

7/31/96

# **WHEN TRUMPETS FADE**

by

**W. W. Vought**

FADE IN

EXT.

A FOREST

DAY

We are looking up at an overcast sky through the branches of large birch trees. The fall season has run its course, leaving the branches void of leaves. They sway and creak in a relentless wind as fine snowflakes are blown around them in chaotic patterns.

Slowly our view moves downward from the top branches. We see now that the trees are burned, shattered, and stripped of life.

Our view continues to float downward.

Hanging from a branch of one of the trees is a dead American soldier, his body broken into horrible angles. An arm sways slightly in the wind.

The ground now rises into view.

As far as we can see are dead American soldiers. Hundreds of them. They cover the ground like a shredded, tangled carpet, many of them mangled beyond recognition.

All that is heard is the WIND BLOWING through the crippled trees.

After a long moment, the following is superimposed:

## HURTGEN FOREST 1944

The eerie calm of the wind is suddenly pierced by the CRY OF A YOUNG MAN in great pain.

ANOTHER ANGLE

We are now looking down at one of the dead. The uniform has been burned away, leaving only the helmet strapped to the head of this scorched body.

Over the sound of the wind we can barely hear APPROACHING FOOTSTEPS and HEAVY BREATHING.

A pair of boots move into view, stepping over the body. Wrapped and tied around the boots are rags in defense against the cold. As the boots move past the body, we follow along, listening to the strained, heavy breathing. The boots continue to maneuver over and around the countless dead.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

PRIVATE MANNING carrying the body of a WOUNDED SOLDIER over his shoulders. Private Manning is a muscular man in his late twenties to early thirties. His left eye is swollen shut and bleeding into his three day beard. His right eye has that sunken look of a man suffering from prolonged physical and emotional exhaustion.

The Wounded Soldier's name is BOBBY, and he is in serious trouble. His right leg is missing from the knee, with a tourniquet-tied just above the shredded stump. His right arm and the right side of his face are burned and bloody. The movement from being carried is causing Bobby extreme pain.

BOBBY

(through gritted teeth)

I'm gonna make it.

MANNING

(trying to catch his breath)

You're gonna make it.

BOBBY

I'm gonna make it.

MANNING

You're gonna make it.

BOBBY

My lucky day.

MANNING

Your lucky day.

BOBBY

I got the luck.

MANNING

You got it, Bobby.

BOBBY

This is nothing.

MANNING

Walk in the park.

BOBBY

Home.

MANNING

What's that, partner?

BOBBY

Get to go home.

MANNING

You're going home, Bobby.

BOBBY

I'm going home.

MANNING

God damn right.

BOBBY

I'm going home.

MANNING

You know it, Bob.

Bobby cries out from a sudden surge of pain. The cry lasts for several seconds, slowly turning into a groaning, whimpering combination.

MANNING

(continues)

Hang in there, Bobby.

BOBBY

Hang in there.

MANNING

You can do this.

BOBBY

I can do this.

MANNING

You're tough as nails.

BOBBY

Nail.

MANNING

That's not good enough, Bob.

BOBBY

Nails.

MANNING

What about nails?

BOBBY

Tough.

MANNING

That's right. They're tough.

BOBBY

Ta...

MANNING

God damn you, Bobby! Stick with it!

BOBBY

Ta...

MANNING

Come on, man! Whose tough as nails?

BOBBY

Me tough.

MANNING

Yeah, that's right. You tough. Tough as what?

BOBBY

Nails.

MANNING

Then say it.

BOBBY

Tough as nails.

MANNING

You know it. Tough as nails.

BOBBY

Nails.

MANNING

Damn right.

BOBBY

(surge of pain)

Geeeeee...Gih...Gih...Gih...

MANNING

Stay with us, Bob.

BOBBY

Hurts!

MANNING

I know.

BOBBY

Hurts bad.

MANNING

Less than a mile. We got less than a mile.

BOBBY

Too far.

MANNING

No, it ain't! It ain't too far!

BOBBY

Ain't gonna make it.

MANNING

Can that shit!

BOBBY

Gonna die.

MANNING

You're gonna make it!

BOBBY

I'm...I'm gonna...

MANNING

You're gonna make it!

BOBBY

Make it.

MANNING

That's right.

Manning stops next to a large birch tree, and leans his weight against it. He is exhausted.

MANNING

(continues)

I'm just gonna rest a minute, okay?

(no reply)

Okay, Bobby?

Again there is no reply from Bobby. Manning quickly sets Bobby on the ground on his back. Bobby's eyes are rolled back, and he is going into convulsions. Manning grabs Bobby by the shoulders, and starts to shake him.

MANNING

(continues, while shaking Bobby)

Stop it! Stop it! Stop it!

Bobby continues his convulsive reactions. Manning slaps him across the face hard. Slowly Bobby's eyes focus on Manning as his convulsions stop. Bobby is breathing heavily.

BOBBY

I'm in bad shape.

MANNING

Trust me, Bobby. I'll get you out of here, but you have to hang tough. Get tough now.

BOBBY

Gotta promise. Won't pick me up no more.

MANNING

What?

BOBBY

Hurts. Don't pick me up.

MANNING

Listen to me, Bob. If I leave you here, ain't nobody gonna find you. You'll die out here, sure as shit. Now I know it hurts you real bad, but we don't have any other choice.

BOBBY

(grabbing Manning's arm)

Just sit here for a bit.

Manning looks around nervously, then turns back to Bobby.

MANNING

There's no way we can just sit here. The krauts will be crawling all over us. Now I'm gonna pick you up again, and we're gonna get out of here.

Manning starts to reach down for Bobby.

BOBBY

(panic stricken)

No more!

MANNING

Bobby...

BOBBY

(bursting into tears)

No more!

MANNING

Okay! I won't pick you up, but how am I gonna get you...

BOBBY

God! No more!

MANNING

Fuck, Bobby!

BOBBY

No more!

MANNING

Okay...okay...relax, Bobby. I'm not gonna touch you. I'm just gonna let you rest.

BOBBY

No more.

MANNING

Relax.

BOBBY

No more...

Bobby's eyes close.

MANNING

Relax.

Manning looks in all directions nervously. His eyes dart from one shadow to the next. He looks down at Bobby who appears to be sleeping. Again Manning looks around. Nothing but the dead. Again he looks down at Bobby. Bobby is staring at him. Manning is unnerved by this.

BOBBY

You're not gonna leave, are you?

MANNING

(a moment of silence)

Got no choice, Bob.

A look of deep sadness and understanding appears on Bobby's face.

BOBBY

Okay.

Manning and Bobby look at each other in silence. Manning stands up. He lets the strap of his Thompson machine-gun slide down from his shoulder, and grips the weapon. He looks back down at Bobby. Bobby manages a smile.

BOBBY

(continues)

Good luck to you.

Manning is unable to reply. He stares down at Bobby in silence. After a moment, he nods to Bobby and walks away.

Manning looks down at the faces of the dead as he steps over and around them. He is starting to feel sick. After walking fifty feet or so, Manning leans against a tree and vomits.

BOBBY (o.s.)  
(continues)

David?

MANNING  
(softly)

Stop...Stop...

BOBBY (o.s.)  
Don't leave me. Please?

Manning glances at the dead that are all around him, and has to lean against the tree to gather his senses.

BOBBY (o.s.)  
(continues)  
Just stay for a little while, okay?

Manning, clutching the tree with both hands now, leans his head against the frozen bark, and clamps his eyes shut as if to block out the world.

BOBBY (o.s.)  
(continues)  
Please don't leave me.

A low groan starts to escape from the pit of Manning's stomach. The groan changes to a long, loud cry of anguish. The cry echoes through the trees and over the dead.

BOBBY (o.s.)  
You can't leave me here!

CUT TO:

A BLACK VOID

BOBBY (o.s.)  
(fading echo to silence)  
You can't leave me here... You can't leave me  
here... You can't leave me here...

For a long moment we are left with silent blackness. The following is then superimposed:

## NOVEMBER 7

The silence is broken by a LOUD, ECHOING, METALLIC SOUND as a pair of double doors open, exposing...

EXT.

A LARGE, OPEN FIELD

DAY

The black void was actually the back of a medical van, and its doors have now been opened from the outside by TWO MEDICS. The two Medics pull an empty stretcher from the medical van, and as they do so, we also leave the van, out into a dreary afternoon.

What we see is an endless world of dead and wounded American soldiers. Everywhere are medics and soldiers desperately trying to help the wounded and dispose of the dead. During all this activity, we do not hear what is happening. All we hear is the WIND AND RAIN.

Our attention shifts to a wounded soldier on a stretcher, crying through what is left of his blood soaked teeth. As we look down on this soldier, we hear MANNING'S VOICE over the sound of the wind and rain.

MANNING (v.o.)

Been in the Death Factory for a week now. That's what it's called here. The Death Factory.

Two soldiers are seen throwing dead bodies into the back of a truck, which is nearly full of bodies.

MANNING (v.o.)

(continues)

It's been days since any body's given a shit about the dead. Gets to the point where there's so many... Well, you just can't give a shit, that's all.

Two soldiers are seen setting down a stretcher, which holds a soldier with a horrible stomach wound. The wounded soldier grits his teeth in agony from the jostling of the stretcher.

MANNING (v.o.)

(continues)

This place is the worst so far. In five days the  
Twenty Eighth Infantry...the Bloody Bucket...lost  
four thousand guys.

A young medic is seen standing in the middle of the carnage, holding his head, unable to cope with the numbers.

MANNING (v.o.)

(continues)

Four thousand fucking guys.

A wounded soldier is being set down on a blood soaked stretcher. His eyes are rolled back into his head. There is a bullet in his forehead.

MANNING (v.o.)

(continues)

How do you lose four thousand guys in five days,  
and still pretend to have intelligence? Still pretend  
to be a human being?

A jeep slowly moves through the field of wounded. There is a stretcher on the hood of the jeep, and a stretcher on the back. Both are occupied by badly wounded soldiers. Walking alongside the jeep are medics holding up the blood plasma bottles.

MANNING (v.o.)

(continues)

I haven't seen one of those sick fucks over the  
rank of captain since I've been here. They're  
looking at points on a map. Not one of them  
has a clue as to what's really happening here.

A medic is seen giving a shot of morphine to a screaming soldier who has lost both his hands.

MANNING (v.o.)

(continues)

I know now that the only way to survive in one  
piece in this hell hole is to throw away all those  
SNAFU rules of right and wrong.

A medic, splattered with blood, moves from one wounded soldier to another, looking as if he hasn't slept in days.

MANNING (v.o.)

(continues)

When we first got here, and still thought right and wrong were real words, we started stacking the dead to be hauled away for proper burial.

Several wounded soldiers are sitting in the back of an open truck. One of the wounded has his head totally bandaged. His hands shake uncontrollably from nerve spasms.

MANNING (v.o.)

(continues)

Didn't take long for the brass to realize that if they wanted to keep sending more guys in for the slaughter, they couldn't waste their precious trucks for disposal.

A dead soldier is laying on top of a pile of bodies. His eyes are open, filled with water as he stares blankly into the rain soaked sky. Rain drops continue to splash in the dead man's eyes.

MANNING (v.o.)

(continues)

Those same dead bodies we stacked a week ago are still in the Death Factory. They're right next to the road. We pass 'em every time we're sent in for another slaughter.

Another truck is being filled with dead bodies. Painted on the driver's door is:

## HOME ALIVE IN '45

MANNING (v.o.)

(continues)

Sometimes I think I'm starting to...I don't know... Slip? I mean I used to believe in this shit. At least I think I did. Hell, I don't know. That was a week ago. Now the only thing I care about is me. I don't know. Maybe I'm baked. Be par for the course, wouldn't it?

A young captain is seen sitting on a crate, crying like a baby, with his head in his hands. Looped in one hand are forty or fifty dog tags.

MANNING (v.o.)

(continues)

I mean I see guys slipping into wacko land here every day. When you're a fugitive from the law of averages for this long, something's gotta give, you know? Why fight it?

Our attention shifts to the two Medics we saw at the beginning of the scene. They are carrying a stretcher, only this time there is a soldier on it. A young man with both his legs and his right arm missing. The Young Man is reaching into the sky with his remaining arm, repeating something that we cannot hear as the two Medics carry the stretcher at almost a run.

MANNING (v.o.)

(continues)

Insanity is the only way to make it in a shit hole like this. I gotta continue not to give a rat's ass. If you're looking for a hero, you turned over the wrong rock. I'll do what I gotta do to stay alive...and in one piece.

We are suddenly backing into an open medical van just ahead of the stretcher. It is the same type of van we came out of at the beginning of the scene. The stretcher is slid into the van, and the double doors are slammed shut from the outside, plunging us into near darkness.

The sound of the wind and rain is cut off by the shutting of the doors.

In the darkness we can barely see the Young Man, still reaching into the air with his remaining arm. We can now hear what he is saying.

YOUNG MAN

Please, God, this can't be happening...Please,  
God, this can't be happening...Please, God, this  
can't be happening...Please...

The Young Man's voice is abruptly cut off by the LOUD ROAR of the medical van's engine starting.

CUT TO:

EXT.

A FOREST ROAD

DAY

Standing in the middle of the road is a BEARDED GERMAN SOLDIER smoking a cigarette. Far off in the distance LOW ROLLING ARTILLERY can be heard. The Bearded Soldier appears not to notice. He is concentrating on the road, waiting for something.

SOUND OF AN APPROACHING TRUCK

A German troop carrier appears from around the bend, and is flagged to a stop by the Bearded German Soldier. The VOICES of all Germans are SUBTITLED.

DRIVER

What do you have?

The Bearded Soldier hands the Driver two cigarettes.

BEARDED SOLDIER

American.

The Driver smells the cigarettes and smiles. He motions for the Bearded Soldier to get in the back of the truck. The Bearded Soldier walks to the back, and begins to climb in, but is stopped by SERGEANT BLOCHER.

BLOCHER

Cigarette.

Having no other choice, the Bearded Soldier hands Blocher a cigarette.

Sergeant Blocher is a killing machine. We know this at first glance. A deep scar mars his face from the bottom of his chin, through his left eye, to well into his hair line. A black patch covers the socket where his left eye once was. His right eye, however, is very much alive. Very much alert. Unclouded from delusions of right and wrong.

The Bearded Soldier climbs into the back of the truck, and sits across from Blocher by the tailgate. He looks further into the truck at the other half dozen soldiers. All of them are under the age of eighteen. The Bearded Soldier's eyes fix on JOHANN, a fourteen year old soldier with thick glasses. Johann is a shining example of helpless, doomed youth. The truck jolts into forward motion.

BEARDED SOLDIER

(laughs)

Sergeant Blocher's baby faces.

BLOCHER

(lighting cigarette)

They can carry a rifle.

BEARDED SOLDIER

Sending our children because that bastard paper hanger tells us to. We must all be insane.

BLOCHER

I didn't know you had any children.

BEARDED SOLDIER

You know what I mean. We follow Hitler like he's Jesus Christ!

BLOCHER

This isn't about following Hitler. Not any more.

BEARDED SOLDIER

(motions to other soldiers)

Look at them. They have no idea what will be expected of them.

BLOCHER

They are willing and able to die.

BEARDED SOLDIER

They don't even know what dying is. Or what they're dying for. Hell, I don't even know.

BLOCHER

You've lost your focus.

BEARDED SOLDIER

Focus?! You slay me, Blocher. You talk of focus when our dead form piles.

BLOCHER

The Americans are dying too.

BEARDED SOLDIER

So that means everything is all right?

BLOCHER

No. It means the Americans are dying too.

## BEARDED SOLDIER

You're still so willing to except all of this. Why?

