



June 25, 1876. The Little Big Horn River Valley. A date and place that would be remembered for generations in story and myth: **THE BATTLE OF LITTLE BIG HORN**. Known, ever since, as "Custer's Last Stand."

But the U.S. 7th Cavalry rode into history that sweltering summer day unaware—its 750 officers and enlisted men dog tired, dozing in their saddles after an all-night forced march. They were the United States Army's elite Indian-fighting force, led by their daredevil Colonel—George Armstrong Custer—the dashing Civil War hero who had stolen the country's heart with his long golden curls and fearless fighting style. Thought to be invincible at this point, the Colonel basked in his great good fortune, which had been dubbed by his men: "Custer's luck."

They were fighting for more than just land and glory. Custer and his 7th were doing God's will, or so they felt. Following their "Manifest Destiny" to conquer the American continent and "civilize" the native people who they knew would battle valiantly in defense of their Ways.

Still, the 35 Indian scouts—Crow, Arikara and Cree—saw many bad signs. They had picked up Sitting Bull's trail days ago, and watched as the numbers traveling with him swelled. Now, even the greenest recruit could see the Plains scored by thousands of travois, as Lakota ponies dragged family belongings west. But still Custer pushed on, riding straight into the largest army of Lakota warriors—2,500—ever assembled, with none other than Crazy Horse himself in the lead.

As the fighting raged and the 7th Cavalry fell, Chief Sitting Bull felt no joy. He could see that, even though the battle would be won, something far greater would be lost to the Lakota here. He knew that now the Wasichu would stop at nothing to get their revenge and that the Old Ways—the Lakota's sacred traditions—would soon be gone forever.

