

THANKS OF A GRATEFUL NATION

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**To care for him who shall have borne the battle,
and for his widow and his orphan.**

— Abraham Lincoln

**The Credo of the
Department of Veterans Affairs**

**NOTE: CHAPTERS ARE TO BE DETERMINED IN
POST-PRODUCTION**

Scene A1	Chapter 1
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Scene 131	Chapter 4
Scene 188	Chapter 5
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Scene 248	Chapter 7

CHAPTER 1

Congressman Mac Collins
118 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C.

Dear Congressman Collins,

We are the grandchildren of Chief Petty Officer Roy W. Butler Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 24 Detachment 1624 from Columbus, Georgia. We are very concern about our Poppa. He is very sick since his service in the Persian Gulf War. He gets worse every day. We are asking you to please help him, they will not even give him anything for pain. Our Poppa hurts everyday. It is very hard for him to go to work everyday. Please hurry! We don't know how much longer he will be able to work. Please, please help get our Poppa his disability started.

-1 A FACE (VETERAN INTERVIEW)

1

A woman's face, a mother's face, an American face. MRS. HESTER ADCOCK.
All else is Black.

MRS. HESTER ADCOCK

I am the mother of Army Specialist Michael C. Adcock, a 22-year-old gulf War veteran. Michael served in Desert Storm from January 18, 1991 until May 19, 1991, arriving home May 23, 1991. He was attached to 9002 Transportation Battalion, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.

Prior to the Gulf War Michael was physically fit, very healthy, a four year letterman in high school football, broke a weight-lifting championship, worked out daily and while serving in Germany, he was a boxer and wrestler.

but suddenly she's gone.

There is BLACK until
CHEERING begins.

2 THE GREAT VICTORY CELEBRATION (STOCK FOOTAGE) (INTER-CUT)

2

in aftermath of Desert Storm is captured in glimpses, the welcome home, the great victory parades --- and CREDITS begin.

JFK (V.O.)

Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike --

SHALLOW WATER (STOCK FOOTAGE)

Appears, and men in uniform wade to shore. The water and the men and the beach and palms and jungle around them are green. The entire world is khaki green.

It is the Marines landing at DaNang in the spring of 1965.

JFK (V.O.) (CONT'D)

-- that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans -- born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace --

B-52'S - OVER VIETNAM (STOCK FOOTAGE)

Fly and drop napalm over rice paddies. They land and explode into sheets of FIRE. That becomes ---

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED:

2

JFK (V.O.) (CONT'D)

-- proud of our ancient heritage -- and unwilling
to witness or permit the slow undoing --

A HOOCH AND VILLE - VIETNAM

go up, torched by American soldiers.

JFK (V.O.) (CONT'D)

-- of those human rights to which this nation has
always been committed, and to which we are
committed today at home and around the world.

THE GREAT VICTORY CELEBRATION (STOCK FOOTAGE) (INTER-CUT)

in aftermath of Desert Storm continues. New York, Fifth Avenue --- the
greatest parade in American history. Torrents of ticker tape blizzard
the sky and three million gathered faces, vets and thunderous, elated
country men.--- and CREDITS continue.

THE UNITED STATE EMBASSY, 1968 - SAIGON (STOCK FOOTAGE)

is assaulted and penetrated during the Tet Offensive, the
Desert Storm victory jarringly juxtaposed by the riot 23 years
earlier. *

VOICES and images wash over one another and everything remains
green, orange-tinted green, blue-green, camo-green, green-green.

AMERICAN MAJOR (V.O.)

It has become necessary to destroy
the village to save it --

WM. WESTMORELAND (V.O.)

The enemy's well-laid plans went afoul --

LBJ (V.O.)

-- We have known for some time that this
offensive was planned --

A BALTIMORE SUN EDITORIAL
(Even it has a green cast)

"If we expected attacks why were
we caught by surprise?"

WALTER CRONKITE - ON AIR (STOCK FOOTAGE)

appears on the CBS Evening News

CRONKITE

We have too often been disappointed by
the optimism of the American leaders to
have

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CRONKITE (CONT'D)
faith any longer in the silver linings
they find in the darkest clouds --

THE BODY BAGS - VIETNAM (STOCK FOOTAGE)

gather at KheSanh waiting for lift-off. A dusty, black-green.

CRONKITE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
The only rational way out then is to
negotiate, not as victors, but as honorable
people who had lived up to their pledge to
defend democracy --

A MILITARY FUNERAL - ARLINGTON (STOCK FOOTAGE)

in a field of rainy, grainy-green, and a fourteen gun salute.

CRONKITE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
-- and did the best they could.

the great victory celebration (STOCK FOOTAGE) (inter-cut)

The salute continues as George Bush, Colin Powell, Norman Schwarzkopf
review the winning troops. Their reserve can barely conceal their
ecstasy.

There is no GREEN here --- and CREDITS continue.

LYNDON JOHNSON - MARCH 31, 1968 - ON AIR (STOCK FOOTAGE)

speaks from the Oval office.

LBJ
-- I shall not seek and I will not accept
the nomination of my party for another
term as your President --

THE BOMBS - CHRISTMAS, 1972 - HANOI (STOCK FOOTAGE)

from B-52's aiming for Bach Mai airfield misses its target by
1000 meters and drops on a wing of a hospital.

People search through the rubble and the bodies they find are
moldy green.

HENRY KISSINGER (V.O.)
We celebrated the President's birthday
today by making a major break through and
--

THE PEACE TABLE - PARIS (STOCK FOOTAGE)

Vietnamese and Americans gather around it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HENRY KISSINGER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

-- Peace is at hand --

THE GREAT VICTORY CELEBRATION (STOCK FOOTAGE) (INTER-CUT)

culminates with Desert Storm and Vietnam vets side by side, hugging, families embracing, hats flying, the country whole again --- and CREDITS continue.

DEWEY CANYON III - WASH. D.C. - APRIL 23, 1971 (STOCK FOOTAGE)

Eleven hundred veterans stage a "limited incursion into the country of Congress." They march up the Capitol steps to a barrier erected to stop them.

JOHN KERRY (V.O.)

-- Our own last determination to undertake one last mission -- to search out and destroy the last vestige of the barbaric war --

One by one they hurl the medals they earned in Vietnam over the barrier and upon the steps of the Capitol.

JOHN KERRY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

-- to pacify our own hearts, to conquer the hate and fear that have driven this country these last ten years and move so...

The medals are Purple hearts and Bronze stars and Silver stars. They glint gold and green.

THE UNITED STATES EMBASSY - SAIGON - APRIL 1975 (STOCK FOOTAGE)

A torrent of humanity attempts to scale the walls. They are in panic and their effort is futile.

JOHN KERRY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

--When thirty years from now our brothers go down the street without a leg, without an arm or a face, and --

A HELICOPTER - SAIGON - APRIL, 1975 (STOCK FOOTAGE)

atop the Embassy roof. A clambering necklace of people climb the steps to reach it and escape.

JOHN KERRY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

-- small boys ask why, we will be able to say 'Vietnam' --

The brown-green chopper lifts off, dangling bodies. One holds for life to its skids. He loses his grip. He FALLS to his death.

THE GREAT VICTORY CELEBRATION (STOCK FOOTAGE) (INTER-CUT)

Flashes now, quick fading echoes of CHEERING , of victory, of the waving of American flags --- and the CREDITS continue.

EXT. AIRCRAFT CARRIER - APRIL 30, 1975 (STOCK FOOTAGE)

Another Huey rocks back and forth on the deck, a dozen grunts rocking it towards the edge.

JOHN KERRY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
-- and not mean a desert, not a filthy
obscene memory, but mean instead --

They succeed and send the chopper toppling overboard.

EXT. INDIAN OCEAN (STOCK FOOTAGE)

It's excess baggage, disposable goods --- the carrier can't carry it, it's got to go. It SPLASHES lands on its side, awkwardly, comic, oddly moving, and

JOHN KERRY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
-- the place where America finally turned
and where soldiers like us helped in the
turning.

THE CHOPPER - UNDERWATER

slowly it goes down into the inky-green darkness and into stillness. There is only a watery WHISPER, coming and going, like a twisted echo:

RONALD REAGAN (V.O.)
...Vietnam... America failed not because
it was defeated but because the military
was denied permission to win...

Slowly sinking, slowly darkening, --- until the chopper at last finds bottom.

There it rests, part of a pile.

3 THE CHOPPER: (END CREDITS/DISSOLVE:)

3

Slowly, the dark seems different. There is no green to it. Not an iota. The movement of the water seems more like smoke.

It is.

The chopper is no longer a Huey, it's an Apache. It's no longer April 30th, 1975, but February 21st, 1991. The bottom of the Indian ocean is the rich, dark, dusty, impenetrable smoke of an oil fire in Kuwait.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

3

It is Desert Storm.

4 A FOX VEHICLE

4

plunges its way through the smoke, navigating out of the umbra; you never leave the penumbra behind. It's everywhere and gets on and permeates everything.

The FOX is an odd, gangly-looking duck, like an armored personnel dolled up on the inside with vats of computer technology. It has "Sample wheels" that look like tentacles and come out and draw from the ground samples and bring them back so the computer can determine what's there.

In personnel there's a TC, a tank commander, a MM1 operator, a multi-mass tetrameter operator, a Probe or Sampler operator, and a driver.

This Fox is commanded by GEORGE GRASS, who happens to be Senior Commander over all the TCs. The driver is SGT. TRAY HAWORTH.

They join up with another Fox, driven by ANDY DYSART and commanded by ANDY WALLACE. Even just two Foxes cut a swath and make a DIN. *

GEORGE GRASS

TANGO 6 move it out. Wallace, you hear me?

WALLACE

Roger that, Sergeant Sir.

(and)

Going to kick some butt at last. Serious -fucking-Iraqi butt.

They're yelling, adrenaline pumping, moving side by side now, and have to grin.

GEORGE GRASS

Keep to call letters, Tango Five. And maintain your discipline and keep radio contact.

(and)

No fucking around.

WALLACE

Roger that, Grassman. Correction, Tango One.

(and)

See you in Baghdad. *

They aren't the only ones moving out. A swirl of activity. Troops and tents and smaller vehicles. Wallace yells at one HMMV passing by, moving ammo supplies. *

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED:

WALLACE

Hey, Chris..see you later.

The driver of the HMMV spins it around and screeches up alongside Tango Six. His name is CHRIS SMALL.

CHRIS SMALL

What's going on?

WALLACE

We're kicking butt, you're going to miss it. The Iraqi's are on the run.

CHRIS SMALL

No shit?

WALLACE

No shit.

CHRIS SMALL

Where are my orders?

WALLACE

Just rear-echelon mother-fucking. That's you. Driving generals around. There's a war on you know. You may have to tell them.

Good-natured, giving each other shit. What you do.

CHRIS SMALL

I think I'll go back to my tent. Catch some sleep. Write a novel or two. Still catch up to you.

WALLACE

Not real likely.

CHRIS SMALL

Have a blast Tango Six. I got to finish a letter home.

WALLACE

Didn't know you could write.

CHRIS SMALL

Video tape.

WALLACE

Who to?

CHRIS SMALL

My woman.

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED: (2)

WALLACE

What you do? Send one every day?

CHRIS SMALL

That's the sordid story.

WALLACE

Pussy whipped!

CHRIS SMALL

You got it -- you flaunt it.

He wheels the HMMV around, sending more dust swirling.

5 OMIT

5*

6 EXT. POW CAMP - 15 MILES FROM DHAHRAN - DAY

6*

For whatever weirdness "LIKE A VIRGIN" is playing and out lasts the chopper flying by. It's blaring over a PA system, making no sense to a lawyer from Indiana called up from the Army Reserve, a future Congressman, STEVE BUYER.

*
*

Not to mention the pickup basketball game with improvised hoops led by a six-foot seven STEVE ROBERTSON out-wrestling a private wearing a flea collar for the ball. A lot of them wear flea collars. More weirdness.

The PA, the P.O.W.'s, the hoops, Madonna, the lines and lines of latrines, the endless chain of passing vehicles, the choppers flying by --- Steve Buyer stares at them all in a kind of aggrieved astonishment.

7 INT. FOX - T1 - DESERT STORM - DAY

Out of the dust and CHOPPERS and scud SHRIEK, George Grass lowers himself in among his men. They're revved uXp too. Fear and nerves, testosterone and plenty of preparation. Grass watches them --- his boys. Serious now:

GEORGE GRASS

Tray, Ape Man, Firebird, I don't know what we're going to find out there. It's going to be dangerous, it could be hell.

But you and I know we're here to do a job. We're ready, we're prepared, we're in the right. Our country is behind us, counting on us. Our cause is just. My confidence in you is total.

(and)

So -- as the man said -- let's kick some ass. Sack this piece of shit.

YO! Yeah! Yes sir.

8 EXT. DESERT STORM - NIGHT

The Fox vehicles, the tanks, the choppers, the jeeps line up, ready. The night is deep and dark, pure black, so black the desert sand looks white even in no light. The world has turned negative.

Men and machines and their ROAR and then their SILENCE, their waiting, and the unique night. An astounding sight.

9 INT. FOX VEHICLE

G Xeorge Grass and his men wait.

10 INT. TENT

Chris Small waits.

11 EXT./INT. EVERYWHERE (DOWNSVIEW)

Everyone waits, faces we've seen and faces we will. Young men and women, tall and short, white and black, Northern and Southern and Western.

Steve Robertson, KRISTIE SCHUERMANN, Steve Buyer, Chris Small, Tray Haworth, Ape Man, Jon Querry (Firebird), the two Andys...

The men and women of the 37th Engineers, the 1st Mechanized Infantry, the 82nd Airborne, the 24th Mechanized Infantry, the 1st Calvary, the 1st Armored, 2nd Armored and 3rd Armored.

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED:

American faces.

12 EXT. DESERT STORM - NIGHT

12

Now and only now the vehicles start to move off into the night. The DIN lasts even after they disappear. The DIN lasts even after there is only BLACK. At last then SILENCE. Now and instantly now the sky EXPLODES and night turns orange. It turns DAY. *

13 INT. MOONBEAMS - MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE (1990)

13

A JUKEBOX vanquishes the EXPLOSION at last --- and a young woman, TERI HERROD, parades into the country bar and dance hall with her friend, SANDY VANDERMUHL.

TERI

I see them, I see them. I ain't going there no more.

She's talking in attitude, almost song lyrics, her playful self, not her true self. She means the men they're passing doing push ups on the bar top. Competitive, a contest. Endorphins jumping.* The girls sit nearby, a couple of other girls are with them; they* don't matter.

WAITRESS

What will it be tonight, girls?

TERI

Ginger ale. You want ginger ale tonight Sandy? Oh, yeah, ginger ale tonight.

WAITRESS

Two ginger ales.

Maybe with attitude, some unspoken knowledge. The women start laughing and the waitress comprehends:

WAITRESS

The usual then.

Teri is extraordinary-looking in an absolutely all-American way. The longest shiny dark hair. She's just got to be a good girl. The kind you want to take home to Mom and Dad and by the way, bed down. Even if you have to teach her. Sandy's another story. Nothing spectacular any which way. Slim, not showy, tomboy. Dirty blonde, like she just came in out of the rain.

TERI

I'm not going over there.

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED:

13

SANDY

Well, I'll go then.

TERI

Which one?

SANDY

The black hair. Look at him.

The objects of their conversation rousingly finish their hijinking contest, but they are not in uniform. The two decked-out young women get up, start dancing with each other. It's hot, it's crowded, there's sweat. They love it, look good, know it, keep talking:

TERI

They're from Fort Campbell you know.

SANDY

How can you tell?

TERI

Special Forces.

SANDY

How can you tell?

TERI

One-hundred-and-ninety doesn't look like that any other how.

SANDY

You want him?

TERI

Nahh. I ain't going there anymore.

(then)

O.K., I'll take the blonde.

They both break into laughter again.

14 OMIT

14*

14A INT. - MOONBEAMS - ANOTHER SECTION- 2 AM

14A*

A whole crew gabbing and eating in late-night, bright, waxy, tallow light. Teri paired with the handsome blonde: Sandy with the dark soldier, who happens to be CHRIS SMALL.

DEENI

(one of the girls)

Are you all Special Forces?

(CONTINUED)

14A CONTINUED:

14A

The men exchange looks: it's young and casually cocky. Chests puffing. They wear short-sleeve polos or mock Hawaiian shirts

(CONTINUED)

and they have that hair and that posture. Razor cuts and broomstick-up-the-butts. Ready to do yet more push ups.

TERI
(to Sandy)
I told you.

THE BLONDE
Told her what?

TERI
You guys are all alike.

SANDY
Teri, you're terrible.

She pronounces it 'turra-bull', aghast at Teri's outspokenness -- not for the first time.

TERI
Oh, you know I hate country music, too.

CHRIS SMALL
(overhearing)
How's that possible? You look just like Lori Morgan.

TERI
Oh, looks can be deceiving.

THE BLONDE
Wait, wait a minute, hon, what? What do you mean 'all alike'?

TERI
(can't stop herself)
Gung Ho. Sickeningly Gung Ho.

BUNCH
Well, why not? Yeah! Go Army! Gyrenes, go kiss my ass!

They all get into it, SIS BOOM RAH, brewed by booze, with humor but unmistakable belief. All except Chris Small. Quieter. Black hair. For the first time really Chris and Teri catch looks.

THE BLONDE
We're not bragging, but we just did PT and kicked ass and took names. Chris maxed it. Popped a 300 set. A new record.
(and)
We're the best and we're ready to go.

(CONTINUED)

SANDY

Ready to go?

THE BLONDE

Go git Saddam Hussein.

SANDY

You think that's going to happen?

THE BUNCH

Yeah! Yo! Saddam, can go kiss my ass.
Make 'em squeal like a pig! Put him in
the hurt locker. Unleash those night
doggies! Tear off his head and shit in
his neck!

*
*
*
*

They're off on a tear. Insult wrapped around some technical
descriptions of capability and fire power.

SANDY

Sweet Jesus.

TERI

(whispering)

Sandy?

SANDY

What? More I told you so?

TERI

No.

(and)

What do you say we--switch?

SANDY

I can't stand sweet potato pie.

She doesn't mean dessert:

TERI

Nonono. The blonde. The black hair.
The blonde is cute, you said so yourself.

SANDY

...You're serious.

Teri rolls her eyes and nods.

TERI

May God strike me dead.

The bunch is still dismembering Saddam Hussein. Makin' him
squeal like a pig.

*
*

16 OMIT

1

17 OMIT

17

18 OMIT

18

19 OMIT

19

19A INT. THEATRE - NEAR NASHVILLE - SOME TIME LATER

19A

An Officer and a Gentleman. The balcony. The shifting light of the projector throw. An oystery carpet, a silvery brick road. An Alfred Ryder path of moonlight. Ready to take them. Richard Gere and Deborah Winger. Chris Small and Teri Herrod. The special Forces man with the black hair and the All-American looking girl.

All around them is necking. A make out fest -- some funny, so wrapped up and in their own world, as well as sexy. They laugh, but it's impossible to ignore. Only makes them aware of each other.

The pull. The force field. Eyes. Skin. Mouth. Others and their own. Drawing them. Wary, shy, yet...

They can't stop it don't want to and don't want to rush it. May it last forever yet may it end. May we kiss. Lips part. Inches, centimeters, millimeters...

Soda spills all over them, some goof tripping in the row behind them. One big mess, one broken mood.

19B IN THE LOBBY - A MINUTE LATER

19B

A slice of the screen still visible, a sepia patina in the lobby. The sticky two of them.

CHRIS
(still laughing)
Maybe another, a different movie?

TERI
(her hands, her sweater) ..
Maybe a bathroom.

CHRIS
Maybe a bath--

TERI
Maybe a shower.

CHRIS
Maybe a --...

(CONTINUED)

He gets suddenly lost in her. She in him:

TERI
I'd like that.

CHRIS
I love what I do. I'm proud of it.

He can't help himself.

TERI
I could tell that.

CHRIS
You aren't Anti are you?

TERI
'Anti'?

CHRIS
What you said at Moonbeam's.
(he looks at her)
You couldn't be. The way you look.
(he looks at her)
I'd like you to meet my parents. They'd
like you.

TERI
The kind of girl you like to take home.
She's so great; she gets it exactly.

CHRIS
(grinning)
Well...yes.

He knows the implications and so does she --- and she walks
away, surprising him, then walks back.

TERI
Chris--

CHRIS
I want to see you
(and)
I know I'm going too fast. We don't know
each other. I just know -- you're the
kind of girl I've always wanted.

TERI
Chris --

19B, CONTINUED: (2)

CHRIS

I'll back off. Put the brakes on. I'm
not usually like this. Must be --
(the stickies)

TERI

This won't work.

CHRIS

(picking up on the signs)
Did I miss something? Is there another
guy? Is it my age?

TERI

Yes.

CHRIS

We can beat that.

TERI

No.

(and)

I'm 24, you're 23. So what? It's not
your age.

(and now)

There is another guy.

His elevator is going down.

CHRIS

Is it serious?

TERI

He's a Sergeant and he's flying back from
Korea this weekend because he wants to
marry me.

CHRIS

...And?

His elevator is free-falling.

TERI

I'm going to say no.

CHRIS

You're not ready?

TERI

No, I'm not.

CHRIS

(phew)

I understand. Getting married's a big
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

19B CONTINUED: (3)

19B

CHRIS (CONT'D)

deal. You want to get it right the first
time. So it'll be the only time.

*
*

TERI

I don't want to get married.

*
*

CHRIS

Never?

TERI

.....Again.

CHRIS

(!)

You've been married before?

TERI

Twice.

(she laughs)

No, wait a minute, three times.

His elevator's tripping by now.

TERI

I told you looks can be deceiving.

She walks away a second time. Totally thrown. What should he
do? He goes after her.

20 OMIT

21 OMIT

22 OMIT

23 EXT. THEATRE - NEAR NASHVILLE - NIGHT

It's raining, nearly a downpour. Teri's standing in it, her
Lori Morgan hair melting licorice. Not so far from a shower
after all.

21

22

23

*

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED:

CHRIS
Maybe this was a bad idea. *

TERI
You don't like me?

CHRIS
I don't know.

TERI
Was it the uniform?

CHRIS
What uniform?

There's no way he's not getting wet too.

TERI
Mine. The good girl. The girl next door.

CHRIS
I --

TERI
It wasn't your uniform.

CHRIS
What do you mean?

TERI
That drew me. It was listening to you.
You talk. Not sickening. Not pitiful.
Not running on and on. You listen.

She's done again what she keeps on doing, surprise him.

CHRIS
What are you saying?

TERI
I've fallen for uniforms. Not anymore.
(and)
They were short marriages. I was so
stupid. Insecure. Always had to do
everything the hard way. Get into these
damn messes. Every bum I'd get attracted
to. The first time, seventeen.
(laughs)
I never did like being a teenager. I was
in such a hurry to grow up.
(serious now)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED: (2)

TERI (CONT'D)

Listen, if I was in your shoes and I
found out about me I'd run the other way.
I'd understand completely.

(and now)

But I found out what was wrong and I fixed
it.

All this in the rain that's practically torrential. All while
getting drenched.

What are the moments that mark and define our lives? So often
we miss them. Not Chris Small, not this time, not here. And
certainly not Teri Herrod.

The rain.

STERLING SIMS (V.O.)

Ladies and gentleman --

24 INT. CAPITOL NORTH BALLROOM - RADISSON HOTEL - ATLANTA, GA.

24

The Presidential Advisory Committee on Gulf War Illnesses
gathers for one of its field hearings. The date is Tuesday,
April 16th, 1996. The date itself is not consequential.

A VETERAN, STERLING SIMS, speaks before the panel:

STERLING SIMS

-- I'm Sterling Sims. I was a member of
an NMCB 24, a reserve battalion that was
sent to the Persian Gulf...

I'm from the state of Alabama. Alabama
sent more veterans to the Persian Gulf
than any other state. I have requested
three or four times for this panel to
meet somewhere in Alabama and hold a
committee meeting in Alabama. This has
not been done...

Now, I would like for you all to bear
with me for just a minute because I'm
going to take a part of my clothes off
and show you all one of my problems...

THOMAS CROSS

Mr. Simmons --

STERLING SIMS

Sims, Sir.

THOMAS CROSS

Mr. Sims, is -- do you think this is
really necessary? I --

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED:

STERLING SIMS

I'd like for you all to see what I've got here.

VET VOICES

(from the crowd)

See it. Do it. Yes!

STERLING SIMS

I'll just strip to my waist.

THOMAS CROSS

I guess my point is I don't doubt that I'm going to see something. I --

VET VOICE

(a single one, calling out)

Have you been over there?

THOMAS CROSS

(after a moment)

Yes, ma'am, I have.

STERLING SIMS

Sir?

THOMAS CROSS

(after another moment)

Go ahead.

And Sterling Sims starts to shed his white shirt. It covers the screen and turns to snow:

25 OMIT

25*

26 OMIT

26*

27 OMIT

27*

27A STEVE BUYER - INT. CLOSET - CLOSE UP (NOVEMBER 1990)

27A*

shoves aside hangers and hanging clothes. The parting lets light splash into the dark depths of his closet on the floor there.

A pair of well-worn combat boots. The soles have holes; they could belong to Adlai Stevenson. He plucks them up.

28 THE BOOTS - LATER

28

cross a small town street and set down on a counter.

*

WIDEN - INT. JACK'S BOOTERY STORE - MONTICELLO, INDIANA

The kind that don't exist anymore. The kind that prove there is a heartland. There is Indiana.

Patterns of soles and samples of heels and swatches of leather. Dark, messy, moody, musty, yet warm, lived-in. A kind of cared for.

A cobbler.

BUYER

Jack, I need these re-soled.

JACK WHITING

(looking them over)

I'm pretty busy.

BUYER

I'm in a rush.

JACK WHITING

I can have them ready by the end of next week.

BUYER

You don't understand, Jack. I'm gone. Two days.

Jack Whiting has a beard and unruly, receding hair and looks at the young lawyer: he knows what Steve Buyer means.

JACK WHITING

I'll have them for you at the end of the day.

29 OMIT

29*

30 INT. JACK'S BOOTERY - THE BOOTS (MATCH CUT)

30*

that were so well-worn, so beaten-up, that looked chapped and chipped, whose soles were holey are now whole. Black as pitch. Shiny. Beautiful.

JACK WHITING

Turned out pretty good.

*

An understatement. It's past normal closing, dark. The few lamps offer a autumnal light the shade of butternut squash.

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED:

30

BUYER

(practically speechless)

They're incredible... How much do I owe you?

Whiting moves his hands dismissively.

BUYER

No, really. I insist.

JACK WHITING

No.

Not rude, not curt exactly, but clear. Confuses Steve:

BUYER

Jack. This is not about charity --

JACK WHITING

Steve, I was in Vietnam.

BUYER

I didn't know that.

JACK WHITING

It's not something I talk about.

BUYER

Jack --

JACK WHITING

All I want you to do Steve is come back
in them alive.

The boots. The staring young lawyer speechless a second time.
The Vietnam Vet.

31 INT. JUSTICE OF THE PEACE OFFICE - BORDERTON TENN. - DUSK

31*

"PEACE":

A part of a neon sign blinks off. Chris Small skids past it.
FERDINAND J. NOBLE is shutting and locking and turning lights
off, including the neon that from inside spells its words
backwards: JUSTICE OF THE PEACE

NOBLE

Too late. Closed now.

CHRIS

You can't be --

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED:

31

NOBLE

Every day 9 to 5. Used to be 8 to 6.
Folks don't keep hours used to. Lazy
maybe.

Noble is pushing 70, crackery Norman Rockwell. Stubborn,
intractable, a seeming 200-proof bureaucrat.

CHRIS

You've got to make an exception. We were
here. I just had to call -- I'll pay you.
Extra.

NOBLE

Can't do it.

TERI

Please.

Her first word --- and the look of her coming out of a LADIES
Room door stops both Chris and Ferdinand J. Noble.

She's changed in the rest room and changed since we last saw
her, her hair cut shorter, only to her shoulders now and she
wears a blue dress, simple, not showy yet showing. How is that
possible? A sense of classic style. A superb fit.

TERI

I'm ready.

(and)

You like?

(he's still stopped)

I've had my big, old-fashioned wedding.

I've done that. Now I'm ready for the
right wedding, the final wedding, the one
to Chris Small.

Listen to the woman.

CHRIS

How do you do it?

TERI

That's classified.

She turns to Ferdinand J. Noble, presents her back to him:

TERI (CONT'D)

Can't you help us?

(and)

Can you zip my zipper?

Captures even his attention. Noble rises into his name.
Zzzzzzip.

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED: (2)

TERI

Thank you..

NOBLE

All right.

(hiding in the crispness)

That'll be fifteen dollars. In advance.

CHRIS

Take credit cards?

NOBLE

Cash. I take cash.

Changing himself now, Chris' pockets are empty. Goes to rifle what he was wearing. Comes back and Noble's gone.

CHRIS

Where'd he go?

TERI

He said he needed a witness.

BARKING, a lot of BARKING. Noble comes through the back door with a leash and a thrice of dogs attached. Big, tonguey, saliva-slathering blood hounds.

NOBLE

Say howdy to Johnny Cash, Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson. Sit!

Amazingly they do, panting and dripping. And Ferdinand J. Noble opens a book.

NOBLE (CONT'D)

There's not much to say here that's sweet or religious. These are state words. You care to say a thing or two yourselves?

They're so rushed and ready they can't find words and it sobers them. What he says more so:

NOBLE (CONT'D)

Well, let me then. I keep count and you all are the three-thousand two-hundred and eleventh I've pronounced for and this is what I got to say: Don't rush into this caterwocky. Are you?

(of course they are)

Don't bring your old laundry to the party. Bad at the breakfast table and worse between the sheets. Are you?

(of course they are)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED: (3)

31

NOBLE (CONT'D)

Don't think it's all romance and sexin!
Do you?

(well, close maybe)

My strongest recommendation. Get drunk.
Take a cold shower. If you must, do the
deed until his dingus falls off. And go
home. Go home.

CHRIS

(recovering)

No, sir.

TERI

(interrupting him)

Mr. Noble, I have no ring yet, I don't need a
ring, I've had rings. I know everything you
say and, you know, we're ready.

