

Jarhead by Bill Broyles

FADE IN:

EXT. DESERT - DAY

We see pattern, a study in planes and shapes: not discrete volumes but a shimmering, almost liquid mass, elusive.

And with the shape there is a glare, a whiteness, the play of light on sand, reflected to sky and back again. It could be clouds, could be earth, feels somewhere in between. Then with full sunrise it separates into sharp clarity: the desert prism, aching blue sky, a palette of whiteness beneath. We hear the voice of ANTHONY SWOFFORD (SWOFF).

SWOFF (V.O.)

I look at the sky, blue like no
blue I've known before, and at the
desert that will not stop.

There is a vastness to it, an endlessness, and a hostility too. Man was not meant to linger long here.

SWOFF (V.O.) (cont'd)

This is the pain of the landscape,
worse than the heat, worse than the
flies--there is no getting out of
the land. The desert is everywhere.
The mirage is everywhere. Awake,
asleep. High heat of the afternoon
or the few soft sunless hours of
early morning...

And the glare shifts and shines in our eyes.

SWOFF (V.O.) (cont'd)

I am still in the desert.

We go to BLACK.

TITLE: JARHEAD

INT. BOOT CAMP BARRACKS - NIGHT

A cramped, low-ceiling barracks room. Low lights, bunks with footlockers, a few plastic chairs against the wall.

In his immaculate uniform and Smoky the Bear hat, DRILL INSTRUCTOR BURKE struts back and forth in front of recruits doing squat thrusts. We see SWOFF (17) struggling to do his squat thrusts. He is physically strong but with a look of slight panic; as if he has finally achieved a dream and found it very different from what he expected.

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D.I. Burke points at THREE RECRUITS lined up to one side, like outcasts.

DI BURKE

I know these three cum receptacles aren't the only ones who've lied to my Marine Corps. If it's drugs we'll find it. If you're a puffer we'll catch you ass-dorking in the shower. Or we'll find the cock magazine under your rack. You're not faggots, are you? Your faggot bus to Hollywood left ten minutes ago.

Some recruits give each other the eye, but Burke's challenge is greeted by silence.

DI BURKE (cont'd)

Okay, don't help me out here. I'll figure it out for myself.

(wheels on Swoff)

You, Swofford. Those sure are pretty blue eyes. You sure you ain't a homo? I know you lied. Each and every one of you. Push-ups till Jesus comes again!

The exhausted recruits switch to push-ups, and Burke switches to Mr. Nice Guy, the recruit's best friend.

DI BURKE (cont'd)

Now girls, what I'm doing here is, I'm giving you an option. Tell me now, if it's nothing major we forget about it. Hell, we're not talking murder one here. Chicken shit stuff. Like wetting your bed. Faking your high school diploma. Like...

(to one of the three)

What did you do again, cum face?

FIRST RECRUIT

Sex with a minor, sir.

Swoff and the others are getting really tired.

DI BURKE

Like fucking teenage pussy. Just tell me now, 'cause once you're in the Fleet and they find out you lied on your contract they'll slam you in the brig. And I guaran-fucking-tee you don't want to be there.

(so sweetly)

Come on, do yourself a favor.

SWOFF

Sir, the recruit will admit something, Sir.

What a relief: he can rest.

DI BURKE

Did I tell you to stop?

Swoff resumes his push-ups, with great effort.

SWOFF

The recruit will admit to occasional recreational drug use, Sir.

DI BURKE

(neutral)

I'm listening.

SWOFF

I tried cocaine once.

Push-up.

SWOFF (cont'd)

Marijuana, twice.

Push-up.

SWOFF (cont'd)

LSD. Twice.

DI BURKE

(enraged now)

Get over here, you cum-sucker!

Swoff stands up with the three outcast recruits. The DI's Smoky the Bear hat jabs into Swoff's face.

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DI BURKE (cont'd)
You fuck-for-brains. You no pecker.
You lily-white bitch!
(a gimlet eye on Swoff)
You look like the kind of dim wit
that reads books. Am I right?

SWOFF
The recruit has read a book or two,
Drill Instructor.

DI BURKE
Fucking A! A genius. You'll be my
scribe.

DI Burke motions him to a large blackboard nearby. Burke holds up a photocopy of the footlocker display.

DI BURKE (cont'd)
You girls see this? It is how each
and every one of you will have your
perfect footlocker in my perfect
fucking Marine Corps.
(to Swoff)
You draw this up. I want a
Michelangelo on this blackboard.
A fucking Michelangelo.

INT. BOOT CAMP BARRACKS - MOMENTS LATER

Sweating and nervous, Swoff desperately tries to draw the footlocker on the blackboard. In the b.g. Burke runs the other recruits around the squad bay backwards, shouting cadence. They stumble and fall all over themselves.

SWOFF (V.O.)
Like most good Marines, I hated the
Corps. I hated being a marine
because more than all of the things
in the world I wanted to be--smart,
famous, sexy, drunk, fucked, high,
alone, understood, loved, forgiven--
more than all of those things, I
was a marine. A grunt. A jarhead.

We are close on Swoff as he tries to draw.

DI BURKE (O.C.)
Platoon! Halt!

Swoff draws with even more desperation. We hear Burke approaching.

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DI BURKE (cont'd)
What in the fuck is this?

He stares at the drawing, a complete mess.

SWOFF
(voice breaking from the
tension)
Sir, it's the recruit's drawing of
the footlocker, Sir.

DI BURKE
Jesus, Joseph and doggie-style
Mary, that looks like a pile of dog
shit. My two-year-old daughter can
draw better than that.

SWOFF
Sir, the recruit has never been
good at drawing, Sir.

DI BURKE
Why the fuck are you my scribe
then? Isn't my scribe supposed to
know how to draw?

SWOFF
Sir, the recruit doesn't know. The
recruit thought the scribe was
supposed to write, Sir.

DI BURKE
Of course the recruit doesn't know.
The recruit doesn't know because I
haven't told him. And don't
fucking tell me what my shithead
scribe is supposed to do. You're
my shithead scribe because someone
fucked up. You should be in the
retard platoon, learning to draw
with crayons and throwing your shit
on the bulkheads.

Burke looks at the drawing on the blackboard.

DI BURKE (cont'd)
Alright cum-for-brains, where
exactly do your skivvies and
running shoes go?

Swoff looks at the drawing, tries to decipher it as Burke
keeps slapping him on the back of the head.

SWOFF

Sir,--
(Slap)
--the recruit--
(Slap)
--can't read while--
(Slap)
--the Drill Instructor--
(Slap)
--is hitting--
(Slap)
--his head.

DI BURKE

You can't read while I'm giving you
love taps? How the fuck are you
going to fire your rifle when
grenades are going off in your
face?
(beat)
What the fuck are you even doing
here?

SWOFF

I got lost on the way to college.

Bang! Burke hits Swoff one more time, really hard, slamming
Swoff's face into the blackboard.

FREEZE FRAME: Swoff's head smashed into blackboard.

SWOFF (V.O.) (cont'd)

I couldn't not be there, that was
the truth.

A QUICK SUCCESSION OF VIGNETTES

EXT. HAWAII--DAY

SWOFF (V.O.)

After all, I was made in a war.

Through the open door of a hotel room we see a couple making
love.

SWOFF (V.O.) (cont'd)

Here's Mr. and Mrs. Swofford, on
R&R from Vietnam.

Outside the window, palm trees sway in the breeze.

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SWOFF (V.O.) (cont'd)
I can't watch, and neither can you.

The door closes on us.

EXT. BEIRUT--ON TV

A TV screen. Bloody marines are pulled from the rubble in Beirut. BOY SWOFF (14) watches with his MOM and DAD.

SWOFF (V.O.)
Beirut, October 23, 1983. 220
marines killed by a single suicide
bomber.

Full of emotion, the Boy Swoff stands up and begins to sing.

SWOFF (cont'd)
"From the halls of Montezuma to the
shores of--"

DAD
Can it. I'm trying to watch this.

INT. SWOFFORD HOUSE--NIGHT

Mom is ironing while Boy Swoff, naked to his skinny waist, watches.

SWOFF (V.O.)
So I made my mother iron my future
onto my chest.

Mom holds up the T-shirt, with a USMC emblem ironed on. She has a look of motherly concern. Boy Swoff's eyes light up.

SWOFF (V.O.) (cont'd)
And there were other reasons, too.

SWOFF'S BEDROOM--NIGHT

Swoff(now 17) makes love up against the wall with his girl-friend KRISTINA(18). She is more sensual than beautiful: every teen-aged boy's fantasy.

KRISTINA
Oh God I love you.

SWOFF
I love you too.

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She stares at him with teen-aged devotion.

KRISTINA
I'll write you every day.

INT. SQUAD BAY - RETURN TO SCENE - FREEZE FRAME

Swoff's face is still plastered to the blackboard.

SWOFF (V.O.)
But right now I wanted the DI to
beat me up more. I wanted him to
beat the living shit out of me.
Then maybe I would fail. Then maybe
I would get out.

BACK TO REAL TIME.

Boom! He hits the floor.

INT. BARRACKS DUTY SCHOOL - DAY

CAPTAIN CURTIS is speaking, sitting at his desk.

CAPTAIN CURTIS
Swofford. In its wisdom, the Fleet
Marine Force has requested that I
transfer two of my men from
Barracks and Embassy Duty to a
grunt battalion. You're going to be
one of them.

We PULL BACK to reveal Swoff, in full dress blue uniform,
with white gloves.

SWOFF
Sir, the private has a contract for
barracks duty. Paris, France.

CAPTAIN CURTIS
Shit on your contract.

Swoff can't believe the Captain said that.

SWOFF
Sir?

CAPTAIN CURTIS

I said shit on your contract. This is the Marine Corps, not law fucking school. You believed the bullshit the recruiter told you. that's not my fucking problem.

(beat)

Michaels. You know why I'm sending Michaels?

SWOFF

Sir, no Sir.

CAPTAIN CURTIS

Because he's been trying to get out of my Marine Corps by pretending to be a retard. He came in here dressed in a pink fucking bolo and jacked off on my desk. Do you think the American Ambassador in Paris is going to want some jarhead's jizm all over his desk?

SWOFF

Probably not, Sir.

CAPTAIN CURTIS

Fucking A' he wouldn't.

SWOFF

But, why me Sir?

Captain Curtis pulls out a folder.

CAPTAIN CURTIS

Because you are a drug addict.

(taps the file)

Says so right here. We can't send you to Paris. The fucking frogs'd think that's what the Marine Corps was, a bunch of drug addicts.

SWOFF

Sir, the private is not a drug addict. He only experimented once or twice. He has not taken drugs in two years.

CAPTAIN CURTIS

This is your lucky day, Swofford. I'm giving you a shot at becoming a real Marine, not some dress-up doll. Dismissed.

Swoff stares at him, desperate. Then, suddenly:

SWOFF

You cum-sucking, dick-skinning,
fuck-for-brains, no-pecker ass-
hole! You want to see where you can
stick your fucking orders?

He drops his trousers, and moons the captain.

CAPTAIN CURTIS

(looking up from papers)

I said dismissed.

Back to what Swoff really does. He stands there, in full uniform, exactly as he was.

SWOFF

Thank you sir.

INT. BUS--DAY

Swoff is on a bus with other Marines, on his way to Camp Pendleton. He's staring out the window.

SWOFF (V.O.)

Underwear were *skivvies*, a hat was
a *cover*, hands were *dickskinners*, a
mouth was a *cum receptacle*, a
flashlight was a *moonbeam*, a bed
was a *rack*, a shirt was a *blouse*. A
tie was still a *tie*, and a belt a
belt...

The bus pulls into the gate at Pendleton

SWOFF (V.O.) (cont'd)

...but many other things would
never be the same.

EXT. CAMP PENDLETON - DAY

Swoff steps off the bus. We are CLOSE on his face.

SWOFF

(soft, to himself)

Holy shit.

We see what he sees: facing him is a formation of terrifying marines, face paint and special weapons.

They stand very still, their eyes focused far away in that thousand-yard stare. This is in fact a SNIPER SQUAD, but neither we nor Swoff know it yet.

INT. JOHN - CAMP PENDLETON - DAY

Reading The Myth of Sisyphus, Swoff sits on the john. He unwraps some Ex-Lax gum, jams it into his mouth, chews, his eyes on the book. He unwraps another package, jams it in.

INT. INFIRMARY - CAMP PENDLETON - SAME

In a hospital gown, Swoff emerges from the toilet. We hear the sound of it flushing. He slowly walks back to his bed, passing the nurse as he goes.

NURSE

Still got that "stomach flu"
Swofford?

SWOFF

Can't seem to shake it.

EXT. BASE THEATRE - CAMP PENDLETON - DAY

In his hospital gown with a robe on, Swoff mounts letters on the movie marquee.

He stands back to admire his handiwork. On the marquee we see "FUCK IT" above "SHOWING ALL DAY".

INT. 7TH MARINE HEADQUARTERS - CAMP PENDLETON - DAY

Swoff snaps to attention, shouting in his best boot camp voice.

SWOFF

Private Swofford! Reporting for
duty, Sergeant!

SERGEANT FULLER

Jesus, don't yell, I'm sitting
right here. This isn't boot camp.

STAFF SERGEANT FULLER, his chest festooned with ribbons, looks over Swoff's papers. Laconic but with a falcon's hard eye, he's been in almost 30 years and has seen it all.

SERGEANT FULLER (cont'd)
You the pissant who tried to get
out of the United States Marine
Corps with ex-fucking-lax?

SWOFF
Uh, no Sergeant. Constipation. I
over-medicated.

SERGEANT FULLER
Sure you did.
(reading)
Says here your old man was in Viet
Nam.

SWOFF
Yes, Sergeant. The Air Force. He
built hot runways.

SERGEANT FULLER
The fucking Air Farce. He ever tell
you about it? Did he live?

SWOFF
Yes, he lived. He only talked about
it once.

SERGEANT FULLER
If he only talked about it once, he
wasn't lying.
(beat)
So what would he say if he knew his
son was a fucking coward?

SWOFF
(beat)
He wouldn't like it, Sergeant.

Sergeant Fuller considers Swoff, as if trying to decide what
to do with him.

SERGEANT FULLER
You play any instruments?

SWOFF
I played the trumpet in third
grade, Sergeant.

SERGEANT FULLER
Trumpet? Can you still play?

SWOFF
Maybe, Sergeant.

SERGEANT FULLER

Maybe my ass.

(beat)

I'm going to help you out. Get you a nice soft job. You won't have to carry a rifle, just a sidearm and bugle. Light duty twice a day, sunrise and sunset. You might be interested in that, huh?

SWOFF

I might be, Sergeant.

SERGEANT FULLER

You're not as dumb as you look. I need a bugler. Someone to blow taps and reveille and the battle march. Raise morale, that kind of shit.

Ah, he's saved. Swoff tries to hide his elation. Sergeant Fuller looks away. He's done with Swoff.

SERGEANT FULLER (cont'd)

Stow your gear in the rec room, meet me at the flagpole at 0900 for battalion formation and bugle tryout.

EXT. FLAGPOLE - CAMP PENDLETON - DAY

Sergeant Fuller waits, looking even more world weary. Swoff approaches, eager to get started with his cushy new job.

SWOFF

Private Swofford reporting for bugle tryout, Staff Sergeant.

Sergeant Fuller does not have a bugle. He ignores Swoff. His eyes are on the battalion, pouring out onto the parade deck behind him. We hear shouts, commands, troops line up.

SERGEANT FULLER

Okay. Let me hear you play reveille.

(beat)

Play reveille goddamnit!

SWOFF

Sergeant, I don't have a bugle.

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SERGEANT FULLER
Play it with your goddamn mouth.

Sergeant Fuller makes bugle sounds. Ba-bu-da-da-da-da.
Swoff begins to make the sounds with his lips. Sergeant
Fuller pulls out a kazoo.

SERGEANT FULLER(cont'd)
Here. Now play "Twinkle, Twinkle
Little Star."

Swoff takes the kazoo and tries to play "Twinkle, Twinkle
Little Star." Sergeant Fuller watches impassively. In the
gathered formation marines begin to laugh.

SERGEANT FULLER (cont'd)
Stop, stop, stop. Jesus.

Swoff lowers the kazoo.

SERGEANT FULLER (cont'd)
There isn't a bugle job, you
fucking moron.

SWOFF
Sir?

SERGEANT FULLER
(looks Swoff in the eye)
You fuck us, we fuck you right
back.

Swoff can't help but smile.

SERGEANT FULLER (cont'd)
God help me, I don't know why, but
I like you Swofford. You are a
killer, not a goddamn bugle player.
Whether you know it or not, you are
a goddamn Marine Corps grunt. You
are the most savage, the meanest,
the crudest, the most unforgiving
creature in god's cruel kingdom.

SWOFF
(not convinced)
Aye-aye, Sergeant.

SERGEANT FULLER
I'm putting you in third platoon.
Golf Company. Third's full of
drunks and halfwits.

(MORE)

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SERGEANT FULLER (cont'd)
Maybe you could elevate the sons of
bitches a bit.

SWOFF
Thanks, Sergeant.

SERGEANT FULLER
Don't thank me, just don't fucking
die.

INT. GOLF COMPANY - CAMP PENDLETON - DAY

Swoff enters a crowded room. Some drunken, tough-looking
Marines are gathered around an unmade rack. THE BRANDED
MARINE holds up his trouser leg as THE BRANDING MARINE uses a
propane torch to heat WIRE COAT HANGERS bent to form the
letters USMC.

