

SNIPER 4

Treatment
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Over the OPENING CREDITS, a VIDEO MONTAGE of news footage pieces together a brief visual history of the Vietnam War, the first war in American history that was broadcast right into people's living rooms:

GIs engaged in various missions, firefights, rolling through bombed out cities, villages and scorched rice paddies. NVA soldiers mobilizing, ducking in and out of tunnels. Helicopters and planes dropping their staggering payloads of explosives over the scarred landscapes. LBJ announcing he won't be seeking re-election. Richard Nixon. Ho Chi Minh. Protests on the American streets chanting "Hey hey LBJ, how many children did ya kill today?" MLK. Madame Nu. Abbie Hoffman. Robert Scheer. A haunted young soldier talking about killing men, women, children...and babies. The Paris Peace accords. Ending the montage on the civilians caught in the cross fire of this vicious and bloody conflict. Villages bombed and napalmed into oblivion. The scorched dead, the traumatized survivors...

Off these haunting images, we are now in the present. In a dimly lit MILITARY COURTROOM. It is the beginning of an inquiry, being presided over by a scattering of grim-faced officers showing no emotion. The council is McKENNA, Marines Intelligence. It's a preliminary hearing into events of nearly 40 years ago during the Vietnam War.

The COLONEL presiding over the inquiry wonders, "Why now? What events?"

McKenna responds that it all has to do with the recent suicide death of Retired Marine CAPTAIN IAN HANSON, former CEO of defense contractor International Aeronautic Design (IAD).

And the true nature of the events of the infamous An Loc Massacre.

That takes everyone present by surprise.

"But before I introduce physical evidence into the record that will prove what really happened at An Loc," Colonel McKenna tells the Court, "I want to call the witness who brought this all to my attention."

And with that the door to the courtroom swings open and in walks THOMAS BECKETT.

He's a little more grizzled than when last we saw him, a little older, a little slower. And yet those smoky blue eyes still burn with the contagious calm of the lifelong warrior, the epic hero. Dressed in full Marine Master Gunnery Sergeant uniform.

Beckett regards McKenna with a respectful nod as he takes a seat in the witness chair, and McKenna asks Beckett to tell the court what transpired on the date of February 11, 1973.

Beckett considers this for a long while, and then, slowly responds: "I went AWOL."

McKenna: “Wouldn’t it be more accurate to call it a rogue mission?”

Beckett shrugs, “Call it whatever you like, Sir.”

McKenna explains to the panel that Beckett had requested this inquiry to get on the record the troubling events that led up to his “rogue mission” in the fall of that dark year.

The Colonel notes that all this is already on the record, to which Beckett counters:

“The record is a lie. My lie.”

The Colonel glares down at Beckett with, “Are you saying that according to your record, on February 11, 1973 you were not lost from your platoon? But that you knowingly left your command?”

“Yes, Sir!” Beckett answers.

Glances all around as everyone sits there stunned.

“Why, Master Gunnery Sergeant?” The Colonel demands.

“Revenge, sir!” Beckett answers.

On this, McKenna asks Beckett to refresh the panel’s memories of all the events that lead up to that day...

Beckett is silent for a long while, as the memory of the events, so long ago and yet so relevant today, play through his mind...

Back in time. Viet Nam jungle...

We can hear the deafening ROAR of a HELICOPTER: “It all happened near the beginning of the end in ‘nam, starting with my first day in country, late summer 1972...”

And on this we are hundreds of feet in the air, watching the alternately verdant, alternately battle-scarred Vietnamese landscape whizzing by from inside a helicopter..

Inside the chopper are FIVE GRUNTS, fresh from boot camp at Ft. Bragg. In their short time together, they’ve become quite close. They’re just kids. Some barely out of high school, some college. The young men are brimming with excitement, anticipation and balls-to-the-wall terror of the unknown as they shoot the shit amongst themselves.

The fifth member of this group, however, doesn’t say a word, lost in his own thoughts. This is PFC THOMAS BECKETT. Though there is a glint of bright-eyed optimism, a contrast to the man he will one day become, that measured and contagious calm is already there, and he sees and hears everything.

The chopper dusts down on a ravaged rice paddy that has been transformed into a make-shift tent city command center, trying to keep things together in a situation that's deteriorating by the second.

There to greet them is LIEUTENANT WELLS, his youthful good looks starkly juxtapose with a face that has seen more than most men twice his age, as he watches the five new grunts drop onto the dusty earth from the chopper, shaking each of the men's hands and then leading them toward their new platoon.

As the men get in line behind their new C.O., they can't help but notice the truly gruesome sight of a quintet of bloody, fly-covered corpses in Marines CAMOS strewn in the back of a half track, rotting in the baking afternoon sun.