She has a remarkable ability to bring it to the table. Stops
then starts Ferdinand J. Noble a second time:

NOBLE

With that in mind let me say: Now by the
power invested in me by the state of
Tennessee I pronounce you man and wife.

(right away)

Tips are accepted and looked at kindly.

(to the dogs)

Aw right Boys, it's your turn.

They start yapping and howling.

NOBLE (CONT'D)

No, no. I said, 'Always on My Mind.'

How can he tell? Whatever it is and whatever it becomes the
hounds do take heed. They change their tune.

Tip paid, the trio acknowledged, the lips that came so close
only to be interrupted approach again.

Bride and groom -- kiss.

32 INT. GRAND OL' MOTEL - NIGHT - LATER

32

The kiss -- without breaking it, the clothes come off. Shoes
shuck. Tie unties. Buttons tear. The zipper unzips. The
blue dress drops. The pants fall. Skin blooms.

The lips never part.

Both naked, Chris leaves her. 190 pounds without flab and she
as All-American undone as done. He pulls the spread back on
the bed, then the blanket. The sheet sticks and he SNAPS it
free until the bed is white, oystery.

(CONTINUED)

32 CONTINUED:

32

The Projector Throw. The Moon.

Both naked, he lifts her and sets her on its rippling face.
Taking his time. He looks at her and she looks at him.

CHRIS

Sometimes -- looks aren't deceiving.

Up come tears. Off goes the light.

33 IN THE DARK - LATER - HARD CUT

33

A section of a light reflects through the curtains. A shape on
the wall. Everything else is dark.

TERI

I'm -- so -- wet.

(and)

You're so deep.

(and)

I can feel it way-way--

(and)

Chris.

(and)

Oh, yes.

CHRIS

Jesus, God.

34 INT. MOTEL-LATER - IN THE DARK - HARD CUT

34*

The phone. Up the cord to the receiver:

*

CHRIS

Lewis. Chris.

LEWIS TIANO

(V.O.)

Where are you? You're on One Hour
Recall.

CHRIS

Are there orders?

LEWIS TIANO

(V.O.)

According to my My-T-Fine record keeping
actually --

CHRIS

Lewis, are there orders?

LEWIS TIANO (V.O.)

What have you been doing?

(CONTINUED)

34 CONTINUED:

34

CHRIS

I got married. Are there orders?

LEWIS TIANO (V.O.)

You what?!

(and)

Don't lose it now, Boy. This is when we need it together.

CHRIS

Got to go.

LEWIS TIANO(V.O.)

You crazy?!

CHRIS

You bet.

It's clear now even in the dark they are still coupled. *

35 IN THE DARK - INT. MOTEL - LATER

35

The neon through the curtain on the wall. The barest outline of them.

TERI

So hard. Your cock when you come, and I could feel it shooting. I'm not going to shower. Going to carry it around all day. As long as I can. Do you mind me talking about it... like this?

He's quiet. She can't see him really. Neither can we. Is he put off, offended?

TERI

What's that?

(and)

Where does it all come from?

(he enters her)

Jesus, God.

CHRIS

Teri...

The way he says it.

There can be nothing so personal, so intimate, so wanting, so giving as a single common word of the one we have found and love.

CHAPTER 2

Congressman Mac Collins
1118 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C.

Dear Congressman Collins,

We are the grandchildren of Chief Petty Officer Roy W. Butler Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 24 Detachment 1624 from Columbus, Georgia. We are very concern about our Poppa. He is very sick since his service in the Persian Gulf War. He gets worse every day. We are asking you to please help him, they will not even give him anything for pain. Our Poppa hurts everyday. It is very hard for him to go to work everyday. Please hurry! We don't know how much longer he will be able to work. Please, please help get our Poppa his disability started.

Hi my name is Courtney. I am 6 years old. Please help my Poppa get better. I love him very much.

Hi my name is Michael Ryan. I am 4 years old. Please help my Poppa. I dont want him to die cause I love him and he loves me.

37 A VIDEO CAMERA - DESERT STORM - DAY

flickers on and the desert appears. The camera PANS:

CHRIS (V.O.)
Hi Teri. Here's the compound. See all the
vehicles --

(yes there are plenty and
plenty of dust)
Over there's my HUMM-V. And here's Jack -

(another GI)
and here comes a helicopter --

It certainly is coming, a low fly by that nearly blows the
Camera (and Chris wielding it) over before it recovers.

CHRIS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Well, that was fun. Now I can't tell you
exactly where I'm at or what we're doing,
about to do -- but not to worry --
because right now we're going to follow
Jack --
(he's reappeared)
and he's going to hold the camera and interview me --

He follows Jack into a tent -- only it's occupied by a GI with
nothing on, not a stitch.

CHRIS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Whoops. Sorry. I-uh...

The camera shuts off. There's black again, just for a second.

38 THE VIDEO CAMERA - MINUTES LATER

38

flickers on again, revealing Chris sitting in his tent on his bunk,
lighting a cigarette. Still so young and trying not to show it.

CHRIS
Hi Babe. This is better. I set it on a
tripod.
(and)
Hi to Sandra, mom and dad, everybody.
(awkward, ingenuous)
If I forgot anybody "hi" to you too.
Miss everybody --

A SOUND interrupts, an ALARM. Not on top of him, definitely audible.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
That's an alarm. We have these chemical
alerts, traces, but they say it's not
enough to hurt you.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

38 CONTINUED:

38

CHRIS (CONT'D)

(the ALARM)

As I said, can't tell you exactly where
I'm at... but just me saying that will
give you an idea.

(the ALARM)

I feel kind of silly sitting here. I
don't know what to say... My HUMM-VEE...
it's engine block busted...

(the ALARM grows LOUDER)

and we're trying to get it ready.

A figure runs by between Chris and the Camera.

CHRIS

(after the figure)

Hey, what's going on?

The answer's too distant to decipher. Chris looks back to the
Camera, a shrug, a sort of grin. The Alarms becoming a DIN.

CHRIS

Hey... what can I say?

Uncertainly, he gets up, unsure what to do. Suddenly, someone
running by knocks over the camera. All it shows now are a tent
flap, bright desert light, blowing dust, and running feet.

The ALARM.

39 OMIT

39*

40 INT. FORT CAMPBELL HOUSING QUARTERS - NIGHT (JANUARY 1991)

Black. The middle of the night. The hour of Keats "Ode to a Nightingale." 3AM. The time and place where dreams and nightmares meet and where you don't want the phone to ring.

Which it does.

TERI
(finding it)
Wha...?

The new Mrs. Small grapples on a lamp, trying not to wake and heart already pounding.

CHRIS (V.O.)
(staticy)
Teri?

TERI
...Chris...?

CHRIS (V.O.)
Hey, how are -- What's that?
No! -- Turn. Turn right!

The phone goes DEAD.

TERI
Chris?
(not laughing)
....Chris?....

The dead phone. The "not knowing." The dream turned nightmare.

41 INT. JEEP - THRU THE WINDSHIELD - DAY

41

A hulking shape is in the road. Right in front of them through the dirty, skewing, strobing glass. Not only one, more than one. Camel carcasses.

42 THE JEEP

42

swerves and skids off the road, the only way to avoid colliding with them. Comes to a halt six inches deep in sand.

43 EXT. DESERT STORM - WIDE - DAY

43

Noon. Bare, blazing, scathing, dusty, desert light. The horizon EXPLODING, oil fires. BOOMING. Thunderclouds breaking open like seismic blisters.

Roiling anthracite.

COLONEL BERT TARDINO gets out. He's a tall, strong, erect man, no kid. He carries himself with a practiced assurance, a soldier's soldier. A veterinarian.

Chris is slower to get out. Bert Tardino is already bent over a camel by the time the jeep driver reaches him. Even to the layman like Chris there's something odd about the sight, this sudden animal graveyard, and their stiff unnatural postures. Limbs where and how and like limbs shouldn't be.

CHRIS

What is it, Colonel?

BERT TARDINO

I don't know.

CHRIS

Malnutrition, thirst...

BERT TARDINO

I don't think so. Look.

CHRIS

What?

BERT TARDINO

The flies.

CHRIS

Of course there'd be flies.

BERT TARDINO

No. See -- they're dead too.

(CONTINUED)

43 CONTINUED:

43

Bends closer to get a better look, coming close to touching the corpse, but not. Some medical caution, some alien sense.

Chris backs away in horror and disgust. His stomach bucks, and it bends him over. Any second he could lose its contents. He notices then metal or plastic shards the size of shrapnel in the sand. Takes him a second to realize what they are.

Scud fragments.

NICK ROBERTS (V.O.)

My name is --

44 VETERAN INTERVIEW

44

The Vet speaking is Nick Roberts.

NICK ROBERTS

-- Nick Roberts and I am a Desert Storm veteran. I served with the Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 24.

I was in perfect health until the night of January 20, 1991, when we were hit by two Scuds or possibly two Frog missiles... I honestly don't know what it was. My skin began to burn and sting; my lips were numb; there was a strange taste in my mouth; my nose ran uncontrollably and my eyes watered... I knew then, as now, that I had been exposed to some type of a chemical. Chemical detectors were sounding; radio transmissions were coming in; confirmed gas attack; go to full MOPP level 4 -- Marines stationed around us were also sounding their warning signals and screaming, "Confirmed gas attack. Go to full chemical gear." As I was feeling my own symptoms, I saw my buddies and I realized that they were experiencing the same thing I was, some even worse --

45 INT. TENT - CHARLIE COMPANY 9-1 AVIATION - DAWN

45

It's still dark out, night and the oil fires. An ALARM sounds, distant. Kristie Schuermann sleeps. Her prom picture next to her. She's that young. Her gear next to her. More ALARMS closer. Kristie sleeps. More still, LOUDER, insistent. *

Kristie comes up out of her bunk with a start and face to face with a nightmarish sight.

Chris Small just completing full MOPP 4, his face disappearing. Head-to-toe protection gear and mask. *

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED:

45

Kristie reacts the way any ordinary, red-blooded American girl would:

KRISTIE

Fuck!

CHRIS

We're already under pepper.

KRISTIE

Shit. Did I sleep thru -- How bad -- Is it too late?

CHRIS

Get going.

He sounds strange behind the mask and its virtually impossible to pinpoint his or any identity through the clear-plastic, porthole-like, eye openings. He's gone then.

Kristie leaps out of her bunk, sweating. Fear and adrenaline and desert heat. It's popped up instantly. She's tiny and ferociously spunky. And oh so young. She wrestles into her suit, no easy task, wondering if its too late to do any good whatsoever.

46 EXT. TENT - CHARLIE COMPANY 9-1 AVIATION

46*

MOPP4, she comes out. The area is a mad house, vehicles moving, suited troops running, ALARMS sounding.

Her face through the eyeholes.
The whites of her eyes.

NICK ROBERTS (V.O.)

Well, I awoke with the two explosions, probably about this high off the bunk. I mean, I didn't sleep through it --

47 VETERAN INTERVIEW

47

The vet, Nick Roberts, continues to testify:

NICK ROBERTS (CONT'D)

-- but the chemical detectors that went off, you know, in the surrounding area, I don't know how to explain them and it's military issue. I mean, now, we are told they all don't work, or malfunctioned. Back during the war they worked. That's what we relied on. We were trained.

It was a little black box; it has a handle, also a red light on top... An M-8 alarm... I

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

47 CONTINUED:

NICK ROBERTS (CONT'D)

could hear them. I mean, I didn't walk up and
look at it. It's loud -- real loud screeching
(MORE)

47

(CONTINUED)

47 CONTINUED: (2)

47

NICK ROBERTS (CONT'D)
noise... And we put on our protective masks.
Yes, sir. Yes, sir. And we didn't play
around.

48 INT. THE SENATOR - CAPITOL HILL - SOME TIME LATER - DAY

48*

An Irish bar. A Washington going-away party. People who see
too much of each other and talk too much about the same thing.
More smokers and less wine than in most cities.

Newlywed LISA TUIE, comes upon DARLA SHERTZER'S stomach. It's *
a major thing -- she's very pregnant.

DARLA
Don't say it.

LISA
You look beautiful.

DARLA
Fifty-five pounds. I can't get up, I
can't turn over.
(and)
I may kill it rather than give birth to
it.
(and)
Help!

She has the exquisite humor of the third-trimester that perches
midst love, sulfuric acid, and exhaustion.

LISA
What's the due date?

DARLA
What time is it?
(they both laugh)
I'm looking, desperately looking, for
someone who can fill in for me as defense
legislative assistant in the Senator's
office while I'm on maternity leave.

Lisa has short short black hair and a bustle of energy and
intelligence. She blinks, the way you freeze in headlights, or
at an idea staring you in the face.

LISA
Boy, do I have the guy for you.

DARLA
Who?

LISA
My husband.

(CONTINUED)

The word is still new and dear.

DARLA

Oh my God, that's right. Is he here?
Where is he?

Lisa searches the sidewalk tables for her husband, JIM TUIITE.

LISA

There.

DARLA

Which one?

LISA

The big one. Back to the TV. Isn't he
gorgeous?

It's true: CNN's all around, the war on, but one person in
jacket, starched shirt, cuff links, and checked socks, has his
back to it.

His stance a decided choice.

DARLA

Short hair? The broomstick up-the-butt
posture?

LISA

(laughs)
I guess so.

DARLA

He doesn't look like a Democrat.

LISA

What does he look like?

DARLA

Straight.

LISA

(enraptured still)
Yeah...

DARLA

Straight -- with maybe receding hair.
Kind of sexy, receding hair.

LISA

He was in the Secret Service.

DARLA

Ah, that's it.

(CONTINUED)

LISA

That's what?

DARLA

The one-hundred mile hair spray.

(and)

Don't you know all Secret Service men are vain? Maybe because --

LISA

(chiming in)

-- They might die on TV.

The two women start laughing at the legend, the tall tale, but are interrupted by the reality:

TUITE

Are you talking about me?

DARLA

Straight -- with big ears.

TUITE

Let me tell you about me: I'm studying for my PhD. I'm a registered Republican and I believe in the single bullet theory. Oh, and I'm running a background check on you right now.

Who can tell whether he's kidding? He's such a serious man and he's mastered deadpan.

DARLA

At the moment I have no background. Only foreground.

(and)

Are you looking for a job?

TUITE

I've had a job. I guarded Presidents. Nothing could match that.

(and)

I'm retired.

Who can tell whether he's kidding?

49 A SMALL TV - INT. FORT CAMPBELL - HOUSING QTRS - NIGHT

49

Near it, Teri Small runs her face under the kitchen faucet. Bottles and glasses all around. Dripping:

(CONTINUED)

49 CONTINUED:

49

TERI

Coffee, tea, bourbon, vodka, rubbing
alcohol? We've got all 28 flavors.

SANDY

You're blasted.

TERI

You're blasted.

SANDY

Check and double check.

(then)

What is it?

TERI

What is what?

Teri's not the only one transforming. Sandy's becoming a swan,
hair lightened and lengthening; Sandra's replacing Sandy.

SANDRA

I've spent too many nights with you, Girl,
and seen you put away buckets and never get
drunk, never even show it. What gives?

TERI

(cracking for a second)

What if he gets hurt, what if he dies, what
-if...?

SANDRA

My Howie won't. Your Chris won't. End of story.

TERI

Tell me again. How did you ever marry
somebody named Howie?

SANDRA

Well, it happened like this. He was carrying
this thing... between his legs... and what
could I do!

TERI

Sandy.

SANDRA

Yeah, Girl?

Still shaking the liquor, in disbelief, almost wonderment:

TERI

The TV... it's all so pretty. Such pretty
pictures.

(CONTINUED)

49 CONTINUED: (2)

49

A conundrum she can't solve:

SANDRA

You know what -- let's blow this pop stand.

TERI

Let me get my shoes.

50 INT. BEDROOM

50

Teri puts high heels on, one at a time, stands a second. Dressing up to quell adrenaline and missingness. That unique sadness. Shakes her earrings like dice. Otherwise perfectly still. She presses the record button on her answering machine beside the bed.

TERI

This is Chris and Teri Small. Chris is -- away -- and Teri will be back shortly. Leave a message.

(and)

And Chris, if it's you Chris, if you call Chris -- I love you and I'm with you.

(and)

Don't forget it. I won't. Never, never, never, never, never.

Each "never" is different, a struggle between breaking and resolve.

51 INT. LONG BAR - HOTEL - TENNESSEE - NIGHT

51*

It's long, full of tiny lights, surprisingly elegant. Teri and Sandy are equal to it, well-dressed. *

SANDRA

(looking around)

Hoo-ahhh! *

That Army word of so many meanings, in this case a kind of awe. *

TERI

Now we've got to behave ourselves. *

SANDRA

Word of honor? *

TERI

Word of honor. *

SANDRA

Pact? *

(CONTINUED)

TERI

Pact.

The word comes out a little playfully like "Pax".
They are still feeling their liquor.

BARTENDER

What can I get you, ladies?

TERI/SANDRA

(simultaneously)

Cappuccino.

Espresso.

BARTENDER

Really?

The two friends laugh.

TERI/SANDRA

(simultaneously)

Tequila.

With salt and lime.

BUBBA

Oil!

A loud man's down the bar by himself and his conversation is
with the TV set. Even here it's on, CNN, The War.

BARTENDER

Sir?

BUBBA

Oil. That's all it's about. The
internal combustion engine. Detroit.
Cars. Mon-eeey. Oil.

He's big, in a dark suit, his hair pulled back into a ponytail.

Teri turns to whisper "Asshole" to her friend but Sandy's
missing. She' passed behind Teri, down the bar to Bubba
Baxter.

SANDRA

What are you talking about? What are you
saying?

BUBBA

Oil. That black greasy stuff. That's
all this is about. A waste.

SANDRA

My husband's over there.

(CONTINUED)

BUBBA

Whatever works. As long as he isn't
stupid enough to think it has anything to
do with Mom, Apple Pie, or standing up
for the American flag. "Sod-oil Hussain"

Sandy's laughed, "pax-ed", kidded about what's between Howie's
legs, and she's gotten a little hammered. It's the last that
does it, takes the stress, the good strong intentions nd
breaks them down.

She starts to cry.

All of which her friend sees and makes Teri simmer to a boil
and explode. Into Baxter's face goes her tequila.

TERI

What would you know about standing up for
your country?

And takes her friend out of there. A certain kind of honor
very much intact.

52 VETERAN INTERVIEW

52

The vet is Carol Picou.

CAROL PICOU

When we deployed into Iraq we set up our hospital
in a combat area. We were exposed to burning
vehicles, we were exposed to the burning oil wells.
We had particles of black oil on our skin and we

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

52 CONTINUED:

CAROL PICOU (CONT'D)

were told that this was just part of the environment, don't worry about it.

I was never told of the use of depleted uranium used in our missiles or in our air strikes until after the war was over.

Today my symptoms include being diagnosed with short term/long term memory problems, speech impairment, neurological damage to the left thalamus of my brain, neurological damage to the left side of my body. I have completely lost control of my bladder. I cannot urinate on my own... I catheterize myself still to this day five times a day to urinate... I wear sanitary products to prevent myself from soiling myself.

I was an active duty nurse and I tried my hardest to seek help through the military. They decided that... they would go ahead and send me to a psychiatrist for a possibility of malingering...

53 INT. FOX VEHICLE - DESERT STORM

53

An awesomely tight and hi-tech space. Hot. Especially Ape Man. *

He rolls up his sleeves, revealing big arms made huge by reaction to shots. Above the elbow they look shot through with collagen or cortisone; maybe both.

They hurt, an itch he can't scratch, but does anyway. Now red welts only troubling the existing inflamed puffiness. All his attention focused there.

GEORGE GRASS

Ape Man, snap to.

(and)

Thank God, you don't have acne and there's no mirror in here.

TRAY

He'd be popping them and we'd be ducking worse than SCUDS.

His imagery gets the wanted disgusted reaction from his compatriots.

GEORGE GRASS

Thank you, gentleman, very much. Now what's going on out there.

TRAY

(looking)

Well, let's see. It's hot. It's dusty.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

53 CONTINUED:

53

TRAY (CONT'D)

There's an oil fire. There's smoke. You
can't see. There's --

His bored recitation's interrupted by an ALARM going off.
Brings them to attention right quickly.

APE MAN

Jesus Fucking H. Fucking Christ.

TRAY

What the hell is that?

APE MAN

Gas gas gas!

GEORGE GRASS

Everybody to MOPP 4

(and)

Mass spec. it.

Like Code Three, they rush to don their protective gear and
masks. No fun and no easy task in the tight quarters.

Professional but urgent, scared but controlling it.

Soldiers.

54 EXT. DESERT STORM

54

The unique, gangly tentacle of the 800,000 dollar Fox reaches
out into the earth, sifting, finding a sample, and the mass
spectrometer sets to work.

They are alone ----- but all around them the fires, the smoke,
the heat, the dust make a kind of whirlwind.

55 INT. FOX - THE MONITOR

55

begins to read out ----- S-MUSTARD across its SCREEN.
Blinking, blinking, *blinking*.

A full distinct spectrum analysis.
A lethal vapor concentration
It begins to print out the dosage.

APE MAN

What's it mean?

TRAY

Whattya think it means?

APE MAN

How bad is it? How bad?

(CONTINUED)

55 CONTINUED:

TRAY
(off of George Grass' face)
Whattya think?

GEORGE GRASS
Is it at a lethal level, Ape?

JON QUERRY
(mark him)
Yes.

Professional, urgent, scared, controlling it. Soldiers.

The ALARM continues like an awful, atonal heart beat.

S-MUSTARD, S-MUSTARD, S-MUSTARD

56 OMIT

56

WHITE

CHAPTER 3

Congressman Mac Collins
1118 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C.

Dear Congressman Collins,

We are the grandchildren of Chief Petty Officer Roy W. Butler Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 24 Detachment 1624 from Columbus, Georgia. We are very concern about our Poppa. He is very sick since his service in the Persian Gulf War. He gets worse every day. We are asking you to please help him, they will not even give him anything for pain. Our Poppa hurts everyday. It is very hard for him to go to work everyday. Please hurry! We don't know how much longer he will be able to work. Please, please help get our Poppa his disability started.

Hi my name is Courtney. I am 6 years old. Please, help my Poppa get better. I love him very much.

Hi my name is Michael Ryan. I am 4 years old. Please help my Poppa. I dont want him to die cause I love him and he loves me.

Hi my name is Stephanie. I am 16 years old. If our country can't treat our Veterans any better than the Gulf War Vets are being treated then maybe everyone should be like President Clinton and stay out of the service. I think it is really awful that we can spend more money trying to feed the Somalians than we can help our Gulf War Vets. Please help my Poppa. I love him very much.

58 CNN: (STOCK FOOTAGE)

covers the victory, the victorious homecoming, all the opening
credit moments captured full-blown, and

The shortest, cleanest war.
The perfect tonic, elixir.
Antidote.

Colin Powell, George Bush, Norman Schwarzkopf, Peter Arnett.
Fifth Avenue. Ticker tape. Three million people.

59 OMIT

60 OMIT

61 OMIT

59*

60*

61*

62 INT. GEORGETOWN DUPLEX - DAY

62*

There it is --- Lisa Tuite watching. She tears her eyes away, looks around for her husband. He's not about.

Searching, she finally spots him through the window, shoveling snow, about as far as he can get from the small screen. CNN.

63 EXT. GEORGETOWN DUPLEX

63

Bundling on a coat and gloves, Lisa comes out to him.

LISA

Jim, you ought to come and see this.

TUITE

What's that?

He keeps shoveling non-stop. He's shed his coat. A big, burly man, muscles coiling and uncoiling, sweating.

LISA

The men coming home.

TUITE

I've seen one war and that's plenty.

LISA

This is different.

He casts an eye, questioning her innocence, maybe even her sanity.

LISA

Are you jealous, envious, hurt -- that they're getting what you didn't when you came back from Vietnam?

TUITE

Maybe... No, that's not it.

LISA

What is it?

(CONTINUED)

63 CONTINUED:

63

TUIITE

...Nothing.

He can't find it, wrap it into words, or won't. Typically, frustratingly male.

LISA

I wondered what your mother meant. Just don't talk about the war with him, she said.

TUIITE

(stops now)

We used to say -- "fed-up, fucked-up, and far-from-home."

(and)

I liked it, I was good at it in some crazy way, dropping down in medivacs firing at anything in sight to bail poor bastards out, can you imagine?

(and)

Glad they're back. Thank God it was so simple -- they don't have any idea.

(and now)

But ----- no more wars for me.

64 EXT/INT. FORT CAMPBELL HOUSING QUARTERS - DAY

Teri Small and Sandra watch a parade as well: one going by right outside the window, full of flags and military men and a high school band. The doorbell RINGS. *

TERI

I wonder who that is.

They look at each other, excited, keyed up in anticipation, know it's not, can't be their guys, but the waiting is frustrating. Downright galling. They can't keep quite still and know it, and know it's kind of funny.

SANDRA

He'll be home soon. They'll both be home soon.

TERI

Oh, I know.

Teri goes to the door --- and who it could be is UPS with a big box addressed to her. The name on the return address is CHRIS SMALL.

TERI

Should I open it?

(CONTINUED)

64 CONTINUED:

64

SANDRA
Are you crazy?

TERI
What do you mean?

SANDRA
Tear that thing to smithereens right now.

TERI
Well, if I don't have him --- at least
I've got part of him.

65 SCISSORS - A MOMENT LATER

65

With them, trying to be careful at first. Giving up, Teri does just that.

66 INT. SMALL LIVING ROOM - THE BOX

66

is full of his stuff and distinctly not feminine things --- boots, camo hat, socks, ammo belt, and a worn Army "chocolate chips" shirt.

War and more war. Nothing exactly personal. So much for any soft, squishy thoughts. They laugh.

SANDRA
(finally)
Better than nothing.

TERI
Maybe not.

They laugh again.

67 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT - LATER

67

Teri tosses and turns until she ends up staring at the ceiling.

68 THE CHOCOLATE CHIP SHIRT - INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

68*

still dangles over the carton when Teri comes into the room. She's naked, and wanders around but ends up at the box, and picks up the shirt.

Smells it to smell him. But it has a funny smell, makes her nose wrinkle. No matter, she holds it.

She puts it on. A piece of him close to her at least.

69 INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

She takes off the camo shirt and discovers her skin has broken out. Funny. What caused it? No idea.

She looks over the shirt --- it still smells funny. She throws the shirt in the washer.

70 EXT. BACK PORCH - WACO, TEXAS - DAY - SOME TIME LATER

70

Out of another washer comes clean clothes, including a bunch of men's shirts.

The woman who pulls them out is striking, but a complete contrast to Teri Small. Texan, a beautifully-shaped redhead in nurse's garb who happens to be enormously pregnant. *

Her name is JERRILINN FOLZ.

JERRILINN

How many do you want me to iron?

JERAN

Don't bother with that.

Her younger brother, JERAN, takes them as fast as she can fold them and packs them into a duffle.

JERRILINN

Of course I will.

JERAN

I'm a better ironer than you are anyway.

JERRILINN

Oh stop.

JERAN

Can I feel the baby? Can I? Let the sprout say hi to its Uncle.

His touch is delicate and delighted. He smiles --- and his smile is a wondrous thing. It pollinates itself all around.

JERRILINN

I don't understand. You're out of the Air Force. Everybody else's coming home and you're going?

JERAN

I'm Wrong Way Corrigan -- remember the flyer? He was from Texas too.

JERRILINN

He wasn't going into a war zone.

(CONTINUED)

70 CONTINUED:

JERAN

The war's over. Can't get killed and
Laxtron's paying a bucketful of money.
I'm lucky.

And he's off with his duffel bag across the small farm, past
the corn, toward the trailer he lives in.

70A INT. JERAN'S BEAT UP TRAILER - DAY

70A

He plucks up his other gear, ready to go. His sister appears
in the doorway, unconvinced.

JERAN

I'm just a civilian who's going to do
some cleaning up, repairing and packing
up equipment, capping off oil wells.
I'll be back before that little monster
can say, "Gaa Gaa" or "GooGoo".

That smile and she tries to hug him. No mean feat with the
kicking porch she carries.

70B EXT. JERAN'S BEAT UP TRAILER - DAY

70B

They're outside now where Jerrilinn's husband, DAVID, a short
stout man nicknamed "Big Daddy" waits.

JERRILINN

We'll just miss you. I wanted you to be
there at the birth.

JERAN

I'll be there, sort of.

He hugs David suddenly, the kind of thing he does, surprising
the man, Jeran's outgoing enthusiasm taking more normal mortals
aback.

JERAN

Going with God... Going with God.

With David, he hops in a pickup, off in a cloud of dust past
the field of corn.

71 VETERAN INTERVIEW

71

DR. EDWARD HYMAN of New Orleans, Louisiana speaks:

DR. EDWARD HYMAN

After World War II, I separated hundreds of
Marines who had hit the beaches at Iwo Jima,
Tarawa, Okinawa, et cetera and had been in hand-to-
hand bayonet fighting. That's stress. When they

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

71 CONTINUED:

71

DR. EDWARD HYMAN (CONT'D)
got back to be separated, they had two things in mind and the second one was going home. Not a one of them had all this "stress" business. I never heard one of the hundreds of them say I have arthritis, I have memory loss, I have skin rashes, and all the other stuff. I have no faith in this stress syndrome theory.

72 INT. FORT MEADE - DAY

72

Ten "stations" spread around an empty, gymnasiumlike room. Returning vets flood in and lines form. Only the medical stations have dividers, any privacy at all. The rest are open; everybody can hear everything. It's a cattle call.

The first station is records -- where you receive a bunch of folders, personnel, medical, dental. The tall, 6 foot 7 vet, STEVE ROBERTSON. You move up one by one, like musical chairs.

STATION #1
Name?

STEVE
Robertson, Steve, Sergeant.

STATION #1
Unit.

STEVE
(run together)
Two-Seven-Six-M-P company.

STATION #1
Last four?

STEVE
(run together)
Twenty-Four-Twenty-Six.

Station #1 checks for files, pulls out a file, spins it around.

STATION #1
DD Form 214, VA Form 919, DA Form 2112. Sign here. Next.
(and)
Next.

The SECOND station is travel allotment -- where you receive a money voucher. Looking right at it on Steve's uniforms.

STATION #2
Name?

(CONTINUED)

72 , CONTINUED:

STEVE

(handing over a folder)

Robertson, Steve, Sergeant. Two-Seven-
Six-M-P company.

