

A LONE WOLF PRODUCTION

Executive Producer: Walter Hill
Producers: Michelle Manning
Shane Black
Director: John Carpenter

John Carpenter's

SHADOW COMPANY

Written by

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"SHADOW COMPANY"

BLACK SCREEN.

Silence.

SUPERIMPOSE THE FOLLOWING CARD:

"... And the sins of the fathers...
shall be visited upon the sons and
the daughters..."

-- LUKE 6:8

Creedence Clearwater Revival's "RUN THROUGH THE JUNGLE"
RISES on the soundtrack, as we...

FADE IN

EXT. SAIGON, 1973 - NIGHT

A street choked with smoke, garbage, and human souls.
American G.I.s and Vietnamese REFUGEES carry their lives
on their backs...

An officer emerges from an alley, smoking a cigarette.
Not that it matters, but meet LT. COL. FRANK NIKKO,
U.S. Army. He eyes a dingy DIVE across the street...

A dying neon sign bleeds through the mist: TORCHY'S.

A PROSTITUTE saunters by, making eyes.
We can't tell if it's a woman, or a man. 15 or 50.

Nikko ignores her, takes a drag off his cigarette.
His attention across the street.
He tosses the butt, dodges traffic...

INT. TORCHY'S - SAIGON - NIGHT

Dim. Smoke-filled. Scratchy JUKE MUSIC.
Nikko ENTERS. Cases the joint:
Soldiers. Junkies. Assassins. Combinations thereof.
Missing eyes, limbs, morals.

WE SUPER:

SAIGON
FEBRUARY 1973

Nikko goes to the bar.
The BARTENDER is South Vietnamese.

NIKKO
Whiskey. Straight.

Nikko looks around the bar.

The bartender returns with a bottle -- looks at him with an impassive face as he pours.

Nikko casually pulls out a HUGE WAD of cash.

NIKKO
You wanna know the real problem with this war ending...?

Peels a bill off the top. Drops it.
Gives the bartender a sly look.

NIKKO
No fuckin' C.O.s to steer you where the action is...

The bartender's eyes flicker toward the back of the bar.
A stairway behind beaded curtains. Red light bleeds down.
Nikko winks. Drops another bill. Rises.

INT. SLEAZY CORRIDOR (2ND FLOOR) - NIGHT

Dingy. Whorehouse-red light bulbs. Cockroach Heaven.
SOUNDS from behind closed doors: LOVEMAKING. Babies CRYING.

Nikko tops the stairs.

An ASIAN BOY with one dead eye stares at him.
The sound of BUZZING FLIES...

Nikko looks down the corridor.
A door at the end of the hall.
Open a crack...

Nikko unzips his jacket.
A .45 automatic in a shoulder holster.
He moves forward...

INT. DINGY ROOM - NIGHT

Thick with smoke.
Ceiling fan slowly turning.
Not cooling anything... just redistributing the heat.

Nikko slowly noses the door open... Enters.

SIX AMERICAN COMMANDOS surround a poker table.
Some at the table, others to the side. Watching.

Black Berets hang on M-16 butts.
Ammo belts. Holstered automatic weapons.
Sheathed combat knives the size of your upper leg.
These guys are armed.
Backpacks packed. Ready for momentary evac.

Some of the men wear sunglasses. Aviator-style.
The mirrored kind, so you can't see their eyes.

Two of them have rolled-up sleeves.
You can see a tattoo on their forearms:
Black snakes coiled around an evil-looking machine gun.

NIKKO

Evening.

The Soldiers say nothing.

NIKKO

Special Forces...?

The Soldiers say nothing.

NIKKO

So much for small talk.

SMACK.

Nikko's WAD OF CASH hits the center of the pot.
The men still say nothing.
They do not move, or acknowledge him in any way.

The only sound is the ceiling fan.

Everyone looks at one man.
Who looks at his cards. Ponders.
Finally reaches into a pocket...and pulls out a snapshot.
A FAMILY. Beautiful wife. Happy kids.

He tosses it into the pile of cash, rings, watches.
Then pulls out a piece of paper. Adds it to the ante.
It is a LIFE INSURANCE policy.

The next player pulls out a medal with silk ribbon.
A Purple Heart. Tosses it into the pot.

NIKKO

You guys are a laugh riot.

The next Soldier studies his cards...
Then holds up his pinkie finger, as though flipping the bird.
He unsheathes a knife, and BAM! Slaps it on the table.

NIKKO

Look...

(he pulls up a chair)

I outrank you and my cash is on the table getting cold, so let's just quit with the jokes, finish the fucking hand, and let's get on with it, can we do that?

The Soldier With The Family Photo shows his cards: Three Jacks.
The Soldier With The Purple Heart: two pair. Twos and Queens.

The Dealer folds.

The Soldier With The Knife shows three sixes.

As the winner pulls the pot toward him, The soldier with the knife spreads a handkerchief on the table, flattens his palm, positions the blade above his pinkie finger, and --

WHUMP. CRUNCHES the blade down.

Takes the handkerchief and wraps his bloody hand.
Tosses the dismembered finger into the winnings.

Nikko staggers backward from his chair.
GASPING with disbelief.

The Dealer shuffles.

The soldiers say nothing...

NIKKO

Jesus fucking Christ. Okay. Okay. I get it. I'm supposed to be scared now, right? This is the scary part?

Okay, admit it: if this was you or me, we'd hit the road.
But not this guy. HE pulls out ANOTHER wad of cash.

NIKKO

Well, FUCK YOU.

SLAPS it down on the table. And sits.

NIKKO

You wanna play cards? Let's play cards. Deal.

The Dealer does. Except NOT to Nikko.
The Soldiers check out their new hands.

NIKKO

Maybe you didn't hear me, soldier.

He GRABS the knife from the Fingerless Soldier.
Leans across the table and presses the blade under the Dealer's chin.

NIKKO

I said deal.
(a beat)
NOW.

The Dealer-Soldier's hand moves so fast it's a blur.
One second the knife is in Nikko's hand.
The next it LANDS with a CLATTER in the corner.

Nikko stares with disbelief.
GRABS his throat.
Blood begins to seep from between his fingers.

He stumbles to his feet.
The Soldier rises to face him.
He wears twin Berettas, one on each hip.
Because of the sunglasses, we cannot see his eyes.
Nikko chokes out some words.

NIKKO

Motherf --

Backing away, he pulls out his .45 with his other hand.

INT. SLEAZY CORRIDOR

He backs into the red-lit corridor.
The Soldier walks forward...Nikko COCKS the gun.

FIRES once.
The Soldier keeps coming.
Doors open. JOHNS appear. WHORES SCREAM.

NIKKO

Who are you...?!?

Nikko FIRES AGAIN!
The Soldier KEEPS COMING...
Nikko backs to the stairs, doesn't look.
FALLS BACKWARD, TUMBLING down the stairs.

INT. TORCHY'S - SAIGON - BAR BELOW

Nikko HITS the bottom.

Scrambles. Crawls backward. Away from the stairway.
Patrons rise and CHATTER WITH CONFUSION.
A SINATRA TUNE plays on the jukebox.

The Soldier appears. Limp straight for Nikko.

NIKKO
Who the fuck ARE YOU?!?!

He FIRES point blank. BLAM!
HITS the Soldier again. Shoulder, this time.
But the Soldier keeps coming...

Pandemonium. Patrons RUN for cover.

Nikko FIRES AGAIN. Misses.
He is weeping now.

The Soldier stands over him.
Nikko aims up at his face.

Click. Click. Out of bullets.

The Soldier grabs him by the collar.
Pulls his carbine from his backstrap.
No sign of strain or emotion.
He puts the muzzle in Nikko's face.

Soldier. STARK (O.S.)

The Soldier LOOKS UP:

Silhouetted in the doorway is an officer.
Full uniform. Face in shadow.
Meet MAJOR GARRETT STARK.

STARK
Get the men. It's time.

The Soldier DROPS Nikko to the floor and walks away.
As if nothing happened...

As Nikko dies, he looks up.
SEES the little Asian boy.
Staring at him with one dead eye.
The boy smiles.

EXT. AIRFIELD - DAWN

A Huey UH-1 sits waiting, the WHUP WHUP of blades chopping the
night air and straining at their Jesus nuts.

WE SUPER: 101ST AIRBORNE FIELD 28
DOOM LOK, SOUTH VIETNAM

SIX FIGURES break from a quanset hut and duck the blades as
they pile one-by-one into the Huey.

A uniformed FIGURE brings up the rear, holding his hat on under the rotor wash. He bee-lines for the cockpit.

INT. HUEY COCKPIT

A PILOT gears up for take-off as STARK appears.

HUEY PILOT
Major Stark, sir --

Stark opens a map, scans it.

HUEY PILOT
I gotta tell ya, sir, you're in the
wrong end of the war. An Loc's gonna
go down any day now...
(takes down a hanging
clipboard, looks at it)
I-Corps says there's a C-141
outta Saigon at 0900 --

STARK
We just came from Saigon.

He circles a spot on the map with a thick red pen.
Hands the map to the confused pilot.

HUEY PILOT
Cambodia? I don't follow you,
sir. My orders --

STARK
Your orders just changed.

THE PASSENGER HOLD

The men strap in, and we recognize them as the commandos from Torchy's. As we ESTABLISH each of them, WE SUPER THEIR NAME, RANK, AND SERIAL NUMBER:

1) ARMBRUSTER. The one shot to shit in the Saigon bar. Mirrored sunglasses. Sleeveless camouflage flack vest. He stoically shuffles the blood-smeared deck of cards.

2) STOCKTON. Blonde. Pretty-boy. The name "Doris" is embroidered in a pink heart on his fatigue jacket like a bowling shirt.

3) PEREZ. Cradling a combat flamethrower, he lights a cigarette. On the front of his helmet is a decal: an evil, cigar-smoking Woody Woodpecker.

4) NOONAN. Wearing a New York Knicks cap and holding a small transistor radio to his ear; a N.Y./Boston game on Armed Forces Radio. We hear the Knicks SCORE and Noonan trades an emotionless high-five with:

5) KOZALLI. Who then returns to the Girlie Magazine he was reading. Distrustful of automatic weapons, Kozalli carries an M16 with a soddered-on M79 40 mm grenade launcher.

6) MCCALL. No helmet. Instead: a perpetual headband. The fingerless soldier.

Stark appears at the hatch... and the men put away their business to give him their attention... WE SLOWLY MOVE IN ON STARK...

STARK

Three weeks ago, a cease-fire agreement was signed with the North Vietnamese... This means that the mission you men are about to undertake does not exist... nor do you exist...

(pause)

You are not ordinary soldiers. Your training has purged you of the true enemies... Fear... Pity... Conscience... This mission will have no questions, and no allies. And above all... no friendlies...

EXT. AIRFIELD - DAWN

Stark backs away from the chopper as the blades speed up to a deafening turbine ROAR...

He ducks under a corrugated tin overhang, where a lone FIGURE stands watching the chopper: COL. PHILIP WOODHURST.

There is an intensity about him. A focus. Like the weight of the war is on his shoulders.

WOODHURST

The seventh man...?

STARK

Taken care of, sir. It's up to the men now...

WOODHURST

Not the men, Major...

Pause. Stark looks with confusion at Woodhurst. Woodhurst does not return the look. Does not take his eyes off the horizon.

WOODHURST
 (almost a whisper)
 Destiny....

A shiver goes up Stark's spine, as he notices:

PEREZ, cigarette glowing, looking out from the inside the chopper. He grins, and raises two fingers.

A PEACE sign.

DAWN SKY - TELEPHOTO - THE CHOPPER

as it RISES, WE SEE A SKULL FACE painted on its nose, teeth rendered as shell casings. As it WORPLES off into the rising sun... becoming a small dot on the horizon, we...

FADE OUT.

THE FOLLOWING CARD APPEARS:

SIXTEEN YEARS LATER

FADE IN

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT (PRESENT DAY)

Sidewalks jammed with overcoated SHOPPERS.
 Elaborate window displays. Blinking lights. Yuletide MUSIC:
 Little CHILDREN bundled up against the December cold.

It's Christmas in The Big City.

SUPER:

DECEMBER 21

Outside a greasy spoon, SANTA CLAUS sits in a wheelchair, ringing a bell for Vietnam Vets. Santa has one leg.

A MAN in a tattered overcoat emerges from the throng, his back TO CAMERA. He tosses some bills into Santa's bucket.

MAN

Merry Christmas.

He goes into the diner.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Straight out of Edward Hopper.
 Frying eggs. Scattered PATRONS.
 A TV DRONING behind the counter.

A WAITRESS looks up as...
The overcoated man steps up to the counter.

WAITRESS
What can I do for ya?

Meet JAKE POLLARD, 41.
The loneliest man in the world.
Three day stubble. Movie star handsome. But hardened.
Like maybe he's seen more than a man really should.

He stubs out a cigarette, fishes for the remaining change
from his pocket.

POLLARD
How much is the grilled cheese
sandwich?

WAITRESS
Buck and a quarter.

Pollard looks at the change in his hand:
Eighty-five cents, give or take.

Also in his hand are his keys and a pair of DOG TAGS, which
he uses as a key-ring.

POLLARD
Coffee. Black.

He sets the change on the counter, re-pockets his keys.

A PATRON sitting nearby has seen the dog tags, and looks
at Pollard with no love lost. Pollard ignores him, picks up
a discarded sports page as the waitress pours his coffee.

A little BLACK KID with a toy Uzi stares at Pollard from
behind the counter. Five, maybe six.

POLLARD
How's it goin', slick?
(pause)
Whatcha got? Uzi?

The kid nods, slack-jawed, cautiously aiming his gun.

POLLARD
Hm. I don't wanna say anything,
but... looks to me like you got
it on full automatic, I mean...
At this range, you'll waste an
awful lot of ammo. Tell ya what...

The kid squints. No idea what the big man is talking about. Pollard leans forward, reaches for a molded plastic switch on the side of the gun, and pretends to FLICK it.

POLLARD

Now you're on semi.

The kid stares with awe... then grins wide.

POLLARD

Hey, no charge.

The kid RUNS AWAY, elated, as the PATRON looks daggers at Pollard, having observed this entire transaction.

PATRON WITH ATTITUDE

Nice. You gonna teach him to kill people next?

The temperature drops twenty degrees. Pollard slowly smiles, shakes his head. Does not look up from his sports page.

PATRON WITH ATTITUDE

Why don'cha throw those tags away? The war's over.

(pause)

We lost, remember...?

PAUSE. Pollard still does not look up. A study in restraint. He exhales, patiently says:

POLLARD

It's Christmas. How 'bout a little Peace on Earth?

One thing about assholes: never try to reason with them. The guy rises.

PATRON WITH ATTITUDE

Whatever you say, soldier. Or should I say... Baby Killer...?

Pause.

Then Pollard's hand SHOOTS OUT like a bolt of lightning -- GRABBING the guy by the collar and JERKING his face to within inches... looking him square in the eye for the first time.

And the color drains from the guy's face. Because something in Pollard's eyes... is different.

Eyes that were hopeless and tired a moment ago, are now burning embers of intensity... as if he is struggling to keep some horrible power in check. His voice lowers:

POLLARD

No.

(pause)

You shouldn't.

From o.s., the TV SOUND breaks in:

TV VOICE

... American soldiers came to our village, and the Communists fought them for many days.

Pollard LOOKS UP toward the TV. He lets go of the guy's collar. The patron backs off, almost trembling. Like he just defused a time bomb with seconds to spare.

He leaves, as -- Pollard STARES obsessively at:

THE TV SET

WHERE WE SEE an aged ASIAN MAN speaking in his native tongue. A VOICE-OVER TRANSLATES into English.

TRANSLATOR

In the end, the Communists killed the soldiers... and placed the bodies in this temple... which has has been here for many centuries.

The burial witness gestures and the picture ZOOMS OUT to reveal an ancient CAMBODIAN TEMPLE.

NEWS CORRESPONDENT

Why did the North Vietnamese place their enemies in this holy place?

The question is translated, and the burial witness shrugs, grinning with bad and missing teeth.

BURIAL WITNESS

To keep the spirits inside, they said... because the walls are very thick... and because they were afraid...

NEWS CORRESPONDENT

The North Vietnamese were afraid of men they had already killed?

BURIAL WITNESS

Yes. They said that the Americans were very powerful warriors... that they were more than just men...

TIGHT ON POLLARD

Looking like a ghost. Picture a man who has spent a lifetime running from his past... only to turn a corner and smack headlong into it.

ON THE TV

The overseas CORRESPONDENT stands in front of the temple/mausoleum. Behind him, WE SEE covered bodies being carried out of the temple on stretchers.

NEWS CORRESPONDENT

The bodies of the six American MIAs, sealed in this impregnable temple for sixteen years, were found this week by a group of self-styled mercenaries from Pokoma, Washington. Members of the group refused to be interviewed for this report, but their leader did volunteer this quote: "We just did what any American would do. We brought our boys home." This is Bob Cochran, in Northern Kampuchea...

THE WAITRESS

behind the counter, turns with her ubiquitous coffee pot. ;

WAITRESS

Get you a refill, hon -- ?

But she stops, mid-sentence, SEEING:
Pollard's coffee and sports section, abandoned.

Pollard himself is NOWHERE TO BE SEEN.

ON THE TV

appears an attractive NEWS ANCHORWOMAN.

ANCHORWOMAN

The names of those soldiers will be revealed at a Press Conference tomorrow in Merit, California, where the dead will be honored in a military funeral at the National Veterans Cemetery, located near the grounds of the William Westmoreland Army Base in Merit...

EXT. WESTMORELAND BASE - NIGHT

Headlights SWEEP past a sign:

WILLIAM WESTMORELAND BASE
UNITED STATES ARMY
MERIT, CA.

As a nonedescipt car pulls up to a checkpoint station guarding a sprawling military compound at the edge of the California desert. The base is surrounded by chain-link.

EXT. GUARDHOUSE - NIGHT

An armed MP emerges, squints into the vehicle:

The driver is a uniformed CORPORAL with sash and beret. He holds out a military I.D.
A black case rests on the seat beside him.