Lt. Wells: "You're their replacements. Some gook motherfuckers snuck up on 'em while they were gettin' high, an' slit their throats."

That night they meet the rest of their platoon. Guys their age but years ahead of them. The horror of it all reflected in their dead eyes.

It's a bizarre night. And none get any sleep. Nerves on edge. The war POUNDING all around them.

At daybreak they're rattled out of bed by the Platoon's SGT. LARSON and on their feet, moving out.

The 9 MAN PLATOON makes its way up the gentle grassy slope away from the rice paddy and into the jungle. And though Lt. Wells gives orders to the platoon, he's taking *his* orders from THREE SPECIAL OPS who are leading the mission, making 12 THE TOTAL NUMBER OF MEN IN THE PARTY.

The Special Ops aren't a talkative bunch, and rumor amongst the grunts has it that they are DELTAS, the mythical elite unit whose existence, to this day, the Pentagon will neither confirm nor deny.

Not knowing where they're going, or why, the grunts hump. Through the jungle, the paddies, bombed out villages, swamp, through blazing heat and freezing monsoons. We see this epic journey through Beckett's eyes. Seeing how each man responds to different pressures.

Sure they might be terrified of the horrors of combat, but at the same time, they're itching for some action, and are growing restless, some even passing around joints. Incredibly good shit that a couple of the guys picked up last time they were in Bangkok for a little fuckin' R&R.

The most excitement they get is when they come upon hidden tunnels, part of the vast-network that helped the outgunned NVA wage their guerilla campaign.

The Deltas, it turns out, are incredibly adept at finding those tunnels, and each time they do, one of the grunts are ordered to strip off all his gear, except for a flashlight, knife and revolver and squeeze their way through the tunnel.

The men all wait with growing apprehension, minutes seeming like hours, until the grunt pops up yet again. No sign of the elusive foe. "Some ugly motherfuckin' spiders!" he grimaces as he equips back up and they push onward.

The platoon is led up a grassy hill toward a thick tree line. It is an incredibly gorgeous afternoon, and when they get into the trees, streams of sunlight filter in through the branches, creating a stunning ethereal glow that lifts the men's spirits, as the Deltas allow them to break for a quick lunch.

As they eat, a few are passing around a joint whenever the LT. and SGT. look the other way. Others are swapping (mostly false or exaggerated) tales of female conquests and telling about their girlfriends and wives back home...

On the move again a few men break out into an acapella rendition of "My Girl." Some singing the lyrics, another, Pfc. Hefler, matches them with that famed James Jamerson bass line.

It's like they're not soldiers in the middle of a brutal and bloody conflict but Boy Scouts, on a weekend hike through the wilderness.

One of the Deltas tells them to shut it down. And they go quiet...

All except for Pfc. Hefler, who grins and quietly continues to finish the base line of the song, stepping on a BOUNCING BETTY...

The explosion is deafening, the carnage instant and shocking. **HALF HIS BODY HAS BEEN BLOWN UPWARD INTO A TREE!**

The other half lies on the ground, a bloody torn mess!

The whole area is suddenly shrouded in deathly silence as the men stand around, as if frozen in a daze. One of the men continues to sing, in a daze, "Talkin' 'bout my girl..."

"SHUT THE FUCK UP!" That's Sgt. Larson, who then turns to Lt. Wells, deferring to him as what to do next. "Get him down from there," the momentarily stunned Wells says.

The Deltas watch as the Marines struggle to figure out a way to even get up into the tree to scrape the carnage that used to be a man, when...

A MORTAR ROUND explodes at their feet. And another.

And soon the afternoon is plunged into brutal violence as automatic gunfire and tracer rounds rain down on our platoon from unseen vantage points in the trees.

For Beckett and his remaining friends from Ft. Bragg, this is their bloody initiation into the horrors of war, and they quickly fall in line under the Sergeant's barking orders, digging in and returning fire!

It's a vicious battle, horrific in its immediacy and intensity, in its stunning and unflinching violence, made all the more intense as a thick pea soup FOG rolls in all around them.

Three men, four if you count poor Pfc. Hefler whose top half is still tangled in the tree above them, are lost in the battle. Including SGT. MAIN, the platoon's scout SNIPER.

He tries to pinpoint the enemy sniper, and just when he gets him in the crosshairs, he sees the enemy aiming his gun right at him! And before he can get a shot off, the enemy sniper FIRES! The bullet kills him instantly.

As the firefight rages on Beckett's M-16 jams and he tosses the weapon aside, picking up SGT. MAIN'S M-40 and tearing off its legs.

As deafening bullets rain all around him he relies on that Montana hunting instinct and does some major damage to the enemy.

A request for air support is radioed in, and before long F-16s are zooming overhead as the Marines fall back, and the entire hillside is napalmed into oblivion!

