelmsford and his staff are still watching from their safe vantage point. As they look out at Sihayo's kraal they can see SMOKE rising as the British army set fire to the homestead. It signals the end of the fight. The whole valley fills with the black smoke.

Hamilton-Browne can be seen making his way to Lord Chelmsford's table. He is exhausted.

LORD CHELMSFORD

Commandant Browne. Your men performed well today. What of the casualties?

HAMILTON-BROWNE

Eight of my Zulus were killed. A number wounded. There were no British casualties. Zulu dead number over forty.

LORD CHELMSFORD

Good, good.

HAMILTON-BROWNE

We have captured a handful of Zulus and over five hundred head of cattle. All in all a good day, sir.

LORD CHELMSFORD

All in all, I'd have to agree with you Browne. Not quite the fight we were expecting, eh? Not what we were expecting at all...

INT. SIHAYO'S HUT - NIGHT

Sihayo is sat on the floor. He is in a SOMBRE mood. Mehlokazulu sits next to him along with his remaining brother Tshekwane and his uncle, Zuluhenga kaXongo. In front of them is Lombo, who has arrived at oNdini to report Mkhumbikazulu's death.

The entire conversation will be in isiZulu with English subtitles.

LOMBO

Your son died a warrior's death,
with great honour.

SIHAYO

There is no honour in death...

ZULUHENGA KAXONGO

Forgive my brother. No father
should hear tell of his son's
death.

SIHAYO

I have betrayed my youngest son.
We should not have run from the
British. We should have stood our
ground, defended our home and
slaughtered the white man to the
last one of them.

LOMBO

There were too many. Their guns
were plentiful and too powerful.
They had the traitors, the
iziGqoza, who fought for them and
took our land...

On hearing the iziGqoza mentioned Mehlokazulu pulls out his short, sharp, assegai, and with eyes blazing with fury sticks it in the ground in front of him and turns it, as though he had just stuck it into the flesh of his mortal enemy.

MEHLOKAZULU

I will cut the throats of every
last son of a whore that ever
crossed my family... Father, we
must go and join our regiments.
Let us go and fight this red
plague that sweeps across our
homeland. Let us avenge our
brother's death...

Sihayo NODS thoughtfully.

SIHAYO

I have spoken with the King, who bides his time patiently, waiting for the right moment to strike. Our army is gathering in strength in the foothills of the Nqutu Plateau. It troubles me that I may lose another son, but many father's will lose their sons in the coming fight... Go... Show the invader that we are Zulu. And we will not go quietly to our fate...

EXT. FOOTHILLS OF THE NQUTU PLATEAU - DAY

From a great distance there is nothing but a vast expanse of African bush that stretches for as far as the eye can see. This is beautiful land, full of WILDLIFE, flowing STREAMS, LAKES and TREES. As we move closer we see that the bush hides something else. A pair of EYES. Several pairs of eyes. A dozen eyes glowing from the faces of a dozen Zulu warriors sat quietly in the bush. As we get closer the bush reveals TWO DOZEN warriors... THREE DOZEN warriors... a HUNDRED warriors... a THOUSAND warriors...TEN THOUSAND warriors sat quietly... waiting...

EXT. RORKES'S DRIFT - NIGHT

Title Over: Rorke's Drift

Durnford sits at his campaign table in the light cast by a candle. He is writing a letter.

DURNFORD (V/O)

My dearest Francis... It has been ten days now since our brave forces took Sihayo's kraal. My company has been moved up to Rorke's Drift on the Buffalo River to act as support as Chelmsford advances further into Zulu-land.

As he narrates his letter we cut to a MONTAGE of scenes that display Durnford's words visually.

DURNFORD (CONT'D) (V/O)

Progress has been painfully slow as the weather and the ground has proven to be a greater adversary than the Zulu.

We see a MONTAGE of a VAST army STRUGGLING to make its way across the rocky ground; thousands of Redcoats marching in storms; beasts of burden hauling great guns; officers cajoling their men from atop horseback; Pioneers desperately trying to clear a path for the invading army.

DURNFORD (CONT'D) (V/O)
 Chelmsford has supplies for just 28 days and his progress thus far has been less than satisfying... Of the great Zulu army we hear nothing... nothing but rumour and falsehood... It seems as though they have vanished from the earth and have left behind them an empty vista... Here and there we capture a Zulu scout and seize a hundred head of his cattle, but Cetshwayo's army proves elusive...

We see a troop of Redcoats CAPTURE and harangue a lone Zulu scout; see the BURNING of other villages; and watch as herds of cattle are rounded up. Of the great Zulu Impi, we see nothing.

DURNNFORD (CONT'D) (V/O)
 Lord Chelmsford has made temporary camp at a place the Zulus call 'Little Hut' which the English call Isandlwana.

We now see a LARGE camp at the heart of which is a hundred white tents. Looming over the camp is an odd looking hill. The camp is a hive of activity. At the centre of the tents is a larger tent at the apex of which flies a British Union Flag. Around the camp the men of the British army go about their duties.

DURNFORD (CONT'D) (V/O)
 It is not an ideal camp, and I hear rumour that our men are quite restless. It is feared that the Zulu army has melted away into the dark, and we will not get our chance to prove ourselves in the field of battle... Where has the Zulu gone? It is quite a mystery...

EXT. FOOTHILLS OF THE NQUTU PLATEAU - NIGHT

It is RAINING hard and the huge Zulu army patiently waits in the darkness, unprotected from the elements. No fires are lit, and the warriors SHIVER in the cold.

EXT. RORKE'S DRIFT - NIGHT

As the storm RAGES overhead the camp at Rorke's Drift is still at work. From the direction of British Natal a train of wagons hauled by oxen snake their way into camp. Smith-Dorrien rides alongside, dripping wet from the storm.

SMITH-DORRIEN

Right, this will do. Corral the oxen in the pens over there. Make sure they are fed well. Have the wagons secured here. I'll go and find out where we can pitch our tents.

The men move SLOWLY, dulled by the weather and exhausted by the trek. Smith-Dorrien leads his horse to where the wranglers are stationed and alights. He leaves his horse and crosses the camp. As he does so he crosses Cochrane's path as he heads to Durnford's tent.

COCHRANE

Good God, is that you?

SMITH-DORRIEN

Some of me. I think I left the rest of me in Cape Town.

COCHRANE

Well, this will never do. Come on. You can dry off in my tent.

INT. COCHRANE'S TENT - SOME TIME LATER

Smith Dorrien is no longer the wet and cold man of earlier. He has had a change of clothes and sits at a small campaign table that doubles as Cochrane's desk. He is drinking a glass of wine and an empty plate of food sits before him. Cochrane enters moments later and shakes off the water from his coat.

COCHRANE

How was it?

SMITH-DORRIEN

My compliments to the chef.

COCHRANE

It's not much, but better than what you've been having I've no doubt.

SMITH-DORRIEN

As you say, much improved. It's my first taste of wine for some weeks.

COCHRANE

They say an army marches on its stomach, I say it swims in the wine that flows with it!

Cochrane pours himself a glass of wine and takes a chair.

COCHRANE (CONT'D)

I should say you've had a rough few weeks, haven't you? This is hardly typical African weather.

SMITH-DORRIEN

I'm not sure what's worse, the natives, the Boers or the bloody rain.

COCHRANE

What about the animals?

SMITH-DORRIEN

When I'm tired of them, or they fall lame, I shoot them, and eat them.

COCHRANE

(laughs)

If only dealing with the Boers was so easy! What are your orders?

SMITH-DORRIEN

More supplies for Lord Chelmsford. I should reach his camp soon enough.

COCHRANE

He's pitched up at a place called Isand... Isnawna... Isandlaman...

SMITH-DORRIEN

Isandlwana?

COCHRANE

That's the one. When do you leave?

SMITH-DORRIEN

We're due in the next few days. How far do you reckon it is?

COCHRANE

Six miles or so. You should make it in good time tomorrow evening, if you leave early enough. It's deep into the Zulu heartland. I'm envious. You'll step foot in enemy territory long before me!

SMITH-DORRIEN

Any chance your forces will move up any time soon?

COCHRANE

We were pulled up from the Sandspruit in case the attack on Sihayo's Kraal stalled.

(MORE)

COCHRANE (CONT'D)

We've been stuck here on camp duties ever since. The closest I've come to Zululand is looking at it across from the banks of the Buffalo river.

SMITH-DORRIEN

Things can change quickly in war.

COCHRANE

Yes... I suppose it can...

EXT. HILL ABOVE ISANDLWANA - DAY

Title over: British Camp at Isandlwana. January 21st 1879

The British camp at Isandlwana: Isandlwana is the Zulu word for 'Little Hut' because of how it looks like a small Zulu hut. The large camp is spread out around its SOUTH and SOUTH EASTERN slopes. One kilometre to the north is a SPUR which leads to the Nqutu Plateau. Half a kilometre to its south is STONY HILL and between it and Isandlwana is a gap which will become known as FUGITIVE'S DRIFT. It is the route survivors of what is about to occur will take, back towards Rorke's Drift and British Natal. A kilometre and a half to the East is BIG DONGA, a small river which flows south and crosses the main track to Isiphesi and oNdini; a further half a kilometre east is CONICAL HILL.

Commandant Hamilton-Browne and COMMANDANT LONSDALE are stood on a hill overlooking the vast British camp at Isandlwana. They look CONCERNED.

LONSDALE

Good God, man. It looks like a Sunday school picnic... Where are the defences? Why haven't the wagons been laagered? If the Zulus attacked now they'd push us all the way back into Natal.

HAMILTON-BROWNE

I have a bad feeling, you know... A dark foreboding. The men feel it too. It doesn't feel right.

LONSDALE

Can't blame Glyn, I suppose. Commander of the main invading column having to babysit Lord Chelmsford. He's been relegated to nothing more than a puppet. You can see it the man. He's positively depressed...

HAMILTON-BROWNE

We must say something.

(MORE)

HAMILTON-BROWNE (CONT'D)
It's our duty...

Browne looks across to Lonsdale for support.

INT. CHELMSFORD'S TENT. ISANDLWANA - DAY

Present in the tent are: Chelmsford, Crealock, Glyn, Clery, Pulleine, Melville, Milne, Coghill, Hamilton-Browne and Dartnell.

GLYN
My Lord, if we may begin by discussing the state of the camp...

CHELMSFORD
What's wrong with the camp?

GLYN
Nothing at all, save for the lack of security about its perimeter. If we were to dig in, perhaps? Or build a number of sangars around the edge?

CREALOCK
Good Lord, man. Dig in? The camp is mostly rock. It could takes weeks to dig a defensive line around the camp!

CHELMSFORD
Weeks? No. No. That will never do. We don't have weeks, Glyn. Besides, the camp is temporary. I intend to march out today, look for another camp where we can dig in properly.

GLYN
Perhaps if we could in-span the carriages? It's a small thing, but terribly effective.

CREALOCK
No. Have the carriages emptied today and returned to Rorke's Drift for re-supply. If you are worried, Glyn, perhaps you could return to Rorke's Drift with them? Oversee the re-supply?

CHELMSFORD
No, no. Glyn will ride out with us. Colonel Pulleine... Any news on Gamdana?

PULLEINE

We were expecting him yesterday, but he failed to turn up. He is Sihayo's brother, and has a kraal in the Hlazakazi Heights. We believe that he is willing to surrender his men. He is known to be on bad terms with the Zulu King.

CHELSMFORD

Lieutenant Dartnell... You have command of a hundred and twenty mounted horsemen. Take them and ride east, beyond the Malakazi and Hlazakazi heights. It's my belief the main Zulu army is there, somewhere, hiding in the hills. If Gamdana is missing, it may be that he is running from them, but too afraid of us to surrender... Commandant Browne... You will go with Dartnell in support. Your iziGqoza Zulus fought well at Sihayo's kraal... I have the utmost confidence in you. Go into the hills and find the Zulu... They are there, somewhere. Go and prod the hornet's nest, and see what flies...

EXT. ISANDLWANA - MOMENTS LATER

Dartnell's 120 horsemen lead slowly out of the camp, heading East along the track towards Big Donga. At their REAR, Hamilton-Browne and Lonsdale march in formation with a hundred or so men of the iziGqoza. Much of the camp is going about its early morning routine. The wagons and carriages are being unloaded. The white tents flap in a small wind.

EXT. AFRICAN BUSH - DAY

In January in South Africa the daytime temperature can reach over 40 degrees. In the valleys, beneath the canopy which keeps the sun from the heads of the men on horseback, the air is FETID and STILL.

Lord Chelmsford is riding his horse through the bush. He is followed by Glyn, Clery, Crealock, Milne, Melville and Coghill and a large force of heavily armed soldiers on horseback. As they pass into a clearing they spot a dozen native soldiers, dressed in a fashion not too dissimilar to the Zulus, watching them. Chelmsford's force grinds to a halt.

CREALOCK

Zulus, sir?

GLYN

(answers for Chelmsford)
No. I don't think so. Their
attitude is all wrong.

CHELMSFORD

Brickhill. See what they want.

BRICKHILL is Chelmsford's translator. He walks over to the natives, accompanied by a handful of soldiers armed with rifles. He returns moments later, having spoken with them.

BRICKHILL

They are Gamdana's men. They come in peace. They say that Gamadana is here and wishes to negotiate the terms of his surrender.

CHELMSFORD

Very well. Where is he?

As Chelmsford finishes speaking an older man walks into the clearing. He is UNARMED. This is GAMDANA.

Gamdana walks slowly over to where Chelmsford is still sat upon his horse. He looks nervous.

GAMDANA

(In isiZulu. Subtitles in English) I am Gamdana
kaXongo. I come in peace.

CHELMSFORD

Ask him where he's been. We were expecting him yesterday.

Brickhill speaks to Gamdana in his own tongue. Gamdana looks abashed. He addresses his reply to Chelmsford.

