

TEN SOLDIERS  
An Original Screenplay  
by  
Kevin Hal Reynolds

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A Thesis Presented to the  
FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA  
In Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree  
MASTER OF ARTS  
(Cinema)

June 1981

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*This thesis, written by*

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under the direction of h.....Thesis Committee,  
and approved by all its members, has been pre-  
sented to and accepted by the Dean of The  
Graduate School, in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Cinema

*L. S. Ornd*

Dean

Date 5-26-81

THESIS COMMITTEE

*Morton Zerkoff*

Chairman

*Morton Zerkoff*

*E. Russell M. Steyer*

*Richard S. Huber*

FADE IN:

EXT BOILING GRAY MORNING

We descend through dark, ominous clouds. JET ENGINES THROB dully. The low ceiling breaks, and in the misty distance ahead a small town lies nestled against the base of the Rocky Mountains.

CUT TO:

INT RURAL HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM MORNING

The old pine walls give a warm feeling. Students in rural attire horse around before class begins.

DARYL BATES pompously tries to command the attention of everyone else.

PAUL MATTHEWS seductively peers down the front of a young beauty's dress.

JED ECKERT watches with a sleepy smile as he slouches in his letter jacket.

They're seventeen.

The THROB of the planes grows louder, then passes over. Outside the window, parachutes begin dropping from the overcast skies. Dozens of armed men in battle fatigues land in the field beside the school and begin opening supply cannisters. They move urgently.

STUDENTS

Enthralled, they crowd to the window.

BOY #1

Must be from Fort Carson. Training jump.

DARYL

Off course a little, aren't they?

BOY #1

My daddy always said the military couldn't find it's ass with both hands and a search warrant.

EXT SCHOOL

A frumpish old man---TEESDALE---exits the school building and waddles toward the soldiers.

INT CLASSROOM

Paul mocks him.

PAUL

Go get 'em, Teesdale!...'Well now, my friend! Well now!

The kids laugh.

EXT SCHOOLYARD

Teesdale approaches a soldier from behind, seeking an explanation. The soldier is unbuckling his chute.

TEESDALE

Well now, my friend! Well now!

Startled, the man whirls and shoots Teesdale dead.

STUDENTS

They're dumbstruck. A girl SCREAMS.

SOLDIER

He nervously jerks in their direction, sees the horrified faces at the window, and fires off a long burst from his automatic rifle.

INT CLASSROOM

The students duck as glass showers over them. Recovering, they rush toward the door, screaming and shouting. Books and desks fly.

BOY #1 stares blankly out the window at the scurrying soldiers, chin on the window sill, a bullet through his head.

EXT SCHOOL

Students of all ages pour from the ancient schoolhouse as more parachutists land in b.g. Jed, Paul, and Daryl run toward the parking lot.

JED  
(shouting)  
Jess?!...You seen my brother?

PAUL  
(pointing)  
...There! Start the truck!

They leap in the cab of an old pickup. JESS, sixteen, and two younger boys jump in back. Jed floors the pickup, then slows for ROBERT and AARDVARK.

JED  
Hurry!

They're yanked aboard as Jed SCREECHES out of the parking lot.

EXT STREETS DAY

The pickup BLARES through town. GUNFIRE and EXPLOSIONS erupt everywhere. Confused people run from houses, a few with guns.

A sheriff's car sits in the middle of the street, bullet-riddled, lights flashing. A deputy is sprawled outside the driver's door.

PICKUP BED

The boys crouch in terror. Some peer over the sides. Jed takes a corner on two wheels, speeds down a residential street.

CAB

DARYL  
Where you goin'?

JED  
My mom and Jenny! I hafta get 'em!

JED'S POV

The pickup rounds a curve...Paratroopers are moving up the street, arms at the ready. The lead soldier raises his hand for the pickup to halt.

EXT STREET

Jed slams on the brakes, spins around on a lawn, speeds between two houses.

The soldiers open fire and BLAST a wall.

INT PICKUP

Daryl and Paul try to wrench the steering wheel from Jed, but he fights them off.

PAUL

Jed, you can't get to 'em!  
You can't!

Anguished, Jed beats at the wheel.

EXT BACK OFF PICKUP

A fifteen year-old Chicano with a long nose and even longer face, 'Aardvark' looks fearfully over the side of the speeding truck. People dart in all directions. Amid the pandemonium, a tall CHICANO MAN trots aimlessly down the sidewalk with a dazed expression.

AARDVARK

Papa!

The man sees Aardvark racing by.

AARDVARK'S FATHER

Arturo!

Aardvark scrambles over the others to beat on the cab window.

AARDVARK

Stop! My father's back there!  
Stop for him!

AARDVARK'S FATHER

The pickup pulls away from him as he runs after it, waving his arms.

AARDVARK'S FATHER

Son, where you going? Arturo?

PICKUP

The boys pull Aardvark down. He stares back at the tiny figure on the road.

CITY LIMIT SIGN

"Calumet, Colorado. Pop. 1012. Gateway to the Rockies!"

The pickup flashes past.

CUT TO:

EXT      ROCKY MOUNTAIN FOOTHILLS      DAY

Jed's pickup races up a winding mountain highway, the only vehicle in sight.

INT      CAB

The boys lean forward, watching the road and hills apprehensively. Suddenly, Jed goes white---and quietly brakes to a stop.

BOY'S POV

Ant-like figures in camouflage battle dress spread concertina wire across the highway several hundred yards ahead. Their parachutes dangle in the trees.

PICKUP

Jed downshifts the truck's old gears and eases off the highway. Slowly, he heads cross country, away from the road and the soldiers.

CUT TO:

EXT      MOUNTAINSIDE      DAY

The pickup struggles up a steep slope. It bounces along crazily for a moment, then the front wheels drop into a gulch.

CAB

The boys sling forward in the crash, hitting the dashboard. Daryl and Paul groggily rub their heads. Jed's nose is bloody. Dazed, he does not notice and stumbles from the cab.

RADIATOR

Steam ROARS out. It's ruptured.

JED

slumps beside the truck. Pale and trembling, the others join him, staring into the valley far below.

BOY'S POV

In the midst of a vast pastoral scene, columns of smoke rise from Calumet. Distant GUNFIRE echoes off the hills.

THE GROUP

Jed, Paul, Daryl, Jess, Arturo, and three others:

DANNY---thirteen, small, meek...a worrier.

ROBERT---fourteen, your basic kid.

RAYMOND---fifteen. A dunce.

Paul takes off his jacket and wraps it around Danny---he's shivering.

DANNY

I ain't cold.

ROBERT

Who are they?

Jed shakes his head numbly.

JESS

You're bleedin'.

Jed wipes at his nose, unconcerned with the injury.

RAYMOND

(breathlessly)

I bet they're Russians!

Jed surveys the open mountainside around them.

JED

We better hide for a while...  
Go up high.

He gets to his feet and heads toward the forests above. The younger boys follow like frightened quail. Danny stumbles backwards, gazing down at the valley.

DANNY

What about our families? Huh?  
What about them?

Getting no response, he hurries to catch up.

EXT MOUNTAIN FOREST DAY

The boys are huddled miserably beneath the boughs of a giant fir tree. A gray drizzle falls. Overhead, unseen jets SHRIEK past at tree top level. It's awesome.

DARYL

They don't send fighters for terrorists.

JESS

If it was a war, the whole world would be blown up by now. Huh, Jed?

JED

How should I know?

He lights a cigarette. EXPLOSIONS stacatto in the distance.

DARYL

There's not but one way to find out.

He picks up a stick and grimly raps the tree.

DARYL

As president of the Calumet High Junior/Senior class, I call this meeting to order. The chair will now entertain motions on the matter of returning home to find out what has happened.

Jed and Paul exchange glances.

PAUL

What the hell are you doing?

DARYL

Don't speak until the chair recognizes you...Danny?

Danny drops his hand and stands up, swept away by the grandeur of parliamentary procedure.

DANNY

I move that we go to town to find out stuff.

DARYL

Do I hear a second to that motion?

Raymond is already on his feet, waving his arm wildly.

RAYMOND

I second it! I second the motion!

DARYL

Thank you, Raymond. A motion has been made and seconded that we go to Calumet to find out 'stuff'. All in favor say 'aye'.

Everyone except Jed, Paul, and Jess shout 'Aye'.

DARYL

All opposed?

JED

We're safer here.

DARYL

Then say 'no'.

JED

NO!

DARYL

The motion carries.

Robert raises his hand and Daryl recognizes him.

ROBERT

I move that we eat first when we get there.

JED

It's too dangerous to go into town.

DARYL

You're out of order. Now if you want to speak, raise your hand...

JED

I'll speak when I damn well feel like it, you little worm. The hell with etiquette...We're lucky to be alive right here, and if we go down...

DARYL  
Our families are down there.

A beat.

JED  
We can't help them.

He sees the frightened young faces.

JED  
...All right. But there's no  
point in all of us traipsing  
down there.

DARYL  
No, that's probably not necessary.

JED  
Paul, come with me, okay?

Paul nods, Daryl starts to interrupt, and Jed cuts  
him off.

JED  
Robert, we need the key to  
your dad's store.

ROBERT  
It's hid.

JED  
Then you can find it...  
And you, Aardvark. You're a  
good pack mule.

DARYL  
I'll keep things under control  
here.

JED  
Good. You can hold a meeting  
or something.

Jess leans close.

JESS  
And me?

Jed whispers back.

JED  
You watch Daryl...Besides, Mom  
would kill me.

He turns to the others.

JED  
In the morning, if we're not  
back, don't come look for us.  
You get away from here.

He starts off down the slope, pushing through deep  
brush.

RAYMOND

trots beside Paul, sporting a remindful look.

RAYMOND  
Get some Twinkies, okay?

Paul looks at him incredulously.

RAYMOND  
(cupping his hands)  
They're on the third aisle!...  
By the bread!

The low afternoon sun breaks a cloud, and sad light  
paints the four boys wading downhill.

JESS  
If it's bad, don't take no chances!

Jed waves back. The brush swallows them.

JESS

turns and sees the other left-behinds. They're  
watching him.

JESS  
(to himself)  
...I ain't no leader.

CUT TO:

EXT CALUMET MAIN STREET NIGHT

A ROCKET

launches right at CAMERA.

The soldier who fired it kneels in the middle of the street, shouldering his weapon. He watches the skyward course of the missile as other troops run by. EXPLOSIONS, HONKING HORNS, JET AIRCRAFT. The soldiers are Hispanic.

An Anglo officer rushes up. The soldier answers his question by pointing in the air. Suddenly, they dash for cover as a JET begins a strafing run.

POV FIGHTER

Soldiers dive in all directions as withering machine gun fire chews up the street.

SOLDIERS

They shoot back.

THE FLAMING AFTERBURNER

of the jet climbs into the night.

SOLDIERS

move into the street again, carrying off the dead and wounded.

A convoy of military and commandeered vehicles push through the flaming rubble.

EXT STORE WALL

Cupped hands hold a house on the peeling stucco:  
"You're In Good Hands With Allstate".

TILT UP

On the roof, Jed and other faces peer at the scene below---frightened expressions floating like firelit phantoms.

AARDVARK

(whispering)

They're not terrorists, are they?

No one answers. The boys scuttle backward from the edge---into darkness.

CUT TO:

EXT RESIDENTIAL ALLEY NIGHT

A cat creeps beside a fence, stalking something. Suddenly, running feet THUMP down the alley. The cat crouches defensively...Five shadows rush by.

THE BOYS

slip from bush to shadow. They halt, gasping quietly. Somewhere a gun CHATTERS.

PAUL

Where to?

JED

Your place in closest.

Paul springs away. They follow across dark lawns. No streetlights; no houselights---only the moon. Running low, they hug the familiar houses.

JED

drops to the ground, taking Robert with him. He motions frantically. Everybody flattens in the grass.

ROBERT

(whispering)

What's the mat...

Jed slaps a hand on his mouth and raises a finger to his lips, urging quiet. He points ahead.

TWO SHADOWY FIGURES

lean on the roof of a curbside car. Cigarettes glow. Soldiers. Twenty yards away. Silent as dead men. Then one drags on his smoke and chuckles in Spanish.

SHADOW

(subtitles)

Yeah, that was a good one...

They have seen nothing.

JED

breathes.

CUT TO:

EXT PAUL'S BACKYARD NIGHT

Paul hoists himself over the fence for a look, fellow faces appearing on either side.

THE HOUSE

Very middle class. Very foreboding. Very void of light or life.

AARDVARK

looks around the neighborhood.

AARVARK

Hey, there's no lights on anywhere!

JED

Welcome along...

(to Paul)

...Go ahead.

PAUL

leaps the fence and slinks to the backdoor. A look over his shoulder, and he grabs the doorknob. It won't turn. He wrestles with it.

Jed shouts a whisper.

JED

What're you doin'?

PAUL

It's locked.

Jed jumps the fence.

PAUL

We never lock the house.

JED

You gotta key?

PAUL

No.

JED

Knock.

Paul does...Silence. Paul knocks louder.

INT PAUL'S HOUSE NIGHT

A tomb. In the eerie darkness Paul's silhouette bangs at the opaque door glass. Cereal boxes and coffee sit on the table...Yesterday's breakfast.

PAUL

stops knocking. He swallows.

JED

You want to try the front?

Paul shakes his head, but can't speak.

JED

They're prob'ly at my house.

Paul nods dismally.

CUT TO:

EXT VACANT LOT NIGHT

They slink through overgrown grass. Aardvark trips on something, falling like lead. He dusts himself off and looks to see what caught his foot---a bulky thing. Something stiff. Aardvark turns it over.

A DEAD WOMAN

AARDVARK

pushes himself away from the corpse.

ROBERT

Aardvark! Come on!

Jed sees it.

JED

Mizz Guthrie?

He waits for an answer, some movement.

JED

...You okay?

PAUL

Look at her eyes.

MRS. GUTHRIE

Her dull, dead eyes stare skyward. Jets SHRIEK.

Jed feels for a heartbeat, sees the dead hand clutching the bloody splotch on her side. He wipes his fingers on his jeans.

JED

She musta got shot and crawled  
out here to hide.

The boys stare at the mannequin. Aardvark is transfixed. Paul pulls him away.

CUT TO:

EXT JED'S BACKYARD NIGHT

From an upstairs bedroom window, it looks haunted. The bedroom is dark, the curtained window closed. Barbeque grill in the yard. A little girl hugs a dog in the picture on the window sill. Someone KNOCKS downstairs.

JED(V.O.)

(whisper)

Mom! Dad!...It's Jed!

A figure backs away from the house. He bends down, throws gravel at the window.

JED

Jenny!...Jenny!

Nothing. Four other figures chase Jed into the night.

CUT TO:

EXT ROBERT'S FATHER'S STORE NIGHT

The back door. Jed and company come to a halt, breathing hard.

AARDVARK

She was dead, wasn't she?

JED

Yes.

AARDVARK

Huh?

JED

Yes.

Robert monkeys with the lock. They're inside in seconds.

INT ROBERT'S FATHER'S STORE NIGHT

Robert closes the door...Safe at last.

POV

Aisles of groceries stretch to the glassed-in store front. Past that--mainstreet. Fires and headlights illuminate at random.

ROBERT

stretches a hand at the groceries.

ROBERT

Help yourselves.

The boys fall on the nearest packages. It's kinda fun.

AARDVARK

destroys a sack of potato chips. He can't eat fast enough.

PAUL

gnaws a frozen TV dinner chicken. Jed appears.

PAUL

I need meat.

JED

Keep away from them windows.

He tosses Paul an apple and moves on, fashioning cold cuts and Roman Meal into a sandwich. A WHIMPER---the next aisle.

ROBERT

sits by the cereal section, tears streaming. One hand holds a bottle of grape juice. The other is plunged in Sugar Crisp.

ROBERT

What's happening?

Jed sticks a wad of meat and bread at him.

JED

Something awful. Now eat this.  
And get your hand outta that  
sugar shit. You eat too much  
sugar and your kids'll be born  
naked.

Robert can't help but laugh.

Glass CRASHES on the other side of the store.

SOLDIER OUTSIDE

He hears it, stops, and looks in the window. Butcher  
paper signs frame his face: "Tongue, \$1.49/lb."...  
"California Navels, 4 lbs./\$1".

SOLDIER'S POV

Everything that is not in shadows appears in order.

A SHOUT pulls him away.

INT STORE

Jed and Robert emerge from the dark.

ANOTHER AISLE

Shattered olive jars cover the floor. Jed and Robert  
round the corner and nearly slip in the mess. They  
look up.

AARDVARK

is on a top shelf, clutching more teetering jars.

JED

What are you doin', you little  
vandal?

AARDVARK

Gettin' some olives...They're  
great with ham.

Paul turns the corner.

PAUL

You stupid...!

AARDVARK

Shuttup.

JED

Get off there.

He pushes Aardvark and Robert together.

JED

Grab some sacks and fill 'em  
up. Me and Paul'll be back  
in ten minutes.

INSIDE WALL

Jed walks up, looking for a door or opening. There is  
none.

PAUL

Anderson's?

JED

Yeah.

Paul examines the ceiling overhead---dropped panels.

PAUL

C'mere.

He pushes Jed against the wall and spreads his feet.

PAUL

Hold still.

He climbs on Jed's shoulders, reaching for the panels  
overhead. He removes one, and pulls himself into the  
ceiling. In a moment, Paul grins down from the dark  
hole.

PAUL

Pay dirt!

INT SURPLUS STORE NIGHT

"Anderson's" is painted on the window. TILT UP to  
ceiling and a hole in the paneling. Jed pokes his  
head through and looks around.

PAUL

is a shadow slipping from shelf to shelf.

Jed drops onto the checkout counter and joins him. Paul is stuffing mess kits, blankets, and other necessities into knapsacks.

JED

You're a damn good burglar.

CUT TO:

INT GROCERY STORE NIGHT

Packs drop from the hole in the ceiling onto the floor below, spilling fish hooks, bows and arrows, hunting slings. Jed and Paul land beside their booty.

