

BEHIND ENEMY LINES

this draft
by Zak Penn

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FADE IN:

A SATELLITE RECON VIEW OF THE EARTH

The faint crackle and drone of NATO COM CHANNELS becomes audible as we DESCEND toward the earth.

CREDITS ROLL

The earth grows larger. Europe fills the center of the screen, closer and closer. The AUDIO SIGNALS, chaotic, endless, and overlapping, become distinct.

NATO COM 1

....0249 Intel verify. Go, all verify.
All verify. 0249 all verify.

The Adriatic is now in the center of the screen. Fifty miles away. Forty-eight. Forty-six. Snatches of CNN reports can be heard mixed with all the other static.

CNN (V.O.)

...and the Cincinnati Accord has brought a cease fire to the region, allowing for the complete withdrawal of U.S. and NATO forces by New Year's Day. President Slobodan Milosevic has promised that ground troops under the command of General Ratko Mladic will not cross the NATO mandated safe zone. Meanwhile...

And now, the cold, dark sea fills the screen. We SWEEP along the surface which is roiling in a high winds.

The CHATTER is DEAFENING now.

CNN (CONT'D)

...infighting between rival militias in the foothills surrounding the so called "safe haven" of Mitrovica continues...

Suddenly, we cross the hull of the USS ENTERPRISE, a massive aircraft carrier three football fields long, steaming grandly in the Adriatic waters, just before dawn. We hear SIRENS...

INT. BELOW DECKS

LIEUTENANT MICHAEL STACKHOUSE bolts upright in his bunk. Stackhouse is a tightly wound guy, a pilot with an obsessive

interest in technology and avionics. Witness the gatefolds from AIR POWER! Monthly, taped above his bed like Playboy Centerfolds.

He springs out of bed, then kicks the bunk of his roommate.

STACKHOUSE

BURNETT! Jesus, WAKE UP!

LIEUTENANT CHRIS BURNETT (call sign Wu-Tang, due to his dislike of gangsta rap) tries not to wake up, despite the ALARMS and Stackhouse screaming in his face.

BURNETT

(exhausted)

It's a drill.

STACKHOUSE

I don't think so.

Burnett turns to face him. This is a guy who was as gung-ho as anyone two years ago, but six months policing the Bosnian conflict has sapped whatever enthusiasm he once had.

BURNETT

Another one of Riegart's drills, I'm telling you. Guy's got a lot of nerve waking us up in the middle of our crew rest ... after an 18 hour alert.

(rolling back over)

Muster for me, Stack. Tell 'em I'm in deep shelter. Strategic reserve.

Suddenly, an insistent KNOCK on the door to their cabin. The door pushes open, COP (Chief Petty Officer) O'MALLEY, a senior enlisted man who serves as the intelligence officer for the fighter squadron, sticks his head in.

O'MALLEY

Drop your cocks, gentlemen. This one's for real.

Stackhouse turns to gloat, but Burnett is already out of bed and going for the door.

INT. READY ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Burnett, Stackhouse, and about eight of the other pilots have assembled in the Ready Room for their briefing. Burnett leans over to Kincaid, a pilot in his early thirties. Kincaid has his sunglasses on, even though they're inside.

BURNETT

(sarcastic)

I can't believe it, an actual mission.
I wonder if we'll even get to arm our
weapons?

KINCAID

You gonna bitch all day, Burnett?

BURNETT

What is it, Tuesday?

(thinking)

Yeah, I guess I am.

OMALLEY

Attention on deck!

Everyone shuts up, immediately, because COMMANDER LESLIE RIEGART has walked in. Intimidating, exacting and a tremendous stickler when it comes to rules and tradition, Riegart inspires his men's attention, if not their affection.

REIGERT

Seats, gentlemen.

Chief O'Malley is comfortable in the midst of authority. He and the CAG go way back.

COP

Morning sir.

REIGERT

Morning.

Riegart wastes no time, just walks up to the front of the room and starts reading off a sit-rep. While he reads, O'Malley draws the scenario on the white board behind them with a magic marker.

REIGERT (CONT'D)

(reading from a clipboard)

"European Command Sentry High Watch
reports unknown rider turned outbound
from Airfield X-ray Seven at time zero-
4-9... Bogey is unresponsive to comms...
Heading is intercept course Romeo Five
X-ray...

(to O'Malley)

Who's that?

O'MALLEY

(not missing a beat)
USS DENYER, Troop carrier, Davis
class.

The pilots scribble in their flight logs. O'Malley's drawing clearly lays out the situation for us, in case we couldn't follow all that: an unidentified Serb plane is headed straight for the USS Denyer, a troop carrier.

REIGERT

(to himself)

Makes sense. Denyer is a plum target
with no real self defense capability.

(to the pilots)

Gentlemen, I want you to run a simple
eyeball - shooter profile. Burnett,
Stack, you're the eyeball, Kincaid,
Purdue, you're the shooter. Buster
out and intercept the contact. If you
get a positive ID on a non-hostile
prior to penetration of the outer zone,
convert and escort if you can.
Understood?

KINCAID and PURDUE nod. Burnett is a bit concerned.

BURNETT

Sir, what if we don't get a positive
I.d. before he hits the Denyer's D-
Radius?

Riegart turns to Burnett. From the look on his face, it's
clear that Burnett is not the teacher's pet.

REIGERT

If you can't eyeball it before it gets
to the hot zone then you will clear
the playground, Lieutenant, so that
our good friends on the USS Chandler
can blow it out of the sky.

(to everyone)

Now haul ass.

The pilots gather their gear hurriedly and begin to leave.
Burnett passes close to Reigert to study the chart.

Riegart points to Burnett's flight suit, where a zipper has
gone unclosed.

REIGERT (CONT'D)

Square that away.

REIGERT turns and leaves. BURNETT rolls his eyes, then zips it closed.

As REIGERT leaves.

COP

Attention on deck!

All rise as the CAG leaves.

EXT. USS ENTERPRISE - DAWN

It's a frenetic scene-- the deck is busy, swarming with pilots and deck crew, all played out against a stormy Adriatic sky.

We see a series of shots detailing the many and varied launch protocols being executed.

ON STACKHOUSE-- he's strapped into his navigator's seat behind BURNETT and is busy flipping switches and punching in flight information as the Hornet's powerful engines spool up. We hear STACKHOUSE talking over the radio with the tower.

STACKHOUSE

Strike ATC from Beefeater 01, we are green to green request a go...

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL

Roger, Beefeater 01 clear the engine start.

INT. BURNETT'S F-18 (BEEFEATER 01) -- NIGHT

BURNETT is looking around him to check that everything is good. We see his hand on the throttle. He looks out to his plane captain who is on the deck outside. The captain looks left and right, tossed around a little by the stormy conditions, then gives Burnett a thumbs up. Burnett returns the signal.

BURNETT

Here we go.

We see him gently push the throttle forward.

We see a MONTAGE of shots detailing the extremely kinetic series of events that occur in fractions of a second leading up to the engine burn.

We see the two circular engine nacelles, their fins tighten maliciously as they funnel 86,000 pounds of thrust energy to an exact spot behind the lethal aircraft.

We see BURNETT'S eyes, focusing intently, concentrating on what promises to be a tricky take off. He looks to his side, where KINCAID is similarly standing by. They exchange a thumbs up, then...

WHOOOOOSH!!!! BOOOOOM!!

Both aircraft hurtle down the deck and catapult into the gloom, their afterburners screaming. Deck crew crouch down as the F-18's thunder past overhead. It's an awesome sight.

CUT TO:

EXT. ADRIATIC CLOUDY SKY --

It's a dark day, the sky filled with clouds, the portent of rain in the air. We hear the buzzing of an air craft. It grows closer, closer...then zips in and out of our view, passing almost immediately into another cloud bank.

What was it?

EXT. ADRIATIC SKY

Looking straight down on the choppy slate black sea, two F-18 warplanes barrel through the frame.

INT. BURNETT'S COCKPIT

Burnett and Stackhouse are zipping along above the Adriatic, doing their best to intercept their target. On Stackhouse's radar scope, we see that the bogey is getting closer, very quickly.

STACKHOUSE

He's close to D-Radius already. But whoever he is, he's a slow-flyer. We're gaining on him.

BURNETT

Copy that.

KINCAID (O.S.)

Uh, Wu-Tang from Yahoo.

BURNETT

Go ahead.

INT. KINCAID'S F-18

KINCAID is busy flipping switches and flying the plane. He looks a little wound up.

KINCAID

Hey, Tang, how the hell do we escort a bogey going 100 knots? You know we'll stall if we try that.

BURNETT (O.S.)

Don't sweat in man, let's split up for a pincer. I'll go left. See if he stays nose on. I'll call the reverse for a stern conversion to get the visual ID. Copy?

KINCAID

(reluctantly)

Copy. Breaking right...

EXT. ADRIATIC SKY

The warplanes flare apart.

ON BURNETT'S RADAR - The bogey stays straight, blinking, blinking.

Burnett shakes his head.

BURNETT

Shit. Bogey is steady up.

KINCAID (O.S.)

Is he blind, or what?

CUT TO:

INT. RED CROWN

The nerve center of an operation where all the big decisions are made. It's a relatively cramped room, bathed in red light, full of radio and radar operators and a commander's helm. You don't fuck around in here.

Reigart watches and listens in, O'Malley by his side. They are coordinating this action.

OPERATOR

Red Crown. Beefeater and Switchbox.
(MORE)

OPERATOR (CONT'D)

One minute till D-Radius penetration.
Do you have contact?

BURNETT (O.S.)

Negative, Red Crown. Beefeater coming
hard left to 360.

O'Malley bites his lip.

O'MALLEY

It's gonna be close.

REIGART

Tell Chandler to get ready.

CUT TO:

INT. USS CHANDLER POS CENTER

This is the kill room of the warship. It's bathed in deep blue light, red and green lights flash across several weapon consoles, radars beep and several ensigns scurry around with situation reports. An ENSIGN slides down the console in his wheeled chair, flicking switches as he goes.

ENSIGN

Batteries four through seven are up
and ready sir.

CAMERA whips over to the COMMANDER at his chair.

COMMANDER

Roger, standby for bird in the air.

EXT. USS CHANDLER'S DECK

We see Tomahawk Cruise Missile launchers swing around to acquire a target.

CUT TO:

INT. BURNETT'S F-18

Burnett and Stackhouse are coming close to the target now. Given their speed, they have to be careful not to overfly.

STACKHOUSE

Hey, Tang, be advised Bogey is still
steady up. We're playing chicken.

BURNETT

Roger Smoke. Stand by. Red Crown from Beefeater 01. Bogey is head to head, will attempt to scrub my speed to get visual ID.

RED CROWN (O.S.)

Beefeater, Bogey is thirty seconds from D-Radius. Advise RTB.

STACKHOUSE

Chris, don't get us killed man.

BURNETT

(ignoring him)

Yahoo, be advised, I'm dropping anchor.

KINCAID (O.S.)

Careful, Wu-Tang.

BURNETT

Hang on, Smoke, we're going ass heavy!

EXT F-18

We see the aircraft deploy it's infamous airbrakes which stand up between the rear tail fins. This allows the pilot to dramatically slow the jet without spooling down the engines. It's not an easy maneuver.

INT F-18

The noise and vibration inside the plane is extreme.

STACKHOUSE

(voice shaky from the vibration)

Crunch 7! HAARM UP on VTC, Spool down on V-Max ATR!

We see the G-force indicator on BURNETT'S head up display (HUD). Stackhouse spools through the G numbers as the pilot tries to keep the power on.

CLOSE on BURNETT'S hand pushing the throttle. The aircraft whines like an injured animal.

EXT. ADRIATIC SKY

We see the F-18 bucking like a wild horse. It's forward movement is much slower now due to the nose up position. We see close up of a wing and trim flaps as well as the air brakes whorling hard to keep the aircraft in position.

INT. BURNETT'S F-18

It's like being in a food blender. A dispassionate computer voice blurts out "STALL WARNING, STALL WARNING" and the cockpit alarms go into overdrive. BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!

Burnett struggles to keep the aircraft in trim while searching the skies for the bogey.

BURNETT

Come on, buttwipe! Show me something.

STACKHOUSE

(amid the beeping and warnings)

Tang! Clock's running man! STV at 90%!

Burnett scans his shaky radar. ZOOM IN on the bogey blip flashing near the center of his radar.

Burnett looks up just in time to see...

THE BOGEY!

Underneath the cloud, about 500 FT above sea level, an old propeller driven transport with few markings flies straight towards the USS Denyer.

A second later, it disappears.

Burnett shouts into his radio, excited.

BURNETT

RED CROWN! RED CROWN! Beefeater 01 -
I have eyeball! Twin engine prop.
Antonov. No weapon stations !

CUT TO:

INT. RED CROWN

Reigart listens to Burnett, but watches the scope. The blip penetrates the D-radius.

RED CROWN
We have D-Radius penetration, Sir.

BURNETT (O.S.)
Red Crown, I say again no weapons
stations!!

Reigart can see that the Chandler has already locked onto the
bogey, which is in the D-radius. He grabs the mic.

REIGERT
Beefeater 01 this is Alfa Whiskey!
RTB at once! I say again RTB! Devil
Six has the ball.

INT. BURNETT'S F-18

BURNETT shakes his head. HE doesn't like it.

BURNETT
Negative, Red Crown. I can turn it
around.
(to Stackhouse)
Hey, Smoke, vector me inside BVR.
We've gotta turn him around before
they pop him.

STACKHOUSE
Come on, Chris. You heard the order.

BURNETT
Chandler shoots that transport down,
we're gonna be out here another six
months making up for our mistake.
Hold on Smoke.

EXT. ADRIATIC SKY

The F-18 lights up and rockets away.

INT. RED CROWN

RIEGART and O'MALLEY rush towards the radar scope.

REIGERT
What the hell is he doing!

O'MALLEY
He's trying to turn it around.

INT. BURNETT'S F-18

ON BURNETT -- He's getting flack from all sides, RED CROWN, KINCAID, CHANDLER, but his eyes are set, determined.

STACKHOUSE

Bogey baring 180 at 20, dead ahead,
you should have visual in 5. Don't
fuck this up, Wu Tang!

EXT. ADRIATIC SKY

We follow the Hornet looking right up the tailpipes as it bends the air around it at Mach 2.6.

INT. BURNETT'S F-18

The noise is deafening. He concentrates intensely.

INT. RED CROWN

They wait. They watch.

INT. CHANDLER

The Commander of the chandler waits, tensely, for the order.

WEAPONS ENSIGN

We have gas grain gen ignition in
10, 9, 8..

The COMMANDER has his hand over the flashing firing switches. Numbers spool down. He's getting ready to blow the transport out of the sky.

INT. BURNETT'S F-18

We see his point of view. Suddenly the clouds part and the bogey is clearly visible, oblivious to the death ranged against it.

BURNETT

Smoke, standby, we're going ass heavy
again.

BURNETT flicks switches and readies himself for the stunt.

EXT. ADRIATIC SKY

The Hornet rockets past camera straight at the bogey, suddenly diving under the plane and pointing its nose straight up.

INT. BURNETT'S F-18

Strain. Violence. BURNETT suddenly rolls the Hornet through 180 degrees and reverses thrust. Sounds like a dying dragon.

EXT. ADRIATIC SKY

It's worked. BURNETT has maneuvered the near stalling Hornet into a position right in front of the Bogey.

INT. SERB TRANSPORT PLANE

The Hornet rises up in front of us like an Apollo rocket!! We can see BURNETT as he looks through his cockpit!! He waves frantically at the pilot.

The pilot, a disheveled Slav, screams and tears at his yoke.

EXT. ADRIATIC SKY

The Hornet can no longer maintain position. BURNETT rams the burners sending out a twenty foot plume of light. He rolls skyward as the bogey flares away to his right. It worked.

INT. RED CROWN

Back in the booth, the Operator excitedly yells the news.

RED CROWN

(excited)

Bandit is turning! Say again Bandit is turning!

They watch as it begins to turn away from the Denyer. The Chandler is still locked on.

O'MALLEY

Sir, the Chandler?

ON REIGERT --

Thinking about it. He's pissed as hell that Burnett just showed him up, but he knows he's right. It's turning around.

REIGERT

Tell Devil Six to abort.

This sends the room into overdrive as various operators inform the players.

RED CROWN

Beefeater 01, you have the ball.
Devil six is amber.

INT. USS CHANDLER POS CENTER

The ambient light changes signifying a change in status.
The COMMANDER exhales.

INT. BURNETT'S F-18

He rockets skyward as dawn finally breaks across the Adriatic.

BURNETT

Roger, Red Crown. Understood.

INT. RED CROWN BOOTH

RIEGART says nothing. His jaw twitches. O'MALLEY slaps him on the back, and lets out a tension relieving laugh.

RED CROWN

Devil Six stand down, say again Devil
Six stand down. Unknown rider has
turned and is headed for feet dry.
Beefeater, Switchbox continue escort
'til 340 Waterloo then R-T-B. Strike
has ATC.