MP AT GUARD GATE
What's in the case, Corporal?

The driver OPENS the case, to reveal a gleaming BUGLE.

MP AT GUARD GATE
You're twelve hours early. The funeral's not 'til tomorrow.

BUGLER
They said they wanted me tonight.

MP AT GUARD GATE
Who said?

BUGLER
General Woodhurst...?

The guard looks at his watch. Shakes his head.

BUGLER
Hey, I thought it was weird, too.

The guard checks his clipboard. Frowns.
Then raises the gate, waving the guy in.

MP AT GUARD GATE
Not for him.

EXT. STOREHOUSE - NIGHT

The bugler parks, disembarks with his instrument and sheet music, and approaches a storehouse door where an armed MP stands guard.

BUGLER
I'm looking for the General.

The MP says nothing, pulls a key-ring, opens the door.
There are no lights on inside.

The bugler enters trepidatiously.
The MP closes the door behind him, continuing his vigil.

INT. MILITARY STOREHOUSE - NIGHT

The bugler takes a few steps into the darkness. His
boot-steps make ECHOING CLICKS as he walks, indicating the
enormity of the place. He stops.

BUGLER
General Woodhurst, sir...?

A FIGURE steps into the moonlight behind him.
Face cloaked in shadow. It is a voice we recognize.

WOODHURST
You came to play. Play.

The bugler recovers from a coronary.

BUGLER
Sir, I'm -- I'm sorry, could we turn
on the lights? I can't read my music.

Pause. The figure moves into the shadows.

WOODHURST
The Condor Legion March, Corporal.
You should know it by heart.

Click.

The storehouse is flooded with sterile fluorescent light
and WE SEE that it is very large, and very empty except for
six caskets lying in a row on the floor, and:

SIX CORPSES in plastic body bags, with tags on their feet.
Though we do not focus on them, it is clear they've seen
better days.

The figure at the light panel turns, and WE SEE for the
first time in full light, a slightly older, slightly grayer
WOODHURST, now wearing the uniform of a two-star General.

He takes off his hat, holds it over his heart, and nods for
the bugler to play. The bugler positions his music on its
holder. The General closes his eyes.

And the bugler PLAYS the 'Condor Legion March', a tune used to rouse the Germans to battle during the Spanish Civil War. The horn ECHOES eerily in the vast storehouse.

The bugler finishes, and Woodhurst opens his eyes as if coming out of a reverie. He nods to the bugler.

WOODHURST

Tell the MP I don't want to be disturbed.

The pale, sweating bugler just stands there.

WOODHURST

You can go.

The bugler is out so fast it makes your head spin. The door is closed again... and Woodhurst is alone with the bodies...

WOODHURST

It's been a long time, men...

(pause)

Long Goddamn time...

There is a calm and offhandedness about his manner that is a far cry from the obsessive Colonel we met in Vietnam.

WOODHURST

Country's changed a lot since I saw you boys last...

He produces a pair of white rubber gloves, and tugs them on as he speaks.

WOODHURST

People don't appreciate what you represent, anymore. What we tried to do...

(pause)

The slopes, though. They respected you. Why do you think they buried you in that temple of theirs? They knew. I mean... temples are for Gods, aren't they?

He chuckles warmly.

Standing along one wall are several cannisters, like those we associate with liquid oxygen. Woodhurst picks one up... and takes it to the table, along with a white hood.

WOODHURST

Nah... not like these sell-outs in Washington... They're the ones let you down... Let us all down. Betrayed the trust.

Then... one by one, he unzips the body bags, revealing the

WOODHURST

They even made me a General to try and make up for pulling the plug on you... They just didn't understand. But they will...

He picks up the hood and we see it has a visor and a breathing filter, like a radiation suit.

WOODHURST

They'll learn... You just watch.

He looks at the corpses with affection.

WOODHURST

Welcome home, boys...

And slips on the hood-and-visor, then picks up the cannister, twists the nozzle on top, and begins SPRAYING a fine mist over the bodies... The mist clouds the lens...

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - OUTSIDE MERIT - THE NEXT DAY

Sand blows past CAMERA, revealing a lonely bus depot at the edge of the desert. Fringy silver Christmas bunting incongruously decorates its windows, while an age-battered Trailways sign swings SQUEAKING in the dry wind.

SUPER:

MERIT
DECEMBER 22

A VIETNAMESE MAN emerges from the depot with a broom and picks up a plastic snowman which lies toppled and smudged with dirt.

The Asian man attempts to sweep the sand from the concrete, but it simply blows back as quickly as he sweeps. He looks up, shielding his eyes from the sun and sand AS:

A BUS appears, turning off the main highway and shuddering to a halt in the bus depot. The bus doors jerk open, and a new cargo of dry dust blows by, obscuring our view of the door.

From this dust, a lone figure appears... like a western gunfighter... a backpack slung over one shoulder.

JAKE POLLARD locks glances with the Vietnamese... then walks away. The Asian man watches him go with a combination of unease and vague respect.

EXT. DOWNTOWN MERIT - LATE AFTERNOON

PAN DOWN from huge banner over the main drag:

MERRY X-MAS! from MERIT KIWANIS, JCS ROTARY

Pollard walks through downtown; the usual complement of car dealers and McDonalds. A grocery market sports a huge, 1950's style neon sign: DESERT TINY'S.

Chintzy yet sincere Christmas decorations blink from windows as Pollard takes it all in with a mixture of nostalgia and dread...

He finally goes into a phone booth. Picks up the local phone directory, and flips through it. Looking like he wishes he hadn't, he finds a listing:

TRAEGER, SYLVIA A. 12 Motor Court West, Mrt.

Pollard stares at it significantly... then tears out the page. He exits the booth, seeing:

A GUN STORE across the street; "Merit Rod and Gun."

He looks purposefully toward the gun store, then -- tenses as a familiar bass SOUND rises. He looks up, and WE SEE:

A Sikorsky BLACKHAWK with military markings FLIES overhead.

EXT. VETERANS CEMETERY - HIGH DESERT - DUSK

The chopper FLIES over a landscape sprinkled with grave markers in the middle of a choked expanse of desert, as WE BOOM DOWN TO REVEAL:

WOODHURST

These men are not dead...

GENERAL WOODHURST standing beside a civilian PRIEST. He looks up with annoyance at the passing chopper, then back down on SIX CASKETS, ready to be lowered into their graves.

WOODHURST

For they will surely live in our hearts and minds as long as the ideals they fought for...

A full MILITARY FUNERAL is in its final moments. All the trimmings: BAND. FIRING PARTY. SIX hearses. The works.

Woodhurst turns and nods to the SALUTE BATTERY, who raise their rifles. And FIRE at five-second intervals as...
ON A HILL

overlooking the gravesight, stands a BOY, 18, wearing a letter jacket and smoking a cigarette. He's good-looking, but there is a brooding, obsessive quality about the way he watches the proceedings. This is KYLE TRAEGER.

Meanwhile, SIX PALLBEARERS complete folding six American flags into cocked hats.

They move in single-file, handing the flags one-at-a-time at chest level to Woodhurst, who proceeds down the line of mourners, presenting the flags to next-of-kin.

The BUGLER from the previous night plays "Taps."

Woodhurst presents the last flag to a WOMAN whose eyes are red from weeping. This is DORIS STOCKTON, wife of the late Capt. Carl Stockton, one of the honored dead.

Doris is flanked by her second husband, a uniformed SHERIFF BUCHALTER, who holds his hat in one hand, while using the other to grip the shoulder of their daughter KIM, 7.

Another girl stands with them, in mourning black. This is HEATHER STOCKTON, daughter of the deceased. She is 17, blonde, and very pretty.

In every man's life there is a Heather Stockton.
Meet Kyle's.

As the coffins are LOWERED, Heather reaches out to touch the flag and WE SEE a metallic red bracelet on her wrist... Printed on it are Stockton's name, rank, and serial number.

EXT. WOODHURST'S COMPOUND (OFFICER COUNTRY) - DUSK

The BLACKHAWK lands, and an officer emerges, clutching a briefcase and holding his hat on under the rotor wash.

A SERGEANT runs forward to meet him, yelling to be heard over the din of the chopper.

SERGEANT
Welcome to Merit, sir -- !

He reaches for the briefcase, but the officer tugs it away.

SERGEANT
(awkwardly)
Uh, how was your trip from
Washington?

WE REVEAL: MAJOR STARK, now aged by sixteen unkind years.

STARK
... I've never liked helicopters,
Sergeant... Whenever I'm around
them, something bad happens.

EXT. DOWNTOWN MERIT - NIGHT

Pollard stands in a doorway, smoking a cigarette, watching:

THE GUN STORE - ACROSS THE STREET

As THE OWNER emerges, to lock up for the night.

Pollard MOVES, tossing his cigarette and crossing the
street to intercept the store owner. He approaches,
extends a hand to shake.

As he does, his glance flicks to a "Protected by Rosco
Security Systems" sticker in the store's window.

POLLARD
Jake Pollard. Revcor Security.
(like a salesman:)
Listen, I was wondering if you'd
consider installing one of our
systems. You know, crime rates in
this area --

GUN SHOP OWNER
Don't waste your breath.
(nods toward the sticker)
I've already got a Rosco.

POLLARD
Ah. So you do. Oh, well. Thanks
anyway, mister, uh...?

GUN SHOP OWNER
Trankis. Gus Trankis.

TIME-CUT:

INT. PHONE BOOTH - NIGHT

Pollard on the phone. A voice on the other end answers.

PHONE VOICE

Rosco Security. Emergency hotline.

POLLARD

Yeah, hi, this is Gus Trankis, Merit Rod and Gun. Listen, this isn't really an emergency, but I'd like to check my system if that's okay.

PHONE VOICE

What can we do for you, sir...?

POLLARD

Well, if I were to trigger the alarm myself, could you shut it off from there, please, then call me back?

PHONE VOICE

Uh... Sure, sir. Can do.

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND GUN SHOP - NIGHT

Pollard takes a crowbar from his backpack, checks that the coast is clear, then violently JIMMIES the door open -- :
An ALARM BELL immediately begins RINGING -- !

INT. GUN SHOP - NIGHT

Pollard enters, and finds the phone. After a few moments, the alarm SHUTS OFF. Pollard's hand hovers over the receiver. The phone RINGS, and he plucks it up quickly.

PHONE VOICE

Mister Trankis...?

POLLARD

Yeah, listen, works fine. Thanks very much. 'Preciate it.

PHONE VOICE

(hesitant)

Uh, no problem.

Pollard hangs up.

POLLARD

Dumb shit.

Then SMASHES a glass case with his crow bar.
Before him is an entire wall of revolvers, handguns,
and shotguns. Welcome to America.

He grabs an army backpack. Starts shoving weapons into it:
A Buckmaster combat knife with grappling spikes and sheath.
A Mossberg "bullpup" pump-action shotgun and shells.
A Colt Delta Elite 10 mm automatic.

A grabs a standard Browning, reaches for a box of 9mm
shells, JACKS out the magazine...

And begins LOADING the cartridge with bullets.

THE SCREEN IS BLACK

as WE HEAR an industrial 16 mm projector WHIRRS to life,
and a black-and-white 1:33 image FLICKERS before us:

UNITED STATES ARMY
SPECIAL PROJECTS DIVISION
FILM #771399

This material is CLASSIFIED.

U.S. Government Sanction Authorization #03115.
Divulging the contents of this film to unauthorized
personnel is breach of national security. Violators
will be prosecuted.

We HEAR a door opening, and a blast of light REVEALS:

INT. BRIEFING ROOM - NIGHT

Major Stark looks up from the projector he is manning.
Sees GENERAL WOODHURST standing in the doorway. Stark turns
off the projector... and the two look at one another for a
moment, history in their eyes. Woodhurst closes the door.

STARK

I, uh -- I'm sorry I missed the
service, sir. I'm sure it was --

WOODHURST

Who knows you're here?

STARK

(a beat)

I've been very discreet, General.
As you requested.

WOODHURST
 Buzzing the funeral like an air
 strike is discreet? What's the
 matter, you couldn't get
 elephants to ride in on?

STARK
 I'm sorry...

WOODHURST
 Save it. Roll the film.

Stark hesitantly turns the projector back on.
 Woodhurst hits the lights, takes a seat in the darkness.
 Stark takes a xeroxed sheet from his briefcase, as --

ON THE SCREEN

A new IMAGE APPEARS: Old. Scratchy. Overexposed.
 Shaky, handheld camera. Washed-out color.

A VIETNAMESE PRISONER tied to a pole.
 An American GI steps into frame, back to camera.
 He puts a pistol to the prisoner's temple. Fires.

Woodhurst doesn't bat an eye.

WOODHURST
 Where's the body of that soldier?

Stark checks his stat sheet.

STARK
 Destroyed at Da Nang, sir.

SUCCESSION OF CUTS - "CINE-VERITE" STYLE

Shaky camerawork. Exposure FLASHES between scenes.

One by one, VIETNAMESE PRISONERS are injured, shot or
 even killed. Throughout this, we INTERCUT:

Woodhurst stoic reactions counterpoint Stark's tense,
 sweaty sense of dread.

WOODHURST
 Them?

STARK
 Same, sir. Destroyed at the test
 sites. NVA officially declared
 them missing presumed dead.

WOODHURST

Good.

Each event depicted on the screen is followed by its PERPETRATOR standing back and watching as though something other than pain or death is supposed to occur.

STARK

Here's where we substituted the allied South Vietnamese...

WOODHURST

They were a little more... co-operative, right, Major?

He smiles. Stark swallows.

STARK

Yes, sir.

ON THE SCREEN, a VIETNAMESE SOLDIER stands at a blackboard, writing. In the f.g. is a CLOCK which reads: 3:17.

A GI with back to camera enters frame. As the Soldier writing completes the words "DEATH TO"... He is SHOT twice in the back. He falls to the dirt. There is an EXPOSURE FLASH, then --

The clock now says 4:04. The man on the ground rises haltingly. Writes: "HO CHI" " The gunman steps in and fires THREE SHOTS at close range. The Vietnamese falls again. EXPOSURE FLASH, AND --

The Vietnamese Soldier, pelted with bloody gunshot wounds, rises unsteadily and shakily finishes what he was writing: "DEATH TO HO CHI MINH".

He turns to camera and stands, expressionless. The rifleman enters frame with a big grin on his face, and puts his arm around the man he has shot several times.

WOODHURST

chuckles, yawns, looks at his watch.

WOODHURST

Him -- ?

STARK

wipes the sweat from his upper lip.

STARK

Yes, sir. I saw to it personally.

ON THE SCREEN we see an AMERICAN SERVICEMAN sitting at a table. He wears a shoulder holster with a Colt Woodsman .22 handgun. There is a glass of water on the table in front of him.

WOODHURST

Who's this now?

A second GI with a machete enters the frame. Pulls the Soldiers' gun out of his holster, and tosses it to the ground. The CAMERA FOLLOWS the gun, then PANS BACK to the Soldier, who calmly rests his arm out straight on the table.

STARK

Uh... PFC Eddie Turnello. 405th Infantry Battalion. Became irrational and tried to escape after this was taken, but we took him out with an air-to-ground a half-mile from the test site. Officially registered MIA, 1971.

The GI with the machete looks O.S. for instructions.

Then turns... And WHACKS the machete down -- ! After a beat, the serviceman reaches for the water. Calmly takes a drink. The camera shakily ZOOMS IN to his stoic face.

The film RUNS OUT.
Code numbers. Leader.
The lights COME UP.

Woodhurst looks happy and refreshed.
Like he just saw a Frank Capra movie.

WOODHURST

Good. So. That's the only copy of this film?

STARK

Yes, sir.

Woodhurst nods, satisfied.

STARK

All records other than your own personal ones have been destroyed. Anyone in Washington who knew about the program is either dead or no longer holding office.

(a beat)

It's done, General. It's over. There's no-one left...

Woodhurst just continues to nod, grinning.

EXT. BOWL-O-RAMA DRIVE-IN - NIGHT

POLLARD, backpack over his shoulder, walks along outside the local youth hang-out; a combination bowling alley and 50's-style Burger Drive-in.

INT. BOWL-O-RAMA - NIGHT

High School KIDS. Juke MUSIC. Laughter.
SOUNDS of pins being slaughtered.
The joint, as they say, is jumpin'.

HEATHER -- the girl from the funeral -- and her well-dressed "Soc" FRIENDS sit in a booth, eating french fries. Except Heather's attention is elsewhere. Namely:

ACROSS THE ROOM - ANOTHER BOOTH

where Kyle sits alone, longways, drinking from a flask, and watching Heather... Their eyes are locked. Finally: Heather rises from her booth.

HEATHER
I'll be right back, you guys.

And crosses the room. Her friends immediately whisper and gossip behind her back.

AT KYLE'S BOOTH

Heather approaches tentatively.

HEATHER
Hi.

Kyle just looks at her.
She points to the seat across from Kyle.

HEATHER
Can I, um...?

Kyle shrugs. Heather sits. Pause.
There is obviously something between these two. A past.

KYLE
Sorry about your Dad.

Heather shrugs, begins toying with her MIA bracelet.

HEATHER
How's your Mom doing?

KYLE
Out of town 'til Christmas Eve.
Got the palatial motor home all
to myself. Not that it matters...

Awkward silence. Kyle casually points to Heather's wrist.

KYLE
Guess you can take that off now.

HEATHER
Yeah, guess so, huh..? Almost a
relief... Now my Mom knows it's
really over. I think she always
thought he would come back.

KYLE
It isn't over... Not as long as you
remember him.

HEATHER
What?

KYLE
My Mom says that. As long as you
remember him, he's still alive.

HEATHER
(sudden vehemence)
Fuck it. I want him to be dead.
Bastard screwed up my Mom. Every
day of her life she's screwed up
'cause of some guy I never met.

KYLE
I never met mine, either...

Heather looks at him.

KYLE
Died in Hanoi, they said... Not
like my Mom keeps any pictures or
anything. Keeps the damn Purple
Heart buried in a drawer somewhere.
But hey, you got a bracelet, I
mean... at least they brought
you a body...

Heather looks down again. Pause.