ROBERT, AARDVARK

sit by the back door, surrounded by bulging sacks and eating fudgesicles. They jump when Jed and Paul appear.

ROBERT

You get any guns?

JED

They're locked up?

Jed drops knapsacks on the floor.

JED

Empty those bags in these.

The two start transferring chips, cookies, six packs of coke and beer, other junk. Jed is appalled. He picks up a bag of marshmallows.

JED

This ain't no picnic.

He starts separating the junk from what they need, tossing a roll of toilet paper into the "unacceptable" pile. Robert snatches it back.

ROBERT

I'm not usin' no leaves.

CUT TO:

INT GROCERY LATER

Jed adjusts a pack on Paul's back. Each boy has a full knapsack and carries an archery set or other essentials, including comic books and gum.

JED  
(to Aardvark)  
D'ja put that other stuff  
back?

AARDVARK  
Uh huh.

JED  
If nobody notices we were here  
we can come back again...If we  
have to.

Paul opens the back door and peers out cautiously. All clear. He races out.

AT THE DOOR

Jed holds Robert back until Paul has made it to the woods. Then it's Aardvark's turn. Jed spots something in his pack. He stops him, then pulls a box of Kotex from the knapsack.

JED  
You havin' problems?

AARDVARK  
What if somebody gets wounded?  
They'll make great bandages.

Jed considers the logic for a moment, then shoves Aardvark and his Kotex out the door, grabs cigarettes off a shelf, and dashes after him.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT MOUNTAIN FOREST DAWN

The sun has just begun it's climb, leaving the forest dim and gray. VOICES can be heard. CAMERA MOVES DOWN through the pines and finds the boys reunited in a clearing, huddled around the packs, clutching at food. Jed, Paul, Robert, and Aardvark sit to one side watching their friends eat. They're haggard and sleepy. Jed smokes.

DARYL  
Gone?

Robert nods tearfully.

ROBERT

And there's dead people and  
soldiers all over the place.

DANNY

Dead? Who was dead?

AARDVARK

Mrs. Guthrie. They shot her...  
(points to his side)  
...right here.

DANNY

Mrs. Guthrie? She wouldn't  
hurt nobody.

A beat.

JESS

Who are they?

JED

We couldn't tell...Aardvark  
heard 'em talkin' in Spanish.

JESS

Spanish?

DANNY

What'd they say?

AARDVARK

'Look out'...'Move that truck'...  
Stuff like that.

DARYL

It's a war, isn't it?

JED

I don't know. I never been in  
one before.

DARYL

What else could it possibly be?

Jed thinks for a moment.

JED

Maybe we could head out for Salida.  
See what's happening over there.

DARYL

It's no better.

Jed is confused by the remark.

DARYL

We tried to hike out while you  
were gone. There's troops on all  
the roads.

Jess avoids his brother's glance.

JED

Thought I said to sit tight  
'til we got back.

DARYL

You did, but we took a vote.

JESS

I voted 'no'.

JED

What if you guys hadn't come back?  
We'd have never known what happened.

DARYL

It wouldn't have mattered. They're  
going to get us anyhow. We're surrounded.

PAUL

So we'll hide.

DARYL

Sure. How long you thing this  
stuff's gonna last?...

He tosses a package in the air.

DARYL

A coupla days? A week maybe?  
Then what?...

Daryl takes a deep breath.

DARYL

I say we give ourselves up.

The others are shocked.

RAYMOND

Surrender?

DARYL

It's the safest thing we can do.

JED

Or the dumbest...I'll take my chances up here.

DARYL

And just scratch off your family?

All eyes are on Jed.

JED

I don't even know where they are.

DARYL

You could at least look.

JED

I did.

A beat.

DARYL

Well, I'm not giving up...and neither should the rest of you. Our families need us.

JED

Not if they're dead.

A long silence.

DARYL

We'll vote on it.

JED

No more votes.

Crying, Danny gets to his feet.

DANNY

I want to go home...I want to know.

JED

You're not going anywhere. Sit down...

(to Daryl)

You wanna leave? Fine. Haul ass. But you're not dragging them off with you.

DARYL  
This isn't The Big Game,  
Mr. Quarterback! He can  
go anywhere he wants!

JED  
Not today he can't.

Daryl looks around---no one is joining him. Frustrated,  
he flings juice from his can at Jed.

JESS  
Knock it off!

DARYL  
Goddamn jock!

JED  
Don't mess with me, Daryl.

Daryl quivers for a moment, then lurches forward,  
slinging the can at Jed. He leaps to meet him in a  
flying tackle. The two boys wrestle on the ground,  
punching wildly. Finally, Jed pins Daryl and delivers  
a couple of half-hearted blows to his face. Then he  
stumbles to his feet before the numb, silent group.

JED  
I've seen what's down there.  
You haven't...If you guys are  
set on going back to Calumet,  
do it; but I can't trust my  
life to a committee of scared  
kids.

Jed starts filling a pack with provisions.

AARDVARK  
Well what do you think you are?

JED  
Alone, I guess.

JESS  
No you're not.

He jumps up to join his brother.

PAUL  
How long you plan on stayin' up  
here?

An especially loud EXPLOSION rumbles in the distance.

JED

'Til we don't hear that no more.

ROBERT

But that could be weeks!

JED

Months...

He points to the bow and arrow sets stacked amid the packs.

JED

That's why we got those.

The boys spot the slingshots, the crossbows too, and snatch them up.

JED

With a little practice, we could bag enough meat to get by 'til the army rescues us.

DANNY

We'll get a deer!

Pulling back on a slingshot, he fires a steel ball at a can and misses.

JED

Hey, don't go shooting those off for the hell of it. We only got a couple dozen and they're...

As Jed speaks, Raymond obliviously nocks an arrow, pulls back on the bowstring, and launches it over the forest, watching it speed away with an ear to ear grin.

JED

...easy to lose.

Raymond turns and sees the others staring at him. The grin disappears. Sheepishly, he heads for the woods.

RAYMOND

I'll find it.

PAUL

Leave the bow here in case we never see you again.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT MOUNTAINSIDE DAY

A MANGY SQUIRREL

nibbles seeds in front of a National Park sign: "Arapaho National Forest". Squirrel jerks his head up, alert to something. Two battered arrows and a steel ball thud into the wood and ground around him. Squirrel heads for the hills. Six dusty feet stumble into frame. TILT UP.

JED, PAUL, JESS

Grubby, their thin whiskers unshaven.

PAUL  
(at Squirrel)  
Nah, nah, nah-nah. Scared your  
ass, didn't we?

The hunters retrieve their missles, then slouch against the redwood sign.

JESS  
Won't get another shot like that  
today...Maybe we should go vegetarian.

PAUL  
I'd give my right nut for a  
quarter pounder with fries.

JED  
I'd give your left one for a  
radio.

A beat.

JESS  
You think it's over? It's been  
awful quiet since we moved up here.

JED  
That's why we moved, pinhead...

He crosses his hands behind his head and yawns.

JED  
There's not a soldier within  
twenty miles of this place.

In b.g., from around a bend far down the road, a jeep suddenly appears. There are four soldiers in it.

PAUL

hears the motor and peeks around the sign.

PAUL  
(horrified)

Well these aren't forest rangers!

JED, JESS

poke their heads around Paul for a look. They jerk back, pale. Jed points to the roadside where it drops away in a steep, wooded embankment.

JED

Quick!

THE BOYS

scurry over the edge, clutching tree roots and bushes, holding on for dear life. In his haste, Jed drops an arrow, but doesn't notice. They wait for the vehicle to pass.

THE JEEP

slows down and stops beside the sign. Dressed in combat fatigues, the four Anglo soldiers clamber out and saunter over to the sign, talking among themselves in Russian, admiring the scenery. They're young and smiling. They carry machine guns. While three of them try to decipher the sign, the fourth studies the countryside through a camera.

SOLDIER #1  
(English subtitles)  
How is your English, Yuri?

The soldier with the camera responds.

YURIE  
Excellent.

SOLDIER #1  
Good. Then translate.

Yuri steps over, studies the words, then clears his throat hesitantly.

YURI

This is a very old dialect...  
'Arapaho National...Battlefield.  
Uh, here in the year 1922, one  
of the greatest battles in the  
American West...ah, was fought  
between cowboys and the savage  
Arapaho Indians...more than 35,000  
men were slain in the fight...  
which lasted for five furious days'.

THE SIGN

actually reads:

'Arapaho National Forest. One of the  
largest virgin woodlands in the western  
United States, Arapaho National Forest  
was designated as such by the Department  
of the Interior in 1922. The region  
served as a vital hunting and fishing  
ground for the Arapaho Indians until  
the late 19th Century when Colorado  
cattlemen began using the lower slopes  
for grazing. Today the forest encompasses  
over 35,000 acres and features five  
day camp areas with facilities for  
recreational vehicles'.

Soldier #1 whistles.

SOLDIER #2

Ah! We must have a picture!

While his comrades post beside the sign, Yuri backs  
up for the proper distance on the shot.

JED

cautiously raises his head for a peek...Yuri's boots  
are a yard from his face.

JED'S ARROW

lies on the ground in front of Yuri.

JED

ducks back down and points to his arrows, indicating  
that he lost one. Jess and Paul turn white.

YURI

snaps the picture and is rewinding the camera when he sees the battered arrow at his feet. He snatches it up.

YURI

Look! An Indian arrow! Look what I have found!

The others hurry to see.

JED

peeks to see what the shouting is about. He drops down again and mouths: 'They found it' to Jess and Paul. Terrified, they pull their hunting knives.

THE SOLDIERS

examine the arrow intently.

YURI

It must be very old!

Soldier #3 touches the steel tip.

SOLDIER #3

I did not know the Indians used steel.

YURI

Oh yes. The Indians of this area were very skilled steel-workers. They made arrows and spears from the melted down swords of cavalry troops they slaughtered.

SOLDIER #1

(skeptically)

How do you know?

YURI

American history was my field at the university.

Soldier #2 notices the white plastic nock at the feathered end of the arrow.

SOLDIER #2

Did these Indians work in plastic too?

Yuri jerks the arrow away and looks closely at the nock with a learned expression.

YURI

This is bone, you dunce! Polished to a high sheen!

The other soldiers glance at one another wryly as if to say, 'Sure, Yuri.'

YURI

I'm telling you; this is genuine!...

He gestures toward the surrounding forest.

YURI

There must be thousands of them on this battleground!

SOLDIER #1

You're an idiot. Let's go.

The soldiers return to the jeep and drive away, with Yuri still insisting the arrow's authenticity.

THE EMBANKMENT

The boys slowly raise up to watch the jeep disappear.

PAUL

Time to move again.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE

--Carrying all their belongings, the boys trudge higher into the remotest parts of the mountains.

--They construct crude lean-tos at the base of a granite cliff.

--Camouflaged with foliage, Paul and Daryl kill a rabbit with their powerful slings.

--Raymond and Danny pound wet clothes beside a stream. Aardvark wanders by.

AARDVARK

What are you doing?

RAYMOND

The wash!

He drops his rock and holds up a shirt. It's been beaten to pulp.

--Robert fixes dinner, pouring powdered milk, cans of soup, and ketchup in a pot. He stirs the goo with his dirty hands.

--Jed and Jess thatch a lean-to as Raymond, Danny, and Aardvark race by flapping their arms---butt naked.

JED

What the...?

JESS

They took a bath. We got no towels.

--Jed expertly stalks and downs a deer with his crossbow.

--Raymond dishes out a vile stew. Paul gets a can top and the next dipper turns up a whole squirrel, complete with head and tail. After much gagging and protest, Raymond hurls the unlucky animal toward the woods and whacks at swarming flies, knocking the stew pot into the fire.

--Night. The boys gleefully throw sticks covered with flaming toilet paper at one another. Jed yells at them.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT BOY'S CAMP DAY

The campsite looks serene beneath sighing pines.  
LAUGHTER and SHOUTING.

Paul, Daryl, Danny, and Jess play four man touch with a beat-up football. Dressed in frazzled clothes (the wash), they are knocking hell out of each other.

RAYMOND

lounges in his lean-to, re-reading a tattered comic book and picking his toes.

THE CAMPFIRE

wisps smoke through a wooden curing rack and big chunks of meat---a testament to new hunting skills.

JED

is stretched under a tree, restlessly drumming a twig on the ground. His young beard is fuller now. In another lean-to behind him, Aardvark squeezes a zit.

AARDVARK

Ow!

JED

Quit playin' with your face.

AARDVARK

I got a volcano on my nose...  
and there's nothing better to do.

JED

Play some ball.

AARDVARK

I'm sick of football.

Jed tosses the twig away and grabs an empty daypack. He stuffs in a canteen.

JED

Then go find Robert.

AARDVARK

Why?

Jed looks up.

JED

You got nothing better to do.

EXT MOUNTAIN STREAM DAY

Robert lies in the middle of a crystal brook, hands behind his head. Eyes closed, he feels the water course by.

Aardvark wanders out of the woods.

AARDVARK

Hey...Jed wants you.

Robert opens his eyes.

ROBERT

What for?

Aardvark shrugs, disappears into the trees.

EXT      CAMP      DAY

Dripping wet, Robert trudges into camp behind Aardvark. His bare feet are caked with dirt and grass.

PAUL

picks himself up from a tackle and spots Aardvark.

PAUL

Aardvark! C'mere! We need  
your nose to block on this  
side!

Daryl and Danny cackle.

AARDVARK

is perturbed. He picks up a nearby bow and nocks an arrow. Robert is horrified.

ROBERT

Aardvark!

Aardvark takes aim at the football players. They scatter. He fires.

THE FOOTBALL

is skewered where it was dropped. Paul rushes over and holds the punctured pigskin aloft.

PAUL

Look what you done! Lookit!

JESS

Asshole!

Robert and Aardvark grin at their ranting. Jed comes up behind them.

JED

(to Aardvark)  
I hear you're better with the  
sling.

ROBERT

Whadda you want?

JED

How do I get in the Supermart?

Aardvark whirls toward the others.

AARDVARK

Jed's goin' to town!

Jess, Paul, Daryl, and Danny make a beeline for him.

JED

(to Aardvark)

Thank you, chancre face...

(to Robert)

...How 'bout it?

ROBERT

You don't get in without me.

Jed rolls his eyes as the others thunder to a halt before him, jabbering.

EVERYBODY

When are we goin'? Want us to pack?

JED

SHUTTUP!...I'm going alone.

Just to check.

ROBERT

Nobody goes in dad's store without me. Not you. Nobody.

He means it.

JED

Get dressed.

Robert streaks away. Everyone else looks disappointed as Jed adjusts his pack.

JED

Haven't heard a gun for three days.

I figure that's as good a sign as we're likely to get.

PAUL

You think we won?

A beat.

JED  
Of course...If it's over.

Robert screeches to a halt wearing a "Star Wars" T-shirt. His hair is still wet. He's pulling tennis shoes on muddy feet.

JESS  
You'll come for us if things are all right?

JED  
First thing.

RAYMOND  
Bring some cokes!

His goofy smile shows green teeth.

JED  
How about toothbrushes?

Anxious laughter.

JED  
Keep your fingers crossed.

He and Robert walk into the forest.

THE OTHERS

watch them go.

DANNY  
(to Aardvark & Raymond)  
Let's pack!

They fly to their lean-tos, whooping gleefully. Paul calls after them.

PAUL  
Jumpin' the gun, aren't you?

DARYL  
God, I hope not.

CUT TO:

EXT FIELD DAY BINOCULAR POV

The edge of Calumet. Sandbagged machine guns flank the highway that runs through town. Armed soldiers

stroll past shell craters and blasted store fronts. Here and there---a civilian. A boy steps into 'Proctor's Feed and Grain.'

ROBERT(V.O.)

Looky there! Looky there!...Lewis Chandler at Proctor's!...Mizz Slauson, Mizz Helm...

ROBERT & JED

They lie side by side in the grass. While Robert gazes through the binoculars, Jed stares at the ground.

ROBERT

...They're all back! It's over!

JED

Those ain't our troops.

Robert lowers the binoculars.

ROBERT

Sure they are.

JED

Look at the uniforms.

ROBERT

(laughs)  
They all look the same.

JED

Then look at the faces.

Robert raises the binoculars.

POV

The civilians hurry past the soldiers, avoiding their gazes. The troops are equally wary.

ROBERT

lowers the binoculars, confused.

ROBERT

But they're back. That means something.

JED

We'll see. Leave the sling here.

EXT CALUMET MAIN STREET DAY

Two flags flutter above the golden arches of a MacDonaldis: One Russian, one Mexican. At the tables below, uniformed Anglo and Hispanic officers enjoy burgers in the same spirit as Germans at a Paris cafe in 1940.

Across the street, Jed and Robert gawk in astonishment. Their stares are returned. They quickly look away.

ROBERT  
Who are they?

JED  
I dunno...Let's ask Alicia.

He nods o.s.

POV

A semi-attractive high school girl flirts and 'fraternizes' with a table of officers, seductively sipping a coke.

ROBERT  
What's she doing?

JED  
Business as usual.

Alicia drips coke from her straw onto a soldier's waiting tongue. They laugh.

CUT TO:

EXT MAIN STREET DAY

Robert and Jed make their way through the shattered town. It's hard to act inconspicuous.

A BULLET-POCKED WALL

A poster announces a general curfew and rules for civilians. Jed and Robert read it nonchalantly.

Behind them, a gold convertible weaves through the street rubble---Two officers chauffeured by a corporal. It is one of the few vehicles in sight.

ROBERT  
That's Daryl's! His dad's car!

JED  
(to himself)  
...The mayor's convertible...

LEWIS CHANDLER exits the feed store nearby and heads down the sidewalk. Jed discreetly hails him.

JED  
Lewis!

Lewis turns and sees them. Shock spreads on his face.

JED  
Hey man, what the...

Lewis whirls and walks away, never looking back.

ROBERT  
(stunned)  
He was scared of us!