And as the roar of the jet planes disappear into the distance, the platoon is left to pick up the pieces.

Lt. Wells is preparing his platoon to hunker down until the choppers can haul away the bodies and (hopefully) bring in some reinforcements, when the Deltas tell him they need to keep moving.

Wells is shocked, and horrified, starting to lose his shit, shouting at the Deltas, who never break their grim façade: "Where the fuck are we going? Answer me, God damn it!"

But they won't answer, simply saying that it's top secret.

Lt. Wells: "Bull fucking shit! I lost four men today. And you're telling me to leave them behind! I have to write their families for God's sake. I NEED TO KNOW THEY DIDN'T DIE IN VAIN! Tell me that at least."

Finally, one of the Deltas mutters, "They didn't die in vain."

And with that, the Deltas move out, back toward that napalmed-to-hell tree line...

The REMAINING 8 MEN continue their hump through the fog as they pass by what was, literally minutes ago, a lush and beautiful jungle, and is now like some extraterrestrial landscape, bare ash white hulks of charred wood jutting up like rotted teeth.

The remainder of the journey is uneventful, and by the time they reach a clearing in the trees, somewhere near the Cambodian border, and the Deltas proclaim, “We’re here,” morale amongst the platoon is incredibly low.

The next thing they see, as they reach a high ridge, is as astounding and unbelievable as anything they had yet seen:

Situated in a 5-acre clearing down below about a mile away, in the middle of all this God forsaken chaos and death, like some relic from the antebellum South, is a sprawling and idyllic French colonial PLANTATION.

Back in the present. In the Courtroom...

Beckett stops for a second. Remembering...

“Who lived at this place? McKenna asks.

“A man named Guy Marquis. His wife. Son... and daughter.” Beckett answers.

“They were our mission. To get them safely out of the jungle, to Saigon... then on to Paris. Only we didn’t know that part of it at the time. We only knew that we had to get them back to a rendezvous point for extraction.”

Back in time. The jungle...

The Deltas tell Lt. Wells to keep his men posted at the edge of the plantation as drop down off the ridge. Wells inquires as to what they are going in for, but the Deltas ignore him and move out.

After several minutes, the Deltas return, and what they have in tow is as stunning and out of place as this whole strange plantation.

The Deltas have met up with A FRENCH FAMILY, father, GUY MARQUIS, his wife and two kids, the eldest is a 17 year-old beauty, so close in age to most of the men.

Though the men appreciate the eye candy, they can’t believe they have to baby sit some civilians through this hellish trip, wonder why they can’t just airlift them out, to which the Deltas inform them that the whole area is hot, and it’s unlikely the chopper would survive touching down at the plantation, to say nothing of liftoff.

So they are going to take the family to a safer LZ ten clicks north by northwest from this location. As well as their luggage, which is strapped on the backs of MULES.

And so, with the RANKS OF THE PARTY HAVING ONCE AGAIN SWELLED TO 12 (excluding the mules) the journey continues.

And the rain is still coming down, sometimes in a fine mist, sometimes in drenching sheets, but since it started during that first battle, it hasn't stopped, even for a second.

The Deltas decide to alter the mission somewhat, making towards a location codenamed LONEWOLF, which is actually a hidden CACHE that is stockpiled with extra weaponry, ammo, medical supplies and rations. The operating necessities for Special Forces missions that might last months without returning home.

And so the platoon humps through the thick, swirling jungle mist toward this cache, coming to a densely wooded area, at the middle of which is a rock formation. And in the center of the rock formation, that's where they start to dig.

But they don't have to dig too far until, THUNK, they hit wood.

It's the door to the weapons cache, and as they get it open, the Deltas order the platoon to make a perimeter.

Beckett and the others guard Guy Marquis and his family outside the cache as the Deltas go underground. And what they find inside is as unsettling as every other God damned detail about this mission. The weapons and ammo are gone!

And then, to make matters a million times worse, one of the Deltas sets off some sort of trip wire that's been set and the whole cache suddenly goes up in a WHITE HOT FIREBALL!

A deafening explosion that kills all the Deltas instantly and Guy Marquis and his son, reducing the number in the party to 7 MEMBERS.

Lt. Wells tries to radio for air support but his frequency is suddenly being jammed! Which confuses him because to the best of any of their knowledge, the VC doesn't have the technical know-how to jam radio transmissions.

Sgt. Larson regroups what's left of the Platoon and they move out, low on ammo, back into the jungle.

Madame Marquis and her daughter scared out of their wits.

And Beckett and the Sgt. Larson realize that they're being "tailed.."

Shadows move stealthily through the dense jungle on their edge. Watching. Hunting...

Minutes seem like hours! The silence is deafening. The fear like a razors edge...

