

"SNIPER 4"

Screenplay
by
Ross Helford

Dannie Festa
Festa Entertainment
310-315-0569

Brad Rosenfeld
Preferred Artists
818-990-0305

"SNIPER 4"

FADE IN:

OVER OPENING CREDITS...

MONTAGE OF PAST IMAGES...

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. And in color...

AMERICAN TROOPS...

On missions, fire fights, shooting at enemy targets from tanks. Rolling through bombed out cities, villages, scorched rice paddies. The wounded, the dead. All puppets and pawns in a deadly game far beyond their control and understanding...

NVA SOLDIERS...

Some of whom are WOMEN. Mobilizing in the jungle. Fighting back...

Ducking in and out of the famed Tunnels of Cu Chi...

AIRPLANES...

Dropping staggering payloads of explosives and napalm over war-ravaged landscapes.

HELICOPTERS...

Firing on targets from the air. Lifting wounded soldiers to safety...

A DOG...

Wandering the corpse-littered streets...

A HAUNTED YOUNG SOLDIER...

Talking about how he followed unspeakable orders and killed defenseless men, women and children...

PROTEST IN THE AMERICAN STREETS...

"Hey! Hey! LBJ! How many babies did you kill today!"

LBJ, in the aftermath of Tet, announcing he won't be seeking re-election...

NIXON...

As the war carries on through his administration...

Smiling with his war cabinet..

(CONTINUED)

MEMORABLE NAMES AND FACES OF THE ERA...

HO CHI MINH. ABBIE HOFFMAN. ROBERT SCHEER. MLK orating
the inhumanity of this inhumane war...

MADAME NU...

Speaking on American Television...

VIETNAMESE CIVILIANS...

Those poor souls caught in the crossfire of this bloody
conflict. Villages bombed and napalmed into oblivion. The
scorched, ashen dead. The traumatized survivors...

Their SCREAMS and WAILS echo in our ears. Weeping for a
life forever destroyed by the ruthless cruelty of armed
conflict...

And slowly these anguished cries FADE OUT, just as all pain
and trauma must with the slow and relentless passage of
time...

Into complete and merciful QUIET...

INT. MILITARY COURTROOM - THE PRESENT - DAY

A long, low-lit room. The bright day outside almost all but
choked off by drawn shades, so that only blinding slivers of
sunlight make their way inside...

At the head of the room, on a RAISED PLATFORM, sits a PANEL
of GRIM-FACED OFFICERS, the center seat noticeably vacant.

The GALLERY is sparsely-populated with MILITARY PERSONNEL.

The COUNSELOR, dressed in his Marine formals, stands patiently
at parade rest...

He is LT. COL. McKENNA, Marines intelligence.

An MP enters the courtroom, calling out...

MP

All rise for the honorable Colonel
Vissers.

COLONEL WILLIAM VISSERS, 50s with sparkling silver hair,
enters through a door in the rear of the courtroom, crossing
to his empty spot at the middle of the panel.

The moment he takes his seat, everyone else in the courtroom
does so as well. Except for McKenna, who continues to stand
patiently at parade rest...

The Colonel glances through some PAPERS laid out in front of
him, before addressing McKenna...

(CONTINUED)

COLONEL

I understand this inquiry, Counselor, called at your request, concerns events from the Vietnam War.

MCKENNA

Actually Sir, this inquiry was called at the request of my client. It regards new evidence that has come to light in the aftermath of the recent suicide death of retired CIA agent Ian Hanson...

(a somber beat)

Evidence having to do with the true nature of the events of the An Loc Massacre.

On that, a murmuring rumbles through the gallery. But the Colonel's stony facade remains, revealing nothing..

COLONEL

Very well, Counsel may continue.

MCKENNA

Thank you, Sir! Before I introduce physical evidence into the record that will prove what really happened at An Loc, I want to call to the witness stand the man who brought this to my attention...

And on that, the MP swings open the courtroom doors, and in a spill of sunlight in walks a familiar face...

THOMAS BECKETT, resplendent in full Marine Master Gunnery Sergeant UNIFORM...

He's a little more grizzled than when we last 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.

Beckett regards McKenna with a respectful nod as he takes a seat in the WITNESS CHAIR...

After being sworn in, Beckett sits back and McKenna approaches the stand with...

MCKENNA

Master Gunnery Sergeant Thomas Beckett, will you tell the panel what transpired on the date of February 11, 1973?

Beckett considers this question for a moment, the gravity of the memory still weighing him down all these years later...

BECKETT

I went AWOL.

(CONTINUED)

MCKENNA
AWOL, Master Gunnery Sergeant?
Wouldn't it be more accurate to call
it a 'rogue mission'?

BECKETT
Call it whatever you like, Sir!

McKenna turns to the grim-faced panel...

MCKENNA
Master Gunnery Sergeant Beckett
requested I call this inquiry so he
could get on record the troubling
events that led to his 'rogue mission'
and how it applies to information
recently discovered concerning the
infamous massacre at An Loc.

The Colonel glares down at Beckett with...

COLONEL
Are you saying that according to
your record, on February 11, 1973,
you were not lost from your platoon?
That you knowingly left your command?

BECKETT
Yes, Sir.

COLONEL
Why, Master Gunnery Sergeant?

BECKETT
(without hesitation)
Revenge, Sir.

MCKENNA
(to the Colonel)
With your permission, Sir, I would
like to ask Master Gunnery Sergeant
Beckett to refresh the panel's memory
of the events that led up to that
day...

The Colonel NODS his permission, and all eyes focus on
Beckett...

He sits there, silent for a moment again as the memory of
the events, so long ago, and yet so relevant today, play
through his mind...

BECKETT
It all happened near the beginning
of the end in 'Nam, starting with my
first day in country, late summer,
1972.

And we can hear the distant sounds of a ROTOR BLADE, as we
FLASHBACK TO...

EXT. VIETNAM SKIES - SUMMER 1972 - DAY

The sound of the Rotor Blade is now nearly deafening. The VIEW is from a HUEY, watching from above as the alternately verdant, alternately battle-scarred Vietnamese landscape races by...

INT. HUEY - CONTINUOUS

From the COCKPIT, a PILOT and CO-PILOT expertly maneuver the chopper.

In the BACK sit FOUR YOUNG MARINES GRUNTS fresh from boot camp. At first, the CAMERA only focuses on THREE of them...

DUSTIN 'DUST' NELSON...

JIMMY JEFFERSON...

And BILL MONDAY...

Even dressed in their jungle fatigues and armed to the teeth, their standard-issue M-16s fully loaded and spread across their laps, they look hardly more than boys, bright-eyed, baby-faced...

DUST

Jesus fuckin' Christ, we haven't even landed yet an' I'm already sweatin' like a goddamn pig!

MONDAY

You're always sweatin' like a pig, Dust!

JEFFERSON

An' you smell like shit, too!

DUST

Fuck you guys...
(to the pilots)
Hey, how much farther to the LZ?

The pilots don't answer, or even acknowledge he's spoken to them.

JEFFERSON

I don't think they can hear ya!

DUST

What?

JEFFERSON

I said I don't...

He trails off when Dust breaks into a mile wide smile. He's fucking with him.

(CONTINUED)

JEFFERSON

Asshole.

MONDAY

(to Dust)

You never told us what happened to those two chicks you were scopin' out last night. You get either of 'em?

DUST

(that broad grin)

You could say that.

MONDAY

Which one? The blonde? The brunette?

DUST

The blonde... an' the brunette.

MONDAY

Bullshit!

DUST

God's honest truth. Tell 'em Beckett.

And for the first time, we get a good look at the FOURTH young grunt riding in the back of the HUEY...

PFC THOMAS BECKETT, all of 20 years-old.

There is a glint of bright-eyed optimism in the young man's eyes, a stark contrast to the man he will one day become.

But that measured and contagious calm is already there. He sees and hears everything...

BECKETT

Don't ask me. I went to bed early.

MONDAY

(to Dust)

You're a lying sack of shit!

BECKETT

But...

(broad grin to match Dust's)

I did see them leaving Dust's room in the morning. The blonde... an' the brunette.

Monday and Jefferson are blown away...

MONDAY

Fuck me sideways, man, that's goin' out in style.

DUST

Damn straight...

(CONTINUED)

The three men continue their jocular sparring, but their words are drowned out by the ROAR of the Rotor Blades.

Beckett tunes them out, focusing instead out the window, at the landscape racing by hundreds of feet below...

BECKETT (V.O.)

There were four of us. Just dumb grunts who couldn't beat the draft, fresh from boot camp at Ft. Bragg. None of us with any idea of the kind of shit that was about to happen...

EXT. LZ COMMAND CENTER - DAY

The HUEY dusts down on a RAVAGED RICE PADDY. The outlying area has been transformed into a sprawling TENT CITY command center.

We can see, from the back, a LONE MAN on the tarmac, watching as the HUEY door swings open, and one-by-one, the Four Grunts disembark...

The CAMERA SWINGS AROUND to see this Lone Man from the front, the stripes on the arm of his sweat-drenched fatigues identifying him as a LIEUTENANT.

LT. RYAN WELLS, his youthful good looks starkly juxtaposed by a face that has experienced first-hand the horrors of war.

One after the other, the Grunts snap SHARP SALUTES, barking out in quick succession..

DUST

PFC Dustin Nelson reporting for duty!

MONDAY

PFC Bill Monday reporting for duty!

JEFFERSON

PFC Jimmy Jefferson reporting for duty!

BECKETT

PFC Thomas Beckett reporting for duty!

LT. WELLS

At ease...

He moves from man-to-man, shaking hands with each...

LT. WELLS

Welcome to Vietnam. I'm Lieutenant Ryan Wells, an' I'll be your C.O...

EXT. TENT CITY COMMAND CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

The new grunts take in this strange new world as Lt. Wells leads the grunts through the sprawling make-shift command center.

TENTS of all sizes are everywhere. From individual pup tents to gigantic circus-size tents housing such essential facilities as the MESS HALL, MEDICAL FACILITIES, OFFICER QUARTERS.

A virtual, and portable, world.

They see MARINES in various stages of undress, with various ways of coping with the staggering heat and humidity...

Catching rays, playing cards, smokin' J's.

The Men spot off in the distance some SOLDIERS unloading bodies from a HALF TRACK...

A truly gruesome sight. A QUARTET OF BLOODY, FLY-COVERED CORPSES IN MARINES CAMOS ROTTING IN THE SWELTERING AFTERNOON SUN as they are dragged out of the truck...

DUST

Jesus...

LT. WELLS

Some gook motherfuckers snuck up on 'em while they were gettin' high, an' slit their throats. You boys are their replacements...

EXT. WESTERN SKY - MAGIC HOUR

Across the endless expanse of paddies and jungle, the setting sun casts a purple glow across the war-ravaged landscape...

INT. MESS HALL - CONTINUOUS

The Mess Hall is almost empty, save our original Quartet, who sit huddled at a table, dipping STALE BREAD into STEAMING BOWLS OF STEW...

DUST

This shit is just nasty!

SGT. LARSON (O.S.)

Enjoy it while you can boys, that there is a regular gourmet feast...

They reel around to see a squat, red-faced man in a neat Marine Sergeant's uniform.

SERGEANT MOE LARSON...

(CONTINUED)

SGT. LARSON
 Compared with the MREs you're gonna
 be chokin' on out in the bush that's
 like my momma's home cookin'.

Dust, always the jokester grins back...

DUST
 No offense, Sir, but your Momma musta
 been some good lookin' woman.

SGT. LARSON
 An' why is that, Private?

DUST
 Cuz if she cooked like this she'd
 have to be.

The others swallow their laughs as Sgt. Larson forces a
 smile...

SGT. LARSON
 Tonight, that's hilarious, Private.
 Funniest fucking thing I've heard
 since I landed in this fuckin'
 shithole...
 (grin disappears)
 Tell that joke tomorrow an' I'll cut
 your balls off. Do I make myself
 clear?

DUST
 Yes, Sir!

SGT. LARSON
 I'm Platoon Sergeant Larson. An'
 you're in luck, cuz tonight I want
 you to think of me as your good buddy
 Moe.

JEFFERSON
 What about tomorrow?

SGT. LARSON
 Tomorrow, you will do whatever I say
 whenever I say... or I'll get so far
 up you ass you'll choke on me...

And with that, Sgt. Larson passes out some BLACK NETTING...

BECKETT
 What's this?

SGT. LARSON
 That's your new best friend, Private.
 Mosquito netting.

He claps each of them on the shoulder...

(CONTINUED)

SGT. LARSON

Make sure you get a good night's sleep. Tomorrow we hump. An' the next day. An' quite possibly the rest of the week. Hell, by the time we get back here, this place'll feel like the cocksuckin' Holiday Inn. That's if we're lucky enough to come back at all...

And as he turns to leave...

SGT. LARSON

Welcome to Vietnam, boys!

EXT. TENT CITY COMMAND CENTER - NIGHT

A group of PUP TENTS are set in a circle in the midst of a small clearing...

INT. BECKETT'S TENT - NIGHT

Beckett tosses and turns beneath the Mosquito Netting, sweating buckets in the humid night.

The SOUNDS of the creatures of the night are DEAFENING.

BECKETT (V.O.)

That first night was hell. It was so hot in my tent, I could hardly breathe, much less sleep. Every sound was alien an' strange. But that wasn't the worst of it...

All of a sudden, a loud WHISTLING followed by...

KA-BOOM!!!

And now Beckett's wide awake, wriggling his way out of the tent...

EXT. TENT CITY COMMAND CENTER - NIGHT

Beckett's not the only one to be awakened by the cacophony, other MARINES also emerging from their tents to see...

The night sky is alive with the sights and sounds of WAR!

DISTANT EXPLOSIONS light up the horizon and shake the ground.

Beckett notices Dust standing outside his tent, and the two men lock gazes. There's fear in their eyes...

And then Dust SAYS SOMETHING to Beckett that's drowned out by the war raging on somewhere out there...

EXT. TENT CITY COMMAND CENTER - DAWN

As the first rays of sunlight peek their way over the horizon, there's no need for the bugle to rouse the men from sleep. That's because ROOSTERS start to CROW.

Hundreds of them. Shit, probably thousands. Who knows where the hell they are, but they're noisy as all fuck, a WALL OF SOUND.

INT. TENT - DAWN

Sgt. Larson's VOICE booms out, which makes the crowing sound like whispers...

SGT. LARSON
LET'S GO! MOVE IT! MOVE IT! MOVE
IT! WE MOBILIZE IN 30!

And Beckett rolls out of his cot, looking like he hasn't gotten a wink of sleep...

He notices Dust, also waking, looking like he hasn't slept either. But Dust still has that winning grin, as he lifts his blanket and peeks inside it at his morning wood...

DUST
Goddamn that thing is big! Sure
seems a shame to waste it on a long
hard mornin' piss.

Beckett starts to say something that's cut off by...

SGT. LARSON
I said get your asses up an' movin',
you pimple face fuckheads!

And he's in Dust's face like a screaming maniac...

SGT. LARSON
I told you, joke time's over, you
needle dick jackass! Get on your
feet an' get humpin'! An' you better
get your head on right, fucker, cuz
it's jungle time an' this just might
be the day you die!

