

A SOLDIER'S PLAY

Screenplay
by

Charles Fuller

(Based on the Play
of the same name)

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CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

- Sergeant Vernon T. Waters: A black man in his fifties--light skinned, short, well built. His jaw is square, anchoring sharp features--a short, almost pointed nose over a thin moustache, high cheekbones and wide mouth--the entire face outlined by mixed-gray hair. He is a volatile man--battle worn--fighting his second World War. A book soldier who is capable of making up his own rules. He can be a 'nice guy' to those that know him, but mostly, he's a tough bastard--surprisingly cunning for all his bluster.
- Capt. Richard Davenport: A black man in his early 30's--tall, handsome, dark, well-built--his features a mixture of things--narrow face, thick nose and lips, bright brown eyes that go sad in thought--the whole face smooth, the hair, short--tight. But you notice Davenport for other reasons--he is flamboyant--his officer's cap is strapped down and cocked to one side of his head--sunglasses cover the entire upper half of his face--his brass is polished--shoes shined, clothes pressed--the creases seem chiseled into his pants and dress shirt. Davenport is proud, brash--and a bit showy--but there is an innocence about him--boyish--as though he is always going off to fight Goliath. At times he is distant--even unapproachable--He is a good lawyer--well-educated and quick to let you know it.
- Corporal Ellis: A thin, light brown skinned Latin-looking black man in his early 20's. Ellis unfortunately looks like everyone's version of a hustler. While his features could be Latin or Negroid, he has accentuated them with a thin moustache and hair slicked back-- But Ellis is the opposite of the hustler--he is ordinary in the extreme. A draftee, he's a nice guy--a bit comic at times--thoughtful occasionally--he is a good soldier with limited intelligence, but no fool.
- Capt. Charles Taylor: A young white man--tallish, medium build--athletic looking--in his mid to late 30's--no grey yet, but there are toughness lines in the square handsome face. The jaw is set, the mouth small and tight--the nose, a bit too thin, but the eyes are clear, a blue that can turn to steel, when he is angry. Taylor is a West Point officer--spit and polish--a man not given to sentiment and is a bit uneasy with softness, but there is a fairness in him that surprises and disarms people around him. Intelligent, well-read--mid-western, quick to cheer, slow to decide--immovable after decision is made.

Corporal Cobb:

A brown skinned man of 26 or 7, medium height and build. A round-faced man with his hair parted on the side--he has the look of a country-boy--a certain openness in his well-fed face tells you his smile is genuine. He is a well-built man--a good soldier judging by the two stripes he's managed to get in a short time in the Army. Quickwitted--bright--a thoughtful and sympathetic man capable of deep feelings--a minor leader among the men, his opinion might be sought from time to time--a man not likely to hassle his fate.

Pfc. Melvin Peterson:

A tall, angular good-looking young black man--in his early 20's--brownskinned--wears glasses on the rather longish nose, and over the pleasant wide smile--looks and acts intelligently--muscular. Peterson is the ideal soldier--a fighting machine--can be moody, but is a man of great passion--cares about his fellow GI's and tends to defend them. He is a young man and full in his way, of piss and vinegar.

Private Henson:

Dark, brownskinned man--stocky--round face, heavy lips, thick, bushy eyebrows--eyes small--major character of the face, disdain. Henson is a draftee who'd rather be fighting than sitting around--sharp tongued--plays the 'dozens'--skeptical--he will always have the last word--basically a good soldier, but "shove the shit!". A typical American GI.

Colonel Nivens:

A white officer in his late fifties. A cigarette smoking Southern gentleman--enigmatic--a rather active looking man in good shape for his age, short--tight almost leonid features, but the hair is short--closely cropped. There is a sense of the regal about the man--he is not a West Point officer--but he is a soldier--intelligent, well-read, used to the good life--a pragmatist, racist, but hardly the boisterous southern bigot--a man of considerable charm when he needs to be--but generally he doesn't need to be--Commander of Fort Neal--he'd rather not be bothered.

Private Wilkie:

A brownskinned man in his late 40's. He is greying slightly, a man of medium height and build--he stays in shape--he is lean, angular, a man with sharp features, and dark penetrating eyes. A veteran--tough-looking--the Army is his life--he drinks, is rarely sympathetic, tends to be out for himself, but quick to excuse himself from wrongdoing--yet, we feel always Wilkie is the victim--of his own greed--he is rather pathetic in his way.

Pvt. Smalls:

A short, well-built athletic looking black man in his early 20's, with an opened, rather round face, high forehead, short cropped hair, longish nose and broad smile--he resembles a young Jesse Owens. Athletic in the extreme, he is better at baseball than soldiering and his competence at the sport has equalized whatever he lacked in size. A thoughtful, rather emotional man with a wry kind of humor--he is congenial--a draftee who is going to make the best of a bad situation.

CJ Memphis:

Handsome, medium browns skinned man in his early 20's--features gentle, almost angelic, eyes bright brown circles--wide easy mouth--he is well built--muscular looking. An easy going man-child that everyone likes--the best athlete among a group of fine athletes--he is strong--fast--a natural talent--whose simplicity and faith in the things of the old south--conjure--potions--seems primitive, but a man whose feelings are most often on target. He is the innocent, but he is not stupid--and there is something of CJ in everyone--and something of everyone in CJ. He is the down home man from the country--and we sometimes wish he'd go back.

FADE IN:

1. INT: GOLDEN SLIPPER SALOON - NIGHT

RUN TITLES OVER:

The camera opens abruptly on a quartet of black musicians playing loud, raucous Delta Blues music on the small stage of the Golden Slipper Saloon. The place is noisy, a large dark, smoke-filled room--a World War II soldiers bar crowded to capacity with black enlisted men in US Army uniforms. The place is jumpin'. Black couples are dancing 'the jitterbug' on a postage stamp dance floor in front of the stage. Around them black soldiers and their dates are seated crammed into small tables that cover most of the floor. Pitchers of beer are being passed from table to table. Glass mugs are being tossed to GI'S from waiters on the edge of the crowd. On the left a long bar is busy with a crowd seated on stools. Everyone is enjoying themselves. On a long mirror behind the bar, the words: 5TH ANNIVERSARY, APRIL 14, 1944, EVERYONE INVITED! are written in broad red and yellow strokes. The camera begins to thread its way dizzily through the crowd from the dancefloor to the dimly lit rear of the saloon. At the entrance, a black, musclebound bouncer--balding, dressed incongruously in a tuxedo guards the door. Black GI's stagger out of the door. The music continues.

TITLES OUT.

CUT TO:

2. EXT: SERGEANT WATERS - ROAD - NIGHT

Music from the saloon trails into the scene as the Camera opens in swirling fog along a dark, moonlit bayou road, lined on both sides with trees and thick underbrush. The night sounds of insects and the stirring of the underbrush mix with the fading music of the saloon making the road seem eerie--threatening. We see and hear almost at once the dim figure of Sergeant WATERS. He is a black Non-com in uniform crawling and mumbling drunkenly on all fours on the road and into CU. He has been beaten. A man in his 50's, streaks of blood course from his mixed-grey hair down the side of his face. Bruises glisten reddish and black around his eyes. Trickle of blood harden on his nose--around his pencil-thin moustache. Dirt mixed with blood 'cakes' on his cheeks. His look is anguished. The fog and dim light make him seem surreal--a nightmarish vision.

WATERS

(coughing, convinced)

They still hate you!

He shakes his head as if admitting a truth.

CUT TO:

3. CU .45 CALIBER AUTOMATIC PISTOL

The hammer of the pistol is pulled back. Beyond the pistol, the heavy fog billows amidst the thick underbrush.

O.C. WATERS

They still hate you!

The pistol catches the light of the moon for an instant before the hammer powers forward, before the gun fires, exploding smoke and death.

CUT TO:

4. WATERS

WATERS flies backward and over, the bullet tearing through his chest, hurting him for an instant before he dies on the dark Louisiana road. His uniform is suddenly stained in a large circle around the wound. And the shot hardly disturbs the thick underbrush and the fog that rolls in over the road from the bayou.

CUT TO:

5. WATERS - MURDERER'S POV

The camera moves toward the body, stops beside it, looks down at it. WATERS is sprawled on the road, his face still shocked in death by the vision of the person who killed him.

CUT TO:

6. CU .45 CALIBER AUTOMATIC PISTOL

The pistol is pointed downward at WATER'S body. It spits flame and another bullet

CUT TO:

7. WATERS BODY

The body jerks lifelessly as the bullet explodes in its head. There is a sudden quiet.

We are aware of sudden footsteps. They start off in the near distance, and fade, hardly disturbing the fog that swirls a little, then settles heavily over the body as if caressing it.

FADE OUT:

3. CU .45 CALIBER AUTOMATIC PISTOL

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FADE OUT:

8. FADE IN:

EXT: TRAIN - PASSENGER CAR - BRIGHT DAYLIGHT

The Camera opens on swirling steam billowing up around the wheels of a Passenger Train in the Tynin Train-Station. A black Porter watches a stream of black passengers, mostly soldiers disembarking. Further down the platform white passengers disembark from another car. There is the feeling of War Time [World War II] about things--the soldiers, signs, flags and banners. At the doorway, CAPTAIN RICHARD DAVENPORT appears. He is tall, handsome, in his late 20's--early 30's--a spit-and-polish black US Army officer. In uniform, he is carrying a suitcase and a black leather briefcase. What attracts our attention to DAVENPORT is his manner--or flair if you will. He is wearing Gen. MacArthur sunglasses, his officers cap slightly cocked to the side, and its brim 'broken' and strapped like Mustang pilots. He attracts the attention of people on the platform immediately. As he reaches the ground he is met by a skinny black Corporal ELLIS. A young man dressed in fatigues, his lean face beneath a pencil-thin moustache and his hair 'slicked-back' reminds one of early movie 'Latins'. ELLIS salutes at once.

ELLIS

Captain Davenport? Corporal Ellis--at your disposal, Sir!

DAVENPORT returns the salute.

CUT TO:

9. ELLIS - DAVENPORT - STATION

ELLIS looks at DAVENPORT'S Captain's bars admiringly. Behind them is the train-station. On both sides of a blue double-door are long white benches with white people sitting on them. Over the door a sign reads: WHITES ONLY. One man on the bench nudges another seated beside him. They both begin to watch ELLIS and DAVENPORT. ELLIS reaches for DAVENPORT'S bag. The action creates an irritating stir among the white people. DAVENPORT notices and straightens.

ELLIS

I'm to take you to Colonel Nivens, Sir.

DAVENPORT

Let's go soldier.

DAVENPORT starts away, with ELLIS a step behind him. An ageing couple sitting on the bench look after DAVENPORT with curiosity. ELLIS has noticed. Everyone is staring at them.

CUT TO:

10. ELLIS - DAVENPORT - STATION - JEEP

The Camera follows DAVENPORT and ELLIS pass the 'Colored' section of the station to a waiting jeep. ELLIS slings DAVENPORT'S bag into the rear seat and mounts the driver's side. DAVENPORT gets in as the engine starts. Almost at once they are moving away from the station.

CUT TO:

11. EXT: SECTION OF BAYOU ROAD

The Camera follows ELLIS and DAVENPORT in the jeep as it rolls along a section of the Bayou Road that provides the full spectacle of the Louisiana Bayou Country that widens in all directions around them. To the right the Bayou licks the shoulder of the road stretching in its direction to the horizon. The trees, the underbrush are softened in the bright sunlight and the road seems pleasant as the mist begins to burn off and reveal sporadic patches of bright red and yellow flowers. The Camera stays with the jeep for awhile, the picture it captures so attractive, there is the feeling this day will turn out well.

CUT TO:

12. ANOTHER SECTION OF ROAD

The jeep slows suddenly through a section of road where the trees and underbrush are especially heavy. A 3/4 ton Army truck passes the jeep moving in the opposite direction. ELLIS stops the jeep and points.

ELLIS

This is where they killed Sergeant Waters las' month, Sir.

DAVENPORT turns and the camera pans to the place ELLIS indicates. A spot on the road where the paint used to mark where the body was found has begun to wear away.

DAVENPORT

Why'd you say, they killed him Corporal? Who's they?

The jeep moves. ELLIS looks at DAVENPORT

ELLIS

The Klan, Sir--they ain't too crazy 'bout us Tan yanks down here--the morning after it happened--the Colonel

(cont.)

12.

ELLIS

ringed the whole Fort with M.P.'s--

In the BG there is the faint sound of sirens, that grows louder.

CUT TO:

13. [FLASHBACK]

EXT: FORT NEAL - EARLY MORNING

The Camera opens on a road adjacent to the Fort and outside the barbed wire fence that stretches around it, at 'first light'. Two MP jeeps, their sirens wailing, roar onto the road and screech to a halt. Four well-armed white MP's jump from one jeep, and four black MP's (two armed with 'Billy-clubs') jump from the other. The MP's quickly take up positions along the perimeter of the fence facing inward at the Fort. The white MP's on one side, the black MP's on the other. Over their activity a loudspeaker is blaring. The voice is male and Southern.

LOUDSPEAKER VOICE

This is the Commanding Officer--Return to your barracks!
I repeat: Return to your barracks!

CUT TO:

14. INT: BARRACKS - TAYLOR - DAY

The camera opens on the back of Captain CHARLES TAYLOR as he paces the length of a long, one storey barracks. He is a young white officer. Dressed in fatigues and pistol belt he is tough-looking, a man of medium height in his early 30's. He is a West Point officer--not only spit-and-polish, but athletic and spartan-looking with rugged though boyish good looks. On both sides of him, enlisted men, all of whom are black stand 'at-ease' beside their bunks, their hands over their heads as a search-team of MP's goes through the personal belongings of everyone--beds are searched--footlockers, wall-lockers, duffel bags, etc.

(cont.)

14.

TAYLOR

I'm afraid this kind of thing can't be helped men--you can put your arms down when the search-team finishes with you.

Several men drop their arms, as TAYLOR passes ELLIS.

TAYLOR

We don't want anyone from this Fort going into Tynin looking for red-necks.

A man in his mid to late 20's, dressed in T-shirt, fatigues and slippers steps forward. He is a Corporal. His name is COBB.

COBB

May I speak, Sir?

TAYLOR nods, stops in front of the man.

COBB

Colonel Nivens must know nobody colored killed the man!

TAYLOR

This is precautionary, Cobb--we can't have the Army engaged in revenge on civilians.

COBB steps back into place.

CUT TO:

15. PETERSON

Private First Class PETERSON clears his throat. He is a bespectacled, young black man in his early 20's. He is tall and thin--surprisingly even at this hour of the morning PETERSON is militarily sharp. His fatigues are pressed and starched, boots shined, brass polished, and as he steps forward his bearing is crisp, his manner direct.

PETERSON

Sir, are there any suspects?

CUT TO:

16. TAYLOR - MEN
TAYLOR faces PETERSON

TAYLOR

None.

HENSON

(suddenly)

Everybody knows it was the Klan.

The voice is sharp, southern and arrogant. HENSON steps forward. He is a man of medium height, stocky--his face is round, his lips heavy, his forehead and eyes separated by thick, bushy eyebrows. He is dressed in a baseball shirt, cap, fatigues and boots. TAYLOR turns on him angrily.

TAYLOR

Were you an eyewitness soldier?

HENSON

They lynched Jefferson the week I got here, Sir--Hamilton two weeks later!

TAYLOR

Henson, unless you saw it, keep your opinions to yourself-- That's an order! It applies to everybody else as well!

ALL

(almost simultaneously)

Yes Sir!

TAYLOR paces again. This time a little uneasily. Softness does not come quickly or with assurance to the man.

TAYLOR

Men! Sergeant Waters served the Two-Twenty-First and this platoon in particular, with distinction--I for one, will miss the man. But you are soldiers and you have a duty to this uniform. Your war--my war is with the Nazis and Japs, not American civilians in town--I don't care what you think they did! The town of Tynin has been placed off-limits to all enlisted personnel. Any man found in the town will be immediately subject to Courts Martial--Sergeant Waters replacement will be assigned in a couple of weeks--Until then, Cobb will be barracks

(cont.)

16.

TAYLOR

NCO. Any questions?

The men are silent. TAYLOR is followed out by the MP's.

CUT TO:

17. [PRESENT TIME]

EXT: ELLIS - DAVENPORT - JEEP - ROAD

The Camera follows the jeep on its final approach to Fort Neal. Ahead the Fort is visible--wide, sprawling, its gate in the distance. DAVENPORT is silent. ELLIS smiles.

ELLIS

We heard they were sendin' somebody down hea' to look into things, Sir. But everybody figures its an open and shut case.

ELLIS looks at DAVENPORT.

ELLIS

At least this time, the Klan won't get away with it--
Will they, Sir?

DAVENPORT is thoughtful.

DAVENPORT

No--not this time.

DAVENPORT is staring beyond the road ahead. The camera watches as the jeep reaches the gate and is met by a smartly dressed black MP.

CUT TO:

18. INT: COLONEL NIVENS' OFFICE - DAY

The Camera opens on a pack of Lucky Strike cigarettes tossed across a blotter on a regulation Army desk. We hear the voice of Colonel NIVENS at once, as the Camera pans up to NIVENS who is lighting a cigarette.

NIVENS

...And I suppose that soldier who drove you in from the station--he showed you the spot where the killing took place, didn't he?

(cont.)

18.

The voice is the same southern voice we heard over the loudspeaker, but its tone is quieter--gentle almost but not friendly. NIVENS is a man in his 50's, active looking and in good shape. He is not a West Point officer--his bearing isn't as crisp, and his manner not nearly as self-assured. His shirt is open, his sleeves rolled up, a handkerchief is tied around his neck--but he is clearly a soldier in every sense of the word and a man well-bred by his manner. There is something of the Old South in him. The office around him is neat and spartan looking. The sunlight slices through the window behind him and into the room like a knifeblade.