## BLOCHER

Twenty kilometers from here is my mother.  
Between her and the Americans is this forest...  
and me. I will kill every American who tries to  
pass by me. I will make this place a nightmare  
for them.

## BEARDED SOLDIER

We will end horribly here.

## BLOCHER

Better to end in horror, than a horror without end.

CUT TO:

INT.

DEMOLISHED CHURCH

DAY

The church is currently being used as an American company command post. There is no roof left on the structure, and the rain pours down on the personnel. Everyone in the post is exhausted. The lack of hope in this headquarters is suffocating.

Manning is escorted into the church by LIEUTENANT LUKAS, who motions for Manning to wait by the door. Lieutenant Lukas is different from the others. His determined walk and spotless uniform tell us that he is new to the front line. Manning watches Lukas walk to the front of the church, and begin talking to CAPTAIN PRITCHETT, who turns in Manning's direction for a quick glance. Captain Pritchett then directs the Lieutenant's attention to a water protected map on the altar.

Manning looks up at a larger than life statue of Christ on the cross. Christ is looking down at the personnel with sad eyes.

Manning lights up a cigarette. As he does so, his eyes lock onto something over to his right.

The right wall of the church has been almost totally destroyed. What was once a brick wall now stands three feet tall at its highest point. At this high point is a beautifully stained window. The colored glass is undamaged. Not a crack or scratch in it. Manning stares at the window in silence. He can't take his eyes off of it. He looks toward the front of the church where Captain Pritchett and Lieutenant Lukas are still studying the map at the altar.

Manning walks over to the window. He runs his fingers over the glass. He moves a step back, taking another drag off his cigarette before flicking it to the floor.

Without warning, Manning breaks the window with the stock of his Thompson machine-gun. Everyone in the church turns toward Manning. Manning is unaware that he is being watched. He is still staring at the broken window. He feels better now.

Pritchett and Lukas walk over to Manning as the rest of the command personnel slowly go back to their activities.

PRITCHETT

You Manning?

MANNING

I think so, sir.

LUKAS

Give him a straight answer, Private.

PRITCHETT

(to Lukas)

Relax.

(to Manning)

What's with the window?

MANNING

Now there's no reason to bomb this hole.

PRITCHETT

(grim smile)

Bit superstitious, wouldn't you say?

MANNING

I wouldn't say, sir. It's bad luck.

Pritchett pulls a pack of Lucky Strike Green from his coat pocket, lights two cigarettes, and hands one to Manning.

PRITCHETT

You can stop looking for your platoon.

MANNING

Sir?

PRITCHETT

They didn't make it.

PAUSE

MANNING

(shaken)

What?

PRITCHETT

You're the only one who made it out. You're lucky day.

MANNING

Lucky day?

PRITCHETT

You're alive.

MANNING

Am I?

LUKAS

If you don't put a sock in it, Private, I'm gonna...

MANNING

You're gonna what, sir?

PRITCHETT

Can it, both of you. Lieutenant, take a walk.

After a moment of hesitation, Lieutenant Lukas walks away, obviously angry.

MANNING

(under his breath)

New meat.

PRITCHETT

You better get along with him. He's your new platoon leader.

MANNING

He'll be dead before the week's out.

PRITCHETT

I need to know something. Have you got it together?

MANNING

Sometimes.

PRITCHETT

What's that mean?

MANNING

Sometimes I got it together.

PRITCHETT

On the line?

MANNING

What's this all about, sir?

PRITCHETT

It's like this. The entire battalion took a beating last night. I've heard seventy percent casualties, but that's just the talk. Whatever it is, it must have crippled us bad. We've been pulled off the offensive without capturing a single objective.

MANNING

What's this got to do with me? Why am I here?

PRITCHETT

We're getting new meat in from the channel. Tonight you'll be fitted with a new squad. Congratulations, Private. You're a sergeant now.

MANNING

(scared)

I don't want it.

PRITCHETT

You'll get used to it.

MANNING

I don't wanna get used to it.

PRITCHETT

I don't give a damn what you want. I'll put up with that mouth of yours because after surviving a week up here, I figure you earned that right. You did not earn the right to question my orders.

MANNING

Sir, I am absolutely the wrong man to be put in charge of a pile of new meat.

PRITCHETT

That may be your opinion, Sergeant, but it's not mine. You've managed to stay alive for a week. That's something the rest of your platoon couldn't do. Call me crazy, but from where I am standing, that makes you qualified for the job.

MANNING

(trapped, desperate)

Sir, you're making a mistake. This ain't gonna work.

PRITCHETT

Your opinion is duly noted, Sergeant. Dismissed.

MANNING

(stumbling for words)

Sir...I've...In the woods...I've done things...

PRITCHETT

Sergeant!

MANNING

Yes, sir.

PRITCHETT

Dismissed.

MANNING

Sir, request permission for a section eight.

PRITCHETT

Now you listen to me. A week ago I had a company of almost two hundred men, now I've got fifty. As hard as this may be to swallow, your efforts to stay alive hold very little value at this particular time and place. What does hold value are the objectives. The longer it takes to obtain them, the more dead we'll be stockpiling by the side of the road. Now it's my job to obtain those objectives, and I will utilize anybody at my disposal to do so. That includes you, sergeant. Now I'm just as sorry as hell about your bruised nerves, but you are out of your skull if you think I'm going to let you bail on a section eight! Is that clear?

MANNING

Yes, sir.

PRITCHETT

At eighteen hundred hours you will rendezvous with your squad. You've got till then to get your shit together. Now is *that* clear?

MANNING

Yes, sir.

PRITCHETT

Good. Now get your sorry ass out of my sight.

Manning starts to leave, then turns back to Pritchett.

MANNING

Sir? When I fuck this up, is it your fault or mine?

The two stare at each other in silence.

CUT TO:

EXT

THE DEMOLISHED CHURCH

DAY

Manning leaves the church, and steps into the muddy street. Leaning against a jeep is SERGEANT TALBOT who is just now lighting a cigarette.

TALBOT

Mind if I tag along?

MANNING

Suppose not.

Talbot and Manning begin walking side by side.

TALBOT

Heard about your promotion.

MANNING

Yeah? Where did you hear that?

TALBOT

Pretty hard to keep news like that a secret.

MANNING

How come I just heard about it?

TALBOT

Pays to have friends. You should try it some time.

MANNING

Got a smoke?

TALBOT

Yeah.

Manning quickly realizes Talbot is not about to give him a cigarette. This does not really come as a surprise to Manning.

TALBOT

(continues)

It's amazing really, when you stop to think about it. Whole platoon fingers its way into the factory. Four hours later only one lucky slob walks out to talk about it. Twenty-five or thirty guys dead or dying, and this one guy makes it out without a scratch.

MANNING

I was lucky.

TALBOT

Lucky. Yeah, that's one way of looking at it.

MANNING

But not the only way, right Talbot?

TALBOT

I can see the angles, tough guy.

MANNING

Is this conversation going somewhere?

TALBOT

How did you manage to get out, Manning? Did you get cut off from the rest of the platoon? Trees get pretty thick in there. Did you get lost?

MANNING

What's it to you?

TALBOT

Professional curiosity.

MANNING

Yeah, right.

TALBOT

So what happened?

MANNING

Look, you got something in that vat of yours, just spill it.

TALBOT

Okay, tough guy. It's like this. Your routine isn't as seamless as you think it is. Hanging back just a bit...never volunteering...doing just enough to keep out of trouble, but never enough to really help. It's like a stink you carry with you.

MANNING

(sarcastic)

You're kind of an emotional guy.

Talbot slams Manning against a brick wall.

## TALBOT

Get something straight. There's no fucking hang back now. You got a glob of new meat that are gonna to be relieving their bladder and looking to you to keep them alive. If I find out one of them answered the last muster because of your yellow streak, I'll personally put a bullet in your brain.

Talbot lets go of Manning, and walks away.

CUT TO:

EXT.

A COUNTRY ROAD

DAY

An endless column of ambulances and walking wounded are slowly moving away from the forest, which can be seen a mile or two in the distance. There are several black smoke clouds billowing out from the top of the trees. It has stopped raining, but the sun has failed to show itself.

Our attention shifts to a jeep moving in the opposite direction of the ambulances, toward the forest. The jeep's progress is slow as the driver watches out for the walking wounded.

Sitting in the seat next to the driver is PRIVATE WARREN SANDERS. Warren is new to the front, and the sight of all the wounded unnerves him. He is a small framed soldier with glasses.

The jeep comes to a stop when a team of medics lay a stretcher with a wounded man in its path to do some emergency work. Warren watches as the two medics do what they can for the wounded man.

The column of ambulances slowly comes to a stop because of some unseen traffic jam as the walking wounded continue on their way.

Across from Warren is another jeep loaded down with wounded. All but one of the wounded are on stretchers. The remaining wounded man, a SERGEANT, is sitting in the passenger seat, his right arm hanging limp. The arm of his shirt has been violently shredded. Blood is dripping off the Sergeant's fingertips, forming a puddle on the running board of the jeep. Warren watches the dripping blood as if he were hypnotized by it.

The Sergeant realizes he is being stared at. He slowly turns his head to Warren. The Sergeant's eyes are dark and sunken in. The two stare at each other in silence for a moment.

SERGEANT

You gotta problem?

Warren, unable to answer, shakes his head no. The Sergeant slowly turns his head to look at the smoke billowing out of the forest. After a moment, the Sergeant turns back to Warren.

SERGEANT

(continues)

Think so, huh?

The column of ambulances begins to move. The Sergeant turns away. Warren watches the back of the Sergeant's head as the jeep moves farther and farther away. The Sergeant never looks back.

CUT TO:

EXT.

A FOREST TRAIL

DAY

It is now twilight, and Warren is tentatively making his way up hill on a small cart trail through a forest of birch and evergreen. He suddenly sees a group of soldiers standing on the trail roughly twenty yards ahead of him. One of the soldiers sees Warren, and an instant later the other soldiers are looking in Warren's direction.

Warren is frozen with fear.

FIRST SOLDIER

(calling out)

Hey, Sandy!

Warren eases, recognizing the voice. He waves back to the group of soldiers, and hurries over to them. Everyone in the squad knows Warren, and Warren knows them. The First Soldier is LONNIE, Warren's buddy.

LONNIE

(continues)

Where the hell did you go? I looked for you.

WARREN

I got lost.

ROGERS

We thought you chickened out.

LONNIE

*You* thought he chickened out. Me, I know he's just a dumb fuck farmer from Wisconsin.

WARREN

Am I in trouble?

LONNIE

Hell no, we're still waiting for the new sergeant.

WARREN

Where's Sergeant Adams?

The squad starts laughing.

LONNIE

That's right, you missed all the fun.

BAXTER

He went to Pig Alley, and got the clap.

ROGERS

You should have seen him getting barked at.

LONNIE

We're boarding the truck while Adams is getting reamed out by this lieutenant. Kept saying Adams did it on purpose so he wouldn't have to go to the front. Said he was gonna court marshal him.

BAXTER

The whole time Adams is standing there with that stupid look he's got. Mouth gaped open like some inbred.

Baxter imitates the open mouth look, and the rest of the squad laughs.

Lonnie lights up a cigarette.

MANNING (o.s.)

Put out that butt.

The squad turns to find Manning standing off to the side of the trail. The sudden presence of Manning makes the squad nervous. Lonnie drops his cigarette and stamps it out. Manning walks over to the squad.

MANNING  
(continues)

Who called out?

The squad stands in silence, afraid to talk.

MANNING  
(continues)

Someone yelled the name Sandy. Who was it?

LONNIE  
(nervous)

I did.

Without warning, Manning viciously backhands Lonnie across the face, knocking his helmet off. The rest of the squad freezes.

MANNING

Let's go.

Manning begins walking up the trail without looking back to see if they are following. The squad slowly begins to follow. Warren picks up Lonnie's helmet, and hands it to him. Lonnie is sniffing, trying to hide his tears.

CUT TO:

EXT.

FURTHER ALONG THE TRAIL

NIGHT

Twilight has given way to near total darkness as the squad continues to follow Manning. In the background we can now hear LOW, ROLLING ARTILLERY in the distance.

Manning is alert, but appears to take no notice of the artillery. His eyes are trained on the trees on both sides of the trail. The rest of the squad is oblivious to what could be waiting for them in the trees. Their concentration is focused on the artillery, as if it could begin falling on them at any moment.

Manning stops walking, and the squad follows suit. For the first time the squad becomes aware of their surroundings.

Manning is staring at the trail just ahead of him. The trail turns sharply to the left, leaving a tree covered hill straight ahead. Manning jogs cautiously over to the foot of the hill, looks around, and signals the rest of the squad to join him. The squad gathers around Manning, awaiting his every word.

## MANNING

(a soft, deadly seriousness)

All right, listen up. Over this hill is the Ziegfried Line. You're gonna be in your foxholes with the krauts less than fifty yards away. Our line is thin, which means we're spaced far apart. Tonight you won't be able to see the guy nearest you. Now the krauts are gonna hear us moving you into position. They're gonna know your new meat.

## WARREN

How?

Manning looks at Warren threateningly for a moment. His eyes remain on Warren a bit longer before addressing the rest of the squad.

## MANNING

The company lost over a hundred guys last night. They know we're hurting bad, and have to bring in our replacements tonight. The only reason they don't make a push is they're hurting too. Now they know you guys don't no shit, and they're gonna use that to their advantage. They might call out to you in English. Try to spook you. Don't be surprised if they take a shot at you.

The sky above momentarily lights up in the eerie glow of a flare. Manning falls silent. The squad holds their breath. At last darkness settles in again.

## MANNING

(continues)

The main thing you need to do is keep your shit together. You flake out, you're dead. The only thing you need to do is stay alive. Make no mistake. This is the real fucking deal.

(to Warren)

Name.

## WARREN

Huh?

## MANNING

Your name.

WARREN

Warren.

MANNING

Last name, new meat.

WARREN

Sanders.

MANNING

You first, Sanders. Stay right behind me.

WARREN

(terrified)

Okay.

MANNING

I mean it, kid. You stay in my back pocket.

Let's go.

Manning and Warren disappear over the hill, leaving the rest of the squad glancing at each other in silence. This is happening much quicker than they thought it would.

CUT TO:

EXT.

THE ZIEGFRIED LINE

NIGHT

Manning leads Warren over the top of the hill, and down into a fog engulfed valley. From the top of the hill Warren is able to see patches of the valley where the fog has not settled. These glimpses of the valley have a surreal, nightmarish quality to them. Pillboxes, barbed wire, tank traps, foxholes, trenches...and the frozen dead.

Warren follows Manning down into the fog. After a while the fog thickens to almost zero visibility. Manning grabs Warren by the arm.

MANNING

(whispers)

I want you to hang on to the back of my belt.

Don't let go no matter what.

Warren grabs on to Manning's belt tightly.

MANNING

(continues)

If you don't mind, I'd like to breath.

Warren loosens his grip on Manning's belt.

MANNING

(continues)

Just stay loose, kid. You'll be okay.

Manning slowly leads Warren forward until they disappear into the swirling fog.

CUT TO:

EXT.

THE FOG

NIGHT

We are moving with Manning and Warren through the thick fog. We can see that Warren is gripped by fear. He is breathing in short, uncontrolled gasps.

Strange streaks of light periodically strike the two soldiers from flares being fired from unknown locations. Rifle shots are heard nearby and far away. There is a burst of machine-gun fire off in the distance. The artillery sounds closer now, more distinct. Screams are heard from wounded soldiers. Explosions from grenades are heard every so often. There are angry shouts in German, followed by obscenities from American soldiers.

Manning and Warren continue to move deeper in the chaos until they stop next to a foxhole. The foxhole is occupied by CHAMBERLAIN, a medic in his late twenties.

MANNING

(to Warren)

Climb in.

Warren climbs into the foxhole next to Chamberlain.