GAMDANA

(In isiZulu. Subtitles in English) I have heard that Cetshwayo's Impi has come to eat me up for talking with the British. They were due here today. I was frightened.

BRICKHILL

He says that the Zulu king's army has arrived and he fears retribution for treating with us.

CHELMSFORD

He knows where the army is?

Brickhill talks to Gamdana in his own tongue and the old man SHAKES his head vigorously.

GAMDANA

(In isiZulu. Subtitles in English) No. I do not seek out the Zulu impi, but they are close...

Gamdana looks about the clearing as if expecting to be ambushed by Zulus at any minute.

BRICKHILL

He says he doesn't know where they are. He says they are close.

CHELMSFORD

Very well. Order him back to his people. Tell him to surrender at our camp tomorrow morning. He is to bring all his weapons and every man of fighting age.

Chelmsford turns in his saddle to talk to Glyn as Brickhill relays Chelmsford's orders to Gamdana.

CHELMSFORD (CONT'D)

I think a spot of lunch, Glyn. Here's as good a place as any.

EXT. HLAZAKAZI HEIGHTS - DAY

In the searing heat the Mounted Infantry, led by Lt Dartnell, has scaled the Hlazakazi heights and have a CLEAR view over the undulating country before them. Some distance away they can see FOUR Zulus on horseback, watching them.

HAMILTON-BROWNE

They're watching us.

DARTNELL

Yes, they are. And they are just the ones we can see.

HAMILTON-BROWNE

Do you think the main Zulu army is beyond the hills?

DARTNELL

I don't know... I suppose we ought to go and find out.

Dartnell smiles in anticipation of combat, and stirring the hornet's nest.

DARTNELL (CONT'D)

Take your men and edge around the valley and push on up the hill just there. I'll head east and push up from the opposite direction.

(MORE)

DARTNELL (CONT'D)

We'll meet in the middle and see what occurs.

EXT. AFRICAN BUSH - AT LUNCH - DAY

Lord Chelmsford and his entourage have taken SHADE in the bush and are eating their meagre rations. It is quiet in the heat of the day. As the men are eating there comes the sound of a COCKEREL and on cue the animal suddenly appears amongst the group.

GLYN

A shilling, Mr Coghill, if you can catch my dinner.

CHELMSFORD

Two shillings, Mr Melville. I rather fancy a bird for my dinner.

Coghill and Melville, easily the youngest men in the lunch party, rise to the challenge and a surreal COCKEREL CHASE ensues. Lieutenant Milne watches in amusement as the bird heads in his direction. He LEAPS to his feet and joins in on the fun, FLAPPING his hands and encouraging the bird back towards Coghill.

COGHILL

This way Mr Milne!

Coghill is CHASING the bird and is barely a foot behind it. As the bird turns, so too does Coghill who lets out a terrible SCREAM as his knee TWISTS in the exertion. The bird chase comes to a dramatic end as Coghill rolls about the floor in pain and is joined by Melville and Milne.

MILNE

Are you all right, old boy?

COGHILL

My knee!

MELVILLE

Looks like you've dislocated it. Here, let's get you to your horse. You won't be walking anywhere for a while.

Milne and Melville assist the wounded Coghill to his feet and towards his horse.

CHELMSFORD

I think this would be a good time to return to camp, Glyn.

Glyn nods in agreement and the lunch party begins to pack up and prepares to return to Isandlwana.

EXT. HLAZAKAZI HEIGHTS - DAY

Hamilton-Browne and his isiGqoza Zulus have scaled the western slope of the hill and have pushed through into the open. As they do so they open out onto a large valley that hides a thousand Zulu warriors on the march.

HAMILTON-BROWNE
Good lord, would you look at them!

WALSH
The fabled Zulu army?

HAMILTON-BROWNE
Some of them, at least. Where is Lieutenant Dartnell?

They both look east just as Dartnell and his two hundred mounted infantry hove into view.

WALSH
Look! The Zulus have seen us!

As if moving as one sentient being the thousand Zulu warriors in the valley abruptly move in OPPOSING directions, breaking up into THREE distinct arms, or more accurately, HORNS. The Right Horn, closest to Hamilton-Browne, moves in defined order towards him, as the Head and Left Horn, manoeuvre towards Dartnell.

HAMILTON-BROWNE
We're far too outnumbered. Order the men to prepare for a fighting retreat... No... Wait...

As they watch the valley beyond, the Zulu army PAUSES and then RE-FORMS into one force before moving off over the hills and AWAY from Hamilton-Browne and Dartnell.

WALSH
What happened?

Hamilton-Browne looks as perplexed as his lieutenant.

HAMILTON-BROWNE
I couldn't say. It looks like they don't want to fight today...

EXT. HLAZAKAZI HEIGHTS - DAY

Lt Dartnell rides his two hundred mounted men into a temporary camp that Hamilton-Browne has mocked up just below the crest of the hill that he was previously on.

DARTNELL
Did you see it Maori?
(MORE)

DARTNELL (CONT'D)
Did you bloody well see it?!

HAMILTON-BROWNE
I did.

DARTNELL
We should send a report at once to
Lord Chelmsford.

HAMILTON-BROWNE
I took the liberty of sending
Gossett and Buller. They're
Chelmsford's men. He'll more
likely trust their word.

DARTNELL
Good, good. Did you see it, Maori?
The 'Horns of the Bull' before our
very eyes!

HAMILTON-BROWNE.
I saw it. I rather feared I was
about to be killed by it.

DARTNELL
Indeed. Indeed. But how it moved!
So many men, all moving in perfect
harmony across a thousand acres!

HAMILTON-BROWNE.
That, indeed, is a mystery.
Sometimes I can't get a single
native to walk in a straight
line...

INT. MEDICAL TENT - NIGHT

Coghill is lying on a bed being TENDED to by Dr Shephard.
There are a few other people in the tent, mostly PATIENTS with
small injuries or sickness. Dr Shephard is wrapping a BANDAGE
around Coghill's knee.

SHEPHARD
It's nothing serious. A simple
dislocation. You'll need to rest
it for a few days.

COGHILL
But my duties?

SHEPHARD
They will have to wait. Camp
duties only. You'll need to stay
off it as much as you can.

Shephard walks over to the side of the bed and picks up a
WALKING STICK.

SHEPHARD

Here, you'll be needing this.

COGHILL

Thank you.

SHEPHARD

You are to remain in camp. It's
for the good of your health.

Coghill does not look pleased.

EXT. NQUTU PLATEAU - NIGHT

A small group of Zulus are sat around a campfire deep in the valleys of the Nqutu Plateau. Mehlokazulu is present, as is the commander of Zulu forces, Ntshingwayo and his second in command, Mavumengwana. A Zulu SCOUT stands before them.

The following scene takes place entirely in isiZulu with English subtitles.

ZULU SCOUT

Matshana has raised his regiment.
We were on our way to join the
Amabutho when we stumbled on the
British.

NTSHINGWAYO

Where was this?

ZULU SCOUT

Beyond the Hlazakazi. My Lord,
Matshana has sent me to seek
guidance...

NTSHINGWAYO

You did well, my son. Ride at once
to your master. Tell him to
continue his journey, and we shall
meet tomorrow in the hills behind
the British... Tell Matshana to
leave a hundred men behind...
Tonight, as the British watch,
light a thousand fires in the
hills... Let us see what the
British do next...

The Zulu Scout bows out and DISSOLVES into the night.

MEHLOKAZULU

Our day is approaching. We should
attack the British now, while they
are at rest.

NTSHINGWAYO

Be calm my son. Our time
draws near...

(MORE)

NTSHINGWAYO (CONT'D)

If we can draw the main British force away from their camp at Isandlwana then maybe... Mavumengwana, order our Impi to move forward towards Isandlwana. Keep low and hidden. Camp just out of range of their scouts. Keep a close watch on the British... Let us see what they do...

INT. CHELMSFORD'S TENT - NIGHT

CHELMSFORD

Thousands you say?

GOSSETT

At least a thousand. I saw them with my own eyes.

CHELMSFORD

And yet the Zulu King commands at least forty thousand...

GLYN

It is possible the Zulu commanders are moving their men into position.

CLERY

I agree with General Glyn. We should take this report very seriously.

CREALOCK

It would be unwise to act rashly. We should wait until morning.

CHELMSFORD

Yes, yes. There is nothing to be done this evening. The Zulu does not fight at night. We shall wait upon the dawn, and see what occurs. Very well, gentlemen, I shall bid you all goodnight.

EXT. HLAZAKAZI BIVOUAC - NIGHT

Dartnell and Hamilton-Browne have laid camp and are now settled by a small campfire, drinking tea.

DARTNELL

My god, Maori, that was some sight. And just a thousand of them, I should say. A mere fraction of the army Cetshwayo commands.

(MORE)

DARTNELL (CONT'D)

God help us all if we get caught
up in the middle of that!

HAMILTON-BROWNE

It was a sight. One I shall never
forget. If that's the tip of the
army the Zulu King has nestled in
the hills beyond, we'll not stand
a chance against them. God save us
if it is...

Just then Lt Walsh appears from out of the darkness. he is
holding his weapon as though he may be called upon to use it
at any moment. He is extremely nervous.

WALSH

Excuse me, sirs, but I think you'd
better see this...

EXT. HLAZAKAZI HEIGHTS - MOMENTS LATER

The faces of the three officers are LIT UP in the moonlight.
To begin with we can't see what they are looking at.

DARTNELL

My God. I think that answers your
question Maori...

We turn and FOLLOW their gaze. It is dark in the hills to
their immediate vicinity. Beyond that we see the YELLOW LIGHTS
of ten thousand CAMPFIRES in the hills. It looks like the main
Zulu encampment.

HAMILTON-BROWNE

We don't have enough men...

DARTNELL

Not by far... We can't hold that
back. They would destroy us to a
man... Lieutenant Walsh...

WALSH

Sir?

DARTNELL

Ride at once to Lord Chelmsford.
He should hear of this straight
away...

Just as Dartnell is about to give his orders there is a CRACK
in the darkness behind them. Then there is SHOUTING and
CONFUSION as a dozen native warriors come CRASHING through the
undergrowth in TERROR, followed by a dozen horses that have
come loose from their restraints.

HAMILTON-BROWNE

What is it?
(MORE)

HAMILTON-BROWNE (CONT'D)
 Are the Zulus attacking?

A FLUSTERED colonial officer is shouting commands at the native soldiers and horses, and having little effect on either.

COLONIAL OFFICER
 An accidental discharge! The bloody natives are jumpy. They've seen the fires in the hills and have convinced themselves the Zulus are advancing. They're afraid the Zulus will cut their throats while they sleep!

HAMILTON-BROWNE
 Well get some bloody order restored or I'll be cutting a few throats myself.

A handful of white officers and NCOs calm the native contingent down and the camp is slowly restored to order.

DARTNELL
 Lieutenant Walsh, if you will...

By the light of a lamp Dartnell writes his report down.

DARTNELL
 "Lord Chelmsford: Main Zulu army presented to our immediate front. Request immediate support." Here. Make sure Lord Chelmsford reads this personally.

Lt Walsh nods and FOLDS into the darkness.

HAMILTON-BROWNE
 Is that wise? We have no actual confirmation of numbers? Should we not wait, and see what the Zulus do in the morning?

DARTNELL
 You saw them yourself, Maori. We cannot possibly hold back the Zulu army if it attacks at daybreak. You've seen the men. They have no stomach to meet our enemy face to face. What we need is four thousand determined Redcoats and the element of surprise. The Zulus won't know what has hit them!

Hamilton-Browne doesn't look convinced.

EXT. ISANDLWANA - NIGHT

It is the EARLY hours of the morning and the camp is quiet. Lieutenant Walsh's horse, and THREE other soldiers who rode with him for protection, break through the outer perimeter of the camp and ride up to Chelmsford's tent, its Union Jack flapping at its mast.

Lieutenant Clery hears the horse arrive and exits his tent that sits next to Chelmsford's. He is fully DRESSED and it is clear he has not yet retired to bed. He holds a LAMP in one hand.

CLERY

What is it?

WALSH

Urgent message from Lieutenant Dartnell, sir.

CLERY

Show it to me.

Walsh gets off his horse and hands the note to Clery. Clery opens the note and shines the light over it.

CLERY

Come with me.

The two men enter Lord Chelmsford's tent.

INT. CHELMSFORD'S TENT - MOMENTS LATER

Lord Chelmsford's cot is situated in one corner of the large tent. MOSQUITO nets hang from the ceiling and his body can be just about made out, sleeping within. Clery goes over, parts the nets and wakes Chelmsford.

CHELMSFORD

What is it? What time is it?

CLERY

Just gone one o'clock your Lordship. I have urgent news from Lieutenant Dartnell.

On hearing this Chelmsford rises from his bed. He wears a long white NIGHTDRESS and a night cap. He notices Walsh but says nothing to him. Chelmsford holds out his hand for the message.

CHELMSFORD

Show me.

Clery hands the note to Chelmsford. Beneath the light of Clery's lamp, Chelmsford reads the note.

CHELMSFORD

The enemy has shown in increased force directly in front of Dartnells's position. You witnessed this show of force?

WALSH

Yes sir. There must be ten thousand campfires burning just in front of Lieutenant Dartnell's camp, sir.

CHELMSFORD

I see. Very well. Ride at once to Lieutenant Dartnell and tell him to hold his position. He is not to make a move against the Zulu until we arrive. Clery...

CLERY

Yes, sir?

CHELMSFORD

Send for Glyn... and Crealock. Where the bloody hell's Crealock?

CLERY

Asleep, I should imagine, sir.

CHELMSFORD.

Well wake him up. There's work to be done. Have the 1st Battalion the 24th stand to. They will be left to act as camp supporters in our absence. Order the immediate mobilisation of the 2nd Battalion... Quietly... No bloody great trumpets. It won't do to let the Zulus know we're on our way.