INT. BURNETT'S F-18

BURNETT

Roger that Red Crown. Escort then
RTB.

EXT. ADRIATIC DAWN SKY

The bogey limps along as the F-18's escort.

INT. BURNETT'S COCKPIT

CLOSE on BURNETT. Sweat pours down his face as he breathes heavily. It was close, but he pulled it off.

CUT TO:

EXT. ENTERPRISE - DAY

The next day. The carrier is very busy. Planes are landing and taking off. The sea is calm.

INT. DIRTY SHIRT - DAY

An aircraft carrier is nothing less than a floating city. Five thousand men and women, all living in close quarters for six months at a time.

The "dirty shirt" officers mess hall is where most of the junior officers eat. It's a rowdy, school cafeteria atmosphere; lots of aggressive people packed into a tight space. The constant roar of planes taking off and landing only adds to the pandemonium.

Burnett could eat in the officer's mess, but he chooses not to. He sits with Stackhouse, who judiciously studies an F-18 manual upgrade while eating his lunch.

STACKHOUSE

....and listen to this, this is pretty cool. They did away with the old nose camera, you know the physical film spool. It's a digital relay now...

BURNETT

You know it turns me on when you talk like that.

STACKHOUSE

... it goes to a Zip drive which loads the info straight into the IDEM.

BURNETT

Wow, that IS great. One question, though. What's an IDEM?

STACKHOUSE

It's the ejection seat, moron.

(beat)

Every time you don't crash is like a miracle, Burnett.

BURNETT

Hey, I don't need to read the manual to fly the thing.

Suddenly a meaty hand grabs Burnett's neck from behind.

RODWAY (O.S.)

Name. Rank.. Serial number.

Burnett smiles. He recognizes the voice.

BURNETT

(to Stackhouse)

Is there a big effeminite looking guy standing right behind me?

Captain GLEN RODWAY, USMC, is a brick shithouse of a man. Early thirties, barrel chested, a bit immature. He has a tendency to get too aggressive, which serves him well in his job (Marine Search and Rescue). He lets go of Burnett, extends a hand to Stackhouse.

RODWAY

Hey, Glen Rodway. You fly with this loser?

STACKHOUSE

Only cause they make me.

BURNETT

Glen and my older brother went to high school together. He used to beat the shit out of me, then he grew up. Oh wait, no he didn't.

Rodway gives him a dead arm, then sits down and starts eating off his plate.

BURNETT (CONT'D)

(to Rodway)

Ow. Thanks, ass, that's my lucky jack-off arm.

STACKHOUSE

Search and Rescue?

Rodway nods, gestures over his shoulder to a group of Marines eating at the next table.

RODWAY

Yeah, we just finished up in Brinisi, we're shipping back. You guys're out of here?

BURNETT

Two weeks. They say.

RODWAY

See any action?

STACKHOUSE

Almost fired a shot yesterday. Wouldda been the first in two months.

Rodway shakes his head.

RODWAY

Waste of fucking time.

BURNETT

Better'n getting blown up.

RODWAY

Think so? I'd rather get shot at than sit on my ass.

Burnett turns to Stackhouse.

BURNETT

This is what happens when your Mother drinks while she's pregnant.

Rodway stands up and puts Burnett in a headlock.

BURNETT (CONT'D)

Oww, come on...

RODWAY

Lieutenant Stackhouse, allow me to demonstrate some Marine close combat techniques for you. The first one, I like to call "the never-ending headache."

COP (O.S.)

Mister Burnett!

They all look up to see COP O'MALLEY standing at the entrance to the mess. O'Malley remains at the door, respecting the "sanctity" of the officers mess. He spots Burnett, points at him. Rodway lets him go.

COP (CONT'D)

Commander Riegart wants to see you.
Officer's mess.

Burnett and Stackhouse look at each other. Rodway smiles.

RODWAY

Dead man walking.

INT. CLEAN SHIRT -- DAY

The Clean Shirt is the formal officer's mess hall, and it's a paradox; an oasis of tradition and refinement on these giant, floating war machines. Rules of etiquette, dating from before WWII, survive. No loud talking, no rowdy behavior, clean uniforms.

Particularly under Reigert's command, it's VERY formal. Fine linens, china, genuine silver.

It is now after dinner. The messmen (stewards) remove the last dishes and serve coffee with all the technique and style of a five-star restaurant waiter.

Reigert sits with NATO COMMANDER ETIENNE DEMERY, a Frenchman. Riegart peruses some new orders just delivered from NATO command.

RIEGART

This is a lot of sorties for an action that's winding down, Admiral. Couldn't we just use satellite intel?

DEMERY

Not my decision, Captain, and I want to emphasize how important it is that your pilots strictly comply with the flight routes provided. The treaty depends on it. Now...

(changing subjects)

Her name is Greta Olson, she's with Sky News.

Demery hands Riegart a business card and a photograph of a NEWS REPORTER.

DEMERY (CONT'D)

She's well-respected, and generally cooperative with our goals.

RIEGERT

(frowning)

What is this?

DEMERY

It's called handling the press, Captain. We want you to give her a tour of the ship. Parade some presentable young men in front of her.

The messmen continue to serve the after-dinner fare, including ice cream in chilled bowls.

RIEGART

Sir, to be honest, I find the press to be an intrusive presence. It inspires showing off and a general lack of focus.

Demery smiles.

RIEGART (CONT'D)

Something funny, sir?

DEMERY

You, Captain. It's amazing you've managed to maintain such a high level of discipline in this conflict. It's a very impressive achievement.

RIEGART

It's my job.

DEMERY

And it's exactly that attitude that makes you perfect for this assignment.
(slyly)
Do you know what happens to officers who pull the press detail, Riegart?

He folds his napkin and rises.

DEMERY--(CONT'D)

They make Admiral.

(beat)

My compliments to your staff, Captain.

Demery rises to leave. He is joined by his aide, another Frenchman carrying a briefcase. He walks out.

Riegart looks down at the card, considering what Demery just said. Then he tucks it into his pocket.

BURNETT (O.S.)

Sir? You wanted to see me?

Riegart looks up at Burnett, who is still in his flight suit. His mood goes from bad to worse.

RIEGART

You're out of uniform.

BURNETT

I was told to report without delay,
sir.

RIEGART

Follow me, Lieutenant.

They move to a seating area adjacent to the dining room. It is a reading area, complete with overstuffed chairs and tables with magazines; a gentleman's club. As Burnett and Riegart arrive, two officers seated in the area get the clue and leave quietly. Burnett takes a seat.

RIEGART (CONT'D)

General Shelton called me this morning to congratulate us on our excellent handling of yesterday's incident.

Burnett brightens a bit.

BURNETT

That's great, sir.

RIEGART

He was under the impression that I ordered you to pull that stunt. I informed him that you violated my direct order, and I recommended punishment.

Burnett's jaw drops.

RIEGART (CONT'D)

General Shelton overruled my recommendation, which I will stand by. But I wanted to let you know that I do not approve of your conduct.

BURNETT

Sir, correct me if I'm wrong, but I averted a pretty hairy situation...

RIEGART

NO!

That "no" is loud enough to bring silence to the rest of the room.

RIEGART (CONT'D)

What you did was ignore a direct order. You violated the chain of command.

BURNETT

Sir, the result was...

RIEGART

I don't give a crap what the result was, Burnett. You think this is all a joke? All this so called bullshit about uniforms, and system checks and practice, and DRILLS... this is what you do to prepare for war, which is something you don't have a clue about.

BURNETT

But we're NOT at war, sir.

RIEGART

Yes, we ARE. Unless we're parked in San Diego Bay and running maneuvers, you are at war every time you step on this boat. Understand?

BURNETT

No sir. I don't. We fly day dickaround hops, we go out, and we come back, we go through the motions pretending we're in the middle of a fight, but we're not fighting. We're WATCHING.

Riegart glares at Burnett. He's about to yell at him, but decides not to.

RIEGART

You be glad you're not in a fight, son. Cause with that attitude, you'd be down in seconds.

(beat)

You're dismissed, Lieutenant.

BURNETT

Thank you, sir.

Burnett salutes and leaves.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHIPS ALONGSIDE

The huge carrier steams alongside a replenishment ship, 200 feet apart. Lines are fired between the ships and packages are highlined between the lumbering giants.

On the opposite side of the stores ship, a destroyer also churns in formation, taking on supplies.

It is an amazing display of precision seamanship and teamwork. The huge palletized bundles are pulled onto deck and arranged by forklifts on the flight deck.

CLOSE UP on one of the huge boxes: a US MAIL sticker.

LOUDSPEAKER (O.S.)

Mail call, mail call! Packages only.
Hangar Bay One.

INT. MESS HALL

Preparations are underway for what looks to be a pretty respectable Christmas meal. Teams of waiters lay out food and drink. Holiday spirit fills the ship. Sailors walk along with Santa hats and reindeer antlers.

INT. HANGAR BAY - DAY

The floor of the hangar is loaded with dufflebags, waiting to be put on transport planes. The boys are on their way home. The ship has mentally checked out.

INT. SQUADRON OFFICE - DAY

Burnett is on the phone with his father back in Denver. We can hear in Mr. Burnett's voice the emotions of a proud parent, even if his son is a bit embarrassed by it.

The only other person in the office is a sailor erasing all the missions off the whiteboard. There's a little Christmas tree on the desk.

BURNETT

No, don't wake her up. Just let her
~~know~~ I'll be home by New Year's.

DAD (O.S.)

She's gonna be disappointed, Chris.

BURNETT

Gee Dad, I'm sorry, I forgot to ask everyone to stop killing each other sooner.

DAD (O.S.)

What's that?

Burnett notices what the sailor has written on the whiteboard.
ON THE WHITEBOARD: "RECON: BURNETT/STACKHOUSE F/A18-F"

AND UNDERNEATH "MERRY CHRISTMAS!"

Burnett is dismayed. Shakes his head.

DAD (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You still there?

BURNETT
Yeah.

DAD (O.S.)
I want you to know, son how proud we
are...

BURNETT
Dad, please, not this speech again...

DAD
Well I am. In my book, you're a hero
just for risking your life.

BURNETT
(uncomfortable,
interrupting)
You know what I did today? I watched
'Who Wants to Be A Millionaire' for
three hours. We're not heroes, Dad.
Trust me.

DAD (O.S.)
Your mother loves Regis.

Burnett can't help but crack a slight smile.

BURNETT
Yeah, okay Dad. I gotta go.

DAD
Bye, Chris. Don't forget to call
your brother.

BURNETT
Okay. Merry Christmas.

Burnett hangs up and looks at the whiteboard.

BURNETT (CONT'D)
Son of a bitch.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Stackhouse is suiting up, alone. Most of the airmen are already at Christmas dinner.

Burnett walks in.

STACKHOUSE

Lucky us, huh?

BURNETT

Sorry bout this, Stack. This has gotta be the Ball Buster getting back at me. Didn't mean to drag you down, too.

STACKHOUSE

No worries, I hate Christmas anyway.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN VILLAGE - NIGHT

The moon is a sliver tonight. A small village in the Southeast section of Bosnia seems almost deserted. A few men try to get a truck started with a flashlight and a hammer. A baby cries.

And suddenly, the sky splits open as a US Navy F/A-18 F SCREAMS across the sky a few hundred feet above them. It's a startlingly loud sound, but the people seem unfazed; they're used to it.

One of the men pulls a cell phone out of his pocket.

SERB SPOTTER

(subtitled)

Fast movers, low flying... Headed your way.

He flips his cell phone closed. Welcome to recon, New Millennium style.

INT. F/A-18 F - NIGHT

Burnett flies in front. Stackhouse rides in back, reading their position on a map. He writes numbers down from a briefing map onto his black, metal kneeboard, strapped to his right thigh. He then stores the pen vertically in the spring at the top of the kneeboard.

STACKHOUSE

Coordinates 3-0 1-5 0-6 point 5, 1-1-5 0-8 4-3 point 7, confirmed. Come easy left, steady up 1-2-5, final vector for entry point, 1-0 to go, mark. The sectors are all concurrent.

BURNETT

You sure about that?

STACKHOUSE

Reading it right here, bro. Check your airspeed.

BURNETT

Well, the Serbs must of bought some old U-boats, cause we're flying over a lake.

Stackhouse looks down. Sure enough, they are photographing a large body of water.

STACKHOUSE

Those are the numbers. Shit.

BURNETT

Goddamn NATO pencilnecks. We've only flown 78,000 sorties...you'd think they would've cracked it by now.

STACKHOUSE

I'll radio back and let em know.

BURNETT

Hold up...

Burnett has spotted something to the West, he banks the plane sharply.

BURNETT (CONT'D)

Check it out, at three o'clock, roughly abeam the point. That's gotta be where we're supposed to be. The coordinates must be laterally offset by 5 miles or so. Typical. Some jerkoff in Brussels writing coordinates for the moon.

ON THE GROUND --

An entire Serb infantry unit advances slowly through the snowy countryside.

BACK IN THE PLANE --

Stackhouse checks coordinates on his flight instruments.

STACKHOUSE

Uh, that's not on the flight plan, Wu Tang. We should radio in.

BURNETT

We radio in, here's what's gonna happen; Riegart's gonna make us fly back, wait for the new coordinates, then refly the mission. We're supposed to recon troop positions, right? Well, there they are. We're expected to show a little reasonable initiative for christsakes. Otherwise, let R2D2 fly the fucking mission.

(beat)

Let's just get it done. :

Stackhouse frowns, but then checks the time.

STACKHOUSE

(to himself)

I'd like to get a call into my parents before they go to sleep.

BURNETT

In and out. No problems. Promise.

Stackhouse nods.

STACKHOUSE

Alright. Take us in.

(into radio)

Strike ATC from Beefeater 01... we're, uh, setting up for the photo run just now... will advise.

STRIKE (O.S)

Roger Beefeater.

EXT SNOWY BOSNIA

Burnett pulls the plane into a climb and banks hard to the right. They are heading over a high mountain range, setting up for the run.

EXT. F/A-

The plane flies over the advancing infantry. The cameras on the plane's belly click away, snapping ten pictures a second. We see a series of shots of computer hardware whirring to life on board the aircraft. A red light and a soft tone attracts STACKHOUSE'S attention.

STACKHOUSE

Shit... Uhh, Wu Tang? We've just lost the uplink to AWACS..

BURNETT

Meaning what?

STACKHOUSE

It's no big deal, the cloud cover is screwing it up. It just means we'll have to spend an hour downloading the photos when we get home.

BURNETT

What's this "we" business, paleface? I don't know a hard drive from a hole in the wall. You're on your own.

STACKHOUSE

Then you do the PFC's.

BURNETT

Deal.

CUT TO:

INT. RADAR SHACK -- DAY

Inside a tiny, shack, a Serbian Soldier observes the movement of Burnett's plane on a radar scope. Thinking he must've gotten it wrong, he checks it again. Nope, he was right.

He makes a few, quick notations, then picks up the phone.

CUT TO:

INT. MANSION -- DAY

What was once the stately home of a fairly wealthy Muslim has been converted into the military headquarters for Zeljko Raznatovic, A.K.A, ARKAN, an ex- Serb Secret Police thug now

turned Warlord, commanding an army of "Tigers" - ruthless enforcers of murderous ethnic policy.

UPSTAIRS ROOM

Three televisions play at the same time, tuned to different news stations. Two of them are running stories on the conflict in Bosnia. Pictures of the Serb leader Mladic appear onscreen.

ANCHOR

... General Mladic's conciliatory speech in Belgrade today at a meeting of the Council for Peace in The Former Yugoslavia is being taken at face value, despite previous disparities between his words and his actions.

MLADIC

(on screen, subtitled)

I believe this agreement will bring peace to the region. It is a workable plan, and it demonstrates Serbia's willingness to cooperate with the peace Accord...

BAZDA (O.S.)

Coward.

REVEAL BAZDA, a young but high-ranking Tiger. He's gotten where he is by being aggressive and fervently patriotic to the cause. He sits next to Arkan himself, an older, calmer, and far more dangerous man. Arkan eats from a plate of food as he watches.

BAZDA (CONT'D)

He placates these people, and why? Because they occupy OUR country?

ARKAN

He's a politician, Bazda. He's trying to get NATO to leave.

BASDA

He tells us to advance, to keep the insurgents at bay. Then he tells the world that we won't fire a shot.

ARKAN

NATO leaves, we RUN this country, Bazda.

(MORE)

ARKAN (CONT'D)

Maybe all of Yugoslavia, some day.
We can't fight everyone at once.

(he taps Bazda's head)

Think, less emotion. You'll live
longer.

A Serb soldier bursts into the room, interrupting their
conversation.

SERB SOLDIER

(to Arkan)

Sir?

Arkan waves him in. The Soldier looks intimidated.

BAZDA

Speak! You're interrupting our meal,
at least make it quick.