And then all hell breaks loose!

The attack comes from all directions. Above from sniper fire. Through the jungle from ground troops.

But the platoon holds its own in the beginning.

Beckett, who wields that M-40 sniper rifle with surprising authority, keeps trying to get the snipers but he slowly realizes that it's only ONE sniper with a "signature" kill. A perfect head shot every time.

The enemy sniper must simply be moving around from tree to tree searching for an angle. But how he is able to move so quickly remains a mystery.

Pinned and low on ammo, the platoon is in big trouble. The radio is still jammed.. And the jungle mists swirl around like the devil's cauldron, threatening to swallow them whole.

Daylight starts to give way to nightfall and insanity descends! Mortars screeching overhead. The night lit up like some garish sideshow with tracers and GUNFIRE.

Beckett takes Madame. Marquis and her daughter into a muddy trench behind the bloody carcass of one of the dead mules and protects them, firing back at unseen targets and shadows in the melee.

One by one the platoon starts to go down in the bloodbath...

Until only 6 REMAIN: Beckett, the women, her daughter, Lt. Wells, who has been badly wounded, immobilized by several gunshot wounds, Sgt. Larson and one of Beckett's Ft. Bragg buddies 'DUST' WILSON.

And then it all suddenly stops...

The jungle turns deathly silent. No sign of the enemy anywhere...

Beckett scans the tree tops in the fading light. Nothing...

Dust is beside himself because those bastards are retreating. And indeed, as Beckett gazes around the jungle he can see shadows moving through the trees, away from them.

Dust has had enough. "Let's get the fuck outta here," he yells to Beckett. And with that he's on his feet...

A bad mistake... and Beckett yells back, "NO! He's still..."

A GUNSHOT cuts him off...

And drops Dust in a dead run!

The women scream in terror and Becket pushes them father into the ditch, quieting them...

Everything goes dead silent again. Nothing moves.

All eyes in the direction of the Sniper's last position...

"Where is he?" Lt. Wells yells out and another GUNSHOT shatters the nightfall as a bullet slams into the side of the young CO's head, killing him instantly!

Now it's just Beckett, Sgt. Larson and the two women, who whimper, crying in terror.

Silence again. Long moment...

Beckett rises up, trying to get a look and a shot RINGS out as his shoulder erupts with blood and knocks him back into the ditch. The Sniper missed. Won't happen again...

Beckett grimaces in pain, trying to stop the blood flow...

"Are you hit?" Sgt. Larson yells out.

And another GUNSHOT from behind him blows the front of his head out in a spray of blood and brains...

Beckett knows the worst has happened. And he sits there in the ditch in the pouring rain, praying for nightfall to come...

Back to the present. In the Courtroom...

Beckett sits there for a second as the memory troubles him... and then...

"The only thing that saved my life was night came on and he couldn't see anymore. He knew I was hit. But not dead. How he missed I'll never know. But we all have that one that got away..."

Becket ponders that for a moment and then, "He wasn't going to take any chances in the dark. So he waited. And so did I. All night. And at the first light of day... he took the mother..."

Back in time. The jungle...

A GUNSHOT shatters the silence and the mother's head explodes, splattering her daughter awake with blood!

The young woman instantly bolts in terror and Becket grabs her ankle, trying to stop her! Begging her to come back! But her muddy wet leg slips out of his grasp and she runs...

Another GUNSHOT drops the daughter dead in her tracks and Becket screams in rage as he FIRES back at the Sniper's position until he empties his rifle...

Everything goes silent for a moment, again. For what seems like an eternity...

And then Beckett hears something that chills him to the bone! FAINT LAUGHTER!

Back to the present. In the Courtroom...

"He just walked away and left me to die... or whatever." Beckett says. "It didn't matter to him. He'd got what he came for."

Meaning what, the Colonel asks?

"The family," Beckett answers.

"I don't understand?" The Colonel asks, confused.

"At the time, neither did Master Gunnery Sergeant Beckett, Sir" McKenna says. "But we're getting a little ahead of ourselves.. May the Sergeant continue, Sir?"

"Continue, Mr. Beckett..."

Back in time. Saigon. U.S. Military Hospital...

Beckett awakens to find himself heavily bandaged and alone in a hospital bed surrounded by monitors. As his eyes start to focus to his new surroundings, he sees a WOMAN with the prettiest face he can ever remember seeing.

Try as he might, Beckett can't remember how he got here. But the staggering pain he feels, in his shoulder, in his chest, the splitting ache in his head, lets him know he's alive. And also lets him know it's too much effort staying awake, and so he drifts off again, memories playing through his head...

Back in the jungle...

Rain pounds down and a VOICE suddenly yells, "This one's still alive!"