CUT TO:

19. NIVENS - DAVENPORT

DAVENPORT has been standing in front of NIVENS desk 'at ease'. Seated in his desk chair, NIVENS points his cigarette at DAVENPORT. The Colonel seems to be enjoying himself.

NIVENS

...Told you I had all the Troops personal effects searched for weapons--correct?

DAVENPORT

Is there a point the Colonel is trying to make, Sir?

NIVENS rises, paces.

NIVENS

There's a point--

NIVENS hesitates, takes a few more steps, stops. His voice is calm.

NIVENS

This things been blown all the hell outta' shape--this is the Army's business--and the Army here at Fort Neal--not Washington!

NIVENS walks to a small sofa and sits on it. He seems exhausted. DAVENPORT faces him.

CUT TO:

20. NIVENS - DAVENPORT

Another Angle. NIVENS is quiet for a moment.

NIVENS

Save everybody a whole lot of unnecessary grief--I was brought up in the South, Davenport. You ever hear of Threadgill County, Alabama?

DAVENPORT

No, Sir.

NIVENS

No matter--I been commanding Negroes all my life, Davenport..

(pause)

And the worse thing you can do in this part of the country is pay too much attention to the death of a Negro under mysterious circumstances--especially a soldier. People get itchy--uneasy--white folks in town--colored at the Fort. Keep turning this thing over and sooner or later you're bound to have an explosion.

(slight pause)

Now, I've lived here in Hunter Parish ten years--I like the duty--you get my meaning?

DAVENPORT

What is it you want, Colonel?

There is a moment of silence. The Colonel rises, crosses the room. DAVENPORT follows his movements. NIVENS moves to his desk, sitting on the edge of it facing DAVENPORT.

NIVENS

I want whatever you came here to do completed in three days.

QUICK CUT TO:

21. CU DAVENPORT

He is surprised and annoyed, his response immediate.

DAVENPORT

Sir I request immediate permission to notify Washington.

CUT TO:

22. NIVENS - DAVENPORT

Another Angle. NIVENS smiles.

NIVENS

Permission denied.

DAVENPORT

I'm under direct orders--

NIVENS

I don't give a damn if Roosevelt himself sent you,
Davenport! I'm trying to prevent my
colored troops, on this Fort from going into that backwater
town and killing somebody! And I don't care what you
think either, you can always return to Washington
if you like.

NIVENS reaches for and picks up a thin manila envelope on his desk.

NIVENS

These are your instructions and our reports.

He hands the envelope to DAVENPORT.

NIVENS

(smiles)

We had to hurry your accomodations--I'm sure you under-
stand we couldn't build you your own Messhall, club and
billet--but I think they're adequate for a short stay
like yours. Captain Taylor's man will get you settled.
Taylor was Waters C.O.--

(cont.)

22.

NIVENS

(pause)

That'll be all Davenport--dismissed.

DAVENPORT steps back and salutes. It is clear by his expression that he is angry. NIVENS returns DAVENPORT'S salute, and DAVENPORT starts out.

NIVENS

And Captain--

DAVENPORT turns around.

NIVENS

Remember, you're the first colored officer most of these men have ever seen. The Army expects you to be a good example for the colored troops, and a credit to your race.

(pause)

Is that clear? Captain?

A moment passes before DAVENPORT answers. His face is tight, the words escaping like a loud hiss.

DAVENPORT

Yes, Sir!

CUT TO:

23. EXT: HEADQUARTERS BUILDING - DAVENPORT - DAY

DAVENPORT leaves the low-slung wooden building like an explosion, angrily slamming the screen door shut behind him.

O.C. ELLIS

Sir?

(coughs)

Sir--you all right?

DAVENPORT looks up.

CUT TO:

24. DAVENPORT - ELLIS - JEEP

DAVENPORT straightens, assumes his officer's poise and starts for the jeep. ELLIS follows.

ELLIS

Would you like to go to your Quarters sir?

DAVENPORT

I'll see Captain Taylor, first--I can get settled later.

DAVENPORT mounts the jeep as ELLIS scurries around its front end.

ELLIS

You don't want to unpack, Sir?

DAVENPORT

(snaps)

What did I say, Corporal?

ELLIS is in the jeep and starting the engine.

ELLIS

Yes, Sir!

The jeep pulls away, quickly.

CUT TO:

25. EXT: FORT NEAL - JEEP

ELLIS at the wheel is racing the jeep across another part of the Fort. Behind him, a dust cloud builds. DAVENPORT at one point has to hold onto his cap. ELLIS drives with a steadied madness, pushing the jeep to its limits.

ELLIS

I used to drive a fire truck, Captain--then the Army took and let me drive an ambulance--

DAVENPORT grabs the side of the jeep just as ELLIS turns sharply to the left and onto another dirt road on the Fort.

CUT TO:

26. EXT: TRAINING FIELD - SOLDIERS - DAY

The Camera focuses on a group of black soldiers involved in calisthenics, and training with a black drill Sergeant. A white officer stands by watching. The young men are in Army T-shirts and fatigues. They are doing sit ups, the Sergeant walking through the ranks of men, hurrying them, making them work harder. The jeep carrying ELLIS and DAVENPORT enters the frame in the BG still kicking up dust. It passes on the outer edge of the training. The white officer is the first person to look, and he stares at the jeep as it passes. In the group of soldiers training, one soldier stops, looks after the speeding jeep, already moving into the near distance. He points at it incredulously. It sets off a chain reaction. Other soldiers stop what they are doing, to gaze after the jeep--even the Sergeant turns around. The white officer faces the men.

OFFICER

All right you men, let's get back to those sit-ups--haven't you ever seen a colored officer before?

SOLDIER

No, Sir!

OFFICER

Get back to it--let's go!

The soldiers go back to training. In the distance the jeep is gone.

CUT TO:

27. EXT: HEADQUARTERS 221ST SMK. CO. - DAY

The jeep with ELLIS and DAVENPORT in it, skids to a halt, kicking up dust outside another long, wooden building designated: HQ 221ST SMOKE GENERATING COMPANY. US CHEMICAL CORPS. A sign is nailed above the building's only door. Outside, two black GI's are hoeing and digging in a flowerbed that runs the length of the building on both sides of the door. They are lined with painted stones. Both men salute as ELLIS and DAVENPORT dismount. ELLIS goes directly to the door and readies himself to open it for DAVENPORT. DAVENPORT reaches the door and stops ELLIS before he can open it. DAVENPORT opens it himself and enters. ELLIS follows.

CUT TO:

28. INT: ORDERLY ROOM - DAVENPORT - ELLIS - DORSEY - DAY

DAVENPORT with ELLIS trailing stops inside the Orderly Room, a small office area cut in half by a low railing, which separate several desks

(cont.)

28.

and a single opened office behind it, from the rest of the room. Rising from his desk to greet DAVENPORT with a salute is Sergeant DORSEY. He is a rather fat, dark-skinned Master Sergeant--a proven veteran if the ribbons he wears from the First War are any indication. He is clean shaven, his face jolly, his eyes bright, lively. He is all pride and smiles as he straightens to attention.

DORSEY

Sergeant Dorsey, Sir--can I help you, Captain?

DAVENPORT

Captain Davenport to see Captain Taylor.

DORSEY

Just a moment, Sir.

DORSEY turns toward an office behind him just as Captain TAYLOR steps into the opened doorway. He is dressed in khaki, shirt opened shirtsleeves rolled, and for a moment he simply stares at DAVENPORT. There is a faint smile on his face as he measures DAVENPORT. The length of the moment begins to grow awkward.

DAVENPORT

Captain?

TAYLOR

Come in Davenport.

DAVENPORT starts to move as TAYLOR disappears inside. DORSEY smiles as DAVENPORT passes.

DORSEY

(whispers)

You got every member in the 'club' rootin' for you, Sir!

DAVENPORT nods and enters. DORSEY makes a high-sign to ELLIS just as door closes.

CUT TO:

29. INT: TAYLOR'S OFFICE

DAVENPORT closes the door of the small office with its single window. There is a desk with TAYLOR'S nameplate on it and a picture of an attractive woman set on its edge. Two chairs await a visitor. The walls

(cont.)

29.

of the room are filled with large charts, duty and personnel rosters. A picture of Roosevelt hangs on the wall. TAYLOR remains standing but uses the desk for support. There are flowers on TAYLOR'S desk.

TAYLOR

Have a seat.

DAVENPORT sits.

DAVENPORT

I see you like flowers, Captain.

TAYLOR

Forgive the staring, Davenport--Colonel Nivens told me you were on your way--you're simply the first colored officer I've ever seen. You're a bit startling--I mean you no offense.

(pause)

So, they assigned a lawyer to the Military Police, huh? Where'd you graduate Law School?

DAVENPORT

Howard University.

TAYLOR

Your family rich--or something?

DAVENPORT

My father's a Postal clerk.

There is a moment of silence. Uncomfortable for both men.

TAYLOR

I graduated the Point--we didn't have any Negroes at the Point--in fact, I never even saw a Negro until I was twelve or thirteen--

DAVENPORT

Did you see my orders, Captain?

(cont.)

29.

TAYLOR

(nods)

Right after Nivens got them--I think it only fair to tell you--had I known you'd be a Negro, I would have requested the immediate suspension of the investigation--may I speak freely?

DAVENPORT

You haven't stopped yet.

TAYLOR begins to pace.

TAYLOR

Look, these local people aren't going to charge a white man in this parish on your say-so! Nivens knows that! He doesn't give a damn about this killing--and your being here proves it! They're making a fool of you--can't you see that?

(suddenly)

Will you take off those damn sunglasses?

DAVENPORT

I like these--they're like MacArthur's.

DAVENPORT lowers the glasses from his eyes slowly, smiling with a kind of mild mockery.

TAYLOR

You go near Tynin in your uniform, sounding white and charging local people and you'll wind up just as dead as Waters! This isn't Washington, Davenport.

DAVENPORT

I know that.

TAYLOR

You know how many times I've asked Nivens to look into this killing? Everyday since it happened--he didn't tell you that!

(cont.)

29.

DAVENPORT

Do you suspect someone, Captain?

TAYLOR

Don't play lawyer with me, soldier--with you on this case
we're not gonna' get anywhere!

DAVENPORT

Like it or not, Captain--I'm all you've got--you're orders
instruct you to cooperate! Is there anything else?

DAVENPORT starts to rise. For a moment TAYLOR stares at him coldly
then suddenly he straightens.

(cont.)

29.

TAYLOR

(shouts)

Ellis!

(to Davenport)

You're right--there's no need to discuss this further.

ELLIS enters.

ELLIS

Yes, Sir!

TAYLOR

Captain Davenport will need assistance with the men.

DAVENPORT looks at TAYLOR and slowly puts on his sunglasses.

DAVENPORT

You'll excuse me, won't you, Captain?

DAVENPORT exits. TAYLOR looks after him, as ELLIS goes out.

TAYLOR

Glad I met you, Captain!

CUT TO:

30. EXT: FORT NEAL - ELLIS - DAVENPORT - DAY

The Camera follows ELLIS and DAVENPORT as they walk toward the corner of a street and are stopped by a passing 3/4 ton Army truck filled with black GI's carrying farm tools. Both men take notice of the truck as it passes. In the near distance are several barracks. Around them, the activity of the Fort is at a lull. There are no soldiers in sight. DAVENPORT follows the truck with his eyes.

ELLIS

I sure hope we get to fight soon, Sir--next, they'll have us pickin' this years cotton crop!

DAVENPORT makes no comment. They start walking again.

(cont.)

30.

DAVENPORT

How long was Captain Taylor's investigation?

ELLIS

Two days, Sir.

DAVENPORT

Who did he question?

ELLIS

Well, mostly guys who had contact with the Sarge that day--
guys in his platoon--coupla' people who saw him in town,
then anybody who coulda' seen him on the road. Wasn' but
a handful.

DAVENPORT

Did you see him that day?

ELLIS

Nope--no, Sir.

CUT TO:

31. EXT: BARRACKS - ELLIS - DAVENPORT - DAY

The two men reach the barracks, another wooden building. Above the
door is a sign which reads: WIPE YOUR FEET OFF!

DAVENPORT

Do you know if the Sergeant drank?

ELLIS

I didn't know him well enough to offer opinions, Sir.

ELLIS enters the building ahead of DAVENPORT and holds the door.

ELLIS

(yells)

TENN-Hut!

DAVENPORT enters.

CUT TO:

32. INT: BARRACKS - DAY

The camera enters behind ELLIS and DAVENPORT. They are in a small hallway between two rooms. At the far end of the barracks about a dozen black GI's 'snap-to'. ELLIS precedes DAVENPORT to a small room on the right.

DAVENPORT

As you were.

The men relax. ELLIS points to the open doorway.

ELLIS

This is it, Sir--the Captain instructed everybody in the Sergeants platoon to be here.

DAVENPORT takes a single step and enters.

CUT TO:

33. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

DAVENPORT enters a small room. Usually the quarters of an NCO, there is a single bunk beside the wall, a small desk and two chairs. The room is bright however, the sunlight charging through the single window. DAVENPORT immediately sets his briefcase down on the desk, and moves one of the chairs to the center of the room. ELLIS remains at the doorway.

DAVENPORT

While I'm questioning the men, take my things to my quarters--then come back and standby.

ELLIS

Yes, Sir!

(pause)

Sir? I think I ought to tell you--well--Sir--
Captain Taylor questioned two white officers from this
Fort that night, Sir.

DAVENPORT

How do you know?

(cont.)

33.

ELLIS

(hesitantly)

I delivered his report to Colonel Nivens? Well, on the way over--the jeep hit a bump, the report fell out of the jeep--pages everywhea'!

DAVENPORT

Who are they?

ELLIS

No names, Sir--just the mention of the questioning--
It seems they were on the road that night.

DAVENPORT remains expressionless.

DAVENPORT

Don't let anymore reports fall out of your jeep, Corporal!

ELLIS

No, Sir--Sir, may I say something though? It sure is good to see one of us wearing Captain's bars, Sir.

DAVENPORT acknowledges the sentiment for an instant.

DAVENPORT

Call the first man.

ELLIS steps into the hall and snaps.

ELLIS

Private Wilkie! Captain wants to see you!

O.C. WILKIE

Yes, indeedy!

CUT TO:

34. PRIVATE WILKIE

WILKIE appears at the doorway. Standing at attention he is a black man of medium height--in his late 40's and greying slightly. He is obviously a man who stays in shape. He is lean, and angular man with sharp features

(cont.)

34. and penetrating eyes. There is the toughness of the veteran soldier about him. The dark shadow of Sergeant stripes on his fatigue shirt tells us he was recently busted.

O.C. DAVENPORT

At ease Private--have a seat.

WILKIE relaxes, smiles and moves toward DAVENPORT.

CUT TO:

35. DAVENPORT - WILKIE

DAVENPORT rises from the desk and moves toward the man.

DAVENPORT

I'm Captain Davenport.

WILKIE

We all know that, Sir--word went out on the grapevine that you were here, the minute you hit the Fort.

WILKIE is ingratiating, DAVENPORT ignores the comment.

DAVENPORT

I'm conducting an inquiry into the events surrounding the death of Sergeant Waters--the report I file will be confidential.

WILKIE nods.

DAVENPORT

How long did you know the Sergeant?

WILKIE

'Bout a year Sir--see this company was basically a baseball team, Sir--most of the boys had played for the Negro League so naturally, the Army put us all together--we'd be assigned to different companies--Motor-pool, Dumptruck--garbage cleanup --all the dirty work on the post, Sir--but on Saturdays we were whippin hell out of 'em on the baseball diamond--I was hittin' 352 myself!

Camera begins to pan slowly.

CUT TO:

36. [FLASHBACK]

INT: BASEBALL LOCKERROOM - WATERS - DAY

Camera pans empty lockers. Some of them are opened and baseball equipment is visible stuffed or set inside the lockers. A pair of spikes sit on a long team bench, as the camera continues to pan, stopping on a pair of polished Army boots. They belong to Sergeant VERNON T. WATERS. It is our first experience with him since the beginning of the film, and the camera begins a slow pan up the length of the man as WILKIE continues to talk V.O.

WILKIE

Well, the Army sent Sergeant Waters to manage the team,--he'd been in Field Artillery--Gunnery Sergeant--had a Croix De Guerre from the First War.

V.O. DAVENPORT

What kind of man was he?

WILKIE

All spit and polish, Sir--he took my stripes, Sir--but I was in the wrong.

WATERS is dressed crisply in starched fatigues and helmet liner. He is a small man who seems larger, and taller than he is because of his bearing. He is standing with his hands on his hips, his face tight, his eyes narrow, his voice spitting fire in the empty lockerroom.

WATERS

Sergeant Wilkie! You are a non-commissioned officer in the Army of a country at War!

CUT TO:

37. WATERS - WILKIE - LOCKERROOM

The object of WATERS' chewing-out is WILKIE. The two men are alone in the empty lockerroom. WILKIE is dressed in a baseball uniform, holding a bat in one hand and standing at attention in front of WATERS who is loudly dressing him down.

WATERS

The penalty for being drunk on duty is severe in peace-time so don't bring me no, 'Po'-colored-folks-can't-do-nothin'-less'-they-drunk-shit', as an excuse! You are supposed to be an example to your men! So I'm gonna' send you to jail ten

(cont.)

37.

WATERS

days and take those stripes--teach you a lesson--you're in the Army!

WATERS prances around a bit, enjoying not only what he's said, but his own role in it.

WATERS

(almost an aside)

Colored folks always runnin' off at the mouth about what they gonna' do--if the white man gives 'em a chance--and you get it, and what do you do with it? You wind up drunk on Guard duty--I don't blame the white man--why the hell should he put colored and white together in this war--you can't even be trusted to guard your own quarters! Get out of my sight, PRIVATE!