CUT TO:

EXT DRUGSTORE DAY

Jed and Robert round a corner and try to come to a casual stop.

BOY'S POV

A lone soldier stands guard in front of "Taylor's Supermart"---Robert's father's store. Signs in the windows read 'CLOSED'. A notice is posted beside them.

JED & ROBERT

pretend to examine the sparse wares in the drugstore window.

ROBERT  
What's the deal? What's that mean?

Jed spots something in the drugstore.

THE DRUGGIST

stands behind the counter of the pharmacy, helping a customer.

JED

gives Robert a nudge.

JED  
Woody'll know.

CUT TO:

INT DRUGSTORE DAY

The boys grin hopefully as they steer past pitifully stocked shelves and approach the counter. WOODY has his back to them. There are soldiers in the store, and Jed keeps his voice low as he puts a carton of cigarettes down.

JED  
Eight toothbrushes, please.

Woody reaches for a couple of toothbrushes.

WOODY  
Sorry friend, the ration plan allows one brush per person. Now are you buying for your whole family or---?

Turning around, he's startled by the sight of the boys. He bends over the inventory sheet on the counter.

WOODY  
Where'd you come from?

JED  
The mountains. We been hiding. Came down to---

WOODY  
You've gotta get outta here.

A beat.

ROBERT  
Well, we will. We're going home but---

WOODY  
No...You can't. You don't have I.D.s, do you?

JED  
What?

WOODY  
Identification papers.

They shake their heads. Woody's making them nervous.

WOODY

Don't get caught. You have to have them.

JED

Are they Russian?

WOODY

And Mexican.

JED

Mexican?

ROBERT

Why is dad's store closed?

Woody eyes Robert a moment, then a Russian officer in dirty combat dress enters the drugstore and starts browsing. The druggist bends back to his inventory sheet

WOODY

Go! Quick!

Jed grabs the cigarettes and toothbrushes.

JED

We don't have any money.

Woody anxiously gestures that it is all right. Robert leans close for a final word.

ROBERT

Tell the folks we're okay. Jess,  
Daryl, Paul, Raymond, Aardvark...  
Tell them.

Woody doesn't look up. The boys hurry out.

EXT ALLEY DAY

Jed ducks into a phone booth and dials a number. Robert nervously waits outside the door.

JED

I only got one dime.

ROBERT

What about supplies?

JED  
Forget 'em.

The phone rings at the other end and is answered.

VOICE  
Hello?

JED  
Mom!

A beat.

VOICE  
...Jed?...  
(she starts to cry)  
I knew you weren't dead! I knew!...  
Jessie?

A patrolling soldier stops across the street and stares at Robert and Jed. A gun is slung over his shoulder.

JED  
He's okay. Mom, listen. I'm  
here...in town. I wanna---

VOICE  
No, honey! Don't come! They'll  
catch you!

The Hispanic soldier crosses the street. Robert taps the booth. Jed looks up, sees him shaking, sees the soldier.

JED  
Mom? You okay?

MOM  
Yes!

JED  
Dad and Jenny?

VOICE  
Fine! Now you run, Jed! Get away!

The soldier approaches, squinting curiously at them.

JED  
Mom, I gotta go...I love you.

MOM

We love---

Jed hangs up on her and watches helplessly as Robert backs away from the soldier and presses against the phone booth door.

SOLDIER

I give you two dollar.

ROBERT

(petrified)

Huh?

The soldier pinches his 'Star Wars' T-shirt.

SOLDIER

For this. Two dollar.

CUT TO:

EXT      FOOTHILL RANCH      LATE AFTERNOON

A lone ranchhouse sits on the edge of the vast mountain forest. Smoke curls from the chimney. It's quiet here. Jed and Robert trudge to the door and knock. Robert has no shirt on; just Jed's denim jacket.

THE DOOR

opens a crack. A rugged old man cautiously peers out.

JED

Hello, Mr. Mason.

MASON

Get in here 'fore somebody sees you.

INT      MASON RANCH HOUSE

The place is simply furnished, warm and comfortable. A thin old woman nervously wipes her hands on an apron by the kitchen stove.

MASON

Look who's here, Mary. Coupla outlaws.

JED & ROBERT

Mizz Mason.

MRS. MASON

Boys.

She stares at Jed's bow. He takes it off with his pack as Robert looks around in wonder.

ROBERT

I haven't been in a house for seven weeks.

Mason sizes him up.

MASON

You look it...  
(to Mrs. Mason)  
Mary, fix two plates.

He guides the boys to the kitchen table.

MASON

Get your feet up...Life on the run ain't no lark, is it?

JED

Nossir.

MASON

Who's out there with you?

ROBERT

There's eight of us. Ray---

Jed kicks him under the table. Mason smiles.

MASON

Well, we all figured you fellas mighta headed to F.A. by now.

ROBERT

What's F.A.?

A beat.

MASON

Free America...The Safe Zone.

Another beat.

JED

Where are we?

Mason and his wife exchange a glance.

MASON

Hell boys, this is occupied territory. You're forty miles behind enemy lines...Smack in World War III.

Mrs. Mason puts meager portions of soup and cornbread before the stunned pair.

MRS. MASON

I wish there was more. I'm sorry.

MASON

Onion soup. Kinda grows on you after a while...

ROBERT

Where's your beeves?

MASON

Confiscated...The world's gone crazy again boys.

A beat.

JED

Dexter Woody said they're Russians.

MASON

What're you doin' wanderin' around that drugstore?

JED

Lookin' for 'hows' and 'whys'. Mr. Mason, we haven't seen or talked to nobody for seven weeks.

Mason gets up and goes to the refrigerator (It's almost empty). He pulls a transistor radio and a bottle from the crisper bin.

He pushes the radio across the table to them.

MASON

Use this to see where you stand from now on.

ROBERT

But...

MASON

I got another one. Listen to me; these is bad times, and in bad

MASON(cont'd)

...times your friends ain't always  
your friends. You stay in them  
mountains and don't go to Calumet  
no more.

ROBERT

How come? Everybody else is---

MASON

You ain't everybody else.

He takes a pull on the bottle.

MASON

There's been some attacks. Hit  
and run stuff. Ruskie's wakin' up  
with their throats slit...Folks  
are sayin' it's you boys.

Robert and Jed blanch.

MASON

...You're missin' so you get the  
blame---or the credit, if you're  
of a different mind.

ROBERT

But we haven't done nothin'!  
Nothin'! Except hide! We came  
down one time and got groceries  
at the Supermart but that's...

Robert senses something.

ROBERT

Why'd they close dad's store?

Mason plugs the bottle.

MASON

Your daddy's dead, Robert. They  
shot him last---

ROBERT

NO! NO! NO! NO!

Robert falls back in his chair and the old lady rushes  
to comfort him.

MASON

...last week. The Russians found

MASON(cont'd)  
stock missing from the store. They  
shot him for supplying 'guerillas'.

JED  
He didn't supply anybody! We  
stole it!

MASON  
But he didn't report it.

ROBERT  
Because he knew it was us! We  
killed him.

MASON  
They killed him, boy. Made him  
an example. You let that burn  
in good.

JED  
That's why everybody's scared  
of us, isn't it?

Accenting his voice, Mason points a finger-gun.

MASON  
'You help bandits, you be shot!'

JED  
But you...

Mason's gaze is steady. The old woman is pale.

MASON  
There's nobody here gonna turn on  
you, boy. You need food, a bed---  
anything---you come here.

He studies Jed a moment, then pulls the table away  
from the wall.

MASON  
Now I gotta coupla heirlooms I  
wanna hide with you.

MRS. MASON  
Jack! No!

Mason opens a trapdoor in the floor and looks up at  
Jed.

MASON

Can I trust you?

Numbly, Jed nods. The old man lifts two teenaged girls from their hiding place. They're fourteen and fifteen.

MASON

My granddaughters...They spent two days sneaking here. Goddam pigs tried havin' their way with them...

Mason hugs the girls in his powerful old arms, then pushes the younger one toward Jed.

MASON

This is Toni, this is Erica. Their mom and pap don't know where they are and I don't wanna know where they're going.

Robert's WAILING rises.

CUT TO:

EXT BOY'S CAMPSITE NIGHT

An oasis in the dark. The firelight flickers on stunned faces. Beside the fire, bundles had been expectantly packed. Robert shudders with sobs as Aardvark holds a gentle arm around him.

Erica turns on her grandfather's radio and thumbs the dial. A strange New Wave tune blares from a powerful station.

RADIO

'...Down but not out  
We're just catchin' our breath!  
Marchin' for Denver  
We blow freedom and death!  
Down but not out  
A Yankee don't tire!  
When you take on the Eagle  
You're messin' with fire!...

The song fades. A bureaucratic monotone replaces it.

VOICE

'Down But Not Out!' That's 'The Clash' with a message for any invading scum out there! Yeah, you're gonna wish you'd never

VOICE(cont'd)

set foot in the U.S. of A.! It's 11:59 at Radio Free America and this is Uncle Sam with music and the truth until dawn! Right now I've got a few words for some of our brothers and sisters in the Zone: 'The chair is against the wall.', 'The chair is against the wall.'...'John has a long mustache.', 'John has a long mustache.'...It's twelve o'clock Americans; another day closer to victory! And for all you patriots out there on or behind the lines, here's your song!

The most stirring rendition of 'The Star Spangled Banner' ever recorded blasts from the tiny radio.

THE BOYS

stare at Erica.

ERICA

Her eyes are vacant. Even cold.

ERICA

Things are different now.

THE FIRELIGHT

dances over bows and slingshots.

CUT TO:

EXT MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY DAY

A MILITARY JEEP

hurries up the winding road TOWARD CAMERA and comes to a sudden stop. YURI is the driver. He and two other soldiers stare ahead apprehensively.

SOLDIER'S POV

A small tree is felled across the highway.

SOLDIERS

They reach for their rifles. Yuri picks up the radio and reports the incident. His comrades get out to move the log.

ROADSIDE BUSHES

A pair of perspiring hands holds a bow and arrow at the ready. TILT UP---Jed and the other boys. Armed. Scared.

BOY'S POV

Yuri continues his report, glancing around at the dark woods. His friends struggle with the tree. Talking and looking, Yuri suddenly does a terrified double-take.

ROADSIDE

A blur erupts in the bushes. Eight figures rise. Eight weapons fire.

THE BOYS

crouch in the foliage and quickly reload. Ashen faces. Jed nods. They rise in unison and fire again.

YURI

Two arrows and a steel slingshot ball slam into him. His face is already frozen in lifeless surprise.

TWO SOLDIERS

One of them lies dead, bleeding beside the highway center stripe. The other young man flops wildly with arrows through his chest and throat. He twists in agony, trying to scream. His eyes are wild with fear.

FULL SHOT

The boys slowly emerge, weapons ready.

DYING SOLDIER

Unconsciousness overcomes him.

SOLDIER'S POV

Tennis shoes and boots skulk closer through a misty haze that rapidly FADES TO BLACK.

FULL SHOT

The boys are trembling. Labored BREATHING o.s. turns to bloody GURGLES as the soldier enters his death throes.

DARYL  
What have we done...?

A beat. Jed pulls out a knife and crouches near the writhing man...He can't do it.

Convulsing violently, the soldier finally dies.

JED

can't take his eyes from the man. Struggling for composure, he stands up.

JED  
Get their stuff.

No one moves.

JED  
Hurry.

He forces himself to begin stripping the bodies of their hardware.

YURI.

stares into CAMERA, dead from a ball in his brain. His body moves slightly as hands remove his gun.

The boys flee into the woods.

EXT CAMPSITE EARLY EVENING.

Toni and Erica tend to steaming pots. They look up apprehensively as canteens and weapons RATTLE o.s.

FOREST

The boys trudge out of the woods adorned with grenades and ammo belts---dirty, grim, and silent. Robert clutches a machine gun with a vengeance.

They fall out and slouch to the ground. Nobody talks.

JED  
What did you think it would be like?

DARYL  
Just shuttup, okay?

JED  
Look at me...They were nothin'  
but varmits. Like snakes or  
coyotes, only worse. So don't  
think twice about---

DANNY  
They were people, Jed!

ROBERT  
WELL SO WAS MY DAD!

Silence.

JED  
They were varmits...And they'd've  
done the same to you.

TONI (o.s.)  
Dinner's ready.

TONI

She stands watching them. A spoon drips in her hand.

DANNY  
We're not hungry.

Daryl gets up.

DARYL  
Speak for yourself, whiney.

Raymond and Aardvark follow him. Daryl leans toward  
Danny as he passes.

DARYL  
That was your arrow killed the  
driver.

DANNY  
(aghast)  
Was not!

He leaps after them.

DANNY  
...Was not!

ERICA

appears, wiping her forehead with the back of her hand.

ERICA

Somebody else can wash dishes...  
(points at Toni)  
Me and her, we're not your cooks.  
We can shoot as good as you.

JED

No way. If your granddaddy found  
out he'd---

ERICA

He knew this would happen...  
He knew.

She heads toward the fire. Paul snorts in amazement.

PAUL

What's up her ass?

Erica whirls on him, eyes flaming.

ERICA

Is that supposed to be a joke?  
Huh?

She flails at Paul and cries.

ERICA

You ever say that again, I'll  
kill you! You hear?!

She storms away.

PAUL

What'd I say?

Jed pulls off his crossbow and slumps beside a boulder.  
He takes out a crumpled pack of Marlboros.

JED

The wrong thing.

Paul points at the cigarettes.

PAUL

Gimme one of those.

JESS

Me too.

Surprised, Jed lights them up. They clumsily cough  
through the smoke and survey the camp:

POV

Danny cries over a plate of stew while Aardvark watches Daryl guzzle from a pot.

AARDVARK

Hey! Save some! Don't drink  
it all!...Hey!

LEAN-TO

Robert huddles in the dark, aiming a new gun at imaginary soldiers.

JESS, PAUL, JED

JESS

I'm scared.

PAUL

At least you got the sense  
to be...

(sharply)

Raymond!

POV

Biscuit in mouth, Raymond toys with one of the machine guns. The shout startles him---He jerks around in surprise, BLASTING the camp with bullets.

Everyone dives for cover. The clip empties, the firing echoes off the mountains...scared faces raise up.

RAYMOND

He sheepishly holds the smoking gun at arm's length as if it were dirty. Jed strides up and yanks it away.

JED

You wanna fire off a flare in  
case nobody heard that?

RAYMOND

I don't think we got any flares.

Jess dusts himself off, shakes his head.

JESS

We're not ready for this.

CUT TO:

EXT MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY DUSK

Flies buzz over a bloated face---Yuri's face. The insects scatter as a blanket is draped over his corpse. A heavily armed Russian/Mexican detail removes the body from the jeep. As they work, a Russian colonel---VIKTOR STRELNIKOV---grimly surveys the scene with his attache.

STRELNIKOV

(subtitles)

...Henceforth, all troops are forbidden to travel outside secured areas in any group smaller than squad size...

ATTACHE

Sir.

STRELNIKOV

Then call Bratchenko, tell him eighth sector now has activity as well, and muster a reconnaissance team for 0500 hours.

ATTACHE

Sir.

The colonel watches the bodies loaded like cordwood onto a truck.

STRELNIKOV

...And I want some interrogations---Starting with the mayor...I'm sick of his pleasantries.

CUT TO:

EXT CAMPSITE DAWN

Danny and Raymond sleep like cherubs in their fireside lean-to.

A pair of boots appears beside Danny's head and kicks dirt on the coals. Danny wakes with a jerk.

POV

Jed is stripped to the waist.

JED

Get up.

DANNY

He blinks, lies back down.

DANNY  
What time is it?

JED  
Get up.

Jed kicks him in the butt. Raymond too.

DANNY  
Ow! Ow! You crazy?

They leap up to escape the blows.

CUT TO:

EXT FOREST DAY HIGH ANGLE

Jed and the others run up and down heavily wooded slopes carrying a huge log. The boys are shirtless.

CLOSER

Roped to either side of the log, the kids crash through the trees, exhausted, drenched in sweat. They falter as the path steepens and Daryl tries to sit down.

JED  
Move!

DARYL  
I got blisters, dammit!

JED  
Tough.

He pushes Daryl to his feet.

EXT STREAM DAY

The kids drag the log to the edge of the water and collapse. Danny is crying.

JED  
Okay, everybody in.

He hits the water. Paul and Jess stumble after him while the others lie on the bank, chests heaving. Jed climbs out and starts throwing them in.

JED  
I said, 'everybody'.

EXT      STREAM BANK

Erica is face down in the grass, struggling to do another push-up. She is soaking wet.

JED  
...Sixteen...seventeen...  
eighteen...

A few feet away, Robert does push-ups like a maniac and Jess takes an unauthorized breather. Jed kicks his brother.

JED  
You ain't no different.

EXT      FOREST      AFTERNOON

The return run to camp. Mouths gasp, hands bleed on the rope. Toni is no longer carrying her weight, she's just dragged along.

EXT      CAMP      SUNSET

Scratched and bruised, Jed cuts pine branches off a tree.

JED  
...Each day, the one who does  
the worst has to run a gauntlet.  
Today that's you, Danny...Make  
two lines. If you don't have a  
belt, use one of these.

Danny starts to cry again as the others reluctantly line up in front of him. Paul takes a branch from Jed.

PAUL  
What's this for?

JED  
We're soft.

He steps behind Danny.

JED  
Anybody that holds back runs  
it too.

He whacks Danny with a branch and sends him flying. Whimpering and covering his head, Danny stumbles through the half-hearted blows and runs straight to his lean-to.

The gauntlet looks at Jed, then disperses.

DARYL

Friggin' Nazi.

EXT CAMP NIGHT

Jed sits by the fire---alone---staring at the coals.

Danny walks out of the dark, dressed and carrying a bundle of belongings. His eyes are red from crying.

DANNY

I'm leaving.

JED

Goodbye.