CHAMBERLAIN

Sure took your sweet time getting here.

MANNING

For a bedpan commando, you spend a lot of time posing as a rifle man.

CHAMBERLAIN

Just earning that non combat pay. Fucking army.

MANNING

Anything notable?

CHAMBERLAIN

Those God damned railroad guns again. They've been peppering us all along the line. I thought we knocked those things out.

MANNING

Apparently not.

CHAMBERLAIN

Well, they better come up with a way of doing it fast.

MANNING

They? Whose this they you're talking about, Chamberlain?

CHAMBERLAIN

I'm serious, Manning. If we don't knock those things out, we're worm food.

MANNING

Can that shit.

CHAMBERLAIN

I'd say the can is just about full, wouldn't you?

MANNING

(to Warren)

School's out now, kid.

Manning disappears into the fog. A moment goes by. Chamberlain just stares at Warren.

CHAMBERLAIN

Scared?

WARREN

Huh?

CHAMBERLAIN

You scared?

WARREN

Yeah. I don't know what I'm supposed to do.

CHAMBERLAIN

(smiles)

You want me to tell you?

WARREN

Yeah.

CHAMBERLAIN

Basically, you're a lookout. You're responsible for holding this section of the line. You've got a machine-gun nest protecting your right flank. Roughly twenty-five yards away. On your left is another rifle man. He's closer. Fifteen yards, maybe twenty. In front of you, you got the krauts. They're close. Thirty yards. Maybe a little more. The password is Hershey. The reply is apple. If you don't get the right reply, you open fire. Don't think about it. Don't rationalize. You hesitate, you go home to your mama in a box. If the krauts make a push, you use your grenades.

WARREN

How do I know if they're making a push?

CHAMBERLAIN

If you hear a lot of screaming and shooting, and you see a bunch of guys running at you...

WARREN

Yeah?

CHAMBERLAIN

Then you know they're making a push.

WARREN

Oh...yeah.

CHAMBERLAIN

If you need to light up, lay on your back in the bottom of the hole.

WARREN

I don't smoke.

CHAMBERLAIN

Still got your issues?

WARREN

Yeah.

CHAMBERLAIN

You will.

Chamberlain crawls out of the foxhole. then turns back to Warren.

CHAMBERLAIN

(continues)

Don't piss your pants, you'll freeze your balls off.  
Welcome to the Death Factory, kid.

Chamberlain leaves Warren in the dark fog by himself. Warren tries to look out at the German positions, but he is unable to see anything. The macabre light and sound show continues all around him.

CUT TO:

EXT.

THE FOXHOLE

DAY

A light snow is being blown in all directions. Warren is shaking violently even though he has his blanket wrapped around him. There is a dead German soldier laying twenty feet in front of the foxhole, his head shattered from a rifle shot. There is smoke coming from the stack of a German pillbox about seventy yards away.

The following is superimposed:

NOVEMBER 8

The fog is gone now. As far as Warren can see to his left and right is the Ziegfried Line. There is very little activity along the line because of the cold.

Warren pulls out his pack of Lucky Strike Green and studies it. He opens the pack, placing one of the cigarettes in his mouth.

SEVERAL RIFLE SHOTS

Warren looks around. There is nothing to see.

Warren lights the cigarette, and immediately begins coughing. He holds the lit cigarette awkwardly as he looks out into the line. He takes another drag from the cigarette. Again he coughs. In disgust, Warren flicks the cigarette out of his foxhole.

We suddenly hear the LOUD SCREAMING of an artillery shell coming in fast. Warren dives to the bottom of the foxhole just as the shell explodes no more than fifty yards away. Chunks of dirt and snow shower down on Warren.

The only thing we can hear is a QUIET RINGING. Warren doesn't move. Seconds go by. Slowly Warren raises his head from the foxhole, and looks around. All is the same. The ringing noise continues as Warren sticks his finger in one of his ears. When he pulls his finger out again there is a small smear of blood on the end of it. Warren forces a cough. We hear the cough from inside Warren's head. The ringing continues. Slowly the ringing fades, and is replaced by the sound of the WIND.

Warren lights his second cigarette. A RIFLE SHOT is heard off in the distance.

CUT TO:

EXT.

THE FOREST

NIGHT

A hard, steady rain is pouring down into the forest. The rain water has left a thin coating of ice on the surface of the trees. Every trunk, every branch, every twig is completely glazed in the ice. They reflect the dim light filtering down from the dreary night sky.

At first, the forest appears to be empty. Soon, however, there are figures approaching, barely visible. The falling rain conceals any noise they may be making.

CLOSE ON THE APPROACHING FIGURES

We can now see that the figures are Manning and his squad. They are walking in single file, with Manning in the lead. There is approximately fifteen feet between each man. Behind Manning is Warren. Behind Warren is Baxter.

Manning stops moving, and signals the rest of the squad to stop without looking back. The squad obeys. Manning slowly moves back to where Warren is standing.

MANNING

(very quiet)

You got point. Keep your eyes peeled. I've got you on a straight line course. You've had time to watch what I've been doing.

WARREN

Yeah.

MANNING

Be alert. We've been behind the kraut line for the last thirty yards or so. We got no friends here.

WARREN

Okay.

Manning looks down at Warren's hands. Both hands are gripping the rifle tightly. Warren's finger is on the trigger.

MANNING

Ease up on the trigger finger.

WARREN

Yeah, right.

Warren stands looking into the darkness of the forest ahead of him. He is terrified.

MANNING

First big chance to stay alive, kid. Don't fuck it up.

Warren looks at Manning who looks sternly into Warren's eyes.

MANNING

(continues)

Now move, new meat.

Warren turns back to the darkness in front of him. After a moment, Warren takes that first step. Then another. Manning signals the rest of the squad to follow as he watches Warren slowly moving ahead.

One by one, the squad passes Manning until he meets up with Lonnie bringing up the rear. Manning slides into the last position.

At the front of the line, Warren slowly makes his way through the forest. The trees are getting closer together now. Warren wipes the rain water from his glasses.

SEVERAL SHOTS of the other squad members moving through the trees. Everyone is tense.

Warren continues to move forward. He looks back to make sure he is not alone, and sees Baxter appear from behind a tree. Unable to see the rest of the squad, Warren gives Baxter a questioning look. He then watches Baxter look behind him, and turn back, nodding for him to keep going.

Manning continues to bring up the rear of the squad, keeping a careful watch on the trees behind him.

Baxter continues to follow Warren. He watches as Warren moves through a gathering of evergreen trees and out of sight.

BAXTER

(to himself, nervous)

Slow down, Sandy.

Baxter picks up his pace a bit until he arrives at the evergreen trees. He cautiously pushes his way through to the other side of the trees, and looks around.

WARREN IS GONE

Rogers, who was the next man behind Baxter, has lost sight of Baxter. He stops moving, signaling the man behind him to do the same. Behind Rogers we can see several other squad members stop and send the signal back.

Rogers suddenly sees Baxter appear by the evergreen trees, and make his way back.

ROGERS

(whisper)

What's going on?

BAXTER

I lost Sandy.

Still bringing up the rear of the squad, Manning stops when he sees Lonnie standing still ahead of him. Lonnie looks back at Manning, shrugging his shoulders. Manning motions Lonnie to get low to the ground, and Lonnie does so. Manning begins making his way to the front of the squad, signaling each squad member to get low to the ground. He finally stops next to Baxter and Rogers, who are crouched down low, staring into the darkness.

MANNING

(intense whisper)

What's going on?

BAXTER

We lost Sanders.

ROGERS

What's this *we* crap?

MANNING

Shut up.

Manning looks off into the darkness, slowly scanning from left to right. Nothing. Manning looks back nervously at the rest of his squad.

BAXTER

What do we do, Sarge?

MANNING

We wait. Hope he's got brains enough to come straight back.

ROGERS

What if he doesn't know he's alone?

MANNING

He knows.

CUT TO:

EXT.

WARREN

NIGHT

Warren continues trudging through the rain soaked night as he turns to look behind him. He freezes. He looks in all directions. He's alone. After a moment of hesitation, Warren starts walking back in the direction he came from. Again Warren freezes.

Moving toward him from the left side are figures. Warren slowly lays down in the mud, and watches half a dozen German soldiers slowly make their way past him on both sides, unaware of his presence. They disappear in the darkness behind Warren.

Warren sits up ever so cautiously. He looks around. His eyes widen.

More figures are approaching. Many more than the first time. Warren watches in terror, not knowing what to do. The Germans grow nearer as their numbers increase. There are at least fifty of them now. Warren moves into the cover of trees. The Germans continue to approach. Warren hides behind a thick birch tree, whimpering slightly. The Germans are now less than one hundred feet away.

Warren looks up at the branches of the birch tree. He jumps up, grabbing the lowest of the branches. He starts using his feet to climb the tree, but his feet keep slipping off the ice coated bark. Warren's whimpering turns to panic as his boots continue to slip faster and faster.

CUT BACK AND FORTH between the approaching Germans and Warren's desperate attempt to climb the icy tree.

The Germans are less than fifty feet away. Warren finally manages to climb to the safety of the branches overhead. He watches as the Germans begin passing cautiously under the tree.

Warren's rifle slips from his grip, but he is able to grasp the weapon by the very end of the barrel. He carefully hooks the strap of his rifle on a branch next to him. He continues to watch the Germans pass under his tree as his rifle rotates back and forth from its strap.

The rain continues in a torrent.

The one-eyed Sergeant Blocher stops directly under the tree. He looks around, sensing he is being watched. Other German soldiers continue to move past Blocher. Warren holds his breath. Finally, Blocher moves on.

The last of the Germans pass under the tree, and disappear into the darkness. Warren stares down at the area by the base of the tree. Nothing. Warren keeps watching. Nothing.

Warren jumps from the tree.

Standing fifteen feet in front of Warren is Johann, the fourteen years old German soldier with thick glasses.

Warren looks up at his rifle, still hanging in the tree.

The two soldiers stare at each other in silence for a long moment.

Johann pulls the trigger of his rifle. Empty. More staring. More silence.

Johann drops his rifle, and pulls out his bayonet. Warren pulls out his bayonet. They stare at each other a moment longer, then slowly start circling each other. They stop circling, and stare at each other again. Johann slowly starts backing away from Warren, then suddenly turns and runs. Warren, with his bayonet still at the ready, simply stands there in the pouring rain.

CUT TO:

EXT.

BATTALION HEADQUARTERS

DAY

The headquarters is located in a small hotel, located in the center of a picturesque village, surrounded by forest. From the signs on the buildings lining the narrow, cobblestone street, we can see that the village is German.

There is a fair amount of traffic on the street, all of it American military vehicles. Parked in front of the hotel is a half-track armed with quad anti-aircraft guns. Laying on the hood of the half-track is a sleeping soldier. Sitting in the back end of the half-track is another soldier smoking a cigarette.

The following is superimposed:

### NOVEMBER 9

A jeep pulls up in front of the hotel. Captain Pritchett gets out of the jeep from the passenger seat, and enters the hotel.

CUT TO:

INT.

HOTEL LOBBY

DAY

Standing in front of a large map is a LIEUTENANT COLONEL in his late forties. His face is leathery and covered with deep lines. His eyes are dark and unsympathetic.

#### LIEUTENANT COLONEL

We're making another push. The regimental objective is the town of Schmidt again, four miles West of our present positions. Our objective is to advance through the woods up to this graveyard, two miles from Schmidt. We'll form a line from the graveyard to Hill 813. When we've secured this line, Second Battalion will take over and break through to Schmidt.

#### PULL BACK TO REVEAL

Captain Pritchett and two other captains sitting on folding chairs, facing the map.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL

(continues)

A Company will take the hill, B company up the middle. Rob, your boys get the prize. Take and hold that graveyard.

PRITCHETT

Yes, sir.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL

G-2 says you'll have clear sailing all the way up to the graveyard, but once you're there, it's gonna get hot.

PRITCHETT

With all due respect, sir. Did G-2 forget about the railroad guns the krauts clobbered us with all week?

LIEUTENANT COLONEL

According to G-2, those guns were knocked out in the last bombing raid.

PRITCHETT

They've been saying that for a week.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL

This time they're right.

PRITCHETT

(shakes his head in disgust)

What a bunch of horse shit.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL

Have you got a problem, Captain?

PRITCHETT

What if those guns are still there, sir?

LIEUTENANT COLONEL

Then we deal with them.

PRITCHETT

And just how do we do that?

## LIEUTENANT COLONEL

Captain Pritchett, if you feel you are unable to carry out these orders, I will relieve you and get somebody who can.

SILENCE

## LIEUTENANT COLONEL

(continues)

There will be no opening barrage. We want surprise this time. You men will take and hold your objectives. We've been stepping on our dicks here too damn long. Any questions?

There is no reply. The Lieutenant Colonel focuses on Pritchett with a threatening look.

## LIEUTENANT COLONEL

(continues)

Any questions, Captain?

PAUSE

## PRITCHETT

No, sir.

CUT TO:

EXT.

## CHOW LINE

DAY

A stream of hungry soldiers make their way through a chow line with hot food and coffee. There is lively conversation from these men. The hot food is a welcome surprise.

CUT TO:

EXT.

## A MUDDY DRAINAGE DITCH

DAY

Sitting along the ditch is Manning and his squad. Manning is sitting apart from the others, watching Warren. The rest of the squad busies themselves eating and smoking cigarettes. Warren sits, staring out at nothing. Most of his food is sitting in front of him.

ROGERS

Hey, Sandy. You gonna eat that?

Rogers starts to bend down to pick up Warren's food.

MANNING

Leave it alone.

Rogers looks at Manning in surprise.

MANNING

(continues)

You want more, go wait in line.

(lights a cigarette)

Sanders. Eat your food.

WARREN

I'm not hungry.

MANNING

That's not the point. Up here you eat when you can. Now eat it.

WARREN

What's the point in eating when you've got no appetite?

Manning looks hard at the rest of the squad for a moment.

MANNING

The last time I had hot food was five days ago. Since then my entire squad was wiped out. In fact, the whole damn platoon. That's why you're here. That's why you're called replacements. You see, when we mangle a bunch of guys up here, we need new meat to fill in the gap. You know. Putty. That's you. You're just a bunch of guys in line to get shot, so they can send in a bunch of other guys to get shot. See how it works?

The entire squad is silent, staring at Manning. Manning laughs.

MANNING

(continues)

Now, once you understand that, you begin to realize just how important a last hot supper is.

Manning stands up, putting out a half smoked cigarette on his coat, and pocketing what is left.

MANNING

(continues)

Don't go wandering off. I want you all right here where I can find you. We'll be making a push tonight.

The entire squad is suddenly alert.

LONNIE

We get orders, Sarge?

MANNING

We will.

BAXTER

If we didn't get orders, how do you know we'll be making a push tonight?

MANNING

Hot food? Coffee? Cigarettes? We're making a push, sure as shit.

Manning climbs out of the drainage ditch, and walks away.

BAXTER

(nervous)

He's full of it. You think he's full of it?

Nobody answers the question. Baxter nervously lights a cigarette.

BAXTER

(continues)

He's full of it.

ROGERS

When did you start smoking?

BAXTER

What's it to you?

ROGERS

Sorry I blew up.

BAXTER

Shut up.

LONNIE

Come on, Baxter. Sit down and relax.

A hush falls over the squad. Baxter sits down, but is still keyed up. Warren picks up his food, and slowly begins eating as Rogers lights up a cigarette. Baxter looks at Rogers.

ROGERS

Yesterday morning for me. Getting pretty good at it too. Warren, I bet you lit up.

WARREN

(nodding, with a smile)

Yesterday morning.

ROGERS

(laughing)

You too, huh?

WARREN

I was freezing out there!