CUT TO:

38.

[PRESENT TIME]

DAVENPORT is staring from the window, his back to WILKIE. He has been affected by WILKIE'S story.

DAVENPORT

How was he with the other men?

He faces WILKIE.

WILKIE

Sometimes the Sout;hern guys caught hell--Sarge wasn't too particular about people from the South--I'm from Detroit myself--did you know Joe Louis started in Detroit?

DAVENPORT

(stern)

What about the southern men?

(cont.)

38.

WILKIE

(shrugs)

Sarge ain't like 'em--except for Memphis--coulda' been because Memphis was the best ballplayer on the team--he could sing too!--anyway, Memphis was from the South but with him, Sarge was different----

In the BG guitar music begins to trail into the scene, the volume rising gradually.

CUT TO:

39. [FLASHBACK]

INT: GOLDEN SLIPPER SALOON - NIGHT

The camera opens on MEMPHIS. He is sitting in the spotlight playing a guitar and singing on the small stage. This is our first look at the man, and MEMPHIS overwhelms us. He is a handsome young man, his face bright with the innocence of youth. He is a medium brown-skinned man, the color of walnut, his features are gentle, his eyes bright circles, his wide mouth opened in an easy smile. He is well-built, his body visibly strong beneath his uniform as he strums his guitar and pats his foot to the rhythm of the music he is creating. We hear his voice at once, it is full and bluesy. Around him the place is filled with smoke and wall-to-wall people--mostly black GI's and local women. The people are attentive, everyone quiet--listening. One senses a magic in the air.

MEMPHIS

(singing)

It's a low, it's a real low----lowdown dirty shame---

(cont.)

39.

MEMPHIS

...Yeah, it's a low, it's a waaay low, low-down dirty shame!

(he hums with the beat)

They say we fightin' Hitlerrr--but they won't let us in the game!

MEMPHIS begins to riff on the guitar and hum along with the music.

CUT TO:

40. BAR - WATERS - WILKIE - SEVERAL NCO'S

WATERS sits on a stool at the bar of the Saloon watching MEMPHIS' performance and enjoying it. Beside him sit several black Sergeants--on-lookers, who also seem to be having a good time. The bar-tender is an enormous fat black woman. She moves with a bottle in her hand and re-fills WATERS' and WILKIE'S drinks. WATERS nudges WILKIE.

WATERS

Boy can sing, can't he?

The song ends and WATERS and WILKIE are clapping along with everyone else around them. WATERS rises to applaud.

WATERS

I'ma ask that boy somethin'--come on Wilkie!

WATERS starts toward the platform. WILKIE follows after 'downing' his re-filled drink.

CUT TO:

41. SALOON

Another Angle. The camera watches WATERS thread his way toward MEMPHIS through the large crowd. MEMPHIS starts playing again--almost immediately, this time the tempo is more up-beat--less bluesy, and several people rise to dance. Around WATERS the crowd swirls, snarls him in its mad traffic, stops him, shoves him forward. People dance, embrace, drink--soldiers are staggering. Politely WATERS inches closer.

CUT TO:

42. WATERS - MEMPHIS - GIRL

WATERS reaches MEMPHIS only to find he is being stared at by a pretty young black girl seated in front of him. She is gazing up at MEMPHIS almost swooning, but MEMPHIS seems a bit nervous about her, as the man she is with--an unconscious black GI--has his arm locked in hers. WATERS voice cuts across the music.

WATERS

What have we got here? A guitar-playin' man!

WILKIE drifts into the frame. MEMPHIS nods to WATERS, turning his attention from the girl.

WATERS

Boy you eva' hea' of Blind Willie Reynolds?--Son House?

MEMPHIS nods to it all. The GIRL is a little irritated by WATERS. She sits up straight and glares in his direction. WATERS ignores her.

WATERS

I knew it--and you' from Mississippi too--ain'tcha boy?

MEMPHIS

Yes, sah!

The GIRL catches MEMPHIS eye again. It begins to seem WATERS is competing for MEMPHIS' attention.

WATERS

I useta' hear 'em at the Bandana Club outside Camp JJ Reilly
--people useta' come from everywhea'--folks be dancin'--
sweatin'--

MEMPHIS laughs. The GIRL tries to pull away from the unconscious GI but each time she does he almost awakens.

WATERS

Reminded me of a place I useta' go in France during the
First War, Wilkie--women--whiskey--place called the Cafe'
Napoleon---

(to Memphis)

Where'd you learn to play so good?

(cont.)

42.

MEMPHIS

My Daddy taught me, Sarge.

WATERS pats MEMPHIS on the shoulder.

WATERS

You play good boy--Wilkie, wasn't that good?

WILKIE

Yeah, Sarge.

WATERS smiles broadly at MEMPHIS--as if he's just discovered a new talent --a star. CU of MEMPHIS, he returns the smile and keeps right on playing.

CUT TO:

43. [TIME LAPSE]

INT: GOLDEN SLIPPER SALOON - MEMPHIS - DAY (dawn)

MEMPHIS plays and sings softly in the BG as the GIRL still seated at the table remains hooked to the black GI. He is now hunched over the table and snoring loudly. The camera begins to pan the saloon.

V.O. WILKIE

I agreed with the Sarge, Sir. He was a good man, Sir.

Wrote his wife and kids everyday!

The camera finds WATERS. He is seated at the bar with WILKIE and two other black NCO'S. The four men are the bar's only customers. WATERS removes a snapshot from his wallet. We hear WATERS voice from a distance.

WATERS

Look at this!

CUT TO:

44. WATERS - WILKIE - WASHINGTON - HOOKS

The Camera focuses on WATERS, WILKIE and two black NCO'S--all are drinking. On WATERS right is Sergeant Major T. WASHINGTON, a

(cont.)

44.

light-skinned, glasses wearing man in his 50's--in uniform, he seems ready to pass out--though he has moments of lucidity. On WASHINGTON'S right is K.W. HOOKS, a younger man, he is thin and lanky looking--a three-stripe Sergeant, his hat is askew and his shirt opened. He is still sober. WASHINGTON passes a snapshot to HOOKS. WATERS is smiling.

WATERS

My wife let a neighbor take that a couple weeks ago--
ain't he growin' fast?

HOOKS

Over your wife's shoulder.

WATERS takes the snapshot back and passes it to WILKIE.

WATERS

See that kid? I hope he never has to be a soldier.

WASHINGTON blows through his mouth derisively, his tongue out.

WASHINGTON

Look who's talkin'?

WATERS

Shiiit! I couldn't do no better---nawww, the Army
ain't for my son--I'm sendin' this boy to some big
white college--

(nudges Washington)

Let him rub elbows with the whites--learn the white
man's language--how they do things.

WASHINGTON

(sage-like)

White don't rub off!

WATERS

What we gonna' do? Get left behind in everything?

In the BG music from the jukebox begins to play.

(cont.)

44.

WATERS

You can see it right hea' in the Army--hell, the white man's
runnin' rings 'roun us!

WILKIE downs a shot of whiskey.

WILKIE

Lot of us ain't had the chance them white boys had,
Sarge.

WATERS

That ain't no excuse--my Daddy shoveled coal all his
life--couldn' read or write! Not havin' ain't no excuse
for not gettin'!

WILKIE

(chuckles)

Sure can't git pee from a tree, Sarge.

HOOKS laughs. WASHINGTON looks up a bit dazed.

WASHINGTON

He said a Tree didn' he?

WATERS mood undergoes a severe change. He is clearly disgusted and
slams his drink down on the bar, nearly spilling it.

WATERS

You're just like the rest of them Wilkie! Ignorant--
scared! We've got to challenge this man in his arena--
use his weapons--don't you know that? We need Doctors,
Lawyers, Generals--Senators! Stop thinkin' like a niggah!

WILKIE is stunned, both WASHINGTON & HOOKS look at one another
strangely.

WILKIE

All I said was--

WATERS snaps at him.

(cont.)

44.

WATERS

Is the equipment ready for tommorrow's game?

WILKIE shakes his head 'no'.

WATERS

Get it ready.

WATERS turns away from WILKIE and faces the bar. WILKIE rises slowly sheepishly.

WATERS

(to Bartender)

Hey, Moma--another round for the road--you can go now

Wilkie--

(faces him)

Move it, Goddamnit!

CUT TO:

45. [PRESENT TIME]

INT: INTERROGATION ROOM - WILKIE - DAVENPORT - DAY

There is silence in the room. DAVENPORT rises from the desk.

WILKIE

Two people, Sir--Mr. Warm and Mr. Cold--

(pause)

But deep down, a nice guy, Sir--you could always borrow a ten off him, if you needed it.

DAVENPORT

Did you see him that night?

WILKIE

Saw him at the Club in town earlier--but I left around eight o'clock--

(pause)

(cont.)

45.

WILKIE

Is it true, when they found him, all his stripes and insignia were still on the uniform?

DAVENPORT

Yes.

WILKIE

Something's wrong, ain't it Sir? Them Klan boys can't stand to see us in these uniforms--they usually take the stripes and stuff off before they lynch us.

DAVENPORT is quiet for a moment.

DAVENPORT

Thank you Private, that'll be all---I might want to call you again.

WILKIE rises.

WILKIE

Yes, Sir.

WILKIE salutes and starts out, then stops, faces DAVENPORT again.

WILKIE

Sir, can you do anything about Allotment checks? My wife didn't get hers last month.

DAVENPORT

Did you see the finance officer?

WILKIE shakes his head 'yes'.

DAVENPORT

Well--I'll--I'll speak to Captain Taylor about it.

WILKIE smiles broadly.

WILKIE

Want me to send the next man in?

DAVENPORT nods.

CUT TO:

46. EXT: BARRACKS - DAY

The Camera looks into the Interrogation room window. DAVENPORT crosses the room and removes his jacket. In the FG a troop of black soldiers runs by the window at 'double-time' chanting in step as they go.

TROOP

Hup, hup, hup, hup! Two, two, two, two! Hup, hup,
hup, hup! Two, two, two, two!

Through the window we see PETERSON enter and salute DAVENPORT.

CUT TO:

47. INT: INTERROGATION ROOM - PETERSON - DAVENPORT

PETERSON is the model soldier--everything 'spit and polished'. He stands at attention--even his PFC stripe seems to glow with newness. DAVENPORT is impressed by PETERSON'S military bearing.

PETERSON

Private First Class Melvin Peterson, reporting as ordered,
Sir.

DAVENPORT

Sit down, Private.

PETERSON sits, erect.

DAVENPORT

Where you from, Private.

DAVENPORT moves to the desk, leaning on it for support.

PETERSON

Hollywood California--by way of Alabama, Sir. I enlisted
in forty-two--thought we'd get a chance to fight.

DAVENPORT

Did you know the Sergeant well?

PETERSON

No, Sir--he was already with the company when I got assigned
and Pfc's and Sergeants don't mix well, Sir.

(cont.)

47.

DAVENPORT

You played ball for him?

PETERSON

Yes Sir, Shortstop.

DAVENPORT

Did you like the Sergeant?

PETERSON

Stoneass? No, Sir.

DAVENPORT

Stoneass?

PETERSON

I'm the only one called him that, Sir--Sergeant Waters--
It goes back to the team, Sir--by the time I got here
they had already won, maybe--nine--ten games in a row!
There was even a rumor we'd get to play the Yankees in
exhibition--

In the BG the sounds of casual talking and laughter begin to rail into
the scene.

CUT TO:

48. [FLASHBACK]

EXT: BUS - BASEBALL PARK - DAY

The Camera opens on a bus outside of which seven or so members of the
black baseball team--among them COBB, HENSON, SMALLS, PETERSON and
MEMPHIS stand around talking to a group of black women, several of
them in the uniform of the YWCA. Other women are locals--some pretty
but all of them taken with the players. MEMPHIS is standing away from
the rest. The GIRL he talks to is younger, prettier and more endowed
physically than the others. Beyond the bus in the BG is a small base-
ball park. The camera moves among the visitors and the players. Every-
one seems to be having a good time.

V.O. PETERSON

Well, we were playing the Thirty-Fifth Ordinance--this
particular day, Sir.--It was a big game too! The YWCA
sent a busload of women--Real big day, Sir!

CUT TO:

49. EXT: BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

The camera focus is on the playing field during the last minutes of a game. The black team is on the field. At the plate, the batter, a white player, hits a high fly ball into centerfield, then starts running toward First Base.

PETERSON

--and we'd played especially good that day, Sir. I had two hits--Smalls three--

CUT TO:

50. EXT: CENTERFIELD - MEMPHIS

MEMPHIS catches sight of the ball and begins to charge deep into centerfield where he suddenly and with amazing agility, leaps into the air, glove up and catches the ball. There is a sudden and loud cheer from the small crowd in the BG.

V.O. PETERSON

--and CJ--well, he was just incredible Sir.

MEMPHIS holds up the ball and sprints toward Home Plate. The Camera follows as his teammates rush from the dugout to greet him. The game is over, and they have won!

V.O. PETERSON

Anyway, we beat 'em--something like ten--or eleven to nothin'--and like we always did after the games--a few of us wound up in the MessHall.

CUT TO:

51. INT: MESSHALL - DAY

The Camera opens in the MessHall, a large room filled with long tables and benches, a long Mess line, and Steam counter. The place is practically empty. In the rear corner of the oblong building and seated around a long mess-table are MEMPHIS, HENSON COBB, SMALLS, PETERSON and two other black ballplayers. They are still in their uniforms and are laughing and talking about the game. It is after lunch and the table is covered with empty metal meal trays. MEMPHIS leans forward strumming his guitar from time to time, to accent the conversation.

(cont.)

51.

COBB

CJ? Who was that fine river-hip thing you was talkin' to before the game, Homey? Woman had tits like two helmets--did you see him Smalls?

MEMPHIS smiles. PETERSON leans back, belches loudly pulling his baseball cap down over his eyes as if to snooze.

HENSON

If Smalls couldn't see enough to catch a ground ball right in his glove--how the hell could he see CJ ova' by the bus?

The men laugh.

COBB

Will y'all let CJ tell me 'bout that woman?--she looked mighty good to me, CJ.

MEMPHIS

All she asked me for was my autograph.

COBB

Look like she was askin' you for mor'n that--movin' close--breathin' heavy--wavin' them tits all in your face.

SMALLS

He's right on that one, CJ--

MEMPHIS

If I hada' give that gal what she asked for--she'da give me somethin' I didn' want--Aroun' home? There was this fella' folks useta' call Lil Jimmy One Leg?--on account of his 'thing' was so big? Couple years ago--ole' young pretty thing laid clap on Jimmy so bad--he los' the one good leg he had!

(the men laugh)

That young thing I was talkin' to, ain't look too clean!

(cont.)

51.

SMALLS

Them dirty ones'll give you clap everytime--right Henson?

SMALLS laughs, as HENSON gives him the 'finger'.

HENSON

Dirty or clean--she had them white boys lookin' at her--
that pitcher liked to break his neck turnin' roun'!

MEMPHIS

I heard tell, they on the verge of gittin' us all
together soon--colored and white--say they want one
Army.

PETERSON looks up from under his hat.

PETERSON

You can forget that CJ--white folks ain't neva' gonna'
integrate no Army.

MEMPHIS rises, puts a foot on a chair.

MEMPHIS

(strums)

If they do--I'ma be ready fo' 'em!

(sings and plays)

Well, I got me a bright red, Zoot-suit, and a pair
of patent leather shoes! And my woman she sits a
waitin', for the day we hea' the news!

Lawd, lawd, lawd, lawd!

The men join in clapping and stomping their feet. And for awhile they
are all involved.

CUT TO:

52. INT: MESSHALL - DAY

WATERS is standing inside the door looking at the men. WILKIE stands beside him. The singing continues and WATERS voice when he speaks is sharp, knifing through both music and song.

WATERS

'Lissen' up!

CUT TO:

53. WATERS - MEN

The playing and singing stop abruptly, the men face WATERS surprised by his presence. He strolls in their direction.

WATERS

I want all you men out of these baseball uniforms and into work clothes--you will all report to me at fourteen hundred hours. We've got a work detail--painting the lobby of the Officers Club.

The men groan.

SMALLS

The officers can't paint their own club?

COBB

Hell no, Smalls--let the Great-Colored-Clean-Up-Company do it. Our motto is: Anything you don't want to do, the colored troops will do fo' you!

HENSON starts clapping.

HENSON

Anything you don't want to do, the colored troops will do for youuu!

Other men join in.

WATERS

That's enough!

CUT TO:

54. WATERS

WATERS looks at his men in silence for a moment. Then he begins to pace his hands behind his back.

WATERS

Let me tell you fancy-assed ball-playin' Negroes something! The reasons for any orders given by a superior officer is none a y'all's business! You obey them! This country is at war, and you niggahs are soldiers--nothin' else! So baseball teams--win or lose--get no special privileges! They need to work some of you niggahs till your legs fall off! And something else--from now on, when I tell you to do something, I want it done--is that clear? Now get out of those uniforms--I could smell you suckers before I hit the door!

CUT TO:

55. PETERSON

PETERSON looks up annoyed, sliding the cap back on his head.

PETERSON

What kind of colored man, are you?

CUT TO:

56. WATERS - MEN

Another Angle. WATERS turns to PETERSON. The men are suddenly quiet, there is a sudden tension in the MessHall.

WATERS

I'm a soldier Peterson--and the kind of colored man, that don't like lazy, shiftless Negroes!

PETERSON

You ain't got to come in here and call us names!

WATERS

The Nazis call you 'shvatza!' You gonna' complain to Hitler they hurt your little feelings?

MEMPHIS straightens.

(cont.)

56.

