

Fifth Draft

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THE DEER HUNTER

final draft screenplay

by

Michael Cimino

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6/7/77

4. INT. BLAST FURNACE - DAWN

We see a CAST HOUSE CREW preparing to tap the furnace which rises into a spidery network of catwalks and girders and deftly swinging across the troughs. There are five of them, all of whom are young. They wear leather aprons, thick goggles and asbestos hoods which extend to the waist. Warped in heat waves and glistening with sweat they seem like figures in some hellish ballet. Since they all wear goggles it is hard to distinguish between them, but there are three, who are younger, who seem to work with particular grace. These are NICK, STEVEN and MICHAEL.

Michael takes up a long steel pole and rams it through the crust sealing the open tap hole at the base of the furnace. As the steel pole penetrates the crust there is a tremendous explosion of white-hot molten iron which gushes from the tap hole in a spectacular shower of sparks and pours into a deep trough in the brick floor. Nick slams open a heavy sluice gate and the molten iron roars out across the entire floor in a series of inter-connected channels. This last regulated by two men, one of whom is huge. He is AXEL. The other, STAN, who is the smallest man, watches as now the molten iron pours through gaping holes, into brick-lined "hot metal cars" waiting on railroad tracks below.

The heat is unbelievable, rising in waves, and as the men step back and forth across the lethal rivers of flowing iron the shapes of their bodies go through sudden, spectacular visual changes -- growing fat, growing thin, growing short, growing tall. Michael has about him an air of command, even of arrogance. He is the "Turn Foreman".

Close on Nick. The noise is deafening, the close presence of the furnace terrifying, and the white-hot molten iron continues gushing from the tap hole in bursts of spark and flame. Taking advantage of a slight pause, Michael jabs Nick with his pole and they both make cuckold's horns at Steven. Steven waves them off with his hand. Michael and Nick make the horns again and now Steven puts both hands on his hips and studiously ignores them. Michael and Nick begin laughing. Steven can't hold out and he begins laughing too, but now one of the troughs begins flowing and Axel turns to give them a look and they become all concentration again.

FADE CREDITS:

5. INT. RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH - ALTAR - EARLY MORNING

And it couldn't be more of a contrast. A young, prematurely balding PRIEST, two small ALTAR BOYS and an old CUSTODIAN are making preparations for a wedding ceremony. STEVEN'S MOTHER hovers close-by as the Priest unlocks a cabinet and takes out beautiful hand-made tapers and two golden crowns which will be used in the service. The Priest moves with precise, agonizing slowness and Steven's Mother is in the midst of a bad anxiety attack.

STEVEN'S MOTHER

It's all right? Everything's going to be all right?

PRIEST.

Yes.

STEVEN'S MOTHER

Are you sure everything's all right? You wouldn't lie to me?

PRIEST

(smiles gently)

No, MAMA.

STEVEN'S MOTHER

How many times does a first son get married?... Once.

The priest smiles again.

STEVEN'S MOTHER (cont)

It would snow...Everybody's going to slip. Everybody's going to slide... All the cars are going to crash!

Steven's Mother puts her hand to her mouth and bursts into tears.

STEVEN'S MOTHER (cont)

I can't believe this... My own boy... with a strange girl... and not so thin, if you understand my meaning... not such a thin girl... and next thing, two days later, he is going off to Vietnam! He enlisted! With those crazy friends of his, they enlisted! I don't understand, Father. No. I understand nothing anymore... Nothing, Father! Can you explain it all? Can anybody explain...

The priest gives his gentle smile again. He takes Steven's Mother, who is openly weeping now, in his arms and comforts her.

6. EXT. CHURCH, STARKWEATHER STREET - EARLY MORNING

A car lunges up the hill, gets about halfway and slides back. As the car disappears, the door to one of the tilting old houses bursts open and a group of giggling BRIDESMAIDS begins scampering across the street. They have all been working on their dresses, which are not completely finished, and they all carry ribbons and scissors and pieces of material. It is freezing cold and as they make their way to the other side of the slippery street they grab each other for support. An icy wind begins blowing. One of the bridesmaids loses her dress entirely and with everyone laughing she rushes back to retrieve it. When the garment is captured a door comes open and the bridesmaids disappear inside.

We hold on Starkweather Street for a moment. The snow slants across the boarded-up stores and piles on the gables of the tipsy little houses. Another car appears, lunges at the hill and slides back. Suddenly the door of one of the houses comes open and a group of OLDER NEIGHBORHOOD WOMEN emerge carrying a huge white wedding cake with a miniature bride and groom standing on the top. The older women are all in their fifties and sixties and bundled in dark overcoats, boots and babushkas. As they begin moving slowly up the street in the driving snow, shielding the great white cake between them, we see the onion-shaped domes of the church rearing over them all.

7. INT. STEEL MILL - CHANGING SHED - EARLY MORNING

Time clocks line the walls. As a whistle screams to mark the end of the graveyard shift thousand of steelworkers, many with their hard hats still on, goggles pushed over the top, and all of them grimy in thick layers of clothes and boots, begin checking out, streaming toward acres of parked cars or heading directly for the line of small, neon-lit bars which adjoin the mill along the entire length of a nearby block on the end of Division Street. Nick, Steven and Michael are right up in the front ranks and once they have clocked their cards they gather together in the streaming mass of men. We see them clearly for the first time: They are tall, strongly built, and there is a melancholy about their faces now, but this can be quickly washed out with a smile or a laugh. They are intelligent, sensitive, handsome faces, but very ethnic, very strong.

NICK

Where's Stan?

STEVEN

There's Axel!

(calls)

Hey, Axel!

Axel appears -- six and a half feet tall, huge and strong-muscled, but with a natural smile like an angel and a stomach as beamy as a coal barge -- changes course and plows across the river of departing steelworkers.

AXEL

How you feeling, Steven?

STEVEN

I feel okay.

AXEL

(poker faced)

You feelin' hot?

Steven punches Axel's arm. On closer view, Steven seems no longer a youth, but he is not yet a man: something about him is unfixed.

NICK
 (laughs, wraps an
 arm around Steven).
 Watch out, Axel. We'll be calling
 him "Old Fire Balls" after tonight...

AXEL
 Fuckin' A.

MICHAEL
 There's Stan!

OTHERS
 (calling)
 Stan! Over here! Stan!

MICHAEL
 Get him, Axel. Get Stan!

AXEL
 I'll get him.

Axel wades back into the stream of steelworkers, grabs Stan and they
 all push out together.

9. EXT. PARKING AREA - MAIN GATE - EARLY MORNING

The snow is still falling. It covers the ground. It covers the
 acres of begrimed cars. It swirls and tosses and blows. As the five
 friends come out into the parking lot they all stop dead in their
 tracks, staring into the grey sky.

STEVEN
 Lookit that! I never saw any-
 thing like that before... What
 the hell is it?

MICHAEL
 Sun dogs. Holy shit... sun dogs!

Everyone looks at Michael, then back up at the sky. Around the hazed
 winter sun is an enormous, perfect halo. At four equidistant points
 around the outer edge of the halo are four shimmering, faintly glow-
 ing disks, each one of which is a miniature reflection of the sun it-
 self.

The sight is so stunning that for a moment no one speaks.

AXEL
 What does it mean?

MICHAEL
 It means a blessing on the
 hunters sent by the Great Wolf
 to his children.

STAN

What the fuck are you talking about?

MICHAEL

It's an old Indian thing.

STAN

(half-believing)
You're full of shit.

MICHAEL

Would I shit about a thing like that?

STAN

Mike, there's sometimes nobody but a doctor can understand you.

MICHAEL

It's an omen. Jesus, could we have ourselves one great fuckin' hunting trip tonight!

NICK

Goddamn, Mike, I don't know where the hell you pick up all this shit.

STEVEN

Hey, wait a minute, Mike. What are you...? Are you thinking about going deer huntin'?

The others nod 'no', shrug. They are all embarrassed. They start heading towards Michael's car. A battered old shark-finned '59 Caddy Coupe de Ville.

STEVEN (cont)

Not tonight! I'm getting married tonight! You fuckin' guys would go up deer hunting tonight?

STAN

Hey. First we'd get you legal. Tuck you in bed with Angela. I mean, what the hell is wrong with that?

(to the others)

Right? Am I right?

AXEL

Fuckin' A.

STEVEN

(envious)

You guys are crazy. You know that? I mean, you guys are fuckin' nuts!

STAN

You're getting married... and we're nuts!

NICK

(arm around Steven)

It's all right. Hey, it's all right. We'll be right here, right with you. All of us.

(looks at the others)

Won't we? Right? Am I right?

MICHAEL

Right.

AXEL

Fuckin' A.

The others murmur agreement. Now Steven is embarrassed. He makes a gesture with his hand.

NICK

(with a laugh)

C'mon. C'mon, you guys! I'm buying the first round this morning.

They all come through the swirling snow to Michael's old Cadillac, all with their arms around Steven, laughing and joking, punching each other, but it's obvious they care about each other. They care.

STAN

Hey, Steven, any help you might need tonight--

STEVEN

(coldly)

Sometimes your sense of humor ain't funny, Stanley!

NICK

C'mon, Steven--

MICHAEL

Willing fingers--

STAN

Extra lips...

AXEL
Fuckin' A!

NICK
(sardonic)
You're a regular poet, Axel.

AXEL
I couldn't agree with you more!

9. INT. LEMKO VFW HALL - EARLY MORNING

The place is large and lovingly painted in glossy pastoral scenes of various conflicting shades, like a huge candy box. There are high arched windows along the outer walls. Across the floor from the entrance is a small arched stage with an enormous American flag hanging from the ceiling behind the arch. WOMEN are laying white paper tablecloths on trestle tables.

Plastered to the wall just above the arched stage are three large blow-ups of Nick, Steven and Michael. The blow-ups are high school vintage photos, patriotically edged with red, white and blue bunting. Above them is a caption: SERVING GOD AND COUNTRY PROUDLY.

As TWO OLD MEN on high ladders gingerly hold the bunting with trembling hands, TWO WWI VETS on the floor look up at them, their eyes peering up intently behind thick corrective glasses. The first vet has a single lens blacked out.

VET 1
Up I would say... What would you say?

VET 2
Up.

VET 1
(signals)
Up closer to Steven's picture!

The old men on the ladders adjust the bunting closer to Steven's picture. The two WWI vets on the floor study it.

VET 2
Down a bit I would say... What would you say?

VET 1
Down.

VET 2
(signals)
Down a bit.

Suddenly there is a commotion. The women who are setting the tables all rush to the door as the older women come in with the wedding cake. The older women are half-frozen and as they move toward the table in the middle of the room the cake receives a great chorus of ohh's and ahh's. Suddenly the oldest woman collapses. Everyone rushes to her aid, seats her in a chair and rubs her feet and hands. Someone comes up with a large glass of wine. The oldest woman takes the glass, tosses it off in one swallow and gives a great, ear-splitting grin.

10. EXT. STEEL MILL - PARKING AREA - EARLY MORNING

Michael's '59 Caddy careens across the parking area.

11. INT./EXT. CADDY - PARKING AREA - EARLY MORNING

Nick, Steven, Michael, Stan and Axel are all laughing. Michael is at the wheel. The wipers have made two broad arcs in the dirt on the windshield.

12. EXT. PARKING LOT - EARLY MORNING

The Caddy bangs over gaping potholes heading straight for the main gate which opens onto the narrow end of Division Street where it curves sharply under a railroad trestle. Obviously the caution sign is not going to be observed.

13. EXT. DIVISION STREET - EARLY MORNING

Michael careens through the gate and just as he does so a huge tractor trailer rig comes barrelling out of the underpass on his blind side to the right and swings wide to avoid him...

AXEL

Stand on it, Mike!

STAN

(to Axel)

You'd never do it.

AXEL

(threateningly)

Are you accusin' me?

MICHAEL

(shouting)

Shut the hell up! I'm trying to concentrate!

ALL

Go, Mike! Stand on it, babe!

14. INT. CADDY - EARLY MORNING

Michael is highballing it two wheels up on the sidewalk scraping the rock wall of the railroad trestle on his right. The tractor trailer is only inches away on his left, air horn blaring. There is not en-

ough room for both vehicles on the same narrow stretch of road.

Nick, who has been slammed against the window on the truck side, is studying the second hand on his watch. The others are all hollering at the truck and swearing. Michael half leans back against the seat, eyes on the road.

MICHAEL

How we doing?

NICK

Never happen! You can't make it!

Over this last, Nick pulls out his pick-up truck registration and throws over to Michael.

MICHAEL

What's that for?

NICK

Your Caddy against my pick-up truck.

MICHAEL

(all concentration)
Today your lucky day?

NICK

It's always my lucky day...

A telephone pole alongside the wall is coming up fast. Mike swerves out more onto the street, touching the truck, floors the accelerator, cuts back around the pole and then right, accelerates across the sidewalk, and suddenly cuts left in front of the speeding trailer rig. Steven's face drains of color.

15. EXT. JOHN WELCH'S BAR - EARLY MORNING

The tractor trailer misses the Caddy by a hairbreadth. The Caddy swaps ends three times around and comes to a sliding stop in the slush directly in front of the bar.

AXEL

Fuckin' A!

The angry blaring of the truck's air horn echoing in the air around them fades. Through the window of the car we see Axel, one eye still on the disappearing truck, his fist thrust forward in a victory salute. A loud cheer goes up... Michael hands Nick back his registration, gives his spare smile.

MICHAEL

I'd be taking advantage of you--
a million to one shot even money
against a sure thing.

NICK

There is no such thing as a
sure thing.

16. INT. STEVEN'S MOTHER'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

A plump, country-pretty girl with a solemn, round face and big brown eyes, leans forward into a mirror. She is ANGELA, Steven's bride-to-be. She is dressed in her white bridal gown and veil. She steps back from the mirror, standing in the middle of an unfamiliar room, looking down at her stomach. Her stomach is definitely swollen and Angela attempts, with no success, to suck it in.

ANGELA

Oh, God!

Now, she crosses back to the mirror and stares intently at herself.

ANGELA

(sincerely)

I do.

A pause. Angela scowls and tries it again.

ANGELA (cont)

(heartfelt)

I do.

Angela tries it a few more times. It sounds worse and worse.

ANGELA (cont)

I do, I do, I do!

Angela stares at herself again. Now she looks desperately alone and unrelievedly forlorn. Bursting into tears she throws herself on the bed. Someone has slipped a magazine photograph under the clothes piled in her beat-up cardboard suitcase. The photograph is face down and as Angela pulls it out she sees that something is written on the back:

ANGELA

(reading, slow)

"This is it -- more or less.

... Love, Mom."

Angela frowns, turns the magazine photograph over. It is a picture of Michaelangelo's "David". Angela stares at the figure for a long, long moment...

ANGELA (cont)

Oh, my God!

17. EXT. STEVEN'S MOTHER'S HOUSE - FRONT ENTRANCE - EARLY MORNING

Suddenly, Angela bursts outside, her bridal gown and veils swirling in the freezing wind. She runs up the steep, rickety wooden steps leading to the top of the hill, smoke swirling in the air above the bare tree tops. And beyond, the huge stacks of the blast furnaces belching smoke and flame tower above the tiny figure of the bride. An overbearing sense of her fragility in the vastness of the bleak industrial landscape.

18. INT. JOHN WELCH'S BAR - EARLY MORNING

The place is packed with boisterous steelworkers drinking boiler-makers. A television set blares above the bar. A well-known SPORTS COMMENTATOR is announcing that the Eagles are beating Oakland 14-0 at the half. Deerheads are mounted in long rows all around the bar, and hand-painted murals decorate the walls. The murals depict hunting scenes and sports scenes -- at once comical and frightening -- as if the animals held some secret from the hunters, some power beyond their own.

JOHN WELCH bangs out from behind the bar with an armload of beer pitchers. At the same moment Steven comes in with Michael, Nick, Axel and Stan. John, who is a great coarse bear of a youth, puts down his pitchers, wraps his arms around Steven and begins jumping him around the floor, a gap-toothed grin from ear to ear. He has skin that is rough and pebbly. Still he is, if not handsome, at least not ugly. He is a few years older than the others, big and strong-muscled like Axel, but after you watch him for a moment you notice his extraordinarily gentle eyes.

The steelworkers, to a man, all leave their bar stools and chairs and swarm around Steven, punching, joking and shouting congratulations over the noise of the football game.

NICK

(loudly)

Hey, I got a hundred bucks
says the Eagles never cross
the fifty in the next half--
and Oakland wins by 20!

STAN

(to all)

And I got an extra twenty
says the Eagles' quarterback
wears a dress!

AXEL

Fuckin' A!

He's already put down half a pitcher of beer and for no reason on earth that he can understand, Axel is suddenly crying.

1. INT. LINDA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING

LINDA is thin -- a fragile slip of a thing with a hauntingly lovely face. She is Nick's girlfriend, although we don't know this yet. Wearing her bridesmaid's dress she stands alone in the kitchen, staring at the ceiling. Thumping noises are coming from the room above. The thumping gets louder. There is a crash, then another crash, as if furniture were being thrown around. A MAN'S VOICE begins cursing and there is more thumping and crashing. Suddenly there is a thud... and then silence.

Linda bites her lip. She crosses to the stove, ladles stew into a bowl, butters bread, pours a cup of tea and puts it all on a tray.

20. INT. LINDA'S HOUSE - FATHER'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

The room is a wreck of broken furniture. Chairs are turned over, lamps are smashed and the pictures hang cockeyed on the wall. In the middle of the room, face down on the bed, is LINDA'S FATHER. His coat is torn, one shoe is missing and he holds a half-empty bottle in his hand. Behind him, through the open window, snow is blowing in fiercely. And in the distance, across the roofs of the other houses leading down to Commercial Street, the mill looms over the whole house, the whole town, the whole valley. Linda's father turns, stares at the acres of steelworkers' cars parked for the next shift. Linda comes in with the tray. She stands for a moment, expressionless, looking down at her father. Then she sets the tray on the bed and kneels beside him.

LINDA

Daddy?

FATHER

(mumbles, still
staring at all
the cars)

Go... fucking hell! I'll give
every car in the town a flat
tire. Every goddamned car.
I'll do it!

Linda reaches down, takes her father by the shoulder and lifts him up. It takes some effort and the face that comes up is gray, unshaven and implacably bitter. Saliva dribbles from his mouth, there is a cut with the stitches still in it seaming his forehead, and as Linda looks at him he begins cursing again, rolls out of bed...

FATHER (cont)

I fucking mean what I say, girl.
All around, like a sea! Like an
ocean of flat tires...

Linda gets up and closes the window subduing the incessant sound of the mill. She comes back, gets down on the floor beside her father and pushes him toward the bed. Then, hiking up her bridesmaid's

dress, she takes him by the shoulders again and heaves him onto the coverlet. The effort is almost too much for her. Tears begin to burn in her eyes, but when he slips back she tries again. Her father groans, begins to mumble, and then, when she almost has him on the bed, he suddenly flails his arm, catches her full in the face and knocks her across the room

Linda crashes backwards over a fallen chair and smashes into the wall. As she gets to her feet her father advances on her.

FATHER (cont)
Fucking bitch... all bitches!

He swings, slaps her in the face, hard.

LINDA
Daddy...! Daddy, it's me!

FATHER
Hate 'em. Fucking bitches!
I'll give 'em all flat tires...

Linda's father swings at her again, loses his balance and falls on the floor. Linda stands looking at him, holding her jaw. She is crying. Tears are streaming down her face.

20A. EXT. LINDA'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

Linda comes outside into the raw cold, down the stairway to the street, dogs barking in the wind.

21. OMITTED

22. EXT. ALLEY BEHIND JOHN'S BAR - EARLY MORNING

Steven's mother approaches wielding a length of two-by-four -- a roar of laughter comes from inside.

* 23. INT. JOHN'S BAR - EARLY MORNING

Michael, Nick, Steven, Axel and John are singing. A country-western tune blasting on the juke box is at top volume and the smoke is thick enough to cut with a Bowie knife. Now we see Stan, arguing loudly with a hulking TEAMSTER over the use of the pool table. Suddenly, from the back, comes a screech of female recrimination. The door to the kitchen bursts open and Steven's Mother appears, swinging her two-by-four. The steelworkers take one look, gulp their drinks, grab their hard hats and all rush for the doors, except for Stan, who pulls his gun on the Teamster. The two-by-four crashing down on tables and chairs. Pandemonium!!!

24. EXT. JOHN'S BAR - FRONT ENTRANCE - EARLY MORNING

The steelworkers all stream into the snow with Steven's mother, like an avenging angel, close behind still swinging her two-by-four.

Several parting blows are delivered and the howls of complaint are met with angry commands to hurry and get dressed for Steven's wedding.

Camera closes on Steven, who emerges with Nick and Michael. The cold hits him a sobering blow and he comes to a stop.

STEVEN

--Boy, this is it. This is really it. I mean... here I go.

NICK

(laughs)

No sense getting too relaxed, Steven.

AXEL

(stoned)

Fuckin' A.

They all share a laugh then go silent. Steven's mother hurries out of the alley. She is crying.

STEVEN'S MOTHER

My beautiful boy! My angel... who is leaving his own mother for a strange girl... a pregnant girl!

She throws herself in Steven's arms, sobbing.

STEVEN

Momma...

STEVEN'S MOTHER

So cold is your heart to do this to your own mother, a person who goes to mass twice a day all her life?

STEVEN

Momma, we'll be all right, we'll be right upstairs. We'll have a family again.

Steven throws a horribly embarrassed look to Nick and Michael. Axel just shrugs in a somewhat befuddled way. They all gesture with sympathy - and study the snow flakes.

STEVEN'S MOTHER

So cruel is your heart? Is your heart so uncaring? You marry this girl, leave me with her. Then you run off to Vietnam?

STEVEN

(a litany now)

One flight, Momma. It's one flight. I'll be living right upstairs when I come home.

(pauses)

I love Angela, Ma. She loves me.

STEVEN'S MOTHER

(after a silence)

Wear a scarf today.

STEVEN

I'm not wearing a scarf with a tuxedo. You don't wear a scarf with a tuxedo!

