

CASUALTIES OF WAR

Screenplay

By

David Rabe

Directed By: Brian DePalma  
Produced By: Art Linson  
Property of Paramount Pictures  
First Draft

A true story  
based on the book  
Casualties of War

by Daniel Lang

Jungle:-intense, vibrant, tangled, green, still. Arching trunks, twisted vines, huge fronds, glittering beads of water. Then the camera moves over the gray metal of the interior of a wall locker, revealing the jungle to be a photo pasted on the locker. Next the camera settles on a photograph of SUEB ERIKSSON and his wife, Kirsten, both in their early twenties, both attractive, both blonde. Moving, the camera pauses at the photo of a two-year-old girl in a pink dress.

Suddenly the gray of the door blurs, and there is a clang, a splash of green jacket, the shape and color of a hand, which has flung the locker door loudly shut.

1 EXT: DAY: LATE AFTERNOON: MINNESOTA: FACTORY EXTERIOR 1

Credits start.

The door of the factory, metallic and austere, opens. Out steps Eriksson followed by another young man, WEBER. Eriksson is blonde and not physically imposing, yet he makes an impression of strength, possessing a sinewy musculature. Dressed in a laborer's clothing, he wears a green winter jacket and cap and carries a lunchbucket, as does Weber. They pull on their gloves and step into the lightly falling snow; their booted feet descend the stairs to the parking lot. Eriksson looks at the falling snow.

ERIKSSON

Look at this.

WEBER

Supposed to freeze our butts off tonight.

ERIKSSON

See ya tomorrow.

Jumping into his car, Weber slams the door. Eriksson hastens on across the parking lot.

2 EXT: DAY: STREET 2

Passing through a large gate, Eriksson finds himself facing a street down which cars cautiously proceed. At a bus stop fifty yards to his right, a bus is easing to a halt. Eriksson runs toward the bus.

3 INT: BUS 3

As the doors hiss open, Eriksson can be seen running up. He climbs aboard, removing his gloves.

DRIVER

Cold enough for you?

ERIKSSON

I love it.

As the bus moves out, Eriksson flops onto the first forward facing seats and begins loosening his clothing, removing his hat and scarf. The bus is relatively empty. The window is a steamy veil.

4 EXT: ROAD 4

In the light snow, the bus speeds along.

5 INT: BUS 5

Leaning back in the seat, Eriksson sighs and sets his head against the window, his body relaxing.

DRIVER

Rough day?

ERIKSSON

I'm beat.

He closes his eyes.

ANOTHER ANGLE: The driver smiles.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Eriksson's eyes flutter open. He stares straight ahead, a puzzled expression as he is blinking.

ANOTHER ANGLE: From a height the bus is seen moving through the outskirts of town.

ANOTHER ANGLE: From behind the driver, WE SEE the road ahead and at the distance a tunnel.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Eriksson's eyes are closing.

ANOTHER ANGLE: From behind the driver WE SEE the road, the approaching tunnel, as the bus is pulling to a halt for another stop.

6 EXT: BUS STOP: TWILIGHT 6

A number of people are there, climbing onto the bus.

7 INT: BUS: TWILIGHT 7

As the people enter and the bus starts up.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Eriksson lies sleeping, curled in his seat, the people filing past him.

ANOTHER ANGLE as several laborers move past, a couple women, one of whom is an oriental girl, quite young, quite attractive, dressed in a big winter coat and hat. She carries two large shopping bags, and settles into a seat directly in front of the sleeping Eriksson.

Beyond her profile can be seen the dark of the tunnel into which they enter.

- 8 EXT: TUNNEL: BUS 8  
The headlights blink on.
- 9 INT: BUS 9  
The girl sits, the yellow lights that dot the tunnel ceiling playing over her face as she sits staring ahead.  
ANOTHER ANGLE: The yellow lights dance eerily on Eriksson's face.
- 10 EXT: TUNNEL 10  
The dark into which the headlights of the bus rush on.
- 11 INT: BUS 11  
In the flickering light Eriksson's head begins to toss as he seems to struggle to wake up; his head goes from side to side.
- 12 INT: ANOTHER DARKNESS 12  
Eriksson is waking up, bursting up from sleep, his countenance both a duplication and a variation of the preceding image, he growls, gasps.  
Looking around, he sees other sleeping figures on bunks. He is in a tent, and other men sleep on beds, a figure with a flashlight standing at the opposite end of the tent. The figure is clearly the silhouette of a soldier. The flashlight beam veers, hitting Eriksson in the face.
- 13 EXT: GIGANTIC SUN LOW IN THE SKY 13  
Camera pans down to show village in Vietnam, straw hootches, a platoon of American soldiers moving through, Eriksson among them. He walks, looks about. The villagers, mostly women and children and old people, stare at the passing soldiers, who look tired, weary. Some of the people wave or bow. At various points in the column children run forward but as one scampers up, a soldier rams a round into the chamber of his weapon and the child skids to a halt. Along the perimeter of the column other squads dip into the straw huts, making quick searches. One soldier is taking pictures with an instamatic.  
CLARK, wiry, hard muscled, tall, a nervous energy rushing through him, suddenly hastens up past several other soldiers until he is with Meserve and Brown. MESERVE is young, twenty, a sergeant. Dark haired, he is handsome, muscular, five-eleven. BROWN is black, muscular, shorter than the other two.

CLARK  
Whata you make a this, Sarge?

BROWN  
We diggin' it, man.

CLARK  
I don't like this shit.

As another young sergeant, SERGEANT KRAMER, moving from the head of the column to them, arrives to talk to Meserve:

KRAMER

Meserve, you're recon right, I'm recon left. Third squad'll be at column point at double intervals. Fourth squad'll take the rear, same intervals. Flankers at twenty meters, point at thirty.

Meserve nods. Kramer heads off.

BROWN

Yes, indeed, these are folks the Sarge and me are overjoyed to have travelled eleven thousand miles to assist them in their struggle to upgrade their raggedy-assed selves.

CLARK

Except they're all old or kids. That ain't good.

BROWN

This here a retirement village. This here sorta like Florida, right Sarge.

Meserve gestures with his head to indicate something at which he wants Brown and Clark to look. They look ahead.

ANOTHER ANGLE: CLARK, MESERVE, BROWN POU

Off to the side, Eriksson is engaged in a conversation with several children.

ERIKSSON

(offering mushy candy bar)

Hershey bar. Humba one.

As Eriksson mimes eating the candy bar.

MESERVE

Quit beggin', Eriksson. They don't want the fucking candy bar you can give it to me. I'm a orphan.

CLARK

You an orphan, Sarge?

As a third child hastens up to snatch the candy bar from Eriksson and then stand there bowing.

CLARK

You're makin' me sick with this rear-echelon bullshit, Eriksson.

CHILD THREE

Cam on ong ay. Cam on ong ay.

As a woman with a baby in her arms steps forward to hand Eriksson a piece of fruit, which Eriksson takes.

ERIKSSON

Cam on ong, man. Cam on ong very much.

The woman giggles.

MESERVE

Eriksson! Comeer.

Eriksson hastens to them.

MESERVE

Listen up here you Cherry. If you don't wanna die a horrible death, don't you eat one fuckin' thing these dinks give you. You read me, Cherry. A village like this, see, these people are confused themselves about are they Cong or not.

BROWN

They're schizophrenic, man.

MESERVE

That's affirmative.

BROWN

Depends on who scared 'em last, man.

MESERVE

They don't know are they or aren't they Cong. Get it? You eat somethin' they give you, it's got ground up glass in it, or chopped up razor blades, what are you dead of?

BROWN

Stupidity, man.

MESERVE

That's much affirmed, Brown. See, Eriksson.

Now they are passing a black officer, Lieutenant Reilly, who, with an ARUN interpreter, is talking to an old Vietnamese man.

ERIKSSON  
I wasn't gonna eat it.

CLARK  
You were gonna fuckin' eat it you  
Cherry. He was gonna eat it,  
wasn't he, Brown.

ERIKSSON  
I just didn't wanna be rude.

As Meserve peels off to slip over beside Reilly and several other  
soldiers gathered there.

BROWN  
Rude? Boy, I'll smack you upside  
the head you talkin' that  
foolishness?!

CLARK  
You do somethin' rude, Eriksson,  
you say, "Sorry 'bout that." Like  
for example you strangle their  
chickens or cop some rice or  
barbeque their hootch, you say  
"Sorry 'bout that." Right, Brown?  
Lemme hear you say it, Cherry.  
"Sorry 'bout that."

ERIKSSON  
Sorry 'bout that.

ANOTHER ANGLE as Meserve comes up to LIEUTENANT REILLY and the  
Vietnamese man.

MESERVE  
This guy any use, sir?

REILLY  
We asked which path was safe, he  
said one day one, next day the  
other.

MESERVE  
You UC! UC! Humba fuckin' ten!

MAN  
No, no. No, no. No UC.

ANGLE PAST Meserve onto Clark and Brown and Eriksson.

CLARK  
Sarge!

MESERVE  
Yeh.

ANGLE ON CLARK.

CLARK  
Ask 'em which way to the nearest  
MacDonald's!

14 EXT: JUNGLE: NIGHT

14

Figures waver in the moonless gloom, the platoon drifting in the dark down a slope. We hear breathing, the strain, the steps. The dark is impenetrable, the men mere outlines, ghostly. A figure stumbles, falls.

HERBER  
Oh, shit. Fuck this, man.

ROWAN  
Herber? Herber?

HERBER  
Ohhhouch.

The second figure has bumped into the first.

ROWAN  
Get up, whata you doin'? Get up.

HERBER  
You stepped on my fuckin' hand,  
Rowan.

ROWAN  
Sorry 'bout that.

As a third soldier is almost bumping into them.

SOLDIER #3  
Are we stopping? What's goin'  
on?

ANOTHER ANGLE: Meserve whirling.

MESERVE  
Shut up!

General muttering as Reilly slips up next to Meserve.

REILLY  
Let's N.D.P. here.

MESERVE  
Right.

Now Meserve glides along the line of men.

MESERVE  
We're gonna N.D.P. here.

The men begin stopping, dropping to the ground.

HERBER  
- Great. This is a posh place.

MESERVE  
Herber. You and Eriksson get out  
the Claymores.

HERBER  
Fuckin' A.

He looks around. The dark is impenetrable.

HERBER  
Eriksson, where are you? Eriksson?

Eriksson is moving toward Herber.

ERIKSSON  
Here.

ANGLE ON Herber looking about.

HERBER  
Where? I can't see you, man.

Eriksson shows up.

ERIKSSON  
It's like bein' underwater in this  
place.

HERBER  
We gotta set up the Claymores,  
man.

ERIKSSON  
Yeh.

As they move along past the other men in the dense dark, and set to  
work on the Claymores.

HERBER  
Eriksson, leeches wouldn't really  
wanna get up my asshole, would  
they?

ERIKSSON  
What?

HERBER  
That leeches wouldn't wanna go  
up my asshole to live.

ERIKSSON  
I don't know. You think they did?

HERBER  
I feel like they did. I been  
feelin' sick, man.

ERIKSSON  
- You should try and dig 'em out.

HERBER  
Why would they wanna do that,  
though. That's so crazy.

ERIKSSON  
Well, leeches got their own point  
a view on these things, Herber.

HERBER  
But that's just nuts. It's just  
fuckin' crazy, man, you know.

Distantly there is a sound, a concussive sound, the sound of a  
mortar being fired, a whispering thump-thump, a heartbeat.

HERBER  
How would I dig them out?

ERIKSSON  
Shhhhhh.

Again, distantly, there is the concussive sound of a mortar being  
fired.

ANOTHER ANGLE on the squad:

ROWAN  
Oh, shit.

SOLDIER #1  
What was that?

MESERVE  
Fix that sound.

REILLY  
Fix that sound, Sergeant.

Both Reilly and Meserve have pulled out compasses.

SOLDIER #2  
I hate fuckin' mortars. Goddamnit.

Everyone is huddling, down, staring up, listening. Again they hear  
the sound, and again.

HERBER  
I'm gettin' a headache.

Distant flashes; the jungle lights up once, twice. Explosions  
rumble in.

REILLY  
Did you get a fix?

BROWN

They're after somebody else. Who they after?

MESERVE

Is that third platoon over there, Lieutenant?

As the RTO comes scrambling up, his radio squawking.

RTO

Captain Vorst says Alpha's gettin' hit, sir.

More mortar sounds: thwump, thwump.

SOLDIER #2

Ohhh, shit. Do they know we're here?

REILLY

I gotta fix on that tube. Whata you say, Meserve?

MESERVE

Get some ponchos over me.

Meserve is digging out a map and flashlight. Two soldiers with ponchos cover Meserve's head and shoulders so he can turn on the flashlight and look at the map.

REILLY

(to Kramer)

Set out security on the flanks and front and rear but not too far, I don't want them getting separated from us.

KRAMER

Take the right flank, Eriksson, and try not to get lost.

ERIKSSON

Right, Sarge.

Eriksson moves off.

REILLY

(to his radio man)

Get Superman Two. Tell 'em we got a fix on the tube. Tell 'em we can hear the tube. We'll adjust by sound.

As the radio man gets on the air:

RTO

Superman Two. Superman Two, this is Silent Twin Two. Over.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Eriksson slides into position against a fallen tree, he's at the ready. The dark is solid, impenetrable, full of wavering leaves. He looks back toward his squad.

ANOTHER ANGLE and the mortar sounds continue, the pacing doubling as more mortars are now firing. A soldier comes running up to Reilly.

SOLDIER #2

Sir, are we diggin' in here, or what?

Suddenly there is rifle fire from the rear of their group, a soldier blasting into the jungle.

MESERVE

What the fuck?

Several other troopers fire off into the jungle.

MESERVE AND REILLY

Hold it, hold it. Jesus Christ.

MESERVE

What the fuck is goin' on?

As Meserve is hastening to the point of firing, Brown dropping in with him.

SOLDIER #4

I saw a gook, Sarge. One of them gooks from the village.

BROWN

You're recognizin' people in this shit, man!

SOLDIER #4

I saw him.

As Soldier #6 comes running up to Meserve.

SOLDIER #6

Superman Two needs your map coordinates, Sarge. That tube's kickin' ass on Alpha.

Meserve is already moving back toward Reilly and the ATO.

MESERVE

Brownie, you stay here and keep the shit together here.

BROWN

My shit is together. My shit is forever together. I am an armor-plated motherfucker.

ANOTHER ANGLE: As Meserve runs, there are more mortar firing sounds. He is looking, thinking.

MESERVE

One thousand and one. One  
thousand and two. Fuck this.

He dives on the ground as there is a nearby mortar explosion.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Eriksson lies there. Suddenly a mortar round explodes close by, dirt showering him.

ERIKSSON

Shit.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Meserve is grabbing the radio as there are more explosions to the right flank.

REILLY

They got a fix on us.

Kramer comes running up.

KRAMER

They found us, goddamnit. They're  
walkin' 'em in on us.

More explosions, moving toward them.

MESERVE

(into the radio)

Superaan Two, Superaan Two, this  
is Silent Twin Two. The tube is  
at coordinates  
four-six-six-five-five-two,  
azimuth one-niner-two.

REILLY

We gotta move. EVERYBODY MOVE.  
LEFT FLANK AND BACK. WE GOTTA  
MOVE. The tube got a fix on us.

The soldiers are all trying to move in the indicated direction.

MESERVE

(into the radio)

We cannot adjust by sound as  
promised. Be advised, we cannot  
adjust.

Nearby, a tremendous mortar explosion.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Men along the line, diving, covering up.

SOLDIER #3

Bullshit.

SOLDIER #2

You ready for that?

Another explosion: large, nearby, terrifying.

SOLDIER #1  
Do you believe that fuckin' noise,  
man?

As Meserve comes running low, crouching.

SOLDIER #2  
Is this the far eastern adventure  
that pus-faced recruiter was  
talkin' about?

MESERVE  
Go. Go. We're gettin' hat. Go!

ANOTHER ANGLE: Explosion. Earth shifting, the log behind which Eriksson has been hiding is rising in the air. Eriksson scrambles. The log is rolling onto Eriksson's foot. He's caught.

ERIKSSON  
Oh, no. Don't. Owww. Owww.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Meserve and soldiers as they are heading off.

MESERVE  
Where's Mills?

BROWN  
He's the way we're goin'.  
Eriksson's on the right flank.  
He ain't come in that I know of.

Huge explosion. They both press into the ground.

BROWN  
This war gettin' old, Mister  
Meserve.

Meserve is simply growling, roaring. There is another sound, a high whine, artillery.

MESERVE  
Here comes arty!

Distant explosion.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Eriksson is struggling to get loose. He looks around. The jungle is wavering, weird. Mortar explosion not far away. Eriksson is panicked, his eyes wide with fear.

ERIKSSON  
Oh, goddamnit. Help. Help!

Eriksson drops his weapon and starts digging at the ground to get his foot loose.

ERIKSSON

- I'm stuck. Help! Help! --  
Somebody! God. Dear God!

ANOTHER ANGLE: Meserve is running through the weeds. As there is another explosion Meserve dives into the ground.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Reilly and a group of soldiers. One soldier has his arm shattered and gone at the elbow. Reilly is tying a tourniquet.

SOLDIER

They gota find my arm.

REILLY

Give him some morphine.

SOLDIER

They gota find my arm or I ain't  
goin'.

MEDIC

(giving shot)

Here you go. Here you go.

SOLDIER

Make them look for my arm, sir.  
Make 'em--

REILLY

Look for Streibig's arm!

Several soldiers look around as mortar shells explode nearby.

REILLY

We gota get outa here!

HERBER

I got it. Streibig, I got your  
arm, man.

He has nothing, a handful of a leaves, a stick.

STREIBIG

You got it, Herber?

HERBER

(heading off)

I got it, man.

STREIBIG

Let's go. Go with Herber.

They move out.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Eriksson is wildly digging to get his foot out as Meserve slides up. A mortar hits.

MESERVE

What the fuck you doin', Cherry?

ERIKSSON  
 - Help me, Sarge. Get me outa here.  
 Christ!

Meserve is shoving a large branch under the tree and using it for leverage; he lifts as Eriksson struggles.

MESERVE  
 Pull! Pull!

Eriksson strains, pulling. Meserve lifts. The foot pops loose.

ERIKSSON  
 I thought I was dead. I thought  
 I was fuckin' dead.

As Meserve is staring at a shifting in the wavering weeds, there seems a figure, and Meserve grabs his weapon, firing. Eriksson ducks, grabbing his weapon. From the weeds firing erupts, the flashing of two weapons. Eriksson is firing wildly now. Meserve is firing. The weeds, the shadowy figures, fire and then the firing stops.

Meserve stares into the weeds. Suddenly he fires a full magazine into the weeds. Eriksson is firing also.

MESERVE  
 Let's didi.

He runs, and Eriksson runs after him.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Jungle, solid, dense. Meserve and Eriksson struggle in the weeds. Forty meters off, firing erupts in the underbrush; they dive. A flare arcs up, popping. In the eerie halo of light the tangled trees can be seen and then firing erupts from the first point and immediately from another point, tracers arcing back and forth.

MESERVE  
 M-Sixteens shootin' A-K's.

He is indicating with a head gesture the point from which the firing first emerged.

MESERVE (CONTD)  
 I'm gonna put tracers where I want  
 you droppin' in three bloopers.  
 Let's bring some smoke on some  
 little motherfuckers!

Eriksson is getting two grenades ready as Meserve raises up slightly and starts firing.

MESERVE  
 Get some! Motherfuckers, get  
 some!

Eriksson, as the tracer rounds arc through the air, aims, let's go.

The jungle lights up with the explosion. Meserve is blasting away. Eriksson is firing.

ERIKSSON  
Some mad fuckin' minute, huh,  
Sarge!