*
*

(CONTINUED)

STATION #2

Again?

STEVE

What?

STATION #2

What was it again?

The SIXTH station is dental -- where you receive a check up.

STATION #6

Name?

STEVE

Robertson, Steve, Sergeant. Two-Seven-Six-M-P company

STATION #6

Open your mouth.

There's a straight-back folding chair, a large box filled with toothbrushes and mirrors.

STATION #6

Looks O.K. Throw the mirror away.

(and)

Brush.

(he watches)

Throw the toothbrush away. Next.

At STATION #8 is a curtain and a woman doctor who feels at first different. Tall, wild curly hair, pale skin, whose benign face hides a bored metronome. Her name is DOCTOR MICHELLE APPLEBAUM.

DR. APPLEBAUM

Name?

STEVE

Robertson, Steve, Sergeant. Two-Seven-Six-M-P-Comapny

DR. APPLEBAUM

Please step behind the curtain.

(Robertson does.)

Do you have any medical problems?

STEVE

I have these flu symptoms. I can't seem to shake them.

DR. APPLEBAUM

What are the symptoms exactly?

(CONTINUED)

72, CONTINUED: (3)

72

STEVE

I have these flu symptoms. I can't seem
to shake them.

DR. APPLEBAUM

What are the symptoms exactly?

*

(CONTINUED)

72 CONTINUED: (3)

She's checking eyes, ears, throat, and reflexes. A general overview.

STEVE

Aching joints. Stuff in the lungs. A cough. Fatigue. I'm always tired.

DR. APPLEBAUM

How long have you had them?

STEVE

Valentine's Day. They kept giving me antibiotics but I couldn't shake it.

DR. APPLEBAUM

Anything else?

STEVE

(a little embarrassed)
I'm passing blood.

DR. APPLEBAUM

Let's take a look.

He's even more embarrassed, she takes a look.

STEVE

I told them it was more than the flu.
(and)
O.k., they said. They'll take care of you back stateside.

DR. APPLEBAUM

Hmmm. Maybe you burst a hemorrhoid.

73 OMIT MOVED TO SC 74A

73*

74 INT. AIRPORT FORT CAMPBELL AIRBASE - A SHORT TIME LATER

74*

A crowd waiting, and anything but tame. A wild, primed, celebratory energy. A sea of tiny American flags. Mini-cams ready to make film at eleven, including Channel 11 and perky reporter, JAN SPARKS.

Both dressed to the hilt, Teri and Sandra clamour in, elbow their way through it. Teri looks superb and aflutter. No other word for it. Sandra carries her own camcorder, hair ever longer and lighter, ever more the looker; chrysalis to butterfly. Sometimes having something to believe in does that. *

TERI

Are we late? My God, we're late. He
could already be off the plane. *

She does a complete spin in place, searching. A pirouette. What she's wanted so much so close it's scary somehow. *

Men and women in chocolate chips have already deboarded, are flooding in. Greeted, hugged, clutched, celebratory reunions, but not her man, her Chris. Wonderful sights. Yet... Looking, looking, can't stop saying something, anything. *

(CONTINUED)

TERI (CONT'D)

(rat-a-tat)

Do you think? Where are the Smalls? Where is he? How do I look? Did I ask that before?

SANDRA

Which question?

TERI

I don't know.

SANDRA

The answer is --- all of them. You asked all of them.

TERI

Sandra.

SANDRA

Yes Ma'am?

Teri stops scanning the arrivals and hauls herself out of her own anxiety and anticipation:

TERI

Howie'll come home, too.

SANDRA

I know.

TERI

Soon.

SANDRA

I know.

Shakes her hand as if trying to cool it off. Va-va-voom.

TERI

Wait 'til he sees you.

(can't help herself)

Where is he?

Last stragglers. No more are coming.

JAN SPARKS

Is your husband supposed to be on that plane?

It's Jan Sparks interrupting with her microphone in Teri's face. Trying to deal with it, trying to stay together:

TERI

Yeah, he's supposed to.

(CONTINUED)

JAN SPARKS
How do you feel?

*
*

TERI
Crazy. Ready..for him to be home.

*
*

SANDRA
I just prayed my Howie stayed inside his tank.

TERI
We were scared now and then.

SANDRA
I'll go find out. Maybe there was a
manifest change.

*
*
*

JAN SPARKS
Have you talked to him?

TERI
I wrote a letter every day, but it's kind
of crazy... we talked on the telephone.

Distracted all the while looking everywhere for him. Not
finding him.

*
*

JAN SPARKS
What will you do when he comes?

*

TERI
-Hold him. Be grateful. Love him to
death... Have a baby.

The girl who looked next door and didn't want to be safe, who
wanted to be bad, who wanted to escape teenagedom --- without a
loss of humor or audacity she's gathered up a luminous, pellucid,
practically spiritual depth.

JAN SPARKS
We'd love to be part of that. Maybe we
could interview you again, the both of
you, sort of keep an eye on you.

TERI
Let me get this straight: you want to
"sort of" follow us around with a camera?

JAN SPARKS
That's right. That would be great.

TERI
Wherever I go, whatever I do. Inside my
house.

(CONTINUED)

JAN SPARKS
Exactly.

(CONTINUED)

TERI

Not everywhere inside my house.

JAN SPARKS

(laughs)

Of course not.

SANDRA

(coming back)

He's not on this one. The next one
supposedly. In two hours.

TERI

That's O.K. I'm rootin' them in anyway.

All true, all false.

74AA LATER

74AA*

No longer being interviewed, time passed, Teri sits, waiting.
The crowd has momentarily thinned. A wearing place to be.

Jan Sparks approaches her without her camera, though Sandra has
her camcorder.

TERI

Hurry up and wait. Hurry up and ... And
I'm living it to the fullest.
(trying for humour)
I want him here now.

She waits.

74AB EXT. AIRPORT - LATER

74AB*

Suddenly, she's running outside, another plane arriving.

TERI

Come on in son. Here he comes, I got it.

The plane taxis, it's lights blinking, right across Sandra's
camcorder. The CHEERING. The flags. Little kids calling.
"Daddy, Daddy." SQUEALS. Flashbulbs kicking thru the night
and off the L10-11. At last to a halt.

TERI

(searching again)

Where is he? Is that him? All right!

(but it's not)

Come on, Chris.

(and)

Where is he? Where is he? I can't find
him.

(CONTINUED)

Exhausted, depleted, another disappointment, she heads back inside.

74AC INT. AIRPORT - A MOMENT LATER

74AC*

Dejected, walking, not wanting to be seen on camera. Suddenly then --

She starts to walk and then to run. Tippy on her heels and not caring. Midstream, her stride hitches; she virtually stops. Something about him, different, thinner. Only a second and then she lets it go, runs again. Makes a cry, a SCREE, without her knowledge or consent. That primal.

Hugging, holding, kissing, holding, hugging. She says his name and he says hers.

Then he's surrounded by parents, Jan Sparks and her mini-cam, Sandra and her camcorder, and even just passing well-wishers. Patting, grabbing, looking, staring, asking, filming for 11.

A conflagration.

74A INT. WALTER REED HOSPITAL - DAY - SOME TIME LATER

74A

An aging, decaying, fine place redone in a way that's taking away the age and the fineness. Dr. Michelle Applebaum hands Steve Robertson a blow tube. A peak flow monitor.

DR. APPLEBAUM
Here blow into this.

STEVE
(reaches)
Like this?

DR. APPLEBAUM
That's the idea.

He's a tall, lanky Midwesterner, a basketball player, suddenly gone to seed.

Steve takes a deep breath and blows: it's pathetic. The needle hardly moves and it exhausts him. He's embarrassed.

STEVE
Let me do it again.

DR. APPLEBAUM
All right.

He gathers all his determination, raises up to full 6'7 1/2", blows.

(CONTINUED)

Just as pathetic. He's exhausted, spent. The doctor looks at him without expression or comment. It's impossible to know exactly what she's thinking.

DR. APPLEBAUM
There's one more thing.

STEVE
(feebly)
What's that?

DR. APPLEBAUM
I'd like you to see a psychiatrist.

STEVE
(still feebly)
... Why?

75 INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - DAY

75

Steve Robertson and DR. FRITZ RODDAM. There's a long silence. Then:

DR. RODDAM
What's this, Steve, your 3rd visit?

STEVE
Yes, Sir.

DR. RODDAM
I've been looking at your case -- We don't know what you've got. We don't know where you got it, but you didn't get it in the Persian Gulf.

STEVE
(steam rising)
How in the hell do you know it wasn't The Persian Gulf if you don't know what it is.

DR. RODDAM
I think it stems from depression... I'd like to put you on Prozac.

STEVE
I don't think so.

(CONTINUED)

75 CONTINUED:

75

DR. RODDAM

Being called off to a distant war. Think of that.

STEVE

But Doc, I wasn't in the fighting. I was safe.

DR. RODDAM

But being separated from your wife and baby. From loved ones.

STEVE

Hate to tell you Doc, but I could walk down to the end of the street where there was a pay phone. That worked.

DR. RODDAM

Plus the Legion work and being unable to do it all.

STEVE

Hate to tell you Doc, but --

DR. RODDAM

Well it's just stress, general stress.

Less flippant, more careful and underneath genuinely upset:

STEVE

Hate to tell you Doc, but you want to know what stress is? I worked in a missile launch site in North Dakota and we got an emergency launch order to prepare our missiles and we inserted our keys. It had never happened before and we waited for that final launch order. Sitting, waiting, knowing what it meant. That's stress.

(and)

I was bored in Desert Storm. Tell you the truth -- I read more books in five months than I read in five-and-a-half years in college.

(and)

I tell you what I am. I'm sick. Physically. Not psychologically.

(he gets up)

See you in the funny papers.

76 INT. CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING - ROOM 334 - 8:30 A.M.

76

The hearing on June 9, 1993, Lane Evans, Chairman presiding.
Among the VA subcommittee members present is REP. LUIS
GUTIERREZ of Illinois:

LUIS GUTIERREZ

I can only imagine from what we keep
hearing... that the VA and the Department
of Defense... they might be in some
denial and need some psychiatric help
here because of that denial, and maybe
not the veterans.

(laughter)

77 A DOOR - INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT - LATER

77

Opens. A candle comes in, Teri carrying it.

TERI

I'll be there in a minute, Sweetheart.

She doesn't turn on the lights. In the dim flicker she drops
her clothes. The waver of the candle plays across the tile.
Her flesh looks like butterscotch. She draws out a shortie
nightgown, not a teddy, not transparently sexy, but not demure
either. Luminously translucent.

TERI

(calls out)

Are you ready?

She doesn't wait for an answer, keeps moving, picks a plastic
container from a drawer. Circular, clear-front, slots,
numbers. Birth control pills. Drops it into the trash.

A dash of perfume here and here and --- here.

TERI

I'm coming. Ready or not.

She takes the candle, closes the door and there is Black.

78 OMIT

78*

79 INT. BATHROOM - DAWN - LATER (HARD CUT)

Carcasses of candles like melted steeples...and Teri comes back in, doesn't turn on a light. Dawn offers a gloaming. She's a shadow.

She sits on the toilet to pee --- and grimaces. She reaches down to her pubis and peers and itches.

80 OMIT

80

81 OMIT

81*

82 THRU THE BEDROOM DOOR - LATER

82

Teri looks into the room and Chris asleep. His sweat in the night light, and

83 THRU THE BEDROOM DOOR - LATER STILL

83

Chris looks into the room and Teri's asleep.

The look on both their faces is virtually the same -- caring but concerned. Something, not knowing what, not right.

84 OMIT 84
85 OMIT 85
86 AT THE WINDOW - LATER 86

Chris looks out silent --- and Teri comes up to him.

TERI

We could go to a movie... A walk -- what about -- ... I got it. Let's call Sandra. Howie's home too now. We'll go dance, get a drink, get a little smashed.

She touches him: his skin is sticky, slimy, gummy, greasy. This strange sweat.

Her man looks out the window.

87 INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT - LATER 87

Chris comes in and turns on the light and steps on a scale. Above it is a chart of his weight, 160 becoming 155, becoming 150, becoming 148. Sets to mark it again when, in the mirror, he sees he has a rash on his head and face. A wild, ugly, purpley outbreak. The bumps of a raspberry scattered and gone bad. He turns off the light.

88 INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT - LATER STILL 88

Teri comes in and turns on the light and he's on the toilet. Diarrhea. His face sweaty putty. The room is foul.

CHRIS

Leave me. *

She turns off the light and his intestines RIP. Sound OVER

89 OMIT 89

90 INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - SOME TIME LATER 90

OB-GYN, HERB LAVIGETTO, RIPS off a plastic glove. Teri's on a table, legs apart. He's been examining her.

DR. LAVIGETTO

What's the pain like?

TERI

It burns.

DR. LAVIGETTO

How severely?

(CONTINUED)

90 CONTINUED:

TERI

I dig at myself. That sounds gross but the itching's outrageous.

DR. LAVIGETTO

Have you ever had vaginal infections before?

TERI

Before Chris. All the time. But not since.

DR. LAVIGETTO

Well, sometimes after a partner's been away, a couple's been separated --

TERI

Every time --

DR. LAVIGETTO

Every time?

TERI

Not right away but after. Every time -- we make love. It's like... I know this is going to sound stupid... it's like his semen is burning me. Like it's on --- fire.

Mystified isn't in an American doctor's ken. They don't open themselves to that. But that's where Lavigetto is.

DR. LAVIGETTO

It could be stress related.

TERI

Oh his part or my part?

DR. LAVIGETTO

Try --- condoms for a while.

TERI

What about a diaphragm, a cervical cap? Anything but condoms.

DR. LAVIGETTO

A condom's probably safer.

TERI

I hate condoms.

DR. LAVIGETTO

I'm sure it's only temporary. It won't last.

90A VETERAN INTERVIEW (TRANPOSED FROM SCENE 89)

90A

Dr. Hyman talking again:

DR. EDWARD HYMAN

Any time you are dealing with a bacterium, you have
got to entertain the possibility of a contagion...
I suspect that it is contagious not only to wives
but to other people living in the same household.

91 OMIT

91

92 INT. BEDROOM - LATER

92

In the dark. Quiet. Small sounds.

CHRIS

This isn't going to work.

TERI

We've got to try.

(and)

Here, baby, let me.

(and)

Well, well, well. That's nice. Let me roll
it on.

CHRIS

I hate condoms.

TERI

No more than me.

(something's wrong)

you're all sweaty...

(practically a croon)

It's only temporary. It won't last.

(and now)

Chris..Chris...It's all right Honey, we
got time, nothing but time, all the time
in the world. Just hold me...

*

His exquisite, breaking face. Hers, Now:

*

CHRIS

Maybe tonight. It's been a couple of
months.

TERI

(she hesitates)

O.K.

(laughs now)

How do you get this thing off?

(CONTINUED)

92 CONTINUED:

She's sitting in the deep shadow: He's standing, his backside visible, and she takes him (O.S.) into her mouth. He moves, his ass clinches. His hand fists, hers clasps one buttock.

The heat of the moment.

TERI

I want... I want you inside me.

(CONTINUED)

92. CONTINUED: (2)

92

CHRIS

Teri...

Yes, no. Yes, but... Yes.

TERI

O.K., baby... It's O.K. baby.

She lies back into the dark and he sets on top of her, disappearing too. All that's left in sight is one leg still on the floor, one of hers in the air. A little CRY. His. Hers. *

The heat of the moment.

93 INT. BATHROOM - LATER - MORNING

93

The chart on the wall above the scale measuring Chris' weight. The 145 crossed out and made accurate, 143.

In the mirror, Teri opens her mouth and it's not a pretty sight. Canker sores. An archipelago of fresh ones. She closes her mouth.

She reaches down (O.S.) and winces, the burning between her legs again. She can't help it -- she makes a little CRY, a different cry, pain not pleasure, and

94 VETERAN INTERVIEW

94

The vet is Kelli Albuck.

KELLI ALBUCK

My husband Troy was an Airborne Ranger Infantry Officer in the 82nd Airborne Division during Desert Shield and Desert Storm... Soon after his return... to Fort Bragg, I experienced that upon intercourse there was pain and burning. After talking with other officer's wives, I found they had the same experience. We jokingly refer to it as "shooting fire." It sounds funny, but it's very, very painful.

My first miscarriage was in December 1991.

I became pregnant again in February 1992. I lost that baby. I knew something was seriously wrong, because my first child, born in 1990, was and is fine by comparison.

During the next couple of months, I was racked with depression, fatigue, chronic abdominal infections, and severe pain, not to mention intimacy problems with my husband due to painful intercourse. My husband experiences painful, swollen, burning, fluid-filled lesions after exposure to his own semen. Sometimes these lesions are bloody and the size of half-dollars...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

94 CONTINUED:

KELLI ALBUCK (CONT'D)

94

By the grace of God, we were blessed with our third pregnancy, which gave us Alexander... My complications with this pregnancy began at 5 months. I hemorrhaged and was hospitalized for 2 weeks. I recall my doctor walking into the room in full surgical gear to tell me if the heart rate did not climb, she would take the baby, and, of course, he wouldn't live.

Alexander was born 2 months early, weighing only 3 pounds. He faced the following birth problems: underdeveloped lungs, strep B infection, spinal meningitis, cranial hemorrhage, collapsed heart valve, calcium deposits in the kidneys, severe jaundice, bleeding ulcers, cerebral palsy, vision and hearing impairments, apnea, respiratory distress syndrome, and bronchial pulmonary dysplasia. His \$500,000 lifetime limit of health coverage was exhausted in 88 days. His first bill, which I have right here enclosed, is a keepsake: "Please pay this amount: \$154,319" after the first week.

95 THE HULK OF A SHIP - EXT. GULF (EARLY APRIL 1991) (TORONTO)

95

It's vast hull a sheer dark wall, a monolith; the deck is straight up, out of sight.

Men spray disassembled choppers, cleaning them, then shrink-wrapping the parts, and pack M1 Abrams coated by depleted uranium --- and one is Jeran Gallimore. Another's JIMMY JENKINS, a talker. A third's RAFF WEBBER, soon to be known as TATER. Neither can stand silence:

JIMMY

Why're you here, Man?

JERAN

They needed a clean up crew.

JIMMY

I wanted to be in the war.

JERAN

I've already been in and out of the Air Force.

TATER

You shittin' me. And you came back?! I'm gettin' outta here.

JERAN

Got a chance. Had a job to do.

JIMMY

This man's fuckin' crazy.

(CONTINUED)

TATER
Fuckin' crazy.

JERAN
What are you two--twins?

JIMMY
, You think we--

TATER
--All--

BOTH
--Look a like?

They're a pair alright.

JERAN
Who you kiddin'? One uglier than the
other!

The two blacks give him a shocked look and then laugh.

JIMMY
Jimmy Jenkins.

TATER
Rafe Webber.

95 CONTINUED: (2)

JERAN
Jeran Gallimore.

Jeran's a worker. He keeps moving, his powerful arms full, he can't loose one to shake.

TATER
, How do you spell that?

JERAN
G-a-l-l-i-m-o-r-e.

TATER
What's that accent? Where you from?

JERAN
Texas.

JIMMY
Too much name. I proclaim you, G-Man.
(he can't)
Why are we spraying and doing this shit?
I thought we won the war. It was over.

JERAN
You going to pick up your end?

He means the next piece they've set to move. They're heavy and have symbols and what look like serial numbers on them.

JIMMY
I don't know. What are these marks?
Toxic material? Goddamit, what is this
shit?

JERAN
Stop right there.

He sets down his end, forcing Tater to do likewise.

JIMMY
What?

JERAN
Don't take the Lord's name in vain.

TATER
What the fuck is he talking about?

JERAN
That too. Both of you. We can converse
without needing to resort to such
language.

(CONTINUED)

BOTH

You are out of your fu--

They're going to say 'fucking', but Jeran's moved closer until they are face to face. Is he going to resort to violence? He reaches out to stop the word, but quietly, and he smiles.

The pollinating smile somehow makes Tater and Jimmy's epithet unnecessary without Tater knowing quite why.

It's something else; astonishing, bewildering, winning.

95A A SNAP SHOT - CLOSE UP

95A*

Rafe and Jimmy Jenkins.

JERAN (V.O.)

I'm sending some pictures of the guys.
Jimmy Jenkins is the hambone-arooni and
Rafe Webber is the potato head. Tater we
call him now--

95B INT. TENT - DAY OR NIGHT (PICK ONE) BLUE SCREEN

95B*

Moody tent. One side up and oil fires flaming in the distance.
Jeran writing a letter. A camera, an American flag, a picture
of Jerlenn close by.

JERAN (V.O.)

--He's leaving soon. There is a girl who--

ROSCA

(interrupting him)

Whatcha doing?

JERAN

Writing home. Asking my sister to send
some Bibles over here. We got some
straightening out to do. Not just for
me, for the Saudis.

ROSCA

They catch you with a Bible. They'll
stone you.

JERAN

(writing)

It it helps one person.

He smiles-- and she goes on further, where maybe she wanted but
didn't think she'd go.

(CONTINUED)

ROSCA

You know I used to be a gymnast. See--

She does the splits, a backflip. That makes him look up from his letter. Then she does a handstand. He looks at her, puts his letter down, and the next thing she knows, he's standing on his hands beside her.

JERAN

How's the weather done here?

ROSCA

(can't help it)

Do you think I'm attractive?

JERAN

I think you're the ever loving fine-est.

ROSCA

Really...just 'cause we're upside down?

JERAN

Are we? Didn't notice.

And he grins, a big grin.

JERAN (CONT'D)

Care to dance?

Maybe he's the ever loving fine-est.

96 CONTINUED:

TATER

This G-Man's a throw back.

JIMMY

Whattaya saying to your sister?

JERAN

. That I'm riding around in Kuwait--or
maybe Iraq-- with two twins.

TATER

Just tell her I'm ouytta here any day
now. I'll miss you two, but man look
around.

JERAN

(still writing)

That Rafe Webber's a good guy
--- except he's losing his hair. Pray
for him.

(Tater checks his scalp in the
mirror, Jimmy breaks up)
That I need her to get in touch with the
Gideons... The Bible people. Get some
Bibles over here. We got some
straightening out to do... Not just for
me, for the Saudis.

(CONTINUED)

JIMMY

Do you know what will happen if they find you over there distributing Bibles?

JERAN

Yeah, they'll stone me. If it would prevent one person from dying it is worth it. If I die it'd be for the right reasons.

Tater at last quits peering at his scalp to join Jimmy in checking out Jeran. Who is this guy and what is it about him?

JERAN

(still writing)

You know going bald is o.k. You'll look distinguished.

(laughs)

Like a Potato. I name you-- Tater.

97 THE SHUTTER OF JERAN'S CAMERA - HIGHWAY OF DEATH - LATER

97

SNAPS. He takes pictures of the pilgrimage of refugees, the ceaseless carcasses, dead animals and dead Iraqis.

SNAP SNAP SNAP:

They're striking in this sense: simple, stark portraits, graphic in their artlessness, their unblinking by-the-way.

The fired sky, the orange sky, the black sky, the always orange or black sky.

The bombs they are unloading and reloading; repacking them for use with some orange powder.

The men and women he works with; what they wear carries an orange silt and a black soot like a frost.

Their body parts, hands and biceps, including his massive own; even the skin carries the coating. They might as well be rusted.

SNAP SNAP SNAP.

JIMMY (POR. V.O.)

G-man. What's the matter? I can't believe it. No more pictures.

98 EXT. GULF - LATER (TORONTO)

98

Jeran is still for once, behind dark glasses. Back at work, they're taking a break to eat near the hulk of a ship.

(CONTINUED)

JERAN

The sun's too bright. Taking a break.
Feel like I got a hangover.

TATER

Impossible. You don't drink. All you do
is work and snap pix.

JERAN

Just trying to record the aftermath.

Whatever it is that lives in the sky and now upon their hands
and upon them makes it tough to even keep sandwich bread white.

TATER

(interrupting)

Maybe it's over -- but all I know is
daytime looks like night and night looks
like day. The orange demon's what you
get. *

(and)

Hell, I spit orange. I pee orange. I
shit orange. I even smell orange. Every-
fucking-thing's orange. *

(and)

I'm black and I'm outta here before I
turn orange. Twenty-four hours and counting
down. *

They all laugh, these men and one woman, ROSCA STEPHANOPOLIS,
because it's true and the laughter settles and a rocket crosses
the sky. They all look up: the sky changing from black to
orange.

99 IN THE ORANGE:

99

Jeran takes off his dark glasses, squints at the sky. His face.

100 INT. CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BLDG. - ROOM 334

100

In front of Lane Evans and Joseph Kennedy III and the House VA
Subcommittee American legion spokesman Steve Robertson testifies.

STEVE ROBERTSON (CONT'D)

-- The veterans are upset with people telling them,
we don't know what you have. We believe you are
sick, but we know you didn't get it in the Persian
Gulf. The bottom line is that these veterans would
have never been deployed if their health condition
was like this prior to deployment to the Persian
Gulf. Almost every one of these veterans has
contracted these medical problems since they have
returned. Now, if these halls could talk, I think
they would *

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

STEVE ROBERTSON (CONT'D)
say, Here we are again! This is Agent Orange
revisited. This is atomic vets revisited. And we
have got to get off the dime...

We have already have some veterans that have died
and nobody knows why they died. They don't know
what the cause was... Now, you can't tell me when
you took a physical to go to war that nobody
detected it. When you were bleeding from the
rectum while you were in the Persian Gulf and you
came back for your discharge physical that nobody
detected that. Or (a) cancer wouldn't have been
diagnosed somewhere in that process...

100A EXT. GULF - ANOTHER ANGLE - MOMENTS LATER (TORONTO)

100A

The supervisor Meeker interrupts their lunch

MEEKER
(derisive)
Girls, girls, girls. Back to work ,
girls.

STEWY
Excuse me, but before we came, Laxtron
promised us certain facilities --

MEEKER
What are you talking about?

STEWY
We never got MOPP equipment as an example.

Meeker's a big, rangy, man, a decade into seed. His sympathy's
lean; his days aren't easy either. He has A/C, a trailer, baths,
a mask visible right near him, but he too is touched by this
orange Hell.

MEEKER
The war is over. This is just a clean up.

JIMMY
The oil fires aren't. Alarms are still
going off.

STEWY
We have a contract --

MEEKER
If we knew we'd hired a bunch of pussies
we'd never have brought you over.

(CONTINUED)

JERAN

(speaks for the first time)

Sir, we need showers, we need masks.

People are getting sick --

Perhaps he among them. The ongoing hangover. A sallow look.
His eyes digging back into his skull. Meeker interrupts:

MEEKER

Jeran, if you want to go fucking-home --

JERAN

(interrupts back)

Sir, in the presence of a woman, in any event,
we don't have to resort to the use of such
language --

His sweetness is perfectly maintained, untreatly, sure,
incendiary:

MEEKER

-- You can go fucking-home without pay.
You're free to go. Every one of you.

(CONTINUED)

STEWY

We're not going to get any help here.

ROSCA

Just some soap. And a shower. That'd be good. Something.

BRISBY/JIMMY/OTHERS

Toilet paper. Flu medicine. Immodium please! Dancing girls. Most certainly dancing girls.

TATER

(gets up)

I'm packing up. I'm gone.

(and)

You're going to waste away over here. An orange death.

He leaves the others and Jeran watches the balding kid go, watches the unhappy, beaten others. His face. The day is night.

101 OMIT

101

102 OMIT

102

103 OMIT

103

104 OMIT

104

105 THE ENTRANCE TO THE TENT - LATER STILL (TORONTO)

105

Jeran sets off a B256 chemical ALARM. The place comes alive. Jeran silences the alarm.

STEWY

What's going on?

(CONTINUED)

JERAN

Please line up and do as instructed. My trusted assistant will issue to you what you will need for today's assignment.

With Jeran in the doorway is tiny, jumpy STEWY GALARDI and stacks of soap, towels and Bibles. The men gather, interested yet leery.

THE MEN

Where did you get this stuff?... Where are we going?

JERAN

One set of MOPP 4 gear, one towel, one bar of soap and one Bible, Ned. *

BRISBY *

One set of MOPP 4 gear, one towel, one bar, one Bible, yes, Sir.

JIMMY *

Where did you get this stuff?

JERAN

No questions. And one bathing suit. Come along.

BRISBY *

One bathing suit, yes Sir. Come along.

THE MEN

What -- ? Where -- ?

Stewy Galardi hands out towels, soap, Bibles, bathing suits.

JERAN

And do you promise to come to Bible class?

STEWY *

... Yes.

JERAN

Next.

JIMMY *

Of course, you bet, sure, whatever.

JERAN

(stops him)
I'm serious.

(CONTINUED)

JIMMY
O.K., O.K.

In they go.

106 OMIT

106

106A A GIANT..HOSE

106A

sprays and SMACKS each one in turn -- blowing Stewy Galardi completely backwards, right out of the water, cleansing Jimmy until he strips completely down, wacking Rosca in a one piece maillot so she covers her breasts and bush, then relaxing, getting her shower, soaping herself she begins a sort of dance. *

Jeran then lifts Stewy, protesting all the way, above his head like a barbell and carries him back into the SPRAY.

The two of them there.

106B A WET JIMMY

106B*

Comes up to Jeran later.

JIMMY
If only Tater could a seen this.

JERAN
Yeah.

JIMMY
How'd you do it?

JERAN
I went to General Schwarzkopf and I said --

JIMMY
Give me a break --

JERAN
-- And I said, 'Norm, it's time we helped these boys', and the General said, 'Our cause is just, my confidence in ya is total, knock 'em dead.'

JIMMY
No, seriously --

JERAN
I am serious. I'm always serious.

Is he? Could he be?...

107 OMIT

107

108 JERAN

108

watches Rosca and the men at play. A moment that feeds him and
makes him forget the headache he constantly has. Smiles that
smile of his.

*
*

(CONTINUED)

109 OMIT

110 OMIT

111 OMIT

112 OMIT

113 INT. CAPITOL NORTH BALLROOM - RADISSON HOTEL - ATLANTA, GA

10

110*

111

112

113

The meeting of the Presidential Advisory Committee on Gulf War
Illnesses, April 16th, 1996. Sterling Sims still speaking, his
white shirt finishes coming off. His bare back.

STERLING SIMS

-- Do you all see these sores? They
started out on the back of my neck, from
there they went on my arms. All these
white spots are scars where the sores
have been. You can see on my back, you
can see how they traveled...