And he shoots a hard look at Beckett with..

SGT. LARSON
Wipe that scared look off your face,
dipshit! You ain't seen nothin'
yet!

EXT. TENT CITY COMMAND CENTER - OUTSKIRTS - MORNING

Beckett, Dust, Jefferson and Monday stand in formation with their new PLATOON.

(CONTINUED)

With them are RADIOMAN, PFC DAVID WINTERGREEN...

And MEDICAL CORPSMAN, JON WESTLUND...

The platoon's SNIPER, SGT. LEON MAIN kneels in some tall grass apart from the group, meticulously cleaning his M-40 SNIPER RIFLE, and embodying that famed loner spirit of the Marine Scout Sniper.

Standing still and attentive at the head of the platoon is Sgt. Larson, whose gaze is focused 50 yards up a grassy bluff...

Where Lt. Wells conferences with THREE MEN...

Dust and the others whisper amongst themselves...

DUST

What are we waitin' on?

SGT. LARSON

Shut the fuck up! We move out when Lt. Wells tells us to.

WINTERGREEN

Looks like Lt. Wells can't tell us nothin' 'til those fellas up there give the order...

JEFFERSON

Who are they, anyway?

BECKETT

That ain't Marines colors they're wearin'. Or Army.

MAIN (O.S.)

Gotta be Special Ops of some sort...

Beckett turns to see Sgt. Main approaching the platoon, holding that M-40...

MAIN

I betcha they don't even have dog tags...

BECKETT

What kinda Special Ops?

MAIN

Spooks.

DUST

With all due respect, Sir, What the fuck's a spook?

MAIN

CIA...

DUST

No shit!

(CONTINUED)

SGT. LARSON
Yeah, no shit! Now shut the fuck
up...

The Special OPS suddenly break off their meeting and start to hump up the grassy bluff toward the jungle...

Lt. Wells MOTIONS to Sgt. Larson, who SCREAMS to the platoon:

SGT. LARSON
Awright, Ladies, let's go! Route
step, harch!

And on that, the Platoon moves out, following Sgt. Larson, who's following Lt. Wells, who's following the Special OPS up the bluff and into the trees. A PARTY OF 12...

BECKETT (V.O.)
Not knowing where we were going, or
why, we humped...

MONTAGE

Of Beckett's first march, his narration matching what we see...

BECKETT (V.O.)
Humped through the jungle...

JUNGLE...

The Platoon makes its way through the DENSE JUNGLE, picking its way through thick branches and overgrown roots...

BECKETT (V.O.)
Paddies...

PADDIES

As they slosh through well-irrigated low-lying RICE PADDIES, past a herd of grazing WATER BUFFALO, we notice their formation...

One Delta and Lt. Wells walk point.

Two Deltas on either flank...

Sgt. Main, the sniper, taking up the rear...

BECKETT (V.O.)
Bombed out villages...

VILLAGES

Through a DESERTED, CRUMBLING VILLAGE, pock-marked with BOMB CRATERS, not a living soul, save a pack of FERAL DOGS, to be seen...

(CONTINUED)

BECKETT (V.O.)

Swamps...

SWAMPS

They slog through waist-deep stagnant swampland, picking off LEECHES and swatting at gigantic MOSQUITOES, as they go...

BECKETT (V.O.)

Through blazing heat...

GRASSLANDS

They march across dense GRASSLAND, the midday sun beating relentlessly down on them, their camos DRENCHED IN SWEAT...

BECKETT (V.O.)

Freezing monsoons...

The platoon moves single-file past a narrow rock formation as TORRENTIAL RAIN lashes down on them...

BECKETT (V.O.)

By the time night came, we were so tired, we could sleep through anything...

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

Somewhere in the thick...

GUNFIRE and EXPLOSIONS rage through the night with apocalyptic fury. And yet no one stirs...

Not even to the sound of F-14s ROARING OVERHEAD and dropping their napalm payload somewhere out in the vast jungle...

BECKETT (V.O.)

Three days an' nights of nothin' but humping...

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

As they make their way through the dense foliage...

BECKETT (V.O.)

The most excitement we had was when stumbled on one of those hidden tunnels we'd heard so much about. Where NVA wage their guerrilla campaigns...

The Platoon makes its way down to a clearing, joining the Special Ops.

One of the Special Ops POINTS OUT a TUFT OF GRASS not ten yards from where they stand...

(CONTINUED)

BECKETT (V.O.)
The Special Ops were monsters at
finding these tunnels...

Sgt. Larson crosses to the Tuft, kneels and clears the
vegetation, revealing a HOLE, barely wide enough for a man
to squeeze through, DISAPPEARING INTO DARKNESS.

SGT. LARSON
PFC Nelson! This one's got your
name all over it.

Dust winces...

DUST
I'm kinda... claustrophobic, Sir.

SGT. LARSON
Tell it to someone who gives a shit,
Private.

Dust looks truly scared...

DUST
I... I can't, Sarge...

Sgt. Larson gets right up in Dust's grill...

SGT. LARSON
You'll do it an' you'll like it!

When Beckett steps up with...

BECKETT
It's okay, Sarge, I'll do it. I
don't mind.

You can tell Sgt. Larson doesn't much like stepping down
from a disagreement with a subordinate, glaring hatefully at
Dust before CLAPPING Beckett on the shoulder with...

SGT. LARSON
That's even better, Beckett. Why
don't both of you get your sorry
asses down in there before I jam
this barrel up 'em an' light up your
guts!

Beckett strips off his gear, his pack, flak jacket, ammo
clips...

Dust follows... hesitant, and Beckett nods that it's gonna
be all right...

BECKETT
Just breath easy an' stay with me...

DUST
I can't...

(CONTINUED)

BECKETT

You can...

Beckett hands Jefferson his M-16 and one of the Special Ops gives him his SIDE ARM...

SPECIAL OPS

Take this...

The whole Platoon gathers around, watching with somber apprehension as they drop down into the tunnel...

SGT. LARSON

Watch out for them big ol' ugly black spiders, ladies...

INT. TUNNEL - DAY

Beckett switches on his flashlight and starts to crawl on his hands and knees down the dark, the dim beam barely lighting the way...

Dust is right behind him, fighting his claustrophobia...

Beckett's broad shoulders scrape the sides of the tunnel. His breath is labored by the stifling, damp air, as gigantic EARTH WORMS and other oversized subterranean BUGS squirm all around. It's disgusting...

Beckett is amazed that these tunnels exist. They turn and stretch out in all directions...

BECKETT (V.O.)

During my tour of duty I was in the tunnels maybe a half dozen times an' every time I hated it more an' more. You never knew what was around the next turn...

Beckett suddenly freezes, his eyes riveting on a HUGE BLACK HAIRY SPIDER caught in the beam of light. I shit you not, this thing is the size of a RAT!

Beckett reaches for his COMBAT KNIFE, bringing it down on the hideous arachnid...

BECKETT (V.O.)

Or right behind you...

DUST

Beckett!

Beckett struggles to turn in the narrow space, shooting a look back over his shoulder...

There's fear in Dust's VOICE and etched in his expression...

And Beckett follows his gaze over to the dark of an dirt alcove between them...

(CONTINUED)

BECKETT

What is it?

DUST

I heard somethin'!

Beckett painfully twists his body around and shines the flashlight into the alcove, REVEALING a large COBRA SNAKE...

It's neck is flared, coiled up and ready to strike...

Instantly, Dust starts to back away!

BECKETT

Don't move!

But Dust flinches and the Snake strikes...

And with a lightning fast move, Beckett stabs, piercing the snake's throat as he pins it to the rotted wood ceiling of the tunnel, stopping its fangs inches from Dust's face!

EXT. TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

The Platoon stands around the tunnel, no one daring to so much as breathe as they wait...

For what seems like an eternity...

And then, all of a sudden, Beckett emerges from under the ground, COVERED IN FILTH, from a DIFFERENT TUNNEL, about ten yards from where the Platoon is gathered.

Dust scrambles out right on his heels...

LT. WELLS

Anything down there?

BECKETT

Some ugly fuckin' spiders!

SGT. LARSON

Told you!

BECKETT

But you forgot to mention the fuckin' snakes.

And a wicked grin creases Sgt. Larson's face...

SGT. LARSON

Did I?

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

The Platoon is back on the move...

(CONTINUED)

BECKETT (V.O.)

On the fourth day there still wasn't any sign of the enemy an' none of us grunts had a clue as to where we were going. All I remember now is that I was terrified an' fascinated at the same time. Filled with excitement for the moment when I'd finally bust my cherry in a real fire fight...

The Platoon continues to hump through the trees, which are slowly thinning, until they come to a PLACE OF STUNNING BEAUTY.

The SUNLIGHT streams in through the trees, creating an ethereal glow that instantly lifts the men's spirits as they stand there looking around in wide-eyed wonder.

One of the Special Ops WHISPERS something to Lt. Wells, and the C.O. calls out...

LT. WELLS

Alright, we'll break for a quick one...

EXT. JUNGLE CLEARING - MINUTES LATER

The Men are spread out across the clearing, picking at their MREs...

Wintergreen glances around, making sure no one who outranks him is watching, and then reaches into a pocket, removing a tightly-wound JOINT. He LIGHTS IT and takes a HUGE HIT just as Sgt. Larson passes through, looking the men up and down.

Wintergreen cups the joint in his hands and has to hold in his hit for an excruciatingly long time...

When Larson finally moves on, Wintergreen EXHALES in a COUGHING FIT, before holding the joint out toward Beckett...

BECKETT

No thanks.

WINTERGREEN

It's primo Bangkok skunk grass, man?

Dust holds out a hand...

DUST

Don't waste it on Tommy boy. He gets high on a clean windshield an' a full tank of gas.

Wintergreen passes the joint to him...

Dust takes a MASSIVE HIT, passing the Joint onto Jefferson...

(CONTINUED)

DUST

You guys wanna see my girl back home?

Jefferson takes a hit before passing the Joint to Monday...

DUST

She's somethin' else, man...

(holding his hands in
front of his chest)

Giant hooters an' a face like an
angel...

He pulls a CREASED PHOTO from his breast pocket...

DUST

Her name's Laura...

Now, along with the Joint, the photo is passed from man-to-man.

WINTERGREEN

(with a whistle)

Very nice, brother.

DUST

I love her. I really do. She's the
first chick I've ever said that about.

Beckett laughs out loud...

DUST

What?

BECKETT

What about the blonde an' the
brunette? An' the redhead in Manilla?

Dust takes the jab with his usual good nature...

DUST

That's different. It's not like
fuckin' some random skank is love.
It's... just biology.

EXT. JUNGLE - MINUTES LATER

The Platoon is back on the march, several of the men feeling nicely buzzed from their mid-afternoon burn...

DUST

(softly singing)

*I guess, you say, what can make me
feel this way? My girl, my girl,
talkin' 'bout my girl...*

Soon others are joining in on the impromptu a cappella number of that beloved Motown standard, Wintergreen matching them with that famed James Jamerson bassline...

(CONTINUED)

BECKETT (V.O.)

In that moment, it was like we weren't soldiers in the middle of a brutal an' bloody conflict, but Boy Scouts, on a weekend hike through the wilderness...

Wintergreen has a look of sheer bliss plastered across his eternally youthful complexion, feeling like a million bucks with the THC coursing through his system, when...

KA-BOOM!!!

VISCERA splatters every which way!

LT. WELLS

Jesus Christ, a bouncin' Betty!

The whole Platoon stands there, frozen, stunned by the shocking immediacy of the carnage!

There is a CRATER in the ground from where the hidden explosive had gone off...

One of Wintergreen's BOOTS, WITH HALF HIS LEG INSIDE, is still standing!

And the remains of the TOP HALF OF HIS BODY have been SPLATTERED IN THE TREE ABOVE!

The whole area is now shrouded in a deathly silence as the men, even the Special Ops, stand around as if frozen in a daze...

Dust doesn't even appear to register what's happened, continuing to sing...

DUST

Talkin'... 'bout... my girl...

SGT. LARSON

SHUT THE FUCK UP!

Lt. Wells is unsure what to do, looking to the Special Ops, who don't return his gaze. So he turns to the men, swallowing hard...

LT. WELLS

Get him down from there!

All eyes glance upward, at the barely-identifiable TORSO plastered to the bark and branches...

BECKETT (V.O.)

The worst part was his face. Even now I can see it plain as day. He was still smiling...

SGT. LARSON

Monday! Nelson! Get him down from there!

(CONTINUED)

Dust and Monday wince at the thought...

DUST

How, Sarge?

SGT. LARSON

By climbing your motherfuckin' asses
up that motherfuckin' tree!

Dust and Monday scramble toward the tree, are about to climb,
when...

KA-BOOM! Another EXPLOSION, this time a MORTAR ROUND, just
misses the Platoon as it kicks up a cloud of DIRT and DEBRIS.

And in an instant the erstwhile pleasant afternoon is plunged
into brutal violence as AUTOMATIC GUNFIRE and TRACER ROUNDS
rain down on the Platoon from unseen vantage points in the
trees!

The men take cover as best they can, bullets raining all
around them as they RETURN FIRE!

Most are operating on pure adrenaline, and balls-to-the-wall
terror, firing indiscriminately at the enemy, which is well
hidden in amongst the trees...

At first it's virtually impossible to tell how much damage,
if at all, they are inflicting on their foe.

The Special Ops, however, are much more conservative and
intelligent under fire, their SLEEK RIFLES ringing out only
when they see a glint of the ENEMY, moving through the
brush...

Beckett notices this and starts to emulate these warriors.
He holds his M-16 steady, and the minute there's MOVEMENT in
the trees...

BAM! The shot is true, blowing an ENEMY FIGHTER backward in
a HAZE OF BLOOD!

The lead Special Ops notices, YELLING to Beckett...

SPECIAL OPS

Nice shootin' kid!

Lt. Wells holds a RADIO TRANSMITTER to his lips, SCREAMING...

LT. WELLS

This is Lt. Wells, Charlie Company
six-five-niner, requesting immediate
air support. Repeat, requesting
immediate air support, our coordinates
are...

SWISH PAN TO AN UNSEEN VANTAGE POINT IN THE TREES...

Where we see the back of the ENEMY SNIPER, leveling his
impressive FR-F2 bolt-action SNIPER RIFLE...

(CONTINUED)

ENEMY SNIPER'S POV - THROUGH THE CROSSHAIRS OF THE SCOPE...

He gets Jefferson right in the middle, and...

KABLAM!

FOLLOWING THE PATH OF THE BULLET AS IT SOARS THROUGH THE AIR, PIERCING JEFFERSON'S SKULL AS BLOOD AND BRAIN FRAGMENTS EXPLODE ALL AROUND!

ANOTHER ANGLE

Sgt. Larson sees Jefferson go down, SCREAMING to Sgt. Main, who's setting up his M-40 and TRI-POD on the surface of a FLAT BOULDER, behind which he takes cover...

SGT. LARSON
Treeline. 10 o'clock!

Sgt. Main swivels his rifle to the treeline at 10 o'clock, peering through the scope...

SGT. MAIN'S POV - THROUGH THE CROSSHAIRS

To where the shot had come from. Scanning for any sign. But the Enemy Sniper is gone.