MEMPHIS

Don't seem like to me, we could do too much to them
Nazis wit' paint brushes, Sarge.

The men laugh, and for an instant the tensions seem gone. WATERS
smiles broadly with them strolling casually over to MEMPHIS. Only
PETERSON remains tense. He watches WATERS.

CUT TO:

57. WATERS - MEMPHIS

WATERS leans way over into MEMPHIS' face. MEMPHIS recoils a little
to avoid WATERS sudden glare.

WATERS

You tryin' to mock me, CJ?

MEMPHIS

No, Sir Sarge.

WATERS

Gooooo! 'Cause nothin' an ignorant, low class geechy
like you got to say is worth lissenin' to, is it?

(pause)

Is it?

MEMPHIS

I reckon not, Sarge.

CUT TO:-

58. WATERS - MEN

PETERSON stirs. He is disgusted, the words burst from him.

PETERSON

You a creep, Waters!

WATERS faces him slowly. He is still smiling--this time almost
solicitous. He even cackles a little as he moves toward PETERSON, who
rises.

(cont.)

58.

WATERS

Boy, you are somethin'! Ain't been in the Company a month Wilkie, and already everybody's champion!

MEMPHIS

(at once)

Sarge was jus' jokin' Pete--he don't mean no harm.

PETERSON

He does! We take enough from the white boys!

WATERS

(nods)

Yes you do--and if it wasn' for you Southern niggahs--yassahin'--bowin' and scrapin'--white folks wouldn' think we were all fools!

PETERSON looks at WATERS derisively.

PETERSON

Where you from? England?

There is quiet in the room as WATERS inches toward PETERSON who backs up a little. WATERS is still smiling, his voice is now low--seductive almost.

WATERS

Peterson, you got a reeaal comic streak in you boy--yes, sir--

WATERS snatches PETERSON in the collar suddenly.

WATERS

Don't get smart, niggah!

PETERSON slaps WATERS hand away. He is ready to fight.

PETERSON

Take your fuckin' hands off me!

CUT TO:

59. CU WATERS - PETERSON

WATERS leans forward, chin out, still smiling. PETERSON already has had second thoughts about hitting an NCO. He takes another step back.

WATERS

You wanna' hit ole' Sargeant Waters, boy?

(whispers)

Come on--please! Come on, Niggah!

O.C. MALE VOICE

(sudden)

Tenn-hut!

WATERS and PETERSON both snap-to attention at once.

CUT TO:

60. TAYLOR

Captain TAYLOR stands beside the doorway. He is not sure what he has stepped into, and his expression is quizzical and a bit annoyed at first.

TAYLOR

At ease!

CUT TO:

61. TAYLOR - MEN

TAYLOR crosses the distance to the table immediately as the men relax. They remain standing however.

TAYLOR

What's going on here, Sergeant?

WATERS advances to greet him.

WATERS

(casually)

Nothing Sir--I was going over some batting techniques--

Is there something in particular you wanted, Sir? Something

I can do?

(cont.)

61. TAYLOR stops, smiling at the men.

TAYLOR

Nothing--I just want to congratulate you men on the game you won today--just seven more and we'll be the first team in Fort Neal history to play the Yankees--everyone in the regiment is counting on you.

(pause)

Sergeant, as far as I'm concerned they can have the rest of the day off.

CUT TO:

62. MEN

The men are pleased. HENSON and SMALLS give each other 'five'.

O.C. WATERS

(suddenly)

Begging your pardon, Sir.

Everyone is suddenly attentive, their focus shifting to WATERS.

CUT TO:

63. WATERS - TAYLOR

WATERS steps in front of TAYLOR. His tone low, but confident.

WATERS

These men don't need time off--our boys in North Africa aren't getting time off--besides we've got orders to report for a paint detail at fourteen-hundred hours.

TAYLOR

Who issued that order?

WATERS

Major Harris, Sir.

TAYLOR

I'll speak to the Major.

(cont.)

63.

WATERS

Sir--I don't think it's such a good idea to get a colored NCO mixed up in the middle of you officers, Sir.

TAYLOR

I said I'd speak to him, Sergeant!

WATERS

Yes, Sir.

WATERS steps away from TAYLOR who continues admiringly at the men. In BG we notice HENSON snicker at WATERS.

CUT TO:

64. TAYLOR - MEN

TAYLOR addresses MEMPHIS.

TAYLOR

Memphis, that catch you made in centerfield--how the hell'd you get up so high?

MEMPHIS

They say I got 'bird' in my blood, Sir.

MEMPHIS has said it innocently yet sincerely. The men are a bit embarrassed, TAYLOR uncomfortable.

QUICK CUT TO:

65. WATERS

Reaction Shot. WATERS expression is filled with contempt, but we are not sure for whom. It is brief, covered with a chuckle.

CUT TO:

66. TAYLOR - MEN

Another Angle.

TAYLOR

I hope it's American Eagle.

(cont.)

66.

MEMPHIS

No, sah--crow! See, a man tol' my Daddy, the day I was born, the shadow of a crow's wings--

TAYLOR

(cutting him off)

Fine! Men, you played a great game.

TAYLOR turns to WATERS.

TAYLOR

Sergeant.

WATERS

Tenn-hut!

WATERS salutes as the men snap-to and TAYLOR starts out.

TAYLOR

As you were.

The men relax as TAYLOR exits.

CUT TO:

67. WATERS - MEN

The laughter is instantaneous once TAYLOR leaves. Most of it is directed at MEMPHIS--even WATERS is laughing.

WATERS

These geechies is somethin' ain't they? How much of a story was you gonna' tell the man, CJ?

WATERS faces PETERSON.

WATERS

Peterson!

There is an abrupt silence. PETERSON stiffens.

(cont.)

67.

WATERS

Oh, I ain't forget you boy--it's time to teach you a lesson!

PETERSON

Why don't you drop dead, Sarge?

WATERS

Nooo! I'ma drop you boy--right outside, behind this hea' Messhall--Wilkie, you go out and make sure it's all set up.

WILKIE

You want all the NCO'S?

WATERS nods and smiles. WILKIE goes out.

WATERS

I'ma wait for you geechy--and when you come out, I'm gonna' whip your black Southern ass---In front of everybody boy--you need to learn respect--how to talk to your betters.

WATERS starts toward the door.

WATERS

Fight hard hea'? Ima try to bust your fuckin' head open--and the rest of you get those goddamn uniforms off like I said!

WATERS exits. In the Messhall, there is quiet. PETERSON throws his cap across the room angrily. It is clear he does not want to fight.

COBB

You gonna' fight him, Pete?

HENSON

I tried to warn you.

PETERSON

You ain't do nothin'!

SMALLS

He'll fight you dirty, Pete--don't do it!

(cont.)

67.

COBB

You don't want to do it?

PETERSON

You wanna' fight in my place, Cobb?

(he sits)

Shit!

MEMPHIS rises and moves to PETERSON

MEMPHIS

Pete? I got some 'Farmers Dust'--just a pinch'll make you strong as a bull!

PETERSON

Get the hell outta' here with that backwater crap--can't you speak up for yourself--let that bastard treat you like a dog!

MEMPHIS

'Long as his hans' ain' on me--he ain't done me no harm, Pete. Callin' names ain't nothin', I know what I is--Sarge ain't so bad--been good to me.

PETERSON

The man despises you!

MEMPHIS

Sarge? You wrong Pete--plus I feel kinda' sorry for him myself. Any man ain't sure where he belongs, must be in a whole lotta' pain.

PETERSON

Don't y'all care?

HENSON

Don't nobody like it, Pete--but when you're here a little longer--I mean what can you do? This hea's the Army and Sarge got all the stripes.

(cont.)

67.

PETERSON rises in disgust.

SMALLS

Peterson, look, if you want me to, I'll get the Captain.
You don't have to go out there and get your head beat in!

PETERSON

Somebody's got to fight him.

CUT TO:

68. EXT: REAR OF MESSHALL - DAY

The camera opens on WATERS. He is standing in the rear of the MessHall in a small area between two buildings. He has stripped to his waist, and is posing arrogantly in the center of a small crowd of black GI's. We notice that WATERS is in fine shape, and is obviously enjoying both the situation, and this opportunity to show off his physique. At the rear door of the MessHall is PETERSON, behind him in the doorway; MEMPHIS and SMALLS.

WATERS

Come on now, boy--take your beatin' like a man!

Someone in the crowd shouts:

VOICE

Kick his ass, Pete!

WATERS

(laughing)

Yeah, Pete--kick my ass!

WATERS begins to move toward PETERSON slowly, cautiously, waving him on with his fingers.

WATERS

Come on now, Geechy--I ain't got all day!

The men laugh. PETERSON stiffens then suddenly lunges forward.

CUT TO:

69. PETERSON - WATERS

PETERSON seems to fly at WATERS, colliding with him and knocking the Sergeant down. At once, the crowd is excited, egging the two men on. The move surprises WATERS. On the ground, WATERS scuffles wildly to throw off PETERSON who is throwing punches everywhere. WATERS manages to shake the boy off and get to his feet. A fist fight ensues that is a boxing lesson for PETERSON and utter defeat. WATERS is faster, craftier and in better shape. After several minutes, the fight ends

(cont.)

69. with WATERS knocking PETERSON out cold, flat on his ass. But both men are left scarred and swollen. WATERS is helped away by WILKIE and HOOKS. PETERSON is stretched out on the ground, as the crowd breaks up and moves away.

CUT TO:

70. PETERSON

On the ground unconscious, SMALLS is the first person to reach PETERSON. He lifts PETERSON'S head and applies a cold rag to his face. HENSON and MEMPHIS appear and lift PETERSON and carry him toward the MessHall door. PETERSON does not stir.

W.O. PETERSON

Yeah, he beat me pretty bad that day, Sir.

CUT TO:

71. [PRESENT TIME]

INT: INTERROGATION ROOM - CU PETERSON
DAVENPORT seems intrigued by the story.

DAVENPORT

Was the incident ever reported?

PETERSON

No, Sir--the Sarge left me alone after that--I just played ball, Sir--you can't take too many of them kinda' whippin's.

DAVENPORT

I appreciate your honesty, Private--did you see Waters the night he died?

PETERSON

No, Sir--me and Smalls had guard duty.

DAVENPORT

Thank you Peterson--that'll be all for now.

(cont.)

71. PETERSON rises and salutes.

DAVENPORT

Did the team ever get to play the Yankees?

PETERSON

No, Sir--we lost our last game to a Sanitation Company.

PETERSON exits. DAVENPORT looks after him for a moment, then starts back to the desk, where he begins to pack up his files thoughtfully.

CUT TO:

72. EXT: SIGN - BARRACKS - DAY (early evening)

The camera opens in CU on a hastily made cardboard sign. In the BG, there is the sound of a jeep pulling away. The sign is tacked to the outer wall of a barracks on the far end of the Fort. Scribbled across the sign in chalk is: THE CULLUD OFFICER'S BARRACKS, CLUB and MESSHALL. WELCOME, SNOWFLAKE!

CUT TO:

73. DAVENPORT - BARRACKS

DAVENPORT looks at the sign for a moment and then angrily yanks it down, dropping it on the ground. Weary, he slings his jacket over his shoulder, tucks his briefcase under his arm and starts inside.

CUT TO:

74. INT: BARRACKS

Long shot. DAVENPORT enters the barracks at its far end. The interior of the long, opened building is in shambles. An abandoned storage area, what insulation there is, hangs from the ceiling or lies on the floor. There is a hole in the roof. Empty bunks are overturned everywhere. Footlockers and wall-lockers are stacked in random piles. The late light of the sun streams through the boarded windows in streaks that resemble wedges of bright paint. From the distance, the camera watches DAVENPORT as he crosses the small area cleared for him.

CUT TO:

75. DAVENPORT

DAVENPORT sets his briefcase on top of a small dresser beside the wall. His area is tiny--a corner of the barracks swept clean and outfitted with the bare necessities--bed, chair, foot and wall-locker. All around DAVENPORT'S area the junk of the barracks seems to be closing in. He looks the place over again. This time he moves back toward the door, where a small bathroom door is opened. He enters the small room.

CUT TO:

76. INT: BATHROOM - DAVENPORT

DAVENPORT'S image is reflected in a long broken shard of mirror, propped in the corner of an old metal shower stall, which is rusted, the paint long ago peeled from its side. The shower head, and fixtures are gone, and there is no piping. Around the stall, what is left of the bathroom reembles the outer room. Angrily, DAVENPORT picks up the broken remains of a spigot and hurls it at the mirror shattering it into several pieces. He has realized what these 'accomodations' really mean. For awhile the camera lingers on DAVENPORT'S face, his anger tells the story.

CUT TO:

77. INT: BARRACKS - DAVENPORT - NIGHT

Another angle. DAVENPORT by the light of a single light bulb sits on his bunk and writes out a report using the seat of the chair as his desktop. His area looks a little more lived in now. His jacket hangs over the chair. On the dresser, along with his toilet articles is a picture of an attractive black woman in a bathing suit. A finished tray of food sits beside him on the bed. In the BG the sound of an approaching jeep distracts DAVENPORT. He listens for a moment, then rises and starts toward the door.

CUT TO:

78. EXT: BARRACKS - NIGHT

As DAVENPORT opens the screen door and steps out, TAYLOR driving a jeep pulls the vehicle to a halt in front of the barracks. For a moment the covered headlights cast an eerie glow on the barracks wall. DAVENPORT moves forward to meet TAYLOR.

CUT TO:

79. DAVENPORT - TAYLOR

TAYLOR turnsoff the headlights and dismounts. He is carrying a manila folder. DAVENPORT waits by the front of the jeep.

DAVENPORT

What brings you out to my neighborhood, Captain?

TAYLOR

I wanted you to see the request I've sent to Colonel Nivens to have your investigation terminated.

TAYLOR hands the folder to DAVENPORT. He opens it, glances at it casually as TAYLOR talks.

TAYLOR

My reasons have nothing to do with you personally--my request will not hurt your Army record in any way--
(pause)

But there are other things to consider in this case.

DAVENPORT

Only the color of my skin--

He hands the folder back to TAYLOR.

TAYLOR

I want the people who killed one of my men jailed, Davenport!

DAVENPORT

So do I!

(cont.)

79.

TAYLOR

Then give this up! Whites down here won't see their duty or justice--they'll see you! And once they do, the Law,-- Due Process--it all goes--your investigation can't possibly get at the truth.

DAVENPORT leans against the jeep. He is studying TAYLOR.

DAVENPORT

Why? Because two white officers are involved in this?

CUT TO:

80. TAYLOR - DAVENPORT

Another angle.

TAYLOR

I want them in jail--out of the Army! And there is no way you can get them charged, Court Martialed or put away!

DAVENPORT isn't buying any of it, his voice is aggressive now, pressing.

DAVENPORT

Why wasn't there any mention of them in my preliminary report? You think I'm gonna' let you get away with this?

There is a moment of silence. TAYLOR takes a few steps away.

TAYLOR

I was ordered not to include it! By Nivens!

(pause)

The Doctors took two forty-five caliber slugs out of Waters--Army issue. If my men had thought a white officer had killed him there would have been a slaughter.

TAYLOR paces.

DAVENPORT

Who were the officers?

(cont.)

80.

TAYLOR

Lieutenant Byrd in Ordnance--and a Captain Wilcox--Twelfth Hospital Group. Private Seymour saw them on the road--I was Officer of the Guard--when I checked the officers billet I found both of them asleep. Several officers verified they'd come in around twenty-one-thirty hours. They admitted they'd had an argument with a Sergeant, but had left him on the road.

DAVENPORT

You didn't look for Waters?

TAYLOR

At the time, there was no reason to believe anything was wrong! Waters wasn't found until the following morning. I told Nivens what happened and he told me to keep my mouth shut until it blew over.

DAVENPORT

So, you never believed the Klan was involved?

TAYLOR

No--now can you see why this thing needs someone else?

For a moment DAVENPORT is pensive. TAYLOR starts toward the jeep.

DAVENPORT

You've got to tell me what they told you, Captain.

TAYLOR stops.

TAYLOR

They're not going to let you charge those two men!

DAVENPORT

Tell me what they told you, Mr. West Point!

TAYLOR nods, smiles cynically.

TAYLOR

You really take yourself seriously, don't you, Hotshot?

CUT TO:

81. [FLASHBACK]

EXT: TRUCK - BAYOU ROAD - NIGHT

The Camera follows an Army 'deuce-and-a-half' truck as it rolls along the Bayou road leading to Fort Neal.

V.O. TAYLOR

Byrd and Wilcox were coming off bivouac.

The road is dark. Already the fog is filling in empty spaces, rolling in from the Bayou, coating things, swirling in puffs. The truck's hooded headlights provide little if any visibility. In the cab of the truck are two white officers, Lieutenant BYRD and Captain WILCOX.

CUT TO:

82. BYRD - WILCOX

The camera peers through the windshield of the 'deuce' at the two officers. Both men are dressed in combat gear. BYRD is driving. He is a young man in his early 20's with 'bird-like' features. He is visibly tired. His helmet is tilted back on his head and at times against heavy eyelids he peers forward to see the road ahead. WILCOX is older, a round faced man in his 30's, he is beginning to bald in the front. His is the watchful personality. WILCOX practically directs BYRD'S driving with little flicks of the hand. Suddenly, WILCOX peers forward frightened and grabs at BYRD'S sleeve. The brakes of the truck screech loudly, the sudden skid throwing both men forward.

CUT TO:

83. TRUCK - WATERS

The 'deuce' skids to a halt two feet from the dim figure of a drunken soldier staggering down the road toward the Fort. In the faint light of the truck's headlamps, we recognize WATERS. The Sergeant is so drunk, he is unaware the truck has stopped behind him. He continues to stagger forward. BYRD leans from the window and yells.