SERB SOLDIER.

Sir, I have the radar reports. A
NATO F-18 has crossed the line and
overflowed our column moving into
Gracza. They are not on the published
NATO mission. One aircraft only. It
appears to be making another run.

Arkan stops eating.

BAZDA

So what? This is what you interrupt
us for?

ARKAN

Shut up, Bazda.

Arkan takes the radar report from the soldier, reads it
quickly.

ARKAN (CONT'D)

Everyone get out.

Bazda looks at Arkan, surprised.

ARKAN (CONT'D)

GET OUT!

Bazda and the soldier clear out of the room. Arkan pulls out his cell phone and starts dialing...

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - DAY

We see an extreme close up of an eye. The pupil is steel grey, a killers eye, an assassin's eye. A high pitch whine starts up and the eye is bathed in green light.

CUT TO:

INT. F/A-

Burnett and Stackhouse are making their final run over the lumbering Serb infantry. SUDDENLY, a WARNING SOUNDS inside the cockpit.

THE RADAR -

Shows a SAM site.

Burnett bolts upright. So does Stackhouse.

STACKHOUSE

I'll be damned. What the fuck is this?

Burnett is surprised to see the site on his radar.

BURNETT

Acquire it Smoke, it looks hot.

STACKHOUSE

Confirming...

Stackhouse is about to speak to Red Crown, but Burnett interrupts him.

BURNETT

Negative. Acquire first. Confirm later.

STACKHOUSE

Copy that. There's not enough flat ground for a SAM site for a hundred miles...

BURNETT

Could be a mobile launcher.

Burnett uses his cursor to pinpoint the SAM site on the ground.

EXT. FOREST DAY

A figure stands upright in the back of a flatbed pick up truck. Pointing a stinger Missile launcher towards the heavens. On the ground by the truck, a man watches a GPS portable radar.

INT. F-18

BURNETT

Target acquired. Copy that.

(over the radio)

Red Crown, this is Beefeater 01. We have acquired a target, a mobile SAM site at 134 08. It's painting our SIG. Request permission to engage.

RED CROWN (O.S.)

Copy that, Beefeater. That's a negative. You are out of your corridor. Vector retreat original heading.

BURNETT (O.S.)

Copy that, Red Crown. We have reason to believe this site is hostile.

RED CROWN (O.S.)

Copy that. Hang on, Beefeater...

STACKHOUSE

How do we know they're hostile?

BURNETT

They're painting our ass, man!

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST

We see the shooter - he's pointing the launcher skyward, tracking slowly around. He's not dressed as a soldier, instead wearing an old, worn Addidas sweatsuit with a threadbare Sarajevo Winter Olympics 1984 symbol.

CUT TO:

INT. F-18

Burnett and stack work frantically to get out of there.

BURNETT

I don't know who the fuck these guys
are but they've got nothing to lose.
Arm the bombs.

Stackhouse starts the ARM SEQUENCE.

SUDDENLY, the WARNING SIGNAL BLARES.

EXT. FOREST

WHOOOOOSH!!!! Stinger away!

INT. F-18

BURNETT

Oh, Shit!!

Burnett immediately flips on the AFTERBURNERS and puts the
plane into an insane climb.

EXT. BOSNIA SNOWY COUNTRYSIDE

We see the F-18 climb and roll as the afterburners power it
skyward.

STACKHOUSE

Motherfucker. They locked on.

BURNETT

(breathing heavily)

Red Crown, Beefeater 01 we are
targeted.

RED CROWN

Copy that, Beefeater.

The AFTERBURNERS are DEAFENING.

EXT. SKY

The airplane climbs like a rocket.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Whooooosh!! A second Stinger is noisily rocketed away from
the back of the bucking pick up.

INT. F/A-

Burnett's doing everything he can to get out of danger. His breathing is loud and fast.

Stackhouse, for his part, is monitoring the SAM site.

HIS RADAR -

Shows the LAUNCH of two SAMS.

STACKHOUSE

I've got two badboys in the air.
Three miles and closing in. They
fired at us, I can't believe it.

EXT. SKY, AERIAL P.O.V.

Far below we see two missiles pluming up towards camera.

BURNETT

Copy that.

Burnett looks at the radar. The two missiles are hurdling toward them. His eyes are wide with terror.

STACKHOUSE

Two miles. One point Eight. Point
Six. Point Four. Point Two. One
Mile. Drop the fuel tanks!! Drop
the fuel tanks!

EXT. LOW LEVEL FLYING THROUGH SNOWY COUNTRYSIDE

Burnett levels off the plane. He kills the Afterburners and JETTISONS the EXTERNAL FUEL TANKS.

STACKHOUSE

Point Eight. Point Six. Point Four.
Point Two...

Burnett JAMS the Afterburners and shoves the plane into a psychotic roll.

The G's are intense. Stackhouse and Burnett groan and yell. Their suits inflate to help kill the G forces. They can barely maintain consciousness.

EXT. GROUND

The external fuel tanks tumble end over end like napalm canisters. One is buried in the snow. The other SMASHES into a TUNNEL and EXPLODES just as the F-18 pulls ahead of it.

INT. F-18 COCKPIT.

Angle on Stackhouse. We see a huge fireball reaching up at him from outside. The cockpit shakes violently as they struggle to gain altitude.

STACKHOUSE

SHIIITT!!

EXT. GROUND

The first SAM Missile twists and alters its course toward the heat of the exploding fuel tank below.

It EXPLODES against the entrance of the tunnel.

STACKHOUSE (O.S.)

(breathing hard)

One is away.

BURNETT

Copy! Hang on!

EXT. SKY

Burnett takes the plane up in a tight, screaming loop to evade the second SAM. All the warning lights in the plane go off; the VOICE ALARM begins to speak.

INT. F-18

VOICE ALARM

Stall Warning. Stall Warning.

Burnett's head is shaking with the G's. Sweat pours out of his face like water.

STACKHOUSE

Second BASTARD coming in. Point Eight.
Point Six....Go for a Cuban....

BURNETT

Copy that.

Burnett pulls the plane into a high-speed Cuban roll.

EXT. F/A-

The second SAM missile whirs past the plane.

STACKHOUSE

Two is away...Fuck! Where's the weasel?!

The plane pulls out into a climb.

INT. F/A-

The plane pulls out of its dangerous roll and regains stability.

EXT. SKY

The SAM Missile turns sharply.

INT. F/A-

Both men are shit-scared now.

STACKHOUSE

She's coming back!

Burnett pulls the stick up, but it's no use.

BURNETT'S P.O.V

The missile comes straight at and into camera.

EXT. F/A-

The SAM SLAMS into the side of the plane.

EXTREME CLOSE UP -- extender rods from the warhead tear through the aircraft's thin skin.

The aircraft bucks violently then catastrophically tears apart in mid air.

Suddenly, all we hear is the RUSHING OF WIND.

The cockpit and fuselage section is hurling end over end at 450 miles per hour. The G forces are lethal.

INT. F-18

STACKHOUSE

Eject. Eject.

C/U on Burnett and Stackhouse pulling the eject handles under the seat. We see a slow motion ballet of kinetic violence as the eject procedure executes its destructive run.

-- A CORD binds their feet toward the seats.

-- A BLADE cuts all the electronics on the back of the seat.

-- THE CANOPY EXPLODES and flies away.

C/U on Stackhouse's leg. His kneeboard is still on his knee, and the pen is still loaded in its upright position.

The pilots pull their arms in and reach down to the yellow and black handle between their legs.

THE EJECT ROCKETS blow, and the SEATS EXPLODE out of the cockpit.

EXT. NIGHT SKY

We look straight down on the crumbling warplane as it bullets along, mere hundreds of feet above ground. The canopy explodes and BURNETT is shot out of the cockpit, straight at camera. A second later, STACKHOUSE follows. We see the aircraft fall away below them, and crash spectacularly into the mountainside.

ANGLE -on STACKHOUSE - We see his helmet crash violently into the side of BURNETT'S ejection seat as they hurtle along at 750 mph, flying horizontal to the ground. Debris flies all around them.

If you thought the G force was bad before, outside the cockpit it's sickening. Both men SCREAM, their faces flattened, their arms pinned to their chests.

STACKHOUSE'S LEG - is punctured by the pen, which is almost entirely buried in his thigh. The blood sprays off and vaporizes.

The seats tumble toward the mountains and we travel with them every terrifying step of the way.

After what seems like an eternity, the chutes on the seats EXPLODE. The seats themselves separate and tumble away.

Secondary charges explode to fill the chutes, and the pilots are YANKED up. And now they float.

Burnett watches the cockpit crash into the mountain below. It's on fire.

EXT. SERBIAN FOREST -- CONTINUOUS

The two EJECTION SEATS crash into some very high trees. One of them gets lodged about fifty feet off the ground. The other shatters into pieces.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - DAY

The shooter calmly packs up his rocket launcher, then gets back in the pick up. He drives away, mission accomplished.

CUT TO:

INT. ARKAN'S MANSION

Arkan stands near the window to the television room. He looks up at the night sky. He can see something fling itself to earth, almost too quickly to catch. And then it EXPLODES somewhere up in the mountains.

CUT TO:

EXT. MORNING SKY - DAY

Burnett, still descending in his chute, looks down at where the tail section just crashed into the forest (that's what Arkan just saw). It's too cold and there's too much snow on the ground below for a forest fire.

Then he looks over at Stackhouse, who seems to be drifting in and out of consciousness.

Burnett looks straight down. The terrain below is steep, wooded, and rocky. But there are a few clearings.

He works his cords to turn his chute toward an opening in the trees.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Looking up, we can see the two chutes coming down.

EXT. MORNING SKY - DAY

Burnett and Stackhouse are almost on the ground.

Burnett looks east and sees a beautiful morning sunrise coming up over the mountains. It's the last time he'll know that peace for a very long time.

As they get close to the ground, we realize just how fast they are falling. The trees come up like knives out of the snow.

Burnett and Stackhouse both hold on, grit their teeth, and hope they don't die on impact.

Burnett hits first. His body SLAMS against pine boughs and branches, and his chute tangles in the trees. He jerks to a stop ten feet from the ground.

Stackhouse fares better. He is lucky to hit a clear patch, relatively flat, but the impact on his leg is brutal. He crumbles immediately to the ground.

We hold on this image, the two broken aviators, one in the trees, one on the ground, motionless in the cold, night air.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICERS MESS HALL --

A far cry from the Bosnian countryside, the mess hall on the Enterprise has been converted into a relatively homey Christmas banquet hall. A few thousand men greased by Egg Nog sing Christmas carols and feast on turkeys flown in by order of the President himself.

One group of carolers, enlisted men in their flight deck jerseys, form a singing group.

RIEGART sits at a front table with O'MALLEY and a few other officers. He seems to be the only one not enjoying himself.

O'MALLEY

You throw a pretty good party, Captain.

Riegart checks his watch, not comfortable in this relaxed situation.

RIEGART

We'll give em another hour. Then start moving the shifts back on.

O'MALLEY

Yes sir, Mr. Scrooge.

Riegart turns to look at him. O'Malley disguises a smile. They are interrupted by a junior officer approaching.

J.O.

Sir. We've lost a bird.

OMALLEY

(not looking up)

"Look for the happy pussy." I've heard it before, Ensign. I'm not in the mood.

J.O.

It's not a joke, Sir. We've lost an F/18, feet dry.

Riegart and O'Malley bolt out of their chairs.

INT. HALLWAY

The J.O. runs to keep up with Riegart and O'Malley, filling them in.

RIEGERT

What squadron?

J.O.

Beefeater, Sir.

Riegart and O'Malley exchange a glance.

REIGERT

Burnett and Stackhouse. I put em on the Holiday mission.

(to himself)

Goddamnit.

INT. RED CROWN - DAY

Reigert strides in. The room is more crowded than before. A downed plane sends an entire carrier into a state of shock.

REIGERT

Any beacon activity?

RED CROWN

Not yet, sir.

(MORE)

RED CROWN (CONT'D)

Captain, we have a radar plot of flight path from feet dry to last contact. Here in blue is the assigned track. In red is actual. Lost contact is here.

It is obvious that the two trackers do not match up.

RIEGART

What the hell happened?

Reigert looks up a map with a red X marked where the last contact was made. It's the most mountainous and inhospitable territory in the entire region.

Communications Officer BRANDON steps over.

BRANDON

If they ejected in this area, it's going to be tough to get a beacon signal. The terrain is extremely hostile.

Riegart frowns. The concern on his face is palpable, but he knows he has work to do.

RIEGART

(to O'Malley)

Get General Shelton on the phone.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Serb troops swarm over the cockpit of the F/A-18F. It's a mess, and the forest around it is too. Another soldier finds a piece of metal that indicates the plane is a U.S. Navy fighter.

DAMIR

Navy! American Navy.

Arkan motions Bazda to come close.

ARKAN

I want every scrap of this plane gathered up and brought to Granik. No one goes near it unless I tell them, you understand?

Bazda nods, judging from the gravity in Arkan's voice that this is very serious stuff. As he organizes some of the soldiers, a PICK UP TRUCK drives up and a MAN gets out.

We might recognize him as the man who fired the Stingers at the f-18, but he will henceforth know as THE TRACKER. And now that we get a good look at him, we see that he is instantly intimidating, and it isn't just the Sniper Rifle slung over one shoulder. He has the faraway, emotionless look in his eyes that comes from killing many, many people.

Bazda intercepts him.

BAZDA

Who are you?

(no answer)

Where do you think you're going?

He puts a hand on the Tracker's chest. The Tracker looks down at it, amused.

ARKAN (O.S.)

Bazda, leave him.

Arkan comes up behind Bazda and shakes hands with the Tracker.

ARKAN (CONT'D)

Do you know where they landed?

TRACKER

(nods)

Farther north. Meet you there?

Arkan nods, then grabs Bazda.

ARKAN

Let's go.

Bazda watches the Tracker get back in his truck. Something about the man spooks him.

As it should.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN RANGE -- DAY

CLOSE ON BURNETT'S FACE

As he slowly regains consciousness. Strangely, his hair seems to be standing straight up.

HIS POV -- THE WORLD IS UPSIDE DOWN

Reveal that Burnett is hanging upside down from a tree, his chute tangled in the branches above him. He unclips his chute, which drops him another five feet, then jerks him to a halt. He's still tangled up. Slowly, painfully, he reaches into the pocket of his flight suit and finds a knife. He begins sawing at the ropes.

CRASH!

He falls face first into the snow. After a moment, he pulls himself to his feet. He's completely disoriented, but the sound of moaning brings him to his sense.

STACKHOUSE (O.S.)

(weakly)

Burnett... over here.

He turns to see Stackhouse, sitting about twenty yards away, flat-assed in the snow.

BURNETT

Stack.

As he moves towards him, Burnett sees why he's sitting. The pen is sticking grotesquely out of his leg.

BURNETT (CONT'D)

Oh, Shit.

STACKHOUSE

Pen...in the kneeboard. Think I broke it when I hit.

(motioning)

Pull it out.

Burnett cringes, then quickly grabs the pen and pulls it out. Unfortunately, it BREAKS off at the skin. Half of the pen stays inside.

Stackhouse howls in pain, then tries to dig the rest out.

STACKHOUSE (CONT'D)

Fuck, get it out...

BURNETT

Stack, hold on...

Burnett takes his arm, pulls it away.

BURNETT (CONT'D)

You're just gonna make it worse.

Stackhouse drops his head, exhausted.

STACKHOUSE

Where are we?

Burnett looks around. He has no clue where they are, but he covers.

BURNETT

Uh, in the mountains north of Miciovic.
I think.

Burnett cuts open the flight suit around Stackhouse's knee.

STACKHOUSE'S LEG -

The wound is small but deep. Burnett uses some of the water in his flight suit and washes out the wound. Then he unzips one of his side pouches and pulls out a square olive-green combat dressing in a thick plastic envelope. He cuts it open with his knife and puts it over Stackhouse's leg.

Stackhouse leans back, almost passing out from the pain.

STACKHOUSE

Burnett, I... I need a doctor. I'm
not gonna last long in this weather.

Burnett nods, then pulls out his radio. He pulls the rubber band off the radio which lets the whip antenna extend. He puts his flashlight in his mouth and shines it on the radio, to read the instructions. He points it upward and turns it on.

BURNETT

(into Radio)

Mayday, Mayday, Mayday. This is
November Kilo 1-0-3. Mayday. Aircraft
down. Come in, over..

He waits for a reply. All he gets is static.

BURNETT (CONT'D)

Goddamn it.

(he tries again)

Mayday, Mayday. November Kilo 1-0-3.
Come in, over.

STACKHOUSE

Burnett... that's, that's a line of sight instrument. Nobody can hear you from down here. You gotta...

BURNETT

Oh, right.

STACKHOUSE

...you gotta get up to higher ground.