THOMAS CROSS

Okay. I think we get the point.

STERLING SIMS

Thank you...

THOMAS CROSS

-I don't know if you want to get dressed
while we're answering questions.

STERLING SIMS

Okay. I was wanting to get my clothes
back on.

THOMAS CROSS

Go ahead. Get your clothes back on.

DR. DONALD CUSTIS

Is that the extent of your problem? Do
you have any other symptoms?

STERLING SIMS

...I have the whole nine yards of it.
The tiredness, the fatigue, memory loss,
the whole nine yards of it. This here is
the most visible.

(CONTINUED)

113 CONTINUED:

113

DR. DONALD CUSTIS
Do those itch?

STERLING SIMS
Itch and burn and sting like fire.

DR. DONALD CUSTIS
Do you scratch them?

STERLING SIMS
I do in my sleep. I can control that --

DR. DONALD CUSTIS
Is there any bleeding from those wounds?

STERLING SIMS
Yes sir. I can go to bed at night and
get up the next morning, and where they
have bled I have to change my T-shirt.
My wife keeps my underwear separate, she
keeps my towels and washcloths separate
from hers.

114 EXT. FORT CAMPBELL - DAY - LATER

114

Teri driving, Chris & Teri's Camaro pulls up with a jerk.

CHRIS
What's this?

TERI
We're stopping here.

CHRIS
How come?

But she's already got the keys out, the door open, and is
moving around to his door.

TERI
You're going to see the Doctor.

CHRIS
(he doesn't move)
I thought we talked about --

TERI
No, you talked about --
(she pulls him)
but I'm not going to sit around and wait
for you to get skinnier, sicker, weaker,
and not admit it or do anything about it.

(CONTINUED)

Her tugging beats back his resistance and gets him started across the lawn toward the infirmary.

CHRIS
Teri --

TERI
Come on.

Short of the door he digs in. Yanking by a very pregnant woman doesn't help. Stubborn, backing toward the car, VOICES rising: *

CHRIS
I'm not going to do it.

TERI
Why not?

CHRIS
What if they find something wrong? They could wash me out.

TERI
That's not going to happen!

CHRIS
I'd lose the career I've always wanted and believed in and fought for.

TERI
They're doctors. They want you to get better. The last thing they'd want is to lose you.

But he's still moving back toward the car, completing a futile circle. Desperate:

TERI
They're not the enemy.
(and)
It'll be o.k.

Chris Small stops.

115 CHRIS SMALL'S RIBS - INT. BASE INFIRMARY - LATER

115

show. The skinniness is shocking, practically Auschwitzlike. *
He pulls a T-shirt over it, and pulls a second one over that; *
in fact he dons a third, all under his uniform. A kind of
hiding. Never looks in the mirror.

116 PAPERS - INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

116

flop down in front of MAJOR EGILSON, a base Doctor.

DR. EGILSON

Sergeant, we've done every test we can think of. And we find nothing wrong with you.

(and)

That is -- to be perfectly accurate -- nothing physiologically.

Dressed, Chris absorbs. He's military --- you mock superiors, bitch, even whine, but you obey, you believe. You still believe.

Which makes Egilson's diagnosis both a relief and more troubling still.

TERI

(can't help herself)

Doctor, there is *something*. Chris used to weigh 180 pounds. Now he's lucky if he's 140. He can't remember things. He constantly has the flu.

DR. EGILSON

No, no, Mrs. Small let me restate more clearly. Chris does have a problem. His condition is what I would call for lack of a better word -- a psychosomatic one.

TERI

Meaning what?

DR. EGILSON

There's nothing physically wrong --

Chris is quiet, Teri can't be:

TERI

You're saying he's making it up?

DR. EGILSON

No, I'm saying stress is amazing. Coming home --

(maybe pointed at her)

living conditions at home. They are real in his mind. He's clearly depressed, but it's not service related.

117 INT./EXT. BASE INFIRMARY - MOMENTS LATER

117

Chris and Teri walk out of the office, down the corridor. Their feet, their togetherness, their silence.

(CONTINUED)

117 CONTINUED:

CHRIS
It feels real.

They walk.

CHRIS
I'm sorry, honey.

They walk, walk, walk.

TERI
I'm sorry
(and now)
They're wrong.

118 TAMMY BOYER - EXT. GARDEN OFF CONSTITUTION AVE. - SOME TIME LATER 118

has short blonde hair and a shorter skirt. A trademark. She has a quick smile and looks innocent and is -- and isn't.

TAMMY
There's this black woman and this polish woman and they're in the backyard hanging laundry --

She's holding court in front of a collection of TV and news crews entertaining them, stalling them. One interrupts her:

REPORTER
"Is it this long?" "Is it this wide?"
We've heard that one, Tammy.

TAMMY
Shoot. O.k., o.k., it's terrible anyway. I used to know a bunch. Wait a minute. How 'bout: Why won't they let women swim in the ocean?

Give up?

Because they can't get the smell off of the fish.

The reporters Boo & Hiss as well as laugh.

REPORTER
Where's the Senator, Tammy?

TAMMY
He'll be here.

SECOND REPORTER
He's keeping other Senators waiting.

(CONTINUED)

REPORTER
He's keeping us waiting.

TAMMY
Just hold your horses.

119 EXT. CONSTITUTION AVENUE

119

Tammy runs across to the Dirksen Building, stops, strips off her shoes, runs again. Faster.

120 INT. DIRKSEN BUILDING - OUTSIDE SUITE 113

120

Breathless, Tammy charges up two other staffers talking in a sort of whisper, KIM and VANNA.

KIM
-- He pisses me off.

TAMMY
Where's the Senator? I've got three women Senators waiting and two more on their way and no Senator Don Riegle.

KIM
Behind closed doors.

*

TAMMY
Behind -- what does that mean? We have a press conference in --
(looks to a clock)
Three minutes

*

She barges on toward the doorway and the shoes attached to a set of legs beyond.

KIM
Not here. He's in his hideaway.

*

VANNA
He is annoying.

TAMMY
Jesus -- I guess I'd better postpone it--

*

Should she just tear out her hair?

VANNA
You wouldn't believe what he said to me today.

(CONTINUED)

KIM

What -- his two tours in Vietnam? His
time as a cop? His --

VANNA

He comes up and says, "You know, Vanna,
I've stood in the shadows of Presidents.
I have contacts everywhere."

KIM

An -- ass-hole.

TAMMY

(beside herself)
Who are you talking about?!

KIM

The new defense legislative assistant.

VANNA

(beside herself)
I have to share an office with him.

TAMMY

Who?

VANNA/KIM

(together)
Jim Tuite.

120A INT. DIRKSEN BUILDING - SUITE 113

120A*

Tammy can't help herself--the shoes draw her like gravity.
She's got to see this obnoxious cynosure.

She sneaks up, peaks around the doorway and up the long length
of him seemingly asleep. One eye opens--catching her:

TUITE

Help you?

121 OMIT

121

122 OMIT

122

123 OMIT

123

123A EXT CORNFIELD - TEXAS - DAY

123A

Barely visible, raising dust, a pick up makes its way through
the corn. It stops now. Slowly then a figure appears and sits
on top of the cab --- Jeran Gallimore returning home.

(CONTINUED)

DAVID FOLZ
What are you doing?

JERAN
Just looking. Just glad to be home.

(CONTINUED)

123A CONTINUED:

123A

Jeran looks different. Thinner. Tired, his eyes dark and set back behind a stetson. No smile but a profound relief crosses his face.

123B OMIT

123B

124 OMIT

124*

125 OMIT

125*

125A INT. JERRILINN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - WACO

125A*

The window--and through it Jeran appears walking from the corn toward the house. Not knowing he's coming Jerrilinn passes the window. He goes by the other way.

The window.

Jerrilinn reappears, returning, reaching the kitchen table, cooking. Jeran reaches the side door, watching his sister, hesitating, not wanting to announce himself, having to.

One last moment of peace for her.

He knocks then and she lights up, rushes to the door swings it open.

JERRILINN

Jeran!

(no answer)

What is it?

He doesn't come in and doesn't allow her to open the screen door. Joy pulling back into uncertainty, not understanding.

He walks away from the door, back across the yard. What is it? She follows him. He still won't let her hug him.

JERRILINN

What's wrong?

JERAN

(at last)

I took a long time writing this letter...I can't say it... Can't say the words to you.

(and)

If you need to cry, okay. Just not in front of me. I'm sorry, Sissy. I'm not that strong.

He leaves her there.

126 INT. KITCHEN

126

Jerrilinn walks into her kitchen. It's full of food, ready and waiting, steaming. The letter is in a large manila envelope --- and inside along with it are X-rays and an MRI.

127 INT. JIM TUIITE'S OFFICE - DAY - SOME TIME LATER

Jim Tuite sits behind a desk that's too small for him and that's stacked too high with paper. Piles like high rises.

His concentration is intense, his seriousness immense. The man of action wanting to be taken seriously. GEORGE LITTELL, Senator Donald Riegle's A.A., his "gatekeeper", comes by with another stack.

LITTELL

Here take a look at this.

TUIITE

What is it?

LITTELL

Our Michigan offices keep getting phone calls and we keep getting these letters.

TUIITE

Who from?

LITTELL

Desert Storm vets.

There's the slightest hesitation, a check:

TUIITE

I'm pretty busy.

LITTELL

I thought you being a Vietnam vet --

TUIITE

(gestures to his desk)
I got my hands so full -- pretty overwhelmed.

LITTELL

(without a hitch)
-- Would be the perfect one to check it out. Make heads or tails of what they're saying. That they're sick. That something happened out there.

TUIITE

I don't want anything to do with it.

The boldness surprises George and maybe even Jim itself. A fissure in his relentless control.

(CONTINUED)

127 CONTINUED:

127

Jim has an authority, a bearing, that's presumptive and can be patronizing. It's not here, but George, the gatekeeper, can't know that. It seems a test of wills. So:

LITTELL

The Senator would like you to do it.

He dumps the wad, as thick as a telephone book, on the new employee's desk.

128 OMIT

128

129 INT. JIM TUIITE'S OFFICE - NIGHT - LATER (JUMP CUT)

129

Tuite circles the pile, he touches it even, but no. He turns the last light off. The papers remain lambent in the window light.

The lamp goes back on. Jim Tuite drops his briefcase, doffs his hat, shucks his overcoat, slips off his jacket, sits down, sits still for a moment. Absolutely still.

Picks up the pile.

The SOUND of them opening.

The FLASHES of the vets faces within (RE-USED FOOTAGE)

Their VOICES

Their illnesses.

130 EXT. GEORGETOWN DUPLEX - NIGHT - LATER

130

An enclosed brick patio. A man sitting in an iron-rung chair.
A light snow.

LISA

(opening the French doors)

I've been looking for you. Let's see --- one bedroom, one bathroom, one living room. Took me forever.

(CONTINUED)

TUITE

Go back to sleep, Lise.

LISA

Do you know what time it is?

TUITE

No.

LISA

Do you know how long you've been out here?

TUITE

No.

LISA

Let's just say if this --

(catches some flakes)

continues you'll be a snowman soon.

He's faced away from her and hasn't moved or turned toward her. Snow sticks to the patio, the chair, his bald spot. Too large to be dandruff, too small to be confetti.

TUITE

I work for a Senator I haven't even met yet who's a Democrat --

LISA

-- 'Dem are fighting words --

TUITE

-- A liberal democrat who may well be toast because the Keating Five banking scandal --

LISA

-- Perception, not reality. He didn't do anything --

TUITE

-- A turncoat Republican --

LISA

Oh, let's see now what was that about? Maybe some illegal bombing in Laos? Some illegal break-ins, buggings, and pay-offs and cover-ups? Just a little matter, maybe, of the impeachment of a President of the United States?

TUITE

When I was in Vietnam we went down once in Laos. Hauling barely living meat out, six or seven shot--

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

130 CONTINUED: (2)

130

TUIE (CONT'D)

to-shit guys in the chopper at one time. I'm trying to sort limbs, count arms and legs. I'm jammin' in every needle I got sittin' on a stainless steel plate... Round comes through the bottom of the Chopper, shattered the ceramic around the steel -- and went through my arm. Band-aid wound. Didn't know it until I landed. Where did this blood?... Wait a minute. That's mine.

(laughs)

My second wound -- had my hand on a truck and a 55 gallon drum of garbage drops off and breaks my hand...

(and)

Do you know only 148 Americans were killed in Desert Storm... only hundred-and-four killed by hostile fire..

(and)

These vets in Michigan -- a lot, a lot of complaints... it's what they do -- they're vets.

(and now)

But they're sick....why?

The man who wouldn't watch homecoming, who wanted no part --- he's hooked.

CHAPTER

4

Congressman Mac Collins
1118 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C.

Dear Congressman Collins,

We are the grandchildren of Chief Petty Officer Roy W. Butler Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 24 Detachment 1624 from Columbus, Georgia. We are very concern about our Poppa. He is very sick since his service in the Persian Gulf War. He gets worse every day. We are asking you to please help him, they will not even give him anything for pain. Our Poppa hurts everyday. It is very hard for him to go to work everyday. Please hurry! We don't know how much longer he will be able to work. Please, please help get our Poppa his disability started.

Hi my name is Courtney. I am 6 years old. Please help my Poppa get better. I love him very much.

Hi my name is Michael Ryan. I am 4 years old. Please help my Poppa. I don't want him to die cause I love him and he loves me.

Hi my name is Stephanie. I am 16 years old. If our country can't treat our Veterans any better than the Gulf War Vets are being treated then maybe everyone should be like President Clinton and stay out of the service. I think it is really awful that we can spend more money trying to feed the Somalians than we can help our Gulf War Vets. Please help my Poppa. I love him very much.

Hi my name is Kristin. I am 11 years old. Why won't our government help my grandpa? My mama says you are trying to help him, so are alot of other people. Thank you very much. It means so much to all of us. Please ask President Clinton why he never says anything on T.V. about our Seabees. doesn't he care? Please tell him to help all of the sick Vets. Tell him to hurry because I don't think my Poppa has much time left. I love him very much and I don't want to lose him.

132 AN X-RAY/MRI SCREEN - INT. DR. SEAWELL'S OFFICE - DAY

132*

DR. SEAWELL snaps the MRI into the screen.

*

DR. SEAWELL

*

My God.

JERRILINN

(trying to be calm)

What is it?

DR. SEAWELL

*

This man -- yes? I see a medium-sized tumor here, but all this edema. The total swelling of the brain. The swelling has got to come down or he could have a stroke any minute. You need to get this guy into a hospital right away.

He turns, fascinated by what he's seen, and discovers her in tears.

DR. SEAWELL

*

Who is this?

JERRILINN

It's my brother.

DR. SEAWELL

*

Jerrilinn, where is he?

JERRILINN

Right now, he's in a plane over Fort Hood.

DR. SEAWELL

*

Get to a phone. We've got to call immediately. He can't go up in a plane. The altitude will kill him.

133 JERRILINN'S CAR - EXT. WACO TEXAS - AFTERNOON

133

She drives past her own house, past the corn field, to the beaten up trailer. Jeran's car is already there, driver's side door open. In her hurry she leaves hers open also.

134 INT. JERAN'S TRAILER

134

Small, simple, hot, dark. Jerrilinn can barely see anything. At last she sees him sitting in a chair in deep shadow.

JERRILINN

Where have you been?

(CONTINUED)

134 CONTINUED:

134

He doesn't answer and she gets to him. She's sweaty but he's positively dripping.. It runs down his ghostly face.

JERRILINN

We had the Highway Patrol out looking for you.

JERAN

I couldn't get on the plane.

JERRILINN

I know. I called Fort Hood to stop you.

JERAN

I was too dizzy.

JERRILINN

How did you make it home?

JERAN

I drove. I had to pull over sometimes.

JERRILINN

Why didn't you call?

JERAN

I didn't think of it.

(simply)

My head aches.

JERRILINN

We're going to the hospital. I've got you checked in. We haven't much time. We've got to go.

JERAN

I haven't had a thing to eat. I'm going to eat something and then I'm going to take myself a shower.

He gets up from his chair awkwardly and stumbles down the trailer. She pursues him.

JERRILINN

Jeran, we don't have time. Don't you understand -- you could die at any minute?

JERAN

Do you know what? If I die, I want to be clean. And if I die, I don't want to die hungry.

He closes the bathroom door on her. She's at a loss what to do. The door opens:

(CONTINUED)

JERAN

What do they want to do?

JERRILINN

They need to drain fluid from your brain
and then there's a tumor. They have to
operate.

JERAN

That's two different things?

JERRILINN

Yes. They can drain the fluid here
immediately and then we can drive to the N. R.
Roberts Medical Center in Houston.

*
*

JERAN

When?

JERRILINN

Tomorrow. Today. As soon as possible.

JERAN

Sunday afternoon.

JERRILINN

We can't wait that long.

JERAN

Easter is Sunday, Jerrilinn. I'm not missing
one more holiday. We're gonna go to church
and we gonna have a big Easter egg hunt. And
when we're through I'll get in the car and go
to Houston.

He closes the door a second time but opens it yet once more:

JERAN

They're going to cut into my head?

JERRILINN

Yes.

JERAN

I got a big beautiful head.

JERRILINN

I know you do.

JERAN

(after a moment)
I want to live.

(CONTINUED)

JERRILINN
I know you do.

JERAN
One of these days I'm gonna get my bike
running and ride it through the corn. And
get married. And babies. Babies.
(and)
I'm gonna fight.

The door closes a third time.

135 VETERAN INTERVIEW

135

Again, the vet is Nick Roberts.

NICK ROBERTS
By the close of Desert Storm, when we went back to
drilling at our Reserve Center, we were diagnosed
as having Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and I was
informed that I needed psychiatric counseling... I
spent the next 4 or 5 months going back and forth
to the VA Medical Center at Tuskegee, AL... At
that point I decided I'd best seek private medical
care...

I was diagnosed as having lymphoma cancer, and was
started on chemotherapy immediately. And matter of
fact I was in stage four when they caught it. I
decided then not to die! All of my medical care
was then, and still is, at my own expense. If I
hadn't sought private medical care when I did, I
could very well be dead now. But according to the
Navy and the VA, I only had Post Traumatic Stress.

While undergoing the chemotherapy treatments, I
found out from my Naval Reserve Center that there
were seven others from Battalion 24 with the same
type cancer that I have... I was told by the VA
that it was not service-connected.

Since the VA will not give up the numbers on
Persian Gulf veterans with cancer and medical
problems, we'll track them ourselves, and we will.
I have found 173 cancer cases, brain damage and
bone cancers. I also have a list of Persian gulf
veterans who have died of cancer. There are other
names that I can't reveal at present, honoring the
request of those service members still on active
duty.

Persian Gulf veterans need help now. We don't want
your sympathy. We can't afford more wasted time.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

135 CONTINUED:

135

NICK ROBERTS (CONT'D)

The medical team that came to our Reserve Center in November of 1992 has a surprise coming. Several of us made copies of our medical records prior to their visit. After their research was completed, we found that our medical records had been purged. We have this and can prove it. Why was this done and who ordered it?

136 INT. JIM TUITE'S OFFICE - DAY

136

In signature short skirt, Tammy Boyer watches Jim Tuite pace about an enormous map of the Gulf in his tiny office that occupies an entire wall. Troop deployments, plenty of pins in different colors. We elect them, we build fancy granite edifices for them, and the offices are badly-done, claustrophobic, rabbit-warrens.

TAMMY

It's a map. I see that. Saudi... Kuwait...
What is it? What?

(he paces)

Oh my Lord, I'm stuck here in indentured servitude helping a man who doesn't know how to use the English language.

(he paces)

I'm not going to sit here all day.

(he stops, stares)

What is it?

His silent concentration driving her crazy.

TUIITE

(at last)

...I don't know...

Crazy.

137 EXT./INT. WALTER REED - WAITING ROOM

137

In an overcoat Jim Tuite approaches, enters looks around. No one's waiting for him. He proceeds to a reception desk.

TUIITE

I'm here to meet Keith Ruckhaiser.

*

RECEPTIONIST

He's a patient?

TUIITE

An Air Force Military Policeman sent down by the Maine VA.

*

RECEPTIONIST

I'll see if I can find him.

(CONTINUED)

TUITE

I can go find him.

RECEPTIONIST

You can wait here.

She's no piece of cake. The room is old, out-of-date, and no pleasure, either. Sections of Walter Reed are new, high tech; others are run down, collapsing into despicability.

Jim hears VOICES. A kind of grumbling, growing MURMUR that draws him into the corridor.

At the elevator is a pale young man and a woman. KEITH RUCKHAUSER and ROSEMARY DOVE. *

KEITH RUCKHAUSER *

-- These headaches. Something's wrong.

ROSEMARY DOVE

There's no indication --

KEITH RUCKHAUSER *

They took out a tumor in Boston and I've been waiting for twenty days --

ROSEMARY DOVE

There's nothing wrong.

KEITH RUCKHAUSER *

I've got to get my head scanned.

Rosemary Dove is a severely attractive, carefully, conservative woman, who prides herself on her control. Unfortunately, she's losing it now, SCREAMING suddenly:

ROSEMARY DOVE

There's nothing wrong with you and if there's something wrong, it's got nothing to do with the Gulf.

She walks off, heels clicking, reining herself in, regaining precious composure.

Stunned, it takes Tuite a minute before he goes down the hall, passing Rosemary Dove to Keith Ruckhauser. *

TUITE

Chris Dauer?

KEITH RUCKHAUSER *

(pretty stunned himself)

Yes.

(CONTINUED)

TUITE

Come on let's get some coffee.

They get into the opening elevator.

138 INT. ELEVATOR

138

The doors shut.

TUITE

What was that about? Who was that asshole?

KEITH RUCKHAUSER

That's Dr. Dove.

TUITE

Who's she?

KEITH RUCKHAUSER

She's in charge of Persian Gulf disorders.

139 INT. RUSSELL SENATE OFF. BUILD. - NOV. 16, 1993 - RM SR-418 - DAY 139

The Veterans Affairs Committee meets for a hearing, Senator Jay Rockefeller the Chair. As a guest Don Riegle sits in.

Testifying is a woman who's obliterated any grey strands in her lush dark hair. Tight, nervous, good-looking, with a remarkably narrow upper lip.

It's Rosemary Dove --- wearing today a suit with a sheer blouse that's carefully pinned shut. A gold chain like a watch band sets around her neck.

ROSEMARY DOVE

It's our best medical judgement that in the diagnoses that we've been able to make, the diagnoses do not point to a single inciting agent --

CHR. ROCKEFELLER

Dr. Dove what you've said is that you've made a whole series of diagnoses...and you've come to the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

139 CONTINUED:

139

CHR. ROCKEFELLER (CONT'D)
conclusion that none of them could have
anything to do with the Persian Gulf War?...
How can you say it doesn't if you don't know
what does?

ROSEMARY DOVE
I'm sorry, I read through this very
quickly. We at this point, with the
.. small number of veterans that we've seen,
do not believe so, but that question
remains open.
(and)
There are, however, a number of veterans--

CHR. ROCKEFELLER
-- Remains open in what respect?

ROSEMARY DOVE
There are--

CHR. ROCKEFELLER
--You're not sure yet?

ROSEMARY DOVE
We're not sure. There are again, a group of
patients that we've not able to make a diagnosis--

CHR. ROCKEFELLER
Dr. Dove, you've seen, assuming you've been in
the room, five soldiers this morning. Most
talked about their physical condition before they
went in, and all talked, I think highly
creditably, about the condition they now find
themselves in medically, which, for the most
part, is grave, highly perplexing... So my
question to you is, what do you make of that? I
mean, were these just unusual people?

ROSEMARY DOVE
No, these are some of the patients with
undiagnosed conditions that we need to continue
to study --

CHR. ROCKEFELLER
To continue to study in government often
means a lot of time

Rosemary Dove nods, which she does lot as if to confirm ---
make true what she's about to say or just said.

ROSEMARY DOVE
Yes, it takes time. These are difficult
diseases to deal with. The symptoms involve
multiple systems and involve a very complex
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

139 CONTINUED: (2)

139

ROSEMARY DOVE (CONT'D)

variety of diagnostic tests and a multitude
of specialists...and in our search we need to
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

139 CONTINUED: (3)

139

ROSEMARY DOVE (CONT'D)

evaluate all of their symptoms and hopefully
not get so focussed down on one etiology that
we miss the big picture--

She has a way of talking, a rhythm that is earnest and achieves
a miraculous effect: it's riveting and yet puts you to sleep.
You can't find the bottom to what she's saying.

It leads nowhere.

140 OMIT

140

141 EXT. FT. CAMPBELL HOUSING QUARTERS - LATER

141*

A baby stroller. Chris and Teri walking. Teri talking, Chris
silent. *

TERI

The baby still has the rash. The doctor
doesn't know what it is. Maybe it's the
heat. I'll try a different kind of
powder.

(and)

He says it's temporary, it won't last.
Chris, it won't...will it? Chris?

But Chris has stopped, short of breath. She turns back, he
tries to hide it. Finally:

CHRIS

Don't look at me like that.

TERI

Like what?

CHRIS

You know.

(CONTINUED)

141 CONTINUED:

TERI
I didn't say a thing.

CHRIS
You don't have to.
(and)
They docked my pay and lowered my fitness
rating. I failed PT again. That's two
red flags.

TERI
You didn't tell me.

This is so hard.

CHRIS
...I fell asleep...
(desperate)
I'm getting better, I know it, you'll
see.
(and now)
I'm not, not, going to see another Doctor.

142 INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

142

Teri flicks on the light ----- the weight chart on the wall now
says 136. Remember when it said 143?

TERI (V.O.)
Dr. Egilson, I've come to see you --

143 INT. BASE INFIRMARY - DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

143

Hamstrung, Teri practically pleas with Dr. Egilson. A way she
hates to be.

TERI (CONT'D)
-- without Chris. He wouldn't come anyway.
I don't like to go behind his back -- but
there must be something wrong with him. Are
you sure the test results were right?

DR. EGILSON
Absolutely.

TERI
Aren't there -- maybe -- other tests?

DR. EGILSON
We gave Chris a complete battery. A to
Z...

(CONTINUED)

143 CONTINUED:

143

TERI

Will you at least look at them again? Or
let me? I've got to do something.

DR. EGILSON

I remember them perfectly well. I'm 1000
percent sure.

TERI

I know, but please.

DR. EGILSON

Well actually, I'm afraid -- they're missing.

TERI

...Missing?

DR. EGILSON

Misfiled, something. I'm sure it's only
temporary.

(that word again)

They'll turn up.

TERI

Missing?

First incredulous, now disbelieving. Working toward a kind of
anger.

143A VETERAN INTERVIEW

143A*

The Vet George Vaughan continues.

SGT. GEORGE VAUGHAN

First I'd would like to make a disclaimer
statement to protect myself from UCMJ action
or any legal litigation that could take place,
since I am an active duty member...

My name is George Vaughan. I am currently a
Sergeant in the U.S. Army serving at Fort
Meade, MD under HOC 743rd Military
Intelligence Battalion. What I'm about to
say... is my opinion and not necessarily that
of the U.S. Army, my current unit or chain of
command that I am now serving under, nor is it
necessarily the opinion of the Walter Reed
doctors... I've gone through nine surgeries
or procedures. I've had seven tumors removed
from my left arm. I'm presently scheduled for
surgery next week to have polyps removed from
my colon, which over a year ago I was told not
to worry about...

144 OMIT 144*

145 INT. HOUSING QTRS - ROOM TO ROOM 145

She searches to house for him at increasing speed in increasing alarm --- and can't find him.

146 EXT. HOUSING QTRS - NIGHT 146

Finally, she looks outside --- and he's on the front lawn. A crumpled shape in the dark. Unconscious.

She goes to him, shakes him, can't arouse him. At last he's breathing.

She hesitates --- and then she slaps him, pretty good CRACKS. Startling the night, like shots.

TERI
Chris... Chris... Chris...

CHRIS
(woozily)
...Nice and cool here.

TERI
You're outside.

CHRIS
Grass, nice grass.

The SKIRL of a coming ambulance (O.S.)

147 OMIT 147

148 OMIT 148

149 OMIT 149

150 OMIT 150

151 INT. THE FT. CAMPBELL HOSPITAL - LATER 151

Yet another Doctor, DR. DENISE NASHAT, an ER resident, looks over Chris' chart as he's wheeled away.

DR. NASHAT
Wow. And you say these symptoms may be related to Desert Storm?

(CONTINUED)

151 CONTINUED:

151

TERI
That's right.

DR. NASHAT
I'll mark that down.
(and)
I recommend your husband be medivaced to
Walter Reed Hospital in Washington.

TERI
It's that serious?

DR. NASHAT
I'm afraid it is.
(and)
I'll call Dr. Egilson, do you know him?
He's the medical director at Fort
Campbell. I'll be right back.

She goes to call, leaving Teri and Alex in her snugly, leaving *
the chart.

The chart is catnip.

152 INT. LADIES ROOM

152

In Teri comes, breathless. She looks around: the bathroom,
thankfully, is empty. She brings the chart out from under her
jacket and scans it. Scary, sobering reading.

What should she do with it, about it? *Sshing* Alex, she tears
off one of the copies and pockets it.

153 DR. NASHAT - MOMENTS LATER

153

comes back down the corridor.

DR. NASHAT
I'm sorry I was wrong. We can't medivac
your husband -- and I was wrong about the
symptoms.
(and)
There is no Desert Storm Syndrome.

A very different demeanor, one changed Doctor.

She takes the chart and walks back down the hall, but not the
copy Teri Small has sequestered.

154 BECOMES SCENE 143A

154*

155 INT. TUIITE'S OFFICE - DAY

1

Jim Tuite's on the phone and he's embarrassed:

(CONTINUED)

TUITE

I'm no expert, but yes there have been a
substantial number of reports of --
(Doctor like)
vaginal infections ranging from --

Tammy Boyer comes in, plunks down across from him in a patented skirt. Almost a sprawl. An iota theatrical.

TAMMY

I'm going crazy. The phones.

Playing it as funny, a pain, a nightmare. A cover for the ripeness of emotion she carries all the time now. All she's hearing and seeing compounding with her workaholic nature.