Danny blinks, can't think of anything else to say. He walks to the edge of the trees and looks back. The WIND in the pines sounds creepy. Gingerly, he makes his way into the woods.

EXT CAMP NIGHT

Raymond is awake, listening. His eyes jerk. A twig CRACKS, a cooking pot BANGS. Raymond spins around in his blanket.

DANNY

crawls into the lean-to with a hang-dog look and finds a blanket. Raymond grins at him.

EXT FOREST DAWN

The kids plunge through leaves and brambles, straining with the log.

EXT STREAM BANK DAY

Jed and Paul wrestle viciously, punching and kicking for the others benefit. It's not professional, but it'll do. They break and Jed sits down.

PAUL

Next?

Erica jumps up, ready to go. Paul hesitates.

PAUL

Uh...

She belts him in the stomach and throws him to the ground.

ERICA

'Uh', what?

EXT FOREST DAY

Aardvark slides down a pine tree at incredible speed, barely stopping to go around limbs. In b.g., Jess, Robert, and Toni descend from other trees in similar fashion.

JED

Go! Go! Go! Go!

The boys finish first. In her haste to catch up, Toni loses her grip and falls the last ten feet--flat on her back. She fights the urge to cry as Erica helps her up.

ERICA

She has a black eye.

ERICA

Walk it off.

EXT CAMP EVENING

Danny runs the gauntlet again.

EXT STREAM BANK DAY

While they leap over rocks and rotted trees, Jed fires bullets around the other kid's feet.

EXT STREAM BANK LATER

Dripping wet, Raymond does forty push-ups without stopping.

EXT FOREST AFTERNOON

The kids heave the cursed log on their shoulders, singing in cadence. Nobody's breathing hard.

EXT CAMP EVENING

Danny is about to run the gauntlet again. This time,

the tears are out of anger and frustration.

Jed hits him with a pine branch.

JED

Stop crying.

Danny turns, slugs Jed in the mouth. He clenches his little fists and takes a stance.

JED

staggers backwards, puts a hand to his cut lip. He half smiles.

JED

It took you long enough.

CUT TO:

EXT CALUMET CITY LIMITS DAY

A patrol of heavily armed troops marches past a peeling roadside billboard: "Remember, only you can prevent forest fires." The words 'forest fires' are crossed out and 'RED SCUM' is scrawled above it. Smokey the Bear rests his shovel on a crudely drawn grave with a hammer and sickle marker. The troops pay no attention.

EXT DEEP WOODS DAY

CAMERA plays deceptively on tree trunks, boulders, shadows. The soldiers dart their eyes and jump at every flushed bird or leaping deer.

EARTHMOVING EQUIPMENT

The troops move past abandoned caterpillars and bulldozers on a graded dirt trail. The hulks loom over them ominously.

EXT SKI RESORT DAY

A web of snowless ski runs---the grassy open slopes labeled "expert", "intermediate", and "beginner". The patrol passes under a chair lift creaking in the wind. It is an incongruous sight.

EXT MOUNTAIN RIDGE DAY

A string of telephone lines disappear over the rugged terrain.

The Russian lieutenant in command of the patrol follows the path of the lines through his binoculars. He studies a point where the wire passes through the boughs of a thick tree.

A MEXICAN PRIVATE

climbers up the trunk of the tree and parts the thick foliage. He shouts to the lieutenant in Spanish.

The line has been cut and the ends tied to branches to conceal the break. The lieutenant smiles.

EXT CLEARING

Speaking to his radioman in Spanish, the lieutenant takes the headset and a map. He reports in Russian while the men fall out for smokes and a rest.

LIEUTENANT

...Delta 30, that's Hill 593, east face...Yes, deliberate. Otherwise, no contact.

A squirrel dashes away.

EXT DEEP FOREST DAY

The troops seem nonchalant from fatigue---'Miller Time.' A few carry their rifles across their shoulders. The dark woods press in as the abandoned caterpillars appear just ahead.

A PAIR OF EYES

is all but concealed by leaves and shadow. The gaze is hard and predatory.

TROOPS

They draw even with the earth movers. Hidden machine guns suddenly BLAST them.

RADIO OPERATOR

He dies instantly as his set is shot off his back.

ROADSIDE

The soldiers scramble for cover in a ditch backed by a high embankment.

The lieutenant calls for radio in a cracked voice, then sees it lying shattered in the trail. Crouching, he signals the men at either end of the defense line to move out and outflank the gunners in the caterpillars.

The two scurry down the ditch in opposite directions, but don't get far...The first catches a crossbow bolt in the chest.

The other is cut down by a sling-shot to the forehead.

DITCH

Unaware of their comrades fate, the troops shoot back at anything.

Behind them, three hands appear at the top of the embankment and three grenades fall in unison. The explosions rip the forest...then silence.

TEN FIGURES

quickly appear from hiding, strip the bodies of all weaponry, and vanish.

CUT TO:

EXT CALUMET TOWN SQUARE DAY

Gun-toting troops are in position around the area. A jeep pulls up in their midst and Strelnikov gets out wearing "formal" combat fatigues. A Mexican captain meets him with a salute.

STRELNIKOV

Are we prepared?

CAPTAIN

Yessir.

STRELNIKOV

Proceed then.

The captain turns crisply. He hesitates, then nods o.s.

There is a loud CLANG, and the captain winces. Strelnikov remains staunch.

CAPTAIN

Shall I seal off the area now, sir?

Strelnikov heads for his jeep.

STRELNIKOV

That would defeat the purpose  
of making this gesture, don't  
you think?

He points o.s.

STRELNIKOV

Leave them up until dark. Hopefully  
we've put an end to this guerilla  
business.

He signals his driver and they're off. PAN with the  
jeep to reveal denim and leisure suited legs twitching  
beneath a scaffold. A sign on the brick wall behind  
them reads: "Things Go Better With Coke."

EXT KID'S CAMP DUSK

Paul emerges from the forest. A row of silhouettes  
waits for him.

PAUL

Fifteen.

JED

Who?

PAUL

Four of 'em I didn't know...  
Roy Ott...Dave Bedo...Marcus  
Owen...Schultzie...Murdock...  
Ellis...

DARYL

That's nine.

Paul looks at Aardvark.

AARDVARK

My father?

No answer.

AARDVARK

My brother?

PAUL

Both.

AARDVARK

The shock is too great. Muttering feebly, he stumbles toward the darkness. Erica goes after him.

Paul's gaze falls on Raymond.

PAUL

Your father.

RAYMOND

He makes terrible choking sounds and Danny tries to comfort him.

PAUL

And your uncle, Danny.

Danny and Raymond comfort each other.

Paul eyes Daryl.

PAUL

Michael.

DARYL

My brother!

A beat.

JED

There's one more.

Slowly, Paul shifts his face to Jed.

JED

My dad?

PAUL

No...mine.

Paul cracks up.

PAUL

I saw him hang! I saw it!

JESS

That's it. We can't risk no more.

Paul takes a crumpled letter from his jacket and hands it over. Jed reads to himself---then aloud:

JED

'...We are proud to pay for  
what you have done. Do not  
let our deaths go unavenged!  
Use our lives, and yours, like  
weapons. We love you. Long live  
America! Your fathers and brothers.'

PAUL

They smuggled it our last night.

Jess is white as he hurries up to Jed.

JESS

No more!...  
(leans closer)  
They'll kill Dad!

Robert is right behind him.

ROBERT

Why should you be different?

CUT TO:

EXT MOUNTAIN ROAD NIGHT

A lone troop carrier maneuvers the curves.

INT TROOP CARRIER

Twenty tired Mexicans ride in the back, swaying under  
the canvas cover.

In the cab, the driver peers sleepily at the dark road.  
The soldier riding 'shotgun' yawns.

DRIVER'S POV

The truck rounds a curve---two stationary headlights  
block the road.

DRIVER

slows to a halt and slaps his partner awake, pointing.  
The man warily pokes his rifle out the window.

SHOTGUN

Hey! Get out of the way!

Aardvark's muffled voice answers in Spanish.

AARDVARK

Hold your gas! We have a flat!

'Shotgun' smiles and pulls his hat down over his eyes. He's relieved.

The driver gets out, lights a smoke, and strolls toward the headlights.

DRIVER

Need a hand?

His smile disappears as he advances---Two powerful lamps have been set on stands to resemble headlights. Behind the driver, figures run from the gloom at roadside and toss something in the truck. Driver whirls in time to see it explode. Turning a frightened circle, he runs toward the flaming truck, away from the shadows.

Robert materializes in black face---banshee-like---and coolly shoots the driver.

CUT TO:

EXT RURAL PASTURE DAY

A corral fence runs beside an ancient feed and grain store. Along the fence stand twenty blindfolded men. One of them has a plastic pen and pencil holder in his shirt pocket. Another---a mechanic---hasn't even had time to wash his grease-blackened hands.

Thirty feet away, two ranks of soldiers aim rifles. A voice commands in Spanish:

VOICE(o.s.)

Ready!...Aim!...Fire!

The civilians are mowed down. As the gunfire melts to echoes shrieking women rush to their dead men.

CUT TO:

EXT MOUNTAIN TOP DAY

Jess is weeping bitterly.

He stands with the others on the windswept peak, watching Jed carve the name 'Charles Eckert' into a boulder already engraved with other names. Robert is serenely cold.

ROBERT  
Now we're together.

CUT TO:

EXT ABANDONED DRIVE-IN THEATER DAY

A faded marquee is being used as a scoreboard.

Beneath the skeletal movie screen, Mexican troops stripped to "shirts" and "skins" play soccer. Others picnic on rations in the shade. Conjunto music blares from a radio.

The ball bounces off an old speaker pole and flies into some brush. A laughing soldier runs after it.

The ball flies back out of the brush, followed by The Kids. They're all armed with automatic weapons.

The soldiers dive for their guns and are cut down by a murderous barrage.

The Kids vanish...

From ground level, the dead men's expressions are grotesque. There's a jingle on the radio: "Radio Jolla, La musica en su maxima expression!"

CUT TO:

EXT HIGHWAY GUARDRAIL DAY

A defiant old man spits at CAMERA. ZOOM OUT---Two dozen other hostages are lined up beside him on the guardrail. Their hands are tied.

VOICE(o.s.)

Ready!...Aim!---

Terrible GUNFIRE erupts in an uncoordinated roar and the confused hostages throw themselves to the ground. CAMERA SWINGS WILDLY in documentary fashion--something's gone wrong.

The SHOOTING stops, the hostages stumble to their feet, and cheer wildly.

THE FIRING SQUAD

lies dead on the ground. In b.g. The Kids race for the forest, making good their escape.

PAUL

He turns and raises a defiant fist in salute.

CUT TO:

EXT CALUMET MAIN STREET DAY

Sandbags and machine guns protect the Post Office. It's obviously a place of importance---headquarters. A jeep parked in front bears the insignia of a Russian general.

Strelnikov and the visitor---GENERAL BRATCHENKO---stroll out of the building toward the jeep.

STRELNIKOV

(subtitles)

...And two days ago they derailed a train on the Denver-Salt Lake City line. That leaves only one rail route to---

BRATCHENKO

You are thwarted too easily, Viktor. Take a VL-5 and push the cars off the track.

STRELNIKOV

They derailed it in a tunnel.

Bratchenko is taken aback.

STRELNIKOV

The FML troops call them 'Los Indios'-- 'Indians', after the savages who once roamed this area. I estimate their strength at 100 to 150 men, probably former soldiers.

BRATCHENKO

What's your body count from these actions?

STRELNIKOV

They apparently take their dead and wounded with them, but I feel certain their losses have been heavy.

BRATCHENKO

Prisoners?

STRELNIKOV

...We have none.

BRATCHENKO

Have you identified any of them?

STRELNIKOV

Not...positively. The locals refuse to talk, but we do have suspects. We drew hostages from their families. I felt that reprisals would drive a wedge between the Indians and the people.

BRATCHENKO

And it's done just the opposite. I can appreciate your desperation Viktor, but no more executions--- for a while at least. It is simpler to shoot the enemy than charm him, but the simple way hasn't proved successful. You must try a different tack. Seduce them. Cultivate improved relations. Whatever. I trust you can remedy the situation. That's why you were given command, Viktor.

Strelnikov indicates the few soldiers on the street.

STRELNIKOV

Of course, sir. As you can see, I have every available man out scouring the countryside...But I think you should know that an FML unit refused to deploy during a mountain skirmish yesterday.

BRATCHENKO

Well don't send them up there. I can't spare troops for wild goose chases of no strategic value. As long as we control the passes I'll concede the mountains to these bastards...Things have bogged down at the front, Viktor. Morale is crucial right now. You keep the men to the secured areas and they'll forget about these 'Indians'.

As the two officers reach the jeep the entire front of the post office EXPLODES into the street, flattening everyone and everything.

The smoke clears. Soldiers run and shout in all directions. Bratchenko is dazed.

STRELNIKOV  
You were saying, sir?

CUT TO:

EXT MOUNTAIN FOREST DAY

All is silent, primeval. Then an F-15 fighter screams out of nowhere and goes into a ninety degree climb from treetop level. Two MiG's are right on his tail.

EXT SKY

Cannon fire rakes the American fighter and it bursts into flame. The pilot ejects and parachutes toward the forest below.

EXT FOREST

The pilot lands heavily in a tiny clearing, hides his chute, and scrambles for cover. The MiG's shriek by looking for his orange flight suit.

MAJOR ANDREW TANNER digs out his survival kit and finds the directional rescue radio smashed. Disgusted, he grabs the service .45 and takes a compass heading.

EXT THICK WOODS

Later. Tanner wanders through massive pines, unsure of where he is going. He looks up from his compass and freezes in his tracks.

ERICA

sits in the branches of a tree calmly holding a machine gun on him. She looks different now---short hair, dark sports coat, and running shoes.

ERICA  
Habla Ingles?

TANNER  
...Yeah.

ERICA  
Drop the pistol.

He does. Erica looks him over.

TANNER  
You American?

ERICA  
Are you?

Tanner turns and shows her the flag sewn on his shoulder.

TANNER  
Red blooded. Andrew Tanner.  
Major. U.S. Air Force.

Silence.

TANNER  
...Had a plane shot out from  
under me...I'm lookin' to get  
back to my lines.

Erica points over his head in the direction he came from.

ERICA  
They're that way.

Tanner tosses the compass away.

TANNER  
Usually I travel with a navigator.

ERICA  
Where's your home?

TANNER  
Home?...Big Springs, Texas.

ERICA  
What's the capitol of Texas?

Tanner laughs.

TANNER  
You been watchin' too many movies,  
kid.

Erica cocks her gun.

TANNER  
Austin. A-U-S-T-I-N. Austin's  
the capitol.

ERICA

It's Houston.

TANNER

Austin. I swear to God.

Erica lowers her weapon and swings down from the tree. She pulls a day pack from under some leaves and lights a cigarette. Tanner is fascinated.

ERICA

Smoke?

TANNER

I don't, but thanks.

His hand takes one anyway. Erica hikes off, leaving Tanner dumbfounded.

TANNER

Hey. Have I been captured?

CUT TO:

EXT KID'S CAMP DAY

A crude American flag hangs from a sapling. Below it, there's a "lived-in" look. The Kids are veterans. Their dress is guerilla chic, individually selected to each fighter's taste---"GORILLA" T-shirts, long johns, camouflaged cowboy hats.

The boys wear their hair long, tied back Apache style. The older ones sport meager beards.

Tanner follows Erica into camp.

ERICA

Look what I found.

The others crowd around.

LEAN-TO

Long haired as well, Jed emerges looking like a young chieftain. Tanner raises his palm.

TANNER

How.

He tousles Jed's hair and looks around.

TANNER

Where's the head honcho, sport?

JED

Who are the fuck are you?

Tanner stops grinning and points to his name patch.

TANNER

Andrew Tanner. Major. U.S. Air Force.

ERICA

MiGs shot him down over by  
Gumdrop.

She pulls off her cap and for the first time Tanner realizes she is a girl.

TANNER

I'll be damned.

JED

Let's hope not.

CUT TO:

EXT      CAMPFIRE      NIGHT

The Kids sit listening to Tanner. Most of them smoke.

TANNER

...After the revolution, Mexico struck a deal with Ivan---they supplied the troops for a Soviet invasion, Ivan gives Mexico back her old territories---California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas. The first waves were disguised as Mexican commercial and charter flights. They took out NORAD, silos in the Dakotas, and all the passes through the Rockies. Ninety full divisions followed them across the border and right now they've got hold of an area as far north as Cheyenne and across from Utah to central Kansas...And if that isn't enough, a whole Russian army crossed the Bering sea and blew the Alaska pipeline. They're moving down through Canada now to meet up with this force.

DARYL  
Why can't you stop them?

TANNER  
Sheer numbers, kid. They got  
'em, we don't.

PAUL  
How come we haven't seen The Bomb?

Tanner looks around the group.

TANNER  
Washington has...Otherwise, looks  
like they aim to take us in one  
piece.

JESS  
Did we nuke them back?

TANNER  
Tried to, but they had another  
surprise. Particle beam defense.  
Thing covers Mother Russia like  
a damn umbrella.

RAYMOND  
I'll never be a communist!

TANNER  
That doesn't have a thing to do  
with it, son...

He picks up a handful of earth and trickles it through  
his fingers.

TANNER  
This is what it's all about...The  
oldest reason in the world.

JED  
Who's on our side?

TANNER  
West Europe was. They lasted a  
week. Australia, Japan...  
(smiles)  
...and 600 million screamin'  
Chinamen.

DARYL  
Last I heard there were a billion  
screamin' Chinamen.

TANNER

There were.

He lifts a pint of Wild Turkey from his flight suit and takes a long pull.

DANNY

You gotta family?

TANNER

I don't know...They were caught behind the lines in Texas.

He produces a wallet photo. It is a young woman and two small girls.

TANNER

...I like to think they're alive... but I've heard stories about what they're doing to civilians---

ROBERT

They're true.

Tanner takes another medicinal slug tosses the bottle to Jed.