Burnett scans their immediate surroundings. He notes the tree line to their right, one of their ejection seats nestled at the top of a particularly tall pine. In the other direction, he sees that they are near the bottom of a hill that looks to be fairly high, and not too difficult an ascent:

BURNETT

Think you can walk?

Stackhouse shakes his head.

STACKHOUSE . . .

No. You go ahead, tell em to hurry.

Burnett frowns. He doesn't like the idea of leaving Stackhouse here by himself.

STACKHOUSE (CONT'D)

Those were stingers, man. No doubt about it. See the way they hacked the turn on us? You cranked us around just right, but we didn't have a chance. Just like I read about.

Stackhouse, despite the panic of the situation, is starting to think clearly.

STACKHOUSE (CONT'D)

Shit. Probably some insurgents firing at anything they could. Serb units'll be looking for us, they'll take us back to the safe zone.

BURNETT

I don't know.

STACKHOUSE

They just signed a treaty, they're not gonna touch us. I'm more worried about bleeding out here in the cold.

Burnett nods, trying to process everything.

BURNETT

Okay.

(beat)

Listen, Stack, I'm sorry I didn't...

STACKHOUSE

Not your fault, Burnett. Just get up that hill and radio for help.

Burnett turns and starts hiking up the hill.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOSNIAN COUNTRYSIDE -- DAY

Serb troops push slowly through the snowy woods, searching for the downed American pilots.

CUT TO:

EXT. LANDING SITE - DAY

Stackhouse tries to make himself comfortable. He pulls off his helmet with difficulty, then pulls off his gloves and checks out his fingernails - they are blue and cyanotic. This is not good -- it means he's in shock.

He drains the last of his reserve water, then starts sucking on some packed snow, trying to slake the insatiable thirst that comes with a crash.

Suddenly, he hears voices, coming towards him. He keeps quiet, then sees TWO SOLDIERS pushing through the brush, about fifty yards away. From his position, they can't see him, but he can see them well enough to know they are Serb infantry.

STACKHOUSE

HEY! HELLO, AMERICAN! AMERICAN PILOT!

The Serbs turn to see Stackhouse. They yell back to their commander, then head towards Stackhouse.

ON STACKHOUSE --

He sighs, relieved. He's not gonna die up here in the middle of nowhere.

CUT TO:

EXT. SERB HILLSIDE

It's slow going as Burnett slogs his way through knee high snow, but he's still managed to cover quite a bit of ground. He hears voices behind him, echoing up the hillside.

Quickly, he pulls binoculars from his pocket.

HIS POV --

He has a pretty clear view of Stackhouse, now surrounded by Serb soldiers.

BURNETT

Shit.

Stackhouse turns in his direction, and Burnett can see that he's smiling, talking to one of the soldiers, presenting his BLOODCHIT, which displays an American Flag and writing in several languages identifying him as an American service member. It also offers a reward for good treatment and return to American lines.

The Serb soldiers seem to be treating him well. Burnett's relieved.

EXT. LANDING SITE

Stackhouse watches as, from down the hill, a figure walks towards him, parting the troops.

It's Arkan, followed closely by Bazda and the Tracker.

BAZDA

(subtitled)

This will look good, sir. Rescuing an American pilot. A big reward.

ARKAN

Quiet, Bazda.

Arkan walks straight up to Stackhouse and takes his bloodchit. He kneels down to speak to Stackhouse. His English isn't bad.

ARKAN (CONT'D)

Recon mission, yes?

Stackhouse doesn't say anything at first.

ARKAN (CONT'D)

(gently)
This was not bombing mission, right?

STACKHOUSE
(drifty, in shock)
Right.

ARKAN
You photograph troop positions?

STACKHOUSE
(wary)
Uh, yeah.
(dizzy)
I need to get to a hospital, so...

ARKAN
Another pilot?

ON STACKHOUSE -- he's dizzy and disoriented, but this question makes him nervous. Instinctively, he lies.

STACKHOUSE
It's just me. I was flying alone.

ON BURNETT --

Watching the scene from up the hill. He sees Arkan stand and walk away from Stackhouse. He confers with the Tracker for a moment, saying something we can't hear. The Tracker nods.

BACK ON THE SCENE

Arkan takes Bazda aside.

ARKAN
Come, we will wait in the car.

BAZDA
But... the pilot...

ARKAN
(referring to the
Tracker)
He will tend to him.

Arkan leads Bazda and the soldiers away, leaving the Tracker alone with Stackhouse. The Tracker leans down next to Stackhouse. He motions as though he's going to help him up...

STACKHOUSE

Thanks.

Then pulls out a gun...

BURNETT's POV -- SLO MO

Burnett watches through binoculars, silently, as the Tracker raises his gun to Stackhouse's head and fires.

The REPORT from the gun travels up the mountain until it reaches Burnett, whose eyes go wide in shock as he sees Stackhouse's lifeless body sag to the ground like an empty sack.

BURNETT

NO! No, Stack...

But there's nothing he can do. Stackhouse is dead.

ON THE TRACKER --

Kneeling down next to Stackhouse's body. He unfolds a BODY BAG and starts stuffing Stackhouse into it. As he does, he notices...

FOOTPRINTS

Yards away, in the snow. Faint, but definitely visible. And to a trained eye like the Tracker's, clearly American boots. He looks down at Stackhouse's leg, realizing that he could not be the one who made those tracks.

BACK ON BURNETT

Hyperventilation with fear. He's staring down at the Tracker and...

HIS POV --

It seems clear that the Tracker is staring right back at him. And smiling. It seems impossible that this man can see him so far away, but there is something about his smile...

Instinctively, Burnett pulls down the binoculars and hides behind a bush.

THE TRACKER

Finishes zipping up Stackhouse's body and hefts him over his shoulder.

BY THE SERB VEHICLES -- MOMENTS LATER

The Tracker walks into the crowd of soldiers and slaps the body bag on the flatbed of his truck.

BAZDA

What happened?

TRACKER

He bled to death.

Arkan nods, somberly, playing his part. Bazda looks shocked.

The Tracker pulls Arkan aside.

TRACKER (CONT'D)

You have another problem.

BURNETT'S POV -- THROUGH BINOCULARS

He watches as Arkan and the Tracker confer, now, near the assembled Serb troops. Arkan points up to the hills, almost directly at Burnett. Burnett stares back at him, frozen for what seems like eternity. Men start moving up the hill, towards him.

BURNETT

Oh God.

Burnett STANDS AND RUNS. He runs as fast as he's ever run before. He runs over rocks, down sliding ice, through trees.

ARKAN -

Screams out to his men.

ARKAN

I want him found before nightfall!

The Serb soldiers spread out, under Bazda's command. The Tracker takes Arkan aside.

TRACKER

It would be better if you sent me.
These men will only find each other.

ARKAN

- He's alone, and scared. They'll find him.

He turns and walks away.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Burnett runs like a madman. His breathing is steady. His mouth is open. His eyes are miles away.

CUT TO:

INT. RIEGART'S OFFICE -- DAY

Riegart is on the phone with Shelton.

RIEGART

No, sir. None yet. We have the automatic beacon but no voice comms.

O'Malley pushes the door open and sticks his head in.

O'MALLEY

We got a signal. It's Burnett.

INT. RADIO ROOM--

Riegart, O'Malley, Rodway and a few others are circled around the radio, listening. Burnett's voice is barely audible, a loud beeping is interfering with the transmission.

RIEGART

What is that?

OPERATOR

I'm sorry, sir, there seems to be interference. Appears to be the U-R-T 33.

The audio is piped in on the overhead intercom. It is an ~~obnoxious~~ WHOOP WHOOP WHOOP WHOOP WHOOP, an automatic pinger on the emergency channel.

O'MALLEY

It's the beacon.

RIEGART

Would someone please shut down the homing beacon in the ejection seat!

OPERATOR

Aye, aye, sir. Alfa Echo, Alfa Romeo
directs cease buzzer on 1-0-3.

CUT TO:

EXT. SERBIAN FOREST

At the top of a fairly tall tree, maybe a hundred feet off the ground, the EJECTION SEAT is wedged into some thick branches. A red light blips on and off, in time with the WHOOP of the remote beacon. Suddenly, the light goes off.

BACK TO:

INT. RADIO ROOM

The sound stops. Now we hear Burnett's voice, clearly.
INTERCUT THE FOLLOWING CONVERSATION.

BURNETT (O.S.)

Alfa Romeo, this is November Kilo 1-0-3, over.

Riegart takes the microphone.

RIEGART

1-0-3, this is Alfa Romeo, loud and clear. Go ahead.

BURNETT (O.S.)

Sir, you gotta get me outta here. They're coming for me. I lost em for now, but...

RIEGART

Slow down, Burnett. Who's coming for you? Where's Lieutenant Stackhouse?

There is a maddeningly long pause from Burnett's end.

BURNETT (O.S.)

(voice cracking)

Stackhouse is dead, sir. They shot him.

This sends a shock through the room.

RIEGART

What?! Who? Say again.

BURNETT (O.S.)

We were separated. I saw through my binoculars. Serbs. I don't know, the guy looked pretty high up on the chain, an officer, gold braid, not real clear through the binoculars, but...

RIEGART

Now hold on, Son, you're saying that a Serbian officer killed Stackhouse?

BURNETT (O.S.)

Sir, they killed him, now I'm telling you, you gotta get me outta here!

RIEGART

Okay, son, just calm down. We're on it.

Riegart turns away from the microphone and addresses Rodway.

RIEGART (CONT'D)

How soon can the Marine Corps be ready?

RODWAY

We're ready now, sir. By your leave, Captain, we'll saddle up. Go on your call.

RIEGART

(to O'Malley)

Radio Demery and Shelton. Let em know we're going in to get our boy.

Riegart turns back to the radio.

RIEGART (CONT'D)

Burnett? If they are looking for you, you'll want to move position and stay off the radio.

BURNETT (O.S.)

Yes sir.

RIEGART

We're coming to get you, Son. Just hang tight.

There is another pause. Then...

BURNETT (O.S.)
Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.

Reigart gets up and leaves.

CUT TO:

EXT. SERB LISTENING POST

The Serb radar guy has triangulated Burnett's position. He picks up his phone to call Arkan with the coordinates.

CUT TO:

INT. MARINE'S ROOMS - DAY

Marines are suiting up, clearing weapons, drawing gear, reviewing maps, putting on camouflage face paint.

EXT. ON DECK

Reigart and Rodway are hunched over a map, going over the plans for the rescue mission.

REIGART
You can push up through here, and hopefully by then we'll have picked up his signal again. I assume a standard TRAP package of fifty-threes, cobras and hueys.

Rodway looks up at Reigart, surprised.

RODWAY
You know your birds, sir.

REIGART
I trained on Cobras. First helicopter pilot with his own air wing, actually.

Rodway nods, duly impressed.

REIGART (CONT'D)
Anyway, the terrain should...

Their conversation is interrupted by a helicopter landing on the deck. We see the NATO insignia on the side.

DEMERY --

Emerges from the helicopter, salutes Reigart and Rodway.

DEMERY

Captain. What's going on here?

REIGART

We've got an f-18 down behind enemy...

DEMERY

(ignoring this,
motioning to the
Marines)

Who authorized a search and rescue?

REIGART

I did.

DEMERY

Call it off. Stand down, Captain.

Reigart's eyes narrow.

REIGART

Sir, I repeat, we have pilots down,
one might be dead already, so...

DEMERY

Captain Reigart, the Serbs are claiming
that the f-18 shot down by insurgents.
They are also claiming that it was
over Serb territory when it was shot
down.

Reigart did NOT know this. He's a little surprised.

DEMERY (CONT'D)

If we fly in there, armed for bear,
the Serbs will fire on us, and they
will claim that WE BROKE THE TREATY.

RODWAY

So what, we just sit here until Burnett
gets killed?

DEMERY

We've spoken to the Serbs. They've
given us every assurance...

RODWAY

(interrupting)

Burnett said that Serb troops killed
Stackhouse and are shooting at him.

Demery ignores Rodway, and pulls Reigart aside.

DEMERY

He needs to get to the safe zone,
Captain. If he's right, and the Serbs
are hostile, you're sending your men
into the meat grinder.

RODWAY

We'll take our chances.

DEMERY

...and if he's wrong? Well, then,
Captain, you risk provoking a war.

Reigart is torn. Demery is making a lot of sense.

DEMERY (CONT'D)

I can have your General order you to
stand down, Reigart. Or you can do
it yourself.

ON REIGART -- taking it all in. He realizes he doesn't have
much choice.

REIGART

Stand down, Marine.

RODWAY

What?! Sir, you can't be serious...

REIGART

DO IT!

DEMERY

I will contact our people on the
ground. The Serbs WILL hand him over
to us, I assure you.

CUT TO:

EXT. SERB COUNTRYSIDE

Burnett is exhausted, scared and cold. He seems to have put
some distance between himself and the Serb troops, but his
nerves are shot.

Then, he hears a voice over the radio.

REIGART (O.S.)

1-0-3, come in, this is Alfa Romeo.

Burnett smiles, glad, perhaps for the first time in his life, to hear Reigart's voice.

BURNETT

Burnett, here, sir.

CUT TO:

INT. RADIO ROOM

Reigart, Demery, Rodway and O'Malley are gathered around the radio. Reigart is at the mic.

REIGART

Lieutenant, our latest intel says that your current location is undoable for a pick up. We'll rendezvous at safe area.

BURNETT (O.S.)

Say again, sir? It sounded like you said you're not coming in to get me.

Reigart takes a deep breath.

REIGART

That is correct, Lieutenant. You need to hump it out to safe zone.

EXT. SERB COUNTRYSIDE

Burnett checks his map through the red light of his penlight. He locates the point that Reigart is suggesting he get to, and now we go into...

RENDEZVOUS CAM --

The camera whistles across the Serb countryside, tracing the route that Burnett'll have to take to get to the safe zone.

It involves many miles, torturous terrain, inclement weather, and countless Serb troops. To call it impossible is an understatement.

ON BURNETT --

Really starting to panic.

BURNETT (O.S.)

Sir, please, you can't leave me out here, there's no way...

REIGART

BURNETT!

Reigart's yell startles everyone in the room.

BURNETT

Yes... yes sir?

REIGART

Burnett, you are a combat naval aviator, stop acting like a little girl! You've been shot down, life is tough, I'm very sorry, now get your shit together! For some reason, a lot of people want to bring you back so we're gonna do that, understand me?!

As Reigart speaks, emotion wells in his voice. It's clear that this hard-ass routine is an act to motivate Burnett.

REIGART (CONT'D)

So you do whatever it takes, you put some angles between you and your pursuers. Use your training. Use your head. Evade and survive and we WILL bring you home. DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME, Burnett?! We WILL bring you home.

(beat)

Burnett?

There's silence on the other end. Then we hear the faint sound of dogs barking.

REIGART (CONT'D)

Burnett?

BURNETT (O.S.)

(whispers)

Someone's coming!

And suddenly, the radio goes silent.

REIGART

Damn it!

Panic shoots through the room, palpably. Reigart grabs the mic, then realizes he should not transmit.

RADIO OPERATOR GUY

We lost the signal sir.

REIGART

(getting frantic)

Where is he? Can we get him up on scope?

OPERATOR

Lemme see what I can do, Sir.

He makes a phone call.

EXT. SERB COUNTRYSIDE -- CONTINUOUS

The sound of dogs and soldiers approaching is getting louder and louder. Burnett stows his radio and starts running.

CUT TO:

INT. BACK IN THE RADIO ROOM.

A moment of quiet desperation passes; everyone feels completely helpless.

Suddenly, the operator blurts out.

OPERATOR

Captain Reigart? I think they may have him in SCIF, sir.

INT. SCIF

The SCIF (stands for Special Compartmentalized Information Facility) is a high-tech sensor fusion and radar analysis room that's off-limits to everyone without deep clearance.

O'Malley, Reigert and Rodway are at the entrance. O'Malley keys in a secret code and the door buzzes open. Everyone piles into the room and crowds around the scope.

PETTY OFFICER KENNEDY

We were able to track the emergency radio signal to somewhere in this radius. Here is where we triangulated the U-R-T 33 seat beacon. Pretty far away. We think the pilot transmission came from here.

He points to the scope, which is covered with moving little blips of light.

PETTY OFFICER KENNEDY (CONT'D)

This is imagery from Talent Rainbow,
downlinked through the Janep
Processing center in Stuttgart.
It's not quite Tom Clancy, but...

REIGART

Which one is Burnett?

PETTY OFFICER KENNEDY

The sensors measure body heat, so any
of these could be him.

RODWAY

No...

(pointing at one little
blip)

THAT'S HIM.

Everyone turns to look at Rodway. Petty Officer Kennedy
doesn't recognize him and immediately BLANKS the display.
Kennedy turns his back to the scope and puts a hand on Rodway's
arm to escort him from the room.

PETTY OFFICER KENNEDY

Captain, this man does not have
clearance to be in here.