Everyone in the squad begins laughing as they all light up.

BAXTER

Hey, Ballman. Last night, with all those krauts. What was it like?

WARREN

It was like...drowning. This is gonna get bad.

CUT TO:

EXT.

THE FRONT OF A LATRINE

DAY

Manning is walking toward the latrine as Lukas is leaving.

LUKAS

I've been looking for you, Sergeant.

MANNING

Can it wait, Lieutenant?

LUKAS

No, it can't. I wanna know what happened out on that patrol last night.

MANNING

It's like I told you.

LUKAS

Tell me again.

MANNING

We infiltrated about a hundred yards, our point man spotted a kraut troop movement, we came back.

LUKAS

That's it?

MANNING

Yeah, that's it.

LUKAS

I heard your point man got separated from the squad.

MANNING

They're still learning.

LUKAS

No shit. What the hell were you thinking, putting new meat at point during a night patrol?

MANNING

Lieutenant, I've got nothing *but* new meat in my squad.

LUKAS

Why didn't you take point?

MANNING

I *did* take point, for the first fifty yards.

LUKAS

You should have stayed at point, Sergeant.

MANNING

Listen, I don't have time to wet nurse these guys. This patrol was the perfect opportunity to give at least one of them some experience.

LUKAS

Are you sure experience is the reason for putting that kid on point? Or is it you're still just trying to save your own butt?

MANNING

I told you guys I was the wrong man for this job.

LUKAS

So what's that mean? You got an excuse to get these guys killed? Get with the program, Manning. These kids don't know anything.

MANNING

And you do?

LUKAS

No, I don't! That's the point! I never did this before. For two days I've been watching these mangled guys being carried out of the woods, knowing that real soon I'm going to be expected to lead a platoon in there. Nobody's telling me anything! I just walk around trying to look like a lieutenant. So, you're right. I don't know anything. In fact, the only one in this platoon who does is you. You get it now? Is it starting to sink in?

MANNING

What do you want from me, Lieutenant?

LUKAS

I want your help! I need your help. I mean...I got this...What if I'm not good enough to keep these guys alive? What if they're all dead in the morning?

After a moment's pause, Manning steps toward Lukas, looking straight into his eyes.

MANNING

I'm gonna do everything I can to stay alive. Now if I can help in any way without endangering my own life, I won't hesitate. If you want my opinion or suggestion, I'll give it to you. But I won't take a bullet for anybody..

LUKAS

That's not good enough.

MANNING

That's as good as it gets.

Lukas and Manning stare into each others' eyes, neither one backing down. Lukas finally walks away in silence. As Manning turns to enter the latrine, he is startled by Chamberlain standing in the entrance.

CHAMBERLAIN

(coldly)

I tell ya what, Manning. When you're laying out in the middle of a firefight, torn open...screaming for a medic. If I can help in any way...without endangering my own life...I won't hesitate.

Chamberlain walks away, making Manning move out of the way.

CUT TO:

EXT.

THE FOREST

NIGHT

It is very quiet. Hundreds of American soldiers are crouched down low in a muddy river bed. There is a high level of tense expectation all along the ranks. Not hopeful expectation. More like dread.

Our attention shifts to Warren, deep in his own thoughts. Next to him is Lonnie, mumbling the Lord's Prayer. Warren's eyes dart over to Lieutenant Lukas making his way along the river bed toward Manning. All eyes of the squad focus on Lukas saying something to Manning that they cannot hear. Manning nods grimly.

LONNIE

(mumbling)

No, God...No, God...No, God...No, God...

Warren watches Manning as Manning says something to the soldier crouching next to him. That soldier says something to the next soldier. Slowly the word gets passed along the squad till it reaches Rogers who is sitting next to Warren.

ROGERS

(whispers)

Two minutes. Nobody dies.

Warren turns to Lonnie.

WARREN

Two minutes. Nobody dies.

Lonnie looks at Warren. He says nothing. He is terrified.

WARREN

(continues)

Say it, Lonnie. You gotta say it.

LONNIE

Nobody dies?

WARREN

Nobody dies.

SEQUENCE OF SHOTS showing individual soldiers waiting for the signal to move out. Manning looks at his watch, then turns his head up to the sky, taking in a deep breath to calm his nerves.

PULL BACK

The lieutenants and sergeants rise from the river bed, and start to move forward. They are immediately joined by the rest of the soldiers. Nobody talks. All that is heard is their feet crunching through the shallow snow, and the clinking of their equipment. At first their movement is at walking speed, but soon changes to a cautious trot. Quickly they are in the thick of the forest. Branches scratch at the faces and hands of the soldiers.

Our attention zeroes in on Warren, who is surrounded by his frightened peers as they continue forward as one. The ground is now edging upward. Already the cold air makes breathing an effort. The grade gets steeper. Soldiers are slipping on the snow. Lots of heavy breathing now.

At last the ground evens out. The advance continues into the darkness.

Off in the distance we hear the muffled pops of ARTILLERY. At the sound of the POPPING, the soldiers shift to an all out run. The muffled popping continues as a new, more terrifying sound is added. It is the LOUD SCREAMING OF INCOMING ARTILLERY.

Shells burst in the trees overhead, sending down deadly fragments on the running soldiers. Men begin to fall all around Warren.

Still the soldiers run forward.

Shells are now dropping on top of them.

Screams are heard. Too many screams.

Warren is screaming as he runs, tears of terror washing down his face.

Trees are catching on fire. More shelling. More death.

An artillery shell lands ahead of Warren, sending a soldier into the air on fire. The burning soldier lands on top of Warren, knocking Warren to the ground. Warren pushes the body off of him, and starts to get up. Another soldier trips over Warren, sending Warren to the ground again. Other soldiers fall on top of Warren.

WARREN

(screaming)

Get off! Get off!

In the chaos, Warren struggles free from the pileup, and continues running forward. Soldiers are now running past Warren in the opposite direction, some without their weapon. Violent explosions throw countless soldiers into the air, smashing them against tree branches. A few of the bodies are lodged into the branches, and hang at horribly broken angles. Most fall on top of other soldiers who are now running in all directions.

The dead are starting to form piles.

The forest is now a blazing inferno. Many soldiers are on fire.

Dead soldiers are thrown back into the air by new explosions. The screaming of the shells is deafening.

Warren and the other soldiers are now running in the opposite direction. Wounded cry out for help as soldiers run past them, sometimes stepping on top of them. The madness goes on and on.

Warren is running straight at us now. His face takes up the entire screen. He is screaming with pure terror in his eyes.

WARREN'S FACE FREEZES, but his screaming continues. The screaming takes on an unreal quality as the scene begins to FADE TO BLACK.

The screaming fades to silence a second or two after total blackness.

CUT TO:

#### STOCK NEWSREEL FOOTAGE

The silence and blackness is abruptly shattered by the upbeat introduction to Lowell Thomas' famous Movietone News of the forties and fifties. After the introduction we are bombarded with images of Allied troops marching on toward victory while victorious headlines flash into view. Headline:

### ALLIES LIBERATE PARIS!

LOWELL THOMAS (v.o.)

Paris is liberated, and French troops lead the way. The Allies march into the historic city after four years of Nazi occupation. The hard fighting French Second Armored Division, under Major General Jacques Leclerc, gets a welcome they will never forget as they enter their beloved Paris.

Headline:

### MONTGOMERY DRIVES INTO BELGIUM!

LOWELL THOMAS (v.o.)  
 In a powerful drive to the north, British General Montgomery cuts off and bypasses the French coastal towns of Calais and Dunkirk, pushing on to capture the vital port of Antwerp.

Headline:

**PATTON RACES  
 TOWARD GERMANY!**

LOWELL THOMAS (v.o.)  
 Meanwhile, the main body of Patton's army, re supplied and rolling like a juggernaut, is slashing through the Saar. Nazi resistance appears to be crumbling, and it seems like nothing can stop our troops from driving into the heart of Germany.

CUT TO:

EXT.

A DEAD TREE

DAY

We are in close on a sign made from old barn wood. The sign as been nailed to the dead tree. It reads:

**THE DEATH FACTORY  
 FINAL RESTING PLACE OF THE  
 BLOODY BUCKET**

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

A narrow mud road sloping down a forest hill. Moving down the road is that familiar endless parade of wounded. Some are carried on stretchers. Some make their way on their own, or with the help of others.

Lining both sides of the road are soldiers that are totally spent. They don't eat or talk. They have nothing left. All of them are covered with mud. Among these soldiers, sitting together in a group, are Warren, Manning, Lonnie, Baxter and Rogers. They are the only ones left of the twelve man squad.

Lonnie has a cigarette hanging from his lips. His eyes are open, but he still appears to be asleep. The cigarette hanging from his mouth is nearly one long ash. Any moment the lit cherry will start burning his lips.

Warren catches sight of Chamberlain, the medic, helping a wounded man down the road. The wounded man is missing a foot. Chamberlain doesn't see Warren as he passes by. Warren says nothing. He is already looking at someone else on the other side of the road. It is Lieutenant Lukas. Lukas is sitting alone, shaking.

Chamberlain passes Captain Pritchett, who is walking up the road, past the wounded. Pritchett wears the same exhausted face and haunted eyes as the rest of his men. As he walks he takes in the sight of the soldiers sitting along both sides of the road. He then sees the sign on the tree.

Immediately Pritchett is struggling to control a sudden rush of anger, frustration and sadness. He looks back at the soldiers who don't even see him, even though he's standing in front of them, on the middle of the road.

Pritchett sees Manning, and walks over to him. For a few seconds Pritchett stands over Manning, looking down at him, until finally Manning looks up.

MANNING

What?

PRITCHETT

We're making another push.

MANNING

You gotta be shitting me.

Pritchett sits down next to Manning, pulling out a small map from his coat pocket.

PRITCHETT

(referring to his map)

Regiment is going to try to overrun those railroad guns. Our company is to take the cemetery in order to draw cannon fire from the kraut artillery on this ridge.

MANNING

Those are eighty-eights on that ridge.

PRITCHETT

I know.

MANNING

(shakes his head in disgust)

Fucking cannon fodder.

PRITCHETT

(referring to map again)

There's a road that leads up to the ridge from the north side. I figure a single squad with flame throwers might have a shot at taking them out. All their gun crews would be firing at us.

MANNING

What about infantry support?

PRITCHETT

Krauts are holding their manpower back about a mile behind the ridge. Apparently they're having a hard time finding replacements so they're relying on their artillery to wipe us out.

MANNING

Might work.

PRITCHETT

I need a squad to volunteer.

PAUSE

MANNING

Well, good luck.

PRITCHETT

I got two guys in this company worth considering for this kind of shit. That's you and Talbot. Talbot's good, but he's not a gorilla fighter. Not like you.

MANNING

Forget about it.

PRITCHETT

You take out those guns, I'll get you that Section Eight you were begging for.

For a moment Manning simply stares at Pritchett. Then he smiles, reaching out to shake Pritchett's hand.

MANNING

You got yourself a deal.

PRITCHETT

You smile at me again, I'll kick your teeth out.

Pritchett walks away without shaking Manning's hand. Manning turns to see Warren staring at him. For a moment their eyes lock before Manning turns away.

Pritchett looks around at his jaded men. We can see that he is struggling to bring himself to say something.

PRITCHETT

All right, let's move out. We still got a job to do.

None of the soldiers respond. It is as if they didn't hear him.

PRITCHETT

(continues)

Let's go, get up.

No words are exchanged as the soldiers struggle to their feet. They can barely get up. And when they do get up, they can barely walk. But they do. Slowly they make their way in the opposite direction of the wounded, past the sign on the tree...back into the Death Factory.

Pritchett bites down on his lower lip as he watches. He is near tears, but refuses to cry.

He looks up at the sign hanging from the dead tree. He reaches up and yanks the sign from the tree, dropping it in the mud.

CUT TO:

EXT.

THE GRAVEYARD

NIGHT

We are looking down at Manning's rag wrapped boots as they run across a light covering of snow. The only thing we hear is his STRAINED HEAVY BREATHING, which slowly fades away into silence. That silence is then broken by MANNING'S SUBDUED VOICE.

MANNING (v.o.)

High above the Chattahoochee,  
Near the Upatoy,  
Stands an old abandoned brick house,  
Benning School for boys.

Onward ever, backward never,  
Follow me and die,  
To the port of Embarkation,  
Just kiss your ass good-bye.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

Manning running through the forest, leading the way for his four man squad. Warren and Baxter are next in line, both of them with flame-throwers strapped to their backs. The weight of the flame-throwers makes running difficult. Behind Warren and Baxter are Lonnie and Rogers. We can now hear the firing of cannons somewhere in the distance.

Manning and his squad take cover behind a stone fire wall.

MANNING

Keep your heads down.

Manning slowly raises his head to see over the fire wall. In front of the wall is a dirt road which leads up the back of the ridge where the German artillery is firing from. Manning looks through his binoculars.

CUT TO:

EXT.

MANNING'S POV

NIGHT

Through Manning's binoculars we see the German artillery crews firing six 88 millimeter guns in the opposite direction.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE GERMAN 88 MILLIMETER GUNS NIGHT

The firing of the artillery is much louder now as the German artillery crews work desperately to load and fire their guns as fast as they can.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE GRAVEYARD NIGHT

The situation in the graveyard is nothing short of nightmarish.

Parts of coffins are being blown from the ground by artillery fire, and smashed to pieces as they hit the frozen earth. Bones, skulls and skeletons held together by ragged clothes rain down on the American soldiers who are pressed against trees and gravestones for protection.

Strange, sporadic light patterns flicker long, distorted shadows of gravestones over the snow. Some soldiers can be seen running in different directions, their movements strobed in the hellish light show. Soldiers are being thrown into the air by the explosions, screaming and burning. Screams are heard from the wounded who are littered across the ground. The following is superimposed:

### NOVEMBER 10

A horse lays on the ground with her stomach torn open, screams of agony escaping from her mouth.

Talbot is pressed against the back of a large gravestone. Despite the death and destruction happening all around him, Talbot's eyes are focused on Lukas, leaning against another gravestone about ten yards away. Lukas is resting his back against the gravestone, his legs stretched out in front of him. He is laughing hysterically at a skeleton leaning against a gravestone directly across from him. The skeleton is sitting exactly the same way as Lukas.

From Talbot's point of view, it almost looks like Lukas and the skeleton could be having a conversation. If Lukas were laughing any harder, he would be screaming.

CUT TO:

EXT.

MAUSOLEUM

NIGHT

Taking cover behind one of the walls of the mausoleum is Captain Pritchett, a RADIO MAN and SERGEANT DESPIN. They too are cowering from the artillery and mortar fire. The Radio Man hands the receiver of the SCR 300 radio to Pritchett.

RADIO MAN

I got Battalion on the horn!

PRITCHETT

(into radio)

This is Pritchett, sir. We've got the graveyard, but we're pinned down tight. What is your situation?

CUT TO:

EXT.

FOREST

NIGHT

The Lieutenant Colonel is crouched behind a large tree, holding the receiver of a radio. In the background we can see a large number of soldiers taking cover behind trees and rocks. The situation seems no better here than in the graveyard. Shells are exploding in the trees.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL

(into radio)

Those damn railroad guns! They've got us pinned down about a mile from their position.

CUT BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN PRITCHETT AND THE LIEUTENANT COLONEL

PRITCHETT

Sir, request permission to pull back!

LIEUTENANT COLONEL

Negative! Do not pull back!

PRITCHETT

My men are getting cut to pieces up here! We're pulling back!

LIEUTENANT COLONEL

You hold that hill, Captain! That's an order!

PRITCHETT  
I've already lost twenty men!

LIEUTENANT COLONEL  
This is not a debate, Pritchett! You hold that  
God damned hill!

PRITCHETT  
THIS IS SUICIDE!