CLERY

G-Company, the 2nd Battalion are on picket duty, my Lord. Shall I order them to remain on camp duty?

CHELMSFORD

Yes. Do that. Who are their officers?

CLERY

Lieutenants Pope and Goodwin-Austin, sir.

CHELMSFORD

Poor sods. They'll be bitterly disappointed to miss the show...

CLERY

Yes, sir. They will.

CHELMSFORD

Have Colonel Pulleine remain as camp commander. Bring up Durnford in support from Rorke's Drift. Colonel Pulleine to act strictly on the defensive in my absence.

CLERY

Yes sir.

CHELMSFORD

I think that's everything for now. See to it, will you Clery? I shall get dressed.

EXT. ISANDLWANA - MOMENTS LATER

Clery exits Chelmsford's tent and disappears into his own, popping back out moments later with another officer in tow. Soon the camp begins to spring to life, with officers and NCOs shouting MUTED commands in the dark and raising the troops.

Lt Smith-Dorrien has heard the commotion and exits his tent just as Clery passes by.

CLERY

You there...?

SMITH-DORRIEN

Lieutenant Smith-Dorrien, Sir.

CLERY

You came up with the transport earlier today? From Rorke's Drift?

SMITH-DORRIEN

Yes sir.

CLERY

Good. You'll do. I have orders for Colonel Durnford. He's camped at Rorke's Drift. You are to ride there at once and make sure he receives these orders personally.

Clery hands Smith-Dorrien an envelope with an official seal.

CLERY (CONT'D)

Don't spare the horses young man.

EXT. ISANDLWANA - A SHORT TIME LATER

Smith-Dorrien is sat on horseback and is moving away from the bulk of the British Army which is moving as quietly as it can out of the camp and towards the Hlazakazi heights. He watches for a short time before turning his horse and guiding it away from Isandlwana and towards Rorke's Drift.

The British Army is made up of row upon row of Redcoats marching as quietly as possible out of the camp, shadowed by officers on horseback. Behind them are towed FOUR of the heavy guns, leaving just TWO in the camp.

As the main British army leaves camp Lord Chelmsford exits his tent. Clery, Crealock and Glyn are sat atop their own horses, waiting. Colonel Pulleine watches from aside. Chelmsford is PLEASED. He beams as he mounts his horse. He takes one last look at the camp, nods in satisfaction, and joins his army.

EXT. JUST BEYOND ISANDLWANA - SAME

A pair of EYES pierce the darkness. A LONE Zulu scout watches from his vantage point. He watches as Chelmsford's large force moves quietly out of the camp. Then the Zulu turns and is gone, swallowed up by the darkness.

EXT. RORKE'S DRIFT - NIGHT

Smith-Dorrien gallops over the crest of an outlying hill. The sun has not yet risen, but colour shows on the distant horizon. He follows a track illuminated in the moonlight and rides into Rorke's Drift. It is mostly quiet with a few soldiers on picket duty. He enters the camp. He finds a British soldier blocking his way.

SMITH-DORRIEN

Urgent message for Colonel
Durnford. Which is his tent?

GUARD

Over there.

The guard points to a tent, smaller than Chelmsford's, but at the crest of which flies a Union Jack. Smith-Dorrien alights from his horse, ties it up and enters Durnford's tent.

Colonel Durnford is sat at his table writing in the light of a nearby lamp. He is with Lieutenant George and they are enjoying a bottle of wine. He looks up as the rider enters.

DURNFORD

What is it?

SMITH-DORRIEN
Urgent message from Lord
Chelmsford, sir.

Durnford's face lights up.

DURNFORD
Go on.

SMITH DORRIEN
A large enemy force has presented
itself to the East of Isandlwana.
Lord Chelmsford has already ridden
out to confront them. You are to
decamp immediately and ride at
once to Isandlwana in support.

Durnford positively beams at the news.

DURNFORD
Do you have my orders there?

Smith-Dorrien hands Durnford a letter with Lord Chelmsford's
seal. Durnford opens it enthusiastically and confirms what the
Smith-Dorrien has already told him.

DURNFORD
Excellent news. What say you,
George, eh? We are not out of the
war yet!
(To Smith-Dorrien) Very well,
we haven't a moment to
lose...

EXT. NQUTU PLATEAU - DAY

The pair of eyes that we saw earlier now appear in the shape
of a Zulu scout called ZIBHEBU. He is sat before the
commanders of the Zulu impi, Ntshingwayo, Mavumengwana and
Mehlokazulu. Also present are a handful of other Zulus.

The following scene takes place in isiZulu with
English subtitles.

NTSHINGWAYO
The British chief has moved
his soldiers?

ZIBHEBU
Yes. Almost all of his fighting
warriors left in the dark of
night. They march towards the
Hlajakazi Heights...

MAVUMENGWANA
They have taken your bait old
friend. The British Chief has
divided his army.

MEHLOKAZULU

Now is the time to strike. We must hit their camp while it is undefended. My scouts report that the British have not dug in. Their camp is open to us. Barely defended. We must act now.

NTSHINGWAYO

Be patient, my son. Today is the 'Day of the Dead Moon.' It is an inauspicious day for fighting. Zulus do not go to war on this day...

MEHLOKAZULU

The British camp is ours. Our army numbers thirty thousand souls and we are so close we can smell the food that they cook...

Ntshingwayo looks at his second in command and then at Zimemu.

NTSHINGWAYO

How many British are left at the camp?

ZIBHEBU

Maybe one thousand. Mostly cooks, labourers and the sick. Two big guns and a few soldiers.

MEHLOKAZULU

We must act! If we take the camp we will force the British back across the border. No!... We will drive them back into Natal and into the sea!

Ntshingwayo seems CAUTIOUS, HESITANT.

MAVUMENGWANA

The boy is right. We may never get another chance like this. We should hit the camp with all the might our great Impi can command!

NTSHINGWAYO

But what of the Dead Moon? Is it not a bad omen?

MAVUMENGWANA

Let the spirits speak to you my brother. Have they not already deceived the invader? Does the great white chief, at this minute, guide the vast majority of his army away from ours?

NTSHINGWAYO

You speak the truth. Very well. I will command the head. Mavumengwana, take your regiments and approach the camp from the east. Mehlokazulu, you are a rash and foolish young man, but in you beats the heart of a true warrior. Go with the left horn and move closer to Isandlwana. If the spirits so decide, then today we fight...

EXT. ANOTHER PICKET ON NQUTU PLATEAU - DAY

CAPTAIN BARRY and Lt Higginson are sat on two horses watching Zulu movements in the valley beyond. They can clearly see Zulu riders on horseback and Zulu troops in small numbers MOVING about in the valley.

BARRY

What do you make of it?

HIGGINSON

I don't know... I really don't know...

EXT. DIRT TRACK TO RORKE'S DRIFT - DAY

Colonel Durnford is riding steadily towards Isandlwana. Behind him trails two hundred mounted men, mostly black soldiers of the NNC, but with some white NCOs. Beside him is Cochrane and further back, leading equipment and men, rides Smith-Dorrien. As they ride they push through a gap and in front of them, maybe a kilometre in the distance, is Isandlwana, and the British camp.

EXT. PULLEINE'S TENT - DAY

Colonel Pulleine is standing over a campaign table. Present are Melville, Coghill, Brickhill and other officers.

MELVILLE

We're getting conflicting reports. Most of the pickets on the Plateau speak of Zulus moving about the valley in large numbers.

COGHILL

The chances are they are stragglers, making their way to the main Zulu army.

MELVILLE

Even so.
(MORE)

MELVILLE (CONT'D)
They are in large numbers, and
terribly close to the camp.

Colonel Pulleine nods his head.

PULLEINE
You're quite right. Too close...
Lieutenant Melvill, have the
'Fall-in' sounded. Have the men
line up just beyond the tents,
facing east.

Melville ducks out of the tent and moments later the 'FALL-IN'
is sounded.

PULLEINE (CONT'D)
Very well gentlemen. Make the camp
ready to act should we be
attacked. We can't know their
numbers for certain, but we must
assume they are making their way
to join their armies opposed to
Lord Chelmsford. But let us not
get caught with our trousers down.

Pulleine takes his pen and scribbles a note. He seals the
missive and hands it to an officer.

PULLEINE (CONT'D)
Have a dispatch rider ride at once
to Lord Chelmsford. He is to wait
for a reply.

EXT. ISANDLWANA - SAME

Outside the command tent the camp is now a rush of ACTIVITY.
Men of the 1st Battalion the 24th have lined up in front of
the tents facing eastwards. It is an impressive display of
British regimental order. HUNDREDS of redcoats are lined up in
almost perfect symmetry along the front of the white tents.

EXT. HLAZAKAZI HEIGHTS - DAY

Lord Chelmsford and his staff have ridden ahead of their large
army. They stop in open country beneath the Hlazakazi heights.
Chelmsford takes a pair of field glasses from Crealock, who is
riding alongside him, and SEARCHES the hills ahead for sign of
the Zulu army. He sees nothing.

CHELMSFORD
Colonel Glyn. What do you make
of it?

Glyn rides up alongside Chelmsford.

GLYN

I'm afraid it feels a bit like a wild goose chase, sir.

CHELMSFORD

I agree.

Chelmsford pulls out a watch from his pocket. He turns in his seat and observes those lucky enough to be riding horses begin to gather behind him. Behind them he can see his vast reserves of Redcoats slowly MARCHING their way forward.

CHELMSFORD

This looks like a good place to have breakfast. We'll decide what's to be done after.

EXT. SOUTHERN EDGE OF THE SPUR - DAY

Lieutenant Higginson is riding his horse at full pelt. Behind him MORE Zulu horsemen begin to gather on the plateau. Ahead of him lies Isandlwana.

EXT. DIRT TRACK TO RORKES' DRIFT - DAY

Colonel Durnford APPROACHES Isandlwana. As he crests a nearby hill he gets his first glimpse of the British Camp. The rocky outcrop that is Isandlwana rises out of the ground and he sees the bright white row of tents to its southern and eastern slopes. He also sees the line upon line of Redcoats that have fallen in in front of the tents. He pauses his horse briefly.

DURNFORD

What do you make of that, Cochrane?

COCHRANE

It seems odd, sir. Is it normal to fall the men in so soon after breakfast?

DURNFORD

What do you think, Lieutenant George?

GEORGE

Most peculiar, sir. Perhaps something is amiss?

DURNFORD

Perhaps....

Despite the row of soldiers fallen in in front of the tents there appears nothing else wrong. Durnford taps his horse and the small procession of mounted horsemen head towards Isandlwana.

EXT. HLAZAKAZI HEIGHTS - DAY

Lord Chelmsford and his men have paused in open ground beneath the Hlazakazi heights and are having BREAKFAST. They sit on fold away chairs and a few foldable tables are set amongst them. They eat from billy cans and drink tea from metal cups. It is not a grand breakfast, but a MODEST affair for soldiers on patrol, although the atmosphere is generally relaxed.

CHELMSFORD

What do you say to moving the camp here Glyn? Better ground wouldn't you say?

GLYN

Most certainly. Easier to defend, the ground is less rocky and better to dig.

CHELMSFORD

Closer to Cetshwayo and his army.

CREALOCK.

Wherever they may be!

CHELMSFORD

As you say, wherever they may be! They are here somewhere, it's just a matter of time. Have that attended to Glyn.

Glyn nods agreement. To his left sits CCAPTAIN GARDNER. He addresses him directly.

GLYN

Ride at once back to the camp. Order Colonel Pulleine to strike camp immediately and join us here.

GARDNER

Of course.

GLYN

Don't ride alone. Take lieutenants Griffith and Dyer with you. The absence of Zulus bothers me...

Lt Gardner gets up and packs away his chair. He leaves Glyn in a SOMBRE mood.

EXT. NQUTU PLATEAU - DAY

Ntshingwayo, Mavumengwana, Mehlokazulu, Tshekwane, Zibhebhu, Zimema and a handful of other lesser Zulus are sat in a clearing not unlike the one Chelmsford is in. They too are eating breakfast.

The following scene takes place in isiZulu with English subtitles.

ZIMEMA

Matshana's men joined us in the night. The British soldiers still camp on the Hlazakazi. The English General's army marches at the foot of the hills as we speak.

NTSHINGWAYO

Good work. His men will start looking for us at once.

ZIMEMA

He will be surprised. We are not there!

NTSHINGWAYO

What of the British camp?

ZIBHEBU

The pickets were relieved earlier. They are not hurrying to replace them. A few scouts are watching our movements on the plateau. The red soldiers are lined up in front of the camp.

MEHLOKAZULU

Our movements have disturbed them. They are growing cautious.

NTSHINGWAYO

We still have many more warriors than they have. How many Zibhebu?

ZIBHEBU

With Matshana's men we number thirty thousand souls...

NTSHINGWAYO

And despite his apparent superiority, still the English general does not see us!!

The other Zulus LAUGH as they realise the sheer weight of numbers they have sneaked right up to the British lines without the British seeing.

NTSHINGWAYO (CONT'D)

But we must be patient. Today is the day of The Dead Moon. Still, I am afraid. We must follow Cetshwayo's orders and not attack the British unless they attack us first. Let us not rush to war...

EXT. COMMAND TENT - ISANDLWANA - DAY

Colonel Durnford rides into camp ahead of his men and makes his way to the COMMAND tent. He is followed by Cochrane, George, Shepstone, and two hundred men of the Native Horse. Smith-Dorrien brings up the rear, shepherding wagons loaded with ammunition and camping equipment. Durnford alights from his horse and is greeted in front of the command tent by Colonel Pulleine.

PULLEINE

Colonel Durnford.

DURNFORD

Pulleine.

PULLEINE

As Brevet Colonel I believe that makes you the most senior officer in camp. The camp is yours, sir.