KYLE

One time on the football field I broke my collarbone, split it in half, I'm lying there in the dirt...

(a beat)

How come when you're in pain, it's the realest thing you've ever felt, nothing else exists...but then, when you're happy...you say, "God, I can't believe it, I must be dreaming..?"

He looks at Heather. She does not look up. Pause.

KYLE

I dunno. Maybe pain's the only real thing after all.

Heather looks up angrily.

HEATHER

Oh, for Christ's sake. Just like old times. Why can't you just once lighten up..? Talk about the weather. You're always dwelling on stuff, why can't you just be like me and just forget about it?

Kyle looks at her with disappointment.

KYLE

I don't want to be like you. That's why we broke up, remember? I'm only good for a few laughs, but the minute I mention something serious, you're all, "Shit, be quiet, my cheerleader friends will hear you," well why don't you just go dancing..? Your Dad's dead, great, go out and dance, you can ignore stuff, I CAN'T.

Neither Kyle nor Heather seems to notice how loud they are speaking. Other PATRONS start to give them strange looks.

HEATHER

Yeah, well you're so fucking DEPRESSING all the time, I wanna look at the future, okay, Kyle -- ? I wanna think about college and a career and you're all, "The world is shit, my old man died, I wanna live in the past"... All I wanted was for you to fucking LAUGH. That's all.

KYLE

Did you laugh today..? Huh? You got
a good look at it, did you laugh..?
Your old man never got old, I'm
sorry I'm so fucking depressing.

HEATHER

Look, I can't do this. Why did I
come over here, anyway?

KYLE

Yeah, why did you? Wait. Tell ya what --

He climbs out of the booth and buttons his jacket.

KYLE

How 'bout I'll go. Leave you to
party with your soc friends.

HEATHER

Fine. Go be depressed about something.

Kyle stands there awkwardly. Runs a hand through his hair.

KYLE

Look. Fuck it. I'm sorry. Just...
fuck it.

HEATHER

... We always do this.

Kyle looks at the floor.

KYLE

Just like old times, babe?

(looks up at her)

I still have those pictures of
us on my sun visor...

(pause)

I'm going out to look at the weather.

HEATHER

Kyle --

He keeps going.

HEATHER

I didn't laugh today. I cried.

KYLE

Right.

Heather is about to call after him again...
But hesitates. She doesn't know what she would say.

EXT. BOWL-O-RAMA PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Kyle emerges and sits on a well-preserved Dodge Charger. He pulls out a cigarette, fishes for a light. A HAND enters frame with a lighter. Kyle fires up.

KYLE

Thanks.

And looks up to see POLLARD, standing beside him, lighting his own cigarette.

POLLARD

(re: cigarette)

They're gonna kill us, you know.

Kyle nods. Pollard notices the car they are leaning on.

POLLARD

Nice wheels. Charger?

KYLE

(nods)

'67. Belonged to my Dad. I keep it up.

POLLARD

No kidding. What's under the hood?

KYLE

(perking up)

400 four barrel, fully blown, Holly high-rise.

POLLARD

Three on the column?

KYLE

Uh uh. I ripped it out, put four on the floor. Have a look --

For the first time, Kyle looks enthused about something. Anything. They look into the car. Pollard looks impressed.

Kyle reaches for the horn, and presses it. The horn plays the opening bar of "The Star Spangled Banner".

POLLARD

Very patriotic.

KYLE

The best part is, I put in a compressed air tank. You're gettin' ready to drag, you flood the shocks... Car sticks its ass in the air and scares the shit outta the competition. Pretty neat.

POLLARD

Too rich for my blood.

(pause)

Listen, maybe you can help me, I'm looking for work.

KYLE

Yeah? What do you do?

POLLARD

Construction. You know of any building going on in town -- ?

KYLE

Well, there's a site over near --

(points)

You know where Carlsen Street is?

POLLARD

Yeah. I'll check it out. Thanks.

(pause)

Take care of yourself, son.

He picks up his backpack, heads off into the night, tossing his cigarette. Kyle looks after him, puzzled.

SMASH CUT:

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - CARLSEN STREET - NIGHT

A BOOT HEEL SMASHES a padlock in two, AND --

INT. CONSTRUCTION SHACK - NIGHT

The door BLASTS IN and Pollard enters, wielding a penlight. The light plays over blue prints, tools, etc... comes to rest in one corner where WE SEE:

A bundle of DYNAMITE STICKS...
Which Pollard proceeds to SHOVEL INTO his backpack...

EXT. MERIT STREET - NIGHT

Pollard walks with tremendous urgency into the night, whistling "The Star Spangled Banner". He passes a sign:

"WESTMORELAND VETERAN'S CEMETERY - 1/2 mile"

EXT. VETERAN'S CEMETERY - NIGHT

The temperature on the desert floor has plummeted fifty degrees. In the distance, HEAT LIGHTNING dances in the clouds. Crackles on the horizon, heralding an approaching storm...

A uniformed NIGHT SENTRY with a Springfield M-1A on a shoulder strap looks out toward the cemetery. Mist. Weird shadows. It starts to rain.

The sentry flicks on his flashlight.
The BEAM splits the night, as...
The sentry cautiously makes his way through the darkness.
Occasional LIGHTNING reveals a grave-studded landscape.

The rain starts really coming down.
The sentry looks up at God with annoyance.
Keeps moving forward.
He stops dead, shines the flashlight ahead, REVEALING:

SIX FRESHLY-FILLED GRAVES all in a row. Silent. Lonely.
Earthen mounds topped with elaborate granite slabs.
The flashlight plays on one of them:

CAPTAIN CARL STOCKTON
101ST INFANTRY BATTALION
MAY HE REST IN PEACE

The sentry stands over the graves, M1 at his side.
He reads the inscriptions.
HEARS a sound.
Looks around, senses pricked. Ear cocked and alert.
He looks down. Squints. After a beat:

He slowly, timidly kneels to the rain-sopped ground.
Sets down his rifle.
Its bayonet gleams in the moonlight.

He puts his ear to the earth.
Listens, breathless. Ear to the ground.
Silence greets him. A pause.

He is oblivious to the slow shifting of earth behind his head. He rises, annoyed with himself.

SENTRY

What the fuck am I doing?

Sees his carbine lying on the ground.
Bends to pick it up when --

TWO LONG DEAD HANDS

SHOOT OUT from the crumbling earth and GRAB the rifle --
As the sentry bolts back up, GASPING --
He looks down with disbelief as --

The gleaming bayonet poised directly beneath him, PLUNGES
UPWARD --

The man shrieks to WAKE THE DEAD as he stands --
Suddenly IMPALED like a butterfly by a combat M-1A...

Automatic gunfire RIPS UPWARD.
Bullets BLOW OUT through the sentry's chest.
He struggles frantically. Thrashes.
Lifted twitching on the end of a belching machine gun.

He unholsters his sidearm and PUMPS TWO SHOTS into the
grave as the M-1A continues to fire --
He opens his mouth in a silent scream, and --

A FIGURE EMERGES from the soggy earth, clutching the rifle.
On its fish-white forearm, smeared with mud, is the
outline of a faded tattoo:

Serpents, coiled hissing around a jet-black machine gun.

LONG SHOT - THE CEMETERY

as a CLAP OF LIGHTNING momentarily SHOWS US --

Six shadowy, naked figures rising from the mud.
Surrounding the hapless sentry.
His SCREAMS are drowned out by the SOUND OF THUNDER.

EXT. HEATHER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A white Suzuki Samurai pulls up, jammed with Heather and
her friends. Heather jumps out, and the jeep takes off.
Looking depressed, she heads up the walk as --

THE FRONT PORCH

lights come on, and her step-dad, Sheriff Buchalter appears, holding the screen-door open for little Kim, who is wearing what appears to be Biblical garb.

SHERIFF BUCHALTER

Hey, honey.

HEATHER

(to Kim)

What are you supposed to be?

KIM

I'm the Virgin Mary, retardo -- !

SHERIFF BUCHALTER

Tonight's the Christmas Pageant, remember?

(to Kim)

Go on and get in the car, Kimmie.

Kim tromps down the stairs, almost tripping over her flowing robes, as Buchalter reaches back inside the front door for something.

HEATHER

Hey, break a leg, shrimp.

KIM

Okay.

Kim heads for the car as the Sheriff pulls on his gun belt.

HEATHER

Isn't Mom going?

SHERIFF BUCHALTER

Later. I'm just dropping Kim off, then I gotta go up to the vet's cemetery. Some kind of vandalism or something.

(indicating Mom inside)

Don't tell your mother.

He secures his belt as Kimmie YELLS from the car:

KIM

Hurry up, Daddy -- !

Buchalter waves to her that he'll just be a second, then faces Heather. This is clearly awkward for him.

SHERIFF BUCHALTER
Listen, uh... The last couple days
have been pretty rough on your mother,
and... well, being a teenager's dad
is kinda new to me --

She gives him a supportive smile.

HEATHER
You're doing fine. Don't sweat it.

He returns the smile.

HEATHER
Now go on. Go catch bad guys.

He kisses her forehead, leaves.

INT. HEATHER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Still wearing her mourning black, MRS. STOCKTON sits
watching an EVANGELIST on TV.

Heather enters, immediately feeling the emotional
temperature in the room. Her mother speaks without looking
up from the screen.

MRS. STOCKTON
Young lady? Do you think it was
appropriate going out tonight
right after your father's funeral?

The shoe has been dropped. Heather rolls her eyes.

HEATHER
Oh shit, here it comes...
You're going out, aren't you?

MRS. STOCKTON
To church.

HEATHER
(under her breath)
No -- Really? What a surprise.
Call channel 4, Mom's going to
church.

MRS. STOCKTON
What was that, Heather Stockton?

HEATHER
Nothing.

She heads upstairs.

TV EVANGELIST
Pray with me, friends! Pray with me!

Heather's mom closes her eyes... and obeys.

EXT. ORDNANCE STORAGE - BASE - NIGHT

But because the audience is not reading this screenplay,
WE FAVOR a sign on a door, which cleverly reads:

ORDNANCE STORAGE
AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY

INT. ORDNANCE STORAGE - SERIES OF CUTS - NIGHT

Long shadows. Creeping figures.
Khaki and camouflage FATIGUES pulled from shelves by
deathly grey hands --
Army BOOTS being laced by bloodless, skeletal fingers --
BLACK BERETS and HELMETS pulled roughly from cabinets --

MACHINE GUNS pulled from cases --
AMMO CLIPS grabbed from boxes and JACKED INTO WEAPONS --
GRENADE and AMMO BELTS looped, locked and fastened --

Two matching Berettas THRUST into twin holsters.
An M79 40 mm grenade launcher is soddered under an M-16.

As WE SEE the shadows of FIGURES dressing and arming
themselves, WE HEAR a RADIO o.s., broadcasting a New York
Knicks basketball game. WE FINALLY MOVE TO REVEAL...

TWO DEAD SENTRIES

sitting at a poker table, their last game in eternal
progress before them, cigarettes smoldering in an ash tray.

One of the creatures, now armed and dressed, reaches for
the deck of cards, and pockets them, as --

WE SEE that he is wearing a pair of mirrored aviator
sunglasses. The mirrored kind, so you can't see his eyes.

This was once ARMBUSTER.

On the radio are several decals, one of which is an evil,
cigar-smoking Woody Woodpecker.

A decaying hand peels the decal off, and PEREZ pastes it on
the front of his helmet... then reaches for the cigarettes
next to the ashtray.

Another of the unit, approaches a Girlie Calendar hanging on the wall. KOZALLI reaches out, tentatively caressing the picture.

In its other hand: his spanking new M16 with over/under grenade launcher. Just like the one he had in 'Nam.

Meanwhile, the thing that was PEREZ finishes tucking cigarettes into its helmet band, then sticks one between skull-teeth, raises the tip of a combat flamethrower...

And lights up.

RADIO VOICE

Larry "Bird" puts it up, and --
SCORE -- ! With an 86-50 lead in
the fourth quarter, it does not look
good for the New York Knicks...

Upon hearing this news, a fourth member of the Company (NOONAN) turns and OBLITERATES the radio with an M-16.

Shadow Company has come home.

EXT. VETERAN'S CEMETERY - NIGHT

A chainlink fence with a human-sized hole cut through it...
A PAIR OF PLIERS lying on the ground...

POLLARD comes over the crest of a hill, backpack in hand.
We HEAR the squawk and static of o.s. POLICE RADIOS.

Pollard's face drops.

And then... so does his useless bag of dynamite, because:

Below him, the grounds are positively ALIVE with POLICE,
civilian AND military. FLASHING cherry lights, SQUAWKING
police radios. Patrol cars and flood lights. It is major.

And in the center of it all, swarming with investigators, are
SIX OPEN GRAVES.

Pollard REACTS; his worst nightmare, a reality.

EXT. GRAVE SITE - NIGHT

TWO PLAINCLOTHESMEN walk up to Buchalter and a group of
DEPUTIES and I.D. DETECTIVES.

BALLISTICS

30-06 caliber, point blank range.

DEPUTY #1
His C.O. says it was a standard-issue
Springfield M1 with a bayonet.

CORONER
(nodding)
The wounds would corroborate that.

BUCHALTER
So you're telling me the vandals
dug a hole into each grave, stole
the bodies, but also impaled
and shot a sentry from underneath
him? With his own rifle?

An I.D. DETECTIVE takes Buchalter aside.

I.D. DETECTIVE
(sotto)
Sheriff... the nature of the
damage to the coffins... the
impact residues, the angle of
the splinters --
(very low)
Sir, whoever smashed these coffins
did so from the inside out, not
the other way around...

Buchalter looks at him, unamused.
Nearby, a commotion. Buchalter looks up.

BUCHALTER
What are those gates doing open?
The vandals could still be on the
grounds, SHUT THE GODDAMN GATES -- !

EVERYONE is on the move so fast it makes your head spin.

DEPUTY #2
(into a bullhorn)
BLOCK THE ENTRANCES!!

WE FOLLOW a lone POLICEMAN as he jumps into his squad car.

INT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT

As the cop turns the ignition and shifts into 'DRIVE' --
A BROWNING 9mm AUTOMATIC is pressed against his temple.
We now see POLLARD, crouching in the back seat.

POLLARD
Nothing cute. Just drive.

The cop SLAMS the gas pedal.

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

The cruiser ZOOMS FORWARD, cutting across grass.
OTHER COPS jump out of the way -- !

EXT. VETERAN'S CEMETERY GATES - NIGHT

Slowly being CLOSED by guards and cops...

INT. SQUAD CAR - DRIVING - NIGHT

SEEING their escape route being shut off --
Pollard COCKS the gun, holds it to the cop's temple--

POLLARD
Okay, impress me.

EXT. CEMETERY GATES - NIGHT - SERIES OF SHOTS

As the gates continue to CLOSE...
Leaving the minimal possible space for a vehicle to fit
through, and THAT'S WHEN --
The patrol cruiser SCREAMS through --
Barely making it -- Sides SCRAPING painfully.
Sparks SHOWERING -- Metal CRUNCHING against metal --
THE GATES SLAM SHUT -- !

INT. SQUAD CAR - DRIVING - NIGHT

Leaving the BUSTLE to re-open the gates FAR behind him.
Pollard watches the cherry lights recede in the rearview
mirror, then faces front --

POLLARD
Head for the base. The armory.

POV THROUGH WINDSHIELD - THE ROAD AHEAD

as the tires SCREAM around a corner, a FIGURE is suddenly
caught in the glare of the headlights --

A ghoul in battle fatigues and headband, crossing the road
ahead like that famous footage of Big Foot.

EXT. ROAD - ON MCCALL

Or what WAS McCall turns, raises its M-16...
And OPENS UP ON FULL AUTO -- !

EXT./INT. SQUAD CAR - SERIES OF SHOTS - NIGHT

ARTILLERY PEPPERS the vehicle --
The Windshield EXPLODES --
Bullets RICOCHETING --
Sparks SPITTING OFF metal --
The COP's face is riddled with bullet-holes --
Pollard valiantly wrenches the wheel --
But not to AVOID hitting McCall --

Rather, he PLOWS STRAIGHT INTO the figure --
MOWS THE SOLDIER DOWN with a nasty CRUNCH-SPLAT -- !
The car SPINS SCREAMING at 90 mph. --
Hits its side -- JACK-KNIFES --

And does three barrel rolls before it comes to rest... a
wadded-up chunk of metal, upside-down in the middle of a
quiet backroad...

EXT. THE WRECK - NIGHT

Gasoline drips from the tank.
Forming a puddle that streams in rivulets away from the wreck.
The weapon-filled backpack has been thrown clear, yards away.

Pollard hangs out the crunched passenger window.
The cop's bloody head in his lap.
Glass everywhere.

Pollard grunts, obviously in great pain.
He looks groggily up the road.

The soldier's GNARLED CORPSE lies there, unmoving.
Pollard stares at it. Tense. Waiting...

Then the corpse JERKS.

Moves. Starts to pull itself up...
Rises to a standing position.
Hoists its machine gun. Turns.
And looks THIS WAY.

At Pollard.

After a beat -- it starts to walk TOWARD US.
Pollard blanches. Tries to pull himself free.

No dice. He's wedged in tight.

McCall keeps coming.
Pollard notices a scatter of shotgun shells that have
fallen out of the glove compartment. He looks at the dash:

THE POLICE ISSUE REMINGTON PUMP-ACTION 12 GAUGE

locked in its holder.
He REACHES for it. Inches short.
The attempt is clearly painful.

He tries again. SCREAMS. GETS IT this time.
McCall is closing.

Pollard grabs some shells. Frantically chambers them.
Levels the shotgun, and KA-BLAM -- !

BLOWS MCCALL'S ARM OFF at the shoulder. Not clean.
Buckshot peppers the thing's chest. It stops.
Looks down... then up again. At Pollard.

The thing keeps coming.

Pollard swears, PUMPS the shotgun and FIRES AGAIN --
KA-BLAM -- ! McCall's head KICKS once...
And WE SEE that part of the face has been wiped off.

But the thing keeps coming.

Pollard frantically GRABS and CHAMBERS more shells.