TUITE

-- simple yeast infections to possible
ovarian tumors --

This is Jim Tuite we're talking about: he stood in the shadow of Presidents. He struggles for purchase, tries to keep collected, can't. His medical patina crumbles. He shields his eyes from Tammy, focuses on a mote of shrapnel dislodged from the eraser end of the pencil he's been using.

TUITE (CONT'D)

...I can't tell you statistics.

A load of boxes, tightly sealed in plastic arrives.

VANNA

These just came.

TUITE

I'll let you know anything we find out. Yes,
call anytime. Yes... yes... Good-bye.

He hangs up. Vanna hangs out, intrigued despite herself.

TAMMY

What's all that stuff?

TUITE

(rising)

Ahh. At last.

(takes them)

Uniforms, gas masks, anything anybody
thought might be contaminated -- I had
them mail them --

(CONTINUED)

TAMMY

What the hell are you doing bringing that stuff in here?!

Flies out of the chair and off the handle. He's stacked with boxes, a funny sight, and he laughs:

TUITE

Tammy, you've hugged so many soldiers in the last few months -- if you were going to get something you'd have it already.

TAMMY

How did you-- you suck me into this anyhow?

TUITE

(a micro-moment of warmth)
It was nothing.
(then keeps going)
Now listen to this. I've found out there was a FOX vehicle --

TAMMY

A what?

TUITE

FOX. Chemical detecting vehicles- and supposedly they did. I've got their crew list here.

(searching for it)
Commander George Grass. We've got to find him and get corroborating evidence--
(gets the RINGING phone)
Jim Tuite... yes, yes -- ... Uh huh. Uh huh. These are real?

Tammy switches from alarm to curiosity: what is it?

TUITE (CONT'D)

You're here. Where? You give that information to the press the DOD will arrest you the moment it airs. I'll meet you at the Senator. The corner of 20th and Massachusetts. Now

He hangs up. Tammy's going crazy.

TAMMY

What?

TUITE

She says she has them.

(CONTINUED)

TAMMY

What?!

TUITE

Pictures of bodies burned by chemical warfare agents.

They look at each other wondering, wondering --- and bolt past Vanna. The phone RINGS in the emptied room behind them. The boxes wrapped in plastic wait.

156 OMIT

TAMMY

What the hell are you doing bringing that stuff in here?!

Flies out of the chair and off the handle. He's stacked with boxes, a funny sight, and he laughs:

TUITE

Tammy, you've hugged so many soldiers in the last few months -- if you were going to get something you'd have it already.

TAMMY

What about DU?-- Depleted uranium-- the shells burned through Iraqi tanks and then it was in the air and soldiers breathed it in and it got all over their uniforms--

(she stops, they look at each other)

How did you-- you suck me into this anyhow?

*
*
*
*
*
*

TUITE

(a micro-moment of warmth)

It was nothing.

(then keeps going)

Now listen to this. I've found out there was a FOX vehicle --

TAMMY

A what?

TUITE

FOX. Chemical detecting vehicles- and supposedly they did. I've got their crew list here.

(searching for it)

Commander George Grass. We've got to find him and get corroborating evidence--

(gets the RINGING phone)

Jim Tuite... yes, yes -- ... Uh huh. Uh huh. These are real?

Tammy switches from alarm to curiosity: what is it?

TUITE (CONT'D)

You're here. Where? You give that information to the press the DOD will arrest you the moment it airs. I'll meet you at the Senator. The corner of 20th and Massachusetts. Now

He hangs up. Tammy's going crazy.

(CONTINUED)

155 CONTINUED: (3)

155

TAMMY

What?

TUIE

She says she has them.

TAMMY

What?!

TUIE

Pictures of bodies burned by chemical
warfare agents.

They look at each other wondering, wondering --- and bolt past
Vanna. The phone RINGS in the emptied room behind them. The
boxes wrapped in plastic wait.

156 OMIT

156

157-161 OMIT

157-161

155A EXT. WASHINGTON STREET - DAY

155A

They hustle across Connecticut Avenue.

TUIITE

Geraldine Hingis. She's from Cut 'n Shoot Texas and she served in the Gulf. She handled casualties and was ordered to bury the bodies and she took the pictures while they did it. Iraqis and possibly, but I doubt it, U.S. Soldiers. And she stole the photos.

155B EXT. THE SENATOR - DAY

155B

They reach and pass under the red neon.

TUIITE

The photos are still, technically, property of the U.S. Army. But I have security clearance and as Senate Staff we can see them legally.

155C INT. THE SENATOR

155C

They look around, scanning faces, looking for a likely suspect. Is this one Geraldine Hingis? That one?

Jim keeps going deeper into the bar. Tammy goes to the bartender.

TAMMY

Has a woman come in named Geraldine Hingis?

BARTENDER

Who?

TAMMY

Geraldine Hingis.

BARTENDER

Never heard of her.

TAMMY

No, you have to tell me. I'm Tammy Boyer, press secretary for Senator Donald Riegle and
(going for the purse)
Geraldine Hingis

(CONTINUED)

BARTENDER
(maybe she's a wee demented)
Have a drink.

*

155D INT. AT THE BACK OF THE BAR

155D

Jim is still looking, asking, coming up empty. He reaches the ladies room. Maybe... Should he? He can't help himself. He opens the door.

*

A shriek.

He closes it again.

155E EXT. WASHINGTON STREET - DAY

155E

They walk back to the Dirksen building in silence. Feeling foolish. Fed up.

162-163 OMIT

162-163

164 OMIT

16

165 INT. JIM TUIITE'S OFFICE - DAY - LATER

165

Another package yet waits for them on top of the already existing mountain of stuff.

TAMMY

What's this?

TUIITE

Read it.

TAMMY

Ms. Geraldine --

(stops, looks at him,

wonderingly, hands it back)

Here, you open it.

TUIITE

You don't think there's a chance?

TAMMY

A nut case.

TUIITE

A complete fruitcake.

TAMMY

-No way.

TUIITE

Think it'll explode?

TAMMY

Be my guest.

Tuite rips it open, peers inside the envelope.

TAMMY

Well --?

TUIITE

There's no photos.

TAMMY

What is there?

166 A 1/2 INCH CASSETTE - MOMENTS LATER

166

plunks into a VCR and a television screen flickers. Wavy lines and speckled black and then the Eagles SINGING "Witchy Woman" and then a fuzzy image:

Two hands holding up photographs.
Two hands pulsing with the beat.
Two hands badly lit.

The photos moving across the lens.
The photos pulsing with the beat.
The photos like a bad porno movie.
The photos impossible to distinguish.

You can't see shit.

167 JIM TUIITE AND TAMMY

167

look at each other and wonder what the hell and can't help it. They start to laugh in frustration and futility. They can't stop laughing.

168 INT. - N. R. ROBERTS MEDICAL CENTER - HOUSTON TEXAS - NIGHT

168*

A pair of bloody shoes walk down a corridor. The corridor is long and he walks it in tired thought, shucking mask and gloves. His cap stays in place. His name is DOCTOR TOBIAS AZIAN, he's 60 plus.

169 INT. WAITING ROOM

169

Still dark this Easter Monday morning. Several people scatter about the room waiting. Doctor Azian comes to Jerrilinn and her mother.

DR.AZIAN

Mrs. Gallimore. I did the best I could. We were in there over eight hours. We got 99%. 1% was just too close to the brain stem.

MRS. GALLIMORE

Will he be all right?

DR.AZIAN

I'm a Christian. I don't know if that makes a difference. I talked to Jeran and he seems a fine young man. I don't know if that makes any difference.

His words are extraordinary, especially for a doctor:

(CONTINUED)

DR.AZIAN (CONT'D)

I have never seen what I just saw. It appears to be two forms of cancer contained in one cell. I have no way to treat it. I don't know what we're dealing with. I am a physician. I am not God.

(and)

I'm going to do the best I can for this young man.

JERRILINN

(The Closer)

How long?

She looks down at the floor, at the doctor's feet, and can't help but see her brother's blood on his shoes.

DR.AZIAN

A year. Eighteen months at the most.

170 INT. N. R. ROBERTS - POST-OP - ROOM 504 - NIGHT - LATER

170*

It's dark and Jeran's eyes open. His head's completely turbaned. His face is red and swollen. Some kind of salve's around his eyes. It's difficult to know if or what they see.

Slow, awkward, unbalanced, he gets up. Kind of unbelievable really. Extricates IVs and oxygen. Sways, like a drunk with the world spinning.

He walks out of the room.

171 INT. CHILDREN'S WARD

171

The door to the ward has a panel of glass in it and is shut. Jeran's face appears. He opens the door and comes in.

It's really an ICU, circling around a central station. It's dark here, too. Very much so for a hospital. Sourcy, almost dreamlike. Vermeer without windows.

The small bays are occupied. Children; none in good shape. Some wracked like Auschwitz. Some oddly beautiful, almost haloed. Some babies.

Tiny bodies and tiny faces and Jeran.

172 INT. N. R. ROBERTS CENTER - ROOM 504 - MORNING

172*

Jerrilinn and her mother walk in -- but the bed is empty, the room is empty. The two look at each other in horror.

173 INT. N. R. ROBERTS - CORRIDOR

173*

They plunge back into the hall and grab a nurse.

JERRILINN

Where's the man in 504?!

NURSE

What?

JERRILINN

Jeran Gallimore. Where is he?

NURSE

He's still unconscious.

JERRILINN

No, he's not.

The three plunge back into 504. For no longer than a second. Reappearing, clearly thrown, the nurse hustles away. Jerrilinn and her mother don't quite know what to do, which way to turn.

JERRILINN

I'll look this way, Mother. You stay here.

Jerrilinn comes down the corridor, looks both ways. Activity but no Jeran. A stairwell door's in front of her.

174 INT. N. R. ROBERTS - STAIRWELL

174*

She peers down the open space to the flights below. Perhaps vertigo, but she sees nothing else, no one.

She tries going up instead. Around a corner, above a landing, sits her brother. The look of him is a shock to her.

JERRILINN

Jeran, what are you doing?

(he doesn't answer)

Are you alright?

(he doesn't answer)

Come on back to your room. Mother's here. She's worried sick.

JERAN

I'm o.k.

He doesn't get up and she bends down to him.

JERRILINN

We must pray.

(CONTINUED)

JERAN

For what?

JERRILINN

That God takes the cancer away.

JERAN

Not gonna do it.

JERRILINN

Why?!

JERAN

I've been sitting here...

(and)

Jerrilinn, I went upstairs to the children's ward and there are babies up there that haven't seen the world. Babies worse than I am. I've been all over the United States, I've been out of the country. I've talked to people. I've done things these babies'll never be able to do.

(and)

If I pray it won't be for me. If God would take my life and spare these children, I'll go.

Oh, brother.

175 INT. FEDERAL BUILDING - 2ND FLRCOURTROOM - MERIDIAN, MS.-DAY 175

The subcommittee of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on Health Effects of Service in Persian Gulf meets in the home state of Chairman G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery on January 21, 1994. Newly elected Congressman Steve Buyer is there. Tapping her mike to test it, MRS. AMMIE WEST begins:

AMMIE WEST

My name is Ammie West and my husband is a member of the 624th Quartermaster Unit in Waynesboro, MS. He is Sgt. Richard Dennis West and his unit played a part in Operation Desert Storm. They were a petroleum unit... They never actually saw any combat or saw the per se enemy, but they provided the means and ways for the ones who did. But in all, there was another enemy there --

HON. MONTGOMERY

We are really having a problem. We are old soldiers up here on this top row and
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

175 CONTINUED:

175

HON. MONTGOMERY (CONT'D)
we are having some problems. Can you
pull that a little closer?

AMMIE WEST

(she does so)

This enemy was so silent that when these men
and women stepped off the planes to come home
to their loved ones, this enemy came too.
They did not come alone...

My daughter...was born February 21, 1992...her
lungs were severely, severely under-developed
and she had the similarities of a disease
called hyaline membrane disease. Her
condition started deteriorating rapidly and
they told us by the fourth day that there was
not anything they could do any more because
she had gotten so bad... *

We were told that right from the start, that
maybe you just have a cluster, maybe this is
just isolated. But it is not. And if you
look in those photos, you will see these are
calls from Arkansas, Alabama, North Carolina,
South Carolina, Indiana, Texas, California and
I could just go on and on. And these people
know more people. So this thing is not just
here in Waynesboro, MS, it is nationwide.

And the bad part about it is Desert Storm is
alive and well in our homes. These people are
fighting battles daily and the sad part about
it is there are casualties. There are
probably more casualties now than when the war
was actually being fought. You know, not only
the men and women are dying, but these
children are dying. And that is the sad part
about it... And there is nothing like that
feeling of helplessness when you see that
child suffering and there is nothing you can
do... And what angers me is to think that no
matter what I could have done, that was going
to be the case. And it seemingly has been the
case over and over and over and over...

175A INT. JIM TUIE'S OFFICE - LATER

175A

Snowstorm of paperwork. More colored pins, studying the locus,
trying to fathom a pattern. Failing. The phones RINGING.

(CONTINUED)

175A CONTINUED:

175A

TUITE
(finally answering one)
Hello.

THE VOICE
I'm looking for Jim Tuite.

TUITE
This is Tuite.

THE VOICE
I understand you're looking into the
Syndrome.

TUITE
Are you a vet?

THE VOICE
Yes.

TUITE
Are you suffering symptoms?

THE VOICE
Not from the Storm. Vietnam.

TUITE
...Oh.

THE VOICE
I've got something to tell you.

TUITE
(leery)
Go ahead.

THE VOICE
Not on the phone.

TUITE
Come on. We don't need cloak and dagger.

THE VOICE
That's what you think. I'll meet you at
the Lincoln Memorial.

TUITE
The Lincoln Memorial?

THE VOICE
He founded the V.A.

TUITE
Is this some kind of joke?

(CONTINUED)

THE VOICE

Midnight.

The VOICE is gone. Tuite looks back to his pins. Colors in search of meaning. The answer escaping him.

176 THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL - NIGHT

176

seems supernal. The night is velvety, the world white, snow on the ground. The great columns make shadows and mystery. Jim's boots CRUNCH on the snow and echo on the marble.

He waits, wondering why he's here, and keeps thinking he's hearing things. Looking into the lurking shadows. But no one's there.

There's no reason to be scared yet he can feel apprehension. The place, the time, the circumstances. The pool, the monument, the bare trees, the stillness.

The magisterial Lincoln.

177 THE VIETNAM MEMORIAL

177

is just to one side. The wall has an unearthly, hallowed beauty that, giving up on his assignation, draws Jim down into its dark granite, its black pallor. 58,000 names. Some he knew, some he can't remember, some he can never forget.

It's a gravesite, a work of art, a place of tears and laughter and letting go. It has sanctity.

Even at midnight vets, family members, others collect. Not so many. But it's never empty.

Jim Tuite stares at the names --- and now The Voice comes:

THE VOICE

Don't turn around.

TUIE

Are you kidding me?

THE VOICE

I know you were in the Secret Service and you could probably throttle me over your knee... but don't.

(and)

I'm doing this for me not you. If I'm found out, I'm gone. They're already suspicious. They know I'm trying to help--

TUIE

Who's they?

(CONTINUED)

177 CONTINUED:

177

THE VOICE

I can't say any more.

Tuite's getting pissed off. Why is he putting up with this?

TUIITE

Oh bullshit.

THE VOICE

You think so?

TUIITE

I don't know what I think about a lot of things, but I think this is bullshit.

THE VOICE

Forget the vets. Don't get caught up in the individual lives. I'll do that.

(and)

Track the alarms.

TUIITE

I'm working on it.

THE VOICE

Track them.

(and now)

It gets worse.

TUIITE

What do you mean?

THE VOICE

Follow the weapons.

TUIITE

Which weapons?

THE VOICE

Did the Iraqis have chemical and biological capability?

TUIITE

Of course.

THE VOICE

(softer)

Where from?

TUIITE

What are you talking about?

(there's silence)

Enough of this shit? Now --

(he turns)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

177 CONTINUED: (2)

177

TUIITE (CONT'D)

What is --

(no one's there)

this?

A man walking away one way along the Wall but another's going the other way. A third's cutting across the grass. Which one? None are running, all disappearing into the dark.

Leaving Jim Tuite and 59,000 names and more questions than answers --- and with a chilling feeling.

178 INT. CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING - ROOM 334 - DAY

178

The June 9, 1993 hearings continue with Chairmen Lane Evans, Joseph Kennedy, and the newly elected Congressman from Indiana, Steve Buyer, making his prepared statement:

CONGRESSMAN STEVE BUYER

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I feel kind of awkward here because I feel as though I am in a position of testimony, being a Persian Gulf War veteran myself, for I... can say affirmatively that the Persian Gulf War changed my life and my body, and that is, in fact, very, very real, gentlemen.

(around him is a display)

These are many of the drugs that I take.

(and)

...Now, I step forward today because there are many veterans out there that do not know whether or not it is real or in their heads...

Still young and handsome, but slightly awry, his features drawn in tight, growing rigid, and conservative by the minute. *

CONGRESSMAN STEVE BUYER (CONT'D)

...When I came back and was personally struggling with many different physical problems, there was a study done in Indiana of the 123rd ARCOM, and over 100 of my comrades went and participated in that study.

My wife Jody said, "Steve, are you going to participate?" I said, "No, I am not. Just watch what is going to happen." I said they are going to come back and label their problems post-traumatic stress disorder, and, son of a gun, was I absolutely furious when that, in fact, is what happened...

So I know when you are having to take drugs like this every day, three times a day, and you pay \$147 out of your pocket for these drugs, that I am not alone; that there are many veterans out there having to do this kind of thing and the U.S. Government has a responsibility.

179 A SLIDE SHOW - INT. JERRILINN'S HOUSE - NIGHT - SOME TIME LATER

17

A pure white rectangle. The HUMM of a projector.

JERAN (V.O.)

Now for how I spent my summer vacation.
Are you ready?

JERRILINN (V.O.)

I'm not sure.

JERAN (V.O.)

Too late. Here goes.

The white rectangle fills with an image. Wild with color, a burnt sienna abstraction.

JERRILINN (V.O.)

What's this?

JERAN (V.O.)

The sky.

The next is a burnt umber and obsidian abstraction.

JERRILINN (V.O.)

What's this?

JERAN (V.O.))

The sky.

He's out of the hospital, in remission, but he speaks slower than he used to. His Texas accent has changed, lessened. No one knows why. His head is still largely shaved. The dent in his skull, the scar along his scalp.

JERRILINN (V.O.)

That's impossible --

JERAN (V.O.)

The oil fires --

JERRILINN (V.O.)

I thought they were capped. You mean
they were still burning out of control --

*
*

The next slide.

JERAN (V.O.)

A Scud.

(CONTINUED)

179 CONTINUED:

JERRILINN (V.O.)

But I thought -- you said -- they said...
You went in March. After the war was
over.

The next slides.

JERRILINN (V.O.)

Those -- those are bodies.

Jeran appears, still like the fabled Man Who Never Was. His head wrapped. He moves with a limp and uses a cane. One side seems crestfallen, slack, like from a stroke. She's still out of sight.

180 HIS VIEW: JERRILINN

180

Silhouetted, rimmed by the projector throw, staring at the pictures he's taken along The Highway of Death.

JERRILINN

This is so hard.

JERAN (V.O.)

Somebody's son, somebody's brother. This
is what war looks like.

(and)

Here hold this.

Awkwardly, he tosses her a compact-sized but thick book.

JERRILINN

Thank God you had your bible.

JERAN (V.O.)

That's the Koran.

JERRILINN

But I sent you all those --

JERAN

The Saudi's pass them down generation to
generation.

(and)

Here's a prayer rug.

The projector HUMMS. Her head quivers. Dust motes jump about it like wary fire flies. The shaking is a failed attempt to still sobs. He joins her.

JERAN

I sat with them in their temples. I left
the Bibles with them.

(CONTINUED)

180 CONTINUED:

180

JERRILINN

Jeran, you're not going to die.

JERAN

Jerrilinn, I died over there... and I
didn't know it.

The two of them in the white light.

181 OMIT

181*

182 OMIT

182*

182A INT. MOONBEAMS - SOME TIME LATER

182A*

The place is quiet, it's evening, but Chris and his buddies are
there--doing push ups again. Chris doesn't join them. *

THE GUYS

Come on, Chris. What's the matter? You
a wuss? I'm going to break your record. *

To avoid embarassment, Chris slides away--and hears a VOICE. *

It draws him, and he realizes it's Teri at the same old bar TV *

being interviewed: *

TERI

(on TV)

I started writing veteran's organizations,
generals, Congressman, Senators, anybody I
could think of. *

JAN SPARKS (V.O.)

(doing the interview)

What made you speak out? *

TERI

(holding up medical report)

My husband has been sick. He has Desert Storm
Syndrome, but his medical records turned up
missing. When he needed emergency treatment --
and then they denied it. Now the original of
this is missing too. *

(and)

We're not alone. Other vets are sick and
suffering and need help. *

(and now)

This isn't, shouldn't be a dirty secret. *

Chris stares and realizes now he isn't alone. The others have
joined him. Escape from one embarassment and smack into
another greater one. *

183 INT. FT. CAMPBELL HOUSING QTRS - NIGHT - LATER

183*

Teri's typing on an old Royal typewriter when Chris comes in.
He's recovered enough to be functioning. That's what it does --
- come and go in worsening waves.

(CONTINUED)

183 CONTINUED:

Skinny, stricken, silent, he passes his wife without speaking. She ignores his ignoring.

He turns on to the TV, leafs through TV Guide. Just an excuse that can't stop his building frustration.

The typewriter KEYS.

He turns and hurls the magazine at her. It EXPLODES through the air, like a bird released from a blind. Surprises and scares the shit out of her.

CHRIS

I saw you. Didn't you think I'd see you?
Everyone saw you!

(she's still typing)

Don't you get it? If I'm sick, they'll bounce me or board me out. It's my career. It's my life.

TERI

You mean the Army comes first, your family comes last.

She's still calm, deadly calm, and she's still typing.

CHRIS

This is what I know how to do. I've got to go do my job or we're not going to have a paycheck to live.

(she's still typing)

You know what they're saying? I can't control my wife.

TERI

I'm trying to save this family, and save your life.

He's come over to her and what can he do, he has to stop those damn KEYS --- he RIPS the paper out of the typewriter.

CHRIS

You're just trying to get your name in the paper and sound off and become famous.

TERI

I'm watching you deteriorate and you're worried about who I'm writing to?

CHRIS

You don't care a damn about me or my friends or my reputation or my career or what we fought for.

His loathing, much of it self-loathing, is complete.

184 INT. BEDROOM

184

Chris rips open a bureau drawer, grabs clothes. T-shirts, uniform shirt, pants. Disappears into the bathroom, comes back with hair brush, tooth brush, Dopp kit. Marches past her.

TERI

(trying to relent)

Chris...

He reappears, passes her a second time, picks up a pillow off the bed, passes right by her a third time without stopping. The SLAM of the door down the hall.

An awful loggerhead.

185 INT. GEORGETOWN DUPLEX - DAY

185

Using Lexis/Nexis Jim Tuite pulls up onto his computer media reports of low level chemical detections from bombings of Iraqi warfare facilities. Hundreds of stories of alarms, plus the Czech government's confirmation of them.

TUIITE

Chemical... chemical...

186 INT. JIM TUIITE'S OFFICE - HIS COMPUTER SCREEN - LATER

186

Up pop maps, focussing in on the Gulf. More and more macro. Blowing away the one on his office wall. Topos too.

Step aside Rand McNally.

Next the colored pins --- tracking the shapes they make, the wavy masses, like blowing flags or wandering tails.

A lightbulb turns on.

186A INT. JIM TUIITE'S OFFICE - LATER STILL - NIGHT

186A

If possible move boxes, maps, stuff... and a new one he opens: satellite weather photos of the Gulf from January 1991. They look like negatives, all black and white, digitized. Layed out to see the way of the weather, the movement of the fronts.

Next the maps with the colored pins --- troop positions and alarm reports and Iraqi munition facilities --- he has them reduced now--- and using a light table and a magnifying glass, lays the satellite photos over them. One last one is infra-red.

The overlap is significant.

Trace the weather and the bombings, and downwind there are the American troop positions.

(CONTINUED)

THANKS OF A GRATEFUL NATION - BUFF REVISION 10/23/97
186A CONTINUED:

118A.

186A

TUITE

Shit.

Blowing in the wind. A cluster fuck.

187 OMIT

187

CHAPTER 5

Congressman Mac Collins
1118 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C.

Dear Congressman Collins,

We are the grandchildren of Chief Petty Officer Roy W. Butler Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 24 Detachment 1624 from Columbus, Georgia. We are very concern about our Poppa. He is very sick since his service in the Persian Gulf War. He gets worse every day. We are asking you to please help him, they will not even give him anything for pain. Our Poppa hurts everyday. It is very hard for him to go to work everyday. Please hurry! We don't know how much longer he will be able to work. Please, please help get our Poppa his disability started.

Hi my name is Courtney. I am 6 years old. Please, help my Poppa get better. I love him very much.

Hi my name is Michael Ryan. I am 4 years old. Please help my Poppa. I don't want him to die cause I love him and he loves me.

Hi my name is Stephanie. I am 16 years old. If our country can't treat our Veterans any better than the Gulf War Vets are being treated then maybe everyone should be like President Clinton and stay out of the service. I think it is really awful that we can spend more money trying to feed the Somalians than we can help our Gulf War Vets. Please help my Poppa. I love him very much.

Hi my name is Kristin. I am 11 years old. Why won't our government help my grandpa? My mama says you are trying to help him. so are alot of other people. Thank you very much. It means so much to all of us. Please ask President Clinton why he never says anything on T.V. about our Seabees. doesn't he care? Please tell him to help all of the sick Vets. Tell him to hurry because I don't think my Poppa has much time left. I love him very much and I don't want to lose him.

Hi my name is Scott. I am 8 years. My Poppa and I go deer hunting and four-wheeling together, but he is sick now and we don't get to do as much anymore. Please help my Poppa he is a good man. He loves all of us very much. He doesn't laugh and smile as much as he used to. I miss my old Poppa please help me get him back. I pray for him every night. I ask Jesus to make him well again. Please help my Poppa if you can.

189 TRANSPARENCIES - INT. PENTAGON - SOME TIME LATER

pass down a line of men in uniform, clanking with metals, and other nameless suits in a nameless windowless room.

TUITE

What you are looking at are hard copies of satellite image transparencies from the U.S. Environmental and Technical Applications Center at Scott Airforce Base.

COL. SANITSKY

So it's your supposition that all these chemicals, that we haven't found any indication of, were carried downwind.

TUITE

That's right.

COL. SANITSKY

Unfortunately, the Secretary of Defense has stated that the wind was blowing the opposite direction.

TUITE

Unfortunately, that flies completely in the face of these satellite photos.

MAJ. RONGJAW

You have a theory. It's completely conjectural.

TUITE

(trying another tack)
What about the alarms?

MAJ. RONGJAW

There were no alarms.

TUITE

I have here reports, eyewitness accounts --

He pulls out a sheaf of papers.

MAJ. RONGJAW

(interrupting)
Completely anecdotal --

TUITE

(interrupting right back)
-- Czech and U.N. Verification of such alarms.

(CONTINUED)

189, CONTINUED:

189

COL. SANITSKY

The truth is there were reports of alarms going off. Very few, though, were verified, and all were found to be false.

TUIITE

All were false? All thousands?

DR. SID BERIA

The truth is -- we have no data.

DR. SID BERIA, a Deputy to the Secretary of Defense for Chemical and Biological Weapons, is one of the ones in the line up opposite Tuite who's not in uniform. He looks like a cold war throwback, a Russian thug. Wide face, paunchy cheeks and belly, grey hair, eyes, and skin.

TUIITE

You do admit alarms went off?

DR. SID BERIA

I think that I would agree to this: per alarm perhaps 2 or 3 a day. I could see that happening.

TUIITE

How many alarms were out there?

DR. SID BERIA

Somewhere in the neighborhood of 14,000.

TUIITE

So 14,000 alarms going off 2 or 3 times a day for 42 days. That's -- give or take -- 1.7 million false alarms.

DR. SID BERIA

Big number --

TUIITE

All false --

MAJ. RONGJAW

Apparently so.

TUIITE

Doesn't say much for the equipment. How come the alarms only went off after the air war began, after the bombings of Iraqi chemical warfare facilities?

(and)

How were the soldiers supposed to know when the alarms were sounding for a real cause?

(CONTINUED)

COL. SANITSKY

(after a beat)

You have to understand -- any information finally we might have on chem or bio exposure is classified. If there is information -- you'll never get it.

TUITE

I have security clearance. I was in the Secret Service.

MAJ. RONGJAW

It's highly classified.

COL. SANITSKY

You'll never get it.

Just how pointed he's being isn't clear -- is it personal, about Jim, or is his contempt directed at Congress? Trying to leaven the atmosphere:

DIEDRE TAMA

I'd offer you a glass of water but you know with this cryptosporitium scare in Washington -- we're not serving it.

TUITE

Let me ask you -- if you can't protect the Pentagon, how do you expect me to believe you can protect the soldiers?

DIEDRE TAMA

(a sort of laugh)

I used to work for Senator Randall Nash -- and I remember the congressional staffer responsible for releasing the Pentagon papers was audited by the IRS for six years after leaving the hill.

TUITE

Excuse me. Are you -- ?

ROBERT JEFFORDS, M. D., Undersecretary for Health in the DOD, has waited, bided his time, can't any longer! *

ROBERT JEFFORDS *

I remember when Desert Storm was going down, a buddy and I were skiing on the back of Yellowstone. Had no idea. Had no idea when I was appointed head Doc at here. It's all been retrospective learning by the best men possible. Do you know we put up over 70 hospitals? Flew them over in boxes. Set them up.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

189 CONTINUED: (3)

189

ROBERT JEFFORDS (CONT'D)

Huge enterprise. Remarkable.

(and)

We sent 700,000 people to war and a lot of people think it was a cake walk.

Sitting over there in sand for six months thinking about what might happen...

mystery illness... I don't know where it started... it has a great allure...

government conspiracy... some connection to Vietnam... Agent Orange... paranoid... and it's taken on a life of its own...

(and)

There is no evidence -- I know this is the politically incorrect way to say it -- no evidence to date of anything.

DR. SID BERIA

The most important event is that there was no major event -- no World War I, no catastrophe -- and the future of warfare is going to be -- we don't know what happens when it happens.