BYRD

Hey, boy! Get your ass off the goddamn road!

WATERS, genuinely surprised, stops, spins around precariously looks up and smiles broadly.

(cont.)

83.

WATERS

Well, I'll be damned if it ain't the white boys!

Suddenly WATERS is standing erect, trying to march in a tight circle, mumbling to himself.

WATERS

One, two, three, four--hup, hup, three, four--
(he repeats it)

BYRD

(overlapping)

You hear what he said?

BYRD starts out of the truck.

O.C. WILCOX

Let it go!

BYRD

My ass!

BYRD steps down onto the road.

CUT TO:

84. WATERS - BYRD - TRUCK

WATERS is still marching in his circle. Byrd stands by the truck for a moment watching WATERS in stunned amazement.

WATERS

White boys--all starched and stiff--wanted everybody to learn all that symphony shit!--That's what you said in France.

WATERS stops, peers at BYRD.

WATERS

You know I listened to you? Am I allright now? Am I?

(cont.)

84. WILCOX drifts into the frame beside BYRD. WILCOX just shakes his head while BYRD is growing more and more furious.

BYRD

Boy, you'd better straighten up and salute when you see and Officer! Or you'll lose those stripes!

QUICK CUT TO:

85. WATERS

WATERS suddenly leaps threateningly at both officers, his face drawn into something hideous and frightening. He seems wild--or mad--or both.

CUT TO:

86. WATERS - BYRD - WILCOX

BYRD steps back. His voice incredulous.

BYRD

Will you look at this niggah?

BYRD'S patience is at an end. He takes his first menacing step toward WATERS.

BYRD

Come to attention Sergeant--that's an order!

WATERS stops and shakes his head, 'no'.

WATERS

No sah! I ain't straightenin' up for y'all no more. I ain't doin' nothin' white folks say do no more.

WATERS begins to sing to himself, in a bluesy manner; "No-more, no-more no-more, no-more, noooooooo!" BYRD lunges at WATERS and is caught almost immediately by WILCOX who grabs him and holds him back. BYRD tries to fight loose. WATERS goes right on singing and humming.

WILCOX

The man's just drunk! Leave him be!

(cont.)

86.

BYRD

I want this niggah to do like I told him!

WATERS

NO!

(to himself)

Followin' behind y'all--look what's it's done to me!

I can't sleep--I hate myself, white boy!

BYRD struggles against WILCOX

BYRD

Don't blame me, boy--God made you black!

WILCOX

(almost immediately)

Sergeant, get hold of yourself!

WATERS

I'll get hold of you!

He starts to charge, but suddenly stops and begins to cry.

WATERS

My Daddy said, "Don't talk like dis'--talk like that! Don't say, hea'--say here!" I even killed for you!

(incredulous)

And nothing changed!

BYRD yanks free of WILCOX and charges at WATERS.

BYRD

You need a lesson, Niggah!

CUT TO:

87. BYRD - WATERS

BYRD punches WATERS in the face. WATERS staggers, throwing his hands up in a futile attempt to ward off BYRD'S blows. Too drunk to offer any defense, suddenly BYRD knocks WATERS down, beneath the front end

(cont.)

87. of the 'deuce'. He is kicking WATERS when WILCOX snatches him around the waist and pulls him back.

WILCOX

You'll kill him--the man's sick!

In the BG there is the sound of an approaching truck. BYRD backs up a little, still enraged. On the ground WATERS stirs, his face bleeding, his uniform soiled, dirty. The truck grows closer, its engines straining.

WATERS

Nothin' changed.

WATERS shakes his head, as the noise from the oncoming truck overwhelms everything around it.

CUT TO:

88. EXT: TWO SHOT - TRUCK

A quickly moving 3/4 ton TRUCK passes the spot where WATERS is on the ground it's headlights picking up BYRD and WILCOX for a moment.

CUT TO:

89. EXT: BYRD - CU .45 CALIBER AUTOMATIC - NIGHT

The camera is in CU of BYRD'S pistol belt. It catches BYRD as he removes his .45 caliber automatic pistol from its holster and points it down at WATERS who is still moaning, and mumbling jibberish.

V.O. BYRD

I should blow this coward's head off! White men are killin' for you niggah! Gettin' their guts all blown to hell for you!

The pistol catches the light of the moon for a moment. Around it, the fog swirls, the noise of the insects and the night sounds suddenly loud--deafening.

CUT TO:

90. [PRESENT TIME]

EXT: BARRACKS - TAYLOR - NIGHT

The camera opens on a 'Zippo' lighter as it bursts suddenly into flame and TAYLOR lights his cigarette. There is a moment's silence. DAVENPORT is disgusted and it shows on his face as he waits for TAYLOR to continue.

TAYLOR

They told me they left Waters around twenty-one-ten, and everyone in the barracks confirms they were in by twenty-one-thirty hours--and neither man left until the following morning.

DAVENPORT

I don't believe it!

TAYLOR

I couldn't shake their stories!

DAVENPORT

That story's nothing more than a few white officers lying to protect two of their own--and you know it! I'm arresting both of them, Captain--and you may consider yourself under arrest pending my charges against you!

TAYLOR

What charges?

DAVENPORT

It was your duty to go over Niven's head if you had to!

TAYLOR smiles, leans back on the jeep.

TAYLOR

You going to arrest the Colonel too, Davenport? He's part of their alibi--he was there, in the officers' billet when they came in--played poker from twenty-one-hundred to 0-three-thirty in the morning--the Colonel and four other white officers.

(cont.)

90.

DAVENPORT

They're all lying!

TAYLOR

Prove it, Hotshot!

TAYLOR moves to the driver's side of the jeep and gets in.

TAYLOR

I've told you all I know--now you go out and prove it!

DAVENPORT'S response is sharp.

DAVENPORT

I will, Mistah! You can bet your sweet ass on that!

I will!

TAYLOR looks at him for a moment, starts the jeep and pulls away in silence. DAVENPORT stands there watching him go. He is angry, his expression filled with rage. Afterawhile he starts back to the steps of the barracks. It is a hot night, and DAVENPORT sits quietly on the barracks steps. He is thoughtful, the angry memory still in his expression.

CUT TO:

91. DAVENPORT

DAVENPORT reaches to his left as he sits on the steps finds a stone and tosses it dejectedly onto the ground. He seems beaten, and for a moment he is quiet, and we sense the disappointment in him. He glances around for another stone and instead sees the sign, and a broken piece of chalk beside it. It's the same sign that reads: CULLUD OFFICER'S BARRACKS, CLUB and MESSHALL. WELCOME, SNOWFLAKE! As he looks at the sign he begins to recover. He reaches for it, picks up the piece of chalk and runs a line through the word 'FLAKE' in the word SNOWFLAKE, and beneath it, DAVENPORT scratches in the word 'STORM'. He looks at the sign for a moment and tosses it away, in the direction TAYLOR left in. He turns around rather abruptly and goes back inside. The screendoor closing with a loud bang behind him.

CUT TO:

92. INT: STUDY - DAY (early morning)

The camera opens on Colonel NIVENS and DAVENPORT in the study of the Colonel's home. DAVENPORT is standing 'at ease' as NIVENS, dressed in pajamas and smoking jacket talks. The study is a fairly large room filled with books that stretch around three walls from the ceiling to floor. There is a large oak desk in the corner of the room beside one of the two opened French doors that lead out to a veranda. The room and its furnishings have an appealing elegance. NIVENS is behind the desk tapping it pointedly to punctuate his speech. DAVENPORT tries to be comfortable.

NIVENS

You will do nothing of the kind!

NIVENS rises, and lights a cigarette, starting around the desk.

NIVENS

Arrest white officers? Are you crazy, Davenport?

DAVENPORT

Colonel, Sir I believe these two men had something to do with Sergeant Waters death!

NIVENS shakes his head, 'no'--he is trying to convince himself.

NIVENS

No! I can't allow that! You have no authority to arrest white officers.

DAVENPORT

Then give me the authority, Sir.

NIVENS looks to the veranda. When he looks out his mood changes, and for an instant he smiles. Immediately, from outside we hear a woman's voice--it is Southern and sweet. It is the voice of IDA NIVENS the Colonel's wife. DAVENPORT is startled by it.

O.C. IDA

Colonel, your breakfast is ready!

IDA NIVENS enters carrying a silver tray on which NIVENS breakfast of eggs, toast, coffee and juice is set. A newspaper is folded neatly on one edge of the tray. IDA is an attractive white woman in her late 40's dressed in a robe and slippers. DAVENPORT nods politely as she takes the tray to NIVENS desk and sets it down.

(cont.)

92.

NIVENS

Thank you, Honey!

IDA smiles at him, then looks curiously at DAVENPORT

IDA

Can I have someone fetch you coffee, Captain?

DAVENPORT

No, thank you, Ma'am.

IDA

I hope they're making your stay here at Fort Neal real comfortable, Captain.

DAVENPORT

That's very thoughtful of you, Ma'am.

IDA smiles and exits quietly as NIVENS returns to his desk, and starts eating as he talks to DAVENPORT.

NIVENS

Nooo, I can't give you that authority, Davenport. I told you they were in by nine-thirty--I was there!

(butters toast)

You read our affidavits on this thing!

DAVENPORT

Sir, what will the Army say, when they find out two white officers beat up the murder victim not long before he's shot to death--their C.O. refuses to report they were involved in any way, and he signs an affidavit supporting their alibi.

NIVENS is thoughtful, as DAVENPORT presses forward.

DAVENPORT

Colonel, these two are our best suspects--how can you justify not having them arrested or questioned by the

(cont.)

92.

DAVENPORT

Investigating Officer?

(pause)

Something like this is bound to get out.

NIVENS cracks a hard-boiled egg with his knife.

NIVENS

Now, I didn't say you couldn't question them--But I want a white officer present, and everything said reported to me.

DAVENPORT

Of course, Sir.

NIVENS continues to eat his breakfast. He reaches for his paper after a rather long pause in the conversation, and looks up at DAVENPORT as if suddenly remembering he is there.

NIVENS

You're dismissed, Captain.

He goes back to his paper, ignoring DAVENPORT.

CUT TO:

93. EXT: HOUSE - DAVENPORT - IDA

DAVENPORT leaves the house smiling. On the side of the house IDA NIVENS gathers flowers from her garden and lays them neatly in an opened basket. As DAVENPORT passes her he snaps his fingers, stops and does a little 'step'. IDA'S face hardens quietly as she watches him, a look of annoyance stealing into her expression as she shakes her head in disgust. DAVENPORT is happy, he got what he wanted. To question the two officers.

CUT TO:

94. INT: BARRACKS - DAY

The camera on HENSON. He is seated in the barracks. In uniform he sits erect on a chair in the aisle between the barracks. Around him, the barracks is empty, though bright. DAVENPORT leans against one of the bunks. We hear HENSON at once. He is a little vexed.

(cont.)

94.

HENSON

I didn't like the man myself--just for what he did to CJ.

DAVENPORT

What did he do?

HENSON hesitates.

HENSON

I don't like tattle-talin' Sir, I don't mean no offense but I ain't crazy 'bout talkin' to officers--colored or white.

DAVENPORT straightens. His expression is cold, his face tight.

DAVENPORT

Henson, I'll bust your ass to buck private right now--you got that?

HENSON

He was always on CJ's ass--every little thing it seem like to me--then the shootin' went down and CJ caught all the hell!

DAVENPORT

What shooting?

HENSON

The shooting at Williams Golden Palace--happened las' year Sir--toward the end of the baseball season.

(pause)

A whole lotta' gunshots had gone off near the barracks--
I'd gotten drunk at the enlisted mens club--

HENSON turns in the direction of the barracks. The camera pans with him. In the BG gunshots are going off--a rapid exchange of shots, like fire-crackers, then sporadic pops.

CUT TO:

95. [FLASHBACK]

INT: SAME BARRACKS - NIGHT - HENSON'S POV

At the doorway to the barracks the screen door closes. We are in the same area but it is night. The outline of men sleeping in bunks can be seen. In the BG the gunshots stop, and just as abruptly, the lights in the barracks go on in an almost blinding flash, and WATERS bursts into the room with WILKIE and two black MP's. His voice is loud and sharp.

WATERS

Allright! Allright! Everybody up!

CUT TO:

96. WATERS - MEN

WATERS walks up the aisle yelling. HENSON seated on a footlocker looks up drunkenly and shields his eyes, as WATERS passes him.

WATERS

Wake them, Wilkie! Allright, you heard me--everybody up! Un-ass them bunks!

WILKIE and the MP's move from bunk to bunk shaking men. Some men awaken angrily. COBB takes a swing at WILKIE as he rises.

WILKIE

OK--let's go you guys!

WATERS

Move it Smalls! Let's go ladies!

(cont.)

96. Gradually everyone of the men staggers sleepily into the aisle. There are sixteen of them. The camera notices PETERSON, COBB, SMALLS, MEMPHIS, HENSON, and a couple others. WATERS looks in both directions at this rag-tag group of men in underwear.

WATERS

Tenn-hut!

The men snap-to.

CUT TO:

97. WATERS

The camera follows WATERS as he paces the length of the barracks looking at the faces of his men on both sides of the aisle.

WATERS

There's been a shooting! One of ours bucked the line at Williams pay-phone and three soldiers are dead! Two colored --one white MP! Now this low down niggah we lookin' for got chased down hea'--and was almost caught til' somebody in this barracks started shootin' at the people chasin' him!

WATERS stops in front of HENSON, who looks up at him with sleepy eyes, then turns around and starts back. The Camera follows him.

WATERS

So, we got us a vicious, low down, murderin' piece of black trash in here--and somebody who helped him--

(pause)

Whoever is in this--I want you to step forward.

WATERS stops, turning in every direction.

CUT TO:

98. WATERS - MEN

None of the men move. WATERS smiles.

WATERS

All you baseball niggahs are innocent, huh? Allright--
make the search.

WILKIE and the MP'S who entered with him start searching.

CUT TO:

99. WILKIE - PETERSON

WILKIE who has been standing near PETERSON'S bunk and footlocker, bends over and lifts the lid of the locker. PETERSON turns and glares at him. WILKIE stops.

O.C. WATERS

Eyes front!

PETERSON

I don't want this creep in my stuff!

CUT TO:

100 WATERS - MEN

WATERS moves toward PETERSON.

WATERS

You don't talk--or move at 'attention'!

PETERSON executes the order reluctantly as WILKIE continues to search through his footlocker. WATERS paces again.

CUT TO:

101 WATERS - MEN

Another angle. WATERS reaches HENSON again stopping directly in front of him.

(cont.)

101

WATERS

I almost hope it is some of you geechies--

WATERS paces again.

WATERS

Get rid of some of you Southern niggahs--

(to searchers)

Anything yet?

WILKIE looks up, he is searching through COBB'S things.

WILKIE

Nothin'.

WATERS reaches MEMPHIS and stops.

CUT TO:

102

WATERS - MEMPHIS

WATERS stares straight at MEMPHIS who is standing at attention.

WATERS

Memphis? You in this?

MEMPHIS

No, Sah, Sarge.

WATERS turns away from MEMPHIS.

WATERS

How many of you were out tonight?

CUT TO

103 WATERS - MEN

SMALLS steps forward. In the BG the searching continues. WILKIE reaches MEMPHIS' bunk and begins to search through his things.

SMALLS

I was over at Williams around seven--got me a pack of Lucky Strikes--I didn't try to call home, though.

QUICK CUT TO:

104 SEYMOUR - MEN

From behind WATERS, SEYMOUR steps out of 'ranks'. He is angry, pointing back at his wall-locker, where one of the MP's is searching.

SEYMOUR

Sarge, you betta' tell this bastard to stop wrinkl'n' my clothes!

The soldier searching through SEYMOUR'S things turns on him.

SOLDIER

I'm followin' orders!

SEYMOUR moves toward the soldier threateningly.

SEYMOUR

Stay the hell outta' my shit!

O.C. WATERS

(at once)

Knock it off, you two!

O.C. WILKIE

(overlapping)

Got somethin'!

QUICK CUT TO:

105 WILKIE

WILKIE is standing in the aisle of the barracks holding up by one finger a .45 caliber automatic pistol--Army issued. In the BG around him everyone's attention is focused on him. One searcher appears in the aisle behind him, surprised by the find.

CUT TO:

106 WATERS - MEN

WATERS moves toward WILKIE

WATERS

Where'd you get it?

WILKIE reaches over and taps MEMPHIS on the upper arm. MEMPHIS almost recoils from his touch, as if burned.

MEMPHIS

Naaaw, man!

WATERS takes the gun from WILKIE and starts toward MEMPHIS holding the pistol with a pencil.

CUT TO:

107 WATERS - MEMPHIS

WATERS holds the pistol up in front of MEMPHIS' face. MEMPHIS is clearly frightened.

WATERS

Still warm, CJ--this yours?

MEMPHIS

You know it ain't mine, Sarge!

WATERS

Probably ain't--I bet it just crawled in through the window--passed everybody's bunk--Peterson--Cobb, and just hunkered on down in your footlocker--must be Voodoo, right boy? Or that Farmer's Dust you wearin'.

(cont.)

107

MEMPHIS

That pistol ain't mine, Sarge--I hate guns--makes me feel bad, jes' to see a gun!

CUT TO:

108 HENSON

HENSON is visibly sympathetic for MEMPHIS, but he is also getting sick. His body lurches forward once, and HENSON tries to control himself.

O.C. WATERS

Liar! You're under arrest!

HENSON lurches a second time. Unable to hold it back, he leans forward and pukes his guts out.

CUT TO:

109 WATERS - MEN

PETERSON steps out of ranks. The sound of Henson irritates him a bit, but he appeals to Waters anyway. WILKIE has moved beside MEMPHIS.