TANNER

Well, c'est la goddamn vie... How soon can you get me back?

Jed takes a drink and passes it on. The Kids gasp at the taste.

JED

Two weeks.

TANNER

Two weeks? Hell, you said yourself it wasn't but a three day hike.

JED

We need your help on something first.

A beat. Tanner figures out his angle.

TANNER

Sorry pal. Duty calls...And I don't know nothing about ground fighting.

JED

You don't know your way back neither.

EXT FOREST DAY

Cradling a gun, Jess escorts Tanner down a mountain trail. The pilot's flight suit stands out like a beacon.

TANNER  
...Borrowing me? Hell, this is  
kidnap.

JESS  
Whatever it takes.

Jess' hair catches on a branch.

TANNER  
Guess 'whatever' don't include  
haircuts, huh?

Jess throws him a look.

JESS  
When the war's won, we'll cut  
our hair. Not before.

Tanner rubs his own head.

TANNER  
So how's an old flattop figure  
in your plans?

CUT TO:

EXT RIDGE DAY

Jed lies on the ridgetop looking through binoculars at something below. Paul and Toni stand watch as Jess and Tanner approach up the incline.

JED  
'Mornin' major.

TANNER  
(winded)  
It's 'Andy' if you don't mind...  
Even if you do mind.

Jed hands him the binoculars and points.

JED  
Take a look.

Andy does.

ANDY  
You little monkeys! You found  
one!...

POV

In the wooded valley below, strange looking aircraft  
sit concealed beneath trees and camouflaged hangers.  
Uniformed soldiers scurry to attend them.

ANDY(V.O.)  
A Yak base!

PAUL(V.O.)  
A what?

ANDY(V.O.)  
A Yak base! Forger Yak-36. Russian  
verticle aircraft...see?

A Yak alights like a helicopter and scoots under the  
trees.

ANDY  
...They take off and land straight  
up and down, like a bug. Don't need  
runways. It's hard as hell to find  
'em from the air.

JED  
How do you hurt 'em?

ANDY  
Put a sidewinder up their ass.

JED  
I mean on the ground.

Andy looks at him.

ANDY  
You show me where this place is  
on the map and get me back to the  
Free Zone so I can strap on a  
bomber.

He turns back to the binoculars for a moment, then  
yanks them down, eyes wide with sudden realization.

JED  
What?

A beat.

ANDY

...Nah...

JED

What?

Andy swallows.

ANDY

Just a thought. A dumb one...  
See, Yak's got a weapons guidance  
box that lets it do everything  
but cartwheels in a dogfight.  
We've been trying to get hold  
of one but the thing self-detonates  
when the plane's shot down...If  
our guys could get their hands on--

JED

You help us blow the planes, we'll  
get you a box.

Andy thinks it over, then decisively shakes his head.

JED

Why not?

ANDY

You're not talking about some  
twenty second hit and run ambush,  
my boy. You're talkin' about  
gettin' down there amongst 'em.  
Sabotage and infiltration is  
scary ass business...

(points)

Look at that perimeter. I wouldn't  
go down there with a herd of Green  
Berets, much less ten kids.

JED

We're soldiers. Ten soldiers.

Andy grins at the alliteration.

ANDY

I'll buy that. Tin soldiers.

He starts to laugh and can't stop himself. Angrily, Jed  
gets up and starts down the slope. Andy catches up to  
him.

ANDY

Hey, I was outta line, okay?  
Don't get bent. It's just that  
on the ground I'm good for nothin'  
but stoppin' bullets.

JED

Bull. You just don't think we  
could pull it off.

Andy studies him.

ANDY

I think we could all be killed  
trying.

JED

Does that matter?

CUT TO:

EXT      OVERGROWN RAVINE      DAY

A bush seems to move furtively through the tall grass. An unmistakable orange identifies it as Andy's flight suit, camouflaged with dirt and branches. Jed and company slip through the undergrowth beside him, guns ready. They come to an embankment and peer cautiously over the top. Spanish VOICES and LAUGHTER are heard o.s.

POV

Three army trucks are stopped at a roadside park. The drivers and armed escort are eating lunch on the picnic tables.

JED & ANDY

ANDY

I've never been this close to  
them before.

JED

Lucky you.

Jed silently signals The Kids with his hands and they fan out along the embankment to take up positions. Jed points at Robert, who eagerly slithers forward through the brush, cradling his shotgun.

TRUCK CAB

While his comrades lunch unawares, one of the drivers sits behind the wheel of his vehicle, wolfing down a wad of food and writing a letter. A field radio crackles on the dash---irrelevant traffic conversing.

ROBERT

pauses at the edge of the brush---still undetected---then crawls under the truck.

DRIVER

looks up from his letter as Robert coolly rolls out from under the front of the cab. As the man grabs for the radio, Robert puts his gun against the windshield and fires.

SOLDIERS

They barely have time to react as the embankment explodes with automatic weapons fire. Their bodies dance like puppets.

Paul puts a bazooka round into one of the trucks. It BLOWS UP.

A few of the bleeding soldiers take cover behind the vehicles, wild with fright. Robert cuts them down.

The dust settles. Bodies twitch.

EMBANKMENT

JED

Robert?

ROBERT(O.S.)

Yeah.

JED

That all of them?

ROBERT(O.S.)

Yeah.

A beat.

ANDY

You don't take prisoners?

JED

We don't take chances.

He summons Toni and points at Andy.

JED

Watch our rear...and his.

The Kids ease toward the trucks at a crouch. Andy shakes his head.

ANDY

So fast...

The Kids cautiously move past the bodies to where Robert waits.

Behind them, a cargo door opens on one of the trucks. Three nervous Mexicans slink out and prepare to shoot them in the back.

TONI

sees them, raises her gun. Andy slaps it down.

ANDY

No!

He jumps up, waving his arms.

ANDY

Hey! Hey!

The Mexicans whirl in surprise. An orange bush gyrates wildly.

The Kids turn too, see the soldiers, open fire.

Andy hits the dirt as the Mexicans are mowed down. Toni hurries over to the Major.

TONI

I...

ANDY

It's okay, darlin'.

Jed storms toward Toni.

JED

I told you to watch our rear,  
dumbass!

ANDY

Hey! Where'd you learn to talk  
to ladies?...

Toni and Erica stare at him.

ANDY

Your butt was in the line of fire,  
chump! She did what she could---

He jumps at the sound of a GUNBLAST.

ROBERT

is shotgunning the corpses of the would-be ambushers.  
He shoots them to pieces, then looks up.

THE OTHERS

are stunned silent.

ROBERT

eyes them dispassionately, wanders around the truck,  
reloading.

PAUL(O.S.)

Look here!

TRUCK BED

Paul kneels beside crates of ammo and grenades. He holds  
holds up a putty-like bar as Jed and Andy arrive.

PAUL

Plastic explosives?

JED

We'll find out later. Pack out  
what you can, burn the rest.  
Hurry.

The Kids hop to it. Jed tries a brighter tone.

JED

(to Andy)

Now what do you think? Not bad  
for kids, huh?

ANDY

Your mom would be proud.

He starts tearing the foliage off his flight suit. Jed pulls him away.

JED

Let's get you something else to wear. You stick out like a pumpkin.

As Daryl and Aardvark torch the trucks, Jed searches the dead for clothing.

ANDY

Wait a minute. I ain't lookin' to be shot for wearin' the wrong uniform.

JED

Ah, we'll rip the insignia off. Besides, if they capture you---

Jed stops in mid-sentence, staring at the corpse in front of him. He spins around, looking.

ROBERT

adjusts his gear by one of the burning trucks. Jed rushes over, jerks his hand up---it's bloodied. Robert does not protest as Jed roughly searches him, rips his shirt open, retrieves some unrecognizable object, and hurls it to the ground.

JED

One more time and you're out, pardner. On your own. Understand?... Now bury it.

Jed storms past Andy and into the brush.

JED

Saddle up. Let's go.

ANDY

What the hell was that all about?

Burdened with a crate, Jess grimly marches after his brother.

JESS

Scalps.

ROBERT

stomps dirt over his battle trophy.

EXT      CAMP      NIGHT

A large pot of grass and pine needles simmers on the campfire. Andy dips his flight suit in and out of the crude dye with a stick. He nurses his bottle and stares vacantly at the flames. Jed pokes the fire, watching him.

JED

War's different up close.

No response.

JED

You get used to it after a while.

ANDY

I can see that.

Jed fumes quietly.

JED

Must be somethin' to kill a man from ten miles off. To sit warm in your plane and see that little orange flash in the distance. No body, no blood, no screams. Must be...clean.

Andy looks up, hard.

ANDY

I'll tell you a story...Coupla weeks ago me and my squadron were escorting relief flights back from Denver. We got shot up pretty bad over Kansas and what was left of us put down on an airstrip outside some podunk town. No gas...No ammo...Planes just sat there waiting for Russian reconnaissance to figure out the situation. It was two days before a fuel convoy finally broke through to us...Five minutes after the first truck pulled up somebody spotted tanks coming across the prairie. Eleven fighters caught on the ground and maybe ten minutes to get airborne...There wasn't shit we could do...Then out of nowhere, these old men came running past us across the field---townspeople. White haired,

ANDY (cont'd)

bald headed...grim as hell. They were going out to meet the tanks with .22's and Molotov cocktails. There couldn't have been more than twenty or thirty of them, and they knew they were going to die, but they threw themselves at the armor like the whole world depended on it. I remember taxiing for takeoff and watching this one old grand-~~father~~ father charge across the runway with a VFW hat on his head. He waved at me...They shot him in half....We got four planes out. Thirty lives for four planes. Don't talk to me about war at your level, kid.

A beat.

JED

Why does Denver need relief flights?

ANDY

It's been under s~~a~~ege for five months...Think you're tough for eating beans everyday? There's half a million scarecrows in Denver who'd do anything for a mouthful of such. They live on rats and sawdust bread...Sometimes each other. At night the pyres for the dead light up the sky. It's medieval.

Jed just stares.

ANDY

Thought you had the market for sufferin' and sacrifice all sewed up, didn't you?...You ain't seen nothin' yet.

CUT TO:

EXT      CAMP      NIGHT

Andy makes his way toward his lean-to. The bottle in his hand is nearly empty.

PAUL (o.s.)

Andy?...

Paul raises up on one arm as the major comes over.

PAUL

Can you spare a nip?

Andy tosses the bottle.

ANDY

Finish 'er off.

He sees Danny curled in a nest of leaves and pine, smoking.

ANDY

Daniel, if you're gonna sleep  
in kindling, don't smoke.

Danny tosses the cigarette.

DANNY

Andy?...Are we doin' right?

Silence.

ANDY

You're doin' what you have to.

He walks on.

At the edge of the clearing, Andy finds Robert huddled by his private campfire, carving five small figures on a boulder. Soldiers...scratched beside lots of others.

ANDY

All that hate's gonna burn  
your insides out.

Robert smiles.

ROBERT

Keeps me warm.

CUT TO:

EXT CALUMET NIGHT

Strelnikov exits his new headquarters, anxiously watching a truck with armed escort approach up the street.

The vehicle stops, the tailgate drops---the bodies of his slaughtered men lie stiff and bloody. The soldiers around the truck swear angrily and throw looks at Strelnikov.

STRELNIKOV

He nervously runs his fingers through his hair and goes back inside.

CUT TO:

EXT MOUNTAIN CLEARING DAY

Andy is running---fleeing---across the open field. Desperate, legs flying, he looks over his shoulder, then cuts in a different direction. He reaches out and snags a beautifully thrown pass from the air. Before he can tuck the football, Paul flashes in from nowhere, lowering his shoulder. It's a bone cruncher. Paul pounces on the fumble as Andy writhes, gasping for breath. The other sweaty players appear.

JED

How could you drop that? I laid it right in your hands.

Andy can only make grunting noises. Toni and Erica help him off the field.

ANDY

I thought we were playing 'touch'.

TONI

How old are you?...

He tries to straighten up.

TONI

Forty-five?

ANDY

Gimme a break, kid.

TONI

Forty-two?

ANDY

Thirty-three, dammit. Thirty-three.

They look skeptical.

ANDY  
Time ain't kind, girls.

He starts toward the huddle.

ERICA  
How old's your wife?

Andy turns.

ANDY  
Eighty.

ERICA  
What's she like?

ANDY  
Huh?...You saw her picture.

ERICA  
I mean what's she like?

He thinks.

ANDY  
Feisty...like you.

ERICA  
How did you meet?

Andy sits back down, sighs pleasantly.

ANDY  
In a closet...at a party. It  
was love at first grope.

TONI  
No@shit?

ANDY  
No...kidding. Actually we couldn't  
stand each other at first---or said  
so anyway. But once it took, I loved  
her so bad I hurt.

ERICA  
You still love her like that?

ANDY  
Not like that.

ERICA

Better?

He smiles to himself.

ANDY

Better.

JESS(o.s.)

Hey! You playin' or not?

ERICA

(angry)

Not!

ANDY

That's strange talk from you.

TONI

All we ever do is play football.

A beat.

ANDY

Well if you ladies had your druthers,  
what would it be?

Erica blurts.

ERICA

Dancing...I'd like to be danced.

Andy laughs, then sweeps her up. He whirls her,  
waltzes her around the field (breaking up the game),  
through the trees, humming an off-key tune.

Enchanted, Erica tries to keep up.

The Kids stare.

CUT TO:

EXT CAMP DAY

A wooden pointer traces trees and barbed wire on a  
crude replica of the Russian airbase.

ANDY

...Now when Paul and Jess recon-  
noitered the area two days ago,  
they found directional mines between  
the inner and outer perimeter wire.

ANDY(cont'd)

That means tommorrow night the mines will be pointing right at you, so watch out. The sentries can set 'em off by remote control.

AARDVARK

AARDVARK

Why don't we turn them around?

ANDY

It's embarassingly simple.

ANDY

Well, that uh, that could be done... Anyway, the five of you in B group will take up positions here...and here...to protect our flanks and keep this corridor open until we exit the perimeter...

(looks up)

That's it...Time to get serious, people. You got any questions, about the plan or your assignment, let's have 'em now.

Raymond raises his hand.

RAYMOND

What's a flank?

Andy looks sick.

ANDY

I need a drink.

JED

You gotta do a practice charge first.

ANDY

Go ahead. I'll watch.

Jed hands him a satchel.

JED

We already know how. You don't.

EXT MOUNTAINSIDE DAY

Jed escorts Andy to a stand of giant pine trees and points one out. The others watch from a distance.

JED  
Blow this one.

ANDY  
I thought my job was to point and  
let you do the particulars.

Jed is cool.

JED  
What if we get shot?...There's  
twenty second fuses in the satchel.  
And remember, plastique's potent.

CUT TO:

EXT MOUNTAINSIDE LATER

Andy runs away from the tree and rejoins the group,  
smiling confidently.

ANDY  
Piece of cake. That baby's goin'  
sky high.

DARYL  
With one charge? You'll be lucky  
to knock the bark off.

ANDY  
That's what I figured...So I used  
three.

The Kids instantly dive for the ground. Andy looks  
down at them, puzzled.

A TREMENDOUS EXPLOSION

vaporizes the pine and every other tree around it.  
The concussion knocks Andy to the ground. Splinters  
rain from the sky as he raises his head.

ANDY  
Three's too much, huh?

CUT TO:

EXT RUSSIAN AIRBASE NIGHT HIGH ANGLE

We drop down toward the forest floor, dipping beneath  
the growth and a vast camouflaged net to find a blaze

of lights and activity. It is an excellent job of concealment.

EXT        BASE PERIMETER

In a remote foxhole ringed with sandbags, a young Mexican guard lounges---He's bored. A peculiar ANIMAL NOISE in the dark catches his ear. He peers over the top of the sandbags, past the wire---an instant too long.

CLOSE        SOLDIER

His head snaps back and he falls lifeless against the other side of the foxhole. A hole in his forehead dribbles blood.

PERIMETER

A form stirs in the dark, leaps the concertina wire, and silently races across the short free fire zone. Diving headfirst over the inner wire, ~~he~~ tumbles into the foxhole. It's Robert. A slingshot dangles from his fist. Face smudged black, he signals to the darkness he came from.

Side by side, Jed and Paul worm their way forward, cutting through the wire with pliers. They push the slinky-like sections aside as the others crawl behind them, blackfaced, carrying weapons and satchels. Quickly they reach Robert and fan out to assigned positions.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Paul, Andy, Aardvark, Toni, and Jess follow Jed into the base. Jed pauses to grab Raymond and point out a hiding place.

JED

(whispering)

Go there. Kill anybody you don't recognize.

Andy crawls past.

ANDY

(to Raymond)

Screw your head on right tonight, son.

JED

Crates and trees slip by him. Mexican VOICES laugh softly in the night. Stop...a sentry. No. A mechanic saunters past carrying tools.

Jed follows him.

CUT TO:

EXT PERIMETER

Danny slithers along the wire. A claymore directional mine appears in f.g., on stilts, like a tiny deer blind. Danny gingerly turns it to point toward a sentry post several yards away. He crawls on, grinning.

EXT HANGAR

The mechanic bangs at the door with a pipe and curses in Spanish. A guard lets him in.

JED

watches from the shadows. He swallows, pulls a knife from his belt...and hands it to Aardvark.

EXT PERIMETER

On her belly, Erica desperately follows a trail of turned around mines. She whispers delicately.

ERICA

Danny! Danny!

Danny looks back.

ERICA

(mouthing the words)

That's enough!

Danny draws a circle in the air with his finger--- he's going around the whole base.

ERICA

(NO!)

Danny smiles gleefully, snakes around the curve of the wire, still turning mines.

EXT HANGAR DOOR

A shaking fist raps loudly.

AARDVARK(O.S.)

(Spanish)

Hey! Open the door!

The same guard casually opens up...Jed's knife slashes his throat.

Aardvark yanks him outside and jams the door. He watches the shocked teenager slide to the ground, gurgling his life away. The boy's eyes fix on Aardvark and glaze over.