And a mortar landing nearby shakes the ground.

MESERVE  
No sweat.

ERIKSSON  
Whatever you say, Sarge!

MESERVE  
(firing)  
Die, motherfuckers!

ERIKSSON  
(firing his M-16)  
Die, motherfuckers!

From their left comes a clamoring and clattering as someone is running toward them. Meserve and Eriksson skitter backward in the dirt turning to aim toward the approaching figure.

HERBER  
It's me Herber, it's me Herber.  
It's me Herber.

He rumbles in, falls on his belly.

MESERVE  
Herber, where the fuck is  
everybody?

HERBER  
Brown's comin' and Clark's comin'.  
They're both comin'. And some  
guy I don't know his name is  
comin'.

MESERVE  
What about the Lieutenant?

Clark and Brown and RASMUSSEN arrive, panting and dropping to the ground.

BROWN  
Where's the Lieutenant, Sarge?

CLARK  
Everybody fuckin' disappeared.

MESERVE  
I was rescuin' faraboy here.

CLARK

We was lookin' for you, Sarge.

BROWN

Yeh, we all runnin' around  
rescuin' each other don't none  
of us know what we're doin'.

ERIKSSON

I think some very spooky shit is  
developin' here.

HERBER

Like what?

MESERVE

Where were we when we got lit up?

They all look around. The jungle is dim and dark and spooky and all the same. As Meserve is getting out his map and compass, a mortar lands and they all duck.

ERIKSSON

You mean which part a this jungle?

RASMUSSEN

We're lost.

CLARK

He's tryin' to get some  
coordinates, right Sarge?

BROWN

This goddamn gook-jungle don't  
have no coordinates.

Meserve is on his feet, crouched over his compass.

MESERVE

We was comin' from the southwest,  
so we were goin' this way.

He orients himself.

MESERVE (CONTD)

The mortars hit us on the right,  
so the platoon went left. That  
way.

As he indicates his left, a mortar comes in nearby.

MESERVE (CONTD)

Let's didi.

They move out, hurrying as best they can in the dark, Meserve leading, then Brown, Eriksson, Clark, Herber, Rasmussen.

ANOTHER ANGLE: The foliage is getting thicker and thicker. Suddenly the bamboo is a wall, thorny bushes. Brought nearly to a standstill, they struggle on, six figures wavering and flailing in a thicket of bamboo, grunting, gasping.

HERBER  
Now we're in this shit, goddamnit.

CLARK  
This is some shit.

BROWN  
The wait-a-minute bamboo got us.

MESERVE  
Just stop. Everybody stop.

They pause, gasping.

BROWN  
This here fuckin' bamboo say "wait a minute," you wait.

ERIKSSON  
Is this what we wanna be doin'?

HERBER  
Please God don't let there be any gooks around here.

MESERVE  
We're goin' back.

CLARK  
Back where? They're blowin' everything up back there.

MESERVE  
Just till we're outa this snit. We're gonna kill ourselves tryin' to get through this.

HERBER  
But--

BROWN  
Just do what the fuck he says.

They retreat warily, fighting the bamboo.

HERBER  
I was just gonna ask where's Rasmussen.

BROWN  
He's here.

HERBER  
Where?

MESERVE  
- Rasmussen, answer up!

HERBER  
He ain't here, man.

ERIKSSON  
Rasmussen . . . Rasmussen . !

MESERVE  
Oh, shit, we lost him.

They emerge now from the bamboo and fall on the ground, exhausted.

ERIKSSON  
Whata we gonna do?

CLARK  
He musta bugged out.

HERBER  
Rasmussen!

MESERVE  
At ease!

HERBER  
I'm worried about him.

MESERVE  
Just shut your face. We're gonna  
be still. And listen. See if  
he's callin' us.

Sitting up, they still their breathing, try to listen. There is only the jungle and the jungle's noises.

HERBER  
He ain't callin' us, man.

ERIKSSON  
Should I recon that mess we just  
got out of?

MESERVE  
Affirm that. I'll nose around  
the way we came. But be quick,  
Eriksson. Don't fuck around and  
don't get lost.

Eriksson and Meserve move out in opposite directions.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Eriksson looks in the bamboo, moving carefully.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Meserve glides stealthily in the weeds.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Clark and Brown and Herber wait. The jungle is there. The noises of the jungle. Meserve shows up. He shakes his head.

BROWN  
- Nothin'?

Eriksson comes back.

ERIKSSON  
Any luck, Sarge?

HERBER  
What happened to him, man?

CLARK  
What is this fuckin' place, the  
Twilight Zone? This is bullshit.

MESERVE  
We're goin' back to the ville.  
We don't know where we are or  
where the fuck anybody else is,  
we're goin' back. It's southwest.  
From the ville we can find our  
evac coordinates. We're gonna  
get up and I'm lead, with the  
compass. Everybody's gonna hold  
hands, and we're gonna get outa  
here. Let's go.

Meserve stands. They all stand.

MESERVE  
You take the rear, Brownie.

BROWN  
I'm gonna be holdin' on tight.

They take hands. The hands hold.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Meserve moves out. The five figures wind through  
the intense unrelenting dark, holding hands.

15 EXT: NIGHT: VILLAGE: THE MOON IS UP

15

At the edge of the jungle, Meserve crouches. He is peering into  
the sleeping village. After a beat, he turns, starts back the way  
he came.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Another spot in the jungle. Clark, Eriksson, Herber  
and Brown are crouched there as Meserve comes up.

MESERVE  
It's quiet. We'll just stay here  
till first light.

HERBER  
I'm beat. I gotta sleep.

MESERVE  
I'll take security.

ERIKSSON  
- I'll do it, Sarge.

MESERVE  
No sweat. I ain't gonna sleep  
one little bit anyway.

They are settling down.

HERBER  
(to Clark)  
Clark, what Eriksson says is the  
leeches might be tryin' to get  
up my ass 'cause a their pointed  
heads.

CLARK  
That ain't a good enough reason.

ERIKSSON  
It's not what I said anyway.

HERBER  
You did, Eriksson; you said they  
had this pointed somehin' -- it  
was different from mine.

ERIKSSON  
Their "point of view."

BROWN  
They wanna do it, Herber, on  
account of they are leeches, and  
they are berserk on account of  
they are leeches disgusted with  
their slimy little selves.

They are still for a moment.

HERBER  
I can't sleep. Shit, I'm wired.

ERIKSSON  
I'm wired.

BROWN  
We're gettin' too short for this  
shit, Meserve.

MESERVE  
We ain't short yet.

BROWN  
Thirty days and a wake-up is so  
short we damn near invisible, man  
-- gonna DEROS right outa this  
jungle, gonna DEROS right outa  
these clothes.

MESERVE

I figure when they put me on the Freedom Bird, I'm short. And then maybe the fucker's gonna crash.

ERIKSSON

Can you imagine that? You're flyin' home and the plane crashes. You escape from the Nam to die an airline fatality.

CLARK

Shut up. You survive Nam, you get to live forever. That's the deal.

BROWN

How long you been in the Nam, Eriksson?

ERIKSSON

Three weeks.

BROWN

Lord have mercy.

For a moment they are silent: the frogs croak, the mosquitoes swarm.

HERBER

I can't sleep, man. I'm so tired, man, I feel like my brain's been med-evacked but I can't fuckin' sleep. I close my eyes and I am instantly like I'm dead, man. I feel like somebody's sneakin' up on me and I'm gonna be dead. You think somebody could be sneakin' up on us and I got like ESP?

ERIKSSON

No. I think your brain was med-evacked.

HERBER

I hope so. I'd rather I had no brain than somebody was sneakin' up on us.

Meserve has moved off from them some. And now Brown is edging toward him.

BROWN

Meserve, I was wonderin' if maybe we should stop ballin' these slant-eyed bitches so we don't arrive home diseased.

MESERVE

Not me.

BROWN

Round-eyed bitches, Meserve, think about it. Nothin' but round-eyed big-titted women. You can recon them from tongue to titty. Maybe we should start takin' precautionary measures.

MESERVE

No, Brownie, next to wastin' gooks, what I like best is fuckin' 'em.

BROWN

That what you thinkin' about?

MESERVE

No, I'm thinkin' about Herber's brain bein' med-evacked.

Everyone giggles but Clark who snores.

ERIKSSON

Clark's sleepin'.

HERBER

Unless he's dead. Unless some goddamn Viet Cong snake crawled up on him and bit him and he's dead, or some goddamn UC bug bit him and stung him and he's dead.

They all stare at the sleeping Clark.

BROWN

How come every damn thing in this gook-jungle wanna bite a person or kill 'em one damn way or another?

CLARK

'Cause the gooks made it that way. They like it that way.

16 EXT: MORNING: THE VILLAGE

16

The village is full of activity, people.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Emerging from the jungle are Meserve and Brown, Eriksson, Clark and Herber. Meserve, leading, moves straightforward and steady, yet on the alert. The squad is spread out at six or seven meter intervals. The people are looking at them. Women, old people, children. Farmers pass them and nod and smile.

BROWN  
- This don't look so bad.

MESERVE  
Stay fuckin' alert.

CLARK  
Look at that. Lord a'mighty.

He's pointing.

ANOTHER ANGLE: POV OF CLARK, MESERVE, ERIKSSON.

Struggling into the village from another angle are three other American soldiers. One has a radio. They are lugging a poncho between them, the poncho hanging down with the weight of a body.

HERBER  
Ohh, shit, man, somebody been wasted.

MESERVE  
Eriksson, you and Herber and Clark spread out here and stay fuckin' alert. Brownie, let's didi.

Meserve and Brown jog toward the other soldiers.

ERIKSSON  
Who is it?

HERBER  
Looks like Wilkins and Sampson and Craig and I don't know who's in the fuckin' bag.

ERIKSSON  
I hope it ain't Rasmussen.

ANOTHER ANGLE: The three men with the poncho as Meserve and Brown arrive. The men are setting down the poncho.

MESERVE  
It ain't Rasmussen, is it?

SAMPSON  
Kramer.

MESERVE  
Kramer? How the fuck could they waste Kramer?

BROWN  
Where's the Lieutenant?

CRAIG has the radio.

CRAIG

I don't know. I think he's back at Wolf. The mission's been terminated. Bravo's due in here at o-nine-hundred. We're supposed to wait for 'em.

BROWN

Some brilliant fuckin' operation this is.

MESERVE

How the fuck you think they managed to get Kramer, Brownie?

BROWN

I figure he just had the misfortune a not bein' with us, man.

Meserve, leaning down, is sliding the poncho off Kramer's face. Meserve crouches over it, looking down.

Kramer's face: still, pale, dead.

17 EXT: DAY: DITCHES AT EDGE OF VILLAGE: A FEW HOURS LATER 17

Meserve, Clark, Herber and Craig are there with the poncho nearby covering Kramer. Craig has gotten out his instamatic, is preparing to take pictures. The others sit silently, smoking. Children from the village squat around the Americans, watching. Herber lies on the ground stretched out, arms flung wide, head back, mouth open, sound asleep, snoring. Slightly off from them Sampson and Wilkins are on security. Beyond them, in the fields, people are working. In the village people move about in their daily life. Craig gets up, starts taking pictures of the children, of the sleeping Herber

ANOTHER ANGLE: Meserve sits, thinking, nodding to the brink of sleep. Suddenly he jerks up, startled. He looks about.

MESERVE

Where's Brown?

18 EXT: DAY: IN THE VILLAGE 18

Near a tethered water buffalo an OLD MAN, a farmer, is bent over a plow, a blade harnessed to a large, shaped hunk of wood. The water buffalo stirs suddenly and the old man looks up to see Eriksson there, watching. Eriksson is stepping nearer. The old man is rather excited, talking, worried about his water buffalo as Eriksson approaches. The buffalo snorts and shifts, yet Eriksson reaches to touch the shoulder and stroke softly.

ERIKSSON

Numba one. Numba one.

As the buffalo stills a little bit, the old man calms down. Eriksson moves to help with the harness by which the old man is attaching the plow to the water buffalo.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Shooting past Eriksson and the old man, Brown is seen stepping into view around the edge of a building. He is taking up on some grass and for a moment he stands there watching Eriksson and the old man work.

BROWN

I hope this ain't your sad-assed idea of fun, Eriksson.

ERIKSSON

This is some piece of equipment, man.

BROWN

Don't look like no piece of equipment to me. Look like some pathetic tree fell over an' got all tangled up in somebody's shovel, this fool goin' around tryin' to act like he's some sorta Einstein, he tied it to his cow.

ERIKSSON

I was just trying to imagine what it's like plowin' with somethin' like this.

BROWN

Sarge wants you over with the rest of us.

Eriksson and the farmer have finished hooking up the harness and Eriksson again pats the animal and then the plow itself.

ERIKSSON

Numba one. Numba one. Tell him I'm here.

BROWN

He wants you over with the rest of us, you will be over with the rest of us.

Brown has moved forward and picked up Eriksson's weapon, which is leaning against a wall. Brown hands the weapon to Eriksson.

BROWN

You'd best be listenin' up to the Sarge, you wanna live to get home to do your own plowin'. You married, right.

They are moving off. Eriksson nods to the old man.

OLD MAN

Chao ong.

BROWN

Chao ong, motherfucker. Have a  
little a my dinky dao cigarette,  
my man.

Brown offers Eriksson a toke which he takes as they walk through  
the village toward the ditches where Meserve and the others sit.

BROWN

Now what was I talkin' about?  
This some bad-ass Thai stick, man.  
You got babies, Eriksson? That's  
what I was talkin' about. You  
got kids.

ERIKSSON

Little girl.

BROWN

Ain't that my point? Didn't the  
Sarge save your ass once already?  
What was you doin' back there?

ERIKSSON

My foot got caught in this log.  
The mortar picked up the tree and  
dropped it on my fuckin' foot.  
Next thing I know--

BROWN

Did you pee your pants? Don't  
be shy. Talk to me. I been  
worried sick about you since that  
foolishness about bein' rude come  
outa your fool mouth. Think a  
me as your priest, you know me  
all your life, you can tell me  
anything.

ERIKSSON

I'm a Lutheran.

BROWN

Did you pee your pants,  
motherfucker!?

ERIKSSON

Sarge didn't come back for me,  
I sure woulda.

BROWN

Without the Sarge, you ain't  
nothin' but a sack a monkey shit.  
You ain't walkin' along at this  
moment in time talkin' to me, but  
(more)

BROWN (Cont'd)  
 you are so much grief bagged and  
 tagged, your raggedy-ass people  
 pissin' and moanin' for the rest  
 their heartbroken lives. Ain't  
 that right, Sarge!

As they have arrived among the men.

HERBER  
 (waking up)  
 What?

BROWN  
 Herber! Herber! You people got  
 thirty days to be learnin' what  
 you can from me and Mister  
 Meserve. You best be absorbin'  
 our tactics and our thought  
 process, cause we gonna DEPOS and  
 leave Freedom's Frontier in your  
 hands. So you'd best be--

The bullet rips through Brown from behind. He screams. The firing  
 is coming from the treeline beyond the ditch.

Everyone is startled. Then they hit the ground. Sampson and  
 Wilkins are firing quickly. Brown is in the dirt, writhing,  
 screaming. Bullets pop around him. Meserve is firing. Eriksson,  
 Craig, Herber and Clark are firing.

In the village the people scatter.

In the fields, they crouch and run.

Herber, ducking to reload, turns his back to the treeline;  
 crouching and looking backward, he starts.

POV OF HERBER: A Vietnamese figure is dashing toward them from  
 their rear. Dressed as a farmer, wearing a conical hat, the figure  
 sprints.

HERBER  
 Sarge!

Meserve is trying to move toward Brown. Herber is frantically  
 trying to reload, he's fumbling with his magazine, dropping it, as  
 everyone else is fixed on the treeline.

HERBER  
 Sarge! Sarge! Somebody! Jesus  
 Christ!

Eriksson looks. Herber is pointing.

HERBER  
 Eriksson! Eriksson!

Eriksson pivots and starts firing at the running figure.

Still fifty meters off, the figure jolts to a halt, a grenade dropping from the man's grasp. The rolling grenade erupts.

Startled, Clark, Meserve and the others whirl to look.

ERIKSSON

The motherfucker was sneakin' up on us, Sarge. Jesus Christ. Goddamnit.

MESERVE

Eriksson, help Herber cover the rear.

As Eriksson moves to Herber, the others start firing again at the tree line.

In the village the people have all disappeared.

Meserve is crawling to Brown. Around Brown the bullets have stopped hitting.

CRAIG

Hold it. Cease fire! Cease fire!

CLARK

I told you this fuckin' place wasn't safe!

ERIKSSON

They set us up! The gook bastards set us up!

ANOTHER ANGLE: Meserve and Brown.

BROWN

Ohhh, man, I'm in trouble.

MESERVE

It ain't nothin'. It ain't nothin'.

BROWN

You sure.

MESERVE

It ain't nothin'.

He is working on the wound, applying pressure, putting on a dressing.

BROWN

It feels like somethin', man. It feels bad.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Craig has the radio, he's calling in a dust-off.

CRAIG  
Dust-off Control, this is Silent  
Twin Two, over . . .

ANOTHER ANGLE: As Clark is on his feet spraying bullets into the dirt before the village where a few people have come forward.

CLARK  
Get away from us. Get the fuck  
away from us!

Beyond Clark, Herber and Wilkins and Sampson can be seen moving toward the treeline, firing as they go.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Eriksson slides up to Meserve and Brown.

BROWN  
Sarge says I'm gonna get over  
this, Eriksson.

ERIKSSON  
No sweat, man.

Craig comes scurrying up to them.

CRAIG  
Dust-off's comin' in in zero-five.  
They said Bravo's half a klick  
off. They can see 'em.

BROWN  
Fuck this! Fuck this! Fuck this!

CUT TO:

In the air, the med-evac helicopter is almost on the ground, lowering, dust whirling. Beyond it, a large number of American soldiers, Bravo Company, can be seen advancing.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Eriksson and Meserve and Clark are carrying Brown to the chopper. They climb on board to place him on a stretcher.

MESERVE  
Look into my fuckin' eyes,  
Brownie. Look into my eyes. I'm  
gonna hypnotize you!

BROWN  
Good.

MESERVE  
You're fine.

BROWN  
I know it.

Craig and Sampson sling the body of Kramer onto the chopper. Meserve and Eriksson jump off. The chopper whirls, throwing dust, grinding off, the huge blades flapping. Meserve and Eriksson and the others duck and turn away. Bravo is moving past them, a full company of men, prisoners among them: men in black pajamas, their eyes blindfolded in huge white cloths, their hands tied behind them. From the midst of Bravo, a LIEUTENANT comes hastening up to Meserve.

LIEUTENANT

Sergeant, you're to hump it back two clicks to the road. Our APC's are there. One'll take you to Ap Than. You can pick up a ride back to Wolf. Captain Uorst is regrouping your platoon there.

Meserve stares at the lieutenant.

LIEUTENANT

Understood, sergeant.

Meserve turns and strides off in the indicated direction, Herber trailing after him. Clark and Eriksson linger with the lieutenant.

ERIKSSON

Watch your back here, sir.

He runs off to join Meserve.

CLARK

This ville is bullshit, sir. These fuckers were harboring UC.

LIEUTENANT

Be advised, corporal, we're gonna bust some chops before we're outa here, don't you worry.

CLARK

(striding off)  
Torch the fuckin' place.

As ahead of Clark, Meserve suddenly bolts toward the prisoners held by Bravo. Using his rifle as a baseball bat, he swings it full and round into one of the prisoner's stomachs. The man screams, collapsing onto his knees.

HERBER

Homerun!

ERIKSSON

In the wheelhouse!

CLARK

(running up)  
That one's outa here, Sarge!

Herber, Eriksson, and Clark all run after Meserve, who is already on the move down the road.