ANOTHER ANGLE

As Westlund, the corpsman, rushes to Jefferson's aide, kneeling beside the man before realizing he's already dead, a gaping hole caving in the young man's skull as blood leaks onto the jungle floor...

ENEMY SNIPER'S POV - THROUGH THE CROSSHAIRS

Getting Westlund in his sights...

KABLAM!

AGAIN, FOLLOWING THE PATH OF THE BULLET AS IT PIERCES WESTLUND'S SKULL AND HE GOES DOWN LIKE A SACK OF POTATOES...

ANGLE - SGT. LARSON

He screams out...

SGT. LARSON
3 o'clock!

ANGLE - SGT. MAIN

Main swivels his M-40 to three o'clock...

SGT. MAIN'S POV - THROUGH THE CROSSHAIRS

Scanning the treeline for the elusive Enemy Sniper...

When... there he is...

THE MUZZLE of the ENEMY SNIPER'S Fr-F2 aimed right at Main!

(CONTINUED)

And before the company sniper can get off a shot...

ENEMY SNIPER'S POV - THROUGH THE CROSSHAIRS

KABLAM!

FOLLOWING THE PATH OF THE BULLET AS IT GOES THROUGH MAIN'S SCOPE, SENDING SHARDS OF GLASS AND METAL FLYING EVERY WHICH WAY BEFORE PASSING THROUGH MAIN'S RIGHT EYE AND BLOWING OUT THE BACK OF HIS HEAD!

ENEMY SNIPER'S POV - THROUGH THE CROSSHAIRS

Scanning the battlefield for his next victim, when he sees...

Beckett! And here's the fucked up thing...

Beckett already has the Enemy Sniper in *his* sights!

ANGLE - BECKETT

Beckett SQUEEZES THE TRIGGER, about to blow the Enemy Sniper to hell, when...

Nothing happens. The damn M-16 JAMS!

BECKETT

SHIT!

Beckett has no choice but to dive for cover, just as the Enemy Sniper pulls the trigger...

KABLAM!

The shot splinters a tree that was behind the spot where Beckett had been, seconds before...

Beckett flings his worthless M-16 away, crawls to Sgt. Main's blood soaked M-40, rips off the TRI-POD and DAMAGED SCOPE and scans the treeline, using the BARREL SIGHTLINE on this EXTRAORDINARY RIFLE, trying to find that elusive Enemy Sniper...

BECKETT

Where are you?

But the fucker's nowhere to be found, when...

ROOOOOAARRRRRR!!!!

The sound of F-14s in the distance, racing toward them...

As Lt. Wells and one of the Special Ops scoop up Westlund's corpse...

LT. WELLS

Fall back! Fall back!

Dust and Monday pick up Jefferson's lifeless body as the platoon falls back...

(CONTINUED)

The other two Special Ops carry the fallen Sgt. Main.

Wintergreen, who's still plastered to that tree, is left behind.

But Beckett doesn't register the order, still scanning the trees, when... there he is!

As the Enemy Sniper drops to the ground and starts running away, Beckett SQUEEZES OFF A SHOT, the recoil nearly knocking him off his feet. But Beckett remains standing...

The shot just misses the fleeing Enemy Sniper...

SGT. LARSON
 Didn't you hear the order, God damn
 it, FALL BACK!

And yet still Beckett scans that treeline, obsessed with getting that bastard, when Larson SHOVES him...

SGT. LARSON
 MOVE IT, SON!

EXT. JUNGLE CLEARING - MOMENTS LATER

The Platoon falls back beyond the treeline as F-14 TOMCATS ROAR overhead, dropping their devastating payload into the trees as the entire hillside is NAPALMED INTO OBLIVION!

EIGHT MEN have survived the fire fight.

The Men collapse in the soft grass, exhausted, traumatized, with the adrenaline of combat still racing through their veins...

Lt. Wells maintains surprising composure, as he walks amongst his men with the traits of a great leader at his young age...

LT. WELLS
 Smoke 'em if you got 'em.

Beckett kneels over Sgt. Main's body, removing fresh M-40 SHELLS that are covered in blood. Sgt. Larson approaches...

SGT. LARSON
 Shit, Beckett, when those planes
 come, you gotta run.

BECKETT
 I almost had that fucker, Sarge.

SGT. LARSON
 There's no way he survived that air
 strike.

Beckett continues to collect the shells in silence as Sgt. Larson picks up the M-40, which Beckett had set down in the grass beside him...

(CONTINUED)

SGT. LARSON
This your new rifle, then?

As Beckett pockets the shells...

BECKETT
That M-16 is a piece of shit, jammed
on me an' I had him... dead.

SGT. LARSON
How ya supposed to use it without a
scope?

BECKETT
I never needed a scope deer huntin'
in the Montana back woods...

Lt. Wells, meanwhile, crouches in the grass, the battle still
playing in his fevered mind when the lead Special Ops crosses
to him...

SPECIAL OPS
We need to move out.

LT. WELLS
Soon as the HUEYS come for our dead...

SPECIAL OPS
No time, Lieutenant. We need to go.
Now.

LT. WELLS
We can't just leave 'em.

SPECIAL OPS
I'm sorry, but the mission can't
wait.

LT. WELLS
The men are exhausted! What's so
God damned urgent we can't wait a
couple fucking hours for a HUEY to
take away our dead?

SPECIAL OPS
That information is on a need to
know basis.

LT. WELLS
Well' I need to know! I lost four
men today. And you're telling me to
leave them behind? Do you know what
they DO to our dead?

SPECIAL OPS
Pretty much the same thing we do to
theirs.

LT. WELLS
I have to write their families. I
NEED TO KNOW they didn't die in vain!

(CONTINUED)

SPECIAL OPS

They didn't die in vain...

And with that, the Special Ops turn and hump back toward the napalmed treeline...

Lt. Wells hangs his head in frustration and profound sorrow as he does his best to regain composure, all his men's eyes on him. Finally...

LT. WELLS

Let's move out. Leave the dead.
Backup will get them...

And with that Lt. Wells starts to hump back to the treeline, finally allowing the TEARS to flow...

Beckett, the mighty M-40 slung over one shoulder, takes up the rear of the platoon now, as Dust and Monday fall back and walk with their Ft. Bragg comrade...

DUST

Fuckin' Jefferson, man. We've been through everything together.

MONDAY

I can't believe we're jus' leavin' him behind.

BECKETT

He left us behind when that sniper blew his brains out.

DUST

That's cold, Beckett.

BECKETT

It's a fact, Dust. This is war.
Get used to it...

The three friends fall silent as they get back into the thick and a JUNGLE MIST swirls around them as they pass 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 from the scorched earth like rotted teeth...

EXT. JUNGLE CLEARING - HOURS LATER

The men march uphill in grave silence, exhausted, each lost in his own head, playing out the events of the fire fight...

BECKETT (V.O.)

Hours later, we reached a clearing in the trees. By this point, morale was incredibly low...

Up ahead, on a HIGH RIDGE where the trees thin out, the Special Ops come to a stop, calling to the Platoon...

(CONTINUED)

SPECIAL OPS

We're here!

BECKETT (V.O.)

Later I learned we had humped right up to the Cambodian border...

And as the men come to the clearing on the high ridge, their fatigue is momentarily forgotten as they stare out on a sight that has their jaws dropping in genuine surprise...

BECKETT (V.O.)

An' the next thing we saw took us all by surprise. In the middle of all this God forsaken chaos an' death, there it was...

POV

Situated in a FIVE-ACRE CLEARING, down below and about a mile away, like some relic from the ante-bellum South, is a sprawling and idyllic FRENCH COLONIAL PLANTATION.

INT. COURTROOM - THE PRESENT

Coming out of the FLASHBACK, where Beckett stops for a second, remembering, as McKenna prods...

MCKENNA

Who lived at this place?

BECKETT

A French ex-pat named Guy Marquis. His wife, son an' daughter. They were our mission. To get 'em to safety out of the jungle to Saigon. Then on to Paris. Only we didn't know that at the time. We only knew we had to get them to a rendezvous point for extraction...

Beckett takes a drink from a GLASS OF WATER and then continues with...

BECKETT

We waited 'til nightfall, an' then the Special Ops moved in...

EXT. NIGHT SKY - FLASHBACK

A FULL MOON casts a dim glow over the war-torn world below...

EXT. HIGH RIDGE - CONTINUOUS

The Men stand around looking out on the vast fields of the Plantation, many falling asleep where they stand.

Beckett is the first to notice MOVEMENT from the field.

(CONTINUED)

BECKETT

Here they come!

The men quickly perk up, all eyes on the field...

THEIR POV

At first it's hard to see much more than SHADOWS moving toward them, but as they get closer, we can see, in the moonlight, the Special Ops leading the FRENCH FAMILY toward the High Ridge...

GUY MARQUIS is in his late 40s, long and lean, smoking a CIGARETTE as he leads a pair of PACK MULES loaded with his family's luggage...

MADAME MARQUIS is a beautiful, sinewy blonde, but with a profound sadness permanently etched in her lovely face.

The DAUGHTER, a 17 year-old knockout, stays close to her mom. Her eyes dart around, taking in everything with a wide eyed curiosity...

And then there's the SON, 12 years-old going on 50, showing no emotion as he follows, head down...

BECKETT (V.O.)

To this day I don't know what that family had been through, livin' the life they were livin', like they'd walked out of a time warp...

As the Special Ops lead this strange group toward the Platoon, Lt. Wells studies the family with growing apprehension, muttering to the lead Special Ops...

LT. WELLS

You sure they're gonna be able to make it back through the jungle?

SPECIAL OPS

The whole area is hot as hell, Lieutenant. We try an' land a chopper here, this whole place is liable to light up like a Roman Candle. We're takin' 'em to a safer LZ ten clicks north by northwest.

LT. WELLS

Then let's get this shit over with once an' for all.

He nods to Sgt. Larson...

SGT. LARSON

MOVE OUT!

As the Platoon gets its act back into gear, Dust catches the Daughter's eye, gives her a wide, hopeful GRIN that she shyly reciprocates...

(CONTINUED)

And with the ranks of the party having once again swelled to twelve, the journey continues...

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

The Platoon marches in silence through the jungle, flanking the French Family on all sides.

Every so often, Dust sneaks a look at the Daughter. Sometimes she sneaks a look back at him.

Beckett notices the interchange, and sidles up to his friend with...

BECKETT
Keep your head on right, Dust. This
ain't the time or place.

DUST
Doesn't mean I can't look.

Beckett can only shake his head...

BECKETT
You're hopeless...

They keep walking for a moment...

DUST
She's a beauty isn't she?

All of a sudden, one of the Special Ops HOLDS UP A HAND, STOPPING the Platoon as he POINTS to something in a clearing ahead...

BECKETT (V.O.)
They'd found another tunnel...

The Platoon makes a formation around the family as the Special Ops cross to the tunnel, uncover the VINES and DIRT, revealing a WOODEN TRAP DOOR.

And as one of the Special Ops YANKS OPEN the Trap Door, there is a CLICKING SOUND...

Which sets off another CLICK. And another. And another...

And then...

KABLAM!!!!

It's a BOOBY TRAP! A WHITE HOT FIREBALL engulfs the Three Special Ops, BLOWING THEM TO SMITHEREENS!

And then more EXPLOSIONS. An underground CHAIN REACTION that LIGHTS UP THE NIGHT in devastation!

The MULES, who had been grazing several yards away, are BLOWN TO BITS, body parts raining down on the men!

(CONTINUED)

Another EXPLOSION takes Guy Marquis and the Boy, while Madame Marquis and the Daughter look on in unspeakable horror!

THE PARTY IS INSTANTLY REDUCED TO SEVEN...

Madame Marquis and the Daughter cling to each other, out of their minds with terror, SCREAMING, CRYING...

BECKETT

Here they come...

The men follow Beckett's gaze into the treeline, at the FAINT SHADOWS, cast by the full moon, moving toward them...

SGT. LARSON

We can't outrun 'em, not with...

(at the terrified
women)

The woman an' the girl...

Lt. Wells nods...

LT. WELLS

We make our stand. Here an' now...

The remaining members of the Platoon hunker down, readying their weapons...

Beckett stands all alone, studying the treeline as the Shadows get closer and closer.

Beckett examines different angles from above, and then compares them with various positions on the ground.

He strides several paces to the right, examines the treeline again, and then moves several paces farther back, toward a FALLEN, ROTTING TREE...

He motions for Madame Marquis and the Daughter to follow him, but they don't respond...

BECKETT

(pointing to the tree)

Come with me. You'll be safe...

But they don't understand, and that's when Dust crosses toward them, speaks to the Girl with a bad, but serviceable French accent...

DUST

(pointing to the tree)

Secours...

(then at Beckett)

Avec Lui...

And the Girl nods her comprehension, as she and her Mother follow Beckett. Dust flashes his friend a tired grin...

(CONTINUED)

DUST

Not too shabby for a guy who only
took a year of French 'fore the Draft
got me!

ANOTHER ANGLE

As Beckett sets up his big ol' M-40 on the fallen tree...

Madame Marquis and her Daughter cower behind him, quietly...

SHADOWS continue to move between the trees. Hunting...

Minutes seem like hours! The silence is deafening. The
fear like a razor's edge. And then...

ALL HELL BREAKS LOOSE!

The attack comes from ALL DIRECTIONS...

ABOVE from SNIPER FIRE...

THROUGH THE JUNGLE from GROUND TROOPS...

BECKETT (V.O.)

There were only five of us left from
the Platoon. Me, Dust, Monday, Sgt.
Larson an' Lt. Wells. An' we held
our own... for a while...

BECKETT

Even without scope, Beckett wields the M-40 with surprising
authority...

BECKETT'S POV - ALONG THE SIGHTLINE

FINDING A BOGEY, and KABLAM!

ANGLE - ENEMY SOLDIER

The BULLET goes through the man's neck, nearly taking off
his head!

BECKETT

As he quickly reloads and takes out THREE MORE TARGETS...

ANGLE - LT. WELLS

He SCREAMS into the radio...

LT. WELLS

This is Bravo Company six-five-niner
requesting air support, over!

But the radio doesn't respond...

LT. WELLS

Shit!

(CONTINUED)

SGT. LARSON

Is it broke?

Wells examines the transmitter, shaking his head...

LT. WELLS

No! Someone's jamming our signal!

SGT. LARSON

The NVA doesn't have the tech to jam
radio signals!

ANGLE - MONDAY

Breaking from cover, taking out an enemy gunman as his M-16
roars like a demon from hell, when...

From the other side, the Enemy Sniper makes his presence
known with a deafening SHOT!

The unmistakable HUM of that FR-F2 Sniper Rifle lead coming
from above...

And the bullet gets Monday between the eyes, and he goes
down without making a sound...

SGT. LARSON

Sniper 5 o'clock!

Beckett reels the Rifle to 5 o'clock, looking for that elusive
Enemy Sniper...

BECKETT

Where is that son of a bitch?

And then another shot RINGS out!

Lt. Wells goes down in agony as Beckett wields his rifle to
where the shot had come from...

10 o'clock. He sees a BLUR OF MOVEMENT. FIRES!