Jed and the others rush from the dark.

JED

Let's go...

Aardvark is frozen.

JED

You've done it before.

AARDVARK

Not like this.

Posting Toni as guard, they collect themselves, then burst through the door.

INT HANGAR

The Kids leap in, guns leveled.

GROUND CREW

There's about ten of them. Some freeze. Some run.

ANDY

Alto! Alto!

The men stop. Their hands go up.

OFFICE

Two Russians arguing behind a window spot the commotion. One dives for a telephone---freezes when Paul kicks in the door. Andy strolls in.

ANDY  
(severe twang)  
Das Vidania.

EXT PERIMETER

Danny continues along the wire, carefully turning mines toward shadowy forms and voices in another post.

ERICA

retraces the furrow of her crawl. The gun slung across her back has caught brush and debris. She nears the cut in the wire and does a thoughtful double take.

POV

Intently at his position across the wire, Raymond grips his rifle and stares down the long curve of perimeter in the direction Danny will come from.

ERICA  
(Raymond!...Raymond!)

His back is to her. He doesn't move.

Erica worms toward him, but the cut section of wire blocks her way. She tries to go under it and gets stuck---a pile of leaves with barbed wire on its back. She struggles, it gets worse. Erica drags herself toward the cut and gets tangled in the hole, blocking it completely.

INT HANGAR

Jed glares at Andy. Behind them the Yak fighters sit waiting. The hangar personnel are covered by Jess and Paul.

JESS  
(mocking)  
We shoul<sup>d</sup>a known... 'Alto! Alto!  
Das Vidania!'

ANDY  
I never said I was fluent.

Aardvark looks ill. Jed grabs him, jerks a thumb at Andy.

JED  
Can you translate Mex for him?

AARDVARK  
(shrugging him off)  
You know I can.

Jed grabs him again, totally serious.

JED  
Aardvark, snap out of it.

Aardvark approaches the Mexican crew chief.

AARDVARK  
(to Andy)  
What do you want?

ANDY  
I want him to open all the cockpits.

Aardvark tells the man. The crew chief looks at the floor as one of the Russians snaps at him in Spanish.

AARDVARK  
He says he'll have him shot if  
he helps.

JED  
Get them outta here.

Paul shoves the Russians back into their office.

The crew chief is sweating.

ANDY  
Tell him we got no time to be  
polite. I'll kill him if he  
doesn't open up. Tell him.

Aardvark does...No response. Just more sweat.

Andy cocks the bolt on his gun.

ANDY  
Tell him he's got ten seconds...  
(looks at his watch)  
Uno...dos...tres...

He puts his gun in the man's ribs and backs him up.  
Aardvark begs the chief to cooperate.

ANDY  
...ocho...nuevo...diez---

One of the mechanics jumps forward, blabbering.

AARDVARK

This guy says he'll do it.

The crew chief breathes. Andy turns to the volunteer.

ANDY

I like a man to sing out.

EXT PERIMETER

Erica is hopelessly caught. She tosses pebbles at Raymond but the barbs have her sleeve. Her throws go wide.

In b.g., a figure leaves the laughter of another post and heads toward The Kids position. He finds his way with a flashlight.

DARYL

hears him, peeks over the sandbags where he waits with the dead sentry. He spots something wiggling in the wire where the hole used to be---Erica. He leaps out of the post and scurries to her head. (Her legs are on the other side).

DARYL

(How did you!...Never mind!)  
(points at the soldier)  
(Don't move!)

He throws leaves on her head, scuttles back to the sandbags, and presses against them.

Erica scrunches down. The wire CREAKS.

SOLDIER

He shines his light at the sound---Just a bunch of branches washed against the wire. He calls to the post.

SOLDIER

Oye?...

No answer. He walks over and flashes the light inside. An arm snatches him down. A blade plunges...Not a sound. Robert's black face eases up, coolly looks around, sinks back into the pit.

INT HANGAR

Paul and Jed stick charges in the jet afterburners while Jess ties up prisoners in b.g. Andy holds his gun to the mechanic's head. The Mexican yanks at a panel in one of the fighter cockpits.

ANDY  
(to Jed)  
Stick 'em in there as far as  
you can.

Jed pokes his head out of an afterburner.

JED  
Don't worry about us...You got  
that thing yet?

ANDY  
Almost...  
(brandishes the gun)  
...Andale!

The nervous mechanic unleashes a string of obscenities at Aardvark.

AARDVARK  
He says he can work a lot faster  
if you take the gun out of his face.

EXT PERIMETER

Daryl tugs at the tangle on Erica. The CREAKING seems deafening.

DARYL  
Ouch! I can't get it! Jed's got  
the cutters!

ERICA  
Okay...but get Raymond. He doesn't  
know Danny's circling the base.

DARYL  
What?

ERICA  
Danny's turning all the mines.  
Raymond doesn't know. He'll shoot  
him when he comes around.

Daryl whirls.

Yards away, across the obstructing wire, Raymond crouches with his back turned.

DARYL  
(Raymond!...Raymond!)

ERICA  
What's wrong with him?

Daryl's face goes white.

DARYL  
Oh God. He's done it again.

ERICA  
What?

DARYL  
Cotton in his ears. He hates  
the gunfire. Jesus, Raymond!

CLOSE RAYMOND

Alert to the slightest movement in front of him, Raymond has white tufts poking out of his ears.

DANNY

methodically works his way forward. An endless curve of turned mines follow in his wake.

INT HANGAR

Cursing, the mechanic gives a mighty tug and pulls an instrument dangling wires from deep inside the cockpit.

AARDVARK  
He says that's the box.

Andy eyes the strange apparatus, the mechanic's "You win" expression...then dashes the instrument to the floor. He rams his gun in the man's throat. The mechanic screams.

AARDVARK  
(calmly translates)  
Don't shoot him, he'll get it.  
He'll get the real box.

ANDY  
If he does that again, I'll

ANDY(cont'd)  
blow his face off. Tell him.

EXT PERIMETER

Daryl tosses pebbles at Raymond. He can't hit him to save his life.

ERICA  
Daryl! You're too loud!

A powerful searchlight flicks on in a nearby post. Daryl drops and freezes behind Erica as the beam slides across her. The light passes on, then flicks off.

ERICA  
Don't leave me.

DARYL  
I won't. I promise.

RAYMOND

Unaware of what's happening behind him, he chomps gum like a fiend...He stops in mid-chew and crouches lower.

POV

Far ahead, a sinister little form appears around the curve of wire. It's crawling, obviously hiding, and headed straight for Raymond.

INT HANGAR

Jess sits in a cockpit, smashing dials with a wrench while Paul rolls fuel drums under the fighter beside him.

Andy clambers down from the aircraft holding a strange metal box covered with micro circuitry and ominous red lettering. Behind him, the mechanic smiles coyly.

AARDVARK  
He says you have to respect him for trying. You'd have done the same thing.

ANDY  
Yeah, but I got away with it...

He holds up the prize and grins.

JED

I wouldn't know one of these  
from a mules ass.

Aardvark translates. The mechanic stops smiling.

JED

carefully places an old alarm clock on one of the  
clustered fuel drums---the main fuse. Other fuses are  
strung like spider web from the plastique behind the  
clock to the other planes.

Andy runs up.

JED

We got five minutes.

ANDY

I'll be gone in two.

Jed gently turns the switch...the clock starts ticking.  
They run.

HANGAR OFFICE

Aardvark ties the mechanic to a chair. The other  
prisoners are trussed beside him. Jed rushes in with  
Andy, who spots Mezcal on a shelf.

ANDY

Sonofabitch!

He grabs the bottles and runs.

AARDVARK

(to Jed)

I tied him to get loose in a  
coupla minutes...So they can  
get out in time.

A beat.

JED

Okay.

The mechanic spits at Aardvark as he leaves and snaps  
a few words...Aardvark stares at him.

JED

What'd he call you?

Jed kicks the mechanic's chair over and pulls Aardvark out of the office.

EXT PERIMETER

DANNY

crawls past the last post, turning the mines as he goes. He's dirty, tired---and thrilled with himself.

RAYMOND

nervously fingers the trigger of his gun.

ROBERT

sits with the dead at his post, glancing between the wire and a group of soldiers in the open area Jed's group must cross on their way back.

DARYL

His hands are bloody.

ERICA

Daryl! Stop him!

DARYL

I've gotta open the wire. They'll be back any second.

ERICA

But Danny---!

DARYL

Pray. That's all we can do.

RAYMOND

whispers a plea at the figure worming toward him.

RAYMOND

Please go away!

EXT AIRBASE

Jed and group slink through the shadows. The bottles in Andy's pack CLINK gently. At the edge of the open ground they stop.

The group of soldiers is standing around a truck, killing time.

PAUL

(Move!)

ANDY

How much time we got?

Jed checks his watch.

JED

Thirty seconds.

INT HANGAR

THE CLOCK

ticks ominously.

MECHANIC

He lies on his side, struggling with the bonds. The other crew members shout encouragement.

CLOSE CLOCK

The minute hand touches the alarm hand...The ticking slows---stops. The clock is dead.

OFFICE

One of the crew 'shushes' the others. No ticking! They shout happily. The mechanic frees his raw wrists and unties his feet. He frees one Russian, then starts on the other.

RUSSIAN #2

Not now! Cut the fuses! Get help!

EXT AIRBASE

The saboteurs have removed their black face and tacked on casual expressions. They start across the clearing far to the side of the soldiers.

JED

Act normal.

The soldiers look up and Andy waves.

ANDY

Das Vidania!

MEXICANS

They wave back.

A SOLDIER  
Russian asshole.

EXT PERIMETER

Daryl almost has the wire free. Erica's watching Raymond.

ERICA  
Don't shoot!

DARYL  
Don't look.

RAYMOND

His finger tightens on the trigger as Danny crawls closer.

RAYMOND  
(Don't make me kill you!)

INT HANGAR

The Russian and the mechanic head for the clock, ripping fuses as they go. They approach the barrel slowly, staring at the once deadly apparatus. The curiosity is too much. The Russian reaches out and taps the clock.

The alarm BLARES. The main fuse ignites.

The two men run like hell.

EXT HANGAR

The ground crew streaks out the door. The Russian and the mechanic hustle Russian #2 out, still tied to his chair.

EXT PERIMETER

RAYMOND

can't miss. Danny is crawling right into his sights.

DARYL

tears the concertina apart. He dives through and knocks Raymond over.

The SHOT kicks dirt in Danny's face.

A split second of frozen silence...

The clothing torn from her back, her eyes brimming, Erica rushes over and plants a stunning kiss on Daryl's mouth.

THE HANGAR

goes up like a volcano.

JED

and company tumble into the sandbag post with Robert.

EXT WIRE

The searchlight comes on again, catching Raymond, Danny, Erica, and Daryl in the beam.

SENTRY POST

A hand hits a red switch.

AERIAL THE AIRBASE NIGHT

The entire perimeter explodes in on the base like a ring of fire.

EXT THE WIRE

The Kids freeze in the FLASH, awed by Danny's handiwork. They are perfect targets.

ANDY

...I'll be damned.

POV

But there is no one to shoot them. The sentry posts are just smoking pits in a circle of total destruction.

DANNY

climbs in beside the others.

DANNY

You're not mad at me, are you?

Shocked VOICES shout o.s. Here and there, the base is recovering. Jed eyes the incredible scene, turns to Danny.

JED

We'll let it go this time.

Stunned, elated---alive---they plunge into the night.

CUT TO:

EXT THE CAMP NIGHT

The Kids are celebrating savagely. Wads of cotton have been glued all over Raymond's head. Tonight he doesn't care. Tonight he grins like a drunken loon.

Erica gets up to put her giggling sister to bed. From across the fire, Daryl secretly watches her every move.

Aadrvark shuns the revelry.

Andy picks at Robert.

ANDY

...You musta killed forty people tonight. What's it take to make you happy, boy?

Jed comes over.

JED

You feel all right, Andrew?

The major casts a bleary eye around.

ANDY

I feel...empty.

He holds up a Mezcal bottle---it's been drained.

RAYMOND

blurts.

RAYMOND

D'ja see when that thing went off? Blowie! Spics all over the place!...

Laughing, he doesn't understand the stares.

Aardvark gets up and leaves.

JED

(to Raymond)

Shuttup...

(calling)

Aardvark!...He'll cool off.

They watch him disappear.

ANDY

War is hell...But tonight the  
gods were with us.

A beat.

DANNY

You believe in God?

ANDY

I believe in somethin'...just  
not sure what.

DANNY

Reincarnation?

Andy shakes his head.

ANDY

One ride's enough, thank you.

PAUL

Well I believe in it, and you  
know what I wanna come back as?...  
Cindy Baskins' bra.

The boys hoot.

JESS

Cindy Baskins? What a tire  
biter!

PAUL

Hey, it's from the neck down  
that counts.

JESS

How would you know, Edwards?

Paul leans forward, rubbing his thumb and fingertips  
together.

PAUL  
We're talkin' bare nips!

Andy gets up.

ANDY  
This is gettin' too raw for me.

PAUL  
(moaning)  
I been deprived! Six months  
with no women!

ANDY  
You been livin' with two of 'em.

BOYS  
(revulsion)  
Toni and Erica?

Daryl pretends to join in.

ANDY  
Yeah, Toni and Erica.

INT LEAN-TO NIGHT

Undressing for bed, Erica overhears.

JED(O.S.)  
Talk about kissing your sister...

PAUL(O.S.)  
More like your brother. I saw  
Erica takin' a bath once. She's  
got tits like lemons...

Erica looks down at herself. The boys roar.

CUT TO:

INT LEAN-TO NIGHT

Groaning with fatigue, Andy pulls off his boots and covers himself with a blanket. Campfire LAUGHTER can still be heard. He stares skyward for a moment, then pulls out the wrinkled picture of his wife and tries to remember the face.

A shadow falls across him.

ERICA

Do you miss her?

Erica has on her best flannel shirt. She's done what she can with her hair.

ANDY

Yeah.

She kneels, studies his face.

ERICA

Can I take her place tonight?

Silence.

ANDY

It wouldn't do, darlin'.

ERICA

It would for me.

Another silence.

ANDY

I can't cheat you...When the first time comes you should be quiverin' with some boy who makes you ache.

Erica laughs bitterly.

ERICA

Oh I ached...My first time was in a smelly tent with pigs who couldn't even understand what I was screaming.

A beat.

ANDY

It don't count.

A tear rolls off her cheek.

ERICA

I want to have been in love, Andy... and I'm gonna die before it happens.

Her mouth begins to quiver.

ANDY

C'mere.

Erica falls in his arms, sobbing. Andy rocks her like a baby. His eyes are so tired.

CUT TO:

EXT AIRBASE FIRST LIGHT

The dawn is cold gray. An unconcerned moon floats above the forest. Oily smoke flicks it.

On the ground below, the hangar is a twisted, smouldering ruin. Soldiers search the rubble.

STRELNIKOV

steps into frame, surveying the scene. He looks helpless, ineffective, smothered in a greatcoat. Slowly he turns an observant circle; approaches a stretch of concertina wire.

TWO BODIES

sit charred in a sentry post, staring at the perimeter that killed them.

A JEEP

appears behind Strelnikov. He doesn't acknowledge its whine. The vehicle stops and two men get out--- Bratchenko and a large strapping fellow...Another colonel. Pants tucked into boots. Strange cut of jacket. He smiles inappropriately, clasping his hands behind his back as if on an outing. Bratchenko stares at the corpses.

STRELNIKOV

Children did this...Can you imagine?

He turns to Bratchenko and the colonel.

BRATCHENKO

Viktor, this is Pyotr Ivanovich.

Strelnikov extends his hand. IVANOVICH touches his beret, then walks past for a closer look at the dead sentries.

STRELNIKOV

Your aide?

BRATCHENKO

Your replacement...I'm relieving you of command, Viktor. Immediately.

Strelnikov looks only mildly surprised.

STRELNIKOV  
Can I speak frankly, sir?

BRATCHENKO  
If you must.

STRELNIKOV  
They could win.

A beat.

BRATCHENKO  
Your war, maybe.

IVANOVITCH

cooly tests the blackened bodies with his boot, making a CRACKLING noise.

CUT TO:

EXT Foothills Afternoon

Endless, rolling, grassy slopes stretch toward the mountains in b.g. Making their way TOWARD CAMERA, Jess, Paul, Daryl, Erica, and Andy stop beneath a large and lonely tree. It's late. Almost Golden Hour.

CLOSE

Andy has all of his gear.

JED  
This is as far as we go with you,  
Andrew...It'll be dark in an hour.

He points ahead.

POV

A wide plain lies beyond the few remaining hills. A river shimmers in the distance. It's beautiful.

JED(V.O.)  
That's the Platte down there. Cross  
that and you're back with friends.

THE GROUP

ANDY  
Well who the hell have I been

ANDY(cont'd)  
with the past month?

Grinning, Jed gestures to the side.

JED  
I gotta talk to you.

Andy follows him away from the others.

JED

turns. His eyes are full of tears. He sweeps an arm  
across the vista.

JED  
Why are we doing this?

Andy thinks, smiles.

ANDY  
'Cause we don't know no better  
yet. Call it evolution, whatever.  
In the meantime, I love life the  
way I have lived it. I want others  
to say the same.

JED

can't talk.

ANDY  
I'll think of you.

He walks back to the others.

ANDY  
I had some dumb things planned  
to say...

He moves down the line, shaking hands, chucking chins.  
He takes off his flight cap and puts it on Jess.

ERICA

Her eyes are brimming. Andy wipes them with his thumb,  
kisses her forehead...starts down the slope.

Jed calls out, waving his rifle.

JED  
Hey!...

Andy turns.

JED  
...Good luck!

Andy grins.

ANDY  
I'll take all I can get!

A JET

looms over the rise behind Andy, speeding silently ahead of its own sound.

JED

There's no time to point.

JED  
Andy!