PETERSON

CJ couldn't hurt a fly, Waters--you know that!

WATERS steps close to PETERSON.

WATERS

I found a gun soldier--now, get outta' the way!

PETERSON

Damnit Waters, you know it ain't CJ!

WATERS

Who is it then--you?

PETERSON steps back at the suggestion. HENSON raises his hand and steps forward. He is sloppy, his shirt covered.

HENSON

Right before you come in hea'--
(pause)

(cont.)

109.

HENSON

I seen somebody sneak in hea'--then sneak right back out!

WATERS

You were drunk when you left the club--I saw you myself!
Throw his ass in the shower!

WILKIE and one of the MP's go over to HENSON, take him under both arms and lead him toward the rear of the barracks. WATERS and the men all watch him carried off. COBB steps forward out of ranks.

O.C. HENSON

I know I saw somethin'!

COBB

(overlapping)

I was here all night--CJ ain't go nowhere--he was sleep
before I got to bed.

WATERS is furious turning on COBB with an unusual intensity.

CUT TO:

110 WATERS - MEN

Another angle. WATERS studies them as he speaks.

WATERS

You think he's innocent don't you? CJ Memphis--actin'
like a cotton-picker--singin'--playin' the blues--bowin'
and scrapin'--smilin' all up in the white folks faces--
tellin' conja' stories--

(mimics)

"I got crow in mah blood, Sah!"

(points)

This man undermined us! You and me--everybody! He's a
dangerous criminal--

(loud)

The description of the man who did the shooting fits CJ!
Henson saw CJ slip in hea' then pretend to slip out!

(cont.)

110

He walks toward MEMPHIS stopping in front of him.

WATERS

Don't be fooled--that 'yassah boss' is hiding something.

Are we like that today--in nineteen-forty-three?

(points)

He shot that white boy!

CUT TO:

111 MEMPHIS - WATERS

MEMPHIS, without warning punches WATERS in the face, and the blow 'decks' the Sergeant. The gun flies out of his hand and slides across the floor. MEMPHIS is grabbed at once, and is surprisingly docile. He does not resist as SMALLS and COBB hold him.

CUT TO:

112 WATERS - MEMPHIS - MEN

WATERS on the floor is stunned. He rubs his chin as he begins to rise. The men have almost formed a circle around the incident.

WATERS

What did you go and do now, boy? Hit you a non-commissioned officer?

He is up, wobbling at first then straightening. His tone and manner are still tough.

WATERS

You men, get back into ranks!

The men move back. COBB is apologetic.

COBB

He ain't mean it Sarge!

WATERS

Shut up!

(cont.)

112

WILKIE hands him the pistol which he deliberately grabs with his bare hands.

WATERS

Take him out, Wilkie!

WILKIE grabs MEMPHIS who leaves without force. MEMPHIS seems in a trance as WILKIE leads him out of the barracks. WATERS follows them toward the door.

CUT TO:

113 BARRACKS - BATHROOM DOORWAY

HENSON, his clothes soaked and wet, the vomit stains gone, appears in the bathroom doorway just as WATERS passes, on his way out.

HENSON

I know I saw somebody!

WATERS storms away leaving a still slightly intoxicated HENSON in the doorway.

CUT TO:

114 MEN

The men wander back to their bunks as HENSON starts back to his with a mop and a bucket of water. They are disappointed and angered by what has happened.

SMALLS

Niggah like that can't have a mother!

HENSON

I know I saw something!

PETERSON slams the lid shut on his footlocker and turns to the men as he starts to dress.

(cont.)

1.4

PETERSON

CJ was sleepin' when I came in! It's Waters--can't y'all see that? I've seen his kind of fool before--white man gives him a little ass job as a servant and when the 'boss' ain't lookin'--ole' copy-cat niggah acts like he's the new boss--shoutin', orderin' people aroun'--arrestin' CJ's gonna' get him anotha' stripe! Next it'll be you--or you! He can't look good unless he's standin' on you--Cobb told the bastard CJ was in all evening--Waters didn' even listen! They let him in the Army 'cause they know he'll do anything they tell him to do!--Somebody's gonna' kill him one of these days!

SMALLS

I heard they killed a Sergeant at Fort Robinson--recruit did it.

HENSON looks up from his mopping.

HENSON

Shiit--it'll just be our luck, Sarge'll come through the whole War without a scratch.

PETERSON

Yeah, well Sarge ain't gittin' away with it this time! I'm goin' to the stockade and tell them MP's what I know! CJ was in all evenin'!

SMALLS

I'll go with you!

COBB

Me too, Pete!

PETERSON snatches a shirt from his bunk and abruptly starts out, as SMALLS and COBB start dressing to go with him.

CUT TO:

115 [PRESENT TIME]

INT: BARRACKS - DAY (as before)

The camera opens on HENSON. DAVENPORT moves in front of him.

DAVENPORT

Could the person you thought you saw have stayed in the barracks? Did you actually see someone go out?

HENSON

Yes, Sir.

DAVENPORT

Was Wilkie the only man out of his bunk that night?

HENSON

I guess--Wilkie came in with the Sarge--it's hard to say--it's been awhile and I was juiced.

DAVENPORT

Ellis!

CUT TO:

116 INT: BARRACKS DOOR - ELLIS

ELLIS appears on the outside of the screendoor. He peeps through the screen, then enters.

ELLIS

Yes, Sir?

CUT TO:

117 DAVENPORT - HENSON - ELLIS

DAVENPORT is facing the door, where ELLIS has stopped. HENSON is still.

DAVENPORT

I want Wilkie and Peterson to report to me at once!

ELLIS

They're both on detail this morning, Sir.

(cont.)

117

DAVENPORT

Find them!

ELLIS

Yes Sir!

ELLIS salutes and exits. DAVENPORT returns his attention to HENSON. For a moment he looks at the man in silence.

DAVENPORT

The night Waters was killed--where were you?

HENSON

In the barracks--played checkers with Cobb til' nine-thirty, then went to bed--is there anything else, Sir?

DAVENPORT shoots HENSON an irritated glance.

DAVENPORT

Dismissed, Private.

HENSON rises.

CUT TO:

118 INT: BARRACKS - DAY (later)

The camera opens on Sergeant WASHINGTON. He is seated in the chair. He sweats a little as DAVENPORT fires questions at him in rapid succession.

DAVENPORT

...And he wasn't a friend, right?

WASHINGTON

Just a guy I drank with.

DAVENPORT

What time did he leave?

WASHINGTON

Around eight--eight-thirty. It had got dark.

(cont.)

118

DAVENPORT

And you didn't try to stop him?

WASHINGTON

You couldn't stop Waters, Sir.

DAVENPORT

And you stayed at the Saloon?

WASHINGTON

Yes, Sir.

CUT TO:

119 SEYMOUR - DAVENPORT

Camera is close on DAVENPORT. He is standing, scribbling notes on a pad.

V.O. SEYMOUR

It was about twenty-forty-five in the evenin', Sir--

I was drivin' my three-quarta' back from town on a pick-up, and I saw Lieutenant Byrd.

DAVENPORT crosses toward SEYMOUR. The man is seated in a chair in the interrogation room. He seems a little troubled, and fidgets with the work-cap in his hand.

DAVENPORT

How'd you know it was Byrd?

SEYMOUR

I recognized him as he turned away, Sir. He useta' be my platoon leader--it's the reason I kept on goin'. When I saw it was him, I thought at first the truck had broke

(cont.)

119

down. I was so glad I could leave that--

(hesitates)

So-and-so on the road, I speeded up!

(pause)

I tol' Captain Taylor about it--I'm sorry I did it now,

Sir--Sarge might be hea' if I had stopped.

The two men look at each other for a long moment. SEYMOUR is clearly ashamed.

CUT TO:

120 EXT: FIELD - SMOKE CLOUDS - DAY

The camera opens in dense impenetrable smoke. The chug-chug sound of small gasoline motors loud and coming from all directions. The camera quickly passes through the smoke and into a large field where a troop of black GI's are testing Smoke Generating machines. A long row of machines is hurling smoke across the field. The camera picks up COBB. He is walking toward the camera and smiling. When he reaches the camera he stops, comes to attention and salutes. In the BG a few men notice, others go on with their work.

CUT TO:

121 COBB - DAVENPORT

DAVENPORT returns the salute.

COBB

They tol' me you were gonna' question us yesta'day, Sir.
When they didn' say nothin' this mornin' I jus' come out
hea' to work.

(cont.)

121

COBB points to the machines.

COBB

Stand on the smokey side long enough, Sir--you begin
to believe you in London.

COBB laughs, DAVENPORT smiles. The relief is welcomed.

CUT TO:

122 EXT: HILLSIDE - DAY

The camera looks down at DAVENPORT and COBB and moves in on them slowly. The two men sit on a grassy hillside overlooking the field where the Smoke Generating machines are still pouring out smoke along a line at least a hundred yards wide. The day is beautiful. The field peaceful--the sounds of the machines, faint in the distance.

COBB

Me and CJ made the team at the same time--Waters, he
come afta'. We was 'Homeys', Sir--both from Mississippi--
CJ from Carmella--me, I'm from up 'roun Jutlerville--
what they call Snake County.

DAVENPORT

How'd you feel about the arrest?

COBB

I hated Waters for it, Sir--that cell started closin'
on CJ--like that!

(snaps fingers)

In the BG, there is the sound of a jaildoor slamming shut.

CUT TO:

123 [FLASHBACK]

INT: STOCKADE - VISITORS ROOM - DAY

Camera opens on MEMPHIS as the door to the Stockade's Visitors Room
slams shut behind him. COBB sits at the single table in the room. It
is seperated from MEMPHIS by bars and a screened window. In the BG

(cont.)

123

outside the door a black MP waits, his arms folded across his chest. The day is bright, the sun gushing through the single barred window. MEMPHIS moves quickly to his stool on his side of the table, smiling weakly as he sits. He seems ill--he is ashen, and drawn. COBB is startled by his appearance. MEMPHIS' shirt is open, his hair matted.

COBB

You all right? What they doin' to you in hea', CJ?

MEMPHIS

It's hard to breathe in these little spaces, Cobb--man wasn't made for this hea'--nothin' was! I don't think I'll eva' see a animal in a cage agin' and not feel sorry for it. I'd rather be on the chain-gang.

COBB

Come on Homey!

MEMPHIS

I don't think I'm comin' outta' here, Cobb--feels like I'm goin' crazy. Can't walk in hea'--can't see the sun! I tried singin', Cobb, but nothin' won't come out. I sure don't wanna' die in this jail!

COBB

Ain't nobody gonna' die, CJ!

MEMPHIS

Yesta'day I broke a guitar string--lost my Dust! I got no protection--nothin' to keep the dog from tearin' at my bones!

COBB

CJ, stop talkin' crazy!

CUT TO:

124 MEMPHIS

He seems resigned. He stares as if looking beyond the stockade.

MEMPHIS

He come up hea' las' night, Cobb--Sergeant Waters.

CUT TO:

125 [FLASHBACK - IN - FLASHBACK]

INT: VISITORS ROOM - NIGHT

The camera focuses on WATERS. He is seated in the same place COBB sat only a moment ago. He is in his dress uniform, looking through the screening at MEMPHIS. He is smoking a pipe, relaxed; he is enjoying the moment.

WATERS

You should learn never to hit Sergeants, boy. Man can get in a lot of trouble doin' that kind of thing in War time.

WATERS takes a puff on the pipe.

CUT TO:

126 WATERS - MEMPHIS

MEMPHIS is seated on the other side of the table. He is barechested, wearing pajama bottoms. He is sleepy and a bit confused.

WATERS

They talkin' about giving you five years--they call what you did, mutiny, boy!

MEMPHIS

That gun ain't mine!

WATERS

We know that CJ--we changed the charge on you this mornin' --and that gun belonged to the niggah that did the shooting-- me and Wilkie found him hidin' in the Motor Pool--confessed his head off! You in here for strikin' a superior officer, boy--everybody seen it too!

WATERS chuckles a bit, re-lights his pipe and leans back in the chair. MEMPHIS is agitated--disraught.

MEMPHIS

Why you doin' this to me, Sarge?

WATERS leans forward, his tone gentle, almost soothing.

(cont.)

126

WATERS

Don't you go feelin' bad, CJ--it has to be this way. See, the First War didn't change nothin' for the Negro--but this one? Gonna' change everything! Them Nazis' ain't all crazy--lotta' people jus' don't fit into where things seem to be going--like you CJ--see, the black race can't afford you no-more!

(pause)

There useta' be a time, when we'd see somebody like you--singing, clownin'--yassahbossin'--and we wouldn't do anything. Folks liked that--you were good--a homey kinda' niggah. They needed somebody to mistreat--call a name or two--they paraded you! Reminded them of the good ole' days--cornbread bakin'--greens and ham cookin' --Daddy out pickin' cotton, granmammy sittin' on the porch smokin' a pipe.

WATERS sits erect suddenly, slashing the air with his open hand.

WATERS

Not no more! The day of the geechy is gone, boy--and you goin' with it. We can't let nobody go on believin' we all fools like you--whites respect power--and you bring us down, boy. Make people think the whole race is unfit! We in the nineteen-forties, CJ.

CUT TO:

127 CU WATERS

WATERS smiles broadly.

WATERS

Waited a long time for you, boy--but I gotcha'! I try to git rid of your kind everywhere I go! I put two geechies in jail at Fort Campbell, Kentucky--three at

(cont.)

127

WATERS

Fort Huachuca--Now I got you!

(snaps fingers joyfully)

One less fool for the race to be ashamed of!

WATERS laughs.

CUT TO:

128 [ORIGINAL FLASHBACK]

INT: VISITORS ROOM - DAY

Camera's focus is MEMPHIS. He is ashen again, sickly-looking in the sunlight.

MEMPHIS

Imagine anybody sayin' that?

CUT TO:

129 COBB

COBB shakes his head 'no' in answer to the question, and lowers his eyes. They have begun to swell and glisten with tears.

CUT TO:

130 COBB - MEMPHIS

MEMPHIS

Memba' I tol' you 'bout a place I useta' go outside
Carmella? Out behind O'Connells farm?

COBB nods.

MEMPHIS

Place would be stinkin' a' plums sometimes Cobb--Mmmmmph!
Shaded--that ripe smell be weavin' through the cotton field
and clear on inta' town on a warm day--I had Evelyn unda'

(cont.)

130

MEMPHIS

them Plum trees--wrote a song for her--

(talks, sings)

My ginger colored Moma--she had thighs the size of hams!

And when you spread them Moma--

(talks)

You let me have my jelly-roll and jam!

(he is quiet for a moment)

O'Connell had a dog, Cobb--meanes' ole' dog you eva' did see--couldn't pet it--but the only way to enjoy them trees was to outsmart that dog. Reminds me of Sergeant Waters--you had to run circles around ole' Windy--that was his name. Say he tore a man's arm off once and got to likin' it--so you had to cheat that dog outta' bitin' you everytime, Cobb--everytime.

The camera lingers with MEMPHIS for awhile.

• V.O. COBB

He ain't make no kinda' sense, Sir--and he just got worse.

CUT TO:

131 [PRESENT TIME]

EXT: SMOKE - DAY

The camera catches the smoke from the smoke generating machines as it blows by the two men, as they walk down the hill. DAVENPORT stops.

DAVENPORT

What happened to him?

COBB

Day afta' I saw him? He was dead, Sir. MP's just found him dead--was like he jus' gave up.

DAVENPORT

What happened after that?

(cont.)

131

COBB

We los' our las' game--we just 'threw' it--did it for CJ--Captain Taylor was mad, 'cause we didn't get to play the Yankees, but Peterson was right on that one--we needed to protest that man.

WATERS

What did Waters do?

COBB

Afta' we lost, they broke up the team and assigned us to this hea' smoke generatin' company--Waters, he started actin' funny--jus' stayed drunk all the time.

DAVENPORT

What time did you get in the night he was killed?

COBB

Between twenty-one-twenty and nine-thirty. Me and Henson listened to Gabriel Heater--played checkers.

DAVENPORT

Who came in last that night?

COBB

Peterson and Smalls--they had guard duty.

DAVENPORT starts away.

DAVENPORT

Thank you Corporal.

COBB salutes. DAVENPORT returns it and turns away, walking into the smoke, and disappearing in it.

CUT TO:

132 INT: OFFICERS CLUB - CU BILLIARD BALLS - DAY

The camera opens in CU on a 'rack' of billiard balls on a green pool table in the Gameroom of the Fort Neal Officers Club. The balls are struck instantly and break apart, as Lt. BYRD takes his first shot in a game of Eight-ball he is playing with another white officer, Captain JIM ESTES. ESTES is a slight, handsome officer in his early 30's with a closely cropped head of dark hair, strong features and cleft chin. Both men are in fatigues, and along with WILCOX looking on from the side-lines are the only three people in this section of the club. Around them, the place is plush. On both sides of the pool-table, high chairs line the walls, along with 'dart' boards, chess tables and cue-stick racks. The chairs and sofas in the room are overstuffed, the coffee-tables and floor lamps elegant and expensive looking. Beyond the gameroom area is the bar, serviced by a black GI bartender. The faint music of Frank Sinatra plays in the BG, and the overall feeling and appearance of the place is one of warmth--friendliness. BYRD takes another shot, makes it, and moves around the table smiling at ESTES' disappointment. In his chair, WILCOX toys with his overseas cap. BYRD leans over to take his next shot.

BYRD

Three ball in the side--

He shoots, then suddenly straightens, looking up in the direction of of the ball. His expression is cold.

CUT TO:

133 DAVENPORT - TAYLOR - BYRD'S POV

TAYLOR picks up the ball that is rushing toward the side pocket, and the game stops. He and DAVENPORT move around the table toward WILCOX. BYRD is angry at his shot being missed.