POLLARD
Go down, McCall.

He fights the pain.
McCall is now mere yards away.

POLLARD
Goddammit, GO DOWN.

He PUMPS again, and FIRES TWICE --
BOOM -- ! BOOM -- !

And McCall COLLAPSES --
Upper torso cleanly separated from the legs.
Scattered body parts lie strewn across the road.

Pollard CHAMBERS two more shells and PUMPS the shotgun,
sweat creasing his brow. Wired.
He never takes his eyes off the pieces.

CLOSE ANGLE - MCCALL'S ARM

We recognize the missing pinkie finger from the Saigon
poker game and, of course, the Shadow Company tattoo.

After a pause... the hand starts to move.
Clenching, unclenching. Like a claw.
Trying to pull itself and the whole arm FORWARD.

KA-BLAM -- !

The arm DISINTEGRATES with a blast from the shotgun.

Then one of the LEGS starts moving.
JERKING at the knee joint. Like it's trying to KICK.
PUMP, BOOM -- ! Pollard blows it apart.

Two more shells left.
Pollard chambers them. PUMPS the 12 gauge.
Aims at McCall's upper torso which lies mere feet away.

The thing JERKS. Looks up at Pollard.
Reaches out for him.

BOOM -- ! The hand and most of the arm is atomized.

But the ghoulish face still stares at Pollard. GASPS.
Continues reaching out, even though there is no hand at the
end of the arm... it utters a single CROAK of a word:

McCALL
... Medic...

KA-BOOM -- ! The head EXPLODES.

And at last, the soldier rests.
Pollard breathes hard, drops the shotgun.

About fucking time.

He turns SEES that in the road directly behind him...
Is ANOTHER MEMBER OF SHADOW COMPANY.
Combat fatigues. Machine gun.
Cigarette clenched between its teeth. PEREZ.

The creature stands there, motionless.

Pollard SEES a stream of gasoline form at the thing's feet.

And fights the pain because, Jesus, now he's GOT to get
free. He PULLS. SCREAMS with pain.

PEREZ drops its M-16 with a clatter.
Pollard TUGS on his bleeding leg, trying to free it.
Perez reaches for his cigarette... Pulls it out.

And holds it up, pinched between his fingers.
Directly over the gas stream.

Pollard's eyes widen.

As Perez DROPS THE LIT CIGARETTE. Cinder touches gas,
as... the creature goes for a holstered sidearm.

As Pollard gives it one last surge of strength --
SCREAMS with pain as he frees himself. Rolls clear.
FLAMES SHOOT along the gas stream.
And IGNITE the wreck...

Which EXPLODES, engulfing Perez in flames...
Pollard, on the ground, covering his face from the heat as...

PEREZ

emerges from the FLAMES.

And WALKS TOWARD POLLARD.
Sidearm in one hand. Up and aimed.
Pollard's eyes widen with horror.

Perez pulls the trigger.

BLAM -- !

A chunk of pavement SPITS DUST near Pollard.

The thing keeps coming.

Gun up. FIRING. Again and again.
GUNSHOTS whining off concrete --
Doing telemetry. A precise circle AROUND POLLARD -- !

Perez closes on two yards.
Point-blank range now.
Pollard looks down the barrel. Knows this is it.
Perez draws on Pollard's head. Pulls the trigger.

CLICK. CLICK.

Empty.
And that's when it does the strangest thing.

It re-holsters the gun... and raises one hand.
A fist, with two fiery fingers extended.

A PEACE sign.

Then it turns... and walks away, blazing into the night.

Pollard watches with disbelief. Rises unsteadily.
The area is now bathed in the orange glow of
flames. We hear distant SIRENS.
Pollard grabs his backpack...

And limps off into the dark...

INT. WOODHURST'S STUDY - DAY

JOHNNY MATHIS SINGS from a stereo with Yuletide cheer as...
 WE PAN ACROSS a wall of artifacts from the Vietnam war.
 Medals. A Purple Heart. Congressional Medal of Honor.

Photographs of young men in tanks and rice paddies.
 An American flag, riddled with bullet-holes.
 A FIELD JACKET with the legend: "Don't Fuck with Airborne".
 Skull and crossbones on a Black beret. WE FINALLY REST...

ON WOODHURST sitting at his desk, sipping brandy as he
 looks at a 'CLASSIFIED' file spread open before him.

A stack of 8 x 10s. Stats.
 Faces tough beyond their years.
 The faces of Shadow Company.

A phone RINGS. Woodhurst picks it up.

WOODHURST

Woodhurst.

INT. ORDNANCE STORAGE - NIGHT (INTERCUT)

An MP holds a field radio-phone.

MP AT ARMORY

Sir, this is Corporal Yenolyk.
 We have a problem down at the
 armory.

He walks out on the floor, and WE REVEAL TWO THINGS:

1) We are in the armory we saw earlier.
 MPs stare with horror at the dead sentries.

2) The place is a SHAMBLES.
 Weapons and ammo on the floor, case-fronts shattered.

MP AT ARMORY

Somebody's been here, sir. A break-
 in. They've killed both the sentries.

WOODHURST

Just remain calm, soldier. Tell me
 what they got.

MP ARMORY

Well, sir... Several M-16s... an
 M-60 belt feed, flamethrower, M79
 grenade launcher. It's like they
 had a shopping list, sir.

Woodhurst looks down at the open file. At his men.

He smiles.

IN THE ARMORY

The MPs survey the damage, walk down an aisle of plundered pyrotechnics. A second MP makes note of what's missing.

MP AT ARMORY

Grenades; Class 2s AND phosphorus.
Looks like they got a Bouncing
Betty Several pounds of C-4.
Detonators. Trip wire --

He stops. Looks down.

He has just STEPPED ON the trip wire.

It is rigged.

MP AT ARMORY

Oh shit.

INT. AND EXT. THE ARMORY - SERIES OF SHOTS

The EXPLOSION blows the place inside-out.

INT. WOODHURST'S STUDY - NIGHT

There is a rapid-fire KNOCKING on the door.

WOODHURST

Come -- !

Stark enters, looking none too pleased.

STARK

General, what the hell is going on?

Woodhurst calmly gathers the file from the desk...
More than calm, he seems... happy.

WOODHURST

Relax, Major... Everything is
in order.

He crosses to a fireplace across the room.
Tosses the file's contents, one by one, into the flames.

STARK

Relax -- ? I just got a call
half the base blew up!

Woodhurst finishes destroying the evidence.
He returns to his desk. Sips his brandy.

WOODHURST

You're upset, Garrett. Have a drink.

STARK

I don't want a Goddamn drink -- !

(a beat)

I was going through your computer
files. Cleaning house. I found a
requisition for several cannisters
of defoliant... herbicide. The
bill of lading was dated last
week.

(a beat)

Tell me what plants you need to
kill in the desert, General...!

WOODHURST

(after a pause:)

Agent Orange does have other uses,
Major.

A chill goes up Stark's spine...
Just like 16 years ago in Vietnam.

WOODHURST

(cheerfully)

You should rejoice, Garrett. Our
boys have come home... And they've
brought the war home to those who
betrayed it...

He pulls a Colt Officers ACP from a drawer.
Casually checks the clip for bullets as he talks.

WOODHURST

Don't you see, Major...?

(he JACKS the clip in)

It's Judgment Night.

Stark swallows.

STARK

What the hell have you done...?

Woodhurst COCKS the gun.

WOODHURST

Not me, Major...

Looks at Stark. Grinning.

WOODHURST
Destiny...

He puts the barrel of the gun in his mouth.
And pulls the trigger.

His brains paint the wall of war artifacts.

NAT KING COLE SINGS from the stereo.

Stark just stands there, dumbfounded.

INT. KYLE'S TRAILER - NIGHT - ON A SET TV

WE SEE Dr. Suess's Grinch sneaking around the fantastical
burg of Whoville, ruining Christmas. PAN TO REVEAL:

KYLE facing the TV, smoking a cigarette, and thumbing
through a high school yearbook. He is distracted. Pensive.
Lightning flickers outside.

CRASH -- !

Kyle almost jumps out of his skin.
Not lightning. Kyle looks toward the door.
Rises... and picks up a baseball bat.
Moves cautiously to the door.

KYLE
Who is it...?

No answer. Kyle reaches for the door... Unlocks it...
And FLINGS IT OPEN, wielding the bat defensively.

A FIGURE stands in shadow outside the door.
After a moment... battered and bleeding, POLLARD steps into
the light. He has seen better days.

POLLARD
Sylvia Traeger..?

KYLE
(recognizing him)
Jesus, man, what happened to you?

POLLARD
Where is she?

KYLE

She's out of town. Who are you,
anyway? Are you following me
around?

(a beat)

I'm sorry, I'm shutting the door.

He starts to. Pollard blocks it with his arm.
Looks at Kyle significantly.

POLLARD

You're her son, aren't you..?

Kyle tenses up. Pause.

POLLARD

Look, is there gas in your car?
You've gotta get out of here.

He ENTERS past Kyle. Looks around the trailer.

KYLE

Hey, what the fuck -- ?

POLLARD

Do you have a tape recorder?

Kyle blocks Pollard's way, tightly gripping the bat.

KYLE

Look, dickwad, I don't know
you from Adam, now get out --

And the moment he notices Pollard's pistol is the same
moment that Pollard whirls on HIM --

POLLARD

Listen, Goddammit --

And again we sense something inside Pollard, some
great force, bubbling just under the surface --

POLLARD

You're in DANGER, Kyle...
Understand -- ?!

And the air freezes.
Kyle looks at Pollard like he's a ghost.
Doesn't even care about the gun anymore.

KYLE

How did you know my name...?

Pause.

Pollard blinks hard... Reaches into his pocket...

He takes out his key-ring and dog tags.
 He hands the tags to Kyle. On them, WE SEE:
 The name, rank and serial no. of one TRAEGER, RUSSELL L.

POLLARD
 I knew your father...

Kyle tentatively takes the dog tags.
 Fingering them gingerly. Staring with disbelief.
 He looks like he's had the wind knocked out of him.

POLLARD
 During the war, he was the only
 one I could trust.

TIME-CUT:

INT. KYLE'S TRAILER - NIGHT - LATER

WE HEAR a light rain spattering the roof of the trailer.
 Pollard sits on the couch, unloading his backpack.

Kyle enters, carrying a portable cassette recorder as --
 The light flicker. Dim. Then die completely.

POLLARD
 Sons of bitches must have
 found the power lines.

Kyle fumbles for a drawer... pulls out some candles.
 As he lights them, he sees that Pollard is unloading his
 cache of lethal weapons.

KYLE
 You expecting an army...?

POLLARD
 Something like that.

Pollard picks up the tape recorder.
 Hits the 'RECORD' button.

POLLARD
 This is Lieutenant Jake Pollard.
 Special Forces, J71-76653...

He sets down the cassette, still recording.
 As he speaks, he cleans, loads and prepares his small
 arsenal, his grim features bathed in candlelight.

POLLARD

To the best of my recollection,
it'd be as early as -- '65...
some people in Washington started
to figure out Vietnam might have
been a mistake... So a warhawk
named Woodhurst, Colonel Philip L.
... he came up with a theory. That
the problem wasn't Johnson sending
our boys over there...

(pause)

The problem was them dying...

Pollard stares at Kyle with eyes that seem to glow like
burning embers...

POLLARD

April, 1970. Woodhurst commissioned
a team of scientists for a project
so secret, so classified, almost nobody
in the Pentagon even knew it existed...

CAMERA SLOWLY CREEPS IN ON POLLARD...

POLLARD

Twenty men. Assembled from 17
different Special Forces units.
A two year training program...
Drugs. Weird hybrids of PCP and
hormones...

SERIES OF FLASH-CUTS (POLLARD'S VOICE-OVER)

SOLDIERS. Sweating. Screaming.
Pushing the envelope of human endurance.
Then going beyond.

HYPODERMICS squirting chemicals.
HYPNOSIS sessions. Strange racks and CONTRAPTIONS.
It is an echoing nightmare.

POLLARD

Hypnosis. Brainwashing. Building
resistance to particular dioxides.
Pushing endurance envelopes to
teach the mind and body that
'weakness', 'conscience' are bad
words. That if you take away a
soldier's humanity... all that's
left is the fight. Doesn't even
matter who the enemy is...

(pause)

January... '73...

KYLE

That's when Nixon pulled us out of Vietnam.

Pollard nods.

POLLARD

Except before the ink on the treaty was dry, Intelligence gets a tip. NVA outpost above the Ho Chi Minh trail that would become the undercover HQ for the big push into South Vietnam... So Woodhurst figures a suicide mission. Recon deep into Cambodia, find the stronghold and pull the war out of a hat... Except the war's over, right...?

(shakes his head)

Wrong. Because Woodhurst has a trump card... A special unit. The only seven men to survive his program. They made a blood pact, all got the same tattoo. They even have a credo: "My will is strong/My name is dread/I fear no death/ 'Cause I'm already dead"...

Kyle shivers.

POLLARD

The unit was called Shadow Company, and Phase One was launched in February, '73. Targetable staff officers sent behind enemy lines... killed in their tracks by the VCs.

(pause)

Except Phase One had a code name: The Trojan Horse Phase. Because the men were killed... but they weren't dead. They were in remission. Waiting... Waiting for the triggering mechanism that would resurrect them... and make them exactly what the war needed: uncontrollable, untargetable, unKILLABLE soldiers who would act without morals, or question... It was an even trade: humanity for immortality. Like the Nazis all over again, trying to make a Superman. Only this time...

(eyes blazing, a whisper)

... this time it worked.

Eyes filled with dread, Kyle speaks:

KYLE

What was the triggering mechanism?

POLLARD

Agent Orange...

(pause)

Chopper would fly over the area, spray the bodies. Except before they got to Phase Two, someone pulled the plug on the whole deal while the bodies were buried. They stayed buried, too... until tonight.

Pollard reaches forward... and turns the tape recorder OFF. Distant THUNDER. Kyle rises and starts pacing.... finally turns, his voice tinged with vehemence:

KYLE

My dad was one of them... is that what you're saying? And Heather Stockton's...?

Pollard averts his gaze.

KYLE

You're full of shit, man -- !

POLLARD

Russ Traeger was the seventh member of Shadow Company, but he never went on the mission. He pulled out before he became one of them. He knew the war was over.

Kyle goes for the door. He is bursting with emotion.

KYLE

I'm not listening to this -- !

POLLARD

Kyle, your dad didn't die in the war.
(Kyle stops; pause)
Woodhurst had him killed... to shut him up.

Kyle looks at him. Tears in his eyes.

KYLE

(bitter sarcasm)
I thought they couldn't die.

POLLARD

Listen to me...

He JUTS the combat knife into its sheath.
 THRUSTS the Colt 10 mm into a clamshell shoulder rig.
 He grabs the tape recorder and rises.

POLLARD
 Woodhurst's here. In Merit. Now
 I'm going to find him... but if
 I don't live past tonight, it's up
 to you to blow the whistle, you
 understand?

He pops the tape and tosses it to Kyle.

KYLE
 (bitterly)
 Yeah, right, do it for my country,
 is that it?

POLLARD
 (a beat)
 No. Do it for your Dad.

Kyle just stands there.
 Pollard heads for the front door.
 Turns. Tosses the 9mm Browning to Kyle.

POLLARD
 You know how to use this?

KYLE
 No.

POLLARD
 Learn.

Pollard starts to leave. Hesitates, looking at Kyle.
 Then turns and goes...

EXT. HIGH DESERT - NIGHT - SERIES OF SHOTS

Five of them. Converging from different directions.
 Marching through the trees.
 Leaves crunching under booted feet. Finally:

EXT. HILLSIDE - NIGHT

SHADOW COMPANY appears over a crest like a mirage.

Like the League of Doom, silhouettes back-lit in the
 night, they trudge down the hill in loose battle
 formation...

EXT. LOVER'S LANE - NIGHT

MIKE and RHONDA are parked in a secluded spot.
They are both attractive teenagers.
They are like fully making out.
A love ballad plays on the radio.

INT. CAR - SAME

Rhonda stops, interrupting their passion.

RHONDA

What was that?

MIKE

What was what?

RHONDA

I thought I heard something.

(nervous)

Maybe you should get out and see
what it is.

MIKE

Oh, cut me a break. Jesus.

RHONDA

No, please, Mike, see what it is --
I'm scared.

MIKE

Rhonda. Don't you ever go to the
movies? I get out, right? And then
a guy in a hockey mask or a thing
from space kills me, and you hear
drip drip drip on the roof and you
think, "Oh, it's the rain," but it's
really blood, see, and I'm strung up
over the car, dripping blood and then
he kills YOU, right? Am I right?

RHONDA

I guess.

MIKE

Sure, he does. So tell you what.
Let's stay here, and keep making out,
and hope whatever it is goes away.

(beat)

Okay? Deal?

RHONDA

I guess.

MIKE

If it'll make you feel better,
I'll roll up the window.

RHONDA

No, that makes everything get all
steamy.

MIKE

Speaking of which...

He grabs her and they kiss.
Their bodies bump together with youthful abandon.

RHONDA

Oh, Mike, I can't.

MIKE

Bullshit.

They embrace again.
When a HAND appears at the window---
And drops something into the car.

RHONDA

Mike, what was that?

MIKE

Shhhh...

He gropes his hand up her leg --
Squeezes her thigh with something less than tenderness, as
her skirt rides up... He fumbles under it...

And his hand closes on something. An object.
Still kissing her, he looks at it.

It is A GRENADE.

EXT. CAR - SAME

It blows sky high.
Showering flame and debris.

Five figures trudge past, silhouetted against the flames...

INT. MERIT POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Phones RINGING off the hook. Lights flickering. Deputies
running to and fro. Buchalter strides through this chaos,
passing a DISPATCHER's station.

DISPATCH

Sir, we're getting reports of
an explosion outside of town --

BUCHALTER

Where the hell did you just send
four squad cars -- ?!

DISPATCH

To the base, sir. They're saying
this one was near the reservoir.

The overhead fluorescents DIE. Scattered GROANS.

BUCHALTER

Somebody plug in auxiliary!