LIEUTENANT COLONEL  
THAT'S AN ORDER!

CUT TO:

EXT. THE STONE FIRE WALL NIGHT

Manning finishes looking through his binoculars, and crouches down to talk to his squad.

MANNING  
All right, listen up. On the other side of this wall  
is a road leading up to the kraut guns. From  
what I can see they got no infantry support. Now  
those gun crews got their backs to us. We're  
gonna run right up that road, and Baxter and  
Ballman are gonna burn 'em out. Now let's  
move.

Manning and his squad climb over the wall, and start running up the road toward the  
German guns.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE GRAVEYARD NIGHT

Talbot is still watching Lukas and the skeleton. Lukas continues laughing. The artillery is  
still pouring down on the graveyard mercilessly.

TALBOT  
(yelling)  
Lieutenant!

A RADIO MAN runs over to Talbot.

RADIO MAN

The Captain wants L.T.

TALBOT

Gimme that.

(into radio)

This is Sergeant Talbot, sir. Lieutenant Lukas is in fucking wacko land!

CUT BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN TALBOT AND PRITCHETT AT THE MAUSOLEUM.

PRITCHETT

That puts you in charge over there, Sergeant, now listen up. I need you to pull your platoon back to the edge of the graveyard. The artillery fire is lighter there.

TALBOT

You expect me to get these guys to leave cover in this?!

PRITCHETT

If you *don't* get that platoon to move, they'll all be dead in ten minutes! Now haul ass!

TALBOT

How about a diversion?

PRITCHETT

Okay then. I'll drop mortar fire as close to those kraut guns as we can reach. Try to make them blink. In the meantime you get that platoon ready to move.

The mausoleum suddenly explodes, sending Pritchett, Despin, and the Radio Man into the air. Pritchett hits the ground hard on top of his right arm as we hear the SNAP of a bone. Pritchett cries out in pain.

PRITCHETT

(continues)

Corporal, get the mortars on the horn!

Pritchett looks over at the now dead Radio Man, his head smashed open on a gravestone.

PRITCHETT  
(continues)

Sergeant!

Sergeant Despin is on his hands and knees nearby. His helmet is gone, and his head is bleeding.

DESPIN

Yes, sir.

PRITCHETT  
Get the mortars on that radio.

CUT TO:

EXT.

THE RIDGE ROAD

NIGHT

Manning cautiously leads his squad up the road toward the German artillery, still firing from the ridge. The advance is organized. Manning runs ahead of his squad roughly fifty feet, taking cover behind one of the trees bordering both sides of the road. After surveying the road ahead of him, Manning signals Warren and Baxter to come forward, pointing to which trees to take cover behind. Once Warren and Baxter have advanced to their new positions, Manning signals Lonnie and Rogers forward in the same manner. Manning surveys the road ahead of him. Fifty yards to the ridge. Manning runs forward another fifty feet while the squad waits.

CUT TO:

EXT.

AMERICAN MORTAR POST

NIGHT

MORTAR COMMANDER  
(on radio)

Yes, sir!

(off radio, calling commands)  
Mortar teams! Stand by for coordinates!  
Prepare for white phosphorous!

CUT TO:

EXT. THE RIDGE ROAD NIGHT

Manning and his squad continue their advance up the road. They are now forty yards from the ridge.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE AMERICAN MORTAR POST NIGHT

MORTAR COMMANDER

Fire!

The mortar teams begin dropping shells into the mortar tubes, pulling their hands away quickly. The shells are fired from the tubes an instant later. The teams continue dropping shells into the tubes as fast as they can.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE FOREST NIGHT

We are looking down at the tops of the trees as mortar shells burst clouds of blazing white light in them. A one hundred yard diameter area is lit up brighter than a sunny day.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE RIDGE AND THE ROAD NIGHT

The German artillery crews stop firing their cannons to look into the light which engulfs them.

Manning stops in his tracks in the middle of the road as he is engulfed in the light. He is roughly twenty yards from the ridge.

A GERMAN ARTILLERY COMMANDER yells out an order, and his crews hurry back to firing their guns. The German Commander sees Manning, and draws his sidearm, but before he can fire, Manning shoots him with his Thompson. The German Commander falls to his knees, dropping his sidearm to grab his chest and stomach wounds. There is a look of astonishment on his face.

Several German crewmen pick up rifles as Manning takes cover behind a tree. Small arms fire ensues from both directions.

The German Commander begins to fall forward. He is already dead. He falls face first in the snow.

One of the 88 millimeter guns is swiveled around, and aimed down the road toward Manning's squad. The remaining guns continue their bombardment of the graveyard. The defending 88 fires, taking out the tree that Warren is hiding behind.

Warren is thrown into a backward flip, and lands on his stomach, knocking the wind out of him. Blood pours off Warren's face and into the snow at an alarming rate. Warren and Baxter's eyes meet. Warren watches as Baxter curls into a fetal position.

MANNING

Baxter!

Baxter clenches his eyes closed, and covers his head with his hands. Warren raises himself to his hands and knees. Lonnie and Rogers continue to return rifle fire to the Germans on the ridge.

MANNING  
(continues)

Get your ass up there!

The defending 88 fires again, the shell exploding in the road. Baxter suddenly gets up, and starts to run away down the road.

MANNING  
(continues)

God damn you, Baxter!

Manning aims his Thompson at Baxter.

WARREN

No!

Manning shoots the flame-thrower tank on Baxter's back, and the tank explodes, casting a blinding light over the road and ridge. The Germans are unable to see Manning's squad because they're looking directly into the light.

MANNING

Ballman! Get up there now!

Warren turns on the gas valve on his flame-thrower, and struggles to his feet. Manning, Lonnie and Rogers keep the blinded Germans pinned down as Warren, weak from the loss of blood, moves up the road with the heavy tank strapped to his back.

Warren is close enough now. He fires the flame-thrower, igniting a box of artillery shells. A bright ball of fire shoots into the air, taking the defending 88 millimeter gun with it in pieces.

MANNING  
(continues)

Fry 'em!

Warren sprays the defenseless cannon crews in a back and forth motion. Screams are heard from Germans covered in the sticky flames. Warren is screaming as he continues to fire the flame-thrower, his face covered with dripping blood. More ammunition explodes.

LONNIE  
Yeah! Yeah! Yeah!

The entire ridge is now in flames.

CUT TO:

EXT.

THE GRAVEYARD

NIGHT

There are no longer shells exploding. We see Pritchett looking into the calm sky.

PRITCHETT  
(to himself)

He did it!

SEQUENCE OF SHOTS showing American soldiers staring into the sky in silence. Our attention then shifts to Talbot, also looking into the sky.

TALBOT  
(to himself)

I'll be a sonofabitch!

CUT TO:

EXT.

THE RIDGE ROAD

NIGHT

Manning quickly gathers his squad in a huddle on the road.

MANNING

This ain't over till we're outta here. With this light show you know the krauts are coming. So keep it together, and follow me. Ballman, take that torch off.

Warren unstraps the flame-thrower, and sets it on the road.

MANNING

(continues, to Warren)

You gonna be able to run?

WARREN

I think so.

MANNING

That's no answer!

WARREN

I can make it.

MANNING

Then let's move.

Manning and his squad begin running down the road.

The one-eyed Blocher and several other German soldiers appear twenty yards behind Manning's squad and open fire.

MANNING

(continues)

Take cover!

Manning and his squad take cover behind trees and return fire. Already more Germans are starting to appear from the trees. Manning fires at the flame-thrower Warren left in the road, and it explodes into flames, blinding the Germans momentarily.

MANNING

(continues)

Let's go! Now! Now!

The four men scurry down the road, and disappear into the darkness of the forest. The Germans, over a dozen of them now, run down the road in pursuit. Manning and his men open fire on the road from inside the tree line, killing two German soldiers. Before the Germans can return fire, Manning and his men disappear again into the thick growth of the forest.

Rifle shots pierce through the branches, past the retreating Americans as they take cover behind trees. The Germans rapidly approach. Manning's squad opens fire at the approaching Germans, who take cover and return fire. Bullets are hitting the trees dangerously close to both Americans and Germans.

Lonnie shoots a German soldier in the leg. The soldier drops his rifle, grabbing his wounded leg with both hands, and begins calling out for help. Another German soldier runs to help the fallen soldier, and is shot in the head.

Rogers is shot in the hand.

Manning shoots a German soldier in the chest, killing him instantly.

Lonnie and Warren begin running from the fire fight. They are being pursued by Blocher. Lonnie turns to fire his rifle, but Blocher shoots first.

Lonnie's bottom jaw explodes away from his face. He falls to his hands and knees. Lonnie screams. His scream has an unnatural, hollow sound. Blood gurgles in his throat as he chokes for his next breath.

#### WARREN

God! Lonnie!

Warren bends down to help Lonnie. He turns him over on his back. Lonnie's face is unrecognizable. Warren screams.

The shooting continues. More intense now. More German soldiers move forward. Manning shoots a German soldier in the knees with a burst of machine-gun fire. The German soldier falls to the ground, grabbing his shattered knees with both hands. He begins screaming like a wounded animal. His screaming continues throughout the rest of the scene.

Warren is struggling to get Lonnie to his feet, but Lonnie is no longer functioning. Wrapping one of Lonnie's arms around his neck, Warren begins carrying him away from the shooting. Lonnie's feet simply drag behind. A gurgling sound is coming from Lonnie's throat.

WARREN

(continues, crying)

It's not that bad, Lonnie! I swear to Christ it's not that bad!

A bullet slams into the back of Lonnie's left calf. A gurgling scream escapes his throat.

WARREN

(continues, screaming)

Stop it! Stop it!

Rogers sees Blocher running, and shoots him in the arm. Blocher crawls behind a tree, and begins dressing his wound.

Manning and Rogers start to fall back. A bullet slams into the back of Rogers' head, killing him instantly. Manning fires a long burst of his Tommy gun as a scream of rage escapes his throat. The bullets riddle two German soldiers.

Warren continues to drag Lonnie, but he is moving much slower. Bullets are screaming past the two of them.

WARREN

(continues)

Manning! Help me!

A bullet scrapes the side of Warren's neck.

WARREN

(continues)

HELP ME!

Manning hesitates. We can see he wants to run. Backing away, he stumbles over a tree root, landing on his side. Bullets tear up the ground near Manning's head. The Germans continue to advance.

Manning pulls the pin on one of his grenades, and throws it.

EXPLOSION

Several German soldiers are thrown into the air, one of them striking the branches of a tree. The screams from the wounded join the screams of the soldier with the shattered knees.

Manning springs to his feet, and looks toward Warren and Lonnie. Again he hesitates.

WARREN (o.s.)

Don't leave me here!

Manning's paralysis breaks, and he runs over to Warren, who is now dragging Lonnie's body through the snow by one arm. Lonnie is leaving a massive blood trail.

MANNING

Just leave him!

Warren continues pulling Lonnie's body.

WARREN

He can make it!

MANNING

He's dead!

WARREN

No he's not!

Manning grabs Warren by the back of the collar, and roughly shoves him forward, away from Lonnie's body.

MANNING

God damn you! Move!

Manning's voice lingers in an echo as his face FREEZES in an expression of rage and terror.

DISSOLVE TO

EXT.

A ROCKY CLIFF

DAY

Wounded American soldiers are being lowered by rope from the top of this twenty foot cliff. There are several medics grabbing the wounded as they near the ground, placing the worst cases on litters, and sending the walking wounded on their way back to the rear.

Chamberlain is one of these medics. He is reaching over his head to guide a WOUNDED MAN TIED TO A BOARD to the ground.

CHAMBERLAIN

You're about eight feet from the ground now.  
You're okay now.

TIED WOUNDED MAN

Did I buy a ticket?

CHAMBERLAIN

Can I get you on the ground first?

TIED WOUNDED MAN

I need to know right now! You gotta tell me right now!

Chamberlain and two stretcher carriers set the board on a litter.

TIED WOUNDED MAN

(continues)

Tell me right now!

CHAMBERLAIN

Easy, kid.

TIED WOUNDED MAN

Tell me.

CHAMBERLAIN

I don't make that decision.

TIED WOUNDED MAN

You know what they'll say. What are they gonna say?

CHAMBERLAIN

(looking at wound)

You'll be back on the line in three weeks.

TIED WOUNDED MAN

But I wanna go home. Talk to my ma. I wanna see her.

CHAMBERLAIN

There's nothing I can do.

Chamberlain nods to the stretcher carriers, who lift the litter off the ground. The Tied Wounded Man grabs Chamberlain's arm.

TIED WOUNDED MAN

You can make it worse.

CHAMBERLAIN  
What are you talking about?

TIED WOUNDED MAN  
My wound. You can make it worse. These guys  
won't say anything. You can use your bayonet.

CHAMBERLAIN  
You're out of your mind.

TIED WOUNDED MAN  
Out of my mind?! I wanna get outta here! I wanna  
go home!

CHAMBERLAIN  
(to the stretcher carriers)  
Get him outta here already!

The two stretcher carriers hurry the Tied Wounded Man away.

TIED WOUNDED MAN  
(yelling back to Chamberlain)  
You think you're God or something?! You think  
you're fucking God?! You're dead! You're a fucking  
dead man! I'll be laying in a nice, warm bed, and  
you'll be dead! You hear me?! You gutless pig!  
You're dead!

Chamberlain watches the Tied Wounded Man as he is carried away. Another MEDIC  
walks up to Chamberlain from behind.

MEDIC  
Somebody call a break, Chamberlain?

CUT TO:

EXT. THE WOODS AT THE TOP OF THE CLIFF DAY

Standing at the top of the cliff are the Lieutenant Colonel and CAPTAIN BRADFORD.  
We immediately recognize Bradford as a new man to the front. The Lieutenant Colonel  
watches solemnly as the wounded are lowered down the cliff.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL

These are good soldiers, Captain. They don't  
deserve this crap.

BRADFORD

Yes, sir.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL

It's your job to turn this company around. They  
need some hope, and the only way they'll get it  
is if we take this hell hole. I need you to put some  
fire into this company.

BRADFORD

Yes, sir.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL

You're not here to be their friend. That was  
Pritchett's problem. He cared about them as  
individuals. A soldier is not an individual. He's  
a tool to get a job done. You understand what  
I'm telling you, Captain?

BRADFORD

Clearly, sir.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL

Good.

CUT TO:

EXT.

IN THE FOREST

DAY

Sitting and laying in the woods are the soldiers of Lukas' platoon. They are exhausted.  
Many are asleep. There is no hope here. Just men waiting for their turn to die.

Manning is leaning against a tree, smoking a cigarette, watching Warren who is sitting ten  
yards away by himself. Warren's face is now bandaged.

Sergeant Talbot takes a seat next to Manning.

TALBOT

Rough night, huh?

MANNING

Rough night.

TALBOT

Where's your squad?

MANNING  
(pointing)

Over there.

Talbot looks over at Warren.

TALBOT

That's it?

MANNING

That's it.

TALBOT

Was it worth it?

MANNING

You mean the ridge?

TALBOT

I mean the Section Eight.

MANNING

I don't know what you're talking about.

TALBOT

You really are a piece of shit, aren't you?

MANNING

That's right, Talbot. I'm a piece of shit. Happy?

Manning throws his cigarette down in anger.

TALBOT

My, aren't we touchy today.

MANNING

One of my guys ran. I had to shoot him.

TALBOT  
You're saying you shot a guy in the back?

MANNING  
Didn't have much of a choice.

TALBOT  
You plugged a new meat for getting scared.

MANNING  
I shot a soldier for desertion.

TALBOT  
Yeah, right. Mister Section Eight himself.

MANNING  
Kid over there saw me do it.

The two sergeants watch Warren for a moment or two.

TALBOT  
Tough three days for a new meat.