25. EXT. MICHAEL AND NICK'S TRAILER - DAY

The trailer is a dented two-tone silver job which looks as if it had been purchased third-hand off a construction site. It stands on cinderblocks in a small lot on the corner of a hill overlooking the town and the blast furnaces of the mill. A beat-up pick-up truck with rifle racks set in behind the seat is parked to the right. On the left is a bare-branched tree. View moves to reveal Michael's black '59 Caddy coming uphill toward the trailer. The Caddy makes a sliding stop. Michael gets out. He is wearing his rented tuxedo but wears his boots and carries his rented dress shoes. The sudden sight of him in a tuxedo is jarring. He mounts the cinderblock steps and pounds on the trailer door. Nick opens the door and motions him in.

26. INT. TRAILER - DAY

The place is cramped, littered with the two bachelors' garbage, but mostly hunting paraphernalia. A very beautiful deer head is mounted above the sink. Nick, who is half into his tuxedo, is applying waterproofing to a pair of heavy boots. Michael smiles, sits on the sink and tries on his rented patent leather shoes.

NICK

(smiling)

You trying to look like a prince?

MICHAEL

Whaddya' mean trying?

Nick shakes his head, laughs, continues waterproofing his hunting boots

MICHAEL

(indicates the waterproofing)

You should have put that on last night.

NICK

I know.

MICHAEL
That way it sets.

NICK
Yeah. I know that, Mike.

Pause.

MICHAEL
I just wait. You know?

NICK
Huh?

MICHAEL
I just wait. For this...it's what
I wait for... the mountains. It's
the only place I feel free. I wait
all year.

NICK
So do I. I guess.

MICHAEL
(sharp)
You do?

NICK
(nods)
Yeah. What the hell... I think
about that. I think about Vietnam.

Nick abruptly takes down his rifle and begins wiping the oil off it.

MICHAEL
You really think about it?

NICK
Yeah. I don't know...For Christ's
sakes, Mike, Steven's getting married
in a couple of hours... I don't know
what the hell we're even doing talking
about hunting a last time before the
army. Whole thing's crazy.
(silence - then to
no one in particular)
Fuck.

MICHAEL
I'll tell you one thing... If I found
out my life had to end up in the moun-
tains, it would be all right... you know.
(watches Nick for a moment)
But, it has to be there, in your mind.

NICK
What? One shot?

MICHAEL
(smiles)
Two is pussy.

NICK
I don't think about one shot that
much anymore, Mike.

MICHAEL
(firmly)
You have to think about one shot.
A deer should be taken with one
shot. One shot is what it's all
about. You try to tell people.
They won't listen.
(studies him)
You really think about Vietnam?

NICK
I don't know... I guess I'm think-
ing about the deer... going to
Nam maybe. I don't know. I think
about it all. Hell, I like the
trees, you know? I like the ways
the trees are in the mountains,
all the different ways the trees
are too. Sound like some asshole,
right?

MICHAEL
(with a glance
to the window)
I'll tell you something, Nick. I
wouldn't hunt with anyone but you.
I like guys with quick moves and
speed. I won't hunt with an ass-
hole.

NICK
(laughs)
Who's an asshole?

MICHAEL
(turns)
Who's an asshole? Who do you
think's an asshole? They're all
assholes. I mean, they're all
great guys, for Christ's sake,
but... The point is, Nick, without
you, I'd hunt alone. Seriously.
I would. That's what I'd do.

NICK
(laughs)
You're a fucking nut. You know
that, Mike? You're a maniac
control freak.

MICHAEL

(grins)

I just don't like surprises.

Just then, there is cursing and banging from outside. Nick opens the door. We see big John, and Axel, who is getting drunker by the minute. Two menacing but comic figures, both in rented tuxedos that are much too small. Loaded with camping gear, they are pounding on the trunk of the Caddy, trying to get it open. Nick and Michael go outside.

27. EXT. TRAILER - DAY

NICK

Axel! For Christ's sake...

John! Wait a minute, you guys!

AXEL

It won't open.

MICHAEL

You gotta kick it here. Here,
Axel, not there.

AXEL

Where should I kick it? Just
show me where I should kick it.

MICHAEL

' Here. Kick it here.

Axel kicks the trunk in the indicated spot and the lid snaps open.

AXEL

Fuckin' A!

JOHN

Too bad you're not still kick-
ing like that for the Steelers,
Axel.

(stops, catches
himself)

AXEL

(trying to ignore
this last)

I love Mike's car. Some cars
sit, you know? This car, a car
like this... grows. I mean,
you never know, with a car like
this, where this car is going.

NICK

Yeah, it makes me feel safe.

Michael gives him a long look. Axel, not knowing what the hell to do, toasts them all with a can of beer. Stan comes up, also in tuxedo, dragging a totally disorganized clutter of hunting gear behind him. But unlike the others, his tuxedo fits as if it were tailor made for him. His shoes polished to a high gleam, he is the perfect picture of a band leader in the forties.

STAN

Hey, gimme a hand...

JOHN

Shhh! Axel's gonna hump Mike's
Coupe de Ville.

Axel looks around at his friends. He surveys the back of the Caddy, then from some dim dark place in his memory he dredges up an old litany from his days as an altar boy; blesses the car, sanctifies his friends with a last sprinkling of beer. Then he expands his chest, thumps on it with both fists and yodels out a magnificent, mile-carrying Tarzan call. As the echo of it comes back the church bell begins ringing down the street and a group of more excited bridesmaids come hurrying up, slipping and sliding on the ice, the mill below them at the bottom of the hill, as Axel throws himself onto the Caddy, attacking it.

BRIDESMAID 1

Axel, what are you doing?

BRIDESMAID 2

Hurry up, you guys!

BRIDESMAID 3

Who's got the carnations?

BRIDESMAID 4

Here. They're right here.

BRIDESMAID 1

(to Axel)

Look at you. You're a mess!

BRIDESMAID 3

Put on his carnation.

BRIDESMAID 1

Who's got hands? My hands are
frozen.

As the bridesmaids begin straightening ties, one of them starts putting on Axel's carnation.

BRIDESMAID 2

Boy, this crummy tuxedo's been
stuck with a million flowers...
Where'd you get this thing? Look
at all the holes in the lapel!

AXEL
(proudly)
Fuckin' A.

Nick hears someone call his name. He turns to find Linda standing beside the trailer where she can't be seen. She looks pale and very frightened and she holds a small suitcase in her hand.

NICK
(crosses)
Linda...

LINDA
Hi.
(forces a smile)
Nick, your shoes are soaking.

NICK
Linda, what's the matter?

Linda tries to speak, can't. She fights against it but the tears begin to come. Nick looks around, pulls her inside the trailer.

28. INT. TRAILER - DAY

Nick clears a place in the clutter on the couch. Linda sits, holding her suitcase in her lap.

LINDA
(with great effort)
I was just wandering, Nick...
you and Michael... you're all
going into the army in a couple
of days with Steven... If I
could use this place to stay
until you guys come back, because...

NICK
Sure. Are you kidding? For sure!

LINDA
I'd want to pay you both... and I
was thinking--

NICK
(kneels in
front of her)
Linda... hey, Linda!

LINDA
No. I would want to pay you,
Nick...

NICK
Linda, Linda...!

LINDA
(very small
voice, looking
into his eyes)
What?

NICK
(as if wanting
to say more)
I don't know...

They meet in a long look. Nothing more is said, but a lot of emotion is going on.

29. INT. CHURCH - DAY

Nick and Linda are holding the crowns above Steven and Angela who stand facing each other as an overwhelmingly vibrant chorus of male voices comes up singing the powerful and haunting Russian wedding music.

PRIEST
"Blessed be the Kingdom... now
and forever unto Ages and Ages..."

As the priest continues with the Holy Sacrament, camera picks up FACES in the congregation. We see familiar faces from the VFW post, the steelworkers from the bar and their WIVES, and Steven's mother who chased them home to change. They are hard faces -- working-class faces -- but we sense a fortitude among the congregation, a community of both heart and spirit. The music is now so emotional it would seem impossible to increase it in intensity, but it does go higher.

Camera picks up Michael, Stan and Axel in a row opposite the bridesmaids. And then John, who is standing in the choir loft singing with the other men. His great voice booming over the others, seeming to carry the entire choir. The expression in his eyes is beyond description, tears welling up in them now.

Michael, Stan and Axel look back up toward John, all disheveled. Their tuxedos are suffocatingly too small and their shoes are soaking wet from walking in the snow. Except for Stan who amazingly, despite the weather, is as neat as a pin.

Nick catches Linda's eye and they hold each other across the intervening space like two children who are amazed.

The priest hands white tapers to the bride and groom. Camera closes slowly on the priest. The man is impressive -- gentle, soft, yet full of power. The priest lights the tapers -- first Angela's, then Steven's -- and looks out across the assembled congregation. The

great wave of emotion from the singing riding over it all, so that we have to strain as he continues...

PRIEST

"For everyone that does evil
hates the light, and does not
come to the light, lest his
deeds will be reproved."

30. EXT. CHURCH, STARKWEATHER STREET - TOP OF THE HILL - DAY

Save for the lone figure of Linda's father, muttering, trudging home, the street is deserted, left to the gently falling snow. The music passes through the walls of the church. A sound that is so rich, so vibrant, so darkly pure, that it seems enough to break the heart. It goes beyond the great onion-shaped domes of the church, beyond the town, beyond the massive silhouette of the steel mill lit with fire.

31. INT. CHURCH - DAY

Michael, Nick, Stan and Axel join the bridesmaids to assist the priest in the crowning of Steven and Angela. The priest has just crowned Angela. Now Steven is crowned.

PRIEST (cont)

"The servant of God, Steven, is
crowned for the servant of God,
Angela, in the Name of the Father
and of the Son and of the Holy
Ghost. Amen."

Guiding the couple by their joined hands the priest leads Steven and Angela and the other friends around the little altar. The movement is very precise, very formal, a circling to represent eternity. Linda meets Michael in a look as the music builds to an unbearably emotional climax. Michael's eyes for a long moment on Linda who holds his look at first, then down.

32. EXT. STARKWEATHER STREET - DAY

The wedding couple hurries from the church down the steps to the one waiting car, Michael's old black Caddy decorated with colored paper streamers. Everybody is cheering and shouting and as the car pulls out toward Lemko VFW Hall, Michael, Nick, Stan and Axel go running down the street after the car, slipping and sliding on the ice, grabbing up fistfuls of snow and throwing snowballs at the car. Steven and Angela laughing, waving back at them. And beyond all of this, the whole congregation moving towards the reception in cars, Nick's pick-up truck, and on foot. John watches the congregation from a high window in the choir loft and follows them with his eyes in the falling snow, advancing toward Lemko VFW Hall.

33. INT. LEMKO VFW HALL - DANCE FLOOR - DAY

Pandemonium. The band is going full blast and the whirling COUPLES,

young and old, are laughing. All the servers are women and they are serving as fast as possible to all the people jammed together. Half the men are already quite drunk. We see Steven and Angela, Nick and Linda, Stan, Axel and John. The only one of the group not dancing is Michael. Michael is drinking heavily, standing alone on the side of the floor chugging beer in tense, rapid-fire gulps. We sense immediately that he feels out of place, at a loss to join spontaneously in the spirit of the party. Suddenly all the old women start clanging forks against their glasses. The sound gets very loud fast and every time the sound is made Angela and Steven must kiss, as they do now. Michael finishes the beer, crumples the can and starts on another. As he picks up the second can he notices that a sad-looking GIRL is sitting against the wall behind him, waiting for someone to ask her to dance. The sad-looking girl gives Michael a smile. Michael pretends not to see and moves behind a post, stares up at his high school picture above the stage between Nick and Steven's pictures, intensely.

Now all the old women begin singing as the wedding cake that was carried in earlier is brought out, the miniature bride and groom are slightly askew, but still standing in the middle. Unnoticed by Steven his mother and Angela eye the little figures. Both women are in rather teary condition and begin moving toward the cake. Suddenly, as the crowd shifts, they encounter each other face to face. Smiles are exchanged -- strained smiles, which get stretched and stretched and stretched. Then, Angela deserts the smiling and removes the figures from the cake, gives them to Steven's mother who looks down at her sugar-coated groom and bride. Then they eye each other, burst into tears and throw themselves in each other's arms, moaning and sobbing.

34. INT. LEMKO VFW HALL - ENTRANCE HALLWAY - DAY

Another late-arriving COUPLE tries to enter the place. It is already overflowing with coats on racks. They finally find their way to the door and squeeze inside.

35. INT. LEMKO HALL - DAY

Inside the whole place is literally throbbing. The band is now playing the loudest dancing polka music anyone has ever heard anywhere. The new man is stopped by John who stands at the head of a receiving line holding a large basket full of money and envelopes. Next to him is Axel.

MAN

What's this?

AXEL

For a buck you get a shot, a cigar and a dance with the beautiful bride.

Axel is swaying slightly but holding firmly onto a large tray with shot glasses of whiskey each filled to the brim, and laden with cigars. Before the man goes any further, he puts his dollar in John's

basket, then Axel gives him a shot and a cigar and the man gets a four-second turn on the dance floor with Angela, who is beaming, showing her ring to everybody as she whirls and twirls. In the midst of all this we very frequently see men, dead drunk, being carried out. Suddenly, the band stops dead, and the band leader addresses the crowd at a shout, without the aid of a microphone.

BANDLEADER

Quiet! Quiet please! Could I have your attention please! Angela and Steven would like to welcome you and introduce you to their bridal party, and especially to Nick and Michael who are also going to Vietnam with Steven to proudly serve their country!

There is a tremendous burst of applause, hollering and cheering as Michael, Nick, Axel, Linda, Stan and John all step into the glare of light and a flash picture is taken of the group. We hold on this tableau for a moment as the band strikes up with "Stars and Stripes Forever".

The old vets put their hats over their hearts. Then the old women begin banging on the glasses again and Steven and Angela kiss once more. Then the whole bridal party switches partners and as the music starts up again they dance. Michael is now going to have to dance with Nick's girl, Linda, but his manner as he takes her hand, is forced. Nick shoves them off onto the dance floor together. He passes John. John stops him. There is an awkward moment.

JOHN

(in a low, very soft voice)

If it wasn't for my accident, I'd be going with you guys, Nick.

They meet in a long look. Nick is touched. He puts his arm around John and hugs him, not knowing what the hell to do. The crowd is loud with excitement.

As we watch Michael dancing with Linda, they seem removed from the rest. They look at each other - she breathing hard, he in controlled desire, as if they were separate, alone.

MICHAEL ,

I'm not the greatest dancer.

LINDA

You're doing fine.

MICHAEL

(after an uncomfortable moment and with great solicitude)

Would you like a beer?

LINDA
(puzzled)
Sure.

MICHAEL
What kind of beer would you like?

LINDA
(laughing)
I don't know, Michael. I don't
really care. Beer is beer.

MICHAEL
I'll get you a Miller's. Miller's
High Life. That's the best there is.

Michael takes off. Linda sits down at a table shaking her head in puzzlement as Michael goes to the cooler to get a Miller's. He gropes around in the tub, finds one and pops the tab. Suddenly he notices that Nick has crossed to the sad-looking girl by the wall. He has stopped in front of her and is asking her something. The sad-looking girl gives a blush, gets out of her chair and Nick takes her in his arms and begins to dance. The sad-looking girl looks transformed. She begins chattering and laughing just like the others.

Michael crosses back to Linda and gives her the Miller's. As he pulls up a chair to sit down beside her he stumbles and nearly loses his balance, and for the first time we notice he is very, very drunk, and it surprises us.

MICHAEL
Sorry.

LINDA
(laughs)
It's okay, Michael. It's a
wedding. You're supposed to
let go... have fun, you know--

Nick swings by with the sad-looking girl and makes a dramatic flashy turn, smiles as they go by.

MICHAEL
(catching Linda's
expression)
I guess you really like Nick
a lot...

LINDA
(nods)
Yes.

Michael doesn't say anything for a moment. He seems to be trying to contain a floodtide of emotion. Looks up at his high school picture next to Nick's again. Big and absurd and yet terribly moving.

36. INT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

The rack is still more jammed with wet, soggy coats. Young couples, squeezed furtively between the coats neck passionately. The racks quiver and shake and the music is now playing sweet and low, but somehow still manages to sound hectic.

The front door comes open and a young U.S. Army Special Forces SERGEANT steps into the darkened hallway. The man wears his dress green uniform and beret. On his chest is a row of battle ribbons and his jump boots are mirror-polished. The Sergeant gives a slight shake of his head and moves toward the bar area.

37. INT. BAR AREA - NIGHT

The Sergeant passes between groups of still celebrating guests, plucks a beer from one of the coolers and sits down alone at the end of one of the white trestle tables littered with food and debris. Watches Angela dancing, expressionless.

Axel suddenly gives his Tarzan cry, picks the bridesmaid who fixed his carnation off her feet and marches around holding her above his head. She had been cutting ribbons from presents and still has the scissors in her hand when he sweeps her up into the air.

BRIDESMAID 2

Axel, what are you doing...!
Axel! You don't put me down,
I'll stab you with this scissors!

AXEL

I'm gonna kiss you. You gotta
fuck or fight!

Meanwhile Stan and John are standing together. Stan is burning because his girl is dancing with someone else.

STAN

Do you know what that son of
a bitch is doing? That bastard
is squeezing her ass!

JOHN

It's only a wedding, Stanley.

STAN

What do you mean, only a wedding?
The guy is actually...There! He
did it again! Johnny, I'm gonna
go get my gun out of my coat.
I'll kill him! I'm gonna kill
him right now!

Instead, Stan suddenly marches up and taps the man on the shoulder. The man releases Stan's girl. The girl waits, one hand on her hip, and abruptly Stan decks her with a wicked left hook, knocking her flat on her ass. Stan is hopping up and down, shouting now. The man is getting the hell out of there fast. Now, Stan pats his still neat hair once again, making certain every strand is in place.

38. INT. BAR AREA - NIGHT

Nick, Steven and Michael are standing together, looking at the young veteran sergeant with as much awe and respect as they can manage in their condition.

MICHAEL

That guy just came back.

NICK

Yeah.

MICHAEL

He looks like a good killer.
See that ribbon on the left?
That's Quan Son.

Michael gestures with his head. Nick and Steven cross with him to the sergeant.

MICHAEL

We, ah... we're going airborne
too.

The sergeant looks at them and delivers a big, blank smile.

SERGEANT

Fuckit!

MICHAEL

What?

The sergeant keeps smiling.

MICHAEL (cont)

(to Nick)

What'd he say?

NICK

Fuckit.

MICHAEL

Fuckit?

NICK

Fuckit.

MICHAEL
That's what I thought he said.

Steven nods.

NICK
(clears his
throat)
Uh... well, maybe you could
tell us how it is over there?

SERGEANT
Fuckit.

Michael looks at Nick. Nick looks at Steven. They all begin to
laugh, but nervously.

MICHAEL
(to sergeant)
Yeah, well, thanks a lot.

SERGEANT
Don't mention it.

They turn away and then, when they are out of earshot, they all break
up, howling. Axel comes up, pouring sweat, his jacket starting to
split down the back.

AXEL
Who the hell is he?

MICHAEL
Who the hell knows!

AXEL
Is he from anywhere around
here?

MICHAEL
Hell no!

AXEL
Well, where's he from?

MICHAEL AND STEVEN
(in unison)
Who the hell knows!

MICHAEL
(almost soberly)
Maybe he's lost.

AXEL
Fuckin' A!

39. INT. STAGE - NIGHT

The guests have formed all around the stage. Everyone is pretty drunk and they are all armed with streamers and bags of rice. As Steven and Angela appear on the stage there is a great rowdy cheer. Angela throws her bouquet - Linda catches it, then the DRUMMER strikes up a roll, followed by the other musicians. Showered with streamers, rice, advice and encouragement, Steven and Angela walk toward the front edge where Steven's mother carefully brings out two wine glasses on one stem.

STEVEN'S MOTHER

If you don't spill any it's good
luck for the rest of your life!

Steven and Angela begin to drink down the wine simultaneously. There is a tremendous cheer. Nick turns to Linda and says abruptly, as if he wanted to say something else:

NICK

Will you marry me?

Linda blushes, completely taken aback.

LINDA

(after a long,
long moment)

Okay.

NICK

What?

Linda nods - a solemn nod.

NICK (cont)

You would? What I mean is, if
we get back from... I mean, when
we get back. I don't know what
the hell I mean.

LINDA

I guess what goes through your
mind comes out your mouth.

Linda's lip begins to tremble. Tears stand in her eyes and she tries to give a little nod of her head.

NICK

Really?

LINDA

Really!

Nick stares at her. He can still hardly believe she said what she just said.

NICK
Terrific...!

LINDA
It is terrific.

Nick nods. Linda is suddenly excited, suddenly radiantly happy. She drops the bouquet of flowers and throws herself in Nick's arms.

LINDA
(eyes closed,
loving him)
I don't know what we've been
waiting for!

NICK
I don't know. I don't know
either!

He breathes deeply to collect himself. Linda laughs nervously. Then their eyes meet, just as Steven and Angela finish drinking the wine. Only we notice a single tiny drop on Angela's white gown. Now suddenly the women all begin singing, and Steven picks Angela up in his arms, jumps off the stage with her and runs through the hall to Mike's Caddy outside. The singing of the women going even higher.

40. EXT. LEMKO VFW HALL - STREET ENTRANCE - NIGHT

John, Axel and Michael are standing by the door. Their badly fitted rented tuxedos are stained and torn. Their carnations are squashed and their clip-on bow ties are either missing entirely or dangling from the open collars of their shirts, all still amazingly guzzling beer. Stan looks the best, same as when he walked in; still not a hair out of place. He turns to Michael, winks at him, grinning...

MICHAEL
(looking at Angela)
Bullshit! That's bullshit!

STAN
You wanna bet?

MICHAEL
That's bullshit. You're fulla
bullshit.

STAN
How much? How much do you wanna
bet? Put your money where your
mouth is.

MICHAEL
Go fuck yourself, Stan.

Steven and Angela struggle into the Caddy to more hollering and applauding and a shower of streamers and rice. Angela is helped

in by John. Axel and Nick throw their arms around Steven and help him around to the driver's seat. There is an awesome collection of tin cans tied to the back of the Caddy.

NICK

Don't worry what Stan says...

STEVEN

Right.

NICK

Just forget that. Forget what Stan says. He's got a big mouth.