DURNFORD

Thank you Colonel Pulleine. If you would care to bring me up to speed on our troop situation. I see the men are lined up in anticipation...

PULLEINE

Yes, sir. There have been some odd movements in the hills all morning. Zulu scouts, possibly. I've been getting conflicting reports of their numbers. My spotters on Isandlwana Hill report that Zulu numbers are diminishing.

Durnford looks across at Isandlwana Hill. There are a number of soldiers on its TOP observing the distant plateau with field glasses. He glances from the hill across to the Nqutu plateau and shakes his head.

DURNFORD

That's no good. The hill is lower than the plateau. There's no way they can see what's going on beyond it.

Just then Higginson rides into camp and disturbs the small meeting.

HIGGINSON

Excuse me, sir...

DURNFORD

Go on, Lieutenant, you may speak freely.

HIGGINSON

There are thousands of Zulu soldiers just beyond the iNyoni escarpment, moving about the hills.

DURNFORD

In which direction?

HIGGINSON

In all directions, sir. Some to the east, some to the west. Some towards the General...

DURNFORD

Towards Lord Chelmsford?

HIGGINSON

In that general direction. Yes.

DURNFORD

What do you make of that Pulleine?

PULLEINE

It could mean nothing. The Zulus have been moving about like that for days.

DURNFORD

Nothing? Do you not think that the Zulu means to cut off Lord Chelmsford? They are moving in that direction.

PULLEINE

They appear to be moving in all directions.

DURNFORD

Well, I can't let it go unchallenged. I'll need two companies of the 1st, if you can spare them.

PULLEINE

Really, Colonel Durnford, I don't think that will be possible. My orders were to defend the camp and, as such, are now your orders.

DURNFORD

You're thinking like a camp commander, sir, not like a Colonel in Her Majesty's army. Besides, Lord Chelmsford's standing orders are to harass and attack the Zulu wherever we find them. It can do no good to allow the Zulus on the escarpment to reach their brothers that face Lord Chelmsford.

MELVILLE

Excuse me, sir, but I do not think it would be right for Colonel Pulleine to allow his men to leave the camp when his orders were strictly to act in defence?

DURNFORD

Very well, I'll not press the matter. It doesn't matter much. I do rather feel that wherever the Zulu may appear, we ought to attack them. But I will go alone, and expect your help should I require it.

PULLEINE

Of course...

DURNFORD

Lieutenant Raw!
Lieutenant Roberts!

The two lieutenants have been sat on their horses nearby. They ride up when they are called.

DURNFORD

Take your company of native horse up the spur and see what's about. If you come across any Zulus you are to confront them and push them east across the escarpment. Roberts, ride deep into the valley beyond the escarpment and dig about. Captain Shepstone, I would be grateful if you would ride with these two gentlemen.

SHEPSTONE

Of course.

DURNFORD

I shall ride out towards Conical Hill and cut them off. Ah, good, the Rocket Battery has arrived.

Trailing at the very rear of Durnford's column of men and horses that arrived from Rorke's Drift, is a troop of 9 Redcoats carrying the equipment that make up the ROCKET BATTERY. They are lead by Major RUSSELL and Bombadier GOUGH. They all look quite TIRED from the effort.

DURNFORD

Major Russell, you are just in time. I am to ride out presently to intercept the Zulu beyond Conical Hill. Have your men follow us as quick as they like.

Major Russell glances at his men who are relieved to have finally reached camp. Gough does not look impressed.

RUSSELL

Yes, sir. Perhaps we can rest for a few minutes?

DURNFORD

Very well. But don't dally. We'll be needing you this day, of that I am sure. Colonel Pulleine...

PULLEINE

Colonel...

DURNFORD

It concerns me that the Zulus may be feigning interest in our eastern flank while pushing westwards towards our rear. We are fairly exposed in this area.

PULLEINE

I agree. I'll have two companies of the 1st sent out to the base of the spur.

Durnford walks to his horse and climbs on.

DURNFORD

Purely on the defensive, of course.

PULLEINE

As you say, purely on the defensive...

Durnford rides out from Isandlwana with his companies of Native Horse in tow. They pass the lines of Redcoats lined up in front of the tents and follow a TRACK towards Conical Hill in the distance. As they begin to edge out of camp two hundred Native Horse, under Raw and Roberts split off and head WEST, towards the SPUR. The Rocket Battery are a red dot trailing behind Durnford. Their movement across the plain is slower than Durnford and his men, who are on horseback.

PULLEINE
Lieutenant Melville.

MELVILLE
Yes, sir?

PULLEINE
Have E Company move out in a
defensive line along the spur. Who
is their Lieutenant?

MELVILLE
Lieutenant Cavaye, sir.

PULLEINE
Yes, yes. Of course. A good man.

EXT. FOOTHILLS OF THE HLAZAKAZI HEIGHTS - DAY

Lord Chelmsford and his staff continue to sit about their
campaign chairs drinking tea. The area for the new camp is now
a bustling throng of activity as the men of the 2nd Battalion
prepare the ground for a longer stay. A lone horseman rides
into camp and stops next to a Redcoat.

LONE HORSEMAN
Where is Lord Chelmsford?

The Redcoat points to the clearing in which Lord Chelmsford is
sat. The rider moves close, alights from his horse and walks
over to the gathering of officers.

CLERY
Yes? What is it?

LONE HORSEMAN
Urgent message from Colonel
Pulleine, sir.

CLERY
Show me...

The rider hands Clery the note.

CHELMSFORD
What is it Clery?

CLERY
Colonel Pulleine reports sightings
of large numbers of Zulus near the
camp.

CHELMSFORD
What of it? There are seventeen
hundred men at that camp.
Sufficient numbers to defend it
should it be attacked. Pay it no
heed, man.

(MORE)

CHELMSFORD (CONT'D)
Colonel Durnford should be with
him by now...

Clery folds the note up and pockets it.

CLERY
(To the rider)
That will be all.

EXT. BIG DONGA - DAY

Durnford is now far away from the camp at Isandlwana, although it is still in sight. He has led his men, with Cochrane and George, towards the south of Conical Hill. As his men ride out the large dried up riverbed they are amazed to see ZULUS moving about on the Nqutu Plateau.

DURNFORD
What do you think, Cochrane?

COCHRANE
Certainly moving eastwards.

DURNFORD
If they are going towards the
General we must stop then at all
hazards!

EXT. NQUTU PLATEAU - DAY

Lt Roberts and Raw have reached the top of the spur and crest the Nqutu plateau. They are followed by Shepstone and another officer called HAMER. The hills beyond the Nqutu plateau are moderately undulating, and from their vantage point they cannot see the huge Zulu army at rest. They do see two Zulu scouts HERDING cattle in the near distance.

SHEPSTONE
Come on, Hamer. What say we bag
ourselves some cattle?

Shepstone commands his horse to a GALLOP closely followed by Hamer. They are joined by twenty or so other Native horseman who join in the chase. The Zulu scouts see the British soldiers turn on them and quickly hurry down out of sight behind one of the hills.

Captain Shepstone is the first to the ridge in pursuit. He pulls his horse up SHARPLY as he sees what before was hidden. TEN THOUSAND Zulu warriors sat quietly waiting. He is joined by Hamer and the other riders who pause on the ridge-line. They are all STUNNED into silence.

From within the valley a Zulu warrior raises the SIGHTS of his ageing rifle and SHOOTs. The silence is ROCKED by the sudden shot and a small plume of smoke wafts past his fellow warriors.

The shot has spurred Shepstone into action and he turns his horse and retreats. Just as the shot echoes around the valley it is joined by another and then another. Then ten thousand Zulu warriors RISE as if one being and raise their shields to the air.

ZULU WARRIORS ALL
Isuthu!!!

Lieutenant Raw and the rest of the mounted horsemen watch in bemusement as Shepstone and Hamer and the other riders RE-APPEAR in the distance and ride at a gallop back towards them. Then there is the sound of gunshots. Lt Raw looks CONCERNED. His expression turns to one of SHOCK when, before him and in pursuit of Shepstone and the others, the fabled Zulu army FLOODS over the hill and into the valley.

RAW
My God! Alright. Dismount.
Prerpare to fire!

The remainder of the mounted horsemen alight from their horses and aim their weapons at the incoming Zulu horde. Just as Shepstone and the others approach they fire over their heads and into the Zulus. Shepstone and his men make it back unscathed. They dismount among their colleagues and join in the firing.

RAW
Look what you've started man. I think you've annoyed them. What of their number Captain Shepstone?

SHEPSTONE
Thousands. Bloody thousands of them.

RAW
Very well. Captain Shepstone, if you would be so good as to return to camp and inform Colonel Puelleine, we'll beat a fighting retreat back to the spur.

Shepstone and Hamer return to their horses and turn back towards the spur. Raw's men climb back on their horses, retreat a hundred yards, DISMOUNT and FIRE, and climb back on their horses.

As they are retreating one of the native horseman is hit and falls from his horse. He gathers himself together on the ground.

RAW
Are you hurt?

NATIVE HORSEMAN
A scratch, sir. Just a scratch.

Despite his assurance his upper body is red with blood.

RAW

Get back to camp and report to the hospital tent.

The native horseman is helped back onto his horse by his colleagues as the bullets continue to fly.

EXT.EAST OF BIG DONGA - DAY

Durnford is riding EAST, away from Big Donga, towards Conical Hill. As they make their way through the African Bush there comes the sound of GUNFIRE from the western slopes of the Nqutu Plateau. Durnford pulls his horse up and LISTENS. Cochrane and George pull up alongside.

DURNFORD

Did you hear that Lieutenant?

COCHRANE.

I most certainly did sir.

As they pause there is the sound of more shots from the west.

GEORGE

Is that gunfire, sir?

DURNFORD

Do you think they fool us?
Feinting right, when all along...
they attack from the east?

COCHRANE

It's possible...

Durnford turns his horse towards the Nqutu plateau.

DURNFORD

Well, let's go and find out.

Slowly the mounted troops follow Durnford, Cochrane and George towards the hills.

EXT.FOOT OF THE SPUR - DAY

E-Company are at the foot of the spur when they hear the sound of gunshots from ahead. Lt Cavaye and Lt Dyson are on horseback ahead of their men when Shepstone appears at the top of the ridge and gallops towards them.

SHEPSTONE

Good day gentlemen. Lieutenant Raw is withdrawing from the plateau just over the crest there. He is facing considerable numbers of Zulu soldiers and will be amongst you shortly.

(MORE)

SHEPSTONE (CONT'D)

You should hurry to the top, he would be most grateful for your assistance.

Shepstone doesn't wait for a reply and continues his race to the camp.

CAVAYE

That's it men, on me! Skirmishing order if you please.

The men of E-Company SPREAD out along the ground keeping a distance of 4 yards between them and they follow their lieutenants up the spur.

EXT. ISANDLWANA - CAMP - DAY

Captain Essex steps out from the folds of his tent and glances up at the sky. There still comes the sound of gunfire but because of the peculiar nature of the topography around Isandlwana it is impossible to establish where the sound has come from. Many others on camp duty have been ALERTED to the sound and have gathered in clusters around the tents, discussing the peculiarity. Even Dr Shepherd has stepped out from within the medical tent and is listening for the sound.

SHEPHARD

Is that gunfire?

ESSEX

I suspect so.

SHEPHARD

Where did it come from?

ESSEX

That, I couldn't say.

Captain Essex notices Shepstone ride into camp.

ESSEX

What news, Captain? You look as white as a sheet!

SHEPSTONE

Zulus, Sir. A black mass for as far as the eye can see. Where is Colonel Pulleine?

Essex points to the command tent.

ESSEX

Over there.

Shepstone dismounts from his horse and makes his way to Pulleine's tent as Essex dips into his tent and appears moments later carrying a REVOLVER which he slips into his hip holster.

ESSEX

Right then. Let's see what these
Zulu fellows are about.

Essex mounts his horse and gallops out of camp towards
the spur.

EXT. CENTRAL NQUTU PLATEAU - DAY

TWO Zulu warriors sat upon horses at the head of their immense
army are watching the eastern slopes of the Nqutu Plateau. As
they watch they hear the sound of gunfire. They also cannot
tell who is firing, but are better able to say from which
direction it comes. As they follow the sounds they see the
fabled right horn move steadily up and over a distant crest,
followed by more gunfire.

ZULU X

It has begun.

ZULU Y

We have not yet received orders
to attack...

ZULU X

That maybe so, and yet we are
attacking...

Zulu Y is hesitant.

ZULU X (CONT'D)

If we do not strike now, our
brothers will hit the camp first,
and for them the glory!

ZULU Y

You are right, my brother.

He turns towards his legion of men camped in anticipation of
impending war. They number ten thousand at least and stretch
as far as the eye can see.

ZULU Y (CONT'D)

Isuthu!!!

He raises his assegai and shakes it menacingly above his head.
As he does so ten thousand Zulu warriors hiss and shake their
weapons. The sound echoes menacingly across the land, a sound
that no-one who hears it will ever forget. A deep, heavy
buzzing, like a swarm of bees in flight. As if one being they
RISE, and the front rows CHARGE over the Nqutu Plateau and
into the valley beyond.

EXT. EAST OF BIG DONGA - SAME

Durnford is trotting at a steady pace towards the Nqutu plateau when the first Zulus crest the skyline. His troop of horsemen led by Lt Cochrane and Lt George come to a stop and watch in amazement as all across the Nqutu Plateau, from beyond the Spur in the East and beyond Conical Hill in the West, appear Zulus in their thousands.

DURNFORD

Damn it all, didn't we have scouts
in those hills?

COCHRANE

We did, yes...

DURNFORD

Well didn't they bloody well know
what they were looking for?

As he watches, the Zulu press on EIGHT deep and move steadily across Durnford's front. These early Zulus are skirmishers whose primary role is to clear the way for the larger army behind. They will SHOOT and DUCK for cover whenever necessary, but always moving forward. As they reach a distance of 800 yards the advancing Zulus take their first shots from their ageing rifles.