MANNING  
Tough three days for anybody.

TALBOT  
I hear that. You hear about Lieutenant Lukas?  
He slipped off the deep end last night. I had to  
take over the platoon.

MANNING  
Where is he now?

TALBOT  
Haven't seen him.

MANNING  
I knew he wouldn't last.

TALBOT

(lighting cigarette)

I've been keeping an eye on you, Manning. At first I thought you were just turning yellow. But I think I was wrong. I suppose I should apologize to you for coming on so strong the other day.

MANNING

Forget about it.

TALBOT

Now I think you're just slipping. Are you? Slipping?

MANNING

If I was slipping, do you think I'd volunteer for a suicide mission.

TALBOT

Cut the shit, Manning. We all know about the Section Eight deal you cut with Pritchett. Anything to save your own ass.

MANNING

That's right.

TALBOT

Too bad Pritchett won't be around to hold up his end of the deal.

MANNING

What the hell are you talking about?

TALBOT

He got wounded. They're pulling him off the line today.

MANNING

Shit.

TALBOT

(laughing)

Life's a bitch, ain't it?

Manning doesn't answer.

The Lieutenant Colonel and Captain Bradford make their way over to the resting platoon. None of the platoon members acknowledge their presence. The Lieutenant Colonel sees Manning and Talbot sitting under a tree, barely awake, and walks over to them.

MANNING

(tired, bitter)

Come for a situation assessment, sir?

LIEUTENANT COLONEL

Where is Lieutenant Lukas?

TALBOT

Nobody knows, sir. Pretty rough on him last night.

BRADFORD

Is that him?

#### ANOTHER ANGLE

Moving toward the Lieutenant Colonel from roughly twenty yards away is Lukas. In his right hand is the tangled mess of twenty dog tags, many of them bloody. Lukas is holding them out in front of him as he moves toward the Lieutenant Colonel. His boots are caked with mud, making it difficult for him to walk.

Lukas is choking on sobs. His eyes are bulging from their dark, sunken sockets.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL

What is the status of your platoon, Lieutenant?

Lukas continues to move toward the Lieutenant Colonel. His choking sobs are turning into something more disturbing. As if he is trying to scream, but is unable to. Several soldiers watch Lukas with interest.

Manning looks up at Lukas. He then looks down at the ground, shaking his head.

Lukas is now only ten yards from the Lieutenant Colonel. He is shaking uncontrollably as he walks.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL

(continues)

Whatever your problem is, Lieutenant, I suggest you get it under control.

Lukas continues to move toward the Lieutenant Colonel. There is a hint of threat in Lukas' advance. Most of the platoon is watching now. Manning lights another cigarette, still looking away from the situation.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL

(continues)

Put it together, Lieutenant!

The scream in Lukas' throat is beginning to surface. A slow, disturbing build.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL

(continues)

Damn you, Lukas!

Lukas lets out a blood curdling scream as he grabs the Lieutenant Colonel with his free hand. Bradford quickly grabs Lukas, and tries to pull him off the Lieutenant Colonel. The Lieutenant Colonel stumbles backward onto the ground. Lukas and Bradford fall on top of him as Lukas continues to scream while clawing at the Lieutenant Colonel. Several soldiers pull Lukas off, the dog tags falling from his grip.

The Lieutenant Colonel struggles to his feet, covered with mud. There are several scratches bleeding on his face.

BRADFORD

(to the soldiers holding Lukas)

Get him out of here!

The Lieutenant Colonel watches as Lukas is led away. He then notices the entire platoon staring at him. His eyes dart from one soldier to another. There is no emotion on the faces of the men. No rage, no sadness. Just a strange ghost-like appearance as they wait to see the Lieutenant Colonel's next move. The Lieutenant Colonel is unnerved by this. Manning picks up the dog tags from the mud, and hands them to the Lieutenant Colonel.

MANNING

You wanted to know the status of his platoon.

Manning begins to walk away.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL

Just a minute, Sergeant.

(Manning turns)

You're treading dangerously close to a court-martial.

MANNING

Will that get me out of here? Sir?

LIEUTENANT COLONEL  
 (realization)  
 You're Manning, aren't you?

MANNING  
 That's what they tell me.

TALBOT  
 Easy, Manning.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL  
 (to Talbot)  
 Stay out of this, Sergeant.

The Lieutenant Colonel pulls a folded sheet of paper from his coat pocket.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL  
 (continues, reading)  
 Sergeant David Manning.

MANNING  
 You got a sheet on everybody?

LIEUTENANT COLONEL  
 Just you, Sergeant.

(reads)  
 Sergeant Manning has an excellent, innate understanding of battlefield conditions. His ability to react to aggressive situations is unmatched by anybody in the company. His disrespect for authority is unable to hide his ability to lead. I strongly suggest he be considered for the next platoon leader when and if the situation presents itself. Captain Robert Pritchett.  
 (to Manning)  
 If I'm not mistaken, the situation has presented itself, Sergeant.

Manning looks blankly at the Lieutenant Colonel.

MANNING  
 (controlling panic)  
 May I remind you, sir. I'm a non-com.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL

I know what you are, Sergeant. I also know what your capabilities are.

MANNING

I was a buck private three days ago!

LIEUTENANT COLONEL

This isn't up for discussion.

MANNING

I can't do this!

LIEUTENANT COLONEL

You've got no choice. And as it is, neither do I.

The Lieutenant Colonel walks away. Manning turns to look at the members of the platoon. They are all staring at him.

BRADFORD

Pick out a new squad leader to take your place.

Manning doesn't respond. He is still looking at the platoon.

BRADFORD

(continues)

Sergeant!

MANNING

I got nothin' left.

BRADFORD

Just gotta dig deeper.

MANNING

I got nothin' left.

CUT TO:

INT.

THE DEMOLISHED CHURCH

DAY

At first we see only the sad face of Christ on the cross. The following is superimposed:

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#### ANOTHER ANGLE

We are now looking over the shoulder of Christ, down at a group of four soldiers standing at attention, facing another soldier whose arm is in a sling.

#### CLOSE ON THE SOLDIERS

The soldier with his arm in a sling is Captain Pritchett. With his good arm, Pritchett shakes the hands of his four staff members. The last man to shake hands with him is Sergeant Despin. Pritchett hesitates in front of his friend.

PRITCHETT

Keep your head down, Doug.

DESPIN

I always do, sir.

PRITCHETT

I wouldn't be going if it wasn't for this arm.

DESPIN

I know that.

PRITCHETT

I told battalion I should stay. I demanded it.

DESPIN

You did all you could, sir. We all know that.

PAUSE

PRITCHETT

Yeah.

(pause)

Stay alive.

(to everyone)

All of you, stay alive. Keep as many of the others  
alive as you can.

Despin and the other three staff members salute Pritchett, and Pritchett salutes back. It is a moment of profound respect. Pritchett leaves the church as the four staff members hold their salute. It is very quiet. The moment lingers.

DESPIN

Front!

The salute is dropped smartly.

CUT TO:

EXT.

THE DEMOLISHED CHURCH

DAY

Pritchett is walking away from the church as a jeep pulls up in front of him. Sitting next to the driver is the Lieutenant Colonel. In the back of the jeep is Captain Bradford. Salutes are exchanged. The Lieutenant Colonel gets out of the jeep, followed by Bradford.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL

How's that arm, Rob?

PRITCHETT

It's not a problem. sir. I could stay.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL

You're due for a rest, Captain.

PRITCHETT

Everybody here needs a rest.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL

This conversation was over the first time we had it, and it's just as over now. You're wounded. You need a rest.

BRADFORD

A fresh point of view may help break things open here, Rob.

PRITCHETT

(cold)

Do I know you?

LIEUTENANT COLONEL

Is the staff inside?

PRITCHETT

Yes, sir.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL

Captain Bradford, I suggest you take this time to acquaint yourself with your team.

PRITCHETT

Sir, shouldn't I be involved in the briefing? The captain here will need every piece of advice he can get.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL

Negative. I don't want the same mistakes as before.

PRITCHETT

(stunned)

What mistakes are those?

LIEUTENANT COLONEL

You tell me.

Pritchett is frozen where he stands, looking as if he has just been slapped in the face. The Lieutenant Colonel's eyes remain on Pritchett. Bradford looks at the ground, feeling extremely uncomfortable.

Pritchett silently climbs into the jeep.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL

(continues, to the Driver)

This man needs a doctor, Corporal.

DRIVER

Yes, sir.

The jeep drives off. The Lieutenant Colonel looks over at Bradford, who still seems a bit embarrassed.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL

What are you still standing out here for?

Bradford salutes clumsily, then hurries into the church.

Our attention stays with the Lieutenant Colonel. Once alone, his facade drops like a lead weight. He suddenly looks exhausted. In his eyes there is a hint of something we haven't seen before. Fear.

CUT TO:

EXT. A TRENCH LINE DAY

The one-eyed Sergeant Blocher, his left arm now in a sling, keeps low as he moves along the trench, which is lined with razor wire. Blocher follows the trench to the back entrance of a pillbox.

CUT TO:

INT. THE PILLBOX DAY

Inside the pillbox are three German soldiers, among them the Bearded Soldier who talked to Blocher in the back of the truck, and Johann. Blocher enters the pillbox.

BLOCHER

Stay alert today. The Americans will probably make another push. Have you heard from Schultz?

The Bearded Soldier shakes his head to say no.

BLOCHER

(continues)

Should have heard from him by now.

BEARDED SOLDIER

Maybe he went home.

BLOCHER

We *are* home now. Try to remember that.

Blocher leaves the bunker.

CUT TO:

EXT.

THE TRENCH LINE

DAY

Again we are with Blocher as he makes his way along the trench. The trench ends at a machine-gun nest built up with sandbags, rocks and mud. There are two German soldiers sitting in the nest. Blocher walks up from behind, and taps one of them on the shoulder.

BLOCHER

You forgot to report in, Schultz.

There is no reply from the soldier. Blocher grabs the soldier's arm, this time realizing there is something wrong. He slowly moves around so he is facing the two silent soldiers. They are both frozen, staring into the forest with unseeing eyes. Blocher picks up the radio laying at the bottom of the nest.

BLOCHER

(continues, into the radio)

Blocher here. Schultz and Mueller froze to death last night. Send two more men to take their spot.

GERMAN RADIO VOICE (o.s.)

You've got orders to report to Company.

BLOCHER

What for?

GERMAN RADIO VOICE (o.s.)

Your squad is being pulled back to protect the railroad guns.

BLOCHER

Negative. My squad is more useful on the line.

GERMAN RADIO VOICE (o.s.)

(sternly)

Your squad is being pulled back to protect the guns.

Blocher drops the radio to the bottom of the nest, and sits for a moment staring at his two comrades.

BLOCHER

(continues)

Lucky bastards.

Blocher takes Schultz's extra ammo clips from his belt. He then tries to take Schultz's machine-gun, but the weapon is frozen in Schultz's hands.

Blocher removes his bayonet, and pries it under Schultz's fingers. One by one we hear the fingers break off until Blocher is able to take the machine-gun. He removes the clip from the weapon, then drops the weapon next to Schultz's frozen body.

Blocher scans the trees ahead of the nest. No sign of the Americans.

BLOCHER  
(continues)

Come on in.

(pause)

I'm waiting for you.

Blocher takes his extra ammo, and moves away down the trench.

We remain on the faces of the frozen dead until finally we...

CUT TO:

EXT.

THE FOREST

NIGHT

Warren is sitting low in a foxhole, completely alone in the dark. The wind is howling loudly through the trees. Warren clings tightly to the blanket wrapped around him.

There is something moving in the darkness ahead of Warren. Warren strains his eyes to see. For a moment the movement stops. Warren ever so carefully reaches for a grenade. He pulls the pin.

A deer suddenly emerges from the darkness. Warren lets out a sigh of relief. The deer limps toward Warren's foxhole. It's left hind leg is bleeding profusely from a bullet wound. Warren watches as he places the pin back in the grenade, and lays it in front of him.

The deer comes closer, sniffing at the ground in front of the foxhole. Warren watches in amazement. The deer is suddenly spooked by some unheard noise, and disappears into the darkness.

SUDDEN SOUND OF MOVEMENT

Warren grabs the grenade, and swings himself around in the foxhole so he is facing in the opposite direction. More movement. Warren pulls the pin from the grenade.

WARREN  
(calling out)

Clover!

CHAMBERLAIN (o.s.)  
Baseball!

Chamberlain runs into view, keeping low to the ground, and jumps into the foxhole next to Warren. Both men talk in whispers.

CHAMBERLAIN  
(continues)

All quiet?

WARREN  
Yeah. What's up?

CHAMBERLAIN  
Manning wants to see you at platoon headquarters.

WARREN  
What's going on?

CHAMBERLAIN  
I was hoping you could tell me.

WARREN  
Tell you what?

CHAMBERLAIN  
I don't know. Nothing.

Warren starts to crawl out of the foxhole, but is stopped by Chamberlain.

CHAMBERLAIN  
(continues)

Wait a minute. Look. Manning being promoted to L. T. has got some of us spooked.

WARREN  
Why?

## CHAMBERLAIN

If you live long enough on the line there's a good chance you might slip. Everybody's got their breaking point. Some break quicker than others.

## WARREN

Like Lieutenant Lukas.

## CHAMBERLAIN

Yeah, you got it. If you're an old timer like me you can usually see it coming. With Lukas, I knew it was just a question of time. Last week Manning started showing the signs. The shakes mostly. The night before you came we had a bad one. The whole company was crippled. That's why you guys were brought in.

## WARREN

Putty.

## CHAMBERLAIN

What?

## WARREN

Nothing. Something Manning said.

## CHAMBERLAIN

Anyway, Manning's entire platoon was wiped out. Every single guy. Except our buddy. He walks out without a scratch. The only one. All of the sudden he's okay. Only he's not. I mean...he seems to have it together now, but he's not the same anymore.

## WARREN

How is he different?

## CHAMBERLAIN

Before you could always count on Manning to watch your back. He was the best. Now...we're just not sure anymore

## WARREN

Look out for number one.

CHAMBERLAIN

No, it's more than that. There's plenty of guys on the line that look out for themselves. We think Manning slipped off the deep end, only different somehow. We think he's dangerous.

WARREN

You keep saying *we*.

CHAMBERLAIN

Sergeant Talbot. Maybe Sergeant Despin on the Captain's staff.

WARREN

How do you mean dangerous?

CHAMBERLAIN

When you been on the line long enough, you learn there's no black and white. Only shades of gray. You learn to survive within those shades. Manning's grays are starting to look a whole lot darker than ours.

WARREN

Are you telling me Manning's insane?

CHAMBERLAIN

I'm not *telling* you anything. I'm *asking* you. Why would he want to see you? He's the platoon leader now. He doesn't need to concern himself with you. Are you his friend?

WARREN

No.

CHAMBERLAIN

Then why? Did something happen on that ridge last night? Could he see you as a threat somehow?

(no reply)

If you know something, spill it.

WARREN

Guy in my squad ran during the fire fight. Manning shot him in the back.

CHAMBERLAIN

He was deserting?

WARREN

He got scared, and he ran. He was a friend.

CHAMBERLAIN

Manning wouldn't have to worry about that.

WARREN

There's something else. When the krauts were tracking us in the woods, Lonnie took a bullet in the face. I tried carrying him out of there, but I couldn't do it. I called out for help. Manning saw me, but he hesitated. It was as if he was deciding whether or not he was going to leave me there.

CHAMBERLAIN

But he didn't.

WARREN

No, he didn't. What he *did* do was force me to leave Lonnie out there to die.

CHAMBERLAIN

Are you sure he was still alive?

WARREN

Positive. And I told Manning too. He didn't even give a damn.

CHAMBERLAIN

Shit.