STEVEN

(low to Nick)

I never really done it to Angela, Nicky...

NICK

Great. That's great.

STEVEN

That's my one true secret in life, Nick...

NICK

(covering his
astonishment)

It's nothing. It's nothing.
Just... forget about it.

STEVEN

What about having a kid!

People are crowding around.

STEVEN (cont)

What do I do... when she has it?

NICK

That's Angela's part. Leave all that to Angela... Hang loose.

STEVEN

Hang loose?

NICK

Just hang loose!

Nick just gives Steven a big hug. Steven slides in the car.

NICK

Hey, don't look so sad. Don't worry. See you Monday on the train.

STEVEN

Right. See you Monday.

41. INT. CADDY - NIGHT

Steven looks over at Angela.

STEVEN

All set, babe?

Angela nods. Steven puts the car into gear and starts slowly off. Fists pound on the car. Rice and streamers shower down. Suddenly, through the front windshield, Michael appears, stark naked, running in front of the car with colored paper streamers floating out from his upraised right hand. For a split second Steven cannot believe what he is seeing. He throws a look at Angela. Angela covers her mouth in amazement and quickly shifts the hand to the horn.

42. EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Michael weaves up the street in front of the growling, slipping Caddy, tin cans bouncing everywhich way from behind it. Michael is not just running. He is leaping and bounding, as if released from gravity and entered into a realm of pure ethereal space.

AXEL

(watching in a
stupor, almost
as if to himself)

Fuckin' A...

Nick, Axel, Stan and John pound up the steep street behind the Caddy. Axel carrying Michael's clothes, slipping and sliding in the slush, goes ass over tea kettle, scattering the clothes all over the street.

ALL

Look at that! Fuckin' maniac!

AXEL

(shouting)

Fuckin' A!

43. EXT. HILL STREET - NIGHT

The road forks, one road going high to a beat-up basketball court on a cliff overlooking the steel mill, the other descending to Steven's mother's house and to the mill below. Michael runs up the incline toward the basketball court while the Caddy goes straight down and disappears around the bend toward Steven's mother's house.

Axel, Stan and John stagger to a stop, panting helplessly, halfway up the hill. Stan is trying to clean the slush off his shoes. Nick takes off for the top.

44. EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - NIGHT

Michael slips under one of the baskets and comes to a sliding stop on the slushy freezing ground, remains motionless, looking out across to the blast furnaces going in the mill as Nick approaches. The night is brilliantly clear and the fires from the furnaces light up the sky with an eerie glow. And all over the neighborhood dogs are yapping and howling.

Nick comes to a sliding stop a few feet away from the basket. The dogs really going at it now.

NICK

Michael?

Michael rolls over, turns. His face is almost blue with a strange, distant look. He gives Nick an almost feral grin.

MICHAEL

I must be out of my fucking mind. At my age... It's all moving too fast. You think we'll ever come back?

NICK

(startled;
frightened)

From Nam?

MICHAEL

Yeah.

Nick helps lift Michael up beside him. He removes his tux jacket and wraps it around Michael. Both of them huddled there together in the moonlight under the basket, the glow of the blast furnace flickering steadily. Neither of them knows what the hell to say.

NICK

(abruptly)

You know something? The whole thing is right here. I love this fuckin' place... I know that sounds crazy, but if anything happens, Mike, don't leave me over there. I mean, don't leave me... You gotta promise, Mike.

MICHAEL

(shivering;
half-laughing)

Nick--

NICK
You gotta promise, definitely.

MICHAEL
Hey, you got it, pal!

Nick lets out his breath... It is as if some great weight had been pressing on him.

MICHAEL
(with a laugh)
Let's go huntin' tonight. Now.
I mean, let's keep moving until
we have to get on that train to
the reception center at Dix...

45. EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Michael's battered old shark-finned '59 Caddy comes screaming past. Some wedding streamers still cling to the door handles and bumpers, rattling in the wind.

46. INT. CADDY - NIGHT

Nick, Michael, Stan, Axel and John, all of them still in their rented tuxedos and drunk out of their minds, are jammed in the car between knapsacks, sleeping bags, huge piles of six-packs of beer and deer rifles. Nick and Michael start singing the "Screaming Eagles Airborne Song"

NICK AND MICHAEL
(singing)
Down from heaven came Eleven,
shout Geronimo...!

STAN
What the hell is that?

JOHN
The Screaming Eagles Airborne
Song.

STAN
Screaming asshole's!

AXEL
Fuckin' A!
(starts singing in
a high sweet voice)
Let me be free! Let me be free!
If... you... will let me be free
...You'll always be happy... with
me-e-e-e!

John looks at Axel, smiles gently.

JOHN
(making a trumpet sound)
Wa-wa-wa!... Waaaaa!

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAWN

The Caddy comes blasting by trailing a great rooster tail of fresh snow...

48. INT. CADDY - ~~DAWN~~ DAY

~~Now~~ Mike is hunched over the wheel, his eyes gone completely glassy. Michael and John are on the nod, while Axel and Stan, both half-asleep, are having a lead-voiced conversation hazed by too much alcohol.

AXEL
Angela fucked you?

STAN
She fucked me at the New Year's eve party in Steve's car out in the garage.

AXEL
(solemnly)
She fucked me too.

STAN
(appalled)
She fucked you?

AXEL
Fuckin' A.

There is a long gloomy pause. They both struggle to keep their eyes open.

STAN
(wonderingly)
Steve don't know she fucked us both...

AXEL
Yeah.

STAN
Maybe it's one of our kids...
Fucking women... all alike.

AXEL
 (shakes
 his head)
 Fuckin' A.

49. INT. CADDY - ~~DAWN~~ DAY

Nick's head is sunk below the upper rim of the steering wheel. One eye is entirely shut and the open one seems close to death. Suddenly his head snaps up and he slams his foot down on the brake and the Caddy fishtails, rubber screaming, to a sliding, bumping stop.

Everyone in the car comes awake -- ten bleary eyes staring out through the windshield.

There is a deer in the road, a big buck standing shock-still in the glare of the headlights. ~~Michael~~ w.

STAN
 Holy shit!

50. EXT. CADDY - ~~DAWN~~ DAY

Stan, Axel, Nick and John pile out, grabbing up their rifles. Stan immediately slips and falls down. Michael remains right where he is, unmoved, watching the others and he is beginning to sober up now.

STAN
 Son of a bitch! Get him!
 For Christ's sake, somebody
 get him!

JOHN
 Who's got the ammo?

AXEL
 Ammo! Get ammo!

STAN
 I'll get it! Where is it?

JOHN
 It's in the trunk!

AXEL
 It is not!

JOHN
 It's in the trunk, Axel! It's
 in the trunk! I'm telling you,
 it's in the trunk!

Stan, Axel and John rush around to the trunk. Axel begins kicking it. He slips, falls on his ass, Stan screaming at him.

AXEL

Stanley, you never could hit
shit anyway!

Pushing and shoving each other, Stan, Axel and John ransack the trunk like madmen, scrambling for weapons.

Michael gives Nick a sidelong glance, then slips out of the car with his rifle. He looks at the others with an expression of absolute disgust -- and then he looks at the deer. The deer is ~~hypnotized in the glare of light~~, still watching. If anything, it has edged closer and his expression of polite curiosity throws Michael into a blind rage.

MICHAEL

Get out of here, damn you!
Go home!... Scat!... Shoo!

Michael, whose rifle is fully ready, slams a shell into the chamber and lets off a shot above the deer. Then, as it scatters in panic:

MICHAEL (cont)

Come on, scat! Shoo! Get
lost!

At this moment the others all crowd around; watch him watching the deer disappearing in the snow; they all think he is drunk and has lost the point of the hunting trip.

51. OMITTED

52. OMITTED

53. EXT./INT. CADDY - MOUNTAIN PASS - DAY

The sky is cold -- there is the pink glow of first light over the rim of the hills -- with low, dark wind-driven clouds. Camera tilts down and we see the Caddy coming up a narrow road flanked by precipitous, heavily forested ridges on both sides.

NICK

(Stan's beer slop-
ping over him)

Watch it, dickhead!

STAN

(pounds Nick on
the shoulder)

Here! This is it! This is
the place we stopped at last
year.

JOHN
It's up ahead, Stan.

STAN
There's no way that's it!

Nick pulls to a stop on the shoulder, disgustedly.

54. EXT. ROADSIDE, SCENIC OVERLOOK AREA - DAY

The sky is just turning grey-white. A cold wind is blowing, moaning in the trees and swirling a fine haze of snow across the open valley below. The guys all pile out in their totally wrecked tuxedos and cracked patent leather shoes.

STAN (cont)
This is not it! Definitely!
This is not it, they changed
it somehow.

MICHAEL
Why the hell should this be
different from anything else?

AXEL
(riding over Michael)
You're full of shit, Stanley!

STAN
Who'd you say was full of shit?

AXEL
You're full of shit. You're
always full of shit!

They lock in a glare for a moment. Finally, Stan avoids Axel's eyes.

STAN
Holy shit, I'm starving!

AXEL
Fuckin' A.

There is a moment of tension. Then everyone begins eating cold baloney, ripping slices of them out of half-dozen near frozen plastic packages, dipping them in a jar of mustard and stuffing them down -- everyone, except Nick. Mustard has dripped over everything, potato chips are littered everywhere and beers are being passed around. Axel, his mouth half-open, full of food, stares at Nick in wonderment.

AXEL
Let me ask you a question, Nicky.
How come I never see you eat anything?

NICK

Sometimes I like to starve
myself -- keeps the fear up.

AXEL

It ain't natural. What do
you say, John?

JOHN

(as Axel goes
for his baloney)
That's mine!

AXEL

You want it?

JOHN

Damn right!

AXEL

Gimme a Twinkie, Mike.

MICHAEL

Here.

Axel tears off the wrapper, dips it in the mustard and glomps it
down.

JOHN

(disbelievingly)
That's mustard!

AXEL

(mouth jam-
med full)
What?

JOHN

You just put mustard on your
twinkie!

AXEL

(nods)
You sound like a traffic cop!
... Gimme another beer.

John just shakes his head.

STAN

(pointing to the
location beside
the road)
Definitely! This is not it!
I'm telling you, they changed
it!

AXEL
(unrelentingly)
You can't find your own ass
with two hands!

STAN
(shifting
subject)
Jesus, it's freezing!

AXEL
Fuckin' A.

JOHN
(abruptly;
remembering)
You know, we forgot to make
a toast to Steven and Angela...

They all meet in a look, stand silently for a moment frozen in tableau in their crushed rented tuxedos at the side of the Caddy in the snow, the icy wind beating at their clothes, the dark mountains rearing themselves over them, the air filled only with the sound of wind. Then they raise their beer cans, drink.

Suddenly, they all seem minuscule, overwhelmed by the massive, black slopes looming up from the narrow road.

After a moment of silence, Axel kicks the trunk open and they all begin taking stuff out.

Michael strips down right where he stands, and begins putting on his hunting clothes.

Axel and Stan grab their own gear and follow the example of Nick and John, who are changing on the corner of the seats.

Hunting gear is hanging all over the fenders, bumpers, etc. They are all fumbling, struggling, half-naked, half-insane figures...

JOHN
Whee-uu!

NICK
Jesus! It's really freezing,
Mike!

AXEL
Fuckin' A!

STAN
You know, you got a really
terrific vocabulary, Axel.

AXEL

Fuckin' A!

STAN

(shakes his head,
then, to Michael)
Mikey, hey Mikey, you got any
extra thermal socks?

Michael who is crouched down studying the hillside, looks over...

STAN (cont)

(rummaging around in
the mess of sorry-
looking things he
has brought)

Never mind, Mike. Never mind.
I got 'em... Where the hell are
my boots? Anyone see my boots?
... Who the hell took my boots!

Stan begins plunging in the squashed baloney, crumpled tuxedo jackets,
potato chips, shoes, sleeping bags, etc.

OTHERS

Dickhead! Watch it!

STAN

Somebody took my boots... I
bought 'em special. I know
I brought my special boots.

Stan tears into the trunk again, comes up with nothing and is shiver-
ing now. It is very cold.

STAN (cont)

All right. All right, you
guys. Whoever took my boots
I want 'em back!

Michael, Nick, Axel and John stand by the roadside while Stan is
still half in his tuxedo and patent leather dress shoes, draped only
in a gigantic red goose down vest that could only have come from
Axel. They have all seen this a million times, look at each other
and shake their heads. Michael's knapsack lies on the ground in
front of him and we can see that it contains an extra pair of Vibram-
soled mountain boots.

AXEL (over)

I got a boot for you, Stan.
(starts a move
as if to kick)
Here... right up your ass!

STAN
(dancing away
from Axel's
lethal kick)
Hey, Mikey, lemme borrow your
spares, your extra pair.

MICHAEL
No.

STAN
(both hands
in the air)
No?

MICHAEL
No.

The word hangs there in the air for a moment. There is a sudden tension.

STAN
What do you mean, no?

MICHAEL
What I mean by no, Stan, is
no.

STAN
Some fuckin' friend... You're
some fuckin' friend, Mike!

MICHAEL
You gotta learn, Stan. Every
goddamned year you come up here
with your head up your ass--

AXEL
(interjecting)
Maybe the view looks better to
him from up there!
(laughs)

MICHAEL
(continuing
over Axel)
You got no jacket, you got no
pants, you got no knife and you
got no boots. All you got is
that stupid pistol you carry
around like some wise guy cop.
You think that's always gonna
take care of you! That's what
you always think!

AXEL

What the hell, Mike, give him the boots.

MICHAEL

No. No boots. No nothin'... No more.

STAN

You're a fuckin' bastard, Mike. You know that? You're a miserable fucking selfish bastard!

MICHAEL

(snapping it out,
jabbing his finger
at the ground)

This is this, Stan. This isn't something else. This is this! This time you're on your own.

STAN

I fixed you up a million times, Mike!

(to the others)

I fixed him up a million times! I don't know how many times I fixed him up with girls, and nothing ever happens... Zero!

(to Michael)

The trouble with you, Mike, no one ever knows what the hell you're talking about! "This is this"? What does all that bullshit mean, "this is this"?

(turns to the others
for moral support)

I mean, is that some faggot-sounding bullshit he's running down, or is that some faggot-sounding bullshit! And if it isn't, what the hell is it?

(to Michael)

You know what I think? There's times I swear I think you're a goddamn faggot!

JOHN

Hey, you guys--

STAN

(hopping-mad now)

Last week! Last week he coulda
had that new red-headed waitress
at the Bowladrome! He coulda had
it knocked! And look what he did.
I mean, look what he fuckin' did!
Nothin'! That's what!

JOHN

Stan! Shut the hell up!

This last from John, strong, and it surprises us. Axel just throws up his hands in a comical way. But Michael's stare at Stan is unwavering and it unnerves the others. Nick is watching Michael very intensely.

JOHN (cont)

I'll give you my boots. I'll
stay in the car and listen to
the radio.

* Michael -- who remains completely unmoved throughout Stan's tirade -- pumps another shell in the chamber of his rifle without sound. The silence lies there cold and killing. John freezes in his tracks and stares at Michael, his face gone blank. The color is draining out of Stan's face.

MICHAEL

I said no.

Michael says this last with a hardness we haven't seen him exhibit with his friends before. John looks at Axel, who is right behind him, and they both back away. Stan, who is standing directly opposite Michael, begins to tremble. His mouth comes open, closes and comes open again. His hand begins moving in his jacket pocket, stops. Michael's face is grave. Suddenly, Nick steps forward -- he looks long and hard at Michael, crosses to the knapsack, takes out Michael's extra pair of boots, walks over to Stan and throws them on the road. Stan laughs. He is the only one who does.

55. OMITTED

56. OMITTED

57. EXT. HIGH MOUNTAIN RIDGE - DAY

It is later in the morning and a cold sun is rising through the mists of swirling snow, with only the keening of the wind on the high slopes.

Close on Nick, we see he is struggling for breath, gasping air in strangled little gulps, trying to keep up with Michael. Then suddenly Michael stops. Instantly he levels his rifle. He is about to

about to squeeze the trigger when we hear the movement of a deer the snow. Nick is transfixed. Then the deer is there. He is of a size and magnificence that gives him an almost mythical quality of presence. Michael puts a single shot into the heart of the deer. The deer shudders and falls without a sound in the snow. For a moment the two men look at each other in the strange eerie light.

58. INT. BUSTED-DOWN OLD LOGGERS SHACK - LATE AFTERNOON

The place is about nine-by-twelve. The floor is rotted out, boards are missing from the walls and the entire structure is canted to the right. Hanging from the roof peak is a Coleman lantern which sways in the wind. Daggers of afternoon slant light stab through the cracks in the walls.

Stan, Axel and John are sacked out, sound asleep. Beer cans -- some old, some new -- litter the floor. Wet clothes hang from tie-boards and nails. Snow is blowing in -- dry, crystal bright. It swirls over everything and settles on the exhausted sleeping figures on the floor.

Camera turns as Michael and Nick come in. They both stare at the men lying in sleeping bags on rusted bedsprings on either side of the broken door. The wind gusts and moans.

MICHAEL

Tomorrow I'll give Stan my boots. I'll take him out with me.

NICK

You? Hunt with Stan?

MICHAEL

Yeah... I mean, he doesn't know anything about anything!

The cabin shudders and then there is a sudden lull.

59. EXT. HIGHWAY OFF-RAMP - NIGHT

Returning weekend traffic is heavy, and unending flow of cars, a river of headlights suspended on the curved concrete trestle which seems to float in thin air. Behind is the steel mill, the furnaces blowing heavy smoke and ablaze with fire.

Nick's Caddy appears, horn blaring, weaving through the traffic. The car sits low. Trussed to the hood is the carcass of the magnificent deer. Rope-ends flutter and bang in the wind. The car shudders and thuds. Inside, grinning, Nick, Michael, Stan, Axel and John are all singing, happy.

60. EXT. DIVISION STREET - NIGHT

The Caddy appears, swerving through the underpass onto Division St. past the town, then down towards Steven's house, tires spinning.

61. EXT. STEVEN'S MOTHER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

We see Axel reaching from the back seat to lean on the horn. He and Stan are hanging out the windows shouting to the house, whistling for Steven and Angela, and banging a triumphant tattoo on the doors. The car spins, swaps ends alongside the house. The lights all coming on now, dogs, barking, Steven's mother's face appearing in one of the windows.

AXEL
(shouting)
Hey, Steve, wha'd'ya say!
Piece o'fuckin' cake!

62. INT. CADDY - NIGHT

JOHN
(to all)
Hey, let's go have a nightcap
at my place.

ALL
Absolutely!

63. EXT. JOHN'S BAR - NIGHT

As the Caddy comes under the railroad trestle the mill appears behind it, seeming to loom upward under the night-dark sky. A sign on the door of the bar proclaims: Closed: Gone Deer Hunting.

Camera holds as the Caddy comes towards it. The headlights blaze white, like huge hungry stars, and the eyes of the beautiful dead deer on the hood glitter gold and green and red.

Axel leans out the window and gives his Tarzan call. It seems to echo as if coming from far away...

64. INT. BAR - NIGHT

The men all sitting in different positions around the room, suddenly silent, unmoving. Outside the bar the sound of the mill comes clearly through. Michael's attention has been riveted toward the sound. Then the men look at each other for a moment. Abruptly, John turns to the old upright piano against the wall opposite the bar. He sits down and begins to play Chopin. It is so unexpected, so beautiful, so sensitive, that it startles and moves us. John's face is grave and proud in the dusty light. Suddenly from outside beyond the wall comes the sound of an approaching train. It passes like a tornado, shaking the whole building, rattling the glasses on the shelves. The Chopin continuing through it all. Michael gives Nick his spare, closed-mouthed smile, but the music reaches him too, as now we --

CUT TO:

65. OMITTED

66. EXT. MOUNTAINS - NORTH VIETNAM - DAY - 1970

And it couldn't be more of a contrast. There is a chopper, coming fast and low, just around a cut in an outcropping of jagged rock, sweeping over a field. Sunlight gleams on its black paint, and murderous-looking rockets are packed to its underbelly in fat clusters, like eggs.

Suddenly, it fires the rockets...

67. EXT. FIELD - DAY

As the rockets streak into a cluster of huts the lightened chopper roars over a dirt road, shoots upward, lost to sight. There is an eerie silence, and then the whole tiny village explodes, vanishes in a sheet of smoke and flame.

But the air support has been too late...

A platoon of AMERICAN RANGERS has already been ambushed on the road bordering the little village. The bodies lie helter-skelter -- headless, armless, legless, guts spilled in the dirt. No one moves and there is absolute silence except for a sudden heavy low buzz of flies.

There is a slight sound. A V.C. LIEUTENANT emerges into view. The V.C. Lieutenant spins and gives a hand signal command. Fifty feet away are the remains of the village. He motions for his MEN to spread out and then he starts toward a clump of dried branches in the field.

68. OMITTED

69. INT. HOLE IN THE GROUND - DAY

South Vietnamese VILLAGERS -- WOMEN, CHILDREN and a few OLD MEN -- sit huddled in the semi-darkness of the deep hole in the ground, roofed with bamboo poles. The women hold their hands over their BABIES' mouths. Flies buzz and there is a look of stark terror in their faces.

70. EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

One of the fallen American Rangers moves. Camera closes on the Ranger. His face is in the dirt and flies are nuzzling at a gash on his temple. The face is bearded, frighteningly gaunt and in-drawn. The skin stretched taut on his face, his eyes sunken and half-crazy, but we recognize that it is Michael... not at first glance, but we recognize him.

A woman's scream comes from the direction of the hole. A muffled grenade explosion rings out. Michael pulls himself to his hands and knees and holds there, on all fours, like a dog.

71. EXT. HOLE IN THE GROUND - DAY

One of the women emerges from the smoking hole, torn and singed and carrying a small dead baby. One of the soldiers swings, levels his AK-47 and lets it go on full automatic. The woman and the baby flip over like rabbits.

72. EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Michael strips a flamethrower from one of his dead companions, slams it onto his back, the metal so hot from the sun it burns him, and starts for the burning huts. His movements are slow, almost dream-like, and his face is expressionless, like someone risen from the dead.