DURNFORD

Lieutenant George, Lieutenant
Cochrane, I think now would be a
good time to beat a sensible
retreat. If you would be so
good...

Lieutenant George pulls the reigns of his horse and rides in front of his men.

GEORGE

Bring up your lines! You there!
Hold fast! On my mark, Mr
Cochrane!

Cochrane's half of Durnford's force break out from George's line and ride neatly and calmly in retreat from the advancing Zulus.

COCHRANE

Steady! Mind your line!

George waits until Cochrane's men have formed a neat line.

GEORGE

Steady now! Let them come on!

As the Zulus break cover and attack, George stands tall on his stirrups and raises his sword high above his head.

GEORGE

Steady. On my mark. FIRE!

As George's sword falls his line of horseman unleash a devastating enfilade of gunfire. Once the smoke has cleared George's men ride calmly back behind Cochrane's line. They dismount to reload their weapons. Cochrane now stands tall on his stirrups, his sword held aloft.

COCHRANE

Steady now. On my mark. FIRE!

The British fire is devastating and accurate and the retreat continues. The Zulu fire in return is mostly inaccurate.

EXT. THE TOP OF THE SPUR - DAY

Lt Cavaye and Lt Dyson reach the top of the spur just as Raw's retreat comes into view. Ahead of them, amongst the rocks, Raw's mounted infantry are beating a STEADY retreat in the face of overwhelming numbers of Zulus who are pushing towards the spur, and across to the west.

CAVAYE

Bloody hell.

Behind him the men of the 1st begin to line up and stretch out across the spur, over one hundred men barely four yards apart. Lieutenant Cavaye turns his horse and faces his men.

CAVAYE

Right then, gentlemen. Hold your fire until they are within range. Then pick your target. Steady shots.

Cavaye turns to Dyson as his men take up their positions in front of Raw's retreating horsemen.

CAVAYE

Lieutenant Dyson, the Zulus appear to be stretching out across the escarpment. I fear they intend to sweep around our flank and hit the camp from behind. We must slow them at all costs. Take fifty men and meet the Zulus there...

(Cavaye points to a rocky outcrop almost half a mile to the west.)

Hold the Zulus there for as long as you can. When you can't hold any longer then you are to perform a fighting withdrawal back to us here, or back to the camp.

DYSON

Yes sir!

Dyson rides off quickly and gathers up some of the men and begins to spread out westwards. As he disappears, Raw and his horseman break through the British line and line up behind. The Zulu horde doesn't pause. Raw rides up to Cavaye. He is gripping his pistol in one hand.

RAW
Lieutenant...?

CAVAYE
Lieutenant Cavaye, Sir.

RAW
Good, good. There are too many to fight them here. The best you can do is slow them down.

CAVAYE
We'll do our best, sir.

RAW
Good man. Captain Shepstone should be at the camp by now. Reinforcements will be on the way.

EXT. NQUTU PLATEAU - DAY

The Zulu commanders, Ntshingwayo and Mavumengwana gather on a distant hilltop. Zibhebu is also present. Before them a vast army is on the move. Gunfire can be heard in the distance.

The following scene is held entirely in isiZulu with subtitles in English.

NTSHINGWAYO
Why do they advance? I have not given the order!

MAVUMENGWANA
I don't know. I can hear the sounds of gunfire. Perhaps the British have finally seen us?

ZIBHEBU
It is possible. Our army has sat for days like the Black Mamba, curled into a small ball so that it cannot be seen. And the British, with their big feet, have stood upon our tail, and now the head strikes, quickly and venomously, upon the unsuspecting invader.

MAVUMENGWANA
Zibhebu is right. The Zulu Impi is not a creature that can be held back forever.

(MORE)

MAVUMENGWANA (CONT'D)

Now it is on the move only the spirits can guide them. It has begun. There will be no stopping it now...

EXT. PULLEINE'S TENT - DAY

Lieutenant Gardner has arrived with Chelmsford's orders. He and Lt Dyer and Lt Griffith dismount outside Pulleine's tent. They are momentarily TRANSFIXED by the sound of gunfire in the distance. They look at one another before entering Pulleine's tent. Just as they enter the tent Shepstone rides up and dismounts.

INT. PULLEINE'S TENT - MOMENTS LATER

GARDNER

Lord Chelmsford's orders, sir.

He hands Pulleine his orders as Shepstone enters the tent. Shepstone is out of breath from the hard riding and has no time to speak of the advancing Zulus before Pulleine opens his orders.

PULLEINE

We are to strike camp at once and relocate to Lord Chelmsford's position... Did he not get my note earlier? The Zulus are amassing in the hills and are advancing on three fronts!! What on earth does he mean by this? Why has he not sent reinforcements!?!?

SHEPSTONE

Sir, the Zulus are in such black masses over there, such long black lines, that you will have to give us all the assistance you can. They are now fast driving our men this way!

Pulleine's face is ghostly white. He is CONFUSED by Lord Chelmsford's orders.

GARDNER

Sir, if I may... Lord Chelmsford cannot possibly know anything of this, he is only thinking of the cowardly way the Zulus are hiding from us over yonder. In the circumstances I believe the correct course of action would be to ignore his orders.

PULLEINE

Yes, yes. You are quite right.
Lieutenant Melville...

MELVILLE

Yes, sir?

PULLEINE

Have F-company move out in support of Lieutenant Cavaye. Lieutenants Pope and Austin to take the men of the 2nd out in support of Durnford. Bring up Major Smith's guns and concentrate his fire on the main body of Zulus. Lieutenant Gardner, if you would be so kind as to take as many mounted infantry as you can and meet the Zulus where the Mangeni crosses the Nyogane.

GARDNER

Perhaps a note to Lord Chelmsford, Sir? he must know of this change in developments...

PULLEINE

Yes, yes. of course. Melville, note to Lord Chelmsford.. "Heavy firing to left of camp. Cannot move camp at present."

Melville writes the note down.

PULLEINE

Thank you gentlemen, that will be all for now.

EXT. PULLEINE'S TENT - MOMENTS LATER

As the men exit the tent, Gardner pulls Melville to one side.

GARDNER

Lieutenant Melville, if you would be so kind...

Gardner pulls a notebook and pencil from his breast pocket and jots down a few lines.

GARDNER

"Lord Chelmsford... Heavy firing to left of camp. Shepstone has come in for reinforcements and reports that Zulus are retiring. All of the camp turned out and fighting about one mile to left of camp." See that he gets this too. Thank you.

Melville takes the note and the two men go their separate ways.

EXT. TENTS OF THE 2ND BATTALION - DAY

Lieutenants Pope and Austen ride into their part of the camp. Most of the men are out amongst the tents and are watching the hills to the distance as they swarm with Zulus.

POPE

Fall in men. To arms!

There is now a sense of urgency among the men as they grab their weapons and line up in front of the tents. Pope and Austen casually ride up their lines as the men gather themselves together.

POPE

That's it gentlemen. Check your weapons. Tuck yourself in Simkiss!

A nearby Redcoat, clearly Simkiss, tucks his shirt in and grins sheepishly as Pope rides up smiling.

POPE (CONT'D)

Check your ammunition. Leave your ration packs.

SERGEANT THOMPSON stands at the end of his row of men as Pope rides up.

POPE

It seems we may not have missed all the fun after all, Sergeant.

THOMSON

No, sir.

POPE

Good. Well let's show these Zulus what the Warwickshires can do, eh Sergeant?

THOMSON

Yes, sir!

EXT.SPUR - DAY

The spur is now a CONTINUAL round of shooting from both sides. Cavaye is riding behind his line of men, directing the fighting.

CAVAYE

That's it men... Good shooting...
Take your time... Don't rush...

CASUALTIES begin to appear as some of the Zulu fire finds a target.

Because of the age of the Zulu weapons, and the distance between the opposing sides, the damage is usually blunt force trauma. Very often the bullet would fail to penetrate skin, but would easily knock a man down and break a bone or two.

Five hundred yard to his left, Dyson and his small band of men are engaged with large numbers of Zulu.

Captain Essex appears at the spur and tracks down Cavaye.

ESSEX
Lieutenant Cavaye...

CAVAYE
Sir?

ESSEX
I see you have things
under control.

CAVAYE
I could certainly do with some
assistance, sir.

Essex looks back down the spur. Behind him Captain Mostyn is bringing up troops from the camp to assist. To Mostyn's right two 7-pounder guns can be seen being moved out of camp towards the Nqutu Plateau.

ESSEX
Very well. Reinforcements are on
the way. Order your men to
withdraw to the base of the spur.

CAVAYE
Yes sir!

EXT. FOOTHILLS OF THE HLAZAKAZI - DAY

In CONTRAST to the din of combat and the firing of hundreds of Martini Henri rifles, the camp at Hlazakazi heights is one of serenity and peace. Most of the officers are lounging around and relaxing. Lord Chelmsford and his entourage are sat in the shade.

CHELMSFORD
(glances at his pocket watch)
Word should have reached camp by
now. Colonel Glyn... have
Hamilton-Browne return with some
of his men and assist with the
striking of the camp. He can guide
them back to our location.

Colonel Glyn nods agreement.

GLYN
Very good, sir.

EXT.NORTH OF ISANDLAWANA - ROYAL ARTILLERY - DAY

The guns of the Royal Artillery are hauled out of the camp at Isandlwana under the direction of Major Smith. They are flanked on either side by two hundred men of A-Company and H-Company the 1st Battalion.

From West to East the British lines are a detachment of E-Company under Dyson; E-Company under Cavaye and Essex, with F-Company under Mostyn filling the gap between them. They face both the RIGHT HORN and the CHEST. Then A-Company; The Royal Artillery; H-Company, facing the HEAD. A mile to the East is Pope and Austin and some of Durnford's Native Horse facing the LEFT HORN. Further East is Durnford, also facing the Left Horn.

EXT.BIG DONGA - ROCKET BATTERY - SAME

The men of the Rocket Battery led by Russell TRAIL behind Durnford in the heat of the day. They are struggling through the mixture of rocks and hard ground and dried up river beds that lay in their path. As the small convoy of men, mules and equipment reach the base of one such small hill they meet a SCOUT from the Natal Carbineers.

SCOUT

Thank God. There are men heavily engaged with Zulus on the crest just ahead. Follow me I'll show you a short-cut.

Russell and the rocket battery follow the scout but the ground is heavy going. Half way up the hill they are alarmed to see Zulus gather in their hundreds on the crest.

RUSSELL

Action front!

The men of the Rocket Battery act instinctively and work together to get the rocket trough fixed to the floor as a hundred Zulus on foot SPEED towards them. Russell takes up his position at the base of the trough and, with one foot placed on the base of the mechanism, he pulls hard on a cable connected to the rocket. It goes off much like a poorly made firework leaving the soldiers in a cloud of smoke and sparks. It flies HARMLESSLY into the hill and PETERS out at the feet of the charging Zulu warriors.

RUSSELL

Stand fast men! Fix bayonets!
Sergeant James, if you would be so kind...

As he speaks Russell is HIT in the chest by a Zulu shot. He falls to the ground but rises again, unsteadily. The other men are firing their weapons around him as JAMES moves forward to assist Russell. As he gets Russell to his feet, Russell is shot in the head and topples backwards, DEAD. As James looks up he sees that the Zulus are on top of him and ENGAGED with the other soldiers of the Rocket Battery.

In the blink of an eye he sees SOLDIER ONE swinging his rifle at the surrounding Zulus before he is felled by several Zulus brandishing assegais. SOLDIER TWO fends off a Zulu with the butt of his rifle but is felled moments later by a shot to the head. SOLDIER THREE is fighting like a man possessed, easily fighting off several Zulus before being overwhelmed.

James moves alongside the remaining crew and side by side they attempt to fend off the ever increasing numbers of Zulus, shooting and stabbing with their bayonets.

Just as it seems they will be overwhelmed Lt Cochrane APPEARS over the crest of the hill to their right and CHARGES into the Zulus, sweeping left and right with his SWORD. He is joined moments later by more of Durnford's horsemen who join in the fight and push the Zulus back. The Zulus take COVER behind the many rocks that litter the ground and continue to take pot shots a safe distance from Cochrane's sword. Cochrane pulls his horse up next to James.

COCHRANE

Are you the rocket battery?

JAMES

What's left of it...

COCHRANE

Where is Major Russell.

James points to a body lying on the floor.

COCHRANE

Well, there's nothing to be done there. Gather your men and follow me.

As he speaks more of Durnford's horseman appear on the ridge continuing their fighting withdrawal. Colonel Durnford rides beside them, shouting encouragement and jollyng his men on, as if it were some local cricket match.

DURNFORD

Ah, there you are Cochrane. Good God, is that the Rocket Battery?

COCHRANE

I'm afraid so, sir. Poor Major Russell took it, and a few others. We reached the rest just in time.

DURNFORD

Terrible business. But there's work to be done yet. We shall make a stand, there, in the dried up river bed. It will afford us some protection, don't you think? Until help arrives...

COCHRANE

Yes sir.

DURNFORD

Good, good. Pass the word around.

EXT. BRITISH CAMP - MEDICAL TENT - DAY

The British camp is now a hub of activity. Outside the MEDICAL tent stands Dr Shephard, herding the injured through as they are brought to him on stretchers. He stops one young man as he is being brought up. He has a terrible wound in his lower abdomen and is bleeding profusely.

SHEPHARD

Here...

He takes a wad and presses it down firmly onto the wound. He takes the injured man's hand and presses it down on top.

SHEPHARD (CONT'D)

Press down hard. All right lads,
let's get him inside...

Dr Shephard is followed inside the medical tent by the stretcher bearers and their patient. They are followed moments later by MORE injured men.