ROBERT JEFFORDS

Be to our advantage if we found an It. We could go back to Congress and triple our budget.

COL. SANITSKY

Don't forget we warned Saddam. We knew he had the capability. But we got the message to him. Very clear. If he did use them, make no mistake, we'd play the nuclear card.

DIEDRE TAMA

Well, I think we're just about done here, Mr. Tuite.

They all start to get up, shoring the wall of denial back into place.

The Stone Wall.

190 OMIT

190

191 TAMMY BOYER'S - INT. WALTER REED ROOM A246 - NIGHT - LATER

191

asleep. Curled up on a chair, a bit pretzeled. Going to have a cranky neck, some stiff muscles. On a good day you might call the space where she is a room. On a good day.

TUIITE

Tammy? What are you doing?

*

(CONTINUED)

191 CONTINUED:

191

TAMMY
(waking)
What happened?



(CONTINUED)

TAMMY

I must've fallen asleep.

*
*

TUITE

Boy, you've come a long way baby.

*

He means how much she's changed. Her commitment to the vets.
Even her wardrobe - sweats instead of a skirt.

*
*

TAMMY

Kristie Schuermann -- this is Jim Tuite.
Who I was telling you about.

There's Kristie Schuermann, from the Gulf, tinier than ever.
Except her freckles. With her skin so washed out they rise
almost in relief.

TUITE

How you feeling?

KRISTIE

Generally ----- kind of crummy.

TAMMY

What about specifically?

KRISTIE

Kind of crummy.

She cracks a wan Kristie grin.

TUITE

What did they do to you? What tests have
they run?

(CONTINUED)

191. CONTINUED:

KRISTIE

Bone marrow biopsies, MRIs, brucella tests. I don't know.

(and)

As long as they find something out --- I don't care.

TUI TE

At least they're testing you.

Suddenly, there's another person in the room: Dr. Rosemary Dove wears another good-looking, but stiff and formal suit; it has no sway, practically metal. Armor.

ROSEMARY DOVE

(to Jim)

I was told you were here. Could I see you?

She's wound tight, she doesn't use his name, she doesn't even look at the patient or her fellow woman. She's gone.

Even the shadow of President's may not have prepared Jim for this. He follows Dr. Rosemary Dove to his fate.

KRISTIE

Who was that?!

TAMMY

Oooo, Satan in a skirt.

192 INT. WALTER REED - COMMON ROOM

192

A warped ping pong table, a remoteless TV, naugahyde chairs in a troubling shade of orange.

ROSEMARY DOVE

(on the attack)

What are you doing here?

TUI TE

I'm following up with a few veterans. Asking questions. Seeing how they are.

ROSEMARY DOVE

Does there seem to be a problem?

TUI TE

Well, yes --- they're sick.

ROSEMARY DOVE

You know there isn't any "Syndrome."

(CONTINUED)

TUITE

Excuse me, Doctor, call it "Syndrome",
call it more accurately whatever you want
-- but there is.

ROSEMARY DOVE

We don't know that. There is no
conclusive evidence whatsoever. It's
entirely anecdotal. Won't you quit?

TUITE

Excuse me, Doctor, but I think you're
bordering on the deranged.

ROSEMARY DOVE

Well, in that case we have nothing to
talk about.

TUITE

Excuse me, Doctor even if there wasn't ---
which there is --- even if we knew all
the reasons --- which we don't -- I'd
still be here.

Some of the frustration from the Pentagon unleashes.

*

193 INT. CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING - ROOM 334 - DAY

193

The June 9, 1993 hearings continue, Steve Buyer takes
questioning General Ronald Blanck, the commanding General,
Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Department of Defense.

STEVE BUYER

When I read statements like... "To date
there is no objective evidence that a
single soldier, sailor, airmen, or Marine
has an illness that can be linked with
petroleum exposure from the Persian Gulf
experience." Wow!

I mean, we just had a panel of experts
talk about multiple chemical
sensitivities and petroleum exposures and
things like that. I sincerely believe,
and I made the statement earlier, there's
a difference between medical ignorance
and medical stupidity.

It's medical ignorance if there's
something out there in which you don't
have expertise or you don't have the
training for and you seek other avenues
to gain a greater intelligence and a

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

193 CONTINUED:

193

STEVE BUYER (CONT'D)
greater understanding. It's medical
stupidity if you turn your back on it...

194 EXT. JERRILINN'S HOUSE - WACO - SOME TIME LATER

194

Able to walk now, Kourtney plays in the corn at the edge of the yard. Carrying a portable phone, pretending to use it, saying "Hello" over and over.

Suddenly, it RINGS. Not knowing what to do Kourtney just keeps saying "Hello". Her mother calls her name. (V.O.) More "Hello's". Jerrilinn's legs appear.

JERRILINN

Who is it?

(who knows?!)

Hello?

JERAN (V.O.)

It's happening again.

(and)

I got up on the plane and I forgot what I was up there for... It's back...

Oh shit. Jerrilinn sweeps up her daughter and drops the phone amidst the dust and corn. Her running feet.

194A OMIT

194A

195 INT. N. R. ROBERTS CENTER - PRE-OP - DAY

195*

Jeran's already lying down on a gurney, going. More angular and leaner than ever. Any burliness is gone. 24 years old, he's becoming Don Quixote.

JERAN

Sister?

JERRILINN

Yeah?

JERAN

Well, maybe you'd better kiss me. Right here.

(tough to do moving, but she does)

No, kiss me harder. Kiss me so I can feel it for a few minutes.

(so she does)

O.K. Maybe that'll last me eight hours.

(to Kourtney)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

195 CONTINUED:

195

JERAN (CONT'D)

Little Gal, don't ever forget this face. I
love you and I'm gonna see you -- real
soon.

They take him through the curtain, toward surgery. And holding
Kourtney, Jerrilinn bursts into tears.

The curtain opens again and he's back. Kisses his finger and
holds it out to Kourtney. What they do. She kisses hers and
holds it out to him. Then he's gone again.

And Jerrilinn knows somehow he's saying good-bye this time and
her tears turn to anger and hate at this place, this hospital,
and the government and what they have done to her family. Torn
them apart.

Her daughter's finger's still pointed.

196 OMIT

196

197 EXT. DIRKSON BUILDING - LATER

197

He vectors through a crowd and catches up to George Littell,
circles him, can't help himself:

*

TUIITE

Did the Senator read my report yet?

LITTELL

Don't worry Jim. Be patient.

*

TUIITE

I've been patient.

LITTELL

You call 24 hours patient?

*

TUIITE

Okay, I'm impatient. When do you think?

LITTELL

I don't know.

*

TUIITE

You did give it to him?

LITTELL

You're pretty funny --

*

TUIITE

-- Did you read it?

LITTELL

I spent like two months trying to get
your attention about the issue with no

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

197 CONTINUED:

197

LITTELL (CONT'D)
success and now you're all over me after
two days --

TUITE
-- Three days.

LITTELL
Whatever. I'll get to it. The
Senator'll get to it.

TUITE
You did give it to him?

LITTELL
Get out of here.

TUITE
Tell him to hurry.

Littell looks at him like he's insubordinate, which he is; like
he's crazy, which he may be becoming:

LITTELL
Out a here!

198 INT. JIM TUIITE'S OFFICE - MORNING - SOME TIME LATER

198

He comes in, but he's in for a surprise: There's already
somebody there, sitting behind his desk in his chair.

SENATOR DONALD RIEGLE.

TUITE
(taken aback)
Senator.

RIEGLE
(getting up)
Don Rieggle.

They shake hands.

TUITE
I'm sorry, Sir. I wasn't expecting you.

RIEGLE
You wrote this?

He means the document on Jim's desk, clearly thumbled.

TUITE
Yes, Sir.

RIEGLE
You did a lot of research.

(CONTINUED)

198 CONTINUED:

TUI TE

Yes, Sir.

RIEGLE

You're sure about everything's that in here. The vets. The alarms. The symptoms, the treatment, the lack of treatment?

TUI TE

Yes, Sir.

But what does he think?

RIEGLE

War is nasty and nothing matters but winning and that's all that counts. Case closed. It doesn't matter that it's over. It doesn't matter how it was done or what's left over.

And welcome to modern war. First we kill with technology. Then we kill with politics.

Jim?

TUI TE

Yes, Sir.

Riegle doesn't answer his own question right away --- instead picks up the phone:

RIEGLE

Senator Rockefeller please.

(while he waits)

Jay Rockefeller is one of my best friends, a good man, and he's the head of the Veteran's Affairs Committee.

But what does he think?

RIEGLE (CONT'D)

Senator Riegle for Senator Rockefeller.

(while he waits and only now)

Excellent work.

(and now)

We're going to blow this thing wide open.

199 INT. RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING - ROOM SR-418 - DAY

199

The U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs meets on Persian Gulf War Illnesses. The date is November 16, 1993. HONORABLE JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER IV presides. Occasionally his aide, MARCIA TIMMERMAN, whispers in his ear. *

(CONTINUED)

199 CONTINUED:

199

CHR. ROCKEFELLER

When our brave men and women returned from the Persian Gulf War, our nation was in a state of absolute euphoria. It seemed that we had accomplished our mission in less than 100 days, with very little loss of American life, while the decision to send troops to the Gulf has been controversial, the welcome home has not. Our troops enjoyed a homecoming unlike anything that American troops had experienced for decades.

Now, 3 years later, the sense of victory has been mostly replaced by a growing concern about the health of the veterans of Desert Shield and Desert Storm. An epidemic of mysterious illnesses has struck thousands of those who returned home.

A grateful nation must never forget that the decision to send our young people into harm's way must, by definition, always go hand in hand with the knowledge that it will be our responsibility to care for those who served. And now I want to recognize our first panel and ask Don Riegle and his two associates to come forward. Don Riegle is, as he well knows, a very close friend of mine.

Senator Don Riegle's not alone. Several veterans accompany him, including Jon Querry, who was in the Fox vehicles. *

RIEGLE

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and let me salute you for holding this hearing.

(and)

Over the 27 years that I've served in the Congress, I've testified many times. In my view, this is the most important testimony in my career... *

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

199 CONTINUED: (2)

RIEGLE (CONT'D)

CWO Jon Querry, seated beside me, is a U.S. Marine Corps chemical weapons specialist with 16 years of service. He happens to come from Jackson Michigan, and we're very proud that he is from the State of Michigan. It was his job to be out in the war zone to conduct chemical surveillance, using the most sophisticated chemical-sensing materials and devices that we have. The FOX Unit. On the occasion he has described to me, this FOX chemical unit detected the presence of lewisite, a very serious chemical agent. When that happened,...it was reported back to headquarters. The commander put the full unit on alert. Everyone put on the protective gear, MOPP4, that one puts on when a finding has been made that there is a chemical agent in the area. An actual computer tape was made by a FOX unit.

The gentleman that was out running the unit is a fellow named SSG Grass, George Grass, and we're tracking him down (and we will find him). He's still in the armed services (it seems)...

The flesh of Don Rieggle's once boyishly handsome face falls awkwardly about its bones. D.C., the hard work, the dissolution of too many campaign checks and Senate freebies. Yet he's afire.

RIEGLE (CONT'D)

(In the mean time) We have thousands of Gulf War veterans now - many that have come out of the service, many still in the service - they're sick, they're hurt, they may be dying; many already have. They need answers, and they need help, and we need to know what went on where they were. We can't have a situation where the truth gets buried...If mistakes were made, if troops were put in the wrong places, if we underestimated, if we blew these things up and this stuff was airborne and came down over our people, then we need to know. I think right now we're not being given the facts, and that can't be tolerated...

Major General Ronald Blanck responds:

MAJ. GEN. BLANCK

Let me say unequivocally that the Department of Defense, Veterans' Affairs, Health and Human Services, take very seriously the health concerns of our

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

199 CONTINUED: (3)

199

MAJ. GEN. BLANCK (CONT'D)
veterans. We care, we are working very
hard to address them.

We will not rest until we do find the
answers, the right answers. I know it is
frustrating and I know it is taking a
long time, but science does take a long
time and our veterans deserve no less
than to have exactly the right answer --
we will find it.

And watching, listening, Jim Tuite hears what he and so many
others have heard so many times before.

200 INT. FORT CAMPBELL PX - DAY

200

Teri Small works her shopping cart around, carrying Alex with *
her. She moves rapidly, but picks sparsely, discriminantly. *
Other women pass her we've glimpsed before, a Dodie, a Lydia *
Ana Tamaway, a Laverne. Takes a while to notice --- none greet *
her. They give her wide berth.

She comes around one aisle and runs into her best friend *
Sandra. Their two carts collide. It's an awkward moment, but *
doubly, triply so because Sandra doesn't smile, laugh or hoot,
even say hello.

Her cart abounds with Christmas stuff --- that's the season.
The PX is decked out also.

Sandra stares, at a loss, torn, this woman who's become stunning.

TERI
How's Howie?

SANDRA
...Fine.

TERI
Say hi to your Godmother, Alex.

Alex gargles something akin to language. Still Sandra doesn't
speak.

TERI
Say hi to your Godchild, Sandra.

SANDRA
Teri... Alex is beauti --...
(and)
Excuse me.

(CONTINUED)

200 CONTINUED:

She wriggles her cart free, flees.

TERI

(holding onto her irony)
Merry Christmas.

201 THE CASH REGISTER - CHECK OUT COUNTER - A MOMENT LATER

201

totes her groceries. Her wallet is out, Alex is fussing --- and she realizes the little she has isn't going to cover the total. Covering her panic, her embarrassment:

TERI

Oh you know what? I don't need all this.
Enough Holiday spirit already. Let me
just put a few things back right quick.

With Alex in tow, she loads up as much as she can carry returns to the aisles.

There she can't hide it, the narrowness of her escape, the proximity of embarrassment. Brings her close to bitter tears.

202 EXT. FT. CAMPBELL - NIGHT - LATER

202*

Chris Small wears his dress uniform. The first time we've seen it. Starched cloth, extra spit polished shoes. His careful walk trying to cover his skinnied sick body. Teri to the nines -- but not new. No money for that. More slender herself, severe, stern, but strong. Together, they've reached an uneasy accommodation, a holding pattern, a separate room truce.

TERI

It's 35 dollars a ticket. We don't have to go.
(no answer, they walk)

I apologize too. I know we can't afford a tree, but I had to get a wreath and one ornament, just one, for Alex, a beautiful golden one, and a little reindeer. It wasn't much.

(and)

I just had to.

(they walk.)

We don't have to go.

CHRIS

We have to go.

203 THE FORT CAMPBELL MILITARY BALL - NIGHT

203

is a big deal. Dress blues. Spit-polish shoes, lids and ribbons on. Swords even. Plus a big Christmas tree, lights, a creche, eggnog, insistent holiday spirit.

(CONTINUED)

The berth the Smalls are given as they enter matches the PX. Howie and Sandra are among those standing back. But suddenly, three women grab Teri.

*
*

THE THREE WITCHES

Come on, Teri. Come on. Wait to you see what we've done for you.

They drag her through the party to a table with a single item on it: a big, wide-necked, Mason jar and a sign:

PLEASE GIVE TO
OUR FAVORITE CHARITY
AND HELP SGT. SMALL
AND HIS WIFE PAY
FOR THEIR MEAL

The three witches CACKLE and ----- Teri feels the red rise from her toes, up her throat and across her face.

A storm coming.

TERI

(as Chris reaches them)

I don't know about you but I'm going across the street to McDonalds.

She's gone, leaving Chris beside his superior, SGT. ELVIS JONES.

JONES

Can't she take a joke?

(and now)

You know, Chris, if a soldier was meant to have a wife like yours the government would have issued you one when you enlisted. She's got you by the Balls, boy. If I were you I'd get far, far away from her before she buries what's left of your career.

204 INT. FT. CAMPBELL HOUSING QTRS - BEDROOMS - LATER

204

Teri and Chris. The two of them. Separate rooms.

Undressing can be the sexiest enterprise, the peel and unzip, the flowering of skin.

Or like here and now, functional, get the garments off and that's all, the least sexy.

CHRIS

(done, at her door)

I'm being transferred to Hawaii.

(CONTINUED)

204 CONTINUED:

TERI
(that stops her)
What?
(and)
That's the most expensive post in the
Army. And they don't allow families.

CHRIS
I know.

TERI
You can refuse it, they can't make you.
Don't do it, Chris.

CHRIS
...I've accepted it.

TERI
Please.

A single word, a world hovering around it, and a marriage.

CHRIS
It's done.

TERI
(right there with him)
Do you want me to file -- or do you?

CHRIS
I don't care.

TERI
I do.

CHRIS
You did it.

TERI
I did everything I could --

CHRIS
You betrayed me. Where was your loyalty?

TERI
Okay, fine, you can go over there and
rot. Fuck you. And fuck them.

CHRIS
Get the divorce.

He leaves the room and her, still undressing, but every way
else completely naked.

(CONTINUED)

TERI
(slowly breaking)
...Merry Christmas.

This time she can't hold onto any irony and it's the time when
the phone RINGS.

TERI
Hello.

SANDRA (V.O.)
Teri, it's Sandra. I'm so sorry about
the way I behaved. It was pathetic.
Pitiful. I felt so horrible, but I'm
caught. Howie won't let me make waves,
talk to you. Can you ever forgive me?

Teri has no answer, can't answer right now.

SANDRA (V.O.)
Teri?

TERI
(at last)
Yes?

SANDRA (V.O.)
I have to tell you...
(breaking down)
Howie's sick too.

She's crying, but Teri's beyond tears.

205 INT. N. R. ROBERTS - POST-OP - ICU

205*

Jerrilinn comes in. Her mother's already there.

JERRILINN
How is he?

Mrs. Gallimore doesn't speak. She holds her son's unconscious
hand. Except for eyes and mouth his head is completely
wrapped. Jerrilinn sits on the other side of the bed and takes
Jeran's second hand.

The two women sit. Finally.

JERRILINN
... Isn't he ever going to wake up?...

206 OMIT

207 INT. N. R. ROBERTS - POST OP - ICU - SOME TIME LATER

207*

The women have hardly moved and Jeran hasn't, but both women are asleep now, Mrs. Gallimore on a cot. It's night, but who can tell? Jeran's eyes open and he instantly starts to move. Not natural movements. Jerks.

*
*
*

His hand spurts away from his sister. Leaps toward his head. Attempts to wrest the turban of bandages off his head. The lurching wakens Jerrilinn.

JERRILINN

Jeran.

He seems to hear and grabs her arm. The grip is ferocious and he tears her watch off and throws it across the room.

JERRILINN

Jeran! Are you o.k.?

He seems to hear and he seems to salute. His hand shunts toward his turban.

JERRILINN

Are you o.k.?

The hand moves again in salute. Not once. Over and over. Eerie. Frightening. Like there's an electrical short in his brain. And it doesn't stop.

208 INT. N. R. ROBERTS - POST OP - ICU - HALLWAY

208*

Jerrilinn comes out, grabs a nurse.

JERRILINN

Please get a doctor.

NURSE

We'll be there in a minute.

JERRILINN

Please help me.

NURSE

As soon as we can.

JERRILINN

My brother's in pain. He needs you now.

(CONTINUED)

There's a SCREAM from inside the room. Jerrilinn lifts off into pure, commanding, shouting, adrenaline.

JERRILINN (CONT'D)

I need you! You're coming with me. GET INTO THAT ROOM NOW!

There is no argument. She's a force of nature. Everyone hops to.

209 INT. N. R. ROBERT - POST OP - ICU - JERAN'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER 209*

Dr. Azian appears. The nurse and Jerrilinn and her mother are all in the room, against the wall. All of Jeran's limbs are jerking, tubes and IVs flying. A riveting, not pretty sight.

DR. AZIAN

(shouting himself)

Everybody go. Go! GO!

Attendants come and restrain Jeran. They hold him down and wheel him out of the room, down the corridor. Back through the curtain.

Oz's curtain.

210 "CDC" - INT. JIM TUIITE'S OFFICE - SOME TIME LATER 210

is the return address on a letter: Centers for Disease Control..

Jim Tuite turns the letter over, hesitating, before opening it. The way he does it carries a wariness, a trepidation. Even a kind of fear. Not wanting to do what he has to.

He opens it then and begins to read. Halfway through he sets it down. Doesn't move. His color rotten.

He retrieves from his wall, a scrawled note, looks at it again. In fact, it's soiled from his fingering it.

Have you forgotten?

*The bio and the chem
--- where did the Iraqi's
get them?!?!?*

The Vet from the Wall.

211 A FLASHLIGHT BEAM (JIM TUIITE'S DREAM)

211

attempts to pierce the darkness. There's dust and it splays and flakes the light, like a snowstorm at night. A distraction that elongates the time it takes to realize the beam is lighting a bunker.

(CONTINUED)

211 CONTINUED:

211

One that seems to go deeper and deeper like a mine shaft. One you don't want to follow but Jim Tuite, holding the flashlight, can't stop.

It's strewn with equipment and supplies and one other thing. Human bodies. Dead bodies. Struck down, limbs askew, mouths rictored, desiccating.

And then, only then, does he see the iridescent letters --- great, gawky, printed letters. Pieces first, exploding with luminescence as he comes closer and forming into words, horrible words:

MADE IN AMERICA

SHARON JUAREZ (V.O.)

On February 6, 1992, only ten months after his return home --

212 VETERAN INTERVIEW

212

The vet is Sharon R. Juarez.

SHARON JUAREZ

-- my husband was diagnosed with acute myelocytic leukemia. My husband had no history of leukemia or cancer in his family. The doctors from Rush Presbyterian St. Lukes Hospital in Chicago stated that they had never seen a form of leukemia as aggressive as the leukemia Pedro was battling. This rare leukemia infiltrated his central nervous system, skin, and bowels in a matter of only three months... my husband, age thirty-eight and father of four, lost his fight and died August 14, 1992.

213 EXT. GEORGETOWN DUPLEX - NIGHT - LATER

213

An enclosed brick patio. A man sitting in an iron-rung chair. It's not snow this time --- it's RAIN, soft spring but insistent RAIN.

Even before she gets to him this time:

LISA

Don't think for a second I've been looking for you. I don't care if it's raining. I don't care if you're getting soaked. Your problem. Just because I'm ovulating and we're trying to have a baby.

I'll just go pick up some likely suspect,
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

213 CONTINUED:

LISA (CONT'D)
some good-looking lunk on the streets of
Georgetown. Or Dupont Circle. Or maybe --
(she stops)
... Jim...

He is wet, wet through and through, but there's not only the
rain. There's another source, smaller, far smaller, but far
more disturbing.

He's crying.

TUITE
We did it.

LISA
... What...?

TUITE
It's not finally that these crazy vets
are sick, and dying... though it is...
it's not that we're denying it when we
know it... though it is...
(and)
It's worse, way worse -- ~~We~~ supplied
virtually all the materials necessary for
biological and chemical warfare to Iraq
from 1985 to 1989.

American companies and the government
approved it.

The appalling sock of the information.

LISA
Shit.

TUITE
It's not as if I was looking for this.
It found me... This is a curse.
(and now)
I've had it.

LISA
Jim.

TUITE
No Lisa.

LISA
Fuck them.

TUITE
I can't do this alone.

(CONTINUED)

213 CONTINUED: (2)

213

LISA

You're not alone.

(and now)

Did you ever think you'd practically have
to leave the government to live up to
that oath you took in the Army and for
the Secret Service?

Two Americans in the spring rain.

CHAPTER

6

Congressman Mac Collins
1118 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C.

Dear Congressman Collins,

We are the grandchildren of Chief Petty Officer Roy W. Butler Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 24 Detachment 1624 from Columbus, Georgia. We are very concern about our Poppa. He is very sick since his service in the Persian Gulf War. He gets worse every day. We are asking you to please help him, they will not even give him anything for pain. Our Poppa hurts everyday. It is very hard for him to go to work everyday. Please hurry! We don't know how much longer he will be able to work. Please, please help get our Poppa his disability started.

Hi my name is Courtney. I am 6 years old. Please help my Poppa get better. I love him very much.

Hi my name is Michael Ryan. I am 4 years old. Please help my Poppa. I don't want him to die cause I love him and he loves me.

Hi my name is Stephanie. I am 16 years old. If our country can't treat our Veterans any better than the Gulf War Vets are being treated then maybe everyone should be like President Clinton and stay out of the service. I think it is really awful that we can spend more money trying to feed the Somalians than we can help our Gulf War Vets. Please help my Poppa. I love him very much.

Hi my name is Kristin. I am 11 years old. Why won't our government help my grandpa? My mama says you are trying to help him. so are alot of other people. Thank you very much. It means so much to all of us. Please ask President Clinton why he never says anything on T.V. about our Seabees. doesn't he care? Please tell him to help all of the sick Vets. Tell him to hurry because I don't think my Poppa has much time left. I love him very much and I don't want to lose him.

Hi my name is Scott. I am 8 years. My Poppa and I go deer hunting and four-wheeling together, but he is sick now and we don't get to do as much anymore. Please help my Poppa he is a good man. He loves all of us very much. He doesn't laugh and smile as much as he used to. I miss my old Poppa please help me get him back. I pray for him every night. I ask Jesus to make him well again. Please help my Poppa if you can.

Hi, my name is Bryan. I am 17 years old. Thank you for all the help you are given all of us. Tell everyone else who is helping that we appreciate their help as well. I often thought of joining the service to serve my country like my Poppa has, but if I am going to be treated like he has I think I will if another way to serve my country. I am proud to be an American, but right now I am ashamed of my government. I wish the Pentagon would admit the truth about what happened in the Gulf. My Poppa tells me what happened, he doesn't lie, but the Pentagon continues to say he is. I am asking you to keep working for us until they tell the truth, so many lives are at stake. Without people like you we would have no hope. Make me proud of my government again.

215 EXT. THE CAPITOL - WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY

21

In the summer the seat of government of the United States can be beautiful even when it's revoltingly humid, sticky, wilting. In the winter it can look pristine. But it's never more stunning than in the autumn.

The design, the marble, the way it sits. The dome. The sight stops Teri Small. She's come a long way to this place. Whoever you are the first time is arresting.

Isn't this what America is all about, where the best of it comes together?

216 INT. CANNON OFFICE BUILDING

216

Teri waits in the crowded outer office of a House member while plenty of others come and go. Waits some more.

All the buildings that house our 435 Representatives and 100 Senators, whatever their age, are grand and dramatic. The individual offices, though, are relentlessly similar and mundane. Flags and state seals and framed encomia.

CONGRESSIONAL AIDE

(at last)

Mrs. -- ...

Young, in a suit and in a hurry. Loses track of her name.

TERI

Small, Mrs. Christopher Small --

AIDE #1

Yes. It's incredible around here today. We're on roll call today and the Congressman has to be ready at any second to go to the floor. I'm sure you understand.

He's very nice, and absolutely convinced of how important the Congressman and, therefore, he himself is.

TERI

I understand, but I made an appointment, I've been waiting --

AIDE #1

I'm sorry the Congressman can't see you. But he did want me to let you know, personally, how important this issue is to him and no one cares more about our veterans than he does. He shares your concern.

(CONTINUED)

216,CONTINUED:

TERI

But --

217 INT. EVERETT DIRKSEN BUILDING - LATER (JUMP CUT)

21

Another office, newer, bigger, blander. A Senator's.

SENATOR'S AIDE

I'm sorry the Senator --

218 INT. SAMUEL RAYBURN BUILDING - LATER (JUMP CUT)

218

Another office, smaller, older, a lot of wood. Another Congressman's.

CONGRESSIONAL AIDE #2

I'm sorry the Congressman --

The last has a young WOMAN, the same age and the same attitude *
as #1. Except male, ditto #2. As smart, as busy, practically *
the same suit.

219 OMIT

219*

220 OMIT

220

221 OMIT

221

222 INT. CAPITOL - OUTSIDE SENATE FLOOR - (OSGOODE HALL)

222*

Lobbyists gather, suited men hover, jockeying, self-important. Legislation and billions at play. You can feel the energy -- a white-shirted lather waiting to pounce.

Teri waits awed. At last another AIDE appears, another young woman. This one belongs to SENATOR RICHARD SHELBY OF ALABAMA, and she's distinctly southern. A tall big-featured blonde in a red blazer and double strand of pearls, SALLY GOODNIGHT. *

GOODNIGHT

I'm sorry to have kept you waiting.

TERI

I'm Teri --

GOODNIGHT

Of course you are.

(and)

Where's the video crew? I thought there was a video crew.

TERI

There's no video crew. There's just me, the wife--

GOODNIGHT

There must be some mistake. Excuse me. I'll be right back.

Lickity split she's gone. More waiting.

The space has a tile floor, a rounded ceiling, chunks of gold leaf, ornamentation, and great chandeliers. Spaced about are busts of Taft, Clay, Webster, LaFollette.

Teri Small has never been anywhere like this. A Tennessee housewife with a sick and maybe dying and lost husband driven here by aching, infuriating, debilitating frustration.

SALLY GOODNIGHT

(arriving back)

He'll just be a minute. Unfortunately, he won't be able to talk very long. A vote is coming up. *

She's from Rising Star Texas, the kind of place people come from and don't go back to. She's a case ~~and~~ point. Her

(CONTINUED)

222 CONTINUED:

222

- polish, if not her accent, has left it well behind. She sets off into the crowd, like a great dane.

And Senator SHELBY appears. Tall, perhaps 6'3", soft-faced, hair brushed to cover recession. Nevertheless imposing.

SALLY GOODNIGHT

Oh, Senator. This is Teri Small. Her husband, Chris, like the unit of Alabamans who testified at the subcommittee hearings --

(CONTINUED)

SHELBY

Of course.. How is he?

TERI

Senator --

SHELBY

Let me tell you we haven't forgotten. We're doing everything we can. We're going to have full committee hearings soon and I think it would be invaluable to have him testify.

It pents up, the waiting, the wanting to know, the slow unanswered, devastating, debilitation. She can't help it:

TERI

I'm afraid he may be dying.

It comes out too loud, hollows under the round ceiling, sits there. Even the Senator takes a second to recover.

SHELBY

We'll do everything we can.

TERI

Why are there no answers? Why will no one help?

Her nakedness is contradictory to every practice Laura and the Senator have down pat. But Shelby is a politician, a Senator.

SHELBY

I think the Pentagon wants it to go away, but it won't go away. It's affecting too many people, including your husband.

TERI

But they keep saying it isn't anything. And the VA -- ...