THE MAJOR

whirls. The fighter screams toward him, barely off the ground. It's a Yak...Two long cannisters release from the wings and tumble end over end. No chance for escape.

ANDY

His face is blank.

ANDY  
I'll be damned...

THE KIDS

Jed, Jess, and Paul dive to one side.

Erica leaps for Andy. Daryl goes after her.

FULL SHOT

The cannisters hit. A wave of flaming napalm swallows Andy, Erica, and Daryl.

Paul's shirt catches fire. Jed beats it out while Jess looks around in terror.

JESS  
ANDY?...ERICA?...

JED

runs to the wall of fire, looking for life. The incredible heat beats him back.

PAUL

Jed!

THE FIGHTER

barrels in for another attack.

THE BOYS

dash for cover. They squeeze behind the tree. A swarm of bullets chews across the ground. Splinters fly. Branches are chopped to pieces. Awesome firepower.

The plane SHRIEKS past, big as a house. The boys open fire.

INT FIGHTER POV PILOT

A line of holes tick across the canopy.

EXT FIGHTER

It veers off to escape their range.

EXT HILLSIDE

Not breathing, the boys run for a gulley. They watch the enemy circling far overhead.

The raging inferno is horrible.

JED

...Run!

JESS

Where?

Anywhere. Jed shoves them up the gulley---back toward the mountains.

THE FLAMES

lick skyward.

CUT TO:



FULL SHOT

Danny is the center of attention.

CUT TO:

EXT MEMORIAL BOULDER NIGHT

Three new names are carved beside the earlier ones. A wind comes up, dancing sparks away like fireflies. The pines MOAN overhead.

JESS

You're the preacher's boy.

Danny draws a breath, closes his eyes.

DANNY

Lord, take us away from here...

CUT TO:

EXT FIELD NIGHT (LATER)

Jess wades through a sea of grass undulating in the wind.

JESS

(whispering)

Jed? Jed?

A form thrusts up from a wave beside him. Jess jumps.

JED

(gun ready)

What are you whispering for?

JESS

It's the dark...Why don't you sleep a while?

JED

I'm okay.

He sinks into the grass. Jess sits with him, a cigarette shaking in his fingers.

JESS

Somethin' how the mountains pay us no mind...You laugh, you cry, but the wind still blows and the grass still grows...

JED  
It was bound to happen sooner  
or later, Jessie.

A beat.

JESS  
Gettin' pretty lean on feelings  
aren't you?

No response. Jess flicks his smoke away.

JESS  
They're talkin' about quittin',  
Jed...They've lost the stomach  
for it.

JED  
And you?

JESS  
I'm your brother...Just use me  
right.

Jess gets up to go, turns.

JESS  
That jet was looking for us,  
wasn't it?

JED  
Yes.

THE MOON

could care less.

CUT TO:

EXT KID'S CAMP NIGHT

The fire has died to embers. Dark lean-tos. Everyone's  
asleep.

CUT TO:

EXT FIELD NIGHT

The moon hangs lower now, just above the waving grass.  
Suddenly a face blocks the frame, darts its eyes, then  
slinks on...followed by three other faces.

FOUR COMMANDOS

They slip through the field, into the trees with unnerving stealth. Green Beret types. Silent. Deadly. Single file, they move up the slope toward camp.

COMMANDO #1

Passing between two trees, he freezes in mid step and looks down.

HIS LEG

presses against a trip wire. PAN---It's attached to a grenade beside the trail.

Commando #1 eases back, indicates the wire, and steps over it. The other soldiers do the same, squinting ahead.

POV

Faint outlines of The Kid's camp can be made out.

COMMANDO #1

points, communicates instructions with hand signals. Synchronizing their watches, the soldiers move out.

When the last man has passed, what looked like foliage beside the trail comes alive. A knife blade glints, a figure emerges---the commandos are followed.

COMMANDO #2

stops beside a tree to ease the bolt back on his gun. It clicks softly. He hears another CLICK...freezes.

CLOSE HIS EYES

They shudder as we hear the BLOW.

COMMANDO #3

advances toward the camp at a crouch.

POV COMMANDO #3

Trees slip by. The camp looks ghostly. It gets closer, closer---THUD. The screen goes black.

HIGH ANGLE      COMMANDO #4

From the treetops, he looks like a beetle sneaking across the forest floor. He does not see another beetle scuttling to catch him.

The two dark forms meet, struggle in silence---one scurries away.

CLOSE      WATCH DIAL

The yellow-green numbers glow in the dark. The second hand sweeps toward "12".

COMMANDO #1

Poised at the edge of camp, he watches the seconds tick down.

WATCH DIAL

The second hand passes "12".

COMMANDO #1

looks up in anticipation.

POV

The camp looks haunted. Not a shadow moves.

COMMANDO #1

He grows anxious---looks to his left, his right... What the---? A gun action PUMPS loudly. He whirls.

JED

holds a shotgun two feet from his face.

CUT TO:

EXT      CAMP      PRE-DAWN

The commando sits crosslegged and stoic in the dirt. His elbows are tied behind him. He's nineteen.

Paul and Jess nervously question him. Half-dressed kids madly grab belongings in b.g.

PAUL

Sprechen zie Deutsch?

JESS

What if he does? You don't.

Danny warily eyes the forest.

DANNY

We better go.

PAUL

Habla Ingles?

JED

stands nearby, listening but not looking at Robert.

ROBERT

Shoot him.

A beat.

JED

I wanna know how he found us.

ROBERT

We got no time for---

JED

I wanna know.

PAUL

He slaps the prisoner.

ROBERT

ROBERT

Rub a butt on him!

He holds up a cigarette.

PAUL

is scared, so he does.

The commando yells, flails at Paul and his cigarette.

COMMANDO

Suck at you! Goddam for you mother!

Jed runs over and grabs his sweaty shirt.

JED  
Who told you where to find us?

COMMANDO

He's scared, but he's been trained.

COMMANDO  
You fock, yankee.

Jed slugs him.

JED  
Talk.

DANNY  
We better go.

The prisoner locks his face.

COMMANDO  
(monotone)  
...Gorsky, Stepan Yevgeny. Lieutenant---

Robert kicks him in the stomach as hard as he can.

ROBERT  
Nobody cares who you are, asshole.

He kicks him again...and again.

RAYMOND & TONI

RAYMOND  
They're gonna hurt him!

TONI  
Good.

JESS

He moves to stop Robert---Jed holds him back, waits a few more blows to pull Robert away.

The commando is pulp.

JED  
Talk.

The boy feebly shakes his head.

Robert springs forward.

ROBERT

That does it. I say shoot the  
bastard and move out. All in  
favor, raise your hands...  
We'll do this Daryl's way.

JED

Hey, I'm in command here.

ROBERT

Then you take the vote...

Silence...Robert jabs a finger toward the hills.

ROBERT

...We owe for them.

A beat.

JED

All in favor?

Danny and Raymond watch the other hands go up. Even  
Aardvark votes---reluctantly.

Robert smirks at the pink horizon.

ROBERT

Shot at dawn...How romantic.

COMMANDO

He lifts a battered face toward Robert.

COMMANDO

(defiantly)

You too, yankeefock...He kills  
at you soon.

JED

Who?

COMMANDO

'Gringolicker'.

AARDVARK

turns white.....slowly raises his face.

POV

Jed pierces him with a look.

AARDVARK

turns to the prisoner.

AARDVARK

You were supposed to wait.

The commando turns white. You could hear a pin drop.

JED

Guess nobody trusts a traitor.

JESS

...Aardvark?!

AARDVARK

My name is Arturo.

JESS

...Wh----Why?

Aardvark points at Paul.

AARDVARK

He knows...

He points at Jed.

AARDVARK

...And so does he.

CUT TO:

EXT FOREST DAWN

Two trees stand starkly in a cloudy clearing. Yards away, captors and captives stand apart.

JED

holds the commando's cap over Raymond's head.

JED

Draw.

Raymond doesn't move. Impatiently, Robert pushes him aside and reaches in. He pulls his hand out, opens it---a white bean sits on his palm. He hurls it to the ground, storms off.

Paul reaches in the hat. His bean is red.

AARDVARK, COMMANDO

They are tied at the ankles and wrists. Robert approaches with a knife. He whirls the Russian around and cuts the rope binding his feet.

COMMANDO

This is violate of Geneva Convention.

ROBERT

Sorry, never heard of it.

Robert moves to Aardvark and cuts his feet loose.

AARDVARK

What color am I?

ROBERT

Black.

CLOSE---OPEN PALM

A black bean quivers on it. CAMERA TILTS to Danny's ashen face. Behind him, Raymond rubs his hand on his pants...A black bean lies at his feet.

EXT TWO TREES

At gunpoint, Robert marches Aardvark and the commando to the gray-barked trunks and ties them in place. Aardvark moves like a zombie.

COMMANDO

(voice cracking)

Dogfock! I show how a Soviet dies!

Robert tightens his ropes.

ROBERT

I've seen it before, pal.

EXT CLEARING

TONI

pulls her hand out of the cap and opens her eyes---  
The bean is red. She actually smiles.

Jess steps forward. He reaches in and pulls a black bean. Shaking, confused, he looks up at his brother.

JESS  
Why didn't you tell us?

A beat.

JED  
It was classified.

Wordlessly, Jess walks away.

JED

empties the cap into his hand. The final red bean tumbles out.

EXT TREES

Robert ties Aardvark to the trunk, avoiding his stare. Finished, he starts across the clearing...looks back.

AARDVARK  
What did you expect from a 'spic'?

FIRING SQUAD

Two groups of three, side by side. Jed, Paul, and Toni face the Russian. Raymond, Danny, and Jess will shoot Aardvark.

DANNY  
This isn't real. This isn't real.

He backs away.

JED  
Danny!

DANNY  
He's one of us!

Robert screams.

ROBERT  
HE KILLED THREE OF US!...  
(points)

HE DID!

JESS  
Well for God's sake at least blindfold them!

JED  
(nervous)  
No time...Aim for the heart.

AARDVARK, COMMANDO

The Russian begins to cry softly.

COMMANDO  
Boy, say at me you are friend...  
Please I will not die alone.

Aardvark numbly nods. Commando faces the executioners  
and squeezes his eyes shut.

FIRING SQUAD

They move like robots.

ROBERT  
Ready!...Aim!...

AARDVARK

AARDVARK  
For you, papa...

FIRING SQUAD

ROBERT  
...FIRE!

It's a ragged volley.

AARDVARK, COMMANDO

The Russian's body dances with bullets. Bark flies.  
Branches are clipped...

Aardvark is untouched.

JESS, RAYMOND, DANNY

They look at each other. Danny throws down his gun.

AARDVARK

His eyes are wild---hopeful.

FIRING SQUAD

They stare at each other. Robert lurches, yanks a

pistol from a holster and heads across the clearing.

AARDVARK

He murmurs deliriously.

AARDVARK

...cutting me loose!...

POV

Robert strides up, cold as stone. He raises the pistol to Aardvark's face and cocks it.

ROBERT

Turn your head.

His mind shattered, Aardvark slowly faces the mannequins across the clearing and the ghostly mountains beyond.

HIGH ANGLE            THE CLEARING

The shot CRACKS.

Robert walks away from the tree.

FIRING SQUAD

Frozen...Robert moves past them.

ROBERT

He would have done the same to you.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT            VALLEY            DUSK

A flight of helicopters crosses the setting sun.

INT            HELICOPTER

Surrounded by fierce looking troops, Ivanovich scans the countryside from the aircraft door. The co-pilot yells back:

CO-PILOT

(subtitles)

Colonel, it's almost dark.

Ivanovich doesn't even acknowledge him.

EXT MOUNTAINSIDE

From atop a craggy ridge, the helicopters skim over the valley far below---dragonflies.

Jed makes his way up the rugged slope in f.g., followed by the others. Wearily, worriedly, they look back.

Jed offers Jess a hand up. He refuses it.

CUT TO:

EXT THUNDERSTORM NIGHT

A bolt of lightning FLASHES.

INT CAVE NIGHT

Total darkness. Somewhere, rain DRIZZLES.

DANNY

...Beat to death by his neighbors?

PAUL

Yeah.

DANNY

His brother too?

PAUL

Yeah.

TONI

For being Mexican?

Paul is wracked by SOBS.

DANNY

Why'd you say they hanged like the others? Why didn't you tell us?

JED

I asked him not to!

DANNY

Why?

JED

I was afraid of what might happen.

PAUL

Why'd he have to find out? Why?

RAYMOND

I bet his mom told him.

Rain DRIPS.

JED

Aardvark talked to his mother?

RAYMOND

Yeah...The day you guys took Andy back...He went home...I bet she told him about the camps too...

A beat.

JESS

What camps?

RAYMOND

You know, Jed. Those ones Andy was whisperin' to you about? Where all the Mexicans in the Free Zone are locked up? Like the California Japs in World War II?...

JED

Why didn't you tell us Aardvark went home, Raymond?

RAYMOND

He asked me not to.

CUT TO:

EXT CAVE MOUTH MORNING

Jed hands Raymond his gear and gives him a push.

JED

Go away, Raymond. You're dangerous.

RAYMOND

I got no place to go!

JED

Go home.

RAYMOND

But...I don't know where I am!

Jed fires his gun at Raymond's feet. Raymond runs.

PAUL  
He'll die out there.

JED  
We'll all die if he stays.

JESS  
So why didn't you just shoot him?

CUT TO:

EXT PRAIRIE EARLY EVENING

The Kids straggle along the open area where high plains and foothills meet. Scrub grows as far as the eye can see---bleak country.

Jed stops.

POV

A khaki green hut on stilts rises above the scrub a hundred yards ahead. The dark windows are foreboding.

JED  
Something's in there.

Paul looks at him.

PAUL  
It's a deerblind.

INT DEERBLIND

One window frames The Kids in the distance. A weathered shutter CREAKS.

EXT PRAIRIE

Jed looks nervous. He taps the bazooka on Paul's shoulder.

JED  
Put a round through it...  
Just in case.

Reluctantly, Paul loads a rocket and pulls the trigger---  
The weapon doesn't fire. He presses the trigger again---  
Nothing. Paul shakes the bazooka, bangs it with his hand.

PAUL  
It's broke.

Jed raises his rifle and fires a long burst into the deerblind.

Dozens of quail explode from the surrounding scrub...  
Silence descends again.

INT DEERBLIND

The shutter still CREAKS.

EXT PRAIRIE

TONI

We could be doing this for years,  
couldn't we?

They give the deerblind a wide berth.

DEERBLIND

Bathed in twilight, the strange little building watches  
over the prairie. A nightbird WHISTLES.

CUT TO:

EXT ROCK LEDGE NIGHT

It's the crudest of camps.

Raymond creeps into the firelight. He's torn and filthy.  
Danny and Toni jump.

RAYMOND

(crying)

I got no place to go...

Jed eyes him dispassionately.

JED

...Followed us...

JESS

You knew he would.

Jess leads Raymond blubbering to the fire, puts a  
blanket around him, offers food.

RAYMOND

I won't screw up no more...You  
can shoot me if I do.

CUT TO:

EXT      CORNFIELD      DAY

A WORM

attacks an ear of corn. Suddenly the stalks are parted-  
A Mexican soldier dressed counter-guerilla style creeps  
out.

Ivanovich and more soldiers are crouched and waiting.  
The Mexican throws a thumb over his shoulder.

MEXICAN #1

There are three of them.

Ivanovich turns to a gun crew.

IVANOVICH

Lay it on.

The men quietly move a heavy machine gun to an open  
field of fire.

GUNNER'S POV

An old gray barn. Inside, Cows MOO and pails CLANK.

THE MACHINE GUN

BLASTS. The barn is shredded.

SOLDIERS

They rush in, guns ready.

INT      BARN

A farmer lies beside his milking stool---riddled. Two  
dead cows twitch at his feet. Ivanovich is livid.

IVANOVICH

(to Mexican #1)

Idiot.

He storms out.

MEXICAN #1

But I saw three of them...

A fellow soldier indicates the cows.

MEXICAN #2

And here are the other two...

He leans over the dead man.

MEXICAN #2

Sorry compadre. Lupe made a mistake.  
No hard feelings, huh?

He puts a cigarette in the farmer's mouth and hurries after the others, laughing hysterically.

A MANURE PILE

in the corner of the barn moves. Paul and Toni emerge, shaking horribly. Paul clamps a hand over her mouth to stifle the heaving SCREAM.

CUT TO:

EXT FOREST DAY

A cathedral of pines. A far off THROB gets louder as helicopters suddenly appear---searching, probing above the woods. One chopper hovers a moment, then opens fire on the forest floor. A group of what had appeared to be bushes leap up and run in all directions.

Cannisters fall from the helicopters, spewing gas.

The 'bushes' scream and writhe. Frog-faced soldiers in gas masks rapel down ropes from the aircraft and finish the 'bushes' off.

One of the frog-faces wears colonel's insignia. He rolls a 'bush' over with his boot.

BODY

The man is in his thirties, his face twisted in agony. He wears rags for clothes. His ancient gun is taped in many places. He has been fighting in the forest a long time.

IVANOVICH

looks disappointed.

IVANOVICH

Not the fish we're after...But they'll do.

The bodies are hoisted into the sky.

CUT TO:

EXT MOUNTAIN VILLAGE DAY

Rubble that was once a house smolders. A light rain falls.

A BAND OF SCAVENGERS

Cautiously moves through the ruined backyard garden, brushing off rotten vegetables, eating them.

DANNY

searches a stiff body, looking for something the living can use. He finds cigarettes.

JED, PAUL, JESS

Survey the scene. Their eyes flick nervously.

PAUL

Didn't they feed us here last week?

JED

Yeah.

He steps through the blasted walls. A SCURRYING NOISE erupts under the rubble. Jed jumps. Seven guns are turned on the sound...

Behind a broken cellar door, someone is babbling softly.

JED

pushes the door open.

POV

A fifteen year old girl is living like a rat. She is crazed.

GIRL

Don't shoot...I'm nice...