BRAVO SOLDIER

You were a hangin' curveball,  
gook.

19 EXT: DAY: ROAD: TRUCK

19

A deuce-and-a-half truck rumbles along the two-lane highway through the jungle. In the back of the truck, Meserve, Clark, Eriksson, Herber, Sampson, Craig and Wilkins are slumped, rocking with the truck's motion, dazed with exhaustion, eyes glassy. The truck passes through stretches of jungle. Meserve looks at his watch.

ERIKSSON

What time you got there, Sarge?

SLOANE

One ninety-seven and a wake-up.

MESERVE

Twelve-fifty.

20 INT: TRUCK CAB

20

The DRIVER, wearing sunglasses, a cigarette between his teeth, is looking ahead.

21 EXT: DAY: ROAD: TRUCK

21

The truck is pulling off onto the shoulder. The men stir. Meserve stands up as the truck comes to a halt and the driver jumps out.

MESERVE

What's goin' on?

DRIVER

I gotta get my laundry.

Children run up to the truck, calling for candy and money.

MESERVE

Hey, man, don't take  
for-fuckin'-ever.

ANOTHER ANGLE: There is a wooden picnic table beside a hootch and at it sit TWO GIRLS dressed in white blouses and black slacks.

GIRL #1

You want short time, G.I.? Numba  
one.

Girl #2 is moving toward the truck.

GIRL #2

Me no sick. Numba one.

HERBER  
Can we get laid, Sarge?

MESERVE  
Later.

HERBER  
I could be quick.

MESERVE  
I wanna find out about Brownie.  
Or don't you give a big rat's ass.

HERBER  
Sure, man, you know. I forgot.  
Can I get a beer?

SAMPSON  
(standing up)  
I'm gettin' a beer.

MESERVE  
No gettin' laid! I don't wanna  
take the time.

The men are piling out of the truck.

MESERVE  
Eriksson, keep your eye on these  
suckers for me. You roger that?

ERIKSSON  
(jumping out of the  
truck)  
Right, Sarge. Want me to bring  
you a beer?

MESERVE  
Sure.

An OLD WOMAN has come out from one of the hootches, a young girl in  
tow, presenting her to Eriksson who moves on.

MAMA-SAN  
Numba one, hooa boom, B... Can  
do, one thousand pi's.

WILKINS is passing mama-san, and he stops. The other men go into  
the hootch.

WILKINS  
Hey, mama-san, you beaucoup  
bullshit me, huh?

MAMA-SAN  
No bull-shit. Numba one.

Wilkins takes the girl by the arm. He points at the girl.

WILKINS  
- No, no, you bullshit me last time  
you talk me your baby-san neva  
happen whore.

MAMA-SAN  
No, no, no. No baby-san me.

She pulls the girl toward the truck to present her to Meserve who  
stares down.

WILKINS  
It's her fuckin' daughter, Sarge.

MAMA-SAN  
Nuamba one. No sick. You want  
short time?

As Eriksson comes running out of the hootch and up to the truck  
with a beer for Meserve.

ERIKSSON  
The driver's gettin' laid, Sarge.

Meserve leaps from the truck. He storms past Eriksson headed  
toward the hootch. Eriksson hurries after him.

22 INT: HOOTCH

22

Meserve rushes in. The soldiers are clustered around the ice  
cooler, drinking bottles of Vietnamese beer. Several other girls  
are there, talking to them.

MESERVE  
Get in the truck, damnit!

He strides past the men, who move quickly out toward the truck  
lugging as many beers as they can handle.

Meserve flings open a curtain. In the little room the driver is  
taking his pants off, one leg out, the other in.

MESERVE  
You sorry sonofabitch, didn't you  
hear what I tole you?

Meserve grabs the man.

MESERVE  
Bring his pants, Eriksson.

DRIVER  
And my laundry. Don't forget my  
laundry.  
(to the girl)  
Chao co, sugar.

Eriksson, in the little room, is looking around.

GIRL  
Me no sugar! Numba fuckin' ten!

Grabbing up the pants, seeing the laundry box and picking it up:

ERIKSSON  
Bye.

GIRL  
Shut up. You numba fuckin' ten!

As he runs from the room.

ERIKSSON  
Sorry 'bout that.

23 EXT: FRONT OF HOOTCH

23

The driver is climbing into the truck in his underwear as Meserve runs around to the shotgun side. Out from the hootch comes Eriksson, the truck engine starts. Eriksson tosses the trousers and laundry bag into the back and jumps aboard. The truck roars off down the road.

ANOTHER ANGLE: BACK OF TRUCK: Eriksson, climbing over the side of the truck, lowers himself to the running board, hands Meserve a bottle of Vietnamese beer.

24 INT: TENT: DAY: BASECAMP WOLF

24

Herber reels into the tent and falls onto a bunk, clutching his beer. Eriksson is right behind Herber, and Clark is behind him. Clark, emptying a beer in one long chug-a-lug, immediately starts drinking another.

ERIKSSON  
What're we gonna do!?

CLARK  
I wanna get shit-faced and go hump the brains outa one a them dink ho's. Are we on duty or off?

HERBER  
I'm too tired, man, you know.

ERIKSSON  
Can I have your beers if you don't drink 'em, Herber?

Clark turns on his radio, loud, pop music.

HERBER  
No, man.

ERIKSSON  
I want 'em. C'mon.

CLARK  
 Don't be a goddamn dog in the  
 manger, Herber, you sonofabitch!

HERBER  
 They're mine, man.

ERIKSSON  
 I'll give you a thousand pi.

HERBER  
 No, man.

CLARK  
 I'll give you ten thousand pi!

HERBER  
 Ten thousand?

CLARK  
 Yeh.

HERBER  
 For one, man?

Eriksson is heading for his footlocker.

ERIKSSON  
 I'll trade you some Oreos. I'll  
 trade you some of my cookies.

Rowan enters the tent holding up a six-pack of Bud.

ROWAN  
 I was hopin' you were still  
 around, Eriksson.

Eriksson runs to Rowan, grabs a beer as Herber and Clark continue  
 their negotiations.

ERIKSSON  
 I think we just spent some time  
 in the combat zone, man.

ROWAN  
 The fuckin' lieutenant had a high  
 degree of difficulty getting his  
 head out of his ass, which left  
 us deployed throughout the jungle  
 like a bunch of crazed  
 motherfuckers. What happened to  
 you guys?

ERIKSSON  
 I don't think anybody knows. I  
 nearly got killed, though.

ROWAN  
 What was that like?

ERIKSSON  
I went crazy.

CLARK  
Let's go shower. I'm gonna go  
shower. You wanna go shower;  
Eriksson?

ERIKSSON  
No. Later.

CLARK  
C'mon. Let's go shower. I wanna  
shower.

ERIKSSON  
You can go with Herber.

CLARK  
You wanna go shower, Herber?!

HERBER  
Fuckin' A.

As Meserve comes in, dirty, weary, lugging his gear, Clark and Herber are undressing.

CLARK  
Hey, Sarge.

HERBER  
Hey, Sarge, this asshole Clark  
bought a beer off me for ten  
thousand pi, ain't that some shit.

Meserve is lying down very slowly on a bunk.

CLARK  
We on duty or off, Sarge?

MESERVE  
Off.

CLARK  
Great!

HERBER  
Fuckin' A.

MESERVE  
We been detailed to go on a long  
range recon in the morning. We're  
off till twenty-one hundred.

ERIKSSON  
Where we goin', Sarge?

MESERVE  
Reilly says battalion's gonna  
brief me, I'll brief you guys at  
twenty-one hundred.

HERBER  
But we're off till then?

MESERVE  
Yeh.

HERBER  
Let's go shower. We're gonna go  
shower, Sarge, whata you gonna  
do?

Silence, as Meserve lies there a second.

MESERVE  
I'm gonna go . . . to town and  
. . . get laid.

As Meserve is sitting up.

ERIKSSON  
You find anything out about Brown,  
Sarge?

MESERVE  
He's dead.

25 EXT: DAY: SHOWER STALLS

25

Eriksson, Clark, Herber and Meserve are all there standing under the water pouring over them. Clark and Herber have canteen cups of beer from which they drink as they stand under the water. Eriksson has a can of beer in his hand and the plastic of a six-pack with two cans remaining.

ERIKSSON  
You want some a my beer, Sarge?

Meserve reaches and rips out one of the offered cans.

CLARK  
And they can't find fuckin  
Rasaussen, either. I HATE THIS  
FUCKIN' PLACE. THEY OUGHTA BLOW  
IT UP AND PAVE IT OVER! Brownie  
could make me laugh, man, and I  
like to fuckin' laugh. I never  
knew a far out spade like Brownie  
before Brownie, you know, man.

HERBER  
They just shouldn't keep makin'  
you hump the boonies when you're  
short like Brownie was, man. You  
oughta get to go home, man.

CLARK

Yeh.

ERIKSSON

But then, Herber, you'd be short when you were gettin' close to where you didn't have to go out any more.

HERBER

So what, man?

ERIKSSON

So nobody'd wanna go then.

HERBER

I don't wanna go now!

ERIKSSON

But then they'd have to move it back again. And then it'd just keep movin' back, see, until nobody'd even be sent over here.

HERBER

What's wrong with that?

CLARK

WHAT I'M SAYIN' IS THESE GOOKS ARE SHIT, MAN!

(suddenly hurling his canteen cup)

They're low-life! Every bug-eyed motherfucker in that ville, every man, woman and child knew about the mortars and they knew about the snipers and they let 'em zap Brownie. They're slugs. They're roaches and total destruction is the only way to handle 'em. They coulda warned us, but they don't care about us. They hate us.

Much of the preceding scene should be played over Meserve as he showers, drinks. Now Meserve, wrapping himself in a towel, walks from the shower. Clark and Herber look at each other, then run after Meserve. Eriksson follows.

26 EXT: LATE AFTERNOON: BASECAMP WOLF: ROAD TO MAIN GATE

26

LOUD MUSIC: THE DOORS playing "Hello, I love you." Meserve, Clark, Herber and Eriksson, wearing clean fatigues, are walking toward the gate. Herber is carrying a radio, which is playing the music. Clark and Herber are diddy-bopping to the music and pushing at each other. Nearing the gate, they are all preparing their passes. At the gate, the MP has a smart-ass expression as Meserve, leading the others, is about to show his pass.

MP  
- Sorry, Sarge. Passes been canceled.

MESERVE  
What?

MP  
The ville's been declared off-limits.

ERIKSSON  
What's he sayin'?

MESERVE  
For how long?

CLARK  
Bullshit.

MP  
Indefinitely.

MESERVE  
Goddamn it, goddamn it!

MP  
Watch it, Sarge!

MESERVE  
Motherfucking BULLSHIT!

He kicks a nearby garbage can, sends it careening.

MP  
Take it easy.

MESERVE  
That was easy! That was motherfucking easy!

He storms off, the others trailing him.

HERBER  
Whata we gonna do?

MESERVE  
You know what this bullshit is about? The goddamn Cong is in town tonight, which is why it's off-limits. Charlie's in the whorehouse tonight!

ERIKSSON  
No shit?

MESERVE

Cong's gotta get laid, too,  
Eriksson. He works hard killin'  
us, don't he?

HERBER

Whata we gonna do, though? Whata  
we gonna do?

He kicks a nearby garbage can.

27 EXT: NIGHT: WIRE AT EDGE OF CAMP

27

Clark, Herber and Eriksson stand there drinking. Flares spark up into the sky distantly, bursting and throwing their ghostly halo of light. Artillery rumbles in nearby firebases.

ERIKSSON

I'm fucked up.

HERBER

(drinking from a whiskey  
bottle)

The Cong's gettin' laid. And  
we're just -- it ain't fair, man,  
you know. Am I talkin'? Man,  
I can't tell if I'm talkin' or  
not.

CLARK

It's very discomboobulatin'.

HERBER

Can you tell me if I'm talkin'  
or not, man.

ERIKSSON

Yeh. Sure, you're talkin', man.

HERBER

Good. I thought I was.

ERIKSSON

You're talkin', man. I can hear  
you.

HERBER

I like you Eriksson. I like you  
Clark.

ERIKSSON

I like you, Herber.

HERBER

Either one a you guys got a  
Playboy or a Penthouse on you I  
can borrow?

On me? ERIKSSON

No, man. CLARK

Shit. HERBER

He heads off.

Where you goin', man. ERIKSSON

I gotta go find one, man. HERBER

28 EXT: NIGHT: COMPANY AREA

28

Meserve, carrying a package and a rolled-up map, strides through the shadows followed by another man, a young Mexican-American, MANUAL DIAZ. Approaching the squad tent, they enter.

29 INT: TENT

29

Clark, Herber and Eriksson are there, working on their gear, drinking beer. Meserve tosses the package to Clark.

MESERVE  
Somebody sent you a present. This is Diaz from third platoon. He's Brown's replacement.

Meserve is the focus of their attention, spreading out on a bunk a sizable map with areas and routes marked in crayon.

MESERVE  
Now we'll be outa here in the morning at a-five-thirty. We'll draw rations after the briefing. Diaz'll be on the radio and I want at least two extra batteries, understood?

Diaz nods.

MESERVE  
Eriksson, make your ammo load almost a hundred percent for your thumpgun. We all got sixteens but you're the only thumpgun. Everybody'll have eight grenades, four of 'em different kinds a snake. Wear what you wanna wear as long as it's charmed, as long as it's made you survive to this day and it don't rattle.

(more)

## MESERVE (Cont'd)

Now five days is a long time and we all know it, so what you're feelin' tightenin' up your bunghole is your wish to live forever. Fuck it.

He points to the map.

## MESERVE

Our destination is Hill one-niner-two in the Bong Son Valley, map coordinates four-six-six-seven-two-four. The hill overlooks a ravine fulla caves which battalion thinks might be UC. Enroute we'll have pre-registered artillery fire -- if we need it -- at AP Charlie, Bravo and Tango. The evac site is coordinates four-six-zero-seven-four-zero. Tac air'll be on call for us, along with gunships, med-evac. The radio freqs'll be seventy-point-four battalion net, sixty-eight-point-five company net. Now, we're supposed to avoid shootin' except in self-defense. We're a pony patrol, lookin' for bunkers, unmapped trails, caches of food or weapons, all early-warning signs. I want everybody ready an hour early because--

He indicates a spot on the crayola line on the map.

## MESERVE (CONTD)

--at this point we're gonna detour two thousand meters south to the village of Cat Tuong where what we're gonna do is requisition us a girl to take along with us for some boom-boom; some portable R-and-R, break up the boredom, keep up morale. And remember: I want nothin' but charmed people around me on this one. Bring your good luck stuff.

As Clark, having opened the package he was sent, lifts out a large hunting knife, the handle wrapped in tape and decorated with tiny diamond-like sparkles.

## CLARK

Like this, Sarge?

MESERVE  
Does it feel lucky?

Clark clutches the knife, feels the heft.

CLARK  
It looks lucky.

00 EXT: NIGHT: A POINT NEAR THE BARBED WIRE: FLARES IN THE DISTANCE  
FAR OFF ARTILLERY

Rowan and Eriksson.

ROWAN  
Did he really say that?

ERIKSSON  
He wouldn't do it, would he?

ROWAN  
Bring a girl? Are you crazy?  
As short as he is? The guy's out  
here in less than thirty days.

ERIKSSON  
So why did he say it?

ROWAN  
What'd the other guys think?

ERIKSSON  
Everybody was joking, you know.  
Clark says, "What's this, some  
new addition to Lurp rations?"

ROWAN  
Right. Some broad in your pack.  
You see how nuts it sounds?

Eriksson is nodding.

ROWAN  
Neua hoppen, G.I.

31 EXT: PREDAWN DARKNESS

31

MOVING CAMERA with five figures running in the dark, the thudding of the feet, the breathing harsh as the figures rush nearer the silhouettes of hootches, the village of Cat Tuong. The figures run until two disappear into a hootch.

32 INT: HUT

32

Three sleeping Vietnamese women with flashlights glaring in their faces. They wake, startled. The lights are blinding. The girls squeal and clutch each other.

33 EXT: PREDAWN: VILLAGE

33

Eriksson, peering in the door of the hootch, whirls away. Herber and Diaz are there, looking about, rifles ready. Dogs are barking. Eriksson is pacing about. He looks confused, he looks back frightened. He turns back to the hootch, shining his flashlight in.

34 INT: HOOTCH

34

The older woman, the mother, is talking rapidly in Vietnamese to Meserve and Clark who are grabbing and examining the two girls. As the flashlight glares in the face of the older girl, MAO, her eyes are desperate with fear.

CLARK

This is the one, Sarge. She's the one.

As Mao flails free and crawls away to clutch her sister.

MESERVE

Get her. Take the good looking one. Take the good looking one.

The mother is begging, yammering, as Meserve grabs the girl, Mao, pulling her away from her sister and forcing her arms behind her back for Clark who has a rope.

35 EXT: VILLAGE: DARK

35

Herber, Diaz, as Eriksson pivots out of the hootch looking at the others.

ERIKSSON

Oh, God. Oh Lord.

DIAZ

What's goin' on?

36 INT: HOOTCH

36

The rope is being knotted on Mao's hands. She moans, cries. The ~~ama~~-san and other girl, LOC, Mao's sister, are clutching each other, sobbing, ~~ama~~-san talking frantically.

37 EXT: VILLAGE: DARK

37

Other villagers are stirring from their hootches.

HERBER

This is unbelievable.

DIAZ

You guys done this before?

ERIKSSON

No.

As Meserve and Clark emerge from the hootch with Mao, her hands tied behind her back. They push her along.

HERBER  
We got her.

MESERVE  
Let's go. Move, people. I wanna  
be outa here before first light.

The patrol forms up, Meserve in the lead. Children are emerging from the shadows and gathering in a chattering, moving crowd around the girl.

CLARK  
Didi! Di di!

The children keep chattering, and beyond them Loc, Mao's sister, appears, stepping warily around the hootch. Loc's face is terrified. Mao, seeing her sister, meets her eyes, her own fear wild and hopeless.

Eriksson sees the two sisters; he looks at Loc and then Meserve, who is hastening to the rear of the patrol. A strange paralysis has come over the patrol and though it moves, it falters, stops.

MESERVE  
Goddamnit. Go. Go! Go!

He is shoving people.

ERIKSSON  
Sarge!

MESERVE  
Move it!

Clark has Mao by the elbow, urging her toward the trees, the patrol following. But hardly have they managed to start when a shrill cry of distress stops them, and they look back.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Emerging from the hootch is the mama-san. Running toward them, she is waving a scarf.

MESERVE  
Didi! Di di mau!

The woman, talking and crying wildly, propels herself forward.

CLARK  
Get her outa here, Sarge!

The woman is talking to Meserve, clutching the scarf and pointing to her daughter.

MESERVE  
No! No! No!

CLARK  
Get her outa here, Sarge! Get  
her outa here!

Meserve shoves the woman backward.

MESERVE  
Di di! Di di!

But the old woman recoils toward him, falling to her knees, begging. Clark storms forward, rips the scarf from her hands.

CLARK  
You want her to have it? No  
sweat. No big thing.

He is marching backward toward the girl as the mama-san looks up, hopeful.

MAMA-SAN  
Cam on, cam on.

As Clark reaches the girl, he grabs her face.

CLARK  
She can have it!

He stuffs the scarf into Mao's mouth, using it as a gag. Mama-san is stunned. Eriksson is staring.

Herber bursts out laughing.

CLARK  
Now let's go.

MESERVE  
Move it.

HERBER  
Sorry 'bout that.

Clark whirls the girl off onto the path. Mama-san is staring. The children are staring. Meserve rushes off as do Herber and Diaz. Eriksson, stunned, pale, shaking, is the last. He looks at the mama-san but cannot speak. He looks at the emerging villagers. He turns and runs into the jungle.