73. EXT. BURNING HUTS - DAY

The dead woman and baby lie in the dust. A dog tries to play with the baby. A V.C. soldier, who took a Rolex watch from one of the dead Rangers, squats nearby, winding it.

74. EXT. - ANOTHER ANGLE - DAY

Close on Michael's eyes. They are cold, dreaming things, glittering blankly. He spins out with the flamethrower on full burn. The V.C. soldiers go down screaming, arms and necks thrown back, disappearing in a wall of flame.

Above the hoarse roar of Michael's flamethrower we hear a growing sound, like thunder.

75. EXT. APPROACHING HUEY HELICOPTER - DAY

In the shimmering waves of heat, it is coming back in low around the towering outcropping of jagged rocks.

76. OMITTED

77. EXT. FIELD - DAY

The villagers stand motionless, staring at Michael and frozen with terror.

Michael stands alone with his flamethrower, like the angel with the flaming sword, surrounded by clouds of billowing black smoke. There is no sound but the dying rush of heated air and the faint crackle of flames. Michael's clothes are close to burning. Flames are licking up his trouser legs. He looks like a blackened scarecrow, or a standing dead man.

In front of Michael the V.C. soldiers lie in charred heaps, motionless now, like roasted stones.

The chopper just touches the field for seconds, more Rangers rush out, moving through the grass fluttering fiercely in the rotor wash. The chopper hauling ass straight the hell out of there.

An AMERICAN RANGER LIEUTENANT steps into the burning clearing. Michael and the Lieutenant spin on each other and then the Lieutenant lowers his armalite rifle.

LIEUTENANT

What the hell are you doing here?

MICHAEL

(numb)

Fuckit...

More Rangers appear, a squad, coming out of the still-smoking high grass in spread-out clusters. Among them are Nick and Steven.

LIEUTENANT

Move it out, mudfuckers! Move it out!

The Lieutenant heads down the line. Nick stares at Michael, shrugs, in evidence that he does not recognize his friend. As Steven passes, he looks at Michael close up and focuses his eyes for a moment, emits a little gasp of surprise.

STEVEN

Michael...? Jesus, Michael!

Michael turns and looks at Steven. He seems to be looking right through him. Nick stops, turns around and comes up behind Steven. They meet in a strange look.

NICK

Michael!

Suddenly a burst of sharp flat sound rings out. The Lieutenant goes down and suddenly the Ranger Squad is caught in a murderous ambush. Mortars rain out of the distant trees. Michael, Nick and Steven dive for the ground.

Out of the smoking high grass soldiers begin to appear, more and more of them, swarming out in scores.

78. EXT. RIVER, SOMEWHERE IN THE NEARBY MOUNTAINS - HEAVY RAIN - DAY - 197

An extraordinarily beautiful bend in the river, the strange, Asian-looking peaks of the mountains beyond rearing themselves enormously over the jungle. Below, our view moves closer toward an ordinary looking fishing hut, typical of the river, and as we do we notice

that in the sand beach a shallow pit has been dug and fitted with bamboo gratings held down by stones, and covered with fishing nets. The river is running high and the pit is filling with water to within a foot of the bamboo gratings. In the pit are about a half-dozen men -- SOUTH VIETNAMESE and some of the AMERICAN RANGERS. Their hands grip the gratings and their eyes are hollow. Other than an occasional groan, there is only the sound of the falling rain. Suddenly --

A V.C. soldier trudges out of the fishing hut. As he reaches the pit he walks over the hands and begins urinating on the bamboo gratings. The hands disappear. As soon as one comes back, the soldier stomps on it.

Our view keeps moving closer --

We see the fishing hut in its totality. It is a raw hut propped on pilings half-jutting onto the beach. The hut is small with a thatched roof. The walls are almost open and we can see a few V.C. soldiers moving about inside. But now below the floor, we notice the pilings are wrapped from top to bottom with barbed wire...

And in the darkness under the floor boards, we see faces from a distance, peering out, unshaved, animal-like, staring up at the cracks in the floor above them.

A cry comes from the hut. There is the thud of a rifle butt on flesh and the cry abruptly stops.

79. INT. FISHING HUT - DAY

In the middle of the hut is a tin kitchen table with a plastic top. At opposite ends of the table are two chairs. A South Vietnamese prisoner sits in one of the chairs. In the other chair, facing him, is another South Vietnamese prisoner. Both South Vietnamese prisoners have welts on their heads which they are wrapping in filthy red rags, and one of the half-dozen V.C. soldiers in the hut is screaming at them to hurry. In the middle of the table, between the South Vietnamese prisoners, is a single-action, high-velocity magnum revolver with a double American eagle carved on its ivory grip.

It is incredible, impossible and startling; and in the middle of a prisoner of war camp, an absolutely terrifying scene. We are looking at a game of Russian Roulette.

Michael looks up through a crack in the floorboards, quietly, waiting; but his eyes are working, glittering like a wolf's, taking in every detail of this strange scene.

The V.C. soldier gives one of the South Vietnamese prisoners a final glancing blow, takes up the magnum revolver with a dramatic flourish and loads one cartridge into the chamber. Immediately the other soldiers begin placing bets.

The V.C. soldiers are a ragged bunch -- wet, half-drunk on captured Miller's High Life beer, and it takes a moment's time to straighten things out. Forget the Geneva Convention here.

80. INT./EXT. WIRED COMPOUND - REVERSE ANGLE - DAY

Now, close on South Vietnamese and American prisoners standing, sitting, kneeling; staring up. Most of them have been badly beaten and all have their elbows tied behind their backs. Among them, standing beside one another, are Nick and Steven. Nick looks grey, like a skinny ghost. Steven is sobbing quietly. Michael keeps staring up through the crack in the floorboards.

81. INT. FISHING HUT - DAY

The betting is now completed. The V.C. in charge waves the magnum revolver around and calls for silence -- then, snapping shut the cylinder containing the single cartridge, he points the revolver at the ceiling and clicks through the empty chambers until the revolver goes off with a deafening roar. A big hole blows open in the roof and bits of thatch flutter down from the ceiling, the rain coming through the hole now.

The South Vietnamese prisoners begin trembling, continually blinking their eyes in the rain pouring down over their faces from the hole in the roof.

The V.C. in charge now reloads the revolver with one cartridge again, snaps the cylinder shut, puts the gun on the table between the South Vietnamese, and gives it a good spin.

The revolver slows and finally comes to a stop pointing to one man. He stares at it for a long beat. Then he picks it up, spins the cylinder, cocks it, puts it to his temple and pulls the trigger. The hammer falls on an empty chamber with a loud click.

The V.C. in charge grabs the revolver, throws it back on the table, and pushes it toward the other South Vietnamese prisoner. The South Vietnamese begins shaking uncontrollably now. Fumbling horribly, he finally manages to get the gun in his hand. He spins the cylinder, cocks the hammer and puts it to his temple. The gun weaves around... The South Vietnamese closes his eyes and pulls the trigger. There is a loud click.

The V.C. in charge quickly takes the revolver again. He spins it, cocks it -- all in one smooth motion -- puts it to the temple of the other South Vietnamese and pulls the trigger himself. There is another click. He pushes the gun back across the table. This time the other South Vietnamese takes it up with giddy confidence. He spins the cylinder, cocks it, puts it to his temple and pulls on the trigger.

THERE IS A SUDDEN, EAR-SPLITTING ROAR. The South Vietnamese is flying in the air away from the kitchen table and blown clear through the grass wall. Then there is a moment of pure silence. As below --

Michael doesn't even blink. Now the guards begin hooting and laughing wiping spots of blood from their clothes -- and Michael stares up at them, watches every gesture, every movement... like a cat, but suddenly his face splits with a smile, wipes off quickly.

82. EXT. FISHING HUT - LATER - DAY

Several bodies lie by the steps in the pouring rain. The bodies are both South Vietnamese and American. Huge dark water rats are already scurrying over them.

83. INT. FISHING HUT - TABLE AREA - DAY

Steven is at the table now, opposite Michael. It will be a sudden and shocking cut. His face is twitching, dripping sweat and both he and Michael are holding onto each other's eyes. Steven is shaking and trembling, his eyes beginning to wander around in their sockets as if they had been suddenly cut loose. Michael is trying to talk to Steven over the excited murmurs of the guards as their betting begins with another round of typical Oriental haggling.

MICHAEL

You can do it, Steven.

Steven cannot speak at first, just keeps shaking his head negatively. Then --

STEVEN

Oh, shit... oh, shit. I can't
hack it...

MICHAEL

Steven... listen to me, Steven!
You have to do it.

STEVEN

(in a very
small voice)
I want to go home, Michael. We
don't belong here in the jungle.

MICHAEL

Use your fucking head!

STEVEN

Oh, God. This is horrible!

MICHAEL

Listen to me, Steven. If you
don't go through with it they'll
put you in that pit. If they
put you in the pit, Steven,
you're gonna die... you under-
stand?

STEVEN

We don't belong here, in the jungle, Michael, I just wanna go home!

MICHAEL

Hey, listen, so do I.

(Steven nods,
numbly)

Believe me, you can do this.
If we both do it, then we all
go home, see? You and me and
Nicky.

Steven looks down. The pistol is ending its spin and the muzzle comes up pointing at him. He stares at the gun and tears begin to fill his eyes. The guards begin yelling at him, urging him on and then Michael gives him a smile of such unwavering faith that Steven picks up the gun, fumbles the cylinder around, cocks it and puts it to his temple. For a moment Michael and Steven look at each other. Steven is taking his faith straight out of Michael's eyes and now Michael gives him another encouraging nod.

Steven starts to squeeze the trigger, but at the very last instant jerks the gun away from his head. There is an explosion and the top of his head is horribly burned and bloodied.

Steven sits motionless, his jaw hanging open and his face formed in an expression of terrible puzzlement. Then his face begins to move, begins to twitch, as if the muscles were trying to discover a frown. Steven looks around, a thin trickle of blood runs from his head down into his eyes. He looks back again at Michael and he begins to cry. We can see all the youth being sucked right out of his eyes.

Suddenly, Steven is thrown out of his chair, jerked to his feet and pushed below. A South Vietnamese is pulled up and placed opposite Michael. The South Vietnamese is only a kid, even younger than Steven, and he is trembling with terror.

84. INT./EXT. BARBED WIRE COMPOUND - HEAVY RAIN - FOLLOWING DAY

A couple of South Vietnamese sit huddled together in the muck on the uphill side. A third lies sprawled on his back, dead. The rain pours through the few leaves placed over their heads and splashes in great cascades around their feet.

On the downhill side are Steven, Nick and Michael. Steven is in a fetal position, gripping his knees and rocking himself back and forth. Michael has torn one sleeve of his shirt off and wrapped it around Steven's wound as best as he could. Steven's eyes are vacant and his face is fixed in an expression of horror, as if he were still at the table. Beside Steven is Nick. Nick sits slumped against the bamboo, careful of the barbs. One knee is raised and he is picking at the threads of his trousers where they have torn at the knee.

Michael is standing, gripping the barbed wire 'walls' of the compound and looking out at the pit.

85. EXT. THE PIT - MICHAEL'S POV - HEAVY RAIN - DAY

The pit is about twenty feet away. Running mud and river water gurgle into it, coming out through shallow trenches on the down side. There are fewer hands than the day before, far fewer. Only one pair is left and as Michael watches he sees that these hands are struggling to keep their grip.

Suddenly one of the hands slips away. The hand comes back for a moment, then both hands disappear under the muddy water.

86. INT./EXT. BARBED WIRE COMPOUND - HEAVY RAIN - DAY

Michael turns away from the pit. He looks down at Steven, then he looks at Nick. His expression is one of exasperation, as if he had been having a long argument.

MICHAEL

I'm telling you, Nick, it's up to us!

NICK

Who do you think you are, God?

MICHAEL

What? Are you hoping? Praying?
What?

NICK

What else?

MICHAEL

I thought you were praying.
(no reply)

How bad do you want to get out of this, Nick?

NICK

What do you think?

MICHAEL

Then... listen to me! We're outta options! This is no fucking time for hoping or praying or wishing or any other bullshit with angel's wings! This is it. Here we are... And we gotta get out!

NICK

You're right... okay, you're right. You're always right! Okay?

MICHAEL

Get off your fucking ass and stand up!

(grabs him)

Get off your ass, Nick!

NICK

(stands)

Okay, okay!

(he straightens
his shoulders)

What about Steven?

MICHAEL

Forget him.

NICK

What the hell are you saying?

MICHAEL

I'm saying forget Steven...
Steven ain't gonna make it,
Nick.

NICK

Forget Steven?

MICHAEL

Look in his eyes. Nothing but
snakes running around under his
skin. He's in a dream and he
won't come out. You hear me?

NICK

Mike...

MICHAEL

Listen, Nick! Get it through
your head or you and me are
both dead too!

A shout comes from above. The two surviving South Vietnamese whip around in fright. Michael and Nick turn.

Through the slits in the floor we see the V.C. guards coming down from the hut. The guards are all drinking Miller's High Life beer again and the guard in charge is waving the pearl-handled magnum revolver.

Nick looks at Michael. The whole thing is beginning to finally totally unnerve him.

MICHAEL

(calm)

We gotta play with more bullets.

NICK

What?

MICHAEL

I'm gotta get more bullets into that gun, Nick. It's the only way.

NICK

More bullets in the gun?

MICHAEL

(even)

More bullets in the gun... The trouble is that still leaves one of us with his hands tied up, so that means we gotta play each other.

NICK

(numb)

More bullets?... Against each other?... Are you crazy!!!

MICHAEL

It's the only choice we've got.

NICK

It's a pretty shitty choice!

Nick stares at Michael. Rain is easing off, fading in rivulets. The voices of the guards coming down are getting louder.

NICK

How many more bullets?

MICHAEL

(watching him)

Three -- minimum.

NICK

(flash of
panic)

No fucking way!

MICHAEL

(evenly, holding
him with his eyes)

I'll pick the moment, Nick. The game goes on until I move. When I start shooting, go for the nearest guard, get his gun and zap the motherfucker!

NICK
I'm not ready for this!

MICHAEL
(over this last)
Whatever gun you get, you zap
the fuckers.

NICK
(shouting)
You're crazy! No way! Now you're
crazy! You're completely insane!!

The guards begin screaming orders from the stair ladder and one of them lets off a blast of automatic rifle fire which shreds the piling just alongside Nick's head. Nick looks at Michael and they watch as the guards grab Steven and drag him out toward the pit.

87. EXT. PIT - DAY

As Steven emerges from under the hut one of the guards smashes him with his rifle butt, screaming orders. Nick and Michael make a move and are both knocked to the ground by furious blows. When they get to their feet they see Steven.

Steven has absolutely no comprehension of what is about to happen to him. His eyes are dreamy, far away, as if he had mentally transported himself to some distant place. There are great gashes in his head from the additional blows he has received and as he stands waiting on the sand he looks exactly like a very small child who has experienced some terrible confusion.

MICHAEL
It's up to you, Nick. Now it's
up to you.

NICK
I must be outta my mind.

Suddenly the guard standing beside Steven wrenches him around. We see the pit now, close up. There are four bloated corpses floating in the muck.

We see Steven's face, close up. He gives a little cry and tries to turn away.

We see the guards pick Steven up, screaming. We see the splash as Steven hits the water and then we see him surface between the bloated corpses, still screaming, paddling desperately and trying to find something solid to hold him up. Then the bamboo grating crashes down as he grabs hold.

STEVEN
(screaming)
Oh, God, there's leeches in
here!!

88. EXT. COMPOUND - DAY

Nick stands motionless, stunned, listening to Steven's pathetic screams. In contrast, Michael has his attention focused only on the guard in charge, and when he glances in their direction Michael slugs Nick in the stomach and begins beating him viciously to the ground. Nick struggles to his feet, his eyes full of question marks. Michael attacks him again and now, as the guard in charge comes over to see what's going on, Michael begins charging Nick again and screaming.

MICHAEL

Him against me! Him against me!

The guards look at each other, becoming interested.

MICHAEL (cont)

Him against me, goddamn it!
Him against me!

89. INT. FISHING HUT - DAY

Michael and Nick sit facing one another across the tin kitchen table. The guards are all grinning and even the South Vietnamese kids are watching with grim fascination. Nick has the revolver. He is trembling visibly. Already Michael has managed to draw the guards in closer and as Nick spins the cylinder of the deadly-looking magnum and cocks the hammer, Michael jumps up and begins pounding on the table.

MICHAEL

This is it, you mothers! Now
he's going to do it! Watch!
You watch!

Nick almost loses what little control is left and his hand begins shaking violently.

MICHAEL (cont)

Look at him! See! This is it
and he knows it!

Side bets begin changing hands.

MICHAEL (cont)

Last chance to lose your money.
There, boys. Good-bye money!
Hurry, hurry. Here he goes!

Nick puts the revolver against his temple and pulls the trigger. There is a dull click.

Nick puts the revolver back on the table. His hand is shaking so badly it falls with a clunk. Michael grabs it, spins it, sticks it to his temple and clicks out, talking all the time.

MICHAEL
(throws the
revolver on
the table)
More! Put in more! You under-
stand more? More! More bullets!
(he mimes with
his fingers)
Three bullets! You understand
three?

Michael starts laughing maniacally. The guard in charge looks at his companions. They all begin shouting for him to go ahead. The guard in charge purses his lips, as if imitating a general coming to a decision, and then nods his assent. The guards all howl. Michael joins right in.

MICHAEL
Terrific!

The guard in charge takes the revolver, opens the cylinder and begins sticking in two or more cartridges. Nick is just shaking his head in disbelief as if wondering how he got there.

Michael suddenly screams at Nick, jabbing his finger at him, as if in fury.

MICHAEL
(for the guards'
benefit)
You or me! Now we got it!
You or me!
(he rubs his hands
and leans back in
his chair)
Now we got ourselves a real
game!

The guard in charge places the revolver on the table, spins it.

MICHAEL
Place your bets, motherfuckers!

The muzzle stops pointing at Michael. Michael scowls, looks over at the guard in charge. The guard in charge has lifted the barrel of his AK 47 and is watching him with caution. The other guards who are totally caught up in the game, are yelling and shouting.

MICHAEL
You jokers think I'm in trouble,
right?

Michael picks up the revolver, spins the cylinder, cocks it...

MICHAEL (cont)

No way! Never!

(begins to chant)

Mike is mighty! Mike is strong!

Mike is magic! Mike lives long!

Lemme hear it from the bench.

Come on, motherfuckers, lemme hear it!

Michael takes a glance at the guard in charge again. The guard in charge is still eyeing him with caution, not understanding a word he's saying.

Michael places the revolver to his temple... and clicks into an empty chamber.

MICHAEL (cont)

See! Nothing to it...

He pushes the gun across to Nick. Then he stabs his finger at him, screaming again, as if in a fit of rage.

MICHAEL (cont)

(low and fierce)

I'm gonna will us outta here!

You got an empty chamber in that gun, Nick. Just put that empty chamber in your mind.

Nick looks down at the revolver and picks it up. He stares at Michael for a moment. Then he spins the cylinder, cocks the hammer, puts it to his head... and clicks into an empty chamber.

The guards let out expressions of disbelief. Those betting on Nick begin hooting and jeering at those betting on Michael.

Michael sits motionless, as if stunned, as if utterly defeated, his brow furrowed in a dark frown.

Nick pushes the revolver across the table. His face is twitching but he gives the gesture a certain flair, as if throwing back a challenge.

Michael stares at the revolver -- stares at it with an expression of utter gloom. Then he reaches out, takes the revolver in his hand and pulls it toward him, as if he no longer possessed the strength to pick it up.

MICHAEL

Who's for this asshole?

(thumps his fist
on the table)

Is anyone for this asshole?

Michael roams a glowering eye over the watching guards, as if suddenly discovering himself among traitors. Slowly, he pushes himself to his feet. The gun is still on the table, still in his right hand, and as he gets up he lets his body sag over it.

MICHAEL

Who here is for Michael...?
Michael, the Archangel!

There is absolute silence now except for the sudden drumming of new rain. It is as if the war had disappeared, vanished. The guards stand motionless, hardly breathing, so captivated by Michael's performance that they suddenly resemble little children.

MICHAEL (cont)

Who... here... is for the Angel?

Michael begins his chant again. His voice is low, very dramatic, and the guard in charge joins in a sing song imitation of Michael's words.

MICHAEL (cont)

The Angel is mighty! The Angel
is strong! The Angel is magic...!

Suddenly, Michael snaps the revolver level in his hand and blasts the guard who has been singing, hitting him full in the face.

MICHAEL (cont)

Die, motherfucker!

At the same time Nick throws himself onto the guard who is standing behind him, spins and slams the guard's AK 47 into his chin. Two more shots blast out from Michael's magnum and we see two more guards crash over the kitchen table. Nick now opens up with the AK 47, and as Michael backs off beside him, also with an AK 47, they gun down the remaining guards to the floor, who fire back as they fall.

For a moment everything is a roaring blur, then it is over in an instant. Bodies lie all over the place in a bloody, tangled mess under a pathetic paper lantern. The rain has stopped --

Nick staggers, badly wounded. Michael picks himself off the floor and pulls Nick out of the fishing hut toward the river...

90. EXT. SAND BAR - DAY

Michael appears carrying Nick on his back. Nick is unconscious and the effort that Michael has expended to get him this far can be measured in his eyes. As Michael approaches the bamboo pit along the side of the river, we suddenly see Steven, staring up, his eyes burning like coals.

Michael comes to a stop, unshoulders Nick and lays him on the ground. As he stands looking at Steven, gasping for breath, Steven stares up at him with an expression of pure terror.

For a moment there is nothing -- silence. The rain drones on and we can hear Nick's breath, which comes in short, shallow rasps.

Camera closes slowly on Steven's face. His gums are bleeding and his skin is drawn tight so that every bone stands out in his skull. His teeth are bared, his eyes are hollow and he looks within a hair's breadth of being completely mad. He makes a strangled animal sound, so faint as to be almost imperceptible. Michael pulls loose the bamboo grating and raises Steven out of the slime.

91. EXT. RIVER'S EDGE - DAY

A huge battle is taking place in the distance. The earth trembles and shakes.

Michael staggers down into the water with Nick, almost too tired to move. Steven comes behind. He is hunched over, like a gnome. The rope which Michael has tied around his neck drags in the water. His eyes are huge with terror and his voice comes in a loud rasp.