RODWAY

Get your hand off me, kid, or you'll
be learning to wipe your ass with
your feet.

PETTY OFFICER KENNEDY

This room is black, Sir. Access to
this material is controlled at the
national level. Captain Reigart, you
know the rules...

REIGART

Bend the rules, Jones.

Petty Officer Kennedy is taken aback. There's a sentence he
never expected to hear from Reigart. He reinitializes the
display.

REIGART (CONT'D)

Go on, Rodway.

RODWAY

Well, it's pretty obvious, if you've done any hunting.

He points down to the screen.

RODWAY (CONT'D)

(pointing to some fast moving blips)

These are dogs.

(tracing the pattern)

These are the enemy. They're in a classic cloverleaf search pattern. See here. Can you put this thing into a time-delay display?

Reigart makes a switch adjustment. Petty Officer Kennedy stands behind, incredulous. The display now shows a smear of green light - showing the history of movement of the individual contacts.

RODWAY (CONT'D)

Great. These are the tips of the cloverleaf. And this...

(he points to a dot off to the side)

This is Burnett.

They all watch as the "Burnett" dot moves across the screen. The soldiers behind him are moving faster.

EXT. SERB COUNTRYSIDE

Burnett can hear the dogs and soldier's voices getting closer and closer. Growing frantic, he tries running down a fairly steep hill. He trips and tumbles, head over heels.

He splats right into a muddy ditch.

As he struggles to get to his feet, he puts his hand on something cold, hard and white. He looks down to see a horrifying sight...

A HUMAN ARM

As his gaze drifts away from the arm, he sees even more body parts sticking out of the ground.

REVEAL -- MASS GRAVES

Melting snow has eroded a hastily, and fairly recently dug, mass grave. Burnett grows sick to his stomach as he takes in the full horror. There are at least fifty bodies he can make out, and probably many more buried beneath that.

He starts to turn and head up the hill when he hears shouting and barking, VERY nearby. The Serbs are almost on top of him:

INT. THE SCIF --

Everyone watches as the blips come closer and closer to Burnett.

RODWAY

Come on, Burnett. MOVE!

But his blip doesn't move. It just stays there. Frozen in place.

EXT. SERB COUNTRYSIDE

The first Serb Soldier, running behind his barking dog, comes into the clearing and stops in his tracks. Other Soldiers come up behind him. They too, stop running.

THEIR POV --THE MASS GRAVES

These people might've been killed by their fellow Serbs, but it's still a grim reminder of what this war has wrought. Particularly given that one of the exposed bodies seems to be a young boy, no older than thirteen, the Soldiers are spooked by the sight.

CUT TO:

INT. THE SCIF

The assembled group watches as the green blips swarm all over the ~~area where~~ Burnett once was. Nobody seems very confident.

Then, gradually, the Serb blips start moving away.

REIGART

What are they doing?

They all watch, astonished, as the Serbs just abandon the Burnett blip where it is.

O'MALLEY

You think they shot him?

That question hangs in the air, as we...

CUT TO:

EXT. MASS GRAVES

As soon as the last soldier has walked away, we see one of the dead arms begin to move. Wet earth is pushed aside, as Burnett rises up from the ground, now covered in cold, wet mud. He retches once, then vomits on the ground.

In the next moment, he starts to run.

INT. THE SCIF

A cheer goes up from the group as they watch the Burnett blip run in the opposite direction from the soldiers.

PETTY OFFICER KENNEDY

He's headed west, sir.

REIGART

Toward the safe zone.

RODWAY

Good work, Burnett.

REIGART

Kid's tougher than I thought.

Reigart breathes a sigh of relief. Burnett's safe for the moment, but for how long?

CUT TO:

EXT. SERBIAN COUNTRYSIDE -- NIGHT

Burnett, covered in mud, slogs his way across the wet, snowy, Serbian countryside. He can still hear dogs coming in his direction, and the fear drives him.

He stops for a moment, to rest. He glances down at his radio, tempted to contact the Enterprise. Seeing that he is in a valley again, he thinks better of it.

He pushes on.

CUT TO:

INT. REIGART'S OFFICE

Reigart fixes himself a cup of tea and tries to get his emotions under control. O'Malley knocks, then enters. Reigart looks up, expectantly.

O'MALLEY

Nothing, sir. Haven't heard anything in an hour.

Reigart nods.

REIGART

I was trying to motivate him.

O'MALLEY

Sir?

REIGART

In the scif, the stuff I said, I was... I was just trying to motivate him.

O'MALLEY

Sir, I know. I'm sure he does, too.

REIGART

This is why I push them so hard, Tom. For times like these.

O'Malley nods. An uncomfortable moment passes.

O'MALLEY

Permission to speak freely, sir.

REIGART

Oh, come on, Tom. You're gonna say what you're gonna say, don't patronize me.

O'MALLEY

Sir, what the hell are we doing?

Reigart looks up at O'Malley, not sure what he's driving at.

O'MALLEY (CONT'D)

Our mar is stuck on the ground, and we're just sitting here.

REIGART

It's a complicated situation.

O'MALLEY

Why aren't there reports on Nightline?
Why isn't the President on the phone
with the Serbs making sure that kid
gets out safe?

REIGART

He was off mission, Tom. If we keep
the whole thing quiet, the Serb's'll
bring him back and we won't break the
treaty....

O'MALLEY

The Serbs are LYING, Skipper, you
know that as much as I do. That kid
might not like listening to orders,
but he's not an idiot, if he says
he's getting shot at, I gotta believe
him!

REIGART

And what the hell do you expect me to
do, Tom?! Command tells me I gotta
sit on my hands, what else can I do?

O'MALLEY

Right. I forgot. It's not your call.

REIGART

Right. IT'S NOT MY CALL.

O'Malley starts to say something that he'll regret, then
catches himself.

O'MALLEY

My apologies, sir. Of course you
can't do anything.

O'Malley walks out.

Reigart sits there, stung by O'Malley's words. He looks
around....

HIS POV -- HIS OFFICE

Covered with plaques, certificates and photos detailing his
illustrious, accelerated career. All testimonies to his
unflinching ability to follow orders and do his job well.

Slowly, Reigart reaches into the pocket of his uniform and
pulls out a card.

It's a phone number for Greta Olson, the reporter.

CUT TO:

SKY NEWS BROADCAST -- TV SCREEN

The graphics come up first.

"AMERICAN WARPLANE MISSING"

Then we see Greta Olson, reporting from somewhere in Bosnia.

OLSON

..confirmed shooting down of an American F-18 net on a NATO reconnaissance mission over Miciovic at around 6AM yesterday morning. It was a routine mission enforcing NATO Operation "West Watch", part of the Cincinnati Accord which will result in a complete NATO withdrawal from the region. One pilot, Lieutenant Jeremy Stackhouse, is feared dead, while the other, Lieutenant Christopher Burnett, is presumed to have survived the crash...

CUT TO:

INT. BOEING AIRCRAFT PLANT IN THE USA -- AFTERNOON

We track along a noisy machine floor, following an attachment of military personnel as they make their way through the various milling machines. They stop to confer with a supervisor, who points them the right way.

They approach a tall, grey-haired man, who is busy milling a block of aluminum for some machine part. They tap him on the shoulder, he looks up and lifts his safety goggles. We hear no dialogue, but we see his name tag, which reads JAMES BURNETT.

He is slow to shake hands and we understand his shock at hearing the news that his son is down behind enemy lines.

BACK ON GRETA OLSON --

OLSON

Regular Serb Forces are alleging that the plane was shot down by insurgents
(MORE)

OLSON (CONT'D)

and that they are doing everything
they can to locate the downed pilot.

ARKAN (O.S.)

(subtitled)

This just got more difficult.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL -- MILITARY DEPOT, SERBIA

Arkan watches the news report from a heavily-armed military depot, somewhere in Bosnia. Bazda and the Tracker are by his side.

They peer at a map, laid out on a table as the report continues.

TRACKER

Last sighting of him was in these
foot hills. We can be reasonably
sure that he'll head west.

BAZDA

We're sending reinforcements to Hac,
over here. If we can flush him out...

ARKAN

Have the columns push through here.
(to the Tracker)
I want you in Hac, personally.

The Tracker nods. Bazda seems a bit annoyed that his authority is being usurped by the Tracker.

ARKAN (CONT'D)

Do not let this man slip through our
fingers.

Arkan walks away from them, and we follow him...

OUTSIDE --

Where the wreckage of the F-18 been carefully arrayed. A technician approaches Arkan.

TECHNICIAN

Sir.

He hands Arkan the camera package from the F-18

ARKAN

This is it?

TECHNICIAN

Yes sir. This is the camera package...

(beat, holding up
another piece)

And this is the storage unit. But
sir, there's no film in it.

Arkan is puzzled by this.

ARKAN

What does this mean?

TECHNICIAN

I don't know, sir. Maybe the photos
are stored digitally, somewhere else
on the plane?

ARKAN

Well? What part? WHERE?!

TECHNICIAN

Sir, most of the plane was destroyed
in the crash. Odds are good the hard
drive was destroyed with it.

ARKAN

Don't tell me odds, FIND IT!

The Technician salutes as Arkan exits.

CUT TO:

INT. REIGART'S OFFICE

Reigart is watching the report on SKY NEWS when Demery knocks
and enters. Reigart salutes.

REIGART

Sir.

Demery nods, sits down.

DEMERY

Reigart, you and I have known each
other, how long? Two years.

REIGART

(wary of where this
headed)

About that.

DEMERY

I'm not saying we're best friends,
but I thought we had an understanding.
I've always commended your work to
your superior officers. I've steered
some of the better assignments your
way...

REIGART

Thank you, sir. I appreciate your
support.

DEMERY

(growing angry)

...and we have ONE disagreement, over
how to handle a downed pilot, and you
stab me in the back?! You talk to
the media, to MY contact, and make me
look like an asshole?

REIGART

Sir, I admit I was the only one who
could've leaked the information.

Demery gets right in his face.

DEMERY

Don't give me military doubletalk,
Reigart. Do you know how fragile
this peace is?

REIGART

The press report it accurate, Sir.
Our man is down behind enemy lines.

DEMERY

Do you have any idea how much damage
this incident will cause if the Serbs
react badly?

REIGART

What I know, Captain, is that the
American Public wants their pilot
back.

DEMERY

EXACTLY! Americans, all you care about is your own goddamn soldiers. What happens when the peace agreement falls apart? Will America recommit its Armed Forces?

Reigart has no answer for this.

DEMERY (CONT'D)

No, you don't have any control over THAT little detail, do you?

(beat)

You might have helped save your man today, Reigart -- and I emphasize "might" -- but you risked the lives of thousands tomorrow.

Demery turns and leaves.

CUT TO:

EXT. SNOW - NIGHT

It's dark. The slice of moon makes the snow a crystal royal blue. Snow falls quietly.

The CAMERA washes over the ground, heading into the dark night. But it comes to a stop at a hole in the ground that seems a few inches deep.

That is until BURNETT opens his eyes. That's him. Buried in the snow to keep warm. With terror in his eyes. Totally unaware that his plight is being broadcast all over the world.

EXT. SNOW - MORNING

Burnett crawls out of his snow cave. His face is blue, but he looks surprisingly warm. He looks around to see if anyone's following him.

He takes out his PRK-90 radio. He peels off his insulated gloves and tries to send out a warning frequency.

BURNETT

(softly)

Not high enough.

He puts it away. He zips up his flight suit and begins to walk.

EXT BOSNIAN MOUNTAINSIDE DAY

Burnett, determined to make it high enough to make a good transmission on his radio, struggles up the mountain. On and on against razor wind, numb fingers, frozen blood. He slips, curses the world, feels self pity, and on he goes. Mortar fire rumbles across the unwelcoming terrain.

He crests the ridge and collapses. He tears the radio out of his flight suit pocket.

BURNETT (CONT'D)

Alfa Romeo, Alfa Romeo from November
1-0-3.

Silence. BURNETT tries again.

BURNETT (CONT'D)

Alfa Romeo, Alfa Romeo, from November
1-0-3.

Nothing. The wind whistles. Suddenly...

ALFA ROMEO (O.S)

November 1-0-3 from Alfa Romeo.
Copy. Be advised your line is hot..

INT. RADIO ROOM

REIGERT, O'MALLEY and RODWAY are gathered amongst others around the radio operator..

OPERATOR

...I say again, your line is hot,
over.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE

BURNETT relieved. This may be nearing an end.

BURNETT

Roger. Understood. I am on course
per your last instruction. I am
tee'd up waiting for you to name the
fairway.

INT. RADIO ROOM

REIGERT and RODWAY confer quickly over a map, which we can see.

REIGERT

He's here?

RODWAY

Yes sir....and I suggest we place him...here...for an extract. It's open ground, near Hac, we've scenario'd a pick up from locations like that a million times. It's well behind the Treaty line.. Should be friendly.

REIGERT gets on the radio.

REIGERT

November 1-0-3 from Alfa Whiskey how you doing son?

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE

BURNETT can't help but smile a little.

BURNETT

Pretty good Alfa Whiskey, what's on the menu?

REIGERT (O.S)

Hard bit's over, November, we're real proud. You need to get yourself 5 clicks to 10040 for the sweet spot. Understood?

BURNETT

(checks his map)

Roger, Whiskey. I understand that spot to be friendly and good for birds?

INT. RADIO ROOM.

REIGERT, happy that BURNETT gets it, swaps a thumbs up with RODWAY.

REIGERT

That's a big roger there November. The spot is friendly. Just get there stay out of trouble and mamma bird will pick up. Next contact at
(looks at his watch)

17 00.

ON BURNETT --

Folding the map up and putting it away.

BURNETT

Roger. Captain Reigart?

REIGERT

I'm here, Burnett.

BACK ON REIGART

Listening as Burnett speaks.

BURNETT (O.S.)

Sir, I don't know if you know this,
but most of the men under your command
get pretty frustrated with all the
drills and classes and bullshit you
put us through...

In the radio room, everyone suddenly stops smiling.

BURNETT (CONT'D)

But as one of the guys who complained
the loudest, I gotta say...

(beat)

Thank you.

A relieved round of laughter shoots through the room. Reigart
only allows himself a nod.

REIGART

Just glad you're alive, son. Now,
let's get you home. Out.

EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE

Burnett clicks off and rests back against a rock, extremely
relieved. Off to the West we can see plumes of black smoke.
BURNETT checks his map.

It's not over yet.

CUT TO:

INT. T.R.A.P READY ROOM --

Reigart, O'Malley and Rodway are going over the details of
the rescue mission with Rodway's TRAP team.

Reigart refers to a wall map of the area while the Marines take a knee all around him.

REIGART

As per Major Rodway's mission brief, Strike Alfa will hold off and secure perimeter while Mamma bird touches down for pick up. Strike Bravo will cover off the pick up arc. Major?

RODWAY

Okay fellas, understand this - we are way outgunned if these boys slam the door on us, so...

Rodway' speech is interrupted by the door swinging open.

Commander Demery enters. He is followed by LECLERC and BRIGAND, two French SEARCH and RESCUE commandos.

DEMERY

Captain Reigart, let me introduce you to Colonel LeClerc. He'll be coordinating the rescue.

RODWAY

What?!

Reigart walks over to Demery and gets right in his face.

REIGART

Demery, don't push me. We are in a time sensitive situation here, and I don't need any of your political bullshit.

Demery just smiles. He knows something Reigart doesn't.

AIDE (O.S.)

Attention on deck!

Everyone turns to see THEATER COMMANDER HUGH SHELTON, a three star General, entering the room. He walks right over to Reigart, who stiffens and salutes.

SHELTON

Captain, let me just say how glad we all are that your boy is alive. I just spoke to the President, and he wants us to know that he is personally monitoring the situation.

REIGART

Thank you, Sir... I was...

SHELTON

Colonel LeClerc is the TRAP co-ordinator for the whole theater, we had him brought in particularly for this instance.

Inwardly, Reigart steams, but he must maintain decorum.

REIGART

Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.

RODWAY

General, sir! Major Rodway, US Marine Corps!

SHELTON

At ease, Major.

RODWAY

Sir, I am a close personal friend of Lieutenant Burnett, and my men and I have run this exfil scenario...

SHELTON

(interrupting)

Which is why I'm sure we'll be able to count on you to cooperate with Colonel LeClerc in every way possible.

Shelton addresses Colonel LeClerc.

SHELTON (CONT'D)

Good luck, Colonel. Bring our man back.

LECLERC

We will, sir.

Shelton exits the room, followed by Demery. Demery turns just before he leaves, saluting Reigart, a slight smile turning up the corner of his mouth.

Reigart and Rodway stare daggers back at him.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOSNIAN COUNTRYSIDE DAY

We see a bird's-eye view of a scorched black forest. Snow covers the ground. The place has been stripped bare of all life through repeated bombings and firefights.

We hold on the shot, drifting along at altitude. A tiny figure moves through the rows of dead trees. It's BURNETT.