A DUTY SERGEANT appears with a flashlight.

DUTY SERGEANT

Gunfire east of town, Sheriff...
Sounds like a Goddamn war zone --

BUCHALTER

(tenses up)

East..?

He grabs his jacket.

BUCHALTER

Get a deputy out to my house -- !
NOW!

HE BOLTS.

DUTY SERGEANT

Where are you going, Sheriff -- ?

BUCHALTER

To find my wife --

EXT. BASE - NIGHT

ARMED SOLDIERS RUN BY CAMERA, as WE SEE:

Several ENLISTED MEN loading Woodhurst's mysterious cannisters
into the back of a transport. TWO of the men hoist a
coffin-like wooden crate. STARK supervises.

ENLISTED MAN

What's in this one, sir -- ?

STARK
You're not here to ask questions,
soldier -- Just get this shit out
of here -- ! NOW!

He turns and climbs into the passenger seat of a jeep as --
The General's AIDE runs up, saluting.

WOODHURST'S AIDE
Chopper's waiting at the
General's compound, sir.

STARK
Excellent.

He nods to the DRIVER, who hits the gas.
The aide calls after the vehicle:

WOODHURST'S AIDE
Sir, where IS the General, sir -- ?!

EXT. JEEP - MOVING - TIGHT ON STARK

Leaving the bustle behind.

STARK
(under his breath)
In hell, with the rest of us.

EXT. EDGE OF TOWN - NIGHT

Kyle's Charger SCREAMS around a corner.

INT. KYLE'S CHARGER - DRIVING

Kyle drives hard, watching the glow of distant explosions
in his rearview mirror. Clipped next to the mirror is one
of those four-for-a-dollar pictures you get in photo booths.

Kyle and Heather in happier times. Mugging. Kissing.
Kyle looks at the picture...

Then SLAMS on the brakes.

EXT. THE ROAD - NIGHT

The car does a smoking, SHRIEKING 180...
Heading back the way it came.

EXT. WOODHURST'S COMPOUND (OFFICER COUNTRY) - NIGHT

The Sykorsky sits on the chopper pad, WHINING, as --
A pair of headlights split the night, illuminating the
sheets of hard rain.

STARK'S JEEP halts several yards from the Blackhawk, and
Stark gets out, carrying the briefcase he had when he
arrived. The driver salutes, and DRIVES AWAY.

Stark dashes to the chopper.

INT. BLACKHAWK - NIGHT

He YANKS open the side-door and climbs in --

STARK
Let's get the hell out of h --

-- when he SEES:

THE CHOPPER PILOT, out cold in the back.
And sitting in the pilot's seat...
Cradling a Mossberg "bullpup" 12 gauge, is:

POLLARD
Ho ho ho.

He COCKS the shotgun. Stark blanches.

POLLARD
What's the matter, Major?
See a ghost?
(a beat)
Where's Woodhurst -- ?

Stark is speechless. Eyes wide. Sweat creases his lip.
Pollard jams the tip of the barrel into Stark's nose.

POLLARD
Come on, little boy, don't keep
Santa waiting...

STARK
-- Dead... He blew his brains
out...

POLLARD
Got smart, huh..? Then you
tell me: what was their last order -- ?

STARK
(a beat)
I don't know what you --

Pollard GRABS him by the collar and JAMS the steel barrel harder. Stark grimaces.

POLLARD
I don't think you get it, Major.
Your boys are headed this way --

STARK
They're not my boys, anymore --

POLLARD
You're their C.O.! STOP THEM -- !

STARK
I can't --

Pollard JUTS the barrel forward and we HEAR a sharp SNAP --
Stark GRUNTS as blood starts trickling from his nostril.

POLLARD
You listen to me, you fuck -- !
They're headed for town --
for innocent people's homes --
Now I figure somewhere in those
rotted brains of theirs, they
think they're up the Mekong Delta,
they think they're still doing the
fucking mission, now tell me:
WHAT WAS THEIR LAST ORDER -- !?

Stark whimpers, nose broken, sweating, tears in his eyes:

STARK
No... No friendlies...

And just when we thought the man couldn't be more of a chickenshit, he actually, audibly YELPS, his terrified eyes looking through the front windshield of the Blackhawk --

Pollard looks, too. Squints.
Reaches for the wiper switch.
Flicks it ON. The huge wipers SQUEAK into motion --
AND THROUGH a cloudy wash of dribbling rain-water, WE SEE:

FOUR DARK FIGURES

standing frozen several yards away, outside the helicopter.
Even in silhouette, we can see their fatigues, berets,
ammo belts... and their AUTOMATIC WEAPONS. Stark gasps.

A FLASH of lightning illuminates SHADOW COMPANY.

STARK
Oh God...

Thinking quickly, Pollard begins to frantically GEAR UP for take-off, as

THE FIGURES

start moving TOWARD THE CHOPPER, and --

EXT. THE PROPELLERS

start to turn, as a result of Pollard's efforts, as

KOZALLI

SEES this. Raises his M79, and FIRES -- !

A 40 mm armor-piercing grenade leaves a blazing fire-trail as it ROCKETS toward the rotor blades and -- BA-WHOOM -- ! A FIREBALL BLOWS pieces of propeller-shrapnel EVERYWHERE --

INT. BLACKHAWK - SAME

Pollard and Stark DUCK the explosion. Sparks and debris raining down, as --

EXT. THE BLACKHAWK

The smoke clears, and WE SEE the mangled-steel remains of the propellers turning lamely. So much for that idea.

THE FIGURES

outside the chopper start to raise their weapons, and -- THEY OPEN FIRE, bullets SPITTING and RICOCHETING off the hull AS -- Stark panics, YANKS on the hatch handle --

EXT. BLACKHAWK - NIGHT

He jumps out, and immediately TAKES SEVERAL SHOTS IN EACH LEG -- He SCREAMS, and raises both hands --

STARK

HOLD YOUR FIRE -- ! I'm your
commanding officer, LOWER
YOUR WEAPONS -- !

The Shadow Company lower their weapons.
Stand at parade rest. Tall. Silent. Deadly.
Eyes locked on Stark, who coughs a bloody spittle.
Legs tattered, he painfully attempts to remain standing.

Terrified... he slowly raises one hand in a salute.

Pause. Pause.

And that's when... yes, by God...

The creatures RETURN THE SALUTE.

STARK
(under his breath)
Sweet... Mother... Mercy...

His eyes, big as saucers, flick back and forth.
He manages to croak out:

STARK
... Men...
(pause)
Um... At ease...

The things just stand, immobile.
Not a sound but the wind and rain.
Stark swallows.

STARK
The mission is scrubbed, men.
(grimaces with pain)
Understand? It's over. You can
disband...

And then... the four figures RAISE THEIR WEAPONS.

STARK
What? What are you doing -- ?

!!!! -- KLIK KLIK KLIK KLIK KLIK KLIK -- !!!!
Four M-16s. COCKED AND LOCKED.
Stark tries to remain composed.

STARK
I said lower your weapons...

The shadowy figures spread. Moving in. Guns up.
Stark backs off, limping toward the edge of the desert.
Desperate. Eyes panicked. Voice no longer steady, choking
out useless words:

STARK
Lower your fucking weapons,
that's a DIRECT ORDER -- BACK
OFF -- ! Five meter spread!
(gasping)
Armbruster, Stockton, Perez -- ?
Goddammit, I'm your C.O. DO AS I SAY!

Shadow Company halt in a semi-circle around him. Guns up.

STARK
(a shriek)
Dammit, you can die now, THE WAR
IS OVER -- !!

And then he sees something.
His face softens with recognition of:
ONE of the men, charred, blackened, burned beyond recognition.

Except for a peeling ash-covered decal on his helmet:
An evil, cigar-smoking Woody Woodpecker. PEREZ.

Stark attempts a pained, pleading smile...
And raises two fingers... forming the PEACE SIGN.

Two Berettas and four M-16s OPEN UP --

Stark is picked off his feet and buffeted about in mid-air like a marionette operated by a spastic puppeteer --
Hanging jerkily as if by invisible winds --
Flesh and medals SHREDDED BY ARTILLERY --

Until, at last, he is flung against a cactus --
And sticks, impaled on the sharp needles...
Company cease fire.

Armbruster re-HOLSTERS his Berettas, steps forward.
DROPS a deck of cards fluttering down on Stark's corpse.

ARMBRUSTER
No friendlies...

WIND sweeps in off the desert.
The incessant spatter of rain.
Then the creatures WHIRL -- SEEING:

POLLARD -- who has broken from the chopper, and PUMPS the Mossberg but before he can get a shot off --

BUDDA-BUDDA-BUDDA -- A HAIL OF ARTILLERY from Shadow Company... who then start moving toward Pollard, breaking into a five meter spread, FIRING ALL THE WHILE --

Pollard is HIT in the shoulder. Once. twice.
He GROANS. SPINS. Starts running.
Company in pursuit.

More HITS. Pollard SCREAMS as his legs are pelted with gunfire. He RUNS. Jerks. Twitches. The fire is WITHERING.
Racking him like a bolt of lightning.

But he keeps running.

And then he STOPS running.
 Because his path is blocked.
 Because directly in front of him... between him and the
 desert... is a canal duct, a stone gulley with WATER
 RUSHING THROUGH IT like a river.

Pollard turns on weak legs.
 Bleeding, sopping with rain.
 Surrounded. Outnumbered. Maybe dying.

But the soldiers are no longer firing.
 Instead.. their leader steps forward.

ARMBRUSTER

... Join us...

Pollard grins sickly back.
 Shotgun at his side, backpack on.
 On the very edge of sanity.

POLLARD

You'd have to kill me first.

And with that, his eyes roll into their sockets, and he
 FALLS BACKWARD into the rushing water...
 And is PULLED DOWNSTREAM, disappearing from sight...

The creatures watch like Golems.
 Then turn, and march away... toward DOWNTOWN MERIT.

EXT. HEATHER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Kyle comes up the front steps when HE SEES:
 A SHERIFF'S DEPUTY standing in the window.
 He DUCKS out of sight. Curses. Weighs his options.

INT. HEATHER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The door is rudely KICKED OPEN -- !
 And there's KYLE. ARMED.
 The Deputy WHIRLS, goes for his gun.
 Too late. Kyle has a bead on him. 9mm. Point blank.

KYLE

Drop it and stand against the wall.

The Deputy reacts, incredulous.

DEPUTY

You've gotta be kidding me...

KYLE

Did I stutter?

The Deputy drops his gun and stands against the wall.
Kyle moves toward him, holds his gun by the barrel, butt
up. He raises it. The Deputy sees this.

DEPUTY
You ever knocked anyone out
before?

KYLE
No.

DEPUTY
Great. Not too hard, okay?
Knock me out, don't kill me.

Kyle hits him.

DEPUTY
Ow, shit -- !

Kyle SLAMS the gun down on his head, knocking him out.

KYLE
Oops.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Heather finishes taking a shower.
She turns off the water... and steps out of the stall,
naked as the day she was born. She reaches for a towel...

And THAT'S WHEN Kyle KICKS the door in, and aims the
Browning at her, police stance. She COVERS herself with the
towel. The two of them kind of freeze in tableau.

HEATHER
Christ, I've heard of guys being
hard-up before.

Kyle lowers the gun.
Distant explosions. Heather goes to the window.

HEATHER
What the hell's going on out
there...?

KYLE
It's bad...

Heather turns, suddenly concerned.

HEATHER
My Mom -- ! Kimmie --

KYLE
Where are they -- ?

HEATHER
Church.

KYLE
Get dressed. I'll take you.

She starts to go. Stop. Turns to Kyle.

HEATHER
Thank you.

They exchange glances for a moment.

KYLE
God, you're pretty.

EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

SOUNDS of EXPLOSIONS and gunfire as CHURCH-GOERS flee down the front steps, almost trampling a sobbing, terrified KIM, still wearing her Virgin Mary outfit.

As she runs off into the night, a Sheriff's vehicle SCREAMS to a halt, and Buchalter emerges.

A panicked CIVILIAN acosts him, SCREAMING and pointing down the street, where WE SEE:

FIVE DARK FIGURES

walking away, M-16s SPITTING artillery in clean semi-circles.

BUCHALTER

plows past the civilian, begins CALLING OUT:

BUCHALTER
Doris -- ! DORIS -- !

He RUNS up the church steps --
Pauses only long enough TO SEE:

A NATIVITY SCENE

Manger, straw, plastic lambs, mannequins in Biblical dress. In the cradle where the Baby Jesus should be is a MAN'S bullet-riddled CORPSE, a single playing card on its chest.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

High, beamed ceiling. Flickering candles.
Deserted but for HEATHER'S MOM, kneeling in the front pew,
a tiny, carved wooden crucifix clutched to her breast.
Outside, EXPLOSIONS rumble in the night.

Buchalter appears, and runs up the aisle to her.

BUCHALTER

Doris. Come on, honey. We've got
to get out of here -- !

Doris mumbles to herself in prayer.
Buchalter looks toward the altar.
Pauses, listening.

And that's when the door at the back of the aisle SWINGS
OPEN violently... and a silhouette appears in the
doorframe, laying a long shadow down the aisle.

Buchalter rises.
The wind rattles the rafters.
All the candles flicker OUT.
Silence. Darkness.

BOOTS begin trudging up the church aisle.

Buchalter pulls his sidearm.
The figure stops several feet from him.
Buchalter stares with disbelief.

The figure stands rock solid. Emotionless.
Around its neck, the dog tags which it carried to the grave.
A shaft of moonlight glints off the name: CAPT. CARL STOCKTON.

BUCHALTER

(gasps)

You...

He backs away. Terrified.

BUCHALTER

I... I've taken... good care of
her. Please... Don't --

He does.

Because THREE CHUGGING BLASTS from an M-16 pick Buchalter
up and fling him through a stained-glass window in a
shower of technicolor glass -- !

EXT. POLICE STATION PARKING LOT - NIGHT

DEPUTIES run to squad cars.

ONE of them stops, looking down at a red stain on his uniform. He grimaces, rubs at it with his hand.
But the stain will not come out, because...

It is the red dot projected by a laser-targeted rifle.

EXT. HILLTOP - NIGHT

A laser-sight .30 M1 Carbine high-powered sniper rifle.
A chalk-white hand squeezes the trigger.

KA-BLAM!

Deputy #2 FLIES BACKWARD, CRASHING through the windshield of the patrol car -- !

Deputy #1 pulls his sidearm and hits the deck.

DEPUTY #1

Jesus Christ --

OTHER COPS pour out of the station to go to their cars.
Deputy #1 frantically waves them to back off.

DEPUTY #1

Get inside! We got a sniper out here -- !

And out of nowhere, a HAIL of M-60 ARTILLERY CHOPS UP the exit, halting the cops in their tracks --

INT. POLICE STATION - AS BEFORE

Auxiliary power flickers to life, as --

PERSONNEL REACT to the SOUND OF GUNFIRE --

The dispatcher's RADIO BLARES. Hash and static.

RADIO VOICE

This is Unit # 7 -- Officer down!
(SQUAWK)

We got some -- guys in fatigues or something, they're like -- mercenaries -- they're out here shooting the shit outta everything --

EXT. POLICE STATION PARKING LOT - NIGHT

KOZALLI-THING rises with his RPG, FIRES --

The Deputy on the ground clutches a radio mic, cord
dangling from the open cabin, as the ROCKET SHOOTS OVER
HIS head, AND --

INT. MERIT POLICE STATION - AS BEFORE

One wall EXPLODES.

POLICE start YELLING, hitting the floor, going for weapons.
A DRUNK in the holding tank tries to claw his way out of
his cell, completely engulfed in flames.

EXT. MERIT POLICE STATION - NIGHT

A phosphorus grenade turns night into day, ILLUMINATING:
FIVE FIGURES marching past the station.
Strung out in a skirmish line.

A POLICEMAN RUNS out in front of them.
Police-stance. Revolver aimed.

STUPID POLICEMAN
FREEZE -- !

But the soldiers keep coming.
The officer FIRES. BLAM.
The lead soldier takes the shot in the head.

But the soldiers keep coming.

The officer freaks.
BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM.
Emptying the clip.

But the soldiers keep coming.

The officer runs out of rounds.
Stares, ashen with terror as --

The leader of the company closes on him.
Wearing mirrored sunglasses, so we can't see his eyes.

His is not so much a voice as a choke from beyond the grave:

ARMBRUSTER
No friendlies...

And their machine guns open up simultaneously.

Armbruster drops a playing card on the corpse as they
trudge over it... and continue marching. Toward downtown...

INT. KYLE'S CHARGER - DRIVING - NIGHT

Kyle drives, Heather shotgun.
Christmas MUSIC PLAYS on the car radio.

KYLE
Helluva Friday night, huh?

Heather shudders, and puts her head on Kyle's shoulder.

EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

The Charger appears, and comes to a halt in front of the now-deserted church.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

The wind whistles through broken glass as the kids enter.
Heather's voice ECHOES...

HEATHER
... Mom...? Kimmie -- ?

... as they move tentatively up the aisle. Kyle goes to the altar, gun up. He looks out the shattered stained-glass AT:

BUCHALTER'S CORPSE

in the alley outside the church.

HEATHER
What's out there?

Kyle turns to her.

KYLE
(lying)
Nothing.

Heather SEES a door in the chancery, just off the altar. An OPEN door...

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT

Heather appears silhouetted in the doorway.
A set of rickety steps lead down into the darkness.

HEATHER
Mom...? Are you here?

She starts down the steps.
Kyle APPEARS in the doorway behind her.

KYLE

Heather, come on. What would she be doing down there..?

Heather stops on the next-to-bottom step. Half in shadow. Listening and looking into the inky blackness. Finally... she turns.

HEATHER

Yeah, you're right...

And a HAND REACHES OUT FROM BEHIND HER, GRABBING her --

But it is only her MOM, Mrs. Buchalter (nee Stockton).

MRS. STOCKTON

The cross has power...

She clutches her ubiquitous wooden crucifix, and babbles like a woman with one foot in sanity, the other with God. She is sweating and seems to have a hard time breathing.

