By June 1775, New England soldiers had nearly surrounded the British in Boston. A new earthen fort, or redoubt, had been dug almost overnight atop Breed's Hill on the Charlestown peninsula, and was particularly threatening to the British. On June 17, 1,500 British soldiers landed from boats and advanced on the redoubt, into a fight that would become known as the Battle of Bunker Hill, named after a nearby landmark.

In this scene, we are among the defenders of the redoubt at the moment when the British Marines and soldiers of the 47th Regiment of Foot have scaled the walls and poured into the fort. British flags wave in the background. The New Englanders are almost out of ammunition and most are turning to flee. Men of African, European, and Native American descent fight alongside each other. They are dressed in civilian clothing, appearing in stark contrast to the British soldiers wearing red uniforms with white “facings,” or trim. One man stands out among the New Englanders, wielding a small sword to the right. Doctor Joseph Warren, president of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, fought as a volunteer in the battle wearing a fine suit and a fringed silk waistcoat. When he was killed in the redoubt, he became one of the first martyrs of the American cause. Though the British claimed victory in the battle, their own losses were almost as great as those of the New Englanders. A British general admitted that “the success [was] too dearly bought.”