CUT TO:

134 GAMEROOM - ESTES - BYRD

Both men seem shocked and a little annoyed at DAVENPORT'S presence.

ESTES

(to Taylor)

Who's idea was this Charlie?

(cont.)

134

TAYLOR

Nivens--and you're going to have to clear the area, Jim
we're here to question these two.

ESTES

(quietly)

He's got no business in here!

TAYLOR

Take it up with the Colonel!

ESTES puts his cue-stick back into the rack, and moves off. He grabs his cap and starts out of the gameroom area toward the bar, where he sits and orders a drink. Through it all DAVENPORT has remained silent, sizing up both BYRD and WILCOX. DAVENPORT sets his file on the pool table, opens it, then leans against the table himself. He stares quietly at the two men.

TAYLOR

This is Captain Davenport--you both understand you are
to give the Captain, your full cooperation.

BYRD

They tell me you a lawyer, huh?

DAVENPORT

I'm not here to answer your questions, Lieutenant.
Sit down.

BYRD is stunned. DAVENPORT'S voice is gentle, but firm.

DAVENPORT

Sit down.

(cont.)

134. BYRD moves to a place beside WILCOX and sits reluctantly. DAVENPORT starts to pace around the pool-table, sometimes in the light, sometimes out of it.

DAVENPORT

When did you last see Sergeant Waters?

BYRD

The night somebody killed him! It should have been me, the way he spoke to me and Captain Wilcox here!

DAVENPORT

How did he speak to you Captain?

CUT TO:

- 135 WILCOX

He glances down at the floor and shrugs.

WILCOX

He was drunk--and he said things he shouldn't have-- I told the Lieutenant here not to make the situation worse--and well--we left him on the road--on his knees.

CUT TO:

- 136 DAVENPORT - MEN

BYRD interjects quickly.

BYRD

And alive!

DAVENPORT ignores BYRD. He stays with WILCOX.

DAVENPORT

What exactly did he say?

(cont.)

136

BYRD answers.

BYRD

He said he wasn't gonna' obey no white man's orders! And me and Wilcox here were to blame for his being black! I didn't even know the man!

WILCOX clears his throat, answering without having been asked.

WILCOX

He said he killed somebody--and some pretty stupid things about us--I mean white people.

DAVENPORT

Did he say who? Mention a name?

WILCOX shakes his head 'no'. BYRD is angry. He rises suddenly.

CUT TO:

137 BYRD

He pounds the cue-stick against the floor.

BYRD

Look the goddamn Negro was disrespectful! No way is a colored soldier going to speak to a white officer like that!

(to Taylor)

What the hell are we wasting time with this for?

CUT TO:

138 DAVENPORT - TAYLOR - BYRD - WILCOX

TAYLOR is annoyed, his tone sharp, cutting across DAVENPORT'S concentration, distracting and infuriating him.

TAYLOR

You answer him like he wants you to Byrd, or I'll stick it to your ass every chance I get--you got that?

(cont.)

138

DAVENPORT

Captain! Let me handle this!

TAYLOR is stung. Having believed he was helping, DAVENPORT'S annoyance irritates him.

TAYLOR

Then handle it!

TAYLOR turns away and paces toward the door of the gameroom. DAVENPORT turns back to BYRD and WILCOX. His tone quieter now.

CUT TO:

139 DAVENPORT - BYRD - WILCOX

DAVENPORT walks right up to BYRD'S face. The gesture, its suddenness, the closeness sends BYRD back a bit.

DAVENPORT

You said he was disrespectful--is that why you killed him?

BYRD

(loudly)

I killed nobody!

DAVENPORT does not flinch.

DAVENPORT

Sit--down.

BYRD does so slowly, as DAVENPORT paces away from him. DAVENPORT is performing now, his lawyer's instincts sharp. TAYLOR re-enters the frame to watch. He is impressed.

DAVENPORT

You hit him didn't you?

BYRD

I knocked him down!

(cont.)

139

DAVENPORT

And then you shot him?

BYRD

He was alive when we left!

DAVENPORT

Liar! You beat him up--you went back--and you shot him twice!

BYRD

No!

BYRD can take DAVENPORT no longer, he rises, fuming, threatening.

BYRD

And you get the hell outta' my face, boy, before I kill you!

DAVENPORT stands firm.

DAVENPORT

Like you killed Waters?

BYRD

No!

BYRD snatches at DAVENPORT's jacket.
immediate.

TAYLOR'S response is

TAYLOR

Soldier!

BYRD freezes.

BYRD

He's trying to put this thing on me!

TAYLOR

Answer his questions, Lieutenant!

BYRD sits back down confused, DAVENPORT shakes his head at TAYLOR.

CUT TO:

140 DAVENPORT - WILCOX

DAVENPORT leans over WILCOX who is now clearly nervous. He is sweating.

DAVENPORT

You were both coming off bivouac, right?

WILCOX nods.

DAVENPORT

Speak up, Captain--you both had weapons?

WILCOX

We didn't fire them.

DAVENPORT

When'd you turn them in?

WILCOX

Right away, Sir--

QUICK CUT TO:

141 BYRD

Byrd surprised by WILCOX use of 'Sir' turns an icy glare on his friend.

O.C. WILCOX

Colonel Nivens took our forty-fives to the MP's.

CUT TO:

142 DAVENPORT - TAYLOR - BYRD - WILCOX

Another angle. TAYLOR moves in on this information listening intently to WILCOX.

WILCOX

It was all kept quiet because the Colonel didn't want the colored boys to know anyone white from the Fort was involved--but ballistics cleared them.

(cont.)

142

BYRD

Besides--we've been short on forty-five caliber ammo for six months--Only MP's and special duty people use it--nobody on the exercise was even issued any!

The information stuns DAVENPORT, he reacts as if he hadn't heard what BYRD said.

DAVENPORT

What?

BYRD

Nobody on bivouac had any forty-five ammo!

DAVENPORT walks away from BYRD.

TAYLOR

I don't believe you! Why wasn't I told?

WILCOX wipes sweat from his brow.

WILCOX

The weapons had cleared--and the Colonel felt, if he involved you further, you'd go to Washington--as it turned out, he thinks you went anyway.

(to Davenport)

I'd like to say, Sir, we had nothing whatsoever to do with the Sergeant's death--I'm a Doctor! He was on the ground when we left him!

TAYLOR

Consider yourselves under arrest gentlemen! The charge is murder--you think I believe that crap?

CUT TO:

143 DAVENPORT

He seems tired, his demeanor has changed, his voice low.

DAVENPORT

Let them go Captain.

CUT TO:

144 DAVENPORT - TAYLOR - BYRD - WILCOX

BYRD stands. TAYLOR is incredulous as DAVENPORT goes to the pool-table and begins to straighten his file.

TAYLOR

You've got motive--a witness!

DAVENPORT

This is still my investigation--

WILCOX rises.

WILCOX

Are we being charged?

DAVENPORT

Not by me.

WILCOX salutes, DAVENPORT returns it. BYRD ignores him and starts for the door of the gameroom immediately. He is followed by WILCOX. TAYLOR is frustrated, as DAVENPORT starts for the rear door of the Club.

DAVENPORT

We've both been had, Captain--the Colonel knew this all along.

TAYLOR

They're guilty as hell--and you know it! I'll back you up! Charge them!

DAVENPORT stops at the door.

DAVENPORT

I do what the facts tell me Captain--not you!

(cont.)

144

DAVENPORT begins to exit the club.

TAYLOR

You don't know what a fact it, Davenport.

DAVENPORT

I'm the Lawyer, remember? Did they teach Law at West Point?

TAYLOR

You don't have to be a Lawyer to know how to deal with those two!

DAVENPORT smiles at TAYLOR, and shakes his head good naturedly. There's some admiration in the smile. As if DAVENPORT has found something very good in TAYLOR. They go out together.

CUT TO:

145 EXT: BASEBALL PRACTISE FIELD - DAY

The camera opens on a row of empty beer bottles set neatly one after another on the seat portion of outdoor bleachers in a small baseball practise field on the Fort. The place is empty. The camera pans the bottles slowly. O.C. TAYLOR belches loudly.

O.C. TAYLOR

What else could I do?

CUT TO:

146 DAVENPORT - TAYLOR

The camera looks at both men. DAVENPORT and TAYLOR are seated beside each other in the bleachers. They've been drinking beer, passing the quart bottle between them. They're not drunk yet, but are headed in that direction. Both men have loosened up a bit,--the air is congenial between them. DAVENPORT passes the bottle to TAYLOR.

TAYLOR

My brother--my father. As it is, I'm the lowest ranking officer in the Taylor military line.

DAVENPORT laughs.

(cont.)

TAYLOR

How the hell did they get you?

DAVENPORT

I really wanted to be a Fighter-pilot--couple classmates had joined the 99th--the glamour--If I was going to be in the Army--why not the cream? But I vomit everytime I go up in a plane!

TAYLOR laughs. DAVENPORT shrugs, takes the bottle from him and drinks.

DAVENPORT

Here I am.

TAYLOR

Don't you want to get into it?

DAVENPORT

Noo! The War's not for me, Captain. I've been a desk-jockey too long. What about you?

TAYLOR

I want to get in it.

It is said with conviction, TAYLOR looking out at something far away, then at DAVENPORT.

TAYLOR

I'm a soldier.

DAVENPORT nods, belches and is thoughtful for a moment.

DAVENPORT

What do you know about CJ Memphis?

TAYLOR is shocked--the question is out of 'left-field', and DAVENPORT awaits calmly his answer. Something of the distance between them is re-established, but TAYLOR shrugs. DAVENPORT drinks again.

TAYLOR

Good centerfielder--died in the stockade--why?

(cont.)

146

DAVENPORT

I think Waters tricked the boy into assaulting him.

TAYLOR takes the bottle from DAVENPORT.

TAYLOR

I can't believe it. This man managed the finest baseball team in the entire United States Army, Davenport! They hadn't lost a game in two years! And the finest player Waters ever had was CJ Memphis--and if you'd ever seen him, you'd know what I mean--fastest man on the team--he could throw a bullet to the plate from centerfield--hit--field--

(pause)

I was their C.O. for eighteen months--You know something, Davenport? They could have beaten the Yankees--with CJ on the field--Smalls, Henson--they coulda' beat the Yankees!

The camera moves in on TAYLOR'S face, and in the BG the sounds of a baseball game begin to rise.

CUT TO:

147 [TAYLOR'S FANTASY]

EXT: BASEBALL FIELD - DAY (Slow Motion)

The camera opens in CU on the Yankee PITCHER. He is a young, handsome white player. He is sweating, chewing, and staring with intense blue eyes at Homeplate. He reaches up and mops his brow with his sleeve, lifting his baseball cap off his head for a moment, only to replace it neatly. He begins to wind up, all of him moving at once like some graceful twisting animal.

CUT TO:

148 MEMPHIS

MEMPHIS is at the plate. He begins to move into his stance.

CUT TO:

149 SMALLS

SMALLS takes a long lead off 1st Base, and is followed by the 1st Baseman. He is anticipating the throw.

CUT TO:

150 PITCHER

The PITCHER'S leg is up, his arm coming around for the throw

CUT TO:

151 MEMPHIS

MEMPHIS raises his bat to its proper height. He is concentrating on the PITCHER'S throw.

CUT TO:

152 CATCHER

CATCHER raises his glove, sets himself.

CUT TO:

153 PITCHER

The ball is let go with grace and power.

CUT TO:

154 MEMPHIS

MEMPHIS hits the ball with all his might, and sends it hurtling away.

CUT TO:

155 BALL

The camera follows the ball, up and out of the ball park.

CUT TO:

156 EXT: BASEBALL DIAMOND - TEAMMATES

The teammates of MEMPHIS, and the camera finds COBB, PETERSON, HENSON, SMALLS, WILKIE AND WATERS, are all on the field around Homeplate waiting for MEMPHIS as he rounds Third base and heads for Homeplate. MEMPHIS is running with his hat held high in the air, waving at the fans. His teammates are jumping up and down congratulating one another--obviously they have won. As MEMPHIS crosses homeplate, WATERS is the first person to grab him. They begin to hug each other. Everyone is enjoying himself. A voice begins to intrude on the beauty of the scene.

V.O. ELLIS

(from some distance)

Captain!

CUT TO:

157 [PRESENT TIME]

EXT: BASEBALL PRACTISE FIELD - TAYLOR - DAVENPORT

Both men have shared the fantasy. TAYLOR looks up first.

O.C. ELLIS

Captain Davenport!

CUT TO:

158 ELLIS - DAVENPORT'S POV

ELLIS in a jeep is in the center of the field.

ELLIS

We found Wilkie, Sir--we haven't located Peterson, yet.

CUT TO:

159 DAVENPORT - TAYLOR - ELLIS

DAVENPORT rises in the bleachers. TAYLOR is curious.

DAVENPORT

Where's Wilkie?

ELLIS

Waiting for you in the barracks, Captain.

(cont.)

159

TAYLOR

Didn't you question Wilkie and Peterson yesterday?

DAVENPORT is begining to move, picking up his file, straightening his cap. He steps over the beer bottles, his attention riveted to ELLIS.

TAYLOR

Hey! I asked you a question!

DAVENPORT

Captain, I'm asking the questions--this is still my investigation.

TAYLOR

I thought--

TAYLOR is abruptly silent, his expression changing--his face hardening.

TAYLOR

Your investigation?

DAVENPORT

Mine.

(cont.)

159

DAVENPORT walks away quickly
TAYLOR looks after him, and angrily tosses the bottle into the dirt
of the field.

CUT TO:

160 INT: INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY (Early Evening)

WILKIE dressed in fatigues, sits with his back to the window. The eerie
light of sundown casting a strange reddish-orange glow about the man. He
is visibly nervous fingering his cap. DAVENPORT crosses in front of him.

DAVENPORT

Nervous, Wilkie?

WILKIE

I couldn't figure out why you called me back, Sir.

DAVENPORT

You said, Waters busted you, right?

DAVENPORT moves behind WILKIE who turns around awkwardly to answer.

WILKIE

He got me busted--he reported me to the Captain.

DAVENPORT

How'd you feel? You and the Sarge were good friends--he was a
nice guy----didn't you say that?

DAVENPORT circles WILKIE again, keeping him off guard. WILKIE nods.

DAVENPORT

Would somebody you considered a nice guy get a friend
busted? Speak up! You lied when you said he was a nice
guy, right?

WILKIE

No sir--I--

(cont.)

160

DAVENPORT

Speak up! Was Waters a nice guy or not?

WILKIE

No sir--you wouldn't turn somebody in for something like' that--you give them extra duty--chew 'em out--but three stripes? They took ten years to get Sir--I was in the Twenty-Fourth Infantry!

DAVENPORT

Made you mad, didn't it?

CUT TO:

161 WILKIE

WILKIE looks out beyond DAVENPORT in to his memories.

WILKIE

(nods)

It made me mad--all the things I did for him.

CUT TO:

162 DAVENPORT - WILKIE

Another angle. DAVENPORT smiles, his voice is gentle.

DAVENPORT

That's right--you were his assistant, weren't you? Took care of the team--ran his errands--policed his quarters--listened to his stories--

He leans over WILKIE'S left ear.

DAVENPORT

Put the gun in CJ's footlocker!

WILKIE is shocked, he bolts upright in the chair.

(cont.)

162

WILKIE

No!

DAVENPORT

Sit down!

WILKIE sits. He is frightened. DAVENPORT'S tone is menacing.

DAVENPORT

You're a liar! It was you Henson saw that night Wilkie!

WILKIE shakes his head 'no'.

DAVENPORT

You lied about Waters--you are lying now! You were the only person out of the barracks that night--who else could have found CJ's footlocker in the dark? Not even Waters knew the place that well--Henson didn't see who it was but he was positive about what the person did--it was you Wilkie!

CUT TO:

163 WILKIE

He is almost in tears.

WILKIE

It wasn't me! It was the Sarge--he ordered me to do it! Said, I'd get my stripes back! He just wanted to scare CJ at first--put him in jail for a couple days. But the boy hit him--and he had CJ where he wanted him. Then CJ died--like he was spitein' Sarge--and Waters didn't figure on that.

O.C. DAVENPORT

What did he have against Memphis?

(cont.)

163

WILKIE

He despised him Sir--he'd hide it 'cause everybody
liked that boy--but underneath, it was a crazy hate
Captain--you could feel it sometimes!

In the BG a guitar is playing. The sounds of the Saloon rising with it.

CUT TO:

164 [FLASHBACK]

INT: SALOON - MEMPHIS - NIGHT

Camera opens on MEMPHIS. He is on the stage again, singing in his uniform. The Saloon is crowded as always with black GI's, but tonight there is a crystal globe spinning in the ceiling and casting red and blue patterns of light over the entire room. The camera pans over the crowd to the bar where WATERS and WILKIE in dress uniforms are seated looking up at the mirror behind the bar, where they can see the reflection of MEMPHIS playing on the stage. Everyone at the bar--mostly GI'S is looking up at the mirror. In the corner of the bar even the jukebox lights have been changed to blue and red.

CUT TO:

165 WATERS - WILKIE

WATERS and WILKIE sit at the bar drinking shots of bourbon, a almost full bottle between them. WATERS seems almost in a trance as he speaks --his voice contemptuous--cold.

WATERS

He's the kinda' boy seems innocent Wilkie--got everybody on the Post thinking he's a strong, black buck.

He takes a drink, and immediately pours another. But he does not drink it. The Camera moves in on him slowly as he begins to look at the mirror and focus his attention on what he sees.

WATERS

Hits homeruns--white boys envy his strength--his speed--the power of his swing. Then this colored champion let's them same white boys call him Sambo or Shine--and he just smiles.