MRS. STOCKTON

We got it in Tijuana...

Heather and Kyle recover from their coronaries.

MRS. STOCKTON

The weekend your father came home on leave... the weekend we... conceived you...

HEATHER

Mother -- don't --

MRS. STOCKTON

He was different though...

(distant)

He wasn't your father.

(looks at the cross)

It's real oak, you know. Painted by hand. They sold over a hundred the day we were there...

HEATHER

Yes, Ma'am... It's very nice.

MRS. STOCKTON

I overheard someone praying at the funeral... A woman. She sounded so happy. She was thanking God HER husband hadn't been killed --

HEATHER

Mom, please --

MRS. STOCKTON

No, see, she really didn't care that God had let someone die... just so long as it missed her... And I'll bet she had this same cross on her wall because they sold over a hundred that day, did I tell you?

Heather bites her lip. Fighting the tears.

HEATHER

Yes...

MRS. STOCKTON

And we all pray to them, on a hundred different walls, and we all wait and see who gets missed, and who... It's not fair.... Why do her prayers work... but not mine...?

Heather doesn't know what to say.

Kyle looks down... picks up an empty M-16 cartridge. He stiffens. Exchanges glances with Heather.

HEATHER

Mom...? Who was here?

Mother mumbles, petting her cross like it's a pet.

HEATHER

WHO WAS HERE, MOM...?

She looks at her daughter. Almost smiles.

MRS. STOCKTON

It was him, dear.

(a beat)

It was your father.

HEATHER

Don't say that. You're confused.

KYLE

Did he talk, Ma'am? Did he say anything?

For the first time, she looks at Kyle. Eyes distant. Red from weeping.

MRS. STOCKTON
He said... "Hi, honey. I'm home."

She steps into the light... and WE SEE that the front of her shawl is riddled with bullet holes. She smiles sadly... and dies.

EXT. GULLEY - DOWNSTREAM

Brown rain water RUSHING in the moonlight.
WE FAVOR the edge of the gulley as...

An arm SHOOTS OUT, clutching at the moldy, rain-soaked earth... and POLLARD emerges, painfully pulling himself out, dripping ropery splatters of muck.

He rises unsteadily to his feet.
Still gripping the shotgun and backpack.
He looks around, trying to get his bearings.

The guy has definitely seen better days.

He trudges painfully up a muddy hillet.

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Pollard tops the hillet, finds himself in a cul de sac.
Outside a pleasant, Ethan Allan-type home.
A Christmas tree BLINKS in one of the windows.
On the roof: a plastic Santa, sled, and reindeer.
In the lead is RUDOLPH, his red nose GLOWING like a beacon.

The house is riddled with bullet holes.

Pollard limps up the driveway to the open garage.

INT. GARAGE - SUBURBAN HOME - NIGHT

Pollard enters tentatively, dripping muck.
WE SEE Tools. Oil slicks. A work-bench with lathe.
Shelves bursting with old boardgames.
Pollard looks up and SEES on one wall:
Scrawled retardedly in spraypaint: "DEATH TO HO CHI MINH".

Squeak. Squeak. Squeak.
Pollard WHIRLS with what strength he has.
AIMS the RPG AT --

cage. A GUINEA PIG running in an exercise wheel.
Pollard exhales. Sees the door into the house.
He nudges it open with the rocket launcher.

SEES a fleeting glimpse of a LIVING ROOM.
TV flickering ON and OFF. Andy Williams Christmas Special.
A dead COUPLE sit in front of the TV.

Pollard closes his eyes. Looks down.
SEES a trail of muddy BOOT PRINTS on the garage floor.
He follows the trail cautiously.
It leads to an automatic DRYER.

The round window of the dryer has been punctured by
gunfire... a ghostly FACE peers from inside. Pollard PULLS
OPEN the dryer hatch, TO REVEAL:

A dead BOY inside, maybe seven years old, clutching a
portable CB radio unit. The CB is ON, CRACKLING with
radio STATIC.

Pollard kneels to take the unit. Due to rigor mortis, he
must pry the microphone away from the boy's hand.

EXT. ROOFTOP - SUBURBAN HOME - NIGHT

The rain has stopped, leaving a crisp, clear night.
Pollard staggers out on the roof, carrying the portable CB.
He flops down next to the plastic reindeer.

He looks out at the horizon.
SOUNDS of distant explosions and artillery.
Truly, the war has come home.

He turns the a dial on the radio. Nothing. Radio SILENCE.
He tries to sit up, but is overcome with pain.
He grimaces, DROPS the hand mic... and lies back.
He looks heavenward.

POLLARD

... Don't... don't let me die...

He closes his eyes.... the life seeping out of him.
Rudolph's nose BLINKS ON and OFF beside him.

POLLARD

God... please don't let me die...

INT. KYLE'S CHARGER - DRIVING - NIGHT

Kyle drives, fiddles with his dash-mounted CB.
Heather looks drained, emotionless. Possibly in shock.
Kyle looks up, suddenly SLAMS on the brakes -- !

EXT. EDGE OF DOWNTOWN MERIT - NIGHT

Directly in front of them is a POLICE ROAD BLOCK halting access to downtown. Flares. Armed COPS and SOLDIERS.

EXT. DOWNTOWN MERIT - NIGHT

An army of MERIT POLICE and SOLDIERS run with riot guns and assault weapons. A SERGEANT with a bullhorn waves them to spread out.

SERGEANT WITH BULLHORN
Hit the roofs! High positions!

He looks down the street.
Raises a hand for QUIET.
Everyone looks...

CHRISTMAS MUSIC emanates from loudspeakers, as...

From the distance, a lone figure comes running.
It is the VIETNAMESE depot clerk; the first person Pollard saw when he got to town. He is SCREAMING, terrified.

VIETNAMESE MAN
Zin ong yup toi, ZIN ONG YUP TOI -- !

A single semi-automatic round sounds with a CRACK -- !
And the Asian man falls to the asphalt, clutching his leg.

Behind him, a silhouetted FIGURE emerges from the shadows, grabs the man by the hair, pulls a sidearm, and FIRES two shots into the man's head.

Three more figures trudge out of the mist, FIRING weapons on full automatic, CHOPPING storefronts and newspaper vending machines to bits.

They re-load robotically in staggered sequence.
Their eyes seem to glow in the night.

SERIES OF SHOTS - POLICE

Taking positions. In doorways. Behind cars.
They wield shotguns, long-barrelled .38s, etc.

EXT. ROOF ABOVE CAR DEALER

SNIPERS take up position on the roof.

THE SERGEANT

raises his bullhorn... and one hand.
Lowers the hand like a flagman at the Indy 500.

SERGEANT

FIRE!!!

Every cop in a two block radius OPENS FIRE.
Artillery BLASTS AT Shadow Company from every direction.
Their march wobbles under the HAIL of bullets --

But even pelted by crossfire, they keep right on walking.

THE SERGEANT

reacts with horror and disbelief.

OUTSIDE McDONALD'S

The one called NOONAN stops in front of a grinning, waving,
life-size plastic RONALD McDONALD.

Noonan cocks its head, as if studying the ridiculous
clown... then proceeds to BLOW THE SHIT OUT OF IT.

EXT. POLICE ROAD BLOCK

Kyle and Heather emerge from the car.
Make their way through the activity.

An ENLISTED MAN with a military walkie-talkie runs up to
his C.O.

C.O. AT ROAD BLOCK

Are all the citizens out of
there?

ENLISTED MAN AT ROAD BLOCK

Working on it, sir... Apparently,
they shot up a transport on its
way out of town... A little girl's
trapped under it in front of the
market.

Heather tenses, moves closer. Kyle beside her.

C.O. AT ROADBLOCK

Can somebody get to her?

They look toward downtown. Artillery SOUNDS.

ENLISTED MAN AT ROAD BLOCK
They might have their hands full, sir.

HEATHER
Is she wearing a costume -- ?

The two soldiers notice her.

HEATHER
The little girl... Is she wearing
a religious costume -- ?

ENLISTED MAN AT ROAD BLOCK
Yeah, they did say something
about that on the radio --

HEATHER
That's my sister -- THAT'S KIMMIE,
THAT'S MY SISTER -- !

Kyle puts his hand on her shoulder.

C.O. AT ROAD BLOCK
Miss, calm down, they know she's
in there, we'll get her out just
as soon as we can --

HEATHER
NO, you have to let us through -- !

C.O. AT ROAD BLOCK
We've got to keep this area secure --
I'm sorry, we an armed insurrection
here --

Heather tries to STORM the roadblock but the enlisted man
GRABS her. She fights back violently. Several COPS move
forward to assist.

HEATHER
GOD DAMN YOU! LET ME GO! SHE'S ALL
I HAVE LEFT! LET ME GO -- !

Kyle pulls her back, trying to calm her.

KYLE
Heather! Come on, it's okay!
Come on. Come on...

She cries hysterically as he holds her tightly, pulling her
back and walking her to the car.

INT. KYLE'S CHARGER - AT ROAD BLOCK

Heather sobs as Kyle helps her into the passenger seat.
He gets in the driver's side and grips the wheel with both hands, looking ahead. A beat.

Then he pulls on his seatbelt.
A determined look on his face.
Heather looks at him, confused.
He continues to stare ahead solemnly.

KYLE
You know... It's against the law
to have your seatbelt unfastened.

A beat. Heather wipes her tears, and fastens her seatbelt tightly. Kyle looks at her... then turns the ignition.

SERIES OF CUTS - THE CHARGER - INSIDE AND OUT

The engine REVS.
COPS and SOLDIERS look on with confusion.
The C.O. SEES this, and approaches the driver's side.

C.O. AT ROAD BLOCK
Hey --

One hand on the handbrake, Kyle REVS the engine with a ROAR.
Several COPS move toward the car from behind, as --
Kyle hits a switch on the dash, flooding the shocks, and --

Tires SMOKING, the Charger REARS like a bucking bronco --
STARTLING THE COPS and stopping them in their tracks as --
The Charger JERKS FORWARD at what seems like rocket-speed --

AND PLOWS THROUGH THE ROADBLOCK --
SMASHING sawhorses into kindling --
Highway flares SPIT SPARKING from under tires --

C.O. AT ROAD BLOCK
STOP THEM -- !!

A squad car PEALS OUT after them, lights FLASHING --

EXT. DOWNTOWN MERIT - NIGHT

Cops and soldiers EXCHANGE ARTILLERY with Shadow Company.
Kyle's Charger slews into view, running a gauntlet
straight up the street.

The police car SCREAMS around a corner in hot pursuit.

SHADOW COMPANY

turns, and FIRES at the new intruders.
Bullets WHINE off the Charger as it roars down the street.

INT. KYLE'S CHARGER - MOVING FAST

The kids DUCK as bullets SPARK and RICOCHET around them.

INT. POLICE CAR - MOVING FAST

The cops are not so lucky. Gunfire SHATTERS the windshield
and the driver WRENCHES THE WHEEL defensively --

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The squad car PLOWS THROUGH A fire hydrant --
Which EXPLODES with a GEYSER of water, as --

EXT. CAR DEALER - NIGHT

Doing 70, The car HITS an empty car-display ramp --
SHOOTS UP IT --
And SAILS THROUGH THE AIR, occupants SCREAMING as --

IN THE STREET - SHADOW COMPANY

AIM their weapons UP, SHREDDING the underside of the air-
borne police vehicle with AUTOMATIC GUNFIRE just before

EXT. CAR DEALER - NIGHT

The patrol car CRASHES through the plate glass window into
the showroom.

EXT. DESERT TINY'S MARKET - NIGHT

A familiar-looking army transport lies on its side, bullet-
ridden, its windshield smashed. The silver cannisters lie
in the street, having fallen out in the crash.

Kyle's Charger SHRIEKS into a skid, and Heather DASHES from
it to the transport, WHERE:

HEATHER
KIMMIE -- !

Little Kim, still wearing her Virgin Mary costume, is pinned under one of the rungs that holds up the canvas shell-cover. She is crying, bruised, and terrified... but otherwise unhurt.

Heather tries vainly to pull the rung up, but it's a losing battle. Kyle helps her, but it is still no use. Physics is against them.

KYLE

Shit -- !

He looks up the street.

The battle rages in the distance, but one or two of Shadow Company are clearly marching this way.

Kyle looks around frantically for something to help free the little girl. SEES an axe lying nearby, and uses it to hack away at the canvas. Heather runs to the car.

She reaches in, and BLOWS the car horn, as she screams:

HEATHER

HELP -- ! SOMEBODY HELP US -- !

EXT. ROOF OF SUBURBAN HOME - NIGHT

Pollard lying on the roof.

Eyes closed. Breathing shallow.

Distant sounds of artillery. Flashes in the sky.

And suddenly something else... a distant sound, wafting across the night air...

Pollard stirs, listening. A pause --

And suddenly his eyes snap wide open.

Because the sound he is hearing is the familiar first bar of "The Star Spangled Banner".

Kyle's car horn.

Pollard sits up. Clutching himself.

Coughs a bloody spittle.

Grapples for the CB mic and presses the broadcast button:

POLLARD

K -- Kyle... Kyle Traeger...
Do you copy me...?

EXT. DESERT TINY'S - BACK TO SCENE

As Heather HEARS POLLARD'S VOICE coming from Kyle's CB.

HEATHER

Kyle..?!

Kyle turns, HEARS the voice. His eyes widen.
He RUNS to the Charger, GRABS the CB mic.

KYLE

This is Kyle, who's this -- !?

EXT. ROOF - POLLARD (INTERCUT)

Pollard on his knees.
Still weak, but slowly rejuvenating.

POLLARD

Pollard. Where are you..?

KYLE

The market! Downtown! Jesus,
man, get over here, we need a
fuckin' miracle.

He slowly rises. Stands.
Backpack slung over his shoulder.

POLLARD

I don't know, kid... I'm fresh
out of miracles...

He COCKS the Mossberg.

POLLARD

But I got a big fucking gun.

EXT. DOWNTOWN MERIT - NIGHT

The street rapidly flooding with water from the broken
water vein. A SHERIFF'S DEPUTY points down the street for
the benefit of the POLICE SERGEANT.

The sergeant looks, SEEING:

SHADOW COMPANY

as they march this way in a skirmish line.
Splitting up. SPRAYING ARTILLERY --

ROOF ABOVE USED CAR DEALER

THE SNIPERS shield themselves from the still-flaming auto
wreckage. One of them SEES:

A TRANSFORMER attached to a telephone pole.
 A BROKEN POWER CABLE is loose and sparking.
 The sniper raises his walkie-talkie to speak.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Pollard moving low behind a row of parked cars.
 Commando-style except for the limp. CB in his backpack.
 The SOUNDS of artillery are close.
 He SEES another roadblock guarding the perimeter of the
 battle zone. Looks around for another option, SPOTS:

A MANHOLE. Spitting distance away.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - AS BEFORE

Shadow Company splitting up the middle of the street,
 exchanging FIRE with the cops, the water sloshing across
 the pavement under their boots, as --

The sergeant YELLS into his bullhorn:

 SERGEANT
 EVERYBODY CLEAR THE STREET -- !
 GET OFF THE STREET -- !!

ROOF ABOVE CAR DEALER

The sniper FIRES shot after shot at the power transformer --
 Finally, he HITS his target.

 SNIPER
 Bingo.

It EXPLODES --
 And the loose POWER LINE SWINGS in an arc down to --

THE NEWLY WATER-WASHED PAVEMENT

which becomes a CRACKLING MAELSTROM of electrical
 current. Which shoots in every direction, BUZZING and
 LASHING. The last of the COPS run for dry footing AS --

SHADOW COMPANY

MARCHES ON, straight across the electrified street.

SPARKS SPRAY off them as --
 They keep walking, machine guns up...
 Silhouetted against zapping blue arcs.

SERIES OF SHOTS - POLICE AND SOLDIERS

as the electrified soldiers BLOW THEM AWAY without mercy.
It is wholesale slaughter.

EXT. DESERT TINY'S - SAME

Kyle and Heather stare in horror, mesmerized as --
WE HEAR Pollard's voice, SQUAWKING from Kyle's CB:

POLLARD

Kid, it's me -- Come in --

INT. SEWER - NIGHT

Hollow wind. Slimy walls. Echoing DRIP DRIP DRIP.
A flashlight splits the darkness.

POLLARD, sloshing knee-dip through shit.
He speaks into the CB mic:

POLLARD

I'm in the sewer... make some
noise so I can track you --

EXT. DESERT TINY'S - SAME

Kyle LEANS ON THE CAR HORN.

UP THE STREET

NOONAN emerges from the maelstrom, electricity still
CRACKLING around the soldier's form. It COCKS its head at
the SOUND of the horn playing the national anthem.

Starts walking toward the sound.

INT. SEWER - WITH POLLARD

Also hearing the horn. Close but muffled. He looks up.

POLLARD

Keep going, I think I'm under
you...

Something MOVES in the dank shadows directly behind him.

EXT. DESERT TINY'S - BACK TO SCENE

Kyle grips the CB mic tensely, SEES:

A MANHOLE several yards away.

Then he GASPS... because a few yards beyond the manhole...

IS NOONAN... coming walking this way.

KYLE

Shit! Jesus, hurry up, man -- !
HURRY -- !!

Heather tries not to panic as she HACKS at canvas with the axe. Little Kim pulls an arm free, but she's still trapped.

Heather GRABS one of the silver cannisters, and starts sliding it under the rung for leverage.

KYLE

There's one of them heading for
a manhole right near us, he's
almost on us -- ! He's right here -- !

INT. SEWER

Pollard shines his flashlight UP at the ceiling.
SEES an old steel GRATING hanging loose from corrosion. --
Years of age have rendered the bars jagged and sharp.

A few feet short of the grating... is the underside of the manhole.

POLLARD

I see it --

And when he lowers the flashlight, he HEARS a SPLASH.
A splash he didn't make. He WHIRLS, the flashlight
harshly illuminating:

A FACE

Inches away. Rotted. Sneering. Like a skull.

KOZALLI's hand SHOOTS OUT --
GRABBING Pollard by the throat --
Pollard DROPS his shotgun. SPLASH.
It sinks out of sight.