CLOSER NOW. He looks rough. His breathing is heavy because of the hard slogging through the snow. His lips are dry and cracked, and blood from the ejection wounds has hardened on his forehead and left eye.

Overhead, far away, obscured behind a relentless gray sky, we hear the low rumbling of jet fighters. So far away. BURNETT looks up, licks his lips. He sucks the last drops of water from the tubing in his flight suit, desperately thirsty.

BURNETT

Shit.

He looks around.

BURNETT (CONT'D)

(to himself, absent
mindedly)

Don't eat the snow, don't eat the
snow...

He spots something. A rabbit hops away through the snow. BURNETT jogs over to where the rabbit was. He crouches down. We see that muddy water has formed in a shell hole, iced over. He stands up, thinking. He looks at the tree nearest him and rubs his fingers along its blackened trunk.

CLOSE ON FINGERS

He rubs the black, gritty charcoal between his fingers. An idea.

He takes out the small regulation signal flashlight from a pocket in his flight suit and unscrews the lens. He flips out the clear glass disc that covers the bulb and snaps it in two. He's made a blade.

Next he begins to tear at the seam of the sleeve of his flight suit, ripping open a small section at the elbow. He pulls out a piece of the rubber tubing that runs throughout the suit, and cuts off a six inch length.

BURNETT rubs his hands together, trying to ward off the biting cold. Now he finds a pen, unscrews the bottom half and fits the plastic cylinder snugly to the rubber tube.

In the distance we hear the rumble of mortar fire. BURNETT is concentrating on his McGyver trick. He places the mouth of his homemade straw against the blackened tree trunk and, using the piece of glass, scrapes powdered charcoal off the tree into the straw. Bingo! He's made what's referred to in the business as a survival straw - a charcoal filter through which you can suck and drink contaminated water.

WIDE - we see BURNETT. He lies down in the snow by the frozen muddy puddle and smashes a hole in the ice with his fist. He sticks his homemade straw into the water and takes a cautious sip.

CLOSE - he tastes it. It's okay. He takes another long sip.

BURNETT (CONT'D)

(quietly)

Jesus, it works.

He can't help but smile a little to himself at this one bright spot in his terrible ordeal. It gives him a touch of confidence. He spots something -

BURNETT'S P.O.V. - the rabbit has returned, curious, poking its head over a small snow drift. It looks at Burnett for a moment, then, quickly, looks to the right. Somethings up.

Burnett looks to the right, his smile fading. He looks back at the rabbit -

But it's gone.

Burnett listens - and now we hear it. Faint. Distant, but definitely a vehicle. A truck? No, it's too thin a sound.

Burnett scrambles to his feet. He half runs, half crouches, stumbling through the snow filled trenches and shell holes, sinking waist deep, struggling on until - he reaches the edge of the dead forest. He pulls out his binoculars - sweating, eyes stinging -- and squints through them.

BURNETT'S P.O.V - far below a battered red Toyota flatbed grinds its way through the twisting road.

Burnett drops the binoculars, thinks, raises them again. In the background we hear the crack of gunfire.

It's getting closer.

BURNETT'S P.O.V - we see the truck filling frame. Definitely civilian. Three men, old, riding up front. No weapons.

Burnett considers the situation, it's now or never. The gunfire sounds closer.

He takes off.

We cut between him scrambling down the hillside and the truck rumbling along the road. Branches tear and sting, pulling and ripping at his face and hands, but on he runs.

TRUCK DRIVERS P.O.V. - Fifty feet up the road BURNETT comes tumbling off the hillside and onto the road.

The Truck Driver reacts, slamming on the brakes. The wheels skid on the icy road.

WIDE - the truck comes skidding to a halt twenty feet in front of BURNETT. We hold. It's quiet but for the occasional crack of gunfire.

Burnett breathes heavily, unsure that this was the right move. Fresh drops of his blood drip off his scratched face and stain the icy road.

One of the trucks passengers, a disheveled 55 year old Muslim man, slowly opens the passenger door and steps out.

Burnett just stands there, panting. This could go either way.

ON the OLD MAN - He stares at BURNETT for a long time, then, slowly raises a bent finger towards the heavens.

Burnett nods. "Yes, pilot."

The Old Man hesitates for a moment, then he motions for Burnett to "come here, get in." In the background, the ever present crack of gunfire.

Burnett walks cautiously towards the old man. This looks okay. He nods and smiles, thumbs up.

BURNETT'S P.O.V. - the old man returns the thumbs up, toothless smile, then a whizzing sound, followed by...

SLAM!

.62 cal rifle rounds slice through the old man's chest. He crumples to the ground.

The truck is hit again and again as the driver starts up and takes off. They know their friend is dead - seen it all too many times.

Burnett hits the deck. Bullets crack the road around him. The truck screeches up to him - an open door, an outstretched hand. He accepts.

INT. TRUCK CAB

Burnett rides in the cab, huddled beside these beleaguered strangers. He glances in the cracked rearview mirror, he sees the distorted image of the old man, prostrate on the ground, his own blood forms a pool that will soon freeze.

The driver squeezes everything out of the old truck, throwing it around the bends. One of the other men starts crying and banging on the seat. It's heartbreaking. The man driving is either in shock, or too well used to death.

BURNETT

I'm sorry....I'm American, American
pilot. Yes? Speak English? No?
Sprechenze Deutsch?

Burnett has some German from his time at Ramstein AFB in Germany. The man (BABIC) understands.

BABIC

Ja....Bissen deutch.

BURNETT

(trying to think,
desperate)

Okay, good, good...eh..khanst du me
helfen bitte? Can you help me?
(in bad German)

I need help, can you help me? Ich
bin ein Amerikanischer pilot. OK?

BABIC

(nodding)

Va, sie werden mit uns in das Dorf
kommen - village, okay, the white
house okay?

BURNETT
 (gets it, smiles
 ironically)
 Ja, Ja good, yes White house.

The Toyota pulls out.

INT. TOYOTA -- DAY

The Toyota rambles down dirt roads pot-holed by the scars of war. As they drive, Burnett notices that the sounds of gunfire are getting LOUDER.

BURNETT
 Where are we going?

Babic points up ahead.

BABIC

Hac.

Burnett looks up ahead, and his heart sinks.

EXT. THE VILLAGE OF HAC -- DAY

HAC (pronounce hah-ch) is, literally, a war zone. Advancing Serb troops have met up with a hearty Muslim resistance, and the town is divided in half, with Snipers creating a killing zone right in the town square.

THE TOYOTA

Zig-zags through the bullet-riddled streets of HAC, finally screeching to a halt in front of a house with Muslim Militia guarding the front.

Burnett, head ducked down to avoid gunfire, is led into the Muslim enclave by Babic.

INT. MUSLIM HOME

In the front room of the house, snipers point rifles out window, periodically squeezing off shots at their Serb attackers.

A group of Muslim refugees sit in another room, mostly women and children. They look scared and hungry.

In what looks like it might have been the kitchen, EJU... Muslim military leader, is going over strategy with two who can't be older than 17.

CLOSE ON -- MUSLIM MAP--

Burnett can see, now, that he is in fact past the safe zone. Hac is clearly situated in Muslim territory, and yet there are Serb troops all over the place.

BABIC (O.S.)

(subtitled)

I have a present for you, Ejup.

Ejup looks up to see the American Pilot standing in front of him. It takes him a moment to register what he's seeing, then he walks over to Babic.

EJUP

(subtitled)

Is this the one from TV?

BABIC

(subtitled)

I thought we could use him.

Burnett smiles stupidly, he has no idea what they're saying.

BURNETT

Lieutenant Chris Burnett. I need to get to...

EJUP

Shut up.

Ejup approaches Burnett. This is a man who has seen most of his family die, recently. He has no time for pleasantries.

EJUP (CONT'D)

Here is what you need to do. You go out there, hands up. You tell Serbs to pull back.

BURNETT

(shocked)

What?

EJUP

Arkan, he destroy us. He invade our homes. Treaty, for shit. You go out there, tell them to leave.

Everyone in the room turns to look at Burnett.

BURNETT

You don't understand...

Ejup grabs Burnett by the neck and drags him across the room. He points his face out the window, where advancing Serb troops are making headway up the block.

EJUP

America say they make Serbs sign deal.
But they already break it. NOW GO!

He pushes Burnett towards the front door. Burnett turns to face everyone, including the Muslim women and children who have come out of their hiding places to see the commotion. The women look up at him, with pleading eyes.

Burnett is dying inside. He'd like to help these people, but what can he do?

BURNETT

Look, you don't understand. The Serbs
are trying to kill me, too.

EJUP

They not kill American!

BURNETT

Yes, they kill American! If I go out
there the Serbs will kill all of us!

Ejup looks suspicious. He confers with Babic for a moment, who doesn't seem to have anything useful to add.

Ejup points a gun at Burnett's head.

EJUP

GO!

Burnett, hands shaking, reaches for the front door. He turns to take one last look at these poor, hungry, frightened people. The hope in their eyes makes his heart sink.

As he reaches for the door...

BOOM!

The entire back of the house is blown to smithereens by a tank shell. Burnett is flown through the front door by the force of the explosion.

The next few moments are utter chaos. Burnett, dazed, finds himself across the street. He can see through the empty doorframe that about half the people in the house, including most of the women and children, have been ripped to shreds. Ejup stumbles around, holding his bloody head. Babic lies on the floor, dead.

Serb troops enter from the rear of the house and start picking off the survivors.

BURNETT --

Bloody and dazed, pushes his way into the house directly across the street from the Muslim headquarters.

INT. MUSLIM HOME

Burnett trips as soon as he walks in, over the corpse of a Serb Soldier laying across the doorway. He turns to see that there are two other dead Serb soldiers lying on the ground, obviously killed by the snipers across the street.

Just as he's started to get his bearings, another tank shell exploding across the street causes all the windows to blow inward.

Burnett falls to the floor.

EXT. SERB TANK LINE

Serb tanks push through the streets of HAC, followed by Serb infantry who shoot anything that moves.

THE TRACKER --

Rides in the rear of the convoy, Bazda by his side. They watch the carnage silently, scanning the streets for any sign of the American.

EXT. STREET IN HAC

Serb Soldiers walk door to door, looking for Burnett. They come to the house across the street from the Muslim headquarters, where we last saw Burnett.

INT. MUSLIM HOME

Two Serb Soldiers enter the home and come across a startling discovery;

Laying in the middle of the room, surrounded by dead Serb Soldiers, is the American Pilot, still in his flight suit. The bloody wound in the back of his head tells us that he is dead.

EXT. HAC TOWN SQUARE -- LATER

The Serb's overwhelming assault has decimated the town. Serb Soldiers have gathered in the town square, a few hostages lined up against a pulverized statue.

Arkan is conferring with the Tracker when they hear shouts...

SERB SOLDIER (O.S.)

(subtitled)

We found him! We found him!

They turn to see the two soldiers dragging Burnett's bloody corpse up the street.

Bazda pushes through the crowd of soldiers who've gathered around Burnett's body. They salute him.

SERB SOLDIER (CONT'D)

(subtitled)

Sir, we found him, in a house just around the corner.

Bazda leans down to inspect the body.

ON BURNETT --

The bullet that entered the back of his head blew off most of the top of his face.

TRACKER (O.S.)

It's not him.

Bazda turns to see the Tracker, standing behind him.

BAZDA

What do you mean it's not him?

The Tracker points to a tattoo on Burnett's left hand, two black circles between his thumb and forefinger.

TRACKER

This tattoo, this is from a prison camp in Gorny Vakuf.

BAZDA

That's crazy, how do you know that?

The Tracker holds up his right hand.

TRACKER

I've got the same one.

The Tracker stands up again. He scans the village.

TRACKER (CONT'D)

He switched uniforms.

CUT TO:

EXT. MUSLIM HOUSE

Back at the house where the body was discovered, one of the "dead" Serb soldiers rises and heads for the back door. As he turns, we see his face.

It's Burnett.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE

Soldiers swarm around the body, as Arkan mulls over what to do. The Tracker peers into the hills.

TRACKER

He would head West, toward Nizjny.
Shouldn't be hard to follow.

BAZDA

If he radioed in, the Americans will
send a rescue team. We don't have
much time.

Arkan is thinking hard, now. He looks back at the Serb Soldier in Burnett's flight suit.

ARKAN

Maybe we do.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE ADRIATIC -- CONTINUOUS

NATO helicopters zip over the Adriatic, flying in formation towards the rendezvous point.

INT. LEAD NATO CHOPPER

French Commandos from the 2eme Rep, Parachutiste, sit side by side, tense and tough. The pilots chatter to Air Traffic.

CUT TO:

EXT. SERBIAN COUNTRYSIDE

The pine forests outside Hac look still and untouched after a heavy winter snow. The battle scarring has miraculously spared this stretch of woods.

Burnett, still in his Serb uniform, makes good time through the woods. He's injured, but the open spaces and relatively flat terrain make for easy travel.

CUT TO:

INT. RADIO ROOM --

Reigart, Rodway and O'Malley are watching the progress of the NATO helicopters on the radar scope. They are also monitoring radio chatter from the pilots, trying to stay as in touch as much possible on the mission they've been squeezed out of.

OPERATOR

(to Reigart)

Sir? I have Admiral Demery.

Reigart picks up a phone.

DEMERY

Captain, I have some bad news.

Reigart's jaw tightens.

DEMERY (CONT'D)

We just got a report from our OPSEC on the ground. A Serb 4th Army Patrol found Burnett, near HAC. They say the village was being routed by rebels and a firefight followed. He's dead.

REIGART

Bullshit.

DEMERY

It's on CNN in two minutes. They're claiming they found his body, so...

Reigart hangs up the phone. He motions to O'Malley and Rodway to follow him.

INT. REC ROOM

Reigart, O'Malley and Rodway pile into the room to watch the CNN report, already in progress.

CNN REPORT --

A different reporter, this time an anchor from CNN:

REPORTER

...once again, breaking news from the Muslim enclave of Hac in Southern Bosnia on the Kosovo border. A Serb Army patrol has discovered the body of downed American Pilot Chris Burnett...

A grainy image of the Serb soldier in Burnett's flight suit, his face covered by a bloody sheet, surrounded by Serb soldiers.

REPORTER (O.S) (CONT'D)

Serb authorities are claiming that the American pilot was killed by breakaway Muslim guerrillas, opposed to the terms of the recently signed Cincinnati Peace Accord, during a fight for control of the area...

CUT TO:

INT. BURNETT FAMILY HOME

Burnett's parents are huddled around a TV at their house, friends and family there for support. As the report continues, grief shoots through the room like lightning...

REPORTER

...the body was discovered by Serb search parties that had been part of a combined search and rescue attempt which had been looking for the stricken flyer for the better part of two days.

RODWAY (O.S.)

They killed him!

CUT TO:

INT. READY ROOM -- THE ENTERPRISE

Reigart, O'Malley and Rodway watch the same report.

RODWAY

Those motherfuckers killed him!

Rodway kicks over a table nearby. O'Malley goes to restrain him.

ON REIGART -- looking stoic. Something about this doesn't sit right with him.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST OUTSIDE HAC

Burnett, oblivious to the news, keeps pushing through the woods. His pace has slowed considerably, now, the result of injuries, the cold, hunger...

A SOUND

A faint sound, whirring in the distance, causes Burnett to freeze in his tracks. He cocks his head, like a dog, straining to make it out. It's a familiar sound...

HELICOPTER BLADES

He smiles, picks up the pace.

CUT TO:

INT. NATO HELICOPTER

Inside the Nato Helicopter, the pilot receives communication from NATO Strike Command ATC.

NATO COMMUNICATIONS

Savior Six, Savior Six from OPCOM
Dixie. Abort mission. Package is
not at the door.. RTB immediately.. I
say again package is not at the door...

The Pilot looks at his co-pilot, surprised.

CUT TO:

BACK ON THE GROUND --

Burnett is about five hundred yards from the edge of the tree line.

HIS POV --

He can see the NATO helicopters flying towards him. He can't help but let out a yell.

BURNETT

YEAH!

He really pours it on now, forgetting his injuries, forgetting his hunger, his exhaustion. He just runs..

THE TREE LINE --

Is only fifty yards away now, and just as Burnett is about to come into the clearing, something horrible happens.

THE HELICOPTERS START TO TURN AROUND!

Burnett can't believe it.

BURNETT (CONT'D)

No! I'M HERE! I'M HERE!

ANGLE -- THE CLEARING

Burnett bursts through the tree line as the Nato Helicopters speed away from him. It is a sickening sight, Burnett reaching his hands up to the sky, the helicopters quickly disappearing from view.

Burnett falls to his knees.

BURNETT (CONT'D)

No. Please, no.

Tears stream down his face. They've left him. They've left him behind.

CUT TO:

EXT. HAC TOWN SQUARE -- LATER

The Tracker makes preparations to go after Burnett. He carefully cleans his rifle scope and stores it in a leather pouch that hangs around his waist.