STEVEN

Michael?

MICHAEL

(a whisper)

Right here.

Steven follows them into the water.

STEVEN

We don't belong here, in the jungle, Michael. Are we going home now?

MICHAEL

(barely moving
his lips)

Yeah, kid.

Another explosion shakes the earth, this one much closer. Nick's breath rattles in his throat. Michael, who lies low in the water beside Nick, holding him, closes his eyes for a moment as if to gather strength.

STEVEN

Michael?

(no answer)

Michael?

Michael gets to within a foot of a snagged uprooted tree floating by, he lunges out and grabs it, then he pushes Nick on it and lays him on his back. The huge root end is so soggy that it barely supports Nick's weight and his chin is within inches of the water.

Michael loops one strand of rope around Nick and ties him down with a knot he can instantly release, then he slips some dead branches under the rope so that he will not be visible from shore.

Michael crosses back to Steven who sits in the water with the rope around his neck.

MICHAEL
(low voice)
We're going swimming, Steven,
okay?

Michael leads Steven out to his neck in the water. Steven balks, staring doubtfully at the boil and swirl of the fast moving current. A sound comes from the clearing. Michael snaps around. V.C. SOLDIERS are coming out of the trees -- about twenty of them.

Steven hesitates and then Michael yanks him to the tree raft and the heavy run of the current sweeps them silently out around a great, rainswept bend...

92. EXT. RIVER - DAY

The rain has stopped. Michael holds Steven who clings to the tree raft staring out at a landscape of strange, hump-like hills. Gnarled pine trees cling to the rock walls and a dreamy mist seems to hold them in a spell.

MICHAEL
How you doing, Nick?

NICK
(delirious)
I don't think I can make it...

93. EXT. CANYON - DAY

Nick, Michael and Steven sweep around a bend. The river suddenly narrows, locked on both sides with sheer walls. There is no way to get to the shore and in the distance there is the ominous rumbling sound of falls.

STEVEN
What's that?

MICHAEL
(lying)
Just wind.

They are racing now, riding a crest of deep, fast-moving water whose surface is deceptively smooth. The river funnels around another bend. Suddenly, dead ahead, there is an ancient suspension foot bridge across the river. The sound of the falls is much louder now and the

derelict bridge, which sags to within only a few feet of the water, is their last hope. The only trouble is that a young V.C. GUERRILLA is squatting on one bank, standing guard.

Michael claws his way to the upstream end of the huge root supporting Nick, who suddenly lifts the AK 47. Just as he does so, the V.C. guerrilla turns and sees him. Nick fires first and the guerrilla crumples down through the rotting slats into the water and sinks below the surface.

Nick drops the rifle into the river. The sound of the falls is like thunder now and the bridge is coming up fast.

MICHAEL

Hold on tight, Steven!

Michael steadies himself and as they pass under the suspension bridge he lunges upward and grabs hold of one of the rotted slats. The bridge swings sideways, tipping the slat to a vertical position so that the slat snaps in Michael's grip.

The current is ferocious, building up a high head of boiling water around Michael's body. As Steven watches, the slat slowly tears away from the dead bridge and then, suddenly, it separates entirely and they are out in the river again spinning toward the mounting thunder of the falls.

Michael drops the broken slat, releases the rope that holds Nick to the tree and screams at Steven:

MICHAEL

Get away from the tree! Get away!

Michael pushes Nick off, holding him on his back. A moment passes. The tree drifts slowly away. The thunder of the water gets louder and louder and then the huge tree suddenly tilts upward and disappears.

94. EXT. FALLS - DAY

Steven, Nick and Michael sweep over the edge...

The river drops about thirty feet into a deep pool. There is nothing visible in the pool except the huge tree log, plunging around like a great horned beast in the roaring water.

95. EXT. POOL - DAY

Michael lies on a rock clutching Nick in his arms. Michael's head is bleeding and Nick is unconscious. Michael shakes his head, wipes the blood from his eyes and says in a cracked voice:

MICHAEL

Hold on. You gotta hold on!

Michael looks over at Steven and notices that he is staring at something, staring as if he couldn't believe his eyes. Michael whips around. A hundred yards downstream a beat-up SQUAD OF AMERICAN RANGERS is being evacuated by choppers. The Rangers are under fire, the sandbars are too narrow to set down on, and the only way the choppers can pick the men up is to swoop down and try to pluck them out of the water.

Michael turns back to Nick, picks him up and drags him back into the heavy run of the current. Steven hesitates. Michael pulls him viciously back into the river with the rope and then moves them all towards the focus of evacuation.

96. EXT. SANDBAR/ROCKS - DAY

The choppers have machine guns mounted in their open doors. They hover with their skids just above the river, the rotor wash whipping water, and as they rake the tree line with machine gun fire what is left of the Ranger squad pull themselves out of the water and climb aboard.

A chopper roars down over Michael, Steven and Nick, who suddenly slide into view. They are the last to be picked up and the chopper takes heavy fire from the shore. Michael manages to get Nick pulled aboard and then, as he is trying to get Steven up, the fire from the shoreline intensifies and the chopper begins to lift up. Hands reach down to Steven and Michael who are both now hanging from the skids, faces blurred in the spray of water. Suddenly, as the chopper reaches a height of about forty feet, Steven loses his grip. For a split second Michael watches him falling... and then he lets go.

Steven and Michael hit the rock-strewn river with two plumes of spray. They both surface and show an arm or leg, and then disappear around a bend.

97. EXT. RIVERBANK - DAY

Michael has dragged Steven from the river and props him up in a low muddy cut of a creek bed. Steven's legs are horribly broken and Michael kneels over him -- out of breath, tears streaming from his cavernous eyes -- howling with helpless rage.

MICHAEL

Damn you! God damn you!

Michael looks down at Steven. Steven's body is a mass of raw flesh but his eyes look up at Michael with lunatic, unwavering trust.

STEVEN

We don't belong here, in the
jungle, Michael. Are we going
home now?

MICHAEL

(nods)

Sure. Sure, Ace. We're going home. We gotta just keep moving...

98. EXT. REFUGEE ROAD - DAY

The mountains rear themselves over the road, immense and mysterious. REFUGEES are streaming down the road in a desperate, frightened human torrent. There is every imaginable means of conveyance -- from bull-ock carts to motorbikes -- but the vast majority carrying their meager belongings, are fleeing on foot. Burned-out vehicles of every kind litter the drainage ditches off the side of the road, and the great human tide overflowing the road streams around them as if they were islands. In the distance comes the sound of machine gun fire and mortars are coming in nearby. MEDVAC helicopters packed full of wounded men clatter overhead, with more wounded strapped to the skids. Now and then a U.S. Army tank comes highballing through, scattering the refugees into the drainage ditches.

We catch a glimpse of Michael moving along the embankment on the far side of the road with Steven on his back. Camera closes slowly on Michael's face. His nose is bleeding from fatigue, and rivulets of Steven's blood run down his legs...

Suddenly a tank approaches with a full bird COLONEL in it. The tank is completely encrusted with men. Clinging to every available support or protrusion are men's hands. The refugees begin scattering to make way for the tank.

Michael stops, turns and stares at the fast-approaching tank -- blankly, without comprehension. He waits. The tank barrels closer. Michael waits until the last instant and then, carrying Steven, and with sudden passionate hate, he lunges into the middle of the road.

The tank is almost on top of them before it grinds to a sudden, sliding, wrenching stop at his feet. Now finally, Michael puts Steven down on the road, utterly exhausted.

MICHAEL

(to tank commander)

Take him along.

The Colonel and the TANK COMMANDER get out swearing and start toward Michael.

COLONEL

(warily)

Little R and R and you'll be standing tall again, son...

TANK COMMANDER

Uh-oh, Sir. Hostile vibes!

The Colonel walks right up to Michael.

COLONEL

Put that weapon down, son.

We now see that Michael is leveling the pearl-handled revolver and he cocks the hammer with an audible click.

COLONEL

Oh, shit!

The Colonel and the tank commander pick up Steven and scramble to the already overloaded tank and pile him on.

COLONEL

(as they
take off)

Fucking maniacs--

Michael watches them go, Steven safely aboard, without expression. On the road the refugees stream past -- by the hundreds, by the thousands, by the tens of thousands. For a long moment Michael watches. Then he jams the gun in his pants and joins the vast human torrent.

MICHAEL

(as if to
himself)

Just keep moving... I'll be
okay.

Michael is walking with the fleeing refugees. Camera pans past the uneven rimrock of the mountains holding on Michael as he grows smaller and smaller. He dwindles to a spot in the distance to the South.

99. INT. NEURO-PSYCHIATRIC CORRIDOR, U.S. MEDICAL HQ - SAIGON - DAY - 1972

The corridor is narrow, jammed with wounded men on stretchers and tables; some propped on chairs. In fact, the whole place is a steamy madhouse of confusion. Nick is there, staring out the window looking down to the courtyard below. He is so changed that we do not recognize him at first glance, see only the shadowy form of what we take to be just another patient. Camera closes on Nick -- and as we do recognize him -- we notice that around his neck is a piece of plastic on which is stapled a colored paper marker.

Nick reaches for the big paper marker on his neck and peers down at it from the corner of his eye. It seems to remind him of something and he takes out his wallet. In his wallet is a photograph of Linda. Nick peers at the photograph intently, then closes his wallet and puts it away. The strain on Nick is now glaringly apparent, both in his face and in his movements; a feeling of complete, radical disconnection between Nick and everyone else. There is a hint -- a look in his eye -- that he is in the edge of madness.

Departing aircraft thunder overhead and there is the sound of wooden coffins being stacked into trucks in the courtyard.

100. EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

Black body bags are laid out in countless rows on the hot concrete. PFC's are stacking them on pallets and more PFC's, driving hydraulic fork lifters, are loading the pallets of coffins into the holds of the trucks.

101. INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

Nick turns away from the window and looks down the corridor, down the rows of blank staring faces. Everything appears grimy, even in here, and the only clean white thing seems to be the cigarette in Nick's hand. Suddenly a couple of NURSES burst in and a harassed DOCTOR follows them in.

DOCTOR
(to Nick)
Is your name Nikanor Chevotarevich?

Nick shakes his head affirmatively.

DOCTOR (cont)
Are you sure?

Nick nods.

DOCTOR (cont)
What is that, Russian?

NICK
No. Just American.

DOCTOR
Lemme see this.

The doctor looks at the paper marker on Nick's neck, marked N.P.

DOCTOR (cont)
How old is this thing?

Nick shrugs.

DOCTOR (cont)
Mother and father's names?

NICK
Lou and Eva.

DOCTOR
(extracts a file
from a thick wad
of papers in hand)
Dates of birth?

NICK
 (an edge of hysteria
 seeps into his voice)
 What the hell difference does
 that make? They've both been
 dead for over twenty years!!!

The doctor stares at him for a moment, shoots a sidelong glance at one of the nurses, then he staples another colored marker around Nick's neck. He directs a finger at Nick.

DOCTOR
 Okay, get the hell out of here.

The doctor slams back out the door, the nurses following in his wake. Another jet thunders overhead. The hydraulic fork lifts in the courtyard shriek and whine. Suddenly, from somewhere nearby, comes the sound of a wounded black G.I.'s voice:

VOICE (O.S.)
 (laughing; almost
 chanting)
 Roll 'em all out of Nam. Roll
 'em daid! Feet first! Let 'em
 all go home with their boots on...

102. INT. U.S. ARMY TELEPHONE CENTER, GHQ BUILDING - SAIGON - AFTERNOON

Banks of telephones line the wall. Stretching out from the telephones are long, ragged lines of SERVICEMEN waiting to call home. The room is huge, full of echoes. Re-enlistment posters are plastered everywhere and canned music is playing over the considerable noise of a hundred men, all shouting over their long-distance connections at the same time.

Nick, wearing civilian clothes, blends into one of the lines with only one person in front of him. He looks anxious. He takes out his wallet again, peers intently at Linda's photograph, then puts it back. He takes a half-step forward -- staring at the telephone -- and then he stops, turns and walks away. No one takes any notice.

103. EXT. BAR - STREET - SAIGON - NIGHT

A shimmering, iridescent confusion of flashing neon signs. Nick comes along the sidewalk, a crowd of MILITARY PERSONNEL and HUSTLERS selling everything from electric blenders to women. He seems drunk and he moves unsteadily, as if he were walking on ice. Suddenly, across the street, something catches his eye.

NICK
 (calling)
 Michael....!

Nick throws himself into the traffic headlong, without even looking.

Vehicles swerve and screech to a stop. Nick dodges between them, gains the sidewalk on the other side lunging through an alley connecting to another street lined with bars. He claps his hand on the back of a passing G.I. The G.I. turns. It is not Michael at all but the resemblance is almost close.

NICK

Sorry... Thought you were
someone else.

- * The G.I. makes no reply, just continues on his way into the congregation of AMERICAN SOLDIERS milling about the middle of the streets. The crowd streams around it, a sea of bobbing, brilliant color. Nick enters the nearest bar.

104. INT. MISSISSIPPI SOUL BAR - NIGHT

- * The place is jammed and very dark, ear-splitting rock music is playing. Bikini-clad GIRLS are dancing with the American soldiers while above the bar on pedestals half-naked girls are dancing to the music with obscene contortions.

Nick comes into the smokey and noisy room, wedges into an opening at the bar. By now a very young, very pretty BAR GIRL is giving him her undivided attention. She whispers something in his ear which we do not hear.

NICK

(stares
at her)

What?

BAR GIRL

(softly, in
his ear)

I show you. Come. You come.

(pulls him
to his feet)

Not like with girls home, in
U.S.A.

Nick nods. He looks as if he might be about to cry.

BAR GIRL (cont)

I give you special, crazy fuck,
not like home. Come. You come.
I make you crazy.

105. INT. UPSTAIRS ROOM - BAR - NIGHT

The bar girl comes around a corner with Nick, guiding him up the steps of a flight of narrow stairs into a fluorescent lit, horribly decrepit room with sad little plastic flowered curtains and a torn mattress on the floor. In one corner of the room, jammed between piles of clothes and cooking utensils is a baby, asleep in a tiny crib. The bar girl puts one hand around Nick's waist and slides

the other down the front of his pants. A look of terrible sadness crosses his face.

BAR GIRL (cont)
What you like to call me now?

NICK
(abstracted)
Linda.

BAR GIRL
(laughs)
You call me Linda, just like home.

Suddenly, with a fever bordering on brutality he undresses her and desperately, as though barely controlling his hysteria through the force of his passion, he pushes her onto the dirty mattress in the middle of the floor. After a moment, Nick pulls away, without the slightest interest in the girl beside him, staring at the window at the end of the room. He tears himself loose from the bar girl and pushes up against the filthy glass, opens it.

106. EXT. BACK ALLEY (NICK'S POV) - NIGHT

A filthy, grimy dark place loud with the fierce whirring sound of hundreds of ancient, leaking air conditioners. Seated on a chair against the wire fence of the opposite building is an OLD MAN with an old food stand on bicycle wheels, surrounded by a collection of white ceramic elephants for sale. A military police jeep roars in front of him, a few motorcycles sputter past and a few girls with soldiers hurry in both directions. The old man sits motionless, like the guardian of some timeless, silent kingdom.

107. INT. ROOM - NIGHT

* Nick spins away from the window, tears rolling down his cheeks.

NICK
(shouting)
Hey... hey, elephants! Look
at those elephants!

* The bar girl stares at him. The baby begins crying now. Suddenly, Nick, startled at the sound, bolts and charges back down the stairs with the bar girl hot on his tail.

BAR GIRL
Wait! First you pay me!

NICK
I can't be in a room with a baby
crying...

108. EXT. NARROW TWISTING STREET - SAIGON - NIGHT

The sky is alight with fires. Now and then huge distant explosions rock the night and sirens wail.

A lone figure appears walking down the middle of the street. As the figure approaches we see that it is Nick. He is alternately burning with chills and fever.

The street is almost deserted except for the incessant rickshaw-type taxis whizzing by carrying soldiers out for a night on the town.

NICK
(toneless, over
and over)
Hey, hey, the wind does blow
Hey, hey, the snow does snow
Hey, hey, the rain does rain...

Nick stops, swallows, as if to force back some overwhelming emotion. Then continues down the street passing under a lamp post leaning precariously over him, and begins singing softly again, his voice thin and cracking now.

Suddenly, there is the sharp flat report of a pistol shot from somewhere nearby. Nick spins, reflectively, staring at a small complex of wooden buildings behind a high corrugated metal gate, and there is the unmistakable sound of Vietnamese voices, hooting and cheering.

Nick stares at the buildings for a long moment, then he crosses through some passing traffic toward the gate.

109. EXT. YARD BEHIND GATE - NIGHT

From another wooden house, beyond the others and closer to the river, a tiny light glows inside a paper lantern. Nick moves toward the light coming from the riverfront house. Lying on the ground under a grove of bougainvillea nearby are three CORPSES, all of them Asian, all of them with one side of their heads bloodied. As Nick stands looking at them a door comes open of the back of the building and TWO BURLY VIETNAMESE MEN bring out another corpse. The body is that of a young American. Like the Asians he is dead from a bullet in the right temple.

MAN (V.O.)
You seem... disturbed.

Nick turns. A man is standing in the shadows of a very beautiful little arbor, eyeing him with a look of cold amusement. The man's accent is French. His name is JULIEN. Beside him, on the seat of a gleaming European sports car, is a bottle of champagne and several silver cups. Nick stares at this strange sight unbelievably, blinks several times to clear his mind of this vision. Then after a moment, says in a distant voice:

NICK
(indicating house)
People inside doing it for
money?

JULIEN

Mais certainement... Sometimes a great deal of money. Naturally I do not do it myself. I myself do not possess the nerve.

(smiles)

But I am always... how do you say... looking out for those things quite rare. Champagne perhaps? Tch, tch. Don't say no. When a man says no to champagne, he says no to life.

(gives Nick a cup)

You saw this before?

A moment of silence passes between them. Then--

NICK

Up north.

JULIEN

Ah, yes. Of course...

(smiles)

Allow me please to introduce myself. I am Julien... And you are?

NICK

Nick.

JULIEN

Nick. C'est extraordinaire! Do you know that I have a second cousin who is called Nicholas and a nephew Nikolai. So you are, comme on dit, en famille..

There is another shot from inside and another round of hooting and cheering.

NICK

I have to go.

JULIEN

But you must come in.

NICK

No, I--

JULIEN

But I insist.

NICK

I have to go.

JULIEN

Of what is there to be afraid
after this war? The war is a
joke, a silly thing.

Julien refills Nick's cup. Nick looks at it. The cup is as highly polished as a mirror and the sparkling bubbles dance and hiss. Nick lifts the glass and empties it in one swallow.

NICK

I'm going home, Ace.

JULIEN

(smiles)

To the girl who waits...

NICK

(gives him
a look)

Yeah.

JULIEN

Naturellement I pay my players
cash American. However, should
you prefer German marks, or per-
haps Swiss francs, this of course
can be arranged. Anything can be
arranged.

NICK

You got the wrong guy, Ace.

JULIEN

But you must come in.

NICK

No, I--

JULIEN

Mon cher ami! But I insist!

He guides Nick toward the little wooden house on the river.

JULIEN (cont)

After all, it may not quite be
le Grand Hotel but it is, never-
theless even for Saigon, really
quite extraordinaire. Something
you must not miss. That is my
hope. After you...

Nick hesitates, then precedes Julien through the door.

110. INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The narrow hallway is lined on both sides with cases of French wine and champagne, making it still narrower. Ahead, from a nearby room comes the sound of voices and the faint but unmistakable commotion of odds being given and bets placed -- an excited humming chaos...

We watch Nick come through with Julien past cases of American liquor and cigarettes stacked to the ceiling, into a room lit only with a single fierce overhead drop light. He is now even more unrecognizable.

111. INT. GAMBLING ROOM - NIGHT

Several big imposing BODYGUARDS from different parts of Asia are spread around -- some standing, some sitting. They are in varying degrees of dress -- some in suits, some in casual clothes. The one element they have in common is their size. Directly under the single bright light is a table and two chairs. Two CONTESTANTS, both of them Vietnamese, sit opposite one another. Between them, lying on the table, is a revolver. Both are wrapping their heads with strips of red cloth in a ceremonial way. The REFEREE inspects the wraps, crossing first to one man, then to the next; satisfied, he nods. Now he holds a pistol by its cylinder, turns to address the room.

CHINESE REFEREE

(Chinese)

Then the game is made, gentlemen.

Spectators, predominantly Asian, jam all the available space around the table. And in the middle of it all we see a vague, familiar shape. It is Michael. But all this seems remote and unreal to him now, something out of a world from which he has already taken leave and from which he is becoming more distant and detached every moment.

A CHINESE CLERK taking the last bets, chalks the final odds on a large board. The betting has been heavy. Champagne flows like water and the atmosphere is one of reckless abandon, as if money, like love, were good for an hour. The referee holds the pistol up for all to see and inserts a single cartridge into the empty chamber.

Camera closes on Nick, staring at the evolution of the game he once played for his life. He is bordering on obsession now; we feel a restlessness in his movements unlike anything we have seen before.

The contestants have finished wrapping their heads with the scarlet cloth. They sit and look at each other, strange in the eerie light. It is like a dream. There is a sudden silence; a sense of upcoming climax among the spectators.

CHINESE REFEREE

(as he lowers
the pistol)

One cartridge. Game to be played
to completion. Forfeit automatic
after delay of one minute.

The Chinese referee puts the pistol on the table in front of the two men. Nick, without taking his eyes off the pistol, abruptly, wades through the crowd, pulls one of the contestants out of his chair and sits at the table opposite the other Vietnamese player.

Michael, who's attention is suddenly snagged by Nick, recognizes him. Nothing at all seems to happen for a moment. Then a startled, choked cry of terror escapes him -- he cannot believe that he is looking at Nick. He stares in wonderment and panic at the sight of Nick grabbing the pistol. Suddenly and frighteningly all of the spectators begin to shout in confusion.