SHELBY

It's a riddle. There may not be a single answer, but there's evidence. I found it, I saw it.

TERI

But what Gen. Blanck said at your hearings --...

SHELBY

(his accent broadens)

Did they lie to me? I went to them as friends....

(and)

It's not over.

(CONTINUED)

The cloaked anger fists, but it's impossible to tell whether it's concern for the sick or about being lied to.

He looks out the window now:

SHELBY

Want to see something?
(takes a step back)
Look at that tree.

Out the window is a great golden maple in full autumn foliage.

SHELBY

Guess it's gone in New Hampshire, but we still got it here.

SALLY GOODNIGHT

Senator, I know you're needed back on the floor.

Shelby turns back from the view and looks down at Teri.

SHELBY

Nothing's more important than our Alabama boys, and anyone who served with them, Mrs. Small.

And Sally Goodnight leads him away.

223 OMIT

223*

224 A VENTILATOR - SOME DAYS LATER

224*

is positioned in Jeran's mouth to help him breathe. He doesn't *
move, comatose. Needles are already in his arms, IVs a plenty. *
Drugs. More drugs. And everything else medicine has to offer. *
He doesn't move, comatose. *

225 OMIT

225*

226 OMIT

226*

227 OMIT

227*

228 JERRILINN

228

watches also.

229 IN THE WINDOW - INT. N. R. ROBERTS - ROOM #2 - LATER

229*

Men come, the men he worked with, a bunch of them, and one woman, Rosca, look at him, hate what they see. They talk behind the glass, largely inaudible.

RAFE

We can't leave him like this. This is no good.

He continues, his words lost. The others say he's crazy, no way. Then they look at each other. What? What is it? What are they thinking?

Jeran doesn't move, comatose.

230 OMIT

230*

230A EXT. N. R. ROBERTS - 16TH FLOOR DECK

230A*

The doors swing open and out they all come pushing the gurney, swinging Jeran through the fresh air, laughing. A kind of dance.

THE MEN

Hang in there, G-Man.

(and)

G-Man, you're gonna make it. Buddy, you can do it.

(and)

G-man, G-man, snap out of it. We need you, G-man.

(and)

G, let's put on our bathing suits and get hosed.

RAFE

C'mon G, we didn't go through hell in Saudi to lose it here.

(and)

Hey buddy, Jeran, it's me. Your old pal Tater. Remember old Rafe.

Then, only then, do Jeran's eyes open and tears start running down his face. Alive again, aware again. A brief shining moment.

231 JERRILINN

23

And hers. Her watching, loving, no-nonsense, nurse's, caring face. Even Dr. Azian watching as well, can't help but be moved.

232 OMIT

232

233 OMIT

233

234 INT. DR. AZIAN'S OFFICE - N. R. ROBERTS - SOME TIME LATER

234*

Dr. Azian sits with Jerrilinn and Jeran's mother.

JERAN'S MOTHER

We're out of insurance money. I want to take him home.

DR. AZIAN

It's amazing he's still alive. I can't say what this young man got into ... chemical warfare... I don't know.

JERAN'S MOTHER

He's getting better. He was walking with a walker yesterday.

DR. AZIAN

Some days he's as smart as a whip. Some days...

(and)

It's only a matter of time. In fact...

(and now)

Pray like you've never prayed in your life. It's the fastest growing cancer I've ever seen in my life.

JERAN'S MOTHER

I want to take him home.

DR. AZIAN

He could go into a rage and hurt you. It might not be safe.

JERAN'S MOTHER

I want to --

DR. AZIAN

You need to find a place for him.

Jerrilinn listens. The Closer.

235 INT. SEN. RIEGLE'S OFFICE - 113 DIRKSEN BUILDING - DAY

235

It's a corner office, once Robert Kennedy's, once bugged by J. Edgar Hoover.

TUITE
(appearing)
Senator?

RIEGLE
(surrounded by staffers)
Jim.

TUITE
The Office of The Joint Chiefs on the phone.
They've heard about our report.

RIEGLE
And?

TUITE
They're screaming bloody murder.

RIEGLE
Sounds like a good sign. Find out what
kind of bloody murder.

236 INT. TUIE CUBICLE - A MINUTE LATER

236

Tuite returns to his cubby hole, picks up the phone.

TUITE
The Senators not available. This is Jim
Tuite, his liaison on defense issues.

WOMAN (V.O.)
You can't put out this report.

TUITE
To whom am I speaking?

WOMAN (V.O.)
Lieutenant Colonel Ryerson. You can't do it.
(and)
This report isn't accurate.

TUITE
We've verified everything in here.

WOMAN (V.O.)
It's highly anecdotal.

(CONTINUED)

236 CONTINUED:

236

TUIITE

Of course, it's anecdotal. We've talked to the men who were there.

WOMAN (V.O.)

It's just not true.

TUIITE

I'm sorry. We stand by it.

WOMAN (V.O.)

(beat)

We've checked, and --

(second beat)

General Powell says there were no chemical or biological weapons in the Gulf.

TUIITE

Facts speak otherwise.

WOMAN (V.O.)

You can't put it out.

TUIITE

Why not?

WOMAN (V.O.)

...It's classified.

TUIITE

How can it be classified if it didn't happen?

WOMAN (V.O.)

You can't put this report out. You don't have the authority.

TUIITE

Excuse me, Lieutenant. Let me explain the difference between how the Executive and Legislative Branch work. We have every right--

WOMAN (V.O.)

(a bit panicked)

You can't put it out.

TUIITE

Excuse me -- with all respect --

WOMAN (V.O.)

(screaming)

You can't. Just hold it. I'll get back to you.

(CONTINUED)

And she's gone. Tuite sits, the taste of satisfaction and victory nibbled at by wondering what's going to happen next.

237 INT. RIEGLE'S OFFICE - DAY

237

Tuite comes back in. Tammy Boyer is with the Senator in a very short skirt. The Senator glances up.

RIEGLE
What did they say?

TUITE
Lt. Col. Ryerson said we can't put it out.

RIEGLE
She did, did she?

TAMMY
What are you talking about?

TUITE
(right on)
She made it abundantly clear, over and over.

The Senator turns in his chair toward the windows and swivels back and punches a number into his bank of phones.

OPERATOR (V.O.)
White House.

RIEGLE
This is Senator Don Riegle trying to reach the President.

OPERATOR (V.O.)
Just a minute please.

PRESIDENT'S ASS'T
(V.O.)
This is the Office of the President.

RIEGLE
Don Riegle trying to reach the President.

PRESIDENT'S ASS'T
(V.O.)
Just a minute please.

Riegle and Tuite look at each other. Tammy sees it, almost like a current passing. Waiting:

RIEGLE
I don't want the President blind-sided on this.

(CONTINUED)

243 INT. TEMPLE VA - SOME TIME LATER

24

Jerrilinn leaves her mother in prayer beside Jeran's bed --- and comes out into the hallway and leans against the wall. Her head falls and she doesn't move.

Temple is very different than N. R. ROBERTS. Drab, dirty, run down. A dump. The VA doesn't have good equipment or good personnel. Even sanitation is questionable. *

There's no life in the halls; every one moves at a crawl, a kind of slow motion. The atmosphere is killingly contagious.

DOCTOR LUCIFER

(coming up to her)

I understand you want to put your brother on the Desert Storm registry.

JERRILINN

Yes, I do.

DOCTOR LUCIFER

And it's my understanding you feel your brother has Gulf War Syndrome?

JERRILINN

Well, according to the information we have, yes.

DOCTOR LUCIFER

But you don't know that.

JERRILINN

And you don't know he doesn't.

DOCTOR LUCIFER

Mrs. Folz, let me tell you something: no one knows even if there is such a thing.

(and now)

You know he doesn't have any kind of real life. What are you hanging on to?

Her head comes up and her fire burns:

JERRILINN

But it's his life and he's still breathing.

DOCTOR LUCIFER

We've done the best we could. What's left?

JERRILINN

He can still pray. We can.

DOCTOR LUCIFER

Prayer?

(CONTINUED)

243 CONTINUED:

243

JERRILINN

He's still believing in God.

*
*
*

DOCTOR LUCIFER

Let's talk about your God. If he's so wonderful and great, why doesn't he just heal him?

*

JERRILINN

I know who you are... I will call you Lucifer. And you won't ever come back in his room. Just get away from him.

And she snaps back into her brother's room. The Doctor shrugs, moves on. The half-speed, the slow-motion remains.

244 INT. JERAN'S ROOM

244

Jerrilinn gets down on her knees, joins her mother in prayer, looks up then to her brother.

The remnants.

JERRILINN

(a vow)

We're going to get you out of here.

245 EXT. THE WALL - NIGHT - LATER

245

Gary Wall leading Teri --- the two descend along a walkway.

WALL

Many of us come back from Vietnam and felt we never came home. That we had no home. No crowds greeted us. We came back alone. We were spat at, vilified. We had no one to talk to about it.

Many of us got lost. So strange over there. So hard, so hard, to make sense of it...

*
*

And it was here, coming here, that brought me and so many like me back... I don't know what it is. It just is -- The Wall.

There it is.

That's where they are and where in the autumn night the polished, black granite reflects the colored leaves that are about to fall and the ones that already have. The lights that mark the path reflect too, like candles. Etching deeper the names.

(CONTINUED)

245 CONTINUED:

245

There are people here, there are always people here, and the things they've carried here and left behind.

Flowers and photos and boots and medals and flags and crosses and camo hats and khaki shirts ----- and all the markers that make a life and are our memories.

The place, the names, the night, the rustle of the leaves on the trees and the movement of the ones that have fallen and the candlelike reflections that make a completion, a release, a resting place, a sepulcher.

A church.

This is where Gary Wall has brought Teri Small. What Vietnam vets have that Desert Storm vets don't.

The camo shirt that sits along the path.

Teri picks it up: if chocolate chip, it could be Chris', the one that came back early, the one she tried to wear, the one that brought back the war before her husband, the first scary early warnings, that smelled not like him but like something there and broke out her skin.

She holds this shirt from Vietnam in this place and thinks, and can only think of her husband, and yet she is thankful to this man she has just met and who has passion and patience and who has seen and seems to know and who has given her now a great gift.

The shirt.

246 OMIT

246

247 INT. RIEGLE OFFICE

247

Tammy pushes through the maze of offices into the Senator's corner suite. Riegle's staring at the Capitol: it sits in complete and gathering splendor out the window. The day is faltering, the light softening and tinging.

TAMMY

What's -- ...

The Senator has this air. There is an atmosphere in the room. Unmistakable if undefined. Quells her. He makes a wave of his hand that sits her down.

They sit.

A.A. George Littell comes in. The Gatekeeper. Looks about:

(CONTINUED)

LITTELL

Where's Tuite?

Again no answer. This time not even a wave. The Senator and the window. Littell sits as well. More silence.

They all sit.

TUIITE

(arriving)

Senator... George... Tammy...

Even with his best Secret Service delivery nobody exactly pays attention to him at this moment.

LITTELL

Senator, we're all here.

RIEGLE

This office used to be Bobby Kennedy's. Did you know that? This desk. Those chairs you're sitting in. Ate his lousy lunch right here. Clam chowder, an apple... The walls lined with crayon drawings by his kids.

(still looking out the window)

We sold it to them, did we?

TUIITE

All approved by the United States Commerce Department.

(and)

The U.S. government provided the Iraqis with pathogens associated with bubonic plague, botulism and others, and American companies and a biological library called the American Type Culture Collection with government approval provided Iraq with pathogens for anthrax, brucellosis, gas gangrene, and even human genetic material.

A hush. The window.

RIEGLE

Where did you get this stuff?

TUIITE

Digging. Letters under your name to the CDC, the Commerce Department. A Freedom of Information Act request.

(and)

And I've got a source.

(CONTINUED)

LITTELL

What do you mean? Who? Where?

TUITE

I can't tell you.

LITTELL

Christ.

RIEGLE

What is this a -- Deep Throat?!

TUITE

I've never seen him. But I've talked to him. He's never been wrong.

RIEGLE

You better never be.

(Tuite meets his stare)

So run by me what we got.

LITTELL

It's been cleared by legal council.

RIEGLE

Double-double-~~double~~ checked?

LITTELL

For sure.

RIEGLE

Jim, the D.O.D. and D.I.A.?

TUITE

They claim that the information in our report is misleading and erroneous and compromises security interests and we can't release it.

For just a brief second time Rieggle turns from the window.

RIEGLE

And?

TUITE

It's not. If anything it's understated.

RIEGLE

George, what will happen if we're wrong?

LITTELL

We'll be laughing stocks. The White House will ignore us or punish us.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

247 CONTINUED: (3)

SLIDELL (CONT'D)

They'll be pissed off. It will kill all our banking legislation. It will be political suicide.

RIEGLE

Tammy?

TAMMY

The press will have a field day. They'll roast us.

RIEGLE

What about that FOX guy, what's his name?

TUIITE

George Grass. We're still trying to find him.

RIEGLE

Christ...I wish...That would do it. Well...

(and)

...And still no word from the White House?

"No Sir," "No", a shake of the head. They sit.

The window.

RIEGLE (CONT'D)

You know I happen to love this country and believe in it and you realize what we're saying -- that we sent our men and women off to war without protecting them adequately against chemical and biological attack, or informing them, or caring for them now, and that it was American companies, among others, who shipped the ingredients that may be making our soldiers sick and dying, and we're covering it up.

A mouthful all right. Everyone looks at everyone else. Now and only now Rieggle stands.

RIEGLE (CONT'D)

You better fasten your seat belts. We aren't going to wait forever.

(CONTINUED)

247, CONTINUED: (4)

247

He keeps them waiting, hanging, walking to the door.

RIEGLE (CONT'D))
Get that baby out.

He raps his knuckles on the doorjamb and is gone.

CHAPTER

7

Congressman Mac Collins
1118 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C.

Dear Congressman Collins,

We are the grandchildren of Chief Petty Officer Roy W. Butler Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 24 Detachment 1624 from Columbus, Georgia. We are very concern about our Poppa. He is very sick since his service in the Persian Gulf War. He gets worse every day. We are asking you to please help him, they will not even give him anything for pain. Our Poppa hurts everyday. It is very hard for him to go to work everyday. Please hurry! We don't know how much longer he will be able to work. Please, please help get our Poppa his disability started.

Hi, my name is Courtney. I am 6 years old. Please, help my Poppa get better. I love him very much.

Hi my name is Michael Ryan. I am 4 years old. Please help my Poppa. I don't want him to die cause I love him and he loves me.

Hi my name is Stephanie. I am 16 years old. If our country can't treat our Veterans any better than the Gulf War Vets are being treated then maybe everyone should be like President Clinton and stay out of the service. I think it is really awful that we can spend more money trying to feed the Somalians than we can help our Gulf War Vets. Please help my Poppa. I love him very much.

Hi my name is Kristin. I am 11 years old. Why won't our government help my grandpa? My mama says you are trying to help him. so are alot of other people. Thank you very much. It means so much to all of us. Please ask President Clinton why he never says anything on T.V about our Seabees doesn't he care? Please tell him to help all of the sick Vets. Tell him to hurry because I don't think my Poppa has much time left. I love him very much and I don't want to lose him.

Hi my name is Scott. I am 8 years. My Poppa and I go deer hunting and four-wheeling together, but he is sick now and we don't get to do as much anymore. Please help my Poppa he is a good man. He loves all of us very much. He doesn't laugh and smile as much as he used to. I miss my old Poppa please help me get him back. I pray for him every night. I ask Jesus to make him well again. Please help my Poppa if you can.

Hi, my name is Bryan. I am 17 years old. Thank you for all the help you are given all of us. Tell everyone else who is helping that we appreciate their help as well. I often thought of joining the service to serve my country like my Poppa has, but if I am going to be treated like he has I think I will if another way to serve my country. I am proud to be an American, but right now I am ashamed of my government. I wish the Pentagon would admit the truth about what happened in the Gulf. My Poppa tells me what happened. he doesn't lie. but the Pentagon continues to say he is. I am asking you to keep working for us until they tell the truth. so many lives are at stake. Without people like you we would have no hope. Make me proud of my government again.

Hi my name is Dave. I am 15 years old. Why does everyone act like Saddam would not use chemical or biological warfare on our people when he used it on his own people? I think Saddam is just like Hitler. Why does our world let him get away with all the things he does? But I guess he is right this is "The Mother of all Wars." If the Pentagon continues to deny chemical weapons were used what about biological warfare? That's what Poppa said Dr. Jackson said was wrong with him. He diagnosed him with H.T.L.V. 1 and 2. He said it works like A.I.D.S. but its not A.I.D.S. it is caused by germ warfare. Why won't anyone talk about this? If this is true my Mimi could die too! So could a lot of other people, what if it is in our blood supply? Saddam could kill us all! Please work to bring out the truth. Help Dr. Jackson to continue to help all of our Vets sometimes I think he is the only doctor in the V.A. that cares. Thank you for all your help, we will never forget you and all you have done for our family.

Courtney Gibson

Scott Gibson

~~Stephen Gibson~~

Kristin Westbrook

Michael Ryan Jarvis

~~Bryan Westbrook~~

~~Dave Westbrook~~

11-11-93

249 INT. DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BLDG., MAY 25, 1994 - ROOM SD-106 - DAY 249

The opening statement of Chairman Donald Riegle, Jr., for the Committee on Banking, regarding U.S. Dual-use Exports to Iraq and Their Impact on the Health of the Persian Gulf War Veterans.

Like both bodyguard and braintrust, Jim Tuite sits behind and to one side of him. Occasionally leaning in his ear.

RIEGLE

Over the last 8 months our office has been contacted by over 1,000 Gulf War veterans... suffering from what has come to be known as Gulf War Syndrome... In addition, we've also been contacted by sick veterans of the Canadian, British, and Australian armed services who served in the Persian Gulf.

I've listened to the Secretary of Defense. I've listened to him on the radio. I've watched him on television. I've been waiting for him to talk about this problem. He can get a mike any time he wants it. He can step outside his office door and say, get the networks in here. I've got something to say on the Gulf War Syndrome issue. And you know what? They'll be there. They'll be happy to come. He can talk about this and he can deliver a message that's so powerful and so clear that shows where the priority is in treating these sick veterans and their families, that it's unmistakable.

The silence is deafening. That hasn't happened. And there's no excuse for it.

EDWIN DORN, Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, responds testifying:

EDWIN DORN

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to begin my testimony by reading a letter to all Persian Gulf veterans from Chairman Shalikashvili and jointly signed by the Secretary of Defense... Let me say loudly: If a soldier comes to a military treatment facility, he or she will be treated. If that soldier brings a member of his family in, he or she will be treated. If there is anyone in this audience who feels that has not happened, I will take the names, I will make the calls, and it will happen.

(CONTINUED)

249 CONTINUED:

The room --- the veterans, and everyone else --- goes crazy. If he had a gavel he'd have to use it:

DONALD RIEGLE

Let's have order in the room. Let me ask you this. When was this letter put out?

EDWIN DORN

It's dated today.

DONALD RIEGLE

So, in other words, the letter was put out today.

EDWIN DORN

That is the last, as I said, of about a dozen messages coming out of DOD on this matter...

DONALD RIEGLE

But again let's be honest with each other. There's no coincidence, is there, in timing, that the fact this letter is coming out today and we're having this hearing today.

EDWIN DORN

Yes Senator, it absolutely is a coincidence because that letter has been working its way through the system for some time.

Again Room SD-106 of the Dirksen Building goes crazy.

EDWIN DORN (CONT'D))

...If I may go on... no chemical or biological weapons were found in the Kuwait theater of operations. And by Kuwait theater of operations, I mean those portions of southern Iraq and Kuwait that constituted the battlefield. We did not find any chemical or biological munitions, live or spent, among the thousands of tons of munitions recovered on the battlefield.

The international community agrees with these
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

EDWIN DORN (CONT'D)

conclusions. This is a complicated and contential issue, however...

Mr. Chairman, may I say to the veterans who served courageously in the Persian Gulf, the following: I understand the fear and the frustration that many veterans are experiencing. They're sick and their doctors can't offer them definitive answers. To them, let me say, this Administration is committed to treating you fairly. You stood up for the Nation. The Nation is going to stand up for you. *

I would now like to introduce other members of the panel, if I may. Dr. Sid Beria, a is the Deputy Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Chemical and Biological Weapons.

DONALD RIEGLE

Yes... but I want to know whether this panel can give an assurance here, based on their expertise and credentials, that there are no Desert Storm veterans that were exposed to chemical or biological agents during the war period that now account for their illnesses.

EDWIN DORN

Mr. Chairman, they will not provide you that assurance because we cannot provide that assurance at this point... It is very easy to confuse use of chemical agents with presence of chemical agents and exposure.... And on that latter matter there continues to be some concern--

(CONTINUED)

DONALD RIEGLE

(interrupting)

Well now, wait a minute. Now you're saying there's a reason for some concern. You're saying, as far as you know now, there was no offensive use of these weapons by the Iraqis that you've been able to establish. But you're drawing a very fine line to say that there may very well have been exposures to chemical agents during the war period.

EDWIN DORN

As you alluded to in your opening statement, Mr. Chairman, there were reports by the Czechs of the detection of very low levels of chemical agents. Those reports were never confirmed independently.

There is again ferment in the audience.

DONALD RIEGLE

I want to keep our respective blood pressures down to a civil level here today.

Senator ROBERT BENNETT from Utah jumps in:

ROBERT F. BENNETT

Implicit in your answer, Mr. Secretary, is the idea that there was something wrong with those initial reports. Is there a possibility, sir, that there is something technically, techno-logically wrong with the confirmation process?..

EDWIN DORN

It's a fascinating question, Senator Bennett, and since it deals with the technical capabilities of our equipment, I'd like to defer to Dr. Beria to address it.

The same Sid Beria Jim Tuite encountered at the Pentagon:

DR. SID BERIA

Let me try to take that... The way we detect chemical agents now, the initial detection of the alarm comes from an M8 detector... The M8 detector generally will detect between .1 and .5 milligram minutes per cubic meter. We then follow up with an M256 kit. Now this is a hand-held kit that basically is a little chemical laboratory in your pocket. The M256 kit is very specific and very, very sensitive. It goes three orders of magnitude better than the M8 alarm does. So even if materials have dissipated after the initial alarm, you should be able to pick it up with the M256 kit. I've worked with that kit and I have a lot of confidence in that kit.

ROBERT F. BENNETT

Are you aware of the fact that, reported in this document, there are those who say that their M256 kits did indeed test positive?

DR. SID BERIA

I haven't seen this report and I am not aware of those. I'm sorry, sir.

After listening, and conferring with Jim Tuite, and starting to steam:

DONALD RIEGLE

This is a problem that we have... You folks seem to find one reality and the more we dig into this, a broad number of us, both parties, House and Senate, the more we find a starkly different reality. It's extremely troubling...

ROBERT F. BENNETT

Mr. Chairman, I have found it, with help from staff. I can very quickly respond.

EDWIN DORN

Senator, can you let us know the page? As you know, this report was just produced. We have not had an opportunity to review it.

(CONTINUED)

ROBERT F. BENNETT

OK. It's on page 79, Event 13. Dale Glover was a staff Sergeant with the 1165th Military Police Company. He recalled being awakened at 3:30 a.m. The Battalion NBC NCO was announcing that they were under chemical attack. An M256 kit registered a positive reading for a chemical agent. They went to MOPP level 4 for 4 hours. Afterward, all of them had runny noses... So here is the case where the kit you have... described as being very, very accurate, produced a result contrary to that which you just told the Committee occurred...

RIEGLE

(summing up)

I would give you this message to take back if you would... Something happened out there, or some combination of things happened... I think every operational officer... the Government that relates to these things, from the Director of the CIA to the Secretary of Defense, to the head of the DIA, to the President himself, to the head of the Veterans' Administration have an urgent task here to marshal the resources, marshal the knowledge, the professional focused effort, and figure out what happened here... I've served here now for 28 years, through seven Presidents... I've been in both parties in my service in the Congress and I've served under Presidents of both parties and Secretaries of Defense under both parties. It has nothing to do with that. It has to do with what the truth is, and about honor and integrity, and our military structure, and our responsibility to our veterans and their families.

250 OMIT

250

251 INT. APT. - NEAR VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY - NIGHT

251

Teri leans over and kisses her sleeping daughter good night.

Rising up, in a tiny baby's mirror, he can't help but see, and
neither can we, that she has a rash, like the ones Chris and
then Alex had.

*
*
*

252 OMIT

252*

253 INT. BEDROOM

253

In bed, not asleep, memorizing the ceiling. The PHONE again.

TERI

Hello.

(nothing)

Hello

(nothing)

...Chris?

CHRIS (V.O.)

I'm not going to sign the final papers.

TERI

You said you wanted the divorce.

CHRIS (V.O.)

I do.

TERI

Well, sign the papers.

CHRIS (V.O.)

Won't you ever back off?

TERI

Okay, fine, don't bother. Just stay over in Hawaii and rot. I've had it.

CHRIS (V.O.)

See.

TERI

You are making me hate you. I tried to keep us together. Go do whatever you have to so you can be happy in your military. I don't want ever to have anything else to do with them. Just sign the papers and don't call me again.

He hangs up on her --- and she lies there hating her mouth and her strength, hating herself.

254 INT. SENATOR RIEGLE'S OFFICE - NIGHT - LATER

254

The celebration after the banking committee hearing is underway.

(CONTINUED)

254 CONTINUED:

254

TAMMY

That was so great. We chewed them up and spit them out. Yum yum. It's going to be front page tomorrow morning.

LITTELL

It was excellent.

Jim Tuite listens, sucking it in, but cautious by nature. Having heard, obviously pleased, the Senator comes over.

RIEGLE

Don't be so sure. There as many as forty hearings a day up here on the hill -- how many do you ever hear about?

(and)

What we need is legislation.

LITTELL

Is not only ready to go, it's through Committee. It's got your support, Rockefeller's --

TAMMY

Pop their bubble!

255 INT. JIM TUIITE'S OFFICE - NIGHT - LATER

255

Still ebullient, Jim checks his E-Mail:

*Must see you midnight.
The Vet*

256 EXT. VIRGINIA - MIDNIGHT - LATER

256

Snow has turned to freezing, slippery rain, and it SIZZLES under Jim Tuite's tires. He pulls his banged-up Trooper off the road into the unlit parking lot of a diner.

The diner's retro, neon and stainless steel kicking whatever light there is, silver streaks into the night. Ploughed snow sets in high clumps on the corners of the lot. Getting out, the snow CRUNCHES underfoot, like wet glass.

A darkness.

A beauty.

An eeriness.

THE VOICE

(out of the darkness)

Don't come any closer.

(CONTINUED)

256 CONTINUED:

256

TUITE
(squinting)

O.K.

THE VOICE
I don't want you to see me.

Maybe there's a shape, a shadow out there.

TUITE
O.K.

THE VOICE
Look to your left.

TUITE
Where?
(seeing, more sensing really)
What is it?

Cartons, boxes, stuff. Getting wet.

THE VOICE
Everything I've got. The name of every
vet. Addresses, records, medical
histories, symptoms, neoplasms, treatment
--- lack of treatment. Their deaths.
(and)
Everything I've left.

TUITE
Left?

THE VOICE
They've accessed my computer, my files.
Stuff's disappearing. They're warning
me.

TUITE
Come on. What are you talking about?

THE VOICE
They can fire me. I have kids. God,
knows what else.

TUITE
Who?

THE VOICE
My data's official, but it'll never be
confirmed now. We'll never get an
accurate number of those who've died.

(CONTINUED)

256 CONTINUED: (2)

256

Silly cloak and dagger stuff, but there's an edge of the willies to it. Fear, brokenness.

TUI TE

This is nuts --

THE VOICE

We could all be in danger. You too.

(and now)

Good-bye.

The shadowy figure starts to go this aging, agitated, suddenly scared Vietnam vet in some beaten up parka and silly faux-fur cap who has cared so much.

TUI TE

(calling after him)

Whattaya going to do?

THE VOICE

Keep my job. See my family. Learn their names again.

TUI TE

What about when a vet calls?

THE VOICE

I don't know.

TUI TE

They need you. You know them. You know things I don't.

THE VOICE

One-- John Greene-- he died. The VA turned him away. His wife and his little kid....

TUI TE

Whattaya going to do... say no?

There is no answer.

The shape is gone.

The freezing, miserable rain.

The willies.

257 INT. FEDERAL BLDG - MERIDIAN MISS - JAN. 21, 1994 - DAY

257

The subcommittee of the House Committee on Veteran's Affairs continues, an unheralded, remarkable Congressman from Alabama, GLEN BROWDER asking Ammie West:

(CONTINUED)

257, CONTINUED:

GLEN BROWDER

Did you contact the VA or did they
contact you?

AMMIE WEST

I contacted them...

GLEN BROWDER

Have you talked to anybody from the Department
of Defense?

AMMIE WEST

No.

GLEN BROWDER

The Department of Defense has not contacted
you?

AMMIE WEST

No, sir.

GLEN BROWDER

Have you talked to anybody from the Department
of Health and Human Services?

AMMIE WEST

No, as far as anybody contacting me, no. It
has been the other way around. I have had to
do the initial calling. And a lot of places,
you know, it has just been dead-ends... They
say, "Well, Mrs. West, do not worry about it,
I do not think you have got a problem."

*
*
*

258 OMIT

258*

259 INT. CAPITOL SENATE CLOAKROOM - JULY 3, 1994

259*

With Tammy Boyer, Jim Tuite steamrollers in. Bunches of LAs,
AAs are about. The floor of the Senate is through the next
doorway one way. The other way is the rounded ceiling, the
chunks of gold leaf, the great chandeliers. The busts of Taft,
Clay, Webster, LaFollette. He corners JEFF BRADFORD, who works
for Senator Jay Rockefeller.

*
*
*
*

Bartlett's lean and young and wears glasses, a grey and white
striped shirt, a tie, but no jacket.

(CONTINUED)

259 CONTINUED:

259

TUIITE

What the hell is going on?

BRADFORD

The Amendment's been pulled. It's not coming to a vote.

TUIITE

What are you talking about?

BRADFORD

You didn't tell us all this research money was in the bill.

TUIITE

That's not true.

BRADFORD

This is the first we've heard of it.

TUIITE

That's not true.

He's often had a strut and always, positive or negative, an intensity. This is something else. His bull neck threatens to erupt out of his shirt. Tendons jut. His face is --- and he's seeing red.