The Marines look over at Swoff. The hangers pulse red hot.
The Branding Marine shoves the four-letter contraption
against the Branded Marine's outer calf. The Branded Marine
bites his fist until his teeth break skin and blood flows
down his arm. Tears stream from his eyes. Marines yell
encouragement. The Branding Marine sees Swoff, watching in
horror.

BRANDING MARINE
Hey, Fucko is here.
(beat)
I need some fresh fucking meat!

ALL
Get him! Get the boot
motherfucker!

Marines pile on top of Swoff, yelling and laughing. They
bind Swoff's hands behind his back with an electrical
extension cord and jam dirty underwear into his mouth.

BRANDING MARINE
Next!!

Swoff stares as the Marine with the propane torch reheats the
hangers. They pull up Swoff's trouser leg, exposing the
white skin of his calf.

BRANDED MARINE
Get some!

Swoff struggles as the red hot USMC wire advances toward his
flesh. Marines yell encouragement: "Barbecue!" "Get the
sauce, boys!"

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CLOSE on Swoff's face. Sweat pours off his forehead, his eyes look like a hunted animal's. The coat hanger descends. Swoff's eyes roll back in his head. He passes out.

INT. GOLF COMPANY - CAMP PENDLETON - NIGHT

A large Hawaiian marine (GRAYCOCHEA) slowly unties Swoff, pulls the gag out. We recognize him as one of the guys holding Swoff down as he was branded.

GRAYCOCHEA

Here, drink this.

He offers Swoff a glass of orange foul-looking stuff. Swoff takes a long drink, chokes.

SWOFF

What the hell is that?

GRAYCOCHEA

Gin and Gatorade. You can hydrate and catch a drunk at the same time.

Swoff slowly moves his hand down his branded leg, his eyes following it. There's no wound. Nothing. Swoff looks up, not comprehending.

GRAYCOCHEA (cont'd)

We switched out the hot brand. It's a little fuck fuck trick we play on the new guys. That guy we branded, he spent six months in Honduras on patrol and all he ate was cocoa and rehydrated pears. In the PI he paid a jeepney driver a hundred bucks to drive through the gate at Subic Bay, while he fucked a bar girl doggie-style on the hood. And he and the whore were both wearing gas masks. That's the kind of stuff you've got to pull to get a brand.

Graycochea pours gin into another glass of orange Gatorade and takes a drink himself. Swoff is speechless, still trying to absorb what happened.

GRAYCOCHEA (cont'd)

Wanna see a picture of my girl?

He doesn't wait for Swoff to answer. He reaches over to his rack and picks up a picture of a Hawaiian girl who may be as big as Graycochea himself.

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Swoff stares at the picture. Graycochea waits for him to say something.

SWOFF
She's beautiful.

GRAYCOCHEA
When I get back, I'm going home to the islands, going to crawl into bed with her and never get out.

He rubs the picture with his fingers, like a totem.

GRAYCOCHEA (cont'd)
What's your girlfriend's name?

SWOFF
Kristina.

Graycochea waits, expecting something.

GRAYCOCHEA
Well?

He taps the picture of his girlfriend. Where's yours?

SWOFF
Right.

Swoff fishes out a photograph of Kristina. She's wearing his old T-shirt with the USMC emblem on it, and nothing else. Swoff stares at her with a mixture of pride and desire. Very reluctantly, he passes the photo to Graycochea.

GRAYCOCHEA
Nice.
(beat; re: Kristina)
Skinny.
(beat)
You love her?

Swoff stares at the picture. His answer comes without hesitation.

SWOFF
Yes. Oh yes.

GRAYCOCHEA
Fuck it. Welcome to the suck.
(beat)
You know why we call it the suck?
(beat)
(MORE)

GRAYCOCHEA (cont'd)
 Because it sucks dick to be in it,
 and when you're in it, it sucks the
 fucking life out of you.

We are on Swoff's face: the fake branding, Graycochea's
 presence, Kristina's picture.

GUNNERY SERGEANT HIERS (O.S.)
 What the fuck is this? A bunch of
 bananas?

EXT. OKINAWA - DAY

ON SCREEN SEE: NORTHERN TRAINING AREA, OKINAWA.

GUNNERY SERGEANT HIERS, arms akimbo, his face wreathed in
 mist watches Swoff and Graycochea as they move forward in the
 jungle. They have on full packs, helmets, rifles--complete
 battle gear. Hiers is a kind of profane Marine intellectual;
 full of wisdom that is more often wasted than not.

GUNNERY SERGEANT HIERS
 Spread out. One grenade would
 waste you all.

They start to spread out and bump into each other.

GUNNERY SERGEANT HIERS (cont'd)
 Goddamnit! I've never seen a bigger
 cluster fuck in my life. Take
 five.

Swoff, Graycochea and the other Marines drop their packs by
 an old World War 2 bunker, a sweeping curve of concrete with
 huge chunks taken out of it.

GUNNERY SERGEANT HIERS (cont'd)
 Any one of you no-clue's know where
 we are?

GRAYCOCHEA
 Okinawa, Gunny Hiers?

GUNNERY SERGEANT HIERS
 Sugar Loaf Hill. May 17, 1945, a
 thousand Marines died here. Your
 ass is sitting on their fucking
 bones.

That sinks in on Swoff and the others. They shift their
 weight uncomfortably.

GUNNERY SERGEANT HIERS (cont'd)
Why did they die, anybody know?

STUPID MARINE
For their country, Gunny Hiers! To
beat the Japs.

GUNNERY SERGEANT HIERS
Fuck that! They died because they
bunched up. Pay attention. I've
been in the Suck since Christ was a
corporal. I'm going to tell you
numb-nuts something that is true.
And precious few things are. What
is the most powerful fucking weapon
in the Marine Corps arsenal?

STUPID MARINE
The A-Bomb?

GUNNERY SERGEANT HIERS
Not the "A-Bomb," dick-head.

Gunnery Sergeant Hiers points to his head.

GUNNERY SERGEANT HIERS (cont'd)
Your brain. News flash: You all
have one, even if most of you
haven't found the fucking switch
yet. Your brain is what will make
you a warrior, nothing else. You
don't want to kill another human
being. No sane person does. So you
must train your brain to have
righteous fucking anger...

Swoff is listening now. This guy actually knows his shit, for
the first time in the Corps Swoff is starting to think that
maybe he could learn something.

GUNNERY SERGEANT HIERS (cont'd)
...so that you can pull the trigger
before the other guy does. So that
you can beat his brains out with
the butt of your rifle before he
gut-stabs you with his bayonet.

Swoff isn't sure what to think. A few laugh nervously.

GUNNERY SERGEANT HIERS (cont'd)

Go ahead, laugh. But you use your fucking brain or what is going to happen? Look the fuck around! Look where you are!

There's a moment of silence. Swoff looks around. Stupid Marine raises his hand.

GUNNERY SERGEANT HIERS (cont'd)

Jesus, speak up, this isn't high school.

STUPID MARINE

(with enthusiasm)

One day we'll be sitting on our own fucking bones?

GUNNERY SERGEANT HIERS

That's one fucking way to put it.

Swoff can't help but smile.

GUNNERY SERGEANT HIERS (cont'd)

Fuck it.

(beat)

The smoking lamp is lit. If you've got 'em, smoke 'em, or chew 'em, I don't give a shit.

A couple of Marines pull out cigarettes. A few others pull out cans of chewing tobacco and stuff it into their mouths. Swoff and Graycochea do neither.

WEAK MARINE

What a crock of shit.

(beat)

I can't walk another fucking step.

Swoff looks over at a WEAK MARINE who is breathing hard, barely making it. What an ass hole.

SWOFF

(exasperated)

Here. Give me your mortar rounds.

Swoff reaches over and begins unstrapping the mortar rounds from the Weak Marine's pack.

WEAK MARINE

I'm going to find a hole and fall in it, break my fucking leg, swear to God.

SWOFF
Shut the fuck up.

EXT. OKINAWA - DAY - LATER

Swoff's pack is twice as big as it was. They are humping along the edge of a cliff.

The cliff narrows. Suddenly Swoff slips. His hands try to grab for purchase, but he can't. He's over the side!

EXT. CLIFF - OKINAWA - SAME

Swoff tumbles, slides and falls. Holy shit. The cliff is HIGH.

EXT. BOTTOM OF CLIFF - OKINAWA - CONTINUOUS

Woomph. Swoff lands on his back, the pack cushioning his fall. For a moment his eyes open and then, with a groan, they close.

EXT. BOTTOM OF CLIFF - OKINAWA - MOMENTS LATER

The CORPSMAN waves some smelling salts under Swoff's nose as he feels Swoff and shouts out his vitals.

GUNNERY SERGEANT HIERS
(to Corpsman)
Can it, Jesus! Swofford, you
alive?

Swoff's eyes come barely open. He manages a nod.

GUNNERY SERGEANT HIERS (cont'd)
Then what the fuck are you doing
lying on the deck?

There is something like respect in the old Gunny's eyes.

INT. JOHN - OKINAWA - DAY

Still sore from his fall, Swoff gently lowers himself onto the john. We glimpse bruises and scrapes on his back. He pulls out Death on the Installment Plan and, immeasurably grateful for a moment of peace and solitude, begins to read.

Through the slit of the door we can see a couple of marines tussle back and forth, slamming each other into the stalls. Suddenly we hear a voice, filled with authority.

SERGEANT SIEK (O.S.)
Hey! This is my fucking A.O. You will take your chicken shit grab-ass out of my A.O. right fucking now. Do you read me?

We hear mumbles, then a door closes. The room is quiet. Swoff is wondering, who the fuck is this guy? We hear footsteps on the floor, moving toward him. They pause in front of Swoff's stall.

SERGEANT SIEK (O.S.) (cont'd)
Swofford?

SWOFF
(after a beat)
Yo.

SERGEANT SIEK pushes the door open. Short and totally squared away, he looks like Daffy Duck with a tan.

SERGEANT SIEK
You Swofford?

SWOFF
Yeah.

SERGEANT SIEK
Sergeant Siek. I'm with Surveillance and Target Acquisition. STA. ["STAY"] One shot. One kill.
(beat)

Gunny Hiers tells me you're a hard bastard. That you fell off a cliff out in the NTA. Full ruck on your back, fifty feet to the ground, walked away. I hear you read books.

SWOFF
I might.

He slips his book down, but Siek has already seen it.

SERGEANT SIEK
Well if you're tough and smart and don't complain I think you could be a scout/sniper.

(MORE)

SERGEANT SIEK (cont'd)
 Now the Major doesn't want us
 recruiting so let's just say a bird
 told you to start running more and
 lifting less.

He hands Swoff some books and manuals.

SERGEANT SIEK (cont'd)
 Maybe read some of these books on
 the history of sniping in between
 this college fuck shit.

Swoff tries to balance the new books as he struggles to keep
 some dignity on top of the john. Siek grabs the book Swoff
 was reading. Examines it like an exotic animal.

SERGEANT SIEK (cont'd)
 That's some heavy dope, Marine.
 (beat)
 I were you, I'd show up. See if
 you're as smart as you think you
 are.

He lets the door slam back in Swoff's face. Swoff picks up
 the sniper book, opens it.

INT. STA INDOC - DAY

Swoff is in a room full of scout/sniper hopefuls, including
 WELTY, FOWLER, VEGH, and, looking confident, TROY. Troy is a
 small man, but he oozes competence and confidence. Sergeant
 Siek holds up a stuffed bird by its feet.

SERGEANT SIEK
 A snipe. A bird so difficult to
 shoot that only the most
 disciplined, well-trained and
 artful hunters can take it down.
 Hence, sniper.

He picks up a rifle.

SERGEANT SIEK (cont'd)
 Anybody know what this is?

Troy raises his hand.

TROY
 A 1903 A4 Springfield with a twelve
 power German Unertal scope.

Swoff and the others look at Troy. Who is this guy?

SERGEANT SIEK
Affirmative. The Marine sniper
weapon of World War II.

He picks up another weapon.

SERGEANT SIEK (cont'd)
The M40 weapons system from
Vietnam. A commercial Remington
M700 with a heavy barrel equipped
with the Redfield three by nine
scope. And this--

He picks up a final weapon.

SERGEANT SIEK (cont'd)
--the M40A1. Made by our very own
Marine Corps marksmanship training
unit at Quantico, Virginia. The
best sniper rifle in the world.
One shot. One Kill. Out to twelve
hundred meters.

Identical M40A1's sit on folding tables behind him, like
laboratory specimens laid out for dissection.

SERGEANT SIEK (cont'd)
There is one such rifle on each of
these tables. You may touch one,
you may hold one, you may imagine
what it would be like to own one...
(child-like sing-song)
...but you can't fucking have one.
(back to normal voice)
Not yet.

INT. STA INDOC - MOMENTS LATER

In the b.g. other hopefuls examine rifles. Swoff reaches down
and picks one up. It is a beautiful piece of equipment. Love-
struck, he runs his hands over it.

SWOFF (V.O.)
You may fire a rifle for many
years, and even go to war, and
afterward you may turn the rifle in
at the armory. But no matter what
else you might do with your hands--
love a woman, build a house, change
your son's diaper--your hands
remember the rifle.

He looks over to the next table. Troy is examining his rifle like a surgeon, with expertise but clinical detachment. Holding it, he walks over to Swoff.

TROY
You ever see a more perfect piece of machinery?

SWOFF
It's beautiful.

INT. STA INDOC BARRACKS - DAY - LATER

Swoff watches Troy unpack his stuff. He lays it out in perfect order, as if his whole life was squared away long before he joined the Marine Corps. Swoff is also unpacking his things. They're not nearly so neat. Troy takes out a photo of an attractive woman in a Marine Corps uniform.

SWOFF
Sister?

TROY
Fiancee.

Swoff doesn't know what to say. The guy is engaged to a woman marine?

TROY (cont'd)
Allen Troy, Greenville, Michigan.
P.J's. SEALs, Special Forces.
They're hype, man. Pussies. STA is it. The best. I joined the suck for STA.

SWOFF
Tony Swofford. Sacramento.

Swoff's not going to offer any more information just yet. He takes out the picture of Kristina, stares at it for a moment, then props it up on the window ledge.

TROY
Not bad.

SWOFF
Thanks.

TROY
You're looking at her the same way you were looking at the 40.

SWOFF

Was I?

TROY

Yeah, a lot of guys do. Like their rifle is a woman. It's bullshit. That 40 is steel and plastic, man. It's machined down to a micro-millimeter. There's two things every marine's got to have: a good woman, and a good weapon. But don't go getting them mixed up, or you'll get a major league fuck-over.

SWOFF

That's the paradox. What you love the most may one day fail you.

TROY

(beat)

Fuck if I said that.

EXT. NORTHERN TRAINING AREA - DAY

In full camouflage face paint, Sergeant Siek addresses the STA hopefuls. Swoff is in the front row. He's beginning to get into this now.

SERGEANT SIEK

Your mission is to kill me. My mission is to kill you first. If I win, you go back to the grunts. If, by chance, one of you pathetic shit-heads wins, there's a remote possibility you might one day become a sniper. But in case any of you are thinking, Sergeant Siek's on my side; he's my friend, he wants me to succeed. Grow the fuck up. I want each and every one of you to fail. Because if you--

He points to Stupid Marine.

SERGEANT SIEK (cont'd)

--can become a sniper, what does that make me? Any questions?

STUPID MARINE

Those paintball bullets, they hurt?

Siek smiles that Cheshire Cat smile.

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EXT. NORTHERN TRAINING AREA - DAY

Pow!! Stupid Marine is hit right in the head. A rose of paint blooms on his forehead, then he falls, screaming.

STUPID MARINE
Shit! Fuck! I can't see!

EXT. NORTHERN TRAINING AREA - DAY

Sergeant Siek grins as he lowers his rifle.

SERGEANT SIEK
Back to the grunts, dickface.

A MAJOR lowers his binoculars and turns to Siek.

MAJOR
Not in the head, Sergeant. You know the rules.

SERGEANT SIEK
My mistake, sir.

Sure.

EXT. NORTHERN TRAINING AREA - DAY

Camouflage paint on his face, Swoff crawls through the mud with his M16. He looks around, notices he is out ahead of the others. He looks up ahead. There's Troy, who glances back and gives Swoff a grin that says, come on, get a move on. Fuck! Swoff crawls faster.

EXT. NORTHERN TRAINING AREA - DAY

Swoff continues to crawl, undetected, in the mud. He sees Troy take careful aim and fire.

Swoff aims his M16 at one of the STA spotters sitting on the tailgate of a Humvee, binoculars in his hand.

Swoff fires his paint bullet.

In the distance one of the instructors keels over. Swoff begins to grin.

SERGEANT SIEK (O.S.)
What the fuck are you grinning at?

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EXT. NORTHERN TRAINING AREA - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Swoff stands smiling with Vegh, Welty, and Fowler, all of whom passed with him. But standing in front, the honor graduate, is Troy. Siek walks down in front of them, his hard face on. Then he smiles himself.

SERGEANT SIEK

Snipers.

EXT. FIRING LINE - DAY

Swoff and Troy lie side by side, each with an M40A1. Sergeant Siek stands in front of them, holding a coin up in each hand.

SERGEANT SIEK

This, this is a nickel. This, this is a dime. See that target, a thousand yards down range? You will take three shots, and they must all fit inside this...