Pollard looks back up. SEES:
That Kozalli is covered with RATS.
They chew happily on the dead soldier's flesh.

EXT. DESERT TINY'S - SAME

Kyle hides, takes cover behind the car.
Pulls the Browning, and levels it at NOONAN.
Noonan raises its own weapon as it approaches.
BLAMBLAMBLAMBLAMBLAMBLAM -- !
The side of the Charger is SHREDDED by M16 fire, as --

KYLE FIRES BACK. Round after round tearing into the creature. Face. Knee. Chest.
The shots slow the thing. But stop it? Think twice.

INT. SEWER - SAME

Red-faced, the life literally being squeezed out of him, Pollard grapples for Kozalli's M16 with its attached over/under grenade launcher on a shoulder strap. He hisses at the soldier tauntingly:

POLLARD
You always had to have a bigger
gun than everyone else, didn't
you, Kozalli..?

And he GRABS the weapon --
Kozalli LOOKS DOWN.
As Pollard JAMS the gun butt HARD into Kozalli's stomach.

And fires. BLAMBLAMBLAMBLAMBLAMBLAMBLAM -- !
The creature is PUNCHED backward by M16 artillery.
Staggering under the barrage, as Pollard shifts his fire
UP, FIRING at the old metal grating. Sparks FLY off it as...

The grating comes loose...

EXT. DESERT TINY'S - SAME

Kyle fires his last few rounds, when -- KA-CHUCK -- !
The slide CLICKS back sharply. EMPTY.

Noonan draws closer.
JACKS a new cartridge into its M-16.
COCKS the weapon. Raises it for the kill, as --

INT. SEWER - SAME

Pollard stops firing.
The jagged grating FALLS from above --
And Kozalli tries to pull himself up from the muck WHEN --

HE IS IMPALED by the falling steel like a Vedge-O-Matic.
A blood-curdling, inhuman SCREAM.

Pollard CRACKS open the M79.
SEES a fist-sized slug inside --

As WE HEAR a hollow KLUNK above him.
Noonan's BOOT-STEP on the manhole-cover.
Pollard SNAPS SHUT the M79 and WHIPS IT UP --

EXT. DESERT TINY'S - NIGHT

With a deafening BA-WHOOM, the manhole cover SLICES NOONAN up the middle as a GOUT OF FLAME SHOOTS a hundred feet in the air, scorching upward like hell screaming at heaven.

Pavement buckles, and shreds of cloth, flesh and bone rain down like fiery hailstones. Kyle covers his eyes. Blast of heat. He looks on with amazement as the smoke clears and...

Pollard emerges from the underworld like some dark avenging angel, covered with blood and shit, rocket launcher smoking. He limps forward.

Using the cannister, Heather has finally FREED little Kimmie. They both move up next to Kyle with dazed expressions. Heather holds the axe limply as they watch:

Pollard, limping pathetically toward them.
Shreds of Noonan lie around him, twitching.

POLLARD
... full auto... this range...

He flicks a switch on the M-16.

POLLARD
... waste a lot of ammo...

On semi, he PICKS OFF the individual pieces as he walks through them. He finally stops, standing over:

Noonan's severed head.
It hisses at Pollard, speaking... but there is no sound.

NOONAN'S SEVERED HEAD
... join... us...

Pollard sneers... and switches BACK to full auto.

POLLARD
Fuck you.

He pulls the trigger, and like a melon dropped from three stories, the head EXPLODES under the onslaught.

Pollard DROPS the weapon with a CLATTER.
 Limpes over to Kyle and girls.
 If he wasn't dying before... he is now.
 He stands there swaying. Grins insanely.

POLLARD

Three down... three to go...

Kyle looks over Pollard's shoulder. Gasps.
 Because KOZALLI'S UPPER TORSO has climbed out of the open
 manhole... and is crawling across the asphalt toward them.

Pollard turns to see it. And merely frowns sickly.

POLLARD

(tired)

Gimme me the axe, I'll do it...

Heather stares at the crawling dead man.
 A nightmare come to life.
 Realizing she's out of it, Pollard takes the axe from her.
 With resignation, he starts to move out of frame.

POLLARD

Only take a second.

Stops. Looks down at Kimmie, then to Heather:

POLLARD

Put her in the car. Cover her ears.

CUT TO:

MOMENTS LATER

THE AXE clatters to the asphalt...

Pollard returns, carrying Kozalli's backpack. He lights a
 cigarette. Kyle notices a distressing amount of blood
 soaking through the front of Pollard's jacket.

Heather and Kim sit in the car.
 They seem to be in shock.

HEATHER

Why... why can't they die..?

Pause. Pollard shrugs tiredly.

POLLARD

Because their Government wouldn't
 let them.

Heather stares off vacantly.

HEATHER

Mom knew... she knew all along...
She's been waiting sixteen years for
him to come home...

(realization)

Oh my God. My father's here, isn't he?
He didn't die in the war, did he..?
My father didn't die...

Pollard looks her in the eye and says:

POLLARD

Trust me. Your father died a
long time ago.

With sudden urgency, she turns the ignition -- and
DRIVES AWAY... leaving Kyle and Pollard alone in the
street.

They hear distant gunfire.

KYLE

More company..?

POLLARD

There goes the neighborhood.

He rises with effort, and begins to rummage through
Kozalli's backpack.

POLLARD

Let's see what new toys Santa
brought us...

He pulls out a brown disc roughly the size of a dinner
plate. He lets out a low whistle. Looks genuinely touched.

POLLARD

Aw... This is just what I wanted.

INT. DESERT TINY'S MARKET - NIGHT

Pollard's weapons and dynamite are laid out on the floor of
a cramped little Mom N' Pop market, as he prepares for the
next round. Neither Mom nor Pop are anywhere to be seen.

POLLARD

They're coming from the north.
Go south.

He grabs a roll of tape from a shelf.
He grimaces with pain.

KYLE

No offense, but you could probably use some help. You're pretty fucked up.

POLLARD

Flesh wounds.

KYLE

You've been shot about six times.

POLLARD

I got a lot of flesh. Now get outta here or I'll bleed on you.

Pollard runs a hand through his hair.

KYLE

Jesus Christ, man, what kind of soldier are you, anyw --

But he doesn't finish the sentence. Because his eyes are riveted on Pollard's upper forearm. There is a tattoo there. THE tattoo.

Pollard notices Kyle notice.

POLLARD

I told you to get out of here -- !

KYLE

(pause)

That's the tattoo, isn't it?

POLLARD

Kyle, we don't have time --

KYLE

You're one of them, aren't you?

There is a great weight in Pollard's gaze. ARTILLERY SOUNDS. Coming closer.

POLLARD

Goddamnit, I said GO -- !

He checks his Colt's action. Holsters it.

KYLE

You told me there were seven.

POLLARD

There WERE seven.

KYLE
SO WHO ARE YOU!?

Pollard explodes.

POLLARD
Fuck! All right -- I LIED! OKAY?
I lied about Russ Traeger! Woodhurst
didn't kill him! Are you happy?!

KYLE
You son of a bitch. He's alive,
isn't he?

And then Pollard says it:

POLLARD
HE'S ME.

His tone is almost venomous.
Like he's admitting a secret he's ashamed of.

POLLARD
I'M Russ Traeger.

He almost chokes on the words.
Kyle looks like he just got slugged in the stomach.

KYLE
Oh, shit...

He bursts into tears.
And acting on pure emotion, HUGS HIS FATHER tightly.
Pollard holds his son in one arm, his shotgun in the
other. Kyle looks at him. Tears in his eyes. Pause.

POLLARD
Son. Please. Do me a favor.
(a beat)
Get the fuck out of here..?

Kyle swallows hard. His mouth works convulsively.
Pollard is suddenly racked by a bolt of pain.
Kyle reaches for him.

POLLARD
It's okay, Kyle.
(he grasps his son's hand)
It's just pain, son...It's just
pain...

KYLE
You're going to die...aren't you?

Pollard regards his son with infinite sadness...
And through it all, produces a tired smile, maybe his
first in years...

POLLARD

No. As long as you remember me,
I won't.

(beat)

Now go.

KYLE

Dad...please...

POLLARD

That's an order.

Kyle steps back. Trembling. A moment, then --

KYLE

Yes, sir.

He starts to go.

POLLARD

Son... When I -- if I die...
and they find my body... I want
you to burn me... understand..?

Kyle looks at him with pain and horror. He understands....
but he wishes he didn't. He turns, and GOES out the back
of the market. It swings closed behind him.

Pollard stands. Stunned for a moment.
Then he collapses like a sack of grain.
His legs don't work.

He grimaces in pain.
Unholsters his sidearm. Coughs up blood.
Removes a clip from his pocket. Last one.
He lights a cigarette, takes a deep drag.
Sighs. Begins loading the gun with calm, almost loving
precision. Sings, barely audibly, under his breath:

POLLARD

"I'm dreaming...of a white...
Christmas..."

EXT. BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

Kyle emerges from the store, checks both ways.
Silent. Empty. He makes his way toward the street.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Police and soldiers lie dead.
The wind WHISTLES. Distant dog BARKS. Then...

The SOUND of BOOTS CRUNCHING through broken glass.
PEREZ appears, making his way down the devastated pavement.
Burned. Charred. Prowling and alert for any sign of life.
So he can kill it.

He strides relentlessly forward.
Flamethrower in one hand, M-16 in the other.

THREE SHOTS split the night air in quick succession, BLOWING OUT
the front window of Desert Tiny's Market.

Perez spins. A pause, then:
THREE MORE SHOTS.
The dim interior of the store is lit by muzzle-flash.

INT. DESERT TINY'S MARKET - SAME

POLLARD calmly puffs on his cigarette, finger stroking the
trigger of his Colt. He cracks off another shot. Smiles.

POLLARD
Come on, mother...

BACK OUTSIDE

PEREZ strides to the entrance of the market.
Smooth. Purposeful. Oblivious to danger.

The soldier raises its machine gun one handed.
STRAFES the interior.

Wood erupts in splinters. Glass shatters. Metal screams.
A side of BEEF is cut in half by multiple hits.

The clip is empty.
Perez stands, a figure of Doom, in the entrance.
Steps inside...

And stops as a soft, barely audible CLICK -- ! pierces the
silence. He looks down.

And finds himself standing squarely atop a small brownish disk
the size of a dinner plate.

POLLARD steps out from behind a side of beef.
COCKS his Mossberg. He can barely stand.

POLLARD

You're empty, mister.

(he staggers forward)

And you're on top of a bouncing
betty, which is a bad place to
be, my friend...

(he raises the gun)

Because if you step off, you're
dog food.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - SAME

Across the street, meanwhile, KYLE enters an alley and jogs
toward the light at the end. Sweating. Nervous.
He hears a noise, SPINS --

And a WHIMPERING DOG emerges from behind a metal DUMPSTER.

Kyle stops, breathing hard, and bends over to stroke the dog.
The brick wall over his head is laced with GUNFIRE.
He screams and dives behind the dumpster, as --

ARMBRUSTER

enters the alley from the other end, grim and merciless,
snapping a new clip into his M-16.

KYLE

DAD!!!!!!

INT. DESERT TINY'S MARKET

Pollard hears his son's cry for help.
Punctuated by gunfire.
He swears, head snapping to one side --

Ignoring PEREZ.

Mistake. Because Perez raises the flamethrower, and --
WHOOSH -- a LICK OF FLAME. Pollard stumbles back.

And then, my friends, PEREZ'S burned, hideous face breaks
into a truly terrifying GRIN... And he steps off the
bouncing betty. Just like that.

The mine goes up with a solid WHUMP-! shredding what's left
of Perez's legs and groin. There's just one problem:

HE KEEPS COMING.

Staggering and swishing like a bad drunk, one leg barely
attached, he drops the flamethrower. Then the M-16. Then...

Comes for Pollard. STILL GRINNING.

Pollard BLASTS Perez with buckshot.
 Again. AGAIN. Punching holes in the burned corpse.
 Which just keeps walking forward, wading through the
 onslaught like a mime walking against wind.

Pollard's gun JAMS.
 And Perez is on him like a crazed animal.

Propels them both backward against a live lobster tank, which
 SHATTERS and vomits its live contents to the floor as the
 two soldiers reel and rock, locked in a death struggle as

BACK OUTSIDE

KYLE huddles in a tight ball, making himself as small a
 target as possible, while the air around him is mostly not
 air but BULLETS. Singing. Whining. Chipping. The noise
 is unbearable. He opens his mouth and SCREAMS and

BACK INSIDE

POLLARD plants one foot, grimacing in pain and rage...
 Takes all his hatred and puts it in his fist.
 BELTS Perez in the head. ROCKS him.

Fumbles for his own holstered gun, grasping --
 As the still-grinning PEREZ simply LIFTS Pollard like a
 sack of cement --

And SLAMS him down onto a jutting meathook.

CLOSE ON POLLARD

His eyes snap open.
 His body arches. Convulses.
 The shock races through him like a thunderbolt.
 And yet, incredibly, one hand still CLUTCHES PEREZ with
 desperation, while the other gropes frantically for his gun.

But Perez pulls his own sidearm, and pumps three shots into
 Pollard, who ROARS with pain as -- he finally liberates the
 Colt. Shoves it in Perez's face and pumps SHOT AFTER SHOT.

POLLARD
 SUCKONITSUCKONITSUCKONIIIIIT...!

Perez stumbles backward, howling and twitching.

As POLLARD watches...the room beginning to spin...funneling down into blackness...RUSHING AND ROARING in his ears, reality swimming away...all of it ending in a sudden, soundless explosion of INFINITE WHITE.

His breath shudders out.
His eyes glaze over.
His head droops to one side.

And he dies.

Silence. Outside, the wind blows. The gunfire stops. Pollard hangs crucified. Mouth slowly opens, limply. His right hand unclenches. The Colt drops to the floor with a clatter. His left hand unclenches. Something else drops to the floor. This time a metallic tinkle.

The pin to a hand grenade.

PEREZ looks down at the grenade clipped to his flak vest. It's missing something.

He blows apart.
A gout of flame. A rush of air and sound.

Perez's components come down like rain.
His dogtags clatter into a corner.

ONE SEVERED ARM still clutches the sidearm, firing SHOT AFTER SHOT, the impact making the arm dance across the linoleum like a skittering pinball.

Flames lick at the walls. Pollard's clothes catch fire. Begin to burn. He hangs like a flaming effigy, as

THE SPRINKLERS kick in suddenly, sending down a shower of water. Extinguishing Pollard. Drowning the smoke. Dousing the market until finally --

Silence. Except for the soft, comforting patter of water, cleansing the chaos...

Leaving us the grim tableau of POLLARD suspended lifeless against the wall, surrounded by devastation. The sprinklers cease. All is quiet.

A LOBSTER from the shattered tank trundles solemnly across Perez's severed HAND. The hand clenches, silently crushing the animal -- Then relaxes. And is still.

Nothing here is alive.

EXT. BACK ALLEY - SAME

ARMBRUSTER. Silent. Relentless. Flickering streetlamps play off his mirrored sunglasses as he moves ever forward. Gun smoking. Rounds the corner of the dumpster...

And stares at Kyle Traeger's CORPSE.
Which lies sprawled in a heap, slick with blood.

Armbruster pauses a moment, staring.
We cannot see his eyes.

He kicks the body. It does not move.

And just as silently and swiftly, he strides away,
shouldering his weapon with military precision. Moves
across the street, and as his figure passes into shadow --

Kyle's corpse gulps a breath of air.

He sits up, trembling, eyes darting left and right.
He can't believe he's not dead.

ANOTHER ANGLE

REVEALS that lying next to Kyle under the dumpster is
THE DOG we saw earlier. It has been shot to death.

The blood on Kyle's face is, in fact, canine. He wipes his
hands on the dog's fur, shuddering.

EXT. STREET - ON A DEAD SOLDIER

as a military walkie-talkie is pulled from its grasp.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE - NIGHT

ARMBRUSTER'S hulking form blots out the moonlight as he
ascends a rickety fire escape to a rooftop.

Behind him, the DESERT TINY'S sign flickers.
Below him, all is devastation.
Scattered fires burn into the night.

EXT. ALLEY ENTRANCE - SAME

Kyle stumbles, retching, to the mouth of the alley.
Steals a glance across the street --

Just in time to see ARMBRUSTER swing over the lip of the
hotel and disappear onto the roof.
Taking the high ground.

Kyle desperately scans the street.
 Makes a decision and bolts... straight for Desert Tiny's .
 He will not like what he finds.

INT. DESERT TINY'S MARKET - NIGHT

A gutted ruin.
 Water runs in drips and spatters.
 A cloud of smoke hangs in the air.

POLLARD'S HEAD comes into frame, gently being lowered to the floor. It rests there lifeless.

Followed by Kyle's face.
 He presses his head to Pollard's chest, wracked with sobs.
 Huddles there on the ground with his dead father in his arms.

KYLE

Oh, Dad... Oh God, look what they
 did to you...

Pollard stares with dead eyes.
 Even in death, he is imposing.
 Even in death, somehow a hero.

KYLE

I'm sorry I left you... Oh, Dad,
 please I'm so sorry... Jesus I
 need your help, Dad he tried to
 kill me... PLEASE...

He clutches his father tightly.
 The body sags. Thoroughly lifeless.
 Kyle weeps, looking into Pollard's eyes...
 And then, suddenly... he looks just a bit more intently.
 Leans forward. Staring.

Pollard is a cyanotic blue. His eyes are like a doll's.
 He is as alive as a side of beef.

But Kyle is thinking of something Pollard said...

KYLE

Oh... Oh no. Jesus... You're still
 in there... aren't you..?

Pollard's corpse continues to stare.

KYLE

You're... somewhere in there still...
 You're waiting... You look dead...
 But you're in there...

He leans in close, whispering tearfully:

KYLE

Can you hear me...? Come back.
Please, Dad... I don't want to
burn you... I want you to --

He pauses. Thunderstruck. His eyes go wide.

KYLE

...Come back to me...

He bolts upright, staggering to the front of the store.