A blur of YOUNG MARINE FACES appear, silhouetted against LIGHTNING FLASHES in the dark sky above, gazing down at something that repulses, and we see what they see. Beckett half floats in the ditch, filled with bloody water and the guts from the mule...

Saigon. U.S. Military Hospital...

When Beckett awakens again, he is no longer in that single hospital room, but a long white washed room filled with beds of other recovering soldiers.

Everyone is paying attention to the black-and-white TV's mounted to the wall, that drone the news that Richard Nixon has announced that the U.S. will reduce troop numbers by 70%.

It's the beginning stages of the end in Saigon. Months will pass before the pull out but the news will spread. And the streets will fill with fear and uncertainty...

"You're awake," comes a musically beautiful voice and Beckett sees it is that same pretty woman.

Her name is SIDNEY NILLSON, military nurse. She tells him it's a miracle he's still breathing, the only survivor of his platoon.

And even though she's not supposed to get emotionally attached to a patient, ever since she helped removed that bullet from Beckett's shoulder, she's felt responsible for him, like she has a personal stake in his survival. Like there's something special about him.

The days go by and Beckett's body is healing, his strength returning.

On the television the chaos in the streets is growing...

Sidney checks on him as much as she can, and the two of them begin to share their personal stories. Where they grew up. Families. Schools.

She wants to become a doctor when the war is over. He's always wanted to be a soldier. Maybe it's because Sidney wants to salvage something good and sweet and sacred from all this death and destruction. And maybe Beckett wants to salvage something of the naïve, tender and sweet young man he had been not long ago.

Whatever it is, his days are spent in anticipation of those precious moments when he can see Sidney.

His nights, on the other hand, are hell. The memories playing over his fevered and fragmented mind, piecing together those moments...

Back in the jungle...

Pfc. Hefler's body in the tree... Dust getting blown away... the mother's head blown apart... trying to hold on to the young woman's leg... the spray of blood from her head as she tumbles to the mud...

Saigon. U.S. Military Hospital...

He awakens with a start...

That day he's debriefed about the mission. It's not only military. There's civilians there.

He tells them everything he can remember. About the battles. The empty weapons cache. The jammed radio. He asks about the family? Why were they escorting them? He gets no answer. Just that it was top secret. They ask about the sniper? Did he see him? What about the NVA soldiers they fought? Why was he left alive? He doesn't know...

As the days pass, Beckett's strength slowly returns and he begins to explore the grounds of this sprawling Manila military base with Sydney. Spending more time with her...

But still not able to shake from his mind that enemy sniper, who single-handedly did more damage to his platoon than any other enemy combatant.

In the hospital there's a young scout sniper named HURLEY. He was wounded in a fire fight near Da Nang. Beckett presses him for information about snipers. Hurley tells him to hook up with the "Snake Killers." That's what they call the training company there on the base for snipers.

Beckett checks them out. At first they're hesitant to talk to him. A wounded soldier is damaged goods to elite groups like that. Especially someone that got out alive when the rest of his platoon died.

But one of them, SGT. COFEEN takes an interest when Beckett starts talking about the sniper he faced.

One night Sgt. Cofeen takes Beckett down to the city. And it's out amongst the populace that we truly get a glance at the decaying situation, the streets aglow with bedlam and looting, angry young men hurling insults at Beckett and Cofeen as they drive past.

They finally arrive at the really seedy side of Saigon to meet an American ex-Marine called "Dead Man." They find him in a bar/whore house. Dead Man is a wily character with a grotesque deformation from where a bullet took a huge chunk of his head off. Leaving him without one eye and a constant drool.

In the dense smoky house of flesh he listens to Beckett tell his story about this incredible sniper he faced and when he's done, Dead Man nods and tells him that the sniper was "The Frenchman".

A legendary soldier left over from the French Special Services. He's the same man that took half of Dead Man's head off with a shot. It's only by a miracle that he lived.

How does he move so fast, Beckett asks. He was everywhere at the same time?

He uses the tunnels. Knows the jungle like a cat. Always head shots. Rarely misses..

“Why is he working with the NVA?” Beckett asks.

Dead Man shoots a look at Sgt. Cofeen and then back at Beckett with, “He’s not. They’re dressed to look like NVA but they’re really Cambodian. A rogue Khmer Rouge unit. Running the opium trade.”

And much more...

There’s money in war. Corporations in the U.S., U.K., France and Germany are all striking it rich.

No one wants to see it end but everyone knows the end is coming soon, and everyone wants to get everything they can before this place descends deeper into hell.

“So what are you telling me?” Beckett asks.

Again, Dead Man shoots a look at Cofeen...

“Have you heard about what happened in An Loc?” Dead Man asks Beckett?

“A little,” Beckett answers, “they’re still investigating it.”

They’re not doing shit, Dead Man tells him. It’s being covered up...