EXT. BRITISH CAMP - AMMUNITION CARTS - DAY

Smith-Dorrien is still in camp and watching the fighting in the distance, like a few other camp stragglers. A man in KITCHEN SCRUBS is standing nearby, clearly a CHEF, with a few other men of similar appearance, seemingly with nothing to do.

SMITH-DORRIEN

You there... Yes, you... What's
your name?

RICHARDS

Richards, sir.

SMITH-DORRIEN

You're a cook?

RICHARDS

Lord Chelmsford's chef, sir.

SMITH-DORRIEN

Which regiment?

RICHARDS

The 1st, sir.

SMITH-DORRIEN

So, they're your men out there?

RICHARDS

Yes.

SMITH-DORRIEN

What about you?

WILLIAMS

Williams, sir... kitchen hand.

SMITH-DORRIEN

You?

HARRIS

Harris, sir... I'm a groom...

SMITH-DORRIEN

Good. Well, there's no point standing here idle. Our boys are stretched out across two miles of open country and, by the sound of it, giving the Zulu the wrong end of a Martini Henri. If this carries on much longer they'll start to run out of ammunition. Follow me.

Smith-Dorrien quickly darts between some tents behind which are stood a number of AMMUNITION CARTS, normally pulled by oxen, but standing idle in the heat. He flips the cover from one and pulls down a large box. The lid is a SLIDING lid, held in place by a small brass SCREW. Smith Dorrien looks about for something hard, grabs a nearby STONE, and uses it to BREAK the screw and open the box. His three new companions gather about him and start to pull the boxes down and break them open. A furious looking man, QUARTERMASTER BLOOMFIELD, walks up and pulls Smith-Dorrien to onside.

BLOOMFIELD

Here, what the bloody hell do you think you're doing? These are the 2nd's supply.

SMITH-DORRIEN

Hang it all, man, you don't want a requisition slip now, do you?

BLOOMFIELD

This is for the 2nd Battalion. Now clear off.

Smith-Dorrien and his new companions retire from an angry and fearsome looking Bloomfield and search the wagons further away before coming across the 1st's supply. They remove the cover and start to pull down the boxes containing fresh ammunition.

EXT. BELOW THE NQUTU PLATEAU - THE ROYAL ARTILLERY - DAY

Horses and mules have pulled the 7-pounder guns across the plain to within shooting distance of the advancing Zulu army that continue to swarm over the Nqutu plateau. Either side of the guns the men of the 1st, TWO HUNDRED Redcoats, line up and start firing at the Zulus. Major Smith and his men work furiously to put the guns in a position to be fired.

SMITH

All right lads, that's it. Steady now. Range one thousand yards, shrapnel shot.

Smith takes a few steps back from the guns as the men of the RA set the machine up.

RA ONE

Ready!

RA TWO

Ready!

SMITH

Steady now. On my mark. Fire!

Unlike the Rocket Battery the 7-Pounders make a CONSIDERABLE noise as the shrapnel shot is fired at the Zulus. Smith uses a pair of field glasses to observe the shot explode in the air above the heads of several Zulus, effectively obliterating them.

SMITH

A little high. Range one thousand yards. Shrapnel shot. Fire at will.

The guns explode again and send their devastating payload over the heads of the incoming Zulu army.

EXT. BRITISH CAMP - PULLEINE'S TENT - DAY

Colonel Pulleine is standing outside his tent watching the drama unfold. Lt Melville is by his side.

PULLEINE

Where is Lieutenant Cavaye?

MELVILLE

At the foot of the spur, sir. I believe that is Captain Essex with him. Lieutenant Mostyn is bringing up the rear.

Pulleine sweeps his field glasses around and momentarily focusses on the guns of the RA letting fire on the Zulus.

He can see the FLASH of the gun many seconds before the sound of the shot reaches his ears. He sweeps the glasses further around and sees a hundred Redcoats in action just this side of Big Donga.

PULLEINE

Who are they? Just north of
Colonel Durnford's position.

Melville takes his field glasses and looks in the direction that Pulleine is pointing.

MELVILLE

That is Lieutenants Pope and
Austin, sir, with what we have of
the 2nd Battalion. They were on
picket duty when the rest of the
battalion left this morning.

PULLEINE

Ah, yes. Good show.

Pulleine sweeps his glasses back to the men on the ridge.

PULLEINE (CONT'D)

We are rather finely stretched.
Our line is too far out. Have the
men withdraw closer to the camp.

MELVILLE

Yes, sir. Right away.

Melville ducks away and leaves Pulleine looking at the developing drama with UNEASE.

EXT.NQUTU PLATEAU - SAME

Ntshingwayo is watching the fight from the Zulu side. The impact of the guns of the RA, and the men of the 1st who are firing on either side, has caused the Head of The Bull to STALL. The men are anxious, and fall to the ground as the shells SCREAM in from the British side. He is joined by Zibhebu.

The following scene is spoken entirely in isiZulu with English subtitles.

ZIBHEBU

The British fire is devastating.
Their guns have greater range.
Their soldiers are more accurate.
Our casualties are high.

NTSHINGWAYO

We knew this would be the case. We
must be patient. What of the Left
Horn?

ZIBHEBU

Mehlokazulu chases the white man and his traitorous dogs beyond the Big Donga. They are retreating from him. He moves more freely there.

NTSHINGWAYO

And the Right Horn?

ZIBHEBU

Moves secretly beyond the hills behind Isandlwana. We will have encircled them before too long.

NTSHINGWAYO

Good... Why do they sit like fat old woman..? why do they not advance like men..?

Ntshingwayo watches as another shell lands among his men ahead of him. He raises his hand and an old Zulu called UNDHLAKA approaches.

NTSHINGWAYO

Go. Tell them to stand and fight!

Undhlaka grabs his assegai that he had left on the floor and darts off towards the front line of Zulus being mauled by the RA and the Redcoats.

EXT. BIG DONGA - DAY

Durnford has now retreated to the dried up river bed and is holding fast against the Zulus. Despite trying to get at him in the Donga, Durnford's fire is DEVASTATING. The spot is easily defended and hard for the Zulus to fire into. Every time they approach they are pushed back by a hail of gunfire.

DURNFORD

That's it men, good show. Keep it up.

Durnford rides about the Donga seemingly oblivious to the fire that comes in his direction.

DURNFORD

Good shooting Trooper. Steady shots now... Not too fast... Let them come on.

GEORGE

I say, Colonel Durnford, wouldn't it be safer if you stayed back a little bit?

DURNFORD

Nonsense, my good man.

(MORE)

DURNFORD (CONT'D)
 Leaders lead from the front, not
 from the back... Yes! Keep
 shooting young man.

GEORGE
 Really sir, I must insist. It
 would be very hard to lead at all,
 if you were shot...

DURNFORD
 Poppycock.

Just at that moment bullets whistle as they pass by.

DURNFORD
 That reminds me, Lieutenant. How
 are we for ammunition.

GEORGE
 I should say we are all right for
 now, sir. Should I organise a
 resupply?

DURNFORD
 Yes, do that would you. It
 wouldn't do to run out.

Durnford watches as a Zulu tries to charge into the Donga, at
 a range of nearly 400 yards. A nearby Trooper fires his weapon
 which drops the Zulu DEAD.

DURNFORD.
 Good shot, that man. That gave him
 something to think about, eh?

EXT. ZULU LINE BY BIG DONGA - DAY

Mehlokazulu and his brother Tshekwane are amongst the Zulu
 skirmishers that are hounding Durnford in the donga.

The following scene is held entirely in isiZulu with
 English subtitles.

TSHEKWANE
 The English general uses the
 ground wisely. He has found
 himself a good place to keep his
 men safe.

As he says this another of his Zulus warriors is felled by an
 accurate British shot.

MEHLOKAZULU
 He thinks he holds us here. But we
 do not need to go through him. We
 can go around him. The Horns do
 not go straight, my brother.
 (MORE)

MEHLOKAZULU (CONT'D)

They go around.

Mehlokazulu stands amid the rain of gunfire and leads his men away from the Donga, and around it.

EXT. TRACK 2 MILES FROM ISANDLWANA - DAY

Hamilton-Browne and his men are pushing back towards the camp at Isandlwana, unaware of the danger they are approaching. They pause at the rise of a hill and seek shelter from the sun under the lee of a tree. As they dismount they hear the distinctive sound of GUNFIRE in the distance.

SOLDIER X

Do you here that Maori?

Hamilton-Browne puts his ear to the wind and listens. There comes the sound of the 7-pounders being unleashed, and echoing about the valleys. As they all wonder what is going on, and where, three men on horseback approach from the direction of Isandlwana, travelling at speed. Hamilton-Browne intercepts them as they approach.

HAMILTON-BROWNE

Hold fast there! Tell me man, where's that firing coming from?

HORSEMAN ONE

The camp, sir. I have urgent word for Lord Chelmsford. The camp is under attack from thousands of Zulu.

HAMILTON-BROWNE

How many?

HORSEMAN ONE

Thousands, sir. I have seen them with my own eyes. There's a line of them stretching over several miles!

Hamilton-Browne looks concerned as the sound of the 7-pounders continues in the distance.

HAMILTON-BROWNE

Ride on, man. Have them send reinforcements.

As the horsemen ride off Hamilton-Browne and his colleagues gather on the crest of the hill, and listen to the fighting in the distance.

EXT. THE SPUR - DAY

A horseman rides up to where Essex is directing Cavaye and his men at the foot of the spur. The fighting is still fought at a distance, with rifles.

HORSEMAN TWO

Colonel Pulleine's orders, sir.
Have your men withdraw closer to
the camp. Our line is fairly
stretched.

Essex looks out across the field of battle. He does not look happy.

ESSEX

Too true... Thank you...
Lieutenant Cavaye, order the men
to fall back.

Cavaye rides up the line of his men, shouting his orders over the din of rifle fire.

CAVAYE

All right lads... Fall back...
Keep in good order... Steady
firing...

Cavaye's men RISE from their firing positions and WITHDRAW in calm order, stopping every few yards or so to return fire at the Zulus. We follow them until they have retreated closer to the camp. Essex rides over to Cavaye who is still directing his men.

ESSEX

Good work Lieutenant... Where's
Lieutenant Dyson?

Cavaye looks about his men but can't see Dyson. Then he looks back at the spur and a look of HORROR sweeps his face.

EXT. TOP OF THE SPUR - DYSON'S MEN - SAME

Lieutenant Dyson is on foot and guiding his men's fire at the Zulus. They are a small patch of red in a field of green and black.

DYSON

Steady now.

The Zulus now gather speed and approach the small band of men in large numbers. The Redcoat's fire continues to batter their shields, and every now and then a Zulu falls dead. As they get closer they begin to throw their spears and assegais, causing a number of casualties amongst Dyson's men.

DYSON

All right men, prepare
to retire...

Dyson looks back at where he expects to see Cavaye and his men still fighting. There is NOTHING but a long line of Zulus advancing rapidly on his position.

DYSON

Fix bayonets! On me men!

The redcoats fix their bayonets and fall closer to Dyson, forming a traditional fighting SQUARE. From a distance we see that the Zulus have entirely surrounded Dyson's position. Then they attack from all sides, falling in among the British and stabbing and fighting like wild animals. The British fight like CRAZED men, stabbing and slashing until the position is OVERWHELMED, and the Redcoats are speared to a man.

EXT. PULLEINE'S TENT - DAY

Colonel Pulleine is watching the unfolding drama through a pair of field glasses. Lieutenant Melville stands nearby. From behind HOBBLER Lieutenant Coghill, still unable to walk well after his accident.

COGHILL

Bloody good show, eh, Melville?

MELVILLE

I fear we are too stretched. The Zulu is moving steadily past Colonel Durnford's position and continues to press us from the plateau. We should fall back, strike the tents and make a stand closer together...

PULLEINE

(Overhears)

Nonsense, Lieutenant. The Zulu head has stalled. It cannot move from its position, our fire is too good. Look. Look at how they cower under the weight of our fire.

In the fore-distance the 7-pounders are firing steadily into the Zulu Head. It is supported by the men of the 1st, who lay down such WITHERING fire that the Zulu Head is unable to make any ground.

EXT. FOOTHILLS OF THE NQUTU PLATEAU - DAY

The Zulu side has indeed STALLED. The 7-pounders continue to explode above their heads and kill any poor soldier that stands nearby. Any soldier that dares try to move forward is shot down by rifle fire. Undhlaka is UNCONCERNED by the withering fire and casually strolls amongst his men hiding amongst the rocks. He squats by a group of warriors who are sheltering from the fire.

The following scene is spoken entirely in isiZulu with English subtitles.

UNDHLAKA

Why do you hide, men of the
uKhamdempemvu? What ails you?

ZULU X

Their fire is strong. We fear
their guns. We cannot move from
here...

UNDHLAKA

Your King asked his commanders for
men, and he sent girls! For shame,
that you hide here, scared of the
white man's weapons!

Undhlaka stands UPRIGHT and PROUD amidst his men.

UNDHLAKA (CONT'D)

Go forward. Your destiny waits.

Despite their reservations several men rise and rattle their shields in the air. The gunfire that returns, drops them dead where they stand, and Undhlaka dives for cover in the undergrowth.

ZULU X

Ha ha. Now who hides like a girl!

EXT. BRITISH LINES - DAY

SMITH-DORRIEN AND HIS BAND OF MEN RUN UP AND DOWN THE LINES OF REDCOATS FACING THE ZULUS AS THEY SWARM OVER THE NQUTU FOOTHILLS. THEY ARE LADEN DOWN WITH AMMUNITION AND CARRY THE LARGE BOXES IN EACH HAND. THEY PAUSE WHERE REQUESTED, BREAK OPEN THE BOXES USING WHATEVER IS AT HAND (ROCKS ETC), AND HAND OUT AMMUNITION TO THE MEN.

SMITH-DORRIEN

Here, do you need ammunition?

A Redcoat gathers some rounds and loads his rifle.