Nick, resting his elbows on the edge of the table like someone having a conversation in a bar, spins the pistol, cocks it, puts it to his own head. Involuntarily, Michael cries out. For a brief moment, the two men simply -- and to powerful effect -- stare at each other. Then Nick gives Michael an odd, searching look. Suddenly --

Michael lunges forward with a great heave, but Nick has already clicked out and is being dragged from the table, screaming. Michael struggles fiercely to rip free from the other bodyguards who are stopping him.

111A. EXT. COURTYARD - NIGHT

There is a sudden movement in the darkness. And with terrible force one of the bodyguard's feet comes up into Nick's stomach. His body lifts off the ground, shuddering with the impact, and crashes down, stunned. Punches, kicks and blows come from every direction. All of it sudden and shocking. Nick gathers himself, mixes punches, then lands a swift, stunning two-punch combination. He backs off, turns away on the same beat, leaving the bodyguard to drop unconscious, and lurches out of the courtyard.

Michael pushes outside, looks around with the confused look of a man who has arrived in a strange city for the very first time. He backs away from the building and hurls himself through the courtyard.

Julien, who has said nothing during the whole scene, follows outside onto the street.

112. EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Michael catches a fleeting glimpse of Nick, breaks into a stiff run that becomes more and more violent.

MICHAEL
(desperately, at
the top of his
voice)

Wait! Nick, come back! Come
back!

Then, as if all this last had been too much for him, he stops -- waves

down one of the passing rickshaw-type taxis. Just then, Julien passes him in his car.

13. INT./EXT. JULIEN'S CAR - NIGHT

We see Nick fall back into the seat and his eyes close -- he looks half-dead. All the life seems to have gone out of him. Suddenly, he opens his eyes. Julien is alongside, driving. Julien studies Nick for a moment and then smiles.

JULIEN

If you are truly brave and lucky
I can make you rich.

For a moment Nick doesn't answer. His eyes seem to look through Julien, as if to some landscape far beyond. Julien takes out a thick wad of American bills and presses them on Nick. Nothing at all seems to happen for a moment. Suddenly, Nick throws the money out the window. Julien says nothing, gives Nick a long look. There is a sound of scuffling, then shouting. Julien turns to look back.

There is a full-scale riot breaking out in the street. People fighting for the money. In the distance the sky goes up in a huge flash of fire and then the dollar bills whip across the street in a great hot wind.

113A. EXT. STREET - NIGHT

There is a sudden, mad scramble of taxis. Michael lunges into the closest one to him, takes off. After a moment, he sees Nick in Julien's car disappearing from view. He looks at the people fighting for the money and suddenly he is moved almost to tears. He sees the fluttering dollar bills -- perhaps it is that that touches him; a sharp awareness that he is no demigod, but human like Nick. Perhaps, too, it is the sense that Nick will never really come back.

DISSOLVE TO:

114. EXT. TRAILER - CLAIRTON, PA. - WINTER - DUSK - 1973

It is freezing cold. The trailer is all decked out like a plum cake, with tiny American flags. Stretching from the trailer to the telephone pole across the street is a huge, hand-lettered banner which says: "WELCOME HOME MICHAEL!" and it whips and snaps in the winter wind. The billowing smoke from the steel mill, blown by the fierce wind across the town below, sweeps over it all.

Michael's battered Caddy is in the yard, tires sagging, frozen flat. Alongside it is Nick's pick-up truck and a bunch of much newer cars.

115. INT. TRAILER - DUSK

Axel, John and a bunch of familiar-looking steelworkers, all of them half-bombed, are dragging out two more kegs of beer from garbage cans filled with ice. Linda is peering out one of the trailer windows, looking pale and anxious. Stan, who is unofficial lookout, is jumping up and down at the approach of every car and screaming:

STAN
 This is it! This is Michael!
 (and then, when
 it isn't)
 Not yet! Just hold your water,
 I'll tell you when!

AXEL
 (abruptly)
 Three cheers for the red, white
 and blue...!

ALL
 Three cheers for the red, white
 and blue!

116. EXT. TRAILER - DUSK

We see the empty street into which a taxicab turns.

117. INT. TAXICAB - DUSK

Michael, in his Airborne dress uniform, sits hunched forward in the back seat surrounded by his baggage, his chest bemedaled with a lot of ribbons and expert badges.

Suddenly, as the cab comes over the crest of the hill, the trailer looms into sight, straight ahead. Through one window we see Stan peering out of the trailer at the approaching cab.

CAB DRIVER
 Jesus! Will you look at all
 this...

Michael just stares at the fast approaching trailer.

MICHAEL
 (suddenly)
 That's not it.

CAB DRIVER
 What're you, crazy? That's not
 it? You said a trailer. You
 said corner Logan Street.

MICHAEL
 I was wrong. That's not it.
 Keep going. Go straight down
 to the highway.

CAB DRIVER
 Hey, now listen. You said--

MICHAEL
 I'm telling you that's not it!
 Now keep going!

Michael slumps in the seat out of view.

MICHAEL

Just keep going! Just keep
going straight to the highway.

118. INT. TRAILER - DUSK

Linda is at the window, standing with Stan and Axel pressed close together, all of them watching the cab.

STAN

It's him. I'm telling you,
this is Michael.

The taxicab comes thudding by. Linda, Stan and Axel all watch as it disappears under the flapping "Welcome Home Michael" banner.

AXEL

(to Stan)

I thought that was him, too.

STAN

So, his plane could be late,
Axel. I mean, take it easy.
I mean, you're driving every-
one nuts.

(to Linda)

You okay?

Linda gives a thin smile. Stan puts one arm around her shoulders.

STAN (cont)

I know Nick will be back soon
too. I know Nick. I know
he'll be coming back.

Linda nods, but not too hopefully.

STAN (cont)

Right, Axel?

AXEL

Fuckin' A!

119. EXT. STARLIGHTER MOTEL - HIGHWAY - NIGHT

A huge neon sign stands against the grey sky, buzzing angrily, as if it were full of bees.

The taxi driver comes out of one of the rooms, gets back in his cab and pulls away.

120. INT. MICHAEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Michael stands in the doorway where the driver just left him. His duffle bag and the rest of his gear are at the wall by his feet. His head is thrown back and he is draining the last of a bottle of whiskey, gulping it down in a great raw swallow.

Michael lowers the bottle, catches his breath. The stark panic is gone, but there is still fear -- blind, nameless fear, like that of an animal run to the ground.

Michael crosses to the window, grips the frame with both hands and looks out across the valley.

121. EXT. MICHAEL'S POV - NIGHT

The five great blast furnace stacks trail their ribbons of smoke across the pale winter sky. Steam billows upward in huge, silver-edged clouds and there is the familiar and somehow comforting flash and gleam of fire.

122. INT. MICHAEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Michael turns back to the room. He stares at it blankly -- stares at the bed, the bureau, the chair -- all of it cheap plastic and synthetic imitation decor; then he opens his bag, pulls out the wedding picture and props it up on the bed. He drags a chair over, sits down heavily and puts his feet up on the bed. Then he reaches down and picks up a new bottle from his bag, closes his eyes and begins gulping whiskey down, gulping it hard, fast. As hard and as fast as he can -- staring at the picture of Linda in front of him.

123. EXT. TRAILER - HIGH ANGLE - DAWN

The banner stretching to the telephone pole across the street has been whipped to shreds by the wind. Everyone has gone home. In the yard, parked beside Michael's Caddy is only one other car about the same vintage. There is a case of beer on its roof, the windows are entirely frosted over and the engine is running. After a moment, Axel, Stan and John stagger out -- bleary-eyed, hung-over and freezing. Linda comes out of the trailer, but just as she emerges the whistle at the mill goes off. Axel and Stan begin yelling at each other, then they throw themselves back in the car and start off. The case of beer on the roof crashes to the ground. They stop, pile out, pick up the cans, heave them in the back seat and take off again.

John stands in the yard alone with Linda. She kisses him lightly on the cheek, John smiles. They hug each other and John starts down a rickety wooden stairway, disappears.

Linda turns and goes back inside the trailer.

Michael's hand, slapping him on the back and shouting orders all at the same time. The girls working as checkers are all smiling, admiring the hell out of Michael, running their fingers over his uniform; as if only by touching him they could tell he was real. Everybody making small talk as the manager keeps interrupting.

MANAGER

(to Michael)

You did a good job, kid.
Petruccio, gimme a count on
those pears!

(back to Michael)

I think we got 'em now, know
what I mean? Have a cigar.

He goes off. A STOCK BOY comes by and whistles at Linda.

STOCK BOY

Hi-you, hot lips.

MICHAEL

They... bother you here?

LINDA

(takes his arm,
laughs)

No-o-o!

(gives him a
little wave)

I have to go now.

MICHAEL

Listen, would you mind if I
picked you up after work?

LINDA

I'd like that.

Linda hurries off. The manager comes up from behind, clapping Michael on the shoulder again as he goes outside for his car, a brand-new Cadillac. Michael watches it pull out of view. He does not move or speak for a moment, and the girls stare at him. Then he just leaves without another word or a look back.

128. EXT. STEEL MILL, PARKING AREA - DAY

Michael waits by the entrance to the mill. It is cold and he looks as if he had been waiting for some time. Suddenly steelworkers begin streaming out the doors, heading for their cars. Michael cranes his neck and then catches sight of Axel and Stan making their way toward John's bar down the street.

MICHAEL

Hey, Axel!

Axel turns. He grabs Stan and pulls him through the departing steelworkers.

STAN
What the--!

AXEL
It's Mike!

STAN
Mike...?
(sees him)
Jesus, Mike!

Stan grabs Michael's hand, shakes it. Then Axel does the same, grabs him in a big bear hug.

STAN (cont)
Where the hell were you? We
were all set -- beer, food.
Right? Am I right, Axel?

AXEL
Fuckin' A!

MICHAEL
I got delayed.

AXEL
(hugs him
again)
Hey, Mike! God damn!

STAN
Jesus, you must be dying for a
shot of real American booze.

MICHAEL
(can't help
smiling)
I'm fine. Hey, I'm fine.

STAN
How does it feel to be shot?

The question hangs there for a moment.

MICHAEL
It doesn't hurt.

Stan seems suddenly relieved. There is an awkward silence for a moment, then everybody nods silently and they start for John's bar.

MICHAEL (cont) .
How've you guys been?

STAN
Same old thing. Nothing's
changed. I get more ass
than a toilet seat and Axel
is getting fatter.

Axel makes a threatening gesture to Stan, then shrugs.

AXEL
Show him the new gun. Show
him the new gun, Stan.

Stan looks around. Cars are streaming out of the lot, horns blaring. Stan hikes up his layers of sweaters and sweatshirts and shows a spanking new .38 Smith and Wesson in a clip holster on his belt.

MICHAEL

What the hell's that for?

STAN

What is it for?

AXEL

He's a worrier!

MICHAEL

Forget it. Let's have a drink.

129. INT. JOHN'S BAR - DAY

Michael comes through the crowd of steelworkers toward the bar, shaking hands. The men treat him with immense respect. There are no cracks, there are no jokes. They squeeze his shoulder, pat his back, punch his arm, reaching out for him, touching him.

STEELWORKERS

Let the man through! Let's make
a little room!

Suddenly John comes out of the back kitchen.

JOHN

(gives him a
great big hug)
Boy! Boy oh boy! Are you okay?

MICHAEL

I'm fine, John.

JOHN

C'mon in back. Come on. Axel!
Stan!

John pushes them all back into the kitchen.

130. INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The door shuts behind him. One of the bartenders bangs in, brings a pitcher of beer and a bottle of Seagram's whiskey, nods and leaves.

JOHN (cont)

Here we go.
(he pours and raises
an overflowing glass
of beer)
Here's to you, Mike!

AXEL

Fuckin' A!

STAN

And here's to the other guys...

They all stand there silently for a moment looking at each other.
The other mood is suddenly gone.

MICHAEL

(in a low
voice)

How's Angela taking it?

JOHN

Not so good. Worse since she
talked to him.

MICHAEL

Worse since she talked to who?

JOHN

(matter-of
factly)

Steven.

MICHAEL

Angela talked to Steven?
(stares at him)
Steven's alive?

John, Axel and Stan exchange glances.

JOHN

(amazed)

You didn't know?

Michael is silent. Tears begin streaming down John's face.

AXEL

John...

STAN

Hey, John...

JOHN

Mike, we don't know where
Steven is... Angela won't
tell us.

MICHAEL

(looks up at him)

What do you mean?

JOHN

She won't talk to anybody.

Michael walks in a circle and then stops, staring at them. Then
he turns and goes straight out.

131. INT. STEVEN'S MOTHER'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DUSK

* The room is very dark. Angela sits propped-up in bed under a lace covered comforter by the window. The only illumination comes from the glow of the blast furnaces. Surrounding the bed are new appliances, many in unopened cartons (blenders, a t.v., a hi-fi set, radios, electric curlers, other gifts, etc.) And in the middle of it all, playing with a toaster, is a chubby four-year-old boy.

There is a sound from the hallway, then Steven's mother comes in with Michael. She gives him a look raising her head slightly, indicating Angela. Then she closes the door soundlessly and leaves, leaving Michael alone with Angela. As she goes out, we catch a last glimpse of her quickly making the sign of the cross.

Michael stares at the cartons of appliances and gifts and at the smiling boy. Then he shifts his look to Angela, who stares right through him. An unblinking, terrifying stare.

MICHAEL

(gently)

Angela, I just heard Steven
was alive.

(no reply)

Where is he?

Angela begins to tremble, fiddles with the dial on a tiny portable radio in her hand, going from one station to another, the whole time staring at Michael. Finally she reaches for a magazine and writes down a number in a tiny, nearly illegible scrawl. Michael moves closer to her now. Angela finishes, puts down the pen and tears off the tiniest piece of paper, looks at it once, and gives it hesitatingly to Michael.

MICHAEL

Angela...?

Angela just gives him a strange, twisted smile, avoiding his eyes too directly. Michael leans over, kisses her gently on the forehead, looks one more time at the smiling boy and goes out... Camera closes on Angela who just keeps staring into space.

132. EXT. CHURCH - STARKWEATHER STREET - DUSK

Michael walks past on his way to the trailer with the piece of paper Angela gave him in his pocket. It is snowing and from inside the church we hear the choir singing. The sound is massive, deep and dark, like a great river rolling through the growing night.

Ahead we see a lone telephone booth at the curb. The door is half-open and snow is blowing in. Michael starts to reach for Steven's number in his pocket, stops, closes his eyes, leans forward into the wind. The telephone looms closer and Michael almost stops, but doesn't and passes by.

133. INT. TRAILER - NIGHT

Michael sits in a chair in the back of the trailer. His knuckles are white from the pressing tension. He looks drained and exhausted. His old deer hunting gear is still piled on the floor alongside Nick's, right where they left it all. The lights are out and Michael is staring at the telephone which is illuminated through the window by a street light in the corner. There is a sound outside, then the lights come on as Linda enters with groceries. Michael is packing a pistol.

LINDA

Michael?

MICHAEL

Right here.

Linda crosses through the living room to where Michael is sitting in the dark.

LINDA

What are you doing?

MICHAEL

Oh. Nothing... getting my gear out. I'm just leaving.

LINDA

Don't go. I've got some food. I'll make you a real sit-down dinner.

There is a long silence. Silence holds past the point where we expect someone to speak, then it holds still longer. When Linda finally speaks, her voice seems teasing yet sad.

LINDA

Why don't we go to bed, Michael?

MICHAEL

(blankly)

What?

There is another long, tense silence.

LINDA

It's been a long time. Can't we comfort each other?

MICHAEL

Not here! I gotta get outta here!

Michael swings all his hunting gear on his back, picks up his rifle and heads for the door. Linda follows, still clutching her groceries, her emotions so pulverized she can hardly speak.

MICHAEL (cont)

I'll be...I don't know...I feel a lot of distance...far away... See you around.

Michael is gone. Linda stands motionless, clutching her groceries, staring at the trailer door. It is dark outside. Snow is blowing in. The door closes slowly, with a faint hiss, and then clicks shut. From beyond the door there is the sound of Michael's Caddy starting up. Linda hesitates a moment longer, then drops the groceries and rushes outside.

134. INT. STARLIGHTER MOTEL - MICHAEL'S ROOM - BATHROOM - NIGHT

We watch Linda step out of the shower and begin to dry herself. When she speaks it is loud enough to be heard in the other room.

LINDA

It just seems sort of strange
coming to a motel...

Linda wraps on a short fresh bath towel and it is very sexy, then looks at herself in the mirror. She is very excited, but there is an uneasy balance between sexual desire and guilt in this moment. She strikes a pose, pulling down the bottom of the towel a bit.

LINDA (cont)

Do you know what I mean, Michael?

Michael doesn't answer. Linda pulls the door fully open, takes one last look at herself in the mirror and goes out.

134A. INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

As Linda comes out of the bathroom her face falls and she stops dead in her tracks.

Michael is lying on the bed -- sprawled on his back, his uniform and boots still on, sound asleep on top of the cheap bedspread.

LINDA

Michael?

Michael doesn't stir, doesn't budge. Linda crosses and looks at him -- hungrily, top to bottom -- the group wedding picture is still where he left it. His duffel bag unmoved from the previous night. All the hunting gear piled carelessly around it.

Linda lets out a little moan and pulls down the top spread beside Michael, then she slips slowly under the covers moving as close to him as she can get. She moves one arm out from underneath and puts it around him, staring at the moonlit shadows moving on the ceiling.

Camera holds on both of them like this for a long moment. Michael's mirror-polished jump boots gleaming in the shine of the moon.

135. OMITTED

136. INT. BOWLADROME - NIGHT

People are coming and going and each time one of the inner doors open the sound of the bowling alley comes in. We catch a fleeting glimpse of Linda letting go of a ball. Her movement is unconsciously erotic, although no one else but Michael seems to be aware of it.

The BARTENDER lifts a beer over to Michael, gestures with his hands, "this round is on the house". Michael nods. Across from him, at the far end of the bar is Stan, fast-talking a redhead who is marvelously stoned, sitting on the bar stool with amazing equilibrium, her glass held near her mouth. She occasionally turns her head to look at Michael, keeping herself in delicate balance, moving as if her head were in danger of snapping off at the neck if she were to move suddenly too fast.

Michael is high and seemingly does not notice her or Stan, continues watching Linda with growing, obsessive appreciation, excitement. Stan gets up, comes over to Michael and claps him on the back.

STAN

(signalling for
another beer)

How's it feel to be back?

MICHAEL

(preoccupied)

Great.

STAN

Hey, Michael.

(gestures with his
head at the redhead)

What do you think?

MICHAEL

I don't know--

STAN

I mean, what do you think of
her?

MICHAEL

I don't know, Stanley.

STAN

Is she beautiful?

MICHAEL

(really looking at her)
Straight?

STAN

Yeah.

MICHAEL

No.

STAN

Do you think she's intelligent?

MICHAEL

(looks again)

No.

STAN

No?

MICHAEL

(shakes his head)

No.

STAN

Neither do I.

MICHAEL

(hooked)

Then what in hell do you see in her?

STAN

(judicially)

I don't know. That's what I'm trying to find out! Maybe she's good in bed.

(shouts to girl)

You good in bed, honey?

The redhead gives him a look of pure agreeable imbecility. But before she can answer (supposing she can answer at this stage) there is a roar of screams from the bowling lanes.

137. INT. BOWLING LANE - NIGHT

Axel is flat on his stomach wedged under an automatic pin setter which has come down on him. He is hollering at the top of his voice but only his legs are sticking out, wriggling frantically. John and Linda are running toward him and begin tugging on his legs, but they cannot budge him. We follow Michael and Stan running across the alleys to help. Linda and John are pulling like mad and Axel is yelling his head off.

MICHAEL

What the hell happened?

LINDA

His ball didn't come back... so he went after it, and the pin setter came down on him.

Michael stares at John. He is perspiring, trying to hold the weight of the pin setter off Axel. Then a big smile splits his face and he begins to laugh; and then, pulling on Axel all the time, Linda laughs and they all laugh together uproariously. They can't help it.

MICHAEL

(over the laughter)

Stan, get the jack out of my trunk.

138. INT. BOWLING LANE - NIGHT

Stan is furiously jacking up the pin setter while everyone stands watching. Slowly, Axel wriggles back out, his bowling ball clutched triumphantly in his hands.

STAN

Axel! Hey, Axel! You all right?

Axel straightens up slowly, his great stomach in his hands.

MICHAEL

Axel, you okay?

AXEL

(laughs)

Fuckin' A!

JOHN

Hey, Axel, you're sure nothing's broken?

Axel scoops Linda into his arms and holds her up over his head, then puts her down, laughing.

STAN

Well, what do you guys wanna do now?

AXEL

We're going huntin', right?

STAN

Who's askin' you?

AXEL

I was askin' Mike. He's going!
But no women.

JOHN

Mike's going. Right, Mike?

Michael hesitates, gives a sidelong glance to Linda, fixes directly into her eyes, setting up a special connection between the two of them. But Linda looks suddenly nervous and just turns and walks off the lane. Michael watches her go for a moment, composed, then lifts his beer.

MICHAEL
(turns to John)
Right.

AXEL
Fuckin' A!

STAN
(hopping up
and down)
Just like old times! Right,
Mike? Am I right?

ALL
(in a ragged chorus)
Fuckin' A!

139. EXT. MOUNTAINS - DAY

Snow is blowing, swirling past the trunks of stark, ice-covered trees. There is no horizon. Sky and earth are bound in a moan of wind, in the faint creak of frozen limbs and the whispering, fitful, spinning flakes.

Michael appears suddenly, as a gust of wind shifts the slanting snow. He is moving easily, heading steadily up-hill, following the contour of the slope. As he draws closer we see that he is following a set of fresh tracks on the highest ridge -- that to the east which falls sheer to jagged rocks standing out in the river below -- then to the west.

140. EXT. ROCK LEDGE - DAY

Then the deer is there. He is a magnificent seven-point buck, standing in a grove of hemlock, looking at Michael. He is like the essence of a deer seen in a dream; and what gives him the over-mastering and mythical quality of presence is something beyond his color and size and beauty: It is the sense of his power and vitality, as if he were a piece of primal and unconditional energy, luminous and immortal.

Michael catches his breath, barely visible in the swirling snow.

The buck watches Michael for a moment longer, then turns, throws up his head and curvets over the high ridge to the west.