(the dime)

...not fucking ever this...

(the nickel)

...because the target shoots back.

That's right. YOU are HIS target.

And I guaran-fucking-tee that raghead or chink or russkie will be shooting this...

(the dime)

....so if you shoot this...

(the nickel)

..or this...

(produces a quarter)

...or God help me, this...

(reaches down, picks up a chrome hub-cap)

...you will be dead snipers. And dead snipers are no fucking use to the United States Marine Corps.

Swoff stares at him. Shit. Siek walks from in front to stand among them.

SERGEANT SIEK (cont'd)

Look into your scope.

They all do. We see Swoff adjusting his eye to the scope, settling in to the fit.

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SERGEANT SIEK (cont'd)

If you're lucky, in that window
will one day emerge the figure of
the enemy. The quartered head, the
JFK shot, the pink mist. Now
consider your target.

We are with Swoff as he stares into the eyepiece. He sees a
blur, something in a jeep. He tries to adjust the scope so
that the target down range comes into focus.

Slowly the image comes into focus: the head of a Russian
general.

SWOFF (V.O.)

There's a moment when the target
disappears, when you see only the
clear intersection of the reticle--
like a bucket of light's been
poured into your scope...

We are inside the scope and see what he is describing.

SERGEANT SIEK (O.C.)

Ready on the right? Ready on the
left? Ready on the firing range.
Gentlemen, commence firing.

Swoff takes a deep breath. His finger gently closes on the
trigger. So gently. Very slow motion now.

Boom! We feel the recoil, the muscles on his face jiggle, a
puff of smoke from the muzzle, a casing ejects out to the
side.

Thwack! The General's head explodes. Cotton stuffing floats
gently down.

Swoff slowly lifts his face off the eyepiece. His eyes are
bright.

SWOFF (V.O.)

The grunt dies for nothing, for
fifteen thousand poorly placed
rounds. The sniper dies for that
one perfect shot.

He sets his eye back on the eyepiece. New target. Light pours
in, and...

SWOFF (V.O.) (cont'd)

I was hooked.

EXT. OKINAWA - JUNGLE - MONTAGE - TIME PASSING

...Boom! A Chinese General's stuffed head explodes. New target, light pours in...

SWOFF (V.O.)
I wanted a thankless mission...

...Boom! A Terrorist's head explodes. New target, light pours in...

SWOFF (V.O.) (cont'd)
I wanted poor odds and a likely death...

...Boom! A Columbian drug lord's head explodes.

SWOFF (V.O.) (cont'd)
But I was a warrior without a war.
I was all foreplay and no climax.

INT. STA PLATOON - REC AREA - DAY

A blow up doll, weights, a wet bar, a big screen TV, and around it are gathered the Marines of the STA Platoon all silently watching.

ON SCREEN SEE: AUGUST 2, 1990

On the TV screen we see Iraqi troops and tanks interspersed with shots of screaming Kuwaiti civilians.

DAN RATHER (ON TV)
In a surprise blitzkrieg-like attack, early this morning Iraqi troops invaded neighboring Kuwait. The Emir of Kuwait has fled Kuwait City. Pentagon sources say elements of the 82nd Airborne Division and some marine units have been put on full alert.

TROY
This is it, boys! We're going to fucking war!!

They all whoop and cheer, Swoff not least of all.

INT. TWENTY-NINE PALMS - DUSK - DAY

Buzzzzz. Buzzzzz. Swoff sits with his buddies getting fresh high and tight haircuts, jarheads.

INT. BARRACKS - LATER

Rucksacks packed, the STA men do a final cleaning of their weapons. Swoff leans over his sniper rifle, cleaning it with a toothbrush. Troy slips his rifle into its case, then looks around at his squad. Their faces are serious, a little worried. Can't have that.

TROY

We need to get a hard on.

INT. STA PLATOON - REC AREA - NIGHT

ON TV: "APOCALYPSE NOW"

Helicopters fly across the South China Sea to the tune of Wagner. Rockets shoot out. North Vietnamese machine gunners are blown high into the air.

We hear the yells and screams of the STA Platoon.

STA PLATOON (O.S.)

Get some! Semper Fi!

INT. STA PLATOON - REC AREA - SAME

SWOFF (V.O.)

Vietnam movies. Our biggest wet dream.

Swoff and his STA buddies lie back against their packed rucksacks. They are guzzling beer and watching Vietnam combat.

SWOFF (V.O.) (cont'd)

Pornography for the grunt-- stroking his cock, tickling his balls with the pink feather of history, getting him ready for his first real fuck.

We PAN across the faces as the men watch the war movie. Beneath the bravado we sense an undercurrent of fear.

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We hear the sound of machine guns and the screams from movie ambushes. Suddenly they stop.

P.A. ANNOUNCER (U.S.)
All personnel from STA 2/7 are
ordered to report immediately to
battalion headquarters. Get some,
Jarheads!

We are on Swoff's face, as it sinks in: this is for real.
We're going to fucking war!

INT. DC-10 - DAY

A STEWARDESS in a bright red uniform is going through the safety procedures. She has a sample seat belt in her hands.

STEWARDESS
I will now demonstrate the proper
method of fastening your seat belt.
Take this end of the belt and
insert it firmly into the latch...

With exaggerated care she inserts the buckle into the latch. As she does we PAN AROUND and see that instead of a civilian flight, the plane is full of jarheads: each and every one of them staring at her hungrily, as if she is the last woman they will ever see.

In front of Swoff's row sits ESCOBAR, a black Cuban, with CORTEZ, a Mexican-American. Escobar and Cortez are like a Hispanic Abbott and Costello.

ESCOBAR
Ah, Chica, come fly my friendly
fucking skies.

We MOVE BACK a row, to where Troy and Swoff are sitting with KUEHN, a big red-headed Texan with a perpetual sunburn.

KUEHN
Me, I had a choice. Join the
marines or go to jail. And you know
what the shit of it is?

TROY
If you'd gone to jail--

KUEHN
Don't spoil the joke, asshole. If
I'd gone to jail, I'd be getting
out today!

That makes Swoff laugh.

SWOFF

I dropped out of high school, tried to join when I turned 17. But my dad, he told the recruiter,

(imitating Dad)

"No way I'm signing that unless you guarantee you won't get my boy Tony killed."

TROY

I bet that recruiter shit in his Class A trousers.

SWOFF

I joined on my own, six months later.

KUEHN

You poor dumb fuck. My recruiter knew the price of every whore from Olangapo to Stockholm. A whole wide world of pussy. That's what got me.

TROY

And here you are, headed to the desert. No pussy in a thousand miles.

SWOFF

Fucked by the green weenie again.

TROY

Let me tell you something. I signed up because the Corp's going to be my fucking family. Fuck, it's better than a family. It lets me fire weapons 24/7. It always waits up for me. It forgives me when I'm dumb and stupid.

SWOFF

Which is pretty much all the time.

Troy nudges Swoff. The Stewardess is standing there with a funny, makeshift cake.

STEWARDESS

Swoff? I hear it's your birthday.

Troy's set this up. He and the other STA Marines stand up and start singing: "Happy Birthday dear Fuckhead, Happy Birthday to you".

EXT. SAUDI ARABIA - DAY

Swoff, Troy and the platoon get off the plane into the desert. Heat waves shimmer. The tarmac is full of jumbo commercial jets: American, United, Delta. Fighter jets patrol the skies.

STEWARDESS

(brightly)

Good luck, now...Good-bye,
now...Good-luck, now.

She speaks to each of them as they pass her on the ramp, headed down, to war.

EXT. SAUDI ARABIA - DAY

Swoff and the STA platoon marches toward a large, bright green Bedouin tent, where the battalion is gathering.

EXT. BEDOUIN TENT - SAUDI ARABIA - DAY

ON SCREEN SEE: AUGUST 1990. TROOPS IN SAUDI ARABIA: 15,000.

The STA Platoon takes their seats with the rest of the battalion just as COLONEL KAZICKIS mounts a makeshift stage, grabbing a microphone in mid-stride like a Vegas M.C. Theatrical as he is, this guy is no caricature: he's smart and knows how to connect to his men.

COLONEL KAZICKIS

Good afternoon, Marines!

The speakers produce major feedback. A lowly corporal slips out and crouches by the Colonel, trying to adjust the volume.

MARINES

Good afternoon, Colonel.

COLONEL KAZICKIS

Jesus, did you just land in a war zone or in a funeral parlor? Good afternoon, Marines!

MARINES
 (a little louder)
 Good afternoon, Colonel.

Swoff and Troy share a look.

COLONEL KAZICKIS
 That's better. I felt my dick move.
 For those of you who don't know me,
 I'm Colonel Kazickis, your
 battalion commander. We are now
 part of Operation Desert Shield.
 Just north of us--Saddam Hussein's
 got a million Iraqi soldiers. Some
 of those boys have been fighting
 since you were nine or ten years
 old. They are tough. They will
 stop at nothing. They've used
 nerve gas against the Iranians and
 the Kurds. Here's a picture. Hold
 it up, Sergeant Major.

The SERGEANT MAJOR holds up a large photo of dead women and
 children. Troy and Swoff stares, especially Swoff: he hates
 gas.

COLONEL KAZICKIS (cont'd)
 Now as of today, these Iraqis who
 have invaded the defenseless nation
 of Kuwait are not our concern. Our
 current mission is defensive. We
 are to protect the Saudi Arabian
 oil fields until further notice.

As he speaks we PAN across the faces, the men we know--Swoff,
 Troy, Kuehn, Escobar, Cortez--and some we will get to know:
 WELTY, VEGH, FERGUS.

COLONEL KAZICKIS (cont'd)
 So you will hydrate, you will
 train, you will adjust to this
 desert and you will hydrate some
 more. And you will be ready. You
 will maintain a constant state of
 suspicious alertness and one day
 Saddam Hussein is going to regret
 pulling this sorry shit.

Behind Troy and Swoff, a MARINE (FOWLER) calls out.

FOWLER
 (high voice)
 We're going to kick some Iraqi ass!

Troy and Swoff turn to see who it is. It's FOWLER, the showboat, the pain-in-the-ass. long-tongue, know-it-all.

COLONEL KAZICKIS
What did you say?

Fowler stands up.

FOWLER
We're going to kick some Iraqi ass!
Sir!

COLONEL KAZICKIS
Well hell, son, you going to win
the Medal of Honor all by yourself?
What is the rest of my battalion
going to do?

ALL
Kick some Iraqi ass!

COLONEL KAZICKIS
It's time for me to retire. I can't
hear a fucking thing.

We are with Swoff and Troy as the entire battalion rises to its feet.

ALL
KICK SOME IRAQI ASS!

The Colonel grins.

COLONEL KAZICKIS
That is most definitely more like
it.

EXT. DESERT -DAY

The STA platoon rides in a Humvee, across the desert, headed for their new position.

Swoff stares out: a vast and trackless place, an infinity of nothingness stretching to the horizon.

FOWLER
This defensive position shit sucks.
We better not be in this shit-hole
long. I need to shoot something.

TROY

You'll get all you want soon enough. We're the marines, not the lame-ass army. First to fucking fight.

KUEHN

Yeah, for what?

They all turn to him. What a question.

KUEHN (cont'd)

I been around these old white fuckers all my life. They've all got their fat hands in Arab oil. The mother-fuckers drink it like it's beer. That's why we're here. To protect their profits.

SWOFF

And their progeny.

KUEHN

That too, whatever the fuck that is.

VEGH

You talk like a Communist, man.

VEGH is Hungarian-American. He looks older than he is and has an immigrant's unquestioned patriotism.

WELTY

Yeah, we're here to fight for freedom.

WELTY is the corpsman. He has an innocence about him, a softness around the corners of his face.

TROY

We're here, fuckhead. All the rest is bullshit.

WELTY

You saw that picture. Those were kids, man.

KUEHN

Who do you think gave Saddam all his goddamn weapons? We did.

FOWLER

You are so full of shit.

They drive into their new position, a gash in the Saudi desert with a few ragged tents being put up.

KUEHN
Look it up.

SWOFF
I hate gas, man.

TROY
The good news is, if it gets you,
you'll never know.

EXT. SAUDI ARABIA - NEXT DAY

Siek is holding a stop watch and screaming!

SGT. SIEK
Gas! Gas! Gas!

Swoff and the others are trying to pull on their MOPP suits, the bulky chemical warfare uniforms, hopping on one leg, cursing, falling down. Only Troy is almost dressed. He's pulling on his gas mask.

SERGEANT SIEK
Come on! Your fucking skin is
melting, your eyeballs are leaking,
your goddam dicks are falling off!!

Siek punches his stop watch.

SGT. SIEK
Time. Stop. Stop! Stop!

Swoff freezes, one leg in his suit. He looks at Troy, who has his gas mask on. He looks like someone very familiar.

TROY
(to Swoff, as Darth Vader)
Luke....Luke...
(beat, still Vader)
I need a blow job.

SERGEANT SIEK
Two minutes, thirty seconds. You're
all dead. And since you're dead
you're not going to mind taking a
little jog in these suits. Ready.
Go.

He runs out of frame, into the desert. Troy follows him. Half in their suits and half out, Swoff and the rest stumble and struggle to keep up.

EXT. DESERT - MINUTES LATER

Not funny anymore. The men struggle and slide in the sand in the heavy rubber suits. We hear their breathing in the gas masks.

We look at Swoff's face through the goggles. They mist up. His eyes disappear.

SWOFF (V.O.)
The UN is united in calling for
Saddam to withdraw from Kuwait.

EXT. DESERT - MOS

ON SCREEN SEE: U.S. TROOPS IN SAUDI ARABIA: 200,000

SWOFF (V.O.)
Sanctions have been imposed. Colin
Powell discusses war plans with
Saudi Arabia, and President Bush
keeps sending in new troops.

The men are in formation. They are ordered to drink. They lift their canteens and swallow. We go down the line as they gulp the water.

SWOFF (V.O.) (cont'd)
Us, six times a day we hydrate.

Swoff and the others hold up their canteen bottles to show they've finished.

EXT. DESERT - MOS

Swoff and the snipers patrol around the desert, slipping in the sand. The space around them is immense, never-ending.

SWOFF (V.O.)
We patrol the desert.

EXT. DESERT - MOS

Sgt. Siek screams (MOS) as Swoff and the snipers rush out in full gear, jacked up on adrenaline.

SWOFF (V.O.)
We go on full alert

EXT. DESERT--MOS

Swoff and the snipers suddenly relax, start taking off their gear.

SWOFF (V.O.)
Then we stand down.

You can see the stress on their faces: up, down, up, down.

EXT. DESERT--MOS

They drink more bottles of water.

SWOFF (V.O.)
And we hydrate some more.

EXT. DESERT - MOS

They sit on top of a dune, staring into the setting sun, out into the desert.

SWOFF (V.O.)
And we look north to our still
invisible enemy. We wait for them,
like a lover.

They stare as the sun rises.

SWOFF (V.O.) (cont'd)
This is our labor. We wait.

INT. TENT - NIGHT

Out of a mailed package Swoff pulls a small white T-shirt with the Marine Corps emblem, the shirt his mom had made for him. It's full of memories of Kristina, so far away. Swoff feels the shirt, holds it to his face, smells it.

TROY
Five bucks to sniff it.

SWOFF
Fuck you.

TROY

At least show me the picture.

Swoff relents and passes a picture of Kristina in the T-shirt.

SWOFF

That was the last night--before I left for boot camp.

KUEHN

Your last night as a human being.

ESCOBAR

Show us the one in the dress blue blouse again.

Swoff pulls out another photo of Kristina. In this one she has on nothing but Swoff's dress blue blouse. They compare the two.

WELTY

Doesn't she have her own clothes?

They stare at Welty; are you nuts?

KUEHN

(the dress blues)
This one, man, it's hard core.

TROY

(the T-shirt)
No way, man. This one, it's more...real.

SWOFF

Come on, give 'em back.

Sergeant Siek enters with another bag of mail.

SERGEANT SIEK

Listen up. We're getting letters addressed to "Any Marine, Iraq".

FERGUS

Hey, that's me.

FERGUS is the newest member of STA. He's a bit of a doofus, a mid-western kid who can't quite seem to click in on things.

SERGEANT SIEK

The first ones go to the Marines who get the least mail. That's you, Cortez.

He starts handing out letters.

ESCOBAR

Yeah, Cortez can't even get letters from women in prison. That's because they know he's a Mexican.

CORTEZ

At least my mama doesn't fry bananas for breakfast, you dumb Cuban.

SERGEANT SIEK

You guys read and respond to every one of these fucking letters. Make those girls feel good.

Cortez eagerly opens his letter, then his face falls.

CORTEZ

Oh man.

ESCOBAR

What?

CORTEZ

It's from a seven year old boy. He wants a camie cover.

ESCOBAR

Send it to him, you fucking pervert.

Vegh unfolds his letter. His eyes light up.

VEGH

(Hungarian accent)

Listen to this.

(reading)

"I just quit Yale. I like to fuck a lot and drop acid. Write me soon if you like to fuck a lot and drop acid."

KUEHN

I like to fuck a lot and drop acid? Show me her picture.

Vegh passes the photo around to general approval. Check this out!

ESCOBAR

Oh, man.

Troy holds up a letter.

TROY

What do we have here?

Welty recognizes it and reaches out.

WELTY

Come on, give it to me.

Troy smells it.