REDCOAT

That all you got?
(MORE)

REDCOAT (CONT'D)

We're going to need more than that. These buggers just don't know when to stop...

Smith-Dorrien looks about him as the British lines unleash a constant barrage of gunfire at the Zulus. It seems never ending.

EXT. BIG DONGA - SAME

Colonel Durnford continues to ride up and down the length of his line of men that are using the Big Donga for protection. From his position he can see a mass of Zulus moving South Eastwards of his position, and moving to cut him off.

DURNFORD

Henderson?

HENDERSON

Yes, Colonel?

DURNFORD

Where is that ammunition?

HENDERSON

I'm afraid it has not arrived yet, sir.

DURNFORD

Not arrived? We will soon be in need of it. Look there. The Zulus choose to go around us. Our position here is becoming worthless.

HENDERSON

Should I return for ammunition?

DURNFORD

Yes. Go, we will follow shortly. We will need to make a stand at the camp.

EXT. SOUTH OF THE SPUR - DAY

Lt Cavaye and his men have now dug in just north of the camp. As the fighting continues several thousand Zulus appear over the crest of the Nqutu Plateau and begin to ADVANCE.

CAVAYE

Captain Essex, sir.

ESSEX

What is it Lieutenant?

CAVAYE

The enemy are developing in some numbers. We have been engaged for some time now, I fear our ammunition will shortly become scarce.

ESSEX

Quite right, Lieutenant. Hold your position. I'll return to camp and organise a re-supply.

Essex turns his horse and heads into the nearby row of tents at speed. Cavaye looks out at his extended line of redcoats as they continue to fire at the huge numbers of Zulus that approach.

EXT. BIG DONGA - DAY

Colonel Durnford's mounted men are still firing heavily out of the dried up riverbed. SOLDIER B reaches into his ammunition bag and pulls out just THREE more rounds.

SOLDIER B

I'm running out!

SOLDIER C

Me too! I'm on to my last rounds!

Colonel Durnford follows the conversations among his men.

DURNFORD

All right. Lieutenant, pass the word along. We shall retire. Have the men fall back to camp.

EXT. PULLEINE'S TENT - DAY

MELVILLE

Colonel Durnford is retreating from the Donga, sir.

Melville points Pulleine to the East, where Durnford's mounted men rise up out of the Donga and begin to retire. Pulleine drops his field glasses from his eyes. He looks strained and CONFUSED.

MELVILLE

He's exposed Lieutenant Pope's position, sir. We should move to support them.

PULLEINE

Eh... Oh, yes... of course...

EXT. NORTH OF DURNFORD'S POSITION - DAY

Lieutenant Pope has seen Durnford's withdrawal from the Big Donga.

POPE

Lieutenant Austen, Colonel
Durnford is retiring. Pass the
order along to retire.

Austen rides off along his line of men and as he does so they collectively rise and begin to head back to camp. At this moment they retire in good order. The soldiers run a few yards before stopping and firing back at the Zulu lines.

EXT. NQUTU PLATEAU - DAY

Ntshingwayo is watching the battle unfold. The following scene is spoken entirely in isiZulu with English subtitles.

NTSHINGWAYO

The British are retreating. We
must act now. If they regroup at
the camp, we may not be able to
break them before their
reinforcements arrive.

ZIBHEBU

The men are cowed by the British
fire. They cannot move while it
continues.

NTSHINGWAYO

(Angrily)

Will no-one stand and fight! Has
no-one the courage to defend his
homeland!

EXT. AMMUNITION CARTS - DAY

Essex has reached the ammunition tents. He passes Smith-Dorrien and the men he press-ganged earlier as they fetch more ammunition cases from the carts. Essex rides up to the cart that Bloomfield protected and begins to lift down some of the cases.

ESSEX

Here, you there. Help me
with these.

Smith-Dorrien HESITATES as he sees Bloomfield's face.

ESSEX

Come on, man.
(MORE)

ESSEX (CONT'D)

Don't just stand there.

BLOOMFIELD

I beg your pardon, Captain, but those are for the 2nd Battalion...

ESSEX

Nonsense. They're for the 24th and I intend to see that they get them. Is that a problem, sir?

BLOOMFIELD

No... No... Of course not...

Relieved that Bloomfield has been put in his place Smith-Dorrien and his happy gang start to RAID the heavily loaded ammunition cart and run them to the front lines.

EXT. PULLEINE'S TENT - DAY

MELVILLE

Our line is very stretched, sir.

PULLEINE

Is it...? Yes, yes, you are right. Sound the retreat, Lieutenant Melville. We shall make a stand at the camp...

EXT. NQUTU PLATEAU - DAY

Ntshingwayo and his commanders WATCH from the hills. As they do so they see an OLD Zulu make his way from the rear of the fighting, among the rocks and trees, to where his Zulu army lay COWERING in the ground. Bullets continue to whizz past but they seem to miraculously miss this Zulu. His name is MKHOSANA. He sees the big guns light up and a plume of smoke bellow from their insides and he pauses, DROPPING to one knee to wait for the danger to pass. When it does he rises again and strolls CASUALLY to the front line. In the midst of this field of battle there is a large ROCK. Several Zulus have taken refuge behind it and look bemused as the old Zulu saunters over. Undeterred by the rain of death that the British are firing, Mkhosana climbs the rock and stands tall, facing his cowering warriors. He raises his assegai into the air and two thousand Zulu warriors turn their attention to him.

MKHOSANA

(In isiZulu. Subtitles in English) Look at you, children of the uKhamdempemvu, proud warriors who grovel in the dirt, shaming your brave ancestors who have passed before you! You bring shame to those of us who call ourselves Zulu. You embarrass your mothers, you, who sing bravely of killing the invader while you hide in the grass! Stand with me brothers, and we shall have this day!

The warriors who have listened to his speech stand as one, shields and assegais raised, and cry out.

ZULU WARRIORS ALL

Usuthu!

As Mkhosana proudly watches the Zulu Impi finally take to their feet, he turns and a wide grin spreads across his face. It is gone moments later when a British bullet enters his forehead and drops him DEAD.

EXT. MAJOR SMITH'S GUNS - DAY

Major Smith has seen the huge Zulu army rise up from their hiding spots and surge forward.

SMITH

All right lads. Grape shot.
800 yards.

The men of the RA fire the anti-personnel shot and it KNOCKS several Zulus over, but it is clear that it won't be enough. The men of the 1st continue to fire on either side, dropping Zulus as they come on, but even then it will not be enough. Just as a third shot is fired from the 7-pounder they hear the sound of the RETREAT being called. Smith watches in horror as the men of the 1st rise up from their spots and begin to retire. As a result of this, the firing into the Zulu Head DIMINISHES. This galvanises the Zulus who abruptly break into a sprint.

SMITH

Bloody hell. Get those guns saddled up! You there, bring up the mules!

The men of the RA take a few seconds to secure the guns to the mules and start to RETREAT back to the camp. The mules and horses are pushed hard by men who cling to the guns and call out panicked orders. Major Smith finds his horse and climbs on. As he does so a Zulu spear flies at him, taking a large SLICE from his arm.

CURLING

Are you all right, sir?

SMITH

It's nothing. Ride on man! They are almost upon us.

Smith, Curling and the two guns lead the charge back to camp. The men of the 1st who fought either side of the guns earlier are the first to be attacked by Zulus. Having seen the sudden Zulu charge, the British lines COLLAPSE as panicked soldiers attempt to outrun the Zulus. The British soldier is not as light on foot as the Zulu warrior, encumbered by a heavy gun and ammunition, bandoliers, heavy trousers and a large red overcoat. The nimble Zulu warriors break into their lines with devastating effect, SLASHING, STABBING and KILLING in an almost inhuman bloodlust. Many of the British soldiers make a stand, determined to die fighting, while others run for their lives.

EXT. EDGE OF BRITISH CAMP - DAY

Captain Essex and Smith-Dorrien are making their way out of camp towards the British lines with their arms loaded with more ammunition as the Zulus finally charge and the British lines collapse.

ESSEX

My God, would you look at them.
Our day is lost.

SMITH-DORRIEN

Sir?

ESSEX

The camp is lost, Lieutenant. We are beaten.

Essex grabs hold of a horse that is tethered nearby.

ESSEX

The tide of history has turned against us. They cannot be held back. We must retire. If you stand and fight, you will surely die...

Essex turns his horse and breaks into a gallop as he rides away. Smith-Dorrien stands looking a little lost before grabbing the nearest horse.

EXT. NORTH OF THE CAMP - BELOW THE SPUR - DAY

Cavaye has seen the COLLAPSE of the British lines. His face is concerned. As he turns to the north he sees that the Zulus he has been holding back have been electrified by the sight of their fellow warriors charging the British. Cavaye now faces two thousand CHARGING warriors as they continue to spill over the spur and the Nqutu Plateau.

CAVAYE

Fall back! Come on boys, on me!

As he speaks, PANIC sets in amongst his men and they all rise and try to outrun the Zulus back to the camp. A few of Cavaye's men rally to his side, guns drawn and bayonets fixed.

SOLDIER C

Sir?

Cavaye looks to his rear and back at the Zulus as they push forwards at speed. He raises his pistol and takes aim at the approaching Zulus.

CAVAYE

We'll never make it. We should hold them here for as long as we can. Give the others a chance...

Soldier B and his fellow soldiers look forlornly at those who have made a break for the camp. As the first Zulu comes into range Cavaye FIRES and the Zulu drops DEAD. He fires again and again and the Zulus pay his desperate price, but all too soon Cavaye's gun CLICKS onto an empty cartridge. Undeterred he throws his pistol to the floor and draws his SWORD. Cavaye and Soldier C and the other men take the full force of the Zulu charge and are brought to the ground after heavy but futile fighting.

EXT. EDGE OF THE CAMP - DAY

SHEPSTONE HAS FALLEN BACK WITH A DOZEN REDCOATS. HIS SITUATION IS DESPERATE AS THE SOLDIERS BEGIN TO FALL FROM GUNFIRE AND SPEAR ALIKE. HE FIRES HIS PISTOL, MORE IN DESPAIR THAN DESIGN.

SHEPSTONE

Come on men. Stand with me. Show no man any quarter, they will show you none in return.

The soldiers form a defensive square and fight off the initial push of Zulus well. But the Zulus don't stop. They are relentless and fearless. Despite the sword and bayonet used against them, the Zulus numbers tell, and the small band of men are cut down and killed to the last one, Shepstone fearless and brave to the last.

EXT. PULLEINE'S TENT - DAY

Pulleine is watching the Zulu charge. He drops the field glasses from his eyes. He is broken. Now, without the use of field glasses, he can see the Zulu Head; the Right Horn, as it passes beyond the South West of the camp; and the Left Horn, as it passes to the South East.

PULLEINE

My God. We are beaten.

MELVILLE

There's still time, sir. Not all is lost. We can save ourselves. The Right Horn is some way from meeting the Left Horn. We can make it through the gap?

Pulleine shakes his head and walks towards his tent.

INT. PULLEINE'S TENT - MOMENTS LATER

Pulleine walks over to his desk and opens a drawer. He pulls out a PISTOL and checks that it is loaded.

MELVILLE

Sir. Really. I think it best you save yourself. There's still time.

PULLEINE

There's no time. No more time.

Pulleine takes his sword sheath which is hanging nearby and slips it over his shoulders.

PULLEINE

Fetch the Colours. They're in the guard tent. You will need them to rally the troops. Save who you can.

MELVILLE

Sir? Really I ...

PULLEINE

Go now. There's not a moment to waste.

Melville nods respectfully and walks out of the tent. Pulleine looks RESIGNED to his fate.

EXT. PULLEINE'S TENT - MOMENTS BEFORE

Lieutenant Coghill has seen the British lines collapse. He hobbles over to his horse and climbs on. He looks back towards the north and west of the camp and sees Zulus fighting hard with redcoats. He turns AWAY and gallops towards the gap between the Left and Right horns.

Moments later Melvill leaves Pulleine's tent and runs across to the guard tent. The Regimental Colours stand in the corner. There are several Colours, representing multiple regiments, all enclosed in leather SHEATHES fixed to an a 8 foot long wooden POLE. Melville finds the box marked 'Royal Warwickshires' and takes it and runs from the tent.

EXT. AMONG THE TENTS - EAST - DAY

Colonel Durnford sits atop his horse. He looks aimlessly about, as if looking for something. Brickhill is on horseback and is fleeing the carnage. Zulus are engaged with Redcoats amongst the white tents and are gaining ground.

DURNFORD

You there, have you seen
Colonel Pulleine?

BRICKHILL

No, sir. Not for some time. Have
you searched the command tents?

DURNFORD

There's no time. Be a good chap,
would you, and find the Colonel.
Tell him we are rather stretched
and could do with some support.

BRICKHILL

Certainly. I'll try my best.

Brickhill turns his horse and rides away. Durnford watches quietly as the Zulu army makes light work of the Redcoats' resistance. Lt George rides up, his pistol drawn.

GEORGE

The camp has fallen, sir.

DURNFORD

I can see that, Lieutenant. I can
see that...

GEORGE

There is still time to make good
your escape, sir? The horns have
not quite met...

Durnford slowly climbs from his horse and taps the nag on its behind. It gallops off.

DURNFORD

You go, Lieutenant. I see no reason why we should both fall upon my sword...

George climbs from his horse and joins Durnford's side.

GEORGE

I don't think so, sir.

George hands him a PISTOL.

GEORGE

It's been an honour to serve with you, sir.

DURNFORD

The honour has been mine.

Durnford pushes the pistol away and draws his sword. The Zulus are now approaching from the north and the east, having fought the Redcoats back amongst the glimmering white tents. As they approach George FIRES from his pistol. He fires continuously until a weird silence descends upon the camp, and the sky DARKENS, as a partial SOLAR ECLIPSE occurs above their heads. The pause is momentary as the Zulus fall in amongst Durnford and his Batman, slashing and stabbing the two men until they can no longer be seen amongst the throng of black bodies.