141. EXT. ANOTHER, MUCH LOWER RIDGE, CLOSER TO THE HIGHWAY - DAY

Stan is out of breath, clawing his way up a steep slope on all fours. John and Axel, who have reached a level area above Stan, unsling their rifles. Shots are going off in every direction and the sound is so magnified by echoes that it sounds like a full-scale war.

STAN

(breath rasping
in his lungs)

What are you, kiddin'? Are
you kiddin' me, Axel? Twenty
times we coulda had it!

(wheezing)

If I'd'a been where you were--

JOHN

Psst. Stan!

John signals with his head, Stan turns. Finally a deer, an old greying buck, has come out of the woods. The deer is rattled by the gunfire and peers at Stan uncertainly. Stan spins and grabs his gun, which immediately goes off. He slams another shell in the chamber and scrambles to his feet, but the rifle sling is hooked on the branches of a bush and his shot ricochets off a nearby rock. John and Axel dive for cover. As they look up, they see the deer trot down the slope and then Axel, firing, running after it...

142. EXT. HIGH RIDGE - MOVING VIEW - MICHAEL - DAY

The wind is much stronger, moaning in the trees. Michael is moving fast, at a near trot. Suddenly he stops, listening. At the same moment there is a snort. Michael wheels. For a split second the buck comes into sight in a break in the trees, then springs away. Michael is transfixed for a moment, then darts after it, as the great buck thunders through the trees.

The wind shifts and we see that Michael has stepped onto a boulder which is loosely planted at the top of a steep scree slope. As he watches in horror, the boulder begins to roll, then to bound, dislodging other rocks and boulders, all of them bouncing and leaping and cracking... and then falling -- soundless -- over a sheer ledge to unknown depths below.

143. EXT. BUSTED-DOWN LOGGERS SHACK - DAY

Axel and John have dragged their dead deer to an old weathered log beside the shack. They sit side by side, drenched in sweat, guzzling beer out of both hands.

JOHN

Sweet! Oh, that is sweet!

AXEL

Fuckin' A!

Shots explode nearby. At first the shots are scattered but they quickly open into a full barrage. Axel and John stand up.

144. EXT. TREE LINE - DAY

Stan comes barreling through the trees, shouting and screaming. His clothes are in tatters, the sole is gone from one shoe and the barrel of his rifle is jammed up with mud and perceptibly bent.

STAN

I got one! I got one!

Stan loses his footing and rolls down an embankment, head over heels.

145. EXT. WOODS - DAY

Stan's deer staggers through the trees, drops quietly in the softly falling snow.

146. EXT. A HIGH FROZEN LAKE - DAY

On the rugged cliffs above the lake the wind is blowing in gusts, slanting the snow first one way and then the other. Michael appears in the distance, a black speck in the endless expanse of shifting white. His pursuit has become nightmarish.

As Michael draws closer we can see that he is near exhaustion. His clothes are caked with snow, his breath comes in a shallow gasp and his gait is uneven, favoring one leg. As Michael approaches camera he falters and limps to a stop. There are no more tracks. There is nothing to go by and he hunkers down in the driving snow.

The wind bangs in from one way, then it shifts and bangs in again from another way. Suddenly it stops entirely. In the moment of pure silence there is a sound -- the click of a hoof on rock.

Instantly the buck comes flashing into view.

Again, Michael is transfixed for a moment, then he pushes himself to his feet, raises his rifle and sights down the barrel.

We see the buck through Michael's sights. The buck whirls and stops facing him. It is a clear shot. Michael's finger is on the trigger. For a second the buck is too astonished to move. He trembles across his whole body.

Michael stands motionless, squeezes the trigger; but at the last instant he raises the barrel. The shot misses.

Almost as if the buck had understood, he hesitates, staring at Michael. Then, throwing up his great head, he begins to run.

Michael is so wonder-struck he has forgotten to breathe. He turns with his back against a sheer rock face high in the air. As he does he looks out over a snow-shrouded landscape of such spectacular beauty that it might be something from a dream.

MICHAEL
(shouts)

Okay!

The wind keening through the high passes, and then faintly, the echo comes back.

ECHO
-- Okay!

147. INT. LOGGERS SHACK - NIGHT

A Coleman lantern hangs from one rafter, rocking in the wind. John is out cold. Axel and Stan are both high on beer and are cleaning their deer rifles. Stan finishes first and then pulls out his .38 caliber pistol and begins cleaning it.

AXEL
(noticing)
What's that stupid little gun
up here for?

STAN
In case!

AXEL
In case? In case of what?
In case you stumble on one of
your girlfriends suckin' a
forest ranger's cock?

Stan is sheet-white, trembling. He grabs up the pistol and cocks it.

STAN
(shrieking)
Say that one more time! Say
it! Go on, say it!

AXEL
You're so full of shit you're
going to float away, Stanley!
That thing is empty now.

STAN
(fiercely)
Try it!

* Michael is just coming in, half-frozen. He stares at the pistol in disbelief. Suddenly looks as if he is going to kill somebody. He springs, seizes the gun with one hand and slams Stan to the floor. Stan gets up. Michael starts to move on him. Axel quickly lurches over, pulls Michael away.

AXEL

Mike, easy!

MICHAEL

(grimly)

Yeah.

Stan gets to his feet. There is a dazed look on his face.

STAN

What the hell was that for?

(picks up
the pistol)

Did you think it was really
loaded?

MICHAEL

Gimme that!

Michael takes the pistol, then he points it at the roof and squeezes the trigger. The gun goes off with a deafening roar, blows a hole in the roof. John snaps awake.

For a moment there is absolute silence. The wind moans in the trees, snow curls through the open hole, splinters and snowflakes raining down. John is still trying to find his breath.

Michael lowers the pistol, looks at it, turns it over in his hands...

MICHAEL

You guys want to play games?
I'm going to play your fuckin'
game!

Michael snaps open the cylinder, empties all but one cartridge and slams it shut. Stan is chewing his lip. John is staring in utter disbelief at the ghastly scene about to take place. Michael spins the cylinder. Then there is absolute silence.

Axel notices that his hands are shaking. Michael suddenly cocks the revolver and in a single motion grabs Stan by the throat and puts the gun to his head. Stan's eyes rolling madly in astonishment and outrage.

Simultaneously, there is a dull click, as the hammer strikes into an empty chamber. Stan clamps his eyes shut and a scream tears out of his throat.

* Michael still clenches Stan, but then slowly, with every last ounce of control he has left, releases his grip. Stan gasps for air, gags and throws up, then he reels, like a rudderless ship, and crashes to the floor where he lies motionless beside Axel's feet. Michael stands right where he is, nerves alert.

For another moment there is an absolute stillness. John, who has not said a word the whole time, is struck mute, staring at Michael.

148. EXT. SHACK - NIGHT

Michael comes out the door and stands for a moment, listening to the wind. He looks down at the pistol turning it over in his hands, then he heaves it into the trees as hard as he can. He looks half-destroyed. He is stiff, sore and exhausted. Slowly he comes back into his other world.

149. EXT. STARLIGHTER MOTEL - DAY

The motel is lonely-looking, cheap and cold. Michael's Caddy pulls into the yard beside the big trucks and cars and slides to a stop. Michael goes around to the trunk, removes his gear and slams the lid. He crosses to his room and goes inside. And now for the first time we notice that Axel, John and Stan are still in the car, silent and unmoving. Momentarily they file out, grab their gear and without a word to each other walk home in separate directions.

150. EXT. EAGLE SUPERMARKET - LATER THAT NIGHT

Division Street is empty except for scores of abandoned shopping carts on the sidewalk near the market which a CLERK is banging together.

Michael pulls up in his Caddy, stops and goes in.

151. INT. SUPERMARKET - NIGHT

A GIRL is closing out the two registers up front.

GIRL
Linda's in back.

MICHAEL
Thanks.

GIRL
How was the hunting?

MICHAEL
Fine.

The girl is about to say more but Michael goes down a long aisle of bright packages. Coming out at the back he finds Linda sitting on the floor surrounded by boxes, crying.

MICHAEL
Linda... what's wrong?

LINDA
(helpless shrug)
I don't know.

MICHAEL

There must be something.

Linda looks up at him, tears streaming down her face.

LINDA

I'm just so lonely.

Michael cannot reply for a moment. Then:

MICHAEL

I've got my car.

LINDA

(shakes her head)

Just leave me alone. I'll be fine. Really.

Michael hesitates, then turns and walks back down the aisle between the bright packages. He is silent but obviously moved.

152. INT. CADDY - NIGHT

Michael sits behind the wheel, watching the lights go out. His hands begin shaking uncontrollably and he gets back out of the car.

The clerk is rounding up the last of the abandoned shopping carts. The carts crash and clank as he rams them together. The lights inside the market are going out.

153. EXT. SUPERMARKET - NIGHT

Michael watches the last light go out in the market. Linda comes out of the door and crosses towards him.

MICHAEL

You okay?

LINDA

(she nods)

Did you ever think life would turn out like this?

MICHAEL

No.

He fumbles, opens her door. Linda suddenly slips in and slams the door shut tight.

154. INT. TRAILER - NIGHT

Michael is lying on his back. Outside the bedroom we hear a door open, then bare footsteps. Michael -- and we -- make out Linda's naked figure through the darkness. She comes to him gently, slowly, decisively. They make love.

155. EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The wind is blowing. No one. A beer can rolling in the wind...

156. INT. TRAILER - LATER THAT NIGHT

We watch Michael back away from the window. For a moment he stands motionless, turns, looks at Linda asleep -- lying on her back, arms flung out across the pillows, like an angel in a child's story. He hesitates; then he pulls on pants, shirt, jacket, and jams his feet into a pair of boots.

157. EXT. STARKWEATHER STREET - NIGHT

Michael comes walking up the street. There is no one in sight. He crosses to the intersection, near the church, with the telephone booth.

Michael jams himself into the booth, zippers his jacket. He is irked with himself, a little frightened. He hears a car door close and an engine start up. A car pulls out of a nearby street and comes past him, slowly. As Michael watches, the tail lights grow small, then the car dips over a hill and disappears.

Michael pulls out the tiny scrap of paper with Steven's number that Angela had given him before. He lifts the frozen receiver and begins to dial a number...

158. INT. V.A. HOSPITAL - RECREATION ROOM - NIGHT

* Moonlight streams through windows. A Bingo game is in full swing. Dozens of men in wheelchairs, some eating, are watching the tote board with absolute concentration.

159. INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

A NURSE enters the foreground with a telephone message. Beyond her we see the wheelchair fleet coming from the recreation room toward her. As the nurse continues we realize she is moving directly toward Steven. Steven is dressed in a white hospital gown, the bottom of which hangs over the front of the wheelchair and trails limply on the floor. Both of his legs have been high amputated and he has lost the use of one arm. His face is scarred and what expression he displays is centered in his eyes.

We watch Steven take the telephone message from the nurse.

Suddenly, Steven begins wheeling himself rapidly down the polished corridor. At the doorway to the telephone room he pauses, looking at the dangling receiver.

He wheels around in a little circle - pained, terribly upset. His eyes fall back on the receiver. Then he hurries toward it.

STEVEN

Hello?

160. INT. TELEPHONE BOOTH - NIGHT

Michael stands in the booth huddled anxiously over the receiver. It is very cold.

MICHAEL

Steven? Steven, it's me, Mike.

STEVEN (O.S.)

Michael! Hey. How's things?

MICHAEL

Never mind me. How the hell is it with you?

161. INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Steven suddenly looks around in desperation. A flurry of wheelchairs go past.

STEVEN

Hey. Great.

MICHAEL (O.S.)

(he can hardly hear)

What's that noise?

STEVEN

Wheelchairs.

162. INT. TELEPHONE BOOTH - NIGHT

Michael holds the receiver, staring into it.

MICHAEL

Jesus. When are you getting out?

STEVEN (O.S.)

I'm gonna stay here awhile, Mike.

MICHAEL

What for?

163. INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

*

STEVEN

(with every-
thing he has)

Place is great. It's like a resort... Basketball, bowling. You name it. Even Princess Grace visited us here. I gotta get back, Mike. Curfew.
(clicks off)

164. INT. TELEPHONE BOOTH - NIGHT

MICHAEL

Steven!!!

165. INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Camera closes slowly on Steven. His head has fallen to one side -- as if he were drowning. In front of him is the dangling receiver. A nurse approaches...

166. EXT. V.A. HOSPITAL - DAY

Someone is getting out of a cab. After a moment the feet appear, clad in highly polished jump boots. We see military trousers with the razor crease tucked in the boots, a belt buckle embossed with an eagle's head... and then suddenly, Michael's face. Then Axel, Stan and John following.

They all slow their approach, stop, looking at the hospital building. It is huge. We watch Axel, Stan and John take seats in the lobby as Michael heads for the elevators.

167. INT. V.A. HOSPITAL - DAY

Steven watches Michael approach for a moment, his face utterly without expression. Michael continues coming closer. As he sees Steven's condition, he tries to hide his reaction, but in his eyes we see how hard he is hit.

STEVEN

Michael. I don't want to go home.

MICHAEL

(nods)

I know.

STEVEN

You go hunting?

MICHAEL

Yeah.

STEVEN

You get one?

MICHAEL

No.

STEVEN

You didn't get a deer?

MICHAEL

I tracked one, a big buck. God, he was a beauty!

STEVEN

Angela send you here?

MICHAEL

No.

Michael gets behind Steven's wheelchair, pushes him along.

STEVEN

Good.

Michael swings Steven's wheelchair around to his bed area. Notices the lid of his footlocker is locked with several very large padlocks.

STEVEN (cont)

Angela keeps sending me socks.

Michael keeps looking down at all the padlocks on the footlocker at his feet. They are everywhere.

STEVEN (cont)

(direct)

It's not socks I got in there,
Michael.

Steven bends over to the footlocker, as best he can, and begins opening the locks with keys from a chain worn around his neck. As he straightens up, Michael notices wedged in between his underwear and toilet articles wadded-up bundles of hundred-dollar bills and ceramic elephants, which are familiar to us from the street peddler in Saigon. Some of them are still stuffed with money. The corners are all chipped and it looks as if they have been in there for a long time.

Michael reaches down, slips a single bill out, feels the paper; realizes it is real and folds it. He looks up, watching Steven. Other men in wheelchairs roll slowly by. Steven sits with the footlocker of money at his feet, utterly bewildered, tears welling up in his eyes.

STEVEN (cont)

One comes every month, Michael,
from Saigon. I don't understand!
Saigon's going to fall any day
now!

This last with a growing edge of hysteria. Michael looks at the men going by in wheelchairs. His head is spinning and he brings himself back with effort, looks suddenly exhausted.

MICHAEL

It's Nick, Steven.

STEVEN

How do you know?

Michael makes no reply. But the intensity in his eyes frightens Steven.

*
STEVEN

That place is gonna be caught
in a terrible shit storm.
Where is a guy like Nick getting
money like this?

Michael rises, looking down at the money. The reality of what he is thinking has nearly overwhelmed him, and it is only with tremendous effort that he maintains a casual tone.

MICHAEL

Oh... cards, maybe. I'll find
him. Don't worry. It's getting
late, Steven. I'm going to call
Angela. The guys are going to
help me bring you home.

*
STEVEN

(panicked)

Like hell you are! I don't fit
in!! Mike! No!

MICHAEL

(almost a shout)

Goddamn it, I am! I am gonna
do it!

For a moment both of them look like the worn-out survivors of a terrible struggle. And they are. They are. After a moment, Steven says quietly:

STEVEN

Do as you heart tells you,
Michael.

There is a moment's pause. Then Michael suddenly gets behind the wheelchair and pushes Steven right out of the ward with quick, hard steps. As he is wheeling Steven through corridors, an increasing number of NURSES gather around, questioning, everyone talking at once.

168. EXT. U.S. AIR FORCE AIRFIELD - RUNWAY - DAY

The place is a madhouse of activity. As jet scream TROOPS disembarking from Saigon are being counted and re-counted. SERGEANTS are yelling off names. CLERKS are typing forms. Forklift trucks weave in and around a few OFFICERS waiting to go to Saigon, looking lost.

Michael is still in uniform. He stands at a window watching a jet transport being prepared for loading. A CLERK comes by, arguing with a SERGEANT. The Sergeant sets down his clipboard to consult the clerk's papers. Michael picks up the clipboard and fades into the crowd.

169. OMITTED

170. INT. TRANSPORT PLANE - DAY

Michael has the Sergeant's clipboard and flashes it as he casually boards with the others. A YOUNG LIEUTENANT is shouting up at the pilot, who shrugs back at him.

LIEUTENANT

Please! It's vital I go to
Saigon today. This is very
important!

The sound of the jet whine revving up overrides him as the cargo doors are slammed shut and the big plane lumbers out onto the runway. The figure of the lieutenant quavers in the waves of heat, breaks up like smoke as the plane taxis into position for takeoff.

CUT TO:

171. EXT. SAIGON AIRPORT - DUSK

VIET CONG SAPPERS have just attacked. A number of jet fighters are burning, bodies are strewn over the tarmac and jeeps with SOLDIERS are racing back and forth. Out beyond, the jet troop transport taxis into view, lumbering like a great silver monster out of the night.

172. INT. PLANE - DUSK

Michael stands in the aisle next to a COLONEL who is peering out the window. A lone MAJOR sits nearby.

COLONEL

Jesus Christ, they're hitting
the goddamned airport now!

Michael nods. Everyone starts out.

COLONEL (cont)

(to no one in
particular)

Assholes!

173. EXT. RUNWAY - DUSK

Sirens are screaming in the distance. Michael looks around nervously. Smoke hangs over everything.

COLONEL

Tell you something else, Major.
Don't eat melons. They use
hypodermic needles here to fill
'em up with river water.

The scream of the sirens grows louder. Suddenly a military police jeep, mounted with a 50-caliber machine gun, careens into view just as a huge black chopper sets down. The people who stream out are of all ages, both Asian and American. They all have identification tags whipping around their necks in the rotor wash, and all are carrying some kind of luggage.

M.P.
(amplified)
Colonel Crispin!

COLONEL
That's me.
(nudges past
Michael and
waves)
Right here, Sergeant! I'm
right here!

M.P.
Right this way, sir. I suggest
we run.

Michael, the Colonel, and the Major are rushed unceremoniously to the chopper and pushed on board.

PILOT
(shouting back)
Quick as you can, guys! We're
in a rush!

They take off just as another round of mortar shells comes screaming.

174. INT. HELICOPTER - DUSK

Michael sits on a seat in the stripped-down, clattering chopper. He is squashed in between the Colonel and the Major who is reading the latest Wall Street Journal.

The chopper veers, suddenly tilting over to one side. Michael twists around to look out the window... In all of these next scenes we will see, and we will hear the increasingly desperate population of a city under assault.

175. EXT. MOVING VIEW - AMERICAN EMBASSY FROM AIR - DUSK

The roof of the Embassy is jammed with people standing on every inch of available space. Enormous red lights glare from the four corners of the roof. The helicopter pad up there is ringed with M.P.'s with machine guns who are checking ID's as they let people aboard another chopper, one at a time. The helicopter on the pad taking people on has its rotors going, and other helicopters are circling. But it not only the roof of the Embassy which is jammed.

From Michael's vantage point he can see that the area around the swimming pool in the courtyard below looks like a refugee camp.

176. EXT. EMBASSY ROOF - DUSK

Michael's chopper sets down with the doors already open. He and his three travelling companions jump out and rush to a door leading to an interior fire stairway.

Michael looks back. The chopper he came in on is already loaded and taking off, while another is coming in to land right behind it.

177. INT. FIRE STAIRWAY - DUSK

Michael and the other officers descend the stairs behind two ARMED GUARDS. The doors are open on the landings. Through one doorway Michael can see into the swimming pool area:

Sitting around the pool, filling the entire courtyard right to the edge of the water, are hundreds of silent, waiting PEOPLE. The people are both Asian and American. As in scenes everywhere in the city, they have piles of luggage. They all hold documents in hand and they have the blank-eyed look of those who have been waiting for days. Except for the clatter of the choppers in the air above and the clicking of typewriters, there is hardly a sound. The image appears briefly; like a hallucination.

Suddenly they come on a Coke machine. It is a huge Coke machine, standing on the ground floor.

GUARD 1

Coke machine. If anybody wants one.

MICHAEL

(sharp)

Corporal, we're all running late!

The Colonel nods.

GUARD 1

(snaps out of it)

We can't get any of you off to GHQ till morning... might as well relax.

178. EXT. EMBASSY GATE - DAY

A yelling, screaming, shrieking, hysterical MOB OF VIETNAMESE are pressed up against the tall red and white striped poles of barbed wire outside the gate. Michael sits in an open jeep with the Colonel, the Major, a DRIVER at the wheel, and a CORPORAL holding

a machine gun in between them. Suddenly a siren goes off. The main gate is opened and then MP's with automatic rifles charge out to a smaller wire-mesh gate that opens through the barbed wire. The MP's open fire above the heads of the mob blocking the wire-mesh gate and as they begin to move to the side and open a path the driver revs up the jeep.

DRIVER

Hold onto yer asses!

He snaps the clutch and they smoke off for the still closed wire-mesh gate. Just as the jeep arrives at the gate, the MP's swing it open and the jeep careens on two wheels down a narrow human corridor of shrieking, jeering, screaming people.

178A. EXT. STREET - DAY

The city seems of two minds, at the very least, about its approaching fall. On some streets everything is calm, on other streets refugees are still frantically streaming in, hoping to flee, carrying every last possession they own on bicycles, motorcycles, rickshaws, carts, and wagons. The jeep whips through it all, fast. A grenade is thrown at the jeep. The machine gunner bats it back with a baseball bat. As behind them in the receding distance there is a dull explosion.

179. EXT. U.S. ARMY GENERAL HEADQUARTERS - DAY

The old colonial-style building in which General Headquarters is housed fronts the river. Between the building and the river is a parking area full of staff cars and jeeps mounted with 50-caliber machine guns in which drivers are all soundly sleeping. The entrance is through a gate in a high chainlink fence topped by three rows of barbed wire, but there is no mob outside the fence and the two MP's at the gate hardly salute when Michael and the officers are driven in. The jeep pulls up at the front entrance, screeches to a stop. Michael watches the others climb out, head into the compound. Then he gets out, exactly as if he knew what he was doing. He does not; watches it all for a moment.