Back in the present. In the courtroom...

“Why would the United States Government cover up the massacre at An Loc? It was done by NVA?” McKenna asks Beckett.

“It wasn’t a U.S. Government cover up. Just a handful of individuals. An Loc was made to look like a NVA massacre.” Beckett answers. “But the real reason was to assassinate a man named Pham Quat.”

He was a member of the notorious South Vietnamese National Police, an incorruptible wildcard who had been methodically cleaning things up, cracking down, in particular, on the flourishing opium trade.

According to Dead Man, Pham Quat was known to be in the village of An Loc the night it was attacked. Not by NVA as the reports say but by the rogue Khmer Rouge unit and their leader “The Frenchman”.

Under direct orders of some rogue French Special Forces and American military.

It was all about money. Getting as much as they could before the war was over...

“You have proof of this?” The Colonel asks.

“If Master Gunnery Sergeant Beckett may continue, Sir?” McKenna requests...

Back in time. Saigon. U.S. Military Hospital...

“After that meeting with the Dead Man I started to hang with the Snake Killers.”
Beckett’s voice fades into...

Though still officially a PFC grunt, Beckett fits in well. Still with the M-40 sniper rifle in his possession from his fallen comrade, Beckett joins in training and damned if he’s not the best shot around, quickly gaining the respect from the other snipers, who already consider him one of them.

Meanwhile, his relationship with Sydney is starting to take a back seat to Beckett’s growing desire to get back “in country.”

And then one day Sgt. Cofeen comes to him to say that he’s been assigned to another unit.

With the precipitous decrease in the American military presence, their mission is to demilitarize as much of the country as possible before it’s overrun by the “enemy.” That means destroying tent cities, staging areas, fox holes, LZs, etc. The assignment calls for a second scout sniper. Does Beckett want in?

Absolutely! Just one thing is needed and that’s a medical clearance....

At first Sydney tries to talk him out of it. He’s not ready to go back into combat. But the determination in his eyes tells her that there’s no stopping him and she relents and takes his request to the doctor, who clears him for duty.

It’s a bittersweet farewell between them. Him promising they’ll see each other again. Her not so sure...

Beckett tells one of the new wounded Marines, a guy named Finnegan, to take care of her for him and Finnegan agrees to gladly...

“And take care of yourself, Beckett,” Finnegan tells him, “it’s a small country. We’ll meet up out there again before it’s all over...”

Back in the present. In the Courtroom...

Beckett sits there lost in a memory for a moment and then he looks up at the waiting faces... and continues...

“We humped the jungle for three days straight without seeing a soul. It gave me a lot of time to think about what had happened on that first mission to get Guy Marquis and his family out. What if Cofeen was right? What if the gooks we’d run into weren’t NVA but this rogue Cambodian unit and its French sniper? The NVA might not have the technical know-how to jam a radio transmission, but the French Special Ops sure as shit would.”

“And you think they attacked you to kill the French family?” McKenna asks.

“I didn’t at the time. But during that second mission I started thinking about what the Dead Man said. About what happened at An Loc.” Becket answers.

“And it occurred to you that Guy Marquis might have had some information about that matter that someone didn’t want made public?” McKenna inquires.

“At the time it seemed insane. To compromise that mission would have meant that our own people were involved.” Becket answers. Eyes narrowing with that old rage...

“The mission had been ordered by General Jack Hastings. He was just a Major back then.” Beckett adds...

And there’s glances all around the courtroom...

Beckett gazes from one man to the next... and then continues, “On the fourth day out we came on some opium runners...”

Back in time. In the jungle...

The platoon, 11 MEN in total, has the high ground, on a ridge looking down on a cut in the jungle...

Below, a heavily armed UNIT (12 MEN) makes their way through the thick foliage, escorting HUMAN PEASANT MULES (10 MEN) who struggle with huge bags of POPPY BULBS on their backs.

Beckett and the others watch from above. Cofeen whispers that they’re Cambodians. And this gets Beckett’s attention. The Cambodians?

Don’t know. But most likely some of them.

A decision is made to leave them go. Their mission is to engage NVA only...

But as the Marines silently move out, one of them loses his footing and makes a sound... All hell breaks out as a battle wages between both sides...

The peasant mules dump their cargo and take off running...

The Marines have the high advantage and Beckett and Cofeen begin to pick the Cambodian gunners off one by one.

The Cambodians begin to spread out in the jungle for cover and the Marines give chase...

The battle continues. Bloody. Marines also dropping...

At some point, Beckett finds himself alone, out of sight from the others...

It's eerie in the thick. Not being able to see anything. Not knowing what you're about to step on...

And then he suddenly spots one of the Cambodian gunners! He's been wounded. And he's crashing through the jungle, bleeding, heading for... safety...