NEARBY --

Arkan is on the phone, arguing.

ARKAN

You tell them 48 hours. We will have both bodies for them. Yes, Mladic, I understand.

(beat)

Look, I don't care, just TELL THEM!

He hangs up, angry, then turns to face the Tracker.

ARKAN (CONT'D)

Listen, this is very important, you have to bring the body back.

The Tracker shrugs.

TRACKER

Won't be a problem.

ARKAN

You have forty eight hours, Veszy. I can't delay the Americans any longer.

TRACKER

There's nothing for fifty miles. I'll catch up to him quickly.

ARKAN

Bazda will go with you.

The Tracker looks over at Bazda, who is checking his weapons.

TRACKER

No.

ARKAN

Yes, he WILL go with you.

The Tracker throws a supply bag at Bazda, who fumbles it, then catches it.

BAZDA

(under his breath)

Asshole.

ARKAN

Good. Get it done.

The Tracker turns and heads for the woods. Bazda follows him.

CUT TO:

EXT. CLEARING OUTSIDE HAC

Burnett is still on his knees, waiting, praying for the helicopters to turn and come back and get him.

But they won't. And he knows it.

Slowly, he gets to his feet.

BURNETT

(to himself)

Come on. Don't give up. Gotta find a radio.

He starts walking.

CUT TO:

INT. REIGART'S OFFICE

Reigart and O'Malley sit in his office, sharing a drink. These are men who are not used to grieving.

CUT TO:

EXT. FAILED PICK UP SITE - DAY

The site where Burnett waited for the NATO Helicopters to land. A light snow has covered everything, including Burnett's footprints.

The Tracker steps into the scene and bends down.

BAZDA

There's nothing here.

TRACKER

Shut up. I won't tell you again.

BAZDA

We should keep moving.

The Tracker ignores him and brushes away the snow very lightly. As he does, it reveals a footprint.

TRACKER

You need to understand something.

BAZDA

What's that?

TRACKER

You're my dog. Follow me, and be quiet.

Bazda looks at him like he's crazy and lights a cigarette. The Tracker follows the prints.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - EVENING

The Tracker examines some broken branches. He peers into the woods and smiles. He knows which direction Burnett is headed.

Bazda watches from a distance. He rolls his eyes and follows.

CUT TO:

EXT. VALLEY

Burnett is hiking up the trail West of the landing site. The trail cuts through a crotch in the hill, leading to a valley ahead. Beyond that valley are impassable mountains, so whatever's there, it's probably his last shot.

As he comes up over a crest, a village comes into view. Burnett allows himself a small smile. Finally, he caught a break.

EXT. VALLEY

The Tracker is on his knees. The snowfall is thick and constant.

ECU on the TRACKER'S FINGERS - he softly, slowly whisks back freshly fallen snowflakes. Patiently. His fingernail is frozen.

He uncovers a footprint in the ice, three inches below the fallen snow. It is Burnett's footprint, and it's pointing up a narrow goat trail.

The Tracker looks up the trail. The first thing he sees are Bazda's feet, standing in the way. He looks up at Bazda.

Bazda nods and steps out of the way. He's got a little smirk on his face. The Tracker sees it.

The Tracker gets up and starts moving. He moves fast. He runs, and when he runs, he's almost silent.

Bazda picks up his ruck and starts running after him, like a wounded moose.

EXT. VILLAGE -

Burnett approaches the outskirts of the village of Nizjny, very cautiously. The first few buildings he sees look pock marked by shell and small arms fire. So far, he hasn't seen a living soul.

EXT. WOODS

The Tracker makes his way up the trail in the dim, late afternoon sun. He does a crazy run/crawl that enables him to see the tracks up close.

Far behind, Bazda makes his way up the trail. Barely keeping up.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

Burnett walks into the village. All the huts and buildings are ruined. Old trucks stand like rotting skeletons. Rats scurry around in the shadows.

It's a ghost town. Another victim of the war.

He goes into the first hut he sees...

INT. HUT

Stale, dank air that stinks of rot causes Burnett to gasp as soon as he walks in. There's no dead bodies around, but the smell of death is everywhere.

He spots a phone, an old rotary model. Heartened, he picks it up.

It's dead, too. He goes into a back bedroom...

BACK BEDROOM

...and stops in his tracks. A male corpse, bloated and decomposing, is propped in a bed, a gun in its hand. A suicide.

Burnett stares for a moment. Then he backs out of the room.

INT. HOME IN NIZJNY

Burnett pushes his way into another house, and this time he doesn't bother waiting for an invitation.

He immediately starts rifling through everything, desperately looking for a radio, a cell phone, anything that can help him get out of here.

BURNETT

Damnit.

Nothing here.

ANOTHER HUT --

The same ritual, again. Burnett desperate for some way to contact home. He literally tears through shelves, looking for anything that can help him. The floor of the hut is littered with detritus.

He stops, breathing heavily, gathers himself. And then he sees it...

A GASOLINE CAN

Propped against a wall. He gets an idea.

EXT. TOWN -- EVENING

The Tracker and Bazda have come over the same crest in the hill, and the town of Nizjny has come into view. The Tracker stops.

BAZDA

What?

The Tracker says nothing, he just takes out the telescopic sight and screws it on his rifle.

BAZDA (CONT'D)

Why are we stopping?

The Tracker ignores him and raises the rifle sight to his eye.

BAZDA (CONT'D)

You can see him?

TRACKER'S POV -- THROUGH THE RIFLE SCOPE

He doesn't have his finger on the trigger yet, he's just trying to see what Burnett is doing. And it looks like madness.

ON BURNETT --

Sets one hut on fire, then runs to the next one. He stops, thinks for a minute, then dashes across the street and lights THAT building on fire. He whirls around and runs back across the street, setting the Mosque on fire.

It seems like he's truly lost his mind.

CUT TO:

INT. HANGAR -- THE ENTERPRISE

Reigart is supervising stuff that tells us they're preparing to go home, when O'Malley comes running into the hangar.

O'MALLEY

Captain! Something you should see!

Reigart drops what he's doing and follows.

INT. THE SCIF

Rodway and petty officer Kennedy are sitting in the Scif room, going over some photographs.

REIGART

What's up?

RODWAY

Sir, you gotta take a look at this.

Petty officer Kennedy holds up a satellite photo of the Bosnian countryside, a small, red dot in the center.

PETTY OFFICER KENNEDY

Our birds picked up a fire in Vizjny, about ten clicks from Hac. Nothing so unusual about that in and of itself, except that the village was overrun a year ago, and it's been uninhabited since, so...

He pulls another photo out...

PETTY OFFICER KENNEDY (CONT'D)

They pulled in for a closer look, and
this is what they picked up.

CLOSE ON -- THE SURVEILLANCE PHOTO

It is a closer view of the village Burnett set fire to, and
now we see that buildings are arranged to create a symbol. A
symbol that looks something like this....

Reigart is puzzled.



REIGART

What is it?

Rodway steps forward, tracing the outline of the symbol.

RODWAY

It's an old martial arts symbol.
Sir, I know this is gonna sound crazy,
but there's a rap group that uses it
on their albums, a kind of band logo.

(beat, he smiles)

Sir, the symbol is the sign of the Wu-
Tang Clan.

Reigart looks up.

REIGART

You're shitting me.

RODWAY

No sir.

REIGART

You think Burnett...

RODWAY

I think Burnett lit that fire, sir.
I think he's alive.

ON REIGART -- taking the photo in his hands, staring at it.
Give him time, it's clear that the man is making the most
important decision he's ever made. A decision that might
cost him his career, his freedom, maybe even his life.

He speaks slowly and clearly.

REIGART

Listen to me, I want everyone to witness this.

(beat)

Major Rodway, I am giving you a direct order to get your men together.

RODWAY

(confused)

Yes, sir.

REIGART

(raising his voice)

Your protest is noted, Major, now get your ass to those choppers before I throw you in the brig!

RODWAY

(starting to see what he's doing)

Yes...yes, sir.

REIGART

O'Malley? Come with me.

Reigart strides out of the room purposefully. O'Malley follows.

CORRIDOR

O'Malley is concerned, he's starting to see what Reigart's thinking.

O'MALLEY

Sir, if you're thinking what I'm thinking you're thinking...

REIGART

Don't say anything, O'Malley.

O'MALLEY

Sir, you've gotta inform command, you can't just take a Marine rescue mission in there with...

Reigart wheels on O'Malley.

REIGART

Lemme tell you what happens if I call command.

(MORE)

REIGART (CONT'D)

I tell them I think Burnett's alive, they have a discussion and tell us to wait until they have confirmation. Demery argues about who should go, and meanwhile, the Serbs come in there and blow his brains out. No thank you.

Reigart motions for O'Malley to enter Reigart's office.

REIGART (CONT'D)

After you.

O'Malley walks into Reigart's office, confused. As soon as he does, Reigart slams the door shut behind him and locks it.

O'MALLEY (O.S.)

What the... Captain, what are you doing?!

REIGART

If I'm gonna commit career suicide, I'm not taking you down with me, Tom.

O'MALLEY (O.S.)

Captain! Sir, open this door!

Reigart ignores him. He breaks the key off in the door and hustles away.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE DEPOT NEAR GRANIK --

Arkan is driving into the compound at Granik (where the f-18 is being kept). As soon as he passes through the gate, an aide runs up to him.

TIGER

There's a fire in Nizjny.

ARKAN

Nizjny? That's the next town over from Hac.

TIGER

A plane just flew over it half an hour ago and said the village was on fire.

Arkan ponders this.

ARKAN

And Bazda?

TIGER

We can't raise him. His radio's dead.

ARKAN

Or he is.

(pause)

Send troops from Hac, anti-aircraft guns.

TIGER

What for?

ARKAN

That fire is a distress signal. The Pilot is there, and the Americans will be coming for him.

Everyone starts to move.

CUT TO:

EXT. DECK OF THE ENTERPRISE -- NIGHT

Reigart joins Rodway and his men at the choppers. Reigart is dressed in his flight uniform, now.

He salutes Rodway.

REIGART

Gentleman, I want to be clear, before we leave, that I am about to put all of you in harm's way. If any man wishes not to join in this mission, you may step off right now.

Nobody moves a muscle.

REIGART (CONT'D)

In that case, let me emphasize that this mission has been authorized by myself, and myself alone as commanding officer.

Nobody moves.

REIGART (CONT'D)

Well then, let's go get our boy back.

With a whoop and a holler, they board the helicopters.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS OUTSIDE NIZJNY -- EVENING

The Tracker puts a round in the chamber of his Sig Sauer PS2000 match-grade sniper rifle.

BAZDA

Shouldn't we get closer?

The Tracker doesn't answer. He stares at Bazda, annoyed. He racks the bolt of the rifle.

He raises the rifle to his eye.

THROUGH THE SCOPE -

The Tracker takes a breath and holds it. He pulls the trigger. At the same moment, Bazda checks a COUGH. The rifle BOOMS and echoes throughout the valley.

EXT. ABANDONED VILLAGE

The bullet wings Burnett in the shoulder. He is flipped over by the force of it, smashing his head on the ground.

The SOUND of the rifle reaches him after he's been shot. He hyperventilates, trying to find the wound with his fingers. He's already going into shock.

BURNETT

Holy shit. Oh God, Oh God....

EXT. WOODS

The Tracker lowers his rifle. He looks at Bazda, who is trying to see if Burnett is hit.

BAZDA

Did you get him?

The Tracker puts the rifle down. He pulls a long, curved knife out of a scabbard at his side.

Bazda sees it and realizes The Tracker is going after him. Bazda steps back and pulls out his sidearm.

BAZDA (CONT'D)

What the fuck are you doing?

The Tracker looks at him.

TRACKER

You are too loud.

The Tracker takes a soft, quiet step. Bazda holds out the gun and is about to pull the trigger.

The Tracker moves his right arm so swiftly it's hard to tell what just happened. Bazda's gun, and the hand holding it, fall to the ground.

Bazda is about to scream out. But he hasn't time. The Tracker steps forward even closer and swiftly lifts the knife into Bazda's throat. All he can do is hiss his last breaths.

He falls to the ground, bloody and dead.

The Tracker picks up the backpack and the rifle, and he heads into the Burning town.

CUT TO:

EXT. SKY OVER BOSNIA -- NIGHT

Two marine helicopters zip through the night sky, flying low enough to avoid radar.

INSIDE --

Rodway and his men stand at the ready.

IN THE COCKPIT --

Reigart is riding shotgun. He points out the window, shouting over the din of the blades.

REIGART

THERE!

Reigart's POV --

He can see Nizjny burning below them.

REIGART (CONT'D)

Land there, out of sight!

CUT TO:

EXT. VILLAGE -- NIGHT

Burnett is huddled behind a crumbling wall, between two burning buildings. He has wrapped cloth around his mouth, but still can't help coughing.

He inspects the wound on his shoulder. It hurts, but it's not as bad as he thought. He looks down at the pistol he took off one of the Serb soldiers. Only two bullets left.

Tentatively, he pushes the gun towards the edge of the brick wall, just peeking it out around the corner...

BLAM!

A shot from the Tracker knocks the pistol right out of his hand.

ACROSS THE STREET --

The Tracker has Burnett pinned down. There's no direction he can go in without getting shot. He yells out.

TRACKER

AMERICAN!

The sound of the fires raging makes it hard to hear.

TRACKER (CONT'D)

American, can you hear me? If you come out, I make it quick. Right in the head! You hear me?!

CUT TO:

EXT. NIZJNY

The Marine recon team moves silently around the edge of the burning town. Rodway suddenly stops in his tracks. Using Marine combat symbols, he points in Burnett's direction.

MARINE'S POV --

They can see Burnett, huddled behind the brick wall.

ON RODWAY --

Thinking to himself. His men want to move forward, but he recognizes the fear on Burnett's face. He makes some more hand signals to his men, then steals away from them.

ON BURNETT --

Genuinely frightened. The gun is now five feet out in the clear, meaning that he's defenseless, and the fire is picking up on all sides.

TRACKER (O.S.)

Don't take too long, American! If I come over there, I make it long time before you die.

Burnett starts to panic. What's he gonna do?

Then, he sees something, behind a wall a hundred yards away on his side of the street.

It's Rodway.

Burnett can't believe it. He almost wonders, with all his injuries and the smoke... maybe it's a dream?

But Rodway is definitely signaling him, holding up a rifle. It's hard to see through the smoke, but Burnett thinks he understands what he's saying. He nods.

Then...

BURNETT

(yelling)

OKAY! I'm coming out! I'm coming out!

ON THE TRACKER --

He assumes this must be a trick. But then, to his surprise, Burnett starts to appear from behind his wall, no gun in his hand.

THE TRACKER smiles his terrible smile, then raises his gun and aims, taking just an extra moment to focus in on Burnett's abdomen.

TRACKER

(subtitled)

Fucking Americans.

And as he squeezes the trigger...

BLAM!

His eye is blown clear through his head.

RODWAY --

Emerges from his hiding place, fifty feet away, and runs up to the Tracker, who is convulsing on the ground. He puts a few more bullets in him, just to make sure.

BURNETT --

Still has his hands up when Rodway comes to collect him.

BURNETT

Glen, holy shit, buddy...

He can't help but laugh. Rodway throws Burnett's shoulder over his.

RODWAY

Let's go home, Burnett.

Marines swarm around them and hustle out of the burning town.

INT. MARINE HELICOPTER

Reigart and the Marine pilot can see Serb troops approaching from the distance. Tracer bullets whizz by.

REIGART

(to himself)

Let's go, let's go...

Then, through the mist and the smoke, a figure appears...

It's Burnett, being helped along by Rodway and another Marine. They head straight for the helicopter.

BURNETT -- gets there first, grabs a hand that's reaching out to him from inside the helicopter...

It's Reigart.

BURNETT

Thank you, Sir.

Reigart pulls him up into the helicopter. Reigart looks as relieved as if he saved his own son.

REIGART

Thought we lost you.

BURNETT

No, sir.

Burnett is led to a seat while the rest of the marines board. They lift into the air.

REIGART
LET'S GO, LET'S GO!!!

Burnett is strapped in. They've got em.

CUT TO:

INT. THE HELICOPTER -- DAY

The Huey races back towards the coast. A marine tends to Burnett's shoulder, affixing a field dressing. Burnett yells out over the din of the helicopter blades.

BURNETT
We can't go back yet.

At first, there's silence. Then Rodway and some of the Marines laugh, thinking it's a joke.

But the look on his face tells them Burnett's not kidding. Reigart turns around to face him.

REIGART
What the hell did you just say?

BURNETT
Arkan isn't gonna honor the treaty, Sir. They're gonna overrun the country soon as we pull out.

REIGART
Burnett...

BURNETT
Me n' Stack were shot down cause we photographed Arkan's troops crossing the treaty line. We bring those photos back, maybe the world sits up and takes notice. If we don't, well, Stackhouse died for nothing.