(thinks for a moment)

Alright, listen up. You're gonna stay put.

WARREN

What about Manning?

CHAMBERLAIN

You let Talbot and me worry about Manning

WARREN

What are you guys gonna do?

CHAMBERLAIN

Don't worry about it.

WARREN

Bullshit. What's going on?

(no reply)

You're gonna kill 'em, aren't you?

CHAMBERLAIN

We're gonna do what we gotta do.

Chamberlain crawls out of the foxhole, and disappears into the darkness.

WARREN

(softly)

Oh my god.

CUT TO:

INT.

BOMBED OUT BUNKER

NIGHT

Talbot is sleeping in one of the dark corners of the bunker, his service side arm in his hand. Chamberlain enters the bunker to find Talbot immediately wide awake, his side arm pointed at Chamberlain's head. Talbot lowers the weapon when he sees it is Chamberlain.

CHAMBERLAIN

You were right.

The two look hard at each other for a moment.

TALBOT

Let's go.

CUT TO:

EXT.

A FOREST ROAD

NIGHT

Manning is handed a map case by Sergeant Despin who is sitting in a jeep. The two salute each other, and Despin drives away. Manning begins walking when he is suddenly met by Chamberlain.

CHAMBERLAIN

Hey, Lieutenant, I'll carry that for you.

Chamberlain grabs the map case before Manning says anything. From nowhere Talbot appears in front of Manning, and punches him hard in the face. Manning falls to the ground. Chamberlain and Talbot begin viciously kicking Manning, then drag him into the woods.

TALBOT

You fucking dirt bag!

Talbot kicks Manning in the stomach while Chamberlain clubs Manning in the face with the map case. Manning tries crawling away, but his legs are pulled out from under him by Talbot, who flips Manning onto his back and straddles over him.

TALBOT

(continues)

Fucking traitor!

Talbot pulls out his side arm, placing the barrel on Manning's forehead.

TALBOT

(continues)

What comes around, goes around, hey tough  
guy?

Talbot pulls the hammer back on his weapon.

TALBOT

(continues)

Just another G.I. for the pile.

MANNING

Wait!

CHAMBERLAIN

For what, asshole?

MANNING

I can make a deal. One you'll want.

TALBOT

What I want is your brains on my clothes, fucker!

MANNING

You kill me, you'll all be dead by nightfall tomorrow.

PAUSE

TALBOT

I'm listening.

MANNING

We're making a push at dawn. Right up the middle again.

CHAMBERLAIN

You're full of shit!

MANNING

Am I? Check the map case if you don't believe me.

TALBOT

So what if we are?

MANNING

The krauts have moved the railroad guns back into our sector. They'll tear us a new asshole as soon as we move. The orders are we take Schmidt at all costs.

CHAMBERLAIN

That's bullshit! There's no way they'd send us against those guns on an all coster.

MANNING

They don't think the guns are there.

CHAMBERLAIN

Then how do you know?

MANNING

You outta try being more observant.

TALBOT

Stick to the point, tough guy.

MANNING

The krauts move the guns every other day. All you have to do is watch the muzzle flashes to know that. I know exactly where those guns are. We can take those fuckers tonight.

Talbot and Chamberlain look at each other.

MANNING

(continues)

Think about it. Without those guns we might make it to Schmidt alive.

MORE SILENCE

MANNING

(continues)

The clock is ticking, boys.

CUT TO:

INT.

LOG BUNKER

NIGHT

A square fold out table is in the center of this cramped, dirt floor bunker, with a lantern on top. The flame of the lantern has been turned down very low, leaving the corners of the bunker in shadow. Manning, Chamberlain and Talbot sit in three of the four chairs at the table, smoking cigarettes. The low light gives the three men a ghost-like appearance.

The sheet of canvas covering the entrance of the bunker is pushed inward, revealing Warren.

MANNING

Come on in.

Warren enters the bunker, but remains standing. He is obviously confused to see these three men sitting together.

WARREN

You wanted to see me, sir?

MANNING

Have a seat.

Warren sits down across from Manning.

MANNING  
(continues)

Smoke 'em if you got 'em.

Warren lights a cigarette. The four smoking ghosts eye each other up in silence for a moment.

MANNING  
You look like you've seen a ghost.

WARREN  
I'm not sure I haven't

TALBOT  
There's been a change in plans.

MANNING  
We got a mission tonight. We need your expertise with the torch.

Warren stares at the three men blankly.

CUT TO:

INT.

THE LOG BUNKER

NIGHT

We are looking down at a simplified map drawn into the dirt floor. Manning's hand is using a stick to refer to the map as he talks.

MANNING (o.s.)  
The guns are on this track here. The krauts are using this convent as a bunk house. It's roughly fifty yards away. We'll cross the Ziegfried Line here, capture this anti-tank gun, haul it to the top of this hill, and use it to knock out the ammo.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL ALL FOUR MEN

MANNING  
(continues)  
We hit that ammo, and the whole place goes.

TALBOT

And if we don't?

MANNING

Then we gotta get close. Torch and demolition charges. Sixty pounders outta do the trick. If that's the case, Sanders covers the front of the convent with the torch, you two cover the back, and I'll take out the guns. Any questions?

CHAMBERLAIN

I'm not thrilled about the odds, but it's better than what's in store for us at dawn.

TALBOT

Let's do it.

CUT TO:

EXT.

THE LOG BUNKER

NIGHT

Chamberlain, Talbot and Warren leave the bunker.

WARREN

Chamberlain. Got a minute?

TALBOT

(to Chamberlain)

I'll get the demos.

Talbot walks away.

CHAMBERLAIN

What's up?

WARREN

Let's walk.

They start walking.

CHAMBERLAIN

What is it?

WARREN

I don't trust Manning.

CHAMBERLAIN

It's worth the risk.

WARREN

What's to stop him from killing us behind enemy lines?

CHAMBERLAIN

He won't.

WARREN

How do you know?

CHAMBERLAIN

I don't.

CUT TO:

EXT.

THE ZIEGFRIED LINE

NIGHT

Silent lightning scurries across the heavily overcast sky, illuminating the bunkers and tank traps like some graveyard on Halloween night.

CUT TO:

EXT.

A TRENCH LINE

NIGHT

Manning, Talbot, Chamberlain and Warren are crouching in the trench. All of them are armed with Tommy guns except for Warren, who has a flame thrower strapped to his back. Manning and Talbot each have a demolition charge strapped to their backs. All four men have smudged their hands and faces with dark mud, and have left their helmets behind.

Manning looks out at the Ziegfried Line. The same as always. Flares, sporadic gunfire, screams. Manning lowers himself down again.

MANNING

When we get out there I'm in charge. What I say goes. No matter what. If anybody fucks with me your mothers get telegrams.

(to Talbot)

You know I can do it too.

TALBOT

The railroad guns, tough guy. Just get us to the guns.

MANNING

Single file. Twenty feet apart. Let's go.

Manning starts to crawl out of the trench.

WARREN

Manning.

(Manning turns around)

Nobody dies.

Manning crawls out of the trench without replying, making his way toward the Ziegfried Line.

TALBOT

Nobody dies, Sanders.

WARREN

(convincing himself)

Nobody dies.

CUT TO:

EXT.

THE ZIEGFRIED LINE

NIGHT

Manning crawls forward, probing the ground for land mines with his bayonet. He looks behind him to see Warren crawling out of the trench about twenty feet back. Manning continues forward, into shell holes and under barbed wire. Warren, Talbot and Chamberlain follow with twenty feet between each man.

The tip of Manning's bayonet makes contact with something metal. Manning freezes, then gives a quick hand signal to Warren. Warren stops and passes the signal to Talbot, who passes it back to Chamberlain.

Manning cautiously brushes the dirt away from the three pronged detonator of the land mine. The mine is very close to the surface, and Manning is able to find its circumference quickly. He digs the dish shaped bomb from the ground, and carefully pushes it as far off to his side as he can reach. He then signals the others to continue following.

Manning probes forward until he comes to a blown out German machine-gun nest. The aftermath of this direct hit is horrifying. Two dead German soldiers are in the nest, one of them missing its body from the waste down. There is a boot just outside the nest near Manning. Jetting out the top of the boot is bone and flesh. Manning gives the boot an uninterested glance before concentrating his attention on something beyond the nest.

About twenty yards off is a chaotic tangled wall of razor wire at least a hundred yards wide and ten feet high. Manning studies the wire, his eyes moving slowly from left to right.

MANNING  
(to himself)

Lucky day, lucky day. Lucky lucky lucky.

Manning motions the others to come forward, then crawls into the nest. He waits motionless until the others join him in the nest.

MANNING  
(continues)

When did we hit the krauts with that mortar barrage?

CHAMBERLAIN

Fourteen hundred.

MANNING  
(looking at his watch)

Eleven and a half hours ago.

TALBOT

A little shallow in the manpower barrel.

CHAMBERLAIN

Maybe.

Manning looks over at Warren who is staring at the decapitated German soldier.

MANNING

Look at me, Sanders.  
(Warren turns)  
Get your shit together.

TALBOT

What about the razor wire?

MANNING

Three possible gaps.

Manning holds out a clenched fist, and is joined quickly by clenched fists from Talbot and Chamberlain. Warren raises a fist when he realizes the others are waiting for him. The four men move their fists up and down in unison with Manning's counting.

MANNING

(continues)

One...Two...Three!

On *three* the four men raise two fingers each in a unanimous vote.

CHAMBERLAIN

Our luck may be changing.

TALBOT

You jinxed it, asshole! Hand me that block of wood.

Chamberlain hands Talbot a small block of wood. Talbot raps the block with his knuckles, then holds it out for the others to do the same. They do so without hesitation. Talbot drops the block of wood.

TALBOT

(continues, to Chamberlain)

You know better than that.

Manning looks out toward the wire, scouting for Germans.

MANNING

We're clear to the wire.

Manning climbs out of the nest, and runs to the razor wire, keeping as low to the ground as possible. Again he gives the signal to follow, and is joined by the others. Manning removes a coil of rope from his belt, and throws an end to Talbot. Talbot removes his own coil of rope, and ties it to the end of Manning's. Manning ties the other end of his rope around his waste, and gives Talbot the thumbs up sign.

TALBOT

Watch for booby traps, Dave.

MANNING

(smiles)

I'm way ahead of you, buddy.

Manning crawls into the jungle of razor wire as Talbot leads out rope to him. Inside the wire Manning quickly loses sight of the others. His probing leads him to two dead ends before finding himself with only a single coil of wire keeping him from the other side. Manning removes a wire cutter from his belt, and snips through the wire.

The wire snaps wildly, slashing Manning's face. Blood flows down his cheek as he silently watches for alerted Germans. After a long moment, Manning clips a hole in the wire big enough to crawl through, unties the rope from his waste, and fastens it to the wire by the opening.

Flickering lightning illuminates the silhouette of the German anti-tank gun on top of a low hill. Manning spots it.

LOW RUMBLING THUNDER

Manning begins crawling, following the rope back in the direction he came.

CUT TO:

EXT.

RAZOR WIRE GAP

NIGHT

Talbot is crouched down low, looking into the gap in the wire. He is in deep concentration, listening through the pouring rain for Manning. Chamberlain and Warren have taken lookout positions twenty feet from Talbot on both his left and right side. All three men are facing away from each other, each in their own world. A long moment passes. Nobody moves. Total focus.

LIGHTNING AND THUNDER

Without taking his eyes from the gap in the wire, Talbot pulls out a stick of chewing gum and slips it in his mouth. Seconds go by. Talbot glances at his watch then focuses on the wire again. Chamberlain crawls over to Talbot.

CHAMBERLAIN

You think he ditched us?

TALBOT

(still watching the wire)

I don't know.

There is a sound from inside the wire. Talbot pulls the pin from a grenade and prepares to throw it.

TALBOT

(continues, calling out)

Silo.

MANNING (o.s.)

Filter.

Manning's head pops out of the wire.

MANNING

(continues)

Other side of the rainbow.

CUT TO:

EXT.

THE RAZOR WIRE JUNGLE

NIGHT

Manning is leading the other three through the wire, following the rope. Warren is following Manning about five feet back. He is starting to fall behind because of the awkwardness of getting through the wire with a flame thrower on his back. Talbot and Chamberlain are right behind him.

TALBOT

Pick up the pace, Sanders. Jesus Christ.

Several drops of blood splash onto Warren's face. He looks up.

FLASH OF LIGHTING

A dead G.I. is silhouetted in the wire above Warren.

LOUD CRACK OF THUNDER

WARREN  
(to himself)

Keep it together, Sandy.

Warren continues forward.

CUT TO:

EXT.

THE CUT WIRE OPENING

NIGHT

Manning crawls through the opening, removes a handkerchief from his pocket, and ties it to the wire to mark the opening. Warren crawls through the opening, followed by Talbot and Chamberlain.

MANNING

Sanders, you keep watch from here.  
(to Talbot and Chamberlain)

Bayonets only.

Manning, Chamberlain and Talbot leave their weapons and the demolition charges with Warren, then start crawling up the hill toward the anti-tank gun. Warren watches them crawl away. He looks around nervously.

In the distance we hear the low hum of heavy bombers approaching from above. Warren looks up into the rain to see, but they are somewhere above the clouds. Warren keeps watching. Already the humming is fading somewhere over the German side of the line. Anti-aircraft guns begin firing at the bombers. Warren watches the flickering of the guns firing into the sky.

LIGHTNING AND THUNDER

Something catches Warren's attention on the hill. Someone is waving him forward from the anti-tank gun. Warren hesitates. There is another wave. Warren runs up the hill to the anti-tank gun.

CHAMBERLAIN

Keep your head down for Christ's sake!

Warren climbs into the hole dug for the gun position. He looks around at the three dead German soldiers laying near his feet.

MANNING

See that road?

Everyone looks toward a line of trees fifty feet deeper into Germany where there is an entrance to a small dirt road cut into it.

MANNING

(continues)

We pull this gun across that open area, and we're home free for a while.

TALBOT

We got three shells here.

MANNING

Chamberlain, Sanders. Get the weapons. We'll get the gun ready to move.

Chamberlain and Warren head back toward the wire.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE OPEN FIELD IN FRONT OF THE TREE LINE

NIGHT

Manning, Talbot, Chamberlain and Warren are pulling the anti-tank gun across the open field. The gun is small enough for them to pull at a slow run, but they are all breathing heavy. Everyone but Warren has a shell tied to their backs for the gun. Manning and Talbot each have one of the demo charges again.

A flare is fired into the sky, lighting up the open field. The four men drop to the ground. The flare continues its float downward until burning itself out, flooding the open field with darkness again. The four men pull the gun into the tree line through the road opening.

CUT TO:

EXT.

THE FOREST ROAD

NIGHT

The four men continue to pull the gun along the road.

MANNING

Hold up a sec.

They slow to a stop, and rest the car hitch of the gun on the road. They are all out of breath. Manning pulls out a map, then looks across the road at a steep hill.

MANNING

(continues)

Over this hill and we got the guns.

TALBOT

(looking at the steep hill)

You gotta be fuckin' kidding me!

MANNING

It's either over this hill, or we pull this bitch another three miles.

The four men stare at the hill.

CUT TO:

EXT.

THE STEEP HILL

NIGHT

Manning, Talbot and Warren are standing on the road, pulling on their tied together lengths of rope. The rope is looped around a large tree trunk at the top of the hill, and fastened to the hitch of the anti-tank gun, which is now half way up the hill. The progress is slow. Chamberlain is up at the tree trunk making sure the rope doesn't slip off of it. The rope is wet and difficult to grip. Chamberlain becomes impatient, and begins pulling on the rope from up top.

Warren stumbles over a rock on the road, losing his grip on the rope. The rope begins sliding through Manning and Talbot's fingers, and the gun begins to slowly roll back down the steep hill.

Chamberlain's arm gets pinched between the tree stump and the rope. He screams.

TALBOT

(calling out as quiet as possible)

Don't scream!

The rope slips completely from their grasp, pulling Chamberlain's arm deeper into the pinch point. We hear a bone in his arm snap, and he screams again.

The anti-tank gun stops sliding down the hill when Chamberlain's entire body is dragged tightly between the rope and the stump. The entire weight of the gun is pinning the teeth gritting Chamberlain to the stump. We hear the snap of one of Chamberlain's ribs. He begins screaming louder and doesn't stop.

MANNING

We gotta shut him up!

The three men on the road are distracted by APPROACHING FOOTSTEPS and EXCITED GERMAN VOICES. Manning throws the end of the rope into the flooded drainage ditch on the hill side of the road, then follows Talbot and Warren into the flooded drainage ditch on the other side. All three crouch down low so only their heads from the nose up are above the water.

The one-eyed Sergeant Blocher and three other German soldiers stop on the road near the hiding Americans, and look up at the anti-tank gun half way up the hill and the still screaming Chamberlain at the top. Blocher raises his weapon to fire. Warren starts to rise from the drainage ditch, but is stopped by Manning.

GUNSHOT

Chamberlain stops screaming, his lifeless body still pinned to the stump. Blocher yells out orders in German, and his men begin wading through the hill side drainage ditch toward the gun. One of the soldiers holds up the end of the rope that was thrown into the water. Blocher suddenly goes rigid. Very slowly he turns to look behind him. Manning, Talbot and Warren are gone.

CUT TO:

INT.

A STONE CABIN

NIGHT

The front door of the cabin is kicked open by Manning, and in run the three Americans. A WOMAN grabs her SIX YEAR OLD CHILD and huddles into a far corner. Manning sees this quick movement, and raises his Tommy gun in their direction. The Woman and Child stare at the barrel of the weapon, which is trained at their heads. Electric silence. Talbot uses his hand to lower the barrel of Manning's weapon. When Talbot speaks, the coldness in his voice that was missing for a while returns.

TALBOT

Easy on the trigger finger, tough guy.

(to Warren)

Bolt that door.

Warren shuts the door, and places the bolting board in the slots across the door.

MANNING

Either of you know any kraut?

WARREN

A couple of sentences.

MANNING

Don't say it if you do, but can say *I speak German?*

WARREN

Yeah.

MANNING

Good.

TALBOT

We need a new plan.

MANNING

We still got the torch and the charges.

TALBOT

They were under water. How do you know they'll work?

MANNING

It's worth the risk, ain't it?

TALBOT

Shit.

MANNING

Same plan as before. Sanders covers the front of the convent, you cover the back.

TALBOT

Yeah, yeah, and you take out the guns.

MANNING

That's right.

TALBOT

So what if the charges don't go off. What if the torch doesn't work.

MANNING

Then we're dead.

Warren glances out a window, then drops to the floor.

WARREN

(intense whisper)

Krauts!

Manning grabs the Child from the Mother's arms, and sits on the floor next to the door. He sets his Tommy gun on the floor, and pulls out his bayonet, placing the tip of the blade near the Child's right eye.

TALBOT

What the fuck are you doing?!

MANNING

Shut up, and get down.

Talbot and Warren each move to a corner and sit on the floor. When the Mother and Child speak, it is subtitled.

CHILD

(crying)

Ma Ma!

MOTHER

Be quiet, my love. You must be very quiet.

MANNING

(to Warren)

Tell her you speak German.

WARREN

(in German)

I speak German.

The Mother looks at Warren, then looks back at her threatened child. Manning touches the Child's skin under her eye with the blade of the bayonet.

TALBOT

Relax, Manning.

MANNING

Shut up!

All eyes dart to the door as the handle is rattled from the outside.

BLOCHER (o.s.)  
(calling out)

Helena?

MOTHER

What is it?

BLOCHER (o.s.)  
I need to speak with you. Open the door.

The Mother looks over at her child. There is a trickle of blood sliding down the Child's face from the bayonet. The Mother fights to keep control of her voice.

MOTHER

I'm in bed. You come back tomorrow.

MANNING

What's she saying?

WARREN

I don't know.

BLOCHER (o.s.)  
It's important, Helena. I need to talk to you now.

MOTHER

This is my house. You come back tomorrow.

There is a long moment of silence. All eyes in the cabin dart between the door and Manning with the Child. We then hear Blocher walking away from the cabin. The Mother closes her eyes in relief.

MANNING

Check the window.

Warren slowly stands, and looks out the front window.

WARREN

They're going.

(pause)

They're gone.

TALBOT

Lower that blade, Manning.

Manning doesn't move. The Mother looks at Manning, her fear rising again.

TALBOT

(continues)

Lower that fucking blade.

MANNING

You think we can just let them go? Gimme a break.

TALBOT

We'll tie and gag them.

MANNING

We finish them right now.

Talbot aims his Tommy gun at Manning's head.

TALBOT

Lower that blade, or I'll splatter your head.

(no response)

Do it!

Manning doesn't move.

CUT TO:

EXT.

THE STONE CABIN

NIGHT

The door to the cabin slowly swings inward, and out step the three Americans, one at a time. Warren is the last one to step out. He takes one more look inside, then gently shuts the door.

CUT TO:

INT.

THE STONE CABIN

NIGHT

The Mother and the Child have been tied and gagged, and are facing each other from opposite corners of the cabin. The Mother begins to sob. Deep, choking sobs. The Child watches her Mother. A tear rolls down the Child's face.

CUT TO:

EXT.

THE TOP OF THE STEEP HILL

NIGHT

Manning, Talbot and Warren are laying on their stomach, looking down at the convent and railroad guns. Manning is looking through binoculars.

MANNING

They got two guards walking around the guns.  
There's a man in the lineman shack next to the  
tracks. Other than that it's clear.

SOUND OF AN APPROACHING TRAIN ENGINE

The three Americans watch as the engine appears from the trees, and enters the railroad gun area. The train backs into the two flatcars holding the guns, coupling itself to them.

TALBOT

They're gonna move them.

The LINEMAN leaves the shack to make sure the engine has coupled to the flatcars. He is met by the ENGINEER, and they both enter the shack.

MANNING

We gotta move fast. Sanders, that truck in front  
of the convent. Take your position there, and wait  
for my signal.

(to Talbot)

I'm assuming you can find your way around the  
back.

TALBOT

That's right, tough guy.

MANNING

Let's go then.

SERIES OF SHOTS showing the three Americans moving into their positions.

Warren takes his position behind the truck in front of the convent.

Talbot moves around the back of the convent, and takes his position behind a fountain with a stone statue of Christ on the cross.

Manning makes his way to the front of the engine, avoiding the two GUARDS moving about the railroad guns. He slowly makes his way to the first flatcar, and climbs on top. He places one of the demolition charges on the triggering device of the gun, then quietly climbs off the flatcar, moving toward the next gun.

Warren sees one of the Guards about to move to the side of the train where Manning is, but he is unable to warn Manning.

Manning hears the approaching Guard, and crawls under the second flatcar. He watches the boots of the Guard walk past him, moving toward the first flatcar where the charge has already been placed.

The Guard stops by the first flatcar to light a cigarette. He sees the charge, and takes a step closer. He suddenly gasps for breath. A moment later he falls to the ground, revealing Manning standing behind him with his bloody bayonet.

Manning drags the body of the dead Guard under the flatcar, then sets the demolition charge in place on the second railroad gun. Still standing on top of the flatcar, Manning signals Warren and Warren signals back. Manning pulls out the detonator cord of the demo charge, jumps off the flatcar, and takes cover against the side of the engine.

#### HUGE EXPLOSION

The second railroad gun is blasted into several large pieces, and crashes through the flatcar to the tracks below.

Warren tries lighting the flame-thrower, but it's not working.

The Engineer and the Lineman come running out of the shack, and are gunned down by a burst from Manning's Tommy gun. The Second Guard opens fire at Manning with his Schmisser machine-gun. Manning takes cover on the other side of the engine.

CUT TO:

INT.

## THE CONVENT

NIGHT

Blocher and the Bearded German are startled by the large explosion.

CUT TO:

EXT.

## THE FRONT OF THE CONVENT

NIGHT

Warren is still struggling to light the flame-thrower. Several German soldiers run out the front of the convent toward the train. Warren lights the flame-thrower, but the soldiers are already out of range.

Johann, the young German boy, runs out of the convent. Warren fires the flame-thrower, and Johann bursts into flames. He begins running blindly in Warren's general direction. Warren screams as he fires another long burst at Johann. Johann takes a few awkward steps and falls to the ground, completely engulfed in flames.

Several more German soldiers begin to leave the convent, but Warren catches them with liquid fire. As the burning soldiers fall to the ground, the front of the convent catches fire. Warren continues to fire at the convent until the flame-thrower goes out. He then takes the flame-thrower off his back, pulls out a service side arm, and takes cover behind the truck.

CUT TO:

EXT.

## THE BACK OF THE CONVENT

NIGHT

The Bearded German Soldier runs out the back door followed by Blocher. Talbot opens fire with his Tommy gun, killing the Bearded Soldier. Blocher manages to crawl back inside the convent, and kick the door shut. Talbot continues firing at the closed door.

CUT TO:

INT. THE CONVENT NIGHT

Blocher is crawling along the floor as the machine-gun fire tears huge holes into the door, spraying wood splinters on top of him.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE TRAIN NIGHT

Manning climbs onto the undamaged flatcar, and pulls the detonator cord on the demo charge. He is about to jump off the flatcar when he sees the approaching German soldiers from the front of the convent. Before the soldiers see Manning, he takes them out with a grenade, then jumps from the flatcar, running for the lineman shack. Just as Manning makes it inside the shack the second railroad gun explodes, tearing the roof off the shack.

CUT TO:

INT. THE CONVENT NIGHT

Blocher runs to the front of the convent only to find it in flames. He doubles back and enters a bedroom, kicking out the window to the outside.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CONVENT WINDOW NIGHT

Blocher crawls out of the window, located on the side of the convent, and crawls to the corner of the back wall. Two German soldiers run out the back door, and are gunned down by Talbot, still behind the fountain. A few seconds later two more German soldiers run out the back door, but before Talbot can fire, he is gunned down by Blocher.

HUGE EXPLOSION

Blocher looks toward the tracks to find that the engine has burst into flames. Silhouetted by the flames is Manning crawling out of the damaged lineman shack.

BLOCHER  
(to himself)

You're mine.

Blocher moves toward Manning in the pouring rain.

### CLOSE ON MANNING

Just as Manning staggers to his feet he sees Blocher standing in front of him, pointing his Schmisser machine-gun at Manning's head. Manning no longer has his weapon. Blocher pulls the trigger. The gun is empty. Blocher and Manning look at each other. Blocher pulls out his bayonet. Manning pulls out his. The two begin to circle each other. Blocher removes his arm from his sling, and loosens it as he circles with Manning. Blocher then removes his helmet, letting it drop to the ground.

BLOCHER

(continues)

Dying time, pig.

MANNING

Come on in, you sonofabitch.

The rain stops falling. Silence.

All at once both men charge each other, each landing their bayonet in the opponent. Blocher has been stabbed in his wounded arm, causing him to call out in pain. Manning, however, has been stabbed in his left side. The two are holding each other up, staring into each other's eyes. Manning is almost unconscious.

Blocher shoves Manning against the wall of the shack, removing his bayonet from Manning's side. Manning begins to fall, up is held against the wall by Blocher. Holding Manning up with one arm, Blocher pulls Manning's bayonet from his arm, and drops it. Taking one last look into Manning's face, he lets go of him, letting him fall to the ground.

Blocher pulls his side arm from his holster, and points it at Manning's head.

Manning suddenly lunges upward with his bayonet, striking Blocher in the groin. Blocher screams and drops his side arm. He falls to his knees, facing Manning, who is also on his knees now.

MANNING

(continues)

Die.

Manning slits Blocher's throat with his bayonet, then falls back against the wall of the shack. Blocher grabs his throat, the blood seeping between his fingers at an alarming rate. He stares at Manning in total amazement. The dying takes an eternity. Blocher falls forward into Manning's lap. Manning clenches his eyes shut as he listens to Blocher drown in his own blood. Blocher finally dies.

Manning looks down at his wounded side, and realizes he is bleeding profusely.

MANNING  
(continues)

Sonofabitch.

WARREN (o.s.)

Manning!

Manning looks to his right to find Warren standing thirty feet away holding his side arm.

WARREN  
(continues)

We gotta move now!

MANNING

Think again, kid.

Warren runs over to Manning, and pulls Blocher off of him. Warren recognizes Blocher.

WARREN

I've seen this guy. He was in the woods the night I got lost. He stopped right under my tree.

MANNING

Lucky he didn't see you, huh?

Manning and Warren laugh, the laughter ending with Manning coughing up blood. Warren looks down at Manning's wound.

WARREN

That's no good.

MANNING

No shit.

WARREN

We gotta stop that bleeding.

Warren removes his coat and undershirt, and uses the undershirt to start bandaging Manning's wound.

MANNING

You better haul your ass outta here.

WARREN

As soon as I get this bandaged, I'm hauling you out of here with me.

MANNING

Bullshit. You'll never get me across the line.

WARREN

Well, we'll see when we get there, won't we?

Manning cries out from a sudden surge of pain.

MANNING

Shit!

WARREN

Hang in there, Lieutenant.

Warren finishes dressing the wound, and puts his coat back on.

MANNING

This doesn't look good at all. I don't think I'm gonna make it.

WARREN

It's a good thing you don't know shit.

MANNING

That's right, kid. You've got to accentuate the positive.

WARREN

Time to go.

Warren picks up Manning so he is over his shoulders. Manning screams out in pain. Warren begins walking.

MANNING

I'm losing too much blood. I ain't gonna make it.

WARREN

You're gonna make it.

MANNING

Fucking idiot.

CUT TO:

EXT.

IN THE WOODS

DAY

The sun has just come up, blazing the ground with tree blocked beams. There are patches of deep snow where it drifted, but mostly the ground is bare and muddy. Warren is struggling through the mud, still carrying Manning. Manning is barely conscious now. Mostly he is mumbling gibberish:

WARREN

Less than a mile to the line.

MANNING

Too far.

WARREN

It ain't too far.

Manning laughs and coughs up blood.

WARREN

(continues)

What's so funny.

MANNING

What goes around, kid.

WARREN

Yeah.

MANNING

What goes around.

WARREN

I'm taking you home, Dave.

Manning laughs faintly, then dies. Warren doesn't know. He keeps walking. All we can hear now is the swirling wind. As we follow Warren's journey, we hear WARREN'S VOICE over the wind.

WARREN (v.o.)

Been in the Death Factory for five days now.  
Learning. Staying alive. Living with the knowledge  
that behind every cannon is another bunker, and behind  
that bunker another trap.

#### ANOTHER ANGLE

We are now watching Warren's trek through the muddy forest from a long way off. In the foreground is a large snow drift. Sticking out of the snow is a frozen hand reaching out for mercy.

WARREN (v.o.)

Sooner or later, unless victory comes, I'll end my  
stay here on the litter or in the grave.

In the background we see Warren carry Manning out of the picture. We hold on the frozen hand. The wind falls silent. We are in complete silence now. The silence is interrupted by the words of a distant memory.

WARREN (v.o.)

Say it, Lonnie. You gotta say it.

LONNIE (v.o.)

Nobody dies?

WARREN (v.o.)

Nobody dies.

#### FADE TO BLACK

The following is superimposed on the dark screen:

**For the over one quarter of a million American servicemen  
killed in action during the Second World War**

**We remember you.**

#### FADE OUT