In the present. In the Courtroom...

"And that's when you made the decision to create your own rogue mission?" McKenna asks Beckett.

"As I said, sir, call it what you want. I went AWOL." Beckett answers. "I left my command."

"To do what, Mr. Beckett?" The Presiding Colonel asks.

"To kill that French sniper." Beckett answers boldly.

"But you were under orders to only engage the NVA." McKenna reminds him.

"Yes, sir. But this was my only chance to get that bastard, excuse my French..."

That brings a faint smile to McKenna's face. And a few of the others present...

The Colonel is not amused! "So then what happened, Mr. Beckett?"

"I followed the wounded Cambodian..."

Back in time. In the jungle...

Completely on his own, Beckett makes his way through the dense jungle with nothing more than a general sense of where he's going, following the blood trail left by the Cambodian...

Constantly at war with the unpredictable elements and terrain, constantly on the lookout for enemy eyes, which could be anywhere.

As the afternoon wears on, Beckett nearly gets caught by an NVA patrol, ducking off to the side of the overgrown path, his ghillie suit providing just enough camouflage..

And by nightfall his target has lead him back to of all places, the ruins of An Loc village, the scene of that gruesome massacre.

The whole area is crawling with Cambodian Killers, moving in and out between the charred thatch and mud huts. And Beckett watches through his scope as they react to the news of the attack from the wounded man and the place buzzes like a beehive!

It's a bizarre sight. Somewhere a generator hums. Lights from one of the larger bombed out domiciles cast an eerie glow in the night...

And inside an old record player plays Cream's *Strange Brew*. Blasting it out at ear splitting level...

Beckett hunkers down, scanning the place with his rifle scope for signs of the French Sniper.

Keeping watch on things from afar, he can spot the movement of the men, guards posted inconspicuously at the edge of the jungle that surrounds the village on all sides.

As the hours pass he waits. The music still blaring out more Cream...

White Room. Sunshine of Your Love. Born Under a Bad Sign...

Then some Rolling Stones. The Animals, *We Gotta Get Outta This Place...*

Someone's a rock 'n roll freak.

Through his scope, Beckett can see movement inside the large domicile. It's wild. Drinking. Opium. Women. Most of them barely into their teens...

Then he scans the jungle perimeter to the guards. He can see FOUR...

And under the cover of the rain, Beckett decides to make a move...

Silent, like a cat, he maneuvers through the thick growth and starts to take out one guard after another with his combat knife. It's a thing of beauty. Fast, sleek and deadly.

Blood runs from slit throats. None of them sees or hears it coming...

From inside the Plantation house The Who's *My Generation* screams...

And Beckett takes up a new position, his eyes a blaze with something we've never seen before...

Something dark and dangerous and primal as he gazes through his scope again, scanning the domicile. From one window to another...

Until his breath suddenly catches... at the sight of the only Anglo face in the crowd...

The Killer Sniper! The Frenchman!

Dead between the crosshairs! Seeming like he's looking right back at Beckett...

Instantly Beckett's finger reaches around the trigger of his M-40...

But just as he starts to squeeze a shot off... a young Cambodian WOMAN steps in front of the Sniper Killer, blocking the shot...

And when she moves away in drunken laughter...

The Frenchman has gone...

Back in the present. In the Courtroom...

"He was there. Even though I'd never really seen his face I was sure it was him. I laid there in the pouring rain, remembering what he did to Dust an' the Sarge an' that woman an' her daughter..."

McKenna and the others sit there in spellbound silence... waiting on him...

"An' I knew I was gonna kill him. That or he was gonna kill me. One way or the other we were gonna dance..." Beckett remembers. Eyes cold as ice as his memory plays that night out in gruesome detail...

"So I invited them all to my little piece of hell..."

Back in time. The Ruins...

Beckett places eye to scope again, scanning the windows, stopping on the head of one of the Cambodian killers...

And he squeezes off a shot that blows a hole in the man's head, spraying blood and brains all over those around him...

For a second, time stands still. No one reacts... and then one by one they realize what it is splattered across their arms and faces...

And the man drops to the floor, dead... as women start SCREAMING and everyone starts running in every direction in a panic...

The needle scratches across the record playing, and the music stops...

As they pour out of the front door, Beckett starts picking off the Killers one by one...

Like fish in a barrel. Killing any and all with a nihilistic vengeance...

Back in the present. In the Courtroom...

All these years later, it makes Beckett a bit uncomfortable to remember...

“By my estimates there were NINETEEN men in all. Not including the Frenchman. I got ELEVEN coming out the door...

And his voice plays over the fading sounds of the horror...

Back in time. The Ruins...

Beckett FIRES again and again... and Killers die inside the house...

“FOUR more inside the house.”