She caresses her filthy body.

GIRL

If you kill me you'll waste this...  
Pretty...You can have it too...

Jed is speechless. He reaches into his pack and puts a wad of something on the cellar floor, pointing.

JED

Food.

The girl's eyes fix on the morsel, but she doesn't move. Jed backs out of her hole. She scurries, snatches the thing, vanishes into the dark.

EXT CELLAR

Jed closes the door behind him.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT MASON RANCH NIGHT HIGH ANGLE

Two figures in rain ponchos approach the house. They knock.

DOOR

It opens a crack and Mr. Mason peers out.

MASON

...Jess?

POV

Jess and Paul look wretched.

JESS

Yessir.

MASON

Come...Come on in.

INT MASON HOUSE

In the light, the boys look old. Mrs. Mason stares at them. Jess reads her eyes.

JESS

We won't stay long.

Mason ushers them to the kitchen table, closing all curtains as he passes.

MASON

Stay as long as you like...  
Mary, fix two plates.

Mason lights half a cigarette and pulls a bottle down from a shelf.

MASON

What brings you boys out of the woods?

JESS

Hunger.

Mason laughs uncomfortably as his wife puts two half glasses of milk and dry cornbread on the table. He pours himself a drink.

MASON

There's a lot of that going around.

Paul and Jess are looking at the whiskey. Mason makes sure the missus isn't watching, then liberally spikes their milk. They chug it down.

MASON

Been through some changes, have you?

JESS

One or two.

MASON

I wasn't much older in you when I went off to Europe. Spent twelve months and eleven days there, but it seemed like forever...I was with Patton, you know? There was a mean bastard. Didn't give a damn about his troops, but always rode in the lead tank...Did you know he wanted to go on and lick Russia after we got through with the Germans? Ol' George knew what it took...But the rest of the world had had enough... The years make you forget. Seein' you boys, it all comes back. You know, sometimes at night I still see faces floating.

PAUL

Mr. Mason, Erica's dead.

A beat.

MASON

I knowed it when you walked through the door.

Mrs. Mason begins to cry.

JESS

We thought you oughta be told.

MASON

Did you bury my baby proper?...  
With a marker?

JESS

Yessir, we did. And she never felt  
a thing.

MASON

I remember now...I remember what  
it was really like...

JESS

We won't bother ya'll no more.

CUT TO:

EXT FOREST NIGHT

Jess and Paul walk to a hillside, pull some roots out  
of the way, and crawl into the ground. They don't  
speak to Jed, who sits watch behind a tree.

INT CAVE

In the dim glow of candles, Robert has a poker game  
going. Roots grow down through the ceiling---home.

ROBERT

(to Raymond)

...Well if I get it first, you  
can pick 'em off my corpse. Now  
ante up!

Paul and Jess crawl in.

DANNY

Any luck?

Jess pulls a bundle from under his poncho and spills it  
on the floor of the cave---toiletries.

ROBERT

What the hell?...

JESS

We stink.

Raymond looks up from a can of shave cream with greasy hair and nasty face.

RAYMOND

I don't shave yet.

TONI

No food?

Jess shakes his head.

JESS

We gotta hit a truck. We got no choice.

ROBERT

Told you.

Paul pulls a mashed carton from under his gear.

PAUL

But we did get smokes...

Robert jumps to his feet, clawing at Paul.

ROBERT

I get Raymond's share! Pack and a half! He just lost 'em!

Jess grabs Robert and hurls him across the cave.

JESS

Shut the fuck up!

ROBERT

His eyes are a cold fire.

ROBERT

You ever do that again, I'll kill you.

Silence.

JESS

Yeah? Well you better think twice about it, asshole, because I ain't tied to no tree!

Robert's face loses all expression.

He picks up a gun.

JED

ROBERT!

Everyone whirls.

JED

trembles in the entranceway, his gun leveled at Robert. The air throbs...Jed lowers his piece, looks tired.

JED

You're going to wake the dead.

One by one, The kids slink from the cave like jackals, leaving Jed alone.

He picks up one of the strewn cigarette packs and pulls out a smoke. No matches. Searching through the rags and dirt, he finds a matchbox in somebody's jacket. He opens it.

MATCHBOX

Something's neatly folded inside.

JED

takes it out, fans it apart.

POV

It's a picture. The creases are deep.

Robert and Aardvark in Little League outfits, arms around each other's shoulders. Their smiling fathers stand behind them. The rest of the team looks familiar.

JED

weeps.

CUT TO:

EXT MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY DAY

It's autumn now.

A two-lane road winds through a sheer rock face. A tiny column of trucks makes its way around the serpentine bends in the distance.

On the opposite slope, Jed and The Kids wait in ambush.

JED

Bundled in a shabby coat, he watches a hawk soar overhead.

POV

The bird glides effortlessly over a snow-flecked peak--and disappears.

TONI(O.S.)

They're coming.

JED

He turns and watches them prepare to attack. They barely resemble teenagers anymore.

Paul wrestles with the worn bazooka. Jess breaks a cigarette and gives him half.

PAUL

If I get two hundred yards outta this thing we'll be lucky.

JESS

How many rounds you got?

Paul lifts a pack. Three small rockets lie in the grass.

JED(o.s.)

Whadaya say we call this one off?

They turn.

PAUL

What?

JED

Let's forget it.

DANNY

...Are you okay?

JED

No...Let's go home.

They stare at him.

JED

I don't mean home, home. I mean The Free Zone. That's home for now.

TONI  
We're quitting?

JED  
'Til spring... 'Til it makes  
sense again.

ROBERT  
I'm not going anywhere.

A beat.

RAYMOND  
I'd like to not be scared for  
a while.

Jed picks up his gear.

JED  
Come on.

He starts off.

PAUL  
Wait...

He's loading a rocket in the bazooka.

PAUL  
...One last time... for us.

The eyes all agree.

JED  
One last time.

Almost jubilant, The Kids form a battle line. Danny and Raymond shake hands, grinning. Robert looks confused. Toni pulls out the crude little American flag and plants it in front of them on a stick.

THE TRUCKS

are directly across the ravine now.

PAUL

raises up on one knee and aims the bazooka.

PAUL  
...For us.

He fires.

THE ROCKET

arcs across the ravine and explodes on the rock wall just above the lead truck. Boulders rain down. The truck veers crazily.

THE KIDS

Paul loads another rocket as the others spray the road with gunfire.

JED  
(smiling)  
Hit something!

Paul squints, fires again.

LEAD TRUCK

explodes, but the driver is already on the ground, calmly speaking into a walkie-talkie.

THE KIDS

They cheer the direct hit.

Jed's smile becomes puzzlement.

POV

The drivers lie beside their vehicles, watching... waiting?

KIDS

A weird silence.

JED  
They're empty. The trucks are empty...

A dull THROB becomes a ROAR.

MOUNTAIN RIDGE

Four helicopters appear from nowhere, swooping straight for The Kids.

INT LEAD HELICOPTER

Ivanovich is elated.

IVANOVICH

I've got you!

KIDS

JED

Get down!

They bury their faces in the grass as mini guns rake the slope.

Jed takes a bullet in the arm.

Danny catches at least six.

ROAD

The drivers are on their feet, cheering.

JESS, ROBERT

fire back at the helicopters.

PAUL

hastily loads his last rocket, kneels, pulls the trigger. There is a FIZZLE, and the bazooka explodes on his shoulder. Paul is horribly wounded.

JED

Paulie!

He stumbles toward his friend.

CHOPPER

swoops, fires. Paul is shot to pieces.

JED

Enraged, he kills the door gunner.

AN EXPLOSION

knocks Jess and Robert to the ground.

JESS

Grenades!

A helicopter skims over, dropping them.

TONI, RAYMOND

While Toni desperately tries to plug the holes in Danny, Raymond shoots at the attackers.

A grenade lands beside them.

RAYMOND

Look out!...

He snatches the bomb to throw it---it falls at his feet. He can't think in split seconds. Raymond looks down at Toni in confused horror, then falls on the grenade.

THE EXPLOSION

is sickening.

JED

Run!...Get out of here!

Jed races to Danny. Toni helps him sling the bloody little body across his good shoulder. They stumble toward the trees.

JESS, ROBERT

Jess starts after them, firing as he goes. Robert coolly stands his ground, loading a fresh clip.

JESS

Come on!

ROBERT

Beat it.

A look. Jess crashes into the brush.

A HELICOPTER

dives for the fleeing wounded. Guns BLAZE.

ROBERT

blazes back. He stitches the gas tank and rotors.

HELICOPTER

Coughing, it peels off for a place to put down. Two others take its place.

ROBERT

runs as he shoots to make himself a more difficult target. He taunts the enemy.

INT HELICOPTER

Ivanovich has had enough. He shouts an order to the pilot.

POV PILOT

We dive straight at Robert, every weapon firing. He empties his gun at us---shattering the plexiglass cockpit and screaming furiously as the bullets riddle him.

EXT FOREST

POV

plunging through vines, branches, brush---a clearing.

JED

lowers Danny to the ground. His shirt is soaked in blood; some of it his own. Danny is in shock, barely breathing. Jess and Toni tend to him.

Jed crawls to the top of a rise, pulls out his binoculars, and looks back.

POV

Far below, Ivanovich steps from his helicopter and points at the pilot behind the shattered cockpit.

IVANOVICH

Put a medal on that boy...Shot  
dead and still got us down.

The troops drag three torn ragdolls into a pile--- Paul, Raymond, Robert. Their weapons are stacked beside them. A soldier with a movie camera films the spectacle from various angles, then turns the camera on Ivanovich.

POV CAMERA

The picture is reframed to avoid the dead pilot in b.g.

IVANOVICH

...preliminary body count indicates at least fourteen enemy K.I.A. And they always drag most of their dead into the bush with them.

Using his boot, Ivanovich lifts Raymond's head for a closeup.

JED

burns the Russian into his memory, then slides back down the rise.

Toni and Jess have fashioned a stretcher from two sticks and their jackets.

JESS

Half his side's shot off.

Danny murmurs incoherently.

DANNY

...It's dark...

JED

We...We'll take him to the Masons.

JESS

(voice cracking)

He'll never make it.

CUT TO:

EXT ROAD NIGHT

Jess and Toni carry Danny out of the forest and lay his stretcher beside the highway. Jed stumbles out after them---He's weak. They unfold a cloth smeared with a bloody cross and spread it in the road.

DANNY

(groggy)

Unh...drink.

Jess grabs a canteen and puts it to Danny's lips. He takes a sip and screams in pain.\*

TONI

Stop! Stop!

JESS

Jesus, Danny! Don't move! You'll bleed again!

DANNY

...Where are we?

JESS

Close to town...Listen Dan, you're hurt real bad and you need a doctor---

DANNY

No! No! No!

JESS

Hey! Hey! Listen! There's nothing we can do to fix you...You're gonna die if you don't get some help soon!

DANNY

I can make it!

Jed crawls over, faking a smile.

JED

Danny, you look like a sieve, guy! Besides, we're not going to The Free Zone anymore...

Jess and Toni give him a look.

JED

It's too risky right now. So you're gonna be better off than us. Just think, clean sheets---

DANNY

Please don't leave me.

Headlights appear around a corner in b.g.

JESS

We gotta go, Dan. You'll be okay.

DANNY

...Promise?

Jess half nods. He leans over and gently hugs Danny. They jump up to leave as the lights come closer.

DANNY

I love you guys.

Tearfully, Toni runs back and kisses him. She and Jess help Jed into the woods.

EXT ~~THE~~ WOODS

After a few yards, Jess pulls his brother to a halt.

JESS

What do you mean 'not going  
to The Free Zone'?...  
Why'd you tell him that?

JED

He might talk.

EXT ROAD

The headlights wash across the red cross. Brakes  
SQUEAK. Cautious foreign voices clamber out of the  
truck.

CUT TO:

INT HOSPITAL NIGHT

Bright lights glare down from the ceiling. A face  
blocks them.

INTERROGATOR

(Spanish accent)

Where are your friends?

DANNY

lies tied to a metal examination table. His eyes are  
red and swollen. His head is wet. He does not answer.

INTERROGATOR

He holds up a map.

INTERROGATOR

Here is a map...Show me the location  
of your camp.

No response. Just labored breathing.

INTERROGATOR

We'll do it again if you don't  
help us.

DANNY

He's terrified, but refuses to speak.

The interrogator nods to someone o.s.

BOX OF SALT

A hand picks it up and carries it over to Danny. He begins to whimper as another pair of hands grab his head and hold it steady. Danny shuts his eyes, but they are pried open. A tired anguished, scream rises in Danny's throat as salt is poured in his eyes. He lurches against his bonds.

A door SLAMS...Ivanovich.

IVANOVICH  
(Spanish w/subtitles)  
What the hell are you doing?

INTERROGATOR  
Interrogating the prisoner, sir.

IVANOVICH  
Killing him, you mean...

He steps over and pours a pitcher of water into Danny's eyes, then wipes the tortured little face with his hand.

IVANOVICH  
Look at this bleeding!

INTERROGATOR  
But sir, you said to find out---

IVANOVICH  
You'll get no answers from a  
corpse!

He turns to an aide.

IVANOVICH  
Get the medics in here...  
(to Interrogator)  
Sew him up first. He'll last  
longer.

Ivanovich exits as the medics hurry in.

DANNY

smiles weakly. He thinks it's over.

CUT TO:

EXT CAMP DAY

A CRUDE BANDAGE

is wrapped around Jed's arm. Jess is cold, perfunctory. In b.g., Toni runs out of the cave carrying meager belongings.

Jed sits against a tree, feebly holding a bowl of food. He's pale.

JESS

Eat.

JED

Leave me.

JESS

You'd like that, wouldn't you?

JED

I'll slow you down.

JESS

That's right, you will. But I'll carry you myself if I have to because as much as I hate you right now, you're still my brother--- not some goddam gun we just throw away when it breaks!

JED

This is no time to argue.

JESS

The hell it's not! Look at us! Three left! Out of ten! And for what? A couple of lousy little battles nobody'll even remember five years from now?

JED

It all adds up, Jess.

JESS

To what?... 'Victory'?... Is that

JESS(cont'd)  
worth the lies?...The way you  
twisted us?

JED  
It's war, Jess. You do what you  
have to.

Jess leans close.

JESS  
Then what's the difference between  
us and them?

.....Jed throws his food in Jess' face.

JESS  
Toni!...Take him to your granddads  
before we light out. Get him patched.  
Then meet me at Dog Canyon...I got  
somethin' to do here.

EXT MASON RANCH DAY HIGH ANGLE

The house is a charred ruin. Timbers still smoke as  
Toni and Jed approach.

CLOSE

Toni is crying.

TONI  
...Grammy?

Jed scans the forest.

JED  
Danny's dead.

He pulls Toni away from the place.

CUT TO:

EXT DOG CANYON DAY

Jed and Toni move toward a dark cut in the mountain  
from a stretch of rangeland.

JED  
(shouting)  
Jess?

POV

Ravens fly in and out of the canyon, squawking evilly.

TONI, JED

She grabs her nose.

TONI

What's that?

Jed sniffs the air, unshoulders the rifle with his good arm.

CANYON

The place looks unnatural, disturbed in some way...

TONI, JED

They stop.

JED

Jesus God in Heaven...

POV

Concealed by a thin layer of brush, the entire floor of the canyon is covered with decomposing human bodies.

The birds are feasting.

TONI

He's not here yet...

JED

(shouting)

Jess?!

...As far as the eye can see.

TONI

...He's not here yet...

JED

The camp!

TONI

...He's not here yet...

Jed runs...Toni reels after him.

THE RAVENS

dive and SCREECH.

CUT TO:

EXT FOREST DAY

Jed can barely walk. He uses trees and Toni for support. Crashing forward, he drags his gun.

EXT CAMP DAY

They rush in-----Devastation.

Flames leap from the cave.

Jed swings around wildly.

JED

JESS?!

Toni CHOKES. Jed spins.

JESS

Silhouetted against the sky, he hangs from a tree---mutilated. Below him lies the memorial boulder.

New names were being carved.

CUT TO:

EXT CAMP AFTERNOON

Jed is burying his brother---a shovelful at a time.

He's laughing.

JED

'Motives'...That's the difference.  
That's what I meant to say...I  
just forgot.

TONI

He didn't mean it.

JED

He did.

TONI

Well he was wrong mostly.

Jed looks up at the sky.

JED  
It just didn't turn out  
like I expected.

TONI  
I wouldn't have followed  
anybody else.

JED  
You'll have to now.

TONI  
I'll go with you.

JED  
This place has gone to hell.  
You get away from here.

He holds out his arm.

JED  
...Tie me tight.

She re-wraps the dirty bandage...

She buries her face in his shirt.

TONI  
This is a terrible time to be  
alive!

JED  
I suspect anytime is. But you  
live to see this end.

Gently, he pushes her toward the woods, turns back to  
his shovel.

Toni stops.

TONI  
You're never gonna know who  
won.

JED  
Who will?

CUT TO:

INT IVANOVICH'S ROOM NIGHT

The colonel sits at his desk, writing a letter. His collar is open. The hour is late.

IVANOVICH(V.O.)

'My dear Zoya,...The countryside in this part of the world is spectacular---especially this time of year. We had our first snow yesterday and it was a welcome sight; a nice change from the incredible heat we've been suffering until recently. They say that down in the desert it gets up to---

VOICE

Hey.

Ivanovich turns.

DOORWAY

An emaciated wild man has stacked gasoline jerry cans in the hall.

Ivanovich watches Jed roll a grenade under his chair.

CUT TO:

EXT MOUNTAINSIDE NIGHT

Toni huddles beneath a tree, watching the dark valley below.

POV

Calumet---a spray of tiny lights.

A brilliant mushroom of flaming gasoline suddenly ROARS skyward from its midst. The distance doesn't do it justice....Machine guns CHATTER softly. Sirens WAIL.

TONI

She wipes the snuffle from her nose and hurries into the night.

\*\*\*\*\*