CUT TO:

166 MEMPHIS - WATERS POV

In the mirror MEMPHIS plays on, the crowd beginning to gather around him rather than dance. It is as if something in the music has drawn them to him. The red and blue lights seem to be spinning just a bit faster.

O.C. WATERS

Can't talk! Barely read or write his own name--
and don't care! He'll tell you they like him,--
or colored people ain't supposed to have but so
much sense.

CUT TO:

167 CU WATERS [REFLECTED IN THE MIRROR]

He turns to WILKIE, the light from the jukebox reflected surreal-like on his face.

WATERS

Do you know the damage one ignorant Negro can do?
We were in France during the First War, Wilkie.

He begins to look up at the image in the mirror.

WATERS

We had won decorations, but the white boys had told
all them French gals we had tails--so they went out
and found this ignorant colored soldier--paid him to
tie a tail to his ass and parade around half naked
making monkey sounds.

In the BG a strain of the song "Mademoiselle From Armentieres"
is rising.

MATCH DISSOLVE:

168 [FLASHBACK - IN - FLASHBACK]

INT: CAFE NAPOLEON - NIGHT

In the mirror the Saloon is gone. In its place is the Cafe Napoleon a French cellar cafe, smokey--liquid-looking. The sounds of the place are muffled--distorted. A younger WATERS is now dressed in a French uniform. He is watching the scene in the mirror seated beside a group of black soldiers who are watching with him. They are all in French uniforms. Their look is cold, angry. The crowd in the mirror has change color--they are now mostly white and made up largely of American officers and French women. Everyone is having a good time--people are standing, drinking, laughing--but their attention for the most part is captured by something happening at the center of the room, on a large round table, on top of which a black GI who looks like MEMPHIS! is leaping up and down like a banshee!

CUT TO:

169 CU BLACK SOLDIER - OFFICERS

The MEMPHIS-looking soldier is half-naked. Around his waist is a G-string like contraption with a monkey tail attached to it. On his shoulders is a table-cloth, on his head a Kaiser-like helmet and in his hands a guitar which he is strumming mechanically. A red flower is tucked behind his ear. He is smiling wide-eyed, his face and body covered with sweat. Around the table, several officers continue an Indian-like war dance, while others toast the MEMPHIS-looking soldier who rises from time to time to shake his tail. From the right, cheered on by the crowd, a white officer carries a sign toward the table. It reads: MOONSHINE KING OF THE MONKEYS. The sign is set on the edge of the table and the MEMPHIS-looking soldier poses beside it for his audience. Someone takes a photograph. The scene is repugnant and humiliating, but the MEMPHIS-looking soldier doesn't seem to notice or care. There are bills sticking out of the guitar.

V.O. WATERS

Oh, the white boys danced that night--

CUT TO:

170 INT: CAFE - NIGHT

The camera is in CU on the group of black soldiers in French Uniforms who were seated at the bar with a younger WATERS. With WATERS they are standing in the center of the Cafe, forming a tight circle around

(cont.)

170

something in front of them on the table. The Cafe is quiet now, but the lights haven't changed. There is still the sense of liquidity to everything. In the FG there is the sudden sound of someone gagging. The black soldiers with the younger WATERS all move away from the large table, at once. In the center of it is the MEMPHIS-looking soldier. He is flat on his back, his throat cut. He is dying--on his face an expression of disbelief. The black soldiers surrounding the table, including WATERS drift away.

V.O. WATERS

But as that boy died--you know that fool asked us,
what he had done wrong?

CUT TO:

171 [ORIGINAL FLASHBACK]

CU WATERS [REFLECTED IN THE MIRROR] - SALOON - NIGHT
Reflected in the mirror, WATERS turns to WILKIE.

WATERS

My Daddy told me, we got to turn our backs on his kind,
Wilkie--close our ranks to the chittlin's, the collard
greens--the cornbread style--we are men--soldiers--and
I don't intend to have our race cheated out of its
place of honor and respect in this War because of fools
like CJ.

He looks up at the mirror again.

WATERS

You watch everything he does. Everything.

CUT TO:

172 MEMPHIS - WATERS POV

MEMPHIS is see through the mirror again. He is still Playing and singing--his image as surreal as befor, but his song is ending, and the spotlight around him is dimming.

WILKIE

And I watched him Sir--but Waters couldn't wait--
wouldn't talk about nothin' else--it was CJ this--
CJ all the time!

CUT TO:

173 [PRESENT TIME]

INT: INTERROGATION ROOM - WILKIE - EVENING

The light outside has dimmed somewhat. WILKIE is still seated in the chair he is staring off into space. DAVENPORT continues.

DAVENPORT

Why didn't he pick Peterson--they fought!

WILKIE

He liked Peterson--Pete fought back--Sarge admired that--he promoted Pete--you imagine that? He taught Peterson would make a fine soldier.

DAVENPORT

What did Peterson do, when CJ died?

WILKIE

Everybody blamed Sarge--Pete, he put together that protest that lost our las' game--afterwards he kept to himself--or with Smalls.

DAVENPORT

What time did you get in the night Waters was killed?

WILKIE

Around twenty-one-forty-five--I listened to the radio --played checkers. I didn't mean to do what I did-- It wasn't my fault--I just did what the Sarge said do-- He promised me my stripes!

QUICK CUT TO:

174 EXT: FLARE GUN - EVENING

The camera is in tight CU on a FLARE GUN. It fires immediately and the camera watches the flare ascend, reach its apogee and descend. In the BG other things explode--gunshots are going off in rapid succession. Suddenly and spontaneously the entire Fort is engulfed in noise.

CUT TO:

175 INT: INTERROGATION ROOM

DAVENPORT stares at WILKIE for a moment, then turns his attention to the suddenness of the noise outside. There is the growing sound of men cheering, and DAVENPORT turns toward the door.

DAVENPORT

Ellis!

O.C. ELLIS

Yes, Sir!

DAVENPORT

What the hell is going on?

Even WILKIE rises and follows DAVENPORT toward the door curious about the pandemonium outside.

CUT TO:

176. DOORWAY - ELLIS

ELLIS is jubilant.

ELLIS

Our orders Sir! We're all shippin' out! They finally gonna' let us Negroes fight! Hitler ain't got a chance now--after what Joe Louis did to Max Schmelling?

CUT TO:

177 DAVENPORT - WILKIE - ELLIS

WILKIE is jubilant for a moment. ELLIS is laughing.

ELLIS

We liable to be back home in a couple months, Sir--by the way--Smalls and Peterson were both A-W-O-L, Sir--MP's got Smalls--they're still looking for Peterson.

DAVENPORT glances at WILKIE. Outside the men go on cheering.

O.C. HENSON

Twenty-four hour stand-by alert!

CUT TO:

178 EXT: BARRACKS - EVENING

HENSON and a group of men that include COBB are hugging one another and generally enjoying the news that they are 'shipping-out' to Europe. DAVENPORT opens the window and looks out at them curiously.

HENSON

It's the invasion of Europe, Boys!

COBB

Look out Hitler, the niggahs is comin' to git your ass--
through the FOG!

The men laugh.

SOLDIER

we gonna' 'goose' the goose-step, Daddy!

Two black GI's march in the 'goose-step' their caps turned backward, giving the Heil Hitler salute.

TWO SOLDIERS

(in unison in southern accent)

Heil--Hitla'!

COBB turns to DAVENPORT.

COBB

We gonna' turn them Nazis around Sir----Woooooww!

ANOTHER VOICE

Show them a thing or two 'bout the Schvatzas!

DAVENPORT smiles, then turns away.

CUT TO:

179 INT: INTERROGATION ROOM

DAVENPORT straightens, moves to his desk.

DAVENPORT

Ellis, place Private Wilkie under arrest and escort him
to the stockade.

(cont.)

179

ELLIS is surprised.

ELLIS

Sir?

DAVENPORT

Carry out my order, Corporal.

ELLIS moves to WILKIE who gives himself up with soldierly dignity. DAVENPORT watches them go. Outside the celebration and cheering continue.

CUT TO:

180 EXT: BARRACKS -EVENING

The men are celebrating as ELLIS leads WILKIE from the door of the barracks and out to the road where they turn and walk toward the stockade. The men go right on celebrating, paying little or no attention to them.

CUT TO:

181 INT: DAVENPORT'S QUARTERS - DAY (Bright Morning)

The camera opens in DAVENPORT'S quarters. Partly dressed, DAVENPORT is folding a shirt and packing it in a suitcase opened on his bunk. It is a bright day, the sun rushing through the window. DAVENPORT looks around his space, sees the photo of the woman on the dresser, goes to it, kisses it, and puts it into the suitcase face up. He then closes the bag and sets it on the floor. He glances around the room one last time, making sure he's left nothing, then reaches for his jacket. There is a sudden sharp rap at his door. DAVENPORT doesn't answer it right away. He finishes dressing, and then faces it.

O.C. MP

Military Police Sir--we have the prisoner, Private Smalls, as you ordered, Sir.

(cont.)

181

DAVENPORT

Bring him in.

The screendoor opens and a black MP enters with SMALLS. SMALLS is handcuffed and in leg-irons. The MP walks him toward DAVENPORT, but SMALLS is reluctant. It is SMALLS that stops the MP's forward motion.

DAVENPORT

(to MP)

That'll be all--stand by outside.

MP

Yes. Sir!

The MP salutes, and exits. DAVENPORT waits for a moment before he turns his attention to SMALLS. When he does, a nervous SMALLS salutes him with both hands.

DAVENPORT

Why'd you go AWOL, soldier?

SMALLS

Private Anthony Smalls, Sir!

DAVENPORT

Answer my question!

SMALLS

I didn't go AWOL Sir--I got drunk in Tynin and---and fell asleep in the train station--it was the only public place I could find to sleep it off!

DAVENPORT

Where'd you get drunk? Where in Tynin?

SMALLS

Jakes--Jakes and Lilly's Golden Slipper--

DAVENPORT begins to pace.

DAVENPORT

Weren't you and Peterson supposed to be on detail?

(Smalls nods)

(cont.)

181

DAVENPORT

Where was Peterson? Speak up!

DAVENPORT'S tone is like a slap from which SMALLS recoils a bit.

SMALLS

I don't know, Sir!

DAVENPORT

You're lying! You just walked off your detail and Peterson did nothing?

SMALLS

No sir! He warned me, Sir--"listen Smalls!", he said--

DAVENPORT moves in close to SMALLS face, shouting.

DAVENPORT

(cutting Smalls off)

You trying to make a fool outta' me, Smalls? Huh?

(louder)

Are you?

SMALLS

No, Sir!

DAVENPORT calms somewhat, paces again.

DAVENPORT

The two of you went A-W-O-L together, didn't you?

SMALLS does not answer. DAVENPORT is angry.

DAVENPORT

Answer me!

SMALLS

Yes!

DAVENPORT.

You left together because Peterson knew I would find out the two of you killed Waters, didn't you?

(cont.)

181

SMALLS suddenly bursts into tears, shaking his head 'no'. But DAVENPORT presses.

DAVENPORT

What? I can't hear you?

DAVENPORT moves closer to SMALLS again.

DAVENPORT

You killed Waters didn't you? I want an answer!

SMALLS is sobbing.

SMALLS

I can't sleep! I can't sleep!

DAVENPORT

Did you kill Sergeant Waters?

SMALLS

It was Peterson, Sir!

(as if he can see it)

I watched, it wasn't me!

CUT TO:

182 [FLASHBACK]

EXT: BAYOU ROAD -WATERS -NIGHT

The camera is in tight CU on WATERS. His face is bloody and he is still drunk. He is down on the road on all fours trying to pull himself up, mumbling, talking out loud, staggering. Around him the fog is heavy, the underbrush threatening, the night sounds unusually loud.

V.O. SMALLS

We had changed the Guard, on our way back to the Orderly Room, when there he was, Sir--right on the road--talkin' to himself--ranting!

(cont.)

182

WATERS

(overlapping)

Can't be trusted--no matter what we do, there are no guarantees--and your mind won't let you forget it.

(shakes head)

No, no, no!

CUT TO:

183 PETERSON - SMALLS - WATERS

PETERSON and SMALLS stand on the edge of the road staring down at WATERS. In full gear, the two soldiers seem larger than normal somehow as the fog billows up around them.

PETERSON

Smalls, look who's drunk on his ass, boy.

SMALLS

Leave him be, Pete!

PETERSON edges toward WATERS.

PETERSON

Nooo! I'm gonna' enjoy this Smalls--big, bad Sergeant Waters down on his knees? No, Sah--I'm gonna' love this!

PETERSON leans over WATERS.

PETERSON

Hey, Sarge--need some help?

WATERS looks up, almost smiles as he reaches for PETERSON who pushes his back down viciously.

PETERSON

That's the kinda' help I'll give yah, boy! Let me help you again--allright?

PETERSON kicks WATERS in the ribs.

(cont.)

183

SMALLS moves forward to stop PETERSON

SMALLS

Peterson!

PETERSON turns on him violently.

PETERSON

No! Smalls--some people man--if this was a German, would you kill it? If it was Hitler--or that fuckin' Tojo? Would you kill him?

He kicks WATERS again. WATERS reaches out, his voice anguished.

WATERS

There's a trick to it Peterson--it's the only way you can win! CJ could never make it--he was a clown--

WATERS tries to laugh, pull himself up.

WATERS

A clown in blackface! A niggah! You got to be like them! And I was! I was--but the rules are fixed--
Shhh! Listen--

(whispers)

It's CJ! I made him do it! I made him! But it doesn't make any difference! They still hate you!

WATERS starts to rise as PETERSON takes a single step back and slowly removes and cocks his .45 automatic pistol.

WATERS

They still hate you!

CUT TO:

184 PETERSON - SMALLS - WATERS

PETERSON points the pistol at WATERS . The barrel of the pistol catching a bit of the moons light. SMALLS backs away from the scene, horrified, as PETERSON'S face twists in hatred.

PETERSON

Justice Smalls--for CJ! For everybody!

WATERS

They still hate you!

PETERSON fires the pistol point blank at WATERS chest. The shot flings WATERS away like a stone. His body slams back onto the road hard, his face surprised, the sudden pain of the bullet in his face before he dies.

CUT TO:

185 PETERSON - SMALLS - WATERS BODY

Another angle. PETERSON walks to the body and looks down at it. His expression is still grim, hateful. This time he stand over the body and points the pistol at WATERS head. He fires again. The body jerks lifelessly as the bullet explodes in its head. SMALLS is about to pee on himself he is so scared.

For a moment PETERSON looks at WATERS body silently. A small, strange smile comes to his expression, as he turns away and follows SMALLS back into the shadows. The camera remains on the body of WATERS. There is a sudden quiet. PETERSON and SMALLS have hardly disturbed the fog that swirls a little, then settles heavily over the body as if caressing it.

CUT TO:

186 [PRESENT TIME]

INT: DAVENPORT'S QUARTERS - DAY

DAVENPORT is shouting at SMALLS who is still sobbing

DAVENPORT

You call that Justice?

SMALLS shakes his head 'no'.

DAVENPORT

Then why the fuck didn't you do something?

SMALLS

I am scared of Peterson, Sir! Just scared of him! He

said everybody would think white people

did it!

DAVENPORT turns away from SMALLS in disgust. He is angry and hurt.

DAVENPORT

Guard!

The MP enters.

DAVENPORT

Get this goddamn man out of here!

The MP takes SMALLS by the arm, but SMALLS refuses to move.

SMALLS

Sir?

DAVENPORT faces him.

SMALLS

I'm sorry, Sir.

SMALLS salutes. DAVENPORT simply stares at him as the MP leads SMALLS out. He is quiet for a long time.

CUT TO:

187 EXT: FORT NEAL - DAY

The camera opens on a long line of black soldiers all dressed in combat gear. They are marching proudly and counting cadence along a road in the Fort. Fort Neal's men have packed up and are on their way to Europe. On the other side of the road DAVENPORT is walking toward the gate of the Fort carrying his suitcase and briefcase. In the BG a jeep approaches. DAVENPORT hears the vehicle and moves off the road out of its way. The jeep pulls up beside him and stops.

CUT TO:

188 TAYLOR - DAVENPORT

TAYLOR is driving the jeep and is wearing sunglasses. He is also dressed in combat gear. He smiles at DAVENPORT as he removes the glasses.

TAYLOR

I thought you'd like to know--they caught Peterson in Alabama just a little while ago--Colonel's peein' roses he's so happy.

DAVENPORT is quiet. There is a awkwardness about the moment.

TAYLOR

Guess that's it--got your man.

DAVENPORT

(not pleased)

Yeah, I got him.

The two men measure each other again.

TAYLOR

I was wrong.

DAVENPORT

(slight pause)

So was I-----I could do with a ride, Captain.

TAYLOR nods and DAVENPORT swings his bags into the jeep and hops in beside TAYLOR who starts the jeep at once.

(cont.)

188

TAYLOR

I'm gonna' have to get used to Negroes with bars
shoulders Davenport--being in charge.

DAVENPORT

Oh, you'll get used to it, Captain--you can bet your
ass on that! You'll get used to it.

The two men smile at each other as the jeep pulls out in front of the marching men, rolls ahead of them for awhile and pulls off and out of the Frame. The camera continues with the marching black GI's, then slowly moves up and over them as they march beneath it, the sound of their cadence call growing louder as they march away.

DISSOLVE & MIX WITH:

189 EXT: BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

The camera focuses on the deserted baseball field. Across it, dust and papers blow out from Home Plate to centerfield. In the BG the cadence count goes on, now mixed with the faint sounds of a baseball game, and a little guitar music.

SUPERIMPOSE: The 221ST Chemical Smoke Generating Company, all it's officers and enlisted men were wiped out in the Ruhr Valley during a German advance in heavy fog.

FADE OUT

THE END