FOLLOWING THE PATH OF THE BULLET

As it tears through a tree, just missing the target...

ANGLE - BECKETT

He reloads...

As SGT. LARSON runs past him, to the aid of Lt. Wells,
dragging him toward the fallen tree...

ANGLE - DUST

He breaks from his cover, firing his M-16 wildly into the
trees as he makes a desperate break for the fallen tree,
arriving in time to see Wells writhing in pain...

SGT. LARSON

I gotta get his helmet off!

(CONTINUED)

With Dust holding Wells down, Sgt. Larson YANKS off the helmet, REVEALING the gruesome sight that is the remains of Lt. Wells' face, half of which has been caved in by the impact of that gigantic sniper bullet...

Wells is SCREAMING in agony as Sgt. Larson gives him a shot of morphine, and he relaxes into a semiconscious haze...

SGT. LARSON
Those God damned snipers are gonna
be the death of us...

As Beckett continues to scan the treeline...

BECKETT
(correcting)
Sniper. There's only one.

DUST
That's impossible! The shots are
coming from all around!

BECKETT
The kills are uniform. Head shot
every time. It's a signature. An'
the sound of the rifle when it's
fired, do you hear it? It's the
same rifle. The same one that took
out Jefferson.

SGT. LARSON
No one coulda survived that napalm
strike!

DUST
Then how the fuck is he moving around
so easily from place to place...

BECKETT
I don't know, but so long as we don't
move from this spot, he can't find
us in the dark.

SGT. LARSON
How's your ammo holdin' up?

DUST
I'm almost dry.

Beckett digs into his pocket, pulls out half a dozen
bullets...

SGT. LARSON
We gotta make it last as long as
possible.

With that he tries the radio yet again, shaking his head
when it doesn't respond...

SGT. LARSON
Fuck!

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

Later...

Ghostly silent in the dead of night, as a thick JUNGLE MIST swirls all around...

Dust, Larson and Beckett fight fatigue as they peer out into the strangely still jungle. Madame Marquis and Daughter are curled up beneath the fallen tree...

Lt. Wells GROANS deliriously, the morphine racing through his veins...

CLOSE ANGLE

ON A PAIR OF BOOTS! Creeping through the vines...

ANOTHER ANGLE

THREE SHAPES shrouded in Jungle Mist, creeping toward the fallen tree...

ANGLE - BECKETT AND THE OTHERS

Beckett, Dust and Sgt. Larson don't see or hear anything.

And it's only by chance that Madame Marquis opens her eyes when she does. And lets out a SCREAM!

As the THREE ENEMY SOLDIERS are almost right on top of them...

Beckett springs into action, kicking one to the ground as he wields his COMBAT KNIFE with shocking authority and brutality, slitting the second man's throat!

Sgt. Larson TACKLES the Third, grabs his head and POUNDS IT into a sharp ROCK until the Man stops moving...

Dust takes Lt. Wells' SERVICE REVOLVER, puts a round through the First Attacker's skull...

And again, everything is deathly silent... save for the soft SOBBING of the women.

Beckett looks at them with compassion, puts a finger to his lips. They quiet down...

EXT. SKYLINE - DAWN

The first rays of sunlight make their way across the eastern horizon...

EXT. JUNGLE - CONTINUOUS

Dust uses his standard issue CAN OPENER on his MRE. Instead of eating it, however, he hands the MRE to Madame Marquis and Daughter, smiling at the latter with...

(CONTINUED)

DUST

Monge.

She smiles back. Tired and sad...

DAUGHTER

Merci.

Dust turns his gaze back to the treeline, eyes going wide at what he sees...

DUST

Fuckin' hell...

(nudges Beckett)

Beckett, Sarge, they're retreating,
look...

And indeed, there's MOVEMENT in the treeline, Shadows moving away from them, disappearing into the jungle...

Just then, Lt. Wells awakens from his uneasy slumber, groaning in agony...

SGT. LARSON

You're gonna be fine, Sir, just fine.
Hang in there...

And with that, injects Lt. Wells with another shot of Morphine...

EXT. SKYLINE - AFTERNOON

A heavy cloud cover darkens the late afternoon skyline...

BECKETT (V.O.)

Morning became afternoon. If that
sniper was still out there, he hadn't
found a way to get at us yet...

EXT. JUNGLE - EARLY EVENING

Later...

A FLASH OF LIGHTNING. A CRASH OF THUNDER...

And a drenching downpour SOAKS them to the bone...

BECKETT (V.O.)

We hunkered down for hours, planning
on waiting for nightfall before making
our next move, nerves beyond the
breaking point...

Dust is starting to lose his composure...

DUST

This is crazy. They're all gone.
We saw 'em leave!

(CONTINUED)

Beckett and Sgt. Larson don't respond...

DUST
Did you guys hear me?

SGT. LARSON
Quiet!

DUST
Why? There's no one here.

BECKETT
What about the sniper?

DUST
He's gone, man!

Dust suddenly gets to his feet...

DUST
I'm goin' crazy in this rain. I
just gotta clear my mind, gotta...

He's cut off by the deafening REPORT of the Fr-F2, and Dust's head explodes like a ripe melon with a spray of blood and bone...

And his legs buckle beneath him as he drops where he stands...

The women SCREAM, as Beckett pushes them deeper beneath the fallen tree...

The gunshot, meanwhile, has roused Lt. Wells who suddenly sits up, eyes wide...

LT. WELLS
Where is he?

Just as another GUNSHOT slams into the side of the young Lt.'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, and then...

Beckett rises up, trying to get a look...

ENEMY SNIPER'S POV - THROUGH THE CROSSHAIRS OF HIS SCOPE

Struggling to get a lock on Beckett through the steady downpour...

KABLAM!

FOLLOWING THE PATH OF THE BULLET

As it just misses its target...

And Beckett's UPPER CHEST ERUPTS with blood, knocking him back behind the tree...

(CONTINUED)

He lies there for a long moment...

No one moves. No one says a word...

And then Sgt. Larson whispers...

SGT. LARSON
How bad are you hit?

But before Beckett can answer, ANOTHER GUNSHOT, from the side this time, blows out Sgt. Larson's temple in a spray of BLOOD AND BRAINS...

BECKETT (V.O.)
He knew how to get to us now. We had to find better cover...

He motions for Madame Marquis and the Daughter to follow him, and they crawl through the pouring rain, through the MUD, finally taking cover in a DITCH behind the rotting CARCASS of one of the PACK MULES...

And as the last miserable gray rays of sunlight fade into night...

INT. MILITARY COURTROOM - THE PRESENT

Coming out of the FLASHBACK as Beckett sits there for a second, the memory troubling him. And then...

BECKETT
It was just the three of us. Me, Madame Marquis an' the girl. The only thing that saved us was night came on an' he couldn't see us anymore...

Beckett sips water from the glass again as he remembers the horror...

BECKETT
He knew I was hit. But not dead. How he missed me I'll never know. But we all have that one that got away...

Beckett ponders this for a moment before continuing...

BECKETT
So he waited. An' so did I. An' at the first light of day... he took the mother...

INT. JUNGLE - BACK IN TIME - MORNING

A GUNSHOT shatters the silence and Madame Marquis' head EXPLODES, splattering the daughter awake with blood!

(CONTINUED)

The Young Woman instantly BOLTS in terror and Beckett GRABS for her ankle, trying to stop her...

BECKETT

NOOOO!!!

But her muddy wet leg slips out of his grasp and she runs...

Another GUNSHOT drops the Daughter dead in her tracks...

And Beckett SCREAMS in rage as he FIRES back at the Sniper's position. Again and again, jamming round after round into his M-40, until he's out of ammo...

Everything goes silent. For what seems like an eternity...

BECKETT (V.O.)

An' then I heard something that chilled me to the bone...

From somewhere in the treeline, a man's FAINT LAUGHTER...

INT. MILITARY COURTROOM - THE PRESENT - DAY

Coming out of the FLASHBACK...

BECKETT

He just walked away an' left me to die. Didn't matter to him. He got what he came for.

COLONEL

Meaning what?

BECKETT

The family.

COLONEL

I don't understand.

MCKENNA

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

COLONEL

Continue, Mr. Beckett...

INT. SAIGON MILITARY HOSPITAL - BACK IN TIME - DAY

Beckett awakens to find himself HEAVILY BANDAGED in a HOSPITAL BED surrounded by MONITORS. At first he appears to be alone..

Then, as his eyes start to come into focus, he can see a WOMAN'S FACE staring down at him...

(CONTINUED)

BECKETT (V.O.)
It was the prettiest face I can ever
remember seeing....

The beautiful Woman stands there, not saying a word, radiating
concern...

BECKETT (V.O.)
I was in Saigon, an' I couldn't
remember how I got there. But the
pain I felt in my chest, an' the
splitting ache in my head told me I
wasn't gonna be dying anytime soon...

Beckett groans as he fights to keep consciousness...

BECKETT (V.O.)
It also let me know it was too much
effort stayin' awake, an' when I
drifted off it all came back to me
in bits an' pieces...

As Beckett's eyes close and he falls into an uneasy sleep as
he remembers...

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

Rain pounds all around as a VOICE suddenly yells...

VOICE
This one's still alive!

A BLUR OF YOUNG MARINE FACES suddenly appear, silhouetted
against LIGHTNING FLASHES in the dark sky above, gazing down
at Beckett, who floats in a ditch, filled with bloody water
and the GUTS from the Mule...

INT. SAIGON MILITARY HOSPITAL - DAY

Beckett is wheeled from a medevac HELICOPTER into the
hospital. His battered body is covered with LEECHES and MUD
STAINED UNIFORM IS SOAKED IN BLOOD...

BECKETT (V.O.)
What I didn't know at the time out
there in country was that my wound
had caused a lot of internal
bleeding...

INT. SAIGON MILITARY HOSPITAL - OPERATING ROOM - NIGHT

A TEAM of DOCTORS work on Beckett under blinding surgical
lights. It's a blood bath...

BECKETT (V.O.)
It was over a week before I could
really put two an' two together...

INT. SAIGON MILITARY HOSPITAL - WHITE ROOM - DAY

A BLACK AND WHITE TV. PRESIDENT NIXON fills the screen, making his announcement that...

NIXON

The US will reduce the troop numbers by 70 percent starting...

His famous speech continues as the CAMERA WIDENS to REVEAL that the TV is mounted on the wall in the corner of a long, white-washed room filled with BEDS of other RECOVERING SOLDIERS, all of whom wear BLUE SCRUBS identifying them as wounded.

The majority of the patients crowd around the few chairs and tattered couches that comprise a make-shift TV lounge...

BECKETT (V.O.)

It'd still be months before the pull out, but Saigon was already comin' apart at the seams. The streets filled with fear an' uncertainty. It was the beginning of the end...

On one of the beds farthest from the TV, Beckett stirs awake. And from somewhere above him...

SYDNEY (O.S.)

How are you feeling today?

It's a lyrical voice, and as Beckett's eyes come into focus, he can see that same Beautiful Face from before.

Blonde hair and deep, kind eyes. Even hiding behind her standard-issue white nurse's scrubs it's clear she has a figure to die for...

BECKETT (V.O.)

Her name was Sydney Nillson.

Or, in Beckett's case, to live for...

BECKETT

Like shit. How did I get here?

She considers this for a long moment...

SYDNEY

Divine intervention? It's a miracle you're still breathing. No one else from your platoon survived, you know.

FAST FLASHES

As Beckett remembers...

Dust taking the sniper bullet, collapsing, dead...

(CONTINUED)

Guy Marquis and Son obliterated by the underground explosion...

The Enemy Sniper's LAUGHTER from somewhere in the trees...

BACK ON BECKETT

As the memories pass...

BECKETT

It doesn't make any sense. Why'd he let me live?

SYDNEY

I don't know. Nothing about this war makes any sense. But you're alive, jarhead. And that's all that matters...

She brushes back his hair with a delicate hand and then gets to her feet.

SYDNEY

I'll see you tomorrow. Take good care of yourself, Thomas...

And when she walks away, down the long, white-washed room...

Beckett's eyes are far from the only ones riveted on this beauty, the startling news on the TV momentarily forgotten.

BECKETT (V.O.)

Even though she wasn't supposed to get emotionally attached, she did...

(beat)

An' I'm glad she did...

INT. SAIGON MILITARY HOSPITAL - GYM - DAY

The gym is all but empty, save Beckett, who works to rebuild his strength...

BECKETT (V.O.)

The days went by, my body slowly healing, my strength returning...

The door to the gym swings open and Sydney enters with...

SYDNEY

How's it going?

BECKETT

(without stopping)

Slow. Painful.

SYDNEY

You're making great progress.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SYDNEY (CONT'D)

Usually wounded soldiers aren't in any hurry to get back into fighting shape. Especially now, with the end so near.

She takes a seat on the floor in a corner, watching Beckett. Neither speaks for a long time, and then...

BECKETT

The guys are givin' me a hard time, ya know.

SYDNEY

About what?

BECKETT

'Bout how much time you've been spendin' with me. Like you got a personal stake in my recovery.

SYDNEY

And what if I do?

Beckett smiles ever so slightly...

BECKETT

Makes me feel like I'm... ya know, special or something.

SYDNEY

You are special.

She's direct. Straight forward. Pulls no punches...

SYDNEY

I know it's crazy, when you think about how many patients I've treated, but... there's something about you, Thomas...

And a warm smile spreads across her face...

SYDNEY

Something I liked the moment you woke up out of surgery and vomited all over the front of my uniform.

He laughs with her...

BECKETT

I didn't!

SYDNEY

You most certainly did!

And their laughter slowly fades away... as her eyes settle on him...

(CONTINUED)

SYDNEY

You have kind eyes, Thomas. So many men who come through here... their eyes are cold... and dead...

There's a moment... and then...

BECKETT

Sometimes I feel... cold... an' dead.

SYDNEY

You shouldn't let it get to you. It kills more men than the war does...

(beat)

I've seen my share of horror. But I can't begin to imagine what you've been through...

INT. SAIGON MILITARY HOSPITAL - WHITE ROOM - NIGHT

The room is dark save for the omnipresent glow of the TV, around which a few INSOMNIACS are gathered, watching the NEWS FOOTAGE of the CHAOS IN THE STREETS OF SAIGON and COMBAT FOOTAGE.

Some playing cards...

Some just lost in thought...

BECKETT (V.O.)

I spent my days in anticipation of those precious moments when I could see her...

The rest are asleep in bed, painful memories coursing through their unconscious minds...

BECKETT (V.O.)

My nights, on the other hand... were hell...

Beckett tosses and turns in his bed, the memories playing over his fevered and fragmented mind...

FLASHES

PFC Wintergreen's top half plastered to that tree! Grinning like a Jack-o-lantern...

Dust getting blown away...

Madame Marquis' head blown apart...

Trying to hold onto the Daughter's leg...

The SPRAY OF BLOOD from her head as she tumbles to the mud...

INT. SAIGON MILITARY HOSPITAL - WHITE ROOM - MORNING

Beckett awakens with a start...

Gasping for breath...

His sheets SOAKED IN PERSPIRATION...

Just lying there with sunlight streaming in through high windows...

BECKETT (V.O.)

Then one day it was decided that I was healthy enough to be debriefed about the mission...