38 EXT: DAY: A PLATEAU IN THE HIGHLANDS

38

The patrol moves along the trail. The men are a ragged looking bunch, no steel pots, strips of cloth tied as sweatbands on their heads, each in his own personally fashioned good-luck outfit. Small mountain ranges are visible in the distance, hazy and green. Below is a valley with a winding stream and along its banks are paddy fields with neat little dikes around them. Herber is walking point. Next comes Meserve followed by Mao and then Clark. Diaz trails Clark and behind him is Eriksson.

ANOTHER ANGLE: The jungle is dryer here, more barren. The patrol moves in the same formation. Eriksson is suddenly hastening forward, passing Diaz, passing Clark and Mao, at whom he looks but her gaze is downcast.

CLARK

We're gonna win her heart and mind, Eriksson. If she's got one.

Eriksson strides on, not wanting to talk to Clark. Reaching Meserve, Eriksson tries to fashion an opportunity for privacy.

ERIKSSON

Yo . . . , Sarge.

MESERVE

No, you can't have her yet, Eriksson. You gotta wait your turn.

ERIKSSON

I thought you were foolin' last night, Sarge

MESERVE

I'm serious as a heart attack, don't you know that.

ERIKSSON

That's what I mean, though, Sarge. This is kidnappin', ain't it?

MESERVE

Take the point.

ERIKSSON

What?

MESERVE

Go relieve Herber on point.

Eriksson is staring at Meserve.

MESERVE

YOU GOT THE POINT, ERIKSSON!

Eriksson turns and heads off, jogging forward.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Herber, walking point, hears a sound behind him and spins to find Eriksson approaching.

ERIKSSON

It's me. I'm supposed to relieve you.

HERBER

It's just like Genghis Khan, right Eriksson.

(more)

HERBER (Cont'd)  
That's what I was thinkin'. You  
ever heard of Genghis Khan?

ERIKSSON  
Whata you talkin' about?

HERBER  
Meserve, man, he's unbelievable,  
I mean, what we're doin' -- it's  
fantastic. I can't figure out  
how come we never thought of it  
before.

ERIKSSON  
This is nuts, Herber.

HERBER  
It ain't nuts. It's what armies  
do.

And Herber, whirling, is headed back toward the rear.

ERIKSSON  
We ain't Genghis Khan, Herber.

HERBER  
You're the one who's nuts.

ERIKSSON  
We're supposed to be here to help  
those people. It's the twentieth  
century, man.

But Herber is gone, the jungle closing on him, and Eriksson is  
alone. Looking forward, he strides, but suddenly stops as a snake,  
a length of green viper, oozes across the path. Eriksson stares,  
watching. The snake is gone.

ERIKSSON  
Oh, God. Oh, shit.

39 EXT: DAY: SLIGHT CLEARING

39

The patrol is camped for a break. Meserve sits with his map spread  
out, and Clark is with him. Mao is crouched, her hands still tied,  
the gag in her mouth. She coughs softly every now and then. Off  
to the side Eriksson sits eating C-rations watching Mao and then  
Meserve. Herber is at the edge of the clearing looking down into a  
valley. Diaz, who has been standing by himself, eases near  
Eriksson.

DIAZ  
That's some hump, huh, man.

ERIKSSON  
Yeh.

DIAZ  
You want some gum?

ERIKSSON  
Sure.

DIAZ  
Eriksson . . . if I don't wanna  
do stuff with her, do I have to?

ERIKSSON  
Diaz, no, man.

DIAZ  
I mean, what's the rules.

ERIKSSON  
There's no -- I mean--

DIAZ  
Because I don't want to.

HERBER  
Somebody comeer! Comeer quick!

Herber is lunging to pick up his weapon and then looking back down into the valley.

MESERVE  
I'm chowin' down, man.

He doesn't move to go near Herber. As Clark and Diaz have hastened to Herber.

HERBER  
Is that a farmer diddy-boppin'  
down there or UC?

CLARK  
Where?

HERBER  
Right there! In the stream. At  
the narrow part.

ANOTHER ANGLE: CLARK AND HERBER'S POV of the valley floor, the stream flowing through it, and a figure, a straw-like hunk of something.

MESERVE  
What is it, Clark?

ANOTHER ANGLE: Clark is staring.

CLARK  
A rock, I think.

HERBER  
It's movin'.

CLARK  
The water's movin', the rock  
ain't.

Herber suddenly raises his weapon and fires a burst.

ANOTHER ANGLE: CLARK AND HERBER'S POV as a water buffalo leaps from the stream and runs into the nearby jungle.

CLARK  
Well, it wasn't no UC.

HERBER  
Water buffalo, Sarge.

MESERVE  
Fuckin' Herber.

As Mao's coughing has grown louder, sharper, Meserve is moving to her.

Instantly, everyone is aware that Meserve is near the girl. They watch as Meserve takes the gag out of her mouth and offers her aspirin. Holding the aspirin between two fingers, he looks into her fearful eyes as she opens her mouth and he places the aspirin on her tongue. With his canteen he gives her a drink to wash the aspirin down.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Eriksson is attentive as Meserve turns from Mao back to his maps. Hoping that this apparent act of kindness might prove a good sign, Eriksson crosses the clearing to crouch down where Meserve is resting.

ERIKSSON  
Sarge?

MESERVE  
Yeh.

ERIKSSON  
We on track?

Meserve looks at Eriksson, then down at the map. He runs a stick along their planned route as it is marked on the map.

MESERVE  
Just follow the little red crayola  
line. Two, three hours and we're  
there.

He flops back. They sit for a moment.

ERIKSSON  
Sarge, you got a gimme a minute  
here on this thing we're -- I  
mean, this thing we're doin' here.  
What're we doin'?

MESERVE

You mean our incarceration of the UC suspect?

Eriksson looks at the girl, looks back.

MESERVE (CONTD)

That what you talkin' about? She's a UC whore, Eriksson, and we're gonna have some fun with her.

ERIKSSON

She's just a farm girl, ain't she?

MESERVE

Eriksson, man, you're a cherry here. Lighten up, will you. Let me pull the weight.

As Clark, having watched, steps up.

CLARK

What's goin' on, Sarge?

MESERVE

Eriksson don't think the UC whore is a whore.

CLARK

He don't? You been to town, Eriksson. They sell you their children.

ERIKSSON

But she wasn't. These people were just in their house.

CLARK

He got the whole wrong outlook, Sarge. He's all discombobulated. You got the whole wrong outlook on this thing, Eriksson.

ERIKSSON

What are you talkin' about?

MESERVE

He's talkin' about that she's a UC.

ERIKSSON

But she ain't.

MESERVE

I'm tellin' you, Eriksson.  
 (He puts his arm around Clark)  
 This ain't a UC. Clark ain't.  
 (more)

MESERVE (Cont'd)

(He points off at  
Herber)

And he ain't. Herber ain't. And  
Diaz ain't. And I ain't. But  
she is. She's Cong. And you .  
. . . I don't know about .

40 EXT: JUNGLE: DAY

40

Huge weeds in sheaths are moving aside, a green wall opening as Eriksson, struggling, pressing aside the verdant, shimmering obstruction, walks point.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Meserve walking, thinking. Behind Meserve is Clark and next is Mao, staggering under the burden of a rucksack, her gag off, her hands untied. Several yards behind Mao is Herber, walking without a pack. Mao is struggling with his. Diaz brings up the rear. Abruptly, Clark wheels out of line and moves past Mao to Herber. Clark is wrestling to get his own ruck off his back.

CLARK

You ain't gettin' away with  
cuttin' yourself this slack,  
Herber. You ain't humpin' your  
own ruck, you will be humpin'  
mine.

HERBER

I don't wanna.

CLARK

(pulling Herber out of  
line)

Put it on.

HERBER

Sarge! Sarge!

Clark has put his ruck on the ground in front of Herber.

CLARK

I'm a corporal, Herber, and I'm  
givin' you a direct command. Hump  
my ruck!

41 EXT: DAY: ANOTHER SECTOR OF THE JUNGLE

41

Herber moves, struggling under a pack. In front of him is Mao still wearing a pack, and in front of her by six or seven meters is Clark without a pack, walking, smiling. Meserve is ahead of Clark. Suddenly Clark pivots and darts back to Mao. There he starts to bob along backwards, sort of dancing and singing to her.

CLARK

Hello, I love you; won't you tell  
me your name? Hello, I love you;  
wanna jump in your game . . .

42 INT: HOOTCH

42

In the shadows Meserve is looking about. The hootch is eight feet square with a floor and walls of mud. The door is to the West, the window to the east. A low bench is built against a wall; a tattered straw mat lies in a dark corner and there is a table lying turned on its side. Metal, rocks and cans litter the floor. Meserve turns the table upright and walks out the door.

43 EXT: CLEARING OUTSIDE HOOTCH

43

Clark, Herber, Diaz, Eriksson and Mao are there. Mao still wears Herber's ruck. Herber wears Clark's. Diaz and Eriksson are coming up from an area off to the east.

DIAZ

The stream's no more'n thirty meters down there. Plenty a water.

MESERVE

(to Clark)

Get her inside.

Clark grabs Herber and shoves him toward Mao.

CLARK

Get your fuckin' ruck off her, Herber, and put mine over there.

MESERVE

We'll use this sorry-assed place as our C.P. Eriksson, you and Diaz get the ammo and food stored. Then square this place away.

Clark is guiding Mao into the hootch.

MESERVE (CONTD)

Herber, Clark and me'll go reconnoiter the area. Let's do it.

Meserve heads off as Herber and Clark emerge from the hootch, checking their weapons, strapping on belts with canteens, etc. Diaz and Eriksson are opening rucksacks, taking out ammo and food as Herber and Clark head after Meserve.

44 INT: HOOTCH

44

Mao, on the edge of the bench, watches as Diaz and Eriksson enter, settle the supplies and then start picking up debris. Eriksson throws a shattered chair out the door. Diaz is moving with a hunk of tree toward the door and Mao is watching closely. Eriksson is picking up the shards of a broken pitcher. Mao steps forward to Eriksson with an old gunny sack which she spreads on the floor and onto which she starts placing the broken pieces of the pitcher. Eriksson slowly rises and moves to the corner where there lies a twisted fragment of tin.

He picks up the tin, turning to look at Mao. On the floor Mao is putting piece after piece onto the gunny sack. As Eriksson passes her, she hands him the folded sack.

45 EXT: CLEARING 45

Eriksson tosses the debris into the woods.

46 INT: HOOTCH 46

Eriksson enters and sees Mao working with Diaz. The two of them strain to pull a half buried hunk of lumber up from the ground. Eriksson stands a moment, then joins them in their struggle. The wood pops loose, they yelp and jump in unison, each staggering to recover their balance. Mao is looking up at Eriksson and then at Diaz, her eyes questioning how she is faring in these strange circumstances. She wipes her hands on the side of her trousers. She looks at her hands, to see how dirty they are, and wipes them again.

DIAZ

I ain't gonna rape nobody,  
Eriksson. You gotta back me.

ERIKSSON

I'll back you.

DIAZ

Swear it, man.

ERIKSSON

I do, man. I promise.

47 EXT: LATE AFTERNOON: CLEARING OUTSIDE HOOTCH 47

Meserve is seated on the ground, eating with Clark. Diaz is off to the side, eating, worrying. Herber lies on his back sleeping. Eriksson is alone. Mao is out of sight in the hootch.

MESERVE

Eriksson, YO!

Eriksson looks up at Meserve, who motions him nearer.

MESERVE

Pull up a chair.

Eriksson rises, walks slowly over. He crouches down, eating C-rations from a can.

MESERVE

C-rats, huh? Whata you got there,  
beans and . . . ?

ERIKSSON

Ham.

CLARK

Army don't wanna surprise us.

MESERVE

'Figure the dinks'll handle that one, huh? How ya doin'?

ERIKSSON

Okay.

MESERVE

Sorry I jumped on you like I did, man, you know. I mean, we're here, right? This is the fuckin' bonnies, man, the Cong hanqin' in every tree, waitin' to grease us outa existence. What'd we hump? Five, six hours of the baddest most disgusting bush.

CLARK

Gooks had half a brain, they'd be fightin' to get outa this stinkhole not to keep it.

Meserve is getting to his feet.

MESERVE

That's five, six hours of the ugliest snake and stingin' spiders,. Who we got to count on in all that but each other?

Meserve is striding toward the hootch.

MESERVE

C'mon here with me. C'mon.

Eriksson rises, follows.

48 INT: HOOTCH

48

Moo is sitting on the bench as Meserve and Eriksson enter. Meserve picks up from the table the rope that had bound Moo's hands. He holds it so she can see it. Moo walks to Meserve and turns her back, holding her hands together behind her waiting to be bound.

MESERVE

(tying her hands)

I don't wanna have no problems with you, Eriksson. I'm countin' on you as a matter of fact, in particular, man.

ERIKSSON

I don't know what the hell's goin' on here, Sarge.

MESERVE

I'm gonna interrogate the prisoner.

ERIKSSON  
We ain't supposed to be doin'  
this.

MESERVE  
Don't fuck with me, man.

Eriksson is staring at him.

MESERVE  
You will take your turn in here,  
Eriksson.

Mao, her hands bound, is looking at them, she doesn't know what they're talking about. Eriksson shakes his head: no.

ERIKSSON  
I ain't gonna rape nobody, Sarge.

MESERVE  
You think you're sayin' "no" to  
me? You ain't hotshot enough to  
be sayin' "no" to--

Eriksson whirls, leaves.

MESERVE  
Motherfucker!

49 EXT: CLEARING OUTSIDE HOOTCH

49

As Meserve comes roaring out after Eriksson, having left Mao behind. Everyone is watching.

MESERVE  
Motherfucker! YOU DON'T THINK  
YOU'RE STANDIN' UP TO ME?!

ERIKSSON  
I ain't doin' it. No way.

MESERVE  
What's a matter with you, fon't  
you like girls? You got a pair,  
Jon't you!?

Lunging to grab Eriksson's groin as Eriksson leaps back.

CLARK  
What's goin' on, Sarge?

MESERVE  
He's sayin' he don't wanna ball  
the dink.

CLARK  
How come?

MESERVE  
I don't know.

CLARK  
He's chickenshit.

MESERVE  
Is that you're problem, Eriksson?

ERIKSSON  
No.

MESERVE  
So what is it?

CLARK  
Maybe he's queer.

MESERVE  
You a faggot, Eriksson? Is that  
your goddamn problem?

ERIKSSON  
No.

MESERVE  
So what is it? What is your  
problem. Everybody else is up  
for this?

Eriksson is trying to make eye contact with Diaz.

MESERVE  
Whata you lookin' at Diaz for?  
Diaz is with the program. You  
got a problem with this, Diaz?

Diaz doesn't speak.

MESERVE  
Will you stop lookin' at Diaz?!!  
I think maybe he is queer. Herber,  
is Eriksson a faggot? I think we  
got us two girls on our patrol.  
IS ERIKSSON A FAGGOT, HERBER?

HERBER  
I don't know, Sarge.

MESERVE  
I think he is.

CLARK  
He's chickenshit, that's for sure.  
(pulling out his knife)  
I'll cut his fuckin' heart out.

MESERVE

How we gonna count on you, you're a goddamn VC sympathizer? You could end up dead. It don't take much. Somebody stumbles. They don't mean to shoot you. They're sorry. Friendly fuckin' casualty. A body bag's a body bag, huh? Who's countin'? Your mama's cryin', you're daddy's pissin' and moanin'.

ERIKSSON

He's dead.

MESERVE

What?

ERIKSSON

My dad's dead.

CLARK

Who cares? Who's askin' for your goddamn family history? Nobody's askin' for that!

MESERVE

You're takin' your turn in there, Eriksson.

ERIKSSON

No.

MESERVE

You disgustin' hunka slime, or maybe when I'm done with her, I'm gonna come after you. Maybe after humpin' her, I'm gonna come hump you!

As Meserve reaches toward Eriksson, Eriksson knocks Meserve's hand aside, his own hands tensing on his weapon.

MESERVE

Ohhh, gonna take up an attack posture, are you? That's right. You got a weapon. Clark got one. Clark got a knife. We all got weapons. Anybody can blow away anybody at any second. Which is the way it oughta be, always.

(holding his rifle out)

Army calls this a weapon, but it ain't, is it.

(He grabs his own balls)

This is my weapon . . .

(more)

MESERVE (Cont'd)  
 (He raises his rifle  
 over his head)  
 This is my gun . . .  
 (clutching his balls)  
 This is for fightin' . . .!  
 (He shakes the up-raised  
 rifle)  
 This is for fun!

Meserve stares at Eriksson, then turns and goes into the hootch. Eriksson stands paralyzed. He looks at Diaz. Diaz is frightened. He looks away. There is a cry of fear from Mao in the hootch. Eriksson steps up to the hootch door, Clark following him, staying very close.

POV OF ERIKSSON through doorway into hootch: Meserve is dragging Mao who struggles and cries out against his forcing her onto her back on the table, her hands still tied as he rips her pants off. Her blouse still on, Meserve has fit himself between her legs. He is still clothed, his hands in her hair, holding her head down as he leans near, kissing her cheeks, her mouth, as she turns her head from side to side, sobbing, moaning in terror.

MESERVE  
 That's right, girl, that's right.  
 Yeh. Yeh.

Looking over at Eriksson and Clark, Meserve reaches to unbuckle his trousers, his other hand still twisted in her hair.

MESERVE  
 You gonna watch?

50 EXT: CLEARING OUTSIDE HOOTCH

50

Eriksson bolts. He rushes past his food, grabbing up his weapon. He is headed for the woods. Mao is screaming.

CLARK  
 Where the fuck you goin'?

ERIKSSON  
 I don't know. Shut up!

Mao can be heard crying, whining, within the hootch.

CLARK  
 Then take fuckin' security. You're  
 security.

Eriksson hurries along, climbing to a point of some height. As Clark stares after him, Eriksson settles down at the edge of the bush, looking out. Mao can still be heard moaning, crying out.

HERBER  
 Who's next, man?

CLARK

Not you.

51 EXT: JUNGLE SKY

51

A streak of eerie light and rising mists. A bird screams.

52 EXT: JUNGLE: LATER

52

Eriksson sits, head bowed. He looks up. Turns.

ANOTHER ANGLE: ERIKSSON'S POV: Meserve is coming out of the hootch, his shirt off, trousers on. He looks over at Clark, Herber and Diaz.

MESERVE

Better'n nothin'.

HERBER

Maybe we should flip coins for who's next.

MESERVE

Diaz is next.

Diaz stands slowly.

MESERVE

You're up, Diaz.

HERBER

Oh, shit, goddamnit. When am I up, Sarge?

MESERVE

After Clark.  
(He's staring at Diaz)

HERBER

That's last.

Diaz, trying to hide what he's doing, looks toward Eriksson.

MESERVE

Diaz, move it. Move it,  
goddamn it.

Diaz marches forward past Meserve into the hootch. Clark, in his wake, steps up to the door of the hootch and looks in.

53 INT: HOOTCH: CLARK'S POV

53

Mao lies on the table, naked, turned away and curled into a fetal position, her bound hands toward the doorway. Diaz is standing there looking at her.

54 INT: HOOTCH

54

As Clark steps in, he pulls the cloth that once gagged Mao from his pocket. When he touches Mao, she starts to shake, her eyes fearful, fixed on Clark.

CLARK

We better gag the bitch or we'll  
have UC all over our case.

He ties the gag tight, looks at Diaz, who starts to unbutton his shirt. Mao is trying to breath through the gag.

55 EXT: CLEARING OUTSIDE HOOTCH

55

Clark steps out, looks around at Meserve and Herber, and then, standing in the doorway, he sings, imitating Dean Martin.

CLARK

Everybody loves somebody some .  
. . . time . . .