EXT. AMONG THE TENTS - NORTHEAST - DAY

As DARKNESS falls on the camp, Pope and Goodwin-Austen have rallied with fifty or so redcoats who have contrived to form a SQUARE. The fighting is desperate as the Zulus approach with blade and rifle, killing redcoats sporadically, whilst being repelled by the sharp blade of a bayonet. As their numbers deplete, Goodwin-Austen stands ISOLATED, firing from his pistol, and making every shot count. Pope has also rallied and is firing rapidly into the Zulus. Their shots are good and a heavy number of Zulus fall at their feet. Goodwin-Austen fires a shot and is hit full in the chest with an assegai. He is momentarily transfixed by the sight of the weapon protruding from his body, before he grabs the handle and PULLS it out. As he drops to his knees a Zulu approaches and swings his weapon hard toward the stricken man. As Goodwin-Austen dies, Pope watches the Zulu press their advantage. He is about to fire another shot when he is hit in the body with a single rifle shot. He is knocked backwards but remains standing, before a second shot hits him clean in the head and he drops to the floor, dead.

EXT. THE BRITISH CAMP - DAY

The British camp has FALLEN. Thousands of Zulu swarm over the tents stabbing and killing ANYTHING and EVERYTHING that stands in their way. British officers try and rally their men, but all is disorder and chaos. Captain Essex is still on his horse and he watches the Zulus come on. He turns his horse away from the carnage and is about to ride off towards Fugitive's Drift when Smith-Dorrien runs across his path.

ESSEX

Here! Smith-Dorrien. Get a bloody horse, man, you'll never out run them!

Essex grabs the reigns of a fleeing horse and Smith-Dorrien climbs on.

ESSEX

Now is not the time to fight. Now is the time to run. Don't die here today, boy. Ride like the wind.

Smith-Dorrien wastes no time in following Essex's advice and the two men ride through the camp in a desperate attempt to escape.

EXT. FUGITIVES' DRIFT - DAY

Major Smith and Lt Curling are with the 7-pounders as the mules race desperately away from the camp. The mules are not as quick as the officers on horseback and they are ATTACKED by Zulus approaching now on all sides. All of the men of the RA are KILLED as they are dragged from the guns and STABBED. Smith and Curling can do nothing and continue riding at pace towards the exit.

Smith-Dorrien is riding HARD among those fleeing the Zulus. He passes by Dr Shepherd and his AMBULANCE which is making its way from the camp. Smith-Dorrien pauses while Essex rides on. As he pauses Cochrane rides up alongside.

COCHRANE

The camp is lost. Don't dally man. The horns have not yet met. There's still chance for escape, but you must ride hard now.

Cochrane and Smith-Dorrien share a glance before Cochrane rides away at speed, towards Fugitives' Drift. Just as Smith-Dorrien is about to pull the reigns of his horse and flee, he notices Dr Shepherd.

SMITH-DORRIEN

Dr Shepherd. The Zulus are upon us. Do you need assistance?

SHEPHERD

That would very kind, Lieutenant.
The bloody mules are as stubborn
as the natives and refuse to move!
If you...

As he speaks an assegai is THRUST by an unknown hand through Dr Shepherd's chest. He stands, shocked, as blood wells up into his mouth. The assegai is withdrawn and Dr Shepherd falls to the floor, dead. Behind him stands Mehlokazulu, his face contorted with blood lust.

Smith-Dorrien and Mehlokazulu swap looks before Smith-Dorrien pulls the reigns of his horse and gallops away, towards Fugitive's Drift.

Zulu warriors swarm over the ambulance and stab and slash at the wounded soldiers, killing them all.

TSHEKWANE

(In isiZulu with English subtitles) The cowards flee before us, brother. The day is hours. We must strike them down, everyone, before they escape.

MEHLOKAZULU

(In isiZulu with English subtitles) Come brother. The horns are closing in upon them. They will not get far.

Smith-Dorrien rides hard and pushes his horse DESPERATELY through Fugitives Drift as the Zulu Impi falls in around him on all sides. Bullets fly, but not so fearsomely as the spears and assegais, as the Zulus chase him on foot.

Melville watches as the camp falls to the Zulus. He holds the COLOURS in his hands. Rightly, he knows he should unfurl them and rally the survivors to him. He looks once more at the camp, turns his horse, and FLEES down Fugitive's Drift.

Further along the track, Melville finds Lt Coghill, whose horse is INJURED and not moving quite so fast.

MELVILLE

Are you all-right, sir?

COGHILL

My damned horse is as lame as me!

MELVILLE

The Buffalo river should be just ahead. If we can get across that we should be safe...

COGHILL

Do you have the Colours there?

MELVILLE

I do... I was going to make a stand, but the camp had already fallen. I think it is my duty to save them from the enemies hands...

COGHILL

Quite right. Perhaps we can ride together? Assist one another in our quest?

MELVILLE

A good idea, sir. Quickly. Follow me, the Zulus are almost among us.

EXT. CLIFFS ABOVE THE BUFFALO RIVER - DAY

Smith-Dorrien has ridden hard. His horse is almost exhausted. He pulls up at the cliff's edge and sees British Natal stretch out beyond the Buffalo river. Safety. The cliff is rocky and STEEP, and he guides his horse carefully down it. Half way down he comes across a wounded soldier whose arm is bleeding profusely. Concerned, Smith-Dorrien climbs off his horse and goes to his aid.

SMITH-DORRIEN

Here, let me take a look at that. What happened?

WOUNDED MAN

Bloody Zulus and their spears, that's what.

Smith-Dorrien cuts his clothing away from his arm, exposing a horrible flesh wound. He takes some cloth from the soldiers uniform and presses it down over the wound to try and stem the bleeding. He then ties a tourniquet around it and helps the wounded man to his feet.

SMITH-DORRIEN

That will have to do for now. We need to get down to the river. Find a way to cross...

As he talks Major Smith and Lt Curling appear over the crest in something of a hurry. Smith is ghostly white and bleeding from his wound.

SMITH

Get on with it man, the Zulus are upon you!

As he mentions the word 'Zulu' they APPEAR behind him, and across the crest of the cliffs, rapidly GAINING on them, led by Mehlokazulu and Tshekwane. They take Curling first and then Smith. Smith-Dorrien fires his pistol EFFECTIVELY, taking a number of Zulus out, but there are too many and they fall on his wounded comrade and kill him.

Realising the game is up, Smith-Dorrien runs to the cliff edge and THROWS himself fifty feet into the raging waters of the Buffalo river. He goes under and Mehlokazulu and Tshekwane peer over the precipice, and wait for him to surface...

MEHLOKAZULU

(In isiZulu with English subtitles.)

He is lucky that one. Brave and lucky.

EXT. BUFFALO RIVER - DAY

Melville and Coghill have made it to the river's edge having found a different route down the cliff's edge. Here they find Lt Higginson surveying the fast flowing waters.

MELVILLE

Quickly, man. The Zulus are right behind us!

All three men lead their horses into the river and begin to press across to the other side. As they get into the centre, Zulus appear behind them, some on horseback. Armed Zulus begin to FIRE at the fleeing men. Melville's horse is hit first and he falls into the waters, still CLUTCHING the Colours. Higginson is nearby and he reaches down to Melville who is desperately clutching the 8 foot pole that holds the Colours. As he grabs hold of the pole, Higginson's horse is HIT and he too plunges into the water. Coghill has managed to get to the other side, but when he sees Melville begin to go underwater he guides his horse back into the river, and goes to his rescue. The Zulus on the riverbank lay down HEAVY fire, but it is mostly inaccurate. Unfortunately the frame of a horse is a large target and just as Coghill begins to pull Melville to calmer waters, his horse is also hit. Coghill, Melville and Higginson all FLOUNDER in the water. Higginson reluctantly releases the Colours and they FLOAT AWAY down the river, freeing Higginson to safely swim to the opposite bank. Melville and Coghill now also swim to the safety of the Natal bank, but their relief is short lived as the Zulus on horseback begin to give chase and enter the waters. The three men begin to run from their pursuers but Coghill's injury is too much, and he drops to the floor barely a hundred yards from the river.

COGHILL

I am done for. I can't go on.

MELVILLE

Nor I.

Melville pulls out his pistol but the chamber is missing.

MELVILLE.

Do you have a gun?

HIGGINSON

I'm afraid I lost mine.

COGHILL

I have mine. I fear it will not be much use.

HIGGINSON

We must run, sirs. Before it is too late.

MELVILLE

You go. Find us horses and return. We will hold them off for as long as we can.

Higginson nods and begins to sprint away from the two exhausted men. He reaches the top of a small hill, several hundred yards away, and TURNS to see thirty or forty Zulus approach his stranded colleagues. Melville is stood bravely with his arm outstretched and firing at the Zulus. Coghill limps nearby with his sword drawn. Higginson watches until Melville runs out of ammunition and the Zulus fall in among them, killing them both. He turns, and disappears over the crest of the hill.

EXT. THE BUFFALO RIVER - DAY

Smith-Dorrien is carried downstream by the raging river. He is SPLUTTERING in the water, with barely enough strength to keep his head out of water. Just as it seems that he may succumb a horse NAYS nearby and he pops his head up to see a solitary horse swimming nearby. He grabs its tail and uses the horse as a float.

EXT. NATAL BANK - MOMENTS LATER

Smith-Dorrien stands on the Natal Bank. He is stroking the horse that has rescued him.

SMITH-DORRIEN

Thank God you came along, eh.
Thank God...

As he speaks there is the CRACK of gunfire from the opposite bank and the horse BOLTS, leaving Smith-Dorrien watching as fifty Zulus enter the water from the opposite bank, and begin to chase.

SMITH-DORRIEN

Bloody Hell, do you lot never know when to stop?

He raises his dripping pistol and begins to fire, hitting the first Zulu he sees. He fires a number of times before taking off on foot in the opposite direction.

EXT. BRITISH NATAL - SOME TIME LATER

Smith-Dorrien RUNS for his life. From a distance we see him follow a dirt track that comes to a cross roads. There is a SIGNPOST at the crossroads that we can't make out, but which Smith-Dorrien stops to read. We CLOSE UP on Smith-Dorrien's back. He is panting heavily. He is almost bent double, trying to catch his breath. He stands and runs to the right and we close up to the signpost.

It points in TWO directions. The first is the way that Smith-Dorrien runs, to the right. The signpost to the right says, 'Helpmakaar'

The signpost to the left says, 'Rorke's Drift'

FADE OUT

FADE IN

Beside the real photograph of Smith-Dorrien we see the actor's face.

TITLE OVER: Horace Smith-Dorrien survived his journey that day. He went on to become a distinguished soldier, serving in Egypt, India, the Sudan, and the 2nd Boer War. He served as a General in the First World War. He died in a car crash in 1930.

FADE TO BLACK

Beside the photograph of Mehlokazulu we see the actor's face.

Mehlokazulu continued to harass and frustrate British forces throughout the Zulu campaign. When the war was lost he was arrested but faced no punishment as he had committed no crimes. He had merely fought for his homeland. The British forces remained wary of him for over twenty years before he attempted to stage a new Zulu revolt in 1906. The Colonial authorities got wind of his plans and ambushed him and his followers, killing them all.

FADE TO BLACK

Beside the real photograph of Captain Essex we see the actor's face.

TITLE OVER: Captain Essex also survived that day and continued soldiering for the rest of his life. He earned the nickname 'Lucky' for surviving two more near death experiences. He later became an instructor at Sandhurst before commanding the Gordon Highlanders.

FADE TO BLACK

Beside the real photograph of Lt Coghill we see the actor's face.

TITLE OVER: For his valiant effort to save his friend Lieutenant Melville, Lieutenant Neville Coghill received the Victoria Cross, the highest award for gallantry in the British Forces. No-one ever asked why he left the field of battle so early.

FADE TO BLACK

Beside the real photograph of Lt Melville we see the actor's face.

TITLE OVER: For his valiant effort in trying to save the Regimental Colours, Lieutenant Teighnmouth Melville was awarded the Victoria Cross. No-one ever asked why the Colours weren't used for the purpose for which they were intended. That is, to rally troops in a confused field of battle. When they were found, they were still enclosed in their leather pouch. The Regimental Colours remain on display at Brecon Cathedral, Wales.

FADE TO BLACK

Beside the real photograph of Colonel Pulleine we see the actor's face.

TITLE OVER: No-one witnessed Colonel Pulleine's death. His body was never formally identified.

FADE TO BLACK

Beside the real photograph of Colonel Durnford we see the actors's face.

TITLE OVER: Colonel Durnford was made the scapegoat for the fall of the British Camp and was widely blamed. Francis Colenso became a very vocal defender of his honour before her untimely death in 1887, aged just 37. The War Office unofficially cleared Durnford's name and laid the blame rightly at Lord Chelmsford's feet. It wasn't until the 1960s that papers came to light fully exonerating Colonel Durnford.

FADE TO BLACK

Beside the real photograph of Lord Chelmsford we see the actor's face.

TITLE OVER: Lord Chelmsford was eventually recalled to London but not until he had made several successful advances against the Zulus. He was a hero to Queen Victoria and the general public, who were never told the full extent of his ineptitude. He died playing billiards at his London club in 1905, aged 78.

FADE TO BLACK

TITLE OVER: Of the 1,782 people at the British Camp at Isandlwana, only 55 Europeans and 350 African auxiliaries survived. Zulu losses were estimated at between 1,000 and 2,500.

FADE TO BLACK

TITLE OVER: But the day didn't end there... 20,000 Zulu warriors, who had been held in reserve during the attack, now set their sights on a small trading post held by just 87 British Soldiers.

FADE TO BLACK

TITLE OVER: The battle for Rorke's Drift had begun...