INT. DARKENED CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The way Beckett is seated at an old wooden table...

A MAN sits across from him...

They're both lit by a single overhead bare bulb that makes this feel more like an interrogation than a debriefing...

And maybe that's exactly what it is...

The man doesn't wear a uniform and his eyes are dark and cold...

BECKETT (V.O.)

His name was Ian Hanson. He said he was Military intel, but he was CIA. At the time I didn't know it but as the years went by I realized what he was. In my line of work you're always dealing with spooks. You can spot 'em a mile away. That smug smile. That stutter in their speech when they're lying to you, which they are most of the time...

Ian Hanson asks questions...

BECKETT (V.O.)

Why the CIA gave a rat's ass about my story I couldn't figure out...

Ian Hanson opens a NOTEBOOK and starts taking notes as he asks another question...

Beckett answers him...

BECKETT (V.O.)

I told 'em everything I could remember. About the battles. The booby trapped tunnel. The jammed radio.

(CONTINUED)

IAN HANSON

What about the family? Why were you escorting them?

BECKETT

The Special Ops... or whatever they were wouldn't tell us. Only that it was top secret.

IAN HANSON

And did you see the NVA that were attacking?

BECKETT

Only ones I saw up close were the three that attacked us that last night.

IAN HANSON

Was there anything... unusual about them?

FLASHES

As Beckett remembers...

Madame Marquis' screams alerting Beckett and the others to the attackers...

Beckett dragging the knife across the throat of one of the Attackers...

Sgt. Larson pounding another Attacker's head to a bloody pulp against the rock...

Dust putting a bullet through the last man's skull...

INT. DARKENED CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Coming out of the FLASHBACK Beckett answers...

BECKETT

I'm not sure I understand the question, Sir. They were men. One minute they were alive. The next they were dead.

IAN HANSON

And the sniper, Private, did you see him?

BECKETT

Just glimpses, through the trees.

IAN HANSON

Why'd he leave you? Why didn't he kill you?

(CONTINUED)

BECKETT

I don't know...

INT. MILITARY COURTROOM - THE PRESENT

Beckett, as he remembers...

BECKETT

That was the first an' only time I met Ian Hanson.

MCKENNA

And yet, after all these years, he remembered you.

BECKETT

Yes.

MCKENNA

Enough to address his suicide note to you.

Beckett considers this for a long moment, and then...

BECKETT

If I'd known at the time what he'd done, what he was a part of...

(beat)

I woulda killed him then an' there...

INT. DARKENED CONFERENCE ROOM - FLASHBACK

Young Beckett sits there, across from Ian Hanson as he goes over his notes...

And then Hanson forces a friendly smile for the first time...

IAN HANSON

Thank you, Private, for your candid testimony. I'm going to recommend you for a bronze star.

BECKETT

Why?

Hanson gets up to leave, glancing back at Beckett with that smile frozen in his expression...

MAJOR

You're a hero.

And Beckett rivets him with a puzzled look...

BECKETT

Have you listened to a word I've said? The mission was a failure. The family was slaughtered. My friends are all dead. Me?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BECKETT (CONT'D)

I'm just the dumb ass who beat the odds an' survived. An' I'm sure as shit no hero...

INT. MILITARY COURTROOM - THE PRESENT

Coming out of the FLASHBACK, back on Beckett...

BECKETT

I was just a pawn in a game that Ian Hanson an' others were playing. An' once they found out I didn't know anything, they let me go...

(beat)

With this...

Beckett indicates the BRONZE STAR that's prominently displayed on his uniform...

BECKETT

This was my bribe. To keep quiet an' not ask any questions.

MCKENNA

But you didn't keep quiet. Didn't stop asking questions.

Beckett grins ever so slightly...

BECKETT

It just isn't in my nature...

INT. SAIGON MILITARY HOSPITAL - WHITE ROOM - AFTERNOON

Where that black-and-white TV drones on, SHOWING THE GROWING CHAOS ON THE SAIGON STREETS...

BECKETT (V.O.)

What they counted on was that I was too young an' too dumb to put all the pieces together...

There's pandemonium everywhere...

BECKETT (V.O.)

What they hadn't counted on was that with each passing day all I wanted to do was to get back in country an' find that bastard who killed Dust an' the others...

At the edge of the make-shift TV lounge, Beckett sits at a table across from a YOUNG MAN his age with a shock of RED HAIR, his arm in a SLING.

They're playing CHESS...

(CONTINUED)

BECKETT (V.O.)

One of the guys who helped me do that was Paul Finnegan. He was a Tunnel Rat who'd been wounded in a firefight near Da Nang. He'd just re-upped for a second tour an' there wasn't much he hadn't seen...

As Beckett contemplates his next move...

FINNEGAN

There's been rumors of a sniper like your boy. Kinda like a phantom.

As Beckett's QUEEN takes Finnegan's BISHOP...

BECKETT

Who is he?

As Finnegan's KNIGHT takes BECKETT'S Queen...

FINNEGAN

I've just heard the rumors. Lemme ask around, see what I can see...

He trails off, eyes riveting on something just behind Beckett...

Beckett doesn't notice this right away, as he moves a PAWN to take Finnegan's KNIGHT...

BECKETT

Check...

And when Beckett looks up to see Finnegan's no longer paying attention to the game, he follows his new friend's gaze, craning his neck to see...

Sydney...

Standing there with a warm smile on her lovely face. She's dressed in off-duty khakis with a pleated skirt that shows off her legs...

SYDNEY

Hello Thomas.

Beckett smiles back...

BECKETT

Sydney.

SYDNEY

My shift just ended and I was wondering if you'd like to take a walk.

EXT. SAIGON MILITARY BASE - LATE AFTERNOON

Beckett and Sydney walk side-by-side through the sprawling Saigon Military Base. The grounds are peaceful, a stark contrast to the civil unrest unraveling just beyond its tall, heavily-fortified wrought-iron gates.

And yet, even inside this sanctuary, are hints of things to come, HARRIED BUREAUCRATS rushing from place to place, hauling FILING CABINETS and other SUPPLIES...

SYDNEY

I was a military brat growing up.
My father was an officer, a lifer,
rarely staying in one place for more
than a few years. He met my mother
when he was stationed in Australia.
That's how I got my name...

BECKETT

(finishing her sentence)

Sydney.

Sydney flashes Beckett a sweet smile, before continuing...

SYDNEY

I've wanted to be a doctor since I
was little, was a year into medical
school when I signed up to come here,
serve my country, if that's what you
wanna call it. My dad's proud as
hell.

BECKETT

An' your mom?

SYDNEY

She died. A long time ago.

And with that, they both fall silent, until...

BECKETT

Both of my folks are dead. Never
knew my mom, she walked out when I
was a baby. Guess I can't blame
her. My dad, he was a tough son of
a bitch...

He goes silent for a moment, remembering...

BECKETT

I don't think he was ever happy.
Drank himself to death an' left me a
little bit of money to start college.
I never had much of a head for school,
but went anyway. Mainly to escape
the draft in the beginning...

Beckett pauses for another moment, as the memories wash over him...

(CONTINUED)

BECKETT

I made it to my senior year but I started seeing friends come home in body bags. You watch this shit on the tube day an' night an' it starts to get under your skin...

(beat)

Truth be known I'm not sure we should've come here in the first place. But we did. An' a lot of good men died because we did...

(another beat)

I started feeling guilty...

SYDNEY

It's such an incredible tragedy. So many young men with no choice but to fight... and die.

BECKETT

I don't see it that way. At least not for me anymore. Bein' a soldier's the first thing I've ever done in my life that feels right.

SYDNEY

Then all the more reason not to waste our best and brightest on a lost cause.

BECKETT

You're here?

That brings a smile to her face...

SYDNEY

Someone's gotta patch you guys up an' send you home to Mama... or a girlfriend.

Beckett smiles back...

BECKETT

No Mama. No girlfriend.

And her smile widens...

They fall silent as they get to the top of a hill, looking out on the military complex and the sprawling, chaotic Saigon beyond...

BECKETT (V.O.)

Maybe Sydney wanted to salvage something good an' sweet an' sacred from all this death an' destruction. Maybe I wanted to salvage something of the naive, young man I had been not that long ago...

And they watch the sunset in silence...

(CONTINUED)

BECKETT (V.O.)
 Whatever it was, the connection was
 immediate, an' it was strong...

In the distance, in the SAIGON STREETS, CHAOS, LOOTING,
 VIOLENCE and URBAN COMBAT rage through the night...

HOLDING ON THIS HAUNTING MOSAIC AS THE COLOR SLOWLY FADES...

UNTIL IT'S BLACK-AND-WHITE...

AND THEN THE IMAGE BECOMES PIXILATED, AS IF IT'S BEING WATCHED
 ON TV...

INT. SAIGON MILITARY HOSPITAL - WHITE ROOM - DAY

We are watching these IMAGES of CHAOS and DESTRUCTION on the
 TV mounted to the wall...

Beckett sits amongst the other wounded GIs gathered in front
 of the TV, but he doesn't pay attention, lost in his own
 thoughts, when...

FINNEGAN (O.S.)
 Tommy!

Beckett turns to see Finnegan approaching...

FINNEGAN
 I been talkin' to a few guys who
 might have some answers for you...

EXT. SAIGON MILITARY BASE - SHOOTING RANGE - DAY

A TARGET cut into the shape of an NVA, with cartoonishly
 racist Asian features...

BECKETT (V.O.)
 He told me I should hook up with the
 "Snake Killers."

A GUNSHOT shatters the silence...

And a bullet tears a hole on the head of the target...

ANOTHER ANGLE

As all hell breaks loose with GUNFIRE!

A GROUP OF MEN, wield their powerful SNIPER RIFLES, many of
 them non-military issue AUSTRIAN and GERMAN MODELS, as they
 blow away targets from varying ranges...

BECKETT (V.O.)
 That's what they called the sniper
 training company there on the base...

These snipers' ages range from early 20s to late 30s and
 beyond...

(CONTINUED)

And each and every one has a SNAKE TATTOO on his right hand.
A symbol of the sniper brotherhood...

One of these snipers is a GRIZZLED VETERAN with deep-set wrinkles creasing his leathery face.

As the CAMERA HOLDS on this character, Beckett introduces him with...

BECKETT (V.O.)
Master Gunnery Sergeant Kris Cofeen had seen it all. He was a sniper in Korea, an' had been in 'Nam since the Kennedy administration...

As SGT. COFEEN crosses to get more ammo, he notices Beckett, notices the blue scrubs identifying him as a wounded soldier...

COFEEN
You the guy Finnegan was talkin' about? The one with the story 'bout the enemy sniper that took out your platoon?

Beckett nods...

COFEEN
You're a lucky sonofabitch, kid. Very few grunts cross paths with the Frenchman an' live to tell the tale...

EXT. SAIGON STREETS - NIGHT

A beat-up old JEEP coughs a noxious cloud of exhaust as it races through the decaying streets of Saigon...

BECKETT (V.O.)
That night, Cofeen took me to see the Dead Man...

INT. JEEP - CONTINUOUS

Cofeen drives. Beckett is in the passenger seat...

COFEEN
You ever wondered what the end of the world would be like, kid? Shit, jus' look out the window...

The scene playing outside the window is apocalyptic indeed...

EXT. SAIGON STREETS - CONTINUOUS

The Jeep rumbles over broken and uneven asphalt, SWERVING to avoid stalled, abandoned and sometimes burning CARS...

(CONTINUED)

Everywhere you look there's LOOTERS, and even the occasional frightened ANIMAL, just another tragic life form caught up in the bedlam and madness...

KABOOM!

A MOLOTOV COCKTAIL shatters the GLASS of a STOREFRONT, starting a RAGING FIRE as the Jeep races by...

EXT. SEAMY SAIGON BAR/WHOREHOUSE - NIGHT

Somewhere off the beaten track...

We see the Jeep parked in a trash-strewn dirt lot outside a crumbling edifice covered in Vietnamese and English GRAFFITI, as well as several CRUDE PAINTINGS OF NUDE WOMEN...

Rock 'n roll MUSIC blares from inside...

INT. SEAMY SAIGON BAR/WHOREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The ROCK 'N ROLL MUSIC, spilling from the JUKE BOX, has been pumped up to ear-shattering decibels...

The energy in this crowded, smoky corner of hell is electric...

Violence threatening to erupt at any second.

Semi-clad and heavily made-up VIETNAMESE PROSTITUTES mingle with a mostly American clientele, some of whom are GI's on R&R...

Others, however, are grizzled EX-PATS who finished their tours, and, for whatever reason, never were able to find their way back home...

A mean, nasty bunch, feeding off the explosive vibrations currently raging in the streets...

Cofeen leads Beckett through the teeming crowd, toward a MAN who sits at the BAR, his back to them...

Cofeen TAPS the man on the shoulder with...

COFEEN

I got someone here needs to talk to you, Dead Man...

DEAD MAN

(without turning around)

'Bout what?

His voice is throaty and guttural, and he sounds like, well, a Dead Man.

COFEEN

About the Frenchman.

(CONTINUED)

He still doesn't turn around... but he raises his head ever so slightly...

DEAD MAN
He's... seen 'im?

Beckett fields the question...

BECKETT
Not really. Just glimpses. Through the trees.

And with that, Dead Man finally turns to face them...

DEAD MAN
I saw him...

Beckett's breath catches in his throat at the sight of this strange character...

HIS HEAD IS GROTESQUELY DEFORMED FROM WHERE A BULLET TOOK A CHUNK OF HIS HEAD OFF, LEAVING HIM WITH ONE EYE AND A CONSTANT DROOL...

DEAD MAN
An' then he blew half my fuckin' head off an' left the handsome devil sitting before you today...

BECKETT
Jesus!

DEAD MAN
Jesus had nothin' to do with it...

Dead Man studies Beckett for what seems like an eternity...

DEAD MAN
He left you in pretty good shape, kid. Maybe the fucker's losin' his touch?

All of a sudden, from across the bar, the Prostitutes scatter as VOICES are RAISED and a FIGHT BREAKS OUT, fists and insults flying, glasses shattering...

DEAD MAN
How 'bout we go someplace a little quieter...

INT. DEAD MAN'S ROOM - MINUTES LATER

It's hardly any quieter in this Spartan bedroom just above the bar...

The rock 'n roll MUSIC from the cranked Juke Box shaking the floor as the bar fight rages on...

Beckett and Cofeen sit on wobbly old chairs across from Dead Man, who's sprawled across his bed...

(CONTINUED)

His permanent squint making him look like a demented Popeye, except instead of a corn cob pipe, he huffs on an ENORMOUS BLUNT...

BECKETT

Why's he called the Frenchman?

The Dead Man stretches a grin across his deformed face...

DEAD MAN

Because... he's a Frenchman...

He offers Beckett a toke but he refuses...

DEAD MAN

A leftover from the French Special Forces. Them frogs been fucking up this part of the world long before we ever got here.

BECKETT

How's he move so fast? It was like he was everywhere at once.

DEAD MAN

He knows the jungle like a cat, uses the tunnels to find the perfect angle. Always head shots. Rarely misses.

BECKETT

That's him. So why's a sniper from French Special Forces workin' with the NVA?