The young women run for their lives, disappearing into the jungle night...

Inside the house the French Sniper smiles to himself, watching the remaining four Killers scramble for their weapons in panic, two of them running around turning off all the lights...

The house goes dark.

Beckett FIRES and the Killers fire back... but he's already on the move along the edge of the jungle...

Finding another position, where he can sight one of the Killers as he continues to FIRE at Beckett's old position...

Beckett takes the Killer out with a clean head shot...

The others duck into the darkness and scramble around the house to get a shot at his new position...

But Beckett's on the move again. Finding another position...

He KILLS TWO MORE when they surface to FIRE at his second position...

“That night I learned the first rule of a sniper. Patience...”

He moves again... and then waits in the rain, reloading...

Eye to scope again, he scans the house... still waiting...

Until the last Killer finally raises his head over a window sill, for a look...

A last one...

Back in the Present. In the Courtroom...

“An’ then there was just... me... an’ him...” Beckett says, looking from one face to another again...

And you can hear a pin drop... if someone in that Courtroom dropped one...

Back in time. The Ruins...

Dead silent. The rain slows to a drizzle...

Seconds pass like hours...

And then... that SCRATCHING sound again as someone places the needle back onto a record and Cream’s, *Tales of Brave Ulysses* shatters the night...

STILL WORKING ON THIS LAST BATTLE. HAVE A FEW DIFFERENT IDEAS. BUT IT WILL BE COOL LIKE ALL THE OTHER FINAL CONFRONTATIONS...

Back in the present. In the Courtroom...

As the deafening and fatal gunshot reverberates and slowly fades out, we’re back with Beckett, who, for the first time, looks at peace as he addresses the Court, explaining that afterwards he made his way back through the jungle, luckily finding another Marine unit on patrol and hooked up with them.

That platoon was lead by none other than Lt. Paul Finnegan...

His official story, which he had held onto until today, was that he had gotten lost.

Beckett: “But the truth was I set off to hunt this sniper down and kill him.”

McKenna: “And you’re positive this sniper was the legendary Frenchman?”

“Yes sir...” Beckett affirms.

The Colonel presiding over the tribunal muses, “And what does this have to do with General Hastings?”

Beckett removes an envelope from a pocket, hands it to McKenna, who hands it to the Colonel with, “In answer to your question, Sir, I would like to enter into evidence Captain Ian Hanson’s suicide note, written six days ago, and addressed to Master Gunnery Sergeant Thomas Beckett. With it are corroborating papers.”

“What am I going to discover in this note and papers, Master Gunnery Sergeant?”

Beckett: “It’s a confession to the conspiracy of the An Loc massacre. You’ll see that in his suicide note, Captain Ian Hanson lived with the guilt of his participation all of his life until he couldn’t take it anymore. As the country descended into hell, he and some other Military began taking what they could out of the chaos. Mostly in the opium trade.

Pham Quat got in the way, and so it was in his best interest to see him dead. And with the help of Major Jack Hastings, now the four-star general and head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff an’ rogue French Special Forces, they made Pham Quat’s assassination look like the NVA perpetrated a massacre at An Loc.

There’s a hint of emotion in his eyes as he remembers...

“When my platoon arrived at that French Plantation, we were to transport Guy Marquis and his family to an LZ that would take them to Saigon, and then onto Paris, where he was going to testify to that conspiracy. And he died for it. They all did. The mission was compromised from the beginning. No one was supposed to come out of it alive.”

The Colonel sits there for a moment, pondering all this...

And then he rivets his eyes on Beckett with a demanding look and asks, “These are very serious charges, Master Gunnery Sergeant Beckett. General Hastings is one of this country’s most respected leaders. Do you swear that all this is true?”

Beckett’s eyes well with tears...

“On my life... an’ the lives of all those men who died at my side...”

Outside the Courtroom...

In the hallway a distinguished looking man in his early-60s, his 4-star general’s uniform choked with medals, waits...

GENERAL JACK HASTINGS watches with curiosity as Beckett exits the courtroom...

And their eyes rivet on each other...

He regards Beckett with a friendly smile: “Master Gunnery Sergeant Beckett. It’s been a long time! I’ve heard a lot of stories about you over the years. You make the Marines proud.”

Beckett just looks right through the man as he continues on toward the exit...

And an MP pokes his head out of the courtroom, addressing the decorated officer with, "They're ready for you, General Hastings."

General Hastings shoots a look down the hall as fear starts to grip his soul and he calls after Beckett...

"What is this all about, Beckett?"

Beckett turns back to him, with cold dead hatred etched in his hard expression...

"It's about the 11 Marines you killed, Sir..."

And then he turns away in disgust and pushes open the door...

Stepping out into BLINDING SUNLIGHT...