BRADFORD

One hundred million dollars!

TUIITE

No no no, it's sixty million dollars over three years. Twenty million a year.

BRADFORD

That's not what we agreed to.

TUIITE

I sent you --

MARCIA TIMMERMAN

(interrupting)

And I sent it back to you Jim saying it was 60 pages and you couldn't expect to bad mouth the DOD for 10 or 20 of them --

Marcia Timmerman works for Rockefeller and was at his hearing. She wears a Hillary Clinton wardrobe and build, low to the ground. Her smile can quickly, suddenly disappear and carry her face into a droop. Fatigue, stress, overwork. A staffer's malaise.

(CONTINUED)

259, CONTINUED: (2)

TAMMY

-- Even if it's true --

MARCIA TIMMERMAN

It doesn't matter if it's true -- and expect
Senator Nunn, the Chairman of the Armed
Services Committee to bring it to the floor,
not to mention vote for it --

TUIITE

That's old news. We took it out --

BRADFORD

But not the money.

TUIITE

We need the research. The vets need --

MARCIA TIMMERMAN

-- Senator Rockefeller can't support it --

TUIITE

-- Senator Rockefeller already supports
it --

MARCIA TIMMERMAN

-- Not any more --

TUIITE

-- What are you talking? --

Timmerman's smart, Tuite's smart, all of them are smart --- but
they'd be screaming if the Senate floor wasn't feet away.

BRADFORD

It's dead. It's not even coming to a vote
unless --

TUIITE

Unless what?

BRADFORD

Unless, I don't know, we slash the
dollars. Slash them.

TUIITE

You can't --

BRADFORD

Maybe ten million --

TUIITE

-- Ten million a year won't pay for shit -

(CONTINUED)

BRADFORD

-- No ten million total --

TUITE

-- That's ~~nothing~~ --

BRADFORD

-- That's the only thing that has a
chance of passing --

TUITE

-- It won't buy a cup of coffee for the
vets who are sick, not to mention dying --

BRADFORD

-- It's all we can hope for --

TUITE

-- I can hope for a lot more than --

MARCIA TIMMERMAN

Senator Rockefeller did you a big favor and
invited Senator Riegle to testify at our
committee hearing and he took over. I saved
the note.

What is she talking about?

TAMMY

-Note? What note?

MARCIA TIMMERMAN

Senator Rockefeller passed a note to
Riegle saying he was going to have to
leave and could he wind up so Rockefeller
could ask -- and he didn't. The Senator
bent over backwards for Riegle and Riegle
took over, I saved the note.

Unleashed, the grudge absolutely fresh as new. Out there; they
all are. So much so all there's left is violence or silence.
Barely, they pick the latter.

BRADFORD

Senator Riegle's a lame duck. He's not
running for re-election--

TUITE

--What does that have to do--?

MARCIA TIMMERMAN

--He's out of it--

(CONTINUED)

TUITE

--He's not out of it. He's still
fighting--

BRADFORD

--Whatever the reason, he's history and--

MARCIA TIMMERMAN

We are the only ones left to fight. Not
him. Not you.

BRADFORD

This is the only thing that'll pass.

The clincher. The only thing that's left:

TUITE

(to Tammy)

Come on.

260 INT. CAPITOL - OUTSIDE OF THE SENATE - A MOMENT LATER

Jim and Tammy retreat back across the circular marble foyer, past the chandeliers, the gold leaf, the busts. So much slower.

TUITE

... What happened?...

TAMMY

(devastated)

Senator Riegle will be gone. They don't really care about the issue... There's no one else. How can that be?

(and)

It's over...

She walks away leaving Jim Tuite in bewilderment turning to defeat turning to grief.

261 INT. JERRILINN'S HOUSE - CU JERRILINN - DAY - LATER

261

reads from the Bible, Isaiah and Ecclesiastes, in a room drenched with light. She stops now, looks up.

JERRILINN

Is it the light? Is it?

262 WIDEN - INT. JERRILINNS' HOUSE

262

She crosses to her unconscious, convulsing brother. He's tied down with restraints. A harrowing, harrowing sight. Carefully, she puts sunglasses on over his tender, unconscious eyes and he calms down.

He is no longer Jeran Gallimore the body-builder who ate carefully, didn't drink or smoke. He is no longer Jeran.

The room has been made over with a hospital bed and some of his things. A toy motorcycle. Blow up barbells. His cowboy hat. An American flag. The curtains blow. A flowering cactus.

A nurses aide comes in. Jerrilinn watches her prepare her brother's already completely poked arm: 2 IV's in each one, plus face, hands, even toes. Simply; very simply, oh so simply:

JERRILINN

No. No more. We're not going to do it anymore.

263 OMIT

2

264 INT. JERRILINNS' HOUSE - OUTSIDE THE ROOM - SOME TIME LATER 264*

Jerrilinn's there, Jeran's mother is there, Tater is there and his fiancée Lee Ann, Jerrilinn's husband David, a couple of other vets, including Ned Brisby, and confined to a wheelchair -- a long, long way from the girl in a maillot --- sick also, and barely recognizable, ROSCA STEPHANOPOLIS. And a PASTOR. *

PASTOR

You need to all gather round him and tell him that you love him. You need to tell him it's o.k. and you're going to be o.k. He needs to stop this struggle. It's time for him to go home and he needs to know that you all love him.

One by one they file into the sun-drenched room. The door closes behind them.

265 INT. JERRILINNS' HOUSE - THE DOOR (LOOKING IN) 265*

has a window.

They gather around the bed and they take each other's hands and one by one they go up to the man in the sunglasses and talk to him of their love and that it is o.k.

The last is Jerrilinn. She leans over her brother, she whispers into his ear, and she takes off the sunglasses. The light is bright and brightening, and she places her hands over Jeran's eyes.

The light is blinding.
The light is everything until there is only WHITE

266 VETERAN INTERVIEW 266

The vet is Todd Richmond.

TODD RICHMOND

I have a 1-year-old son that is suffering with some of the signs that I have...

With all these veterans that are dying, it's really hard, you know, really tough, to see if I'm going to make it, if other veterans are going to make it, if kids are going to, if wives are going to. It's really tough.

267 OMIT 267*

268 EXT. JERRILINN'S HOUSE - TEXAS

26

Men pick up a flag-draped coffin. Jeran's. The pallbearers, including Tater, lift the coffin above their heads and carry it through the cornfield. Jeran's mother and Jerrilinn and Kourtney, now almost three, come behind.

The sadness is so supreme it transforms into a sorrowful joy they all share. A mark of this young 25-year-old man and his life.

The coffin and the American flag atop it disappears into the corn --- toward a distant church and steeple.

MRS. HESTER ADCOCK (V.O.)

I am the mother of Army Specialist Michael C. Adcock, a 22-year-old gulf War veteran -- Michael served in Desert Storm from January 18, 1991 until May 19, 1991, arriving home May 23, 1991. He was attached to 9002 Transportation Battalion, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.

The corn. The coffin appearing and disappearing. The autumn leaf Kourtney laid on it. The church.

269 VETERAN INTERVIEW

269

Mrs. Hester Adcock speaks for her son:

MRS. HESTER ADCOCK (CONT'D)
(continuing where she didn't
before)

Exactly 11 months to the day after returning from the Gulf Michael died of multiple cancers -- T-cell lymphoblastic high-grade non-Hodgkin's lymphoma with pleural effusion and leukemia. His death certificate states from approximate time of onset until time of death, 1 year. This puts Michael in the middle of the war zone.

Michael became ill early in January 21, 1991, after being near Al-Jubail on the night of January 20, 1991 where three Scud attacks had occurred and chemical alarms sounded. Michael reported to the 8th Evac hospital on January 25, 1991 presenting with rectal bleeding, only to be told he probably had hemorrhoids. He was given Motrin, although the examination physician wrote in Michael's military records requesting surgery consult. My son was

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

269 CONTINUED:

269

MRS. HESTER ADCOCK (CONT'D)
never referred to a surgeon...

My son was a very patriotic young man. He loved his country, family and God. I ask you today how much did my country appreciate my son? He wore his Army uniform proudly. He was a brave and courageous soldier. Had Michael died on the battlefield, I would not be sitting here asking any questions. War is war, but now I must admit I am angry and I need and want answers now. I feel that my son died a senseless, needless and very painful death. Why? Will I never get an answer?

Our family's loss cannot be measured by mere words. My jewel is gone forever.

I thank God for the thousands of beautiful memories that I have of my son. However, the way my son died still haunts me. Michael's deathbed wish was for me to fight for him and fight for all of his comrades. After this request, a few short hours later, Michael slipped into a coma. He died 7 days later. Fight I must: one young life is too many to lose.

270 A TROOPER - EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. - NIGHT

270

makes a sudden, spurting, SCREECHING turn, swinging Lisa Tuite.

LISA
Where are you going?

TUITE
I don't know.

But he must know, his driving headlong. She has to hold on to the dashboard and door. She's very pregnant, and the sudden acceleration is no picnic.

LISA
Practicing the route to the hospital?

She sees now where he's heading --- oncoming, lit up, swathed and glowing like a monument, which in a way it is, an old awkward, sprawling, painted home that has become a symbol.

The White House.

Pulling up, Jim Tuite's out of the car. Slowly, awkwardly, pregnantly, Lisa goes after him.

LISA
What are you doing?

TUITE
Thinking of climbing the fence.

(CONTINUED)

LISA

That'd be smart. Get you real far.

TUITE

If I got to the President --- It'd be so easy to help. Just admit it. That would be something.

; (and)

That's what the guys want most. To be told they're not crazy, not malingerers, that their country cares about them.

Something about his intensity draws a White House cop.

LISA

It's all right officer he's with me.

(as in, "pregnant women are harmless")

Let's get going. Or my water may break right here.

271 INT. TROOPER - MOMENTS LATER

271

They ride again through the light-splotched dark, as if going in and out of tunnels.

LISA

Why do they deny it Jim?

TUITE

Looks like shit, smells like shit, tastes like shit, but I say it's not. So it's not.

LISA

What's the point?

TUITE

It's their nature --- and there's no smoking gun. So maybe they can wait it out and get away with it. The DOD, DIA, VA, CIA -- they're lifers. Politicians, even Senators and Presidents come and go.

(now the list)

It's not a sexy issue -- the media could give a damn. Alabama, the Hartford Courant, but the Washington Post, the New York Times, they can't

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

271 CONTINUED:

271

TUITE (CONT'D)
even find the story.

It's the money, the possible billions of dollars it could cost to treat everybody.

It's the Pandora's Box -- if they open up the lid, what else will come out? That we can't protect our soldiers. That war in the 21st Century is going to be about invisible bullets that are more lethal than visible ones. Want to volunteer?

That we don't understand how fragile our immune systems are. What will break them down. What toxic cocktail. Chem, bio, pesticides, depleted uranium, legionnaire's disease, AIDS, sucking in oil fires, breathing in certain rat shit, hell breathing in our air.

*
*
*

LISA
Gives me a headache.
(and)
Maybe it's too much for anybody to get hold of.
(and)
Maybe it's time to let it go.

TUITE
.....No.

The great white lights of the city have fallen behind them. They ride-into the darkness.

And there is only BLACK
until children's VOICES

272 INT. VANDERBILT OFFICE - DAY - SOME TIME LATER

272

At work at her new job, Teri Small answers the phone:

TERI
This is Teri.
(and)
Yes, this is Teri Small... Yes, I'm sure...
Ex-husband -- and you are?...
(a mite sarcastic)
Well, aloha. Wait a minute -- an MP? What is the problem? What is this about?
(surprise and chagrin)
AWOL! That's not Chris Small. I knew you could lose paper work all right, but people too. Maybe you'd better do your head count again.
(and)
No, I haven't heard from him. No, I don't
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

272, CONTINUED:

272

TERI (CONT'D)
expect to.
(and)
Mahalo to you too.

273 INT. APARTMENT - NEAR VANDERBILT - NIGHT

273

Teri's changing the bed, still with a rash. Once again the PHONE:

TERI
This is Teri.
(and)
Yes, Teri Small... I know, I heard. AWOL.
Talk to your other MPs... What? You're from
where? Walter Reed?
(slowly amused)
I hate to tell you, he's in Hawaii --
though they think he's missing too.

Moving closer, she listening closer, the caller from Walter Reed is becoming AUDIBLE. Suddenly, heart stopping:

WALTER REED (V.O.)
No, he was medi-vaced from Hawaii.
(she's stunned)
You see... there may be a problem... the
Army's setting up a medical panel to test sick
Gulf vets... and Chris Small was one of them.
(she's stunned)
And now he's disappeared.

She's shaking, starting to cry, what in year's ahead she will laughingly and accurately label "bawling." So much, so too late.

The doorbell RINGS --- and she can't move. Barely:

TERI (CONT'D)
Can you please hold?

Leaving the phone, she goes to the front door and grabs it and instantly closes it again. Opens it again then.

It's the man who's AWOL, her ex-husband, Chris Small.

274 INT. TUIITE APARTMENT - DAY

274

Jim Tuite works in the cramped quarters at a computer, his life stacked all around. The wall has the maps from his Senate office.

The tiny, jammed space is also the bedroom. Feminine and masculine in an absurd mix. Pick a gender --- and there's such underwear scattered about. Black hand-weights and white lace pillows, earrings and a hunky i.d. bracelet, perfume and a revolver.

(CONTINUED)

274 CONTINUED:

274

The computer HUMMS E-mail CLACKS. Neoplasms. The Downwind Theory. The list --- the registry of vets --- prints out. Not so different from the Vietnam Memorial. The Wall.

TUIITE

(answer the phone)

Jim Tuite.

THE VOICE (V.O.)

(he's back)

I found George Grass.

275 INT. OMNI SHOREHAM HOTEL - 2500 GAIVERT ST N.W. - MAY 5 1996 - DAY 275

The Presidential Advisory Committee on gulf War Veterans' Illnesses convenes. JOYCE C. LASHOF, M.D., Committee Chair, and --- in walks a man with his wife, Rosemary, we have not seen in a long time, SGT. GEORGE GRASS.

He wears a tropical, short-sleeve shirt with the Marine Gunnery Sergeant's chevrons on it. No tie. Rosemary has long, blonde, plaited hair and wears a red dress with a black belt.

And Jim Tuite is there.

GUNNERY STG. GRASS

I, Gunnery Sergeant George J. Grass, United States Marine Corps, do make the following statement: upon my arrival in Southwest Asia, I was assigned as NBC Fox Recon Vehicle Commander, Serial No.5604, for 1st Marine Division, Task Force Ripper.

(JUMP CUT)

Approximately 24 to 48 hours prior to the breaching operations, all of the Fox vehicles were sent to the Northern Division Support Center for a final operations and functions test. These tests included checking and verifying the Mobile Mask Spectrometer for accuracy... all of the Fox vehicles assigned to 1st Marine Division were fully functional and accurate.

(the image of his Fox flashes)

The following day the smoke from the oil fires made daylight hours look completely black.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

275. CONTINUED:

GUNNERY STG. GRASS (CONT'D)

On 28 February 1991... while monitoring for chemical agent vapors and an ammunition storage area next to the 1st Battalion 5th Marines pause or location, the alarm on the computer was set off with a full distinct spectrum across the monitor and a lethal vapor concentration of S-MUSTARD. We we drove the Fox vehicle closer

(S-MUSTARD flashes)

to the dug-in bunkers and fully visible were the skull and cross bones either on yellow tape with red lettering or stenciled to the boxes or some had a small sign with the skull and crossbones painted on it. On top of the boxes were artillery shells. A full and complete spectrum was taken and printed... As we continued driving to the ammo storage area, the alarm sounded again. The chemical agent HT-MUSTARD with a lethal dose came up across the monitor.

(Jim Tuite's nightmare flashes)

The alarm sounded once more showing a positive reading of BENZENE BROMIDE. Again, a full spectrum was completed and printed as evidence of vapor contamination. Positive readings of S-MUSTARD, HT-MUSTARD, and BENZENE BROMIDE were all within a hundred yards of each other near grid coordinates QT 766395.

(JUMP CUT)

It was determined that I would meet an explosives ordnance team at 0700 at Division headquarters located at Kuwait International Airport and escort them to the ammo storage area the next morning. I gave my superior officers all of the printed out Mass Spectrometer spectrum tickets taken from the positive readings at Jaber Airfield and ASP. I never saw those tickets again.

(the EOD team flashes)

When the explosive ordnance team finally arrived, I escorted them to where the chemical weapons were detected. Upon arrival, the EOD team donned full protective equipment and entered the area... Upon completion... they deconned themselves and verbally acknowledged the presence of chemical weapons in the storage area.

(JUMP CUT)

This particular ammo bunker... wasn't easily accessible. I had to go off the road... they had a

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GUNNERY STG. GRASS (CONT'D)

dug-in fancy looking Winnebago at the front of this ammunitions storage area right here... there were gates. It was all bermed up with sand all over the place. Our alarm went off, and S-MUSTARD came right across the screen in a full force, the whole time that we were doing a background check on it... As a matter of fact, we had to turn the alarm off because, if we didn't, it was going to continue alarming. Sitting on top of the open boxes were artillery shells either from Jordan, Holland or the United States..

DR. TAYLOR

Did you keep a log or notes during your time that you were over in the Gulf?

*

GUNNERY STG. GRASS

Yes, sir, I have that right here, too...

DR. TAYLOR

So, I guess, the question then as a follow-up would be were there people in this area during the time that you recognized that these levels were lethal concentrations?...

(CONTINUED)

275 CONTINUED: (3)

GUNNERY STG. GRASS

There were all kinds of people, yes,
ma'am.

The man is simple yet remarkable, very American, born-again.
He's completely prepared and what he says is devastating.

Makes for Jim Tuite --- a measure of hope and vindication and
even victory....

Now the spokesmen for the Department of Defense. Lt. Colonel
Nalls and Colonel Sanitsky, another who was at Jim Tuite's
encounter at the DOD. *

JOYCE C. LASHOF

Thank you very much. Lieutenant Colonel
Nalls?

LT. COL. NALLS

At this time, after an extensive investigation
into the events surrounding this particular
incident, we are unable to substantiate that
this event occurred, as originally recorded in
the 2nd Division monograph.

To quote the 11th Marines Command chronology,
"During combat operations, the regimen
experienced 14 incidents of chemicals being
detected which resulted in an increased MOPP
level. All proved to be false. This was mainly
due to battlefield conditions that included
heavy smoke and an oil mist from the burning
oil fields that caused sensors and detectors
to give false alarms."

DR. LARSON

Could I ask just about the specific
incident about Gunnery Sergeant Grass had
talked about. That is not in the 30 that
you have investigated yet; is that
correct? *

LT. COL. NALLS

No, ma'am. That is one of the -- actually,
there are several incidents that he made
reference to that are all being investigated.
We are taking every one of those seriously --

DR. LARSON

But you said that every instance where a
chemical detection caused the unit to upgrade
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

275 CONTINUED: (4)

DR. LARSON (CONT'D)

to a higher MOPP level was determined to be a false alarm. Does that include the ones that he reported?

LT. COL. NALLS

That statement came from the 11th Marines. He was not part of the 11th Marines.

DR. LARSON

I was just trying to get an answer to the question... and that is what would it take -- and here is a credible, active-duty person testifying saying something, but what you are saying is, if there isn't, for whatever reason, either lost, burned up, whatever, not a paper trail, then that is never confirmed as true...

DR. NISHIMI

... If you don't have that confirmatory information, chemical casualties, logs, whatever, then there were no exposures. Is that a correct--

COL. SANITSKY

Once we get all of the facts together, then it can be looked at.

*
*
*

(CONTINUED)

275 CONTINUED: (5)

275

DR. CAPLAN

...The previous testimony said that the Fox vehicle was unparalleled as a moving chemical laboratory. Why isn't that sufficient?

COL. SANITSKY

...It is a very complicated system, and it is not that simple, and it is a qualitative system, not a quantitative system. So it can't tell you exactly levels that are out there.

DR. LARSON

I would like to ask what would you say was evidence of confirmation that you would accept? Is there such a thing, and at this point in time, isn't it highly unlikely that you will ever be able to confirm exposure?

Colonel Koenigsberg does not respond.

276 INT. CHRIS & TERI SMALL'S HOUSE - TENNESSEE - NIGHT

276

Military housing is long gone, so is Teri's apartment. Where they live now is equally tiny, but individual. Homey, funky.

TERI

I'm going up.

CHRIS

I'll be with you in a minute.

He moves through the house turning off lights. Amber pools extinguishing one by one.

After all their battles --- the fights, the struggles with the doctors and the military, the divorce --- there's a quietness now.

This is aftermath.

CHRIS

What is it?

TERI

Just a little short of breath.

A lot short of breath. He's found her stalled on the stairs. Trying to hide gasping.

(CONTINUED)

276 CONTINUED:

276

CHRIS

Here let me help you.
(she starts to laugh)
What?

TERI

I don't know.
(but she does)
The way tables have turned. You having
to help me. Isn't it pitiful?

CHRIS

Nonsense.

TERI

It's true.

CHRIS

(throwaway yet deeper)
Teresa Small...

TERI

Yeah?

CHRIS

Glad to do it.

TERI

(throwaway yet touched)
How are you?

CHRIS

Oh, an ache here, a pain there.

TERI

Joints?

CHRIS

Yeah.

TERI

Check.
(and)
The burning...

CHRIS

Yeah.

TERI

Double check.
(after some steps)
What about making love?

(CONTINUED)

276 CONTINUED: (2)

276

CHRIS

The day will come.

A long, long, long way from pouring bourbon and CNN.

They look at each other---and he puts his arm around her and, slowly, together, they go up the steps.

277 INT. BEDROOM - A SHORT TIME LATER

277

She lies in bed and he brings a water and pills. She reaches her hand out --- it's peeling, as if she has impetigo or worse; leprosy or scleroderma. The crawling oatmeal.

His hand too.

CHRIS

Here.

TERI

Thanks... I'll feel better in the morning.

CHRIS

I'm right here.

She takes the pills, drinks, and he turns out the light.

ALEX (O.S.)

-Mommy --

278 INT. ALEX'S BEDROOM - MINUTES LATER

278

Alex, four-and-a-half now, is sitting up, CALLING. Coming in:

CHRIS

Alex, what is it?

ALEX

Mommy, where's Mommy?

CHRIS

She's asleep, honey.

ALEX

I haded a bad dream.

CHRIS

What was it?

ALEX

I don't knowed. Where's my nightmare box?

(CONTINUED)

She tends to add "'ed" to her verbs, make them past tense. He picks up a lacquered box beside her bed:

CHRIS

Right here. Want me to put it in?

ALEX

Don't let any others out!

CHRIS

Not to worry..

ALEX

I think there maybe monsters in my bed.

CHRIS

(searching)

Hmmmmmm, I can't find any.

ALEX

Am I going to getted sick again?

CHRIS

The amoxycillin's helping. Your fever's gone. No rash today. No gunk in your lungs.

Alex doesn't know what else to say, except what she's meant all along:

ALEX

Don't leaved me.

CHRIS

Your bed's not big enough for both of us, Alexandra.

ALEX

Daddy --

(the light bulb)

You canned sleep on the floor. Will you? Canned you? Please?

CHRIS

(laughs)

Only if you-will go-to-sleep.

ALEX

I promise.

Victorious, she settles back, shuts her eyes and pretends. Lying down for Chris isn't so quick, such an easy task.

(CONTINUED)

278 CONTINUED: (2)

278

And guess what? Soon enough Alex peers over the side of the bed to make sure he's there. Warningly:

CHRIS

Alex.

She vanishes. All's quiet. He closes his eyes. Then:

ALEX (O.S.)

Daddy...?

CHRIS

Yeah?

Her hand appears.

ALEX (O.S.)

Will you holded my hand?

This is what children do to you, make and break your heart, and lead your emotions to slaughter and to a sweetness and a splendor you never knew you were capable of.

279 INT. ALEX'S BEDROOM - LATER STILL

279

Teri comes in and sees them, her sleeping daughter and her sleeping husband and their linked hands.

She goes out and comes back with a blanket and covers Chris. Goes and comes again ----- and this time she settles down below her daughter and beside her husband, behind him, spooning, under the blanket together.

A long way from the oystery moon or that first sexy oystery bed. Gone. Not forgotten. But never to return. Something else, something more now.

The three of them together in Alex's room.

280 INT. FEDERAL BLDG - 2ND FLR - MERIDIAN, MISS - JAN. 21, 1994 - DAY 280

The hearing of the House Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs continues, Congressman Steve Buyer speaking.

STEVE BUYER

It is not very easy to come forward in a public forum to discuss matters that are so private... my wife and I had dreamed of having a third child and I said we are not going to have a third child not only because of the exposures but of all the injections and the anthrax and botulisms and nerve agent pills. You know, the body, God's gift...

he body.

He trails off.

*

281 EXT. JERRILINN'S HOUSE - SOME TIME LATER

281*

opens. A young MAN, WESLEY FINSTER approaches Jerrilinn in the *
garden. The corn is being tilled. *

WESLEY

Do you remember me, Ma'am?

JERRILINN

I'm afraid --

WESLEY

I heard about Jeran and -- I'm sorry.

JERRILINN

Yes... thank you... would you like to come
in?

Heartfelt yet aching, empty.

WESLEY

Thank you, Ma'am.

282 EXT. PORCH

282*

Jerrilinn and Jeran's mother's there. She looks older, paler,
ill. Some losses go beyond grief; they can't be measured. The
toll preempts the will to live. She doesn't, maybe can't get
up.

WESLEY

Hey, Ma'am. Wesley Finster. I was in
seventh grade when Jeran was a senior.

The mention of her son animates Jeran's mother. She comes to life.

WESLEY (CONT'D)

He was the good-guy and I was always getting
into trouble. But even I liked him. You
couldn't help it.

(and)

Guess what I did today -- And I kept thinking
of him. I'm making a future for myself.

Jerrilinn watches her mother: is there something of her
brother here in this young man? A humor, a spirit, a gift to
give. A protege. Some possible resurrection.

MRS. GALLIMORE

Oh, you are? Well, that's great. What
are all these big plans that you have for
yourself, young man?

(CONTINUED)

282 CONTINUED:

282

WESLEY

I just came from a recruiter's office and
I'm going to join the Marines.

Tears can well, they can roll. These pop --- burst like anger:

MRS. GALLIMORE

Don't you dare. Don't you dare do that. Go back
down there and do whatever it takes. To get out.

Wesley Finster's completely taken aback and Jeran's mother
doesn't stop:

MRS. GALLIMORE (CONT'D)

Sit down. I want to tell you a story --

283 INT. TUIITE APARTMENT - SEPTEMBER 18, 1996 - DAY (INTER-CUT)

283

A CRY and Jim Tuite has to get up from his computer. It's the
baby and he goes to her and picks her up and the phone RINGS.
Baby in one hand, phone in the other:

TUIITE

Hello.

VOICE (O.S.)

This is Philip Shenon of the New York Times. We
have word the Pentagon today is going to admit
that American troops in Desert Storm were
exposed to chemical weapons when they blew up
a concrete bunker at Kamisiyah --

The doorbell RINGS.

TUIITE

What?

(and)

Yes!

(RING)

That's just the beginning.

(RING)

Just one minute.

He carries the baby, he carries the phone, he manages the door.
A MAN'S there, a REPORTER:

REPORTER

I'm with the Washington Post and I understand you --

The phone, the baby, and the man who stood in the shadow of
Presidents and never gave up.

His face.

284 A CLOSET DOOR - SOME TIME LATER (INTER-CUT)

284

opens, not unlike Steve Buyer's closet in Indiana so long and yet not so long ago. Not a big closet and not full. Two bulky Air Force uniforms, one dress. Clean and neat and big in size for a big man, a weight-lifter. What Jeran once was.

MRS. GALLIMORE (CONT'D)

I want to tell you about my boy --

A hand pulls them out and carries them down the hall Jeran walked with Jerrilinn so long and not so long ago and

285 EXT. JERAN'S TRAILER - WACO, TEXAS - NIGHT

285*

Out the front door and plops them on the grass. They are not the first. There's an older set, Vietnam era, and an older set still, World War II. Jeran's father's and grandfather's.

MRS. GALLIMORE (V.O.)

-- who wanted nothing more in this world --

286 THE CLOSET - A MOMENT LATER

286

The hand returns and takes the set of boots on the floor. Well-worn and yet well-shined. Some dust. The hand swipes it off. The boots, like the uniforms, make their way down the hall.

MRS. GALLIMORE (V.O.)

-- than to serve his country, like his father and his grandfather--

287 EXT. JERAN'S TRAILER - WIDEN

287*

It's Jerrilinn carrying them also --- Out the front door and onto the pile of uniforms.

MRS. GALLIMORE

-- Make his Mama proud.

288 WHAT LOOKS LIKE PEE - A MOMENT LATER

288

glimmers in the night, streaming onto the uniform. It comes from a can of charcoal lighter in Jerrilinn's hand.

289 THE NEW YORK TIMES - JUNE 16, 1997 (INTER-CUT)

289

Prints out in extreme close up:

A new government report has harshly criticized the Pentagon and a special White House panel over their investigation of the illnesses reported by veterans of the 1991 Persian Gulf war and has found that there is "substantial evidence" linking nerve gas and other

(CONTINUED)

289 CONTINUED:

289

chemical weapons to the sorts of health problems seen
among the veterans.

290 A MATCH - CLOSE UP (INTER-CUT)

290

strikes

291 THE UNIFORMS

291

erupt in flame. The light from it paints Jerrilinn's face.
There are no tears here. There are no tears now.

The Closer.

292 THE FLAMES (STOCK FOOTAGE) (MONTAGE)

292

become the oil fires.

The flames become the faces of the men and women who served.
The flames become the husband and wives and children of those
who served.

The flames become SNAPS, Jeran's photographs.

The flames, like Dewey Canyon, become the medals of those who
served.

The flames become their VOICES, their laughter, their singing,
their pain, their vows and their prayers

(CONTINUED)

292 CONTINUED:

292

The flames become dark with smoke --- until night is day and day is night.

148 Americans died in Desert Storm, a third from Friendly Fire.

The total estimated number suffering medical symptoms since coming home now exceeds 100,000.

No one knows how many have died. The military, the DOD and the VA claim they can't tally such a statistic.

The lowest estimate is 4,000. The highest has reached 10,000.

The average age of those who've died is 29 years old.