Dead Man shoots Cofeen a knowing glance...

His lips spreading into a gruesome grin again as he lets out a cough that sounds like a death rattle... or maybe it's laughter...

DEAD MAN

He's not. They dress like NVA, but they're really Cambodian. A rogue Khmer Rouge unit runnin' the opium trade.

COFEEN

But that's just the tip of the iceberg, tell the kid...

Dead Man nods, picking up the thread with...

DEAD MAN

No one wants to see it end, but everyone knows the end is comin' soon, an' they want to get every fuckin' thing they can before this place descends into fuckin' hell.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DEAD MAN (CONT'D)

You can't begin to imagine the money that's been sucked outta this godforsaken shithole over the last ten years. There's a lot of motherfuckers gettin' rich. On both sides of the coin. In an' out of uniform...

Dead Man lets this final comment hang in the stifling air for a moment as he takes a MASSIVE HIT from the Blunt...

BECKETT

So what are you telling me?

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

DEAD MAN

You ever hear 'bout what happened at An Loc?

BECKETT

A little. They're still investigating from what I hear.

DEAD MAN

They're not doin' shit. It's all being covered up...

INT. MILITARY COURTROOM - THE PRESENT

McKenna stops Beckett's story with...

MCKENNA

What would they have been covering up?

BECKETT

That the An Loc massacre wasn't the work of the NVA.

MCKENNA

Then who actually committed it?

BECKETT

Khmer Rouge.

MCKENNA

But why would the U.S. government cover it up?

BECKETT

It wasn't a government cover-up. Just a handful of individuals that conspired to make An Loc look like an NVA massacre. But the real reason was to assassinate a man named Pham Quat.

(CONTINUED)

McKenna removes an old weathered "8 1/2 x 11" PHOTOGRAPH from an official-looking ENVELOPE as he addresses the Colonel...

MCKENNA

If your honor would allow me to approach the bench...

COLONEL

You may...

McKenna crosses to the Colonel, places the PHOTO in his outstretched hand...

CLOSE ANGLE

The PHOTO, which shows a candid shot of PHAM QUAT, a striking presence, stern-faced and serious...

ANGLE - ALL

As the Photo is passed amongst the panel, from officer-to-officer...

MCKENNA

Pham Quat was a high ranking official in the South Vietnamese National Police. An incorruptible wild card who had been methodically cleaning things up, cracking down, in particular, on the flourishing opium trade...

BECKETT

(picking up the thread)

What the Dead Man told me was that 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 a Khmer Rouge unit an' their leader. The Frenchman.

MCKENNA

Under direct orders from some rogue elements in the French Special Forces and American Military?

BECKETT

Yes, Sir. Like I said, it was all about money. Getting as much as they could before the war was over. They killed Pham Quat because he was getting in their way.

COLONEL

And you have proof of this?

MCKENNA

We'll get to that, Sir. If Master Gunnery Sergeant Beckett may continue?

(CONTINUED)

The Colonel nods his permission...

And as Beckett continues...

The CAMERA ZOOMS IN on the PHOTO of Pham Quat, until it FILLS THE SCREEN...

BECKETT (V.O.)
After my meeting with the Dead Man,
I had to find out all I could about
the An Loc massacre...

INT. SAIGON MILITARY BASE - RECORDS - NIGHT

ON the same PHOTOGRAPH of PHAM QUAT...

And the CAMERA WIDENS TO REVEAL young Beckett, SITTING all alone at a table, staring at the PHOTOGRAPH that he holds in his hand...

He lays the photograph down and picks up a large ENVELOPE marked:

**AN LOC MASSACRE
CONFIDENTIAL**

BECKETT (V.O.)
Finding what I was looking for proved
easier than I had ever imagined...

PULLING BACK FURTHER...

To REVEAL that the Records Room more closely resembles a garbage dump.

File cabinets are open and FILES are scattered everywhere.

Many of them are marked with that 'CONFIDENTIAL' or 'TOP SECRET' seal, strewn about haphazardly, as if they'd been abandoned...

Beckett breaks the seal on the envelope and takes out its contents...

A thick stack of photographs...

BECKETT (V.O.)
Things were unraveling in a hurry.
Documents, that only weeks before
had been guarded with the utmost
secrecy, were now left out in the
open, there for anyone who cared to
look...

Beckett shuffles past one disturbing PHOTO after another...

The village is a disaster. Smoldering ruins...

Dead animals half buried in the mud...

(CONTINUED)

The landscape littered with blood soaked HUMAN CORPSES...

The FACE of one of the CORPSES...

Beckett picks up the PHOTOGRAPH of PHAM QUAT and compares it to the bloody face of the corpse...

It's the same man...

BECKETT

I spent all night going through everything. It wasn't until sunrise that I finally found what I was really looking for...

ANGLE - BECKETT

The first pink rays of sunlight streak through the old wooden blinds as he lifts a FILE FOLDER out of one of the file cabinets...

It's marked:

JEAN PIERRE HERAULT

As he opens it his eyes narrow in the dim light, straining with disbelief at what he finds...

ANGLE - FILE

Inside is one single PHOTOGRAPH of the RUINS of a GIANT TEMPLE SPIRE in the middle of the jungle...

A CAUCASIAN MAN stands there dressed in jungle camo...

He holds that sleek looking FR-F2 SNIPER RIFLE in his arms...

Standing around him are armed CAMBODIAN PEASANTS...

Standing next to him are TWO FAMILIAR CAUCASIAN FACES...

INT. MILITARY COURTROOM - THE PRESENT

Mckenna approaches the bench and hands the Colonel some PAPERS...

MCKENNA

These are the French military records for Jean Pierre Herault, Sir. He was a sniper in their Special Forces. You'll find that when the French left Viet Nam in '55 Captain Herault was listed as missing in action...

The Colonel studies the PHOTOGRAPH for a moment... and then...

COLONEL

Who are these men next to him?

(CONTINUED)

BECKETT
 Ian Hanson, Sir. An' Guy Marquis...

And that takes everyone by surprise...

COLONEL
 The man you went to rescue an' the
 CIA operative who debriefed you?

BECKETT
 Yes, Sir. An' Jean Herault was the
 man they called the 'Frenchman'.

The Colonel stares at the photograph again for a moment,
 digesting all of this...

COLONEL
 Did you take this information to
 your superiors at the time, Master
 Gunnery Sergeant?

BECKETT
 No, Sir.

COLONEL
 Why not?

INT. SYDNEY'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Beckett lies in the dark, lost in thought as Sydney sleeps
 soundly at his side, a shapely bare arm wrapped around him...

BECKETT (V.O.)
 I know we were fightin' the NVA.
 But in my mind, there was only one
 enemy. The Frenchman. And I wanted
 to kill him in the worst way...

Beckett slowly slides out of bed, causing Sydney to stir
 with...

SYDNEY
 You okay?

BECKETT
 Just need a glass of water...

And with that he crosses to the bathroom, his naked body
 silhouetted in the darkness...

INT. SYDNEY'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Instead of getting a glass of water, Beckett just stands
 there, staring at his REFLECTION in the mirror, fixated on
 his healing wound, still purple and discolored...

BECKETT (V.O.)
 I wanted to kill him... by beatin'
 him at his own game...

EXT. SAIGON MILITARY BASE - SNIPER SHOOTING RANGE - DAY

Beckett hangs out at the shooting range as the Snake Killers go about their training. This time he has his M-40 spread across his lap, attaching a new SCOPE...

Watching, waiting, hoping...

BECKETT (V.O.)

At first they were hesitant to let me in. A wounded soldier is damaged goods to an elite group like the Snake Killers. Especially someone that got out alive when the rest of his platoon died...

The Snake Killers all but ignore Beckett...

All except Cofeen, who suddenly crosses to him, his sleek DRAGUNOV SVD BOLT-ACTION slung over his shoulder...

COFEEN

You remind me of the kid who didn't get picked for the baseball team but keeps showin' up to practice.

Beckett holds up the M-40 with a wry grin...

BECKETT

Even brought my own mitt, coach.

COFEEN

Remington M-40, huh? Decent gun. For American-made. Most of us prefer European-models...

Cofeen hoists out his own rifle...

COFEEN

Got this baby off an enemy sniper I took out after one of my first firefights in Nam. It's a Dragunov, Soviet model. Always thought there was somethin' kinda poetic 'bout usin' the enemy's weapon against him.

BECKETT

I don't know much about poetry, Sir. But I know I prefer my guns American made...

Cofeen's conversation with Beckett causes some of the other Snipers to take a break from their training and observe his interaction with the 'rookie.'

COFEEN

One shot, one kill, you know what that means, kid?

(CONTINUED)

Beckett's not sure...

COFEEN

What we do, it ain't like regular combat, where they're shootin' at you an' you're shootin' back. You sit an' you wait until you have a clean shot. An' when you do, there's no hesitation, cuz there's no second chance. One shot, one kill. It's what some might call 'in cold blood.'

BECKETT

An' what do you call it?

Cofeen flashes a wry grin...

COFEEN

I call it another day at the office.

Beckett is silent for a moment...

The Snake Killers have stopped their training, all eyes on him.

BECKETT

I wish to hell I could go back an' live a normal, quiet life. But I can't. I've killed in the way you're talkin' about. An' that kinda blood, it never washes off. Whether you let me into your little club here or not, I'm one of you. I always will be...

Silence for what seems like an eternity, and then...

COFEEN

Alright, kid, let's see what ya got...

BECKETT adjusts his scope on the M-40...

And then steps up to an unoccupied TARGET STATION...

All eyes are on him as he levels the M-40...

Cofeen operates the SWITCH that moves the TARGET (another one of those racist NVA cardboard cutouts) out into position...

BECKETT'S POV - THROUGH THE CROSSHAIRS

As he zeroes the Target into his sights...

BECKETT (O.S.)

Farther...

ANGLE - BECKETT AND COFEEN

Cofeen grins...

(CONTINUED)

COFEEN

Farther it is...

He moves the target back another 50 yards...

BECKETT'S POV - THROUGH THE CROSSHAIRS

Again he gets the target in his sights, before calling out...

BECKETT (O.S.)

Farther!

ANGLE - BECKETT AND COFEEN

Cofeen is unsure...

COFEEN

You sure, kid? There's only a handful of snipers in the whole goddamn Corps who can make that shot?

BECKETT

I used to hunt deer at this range.

COFEEN

Yeah, but deer ain't huntin' you back.

BECKETT

Tell you what. I make it, I'm in. I miss, you tell me to fuck off.

That brings another grin to Cofeen's face...

COFEEN

You got balls. I'll say that for you...

And he flips the SWITCH and the TARGET whirs back farther and farther...

The Snake Killers gather around, fascinated by how this is gonna play out...

Finally the target gets to the end of the track...

Just a speck in the distance, rocking back and forth in the breeze, a quarter of a mile from where they stand...

COFEEN

That's as far as it goes.

BECKETT

Perfect...

Beckett readjusts the M-40 and without hesitation...

KABLAM!

FOLLOWING THE PATH OF THE BULLET

(CONTINUED)

As it soars through the air, hitting the target...

DEAD BETWEEN THE EYES!

And that's how a legend is born...

BECKETT (V.O.)
From that point on, I was one of
them...

MONTAGE

Beckett going through SNIPER TRAINING with the Snake Killers...

Making a GHILLIE SUIT from any and all available vegetation...

TRACKING through the jungle...

And, of course, TARGET PRACTICE...

EXT. SAIGON MILITARY BASE - SNIPER SHOOTING RANGE - DAY

Beckett stands at the shooting station. This time, as well as the fellow Snake Killers, a CROWD is gathered, enjoying the show...

As Beckett FIRES...

Destroying the target with dead-eye accuracy...

BECKETT'S FACE

Teeth gritted, sweat cascading his brow. And though it's clear he's still in considerable pain, he doesn't make a sound...

INT. SNAKE KILLER QUARTERS - NIGHT

More a dank, dark hovel than a quarters...

The Snake Killers all stand around Beckett, who sits on a stool, ink mixing with blood as Cofeen gives him a TATTOO...

The iconic SNAKE that, to this day, adorns his right hand...

INT. SNAKE KILLER QUARTERS - LATER

Beckett sits all alone, nursing a WARM BEER, eyes riveted on his new tattoo, when Cofeen enters...

COFEEN
You like it?

BECKETT
Yeah.

(CONTINUED)

COFEEN
You're one of us now. For life.

BECKETT
It's an honor.

COFEEN
We're proud to have you...

Cofeen reaches for another BOTTLE of warm beer and POPS the top...

COFEEN
The country's goin' to hell. We coulda won this thing, Beckett. If we'd had the balls, if we'd had the will, but we didn't. Shit, back home, folks are callin' us baby killers, you know that?

Cofeen downs half the bottle of beer in one mighty swig...

COFEEN
An' now everyone's leavin' like rats from a sinkin' ship. But not you, Beckett? You're itchin' to get back in country, aren't ya?

BECKETT
Yes, Sir!

COFEEN
I can see it in your eyes. Some guys, once they see combat, nothin' an' no one can ever get 'em back out there. But not guys like us. What we are...

He stops to think about it. There's a hint of remorse in his tired eyes...

COFEEN
It's a lonely life...
(beat)
A life I wouldn't wish on anybody...

He finishes the last of the beer and hurls it into a garbage drum...

COFEEN
You got a girl on the base, I hear?

BECKETT
Sorta...

COFEEN
An' what would she think if you shipped out again?

Beckett takes a deep breath, troubled by the thought...

(CONTINUED)

BECKETT

I can't speak for her, Sir.

Cofeen studies Beckett for a while before proceeding...

COFEEN

I've been assigned to a new unit.
Our orders are taking us up around
the area where your platoon was wiped
out. They asked me to recruit another
sniper for the team. You interested?

BECKETT

I'm interested.

COFEEN

(a tired smile)
Get medical clearance, an' you're
in.

BECKETT

Yes, Sir!

COFEEN

And for the love of God, Beckett,
don't leave that poor girl hanging.
Love has no place in our line of
work...

INT. SYDNEY'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Sydney sits on the bed, her back turned to Beckett, who lies
on the bed...

SYDNEY

I... just don't think you're ready
to go back into combat.

BECKETT

Is it that you don't think I'm
ready...

(beat)

Or that you don't want me to go?

Sydney turns to him, the tears streaking her lovely face...

SYDNEY

Can't it be both, Thomas? I could
sign a piece of paper, get you
discharged tomorrow. My tour's almost
over. We could... test this...

He doesn't say anything...

And she tries to make light of it, tears welling again...

SYDNEY

Or at least go out on a real date.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SYDNEY (CONT'D)

Dinner, movie, you know, the stuff
young people like us are supposed to
be doing?

She trails off, locking her gaze with Beckett's for what
seems like an eternity...

Sydney flinches first, a symbolic act of surrender, as she
drops her head...

SYDNEY

That's not gonna happen, is it?

His eyes say it all...

BECKETT

I promise...

He reaches out to her...

BECKETT

We'll see each again, I'll...

But Sydney moves away...

SYDNEY

No. I patched you up once. I can't
do it again. I won't...

INT. SAIGON MILITARY HOSPITAL - DAY

Beckett's loading up his gear into a duffel bag, as Finnegan
crosses to him...