56 EXT: WILD JUNGLE SKY: A VIOLENT SUNSET

56

The huge boiling sun sinks like a knifeblade down the sky and into the jungle. MUSIC: Loud, violent, dissonant, perhaps the last dark seconds of The Doors' "Hello, I Love You."

57 EXT: NIGHT: DARK JUNGLE

57

The clearing is empty. The music is fading.

58 EXT: HOOTCH: NIGHT

58

Meserve, Eriksson, Herber and Clark are gathered at one side of the hootch. Eriksson is somewhat separated from the others. Mao is huddled in a corner, breathing with some difficulty. She coughs every now and then.

CLARK

Herber manages about half a stroke  
and then he's gain' Eeee-eeee,  
like a fuckin' mouse.

HERBER

Clark had his knife in his hand  
the whole time. He had it at her  
throat.

CLARK

So what?

HERBER

Well . . . ! Whata you mean?

CLARK

How long's it been since you had  
a real woman, Sarge?

MESERVE  
 She was . . . I think she was  
 real.

Silence.

HERBER  
 My brother had this car, man, a  
 fifty-seven Chevy Belair. It was  
 raked, nosed and decked. It had  
 ten coats a hand-rubbed  
 candy-apple-red lacquer. That  
 two-eighty-three block was bored  
 and stroked.

Eriksson gets to his feet and walks to leave the hootch.

59 EXT: NIGHT: CLEARING OUTSIDE HOOTCH

59

Eriksson stands several yards from the hootch. Herber can be heard  
 talking.

HERBER (OS)  
 Had Carter's on it, a hi-lift cam.  
 And everything was chrome. Air  
 cleaner. Valve covers. Fan.

As Meserve comes out of the hootch and standing several yards away  
 from Eriksson, he pees in the bushes.

HERBER (OS)  
 Even the radiator. Can you  
 imagine that? A chrome radiator?

Herber goes on now, talking about the Saracen Car Club to which his  
 brother belonged, the jacket they wore, silk and with a picture of  
 a Saracen astride a car engine instead of a horse, as Meserve and  
 Eriksson speak.

MESERVE  
 You relieve Diaz on security at  
 twenty-four hundred, all right?

ERIKSSON  
 All right.

MESERVE  
 You probably like the army, don't  
 you Eriksson.

ERIKSSON  
 No.

MESERVE  
 I hate the army.

ERIKSSON  
 This ain't the army. This ain't  
 the army, Sarge.

Silence: night jungle sounds, and Herber OS.

MESERVE  
Eriksson . . ?

Eriksson looks at him.

MESERVE  
I was just thinkin'. Twenty years  
from now . . . they'll probably  
make a movie outa this. Whata  
you think?

60 EXT: DAYLIGHT: HILL 192

60

Meserve, Herber, Diaz and Eriksson are on the move. Loaded with weapons, ammo and the radio, they struggle, climbing through shoulder-high vegetation toward the summit. Meserve turns, walking backwards.

MESERVE  
We're gonna hump another thirty,  
forty meters up to that overlook  
up there where we can observe the  
cave complex and the stream. Even  
gooks gotta drink water.

They walk on, Herber peering down at the stream below.

61 EXT: DAY: VALLEY FLOOR

61

Three Vietnamese emerge from the jungle, walking toward the stream.

62 EXT: DAY: RIDGELINE

62

The patrol is gazing down from the overlook into the area of the stream where the three figures are emerging.

HERBER  
It's a buncha them cruel-hearted  
little people.

MESERVE  
(raising his weapon)  
Let's take no names.

Meserve fires, everyone fires.

ANOTHER ANGLE: POV FROM THE RIDGE: The three figures are scampering from the water.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Eriksson is firing a second grenade. Herber and Diaz and Meserve are firing.

ANOTHER ANGLE: POV FROM THE RIDGELINE: The three figures are running into the woods.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Ridgeline.

MESERVE

Diaz, get on the hook with Superman and see if we can't get some arty in on these dinks.

Herber is standing, trying to peek down on the stream.

HERBER

That'll scatter their shit.

MESERVE

Eriksson, you and Herber didi back to the hootch and load up on extra ammo and smoke grenades. Then we'll close on the bastards.

Diaz is on the radio raising the artillery fire base as Herber and Eriksson head back down the slope.

63 EXT: DAY: CLEARING OUTSIDE HOOTCH

63

Clark sits in the shade at the edge of the hootch doorway, sharpening his knife, smoking a cigarette. Behind him Mao can be seen inside the hootch, lying there, hands tied, coughing.

64 EXT: DAY: CLEARING OUTSIDE HOOTCH

64

At a sound from the bushes, Clark grabs up his weapon and scurries backward into the hootch.

CLARK'S POV as Herber and Eriksson arrive into the clearing breathing hard from their hasty descent.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Clark getting to his feet.

ERIKSSON

Meserve wants smoke grenades and ammo.

HERBER

We're gonna light up some little motherfuckers.

65 INT: HOOTCH

65

As Eriksson and Herber are at the ammo depot gathering gear.

CLARK

Where's Meserve?

ERIKSSON

There's some UC in the valley, we're goin' down to get 'em.

CLARK

What about me?

ERIKSSON

Whata you mean?

CLARK

What am I supposed to do, babysit  
the broad while you guys get to  
waste some gooks? What'd he say  
about me?

ERIKSSON

He didn't say anything.

CLARK

Well, I'm sayin' then. I'm goin',  
you're stayin', Eriksson.

He is hastening about, gathering his equipment.

ERIKSSON

But I'm--

CLARK

I'm goin' up there and get some!  
I ain't gonna miss this good shit.  
Eriksson, gimme the smokes.  
Herber, you ready?

He is grabbing the resupply bags from Eriksson.

ERIKSSON

Reserve told me--

CLARK

I'm the corporal, you're the pfc.  
You're stayin'. Got it? Let's  
didi, Herber.

Clark heads out, Herber following.

HERBER

Gonna K.I.A. some VC gooks.

66 EXT: CLEARING IN FRONT OF HOOTCH

66

As Clark and Herber run out, Eriksson also emerges, following them  
halfway across the clearing. He watches as they disappear into the  
bush. Then, after a moment, he turns and sees through a crack in  
the hootch wall Mao's face for just an instant before she ducks  
back.

CLOSE-UP of Eriksson as he breathes, thinking, and then he walks  
toward the hootch.

67 INT: HOOTCH

67

Mao is crouched against a wall when Eriksson enters. He looks at  
her. Her body is shaking. She is staring warily at Eriksson, and  
then she coughs.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Eriksson sets down his weapon. He moves toward her. Panic is in her face and eyes as she scrambles backward, speaking rapidly, shaking her head fearfully, begging until she hits the wall with her back and crumbles there on her knees, her body hunched over, her hands tied behind her.

ERIKSSON

No, no.

Mao speaks rapidly in Vietnamese, coughing.

ERIKSSON

I'm not gonna hurt you.

She stares at him, says something.

ERIKSSON

I just want . . . to . . . untie you.

(He pantomimes untying her)

Untie.

Very carefully, and slowly, he moves toward her and as he does, she begins an uncontrollable shaking and whimpering.

ERIKSSON

No, no. No . . . no . . . Don't worry.

She is bowed over, her face averted, pressing into the wall as if to disappear into it, as Eriksson reaches her and works to untie the rope from her wrist. Freeing her, he puts his hand on her brow as she covers from him.

ERIKSSON

Are you sick? You have a fever?

He presses his hand to his own head.

ERIKSSON

You hot. Very hot.

Mao is staring at him.

ERIKSSON

Are you hungry? Food? You?

(He pantomimes eating)

Hungry?

She stares at him.

ERIKSSON

Of course you're hungry. Food. Food. Numba one.

He is moving to the supplies where he breaks out a C-ration of crackers and beef stew.

In the corner Mao watches closely as he prepares the food.

ERIKSSON

Numba one.  
(pointing to the food)

As he is pouring the water, she is risking a slight movement toward him. She is desperately thirsty.

Eriksson goes to her, carrying the food and water extended far in front of him, as if to reassure her that he wants nothing from her but is merely delivering food.

Mao takes the food and water and scurries back to her corner where she begins while still standing to eat. She whimpers, then eats, her emotions overwhelming her.

ERIKSSON

Good, huh? I hope so. Good.

He chews along with her as she looks at him quizzically, not fully trusting him. She eats, then whimpers, then eats. Dismayed at her condition and his own predicament, he sighs.

ERIKSSON

Ohh, boy. Oh . . . man.

From the distance he hears artillery whirring through the air. He dives on the ground and Mao cowers. The rounds explode in the distance and he hastens to the door and looks out. Then, grabbing his field glasses, he runs out.

68 EXT: DAY: CLEARING

68

Eriksson runs up an opposite slope to get some height.

Far off he can see the huge explosions. Because of the treetops, he can't really see what's going on in the valley, but the ground shakes with the concussion; there are distant plumes of smoke.

He lowers the glasses, heads back toward the hootch.

ERIKSSON

What the fuck am I gonna do?

69 INT: HOOTCH

69

Mao is standing there holding out the empty ration can, the empty canteen cup. Suddenly, the artillery firing stops. Eriksson looks up, listening. Then he looks back at Mao. He takes the cup and can. She suddenly speaks in Vietnamese, gesturing with some animation.

ERIKSSON

I don't know what you're saying.  
I don't understand. I don't .

(more)

ERIKSSON (Cont'd)

(He points to his chest)

Me . . . no . . . no . . .  
 (Trying to pantomime  
 "understand," he looks  
 for various hand  
 gestures and gives up)

Mao speaks to him in Vietnamese and picks up the cloth which her mother wanted her to have and which has been used as her gag, she clutches it, twisting it in her hands.

ERIKSSON

I'm . . . sorry. I'm sorry .  
 . . . for . . . for . . . Friend  
 me numba fuckin' ten . . .

He shakes his head. She starts coughing. He moves to her, and she is a little less fearful.

ERIKSSON

Can you -- Listen. Can . . .  
 (He points to her)  
 you . . . Can you run . . . ?  
 (And he pantomimes  
 running)  
 You . . . run . . . away . . .  
 (He pantomimes "away"  
 as if pushing something  
 aside)

Mao is staring at him, puzzled, thinking. Eriksson stops, and then he is about to try again, thinking over the symbols.

ERIKSSON

. . . Can you . . .  
 (He points to her)  
 . . . you . . . run . . .

Pantomiming running, he suddenly gives up, spinning away.

ERIKSSON

Holy Christ, I'm playing charades!

He pounds his own legs, wildly.

ERIKSSON (CONTO)

I'm playing motherfucking  
 charades! She couldn't answer  
 me if she wanted! We can't even  
 say "Hello," can we. Huh?  
 "Hello!" Hello! HELLO!

His outburst has startled her, and she has recoiled into her corner, hiding, her hands over her head. Having hastened across the hootch, Eriksson moves the last few feet slowly, reaching to touch her, to pet her head as one might a frightened animal.

ERIKSSON  
 No, no. I'm sorry. I'm . . .

She looks up, her deep dark eyes fearful and helpless peering into him.

ERIKSSON  
 Maybe we could . . . run for it  
 . . . together. Maybe . . .

He's looking around the hut.

ERIKSSON (CONTD)  
 Just get the hell out of here.

He hastens to the supply depot where he loads food, grenades, ammo into a bag. Moving back to her, he takes her hand and guides her to the door and peers out, picking up his weapon.

POV OF ERIKSSON: The surrounding jungle.

70 INT: HOOTCH

70

Eriksson looks at her. She is staring at him, coughing.

ERIKSSON  
 Of course I'll be a fuckin  
 deserter.

He steps out, bringing her with him. Moving at a crouch, he takes a step. Then from the jungle there is a crash, as if someone has run into something or a large object has fallen. Eriksson starts wildly, flinging Mao back into the hootch and diving onto his belly, his weapon at the ready as he stares at the still and impenetrable jungle trying to see who is there? What is there? The jungle is wavering, ominous. Then slowly he begins to crawl backwards, inching his way into the hootch.

71 INT: HOOTCH

71

In the shadows Eriksson sits up, leaning against the wall. He looks at Mao. On her knees a few feet from him, she is gazing expectantly at him, wondering what is next. He shakes his head, closes his eyes, folds his hands.

ERIKSSON  
 Our father, who art in heaven,  
 hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom  
 come, thy will be done on earth  
 as it is in heaven.

72 EXT: JUNGLE

72

Night has come. The jungle is shifting leaves and shadows. The cries of wild creatures.

73 INT: HOOTCH: NIGHT

Eriksson sits against the wall as the squad strides into the hootch. One by one they enter and collapse exhausted. Clark, Herber, Diaz.

HERBER  
Ohh, man, I'm beat.

CLARK  
I'm starvin'.

Entering the hootch, Meserve looks things over.

MESERVE  
Before we chow down or catch any z's, everybody's loadin' up their rucks. There ain't gonna be time in the mornin'. We're outa here by o-six-hundred.

As the men start working with the gear.

ERIKSSON  
What's happenin'?

MESERVE  
We're movin' our base up onto the ridgeline. If we can stir up some shit, Reilly's promised to support us with three squads. We can have arty and slicks and twenty mike-mike. You shoulda seen it up there, Eriksson, that arty come in and kicked some ass. They were pure and holy hell.

CLARK  
(imitating a radio operator)  
Hell Control, do you Roger our request you pitch us more flaming death? Over. Silent Twin Two, this is--

Mao, huddled in the corner, suddenly starts coughing.

HERBER  
What'sa matter with her? What is she, sick now?

CLARK  
She's gonna give away our position with all that coughin'. We oughta waste her now, Sarge.

Meserve looks at Eriksson, who is studying him.

MESERVE  
 We'll deal with it in the morning.  
 Who knows? Maybe somebody'll want  
 a little more boom-boom.

HERBER  
 I might, man. What time do we  
 have to wake up to do that?

CLARK  
 For you, Herber, about  
 o-five-fifty-niner. Eeee-eee-eee.

Mao coughs savagely.

HERBER  
 She ain't lookin' so appealin',  
 Sarge.

MESERVE  
 This is the Nam, Herber. You gotta  
 be hardcore.

CLARK  
 Yeh, Herber, just cause you pissed  
 off and pukin' don't mean you  
 ain't havin' fun. Right,  
 Eriksson.

Eriksson doesn't answer. The rucks are packed now, the men are  
 settling down for sleep.

CLARK  
 Huh, fool?  
 (pause)  
 Fool!  
 (pause)  
 Fool! Fool!  
 (Each repetition of the  
 word gets uglier, more  
 vicious)  
 I hate him, Sarge. He's skatin'  
 on us.

MESERVE  
 The Nam is a nightmare, Clarkie.

74 EXT: MORNING: RIDGELINE

74

The squad is climbing the ridgeline, Herber on point followed by  
 Meserve, Mao, Diaz, Eriksson and Clark.

As they advance, Eriksson glances back at Clark behind him. Clark  
 stares at him. Eriksson looks ahead to Diaz and slides up toward  
 him.

ERIKSSON  
 Diaz, man. Listen up. If I try  
 somethin' with her, if I try to  
 break with her, will you back me?

Diaz turns away, looks forward, strides off to separate himself  
 from Eriksson. After several more paces Diaz peeks back at  
 Eriksson, then advances forward, hurriedly, past the girl to  
 Meserve.

Eriksson, in dismay, watches as Meserve and Diaz confer, Diaz, with  
 his body, clearly referring back to Eriksson.

MESERVE  
 Eriksson, up! Let's take five.

Eriksson is moving up.

HERBER  
 Sarge, there's gooks diddy-boppin'  
 on the trail down there.

CLARK  
 Sarge, gooks.

Both Herber and Clark are pointing down into the valley.

POU FROM RIDGE: Eight or nine figures can be seen moving along a  
 trail toward the stream.

MESERVE  
 (to Diaz)  
 Get me Reilly. Tell 'em we want  
 the pre-arranged support. Slicks,  
 arty, the whole shit-load.

Diaz is getting on the horn.

DIAZ  
 Silent Twin Two, this is Little  
 Brother Two. Over.

As he continues calling for support:

MESERVE  
 Eriksson, you're gonna grease the  
 bitch.

ERIKSSON  
 What?

MESERVE  
 You heard me. Waste her. Now.

ERIKSSON  
 Meserve, man, whata you talkin'  
 about?

MESERVE  
I want you to kill her. I want  
you to grease her.

ERIKSSON  
You're nuts, man. Brownie was  
here, he'd kick your butt on this  
one, man. He would not tolerate  
this bullshit.

MESERVE  
Brownie ain't on my frequency no  
more, he's on the dead frequency.  
Are you on my frequency,  
motherfucker? Cause if you ain't,  
you ain't walkin' outa here. You  
are K.I.A.

ERIKSSON  
Just let her go. Who's she gonna  
tell? Who's gonna care what  
happened so far?

MESERVE  
Herber! Waste her!

HERBER  
What?

MESERVE  
Waste her!

CLARK  
I'll do it, Sarge.

MESERVE  
No. Herber's gonna do it. Herber!

HERBER  
Why me?

MESERVE  
You little piece a bug-shit. Do  
it!

HERBER  
I don't wanna, man. C'mon.

CLARK  
(pointing off)  
Choppers, Sarge!

POU FROM RIDGE: In the distance the specks of a half-dozen gunships  
can be seen flailing in the air.

MESERVE  
We gotta get rid of her. We're  
gonna have every kinda bird  
circlin' our area. Diaz! Do it!

Diaz is shaking his head, no. No.

CLARK  
I'll do it.

Diaz whirls and starts firing down into the valley.

MESERVE  
What the fuck you doin'?

Herber whirls and starts firing down into the valley. Meserve drops to his knees. Eriksson hits the dirt.

MESERVE  
Goddamn it, did they see us?

Bullets hit into the dirt.

MESERVE  
Shit. Eriksson, set up on that lower ledge. You should be able to see anybody comin' up on us.

Bullets pop into the dirt around them as Eriksson drops down the ridge. Behind him Clark can be seen moving on Mao, his knife out as he grabs her.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Eriksson is on the lower ledge setting up, and glancing back to see Diaz looking backward. The gunfire continues as off to the left Herber and Meserve are shooting down into the valley.

HERBER  
Man they're dingin' us from somewhere besides the valley, Sarge!

MESERVE  
No lie. You hadda light 'em up, you asshole.

Diaz is staring at Eriksson as Eriksson is looking up. Then Diaz looks backward again.

POV OF DIAZ as Mao is being dragged behind some bushes by Clark. More bullets hit.

HERBER  
Now we're in the shit.

MESERVE  
Diaz, tell Reilly we have heavy contact; tell him we got gooks in the open, request Superman to use Victor Tango Fuses and fire for effect.

As Clark is hastening back, giving thumbs-up.

MESERVE  
Where is she?

CLARK  
I fixed her.

As behind them Mao suddenly emerges from the bushes, half running, half crawling downhill toward a mass of thicker foliage and the shooting continues, the helicopters advance.

HERBER  
(pointing at Mao)  
Jesus Holy Christ!

Meserve and Clark look.

Eriksson, whirling, sees Herber pointing backwards and everybody looking. He scrambles up the slope toward them.

CLARK  
That bitch, I stuck her more'n  
twice.

MESERVE  
Get her! Everybody! Waste her!

Meserve, Clark, Herber and Diaz fire at the fleeing girl as Eriksson whirls and fires his weapon down into the valley

MESERVE  
What the hell you shootin' at,  
you asshole?!

ERIKSSON  
Sarge, don't do this! For God's  
sake, I'm beggin' you, let her  
go. Stop 'em. Sarge! Stop!  
Man, you're outa here in three  
weeks! You're goin' home!

MESERVE  
I am home.

ERIKSSON  
Stop everybody. Stop! Stop!  
Stop! Stop! Stop!

He is running from one soldier to the next and Meserve violently smashes his rifle butt into Eriksson's stomach, dropping him gagging to the ground. The others falter in their firing.

MESERVE  
Get her!

He kicks Eriksson in the head, and Clark and Diaz and Herber go running after Mao who is vanishing into the foliage near a large and oddly shaped rock. Eriksson, on the ground, is writhing, trying to rise, as Meserve runs after the others.

75 EXT: DAY: JUNGLE

75

In the Weeds Mao struggles to keep moving. Clark and Herber are darting into the weeds.

CLARK  
Where the fuck is she?

ANOTHER ANGLE: Mao stops to hide, crouching over; Clark and Herber are stealthily advancing.

76 EXT: RIDGELINE

76

Eriksson, on his knees, is gagging, trying to breathe as he looks into the weeds where Herber, Clark and Mao can be seen.

77 EXT: JUNGLE

77

Clark and Herber advance stealthily. Herber points off to the right. Weeds rustle near the large rock. Clark fires.

ANOTHER ANGLE: From behind the rock Mao tries to run, half crawling, and Clark blasts away.

78 EXT: RIDGELINE

78

Eriksson is writhing, clutching his stomach, gagging, looking.

79 EXT: JUNGLE

79

Clark let's go a burst and Mao is hit, twisting, falling. Clark and Herber are running forward through the weeds until they rush upon her and she's there, twisting, dying.

80 EXT: RIDGELINE

80

Eriksson is on his knees, mouth agape.

81 EXT: JUNGLE

81

Mao lies there, dead.

The camera starts to pull back, and back.

MESERVE  
Mortars! Incoming! Incoming!

Thunderous explosion. The camera is pulling back and back.

82 EXT: DAY: JUNGLE

82

POV FROM THE AIR as a helicopter goes rushing by, and on the ground can be seen Clark and Herber in the bushes with the body of Mao, and on the ridgeline Eriksson is on his knees. Meserve and Diaz are a short distance off as there is a mortar explosion, throwing up dirt and debris.

As the angle expands, the valley can be seen. The tiny figures of VC battle the tiny figures of two squads of U.S. Army soldiers.

A jet comes sweeping in, dropping napalm in a nearby stretch of jungle. Smoke swirls up blinding our view, enshrouding it in dark clouds; a roaring, deepening thunder, which when it clears shows another vista of flaming foliage and squads skirmishing.

A silver jet plummets out of the sky, its bombs setting off a furious eruption, the smoke and flames rising to utterly obscure the view. Within this thunderous rumble another sound can be heard, a chopper motor whirling, roaring. Emerging from the smoke, the chopper can be seen now, a med-evac.

83 INT: DAY: CHOPPER

85

Eriksson is slumped there among the badly wounded. His shirt is open, a dirty field dressing on his head. Dazed, he sits there, his glassy eyes staring at the faces of the wounded men around him. The floor of the chopper is filling with blood, blood washing along and over his boots.

WOUNDED SOLDIER  
(nodding at another  
soldier)

Ohh, look at that poor guy, he's  
gettin' so gray. He's gettin'  
that awful gray.

Eriksson looks at the figure toward which the soldier is pointing. The figure rocks on the stretcher, eyes open, alive, but only dimly conscious.

WOUNDED SOLDIER  
I ain't gray like that, am I?  
I ain't that awful gray.

ERIKSSON  
No.

WOUNDED SOLDIER  
Stay with me, okay. Don't leave  
me.

ERIKSSON  
Okay.

WOUNDED SOLDIER  
Promise.

Behind them another soldier starts sobbing. Eriksson looks away, and out the window of the chopper he sees a nightmare sight.

POV OF ERIKSSON: Rising past them at less than fifty meters is a cargo net full of dead bodies of American soldiers.

Eriksson stares, aghast.

The cargo net rises and rises, suspended from a huge chinook helicopter.

Eriksson stares as the cargo net floats further and further away.

84 EXT: LANDING PAD OUTSIDE TRIAGE AREA AT WOLF

84

Eriksson comes out the door. He has a clean dressing on his head. His ribs are wrapped. He looks about, amazed to find himself standing there, alive. He starts walking.

85 EXT: TENT AREA AT WOLF

85

Eriksson is approaching his tent. Pausing, he takes a magazine from his ammo pouch and slams it into his weapon. Then he locks and loads a round into the chamber. Carefully, he eases toward the tent. Reaching the front, he stealthily slips up to the edge of the door and looks in.

POV OF ERIKSSON: The empty tent.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Eriksson carefully slides the tent door open.

86 INT: TENT

86

Eriksson springs in, his weapon at the ready as he double checks to make sure the tent is empty. Satisfied, he finally relaxes slightly. He moves to his bed and sits. He bows over, holds his head in his hands. Then he starts and sits there, staring. After a few seconds he goes to his wall locker, which he opens to take out clean clothes. He lays the clothes on the bed then he rushes to his footlocker and feverishly works on the combination lock which at last pops open.

ANOTHER ANGLE: In the locker his hands rummage through socks and underwear, books and pictures, until he comes upon a small plastic sack tied tightly. Ripping the plastic open, he finds a bag of Oreo cookies which he tears open. He begins to eat ravenously. He stuffs the cookies into his mouth, chewing desperately, fiercely. He eats and eats.

ANOTHER ANGLE: The tent door opens, a figure stepping in. Eriksson leaps for his weapon, whirling to the ready position. The figure in the door is a black corporal we have never seen before. The CORPORAL flings his hands up.

CORPORAL

Hey, troop. Hey, relax. Lighten up.

ERIKSSON

What?

CORPORAL

Lighten up, man. Be cool. I ain't after your Oreos, man.

Eriksson is lowering his weapon.

CORPORAL

You musta seen some spooky shit, huh?

ERIKSSON  
Whata you want?

CORPORAL  
The C.O.'s got me countin' live  
bodies, that's all.

ERIKSSON  
Count me.

CORPORAL  
Right.

ERIKSSON  
Count me, man.

CORPORAL  
I am. I'm countin' you. You're  
one.

ERIKSSON  
I'm alive.

CORPORAL  
Nobody else back in this tent,  
though.

ERIKSSON  
I ain't seen 'em.

CORPORAL  
Okay. You go on, git back in them  
cookies, man. 'Njoy yourself.  
Knock yoself out.

The corporal goes. Eriksson looks at the cookies in his hands, the crumbled mess of cookies clinging to the mud and blood on his fingers and clothing.

87 EXT: TENT AREA

87

Eriksson, in clean fatigues, his face still dirty, is moving along, lugging his weapon and a bag of gear as he approaches another tent.

88 INT: TENT

88

Eriksson steps into a tent of five soldiers, some of whom we may have seen in the first mortar fight; others are totally unfamiliar. They look at Eriksson as he moves to an empty bed.

SOLDIER #1  
Hey, man, who you?

ERIKSSON  
This is Rowan's rack, huh.

Eriksson is dumping his bag onto the bed.

SOLDIER #2  
- He's at the shutter.

Eriksson turns and heads for the door.

SOLDIER #1  
You know this guy?

SOLDIER #2  
He's second squad.

89 EXT: TENT AREA

89

Eriksson is walking near a road on which trucks full of soldiers are passing. Ahead is the latrine. As Eriksson walks, the door opens and Rowan steps out, buckling his pants, carrying a newspaper. He looks up startled, seeing Eriksson.

ERIKSSON  
The motherfuckers are gonna kill  
me, Rowan. They're gonna kill  
me.

ROWAN  
What?

As they talk, trucks can be seen passing periodically.

ERIKSSON  
They're gonna kill me.

ROWAN  
Who you talkin' about, the gooks?

ERIKSSON  
No, man, no. They did it. They  
fuckin' did it. You didn't think  
they would and I didn't but they  
did. They fuckin' took her and  
they killed her.

ROWAN  
The girl? They did it.

ERIKSSON  
That ain't supposed to happen,  
is it?

ROWAN  
What?

ERIKSSON  
We just, we just marched in there  
and drug her out, and they took  
her and tied her up and marched  
her out there and fucked her and  
killed her. That ain't supposed  
to happen, is it?

ROWAN  
Jesus Christ.

ERIKSSON  
I mean, it ain't supposed to happen and I just didn't know it, is it?

ROWAN  
That fuckin' idiot.

And the perspective of the camera shows Clark, having just jumped from one of the passing trucks, landing and struggling to head toward them.

ERIKSSON  
Herber's talkin' about Genghis Kahn and Meserve's tellin' me I'm K.I.A.

ROWAN  
(seeing Clark)  
Was Clark in on it?

ERIKSSON  
He's nuts!

ROWAN  
He's comin'.

Eriksson whirls to see Clark advancing toward them.

CLARK  
Whata you talkin' about? Eriksson, you sonofabitch, whata you talkin' to him about?

ERIKSSON  
I can talk to him.

CLARK  
What happens in the field stays in the field, Eriksson! You know that! Everybody knows that!

ROWAN  
Where's Meserve? Is he back?

CLARK  
What the hell happened to you, Eriksson? You disappeared.

ERIKSSON  
I got choppered out.

CLARK  
 (grabbing Eriksson by  
 the arm)  
 We're supposed to regroup at the  
 tent. Reilly wants us ready in  
 an hour.

ERIKSSON  
 Quit fuckin' pullin' at me, man,  
 I'll be there.

CLARK  
 You better.

Clark is studying them suspiciously but nevertheless moving off as  
 Rowan tries to keep the conversation apparently on the subject of  
 battle.

ROWAN  
 Victor Charles Cong is one  
 hardcore jackass, man. They told  
 us it was heatin' up out where  
 you guys were and we were on  
 alert. I said, "I'm always on  
 alert."

Clark is now far enough off for the real conversation to resume.

ERIKSSON  
 Did you see him, man?

ROWAN  
 I saw him.

ERIKSSON  
 They get me back in the bush, man,  
 I'm dead. I'm comin' back in a  
 bag.

ROWAN  
 You gotta tell somebody.

ERIKSSON  
 I don't know who, though. Who  
 do you think?

ROWAN  
 Reilly?

ERIKSSON  
 You think I could tell Reilly?

ROWAN  
 Maybe I could try Hawthorne. He  
 don't like Meserve.

ERIKSSON  
 I'd have to hide out, man, I got  
 to. I could hole up in your area.

Shooting past them, the camera shows Clark running toward them.

ROWAN

Watch it.

Clark is running full tilt, his eyes wild. Rowan and Eriksson whirl and stand ready to defend themselves. Clark races up, making no move with his weapon and stopping a yard away to scream in Eriksson's face.

CLARK

WHAT HAPPENS IN THE FIELD STAYS  
IN THE FIELD, YOU SONOFABITCH!  
IT'S A LAW! IT'S A MOTHERFUCKING  
LAW! WHAT HAPPENS IN THE FIELD  
STAYS IN THE FIELD!

His face distorted, he stands there gasping, looking at them. Eriksson turns, starts walking away.

CLARK

You ain't worth the shit you're  
made of, Eriksson.

Eriksson keeps walking. Rowan turns and runs after Eriksson. Clark stands there watching them.

90 INT: HOOTCH: ROWAN'S TENT

30

Eriksson sits on Rowan's bunk, his M-16 on his lap.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Rowan is huddled with several other soldiers in a corner. The group is talking intently, arguing over something. Suddenly Rowan backs from their ranks.

ROWAN

Okay. Okay.

Turning, Rowan crosses to Eriksson.

ERIKSSON

What?

ROWAN

It's a buncha shit. Somebody  
heard somethin', you know. Reserve  
this or that, they ain't sure  
what, but they don't want you here  
if there's the slightest chance  
Reserve might drop a grenade in  
hopin' to blow you away.

ERIKSSON

You think Hawthorne'll tell  
Reilly?

ROWAN

He said he would.

ERIKSSON  
I couldn't go along with it, you know. I couldn't.

ROWAN  
No.

ERIKSSON  
You shoulda seen her. There was no way.

ROWAN  
Of course not, man.

As a PFC. sticks his head in the tent, Rowan and Eriksson jump

PFC  
The company's movin' out at fourteen hundred. That's thirty minutes.

He goes.

ERIKSSON  
I'm dead. I'm fuckin' dead.

ROWAN  
Look, you could go to the medics. Tell 'em you're fucked up.

ERIKSSON  
Whata they care?

ROWAN  
You got whacked in the head, man. You were out there.

ERIKSSON  
I forgot. Right.

ROWAN  
It might buy you some time. Let's go.

They head for the door as SERGEANT HAWTHORNE steps in.

HAWTHORNE  
Eriksson, Reilly's waitin' at the C.P.

Rowan and Eriksson freeze, they look at each other.

HAWTHORNE  
He wants to see you, Eriksson. A.S.A.P.!

91 INT: REILLY'S HOOTCH

91

Lieutenant Reilly sits behind his desk staring forward thoughtfully at Eriksson and Hawthorne standing before him. After a moment he rises.

REILLY

Hawthorne, you'd best head back to your area and prepare the men to move out. We're gonna be the hammer and Bravo's the anvil.

HAWTHORNE

Yes, sir.

Hawthorne salutes and leaves. Eriksson stands uneasily.

REILLY

Where you from Eriksson?

ERIKSSON

Minnesota.

REILLY

Ohh, cold in Minnesota, right?

ERIKSSON

Yes, sir.

REILLY

You ever been to Alabama?

ERIKSSON

Alabama, sir?

REILLY

On the day I was born, my momma grunted, I popped out, I took one look around: "Shit," I says. "It's Alabama." So about three years ago I was still in Alabama, my wife was about to give birth to our first child. I took her to the hospital, a natural thing to do. Well, she was refused admittance to this hospital on the basis of her race which is, as you might guess, Negro. Next thing we know, the baby ain't about to wait, and so my son is born on that goddamn floor of this Alabama hospital's reception room. I flipped the fuck out -- turnin' over chairs, kickin' lamps. It wasn't long, I was in jail. Now wasn't I on the side of righteousness? So what the fuck was I doin' in jail?

(more)

REILLY (Cont'd)

What I was doin', lemme advise you, was askin' myself that very same question and fixin' to shoot some motherfuckers workin' in that hospital. But do you know what? It was like they could read my mind and they just kept me in that cell until my mind was turned around. By the time I walked out, I wanted nothin' but to see my baby and wife and I was thinkin' to myself in this kinda wise old voice, "What happened is the way things are, so why try and buck the system?" You see what I'm sayin'? In the middle of a war, buckin' the system is even more hopeless, 'cause the system is all we got. It is the reality here, you see what I'm sayin'?

Eriksson stares at him.

REILLY

Now what I'm gonna do is break that squad up -- send the five a you men off in five different directions.

ERIKSSON

Sir, I think . . .

REILLY

No, no, no, no. You listen up, Eriksson. Be advised you'd best just try and relax about this thing.

(picking up a piece of paper)

You can't expect nothin' different in the combat zone. You're goin' to first squad. That'll put you with your buddy Rowan and Sergeant Hawthorne. Is that clear?

Eriksson stares at him.

92 EXT: DAY: SWAMP

92

Algae-coated water ripples against the jungle fatigues of a figure moving through the foul muck. Eriksson is sloshing forward. Behind him other soldiers are visible pushing through the scum-covered water. They wade through weeds, past moss-coated trees.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Hawthorne, on firmer ground, is rising onto a shoreline of palm trees and crushed fronds and reeds. He speaks to the first pair of soldiers to join him, gesturing toward the jungle wall, and these two move off, setting up security.

As the other men come ashore, they automatically lower their trousers, open their shirts, checking for leeches. Everyone has them. Eriksson and Rowan are among those wading ashore. They are lighting cigarettes which are pressed into the leeches. They spray the leeches with mosquito repellent.

HAWTHORNE

We're gonna take twenty here, gentlemen.

SLOANE

Great. This fuckin' middle-a-nowhere is much better than the other middle-a-nowhere we started from this morning.

MATZ

So where are we?

SLOANE

Whata you mean, "Where are we?"

ROYCE

You mean, is this Fu du, or Du fu?

SLOANE

This is the island of Muck-Muck in the province of Fuck You.

HAWTHORNE

Get 'em off right, gentlemen.  
(indicating a soldier standing frozen)  
Sloane, help the Cherry.

The Cherry, a pale, wide-eyed skinny kid with glasses, is staring at the leeches on his legs and shaking as Sloane moves to him.

SLOANE

This boy can Buggaloo!

Suddenly Eriksson stops his effort with the leeches.

ERIKSSON

I can't stop thinkin' about her, Rowan. I can't. I'm losin' it.

ROWAN

What?

ERIKSSON

I don't even know her fuckin' name, you know.

ROWAN

(working at the leeches)  
I hate these slimy bastards, man.

ERIKSSON

- I kept thinkin' somebody'd help  
me, you know, but I was  
bullshittin' myself, wasn't I?  
Who the fuck was gonna help me?

CHERRY

Agghhhh!

Nearby, the Cherry, with a low animal growl of hatred and loathing begins to jump up and down with both feet on the leeches that have dropped off him, stomping and growling in a fit of hysterical viciousness.

93 EXT: LATE AFTERNOON: JUNGLE

93

The men move down a pathway in the jungle, pushing aside the growths.

Eriksson walks, thinks. Suddenly from the front comes firing. He hits the ground, as do the others in his view.

SOLDIER #1

I ain't ready for this.

SOLDIER #2

What the fuck is gain' on?

SOLDIER #3

We got a leadership problem, man.

As Eriksson lies there for a moment, Rowan is seen in front of him turning to relay information.

ROWAN

Point got spooked by a monkey and  
blew him into a pile of turds and  
fur.

Eriksson gets to his feet.

94 EXT: DUSK: JUNGLE POSITION

94

The Cherry is moving along, carrying several cans of C-rations as he comes up to Rowan and Eriksson, sitting, eating.

CHERRY

I got some boneless chicken I'll  
trade for some pound cake if  
anybody wants to.

ROWAN

Sorry, Cherry, we would kill to  
keep our pound cake.

CHERRY

That's what everybody says.

ROWAN  
 In fact, we have killed to keep  
 our pound cake.

The Cherry is moving off.

ERIKSSON  
 There was somethin' I shoulda  
 done, you know. If you was me,  
 Rowan, what would you have done?

ROWAN  
 Whata you mean?

ERIKSSON  
 I mean.  
 I tried to talk to her and -- but  
 we couldn't even say hello. And make sense.  
 Meserve was -- I mean, what was  
 I supposed to do, waste a fuckin'  
 sergeant? And Clark and Herber?  
 Is that what I was supposed to  
 do?

ROWAN  
 No, man.

ERIKSSON  
 I couldn't. Kill four Americans,  
 for Chrissake?! And Diaz -- if  
 Diaz woulda had any balls! So  
 was I supposed to blow him the  
 fuck away -- waste every damn one  
 of them? I thought about it, man.

ROWAN  
 No.

ERIKSSON  
 Run away with her?! The two of  
 us in the middle of fuckin'  
 nowhere!

ROWAN  
 I don't know.

ERIKSSON  
 What, then?

ROWAN  
 It's a ballbuster, man.

From the tangled shadows, Cherry speaks.

CERRY  
 Can I stay with you guys?

They whirl on him.

ERIKSSON  
 - What the fuck are you doin' there,  
 Cherry?

CHERRY  
 I can't find my position.

ERIKSSON  
 Where was it?

CHERRY  
 I don't know. I can't find it.  
 I was with Willow and MacIntire.

ROWAN  
 You get any pound cake?

CHERRY  
 No. I still got the boneless  
 chicken, though.

ERIKSSON  
 What happened to your own pound  
 cake?

CHERRY  
 Somebody stole it. Can I stay  
 with you guys and find my position  
 in the morning?

Eriksson and Rowan look at each other.

ERIKSSON  
 No sweat.

ROWAN  
 You pathetic, dumb, sad-assed  
 cherry.

ERIKSSON  
 You were brutal with those fuckin'  
 leeches, Cherry. You were  
 berserk, man.

Silence as they settle.

CHERRY  
 When we reconnoiter those caves  
 tomorrow does everybody have to  
 go in or just some people?

ERIKSSON  
 And if I do nothin', man, nobody  
 knows a fuckin' thing, do they.  
 She just vanished.

The Cherry is staring at them, looking from one to the other.

ROWAN  
You tole Reilly.

ERIKSSON  
Oh, man, Reilly's total  
bullshit. He's doin' zip, man.  
That's what the chain of command's  
for, man, to buru stuff like this.  
Unless  
I go to Captain Vorst myself.

ROWAN  
You violate the chain of command,  
you're gonna piss some people off,  
man.

ERIKSSON  
Right, we wouldn't wanna violate  
somethin' so great as the chain  
of command just to report a  
murder.

CERRY  
Whata you guys talkin' about?

ROWAN  
Don't worry about it. Go to  
sleep.

Silence as they settle down.

CERRY  
Get's so goddamn dark here, man.  
I never seen dark like this  
before.

ERIKSSON  
Wait'll you're in those caves.

95 EXT: DAY: JUNGLE

95

Eriksson walks, Rowan follows, then comes Sloane and Royce. Sudden  
rifle fire startles them and they duck.

SLOANE  
Bullshit!

ROYCE  
Don't these suckers ever take the  
day off.

ERIKSSON  
Point probably wasted another  
monkey.

From OS comes a voice:

VOICE  
 Ohhh, God. Help. Help me. Help.  
 Sweet God, ohhh.

SLOANE  
 Oh, man, somebody's down.

More firing breaks out up front.

ERIKSSON  
 Recon by fire! Recon by fire!

They each begin firing into the jungle beside them, each letting go two full magazines. When they stop they hear:

VOICE (OS)  
 Ohh, help me, help me. Please  
 help me, help, sweet Jesus.

ERIKSSON  
 What the fuck is goin' on?

VOICE (OS)  
 Ohhh, sweet God, help me, help  
 me.

ERIKSSON  
 Who is it?

ROYCE  
 Sounds like that skinny  
 motherfucker with the glasses,  
 he fieldstripped them leeches.

ROWAN  
 The Cherry?

ERIKSSON  
 That's him? The kid?

Throughout this scene the Cherry has been calling from OS and now a rifle shot rings out. Again everyone fires into the jungle, a full magazine.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Sergeant Hawthorne moving along the column.

HAWTHORNE  
 Cease fire. Hold it. Cease fire.  
 Cease fire.

Hawthorne is now approaching Rowan and Eriksson and the others.

SLOANE  
 What's the haps here, Sarge?

HAWTHORNE  
 Sniper. Matz greased him hangin'  
 in a tree about forty meters up.  
 (more)

HAWTHORNE (Cont'd)  
 His shit's in the wind. Let's  
 quick-step it outa here.

ERIKSSON  
 Was it the Cherry got dinged?

HAWTHORNE  
 That boy was bagged and tagged  
 the minute they cut his orders  
 for this place. They shoulda just  
 shot him back home.

96 EXT: DAY: JUNGLE TRAIL

36

The Cherry lies on a poncho. Two soldiers are rigging poles to hook into the poncho to carry the body. Rowan passes, Eriksson passes, looking down. At the sound of rifle fire he whirls to see Sloane blasting up into the trees. Around Sloane other soldiers stand looking up. No one else is firing.

ANOTHER ANGLE: In the treetops the UC sniper dangles from the rope that held him tied to the trunk of his perch, bullets impacting into him, ripping him.

ERIKSSON  
 Man, whata you doin'? He's dead.  
 Sloane!

SLOANE  
 He ain't dead enough.  
 (He stops shooting,  
 looks at Eriksson)  
 Fuck you!

Sloane starts shooting again. Another soldier, MEYERS, is snapping pictures of Sloane with an instamatic camera. Then Meyers turns toward the distant, dangling UC and snaps away.

SOLDIER #1  
 You ain't gonna get nothin' with  
 that thing, man. It's too far  
 away.

SOLDIER #2  
 You need a telephoto lens from  
 here, Meyers.

97 EXT: DAY: CLEARING IN FRONT OF CAVE MOUTHS

37

A large number of soldiers mill about or lie or squat on their rucks, smoking, eating.

ROWAN

So you get about eight days in the Nam, you brutalize a buncha leeches, somebody steals your pound cake, and nobody'll trade you pound cake for boneless chicken. You get lost and the next day some gook motherfucker tied to a tree looks over this long line a grunts humpin' a trail and makes you his target of opportunity.

ERIKSSON

No, man. No.

ROWAN

No, what?

ERIKSSON

You can't be thinkin' about it that way.

ROWAN

How the fuck you wanna be thinkin' about it?

ERIKSSON

The goddamn thing is turnin' us on our heads. We're gettin' it backwards, man.

ROWAN

Because what it is is a day-in, day-out dose of bullshit.

ERIKSSON

But don't you feel how it oughta be different? Don't you feel it, man? It don't have to be this way if we don't want it this way. I mean, just because each one of us might at any second be blown away, everybody's actin' like we can do anything and it don't matter what we do -- but I'm thinkin' maybe it's all the other way around and the main thing is just the opposite, you know, and because we might be dead in the next split second, we have to be extra careful about what we do -- because maybe what we do matters more -- maybe it matters more than we can imagine.

98 INT: CAVES: PITCH BLACK

98

Flashlight beams probe the dark showing wet walls, rock crumbling. A light hits Eriksson's face. He turns. His light hits Rowan's face.

SLOANE  
Holy shit. Oh God.

They all whirl to the point where Sloane's light has stopped, the lights converging to illuminate a figure, hanging, a G.I.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Dangling in the dark is Rasmussen, a rope around his neck, his hands tied.

MATZ  
Ohhh, shit. God.

ROWAN  
It's Rasmussen.

SLOANE  
They hung him.

CLOSE UP on Eriksson, staring.

99 EXT: DAY: BASECAMP WOLF: OUTSIDE C.P. TENT

99

Trucks pass as Eriksson, in full combat gear, sits on his helmet outside a huge tent. Then he rises as from out of the tent steps a Sergeant E6.

E6  
Captain says he's got a minute,  
Eriksson. And by that he means  
sixty motherfucking seconds.

ERIKSSON  
Yes, sergeant.

E6  
Don't piss him off.

Eriksson enters the tent.

100 INT: TENT

100

He passes through one section of the tent into another where CAPTAIN VORST awaits him behind a desk.

ERIKSSON  
Sir, Pfc. Eriksson, reporting,  
sir.

VORST  
At ease, Eriksson.

ERIKSSON  
Captain Vorst, sir, something  
happened . . . somethin' I feel--

VORST  
I know why you're here, Eriksson.

Eriksson is startled.

VORST  
Lieutenant Reilly came to me when  
you first detailed this thing to  
him. I'm handling everything.

ERIKSSON  
I didn't know that, sir.

VORST  
Does that cover it as far as  
you're concerned, soldier? I'm  
max-attentive to this thing.

ERIKSSON  
Yes, sir. Is there anyone I  
should speak to? I mean, has the  
investigation started?

VORST  
I hope you realize how serious  
this event is, Eriksson.

ERIKSSON  
Yes, sir, that's why I reported  
it, because--

VORST  
An event like this could cause  
an international incident. Are  
you aware of that?

Eriksson stares at him.

VORST  
Because if you haven't thought  
about it, you goddamn well better  
think about it.

ERIKSSON  
Yes, sir.

VORST  
These four men fucked up good,  
but is bringing charges against  
them going to start that poor girl  
up breathin' again? Is it going  
to ease one second of her  
suffering or just spread the hurt  
on these boys and their families?  
I'm askin' you, Pfc.

ERIKSSON

Charges have to be brought, sir,  
don't they?

VORST

Why?

ERIKSSON

This was a crime, sir. I mean,  
she wasn't -- she didn't --- she  
was just in her goddamn house!  
Sir! Sleeping, sir! Whata you  
mean, "Why," goddamnit?!  
GODDAMNIT! WHAT THE FUCK IS GOIN'  
ON HERE? I'M NOT TALKIN' ABOUT  
A COMBAT SITUATION HERE! I'M  
NOT--

VORST

At ease! You want charges  
brought, alright. Do you know  
the first thing to come into  
question in a court martial on  
this thing will be your sanity  
for bringing charges like this!?

ERIKSSON

What?

VORST

They'll tear you a new asshole  
and I want you clear on that!  
Do you read me?

ERIKSSON

Yes, sir.

VORST

These are four men who never would  
have done this thing in other  
circumstances -- and that's a  
fact, not a woulda or a coulda  
but a fact. And they're good  
soldiers, each and every --  
Meserve is up for the Bronze Star!  
What about that? What about the  
fucking lives he saved? Are you  
just going to throw it away?

ERIKSSON

Maybe, sir, if you'd heard her  
screamin' you'd feel differently?

VORST

I've heard a lot of screamin' in  
this fucking country and most of  
it's been comin' from the mouths  
of hurt American boys. I'm gonna  
transfer you outa this company,  
Eriksson. All right?

(more)

UORST (Cont'd)

How's that strike you? Out of the infantry if you want. I'll get you placed any fuckin' where you say. You name it.

Silence.

UORST

You name it.

ERIKSSON

Door gunner, sir.

UORST

You want to be a helicopter door gunner? That's a Rog, then Eriksson. That's affirmed.

ERIKSSON

It won't keep me from tryin' to bring this thing out, though, sir.

UORST

Nobody wants to keep you from anything, Eriksson. I'm just functioning here to make the procedures clear by which a thing like this will go down. I mean, even if you get these men convicted, you oughta know they will do no real time in prison. Military courts are leniant, and stateside boards of review are notoriously forgiving. They'll be out of the stockade faster'n flies on shit. And if I was them, I'd be pissed off -- I'd want some payback. And if I was you, a young man with a young wife and baby daughter, I'd consider these factors very closely.

ERIKSSON

Pardon me, sir, but what's your point, sir?

UORST

No point, Pfc. I'm just trying to illuminate the terrain you're crossing into. You don't mind that, I hope; and fuck you if you do.

ERIKSSON

Yes sir.

UORST

Are you on my frequency?

ERIKSSON

Yes, sir.

UORST

I mean, who the fuck do you think you are?! You little scumbag! You're in this report recommending Meserve for the Bronze Star! You were out there that night. He brought the five a you outa that mess alive! I mean, this thing with the girl, it was wrong, but he's a kid. He's twenty goddamn years old! Are you gonna ruin his life! He saved yours!

Eriksson stares at him.

UORST

Get the fuck outa here.

101 EXT: DAY: CHOPPER PAD

101

Eriksson, accompanied by Rowan, is hauling his gear toward the chopper.

ERIKSSON

I don't know exactly, but I'll be about two weeks TDY at Radcliff before I'm transferred to the choppers. That's all I know. I'll be pullin' maintenance, doin' carpentry.

He freezes, looking back toward the tents.

POV OF ERIKSSON: Meserve, with a young soldier, is standing there looking at Eriksson. The young soldier suddenly runs toward Eriksson, who stares at Meserve until the soldier arrives.

SOLDIER

Meserve says he's got a feelin' your chopper's goin' down.

Eriksson whirls, looking at Meserve who gives Eriksson the finger. Eriksson stares at Meserve, who meets his gaze.

102 INT: NIGHT: ENLISTED MEN'S CLUB: CAMP RADCLIFF

102

Eriksson sits at a table in the corner, isolated. Music is playing. Eriksson has a pyramid of beer cans on the table before him and a letter, a torn envelope, a picture of his wife and daughter, a carpenter's belt containing a hammer and other tools. Wood walls and floor, a galvanized roof, the room is fairly large and filled with formica tables, padded chairs. There are two bars, one at either end, both made of plywood decorated with black and red vinyl. The club is fairly crowded. As Eriksson sets the picture down and drinks, a large man, an officer, moves from a cluster of enlisted men toward Eriksson.

KIRK  
How you doin', son?

ERIKSSON  
Sir, sorry, sir. Drunk, sir

KIRK  
You mind if I join you for a bit?

ERIKSSON  
Drunk, sir.

As Kirk picks up the photos and examines them, Eriksson watches and Kirk pulls up a chair and sits.

KIRK  
Very pretty.

ERIKSSON  
That's my wife, sir.

KIRK  
And this little darling must be  
your daughter.

Eriksson is nodding.

KIRK  
Trouble at home, son?

ERIKSSON  
Pardon, sir?

KIRK  
I couldn't help noticing the way  
you isolated yourself over here,  
all alone, gettin' a real  
snoutful.

ERIKSSON  
Oh, yes, sir. Well . . . yes,  
sir.

KIRK  
I thought maybe you were having  
problems at home. Problems with  
your wife, or sickness in the  
family, and you might want to bend  
my ear about it.

ERIKSSON  
My wife wrote me a beautiful  
letter. It's a beautiful letter.  
She loves me.

As Eriksson is lifting a beer to his mouth, Kirk puts his large hand gently on Eriksson's arm, restraining him.

ERIKSSON  
- You don't wanna know, sir.

KIRK  
Of course I do.

ERIKSSON  
No, you don't. Nobody does.

KIRK  
I'm a chaplain, son. Try me.  
That's what I do.

ERIKSSON  
You're a chaplain?

KIRK  
I'm a Mormon. Are you religious,  
son?

ERIKSSON  
(quite drunk)  
Sir, can I ask you a philosophical  
question, sir. That's what I'd  
like to do. I have a  
philosophical question I would  
like to ask you.

KIRK  
Shoot.

ERIKSSON  
I worked hard all my life. We  
were farmers. Lutherans. My  
father died when I was little.  
And I believe that a man's  
conscience is just -- it's part  
of him. It goes where he goes.  
Even all across the ocean, it  
travels with him because it's a  
part of him as much as his arms  
and legs are a part of him. Do  
you believe that, sir?

KIRK  
I do. Yes. But we've all seen  
what can happen to the arms and  
legs of men in this war, haven't  
we. Conscience, in most cases,  
is even more fragile, I'm afraid.  
Forgive yourself, son. Forgive  
yourself. The Lord forgives you.  
Now you forgive yourself.

Patting Eriksson's arm, Kirk picks up the photo of Eriksson's  
daughter.

KIRK  
What's your little girl's name?

ERIKSSON

I went on a long range patrol, sir, three weeks ago, and we kidnapped a girl, sir, and the other four men raped her, sir, and they murdered her.

103 EXT: NIGHT: CAMP RADCLIFF: A ROAD

103

A jeep rushes through the streets between the hootches, the quonset huts and G.P. tents. The driver is an M.P. Beside him sits another M.P. Eriksson is in the back seat between the chaplain and another officer.

ANOTHER ANGLE: The jeep rushes through the night.

104 INT: QUONSET HUT: CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION DIVISION

104

Two agents are interrogating Eriksson.

AGENT #1

Where was the girl supposed to have been abducted from?

ERIKSSON

Cat Tuong village.

AGENT #1

How old was she?

ERIKSSON

She was, uh, eighteen to twenty

AGENT #2

How do you know that?

ERIKSSON

Because her mother . . . she was young . . . She just -- she appeared young. Her mother was there, she was very upset. The girl--

AGENT #2

How do you know she wasn't fourteen, how do you know she wasn't twelve, how do you know she wasn't twenty-eight?

ERIKSSON

Well . . . I guess . . . Well, that's how old she seemed to be.

AGENT #2

Was she VC?

ERIKSSON

I don't think so.

AGENT #1  
How do you know she wasn't?

ERIKSSON  
We went through the village with a flashlight looking for a good-looking girl.

AGENT #2  
How do you know the sergeant wasn't looking for arms, for UC?

ERIKSSON  
Because at the briefing the night before he told us we were going to have some fun, that we were gonna take a girl.

AGENT #1  
Who attended this briefing?

ERIKSSON  
The men who went. Meserve, Herber, Clark, Diaz, myself.

AGENT #2  
No one else.

ERIKSSON  
No.

AGENT #1  
What do they say about this? Have you talked to them about it?

ERIKSSON  
No. When I refused to participate, Sergeant Meserve threatened me that I could end up dead by friendly fire and so everybody else -- they . . .

AGENT #2  
Everyone else participated.

ERIKSSON  
One of the guys didn't want to but the Sarge jumped on me pretty good and it scared them, they all saw it--

AGENT #1  
This guy who was reluctant, who was he?

ERIKSSON  
Diaz.

AGENT #2  
Did she struggle?

ERIKSSON  
Yeah. Her mom--

AGENT #1  
How do you know she wasn't UC  
struggling because she was being  
taken prisoner?

AGENT #2  
How do you know he didn't have  
it in his mind that he went to  
the ville to take some prisoners?  
How do you know that this woman  
was the object of the night  
before's briefing?

ERIKSSON  
Well, he said we're gonna go get  
us the girl and we did.

AGENT #2  
So she struggled.

ERIKSSON  
Yeah. Her mom was very upset.  
She came out and gave her a scarf  
to take with her. There was  
screaming--

AGENT #2  
Why did they give her a scarf.

ERIKSSON  
I don't know. It was just like  
. . . something -- everybody was  
very upset and the mom -- it was  
like something of her daughter's.

AGENT #1  
How far out did the patrol go.

ERIKSSON  
We went to Hill one-ninety-two,  
which is about a five hour hike.

AGENT #1  
And you did it all on foot, no  
helicopters.

ERIKSSON  
No. No helicopters. We hiked  
in.

AGENT #2  
So what happened to her after you  
got there?

ERIKSSON  
She was . . . They killed her.  
She was stabbed and--

AGENT #1  
Did you see her get stabbed?

ERIKSSON  
No.

AGENT #1  
How the hell do you know she was  
stabbed then?

ERIKSSON  
Because the guy said he'd stabbed  
her two or three times, the guy  
who did it, he saw her crawling  
away and he said--

AGENT #2  
You saw her crawling away?

ERIKSSON  
We all saw her crawling away.

AGENT #1  
Who shot her?

ERIKSSON  
Uh, everybody shot her.

AGENT #1  
You saw these people shoot her?

ERIKSSON  
Yeah.

AGENT #1  
If she was dead, when did they  
rape her.

ERIKSSON  
That was before, at the hootch.

AGENT #2  
Did you see anyone rape her?

ERIKSSON  
Well, you could hear her screaming  
and moaning and then they would  
come out of the hootch and say  
they did this. I went off. I  
couldn't stand it. To be around  
it.

AGENT #1  
Guess what? This is a grade A  
bullshit story. Do you know why?

ERIKSSON

It isn't.

AGENT #1

But it is, because if what you're telling us is true, and you hiked in and hiked out, and these things happened the way you're telling it, you would have never made it walkin' back. You'd have been K.I.A.

ERIKSSON

I was choppered out. I said we walked in. I was med-evacked out.

AGENT #2

You were choppered out?

AGENT #1

So then what happened.

AGENT #2

After you shot her, what happened? What did you do with the body?

ERIKSSON

Well . . . She's there. The body's there.

The agents look at each other, then back at Eriksson.

AGENT #1

So if somebody went out there, they could find the body?

ERIKSSON

Yeah.

105 EXT: DAY: HILL 192

105

The hill is wavering grass and Eriksson looks around at the ridgeline ahead, the vista in which he once struggled now seen on another day. Then he steps forward. Other figures are tramping up the terrain, which remains familiar, though large sections of it are scorched and cratered. The group consists of a major, Captain Vorst, the CID agents, several photographers, a firearms expert, a ballistics man, a squad of grunts, and in their midst, Eriksson. As they climb, the squad is spread to the front and rear with flankers out. Behind the point men and advance troops of the squad, the group is led by a heavy-set major, clearly more accustomed to time spent behind a desk than to the struggle of this climb. He gasps, pants, his face red.

VORST

Perhaps we should take five, sir.

MAJOR  
 (gasping)  
 How . . . much . . . further?

CID AGENT #2  
 Eriksson, how much further?

ERIKSSON  
 (pointing ahead)  
 I think it's that rock there, sir.

MAJOR  
 We'll . . . go . . . there.

They climb on, passing a crater, a large scorched area.

BALLISTICS MAN  
 Somebody managed some high level  
 devastation on this hunk a real  
 estate, man.

PHOTOGRAPHER  
 (snapping a picture of  
 the crater)  
 They put Charlie to flight from  
 this motherfucker.

A yelp from above startles them, and they look to see the major  
 tumbling down the hill.

ANOTHER ANGLE: As the tumbling major claws the dirt and grass to  
 stop, colliding with Eriksson, who helps the Major clamber to his  
 feet and flail on.

MAJOR  
 No break, no break. I'm fine.

Eriksson, stepping out around the major and the CID agents climbs  
 rapidly, striding away from them toward the rock.

The others struggle, climbing.

Eriksson climbs looking ahead toward the rock, then turning to  
 survey the ground below, trying to remember where things happened.  
 Glancing ahead again, he sees two men from the squad at the rock.  
 As Eriksson arrives, they turn to him.

SOLDIER #1  
 Nothin' here.

Eriksson looks about, thinking. Then he points off.

ERIKSSON  
 Over there, sir.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Where Eriksson points, a rock similar to the one to  
 which he has already climbed, juts out.

ERIKSSON

That rock, sir. It was either  
this rock or that one.

MAJOR

Go look then!

(He flops down to sit)

We'll wait here. Sergeant, have  
your men check other areas.

SERGEANT

First squad. Spread out and check  
for the body.

Eriksson is climbing the hill, and as he gets closer, he knows it's  
right. The rock definition is clearly the one he remembers.

Below Eriksson and on his flank other grunts are visible moving  
about in the weeds. Eriksson begins to ascend again. From below a  
voice calls:

SOLDIER #3

Here's a body, sir.

ANOTHER ANGLE: The G.I. stands in the weeds, waving. From off we  
hear another voice:

SOLDIER #4

I found one, sir.

ANOTHER ANGLE: The major, looking disgruntled.

Eriksson keeps climbing; flies can be heard buzzing. He takes a  
deep breath. From off:

SOLDIER #5

Sir, over here. American body  
over here, sir.

Eriksson comes over the top of the rock, and there are Mao's  
remains tangled in the weeds. Eriksson stares at it. He turns,  
looks down the hill to the soldiers spread out.

ERIKSSON

She's here, sir. It's up here.

106 EXT: LATER THAT DAY: HILL 192

106

Photographers stand taking pictures as other men bustle around and  
from their midst Vorst walks toward Eriksson, who stands off to  
the side looking down at the stretch of vibrant jungle. For a beat  
Vorst stands looking off with Eriksson.

VORST

You couldn't let it rest, could  
you. You hadda push it.

Silence.

UORST

In a way, I'm relieved.

Eriksson looks at him.

ERIKSSON

Sir . . . fuck you.

Uorst glances at Eriksson, then back out at the jungle.

UORST

Don't even look like a jungle.  
Looks almost beautiful from way  
up here.

ANOTHER ANGLE: The vista of the jungle, wild and green, huge swatches of tangled and varied greens and browns and reds.

DISSOLVE TO:

107 INT: COURT ROOM

107

Meserve is on the witness stand.

MESERVE

I was just fooling when I talked of having fun on the mission at the briefing, sir. I told my men, "It'd be nice if we could pick up five women for the five days up there and have an orgy." Everybody made comments and laughed.

PROSECUTOR

And how do you explain the affidavits of Pfc. Herber and Pfc. Diaz in which they admit to raping the girl, Phan Thi Mao, under your orders.

MESERVE

I can't explain what other men say, sir. How can I explain that?

PROSECUTOR

Is that all you have to say for yourself?

MESERVE

Well, sir, I've seen a lot of killing, which it is our duty to do, because it's kill or be killed. Sometimes you hate the enemy so bad.

(more)

.MESERVE (Cont'd)

"Well, during this Operation Thayer II, which started last October, we ran into a hootch that was burned down. Some Vietnamese people were bringing children out of the bunker in the hootch. They suffered from smoke inhalation. I had to give one small child mouth-to-mouth respiration and bring her back to life. That just shows you it isn't all combat over here.

PROSECUTOR

Do you regret what you did to that girl?

Silence.

PROSECUTOR

Do you regret what you did?

DISSOLVE TO:

Diaz on the stand.

DIAZ

I do.

PROSECUTOR

Why did you rape the girl?

DIAZ

I was afraid of being ridiculed.

PROSECUTOR

Could you please explain?

DIAZ

Okay, let's say you are on a patrol. These guys right here are going to start laughing you out. "That guy, he's scared of doing this, he's scared of doing that." You see? When you go out on a patrol then, you ain't going to be as good as you want to be, because these guys ain't helping you do anything. It's going to be yourself. There is going to be four people on that patrol and an individual. And so I did what I did, and got remorse about it and I'm saying these things, but I don't feel good about that either, because I have loyalty to the men I was out there with.

(more)

DIAZ (Cont'd)

I had to talk lots to the chaplain about this problem, and he has led me to believe that I have a greater obligation to justice and society and to my own wife and child, to tell the truth and betray my friends.

PROSECUTOR

Why did you go into that girl's hamlet?

DISSOLVE TO:

Clark on the witness stand.

CLARK

We was lookin' for UC, and if that girl hadn't started acting funny we wouldn't have bothered her. But she acted funny. And I've seen gooks half her age waste many a G.I. -- it just riles the hell outa me, sir, when I think what we've done for these slopeheads. And they haven't got even a little gratitude. You put something down and look away, they'll steal it before you look back. I could give you a bunch of examples of this. I mean, I just don't see what's the big deal about what happened, sir.

PROSECUTOR

Are you saying you do not feel in any way involved in crimes of rape and murder?

CLARK

No, sir -- I do not. And another thing, soldiers like Tony Meserve and me belong out in combat, not here. You throws guys like us in the stockade, and it's helpin' nobody but the Viet Cong, sir.

PROSECUTOR

When your turn was called by Sergeant Meserve, did you go into the hootch?

DISSOLVE TO:

Herber on the witness stand, thinking, worried.

HERBER

Yes, sir.

PROSECUTOR  
And you raped the girl.

Silence. Herber sits, worried, thinking.

PROSECUTOR  
Please answer the question.

HERBER  
Yes, sir.

PROSECUTOR  
Have you any idea why Pfc.  
Eriksson stayed out of the hooch?

Herber thinks.

HERBER  
Well, sir, he was brand new. I'd  
been there more'n him. I'd been  
there at least three weeks longer.

PROSECUTOR  
And how long had you been in  
country at this time?

DISSOLVE TO:

Eriksson on the stand.

ERIKSSON  
A little more than three weeks,  
sir.

ATTORNEY  
Isn't it true that shortly before  
this incident on Hill  
one-ninety-two, you were involved  
in an action during which you were  
put out on flank security, where  
you failed utterly to either  
protect your fellow soldiers or  
regroup according to your  
instructions.

ERIKSSON  
Sir, mortars were landing, and  
the concussion put -- it knocked  
part of a tree trunk onto my leg,  
I couldn't move.

ATTORNEY  
And who saved you?

ERIKSSON  
Sergeant Meserve.

ATTORNEY

He didn't have to come after you,  
did he.

ERIKSSON

No, sir. He didn't have to.

ATTORNEY

Do you respect Sergeant Meserve?

ERIKSSON

No sir.

ATTORNEY

Are you afraid of him?

ERIKSSON

That's affirmative, sir, but not  
if he doesn't have a weapon.

ATTORNEY

(looking at his notes)  
And during this alleged rape, you  
went off to sit in the jungle,  
is that correct?

ERIKSSON

Yes, sir.

ATTORNEY

Does sexual activity always  
repulse you in this way?

PROSECUTOR

Objection.

ATTORNEY

Isn't it true that what you went  
off to do was to figure out how  
to use this incident to get the  
hell out of the infantry.

ERIKSSON

No, sir.

ATTORNEY

Didn't you fabricate your charges  
against Meserve and Clark to avoid  
further combat duty?

PROSECUTOR

Objection.

ERIKSSON

No, sir. I applied for door  
gunner -- that's hazardous--

ATTORNEY

I know what you applied for and I know what you're doing. You're a carpenter and a witness and neither one is hazardous. Why the hell didn't you let that girl go when you had a chance?

Silence.

ATTORNEY

In fact, if you wanted to save her so badly, why didn't you just shoot the other members of your patrol, and--

ERIKSSON

I thought about it.

PROSECUTOR

Objection.

ATTORNEY

But you didn't do it. Because you were watching out for your own sweet ass is why you didn't do it.

PROSECUTOR

Objection, sir!

PRESIDENT

Overruled.

ATTORNEY

In fact, you didn't do anything, did you, except trade that girl's life for your own safety, betraying her, and then betraying your fellow soldiers with this sham of a trial! Isn't that right?

PROSECUTOR

Don't answer, Eriksson.

ERIKSSON

I probably should have shot them. I probably should have shot Meserve! And Clark! I probably should have shot them. Yes sir! Instead of what I did . . . which is let her die.

CUT TO:

Loc, Mao's sister, on the witness stand, an interpreter beside her, Loc speaking Vietnamese.

## INTERPRETER

--her mother and she searched for  
Mao with much desperation into

Loc speaks in Vietnamese.

## INTERPRETER

Traveling into the jungle, they  
find the hootch and clothing .  
. . . this my sister's treasure,  
a scarf.

Loc holds up the scarf as she continues her narrative in  
Vietnamese.

## INTERPRETER

. . . and the troops burned down  
the hootch . . . and . . . now her  
mother . . .

Loc, in Vietnamese.

## INTERPRETER

The Viet Cong abducted her mother  
now, accusing her . . . of leading  
South Vietnam forces to VC  
ammunitions hidden there . . .  
on that hill one-ninety-two.

108 INT: COURT ROOM

108

The five officers are filing back into the room as the defendants,  
their lawyers, Eriksson, the chaplain, Loc, the interpreter, one of  
the CID agents and several other people wait and watch.

Taking their places behind the table, the proceedings are called to  
order, then the President rises, sheets of paper in his hands.

## PRESIDENT

(reading)

Of the charges of rape and  
premeditated murder, Corporal  
Thomas E. Clark is found guilty  
and sentenced to life imprisonment  
at hard labor.

(pause)

Of the charges of rape, Pfc.  
Antonio Diaz is found guilty and  
sentenced to eight years  
imprisonment at hard labor.

(pause)

Of the charges of rape and unpre-  
meditated murder, Pfc. Edward T.  
Herber is found guilty and  
sentenced to ten years hard labor.

(pause)

Of the charge of rape, Sergeant  
(more)

PRESIDENT (Cont'd)

E5 Tony Meserve is found innocent. Of the charge of unpremeditated murder, Sergeant Meserve is found guilty and sentenced to ten years hard labor.

(pause)

All sentences are to begin immediately at the United States Disciplinary Barracks, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

As everyone stirs, MP's move in to manacle the four men.

ANOTHER ANGLE: At the prosecutor's table, as an officer comes up to the prosecutor, Eriksson is nearby.

OFFICER

Tough sentences, Morris.

PROSECUTOR

Don't playfuck me, Maxwell.

OFFICER

That's stiffer than anybody thought they'd get.

PROSECUTOR

They'll all be out walkin' the streets in four years or less.

Eriksson is startled. He looks at the prosecutor who has seen him jump.

OFFICER

Maybe. But--

PROSECUTOR

That's right, Eriksson. Four years max. And I mean every one of em'll be out. I know this system.

ANOTHER ANGLE: The President of the Board, a full-bird colonel who has been watching closely as the MP's put handcuffs on the men.

PRESIDENT

Sergeant of the Guard. Cease and desist. There's no need to have these men in handcuffs.

The MP's begin taking the cuffs off Clark and Meserve, Diaz and Herber.

The prosecutor looks at Eriksson.

109 INT: AIRPLANE: NIGHT

109

A soldier is wandering along the dimly illuminated aisle of the commercial airliner, the seats of which are filled with soldiers in dress khakis. Many of these men sleep. A few stare or chat with one another. Occasionally there are bursts of laughter. The wandering soldier, EVANS, flops into his seat beside Eriksson, who is gazing out the window at the night sky. Evans has a pint of whiskey, nearly empty, and a paper cup.

EVANS

There's a guy up there sabbin' like a baby. I couldn't make him stop. Stewardess come along, the guy gets worse.

(holding out the paper cup, offering to pour)

Wanna pop? I got more.

ERIKSSON

Sure.

Emptying the bottle, Evans pulls another out from the pouch in the back of the seat in front of him.

EVANS

I'm gonna miss gettin' dinky dao on that Thai stick, man. That was some far out shit, wasn't it.

ERIKSSON

Yeh.

EVANS

What was your name again?

ERIKSSON

Eriksson.

EVANS

I'm from Pennsylvania, where you from?

ERIKSSON

Minnesota.

EVANS

Do I know you from some mad-minute lost in the Nam, Eriksson? There's somethin' about you familiar.

ERIKSSON

I don't think so.

Evans stands up, trying to peer forward and see something. Eriksson looks out the window.

EVANS

Guy stopped cryin'. Got the stewardess to hold his dick probably, maybe I'll start to--

Flopping down, he looks at Eriksson.

EVANS

You were the guy that turned in that patrol for wastin' that gook bitch. Were you that guy?

Eriksson stares at him.

EVANS

Why'd you do that?

ERIKSSON

They killed her.

EVANS

Yeh, but why'd you do that?

ERIKSSON

I thought we were over there, you know, to help those people, man, not . . . not . . .

EVANS

No, no, no.

(sloshing more liquor  
into Eriksson's cup)

That ain't why we were over there, man.

(He takes a big drink  
from the bottle)

That was crazy what you did, but everybody was crazy in the Nam. Fuck it, man.

Evans offers to clink glasses, and they do, cup to bottle, and they drink.

ERIKSSON

Why were we over there?

EVANS

The equipment, man. They had all this equipment, they needed to see if it worked.

110 INT: AIRPORT: MINNESOTA

110

The girl from the photo, Eriksson's wife, KIRSTEN, stands there, and beside her the little girl from the photo, KIMBERLY, is jumping up and down, and Eriksson is there, hastening toward them. He all but jumps into his wife's arms, the little girl hugging his legs. And then he lunges down and lifts the little girl. The three of them turn into one fierce embrace.

KIMBERLY  
Daddy! Daddy! Daddy!

111 EXT: ROAD: DUSK 111

A car pulls to a halt in front of a small, one story house.

112 INT: CAR: DUSK 112

Eriksson and his wife and daughter sit looking out, Eriksson wearing the dress khaki uniform he wore in the plane.

113 EXT: ROAD: DUSK 113

Eriksson climbs from the car as his wife and daughter emerge. He stares at his house. He looks at his daughter, his smiling wife. He cannot believe he's home. He goes to the trunk and gets out his duffle bag. Together Eriksson and his family move across the small yard toward the house, holding hands.

114 INT: KIMBERLY'S BEDROOM: NIGHT 114

Kimberly lies there looking up as Eriksson leans to kiss her.

ERIKSSON  
Goodnight, honey.

KIMBERLY  
Will you be here in the morning,  
daddy?

ERIKSSON  
Sure will.

Straightening, he turns to Kirsten who stands in a nightgown. He goes to her, puts his arm around her, they move to leave Kimberly's bedroom.

115 INT: HOUSE: NIGHT 115

Eriksson and Kirsten walk through the dimly lit living room turning out lights. Beyond them a window shows with snow beginning to fall past it as they open the bedroom door. Standing in the door of the bedroom is a towering figure, all in black, a diamond decorated knife clutched in the gloved hand above the stocking-masked face. It's Meserve, his features crushed and distorted in the stocking mask.

MESERVE  
Agggghhhhhhhhh!

As Kirsten screams, Eriksson flings her back into the living room, the plunging knife flashing past her as Eriksson dodges backward. He flings shut the door on the arm, which escapes into the bedroom as Eriksson lunges against the door.

KIRSTEN  
(shrieking)  
Ohhh, God!

Eriksson whirls to see Kimberly in the hands of Clark dressed exactly as Meserve: the black, the gloves, the stocking mask. The little girl begins screaming as Kirsten runs toward her daughter and Clark takes Kirsten's full attack, hanging onto Kimberly, and wrapping his arm around Kirsten's throat as they go to the floor.

ANOTHER ANGLE as Eriksson grabs up a floor lamp, ripping it loose, plunging the room into a deeper darkness.

CLARK

Which one? Which one we gonna take!

Eriksson, the lamp as a weapon, is rushing at Clark.

KIMBERLY

Daddy! Daddy!

Meserve comes hurtling out of the shadows behind Eriksson, tackling him, growling, cursing.

The front door bursts open. Flashlights glare in, their beams darting about. Someone is there.

ERIKSSON

Help! Help!

MESERVE

It's payback, motherfucker.

His arm around Eriksson's neck, the knife is at his throat.

ERIKSSON

Goddamn it. Goddamn it.

The figure in the door is approaching, flashlight glaring.

ERIKSSON

Help me!

CLARK

Which one we gonna take?

MESERVE

Take the pretty one. Take the pretty one.

As the figure rushing forward and leaning in is seen to be Eriksson himself, dressed in jungle fatigues.

116 INT: BUS: DAY

116

Eriksson, with a wild look, is waking up. His eyes blinking, fearful, dazed.

POV OF ERIKSSON: Through his blinking eyes, as through a mist or veil, we see a Vietnamese girl sitting on the bus, her big coat open to reveal the white blouse she wears, her hat off and her black hair streaming down her shoulders.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Slowly, Eriksson is sitting up. He looks sharply out the window to see the terrain of Minnesota flowing by.

DRIVER

Have a good snooze? I wouldn't  
a let you miss your stop, Sven.

Eriksson cannot respond, his gaze returning to the girl. She occupies the seat that runs parallel to the bus, right in front of him. On the floor are two large shopping bags full of food. Now the girl, as the bus is hissing and slowing down, is buttoning her coat and putting on her hat. Eriksson stares, entranced. As the girl, getting to her feet, picks up her bags, the bus hits a bump and someone jostles the girl who staggers, dropping one of her bags, the items spilling out onto the floor. The girl cries out in dismay. Eriksson moves quickly to help. Crouching together on the floor, they replace the spilled items into the bag.

DRIVER

No rush.

The bus is stopped now as Eriksson and the girl are finishing loading the bag. He picks it up in his arms.

ERIKSSON

I'll carry it for you.

She grabs the other bag; they move for the door.

117 EXT: DAY: BUS STOP

117

The girl steps off, followed by Eriksson. A light snow is falling. The girl stops and waits for him. He hands her the bag.

GIRL

Thank you.

She looks at him, smiling, and then she turns to leave.

ERIKSSON

Chao co.

She stops, looks at him sharply, understanding.

GIRL

You had a bad dream . . .

She reaches out, touches his arm.

GIRL

Chao ong.

She turns and starts walking, as does Eriksson. The snow is falling heavier. In the swirling snow, Eriksson walks, thinking, amazed at it all.

ANOTHER ANGLE: The two figures: Eriksson and the girl are moving in opposite directions in a flat wintry area, fairly empty and uninhabited. Only low flat tract houses occasionally break the uniformity of the snow and terrain.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Eriksson strides along and suddenly he turns.

POV OF ERIKSSON: The figure of the girl walks in a cloud of falling snow, increasing and veiling her, until she all but vanishes.

ANOTHER ANGLE: Eriksson stares after her. And then he turns in his own direction, and sets out for home.