REIGART
How do you propose we do this, son? The Serbs have picked that plane apart by now.

BURNETT

The photos aren't with the plane,
sir.

(beat)

Last meal I ever ate with Stack, he
bored the shit out of me detailing
all the design changes in the f-18.

ON REIGART -- his jaw clenching. He genuinely does not want
to hear this, but he knows he has to listen.

BURNETT (CONT'D)

The film we took got transferred into
the ejection seat, sir. And that
seat is sitting on top of a tree near
the crash site.

A long, hard moment of silence passes in the interior of the
copter. Everyone looks to Reigart to see what his decision
is.

Reigart shakes his head.

REIGART

We can't do this.

BURNETT

We CAN sir, and we should.

(beat)

Look, I'm gonna go home and people
are gonna call me a hero cause I
survived out here. But that's
bullshit, sir. All I did was watch
my ass. We go back for that film,
and we show the world the truth?

Burnett looks around at all the men on the helicopter, stopping
at Reigart.

BURNETT (CONT'D)

Well, sir, I hate to be a cornball
about it, but that makes us heroes.
And it makes all the shit I just went
through worth it.

HOLD ON BURNETT, looking at Reigart, and then...

CUT TO:

EXT. HELICOPTER -- DAY

The helicopters turn a hundred and twenty degrees to the left. They're going back for the chair.

CUT TO:

INT. SERB RADAR SHACK --

The Radar operator tracks the American helicopters. He is surprised to see the blips turn and head in the wrong direction.

He picks up the phone.

EXT. SERB MILITARY DEPOT --

Arkan is on the phone, in an office at the military depot. Things are quickly falling apart for him, and he knows it.

ARKAN

I understand, but we've already pulled our troops back. If they try to confirm what he says, we'll deny it.

We hear yelling from the other end.

ARKAN (CONT'D)

They have no proof, Mladic. Whatever photos they took, they must have been destroyed in the crash.

More yelling, even louder now.

ARKAN (CONT'D)

For two days, he'll be a hero, then everyone will forget.

An aide comes up to Arkan, motions that it's important. Arkan nods.

AIDE

Sir, the Americans are coming back.

Arkan's brow furrows. He hangs up without saying goodbye.

RADAR BOOTH --

The Radar operator shows Arkan what they've observed.

SERB RADAR GUY
They're headed due east.

Arkan pulls at his chin, troubled.

SERB RADAR GUY (CONT'D)
I don't understand it. They picked
up their man, why would they come
back?

ARKAN
Proof.

Arkan bolts out of the room.

INT. F-18 GAR

The hangar where the reassembled f-18 is being kept. The technician who earlier presented Arkan with the camera package is having a cigarette with a co-worker.

Arkan barges into the room, marches right over to the plane fragments arranged on the floor.

HIS POV -- what remains of Stackhouse's navigator seat is still there, but...

One of the ejection seats is missing.

ARKAN
(yelling)
I need every man we've got! And
trucks!

As he walks out on the base, everyone snaps to it.

CUT TO:

EXT. SKY OVER BOSNIAN FOREST

We recognize this stretch of forest, it's where Burnett and Stackhouse went down originally. We can even see the scarring from where the fuselage crashed.

BURNETT (O.S.)
That's it. Up ahead.

REVEAL THE MARINE HELICOPTERS

Thundering over the tree tops, flying in formation.

INT. CH 53 CHOPPER

Reigart is in the co-pilot's seat, taking directions from Burnett, who leans over his shoulder.

BURNETT

See that bank of tall trees? Should be in there.

The pilot steers the helicopter in closer to the tree tops. Everyone peers out the window, looking for the seat.

REIGART'S POV --

Nothing there. Just a lot of empty trees.

REIGART

Sure this is it, Lieutenant?

BURNETT

Yeah. Definitely.
(then, spotting something)
Oh shit...

Burnett points off to the right.

BURNETT (CONT'D)

They beat us to it.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST

A team of Serb soldiers, coordinated by Arkan himself, are pulling the ejection seat out of the tree tops. They've almost got it freed from the branches when someone spots the American helicopters.

ARKAN

Let's go, hurry up!

With one final yank, the chair crashes down to the ground.

ARKAN (CONT'D)

Let's go, get it on the truck! Move!

The Serb soldiers grab the chair and head for a tarp-covered flatbed truck nearby.

CUT TO:

INT. CH 53 CHOPPER

The Pilot has brought the chopper around for another run. The truck that Arkan has loaded the chair onto is partially obscured by trees.

REIGART

Come in straight ahead. Soon as they clear the tree line, they're gonna be sitting ducks.

The Pilot heads back for the same tree line, and as he does...

BURNETT

Oh...

We pull back and reveal...

THREE TRUCKS --

Totally indistinguishable from each other, speed out from the tree line heading in opposite directions.

BURNETT (CONT'D)

...shit!

REIGART

Decoys!

At the same time, machine gun fire erupts from the forest, pinging the helicopter and forcing them to pull up.

CUT TO:

INT. TRUCK -- CONTINUOUS

Arkan rides in the front seat of one of the trucks speeding away from the crash site. We can see behind him, into the bed of the truck...

The Ejection Seat is there, loosely strapped down to the truck.

ARKAN

(to the driver)

Keep moving. Once we hit the tunnel at Vanuf, we'll detonate it.

CUT TO:

EXT. HELICOPTER -- CONTINUOUS

The three helicopters fly in formation, doing their damndest to make sure they don't get shot down.

INT. HELICOPTER

Reigart's surveying the scene, trying to figure out what to do. Rodway and Burnett nearby.

REIGART

(eyeing the three trucks)
We can't chase all three, and we're gonna get ripped apart if we stay much longer.

RODWAY

Guy's pretty smart, ya gotta hand it to em.

CLOSE on BURNETT - thinking, thinking. Then...

BURNETT

THE BEACON!

REIGERT

What?!

BURNETT

The seat beacon! The beacon on the seat, it's activated remotely...

REIGART

Right.

REIGERT throws a series of switches on a control panel in the chopper.

REIGART (CONT'D)

Red Crown, this is Alfa Romeo...

As he radios in the request...

CUT TO:

INT. TRUCK

Arkan's truck heads for another tree line, now about two miles away. He doesn't even notice...

IN THE BACK -- THE EJECTION SEAT

A red light starts blinking.

BACK TO:

INT. CH 53 CHOPPER

Reigart peers down at his scope.

REIGART

THERE! That one - heading north!

EXT BOSNIAN ROAD

We see ARKAN in the front of the truck as it tears down a tree lined road. He scans the skies frantically.

WIDE AERIAL - the choppers peel away from each other.

REIGERT

Magic 6 ..you boys head north and suppress the heat on that truck, Mammabirds kickin' in the door.

MAGIC 6 (O.S)

Roger that Mammabird. She pops her head we'll lick her real good.

AERIAL - We fly along with the formation as they wait for a gap in the trees to fire at the convoy.

ON THE GROUND - we ride with the gunner of an armored personnel carrier as he squeezes off rounds at the glimpses of chopper he can see through the canopy.

INT. COBRA -

Tic! The cockpit window spiders as it takes direct hits.

MAGIC 5

Son of a bitch! Come on boys let's get it done. I'm going in.

EXT. AERIAL -

We see the cobras form up line astern and drop right down to the tree tops. Suddenly a break opens up in the canopy.

The cobras don't miss their chance. In a dramatic piece of flying the lead cobra affects a stunning pedal turn, swinging the tail boom of the helicopter right around through 90 degrees so the second cobra can form up opposite it.

Then they open up with everything they've got, nose guns and rockets.

ON THE GROUND - the armored personnel carrier doesn't have a chance. It never makes it past the clearing as round after round of armor piercing ammunition tears the metal apart from left and right. It's a turkey shoot.

AERIAL WIDE - below us we see the Cobras crab along, pouring death onto the road. Eventually they peel off, job done. The truck is now relatively unprotected.

MAGIC 6 (O.S)

Okay, Mammabird, we've turned down the heat. She's all yours. Good luck.

INT. MAMMABIRD

The Marines tense up. They're on.

REIGERT

Roger Magic 6 thanks for the help we'll nail it from here.

EXT. AERIAL WIDE -

We see the cobras peel off in front of the massive CH53. They swoop right past camera, leaving distinct heat trails.

We see the imposing Mammabird get "nose down" to pick up speed as it chases after the truck.

INT. TRUCK

ARKAN looks up. It's getting real hairy.

ARKAN

Keep going! We'll be safe in the tunnel!

INT. MAMMABIRD

The noise and vibration is tremendous. RODWAY turns to his men and gives them a hand signal. Four men hustle to the back of the chopper and hook into rappel lines, giving thumbs up. Two door gunners cock their Miniguns and train them on the truck. RODWAY taps REIGERT on the shoulder.

RODWAY

Sir, we're good to go, but you'll have to put us right over the truck.

PILOT

No dice chief, the bush is too heavy, we don't have a clear approach.

REIGART

We'll make one.

The pilots look at each other, stunned.

REIGART (CONT'D)

We did it in Vietnam all the time, with Hueys. We hedge cut right into hot LZs in a bird quarter the size of this.

PILOT

Sir, we...

REIGART

Just do it!

The pilots look anxiously at the heavy canopy sweeping by below them, then nod to each other.

PILOT

Hang on.

EXT. AERIAL -

We fly along with the giant chopper as it swings violently out towards us then back in towards the tree line.

ON THE GROUND - we travel along with the truck as suddenly, the CH 53's massive blades slice through the tree line throwing tons of debris every where.

INT. TRUCK

ARKAN can't believe what he's seeing.

ARKAN

Jesus!

AERIAL WIDE - we see the 53 slicing its way into position over the speeding truck. Branches and leaves are spit into the air as this 10 million dollar hedge trimmer goes to work. It's an unbelievable sight.

INT. MAMMABIRD

ON THE PILOTS - the vibrations are sickening as the pilots struggle to maintain course. The cockpit windows are covered in spattering debris as the engines grind and scream.

REIGERT

Stay with it! Stay with it! RODWAY!
STANDBY!

(The cuts are fast and furious now)

RODWAY hooks into the rappel lines and gives REIGERT a thumbs up.

ON THE GROUND - WHOOOSH!!!!!!!!!! Air blast from the 64 foot rotors is so strong that it blows the canvas covering off the truck. The soldiers in the back are terrified as the beast bears down on them.

UP FRONT - ARKAN, pistol in hand screams at the driver to keep going.

INT. MAMMABIRD -

The rear loading door lowers, 200mph winds bustle around the bay, but RODWAY and company stand fast.

EXT. AERIAL -

We look down on the spectacular stunt. The rear hatch is all the way down and the Marine team is right over the truck.

ON REIGERT AND BURNETT - watching anxiously, it all comes down to this. ON THE GROUND - we speed along behind the truck as feet above our heads four Marines sail down out of the chopper, firing as they go.

ON THE TRUCK - ARKAN'S terrified men fire back blindly.

WITH RODWAY - he abseils down towards the truck as he calmly picks off Arkan's men.

WIDE - we race along with the truck as Rodway's men touch down on the truck.

ON THE TRUCK- a sickening close quarter firefight takes place, machine guns blast men's guts into the airstream, as the thundering CH53 keeps pace overhead.

WHAM!

One of Rodway's team takes a round in the face! The force lifts him off his feet and he is yanked off the truck into mid air. He hangs like a doll on the end of his rappel line smashing into trees as they speed along.

BLAM!

Rodway settles the score.

ON THE CHOPPER - the winch team desperately struggle to pull the wounded man back up.

ON THE PILOT - all they can see is an endless wall of canopy that they must chop through.

PILOT

COME ON!!

ON THE TRUCK - ARKAN looks around as Rodway's team throw the remaining men off the truck.

ARKAN

No!

ON RODWAY - he looks around. SHIT! The tunnel mouth is just up the road. Time to get the fuck out of here. He signals his men to wave off and get back onto the chopper. Then he clips a carabiner to the ejection seat.

ON THE CHOPPER - the winch men haul the Marines off the speeding truck.

ON THE TRUCK - they're all away but RODWAY. Suddenly ARKAN fires at him hitting him twice in the chest.

ON RODWAY - the bullets spin him around and he tumbles onto the seat, his rappel line twisting in the wind.

ON THE CHOPPER - BURNETT see what's happened.

BURNETT

GLEN! NO!

REIGART

Get him outta there! Get him out!

The winch men frantically tug at RODWAY'S tangled lines.

IN THE COCKPIT - we see what the pilots see - the forest clears as the mountain wall rears up in front of them.

PILOT

Shit! We have to pull up!

REIGART

NO! Hang on, we're nearly there!!

ON THE TRUCK - ARKAN has clambered to the back to finish off RODWAY, screaming and firing as he goes. He's just about to blast RODWAY to eternity, when he is literally severed by a blast from a Minigun, manned by none other than BURNETT.

ON THE CHOPPER - the winch men have got it working. They reel RODWAY in.

ON THE PILOT - The tunnel mouth rears up at them. He pulls frantically back on the stick.

ON THE TRUCK - the driver is losing control

RODWAY'S line tightens and yanks him and the chair off the back of the truck as...

WIDE - we see the CH53 pull up almost vertically to avoid the cliff wall as the truck smashes into the mouth of the tunnel.

ONBOARD - tremendous G force, pilots grimace, fighting the beast. We look straight down out the bay door to see RODWAY and the seat dangling like fish on a line. The Marines hang on for dear life.

EXT. - AERIAL -

WHOOOM!!! The 53 levels off at last breaking out over the snowy landscape.

We see it sail along towing the unconscious RODWAY.

INT. CH 53 CHOPPER

The winch men do their job hauling RODWAY and the seat to safety.

BURNETT and REIGART gather around RODWAY. He's okay, mostly superficial. He coughs, blood and dirt.

RODWAY speaks, but it's too noisy to hear. Instead he just gives a thumbs up.

REIGART and BURNETT exchange a look. REIGART laughs and slaps BURNETT on the shoulder.

EXT. BOSNIAN SKIES

The chopper swoops along, heading for home, as out of nowhere a pair of escorting Sea Harriers thunder by. They escort them home.

CUT TO:

EXT. USS ENTERPRISE - DAY

Half the crew is up on deck, watching with breathless anticipation as the marine helicopters approach from the distance. Official Navy and NATO photographers and camera crews stand off to one side, near Demery, Shelton and O'Malley.

Next to Shelton are TWO MP'S, handcuffs hanging off their belts.

THE HELICOPTERS LAND --

And as the door opens up, a cheer goes up from the men. Burnett is instantly met by medical personnel, photographers, and the top brass...

SHELTON

(saluting)

Lieutenant Burnett, welcome home.

Burnett salutes back and hands Shelton a slightly damaged black box.

BURNETT

Sir, on this drive, you'll find digital records detailing Serbian troop movements across the safe zone, in clear violation of the treaty.

Shelton looks surprised, but not nearly so much as Demery.

SHELTON

I see.

BURNETT

I hope they'll find their way to the right people, sir. This conflict isn't over.

Burnett pushes past Shelton, into the cheering mass of crew men who welcome him home.

REIGART --

Emerges from the helicopter now, and as soon as he does, the MPs are there to escort him. Shelton makes sure that none of this is captured by the cameras or photographers.

SHELTON

Captain, while I applaud your bravery, you have violated direct orders from your superior officer and broken the chain of command. I'm ordering you be placed under arrest until such time as a fair hearing can be convened.

Reigart nods his head, extending his hands to be cuffed. He looks over at Demery, who looks at him more with pity than anger.

DEMERY

I'm sorry it came to this, Captain.
It was unnecessary.

REIGART

No, Sir, I don't think it was.

As Reigart is led away...

BURNETT, manages to pull away from the crowd surrounding him. He stands at attention and salutes, as Reigart is led to a waiting helicopter.

Soon, everyone joins in, the entire crew of men, saluting their Captain.

As the camera pulls up and away...

TITLE CARD

The photographs taken by Lieutenants Burnett and Stackhouse were submitted to the Pentagon and NATO Authorities. Soon after, the Cincinnati Accord was nullified.

INT. MILITARY COURTROOM -- DAY

Reigart sits in the middle of the courtroom, an impeachment trial underway.

TITLE CARD

All criminal charges were waived against Captain Leslie Reigart, in light of his bravery.

(MORE)

TITLE CARD (CONT'D)

However, he was dishonorably discharged from the United States Navy, ending an otherwise distinguished thirty-five year career.

Reigart looks sad but defiant as the military judge issues his ruling.

EXT. THE ENTERPRISE -- DAY

A pilot in his flight suit walks across the deck of the Enterprise, a crisp fall wind raising white caps on the ocean.

TITLE CARD

The USS Enterprise remains stationed in the Adriatic until a more enforceable treaty can be drafted... Captain Chris Burnett stayed in the military and later was selected to command a carrier Wing. He is still flying missions over Bosnia.

The pilot, Burnett, walks across the deck and we...

FADE OUT