FINNEGAN

Shit, Tommy, you just gonna leave
like that, no goodbye, nothin'?

BECKETT

That was the idea...

FINNEGAN

Wish I was goin' out there with ya.
But the quacks tell me I need another
couple days of bed rest. Jesus
Christ, I don't know how I'm gonna
make it. I'm goin' fucking insane
in this place.

Before Beckett can reply, he notices Sydney standing at the
end of the long room, watching them...

She doesn't return his smile, as Beckett turns back to
Finnegan with...

BECKETT

Take care of her, Finnegan, will ya?

(CONTINUED)

FINNEGAN
 No problem, buddy. An' you take
 care of yourself, huh?

Their handshake becomes a manly hug, and when they break...

FINNEGAN
 It's a small country. We'll meet up
 again before it's all over...

Beckett shoots one last glance back at where Sydney had been standing, but she's no longer there...

INT. MILITARY COURTROOM - THE PRESENT

Beckett sits there, lost in the memory. And then he looks up at the waiting faces, continuing with...

BECKETT
 Me an' Sydney, we stayed close over
 the years. Still are close. But
 what we had, we never got it back.
 Like Cofeen said, it's a lonely life,
 a life I wouldn't wish on anybody...
 (beat)
 By week's end I was back where I
 belonged...

EXT. LZ - DAY

PANNING across a Tent City Command Center, not unlike the one Beckett was introduced to his first day in country. The only difference...

It's been completely ABANDONED, unoccupied TENTS of all sizes flapping in the warm breeze, and even a few rusty, hulking VEHICLES whose days of service for their country are behind them...

BECKETT (V.O.)
 With the decline in American military
 presence, our mission was to
 demilitarize as much of the country
 as possible...

A PLATOON OF MARINES moves through this desolate scene...

TORCHING EVERYTHING IN SIGHT...

ANGLE - BECKETT AND COFEEN

They're posted on a ridge above, watching over this RAGING INFERNO as they look for enemy movement...

The FLAMES dancing across their faces...

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

The Platoon, 11 MEN IN ALL, with Cofeen and Beckett holding up either end, makes its way through the dense jungle...

A THICK MIST swirling all around them...

BECKETT (V.O.)
 We humped through the jungle
 destroying tent cities, staging areas,
 fox holes, LZs, anything that could
 fall into the wrong hands when the
 inevitable flood of enemy fighters
 would overtake the country...

No longer the fresh-faced rookie, Beckett moves through the thick undergrowth as if he were made for the terrain, carved from the dirt beneath his feet, from the bark of the trees...

He's aware of every sound, every movement...

BECKETT (V.O.)
 We were three days out without seeing
 a soul. Gave me a lot of time to
 think about what had happened on
 that first mission to get Guy Marquis
 an' his family...

Beckett studies Cofeen, walking point...

Studying the veteran warrior he will one day become...

BECKETT (V.O.)
 I kept thinking, what if Cofeen was
 right? What if those enemy combatants
 we'd run into weren't NVA, but the
 rogue Cambodian unit an' its French
 sniper? The NVA might not have the
 technical know-how to jam a radio
 transmission...

INT. MILITARY COURTROOM - THE PRESENT

Beckett remembers...

BECKETT
 But the French Special Ops sure as
 hell would.

MCKENNA
 And you think they attacked you to
 kill the French family?

BECKETT
 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.

(CONTINUED)

MCKENNA

And it occurred to you that Guy Marquis might have had information about the massacre that someone didn't want made public?

BECKETT

At the time it seemed insane. To compromise that mission woulda meant our own people were involved...

His eyes narrow, as an old rage simmers just beneath the surface...

MCKENNA

But now you don't think it was so insane?

BECKETT

No, Sir, I don't. Not in light of what I now know...

And there's glances all around the courtroom at this...

Beckett studies the panel before him, looking from face to face, and then...

BECKETT

On the fourth day out we came up on some opium runners...

EXT. JUNGLE - HIGH GROUND - BACK IN TIME - DAY

The Platoon stands in formation along a ridge, looking down at MOVEMENT on a cut in the jungle.

Beckett levels his M-40...

BECKETT'S POV - THROUGH THE CROSSHAIRS

Watching below as a heavily-armed 12-MAN UNIT makes its way through the thick foliage, escorting 10 HUMAN PEASANT MULES, who struggle with HUGE BAGS OF POPPY BULBS strapped to their backs...

ANGLE - BECKETT

As he lowers his rifle, and Cofeen whispers...

COFEEN

They're Cambodians, by the look of 'em.

BECKETT

The Cambodians?

COFEEN

(with a shrug)
Could be... hard to tell for sure...

(CONTINUED)

Cofeen then levels his Dragunov, eye to scope...

SCOPE POV

Scanning the procession. There's no sign of the "Frenchman"...

But there never would be...

ANGLE - BECKETT AND COFEEN

Cofeen lowers his rifle and gazes around the jungle...

COFEEN

There's no sign of that fuckin'
Frog...

(beat)

Leave 'em be. Our mission is to
engage NVA only...

Cofeen motions for the platoon to move out and they do...

As the last MARINE on the ridge turns to leave he steps on a loose part of the ground near the edge, nearly losing his footing...

ANGLE - CAMBODIANS

As the dislodged ROCKS tumble down the cliff and one of the ARMED CAMBODIANS spots the Marine as he ducks away...

He yells to the others and instantly they aim their rifles up at the ridge and open FIRE...

ANGLE - BECKETT AND THE OTHERS

The Marine is hit! Going down in a hail of GUNFIRE...

Beckett and the others run back to the ridge...

A CORPSMAN to the aid of the wounded Marine...

The others, finding position above the Cambodians...

As all hell breaks loose...

ANGLE - CAMBODIANS

The GUNMEN take whatever cover they can find, FIRING blindly up at the Platoon, which, along with owning the high ground, is well-covered as the Marines RETURN FIRE...

In the chaos and violence, the Peasant Mules DUMP THEIR CARGO and take off running...

ANGLE - COFEEN

Leveling his Dragunov...

COFEEN'S POV - THROUGH THE CROSSHAIRS

(CONTINUED)

Getting a Cambodian Gunman in his sights...

He FIRES!

And the Gunman's skull explodes in crimson...

ANGLE - BECKETT

Calm and cool as he levels his M-40...

BECKETT'S POV - THROUGH THE CROSSHAIRS

Getting another Cambodian Gunman in his sights...

Right between the eyes!

ANGLE - BECKETT AND COFEEN

Beckett and Cofeen continue what is essentially a sniper shoot-off, picking off one Cambodian Gunman after another, taking them out with dead-eye accuracy.

One shot, one kill...

ANGLE - CAMBODIANS

Overmatched, the remaining Cambodian Gunmen start to fan out...

Beating a hasty RETREAT toward the jungle.

ANGLE - BECKETT AND THE OTHERS

As he scrambles down the rocky ravine toward the cutting below, leading a charge...

Kicking up dirt and turf the Platoon skids its way down the ravine behind Cofeen and Beckett, a few losing their balance and falling hard, rolling head over heel to the jungle floor...

The Platoon gives chase, trying to pick off the remaining Gunmen taking cover in the trees...

EXT. THICK JUNGLE - CONTINUOUS

In the dense, dark jungle, the sound of AUTOMATIC GUNFIRE is deafening as the battle rages on...

Intense, bloody, chaotic...

Cambodian Gunmen and Marines alike are dropping in the frenzied cross-fire.

Cornered, a PAIR OF CAMBODIAN GUNMEN drop their weapons in surrender.

As MARINES surround them, a GUNSHOT from somewhere in the dense jungle takes out ONE of the Marines!

(CONTINUED)

ANGLE - BECKETT

In a catlike reflex, Beckett levels his M-40 in the direction of the gunshot...

BECKETT'S POV - THROUGH THE CROSSHAIRS

Scanning the jungle...

Whipping back and forth...

Suddenly catching a MOVEMENT...

As the Cambodian Gunman runs...

ANGLE - BECKETT

He FIRES...

FOLLOWING THE PATH OF THE BULLET

As it HITS the fleeing Gunman and he goes down in a haze of blood!

ANGLE - BECKETT

He yells out to Cofeen, taking off after his quarry...

BECKETT
I'm goin' after him...

ANGLE - JUNGLE

Beckett staggers through the thick foliage, fighting his way, eyes searching ahead for a sign of the fleeing GUNMAN...

ANOTHER ANGLE

As he crashes through the tangle of vines...

To the spot where the man dropped...

All that's there is a BLOOD-SPATTERED trail in the mud...

Leading deeper into the jungle...

Beckett levels his M-40, gazing in the direction of the blood trail...

BECKETT'S POV - THROUGH THE CROSSHAIRS

As he scans the jungle, looking for his quarry, when...

There he is! The Gunman is hobbled but alive, leaking blood as he crashes through the trees...

ANGLE - BECKETT

He isn't able to get a clean shot...

And he lowers his rifle and takes off after him again...

(CONTINUED)

ANGLE - COFEEN

The FIRE FIGHT starts to wind down as the last of the CAMBODIANS is killed...

And the GUNSHOTS echo across the jungle as Cofeen takes stock...

COFEEN
How bad are we?

MARINE
Four are down, Sir. Two dead. Two wounded.

COFEEN
Call in a chopper...

ANGLE - BECKETT

As he stumbles through the jungle, farther and farther from his platoon...

In the distance he can barely hear their VOICES...

And then he suddenly crashes through the snarl...

Stopping dead in his tracks at the sight of a TEMPLE RUINS 20 yards ahead...

For a moment he stands there, catching his breath...

There's no sign of the wounded Cambodian...

But the sight of the Temple Ruins suddenly sends a chill up his spine...

THERE'S NO MISTAKING IT! THAT'S THE TEMPLE SPIRE IN THE PHOTOGRAPH HE FOUND. THE ONE WITH JEAN PIERRE HERAULT, IAN HANSON AND GUY MARQUIS...

ANGLE - COFEEN

He takes stock again, noticing that Beckett's nowhere to be found...

COFEEN
Where's Beckett?

And he yells out...

COFEEN
BECKETT!

ANGLE - BECKETT

He stands there frozen, eyes riveted on the ruins as the faint sound of Cofeen's VOICE echoes through the jungle...

COFEEN'S VOICE
Beckett!

(CONTINUED)

A million things are racing through Beckett's fevered thoughts...

COFEEN'S VOICE

Beckett!

And Beckett has to make a split-second decision...

Go back to the Platoon, or...

He takes one last glance back in their direction...

And then starts to run...

In the opposite direction, chasing after the wounded Cambodian Gunman...

INT. MILITARY COURTROOM - THE PRESENT

McKenna locks gazes with Beckett...

MCKENNA

And that's when you made the decision to create your own rogue mission?

BECKETT

As I said, Sir, call it what you want. I went AWOL. I left my command.

COLONEL

To kill that French sniper.

BECKETT

Yes. Sir.

MCKENNA

But you were under orders to only engage the NVA.

BECKETT

Yes, Sir! But this was my only chance to get that bastard... excuse my French.

This brings a faint smile to McKenna's face. And a few others present...

The Colonel, however, is not amused...

COLONEL

So then what happened, Mr. Beckett?

BECKETT

I tried to follow the wounded Cambodian...

EXT. VIETNAMESE SKY - BACK IN TIME - AFTERNOON

The sun makes its downward arc across the western horizon...

EXT. JUNGLE - CONTINUOUS

Beckett skulks through the jungle, using his newly-learned tracking skills to study the terrain, as he follows the wounded Cambodian...

A FOOTPRINT here. A DROPLET OF BLOOD there...

As Beckett makes his way through the dense brush, he takes bits and pieces of the jungle with him...

SMEARING MUD on his face, ATTACHING LEAVES AND BRANCHES to his helmet and uniform, to the muzzle of his gun...

A phantom figure, a chameleon, blending in more and more with the terrain...

All without breaking stride...

EXT. OVERGROWN JUNGLE TRAIL - LATE AFTERNOON

Soon Beckett is moving along something resembling a game TRAIL, still tracking the broken sticks, crumpled leaves and faint footsteps, still finding droplets of BLOOD, when...

A NOISE...

Coming from his right. FOOTSTEPS. Getting closer...

An NVA PATROL... moving in stoic formation toward him!

Beckett's eyes dart all around, looking for a place to hide, but there's scarce cover...

ANGLE - THE NVA PATROL

Gets closer and closer...

ANGLE - BECKETT

Huddled a mere inches from their nearest NVA flank, not daring to breathe, not daring to blink...

Crouching in the bush, his Ghillie Suit providing just enough cover to escape detection as the NVA Patrol moves past him...

And once the last man has disappeared around a bend, Beckett re-emerges from the brush and continues on his way...

EXT. VIETNAMESE SKY - SUNSET

As the last rays of sunlight are quickly disappearing over the horizon...

EXT. JUNGLE - CONTINUOUS

Beckett is on his hands and knees, frantically searching, in the dim light, for any sign of the wounded soldier...

BECKETT (V.O.)
Hiding from the patrol I'd lost time,
an' night was coming fast. I searched
for his trail but I'd lost him...

And then, a ROLL OF THUNDER rumbles across the heavens...

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

Beckett hunkers down as a MONSOON drenches the jungle...

Until the rain slowly stops...

And then he gets to his feet...

BECKETT (V.O.)
Any fightin' chance I had of pickin'
up his trail had been eliminated by
the monsoon...

He wanders through the clearing, wild-eyed, on the brink of despair...

EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE JUNGLE - NIGHT

Beckett moves slowly through the jungle...

BECKETT (V.O.)
I was lost. I wandered for hours,
without a clue to where I was, or
where I was going...

Suddenly freezing in his tracks, eyes going wide...

BECKETT (V.O.)
An' that's when I heard it...

The SOUND of MUSIC sails through the jungle. Distant.
Pounding...

He gazes around, trying to pin point the direction...

And then he takes off RUNNING! Crashing through the thick
vegetation...

BECKETT (V.O.)
It was Rock n' Roll...

He slows as the SOUND grows discernable...

BECKETT (V.O.)
Rock n' Roll in the middle of the
Vietnamese jungle...

(CONTINUED)

And then he's there! Breathing heavily as he rests against the trunk of a MOSS COVERED MONKEY TREE...

HIS POV

Through the growth he can see the RUINS of a VILLAGE in the distance...

EXT. VILLAGE RUINS - DAY

A depressing sight. A grim reminder of the gruesome remains of war...

Burned out thatched roof shacks with only the walls still standing...

BECKETT (V.O.)

It was the ruins of a village that the French must've destroyed years before...

Scattered about are the rusted out shells of FRENCH ARMY VEHICLES...

BECKETT (V.O.)

It appeared they had used it for a base for a while an' then abandoned it when they decided to cut an' run...

The whole area is crawling with CAMBODIAN GUNMEN and PEASANT OPIUM MULES. Milling around COOKING FIRES as OLD CAMBODIAN WOMEN fix food...

There's a primal, insane look in the eyes of these people as they move about, drifting in and out of the thick humid mist and smoke, illuminated by the licking FIRELIGHT that dances in the night...

ANGLE - BECKETT

He levels his M-40 and gazes through his scope to get a closer look...

BECKETT'S POV - THROUGH THE CROSSHAIRS

Watching as a pair of CAMBODIAN GUNMEN jabber nervously as they gaze down at the blood soaked body of the MAN Beckett wounded...

The place buzzes like a beehive!

GUNMAN stand guard the edge of the jungle beyond the ruins...

In the middle of the ruins is the stone ruins of another Temple. Its high stone walls still stand and this is where most of the men have congregated in the multiple rooms...

The place is lit by the spill of the cooking fires...

This is where the MUSIC comes from...

(CONTINUED)

Cream's, Strange Brew, crackles from one of those small '70's portable battery powered RECORD PLAYERS...

ANGLE - BECKETT

He needs to get closer. A better angle. And he moves away, disappearing into the darkness...

ANOTHER ANGLE

One of the CAMBODIAN GUARDS sits on his haunches at the edge of the jungle, accepting a plate of rice and meat from one of the women and watches her walk back to the cooking fires...

As he digs into his meal there's a sudden flash of steel as Beckett appears out of the dark behind him and strikes, cutting off his scream with one hand over his mouth while the other driving his COMBAT KNIFE deep into the man's back, piercing his heart!

He drags the man's body back into the thick and then returns, bringing up the scope to his eye again

BECKETT'S POV - THROUGH THE CROSSHAIRS

He can better see SHAPES moving around inside the temple ruins...

MEN and YOUNGER WOMEN, silhouetted against the FIRELIGHT...

They move about, passing in and out of the walls that still stand. It's a PARTY! Drinking. Opium...

Strange Brew gives way to *White Room*...

ANGLE - BECKETT

He continues to search for his target...

BECKETT'S POV - THROUGH THE CROSSHAIRS

The MUSIC carries through the night air...

And a ROLL OF THUNDER rumbles above...

As Beckett scans the perimeter again, noting where the GUARDS are posted one more time...

ANGLE - BECKETT

This is a different Thomas Beckett. The cold-blooded killer. So comfortable in his element. A thing of morbid beauty.

Fast, sleek and deadly.

There's a SCRATCH of NEEDLE across the record as someone changes the song...

And *Cream's, Sunshine of Your Love* crackles the night!

(CONTINUED)

The light from the fires dance in his eyes, ablaze with something we've not seen before...

Something dark and dangerous and primal, as he peers again through his scope, searching once more...

BECKETT'S POV - THROUGH THE CROSSHAIRS

Moving from one SHADOWY FIGURE to the next in the temple ruins...

Until his breath suddenly catches...

There, standing in the middle of the crowd is the only ANGLO face...

BECKETT (V.O.)
He was there. I had him in my
sights...

CLOSE ANGLE - BECKETT'S TRIGGER FINGER

Tensing, a second from blowing the Frenchman to hell...

BECKETT'S POV - THROUGH THE CROSSHAIRS

When all of a sudden a young Cambodian WOMAN steps in front of the Sniper Killer, BLOCKING THE SHOT...

ANGLE - BECKETT

As he keeps his finger on the trigger, waiting... waiting...

BECKETT'S POV - THROUGH THE CROSSHAIRS

But when the Cambodian Woman finally moves away in drunken laughter...

The Frenchman is GONE...

INT. MILITARY COURTROOM - THE PRESENT

Beckett remembers the moment like it was yesterday...

BECKETT
I was sure it was him. An' when I
remembered what he did to Dust an'
Sarge, an' that woman an' her Daughter
an' the others...

McKenna and the others sit there in spellbound silence...

Waiting on him...

BECKETT
I knew I was gonna kill him. That
or he was gonna kill me. One way or
another we were gonna dance...

(CONTINUED)

His eyes are cold as ice as the memory plays that night out in gruesome detail...

BECKETT
So I invited them to my little piece
of hell...

EXT. VILLAGE - BACK IN TIME - NIGHT

Beckett again places eye to scope...

BECKETT'S POV - THROUGH THE CROSSHAIRS

Scanning the temple ruins. Stopping on the head of one of the Cambodian Gunmen...

CLOSE ANGLE - BECKETT'S TRIGGER FINGER

Squeezing off the shot, the DEAFENING ROAR of the M-40 shatters the night...

FOLLOWING THE PATH OF THE BULLET

As it BLOWS A HOLE in the Gunman's head, spraying BLOOD and BRAINS all over those around him!

For a second, time seems to stand still. No one reacts...

And then, one by one, they realize what it is splattered across their arms and faces...

And the Gunman drops to the floor, dead...

Women are SCREAMING, and everyone starts running in every direction in a BLIND PANIC!

ANGLE - BECKETT

With lightning fast moves he swings the rifle around, locking in on one PERIMETER GUARD after another...

VARIOUS ANGLES

As they drop from PERFECT SHOTS to the head...

ANGLE - BECKETT

He reels around, back at the temple ruins, eye to scope...

BECKETT'S POV - THROUGH THE CROSSHAIRS

Somewhere inside the temple ruins, the NEEDLE SCRATCHES across the record, and the MUSIC stops...

The only sound is the panicked SCREAMS of the Women...

And GUNMEN begin to run for their weapons...

ANGLE - BECKETT

(CONTINUED)

One after the other, Beckett begins to pick them off, his hands a blur as he pumps round after round into the Remington's white-hot smoking chamber...

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

INT. MILITARY COURTROOM - THE PRESENT

All these years later, Beckett looks a bit uncomfortable as he remembers...

BECKETT

By my estimate, there were nineteen
gunman. Not including the Frenchman.
I got eleven comin' out of the
ruins...

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

EXT. VILLAGE - BACK IN TIME - NIGHT

Beckett FIRES again and again...

And Gunmen DIE...

BECKETT (V.O.)

Got four more inside...

The Young Women RUN for their lives...

ANGLE - TEMPLE RUINS

The FRENCHMAN, holds his position in the shadows...

In spite of the chaos all around him, he's actually SMILING to himself. Perhaps enjoying the work of a man who might very well be his match...

He watches the remaining FOUR GUNMEN scramble for their weapons in a panic...

ANGLE - BECKETT

As he FIRES blindly into the ruins...

The Gunmen FIRE back...

But Beckett's already ON THE MOVE, along the edge of the jungle...

He finds ANOTHER POSITION, where he can see ONE of the Gunmen as he continues to FIRE on Beckett's old position...

In a movement that's becoming as easy and natural as breathing, Beckett takes him out with a clean HEAD SHOT...

ANGLE - TEMPLE RUINS

(CONTINUED)

The remaining THREE GUNMEN duck into the shadows and scramble to get a shot at his new position...

ANGLE - BECKETT

He's on the move again, finding yet another position...

BECKETT'S POV - THROUGH THE CROSSHAIRS

Finding two more GUNMAN...

ANGLE - TEMPLE RUINS

He kills TWO MORE from his new vantage point while they're still firing at his second position...

BECKETT (V.O.)
That night I learned the first rule
of a sniper. Be lucky...

ANGLE - BECKETT

He's on the move again! Finding a new position...

RELOADING...

ANGLE - TEMPLE RUINS

The Frenchman peers out from behind one of the crumbling walls, eyes straining in the blinding FIRELIGHT as he brings up his scope and scans the jungle...

THE FRENCHMAN'S POV - THROUGH THE CROSSHAIRS

Moving across the pandemonium as the WOMEN and the PEASANT OPIUM MULES run in every direction, looking for places to hide...

ANGLE - FRENCHMAN

He ducks back behind the wall...

ANGLE - LAST GUNMAN

He rises up from behind another wall, for a look...

A last one...

ANGLE - BECKETT

As he rises up from behind one of the rusted out VEHICLES and levels the M-40, placing his eye to his scope...

BECKETT'S POV - THROUGH THE CROSSHAIRS

Landing on the Last Gunman...

CLOSE ANGLE - BECKETT'S TRIGGER FINGER

Squeezing off a shot...

(CONTINUED)

ANGLE - LAST GUNMAN

The bullet slams into him with a force that blows him off his feet, backwards into the darkness...

INT. MILITARY COURTROOM - THE PRESENT

Beckett again looks from one face to the other with...

BECKETT

An' then there was just... me an'
him...

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

EXT. VILLAGE - BACK IN TIME - NIGHT

Dead silence. Dead still...

Terrified eyes dart about from their hiding places...

The ones who didn't make it to the pitch black of the jungle...

Frozen with fear as they wait for what comes next...

Seconds pass like hours...

Minutes like days...

And then...

That SCRATCHING sound again as the Frenchman places the needle back on the record and Cream's, *Tales of Brave Ulysses* breaks the silence...

ANGLE - BECKETT

His heart pounds as his finger tightens around the trigger again, listening to the scratchy MUSIC...

ANGLE - FRENCHMAN

He sits in the shadows of the ruins, that sick smile still etched in his icy expression...

ANGLE - BECKETT

He steels his nerves and starts to rise up for a look again...

ANGLE - FRENCHMAN

Leaning out from behind the wall for a look, at the exact same moment...

ANGLE - BECKETT

As he levels his M-40 again, eye to scope...

(CONTINUED)

BECKETT'S POV - THROUGH THE CROSSHAIRS

Scanning the village, through the FIRE and SMOKE, right to left...

ANGLE - FRENCHMAN

Eye to scope...

THE FRENCHMAN'S POV - THROUGH THE CROSSHAIRS

Scanning the village, through the FIRE and SMOKE, left to right...

ANGLE - BECKETT

Eye still to scope...

BECKETT'S POV - THROUGH THE CROSSHAIRS

As a monsoon breeze starts to clear the SMOKE...

ANGLE - FRENCHMAN

Eye to scope...

THE FRENCHMAN'S POV - THROUGH THE CROSSHAIRS

As the SMOKE starts to clear...

AND WHAT HAPPENS NEXT, HAPPENS IN A SPLIT SECOND...

BECKETT'S POV - THROUGH THE CROSSHAIRS

The SMOKE clears and the Frenchman is looking right at him...

THE FRENCHMAN'S POV - THROUGH THE CROSSHAIRS

The SMOKE clears and Beckett is looking right at him...

ANGLE - FRENCHMAN

He FIRES first...

ANGLE - ALL

As one of the YOUNG CAMBODIAN WOMEN suddenly bolts out of hiding and the bullet slams into her head, knocking her off her feet in an explosion of blood!

ANGLE - BECKETT

He FIRES back...

ANGLE - FRENCHMAN

Stunned shock wipes that smile off his face as the bullet pierces his left eye and blows out the back of his head...

INT. MILITARY COURTROOM - THE PRESENT

Beckett sits there in silence for a moment...

And then finally addresses the Court...

BECKETT

It was all about being lucky. His was bad. Mine was good. I left his body to rot in the village an' made my way back through the jungle. It was almost two days before I finally ran into another Marine unit on patrol...

EXT. JUNGLE - BACK IN TIME - DAY

Beckett stands in the middle of a small clearing, so exhausted he can barely stand, as he sees shapes in the treeline all around him...

And a VOICE shouts to him in English...

VOICE

Identify yourself!

BECKETT

Thomas Beckett, US Marine Corps.

And then another VOICE rings out...

FINNEGAN (O.S.)

Tommy?

It's a voice Beckett recognizes, as a shape emerges from the trees, revealing PAUL FINNEGAN, his friend from the Saigon hospital...

FINNEGAN (CONT'D)

God almighty, man, you look like shit...

INT. MILITARY COURTROOM - THE PRESENT

Back on Beckett...

BECKETT

When they asked me how I ended up way the hell out there all by myself, I told them I'd gotten lost. That was the official story. Until today.

MCKENNA

And you're positive this sniper was the legendary Frenchman?

BECKETT

Yes, Sir.

(CONTINUED)

The Colonel ponders all this for a moment...

COLONEL
And what does this all have to do
with General Hastings?

Beckett shoots a look at Mckenna... and then back at the
Colonel...

BECKETT
He was Major Hastings back then. My
commanding officer. I went to him
an' told him what I suspected. He
said he would look into it.

COLONEL
And did he?

Beckett hesitates for a second...

BECKETT
I assumed he did.

COLONEL
But you never followed up on it?

BECKETT
No, Sir, I didn't. An' I'm sorry
that I didn't...

Beckett glances over at Mckenna and Mckenna rises with a
large ENVELOPE in his hand...

MCKENNA
Master Gunnery Sergeant Thomas
Beckett's record has been an exemplary
one, Sir. He has served his country
to the very best of his ability all
of his life. Before he received the
letter from Ian Hanson six days ago
he always believed that the events
of An Loc and the subsequent mission
to rescue Guy Marquis and his family
were connected in some way. He also
believed that his superiors made
every effort to investigate the
possibility of a conspiracy. When
none was discovered he rightly assumed
that his suspicions were unwarranted.

McKenna holds up the ENVELOPE...

MCKENNA
Permission to approach the bench?

Colonel Vissers nods his consent and McKenna crosses to the
Colonel and hands him the ENVELOPE...

(CONTINUED)

MCKENNA

I would like to enter into evidence Ian Hanson's suicide note, written six days ago and addressed to Master Gunnery Sergeant Thomas Beckett. With it are corroborating materials provided by Mr. Hanson along with his note...

The Colonel turns to Beckett with...

COLONEL

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

BECKETT

It's a confession, implicating himself an' General Jack Hastings in the conspiracy to cover up the real events of the An Loc massacre. You'll see that in his suicide note, Ian Hanson lived with the guilt all his life until he couldn't take it anymore. As our participation in Vietnam collapsed, he an' General Hastings became involved with Jean Pierre Herault in the opium trade...

He pauses, before continuing with...

BECKETT

Pham Quat got in their way, an' so it was in their best interest to see him dead. They made his assassination look like the NVA committed a massacre at An Loc...

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

BECKETT

But it didn't end there. Guy Marquis was also involved. An' General Hastings was constantly worried that he was a weak link, so Ian Hanson decided to eliminate him. The plan was to make it look like the NVA did it again...

(beat)

Our mission was compromised from the beginning. No one was supposed to come out of it alive. Except for me...

(another beat)

So that I could confirm the charade that it was NVA who attacked us...

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

And then he rivets his eyes on Beckett with a demanding look...

(CONTINUED)

COLONEL

These are very serious charges, Master Gunnery Sergeant. General Hastings is one of the country's most respected leaders. Do you swear all this is true?

Beckett's eyes well with tears...

BECKETT

On my life. An' the lives of all those men who died at my side...

INT. MILITARY COURTROOM - HALLWAY - LATER

In the hallway, a DISTINGUISHED-LOOKING MAN in his early-60s, his 4-STAR GENERAL'S UNIFORM choked with MEDALS, waits...

This is GENERAL JACK HASTINGS, and he watches with curiosity as the door to the courtroom swings open and Beckett exits into the hallway...

Their eyes rivet on each other...

General Hastings regards Beckett with a friendly smile...

GENERAL HASTINGS

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 then an MP pokes his head out of the courtroom, addressing the decorated officer...

MP

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...

GENERAL HASTINGS

What's this all about, Beckett?

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

BECKETT

It's about the nine Marines you killed, Sir...

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

(CONTINUED)

Stepping out into BLINDING SUNLIGHT...

FADE OUT:

THE END