TROY

Mmmmm. Chemical weapons? No.
Pussy Juice.

Welty grabs the letter. Swoff resumes reading his letter.

TROY (cont'd)

What's up with Kristina?

SWOFF

She got a job at a hotel.

To Swoff's surprise, this gets a large response.

FOWLER

You are fucked!

KUEHN

I'm sorry, Bud.

SWOFF

Sorry? Why?

FOWLER

She'll have breaks, dumb fuck. She and one of the Jody clerks will go to one of the vacant rooms. I bet they've got one all the employees use. Probably don't even change the sheets.

This sinks in on Swoff. His face goes dark.

TROY

Don't let them fuck with your head.
A job's just a job. She loves you.

SWOFF

(trying to be convinced)
Yeah.

Swoff would get more emotional but at that moment we hear a sobbing from Welty. Tears crawl down his cheeks.

TROY

Hey man, what's the matter?

Welty's shoulders begin to shake. Fowler picks up the letter.

FOWLER

Hey, let me see that. What's she doing, fucking someone else?
(reading, smile)

Holy shit..
(smile fades: reading aloud)

"Bet you didn't know your brother's got a nine-inch dick. And believe me, he knows how to use it."

(beat)
Holy shit.

Fowler lowers the letter. Even he is stunned. This news doesn't help quell Swoff's nascent doubts about Kristina. Welty is devastated. He holds his fiancée's picture in his hands and begins to crumple it up.

KUEHN

No! Give it to me.

Kuehn grabs the photo from Welty. He holds it up.

KUEHN (cont'd)

Everybody see this??

They all stare at the faithless fiancée. Welty is truly devastated.

KUEHN (cont'd)

Only one place for it.

They all know where he means.

TROY

Wall of Shame.

Escobar helps Welty up.

ESCOBAR

Come on, man.

The rest of them start to leave. Swoff just sits there.

KUEHN

Swoff, come on.

He takes one last look at Kristina's letter, maybe wondering just a bit if Welty's fate is in store for him.

SWOFF

Sure.

EXT. BARRACKS MESS - MOMENTS LATER

The Wall of Shame. A big board between two posts in front of the mess hall, its every square inch covered with photographs of women stuck up with duct tape. And on each piece of duct tape the betrayed marine has written his tale of woe.

Swoff watches as the others help Welty duct tape the photograph of his fiancée to the wall. Kuehn hands Welty a magic marker.

KUEHN

Go on, man.

Welty begins to write on the duct tape.

WELTY (V.O.)

She was my fiancée, with my brother now...

Swoff looks at a photograph of a woman with a young boy, then examines the writing on the duct tape. He hears the voice of the marine who wrote it.

VOICE 1

I loved her so much and she took my kid and disappeared....

Swoff looks at another photograph: a woman in a bikini, her tongue stuck out suggestively.

VOICE 2

Stay away from her, she'll take all your money, she hangs out at the Whale Club in Oceanside.

Swoff holds up Kristina's photograph, wondering how it would look up on the wall. Troy appears as the others lead Welty away.

TROY

Put it away. Kristina's not cheating on you. They're just fucking with your head.

Swoff looks at Troy, slightly relieved.

EXT. SAUDI ARABIA - DAY

The sniper squad is in a circle under an Infrared cover. You can see the heat coming off the desert.

SERGEANT SIEK

Here are the rules. When you talk to these reporters, don't get specific. Say you can shoot from far away. Say you are highly trained. That there are no better shooters in the world than Marine snipers. Say you are excited to be here and you believe in the mission and will annihilate the Iraqis. Take off your shirts and show your muscles.

KUEHN

This is censorship. You're telling me what I can and can't say to the press. This is un-American.

SWOFF

That's right. We have freedom of speech. Article 1, the Constitution.

SERGEANT SIEK

You signed a contract. You have no rights. Goddamnit, we're not playing around. Tell your complaints to Saddam Hussein, see if he cares.

KUEHN

That's exactly what Saddam Hussein does. You're treating us the same goddamn way.

SERGEANT BIEK

You are Marines. There is no such thing as speech that is free. You must pay for everything you say.

EXT. SAUDI ARABIA - DAY

The members of STA Platoon shave, wash in their helmets, pull on new camies. One holds a mirror for another.

Swoff and Troy helmet wash their pits, their crotches, their cocks.

TROY

I can't get the fucking sand out. It's everywhere, even in my piss hole.

SWOFF

It's the desert, man. We thought we invaded it. But it fucking invaded us.

EXT. DESERT - IR NETTING- DAY

Swoff is watching the now very clean STA Men being interviewed earnestly by a FEMALE REPORTER, a kind of young Diane Sawyer, who has a cameraman with her.

FEMALE REPORTER

So if you could say one thing to our viewers back home, what would it be?

CORTEZ

I believe in our mission. I believe we will quickly win this war and send the enemy crawling home.

FERGUS

I'm proud to be here serving our country. I love God and I love my new Harley. Them ragheads is going down.

TROY

We can shoot out someone's eyeball from a click away. No better shot in the world.

(MORE)

TROY (cont'd)

They can bomb us and gas us and shoot us and we'll keep at 'em.

Now it's Swoff's turn.

SWOFF

I don't care about a New World Order. I don't care about human rights violations in Kuwait City. Amnesty International, my ass. Rape them all, kill them all, sell their oil, pillage their gold, sell their children into prostitution. I don't care about the Flag and God and Country and Corps. I don't give a fuck about oil and revenue and a million barrels per day and U.S. jobs. I'm twenty years old and I was dumb enough to sign a contract and here I sit, swinging in the ball sack, slopping through the straddle trench of the world, and I can hear their bombs already, I can hear their bombs and I am afraid.

SERGEANT SIEK (O.S.)

Swofford, you're up!

And this is what he really says.

SWOFF

I'm prepared for anything. I have supreme confidence in all my leaders, from my team leader to my president. My father and uncle served in Vietnam. I'm proud to serve my country here.

EXT. DESERT - LATER

A football flies through the air. Swoff and Kuehn and Troy toss it back and forth. In the b.g. we see Sergeant Siek and Colonel Kazickis briefing the Female Reporter and a few other reporters about the chemical warfare suits: holding the suits up, pointing out their features, so on.

The rest of the platoon join an impromptu football game. Swoff goes out for a long pass. He leaps over the straddle trench, catches the ball with one hand and slams his face into the desert.

KUEHN
Touchdown!

Swoff jogs back in with the ball just as Sergeant Siek comes back with the reporters.

TROY
Swoff! Quick, throw the ball in the shitter!

SWOFF
What?

TROY
Get rid of the fucking ball.

Swoff doesn't get it--not fast enough.

SERGEANT SIEK
Swofford, the football.

Swoff gives it to him. Troy rolls his eyes. Look what you did.

SERGEANT SIEK (cont'd)
Men, this is your lucky day. These reporters want to know how you can fight wearing all your chemical warfare gear. So you're going to show them just how well your MOPP suits work.

(to general disbelief)
That's right. Get 'em on. We're going to continue this football game in full gear.

TROY
(to Swoff)
See what you did, ass-hole.

WELTY
It's a hundred and twelve degrees.

SERGEANT SIEK
Then you won't be needing your parkas, will you?
(beat)
And the Colonel has promised hot shower trucks. And cold soda.

EXT. DESERT - MOMENTS LATER

The men slowly put on their MOPP suits. Some are bound together with duct tape and nylon ripcord. The MOPP suits are in a jungle camouflage.

TROY

Just like the Marine Corps, gives us jungle suits in the desert.

SWOFF

We look like a fucking Monty Python skit.

Swoff and the others take a last drink of water, then put their masks on and tie the hoods. Troy is the last to close up. We're inside Swoff's gas mask as he looks out at Troy. It's like a personal sensory deprivation chamber.

TROY

Ready?

His voice comes from far away, as if he is talking through a Styrofoam cup.

SWOFF

Fuck it.

Swoff's voice has a half-second delay and a kind of echo, as if he's on a very long distance phone line.

TROY

Let's do it.

EXT. DESERT - MOMENTS LATER

The game begins again. The men run awkwardly in their MOPP suits.

Swoff's POV: Colonel Kazickis points out various features of the suits to the reporters.

Passes fly. At first the game is touch, then it becomes tackle. WHOMF. Bodies slam together.

Swoff intercepts a pass and runs it in for a touchdown, then collapses in the sand. They are all bent over at the knees trying to catch their breath in their gas masks.

SERGEANT SIEK

Gentlemen, the Pentagon says that you can fight at one hundred percent capacity in this gear for eight hours. You've only been playing football for twenty minutes. Let's go.

EXT. DESERT - MOMENTS LATER

WHOMF. They slam together. Siek blows a whistle.

SERGEANT SIEK

(shouts)

Halftime!

(to the reporters)

These MOPP suits are fitted with drinking tubes, so these men will be able to drink from their canteens without removing their gear.

Swoff's POV: over the sound of Swoff's heavy breathing, we hear Siek's voice as if it comes from a tunnel.

SERGEANT SIEK (cont'd)

Men, these M11 A1 drink tubes are designed to work perfectly with your canteen and mask. Insert the narrow end with your fingers extended and join it into the appropriate receptacle on the canteen lid. Excellent.

Swoff breaks the seal of his gas mask quietly and tries to breathe in fresh air.

SERGEANT SIEK (cont'd)

Now extend the tube into the proper fitting in the mask receptacle.

KUEHN

I'm fucking dead already, the cap is broken on my canteen!

SERGEANT SIEK

Hey, cool it.

TROY

My drinking tube is broken. I can't break the seal of my mask because that would kill me. So I'll die of dehydration.

Swoff rips off his mask.

SERGEANT SIEK

Okay. Okay.

He's trying to put a lid on it, but with the reporters there his options are limited. And the men know it.

CORTEZ

My drinking tube fell off in the gas chamber in Okinawa and Kuehn stepped on it. I requested a new gas mask four months ago.

SWOFF

We all have unserviceable filters in our masks. We are all dead.

Fowler has been wrestling with his drink tube and canteen and finally he rips his mask off and punts it down the field.

FOWLER

Fucking fuck this piece of shit!!

SERGEANT SIEK

Men! Men! I'll speak to supply about those parts. Now masks on! Play ball!

He's trying to be polite for the reporters, nice fake smile. The men groan and moan and start again. But instead of a nice touch football game, the exercise degenerates at once. Kuehn tackles Cortez.

KUEHN

Remember the Alamo!

CORTEZ

Motherfucker!

He leaps up and jumps on Troy, who tosses him aside. Escobar piles on, screaming in Spanish. Fowler pounds Vegh. Swoff jumps in. Everyone begins tackling and piling on, in a melee, a laughing shrieking dog pile.

KUEHN

King of the desert!

He yells as he struggles to the top of the pile. Then someone yells the dreaded two words.

TROY

Field Fuck!

Fowler pulls Kuehn off the top of the pile. Fowler starts moving his hips against Kuehn.

VEGH

Get that virgin Texas ass! It's free!

ESCOBAR

Get a picture for his wife! The poor woman!

Siek comes running back.

SERGEANT SIEK

Stop!

KUEHN

I've seen the whores you've bought, you sick bastards, I'm the prettiest girl any of you's ever had!

The reporters have stopped taking notes and are staring. Siek is desperate.

SERGEANT SIEK

Stop! Stop you assholes!

But the field fuck continues. We see each face in turn.

SWOFF (V.O.)

We aren't field-fucking Kuehn: we're fucking the Colonel, and the sorry, worthless MOPP suits, and the goddamn gas masks and canteens with defective parts, and President Bush and Dick Cheney and the generals, and Saddam Hussein, and the PRC-77 radio.

Swoff steps out of the pile, a look of glee on his face. He rips his gas mask off. We're on him as the field fuck continues.

SWOFF (V.O.) (cont'd)

We're fucking the world's televisions, and CNN;
(MORE)

SWOFF (V.O.) (cont'd)
we're fucking the sand and the bad
food and the fuckhead peaceniks
bac. nome; we're fucking ourselves
for signing the contract, for
listening to the soothing lies of
the recruiters, for letting them
call us buddy and pal and dude,
luring us into this life of
loneliness and boredom and fear.

The field fuck subsides. Kuehn gets up.

KUEHN
I've had better fucks from dwarves.

EXT. DESERT - SAME

Mumbling apologies, Sergeant Siek escorts Colonel Kazickis
and the Female reporter back to the land rover.

SERGEANT SIEK
...It must be the heat. They are a
highly trained, highly disciplined
unit, I assure you.

EXT. DESERT - MOMENTS LATER

The last MOPP suit is thrown into the straddle trench. Kuehn
douses the suits with fuel and strikes a match.

KUEHN
May god please save our ass,
because these suits sure won't.

Half-naked, they stand and watch the suits burn, a small fire
of thick black smoke, harbinger of the fires to come.

Hear the sound of THUNDER.

INT. TENT - NIGHT

It's raining outside. Water drips down the tent flaps. Swoff
and most of the others sit eating MRE's, chewing, staring
ahead. The tent is much homier, with more personal details.

Escobar does push-ups, then stands up and looks at himself in
a field mirror.

ESCOBAR
You are a bad motherfucker.
(beat)
(MORE)

ESCOBAR (cont'd)
 You will kill hundreds of ragheads.
 You will fulfill your duty.

Fergus adjusts his Walkman, then turns up a recording of a motorcycle.

FERGUS
 (headphones on, way too
 loud)
 My Harley!

No one is interested. Dripping wet, Troy enters with the mail bag.

TROY
 Rain in the fucking desert. What
 next? Ski season?

SWOFF
 You keep the mail dry?

TROY
 Fucking A! Neither rain, nor sleet,
 nor fucking mustard gas keeps the
 jarhead from his fucking mail.
 (beat)
 Swoff, who's got fire watch
 tonight?

SWOFF
 Vegh.

VEGH
 Oh man, I had it two weeks ago.

SWOFF
 Which is why you have it again.
 0500. Don't fucking zee out or
 it'll be my ass.

Troy pulls out the first letter.

TROY
 Swoff! Your new dog tags.

Swoff rips the envelope open, examines the dog tags.

SWOFF
 Shit.

TROY
 Still say Roman Catholic?

Swoff nods. Troy passes out more mail.

SWOFF

Fifth time.

CORTEZ

It's a sign from God. He wants you
to stay with the one true religion.

FERGUS

Which is Baptist.

CORTEZ

Jesus was a Catholic, man.

Swoff reaches into his gear, pulls out a small lacquer box.

TROY

What difference does it make what
your dog tags say? God knows
you're "no preference."

KUEHN

No preference? Man, that sounds
like you're a religious whore.
You'll take it in any hole, from
any pulpit.

SWOFF

I don't even care. I just like
getting new dog tags. I like the
sound they make.

He holds them up. Jingle. Jingle.

Troy hands Cortez a letter from the bottom of the bag.

CORTEZ

Hey, look! I got an answer from my
Any Marine girl!

There's general amazement. No way! Finally!

TROY

Hey, that's the first one. Open it.

Cortez starts to open the letter, very carefully.

ESCOBAR

Vegh, you heard from "acid" girl?

VEGH

Not yet.

KUEHN

Not ever.

Cortez looks up, a stunned look on his face.

CORTEZ

Empty.

He holds the opened envelope upside down, shakes it.

KUEHN

(laughing)

That is fucking perfect.

His face suddenly pale, Swoff looks up from reading his letter.

SWOFF

Kristina's got a "new friend."

KUEHN

A "new friend?" That doesn't sound good.

SWOFF

Yeah. He's the night manager. She says he's a great listener.

KUEHN

Great listener? Man, this is getting worse.

FOWLER

She's one of those girls with a military fetish. She's smiling when she tells the Jody that the poor shit whose girlfriend he's fucking is a Marine.

KUEHN

And the Jody likes telling his friends that the new girl he's stiffing is a dumb jarhead's girlfriend.

WELTY

Everyone loves to get over on the jarhead. Everyone.

They know Welty means it. He's still numb from losing his fiancée to his brother.

KUEHN

The world is full of Jodys, man.
The world is full of Jodys.

During this mounting group paranoia we are on Swoff's face.
It's getting darker and darker.

TROY

(to the others)
Go jack off somewhere, you're all
fucking losing it.

KUEHN

Hey Swoff, that's right. Cheer up,
we're headed back to the rear. Get
some AC, sleep in a rack, get on
the phone to your girlfriend, even
if she is cheating on you.

Swoff looks green. He looks down at Kristina's letter. On the pink stationery is a drawing of a couple holding hands, and the words, "Tony and Kristina forever."

EXT. REAR - DAY

CU on Swoff as he thinks about Kristina. He rides with his STA buddies in an open Humvee through the gates of a vast rear area: barbed wire perimeter with watch towers, barracks stretching over the sand, a logistical warehouse.

There is a spooky feeling about this place; as if these barracks and facilities were always here, waiting for them.

They pass shacks where Egyptians sell candy and sodas. Marines stroll about looking cool and clean. A Muezzin chants the call to prayer over loud speakers. All activity in the soda and candy shacks cease: out come the Egyptians, falling prostrate in prayer.

We register all this on Swoff's face.

INT. SHOWERS - REAR - SAME

Swoff stands under a shower head, the water pouring down his face. His eyes are open, staring, focused somewhere else. The others are in the b.g., swigging cokes in the showers, singing, having a ball. Around Swoff's feet water swirls into the drain, clogging it with sand.

INT. BARRACKS - REAR - NIGHT

Swoff sits on the john, holding a picture of Kristina. He's trying to masturbate, trying to connect to her, but it's just not happening.

INT. COMM BUILDING - REAR - NIGHT

Rows of phones. Marines talk to wives, girlfriends, mothers. Troy is deep in conversation with his fiancée.

Swoff has a phone in his hand.

OPERATOR (O.S.)
Number? Number please?

He puts it gently down. Stares at all his friends, all connected to home, all with someone to talk to.

INT. BARRACKS - REAR - NIGHT

All the men lie peacefully in their racks. Moonlight streaks through the windows. CLOSE ON Swoff. He lies still, his eyes open.

At the end of the room the door swings open. A pale figure enters. It's Kristina. She's dressed for visiting and carrying a bag. She walks slowly down the center of the room.

She stops at the end of Swoff's bed and looks down at him.

She reaches down and strokes his cheek. Tears well up in his eyes.

TROY (O.S.)
Shut the fuck up!

Swoff comes blinking out of his dream. The room is empty. It is early evening, not night.

Troy has his face in front of an air conditioner. It blows cool air that feels like a blessing.

TROY (cont'd)
You were talking in your sleep.

Swoff sits up, still disoriented. But one thing he knows.

SWOFF
I want to go back to the desert.

Revised 1st Draft - 4/20/04

Troy doesn't leave his post in front of the AC.

TROY

What the fuck's your problem?

SWOFF

I don't like this place. It's spooky. Like it was built for us, just waiting. The Saudis built it so they could stick us in here before we died for their oil.

TROY

You sound like Kuehn, man.

SWOFF

The desert. It's honest back there, clean.

TROY

It's fucked. Come on, let's go see a movie.

INT. SPECIAL SERVICES BUILDING - REAR - NIGHT

In a group of marines, Swoff watches *Platoon* on a big TV screen. Tom Berenger has his pistol at the Vietnamese woman's head, screaming at her to talk. The images of the video reflect off Swoff's face.

Suddenly, there is a click and instead of the war movie, we are watching a homemade porn flick. A man whose face is in shadow is doing bizarre things to a woman in a hood.

The room erupts in cheers. Just as the woman comes to orgasm with loud shrieks, A MARINE jumps up and screams.

BETRAYED MARINE

That's my wife! That's my wife
fucking the neighbor! A goddamn
Squid!

Everyone starts to laugh, but the man continues to scream. We see Swoff, not laughing, but disturbed: this is his own worse nightmare about Kristina, playing right on the screen.

BETRAYED MARINE (cont'd)

You fucking bitch! You slut!

He screams and begins to cry. The movie jerks to a stop. Lights come on.

Some of his buddies wrestle the Betrayed Marine out. He's still screaming as the door slams behind him.

In the movie room there is a moment of absolute silence. Swoff stares at the now closed door.

FOWLER

Fuck it. Let's watch it again.

There's general agreement: "Fucking A! Get some!" Moving like a robot, Swoff gets up and heads out the door.

TROY

Swoff? Where you going? Don't miss this.

But Swoff is gone.

INT. BARRACKS - REAR - NIGHT

Swoff assembles his M16 with infinite tenderness. The photo of Kristina is right there, on the wall, next to him.

He holds out the firing pin before inserting it into the bolt. He lifts the firing pin to his mouth, then slowly slips it in, like he's tasting something forbidden.

SWOFF (V.O.)

I love my rifle. It won't cheat on me. I love it to fucking death. It needs to fire. It needs to shoot something. Who am I to stop it?

INT. BARRACKS - REAR - NIGHT

Swoff lies in his rack, cradling his M16 like a lover. The photo of Kristina is right by his face, propped on the side table.

He sits up, moving very deliberately. He turns the picture face down.

Very slowly, he puts the M16 muzzle in his mouth. He bends at the waist and places the buttstock of the rifle against the floor. He puts his thumb on the trigger.

SWOFF (V.O.)

Cerebrum, Cerebellum, Corpus Callosum, Pineal Body, Medulla Oblongata.

(MORE)

SWOFF (V.O.) (cont'd)
The trip my bullet will take. The
JFK shot, but this time the pink
mist will be me.

You can hear the sound of his teeth scraping on the metal.

SWOFF (V.O.) (cont'd)
I turn the trigger selector.
(there's a soft click)
Burst. There'll be three rounds,
not one, circling around inside my
skull.

He re-positions the rifle in his mouth.

His hand plays around the trigger. We study his face. Is he
going to do it? We can't tell.

BANG! The door slams open. Swoff looks up, confused, as
Troy enters the room.

TROY
What the fuck?!

He slaps Swoff hard against the back of his head and grabs
the weapon. Swoff stares for a moment, not registering what
has happened, thinking perhaps he's already dead.

TROY (cont'd)
What the fuck, Fuck?

Swoff runs his tongue around his mouth.

SWOFF
You chipped my tooth.

TROY
You'd shoot yourself without
letting me watch? You selfish,
selfish fuck. I thought we were
friends.

SWOFF
I was just fucking around. I knew
you were walking in the door.

Troy hits the eject button, drops the clip out, pulls back
the bolt and ejects the round from the chamber. Troy tosses
the rifle on the rack.

TROY
They played the movie again. That
poor jarhead.
(MORE)

TROY (cont'd)

Half the battalion plus assorted
tanker assholes came by to watch
his wife get fucked. And you want
to kill yourself?

(beat)

I need to go for a run. Come on,
let's go.

Swoff doesn't move.

TROY (cont'd)

Let's go.

He hauls Swoff up.

EXT. REAR - MOMENTS LATER

Swoff and Troy run the perimeter of the base. Troy snaps his
fingers as he runs to keep cadence. We hear that snapping,
and the rhythmic sound of their boots on the sand.

TROY

If this is over Kristina, you need
to pull yourself together.

SWOFF

It's the waiting, the whole fucking
cock-tease. It's the fucking
desert.

TROY

I don't give a fuck what it is,
just don't pull the goddamn
trigger.

EXT. REAR - NIGHT/DAY

They run and run. We follow them on a tour of the perimeter;
outside is the dark of the endless desert beyond the shadows
of the perimeter lights.

In pain, Troy rubs his groin. He's chafed himself raw running
his friend back to sanity.

TROY

I wish I'd rubbed some Vaseline in
my crotch.

SWOFF

Me too.

TROY

Fuck it.

They keep running.

SWOFF

Fuck it.

In CUTS we see them run all night long. The darkness gives way to sunrise. The Muezzin calls the Egyptians to prayer.

Finally, Swoff stops running. His face is beyond red. Chapped and blistered, it is like some desert creature. But he has stopped. Troy stops with him. His face looks even worse.

TROY

Done?

Swoff nods.

SWOFF

Done.

EXT. REAR - DAY

Their Humvee passes through the gates, heads back into the desert. Swoff takes a look back, back at the air-conditioned world, then turns his face into the hot desert air.

EXT. DESERT - DAY - LATER

ON SCREEN: TROOPS IN SAUDI ARABIA 400,000

The Humvee drives back into the snipers' forward area.

More equipment and troops are there, big trucks and self-propelled vehicles, more howitzers.

INT. S-2 TENT - LATER

Troy leads Swoff past rows of office marines working on maps. Swoff's a little reluctant.

TROY

Relax, no one's going to know.

They come to CORPORAL HARRIGAN. His glasses sit crooked on his nose. He's writing something on a computer; he talks into his left shoulder, like he has a phone cradled there.

CORPORAL HARRIGAN

Yeah?

TROY

I hear you've got some good stuff.

CORPORAL HARRIGAN

Fly rumor, on winged feet.

(beat)

You know what I'm doing?

TROY

No.

CORPORAL HARRIGAN

I'm writing a love letter for the Major. I studied classics at Dartmouth. I write all his letters to his wife. "Dear sweet Gloria, I wish I were up in you now with a finger in your ass."

TROY

I don't think that's what we want to hear right now.

CORPORAL HARRIGAN

(resigned)

There's just no market for poetry any more.

(beat)

Forty bucks. Five gallons.

EXT. S-2 TENT--MOMENTS LATER

Troy and Swoff stand in front of a cargo container tucked behind some tents. Corporal Harrigan emerges from the dark interior, carrying an enormous jug of homemade hooch.

CORPORAL HARRIGAN

Chateau Riyadh. 1991.

INT. TENT - MORNING

Sunlight shines through the window. Swoff lies drunk and passed out on his rack. Troy's rack is empty. Sergeant Siek bangs in.

SERGEANT SIEK

Swofford!

Swoff pulls himself out of his rack, blinking.

SERGEANT SIEK (cont'd)
Tell me I am having a bad dream!
Tell me I didn't put your ass in
charge! Tell me we're not supposed
to be on patrol at Oh four thirty.
Tell me some sweet story about
screwing and I'll go back to sleep
and one of your asshole idiots will
call reveille!

Swoff can't tell him that.

EXT. TENT - MOMENTS LATER

Swoff finds Fergus leaning against the Major's Humvee,
asleep. A half eaten peanut butter cracker from his mother's
care package in one hand, his walkman in the other playing
the loop of his Harley Davidson.

Swoff kicks Fergus in the stomach. He comes up coughing
crackers and peanut butter and drops his walkman. We can
hear the sound of the Harley coming out of the headphones.

FERGUS
What's your problem Swoff?

SWOFF
What the fuck time do you think it
might be?

Fergus blinks into the sunlight.

EXT. BASE - LATER THAT MORNING

Sweaty and pale, Swoff struggles to finish a bottle of water.
Empty water bottles are strewn around him. A line of full
water bottles are beside him.

SGT. SIEK
That's it, drink it down. Drink it
all down.

Swoff sputters and chokes and gags. He turns and vomits and
moans. Siek gets down next to Swoff, speaking very quietly.

SERGEANT SIEK
You're not just fucked, Swofford.
You're double possum fucked.
(MORE)

SERGEANT SIEK (cont'd)
Fucked twice by the same two-
peckered possum.
(beat)
Guess what's next?

EXT. SHITTER SUPPLY TENT- LATER

Swoff reports to the S-4 CLERK, PFC POTTINGER, who is in charge of issuing a unique set of supplies from his make-shift tent. PFC Pottinger affects the pose that he is sorry this has occurred and he'll straighten it out as soon as he can. He hands Swoff the tools of ignominy.

PFC POTTINGER
One fence post...one pair welder's
gloves...one pair tongs...five
gallons diesel fuel...
(beat)
...one box of matches.

Swoff takes it all, balancing the gloves, the tongs and the metal fence post.

The clerk checks his papers, filling in the requisition.

PFC POTTINGER (cont'd)
Returning?
(beat)
When are you bringing them back?

SWOFF
A week.

PFC POTTINGER
Jesus.

Swoff turns to leave.

PFC POTTINGER (cont'd)
Don't forget to stir it...

Swoff turns back, a murderous look on his face.

PFC POTTINGER (cont'd)
...while it's burning...
(beat)
Sorry, dude.

EXT. SHITTER - DAY

A 3-hole, deluxe shitter, with hinged doors in back. Swoff takes a breath, opens the door, and uses the tongs to pull out the first 55-gallon drum. It's been spray painted with names. Swoff recognizes one, which makes him smile, sort of. He pulls out the other two barrels and pours in diesel fuel.

Just as Swoff starts to light the match MAJOR LINCOLN approaches. He's a pompous, no bullshit African-American who walks with an ex-athlete's stiffness.

MAJOR LINCOLN
Hold it right there, marine.

SWOFF
Sir?

MAJOR LINCOLN
Stick one of those back in.

SWOFF
They're already full of diesel fuel.

MAJOR LINCOLN
I don't give a shit if they're full of Chanel Number 5. I'm not walking to the other side of the perimeter for my morning glory.

Major Lincoln disappears inside the shitter.

As the door closes, Swoff takes out a box of matches and strikes one. He lights a fuse of detonating cord. It crackles and hisses as it snakes toward the shitter.

Swoff hits the deck and covers his head.

BOOM! We register the explosion on his face. Bits and pieces of the shitter rain down. Swoff smiles.

EXT. SHITTER - SAME

Major Lincoln departs the utterly intact shitter.

MAJOR LINCOLN
Thanks, Marine. I left you a little present.

SWOFF

Thank you, Sir.

As Major Lincoln walks away, Swoff pulls out the barrel, pours in a little more diesel fuel, then lights the barrels, one at a time.

Bilious black smoke pours out, then blows into his face.

Swoff stirs the burning shit, looking like he's going to throw up.

EXT. TENT - DAY

Swoff returns, his hands black from the burnt barrels, his face green. Troy is cleaning the sniper rifle.

TROY

You look like shit.

SWOFF

Tell me about it.

TROY

Help me with the bore.

He attaches a cotton pad to the end of the bore brush. Swoff holds the rifle while Troy pushes down from the muzzle, Swoff removes the cotton pad which emerges flower-like in the chamber. It is meditative.

TROY (cont'd)

Camel hair brush.

Swoff hands it to him and he pours lubricant on a cotton pad. Troy brushes the scope. They handle the weapon and its parts like lovers.

TROY (cont'd)

There's a Lance Corporal. Motor Pool.

They clean some more.

TROY (cont'd)

He'll burn the shitters for the rest of the week.

SWOFF

Why would anyone do that?

70

TROY

It's this place, man. It fucks you up.

(beat)

Twenty bucks a day. Cash only, no IOUs, no porn, no booze.

Swoff hesitates.

TROY (cont'd)

You're getting \$80 a month cash. What do you have to spend it on, pogy bait from the Egyptians?

EXT. MOTOR POOL - LATER THAT DAY

LANCE CORPORAL MARTINI, a pasty-faced, stooped kid with evasive eyes, slides out from under a HUMVEE.

LANCE CORPORAL MARTINI

Sure I'll do it.

Swoff hands him some money.

SWOFF

120 bucks. It's all there.

LANCE CORPORAL MARTINI

Just leave the tongs and shit.

SWOFF

Sure.

Swoff sets them down.

LANCE CORPORAL MARTINI

A week. You must have really fucked up.

Lance Corporal Martini slides back under the Humvee.

SWOFF

Someone did.

And it's Fergus he has in his mind.

INT. TENT - LATER THAT DAY

CLACK. KA-JAM. Metal on metal as Swoff slams his rifle back together. He's sitting cross-legged, his eyes not on his rifle or his hands, which move with practised speed.

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His eyes are on Fergus, sitting across from him, also trying to assemble his weapon.

In the b.g. Cortez sits patching his MOPP suit.

SWOFF

Done.

Fergus finishes.

SWOFF (cont'd)

Again.

He does it again, never taking his eyes off Fergus.

SWOFF (cont'd)

Done.

Fergus, nervous, drops the bolt, then, his hands shaking, slips it home.

SWOFF (cont'd)

Again.

There is murder in his voice.

FERGUS

Swoff--

SWOFF

Again!

They start again. Swoff's fingers fly. Fergus can't do anything right.

CLICK. CLACK. Swoff pulls back the lock.

SWOFF (cont'd)

Done.

Fergus is not quite finished.

SWOFF (cont'd)

How many's that, Cortez?

CORTEZ

(barely looks up)

26 in a row.

Swoff reaches down and slams in a magazine, pulls back the bolt and puts the muzzle against Fergus' temple.

SWOFF

Never, ever fuck over your buddies.

FERGUS

I didn't mean to. It was an accident.

SWOFF

Accident? Like right now when this trigger slips? Course your mom and dad in, where?

FERGUS

Kansas.

SWOFF

Kansas. They'll be sad. I'll say it was an accidental discharge. I may even spend some time in the brig, but I'll be the fuck out of Saudi and I'll know what it's like to kill a man.

(beat)

I am in the firing position known as the sitting position. After the prone position it is the platform most likely to enable the Marine to effectively kill his target. His target being a human, generally an enemy, but sometimes by mistake a friend or friendly. We call this friendly fire, or friendly fucking, or getting friendly fucked.

Swoff's rifle is pointed straight at Fergus' head.

FERGUS

Come on Swoff, I'm really sorry. I didn't mean to Zee out on watch.

Swoff looks over to Cortez.

SWOFF

What do you think Cortez? Do you think I'll accidentally kill your homeboy from boot camp?

CORTEZ

Sure you'll kill him. Accidents happen.

SWOFF

You don't see shit right?

CORTEZ

I'm not here. This isn't even my room. In fact, I'm really not here.

He leaves.

FERGUS

Swoff I'm sorry, I was just sitting there bored as fuck thinking about home.

SWOFF

Sorry? That's what you say after Iraqi sappers step right over your sleeping ass and cut our fucking throats?

He switches the rifle on and off safe. Click. Click.

SWOFF (cont'd)

The M16 A2 service rifle is an air assisted gas rifle that fires a 5.56 millimeter ball projectile. Maximum range 3,534 feet. Muzzle velocity 3100 feet per second. This is my rifle. Repeat after me.

FERGUS

...this is my rifle...

SWOFF

There are many like it but this one is mine. Repeat after me.

Fergus is sniveling. The words come out in fragments. The muzzle of the M16 is right by his cheek.

FERGUS

...many...like...it...

SWOFF

Without me my rifle is nothing. Repeat after me.

FERGUS

...my rifle...nothing...

SWOFF

Without my rifle I am nothing. Repeat. After. Me.

Fergus is moving his lips but we can't hear what he is saying. we are on Swoff's face. He really does want to shoot Fergus. But...he...can't.

SWOFF (cont'd)

Fuck.

Swoff pushes the magazine release button and the magazine clanks down to the floor. He removes the round from the chamber and sticks it in Fergus's mouth.

SWOFF(cont'd)

Damn you, you can't even die right.

He throws the rifle on the floor and walks out, leaving Fergus with the round between his teeth.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

The sun is high in the sky. Desert and sky blend in the glare. Swoff, Troy, and Escobar are on patrol. Escobar carries the radio. Troy is clearly angry. He motions them to stop. They face outward, but their relaxed posture tells us that after all these months they don't expect to encounter anything.

SWOFF

(to Troy)

Come on, Man. It wasn't that big a deal.

But Swoff's feeling of guilt tells him he knows it was.

TROY

You had a fucking round in the chamber! You were locked and loaded on him!

SWOFF

But he slept on watch. He fucked us all over.

TROY

Look, you can kill Iraqis, you can kill your fucking self, I don't give a shit. But if you ever pull crap like that again I will shoot you myself, I swear to fucking god.

SWOFF

Troy, listen--

TROY
Don't fucking talk to me.
(beat)
Come on Escobar, let's go chow down
over here.

As they start to move away Swoff hears something.

SWOFF
(loud whisper)
Troy!

TROY
What fucking now?

SWOFF
There. I hear firing. Over the
dune.

ESCOBAR
It's an echo, man.

SWOFF
Like hell it is.

Swoff gathers his gear and starts up the dune, alone.

Troy watches him go, then turns to Escobar.

TROY
Fuck it. Come on.

And they follow Swoff up the dune.

EXT. DESERT - MOMENTS LATER

The three are moving tactically. They're suddenly on edge,
ready for anything.

TROY
Get on the radio. Find out if there
are any friendlies in the area.

Escobar works with the radio. He looks up. Not working.

ESCOBAR
Fucked.

TROY
Try the 5-foot drop.

Escobar holds up the radio and drops it. Picks up the handset. Nothing.

ESCOBAR
The fucking Army has satellites and we have this shit.

TROY
Fuck it.

They head up the next rise, moving carefully. Covering each other.

SWOFF
There.

TROY
Where?

EXT. DESERT - HIS VIEW

Some Bedouins appear out of a mirage, their robes gently waving in the wind.

SWOFF
They're spies. Are they spies?

TROY
Those are RPG's. Those are fucking RPG's under their robes.

ESCOBAR
They've got anthrax in those RPG's. We're going to fucking melt, man.

They're winding each other up. Swoff begins repeating to himself in Arabic, trying to get it right.

SWOFF
(Arabic. Subtitled)
I am your friend. Drop your weapons.
(trying again, Arabic)
I am your friend. Your friend.

TROY
(to Escobar)
Stay back and cover us. If you see any weapons shoot the fuckers.

Troy waves Escobar back. Ahead they see five camels. Swoff switches his right thumb from burst to fire to safe and back to burst. Click. Click.

One of the Bedouins waves. Troy waves back.

SWOFF

Let's shoot them. All of them.

TROY

Easy. He just wants to talk.

The FIRST BEDOUIN comes up, squats a few feet in front of them. He draws in the sand, speaking in Arabic, gesturing at the camels. The First Bedouin has a gentle face. He is scared.

Troy and Swoff can't understand. More Bedouin emerge, eight of them now. This is getting very tense. The First Bedouin slowly reaches for Swoff's rifle, trying to show him something. Swoff pushes him back. The First Bedouin turns to Troy for help, gesturing.

TROY (cont'd)

Give it to him.

SWOFF

Are you crazy?

TROY

Give it to him. He wants to show us something.

Swoff unloads his rifle, then hands it to the Bedouin, who takes the weapon the way a child might, points it at the camels and makes firing noises.

Troy and Swoff look at each other.

SWOFF

Eight men. Five camels.

The Bedouin inspects Swoff's rifle. Swoff suddenly gets what he's trying to do.

SWOFF (cont'd)

He's looking for gunpowder. To see if it's been fired.

He reaches out to help the Bedouin check the bolt. The Bedouin hasn't opened the rifle and doesn't want to give it back.

SWOFF (cont'd)
It's okay. It's okay.

He smiles at the Bedouin and gestures. There's a connection between them now. The Bedouin understands, hands the rifle over.

SWOFF (cont'd)
That's good. Good.

He opens up the bolt so that the Bedouin can check the chamber.

SWOFF (cont'd)
See?

It clearly hasn't been fired. The First Bedouin nods to Swoff, turns and speaks in Arabic to the other Bedouin. The tension dissolves. The First Bedouin hands the rifle back to Swoff and nods in respect. Swoff nods back.

TROY
Hey man, we're sorry about your camels--

The Bedouin nods to Troy as well, then walks away. The others follow, back to the camels. Swoff and Troy watch them go.

SWOFF
I wonder what dumb fuck played target practice with their camels.

EXT. HUMVEE - LATER

The squad is riding in an open Humvee down the highway. Swoff and Troy have just told the Bedouin story. Welty, Fowler and the others are laughing.

CORTEZ
You should have wasted 'em. Bunch of sand niggers.

SWOFF
They're not the Iraqis, you asshole.

TROY
Yeah, this is their fucking country.

FOWLER

You should see what the 40 does to
the head of a fucking camel.

Troy and Swoff share a look. Of course. Who else but Fowler
would have shot the camels?

SWOFF

What does it do, Fowler?

FOWLER

It turns it inside out into about
three fucking knots. Easy targets
too. Head shots like a
motherfucker.

TROY

You are truly an ass-hole.

FOWLER

You just haven't got to kill
anything, that's your problem.

As they talk a Mercedes Sedan approaches from the rear. It
floats back behind them, waiting to pass. In front is an
upper-class ARAB, in the back seat a veiled ARAB WOMAN.

FOWLER (cont'd)

Check this out!

As the Mercedes passes, Fowler stands up, holds the crossbar
with one hand, and pulls his other hand to his mouth,
flicking his tongue between his fingers in an obscene
gesture.

Swoff can see the covered woman alone in the back of the
Mercedes. He watches as her eyes follow Fowler's crude
gesture. He sees her eyes, locked on Fowler, register shock,
confusion, disgust.

Swoff stares as the Mercedes blows past.

FOWLER (cont'd)

That bitch will never forget me.
She wanted me.

Swoff stares at Fowler.

INT. TENT - NIGHT

Swoff tries to sleep. He tosses and turns. We go in on his
face.

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SWOFF'S DREAM

A bizarre, empty city-scape. A de Chirico painting. Swoff wanders through it. The alleys are numerous, the women in them wear veils. All he sees is their eyes. Diseased dogs wander, addicts do drugs. The sound of his footsteps on pavement.

A veiled woman approaches. He sees her eyes above the veil. It is Kristina. He tries to approach her but can get no closer. She turns and heads out of the alley. Swoff follows her.

Swoff turns out of the alley and he is in a giant reticle. Someone else's crosshairs. Light floods in. A shot rings out. Swoff is shot through the eye. He holds his hand up to his face. No blood. Where the eye was is a small black hole.

Fowler spray paints Swoff's name on a warhead. It fires, a streaming missile, it comes down, headed straight for him, right into him and...

a Mercedes speeds by. Siew is driving. Kristina is in the back seat. Staring at him, she lifts the veil, which becomes the T-shirt in the photograph. She takes it off, revealing her body which is shriveled like a mummy.

Swoff begins to cough, then choke. He vomits. Sand pours out of his mouth.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Swoff comes awake, sweating. He runs his tongue around his lips, tries to swallow. Shit. He lies back down, his eyes open. We hear howitzers firing in the distance.

EXT. HQ - NIGHT

Swoff and Troy man a .50 Cal sniper rifle set up on the roof. Swoff is on the radio while Troy idly scans with the night vision binoculars.

SWOFF

It's been weeks since anybody complained about this place.

TROY

(shrugs)

It's home now. It's comfortable.

SWOFF

- guess you can get used to anything.

TROY

At least it's about to hit the fan. I'm so fucking bored.

SWOFF

Scout-snipers, man. We lead the way.

TROY

You're supposed to be the fucking smart one. Wake up. What can we shoot, say, out to 1500 yards? Man, in Vietnam, that was, what, a week? In World War I, a year? Here it's going to be about ten fucking seconds. By the time we dial in our rifles the fucking war is going to be a mile down the road.

SWOFF

What're you saying, we're not going to get any kills?

TROY

Face facts, man.

Swoff stares at him, not believing gung-ho Troy is saying this.

Then Troy sees something through his binoculars.

TROY (cont'd)

Hey, check this out.

Swoff moves the scope over to look.

THROUGH SCOPE - HIS VIEW

An office, with a map on the wall. A Marine is updating it.

SWOFF

The fucking General's office.

Swoff moves the rifle. The GENERAL appears, in the reticle, looking very impatient, gesturing to a COLONEL. Swoff's finger twitches on the trigger.

SWOFF (cont'd)

Bang.

The General and the Colonel head out of the room.

TROY

Don't even think about it.

Swoff moves the scope around the room and stops on a Television.

SWOFF

Look, the fucker's got CNN.

The TV is set to CNN: A REPORTER is broadcasting news of a SCUD attack in Israel. We see a smoking ruin, civilians in gas masks. Troy begins to read the ticker-tape along the bottom.

TROY

(reading, slowly)

Secretary of Defense Cheney sends
Delta Force to look for Scuds...

Just then the Marine who was updating the map checks to make sure the officers have left, then changes the channel: it's now MTV. Madonna does "Vogue."

SWOFF

Isn't that Madonna?

TROY

Back to the map.

They both move their scopes back to the map. We see it more clearly now.

TROY (cont'd)

It's the Sit Map, the real thing.
Everything they're not fucking
telling us.

They lower their eye pieces, stare at each other. Holy shit. Then they both look again.

INT. TENT - NIGHT - LATER

The snipers gather around a map they've made up to be the exact duplicate of the general's. Troy finishes up some markings based on notes he has in his hand, then turns to start explaining it to the other snipers. Swoff sits still and silent. All this is getting to him.

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TROY

Okay, here we are, First Mar Div.
Just South of the oil fields in
South Kuwait fifty miles inland.
The Second's directly to our west.
This is our planned line of
assault.

They stare at it, each imagining the shit hitting the fan.

TROY (cont'd)

Here's the math. On the infantry
level, we're outnumbered three to
one.

Escobar whistles softly. The men look at each other.

FERGUS

What's that, there, in front of our
assault route?

VEGH

Iraqi artillery...13,14,15
battalions. We've got three.

KUEHN

And look. An Iraqi armored brigade-
state of the art Soviet tanks.
West, to east, across the middle of
Kuwait. And an armored division,
just south of the oil fields.
Right in front of us.

They're all quiet for a moment.

FERGUS

I hear they shipped in a hundred
thousand body bags.

This sinks in on Swoff. He has a feeling of impending doom.

ESCOBAR

Do they come in sizes?

(beat)

Seriously, man. I mean Welty, you
could fit two of him in Kuehn's
bag.

TROY

What difference does it make?

ESCOBAR

I just want a good fit.

CORTEZ

No wrinkles, right, ... k?

ESCOBAR

Fucking A, someone's gotta look good.

SWOFF

(suddenly exploding)

You're just dead, stinking up the cargo plane, man, stinking it up with dead fucking you and all the other dead fucking jarheads. Maybe some of us, who the fuck knows. That's why we wear these...

(he holds out his dog tag)

We know who the fuck we are when we're alive...This is death man, death around our necks...we got death around our necks.

They all stare at Swoff. For a moment no one knows what to say.

FERGUS

That's deep.

KUEHN

Too many books, man. Screws up your head.

TROY

(after a moment,
practical)

Dog tag check.

They all start checking their dog tags. Swoff has one around his neck, one in the loop of his boot. This is the standard style, but there are many variations. Troy's are painted Marine Corps green; Welty's shit brown. Escobar has four taped together and wrapped with camouflage desert tape.

Vegh starts picking something off his.

KUEHN

What the hell's that?

It's a hair, a very curly hair Vegh has taped to his tags.

VEGH

(Hungarian accent, quite
serious)

It is a pubic hair of my wife.

That makes them all laugh, especially with the accent. Finally even Swoff starts to smile. He picks up a letter and opens it. Some pictures fall out. He looks at them before he reads the letter.

SWOFF
Motherfucker.

TROY
What's up?

Swoff hands him the pictures. One of them looks like a party. His mother is in white next to a beardless round-faced man in a white tuxedo. In another shot he is kissing Swoff's mother.

SWOFF
What does this look like to you?

Troy looks through the pictures, shuffles them back and forth, returns once or twice to one of them.

TROY
Hell Swoff, looks to me like your mom just married some fat dude.

SWOFF
My mom married some guy I don't even know. She could have waited until I died in the fucking war or made it home alive, don't you think?

KUEHN
We're jarheads, man. Nobody gives a fuck.

SWOFF
Doesn't matter. She's my mother and she married a stranger. She made me a step son and I had nothing to say about it. What if I don't like the motherfucker?

TROY
Swoffie, it's not really your business. Your mom fell in love, she got married. You're a grown man, she's a grown woman. She couldn't wait.

(beat)
(MORE)

TROY (cont'd)

Time doesn't stop back in the world man, just because we're about to be in the shit. Nothing stays the same, not our mothers, not our girlfriends, not nobody. They live their lives, man.

SWOFF

What the fuck do you know? You're engaged to a woman you've never even fucked.

TROY

That's because we're saving each other for marriage.

SWOFF

Bullshit. What about all those Okinawa whores?

TROY

Overseas. Doesn't count.

SWOFF

You don't know shit!

TROY

I know you're a jarhead. That's all I need to know.

(beat)

Jar-fucking-head.

(beat)

Marine Corps Birthday?

(beat)

Marine Corps Birthday, goddamnit!

SWOFF

November 10, 1775. Older than the USA.

TROY

Fucking A. Birthplace?

SWOFF

Tun Tavern, Philadelphia.

TROY

Tarawa?

SWOFF

Bloodiest battle of World War II.

TROY

Dan Daly?

SWOFF
Killed 77 Chinese by hand during
Boxer Rebellion. 1900.

TROY
Deadliest weapon on earth?

SWOFF
(into it now)
The Marine and his rifle!

TROY
You want to win your war?

SWOFF
Tell it to the Marines!

Troy explodes into song. He's the ring-master now.

TROY
From the halls of Montezuma, to the
shores of Tripoli--

All the others join in.

ALL
--we will fight our country's
battles on the air and land and
sea.

Vegh jumps in, shouting over the song, with fake malice.

VEGH
(Hungarian accent)
Give me a fucking break jarheads!
You cum suckers don't love my
Corps. You shitbags dishonor the
memory of Chesty Puller every day
with your lazy asses lying around
on these cots like god damned
desert princes jerking your rotten
clits.
(beat)
Bends and thrusts. Bends and
thrusts. My Hungarian
grandmother's harder than you
Swofford!

The tension explodes. They pretend to be DIs to each other.
The whole hooch is on the floor doing push-ups and squat
thrusts. Someone knocks the foreboding map over.

Troy and Kuehn go back and forth, pointing fingers in each others faces, impersonating their favorite DI's, the ones they hated the most, the same ones who taught them the most.

Someone begins to bend heavy wire. As the wire is bent, a blow torch appears. As the thrashing goes on we CUT back and forth to see the wire as it is heated up. The others head-butt and chest-slam each other.

Now the wire glows red hot. As the tension reaches its peak, Troy shouts.

TROY
Now! Now! Now!

They grab Swoff and hold him down. He looks and sees the brand. They're all around, yelling. The brand comes down.

Swoff's face as it touches his skin.

He screams. Then his face slowly changes from rage and pain to a kind of acceptance.

SWOFF (V.O.)
I no longer care that my mother has
completed the crucifixion of my
family and married someone I've
never met. I have a new family.

We linger on Swoff as Troy grabs him and holds him.

TROY
Semper fi, asshole.

SWOFF (V.O.)
We turn the inside of our hooch
into a circus and inside of the
circus we cannot be injured.
Inside of our circus we cannot be
touched.

The chaos continues all around him.

SWOFF (V.O.) (cont'd)
But we are insane to believe this.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Total confusion. Trucks grind gears. Tank engines scream, their tracks churning sand. Tents are struck. The whole battalion is mounting up on trucks and Humvees and riding on tanks.

In full gear, Swoff and the snipers climb into their Humvee.

SWOFF (V.O.)

The United States Congress supports the President's demand for offensive action against Saddam Hussein. The last ultimatum is issued. We move to the Kuwaiti border. The war is so close we can taste it.

EXT. BERM - DAY

Swoff and his team get out of their Humvee. We are just below a tall berm that marks the Kuwaiti border.

EXT. BERM - MOMENTS LATER

Sergeant Seik speaks to the STA platoon. He has a laminated briefing sheet in his hands. The men are edgy and nervous.

SERGEANT SIEK

Listen up numb nuts. I've been ordered to read you what Mister Sodom Insane has just said to the Iraqi people. Please do not consider this a bunch of bullshit.

(reading)

"The mother of all battles is upon us. The sacrifices the Iraqi people will make are equal to the importance of the victory. Kuwait is the branch that must be returned to the tree. The blood of infidels will flow like a river. Jihad is the way of all Arab people."

He pronounces jihad as jye-had.

FERGUS

What the fuck is jye-had?

KUEHN

It means he thinks they can kick our asses with the help of Allah. We are the sinners. We are the infidels and thus easily defeated due to our sinning and other bad behavior.

ESCOBAR

I've been sinning since I was fourteen. They don't know that in America sinning makes you strong.

SERGEANT SIEK

We are now Operation Desert Storm, and we are the eye of the storm. We are the fucking righteous hammer of God.

That sinks in. They all stare away, into themselves.

SERGEANT SIEK (cont'd)

Pass out the syringes.

Welty starts to pass out syringes. Swoff takes his.

SERGEANT SIEK (cont'd)

We don't know when we'll be going in. We do know there will be gas and it will be fucking nasty. These here are Atropine Oxime injectors that go with your PB pill paks. In the event that you're attacked by nerve agents such as Somad, those agents will produce immediate casualties if you do not deploy these counter measures most Rikki Tik.

KUEHN

Why the fuck have we already taken one cycle of PB and we're just now being issued the Atropine and Oxime injectors?

SERGEANT SIEK

(eyes rolling)

Shut the fuck up, Kuehn.

SWOFF

They don't want any chemically dead fighters on CNN.

SERGEANT SIEK

In 1987 Sodom Insane used chemical weapons on the Kurds. Killed thousands of them, like fucking that.

(snaps fingers)

(MORE)

SERGEANT SIEK (cont'd)

The ones that didn't die, their
fucking new babies are deformed:
eight toes to a foot, no anal
openings, retarded, blind--such
fucked up little fuckers it would
be better just to kill them. You
want that, don't take the pills.
You don't want that...

(beat)

...take the fucking pills!

There's silence as that sinks in. We are on Swoff.

SGT. SIEK

So. Remove one pill from your PB
pack. Now place the pill on your
tongue.

(they do)

Take your canteen from your belt
and swallow water and pill.

(they do)

Now don't you feel better?

Kuehn turns, spits his pill out and kicks sand over it.

SERGEANT SIEK

Now dig in. Dig your holes with the
hands God gave you.

EXT. BERM - DAY

The sounds of E-tools striking wet sand. Thump. Scrape.
Thump. Scrape. It's a percussive rhythm. Swoff and Troy
are well down into their fighting hole.

To the rear, American howitzers fire. Boom. Boom. Adding a
deep bass to the percussive concert. Planes fly overhead.
Kuehn pokes his head up from the next hole.

KUEHN

(re: the howitzers)

Soften those ragheads up!

SWOFF

They better. I hear the Iraqis have
brought their big arty up. Russian
stuff. 175's, 8 inchers, even
bigger. Gas warheads.

TROY

Forget the gas.

SWOFF

Forget the gas? Are you nuts?

TROY

Can you do a fucking thing about it?

(beat)

Then forget it.

FERGUS

Doesn't feel like digging a hole.
Feels like digging a grave.

KUEHN

Then make it deeper, you fat fuck.

EXT. FOXHOLES - NIGHT

Swoff and Troy are peeing and watching bombs explode across the horizon. We hear the distant rumble of explosions like thunder and see flashes, strobe-like, across the whole line of Iraqi positions.

SWOFF

Those poor fuckers.

Troy pulls a flask of whiskey from his cargo pocket.

TROY

The real stuff. I've been saving it for the shit.

Swoff takes a long drink. He passes the flask back.

SWOFF

I didn't think it would happen. All those deadlines. All that talk. It's a real mother-fucking war. Bombs and shit. Chemical weapons.

(beat)

Welcome to the mother-fucker.

Troy takes a long swig.

A LOW SCREAMING SOUND comes across the sky, taking us to:

EXT. BERM-DAY

Swoff and Troy are in their hole, eating breakfast. The SCREAMING SOUND intensifies. Troy and Swoff look at each other. What the fuck is that?

SERGEANT SIEK (O.S.)

Incoming!!!

For a moment we linger on Troy and Swoff and then the penny drops. BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! They throw themselves face down as incoming rounds EXPLODE all around them like fierce, blazing fists. We see the effects of the incoming in quick cuts.

KUEHN

(yelling)

Fuck this goddamn shit! Oh fuck
god I love my wife!

Welty is laughing and shrieking. Cortez and Escobar scream in Spanish.

FERGUS

I didn't do it! I didn't do it!

SWOFF

Rockets! Rockets!

Swoff lies crying out to his mother. They all do, to Mom and Jesus. The men's screams continue over the sounds of the rounds coming in. The sand, where the rounds have impacted, looks like an abstract charcoal portrait.

Swoff stares over to where his flak jacket, helmet, weapons and gas mask are stacked by his fighting hole. More rounds come in.

KUEHN

Gas! Gas! Gas!

Troy and Swoff exchange a look. More rounds explode. Do they die from the explosions or the gas?

TROY

Fuck.

SWOFF

Fuck.

In the midst of the explosions, Troy crawls out of the hole and grabs the gas masks. Sand rains down. Swoff and Troy desperately don and clear their gas masks. It's crazy, disjointed, scary. We hear the sound of Swoff breathing inside his gas mask and the sound of his breathing becomes the sound of his crying.

SWOFF (V.O.) (cont'd)

I'm not crying because I'm afraid,
although I am scared shitless.

(MORE)

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SWOFF (V.O.) (cont'd)
I'm crying because I'm finally in
combat. My combat action has
commenced.

Suddenly there is an eerie silence. Swoff rolls over and
looks down at himself.

To his surprise he has pissed all over himself. Great gouts
of piss, soaking his trousers, his socks, his boots.

SWOFF (cont'd)
(to himself)
Jesus.

Troy shouts to the others.

TROY
Everyone okay?

KUEHN
Yeah, but we could've not been. We
could've not been.

Sergeant Siek jumps into their position, gas mask on.

SERGEANT SIEK
We've got to find their fucking
F.O.!

His voice comes oddly muddled. They stare at Siek through
their gas masks. He rips his gas mask off.

SERGEANT SIEK (cont'd)
Their fucking F.O.! He's got us
dialed in! We've got to spot him.

More rounds come down.

SWOFF
Our radio's dead. We couldn't call
it in.

SERGEANT SIEK
Go to the comm shack. Get some
batteries.

Swoff stares across the desert.

HIS VIEW - COMM SHACK

It's a long way away.

SWOFF
It's 200 meters.

SERGEANT SIEK
Run tactically. Wear all your
gear. Good luck.

Swoff doesn't move.

SERGEANT SIEK (cont'd)
It ain't gonna get any closer.

EXT. BERM - DAY - SWOFF RUNNING

Geared up, Swoff pulls on his gas mask and starts to run.
He's not twenty yards from the hole when we hear a shout.

VOICE
Incoming!

Rounds explode. We hear screams from wounded. Shouts of
"Corpsman! Corpsmen up! Jesus!" Welty heads out with his
Unit One. In the b.g. we see him treating a screaming
wounded Marine.

Swoff runs, his feet slipping in the sand, breathing hard,
the sand falling around him. He trips, falls into the sand,
gets up, runs again. It's amazingly slow.

SWOFF
(to himself)
Do not die now. Do not die now.

Rounds explode all around him. American jets scream over,
headed for the Iraqi artillery.

INT. COMM SHACK - DAY

A LANCE CORPORAL hands Swoff the batteries.

LANCE CORPORAL
That's a long fucking run, huh?

Swoff stares at him, then looks out the bunker. More rounds
land. He summons his courage and heads out.

EXT. BERM - FIGHTING HOLE - MOMENTS LATER

Swoff falls back into the hole breathing hard, tears running
down his face. He has the batteries.

TRCY
What took you so long?

SWOFF

Fuck you.

EXT. BERM - MOMENTS LATER

Troy and Swoff take their scopes and crawl up to the top of the berm.

They scan the area.

TROY

You see anything?

SWOFF

A fucking desert and nothing else.

TROY

Get on the radio.

Swoff picks up the handset. Clicks it. Nothing. He looks up at Troy, not believing the radio's still dead.

TROY (cont'd)

The fucking fucker's fucking fucked.

SWOFF

I just ran through incoming to get dead fucking batteries.

TROY

Welcome to the suck.

EXT. BERM - LATER

Jets zoom over, screaming in the sky, headed for the Iraqi forward observers positions.

Swoff strains to see through his spotter scope. But all he can make out are flashes on the horizon. The bombs make a soft thud, like an E-tool striking a skull. Dust rises from where the bombs landed.

Swoff slowly lowers his scope.

SWOFF

Look at that dust cloud. It's like those dead fuckers last breath.

TROY

Motherfucker.

Psy-Ops helicopters fly overhead playing tapes of The Doors.
Propaganda pamphlets blow gently across the desert.

SWOFF
That's fucking Vietnam music.
Can't we get our own music?

TROY
Sounds okay to me.

He looks to his left, then looks again.

TROY (cont'd)
What the fuck is that?

Swoff stares. A huge column of black smoke rises, then another, then another.

SWOFF
The oil wells, man. They've lit the oil wells.

All along the horizon fires spout up, one after another. Black smoke curls to the sky.

We hear a sound like rain. Swoff looks down at his arm. Black gooey drops start to fall on it. He touches and tastes it. Kuehn appears, wired.

KUEHN
It's oil, boys. It's raining oil.
Hallelujah. You ever see that movie, Giant? James Dean, man, dancing in oil.
(beat, James Dean imitation)
My well came in, Bick. I'm a rich man. Richer than you.

The oil gently falls.

ESCOBAR
Those Iraqis, they burn their own oil wells. They'd do anything. They cut out your liver and eat it.

SWOFF
Who told you that? Your mother? They're just like us, man. They're lying out there, scared, just like us.

Swoff sticks out his tongue to catch some of the oil that's still raining down on them. There's an oily slickness to everything. Drops of oil hit Swoff's tongue.

TROY

Swoff, close your mouth. That
shit's poison.

Swoff keeps his mouth open. Kuehn does, too.

SWOFF

It's black blood. The earth is
bleeding.

Sergeant Siek appears.

SERGEANT SIEK

Get your shit together. We're
attacking. MOPP Two.

EXT. BERM - MOMENTS LATER

The STA men are in front, their MOPP suits on, loose, no gas masks. Behind them the Battalion has formed up in a column.

Troy and Swoff are checking each other's gear, making sure nothing is loose. It's very quiet. Nothing more to say.

More Harriers fly overhead. American Artillery fires, deep, gut-rattling booms.

EXT. DESERT - MOMENTS LATER

They head down the other side of the berm, into Kuwait. We see each of our men, MOPP suits loosely on. The suits are still in jungle camouflage.

WIDE SHOT: the men, tiny in the landscape.

SWOFF (V.O.)

When you take the first steps of
your first combat patrol, you are
newborn, and every boot-step you
take is one step closer to, or
farther away from, the land of the
living. And the strangest thing
about it is...

Sweating and exhausted, they crest a dune. Suddenly they see it, a sight unlike anything anyone has ever seen.

SWOFF (V.O.) (cont'd)
...you never know which way you're
walking until you're there.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

The results of all that air power and artillery: terrible
destruction, burnt-out and bombed-out enemy vehicles, bodies
dead in the vehicles or blown from them.

Hundreds of destroyed Iraqi vehicles, both military and
civilian, line the side of the road, frozen in destruction as
they tried to flee.

The men move into it, speechless.

They stop. Troy and Swoff and the men stare at the Iraqi
bodies and then at each other.

TROY
(after a long silence)
The poor bastards never had a
chance.
(beat)
Fuck it.

Swoff stares up the highway at the endless line of
destruction.

EXT. DESERT - ROAD OF DEATH - DAY

We CRANE UP and see a blackened scar on the desert,
stretching for miles as far as we can see, death into the
distance.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

They stop in a small draw for a water break. The destruction
surrounds them like an amphitheater. They barely make a
sound.

TROY
(eventually)
Might as well eat.

The boys break out their powdered cocoa and dehydrated pears
in silence.

SWOFF
Hey, Fergus, want my spaghetti?

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Fergus stares at Swoff. This is the man who held his rifle against Fergus' head, now offering him his main meal.

FERGUS
Sure, Swoff. Thanks.

He takes it. Swoff wipes his hands. He sticks his crackers in his pocket.

SWOFF
I've got to take a dump.

TROY
Stay in voice contact, man.

Swoff nods and heads up the rise.

EXT. DESERT - MOMENTS LATER

As Swoff crests the rise, he sees the remains of a bombed Iraqi convoy. Twelve vehicles are in a circle. Bodies are gathered around what must have been a campfire. They are burned to a black crisp. Swoff stops and stares, taking in the horror of it. A few men are dead in the cabs of the trucks. The hatch of one troop carrier is open. It is packed with bodies.

The men around the fire are bent forward at the waist, sitting dead on large steel ammo boxes. The bodies are in the same positions that Swoff's buddies were in just moments before. On either side are blackened bomb depressions like the marks a fist would make in clay.

Swoff vomits. And again, swishing it around in his mouth as if to cover the stink and taste of death.

Swoff walks to the fire circle. There is a vacant ammunition box, as if reserved for him. He spits into the fire hole, the last of the bile in his mouth.

He takes out his crackers. Six tin coffee cups sit among the remains of the fire. The men's boots are cooked to their feet. The man to Swoff's right has no head. To his left, the man's head is between his legs, his arms hang at his side. Insects swarm.

SWOFF (V.O.)
I want to ask the dead men their names and identification numbers and tell them this will end soon. They must have questions for me.
(MORE)

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SWOFF (V.O.) (cont'd)
But there is distance between the
living and the dead. I could bend
at the waist, close my eyes, and
try to join these men in their
tight dead circle...

We PULL BACK to see Swoff sitting there, in the circle of the
dead, chewing his crackers.

SWOFF (V.O.) (cont'd)
...but I am not yet one of them.

EXT. DESERT - MOMENTS LATER

The men look up to see Swoff coming back over the rise.

TROY
What took you so long?
(beat)
Anything over there?

SWOFF
No.
(beat)
Nothing.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

They bivouac within two hundred yards of the burning oil
wells. The flames shoot hundreds of feet into the air. The
sounds they make are like exhailes of extinct beasts. They dig
individual prone shelters in sand, black and soaked in oil.

Kuehn stops digging.

KUEHN
I can't take this any more man. I
need to get out of this fucking
oil.

TROY
Dig your fucking hole.

Kuehn starts to speak but only a sort of animal scream comes
out. Troy grabs Kuehn's shoulders and shakes him.

TROY (cont'd)
Wake up Kuehn! Come back to me.
Come back to us. This is war,
baby. This is your war.

Kuehn slowly gathers himself together.

KUEHN

Goddamnit. You know I'm here to
fight. I just got to get the hell
out of this oil.

He sinks down to the sand.

KUEHN (cont'd)

This fucking oil.

Swoff drapes his poncho over Kuehn as he lies there shaking.

SWOFF

No sweat, Kuehn. I'll dig your
shelter for you.

VOICE

GAS!

They all scramble to put their gas masks on. Cortez can't
find his mask. He jumps out and runs in circles.

CORTEZ

I'm gonna die! I'm gonna die!

Escobar tackles him, rips his own gas mask off and forces it
over Cortez's face to quiet him.

ESCOBAR

Shut up and breathe, you crazy
fucking Mexican!

Still panicked and wild-eyed, Cortez begins to breathe.

ESCOBAR (cont'd)

(to Cortez)

You okay amigo? You okay?
Tranquilo? Tranquilo?

Cortez nods. Swoff stares at them, the two antagonists,
Cortez in Escobar's arms like a child.

EXT. DESERT - MORNING

Sunlight peeks through the pillars of smoke and strikes
Swoff's gas mask, which is stuck to his face. He peels the
mask away and gulps in some air. Drops of oil spot his face.
The fires rage around them. Sergeant Siek stands there.

SERGEANT SIEK

Swoff, you and Troy are going with
Fox Company.

(MORE)

100
SERGEANT SIEK (cont'd)

They're going to take the Air Field. The rest of us'll rendezvous with the trucks and troop carriers. We'll extract you at 0800 on Day 2. Now we've had beaucoup surrenders. Whole fucking units. But the Republican Guard is still out there. And they are most definitely hard core. So keep your shit together.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Troy and Swoff jump up onto a 5-ton. The grunts eye their high tech sniper rifles.

GRUNT 1

Look. The Ninjas have arrived.

GRUNT 2

We're safe now, boys.

Their voices are dripping with irony. Swoff and Troy get in, silent.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

A convoy snakes across the desert: TANKS, APC's, 5-TONS jammed with Marines.

We see Swoff and Troy in the midst of this firepower.

EXT. 5-TON - DAY

The convoy is stopped. Up ahead is a rise. A GRUNT RADIOMAN looks up from his radio.

GRUNT RADIOMAN

Snipers up.

Swoff and Troy hesitate for a millisecond.

GRUNT RADIOMAN (cont'd)

The Six is up on the ridge there.

EXT. DESERT - MOMENTS LATER

With Colonel Kazickis, Swoff and Troy are looking down on the air field. Swoff and Troy have their scopes.

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COLONEL KAZICKIS

What do you have?

SWOFF

I count a hundred, maybe a hundred and fifty. They've got RPG's. Couple of quad-50's. Two anti-tank rifles.

TROY

Officers in the control tower.

Swoff shifts his scope. His POV: two tiny figures in a distant tower.

SWOFF

Got 'em. 1800 meters.

TROY

Wind south southeast five.

SWOFF

We need half a click.

COLONEL KAZICKIS

Go over two dunes, dig your hide. All the air is tied up farther north until 17:30. That's how long you've got to show me if STA stands for Sun Tan Association.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

In their ghillie suits, Swoff and Troy move tactically up a dune. In the b.g. we see the battalion pulling back into defilade.

EXT. DESERT - LATER

Swoff and Troy scramble up the next dune.

EXT. DESERT/THROUGH SCOPE - INTERCUT - STILL LATER

They position themselves in the sand, carefully concealed. The sun has moved across the sky. They look through the scope.

We see the control tower. The officers are gone.

SWOFF

Shit.

Troy squints at the setting sun. Swoff keeps his eyes in the scope.

TROY

Light's going. We're fucked.

Swoff reaches over and taps his helmet. Troy looks through his binoculars.

TROY (cont'd)

Thank you God.
(into radio)
Officer in control tower.

The Iraqi officers have climbed back up into the tower.

SWOFF

Range.

TROY

1200 meters.

SWOFF

Wind.

TROY

Five to seven, west to east.
(into radio)
Request permission to take the shot.

Swoff dials in the data.

SWOFF

Set.

THROUGH SCOPE we can see the Iraqi officers. They're arguing. One wants to fight, the other doesn't. The light bathes in the reticle. That moment every sniper dreams about.

TROY

(into radio)
We have the shot.
(into radio)
Affirmative.
(beat, to Swoff)
Permission to fire.

He picks up his binoculars, begins his chant.

TROY (cont'd)
Fire...fire...

Swoff's finger tightens, light flows into the scope, and then...

MAJOR LINCOLN (O.S.)
What the fuck frequency are you on?

Swoff and Troy turn to see what the hell is going on. Major Lincoln, the same Major who took a dump in Swoff's ready-to-burn shitter, is standing there, with a RADIOMAN and a PRIVATE, who carries a beach chair.

MAJOR LINCOLN (cont'd)
I had to hump all the way over here. We got air. I'm calling it in.

SWOFF
What the fuck--?

TROY
We have permission to take the shot.

MAJOR LINCOLN
Tough break. But you were only going to waste one guy. Watch this, it'll blow your fucking mind.

The Private opens the lawn chair.

MAJOR LINCOLN (cont'd)
(re: the chair)
Bad knees. College football.

Major Lincoln sits in the chair and nods to the Radioman, who hands him the handset. Troy and Swoff can't believe it.

MAJOR LINCOLN (cont'd)
You never know how many chances you're gonna get to do this.

Major Lincoln begins calling in the coordinates for the air strike.

EXT. DESERT - MOMENTS LATER

We see the combat unfold from Troy and Swoff's POV. All they can do is sit and watch, awed spectators.

Jets scream over. BOOM! The whole control tower disappears.
Black smoke pours out where the tower was.
American tanks assault the airfield.
The tanks maneuver, fire, maneuver.
Dirt clouds mushroom in the desert.
Iraqis fire their 50's.
BOOM! One of the quad 50's is blown up.
Marines spread out on line, pouring out of the APC's.
A few Iraqis drop their weapons and begin to run.
More jets arrive, dropping high white phosphorous.

EXT. HIDE - MAGIC HOUR

It's later. Major Lincoln and his entourage have gone. The airfield is a smoldering mess. We find Troy and Swoff in their hide, the light from the fires playing across their faces. We hear on their radio the orders and messages, the sounds of war. Far away.

Finally Swoff turns to Troy.

SWOFF

We ever going to get to kill anyone?

TROY

Fuck if I know.

SWOFF

(after a moment)

I've been thinking. Marrying a jarhead. It's like kissing your sister.

TROY

Erica's not a jarhead, shit for brains. She's a Woman Marine. With emphasis on the woman.

SWOFF

Whatever works, man. I can't say a word, the way I've fucked up.

TROY

You haven't fucked up. Katrina's still there for you. You come back, big tough marine in those dress blues, medals all over your chest, you think she'll stay with a fucking clerk??

SWOFF

Night manager.

TROY

Whatever. The point is, she'll be there for you, you just gotta trust her.

SWOFF

You're talking about a woman, right?

TROY

Hey, don't be bitter, man. I'm not.

SWOFF

Me? I'm stuck in the fucking desert, with a retard engaged to a retard, surrounded by fucking Iraqis with chemical weapons, while every Jody in the world is banging my girlfriend.

TROY

But you love it.

After a moment, as the radio war heats up: with sounds of firing and screaming.

SWOFF

Sure. What's not to love?

The radio sputters and dies. Silence. They realize they are completely alone.

SWOFF (cont'd)

Where the fuck is our relief?

Troy looks at his watch.

TROY

I've never not had a pick up. Siek wouldn't allow it. He'd run out here and carry us back on his fucking shoulders.

SWOFF

Maybe they gave Fergus the map and compass.

TROY

Even Fergus would find us. Let's lock and load and go find out what the fuck.

They hear a screaming sound in the sky.

SWOFF

Fucking Scuds! They're Scudding the battalion!

TROY

We don't know that. Could be Friendly.

SWOFF

You ever hear Friendly sound like that?

TROY

Fuck.

EXT. DESERT - MAGIC HOUR

Troy and Swoff are walking on foot, alone, across the eerie emptiness, terrified. Fires burn. Smoke covers the sun, which has nearly set. The flames and smoke lick the edge of the sky.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Night now. The scene is lit by the otherworldly light of burning oil fires. They come over a dune just as rounds land near-by. Shit! They dive to the ground. For a moment they lie there as the sounds of the incoming fade.

Then, suddenly, the sand gives way beneath them! They are falling with the sand, rolling down.

Whomp. They come to rest at the entrance to an Iraqi bunker exposed by the explosions. It's spooky in the shadows.

TROY

Come on, man.

SWOFF

I gotta check it out.

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INT. BUNKER - MOMENTS LATER

Swoff adjusts his eyes to the half darkness. The fires outside cast strange shadows. The bunker is empty. The Iraqis have dug shelves into the walls. On one shelf is the picture of a woman with a young boy. Swoff runs his hand over the shelf. Magazines in Arabic are stacked neatly. Some cigarettes. Letters. A few items of gear.

He hears a sound, a familiar jingling. He looks for it. Across the way something glitters in the fire light. Swoff walks to it. It's a set of Iraqi dog tags, swinging gently from a stick stuck into the side of the bunker.

Swoff reaches for them, takes a step closer. His hand closes around them. CLICK. He freezes.

He slowly looks down at his feet.

HIS VIEW - BOOBY TRAP

A gentle breeze blows some sand away beneath his boot. There, under his foot is a pressure-release BOOBY TRAP.

ON SWOFF - SAME

Swoff's face turns pale. His leg shakes as he tries to keep his foot down.

SWOFF

Troy...

He wants to yell but it's barely a whisper. He licks his lips, tries again.

SWOFF (cont'd)

Troy!

EXT. BUNKER - MOMENTS LATER

Troy's head appears in the entry.

SWOFF

Stop the fuck! Right there!

Troy doesn't understand.

SWOFF (cont'd)

Booby traps, man. I'm standing right on one.

TROY
Easy, don't move. Easy.

SWOFF
I don't want to die.

TROY
Easy. I'm coming.

SWOFF
No! You'll blow us both up!

TROY
Shut up.

He drops to his knees and crawls forward, probing gently with his knife in the floor of the bunker.

SWOFF
Motherfucker!!

INT. BUNKER - MOMENTS LATER

Troy lies next to Swoff. He has his bayonet out.

TROY
It's pressure release, so don't
move, okay? Fucking Bouncing
Betty'll blow off my head and your
balls.

SWOFF
I'm not moving.

Troy works his bayonet under Swoff's foot, then shifts his weight. We hear another CLICK.

They look at each other. Another one.

SWOFF (cont'd)
No fucking way.

TROY
We're fucked.

SWOFF
Where is it?

TROY
Right under my butt.

Swoff slowly pulls out his knife.

SWOFF

Steady, man.

TROY

No shit.

SWOFF

You get mine?

TROY

I think so.

SWOFF

Here goes.

Swoff slowly lifts off his foot. Troy holds the pressure on.

SWOFF (cont'd)

(pretends to leave)

See you.

TROY

Fuck you.

INT. BUNKER - MOMENTS LATER

Swoff digs under Troy's butt as Troy holds his knife on Swoff's booby trap. Swoff slips his knife under Troy. Very slowly.

SWOFF

Got it.

(beat)

Now what?

TROY

Take off your pack. Slowly.

Swoff starts to, very carefully.

Swoff sets his pack on Troy's knife. Troy slowly pulls his knife out. No explosion. One to go.

TROY (cont'd)

Okay. Okay. Good.

Troy rolls off Swoff's knife. He sets his own pack on Swoff's knife.

SWOFF

Stop fucking shaking.

He starts to pull his knife out, so slowly. There is utter silence.

EXT. BUNKER - MOMENTS LATER

They emerge from the bunker into the desert, into the eerie shadows of the burning oil wells. We linger on Swoff's face, still so scared, so glad to be alive. He and Troy share a look. They've just shared something only they will ever understand.

SWOFF
(finally)
You okay?

TROY
Yeah.
(beat)
Let's go.

They begin to walk.

EXT. DESERT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Finally they come up to the berm. Black smoke pours up from the other side. A very bad sign. Troy pauses and loads a grenade into his breach. They approach the top of the rise.

SWOFF
They're all dead, Troy, I know it.
They fucking gassed 'em.

EXT. DESERT - SAME

They start to crawl up the back of the berm. Swoff's face is full of foreboding at what they will find.

TROY
What's that noise?

And now we hear it too. A weird kind of pounding and screaming.

SWOFF
Fuck, man, they're doing 'em right
now.

They crest the top of the berm. The first thing they see are what looks like two heads impaled on sticks. Holy shit.

They look closer, to see: two gas masks stuck on rifles that have been planted upright in the sand.

They look past the gas masks and what they see is...

EXT. BATTALION POSITION - THEIR VIEW

...Men lying naked on sleeping pads, in the light of the burning wells. Weapons and rucks and uniforms are strewn about the camp. A wild football game is in progress.

Sergeant Siek is handing out cigars and dancing shirtless and playing a kazoo. The Who is piping through the comm towers. That's the weird sound they heard. Other men burn their chemical weapons suits in a huge bonfire. And that's the pillar of black smoke they saw.

Some Marines roast marshmallows in the flames. Others toss Frisbees. A few play poker and shoot craps in the firelight. Troy and Swoff can't believe it.

EXT. BATTALION POSITION - MOMENTS LATER

In full combat gear, Swoff and Troy walk into the celebration. Naked Marines dance around them. The contrast between Swoff and Troy with their weapons and combat gear is intense. Siek comes up with a big smile.

SERGEANT SIEK

Shit. You were still out there.
Sorry.

He looks at Swoff and Troy in their full gear and laughs.

SERGEANT SIEK (cont'd)

You guys are overdressed. Didn't you read the fucking invitation?

(beat)

Hey, smile, the motherfucker is over. You didn't die.

He shoves cigars in their mouths. They stand there, still not taking it in. Kuehn comes up, totally smashed, waving his rifle.

KUEHN

It's over, it's fucking over!

He fires his M16 into the air, one burst, then another.

VEGE

Get some!

Escobar and Cortez begin to dance around, doing salsa with each other, screaming in Spanish.

WELTY

Fuck! Bitch!

He screams and fires. Troy takes his rifle, fires it once. Grins. This is great. He fires some more, and starts to scream.

Swoff watches them all go crazy. And then suddenly his face changes, he gives himself permission. And now he is firing too, firing and screaming. They all are.

Firing from the hip. Not even aiming. Ejected cartridges fill the air, gleaming in the firelight like fireflies. Machine guns kick in now. Tracers etch the sky like light pens.

They're dancing now, on one foot then on the other, firing their weapons and dancing in circles like pagans around a fire. Screaming. Laughing. Weeping.

SWOFF (V.O.)

Many of the men who live through war don't understand why they were spared. They think they're still alive in order to return home and make money and fuck their wife and get drunk and wave the flag.

And above them is the night sky, lit by burning wells, crisscrossed by tracers.

SWOFF (V.O.) (cont'd)

I went to war. And I am entitled to say: we belonged to a fucked situation.

INT. SCHOOL BUS--DAY

Swoff looks out a window at a welcoming parade. The other snipers ride with him.

EXT. TWENTY-NINE PALMS - CALIFORNIA - DAY

Twenty yellow school buses rumble into a town on the high desert.

People are cheering, an enthusiastic if rather ragged and anticlimactic crowd. They throw plastic yellow ribbons, wave flags.

INT. BUS - SAME

A can of beer comes hurling through the window. Troy picks it up and opens it, spewing beer everywhere. The bus stops.

INT. BUS - SAME

Kuehn pulls a VIETNAM VET onto the bus. He wears tattered jeans and a faded camouflage blouse with his Vietnam medals. All the horseplay stops and everyone stares at him. The vet closes his mouth and licks his cracked lips.

VIETNAM VET

Thank you. Thank you Jarheads.

They all mutter. Sure. No sweat.

VIETNAM VET (cont'd)

I'm a Vietnam Vet. 26th Marines.

(beat)

We're not all baby killers. You made them see that. You did.

Outside we hear the cheers of the crowd, we see the waving of the flags.

VIETNAM VET (cont'd)

Semper Fi, you mother-fuckers,
Semper Fi.

We look at the faces of these men we've come to know, ending with Swoff. It's silent on the bus.

SWOFF (V.O.)

That sad Vietnam vet in his faded
camies, haunted by jungle ghosts,
lost in America...he is me.

EXT. FILIPINO BAR - NIGHT

Welty stumbles out of a Filipino bar, blinking in the light, a bar girl on his arm.

SWOFF (V.O.)

That jarhead stumbling out of a bar in the PI with a bar girl, madly in drunk hangover love with each other and all things American, which you can tell by the American flag miniskirt she's wearing and the red, white and blue heels, and the patriotic shit-eating grin on his face, goddam, that is me.

EXT. PIER - SANTA CRUZ - DAY

A pot-bellied older Vegh tries to handle his wife and 3 kids, who are covered with ice cream and kicking each other.

SWOFF (V.O.)

That one, with the stupid regulation mustachio, the overweight wife from his hometown of Bumfuck and three kids in tow, that jarhead is me.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Looking smooth in a 3-piece suit, Kuehn gives orders to a group of other young executives.

SWOFF (V.O.)

That smooth operator, moving up the ladder, taking no prisoners, shooting to kill, that jarhead is me.

EXT. HOUSE - SACRAMENTO - DAY

Kristina stands by the door of a cottage, staring at Swoff, who returns her look with such longing.

They stare at each other, so much between them, so much anger and lust and love and pain. Just then a figure appears beside her, a MAN. His hand goes to her shoulder, her hand covers his hand.

SWOFF (V.O.)

That poor stiff who comes home from the war, and everything he thought would be waiting for him is gone, that poor dumb fuck, that jarhead is me.

The door closes on Swoff.

INT. HOUSE - IOWA - NIGHT

Another door opens. A long-haired bearded guy in a knit cap stands there. Swoff doesn't recognize him. Swoff himself is older now, lost a little hair, put on a few pounds. The stranger pulls off his knit cap. It's Fergus.

EXT. IOWA - NIGHT

The two of them are shit-faced drunk, running through the snow-covered streets, shouting cadence to each other, singing obscene marching songs.

SWOFF (V.O.)

Those jarheads, drunk and rude, shouting their bad behavior and their Jarhead bullshit into the quietest civilian recesses, the guys everyone loves so long as they are somewhere else, those jarheads are me.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - MICHIGAN - DAY

We see the faces of Fergus, Kuehn, Welty, Escobar, Fowler, Vegh, all much changed, and finally Swoff, looking down into a casket.

SWOFF

That guy in the casket, who wanted nothing more than to be a jarhead all his life, who's driving home from his dead-end civilian job and flips his car on black ice, he is me.

And what they see is: Troy, lying dead in the casket.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY - SERIES OF SHOTS

WIDE on everyone with the priest speaking over the casket.

SWOFF (V.O.)

And that man, who'd offer his life to go back for the chance to kill, that is me.

We go to Swoff's face.

SWOFF (V.O.) (cont'd)
 But that jarhead who knows that
 when that major took away his kill
 he handed him his life, that is
 also me.

The casket is lowered into the grave. Swoff's eyes are wet.

SWOFF (V.O.) (cont'd)
 And all the jarheads killing and
 dying in every shit corner of the
 world from 1775 till tomorrow, they
 will always be me.

FROM ABOVE now, as the men disperse, saying their last good-
 byes to each other, going their separate ways, one by one.

INT. HOUSE - IOWA

Swoff stands at the window, looking out.

HIS POV: Snow falls gently. A whiteness, like a shroud,

SWOFF (V.O.)
 When I despair, I am alone, and I
 am often alone. In crowded rooms
 and walking the streets of our
 cities, I am alone and full of
 despair.

We are back on Swoff, staring out at the snow. We hear the
 words from the beginning of the movie.

SWOFF (V.O.) (cont'd)
 Awake, asleep, high heat of the
 afternoon or the few soft sunless
 hours of early morning...

And now we see what he sees. The snow has become the desert.
 Vast, endless, shimmering in the light of the dying sun.

SWOFF (V.O.) (cont'd)
 ...I am still in the desert.

And now, in the distance, we see two figures.

Troy and Swoff, trying to find their way home.

FADE TO WHITE