There are bumping sounds ahead of him. CLERKS are wheeling out tall green file cabinets. TWO CORPORALS are carrying huge piles of American flags, others carrying trunks, etc.

The officers staring at it all.

The whole area looks as if a tornado had hit it. Papers are all over the steps. More file cabinets are standing around every which way, some with their drawers torn out, some lying on their sides, some empty, some full. In between the file cabinets, the Colonel moves up the steps into the building, passing a SERGEANT with horn-rimmed glasses which he keeps pushing back up on the bridge of his nose.

COLONEL
I'm looking for General McDowell.

The sergeant looks around, making a hopeless gesture with his hands.

SERGEANT
You're kidding!

The Colonel stares at him for a moment, shakes his head. The lights inside suddenly go off, there is a dull, far-off explosion. Michael is gone.

180. OMITTED

181. OMITTED

182. OMITTED

183. OMITTED

184. EXT. STREET - DUSK

Traffic streams by the GHQ. In the distance there is the dull crump of artillery fire. A taxi appears and screeches to a stop in front of the GHQ compound. We see Michael get in the taxi, then the taxi pulls out, merging into the flow of other similar taxis.

185. OMITTED

186. OMITTED

187. OMITTED

188. OMITTED

189. INT. MISSISSIPPI SOUL BAR - NIGHT

Loud, crowded and steamy as ever, except now the dancing girls above the bar are stark naked. Music is blaring and the place is almost pitch-dark. The girls dancing, seeming in a frenzy but with wistful, far-off gazes. We watch Michael walk straight past the bar, then through a tiny kitchen door, closes it behind him.

189A. EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

The hundreds of air conditioners propped-up with sticks, poles, wire, and boards, are all older; still dripping, squeaking and shaking. And the old peddler with the food stand and ceramic elephants is still there.

Michael comes outside wearing civilian clothes now. Noticing the old peddler he moves on, threading his way through the dark alley. He walks with urgency, breathing hard.

189B. EXT. TWISTING STREET - NIGHT

A nearby building is burning. The street is littered with corpses lying this way and that, like broken dolls. Michael walks past the body of a dead child. Then suddenly, as if by a miracle, he finds himself standing in front of the courtyard where Julien served Nick champagne.

A KID appears out of the shadows holding a gun in his hand. Michael gives a little laugh, gropes in his pocket, takes out his roll and counts out a few bills. In the space of an eyeblink, the money and the kid disappear. Michael steps into the familiar courtyard.

190. EXT. COURTYARD - NIGHT

The old courtyard seems entirely menacing, mysterious, everywhere grown over with weeds. A loaded truck is just pulling out revealing Julien's car. Discarded crates lie around, along with a corpse. As Michael looks at the corpse, there is a sound of footsteps coming from inside the shuttered wooden building on the river. Michael stands for a moment, listening, then he watches as a figure pulls open the door. It is Julien.

In the darkness, Julien suddenly finds his way blocked by Michael. He steps back and for a moment the two men are locked in stares.

JULIEN

Who the fuck are you?

Michael comes close, looks Julien long and hard in the eye, remembering him. Julien starts to squirm. Suddenly, Michael smacks him in the face. Julien is shocked, stunned.

MICHAEL

Where is the American gambler,
Nick?

JULIEN

(staring intent-
ly at Michael)

C'est extraordinaire! Nick?

MICHAEL

What happened to Nick?

JULIEN

(uneasily)

Fini.

Julien turns, pulls open the door to his car, muttering to himself and rubbing his face.

MICHAEL

Hold it, Ace...

JULIEN

(angry)

There is nothing here! There is only what you see.

MICHAEL

(digs in his pocket
and takes out his
roll)

I want a game, Julien Grinda!

This last with a strong aroma of contempt.

MICHAEL (cont)

Here, this is for you.

Michael begins slapping bills down on the hood of Julien's car.

JULIEN

(stares hungrily
at the money)

It is too dangerous in these
times!

Michael smacks down more money. Julien flinches. Michael gives him a look that suggests he should not start the car. He doesn't.

JULIEN (cont)

(feigning
toughness)

I am not afraid of you!

Michael smiles at the last line, speaks softly, lighting a cigarette as he does.

MICHAEL

Take me to a game with the
American. Highest stakes.
I'll match his.

Julien watches with unwavering eyes, finally gives a slight frantic nod of his head.

MICHAEL

How do you know where?

Julien doesn't answer.

MICHAEL (cont)
I say, how do you know?

JULIEN
Because I know.

MICHAEL
Well, then what are we waiting
for?

JULIEN
I must take you by river...

MICHAEL
(shakes his
head slowly)
Sure.

Julien hurries off to the wooden building and disappears inside.
Now Michael crosses to the door.

191. INT. BUILDING - NIGHT

Michael steps inside and moves into the middle of an empty room. The same room where the audiences for Julien's gambling used to sit. And everywhere more remnants of black-market crates and torn cartons of American cigarettes littering the floor. Michael looks out over the river reflectively. Our view begins to move closer to him. We begin to hear music of the wedding, happy music; as we move closer to Michael we see --

191A. EXT. MICHAEL'S POV - RIVER - NIGHT

The river is crowded with houseboats of every size, shape and description gently rolling in the wake of passing power boats...

191B. INT. BUILDING - NIGHT

Michael turns around -- Julien reappears, wearing his still-elegant white linen suit, the trousers of which are a bit shiny now; trying to remember his old importance.

JULIEN
For some reason I've always
felt better in a white suit.

Julien lurches out the door on the river side.

192. EXT. RIVER - JULIEN'S BOAT - NIGHT

Julien's boat is about twenty feet long and two feet wide. Michael sits in the front, broken crates sit in the middle, and Julien operates a tiny but incredibly noisy outboard from the stern. As they move up the river, bridges come gliding overhead, one after another, each of them jam-packed with refugees on the move to God knows where. The bridges are so full that people are almost falling off the sides. As they pass Michael can hear babies crying. Now and then, as a rocket hits closer to the city the sky glows and then, like an afterthought, the sound of the explosion runs out across the night.

193. EXT. USED TIN CAN FACTORY - DOCK - NIGHT

The dock is half-rotted, sunken into the water next to two decrepit Esso gasoline pumps wrapped in chains, and beyond, a two-storied warehouse-type building surrounded by truck sheds and mountainous stacks of gleaming silver five-gallon tin cans.

Julien runs his boat right up on the dock, hops into the water, takes hold of the rope and lurches off. Michael follows; the dock sinking further, bringing the water almost to his knees. He surveys the scene, shaking his head.

194. EXT. MAIN WAREHOUSE BUILDING - NIGHT

As Michael and Julien approach the warehouse there is a sound of clanking and banging, getting louder and louder. Dim light shows from the upper story of the warehouse through chinks and cracks, but it is impossible to see anything at all of what is going on inside.

JULIEN

Wait here.

There is an entrance on the ground floor and an entrance to the top floor via wooden stairs, directly above it. Julien heads for the ground floor entrance, lugging his cans. When he reaches the door he knocks. After a moment the door comes open, and there is a furious argument with some unseen person, and then suddenly the door slams shut.

Julien carefully mounts the steep, rickety wooden stairway leading to the second floor, gathers his breath and knocks. The door comes open instantly and as instantly slams shut. Julien shouts something

in Chinese and pounds on the door. The door re-opens and a dangerous-looking CHINESE MAN comes out into partial view on the landing. Julien goes on with his explanation. The Chinese man glances down at Michael and says something to Julien in French which we do not translate.

JULIEN
(to Michael)
We must pay to enter.

MICHAEL
No problem.

JULIEN
Five thousand American dollars.

MICHAEL
Tell him I'm coming up!

He takes the stairs two at a time with urgency, breathing hard.

195. EXT. LANDING - NIGHT

As Michael reaches the landing the Chinese man sticks out his hand. Michael slaps five thousand dollars into it.

MICHAEL
He's got the American player?

Julien translates the question. The Chinese man does not answer. Michael slaps another thousand dollars into the Chinese man's hand. The Chinese man says something, which Julien translates:

JULIEN
(translating)
He says they have the famous American who has survived twenty-seven games... and that this information has deprived him of his valuable time... and that you owe him another thousand dollars.

Michael slaps another thousand dollars into the Chinese man's hand but stinging hard this time. The Chinese man smiles, finally opens the door and they all go in.

196. INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

The Chinese man guides them into a dimly lit room; it is long and rather high. At the back of the room is a small office under a balcony which encircles the room. The door of the office is open slightly, showing light. On all sides of the room every conceivable kind of black-market American merchandise is piled in cartons to the ceiling. From whatever operation is being conducted on the floor below, comes a furious din of clanking and banging, as if thousands of per-

sons were hammering on metal cans. The air is thick with smoke. The only light in the room comes from a fierce drop light hung from the ceiling focusing on one area, a broken-down table. Because the lighting leaves other parts dark or in shadows it does not allow us to see it all at once, but there is a suggestion of armed BODYGUARDS all over the place.

On closer view, we see TWO YOUNG-LOOKING VIETNAMESE MEN seated at the table. Closely surrounding the table is a seedy-looking group of about TWENTY MEN who are eating and betting out of paper bags filled with money. The noise of the banging from below is such that neither the clicks of the hammer into empty cylinders nor the firing of the pistol can be heard at all. Nobody even tries to talk and everyone communicates with hand signals and signs, indicating the shifting odds.

As Michael comes in he -- and we -- are startled yet should not be completely surprised to catch sight of Nick, who is just wrapping a scarlet cloth around his head. He stands in the narrow aisle between the contraband crates, his face without expression whatsoever. For a split second, Michael stares at him in horror, then he quickly moves out of the shadows toward him.

Nick looks at Michael, studying his face with the blank detachment of one stranger eyeing another, pale, exhausted; yet imposing and appealing. Michael leans in closer toward him, stops. He doesn't know -- we don't know -- what he is going to do.

MICHAEL

(over the noise)

Nick, it's me! It's Mike!

Nick makes no reply, staring at him, like someone watching it rain.

MICHAEL (cont)

(shouting)

For Christ's sakes...! You got no reaction for me?

Nick doesn't respond; looks straight at him.

MICHAEL (cont)

Nick! Talk to me!

Nick still doesn't answer him.

MICHAEL (cont)

(almost to himself)

I don't believe this whole thing!

(then, directly
to Nick)

You always told me I was crazy...!

Why are you doing this?... I don't know what did this to you...

Silence. Michael fixes directly into Nick's eyes.

MICHAEL (cont)

Nick! I didn't come all this way back here for nothing -- this city's running downhill by the minute! We gotta get outta here!

Nick just keeps looking at him. It is now apparent to Michael that he is out of control the situation. He clears his throat.

MICHAEL (cont)

Hey, am I talking to myself here?

Just then, one of the Vietnamese pulls the trigger, clicks out, passes the pistol to the other man, who spins it, cocks it, pulls the trigger, clicks out, and passes it back just as quickly. Nick still shows no reaction, and now his name is called by one of the Chinese.

Michael breathes deeply to collect himself. He looks around for Julien, finds that he has disappeared. He turns back to Nick who is already heading toward the next game.

The first Vietnamese now has the pistol to his head once more. He pulls the trigger, clicks out, and pushes the pistol back the other man. The man spins it, cocks it and puts it to his head. Suddenly, with only the sound of the banging from below, his body blows away from the table. There is a small puff of white smoke in the gloom. One man outreaches his companion and catches the pistol as the dead man crumples to the floor.

Two MEN remove the body matter-of-factly, as if carrying out a drunk.

Suddenly Michael whirls, spots Julien, crosses to him and grabs his arm.

MICHAEL

Get me in the game! I want to play Nick!

197. INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

A thin, good-looking CHINESE sits at a table, eating. Sitting around him are several other MEN who could only be bodyguards. Covering the wall behind the Chinaman and the standing bodyguards are framed photographs of relatives, all of them tilting out from the wall as if to gaze upon him directly. The noise in the office is fully equal to the noise outside and as Michael and Julien are brought in, the Chinaman and the others are all eating, watching TV.

MICHAEL

I want to play! Now!

CHINAMAN

What for?

MICHAEL

What for? -- I'll show you what
for --

Michael yanks out all of his remaining money, very last bill he has,
slams it down on the table.

MICHAEL (cont)

This!

All of the men at the table stop eating to confer. Suddenly Julien
nods to Michael.

198. INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Nick and Michael sit facing each other over the battered table. Nick
holds the pistol to his head -- frowning, staring at Michael with a
puzzled expression -- as if somehow he might have met him before.
Michael holds his eyes, holds them as hard as he can, trying to break
through, trying to reach him, get him to speak. The tension shows in
Michael's face and manner and tone.

MICHAEL

(shouting over and
over like a litany)

Nick, it's me, Michael! Michael!
Remember Michael! Hey, Nick, it's
Mike! What the hell do you think
this is - fourth of July?

This last line delivered to mock the game. Nick says nothing; clicks
out; pushes the pistol across the table. Trembling like a flame shoots
through Michael's body, then he picks the pistol up, spins, cocks, and
clicks out, talking all the time, trying to feed the faint ember of
recognition beginning to flicker in Nick's eyes.

MICHAEL (cont)

You dislike life so much?

He says this flatly; colder. He hesitates, pushes the pistol back to
Nick. Nick picks it up, spins, cocks, puts it to his head. Suddenly,
just as he is about to pull the trigger, the puzzled look opens into
a startled grin of recognition.

NICK

One shot, remember? I love you,
Mike...

But Nick's finger was in motion. Michael suddenly lunges across the
table for the pistol -- as Nick squeezes the trigger and the pistol
goes off... Nick's body is driven back by the bullet out of his chair.
In slow motion we see Nick and Michael fly slowly away from the table,
producing a stunning effect they crash into stacked cartons of Ameri-
can cigarettes. Michael does not move a muscle; the feeling is almost
perfectly suppressed. Only his eyes suggest how hard he has been hit.

We see Nick lying on the floor and we watch Michael stumble to his feet staring at Nick's blood on his hands, grim, motionless, stricken, as the tinny banging builds and builds.

199. EXT. SOUTH CHINA SEA - DAY

We see the huge grey shape of an American aircraft carrier. The sun is behind it, reflecting on the water, and helicopters are coming in overhead.

200. EXT. AIRCRAFT CARRIER - FLIGHT DECK - DAY

The flight deck of the carrier is bedlam. VIETNAMESE REFUGEES and AMERICAN EMBASSY PERSONNEL are being pulled out of the arriving helicopters and flight crews are pushing the helicopters over the side.

201. EXT. BRIDGE - DAY

A WOMAN TELEVISION CORRESPONDENT is looking into camera. She is a thin blonde in her mid-thirties with her hair pulled back and wearing a short-sleeved bush shirt, flapping in the wind. Her face is intelligent-looking, a little worn.

WOMAN CORRESPONDENT

This seems to be the last chapter in the history of American involvement in Viet Nam. It's also been the largest single movement of people in the history of America itself.

(pauses)

... Hilary Brown, ABC News, aboard the attack aircraft carrier USS Hancock, in the South China Seas.

202. INT. LEMKO VFW HALL - DAY

The place is empty. ~~There is the faint hiss of leaking steam.~~

Near ~~seated on the edge of~~ the little stage is one of the old vets. Beside the flag, with a bugle, ~~he~~ trying to play taps. He ~~stands up~~ *walks out, snaking his head,*

203. EXT. CHURCH - STARKWEATHER STREET - DAY

A hearse waits at the curb. The day is cold and grey. And the gleaming black vehicle emits a ghostly cloud of white exhaust.

Camera closes slowly on the front doors of the church. The choir is singing. At first the sound is barely audible. Then it begins to grow louder and louder, ascending in dark triumph to a sudden, final note.

In the ringing silence of the music's end the doors to the church swing open. Michael, Stan and John appear with Nick's flag-draped coffin. John is holding up one whole side by himself. His face is impassive. Next, Axel wheels Steven carefully down the icy steps Angela holding lightly onto one of his arms for support and holding her child tightly in the other. They are followed by more mourners, as the coffin is placed slowly into the hearse.

204. EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Smoke drifts across the leaden sky as the mourners stand together on a steep hillside of tilted, weather-worn headstones. The steel mill looms behind them, breathing steam and fire and uttering a dull concordia of rumbling sounds.

205. EXT. CEMETERY - NICK'S GRAVE SITE - DAY

The priest we saw at the beginning of the film completes his reading of the 23rd Psalm.

Camera closes on Michael, Stan, Axel, John and Steven. Axel helps Steven to the side of the grave. It is awkward. The chair gets stuck and they all have to help carry it. Each of them has a single flower and then, following Michael's lead, they throw it in.

Michael looks up from the grave to the blast furnaces, then meets Linda in a long look. Their faces tell us all we need to know about this day.

206. INT. JOHN'S BAR - DAY

The place is quite dark and a sign that says "CLOSED" hangs in the window. Michael, Stan, Axel carrying Steven in his arms, Linda and John, and Angela with her child all come inside. They stand watching John as he drags out a table into the middle of the floor. They have all just come from the cemetery. They are all in their coats and boots, awkward and tired, and they go bumping into each other trying to bring chairs.

Axel brings a chair with a broken leg and places it carefully at the table where it sits at a ridiculous angle. Something like a sob is wrenched out of him... a stifled sound, irrepressible. Looking up he says hoarsely:

AXEL

I think this one has a broken leg, John.

John takes away the broken chair and replaces it with another. He appears emotionally drained and physically tired.

JOHN

There's coffee already made.

John goes in the kitchen and comes back with a pot of coffee which he puts on the table. Everyone stares at the pot of coffee, as if they would lock the memory away forever.

JOHN (cont)
I'll get cups.

STAN
(barely a whisper)
I'll help.

OTHERS
(all together)
We'll give you a hand.

Everyone except Steven follows John into the kitchen and begins loading up with cups.

JOHN
We don't want to get too many.

MICHAEL
I can take more.

AXEL
Put some here, Linda. Load me up.

Everyone goes back to the table with their cups. Obviously there are too many cups and after counting themselves and getting it all confused they put the extra cups on adjoining tables.

JOHN
How does everyone like their eggs?

LINDA
What about just scrambled, John.

JOHN
(remembering)
Toast, toast...!

John rushes back into the kitchen with Stan behind him.

207. INT. KITCHEN - DAY

John opens the oven door and pulls out a tray of toast he prepared earlier. He goes back outside. Stan remains alone for a moment. He gives the little kitchen an odd, searching look. Then, his eyes suddenly close as if he were bearing a sharp pain.

208. INT. BAR - DAY

LINDA
I'll help, John.

JOHN
It's hot, Linda. Watch out now,
this is hot.

Everyone helps make room on the table. John sets down the tray of half-burned toast. Stan comes back inside, his eyes all red.

STAN
Hey, maybe we should start with
a beer!

AXEL
I'll get 'em. Wait. Let me...

Axel goes to the bar to get the beers.

JOHN
(huskily)
I'll get going on the eggs.

LINDA
Let me help you, John.

JOHN
You sit down, Linda. Pour the
coffee.

Linda pours the coffee. Angela sits down next to Steven, holding her child. Both are very moved, though they maintain their reserve.

ANGELA
(to Steven)
You okay?

Steven nods. He looks like he's about to cry.

ANGELA (cont)
(as if she wanted
to say more)
It's such a grey day.

Axel comes back with glasses of beer and puts them on the table. There is a big awkward pause, then they all sit down. Silence.

Michael looks around at everyone. He looks at the beers sitting on the table and suddenly, soundlessly, tears begin to well up in his eyes. He moves his mouth, as if trying to say something, but he can't say a word and the tears roll on down his face. Linda draws a deep breath.

209. INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Scrambling eggs, John is trying to hold himself together by humming to himself. Suddenly, he lets out a long, shuddering sigh, then

Michael reaches out for one of the glasses of beer and raises it. The gesture is made with a smile and Linda smiles too.

MICHAEL

Here's to Nick.

Suddenly, all of them, registering a last moment of the image they have always sought to hold, say with one voice:

ALL

Here's to Nick!

THE END

1. EXT. ALLEGHENY MOUNTAINS, HIGHWAY - LIGHT SNOW - 1968 - DAWN

A big tandem diesel truck brakes and turns off the highway into a smaller commercial route that is becoming a forgotten back road. The road winds under the highway, through a high underpass, down towards the little steel town of Clairton, Pa.

2. EXT. CLAIRTON - DAWN

Rearing itself enormously over the town, the steel plant is massive, grime-streaked, squatting in the river valley under five massive blast furnace stacks, each one over twelve stories high and trailing fat white plumes across the winter sky. Fires can be seen flickering through the windows and long flames weave and dance from the tops of gusted metal flues. Steam rises in clouds from vents and chimneys and the sound of it all -- the hissing, the clanging, the rumbling, the shrieking -- comes faintly, muted by the falling snow.

In the foreground is the town's only commercial street -- Division Street -- which shares the bottom of the narrow flood plain and borders directly alongside the mill. Division is a sad-looking street, a grim-looking street, a street hanging on by the skin of its teeth. Dilapidated stores hug the narrow sidewalks. Battered signs squeak in the wind. Sandwiched between the stores and scattered on twisting roads along the hillside are narrow Victorian houses. These houses, which run to three stories or more in height, all seem on the verge of toppling over, and undoubtedly would, except that they are all connected one to another by a mad arrangement of utility lines which cross and re-cross between them with occasional aid from a leaning pole.

The theme music comes up -- dissonant, rather frightening music -- as we watch the truck come charging up through the slush on Division Street. As it nears camera the truck seems to shake the town, roars down the slippery grade and slides out of sight. A figure appears, huddled against the driving snow. The figure crosses a catwalk to the mill, disappears as camera holds on the mill and the empty street. Simple lettering fades in:

THE DEER HUNTER

Suddenly the theme music stops. There is a moment's pause.

3. INT. STEEL MILL - DAWN

A huge sheet of flame roars two stories high as pure oxygen is blown into a furnace. On a stage below, a white-hot ingot is pulled from a "soaking pit" by a massive overhead crane. The crane comes screaming down a mile-long track and drops the ingot off onto the rollers. Another ingot follows it, and another and another and another. The ingots are huge, trembling with heat, and they come on with a terrifying rumble.

FADE IN CREDITS OVER: