

THE DEATH SQUAD

BY

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FADE IN:

SUPER: "NEGLECTED BY CONGRESS...WANT OF GENERALS AND DISCIPLINE IN OUR ARMY, WHICH MAY BE CALLED A GREAT RABBLE. OUR CREDIT AND REPUTATION LOST...AND A POWERFUL FOREIGN ARMY ADVANCING UPON US ARE SO MANY DIFFICULTIES, WE CANNOT SURMOUNT THEM." BENEDICT ARNOLD. REVOLUTIONARY WAR GENERAL.

A moment later,

SUPER: TRAITOR.

The CHATTER of radio crosstalk.

EXT. CHOPPERS - DUSK

Two HUEYS streak over the jungle. Engines ROARING. Rotor blades WHUMPING. Racing toward a sprawling airbase.

EXT. AIRBASE

An ambulance door SLAMS closed. Several others wait nearby. Nurses prepare stretchers. DR. RILEY. Scrubs. Stethoscope. Young. Disheveled. Frantically points.

RILEY

Triage here! Triage here!

The Choppers approach and land. The Medical Teams race up. The Wounded are loaded into ambulances which drive off.

Nearby a sign reads: WELCOME TO THE 95TH EVACUATION HOSPITAL - DA NANG.

INT. SURGICAL TENT - NIGHT

The Medical Team is overwhelmed. Wounded Soldiers cry out. Terrible agony. Dr. Riley moves swiftly from patient to patient. His scrubs now spattered with blood.

Riley walks up to a young Surgeon. This is DR. PARKER. Grimly POUNDING on the chest of a dead Soldier.

RILEY

What have you got?

PARKER

Christ. Guts all over the floor.
Kidneys gone. No pulse.

Riley reaches over and grabs a rubber body bag. Hands it to Parker.

RILEY

All right. Bag and tag him.

He moves on.

SUPER: SOUTH VIETNAM. 1970

It's chaotic. Lots of yelling. Soldiers are still being brought in.

JENKINS (O.S.)

Dr. Riley?

He turns. NURSE JENKINS kneels beside a BURNED SOLDIER on a stretcher. Skin leathery and yellow. Swelled. Body covered in dressings. Like he was roasted alive.

She hands Dr. Riley a clipboard with some writing scrawled on it.

RILEY

Ok. Sergeant-

Instantly, the Burned Soldier's hand reaches up. Like a corpse from a grave. Grabs Riley's arm. Tries to sit up.

He speaks with a strong West Virginian accent.

BURNED SOLDIER

You gotta tell someone.

Riley and Jenkins gently ease the Burned Soldier onto the bed.

DR. RILEY

Tell who soldier? Tell them what?

But, he doesn't seem to HEAR. Starts fading away.

BURNED SOLDIER

You gotta tell somebody. He was one of us...

He breaths deeply. Struggles to stay awake. Then, he drifts off. His eyes close. He passes out.

INT. BARRACKS - MORNING

SUPER: TWELVE HOURS EARLIER

JAKE WORKMAN. A seasoned United States Marine, dresses in front of a mirror.

Shined shoes. Crisp khaki uniform. The stripes of a Sergeant. Spit and polish. Lots of medals. But, there's an anger about him. An attitude. A chip on his shoulder.

From the dresser, he takes a PEACE BUTTON and is about to pin it to his uniform when

MP#1 (O.S.)

Don't even think about it.

Jake turns. A surly looking MP#1 stands in the doorway. Jake places the PEACE BUTTON back on the dresser.

He speaks with a strong West Virginian accent.

JAKE

Ready.

MP#1 steps forward. Handcuffs CLINK around Jake's wrists.

EXT. CITY - DAY

A jeep travels through busy streets. MP#1 drives. He's chunky. MP#2 rides shotgun. Thinner. Jake rides in back. Duffel bag beside him. A HORN HONKS. Jake looks over.

Another jeep pulls alongside carrying MAJOR HARVEY "HARV" LAWRENCE and LIEUTENANT WESTWOOD. Both in civilian clothes.

Lawrence is All-American. Born leader. A nail eater. Carries a .38 on his chest and a .45 on his hip.

Westwood has a cool, steely attitude. Lawrence signals for Jake's jeep to pull over.

MP#2

Who's this guy?

MP#1 shakes his head and pulls the jeep to the side of the road. Lawrence's stops in front. He and Westwood get out and walk over.

LAWRENCE

Morning Corporal.

Lawrence shows MP#1 an ID Card. Instantly, MP#1 salutes.

MP#1

Yes sir.

So does MP#2. Lawrence returns it. Lawrence hands MP#1 a document who reads it. Jake watches. Bewildered. MP#1 quickly signs it.

MP#1 (CONT'D)
He's all yours, Major.
(to Jake)
You must be important Sergeant.

JAKE
Why's that?

MP#1
(indicating Lawrence)
Because you're his problem now.

MP#1 hands Westwood the handcuff key. Gets into the jeep and drives off.

LAWRENCE
Sergeant Workman. I'm Major Harvey Lawrence. This is my One Two. Lieutenant Westwood. You're being released into my custody.

Jake comes to attention.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)
At ease.

There's something about Lawrence. He's a man driven. Focused. A Captain Ahab.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)
I command a SOG Team. CCN North. Task Force Oklahoma.

JAKE
I didn't know there was a Task Force Oklahoma.

WESTWOOD
That's kinda the point.

Westwood steps forward and uncuffs Jake.

LAWRENCE
You witnessed something of vital interest to national security.

Jake's eyes narrow. Not sure what to make of this.

JAKE
And what was that?

WESTWOOD
Not what you think Sarge.

LAWRENCE
You'll be briefed en route.

JAKE
En route to what?

LAWRENCE
Lunch. Do you like prawns Jake?

JAKE
Prawns?

LAWRENCE
Yeah. Prawns. Like shrimp. Only better.

JAKE
I don't follow boss.

LAWRENCE
You've eaten shrimp, haven't you?

JAKE
That's not what I mean.

Jake and Lawrence remain by the jeep. Westwood climbs in.

LAWRENCE
Twenty six June. Your SOG Team was ambushed by an NVA Regular packing a Mark Two flamethrower. Fishhook region. Cambodia.

FLASHBACK - EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

A stream of flame WHOOSHES through the jungle.

END FLASHBACK

Jake shudders. Shivers. A horrible memory seared in his mind. Quickly, he composes himself.

JAKE
Yeah. That's right.

Lawrence notices.

LAWRENCE
That was no NVA Regular.

Jake's caught off guard.

JAKE
What do you mean?

LAWRENCE
Just what I said.

JAKE
Like I said boss, I'm not following.

LAWRENCE
That's why you need to be debriefed.

JAKE
Sir. All due respect. I don't give a shit about being debriefed. I don't give a shit about the uniform. The flag. Nixon. And this fucking war.

Jake raises his chin. A bit of a prick.

JAKE (CONT'D)
And I don't give a shit about you. Sir.

Lawrence removes his sunglasses.

LAWRENCE
Westwood?

Who hands him some papers. He holds them up to Jake.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)
You're lucky you didn't end up in Leavenworth, you know? A few weeks in the brig at Pendelton and your out. Only your record saved you.

JAKE
Yeah. That's what they said.

Holds up the papers to Jake. RIPS them up. Tosses them into the air. They blow all over the street. All gone.

JAKE (CONT'D)
That's my discharge order.

LAWRENCE
No. That was your discharge order. Now, I own your ass.

JAKE
You can't do that.

LAWRENCE
Ask me if I give a shit?

Jake says nothing. Lawrence leans closer.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)
Ask me. That's an order.

JAKE
Do you give a shit sir?

LAWRENCE
No. I do not.

Jake starts to get the message.

JAKE
Like shrimp. Only better?

LAWRENCE
That's right.

JAKE
Then, I guess I fuckin' love them
boss.

LAWRENCE
I thought so.

EXT. JEEP - DAY

Westwood steers the jeep through scooters, bicycles, cars and rickshaws. Horns HONK.

LAWRENCE
Scout sniper? Correct?

JAKE
That's right boss.

LAWRENCE
You guys are sneaky bastards.

Jake chuckles. Starts poking around his pockets. Patting his shirt. Looking for something.

JAKE
Yeah. We are.

LAWRENCE
You got ninety confirmed kills.

JAKE
It's more than that.

LAWRENCE
Let's talk about Cambodia.

Jake says nothing. Keeps looking for something.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)
Look Jake. I know your spotter got
killed and that's a shitty thing.
But I have a job to do.

Lawrence looks over his shoulder. Jake quickly looks away.
Lawrence notices.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)
War is war Jake. People get killed.

Jake looks back. A phony nod of understanding. Then, he finds
it.

He pulls out a joint from his pocket. Pulls out a Zippo
lighter with a peace symbol on it. FLICKS it a couple of
times. It catches. He puts the flame to the joint and
breathes it in.

Lawrence watches.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)
How did you get that past the MP's?

JAKE
Well, you know us scout snipers
sir. We're sneaky bastards.

LAWRENCE
Hand it over.

Jake pauses. Takes a really, long final haul. Then, does so.
For a second, it looks like Lawrence will toss it. Instead,
he puts it to his lips and takes a long toke. Passes it to
Westwood.

WESTWOOD
How is it?

LAWRENCE
(blowing out the smoke)
Not bad.

Westwood takes a puff. Hands it back to Jake.

WESTWOOD
Don't bogart it.

Jake chuckles despite himself. The jeep drives on.

EXT. TEXAS BAR

The Jeep stops outside a ramshackle building with a rickety sign.

JAKE
This the place?

Jake looks unsure. Lawrence nods. Reassuring.

LAWRENCE
Don't worry Jake. You'll love it.
It has a certain ambiance.

JAKE
Ambiance?

WESTWOOD
(chuckling)
Yeah. Ambiance.

INT. TEXAS BAR

A noisy, smoked filled bar. Topless Women Dance with rowdy Soldiers.

Jake, Lawrence and Westwood sit at a table. A BAR GIRL on Westwood's knee whispers something in his ear. She stops. His face aghast.

WESTWOOD
That's the most disgusting thing
I've ever heard.

He smiles.

WESTWOOD (CONT'D)
Tell me again.

She giggles and starts again.

At the table, Jake and Lawrence sip beers and munch prawns. A Topless Bar Girl slinks past. Jake notices. Lawrence notices Jake noticing.

LAWRENCE
How you like the ambiance?

JAKE
It's working for me.

LAWRENCE
And the best prawns in country.

Jake nods in agreement. Then, stops. Lawrence stares at him. Jake knows what Lawrence wants to discuss.

JAKE
Yeah. I know. Cambodia.

LAWRENCE
I told you. I have a job to do.

JAKE
A friend of mine got killed. That's all that happened.

Grabs his beer and takes a long drink. Puts it down on the table HARD.

LAWRENCE
The man that did that. I hunt him and others like him down. And kill them. Another part of my job.

Jake listens.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)
Straight up. I need a replacement for my unit. Your charges vanish. You get full reinstatement. Back pay. Pension. Everything.

JAKE
No thanks.

Lawrence leans in. Talks a little quieter. Calm voice.

LAWRENCE
You're an operator. A specialist. You knew the game. The risks-

He leans away.

JAKE
And the consequences.

A long pause.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Like I said. You want to know what happened boss? A friend of mine died. That's what happened.

LAWRENCE

I see. How did you get separated from him? I don't recall that from the report.

Jake felt that in the stomach. A low blow. They hold on one another for a long moment. Then, Lawrence looks over Jake's shoulder. Jake turns.

On the opposite side of the bar is an Vietnamese woman, KIEU. Lots of makeup. Dress short and tight. She gestures to Lawrence.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

Westwood. It's time.

JAKE

Time for what?

LAWRENCE

Intel briefing.

They all get up. Westwood takes out a handgun from his belt and hands it to Jake.

JAKE

Am I going to need this?

WESTWOOD

You might.

Jake tucks it into his belt.

EXT. ROUGH NEIGHBORHOOD

The Jeep drives through a poor section of town. Stops in front of a filthy, decaying building. Westwood, Jake and Lawrence get out and walk inside.

INT. BUILDING - HALLWAY

Lawrence, Jake and Westwood enter from a stairwell and walk to a door at the end of the hall. Lawrence KNOCKS. A moment later, locks CLANK. The door opens a crack. Secured by a chain.

TRINH (O.S.)
Who there?

Lawrence holds up a wad of hundred dollar bills.

LAWRENCE
Benjamin fucking Franklin Trinh.
Open the door.

It opens revealing TRINH. An old, wrinkled whore well past her prime.

TRINH
Ah. Major Lawrence. No see. Long time.

LAWRENCE
You have something for me?

TRINH
This time. Cost much.

Lawrence shoves the money into her hand.

LAWRENCE
It's covered.

She smiles. Opens the door. They enter.

INT. APARTMENT

Drab. Dirty. Crappy furniture. Psychedelic MUSIC PLAYS. A ceiling fan spins lazily overhead.

By the window, a MAN in a wheelchair. This is LESTER. Thirties. Looks about sixty. A spent human being. Absently stares out the window.

Jake, Lawrence and Westwood walk up.

LAWRENCE
How are you my man?

LESTER
Number one brother. Can't complain.

They grasp hands like old friends. Jake looks around.

In the kitchen, he SEES a pair of VIETNAMESE ARMY OFFICERS flanking a YOUNG WOMAN. She's barely clothed. Wears a kimono. She is KY. Young. Pretty.

LAWRENCE
(gesturing to Ky)
That her?

LESTER
Yeah. She's one of his.

From the kitchen, Ky looks back at Jake. A distinct tattoo of a thorny dragon's tail runs along her neck. She holds Jake stare for a moment. Then, looks away.

LAWRENCE
The intel good?

LESTER
Oh yeah. Number one.

Lawrence and Westwood head for the kitchen.

LAWRENCE
Grab a seat Jake.

LESTER
Am I telling him?

LAWRENCE
(over his shoulder)
Don't you always.

Jake's puzzled. Lester chuckles. His eyes glossy. Jake takes a chair across from him.

Trinh slinks up and sits on a couch beside Lester. She carries a small black case. About the size of a large wallet. Placing it on the table.

LESTER
You're Jake.

JAKE
That's right boss.

Jake's eyes keep flicking to the case. Then, back to Lester. Subtly, He moves his hand closer to the pistol.

LESTER
Name's Lester.

JAKE
I figured that. Why are we here?

Lester chuckles.

LESTER
Major brings all the newbies here.

JAKE
Newbie? I'm on my third-

Lester waves him off. Seems to come out of his haze.

LESTER
Yeah man, I know. Third tour.
Workman. John James. Staff
Sergeant. United States Marine
Corps. Six four three three one
zero. Born Beckley West Virginia.
Seven seven fifty four.

Jake watches Trinh's fingers TAP on the small black case.
Subtly moves his hand a little closer to the gun.

LESTER (CONT'D)
Scout sniper. Served in SOG.
Phoenix Program. Bronze Star.
Silver Star. DSM-

JAKE
Yeah. I know. I wear them.

Lester leans forward a little. Jake notices a gun on his belt
and tenses. Lester smiles. Nudges Trinh.

LESTER
He really has no idea.

Trinh laughs too. Keeps TAPPING. Jake's now on alert.

JAKE
No idea about what?

LESTER
A trip that will blow you away.

She opens the case. Jake looks over. Inside, a syringe. A
thin piece of rubber tubing. A vial of liquid. A bent spoon.

Jake gets ready to move. Hand inching closer to the gun.

LESTER (CONT'D)
You don't need the piece man.

Jake's caught.

LESTER (CONT'D)
Just 'cuz I don't have legs, don't
mean I don't have eyes.

He nods to the black case.

LESTER (CONT'D)
That ain't for you.

He removes a clear baggie from inside his jacket. A white powder inside. Hands it to Trinh. She takes out a lighter.

Jake relaxes a little. But, he keeps his eye on Trinh. Nods to Lester's legs.

JAKE
How you lose 'em boss?

Trinh lays out the paraphernalia on a small table. Lighter. Spoon. Bag. The rubber tourniquet. Trinh dips the spoon to the baggie and puts some powder on the spoon.

LESTER
All part of the story brother.

Instantly, Lester changes. Becomes as serious as a heart attack.

LESTER (CONT'D)
You saw him.

Trinh looks up. Pauses.

JAKE
Who?

LESTER
Him. One of the Specials. That's what the Company calls them.

Trinh FLICKS the lighter. The flame lights. WHOOSH. Jake watches it. Unable to look away.

JAKE
Specials?

LESTER
Yeah specials. Us against them dude. Our own brothers. Our own war. Inside the war. You know?

Jake looks to the Kitchen. Lawrence speaks QUIETLY to the Vietnamese Army Officers. He looks over at Jake for a moment. Then, looks away.

JAKE
How you know the Major?

LESTER
Served together. Fifth Special
Forces. Two tours. Then, I just
stayed.

She keeps cooking the powder. Jake keeps watching the flame.
Quickly, it liquifies and she puts the lighter down.

LESTER (CONT'D)
Didn't have much choice.

His face turns angry. Bitter.

LESTER (CONT'D)
Those motherfuckers.

TAPS his wheelchair. Looks out the window.

Trinh takes the needle and draws the liquid into it. Turns to
Lester. Rolls up his sleeve. The arm covered in needle marks.
Jake watches. SILENT.

Lester leans back in his chair a little. It CREAKS. GROANS.

LESTER (CONT'D)
We formed the unit when the first
one went over. Just after Junction
City. A couple more after Dak To.
More after Tet. A lot more.

She wraps Lester's arm in the rubber hose.

JAKE
Went over? Who-

Lester rubs the stumps of his legs.

LESTER
That's how I lost these.
We got close once. Damn near had
him. But, he got away.

Trihn TAPS his arm. He winces. As if in pain.

LESTER (CONT'D)
They always do.

She gets the vein. Takes the syringe and holds it up.

TRINH
Ready baby?

Lester smiles. Nods.

JAKE
I don't understand. Close to who?

LESTER
Benedict Arnold. You heard of him?

JAKE
Yeah. Of course.

Trinh flicks the needle.

LESTER
Same thing here. But, we find 'em.
We hunt 'em. And we kill 'em.

Jake starts understanding.

JAKE
I've heard rumors-

LESTER
Rumors? Hell no. This is the Nam,
man. Truth is the fiction and
fiction is the truth.
(beat)
We don't hunt gooks.

With a nurse's precision, she inserts the needle into Lester's arm and pushes the plunger. The fluid seeps from the needle into his arm.

His pupils dilate. He smiles blankly. His eyes glaze. Trinh strokes his hair.

Jake looks over. From the kitchen Lawrence watches him intently. Jake looks back to Lester.

LESTER (CONT'D)
We hunt guys come from Alabama.
California. Maybe New York. West
Virginia even...

Trinh nuzzles him as he laughs. Disappearing into a drug induced haze.

INT. HUEY

Engine's ROARING, the chopper flies over the coastline. Jake, Lawrence and Westwood inside. Lawrence taps Jake on the shoulder. Points to the ground.

LAWRENCE
Red Beach.

Below, a heavily guarded base. Right on the coast. Several buildings. A large chopper pad. A control tower. Lots of tents. Fence topped with razor wire.

LAWRENCE (V.O.)

Our HQ.

The Huey approaches. Jake looks at a tarmac lined with several helicopters. He notices transports. Scout Birds. Gunships. All battered and patched. They've seen heavy action.

EXT. CHOPPER PAD

The Huey comes in and lands. A MAN waits. This is TAYLOR.. Wears a dull, short sleeved shirt. Glasses. Tie. Belongs in an office.

Jake, Lawrence and Westwood exit and walk up. Lawrence shakes his head ad he notices Taylor's shirt.

LAWRENCE

Jesus Taylor. How could anybody wearing a shirt like that not be CIA?

They walk on.

TAYLOR

Defense Intelligence Agency actually.

LAWRENCE

(to Jake)
Taylor's our intel liaison.

They keep walking. A short distance off, LOUD MUSIC PLAYS from the beach.

EXT. BEACH

A party underway. The surf CRASHES Soldiers swim in the water. Play football. Suntan on the beach. Drinking beer. Eating.

Among them, TOP. A vet. Battle scarred. But, still good to go. Chews tobacco. Intently watches Jake through binoculars.

Beside him, MR. PIG. Brawny. Solid. A mountain of muscles. There's a reason they call this guy mister. Sips a beer.

MR. PIG
Marine?

TOP
Yep.

MR. PIG
Crocker's gonna be pissed.

TOP
Yep.

MR. PIG
You know his story?

TOP
Yep. Ninety confirmed kills. NVA
put a bounty on his head. Fifty
thousand.

MR. PIG
More than they put on you Top.

Top looks over.

MR. PIG (CONT'D)
The kid must be some bad ass.

Top grunts. Not agreeing. You can feel it. A real attitude
for Jake. Mr. Pig knows why.

MR. PIG (CONT'D)
You can't change what happened Top.
Ritchie's dead.

TOP
Yeah. And he's why.

MR. PIG
And you think the Major's wrong?

TOP
Been wrong before Pig. Problem is,
by the time we find out, people
start dying.

EXT. CHOPPER PAD

Jake and the others approach. Up ahead are four CHOPPER
JOCKS.

CROCKER. Hotshot pilot. Cocky. Flyboy type. Holds a wrench.
Working on the Huey. SUPER SLICK. A bit nerdy. RIPPER.

Covered in tattoos. A bad ass. SNAKEBITE. Tall and thin. Like a basketball player.

Taylor looks over to Lawrence.

TAYLOR

(quietly)

Did you let Crocker know, sir? You know how he is about Marines.

But Jake overhears.

JAKE

And how is that exactly?

LAWRENCE

He doesn't like them.

WESTWOOD

His ex wife.

JAKE

Oh yeah? Run off with one of us?

LAWRENCE

Not exactly.

WESTWOOD

She is a Marine.

LAWRENCE

Command Sergeant Major. Camp Lejeune. North Carolina.

WESTWOOD

Super mean bitch.

Crocker notices them approaching. Points to Jake. Super Slick, Ripper and Snakebite all tense up.

CROCKER

This him? We had an agreement Harv.

LAWRENCE

Well, since I outrank you, the agreement is null and void. The reports?

Crocker still holds the wrench. Staring at Jake. Jake smirks back. Bring it on.

For a moment, Crocker looks like he'll bury the wrench into Jake's skull. Then, he puts it down. Grabs the clipboard and hands it to Lawrence who talks while reviewing it.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

Jake. Captain Dave Crocker. Air Det
Commander. Green Hornets. Best Huey
pilot I've ever seen.

Crocker stares at Jake. Like he could rip Jake's head off.
Jake keeps enjoying it.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

All looks good.

Hands the clipboard back.

CROCKER

We're not done talking about this
Harv.

LAWRENCE

Yeah. We are.

Crocker nods. Not happy. Jake salutes. Smirking.

JAKE

Semper Fi, Captain.

CROCKER

Go fuck yourself.

Jake and the others walk on.

TAYLOR

(pointing)

The command center is this way.

LAWRENCE

Like I was saying, we're organized
like another SOG Team. Taylor?

TAYLOR

I co ordinate with MACV in Saigon.
CIA. NSA.

He points to a windowless building. Roof bristles with
antenna.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

We monitor propaganda broadcasts.
North Vietnamese radio traffic.
Twenty four hours a day. Three
hundred sixty five days a year.

Jake chuckles.

JAKE

Christ. This is someone's full time job? The 'Nam is a fucked up place.

TAYLOR

Not only Vietnam. World War Two. Lieutenant Martin J. Monti. Army Air Force. Defected to the Nazis in 1944.

They keep walking.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

During the Korean War, nine US Soldiers changed sides. More than twenty refused to be repatriated when the war ended-

LAWRENCE

Taylor. The point.

TAYLOR

Sorry sir.

(to Jake)

Our mission is to eliminate enemy collaborators. You've heard of the Phantom Blooper?

Jake nods.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

He's real. One of several we know of.

Jake stops abruptly.

JAKE

Several? For Christ sake boss, how many are there?

INT. COMMAND CENTRE - DAY

The nerve center. A large room. Banks of communication equipment. Filing cabinets. Teletype machines. Technicians sit at terminals. Lots of radio CHATTER.

A FIGURE stands in a darkened corner, puffing a cigar. Stays out of sight for the moment.

TAYLOR (V.O.)

We know of eight for certain.

In the middle, a large table covered by a map of Southeast Asia. On it are several push pins. Many yellow. Some orange. A few red. Taylor points.

TAYLOR

Yellow. Possible sighting. Orange.
Probable sighting. Red. Confirmed
sighting.

Jake walks around the table. Looks over to the wall. Covered with photographs. Documents. A rogues gallery of traitors. All with code names:

PHANTOM BLOOPER. SALT. PEPPER. TEX. PORKCHOP. Another reads:
UNIDENTIFIED.

Jake walks over. Reads documents pinned to the wall.

REPORTED BY CAPTURED VC. APRIL 1967.

CONFIRMED SIGHTING - IRON TRIANGLE - JUNE 1968

ACTIVELY SUPPORTED NVA. KONTUM PROVINCE - SUMMER 1969

ENGAGED US FORCES - DONG HA - JANUARY 1970

Jake SEES another code name. He chuckles. Turns to Lawrence.

JAKE

Buddy Holly? The singer?

LAWRENCE

Look at the photo.

Jake steps closer. Laughs again.

JAKE

Christ. He does look like him.

He reads something else. And his face changes.

REPORTED IN COMPANY WITH SUBJECT CODENAMED: ZIPPOMAN.

Jake intently looks over the information.

JAKE (CONT'D)

(reading aloud)

Name. Classified. Weapon. Mark two
flamethrower. Last sighted.
Fishhook region. Cambodia.

Jake's face becomes cold steel. Realizes. Turns to Lawrence.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Zippoman. Nice name.

LAWRENCE
We hear he doesn't like it.

JAKE
Who is he? What do you know about
him?

Lawrence's jaw tightens. He looks away.

LAWRENCE
Very little.

Jake ponders for a moment. Something doesn't seem right.
Then, he looks back at the photo.

JAKE
(utterly confused)
Why does he do it?

WARREN (O.S.)
Why doesn't matter.

He steps into the light. Surrounded in smoke. This is

WARREN (CONT'D)
Colonel Mack Warren. SOG Chief. CCN
North.

Tall. Broad. Crew cut. Old school. Over fifty and you still
wouldn't fuck with him. Jake stiffens. Nods.

JAKE
I know who you are sir. My recon
team covered your Bright Light op
in the Mekong.

WARREN
Yeah I know. Hell of a job.

JAKE
Thank you sir.

Warren strides to the table. Jake follows. A bit in awe.

WARREN
We target the most vital weapon our
enemy has in his arsenal.

Jake looks on.

WARREN (CONT'D)
Once you've signed on, finish your
tour.

Jake takes a deep breath.

JAKE
I never said I was signing on to
anything.

Warren's eyes flash over to Lawrence. Then, back to Jake. And
back to Lawrence, now with harshness in his eyes.

WARREN
I was under the impression this was
a done deal.

Lawrence knows he's caught. Warren turns to Westwood.

WARREN (CONT'D)
Lieutenant Jake could use a beer.
Something to eat. Take him around
to meet the boys.

Westwood leads Jake to the door. He looks at Lawrence as he
exits. Unsure of this. Once out earshot, Warren speaks.

WARREN (CONT'D)
I'm not sure you and I are on the
same page here Harv.

LAWRENCE
If there's something you have to
say Mack. Say it.

WARREN
This is not the first time-

LAWRENCE
I'm reading your mind.

WARREN
You can't have another go over-

LAWRENCE
(sharply)
I know that.

An angry look from Lawrence. But, Warren outranks him. He
arches his brows. Reminding him.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)
Sir.

WARREN

You need to be sure. Harv.
Absolutely sure.

LAWRENCE

I am.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

The party is still in full swing. Music BLARES. A BBQ
SIZZLES. Lots of beer. The Squad Members eat and drink.

Jake and Westwood walk up. The Squad Members turn. Watching
them approach.

Jake surveys the SQUAD. A cross section of America. Fighting
as brothers. Like the choppers on the pad, they're battered
and worn. They too, have seen plenty of action.

Jake and Westwood walk up to PASSMORE. Juggles grenades. Kind
of goofy. The constant expression of a guy fascinated with
blowing shit up. But, Westwood's not amused.

WESTWOOD

Passmore! There had better be pins
in those grenades this time!

PASSMORE

You know me LT. Safety first.

Carelessly, he tosses them onto the sand.

WESTWOOD

Passmore. Demolitions. USMC.

Passmore high fives Jake.

PASSMORE

Finally another of us aboard. Ooo
rah!

(turning to Westwood)
But, Crocker's going to be pissed.

JAKE

Yeah. I noticed.

Passmore pulls out a long, white cord. Jake watches nervously
as a cigarette dangles from Passmore's mouth.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Is that det cord?

PASSMORE

Yeah.

JAKE

What for?

PASSMORE

Fishing.

He walks off toward the surf.

WESTWOOD

We should probably move away from that.

They approach a pair of Soldiers sun tanning. Chugging beers. Arriving in mid-conversation. One is VEGAS. Strong. Lean. a professional. The other, TRIPLE C. Built like a street fighter.

TRIPLE C

No. No. No. They killed him.

Jake and Westwood walk up.

VEGAS

Hey LT.

WESTWOOD

He's still on that Kennedy conspiracy shit?

Vegas nods. He's heard it all a ton of times.

VEGAS

You gotta give it up amigo.

Jake watches. Amused.

TRIPLE C

You can't give up on the truth brother. Three letters. Three letters killed Kennedy.

Jake nods. He gets it.

JAKE

Yeah. Yeah. CIA.

Triple C frowns. Not even close.

TRIPLE C

No. No. No. FDA.

A long pause. Jake shakes his head.

JAKE

Sorry. You're saying the Food and Drug Administration killed Kennedy?

TRIPLE C

Oh yeah. They did.

Westwood gestures.

WESTWOOD

Curtis Clarence Carter. Heavy Weapons. We call him Triple C.

Shakes Jake's hand.

WESTWOOD (CONT'D)

And Vegas. Team Medic. Gets all the good drugs.

Vegas nods.

VEGAS

Damn straight.

(to Jake)

So. You're one of us now?

JAKE

Well, I haven't-

WESTWOOD

Skipper is still working on him.

Mr. Pig walks up.

MR. PIG

Don't worry Jake. You'll come around.

He indicates the other team members.

MR. PIG (CONT'D)

We all did.

Laughter.

WESTWOOD

Mr. Pig.

He and Jake shake hands.

JAKE

Why they call you mister?

MR. PIG

A sign of respect. For my unique talent.

JAKE

What's that boss?

MR. PIG

Being the best nigger behind a pig trigger in all of Viet fucking Nam!

The Squad cheers. Jake laughs.

HATCHER (O.S.)

Cuts down gooks like grass.

Jake looks over. This is HATCHER. Twenties. Native American. Lean and lethal. Sitting on a lawn chair. Sharpens an army tomahawk.

Top sits alongside. Flipping a knife from one and to the next. Like a master.

WESTWOOD

Hatcher. Senior Scout.

HATCHER

So you're the fucking new guy?

JAKE

I'm on my third tour-

TOP

Not with us you're not.

Jake looks at him. A hint of recognition.

WESTWOOD

Master Sergeant Thomas Bryan. We call him Top.

And then, it dawns on Jake.

JAKE

Yeah. I know who he is.

TOP

Richie Parks. The only Marine I ever liked. Hell of a spotter.

JAKE

The best.

TOP
Yeah. He used to be.

Sudden, utter SILENCE. Top stops with the knife. Gets up. Steps a little closer. A little threatening.

TOP (CONT'D)
I want to know how it went down.

MR. PIG
C'mon Top. We don't need to do this now.

TOP
No Bobby. We're doing this now.

He looks back to Jake.

TOP (CONT'D)
How did it go down?

Jake says nothing.

TOP (CONT'D)
How did it go down?

Top moves quickly toward Jake who backs up slightly. Mr. Pig gets in Top's way.

MR. PIG
What is this Top Kick? You trying to fuck up the party?

Top tries to push forward. Mr. Pig gives him a look.

MR. PIG (CONT'D)
Let it go. For now.

Top knows it's time to stop. He tosses the knife to the ground between Jake's feet.

TOP
We'll talk again.

Mr. Pig looks around. Grabs some beers.

MR. PIG
C'mon, c'mon.

Hands them out.

MR. PIG (CONT'D)
The night is young. And there's still drinking to be done!

The Squad gets rowdy again. Lots of laughter and noise. Mr. Pig hands a beer to Jake.

MR. PIG (CONT'D)
Join the party my man!

Jake POPS his open. He and Mr. Pig raise them and drink. Jake look over at Top. He's not drinking. He just keeps staring at Jake.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

The party has died down. Flames FLICKER in the campfire.

Jake and Lawrence sit off on their own. Jake munches on some ribs. Slathered in sauce.

LAWRENCE
How you like them?

JAKE
(with a mouthful)
Gree...far...woof.

They both laugh. Jake finishes.

LAWRENCE
Best damn ribs in country.

JAKE
No argument here.

Jake laughs. Then, turns quiet.

JAKE (CONT'D)
You had to know.

LAWRENCE
Know what?

JAKE
About Top and Ritchie.

LAWRENCE
I did.

JAKE
You bushwhacked me boss.

LAWRENCE
I did.

JAKE
I don't like being bushwhacked.

LAWRENCE
No one does Jake.

JAKE
Is this some sort of test?

LAWRENCE
Life's full of them.

Jake doesn't like the answer. A quick change in his mood.

JAKE
How am I doing? Am I passing this
little test of yours?

LAWRENCE
It's not a pass or fail. It's about
what you need to do.

JAKE
I don't need to be saved sir. If
that's what you think.

Jake CRUSHES a beer can and angrily tosses it.

JAKE (CONT'D)
I'll be fine. Really.

A long SILENCE.

LAWRENCE
Jake. In all the wars before this
one and after. There are soldiers
who hold the line, and those that
cross over it.

Lawrence pauses.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)
Treason is a crime where justice
must be served.

Jake listens.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)
We are the instrument of that
justice.

Lawrence gets a document from his pocket.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)
But, this is an all volunteer unit.

Hands it to Jake who looks at it.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)
And remains so.

Then, he looks back to Lawrence. Completely shocked.

JAKE
Discharge papers?

LAWRENCE
They are.

JAKE
Yeah but it says-

LAWRENCE
I know what it says.

Jake's face is in utter disbelief.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)
Record cleared. Charges dismissed.
Discharge upgraded to honorable.
You're on your way home at oh six
hundred. A free man.

Jake swallows hard.

JAKE
Thank you sir.

Quiet. Until, Lawrence looks over.

LAWRENCE
What happened in Cambodia, doesn't
matter. What it says in the report,
doesn't matter.

He points to Jake.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)
What matters is you are alive. You
made it out of here. He didn't.

His eyes bore into Jake's.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)
But, you're going to have to live
with that. Every day.

JAKE

Yes sir.

A long, QUIET moment.

Then, the GROWLING engine of a jeep. It pulls up. SCREECHES to a halt. Taylor behind the wheel. He leaps out and breathlessly runs up.

TAYLOR

We have a red sighting Major.

LAWRENCE

Which one?

TAYLOR

It's him sir. It's Zippoman.

Jake's body clenches like steel. Lawrence moves. Jolted with electricity. But only he and Taylor race for the jeep. Jake doesn't move.

They get in. Lawrence looks over his shoulder. Jake hasn't budged.

LAWRENCE

Taylor. Go.

Taylor pulls on the gearshift about to hit the gas when

JAKE

Major! Wait!

Jake sprints to the jeep. Hops in. It tears off.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Lawrence, Warren and Taylor stride along the hall. Jake trails behind.

WARREN

A doctor from the Ninety Fifth got in touch with the base CO. Base CO got in touch with MACV. MACV got in touch with me.

Up ahead, Dr. Riley waits. They walk up.

LAWRENCE

We need to see the patient.

DR. RILEY

He's critical-

WARREN

Doctor. This is from Saigon. We see him now.

DR. RILEY

(reluctant)

All right.

INT. HOSPITAL - BURN UNIT

They stand at the bed the Burned Soldier. Except Jake, who stands off to the side. Eyes locked on the injured man.

His voice hoarse and strained, the Burned Soldier speaks with a West Virginian drawl. Just like Jake.

BURNED SOLDIER

NVA Regulars. Hit us with everything.

Taylor furiously scribbles notes.

BURNED SOLDIER (CONT'D)

RPG's. Machine guns. And a flamethrower.

Jake's jaw tightens.

BURNED SOLDIER (CONT'D)

He was no gook. He was one of us.

He tries to sit up. Dr. Riley moves quickly, gently easing him back on the bed.

DR. RILEY

Easy. Easy.

LAWRENCE

Doctor. May we have a word?

The Group moves off, leaving Jake alone at the bedside.

BURNED SOLDIER

Is someone there?

Jake doesn't respond. A long, uncomfortable SILENCE.

BURNED SOLDIER (CONT'D)

(pleading)

Is anyone there? Please?

JAKE

Yeah. I'm here.

BURNED SOLDIER
Who are you?

JAKE
Sergeant...

He stops.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Jake. My name's Jake.

BURNED SOLDIER
Can't see you.

Jake steps closer. Burned Soldier SEES him. Smiles a little.

BURNED SOLDIER (CONT'D)
Thanks. Good to see you.

Jake nods. Looks at the Burned Soldier's awful, horrible wounds.

BURNED SOLDIER (CONT'D)
You're from West Virginia.

JAKE
(surprised)
How did you know?

BURNED SOLDIER
I should. Where you from?

JAKE
Beckley.

Burned Soldier laughs.

BURNED SOLDIER
No shit. I'm from Bluestone.

They both laugh.

BURNED SOLDIER (CONT'D)
Practically neighbors.

JAKE
Yeah.

The laughter fades. Burned Soldier suddenly winces in pain. His body tightens. Shudders. A moment later, he relaxes.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Does it hurt bad man?

BURNED SOLDIER
Yeah. Comes and goes.

The Burned Soldier breathes deeply.

BURNED SOLDIER (CONT'D)
You going after this guy?

JAKE
Huh?

BURNED SOLDIER
You going to get the guy that did
this to me...?

His strength suddenly saps from him. He starts passing out.

JAKE
Yeah. Yeah. Someone will.

Jake starts to retreat for the door.

JAKE (CONT'D)
You'll be all right boss.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY

Still reflecting, Jake walks up to where Lawrence, Warren, Taylor and Dr. Riley are conversing. He enters mid discussion.

LAWRENCE
...And we need him to make a
statement. I can get a team up here
for morning.

DR. RILEY
Morning?

Dr. Riley looks at each of them. Then back to Lawrence.

DR. RILEY (CONT'D)
Major. He's suffered third degrees
burns to over ninety percent of his
body. He won't survive the night.

Dr. Riley walks off. That hits Jake hard. His face becomes stony.

INT. RED BEACH - COMMAND CENTRE - NIGHT

Lawrence enters with a determined swagger. Sweaty. Urgent. Warren and Taylor follow. Jake hovers near the door. The place brims with activity.

LAWRENCE
What have we got?

HATCHER
Just a minute sir.

A few seconds pass. Abruptly, Lawrence SLAMS his fist onto the table.

LAWRENCE
I don't have a fucking minute
Hatch!

SILENCE. A long, QUIET moment.

TAYLOR
Sir. He has three lines of
movement. One.

HATCHER
East to Phu Bai. Hundred and first
is there. Plenty of round eyes.
Easy to blend in.

TAYLOR
Two.

HATCHER
North across the DMZ. Rapid
movement over the terrain.

Lawrence looks to Taylor and his eyes narrow.

LAWRENCE
But that's not where he's going?

HATCHER
No sir. We don't think so.

Off to the side, Jake listens intently.

TAYLOR
We believe he's heading west into
Laos. Heavy terrain. Significant
local forces. Here.
(points to the map)
Toward base area six zero four.

LAWRENCE
Border crossing?

TAYLOR
West along Route Nine. South along
Route Ninety Two. Near the Co Roc
ridge.

The men all groan.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)
Major NVA Base Camp. Miles of
tunnels. Anti aircraft. Heavy
artillery.

LAWRENCE
Chokepoints?

TAYLOR
(pointing to the map)
The Sepon River. To reach the base
camp, he has to swing off the route
and cross this bridge. Here.

Lawrence's eyes bore into the map.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)
There's a slim chance. But-

LAWRENCE
Still a chance.

Taylor nods. Lawrence rubs his chin. Jake looks on. He's
thinking back the hospital. Blood starting to boil.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)
Enemy strength?

TAYLOR
Elements of the 325th NVA Division.
Five battalions. Two thousand five
hundred men.

MR. PIG
Shit bros. It's almost a fair
fight.

Nervous laughter.

TAYLOR
The bridge is twelve clicks past
the no go line.

WARREN

Saigon will deny you're over the fence. It gets hot. You could be on your own. It's your call Harv.

A long pause.

LAWRENCE

Gentlemen. Consider this your warning order. Westwood?

WESTWOOD

Skipper?

LAWRENCE

Get hold of Covey up at Phu Bai. Tell him I want Sandy Lowlead on station when we arrive.

WESTWOOD

Aye sir.

He exits. Lawrence turns.

LAWRENCE

Top? What do you think?

TOP

Five battalions?

(beat)

Both pigs. Full load. Everybody humps. China Lakes. Bloopers. As much forty mil as we can carry. LAW's. Lots of claymores. Plenty of salt pills.

TRIPLE C

And the kitchen sink.

Laughter.

LAWRENCE

Make it happen.

TOP

Mr. Pig?

They both depart.

TAYLOR

There's something else sir. There's only one good LZ. Near this village. Here. LZ two niner one two.

HATCHER
Eight clicks from the target area.

TAYLOR
And if we know that-

LAWRENCE
So do the gooks. Gun emplacements?

TAYLOR
Several batteries of twenty three millimeter. Twin thirty sevens. A handful of fifty sevens. All radar controlled.

A few GRUNTS. Displeased.

CROCKER
Well that settles that-

JAKE (O.S.)
There's another way in.

Everyone turns. Jake steps toward the map. Points.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Here. LZ one seven oh four.
Backslope of Co Roc ridge.

VEGAS
That's more than twice the distance to the bridge.

JAKE
Yeah. But Charlie doesn't know about it. B52 strike snuffed out just enough treeline. Bomb crater created a ledge. A Huey can get close enough-

CROCKER
Forget it. Too much incline. Blade strikes ruin your whole day. That place is a Huey graveyard. Twenty First lost two birds-

JAKE
I've been there.
(to Lawrence)
It can be done boss.

CROCKER
You're not a pilot Jarhead.

JAKE

Yeah. Right. But, the Jarhead that flew me in was. Maybe you're just scared Air Force?

A murmur across the room. Crocker looks across the room as if he could crush Jake's nuts. Jake answers with a death stare. He's not backing down.

LAWRENCE

What do you say Crock?

CROCKER

Air Force will show up the Marines any day sir.

Lawrence nods.

LAWRENCE

We insert on the ridge. Hit the secondary LZ hard. Ambush at the bridge. We take Zippoman out. Fall back to the village for extraction.

JAKE

And get the fuck out of Dodge.

LAWRENCE

Gentlemen. Make it happen.

The room becomes alive. Everyone gets down to business. Lots of chatter. Equipment flashed up. Switches thrown. Radios tuned. Buttons pressed.

Jake leans across the map. Scanning it intently. Then, stands up. Ready. Resolved. Game face on.

JAKE

I need an M14. It's lighter than the M40. More accurate. Ten by forty tactical scope. I'll zero it myself. And I'll need a spotter. a good one.

Jake looks over. Lawrence beams.

LAWRENCE

You're looking at him.

EXT. RED BEACH - TARMAC - DAWN

Bands of sunlight appear on the horizon. The choppers on the flightline START ENGINES. WHINING to life.

INT. CROCKER'S CHOPPER

Crocker presses buttons as the engine WARMS UP. He signals the ground crew. Thumbs up. Good start.

INT. RED BEACH - HANGAR

Jake LOADS a magazine into his rifle. COCKS it. Ready to fire. Nearby, Westwood readies the radio equipment.

WESTWOOD

Three echo. Five alpha. Radio check. Radio check. Over?

COLLINS (V.O.)

(filtered)

Have you five by five, over?

EXT. RED BEACH - TARMAC

The Choppers are ready to go.

The Squad walks up. All wear fatigues and are heavily armed. Machine guns. Assault rifles. Lots of ammo belts. Lawrence holds up his hand. The team halts. Kneels down.

LAWRENCE

(to Jake)

Dogtags?

Jake removes them. Hands them to Lawrence. Who tosses them to Taylor standing nearby with Warren.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

Combat seating gentlemen.

The Squad climbs into the chopper.

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL (V.O.)

(filtered)

Eagle flight. Red Beach tower. Winds aloft. Two five zero at one five. Altimeter two niner niner one. Cleared for takeoff.

EXT. RED BEACH - TARMAC

The helicopters lift off into the rising sun. Heading out. Flying low, over the ocean. They turn away and fly on.

Warren, Taylor and the Ground Crew watch them go.

WESTWOOD
We've been made.

The Squad Members tense.

VEGAS
Gonna be a hot one fellas.

TOP
Just another day at the office.

Crocker turns to the cabin.

CROCKER
Three minutes!

TOP
Lock and load!

Weapons are READIED. The Squad Members become pensive. QUIET. It's getting real. Triple C crosses himself. The Door Gunners ready their machine guns.

EXT. EAGLE FLIGHT

The Choppers form up for the assault. Good to go.

EXT. VILLAGE LANDING ZONE - SOME MILES AWAY

NVA GUNNERS ready their weapons. Anti-aircraft guns point skyward. Tons of Soldiers wait SILENTLY. Only JUNGLE SOUNDS can be HEARD.

QUIETLY at first. Then LOUDER. The WHUMPING of helicopter blades. Getting closer.

The NVA GUNNERS smile. READY their weapons. Then, another SOUND. Not a helicopter. The DRONING of an aircraft propeller. NVA GUN COMMANDER looks up.

EXT. HIGH ABOVE

A pair of propeller driven planes dive steeply on the gun emplacements.

Several cylindrical objects tumble beneath them to the ground as the planes ROAR in low overhead.

GUN COMMANDER
(in Vietnamese)
Cover! Take cover!

EXT. JUNGLE

But it's too late. The bombs IMPACT and the area becomes an inferno. A fireball pours through the jungle, burning everything in its path. Black smoke climbs skyward.

NVA Gunners are incinerated at their posts. They're the lucky ones. Others are horribly burned. Agonized screams. Crawling across the jungle floor.

EXT. HIGH ABOVE

The planes, A-1 Skyraiders, drop in low. Diving again at the enemy positions.

SKYRAIDER PILOT (V.O.)
(filtered)
Copy Covey. Sandy one three. Second
run. Willy Pete.

The Skyraiders release their bombs and pull up sharply.

EXT. VILLAGE

The bombs HIT and EXPLODE. Clouds of smoke blanket the area. NVA Gunners and NVA Soldiers race for cover. The injured, cry out in pain. Their flesh burning.

EXT. HELICOPTER GUNSHIPS

Emerge through the wall of flame, PEPPERING the area with rockets.

INT. SNAKBITE'S GUNSHIP

Snakebite at the controls. Stinger in the gunner position.

SNAKEBITE
Knock. Knock. You fucking gooks.

Stinger presses a button on the control stick.

EXT. GUNSHIPS

FIRE on the gun emplacements.

STINGER (V.O.)
 (filtered)
 Roger that! We got secondaries down
 there.

EXT. RICE PADDY

Rockets and bullets cut down NVA Soldiers alike. The Gunships
 make pass after pass. FIRING rockets and guns.

An NVA Anti-Aircraft gun OPENS UP. Tracer shells STREAK
 upward.

RIPPER (V.O.)
 (filtered)
 I got a fifty seven mike mike.
 South side.

INT. SNAKBITE'S GUNSHIP

Snakebite looks out the cockpit window.

SNAKEBITE
 I see the son of a bitch. Break
 left.

More rockets IMPACT. More EXPLOSIONS.

EXT. EAGLE FLIGHT - SOME MILES AWAY

Led by the Scout Bird, the Hueys complete a long turn.

INT. CROCKER'S BIRD - DAY

SUPER SLICK (V.O.)
 (filtered)
 LZ in sight.

CROCKER
 Copy that Super Slick. I have the
 lead. Echelon is heavy left.
 (turning over his
 shoulder)
 Major?

With Jake beside him, Lawrence looks up.

CROCKER (CONT'D)
Red flight hit the extraction LZ.
All birds okay. No casualties. Be
advised we're on final now.

Lawrence nods.

LAWRENCE
Copy that Crock.

CROCKER (O.S.)
Harv?

Jake and Lawrence look up.

CROCKER (CONT'D)
Get this fucker.

Lawrence nods.

CROCKER (CONT'D)
Thirty seconds.

EXT. EAGLE FLIGHT - DAY

The two Hueys climb. Hard and fast. Running along the
mountainside. Barely clearing the rocky ledges.

INT. CROCKER'S BIRD

Suddenly, the Chopper shudders. Lurches from side to side.
Crocker pushes hard on the rudder pedals.

CROCKER
(filtered; to Copilot)
Watch the airspeed.

The Chopper tips. Nearly spilling the team out. Then,
recovers. Approaches the mountainside.

Jake looks a little nervous. The postage sized LZ up ahead. A
small patch of brown in a sea of green. Nestled into a steep
slope.

EXT. CROCKER'S BIRD

Approaches the LZ. Coming in quick. The Squad stands on the
skids. Seconds away. Then, the chopper swings hard at the
last moment. Avoiding a collision.

CROCKER (V.O.)
(filtered)
Go! Go! Go!

The Team jumps onto the LZ. Landing in the crater.

INT. CROCKER'S BIRD

Goes FULL POWER and climbs away.

CROCKER
Tell that to the fucking Marines.

INT. RED BEACH - COMMAND CENTRE

COLLINS
Westwood radios team okay.

Taylor, who looks over to Warren, who nods.

TAYLOR
(to Collins)
Continue the mission.

Collins PRESSES a button.

COLLINS
Five alpha. Three echo, over?

EXT. MOUNTAIN LANDING ZONE

The Team waits. Defensive positions. Vigilant. Alert. Jake scans left and right. Ready to fight.

Hatcher appears from the treeline. Gives a thumbs up. Top turns to Lawrence.

TOP
Hatcher's in sir. Good to go.

Lawrence nods. Turns to

LAWRENCE
Westwood?

WESTWOOD
(holding the handset)
Charlie Mike sir.

LAWRENCE
 (to the Squad)
 All right gentlemen. Stay alert.
 Stay alive. Quick and quiet. Top?

Who looks over.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)
 Tail end charlie. Counter track.
 Rally point is the temple. Then,
 push hard for the blue line. Jake?

Who looks up.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)
 At the target site, I spot. If he
 shows, you waste the fucker.

Jake nods.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)
 Let's move out.

The Squad heads down the steep slope.

EXT. VILLAGE LANDING ZONE

Vehicles and buildings burn. Whole area thick with smoke. A vehicle drives up. Stops. An NVA OFFICER leaps out. This is CAPTAIN TUAN (35). Wears glasses. Like a professor. Belongs at a college. Not in a uniform.

He watches NVA Soldiers load wounded comrades into trucks. A haggard NVA SERGEANT rushes up. They speak Vietnamese.

TUAN
 How many?

NVA SERGEANT
 A hundred and six and still
 counting.

Tuan surveys the scene. Awful destruction. Scorched jungle. A NVA Soldier grieves over the body of one of his comrades.

NVA SERGEANT (CONT'D)
 They used aircraft and attack
 helicopters. But, no soldiers
 landed.

TUAN
 No Sergeant. They did. Just not
 here.

He signals. An NVA RADIOMAN runs up. He grabs the handset.

TUAN (CONT'D)

This is Tuan. Give me the Command
Net.

EXT. JUNGLE - SOME DISTANCE AWAY

A long line of NVA Soldiers moves through the jungle.

An NVA RADIOMAN holds a handset to a tall MAN in jungle
fatigues. Lean. Strong. Cold. A sense of darkness around him.
A pair of shaded sunglasses obscure his eyes. This is
ZIPPOMAN. He listens for a moment.

ZIPPOMAN

Roger.

He hands it back to the NVA Radioman. Behind him, columns of
NVA Soldiers weave along the trails. Hundreds. Maybe a
thousand.

EXT. JUNGLE

The Team moves through some heavy, bad ass bush. Monstrous
trees. Dense foliage. Eerie shafts of light penetrate the
thick canopy and mist. Insects BUZZ. Animals CRY OUT.

EXT. RIVERBANK - LATER

Hatcher raises his hand. The Team halts. Lawrence moves
forward. Hatcher points. The river moves slowly. TRICKLING
past.

Lawrence signals the Team. Preparing ambush positions. Jake
scans the bridge through his rifle scope.

JAKE

Looks good here.

LAWRENCE

Set up the nest.

Jake begins to move some foliage as Passmore creeps up.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

(to Passmore)

Take Triple C and wire the bridge.

PASSMORE
Sir. The water level is really low.
They might spot the wires.

LAWRENCE
I want a secondary option.

Jake HEARS this and looks over. Stung a little.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)
We'll take the chance.

PASSMORE
Yes sir.

Passmore moves off. Jake finishes the nest. Moves over to Lawrence.

JAKE
Secondary option?

LAWRENCE
Yeah.

JAKE
You won't need it.

Lawrence nods.

LAWRENCE
Make sure I don't.

Jake nods.

JAKE
Now what boss?

LAWRENCE
Now we wait.

INT. RED BEACH - COMMAND CENTRE - HOURS LATER

QUIET and tense. Operators and Technicians at their terminals work away. Warren stands over the map table. Taylor walks up.

TAYLOR
Eagle Flight reports joker fuel.

Warren looks at his watch.

WARREN
All right. Pull the plug.

EXT. JUNGLE - NEAR RIVER

Westwood holds the handset to his ear.

WESTWOOD

Major?

Lawrence looks over. Westwood draws his hand across his throat. Lawrence looks at watch.

Jake watches the bridge. Nothing. No one. Time to abort. Lawrence signals the team. SILENTLY, they prepare to go.

EXT. BRIDGE

Just then, an NVA POINT MAN appears. Looking left and right.

INTERCUT: EXT. BRIDGE/EXT. RIVERBANK

The Team doesn't notice at first. Too busy packing up. Jake looks up and SEES NVA Point Man.

JAKE

(whispering)

Boss.

Lawrence looks over. SEES him too. He makes an INSECT LIKE SOUND. The Squad freezes.

NVA Point Man halts. Searching the jungle. Surveys the opposite bank. Satisfied, he signals the NVA Soldiers behind.

The GROWL of vehicle ENGINES. A pair of trucks emerge from the jungle loaded with NVA Soldiers. More on foot. They casually move across. Overconfident. Talking to one another.

Through his scope, Jake scans the NVA Soldiers.

LAWRENCE

Anything?

JAKE

Negative.

A pair of trucks and several civilians, women and children among them appear and move across the bridge.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Sir.

Lawrence SEES them through the binoculars. Face clenches. Top SEES them too.

TOP

Fuck.

Jake sweeps the rifle scope along the bridge. He SEES something.

JAKE

Wait.

It looked like Buddy Holly moving across the bridge amid the NVA Soldiers and Civilians. But, hard to tell. A sea of faces. The trucks CREEP along.

He looks again. Waits. Then, he SEES him.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Got Buddy Holly.

Lawrence looks. Buddy Holly walks among several NVA Soldiers.

Lawrence nods, who signals the Squad - get ready. They tense. Taking aim.

Jake takes aim on Buddy Holly. Dead in his sights.

A truck STALLS. Comes to a halt. Creating a traffic jam. Buddy Holly slips behind it out of sight.

LAWRENCE

(to Jake)

You got him?

JAKE

Lost him. Stand by.

Everybody's getting edgy. Itchy trigger fingers.

The NVA Point Man keeps walking. His eyes scanning for any danger.

Jake keeps his eye pressed to the scope.

Buddy Holly re-emerges from behind the truck. But now, he's carrying a small CHILD. The child completely obscuring his head and torso from Jake's view.

He can't kill him without killing the Child too.

JAKE (CONT'D)

I don't have a shot.

LAWRENCE

Shoot through the kid.

Jake turns. Shocked.

JAKE
Say again.

LAWRENCE
(determined)
Shoot through the kid.

Jake swallows hard. Eye back to the scope.

Buddy Holly continues to cradle the child, Jake does not have a clear shot.

Jake's finger slips off the trigger. Lawrence notices. Nearby, Top tenses over his machine gun.

TOP
I knew it.

The NVA Point Man keeps searching the bridge. Then, he suddenly stops. Kneels down. Points. The wires visible just above the water line.

NVA POINT MAN
(in Vietnamese)
Get off the bridge!

Panic ensues. The Trucks can't go forward or back up. The Civilians cry out. Fleeing in both directions. Pushing. Shoving. The NVA Soldiers scurry to get off the bridge. A frightening scene.

LAWRENCE
Take the shot.

Jake shakes. The weapon unsteady. Unable to clearly SEE Buddy Holly among the panic on the bridge.

MR. PIG
We're losing him.

Jake doesn't pull the trigger. Lawrence can't wait. He turns to Passmore. Nods. Passmore PRESSES the detonators.

The bridge EXPLODES. The Women. The Children. The Soldiers. Buddy Holly. All disintegrate. Splinters SPLASH into the river. The area becomes eerily SILENT.

Lawrence turns to Jake. A furious stare.

LAWRENCE
Fall back to the ruins.

Rapidly, the Squad moves out.

EXT. JUNGLE

The Squad races through the jungle. Knowing they only have moments before a counterattack.

EXT. JUNGLE - NOT FAR AWAY

Zippoman moves among several columns of NVA Soldiers. Alerted by the blast, they move swiftly. Closing in.

EXT. TEMPLE RUINS - MOMENTS LATER

The Squad arrives. Taking cover behind shattered idols and thin stone walls.

LAWRENCE
Defensive line.

TOP
What's the plan Harv?

LAWRENCE
We hold here. Fall back to the LZ-

PASSMORE
You mean the LZ that was too dangerous to land in is the LZ we're leaving from? That's a great fucking plan.

LAWRENCE
You suddenly get promoted Passmore?

PASSMORE
Excellent plan sir.

LAWRENCE
Get a wall of claymores out there.

Passmore turns to

PASSMORE
Triple C.

And they run into the jungle. Carrying arm loads of claymores. Lawrence turns to Jake.

LAWRENCE
What the hell was that?

Jake shakes his head absently. O.S., NVA Soldiers shout. Getting closer.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

How many?

HATCHER

(peering into the jungle)
Can't tell.

LAWRENCE

I need eyes. Go Hatch.

Hatcher leaps up. Races forward. Disappears into the foliage.

TOP

(to Jake)
Kiddo. You fucked up good. Now the whole NVA knows we're here.

LAWRENCE

Top. Secure that shit.

Top gets it. Lawrence looks over at Jake. Furious. Passmore and Triple race back in. Take cover.

PASSMORE

Wall's up Major.

Top pulls the cocking handle of his machine gun.

TOP

Wait until they're real close.
(to Jake)
And don't fuck this one up.

The Squad prepares for battle. Mr. Pig hunched over his weapon. Triple C points his grenade launcher into the trees ahead. Vegas. Westwood. Alert. Vigilant.

Jake scans the jungle. Can't SEE anything. Only trees. Until Hatcher bursts through. Running for his life.

HATCHER

Reinforced company coming in!

The jungle becomes QUIET. More shouting in Vietnamese. A couple of SHOTS RING OUT. More shouting. A RUSTLING.

TOP

Contact front!

The Squad FIRES. Bullets blaze into the jungle. Muzzle FLASHES respond, decorating the landscape.

Bullets RIP through the trees and ricochet off the stone. Geysers of dirt. Splinters of wood.

Still, the NVA SOLDIERS remain unseen. Only their muzzle flashes. Then, they spill from the jungle's edge. Swarming like insects. Insects armed with AK's and RPG'S.

Call them gooks or dinks, if you want. They're tough, smart, determined. And they fight hard.

The Squad is pinned down by a heavy machine gun. Like TEARING cloth, bullets ZIP past and cut into trees.

Mr. Pig SHOOTs back. Short controlled BURSTS. Cutting down NVA Soldiers with ease. There's a reason they call this guy Mister. His weapon chews through ammo belt.

MR. PIG

Reloading!

LAWRENCE

Grenades!

Bullets FLY overhead. Jake tears a grenade from his web gear. Pulls the pin. Lobs it high in the air.

The Squad does the same. A wall of EXPLOSIONS! Holding the NVA off for only a moment.

But, moments later the NVA charge in again. Weapons BLAZING. Shell casings litter the jungle floor.

The team is overwhelmed. Only their training and skills keep them alive.

Jake KEEPS FIRING. Picking off NVA Soldiers wholesale. Dropping like flies. He picks his targets well. Radiomen. Officers. Sergeants. Slicing them up a like a surgeon would.

CLICK. Out of ammo. Jake grabs a magazine from his web belt.

JAKE

Reloading!

COCKS the rifle and keeps FIRING. Just then, a bright flash nearby.

MR. PIG

Rocket!

A rocket SHOOTs. BLASTING the ruins. Triple C drops. Cries out in pain.

TRIPLE C

I'm hit!

Vegas bravely tries to break from cover and tend to his wounded buddy. But, he's stopped by an NVA MACHINE GUNNER.

That catches Jake's eye. Jake takes aim. FIRES. A bullet smashes through the machine gunner's eye. He's done.

Now, Vegas can race forward. Starts tending to Triple C.

But, the NVA Soldiers keep coming. And coming. The FIREFIGHT continues. Lawrence knows. It's time to go.

LAWRENCE

Vegas! We gotta move!

He finishes patching up Triple C.

VEGAS

Good to go!

Lawrence turns to the Squad.

LAWRENCE

Break contact! Peel right! Make for the creekbed!

HATCHER

One!

Hatcher falls back. Triple C took it down low. Vegas helps him.

The rest of the Squad are ready to move.

LAWRENCE

Top! Fall back!

TOP

I'm right behind you!

Jake, Westwood, Lawrence and Passmore break and run. Top keeps FIRING. Covering them.

Mr. Pig moves next. But, stops in his tracks. Looks back. Ducks down. Moves to Top. Drops off some ammo.

MR. PIG

Don't get stupid.

TOP

(smiling)

Too late.

Mr. Pig points to his friend. His eyes say it. We're not dying today. Then, he races off.

INT. COMMAND CENTRE

Warren and Taylor hover over the communication console. Transfixed.

COLLINS

Five alpha reports heavy contact at the rally point. They are falling back to the LZ.

Warren and Taylor exchange concerned looks.

EXT. JUNGLE

The Squad hits the gas. They're running for their lives.

EXT. TEMPLE RUINS

Top's done his duty. His buddies have escaped. A lull in the battle. The area has become SILENT.

Top rises. Tries to escape. Suddenly, a GUNSHOT. A bullet SLICES through his leg. Knocking him to the ground.

TOP

Fuck!

A couple of NVA Soldiers charge in. Quickly, he grabs the machine gun and OPENS UP. Doused with bullets, they fall dead.

But, he's hit in the leg. He needs help.

EXT. JUNGLE TRAIL

The Squad hauls ass for the LZ. Legs pumping like pistons. Suddenly, Jake stops. Turns. Top is nowhere to be seen.

JAKE

Major?

Lawrence stops.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Top.

Lawrence looks to his men. Somebody has to go back.

JAKE (CONT'D)
I'll go.

MR. PIG
Fuck that. I'll go.

JAKE
I can move faster.

Lawrence nods. Agreed. Gestures to Mr. Pig. Jake goes.

JAKE (CONT'D)
(to Passmore)
Det cord?

PASSMORE
What the fuck for?

Passmore hands him the spool.

JAKE
And the claymore.

PASSMORE
Trigger's busted.

JAKE
(taking it)
I'll think of something.

LAWRENCE
We won't wait.

JAKE
Don't.

Jake runs back toward the ruins. The Squad hurries off. Lawrence pauses. Looks back. Then, quickly follows the others.

EXT. TEMPLE RUINS

Struggling with his wound, Top keeps moving. But, he falls. Behind him, there's shouting in Vietnamese. He readies his machine gun. A last stand.

EXT. JUNGLE - NEARBY

Jake races through the thick foliage.

EXT. TEMPLE RUINS

The whole area is covered with smoke. The NVA Soldiers are out there. Top looks to his ammo belt. There's very little left. Suddenly, Jake flops down beside him.

TOP
What the fuck?

Jake looks at Top's wounded leg. Bleeding heavily. Jake quickly applies a bandage and ties it off while Top scans the jungle.

JAKE
Where they at?

TOP
Regrouping. Getting ready to finish us off.

JAKE
Cover me.

Jake stands up. Pulls out the roll of det cord.

TOP
Where you going?

Jake moves out from their position.

JAKE
Landscaping.

TOP
What?

Jake races across the jungle, wrapping det cord around tree trunks.

EXT. JUNGLE - NOT FAR AWAY

With a radioman in tow, Zippoman hurries. Talking into handset.

ZIPPOMAN
Cut off their retreat. Move for the landing zone now.

Zippoman gets into his flamethrower pack. Pulls out a ZIPPO. With a WHOOSH, he lights the weapon. It HISSES. Like a snake.

Companies of NVA Soldiers follow. Weapons ready. Eager to kill.

EXT. TEMPLE RUINS

Jake winds the det cord around a tree. Plants the claymore into the ground at its base.

There's SHOUTING nearby. The NVA are closing in. SHOTS RING OUT.

Top readies his machine gun.

TOP

Jake! Take cover!

Jake races back. Dives behind Top as bullets RAIN IN. NVA SOLDIERS charge toward them. Bayonets fixed.

Jake takes AIM. SHOOTS at the claymore. HITS it. A massive EXPLOSION. The claymore EXPLODES a rain of shrapnel. NVA Soldiers are cut down.

The BLAST lights of the det cord with a SIZZLE. Another set of EXPLOSIONS. Toppling several trees. CRUSHING NVA Soldiers underneath. Stopping them in their tracks.

Jake lifts Top.

JAKE

I should have mentioned. I'm pretty good with explosives.

TOP

No shit.

They hurry off.

EXT. RICE PADDY

The Squad has reached the LZ. They limp in and take cover. Defensive positions. They're breathing heavy. Getting tired.

LAWRENCE

Hold here! Hold here!

Smoke still lingers from the earlier attack. Bodies strewn about.

Suddenly, bullets RIP into the Squad. They SHOOT back. Guns BLAZING. Now, there's enemy FIRE in all directions.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

Westwood?

WESTWOOD

Five alpha three echo. Lima Zulu is hot.

INT. RED BEACH - COMMAND CENTER

Warren turns to Taylor.

WARREN

Get Saigon on the horn.

Taylor grabs the phone.

WARREN (CONT'D)

(to Collins)

Tell Crocker to burn those turbofans out!

EXT. CHOPPERS

Racing over the jungle.

INT. CROCKER'S CHOPPER

The fuel warning light continues to blink.

EXT. RICE PADDY

The Squad holds on by their fingernails.

INT. COMMAND CENTRE

COLLINS

(to Taylor)

Eagle flight is six minutes out.

TAYLOR

They'll be dead in six minutes.

EXT. JUNGLE

Jake and Top struggle on.

EXT. JUNGLE - NOT FAR AWAY

NVA Soldiers are not far behind. Led by Zippoman. They continue closing in.

INT. COMMAND CENTRE

Warren turns to Taylor, who holds a telephone. Shaking his head. Eyes a little desperate.

Warren races over. Grabs it.

WARREN

Mack! I need that air strike or all we're doing today is putting my boys in body bags.

EXT. JUNGLE - HEADING FOR THE LZ

Jake and Top keep going. Top's a little pale. Sweaty. Jake notices.

JAKE

Top. You good?

TOP

I need a sec. Need a sec...

Jake looks forward.

JAKE

Gully up ahead.

They make for it. Quick as they can.

EXT. RICE PADDY

The NVA are getting close. Too close. They're out of time.

LAWRENCE

(to Westwood)

Call Prairie Fire!

INT. COMMAND CENTRE

WESTWOOD (V.O.)

(filtered; through radio)

Prairie Fire! I say again prairie fire!

COLLINS

They're being overrun.

Warren listens to the phone. Nods curtly. Got what he needs.

WARREN
 (into phone)
 Thanks Mack.

HANGS it up.

WARREN (CONT'D)
 (to Collins)
 Get them to mark their line!

EXT. RICE PADDY

Vegas BLASTS AWAY. Full auto.

VEGAS
 Last mag!

Bloody bandage on his leg won't stop him. Triple C FIRES a grenade. BOOM! A cloud of fiery metal and smoke.

TRIPLE C
 I'm out.

He pulls out his pistol. STARTS SHOOTING as bullets CRACK and WHIZ by. Suddenly, Westwood turns to Lawrence.

WESTWOOD
 Fast movers inbound!

But it may be too late. The NVA are just yards away. Lawrence hurls the smoke grenade. It POPS. A thick cloud of red smoke rises.

The NVA are almost on top of them. Then from above, the ROAR of JET ENGINES.

EXT. JUNGLE

Jake and Top keep running. Dodging bullets ZIPPING past.

Up ahead, the creek bed. Jake and Top are almost there.

Suddenly, an NVA Soldier appears from nowhere. Charging in, bayonet first.

Jake SEES him coming. But, his rifle's slung. No chance for a shot. Then, something from above catches his eye. He looks up.

Jake SEES the bombs coming. Tumbling. Directly at him. They have to find cover.

Jake pushes Top leap into the creek bed. Jake dives in after. Covers Top's body with his own. Maybe its deep enough.

The NVA Soldier charges after them.

EXT. JETS

They release their bombs. Tumbling down. They HIT and EXPLODE. Flame cascades through the jungle. Bathing the area in napalm. A surging, boiling FIREBALL. Consuming the jungle. NVA SOLDIERS are incinerated. Roasted alive.

EXT. ZIPPOMAN'S POSITION

The concussion BLOWS him backward.

INT. CROCKER'S CHOPPER - A FEW MILES AWAY

The wall of FIRE climbs from the jungle. A dazzling and frightening scene.

CROCKER
Jesus Christ.

EXT. JUNGLE - CREEK BED

The NVA Soldier chasing Jake and Top vanishes in a sheet of flame.

The cauldron reaches them. This is it. They're done. The FIREBALL rolls in. Seemingly consuming them.

EXT. JUNGLE

A few moments later. The flames die away. Covering the area in oily black smoke.

EXT. RICE PADDY

The jungle? Gone. The NVA Soldiers charging their position a moment ago? Gone.

The Squad are dazed. Out of it. A little shell shocked. Then, the THUMPING of chopper blades snaps them back to reality. They all look up.

The choppers. There they are. Eagle Flight inbound.

PASSMORE

About time. Crocker you asshole!

The Squad smiles relieved.

LAWRENCE

Pop smoke.

Westwood throws a grenade. Purple smoke quickly covers the area. Lawrence peers into the jungle. Then, to his watch.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

Come on dammit.

But, he's got other Soldiers to worry about.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

Get ready to move.

EXT. CREEK BED

Jake and Top lay motionless. Not moving. Lifeless. SILENT. Then suddenly, both come alive. Coughing. Hacking. Their lungs in agony. They take a moment. Gather themselves.

Bodies battered and bruised. Their faces blackened. Their uniforms blackened.

But, the creek bed was deep enough. They're alive. Jake lifts Top to his feet.

JAKE

C'mon boss.

TOP

We're having bad fucking day.

They pass the body of the NVA Soldier. Body roasted. Charred.

JAKE

His was worse.

INT. RED BEACH - COMMAND CENTRE

COLLINS

Sir. Eagle flight reports bingo fuel.

TAYLOR

How much time they got on station?

COLLINS
Five minutes.

Taylor looks over to Warren. Their faces say it all. The Squad's not going to make it.

INT. CROCKER'S CHOPPER - COCKPIT

Crocker pulls hard on the stick. A tight turn. The jungle streaks by.

STINGER (V.O.)
(filtered)
Twin fifties being brought in from
the west.

CROCKER
(into radio)
We gotta go! We gotta go!

EXT. JUNGLE

GUN CREWS move large anti-aircraft guns into position and
OPEN FIRE.

EXT. JUNGLE - NEARBY

Zippoman keeps moving. His legion of NVA Soldiers following.
He stops. Grabs the handset from his Radioman.

ZIPPOMAN
Use the mortars!

EXT. VILLAGE - MORTAR PITS

NVA Soldiers man the mortars. Drop the bombs into the tubes.
WHUMP! They arc toward the rice paddy.

EXT. RICE PADDY

Mortar shells SPLASH and EXPLODE among the Squad as they
struggle on. Sending up Geysers of water.

EXT. CROCKER'S CHOPPER

It descends rapidly. Bullets STREAK past. It dives down. The
choppers above providing cover. It skims the trees on final
approach. Then, slips downward and lands in the LZ. The door
GUNS BLAZING.

EXT. RICE PADDY

Machine gun FIRE PEPPERS the area.

LAWRENCE

Go! Go! Go! Go!

Lawrence, Westwood, Mr. Pig and Passmore lay down cover FIRE. Vegas and Hatcher carrying Triple C race for the Chopper and climb aboard.

As fast they can, the rest of the Squad sprints for the chopper and leaps in.

INT. CROCKER'S CHOPPER

Lawrence scans the jungle's edge. No Top. No Jake. Mortar bombs HIT nearby. Too close. Way too close.

WESTWOOD

We're light two!

More mortars LAND near the chopper BLASTING shrapnel into its thin skin. CLANG! CLANG! CLANG! They're out of time.

LAWRENCE

We're going!

WESTWOOD

It's Top and Jake!

LAWRENCE

I know!

(to Crocker)

Take off!

EXT. CROCKER'S CHOPPER

The chopper lifts off. A pair gunships STRAFE the area as they climb.

But, their GUNFIRE misses a WOUNDED RPG GUNNER. He points his rocket at the Crocker's Chopper. With his dying breath, he pulls the trigger. FIRING the rocket.

INT. CROCKER'S CHOPPER

Crocker SEES it coming. Pushes hard on the pedals.

CROCKER

RPG! Starboard side!

EXT. CROCKER'S CHOPPER

The rocket streaks in. They're done for. Suddenly, it EXPLODES in mid-air. They all look down.

EXT. RICE PADDY

Jake lowers his rifle. Smoke rising from the barrel. He took it out. An incredible shot.

INT. CROCKER'S CHOPPER

Lawrence smiles. SEES Jake lifting Top.

LAWRENCE
(to Crocker)
Take her down!

Crocker lowers the controls.

EXT. CROCKER'S CHOPPER

It lands. Every guns SHOOTs. Covering their escape. The NVA guns SHOOT back.

Bullets WHINE. Kicking up dirt around Jake and Top. They reach the Chopper. It POWERS UP and lifts off.

EXT. LANDING ZONE

The LZ is covered in smoke and dead bodies. Zippoman watches the choppers depart. Tuan walks up. Zippoman's face is not what you'd expect. He's not defeated. Instead, arrogant and cool.

ZIPPOMAN
Contact Hanoi. We're moving up the timetable. Zero two thirty.

Tuan's eyes widen.

TUAN
That's impossible.

Zippoman stops. Turns. Smirks. Confident.

ZIPPOMAN
Nothing is impossible.

He walks off.

INT. CROCKER'S CHOPPER

The Squad are exhausted. As if they've run a marathon. Vegas tends to Triple C. Westwood applies a bandage to Top. Top looks over to Jake. Gives him a nod of thanks. Jake nods back.

Lawrence holds a canteen out to Jake. He drinks it heartily. Lawrence SMACKS Jake on the arm. They both smile. A traitor dead. The Squad alive. For now.

EXT. HOOCH - NIGHT

A barracks. Wood and mosquito netting. Ringed by sandbags. Music BLARES from inside. The LOUD NOISES of a celebration.

The Squad SING a drunken version of a Buddy Holly hit tune.

INT. HOOCH

Hazy, acrid smoke hovers. Many puff cigars.

Two lines of bunks. Foot lockers. Posters on the walls. Dartboard with Nixon's picture. Lots of bull's-eyes.

Jake sits in the centre. The Squad all around him. Jake's one of them now. Holding court. Telling a story.

JAKE

So we're up on the trail.
Nighttime.

Jake sips a beer.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Scout comes along. Stops to take a break. Starts raining. Puts on a poncho. I'm watching him through the scope. He starts moving underneath.

He burps.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Something familiar about it. The way he's moving. You know? Then, it hits me.

(beat)

He's jerking off.

Laughter.

PASSMORE
So what did you do?

JAKE
Hey. One shot. One kill.

MR. PIG
That's cold. Denying a gook one
last pleasure in life.

JAKE
No boss. No.

Jake smirks. A little devilish.

JAKE (CONT'D)
I let him finish.

The room fills with laughter.

INT. COMMAND CENTRE

Lawrence stares intently at Zippoman's profile stuck to the wall. Holding a beer. He's had more than one. Warren approaches.

WARREN
We'll find him.

Hands Lawrence a cigar. But, he's in mood to celebrate. Shakes his head.

LAWRENCE
He'll disappear. Melt away.
Impossible to find him now.

WARREN
Come on Harv.

Pats him on the back. Starts to walk away.

WARREN (CONT'D)
Nothing is impossible.

EXT. DA NANG BAY - NIGHT

A trio of sampans glide SILENTLY across the bay. Heading toward the Red Beach compound.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

A convoy of military vehicles, a jeep in the lead. They drive up to the main gate where a sign reads: RED BEACH - RESTRICTED AREA.

The vehicles STOP. Zippoman steps from the jeep, in US Army uniform. Walks toward a SENTRY#1 and SENTRY#2, standing guard. Sentry#1 smiles.

SENTRY#1

Evening sir. How can we help-

Zippoman pulls out a pistol with silencer.

ZIPPOMAN

You can fucking die.

He SHOOTS both Sentries dead and returns to the jeep. The vehicles drive onto the base.

EXT. HOOCH - LATER

The door opens and Jake emerges. A little drunk. Cigar in mouth. Pats his shirt for a light.

TOP (O.S.)

Here.

Top tosses a Zippo to Jake who catches it.

JAKE

Thanks.

Jake looks at Top. A long, long moment of SILENCE.

Top kicks the dirt. Then, he looks up at Jake.

TOP

You saved my ass.

Nods toward the hooch.

TOP (CONT'D)

And theirs.

JAKE

You're welcome.

TOP

But, I still need to know.

Jake takes a deep breath.

JAKE
I don't owe you a thing-

TOP
You owe it to him.

Jake looks away. Doesn't say anything for a few moments. Then, he swallows hard.

JAKE
I think you know what happened.

TOP
Then, I need to hear you say it.

A long pause.

JAKE
Yeah. I left him.

Top nods. Now, he's quiet for a few moments. Sniffs.

TOP
Is what it is kid. Can't bring him back.

JAKE
Makes me a coward, doesn't it?

That pisses Top off.

TOP
Don't start that shit.

Jake looks over.

TOP (CONT'D)
It wasn't a coward who came back to get me. And if it wasn't for you, my buddies would be dead.

But, Jake's not listening. In his mind's eye. He's back in Cambodia. He lowers his head.

JAKE
I don't know why I'm here Top.

Top's voice becomes a soothing, fatherly tone.

TOP
Look at the lighter.

Jake does. IT READS: BROTHERS IN MUD, BROTHERS IN BLOOD.

TOP (CONT'D)
That's why.

He turns. Grabs his crutches. Heads off.

TOP (CONT'D)
I gotta piss.

JAKE
Can't help you there.

They laugh.

TOP
And I'll be getting that back.

Jake chuckles. Looks at the lighter again. Puffs on his cigar.

Top heads for the latrine. Jake watches two FEMALE CIVILIAN cleaners emerge. They exit. Top enters. They approach Jake and walk past. Keeping their heads down.

The one closest to Jake passes has a distinctive tattoo. The tail of a thorny dragon on her neck.

It's Ky. The young woman from Lester's place. Suddenly, it dawns on Jake. This isn't right.

JAKE
Top!

The latrine EXPLODES! Jake's blown clear. Off his feet.

INT. HOOCH

Beers are abandoned. Card games forgotten. The Squad members grab weapons and race for the door. No one asks "what's going on?" There vets. They don't need to.

They're under attack.

EXT. HOOCH

Jake comes to. Dazed for a moment, he gets back on his feet. Shakes. Comes back to reality. Bullets CRACK around him.

Dozens of enemy troops are heading for the Chopper Pad. He gets up and races after them.

EXT. COMMAND CENTRE

EXPLOSIONS ring the compound. Warren and Lawrence appear in the doorway.

WARREN

Rally them at the motor pool!

Lawrence nods. Races off.

EXT. CHOPPER PAD - DRAINAGE DITCH

Jake hops into the ditch. The NVA Soldiers move quickly. Tossing grenades into the choppers. They EXPLODE in towers of flame.

Jake won't have that. He grabs an assault rifle from the body of a dead GI and OPENS UP. Full auto.

Up ahead, he SEES something in the distance. A pair of wounded American Soldiers trying to escape the bedlam. From behind, a stream of flame WHOOSHES. Envelopes them.

Jake watches in horror. That stream of flame can only be on thing. A flamethrower.

EXT. RED BEACH

The base is an inferno. American and NVA Soldiers SHOOT and kill one another in close quarters.

EXT. MOTOR POOL

The Squad has taken up positions manning several jeeps, armed with machine guns and cannon. Tracer bullets STREAK through the sky. ZIPPING past.

Lawrence races up.

LAWRENCE

(to Westwood)

Sitrep?

WESTWOOD

We are in a world of shit sir!

EXT. CHOPPER PAD - DRAINAGE DITCH

Jake attempts to break for cover but is driven to the ground by enemy FIRE.

Unable to advance, he looks for an alternate route. Notices an undamaged guard tower. He heads for it along the drainage ditch. Moving like a panther.

EXT. COMMAND CENTRE

Taylor emerges from the entrance. A pistol in hand. Suddenly, he SEES an NVA Rocket Team reading the weapon. It FIRES and the rocket streaks in. The command centre EXPLODES. Taylor's vaporized.

EXT. MOTOR POOL

Westwood holds the radio. Taps Lawrence.

WESTWOOD

Commo hut's gone. They've formed a perimeter near the ammo dump.

LAWRENCE

Fire for effect!

The cannons are FIRED toward the NVA. Distant EXPLOSIONS! Lawrence watches through binoculars.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

Dammit! They're falling short!

EXT. GUARD TOWER/AMMO DUMP

Jake climbs up and readies his weapon from his sniper's nest. Down below. He SEES Zippoman. Gets him in his sights.

Zippoman looks up. SEES Jake. Knows Jake's got him.

Jake pulls the trigger. CLICK. Nothing happens. He pulls the trigger again. CLICK. Still nothing happens. JAMMED.

JAKE

God damn piece of shit!

Zippoman smiles. An NVA Soldier OPENS UP on Jake, forcing him to take cover. Zippoman turns to Captain Tuan, standing nearby.

ZIPPOMAN

Attack the motor pool.

EXT. MOTOR POOL

Westwood looks to the left and right. SEES swarms of NVA Soldiers. Americans are getting cut down wholesale. Westwood ducks back into the pit beside Lawrence.

WESTWOOD
They're moving in on both flanks!

LAWRENCE
It's not having any effect.

Ponders for a moment.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)
Get me TACAIR!

WESTWOOD
Magic Dragon. Eagle Six. Over?

LAWRENCE
We'll blow the ammo dump.

Westwood lowers the handset.

WESTWOOD
Say again skip?

LAWRENCE
Charlie will blow it anyway.

WESTWOOD
(into radio)
Roger that. Magic Dragon. Fire mission.

EXT. GUNSHIP PLANE

The PURRING of four large turbofan ENGINES. The large plane turns hard for the attack approach.

GUNSHIP PILOT (V.O.)
Stay alive Eagle. We are inbound.

EXT. AMMO DUMP

Ky races up to Zippoman. They speak in Vietnamese.

KY
Our mission is almost accomplished.

ZIPPOMAN

Ours is. Yours is just beginning.

Zippoman shoves a map into her shirt. Pulls out a handgun.
SHOOTS. She falls dead.

INT. GUNSHIP PLANE - COCKPIT

The Pilot calls into the mic.

PILOT

(filtered)

On station. Ready to fire.

EXT. MOTOR POOL

Lawrence calls into the handset.

LAWRENCE

Hit it!

EXT. GUNSHIP PLANE

The volley of shells and machine gun bullets pour downward.
BLASTING the ammo dump.

EXT. GUARD TOWER

Jake SEES the GUNFIRE RIP through it. Knows what's coming.

JAKE

Son of a-

Dives for the ladder.

EXT. AMMO DUMP

It EXPLODES like Hiroshima. NVA Soldiers are vaporized. Fires
break out.

The Tower gets hit and Jake is blown to the ground. GRUNTS.
Tucks and rolls. Not badly hurt.

Zippoman disappears in a thick veil of smoke. NVA Soldiers
retreat. Melting into the jungle and disappear.

The ammo dump is an inferno. Smoke pours and flames shoot
into the sky. Deadly shrapnel ZIPS through the air.

Jake collapses in exhaustion.

EXT. RED BEACH - DAWN

Base awash with smoke. The water LAPS peacefully against the shore. A Dead Soldier's body floats in the surf.

Jake looks out at the rising sun. A tattered stars and strips flies limply overhead. Jake stares at it intently.

He's different today. Angry. Resolved.

Lawrence stands amid the smoldering remains of choppers. Watching body bags loaded into a medevac. It lifts off. Sadly, Lawrence watches it go.

Westwood. Head in hands. Off by himself.

The other remaining members huddle together. Exhausted and in shock.

Lawrence walks up to Jake.

JAKE
Top's dead.

LAWRENCE
Yeah. I know.

JAKE
Who else?

LAWRENCE
Taylor. Everybody's wounded. Lost most of the air det. Headquarters team. Bad fucking night all round.

JAKE
It was Zippoman.

LAWRENCE
Yeah. I know.

JAKE
How would he know to come here boss? How?

Lawrence takes a deep breath.

LAWRENCE
Because he was one of my men.

Jake's astonished.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

Scott. Franklin. Captain. United States Army. Serial number one one five five two four four.

(beat)

Traitor.

(beat)

HALO jump. Across the fence in Cambodia. He lands away from the group. Opens fire. Kills two of my men. Breaks contact. And we lost him. He went over.

SILENCE. Jake soaks that in. Nods. No going back. Time for payback. Warren strides up.

WARREN

Harv. You need to see this.

EXT. AMMO DUMP

Firefighters tackle the smoky ruins. Nearby, dead NVA Soldiers are stacked in a gruesome pile. Warren leads Jake and Lawrence to a CORPSE separated from the rest.

WESTWOOD

We found her near the ammo dump. Shot once in the head.

Ky lays on the ground. Tattoo on her neck still visible.

JAKE

The girl from Saigon.

WESTWOOD

Yeah. She had this.

It's the map. He hands it to Lawrence. Jake looks on. An area clearly circled in red. Marked with an "X".

JAKE

The Ashau.

All the Soldiers look at one another. Concerned.

INT. HANGAR

A large table with a map on it. Jake, Lawrence, and the survivors look on. Technicians bring in weapons and equipment. A makeshift HQ.

HATCHER
Phan Tuc Airfield. Ashau Valley.

Faces turn grim.

VEGAS
Charlie's fucking turf man.

HATCHER
Major NVA infiltration route. Two
whole regiments. More than five
thousand men.

Jake ponders over the map.

JAKE
He wants us to come after him.

CROCKER
Then let's give the fucker what he
wants.

Warren walks up.

WARREN
I just talked to Saigon Harv.
General Graves is coming here
personally to shut us down.

LAWRENCE
How much time we got?

WARREN
Not enough.

Lawrence looks at his Squad.

JAKE
What's the plan boss?

Lawrence rubs his chin.

LAWRENCE
You all know this is a trap. I
can't ask any of you to go. But,
one way or another I'm finishing
this.

The Squad Members nod. Jake among them.

WESTWOOD
Skipper. I'm with you. One hundred
percent. But, how do we get to him?

Jake ponders. Murmurs aloud.

LAWRENCE
What you thinking Jake?

JAKE
He wants us all pretty bad.
(indicating the
destruction outside)
I don't think we need to go to him.
I think he'll come to us.

VEGAS
And how do we do that?

JAKE
Just like snaring a rabbit. We bait
him. Then, flush him out.

Lawrence nods. Impressed.

MR. PIG
But shit Major, we're going to need
more than the six of us.

Lawrence ponders. A lightbulb goes off.

LAWRENCE
Crocker. Get over to Da Nang. Roll
out Charlie's Birth Control.

CROCKER
Right.

He and Super Slick depart. Jake's confused.

JAKE
Birth control?

LAWRENCE
Yeah. You'll see.

EXT. RED BEACH - CHOPPER PAD

Over the ruins of burned out choppers, a massive, twin rotor
helicopter lands. Bad ass. Bristling with cannons. Painted on
the side: CHARLIE'S BIRTH CONTROL.

Lawrence and Jake watch it land. Jake turns to Lawrence.

JAKE
That makes sense now.

EXT. NAVAL BASE

Westwood drives a truck through the main gate.

LAWRENCE (V.O.)
Westwood. Man overboard dummies. A
half dozen.

A pair of SAILORS watch confused as Westwood and Vegas load several dummies into the rear of the truck.

INT. HANGAR

Several smaller maps are laid out on the table. Jake, Passmore, Lawrence and Warren pour over them. Hatcher uses a ruler. Measuring objects on the maps.

JAKE
What are these?

PASSMORE
Air Force bomb damage assessment
maps.

He points to the map. Areas marked with large red X's.

PASSMORE (CONT'D)
Fields of unexploded ordinance.

LAWRENCE
Hatcher?

HATCHER
A big one. About two clicks
southwest of the airfield. A mixed
bag of Mark Eighty Fours and
Rockeye cluster bombs.

LAWRENCE
Passmore?

PASSMORE
We wire them with claymores and det
cord. Light them up like a fucking
Christmas tree.

LAWRENCE
You're reading my mind.

Smiles all round. Confident.

EXT. CHOPPER PAD

The Soldiers are assembled. Ready for war. Loaded down with weapons and ammo. Lawrence stands before them.

LAWRENCE

Once we're out there. We won't likely be coming back. I know you all know that. But it needed to be said.

A long SILENCE.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

It's gonna get heavy. Real heavy.

JAKE

That's what we get paid for boss.

Lawrence smiles. The CH-47 engines WHINES. STARTING UP.

EXT. CH-47

Wearing camo and heavily armed, the Squad Members walk to the chopper move to the ramp and enter.

Its engine ROARS. Almost ready for take off. Suddenly, a dozen jeeps drive up. MP's. Surrounding the CH-47. Machine guns pointed at it.

INT. CH-47

Crocker SEES the jeeps.

CROCKER

Whoa! What the hell?

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL (V.O.)

(filtered)

Birth Control. Da Nang tower. Power down. You not cleared for takeoff.

EXT. CHOPPER PAD

Warren watches the confused situation. A command helicopter lands. GENERAL GRAVES strides out. White hair. West Point. A commanding authority. Flanked by a couple of AIDES.

GRAVES

Was it worth your pension Mack?

WARREN

Every last god damn penny.

They walk toward the CH-47.

INT. CH-47 - REAR DOOR

The Squad Members watch them approach.

JAKE

Looks like the game is up boss.

LAWRENCE

Wait here.

Jake watches Lawrence exit the CH-47 and approach Warren and Graves. Over the ROAR of the engines, he cannot HEAR what is being said.

It's an animated discussion. Maybe an argument. Graves points his finger at Lawrence who shouts back. Lawrence keeps talking. Grave's face changes. Lawrence stops. The General pauses for a moment. Then, says something.

Lawrence salutes. The General returns it. Lawrence dashes to the CH-47. Puts on his headset.

JAKE

What did you say to him?

LAWRENCE

It doesn't matter what I said. It only matters what he said.

He grabs a mic.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

(into mic)
Crocker. Let's go.

Jake smiles. Impressed with his commander.

EXT. CH-47

The large chopper lifts off into the air.

EXT. CHOPPER PAD

Warren and the General watch them go. Stone faced. Sombre.

EXT. CH-47 - DAY

The chopping flies on. Over the vast expanse jungle.

INT. CH-47

Jake checks his gear. So do the others. Faces tense. Taut.

INT. RED BEACH - HANGAR

Warren and Graves watch over the controllers at their stations. Hectic activity.

COLLINS
(turning to Warren)
Sir. They're in the Ashau.

Warren nods grimly.

EXT. CH-47 - LATER

Flying above the jungle mist.

INT. CH-47 - COCKPIT

Crocker at the controls. Watching the instrument panel. A red warning light blinks beneath the letters: RWR.

CROCKER
Man. That's creepy.

LAWRENCE (V.O.)
(filtered)
Say again Crock?

CROCKER
Major. Every gun in this valley is painting us on radar. They're not even throwing a rock.

EXT. JUNGLE - AIRFIELD

Surrounded by NVA Soldiers, Zippoman watches the helicopter climb above the valley. Tuan stands nearby.

TUAN
Northwest battery requests permission to fire.

ZIPPOMAN
Negative. No one fires.

INT. CH-47 - CARGO BAY

JAKE
I guess he's expecting us.

LAWRENCE
Let's not keep the prick waiting.

EXT. CH-47

The chopper climbs swiftly skyward.

INT. CH-47 - COCKPIT

Crocker levels the chopper off. High altitude.

CROCKER
We're over the drop zone.

INT. CH-47 - CARGO BAY

A HORN SOUNDS. The jump light switches from red to green.

LAWRENCE
Go! Go! Go!

EXT. JUNGLE - AIRFIELD

Far below, Zippoman keeps watching. Several objects fall from the helicopter.

Moments later, parachutes open and the objects fall downward, swinging beneath the canopies.

They drop behind a distant ridge and disappear from sight. Zippoman turns to Tuan.

ZIPPOMAN
Send them.

TUAN
(into radio; in
Vietnamese)
All units move out. Close on the
drop zone.

Hundreds of NVA Soldiers move out from the airfield and into the jungle. Weapons at the ready.

EXT. JUNGLE - LATER

The endless green is suddenly broken. A World War battlefield. A No-Man's Land. Shattered trees. Bomb craters. A landscape of death.

A barren and dead expanse. Bombs litter the area. A virtual minefield.

ZIPPOMAN

Set up the command post here.

TUAN

This far forward?

Zippoman turns. Looks at Tuan. Discussion over.

EXT. DEATH FIELD - NEARBY

The NVA Soldiers continue. Ready for anything.

Up ahead, A PARACHUTE BILLOWS IN THE WIND.

The NVA SOLDIERS freeze and take up defensive positions. Ready for an ambush.

A POINT MAN dashes forward.

Up ahead, the chute is draped over a shattered tree. Still in the harness is a body. Slumped over. Face turned away. Concealed by a hat. Camo fatigues. Dead?

The POINT MAN moves closer. He's just inches away. Then, he leaps around. Ready to pump rounds into the chest of

It's a dummy. A Man Overboard Dummy.

The NVA Soldiers are confused. The OFFICER looks around. Several large bombs nearby. He notices a claymore mine attached to it.

He looks around. There's another. And another. And another.

It's a trap.

EXT. BOMB CRATER - NOT FAR AWAY

Passmore watches. Big smile.

PASSMORE

Kaboom!

He presses the trigger.

EXT. DEATH FIELD

The bombs EXPLODE. BLASTS deafening. Setting off a chain reaction. The entire field EXPLODES. BLASTING geysers of earth high into the sky. Shredding NVA Soldiers. The blast blows Zippoman off his feet. Bits and pieces of bodies everywhere. A grisly scene.

The whole area has become eerie. SILENT.

LAWRENCE

Now!

The Squad Members rush from the crater. Mr. Pig BLASTS away with his machine gun. Passmore POPS off grenades from the launcher.

The Squad leapfrogs forward. Leaping into one crater. Laying down cover fire. Sprinting to the next. Dropping NVA Soldiers as they go.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

Push through! Push through!

EXT. ZIPPOMAN'S COMMAND POST

Zippoman's not smiling now. The Squad charges his position. But, he's not about to fall back.

ZIPPOMAN

Bring up the reserves!

EXT. JUNGLE - NEARBY

Ready to move. NVA COMMANDER signals with his hand.

NVA COMMANDER

Move up.

More NVA Soldiers pour into the death field.

EXT. RIDGELINE

The CH-47 suddenly climbs into view. Engines REVVING. Stopping the NVA Soldiers in the tracks. They're too exposed. Sitting ducks. The Chopper makes an attack run.

INT. CH-47 - COCKPIT

Crocker presses the talk button.

CROCKER
(into radio)
Port and starboard. Open up.

EXT. CH-47

The guns FIRE with a ROAR. Cutting down NVA Soldiers. It turns and flies on. Guns BLAZING.

EXT. DEATH FIELD - ZIPPOMAN'S COMMAND AREA

The NVA Soldiers are breaking. Falling back.

Disgusted, Zippoman throws the flamethrower unit over his back.

EXT. DEATH FIELD

The Squad charges forward. They are now just yards from Zippoman's Command Post.

LAWRENCE
Sweep left! Sweep left!

EXT. DEATH FIELD - ZIPPOMAN'S COMMAND AREA

FIRE from the CH-47. Bullets FALL everywhere. Tuan races up to Zippoman.

TUAN
They're using the chopper as cover!

Machine guns FIRE. Chewing up NVA Soldiers. Kicking up dirt. Zippoman grabs the radio.

ZIPPOMAN
Shoot it down!

EXT. JUNGLE - NEARBY

Anti-Aircraft guns OPEN FIRE from every direction. The helicopter twists and turns. Skillfully avoiding the barrage.

EXT. DEATH FIELD - ZIPPOMAN'S COMMAND AREA

The Squad penetrates the perimeter. The team reloads. Ready for the final assault. Lawrence nods to Jake. They move forward and OPEN FIRE.

Lawrence notices a NVA GUNNER slumped over a heavy machine gun.

LAWRENCE

Vegas!

He nods. Dashes behind the gun and OPENS UP. Under its covering FIRE, the Squad rushes in. Guns BLAZING. The NVA SHOOT back.

Jake dives to the ground. Takes up a firing position. Zippoman suddenly appears on the flank.

JAKE

There he is!

Jake moves to get a clear shot. But, Zippoman's got the drop on Vegas. A stream of FLAME HITS him. He screams. Tries to walk. But he drops, consumed by the flames.

MR. PIG

Vegas!

JAKE

Come on fucker. Come on.

Zippoman is almost in view. Takes careful aim. Jake's finger on the trigger. He's got him in his sights. One shot. One kill. This is it.

Just then, Lawrence is hit. He cries out. Jake looks over. Horrified.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Major!

Lawrence pulls himself up.

LAWRENCE

I'm fine!

Jake looks back into the scope but Zippoman is gone.

EXT. CH-47

BLASTS NVA Troops below.

EXT. DEATH FIELD

An NVA ROCKET TEAM crawl into position. Unseen by the helicopter. Quickly, they load the rocket and take aim.

ROCKET TEAM LEADER

Shoot.

The rocket streaks into the air.

EXT. CH-47

The rocket HITS the rotor hub. The helicopter lurches. Spirals.

INT. CH-47

Crocker fights the control stick. WHOOP! WHOOP! An ALARM SOUNDS.

CROCKER

Tail rotor is hit!

SUPER SLICK (O.S.)

(filtered)

Drive shaft failure!

CROCKER

We're losing oil pressure!

EXT. CH-47

A BURST of anti-aircraft FIRE HITS the chopper. Starts to fall from the sky.

CROCKER

(filtered; into radio)

We're going down! We're going down!

Mayday! Mayday!

EXT. CH-47

Spirals out of control. Falls out of view behind a ridge.

EXT. DEATH FIELD

Jake watches the chopper spiral away. So do the others. They know it now. They're done for.

EXT. ZIPPOMAN'S COMMAND POST

Zippoman smirks. Satisfied. HEARS GUNFIRE. Turns back to the action.

ZIPPOMAN

Move in.

The NVA Soldiers charge forward. Shell castings litter the earth. NVA Soldiers continue FIRING. Pressing the attack. The Squad FIRES back. Coming under heavy FIRE.

MR. PIG

A hundred meters! Still comin'

Jake keeps SHOOTING picking off NVA Soldiers as they charge in. Swarming in by the hundreds. Guns BLAZING.

HATCHER

They're all over the place!

Passmore rapid FIRES the grenade launcher.

LAWRENCE

Fall back!

The Squad starts retreating. SHOOTING as they do. More NVA Soldiers SHOOT back pouring rifle and machine gun FIRE into the Squad's position.

Hatcher gets HIT in the stomach. Goes down. Mr. Pig runs out of ammo. Then, Westwood gets HIT.

WESTWOOD

Fuck!

Drops to the ground. Sits up leans against a tree. Jake looks over. A BURST of FIRE stitches Westwood's chest. Finishes him off.

Lawrence keeps SHOOTING. CLICK. His ammo exhausted. Lawrence grabs his pistol. Keeps FIRING. Just then, he gets HIT again.

Jake moves toward Lawrence, who holds up his hand.

LAWRENCE

Stay there!

Jake SHOOTs. Dropping several NVA Soldiers.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)
 Jake! Fall back!

Jake freezes for a moment.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)
 Jake! Go!

He rises. FIRES. Pulls the trigger. CLICK. CLICK. Out of ammo. Jake runs as NVA Soldiers race in and capture the survivors.

Jake keeps running. Suddenly, a rocket WHOOSHES in. He dives for cover. A big EXPLOSION. He vanishes in the smoke.

Jake's gone. Lawrence frowns. The battlefield falls SILENT.

Passmore stands. Helps Mr. Pig to his feet. NVA Soldiers race over. SLUG them with rifle butts. They drop to the ground.

Zippoman walks up to Hatcher. Flamethrower ready.

ZIPPOMAN
 Hello Hatcher.

HATCHER
 (spits)
 Fuck you.

ZIPPOMAN
 Good bye Hatcher.

Zippoman pulls the trigger. A streak of flame WHOOSHES out. Envelopes Hatcher. He screams and dies.

Zippoman moves to Lawrence laying on the ground. Zippoman stands over him. Triumphant.

INT. HANGAR - DAY

Collins presses a button.

COLLINS
 (into radio)
 Five alpha. Sitrep. Over?

The only response. The HISS and SQUEAL of static. Graves turns to Warren.

THE GENERAL
 It's done.

Warren nods. Accepting.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

The battle is over. Hatcher. Dead. Vegas. Dead. Westwood. Dead.

An NVA Soldier cautiously approaches the hole where Jake's body should be. AK at the ready. He quickly looks in.

It's empty. Except for Jake's rifle. And there's blood on it.

EXT. BEACH - DUSK - HOURS LATER

Warren steps outside. Lights his cigar. Watches the waves. Listens to the SURF. Mourning his troops.

An Enlisted Soldier walks up.

COLLINS

(to Warren)

Sir. You have a collect phone call from Phuket Air Force Base in Thailand.

Warren shakes his head.

WARREN

What?

INT. RED BEACH HANGAR

Warren grabs a phone.

WARREN

Warren here.

INT. THAI AIR BASE - HANGAR

Crocker's there. Face blackened. Matted with sweat.

CROCKER

Colonel.

INT. HANGAR - RED BEACH/HANGAR - THAI AIR BASE

WARREN

Crocker? You're supposed to be dead.

CROCKER

Negative sir. Not today. Managed to limp to Thailand. What's the situation?

WARREN

We lost contact several hours ago. There's a small transit camp seven clicks west of the border. They might be near there.

CROCKER

Got it. How soon can you get a team over the fence?

WARREN

No one is going over the fence. Orders from MACV.

CROCKER

Shit. Somebody has to get in there.

WARREN

Well. Since your presently officially MIA?

CROCKER

On it sir. Roger that.

He hangs up the phone.

So does Warren. Concerned. He puffs on his cigar.

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

Dark. Pitch black. The ominous SOUNDS of the jungle.

EXT. HUT

A thatch roofed hut on stilts. Beside a river. The area, a muddy, slimy hellhole.

Lawrence, Passmore and Mr. Pig are confined in a bamboo cage. Wounded. Battered. Exhausted.

The hut door OPENS and Zippoman and Tuan emerge. Zippoman drinks from a bottle. Tuan follows. They walk to the cages.

Zippoman points at Lawrence. Smirks.

ZIPPOMAN

Him first.

EXT. FAR RIVERBANK - NIGHT

Jake's injured. Far side of the river. Hurt. Bleeding. Battered. Wounded. Looking through the broken rifle scope as Zippoman drags Lawrence toward the hut entrance.

JAKE

Christ.

He checks his web gear. No rifle. No sidearm. No ammo. No grenades. Only his knife and an injured arm.

Just then, a THUMPING on the shoreline. A sampan. He grits his teeth. Winces. Jaw tightens. A plan is being formed.

INT. HUT - NIGHT

The door CRASHES open and Lawrence is flung inside. Falls to his knees. Zippoman picks him up and tosses him into a chair. Lawrence's hands are tied behind him. He's bleeding. Bruised. Eyes hollow. Wounds, crudely bandaged.

ZIPPOMAN

Have a seat Harv.

Zippoman sits down across from him. The hut is filthy. A table and chairs. Bottles litter the place. A radio PLAYS MUSIC. The flamethrower pack rests on the ground.

Tuan SHUTS the door. Moves quickly to Zippoman.

TUAN

(quietly)

You should not have sent the guards away.

ZIPPOMAN

Relax Tuan. Have a drink.

Zippoman pulls a lighter from his pocket. Starts playing with it. CLICK. CLICK. CLICK. CLICK. The lighter reads: WIN THEIR HEARTS AND MINDS OR I WILL BURN DOWN YOUR FUCKING HOOCH.

Zippoman sings. He's calm. Arrogant. He picks up a revolver and opens the chamber. Puts in on the table in front of Lawrence.

ZIPPOMAN (CONT'D)

A little Russian Roulette. What do you say Harv? For old times sake.

LAWRENCE

Sure. You first.

Zippoman laughs.

ZIPPOMAN

Good to see you haven't lost your sense of humor.

LAWRENCE

No need to waste time, Scotty. Just get started.

ZIPPOMAN

That's what I like about you Harv. Always so eager.

LAWRENCE

But, you're not Scotty anymore are you? Zippoman.

ZIPPOMAN

I heard you gave me that name.

LAWRENCE

I heard you don't like it.

Zippoman's cocky smile fades. His eyes stab into Lawrence for a long moment. Then, he snaps out of it. Smirks.

ZIPPOMAN

What's in a name, huh?
(to Tuan)
Get the car battery.

Tuan hesitates. Looks over to the AK-47. Zippoman notices.

ZIPPOMAN (CONT'D)

Do you really think you need that?

A little embarrassed, Tuan grabs the pistol from the table and exits.

ZIPPOMAN (CONT'D)

(shouting after him)
Better hope there's only one.

Zippoman laughs. Cruel smile. Sinister look.

EXT. HUT

Tuan walks toward the shed. Something goes BUMP. He looks over.

The sampan BUMPS against some ROCKS. He walks over. Pistol in hand.

Looks inside. Walks around it. Nothing. He shrugs. Heads back toward the shed.

EXT. SHED

Tuan OPENS the shed door. Peers into the darkness. Can't SEE a thing. FLICKS the light switch. Nothing happens. He FLICKS and FLICKS it. Nothing happens.

Over his shoulder, Jake rises into view. Like a ghost from a grave. Crouching. Knife drawn. Moving in for the kill. Tuan has no idea.

A sudden flash of lightning startles Tuan and he turns.

From the corner of his eye, Jake's captured in the flash of LIGHTNING.

Tuan SEES him. Raises the gun. Jake charges. Grabs Tuan's wrist. They wrestle for the gun.

Jake headbutts Tuan. Who stumbles backwards. PULLS the TRIGGER. BLAM! Jake leaps forward onto Tuan's chest.

He buries the knife in Tuan's throat. A GURGLING SOUND. Blood seeps from his mouth. Tuan's eyes roll back. He dies.

INT. HUT - NIGHT

Zippoman looks out. Tuan's body lies motionless outside. Jake kneeling over him. Jake SEES Zippoman watching him. He grabs the pistol and dives for cover.

Zippoman turns to Lawrence.

ZIPPOMAN

We have a visitor.

Quickly, he moves to his flamethrower pack.

EXT. TALL GRASS

Jake hides. Watching the hut. He checks the revolver. No bullets. Empty. Useless.

A CRASHING SOUND. He looks up.

EXT. HUT - MOMENTS LATER

Tossed outside, Lawrence tumbles down steps to the ground below. A few yards from the cage holding Mr. Pig and Passmore, who watch helpless.

Zippoman emerges. Flamethrower pack on. Slowly, he walks down the steps. Scanning the night searching for Jake.

ZIPPOMAN

I've got my intel too kid.

He keeps looking. Finger massaging the trigger.

ZIPPOMAN (CONT'D)

Heard your pretty good with a rifle.

He shakes his head.

ZIPPOMAN (CONT'D)

Me? I like to get close enough to smell them burn.

(beat)

How close were you kid? Did you smell him burn? Hear him scream?

EXT. GRASS NEARBY

Jake remains out of sight. Eyes closed. Gripping the earth in tight fists.

INTERCUT: EXT. HUT/EXT. GRASS NEARBY

Zippoman smirks.

ZIPPOMAN

You we're. Weren't you?

Zippoman nods. Certain of it. Points the flamethrower at the cage.

ZIPPOMAN (CONT'D)

Step out kid or I'll cook them all.

Mr. Pig grasps the bars.

MR. PIG

Go Jake! Get the fuck out of here man!

Zippoman pays not attention. Then, he turns and sprays a SHOT OF FLAME that barely clears Lawrence.

ZIPPOMAN

Now kid.

Jake rises from the grass. Still wounded. A little shaky. Holding the pistol.

ZIPPOMAN (CONT'D)

Gun's empty.

Jake tosses it down.

JAKE

Yeah boss I know.

They stand there. Sizing each other up. A long, long moment.

ZIPPOMAN

Did you hear? They raised the bounty on you to one hundred thousand.

JAKE

Didn't know. Lucky you. You get to collect.

Zippoman chuckles sarcastically.

ZIPPOMAN

If it makes you feel better, it's not just about the money.

He raises the flamethrower.

JAKE

There's one thing you should know.

He lowers it slightly.

ZIPPOMAN

What's that?

JAKE

I'm pretty good with a knife too.

Jake throws it like a bolt of lightning. But, it misses Zippoman and THWACKS into the hut behind him.

Lawrence's face says it all. We're dead men.

ZIPPOMAN

You missed kid.

JAKE

Don't be so sure.

Fuel suddenly splashes from a rubber hose and sprays all over Zippoman. Soaking him. He presses the trigger again and again. Starved of fuel, the weapon won't fire.

It's in his eyes. He cries out. Struggling to get out of the pack, he manages to free himself and throw it aside.

Jake pulls something from his pocket and holds up a Zippo lighter. It reads: BROTHERS IN MUD, BROTHERS IN BLOOD.

JAKE (CONT'D)

A friend of mine gave this to me.

Jake and Zippoman's eyes meet. Jake FLICKS the lighter. Zippoman grimaces. He's done for.

JAKE (CONT'D)

He'd want you to have it.

Jake tosses the lighter. Lands at Zippoman's feet. He IGNITES. Staggered. A blood curdling scream. He falls. His body being incinerated. He's dead.

Jake watches. Mission accomplished. Friends avenged.

He looks to Lawrence. Who nods. It's done.

EXT. HUT - CAGES - MOMENTS LATER

Jake FLINGS opens the cage containing Mr. Pig and Passmore. He pulls them out. They all collapse beside Lawrence. They're all bleeding. Battered. Exhausted. Almost dead.

Nearby, the flames consumes what's left of Zippoman.

JAKE

(weakly)

Nice night for a barbarque.

They all laugh.

EXT. CHOPPER - DAWN

The CH-47 flies above the jungle. Shrouded in morning mist.

INT. CH-47 - COCKPIT

Crocker searches. Eyes sweeping the ground. Super Slick the in co-pilot seat. He suddenly points.

SUPER SLICK
(filtered)
Got something. Two o'clock.

Crocker looks down.

EXT. POW CAMP - MORNING

Jake, Lawrence, Mr. Pig and Passmore stand below. Jake holding Lawrence up.

INT. CH-47 - COCKPIT

Super Slick turns to Crocker.

SUPER SLICK
That them?

CROCKER
You're damn right it is.

EXT. CH-47

The chopper lands. They climb aboard. It takes off and flies away.

INT. BARRACKS - DAY

Jake gets dressed. Mirror shined shoes. Crisp khaki uniform of the United States Marines. Razor sharp creases. Chest full of medals.

Standing taller. Straighter. Prouder. Reborn. He turns.

Lawrence stands in the doorway. Bandaged. Looking at Jake.

JAKE
Ready.

EXT. AIRBASE

They drive toward a jet parked near a runway. A jet way leads from the ground to the passenger door.

Lawrence stops the jeep They get out and face one another.

JAKE
Next stop. Oakland.

LAWRENCE
And from there?

JAKE
Back home. I guess.

LAWRENCE
You earned it.

JAKE
Thank you sir. What about you? What happens now?

LAWRENCE
Unit's shut down. I guess this war will be my last.

JAKE
You'll miss it. Won't you?

LAWRENCE
It's been my whole life.

A long moment of SILENCE. The jet's engines START UP.

JAKE
There's something I need to know.

LAWRENCE
Name it.

JAKE
Before we took off for the Ashau. What did you say to the General?

LAWRENCE
(smiling)
I told you. It doesn't matter what I said. It only matters what he said.

JAKE
And what was that?

LAWRENCE
Get the fucker.

Jake and Lawrence laugh. Drowned out by an approaching chopper. Getting LOUDER. It flies overhead. Lands nearby. Warren climbs out. Races over.

WARREN

Need to talk Harv. Urgent.

LAWRENCE

Why is that?

WARREN

A patrol from Second Battalion Fourteenth Infantry ran into an NVA unit along the Cambodian border.

LAWRENCE

Why tell me Colonel?

WARREN

The unit radioed in. The NVA were commanded by two Americans. One black. One white.

JAKE

Salt and Pepper.

Warren nods.

WARREN

I just got a call from MACV.
Consider yourself reactivated.

Lawrence looks to Jake who shrugs. Struggles out of his sling.

JAKE

I got nothing else planned today.

Jake and Lawrence laugh. Warren nods. Approving. They hurry to the chopper and get aboard. It lifts off and climbs away.

FADE OUT.