EXT. DESERT TINY'S MARKET - NIGHT

Kyle approaches the toppled ARMY TRANSPORT, mesmerized.
The overturned vehicle still rests against the brick wall
of Desert Tiny's...

The cannisters. Each covered in chipped paint.
HAZARD symbols emblazoned across them.

Kyle dashes forward.

Tugs on one of the containers, pulling and heaving with
all his strength, until he JOLTS ONE LOOSE...

And a long GREY BOX also slides loose and thuds to the
pavement, the wood splitting open.

Dead eyes stare blindly at Kyle.

The corpse of General Philip Woodhurst.
He is smiling.

KYLE stares. But only for a moment.
Then he yanks the cannister to his shoulder.

KYLE

He's my Dad. You can't have him.
I'm getting him back.

He turns and runs for the store, clutching the container.
And Woodhurst, in the foreground, keeps right on smiling...
like he knows a secret.

INT. DESERT TINY'S MARKET - NIGHT

Kyle. Grim-faced. Tearful. Limping.
Lugging the heavy cannister past rows of Kellogg's cereals
and Campbell's soups toward his father.

He kneels weakly beside the body, mumbling softly and incoherently to himself. He begins to cry as he unsheaths his father's combat knife, and uses it to jimmy the nozzle.

In frustration, he THROWS the cannister down with a loud CLANG and it bounces defiantly.

Kyle finally picks up Pollard's pistol and rises with tears streaming from his eyes. He pulls the cannister beside Pollard and backs away, weapon raised.

He seems on the very edge of sanity. He aims...
And gritting his teeth venomously, SHOOTS at the cannister.

It explodes.
A loud PSSSHHHH of compressed gas escaping.
Plumes of smokey white spray cloud Kyle's view.

And then... the mist disapates...
And through it, WE SEE...

Kyle's father. Dead. Very still.
Almost angelic. Having been crucified.
Having finally found peace.

Kyle sinks to his knees, sobbing.
He was dreaming. All of this must be a dream.
A horrible, unending dream.

He puts his face in his hands, wracked with sobs.
And then... then he looks up.
And something is different.
Something behind those tear-filled eyes has changed.
And for a breif moment, Kyle looks old beyond his years.

He rises stoically. Raises the combat knife.
And WALKS OUT...
Madness only a soldier could know etched in his face.

EXT. ROOFTOP - NIGHT

A CRACK OF LIGHTNING splits the air.
Once again, the rain starts to fall.

ARMBRUSTER stands silhouetted against the desert sky.
Raises the military-walkie. Begins to speak.
On the horizon, pin-pricks of light approach, and --

EXT. OVER THE DESERT - NIGHT

The night air is a deafening ROAR of sound and fury as

A FLEET OF ARMY NATIONAL GUARD HUEYS

fly toward us. The cavalry arriving at last.

INT. HUEY - FLYING - NIGHT

A CO-PILOT yells over the din to the MISSION COMMANDER.

CO-PILOT

-- Just picked up something on
the local emergency band, sir.
Sounded like a recon code.

MISSION COMMANDER

From where -- ?

CO-PILOT

You won't believe it, sir.

MISSION COMMANDER

Try me.

CO-PILOT

Cambodia, sir.

EXT. ROOFTOP - SAME

Armbruster watches the incoming choppers. Waiting.
Suddenly... there is a noise behind him. FOOTSTEPS on
gravel. He spins, combat-ready --

And sees someone standing on the roof of Desert Tiny's.
A dark silhouette. Tall. Military bearing.

A TEN-FOOT CHASM separates the two rooftops.
The two figures face each other across the abyss.
The rain falls, engulfing them.

The DARK FIGURE takes a step forward.
And folks, if you've never seen a soldier before --
You're by God looking at one now.

It is Kyle.

And he's holding his father's combat knife, blade up.
Around his neck, his father's dogtags.
His eyes burn with rage.

KYLE

Let's dance.

Armbruster is actually FAZED for a moment, unsure of how to
respond... And then..? Then his dead face grins.

INT. DESERT TINY'S MARKET - NIGHT

Pollard's corpse...

Lying peacefully amid carnage and breakfast cereals.

Pause. Pause. Pause.

Then a voice. A sudden, savage MOAN that makes you JUMP.
At first, we think it is a voice-over.

Then WE SEE Pollard suddenly JERK, and we know better...

One arm reaches out.

Then the torso turns.

Both hands out. SLAP, SLAP.

Pulling himself up.

Eyes like a demon's.

A VOICE from beyond death:

POLLARD

... my will is strong...

EXT. DESERT TINY'S ROOFTOP - SAME

Armbruster staring across the chasm at Kyle.
He shoulders his M16 and draws his own knife.
It glitters in the rain.

A dead CHUCKLE seeps from his lips --
And he LEAPS THE CHASM like a jungle cat.

LANDS effortlessly on the adjoining roof.
He comes up, blade ready.
Targeting Kyle. Face a death mask.

Kyle backs off, shifting the knife...
and they circle each other. This is to the death.

INT. DESERT TINY'S MARKET - SAME

Pollard. Black eyes in deep, dark sockets.
Rising unsteadily. His expression a pissed-off sneer.
Ladies and gentlemen? Bear witness to a resurrection.

POLLARD

... my name is dread...

We are tight on his upper torso. His jacket is off.
The o.s. RIIIIIP of masking tape being unspooled.

EXT. DESERT TINY'S - ROOFTOP - NIGHT

A KNIFE BLADE chops the air over Kyle's head.
He spins, twists. Counterthrusts... and misses.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Kyle is losing. Armbruster is relentless, his onslaught savage. What's left of his face is positively AGLOW.

He lunges, knife driving straight for Armbruster's head --
And the soldier simply turns --
Takes the knife in the shoulder, where it STICKS.
Leaving Kyle unarmed.

Armbruster chuckles.
The rain falls, drenching them.

Kyle backs away. Armbruster follows, bootheels CLOCKING
on the tar paper. Ever forward. Unstoppable.

INT. STAIRWELL - SAME

Slowly, Pollard mounts the stairs.
His bloody, charred, bullet-riddled fatigue jacket is ON.
Once again, he is like Phoenix from the ashes.

POLLARD
I fear no death...

EXT. DESERT TINY'S ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Kyle slips in a puddle. Goes down hard.
And Armbruster looms over him in the rain.
Rears up like a cobra. Knife held high for a death-strike.

Kyle looks up bravely.
Awaiting death without a hint of fear.
Truly, his father's son.

KYLE
Fuck you.

Armbruster brings the knife down HARD.

Well, he tries.
Except it doesn't budge. At all.
In fact, his arm is locked in a VICE GRIP.
He turns, hissing and snarling...

And stares straight into the glassy, feverish eyes of
Lieutenant Russell Jason Traeger.

A pause. Kyle looks on, dumbstruck.

Armbruster's eyes are invisible behind the glasses. Slowly, he raises one skeletal hand in a tentative salute --

And Pollard just as slowly raises his free hand, and gives Armbruster the finger.

POLLARD

What he said.

And with that, he BACKHANDS Armbruster with sledgehammer force, sends the creature sprawling to the rooftop. It slams down hard. Struggles to its feet. Levels the M16.

POLLARD

Son... Stay behind me.

He begins to walk toward Armbruster. The rain falls.

ARMBRUSTER

Join us.

POLLARD

No.

ARMBRUSTER

Then die.

He opens up with the M16. Semi. Single shots tear into Pollard. But he keeps coming. Taking the hits. Shielding his son.

POLLARD

It's done, Mike. It's over.

More shots.

POLLARD

We lost. You died.

Closer now. The bass SOUND of approaching HELICOPTERS can be heard over the rainfall.

POLLARD

We all died, all of us.

More bullets. Pollard doesn't blink.

POLLARD

Let it rest. Lie down.

Ten more feet.

POLLARD

Goddammit, Mike, LIE DOWN!

Armbruster's banana clip is empty.
Pollard comes to a halt, facing him. Pause, then --

Armbruster reaches for his SUNGLASSES.
Chuckles and croaks:

ARMBRUSTER

I'm not Mike...

He takes off the glasses.

And Pollard gasps. His blood freezes.
The thing SLOWLY GRINS a skull grin.

IT HAS NO EYES...

Only empty, taunting sockets.

Then, like lightning --
The creature GRABS Pollard by the throat --
LIFTS HIM in the air. Pollard chokes.
He looks into the sockets. And beyond.

ARMBRUSTER

I am War...

A sound of pure terror seeps from Pollard's throat as he
stares into the empty caverns --
And what he sees there is DESPAIR,
Two involuntary tears course suddenly down his cheeks.
He is staring into the depths of HELL.
There is FIRE in there, raging... and INFANTS CRYING...
And shrieking and horrible loneliness and pain and all
that is war.

It would drive a lesser man insane.
We HEAR Pollard's neck breaking as --
The thing's rotting lips curl back to reveal skull teeth.

ARMBRUSTER

I -- AM -- YOU...

And with that, Pollard reaches down and yanks BOTH PISTOLS
from Armbruster's hip holster.

POLLARD

Dream on.

SPINS them -- plants one in each eye socket --
And FIRES into the depths, the explosion blowing out the
back of Armbruster's head.

The creature drops Pollard.
Backs away, screeching.

But it isn't over. Pollard darts forward --
SLAMS into the creature, thrusting him toward the roof's edge --

While Armbruster CLAWS at Pollard like a cornered animal --
Tearing his cheek. Slicing his wrist.
Finally RIPPING OPEN HIS JACKET to REVEAL:

The dynamite from Pollard's backpack. The very stuff he's
been carrying around all movie long is TAPED AROUND HIS
CHEST, wired to one fuse...

And he just has time to flick his cigarette lighter,
igniting it as Kyle screams:

KYLE

DAD, NO!!

And then Pollard embraces Armbruster and throws them both
over the edge.

They fall through space, locked together.
Until, without warning, KA-CHUK - !

They are JOLTED to a dead stop, swinging in mid-air.

ARMBRUSTER'S MACHINE GUN STRAP

Has snagged on a third story FLAGPOLE, they now hang
suspended, struggling to the death while the rain-soaked
AMERICAN FLAG whips around them.
Beneath them looms a fifty foot drop.

POLLARD

clutches Armbruster around the neck, thrashing and
struggling and meanwhile

THE DYNAMITE

sparks and sputters as the fuse burns down and

ARMBRUSTER

unsheaths his knife and drives it straight into Pollard,
trying to HACK away the hissing explosives --
Pollard straining to BREAK ARMBRUSTER'S NECK as

KYLE APPEARS at the roof's edge above them, screaming
through the rain...
Clutching for his father, who is just out of reach...

POLLARD
KYLE, GET OUT OF HERE!!!

And the MACHINE GUN STRAP is now starting to RIP...
And just as the DYNAMITE is about to blow --

Armbruster CUTS IT LOOSE.

It plunges fifteen feet --
And explodes, shattering brick and glass...
SHREDDING the American flag...
Setting Armbruster ABLAZE...

THE STRAP BREAKS

And Pollard shifts his grip to the FLAGPOLE, hanging on
desperately as the M16 PLUMMETS forty feet to the ground.

And Pollard looks down through the rain, face a mask of
pain -- where the hell is Armbruster..? But then --

HE SEES where he is.

The flaming soldier is climbing, hand over hand up the
American flag towards him...

And Pollard looks up, through the rain, and there
is his son's desperate face, pleading with him...

And it's no contest.

Pollard swings upward, straddling the flagpole.

FLAMING ARMBRUSTER

closes one fist around the pole, pulling himself up,
rain HISSING off him...

And Pollard simply leans forward, grabs the flaming
creature by the hair...

POLLARD
You know what you are, Mike..?

Yanks his own combat knife from Armbruster's shoulder,
where Kyle left it...

POLLARD
You're history.

And with one blow separates head from torso.

ARMBRUSTER'S BODY

Plummets down into darkness, like Alice down the rabbit hole, as

ANOTHER ANGLE

It impacts with the DESERT TINY'S SIGN, clipping down the side of it, knocking out letters in a spray of hissing sparks...

Finally landing with a sick THUD on the sidewalk.

UP ABOVE

In Pollard's hand is the thing's SEVERED HEAD.
Which suddenly croaks with sad recognition...

ARMBRUSTER

Russ..?

And Pollard drops it to the street below, supports himself against the brick and crouches there shuddering atop the flagpole.

EXT. THE ROOFTOP - MOMENTS LATER

Kyle hoists his father over the side.
They embrace in the rain.

POLLARD

I love you.

LONG SHOT - LOOKING UP

The two of them, together on the roof, as the pre-dawn sky above them is filled with arriving HELICOPTERS.

Below in the street lies Armbruster's unmoving corpse, soaking into the rain.

Above it we see the remains of the Desert Tiny's sign
BLINKING forlornly.

With several letters broken, it now reads "DES TINY..."

EXT. ON THE ROOF

Father and Son in each other's arms.
Then... they pull apart. Look at one another.
The same horrible thought, simultaneously:

POLLARD

Stockton...

INT. HEATHER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Heather RUNS into the front hallway, Kim behind her.
Heather whirls to her sister.

HEATHER
YOU STAY HERE -- !

Kimmie stays on the porch, crying.

KIM
Mommy...?

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY, HEATHER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

She tops the stairs. And SCREAMS --

Because standing down the hall, obscured by shadow, backlit
by moonlight, stands a solitary FIGURE.

Heather's father has come home.

Heather backs away. Dazed and trembling.

HEATHER
... Daddy...?

The creature turns... SEES a photo framed on the wall:

A WEDDING PICTURE

In it is a much younger version of HEATHER'S MOM.
In her wedding gown, she is 180 degrees from the woman we
knew... it is a girl, not unlike Heather -- young, happy,
innocent. Looking forward to a new life. A long life.

Beside her is her husband... her FIRST husband:
STOCKTON himself, in a wedding tux and crewcut.
He also looks young, happy, untarnished by life.

The creature standing in the hallway, the creature this man
has become, cocks its head and stares at the photo with
something that resembles confusion. Distrust.

Then it forms a fist and LASHES OUT.
SMASHING the frame-glass with its bare hand.
OBLITERATING the photo.
It turns to Heather, who SHRIEKS...

The creature walks forward, looking around at the pictures
on the walls... Images of a lost innocence, a lost time
unblemished by war or death. A time only of hope and promises.

Stockton BLASTS the photos with its machine gun.
Destroying every evidence of its former life.
Heather SCREAMS and falls back into her sister's bedroom.

INT. KIM'S ROOM - NIGHT

Cute stuffed animals. Wallpaper with daisies.
Model horses. Smurfs. Puffy stickers.
A heartbreaking testimony to childhood innocence.

Heather crouches in the dark, shaking uncontrollably,
hiding behind a quilted bedspread....

Stockton enters. Cocks its head toward her hiding place.
And without missing a beat, Stockton raises its rifle...
And Heather realizes: she is about to be KILLED.
She stands.

HEATHER

NO!

The most intense she's ever been.
The creature pauses.

HEATHER

Fathers don't... kill their children...

She starts to walk toward the thing.
Slowly, one step at a time.

HEATHER

You won't shoot, Daddy... I know
you won't...

(another step)

... And if you do... then fine, I'll
just die... 'Cause I'm better off
dead... I'd rather be dead... if
fathers can kill their children...

Another step. The figure growls low in its throat.

HEATHER

Look how close I'm getting...
You can't do it, can you...?

Another step. Heather picks something off the dresser.
It is Kimmie's toy squirt gun. Chipped green plastic.

HEATHER

(shakily)
Now we're even...?

She stops, her face just inches from the M-16 barrel.

Trust us, her father's face is not pleasant to look at.
 BUT HEATHER DOES NOT LOOK AWAY.
 She gently pushes aside the rifle barrel.
 Reaches for what was once her father's face.

STOCKTON

... Don't look at me...

Heather's eyes burn with tears.

HEATHER

My God, Daddy... What did this to
 you...?

And even though it's been dead for fifteen years and LOOKS
 it -- Heather EMBRACES IT... Clings to the hideous form.

HEATHER

(a whisper)
 I love you...

And that does it.
 The creature drops its machine gun.
 Backs away, shaking and trembling.

Heather backs off. Eyes wide. Stunned.
 Absently raises the toy gun.... and pulls the trigger.
 And the gun is only a toy. Loaded not even with water.

And yet -- THE CREATURE FLIES BACKWARD and lands in a heap
 as if hit by a bolt of lightning.

Silence reigns.

Heather steps forward and stares down.
 Drops the toy gun atop her father's remains.
 Crushes it under her foot.

HEATHER

Rest in Peace, Daddy...

As she weeps, we...

DISSOLVE:

EXT. HEATHER'S HOUSE - DAWN

A street choked with smoke, survivors and emergency teams.
 A HUEY sits in the middle of the street.

POLLARD

lies in a stretcher, surrounded by MEDICS as

KYLE, HEATHER AND KIM

like a family, standing in front of the house.
Heather wearing Kyle's army jacket, and holding her
little sister's hand. Their eyes are red from crying.

Kyle steps forward, walking up to the gurney...
The girls remain behind. The medics back off.
Kyle is smoking a cigarette.
Pollard reaches for it...

POLLARD

Knock that off. It's bad for you.

And takes a big hit off it before throwing it away.

POLLARD

Guess they need to take some
bullets out of me... Probably
ask some questions.

Kyle nods. Awkward pause. He shivers.

KYLE

Cold...

POLLARD

Yup.

Kyle looks around. Exhales.

KYLE

Christmas Eve day.

POLLARD

Yup.

Another awkward pause.

POLLARD

She coming back today?

KYLE

Yup.

BIG pause as Kyle decides whether to say it or not...

KYLE

You know...
(not looking at Pollard)
It'd be our first Christmas.
As a family, I mean.

POLLARD

I know...

He faces Kyle. We see the pain in his eyes.

POLLARD

Kyle, I can't stay. Your Mom thinks
I died eighteen years ago...

Kyle can't hide the tears in his eyes.

KYLE

She'll never love anyone else...

POLLARD

Neither will I, but sometimes...
(pause)
The dead should stay buried...

KYLE

What if they shouldn't have died
in the first place?

Pollard looks at him.

Can't even say the words.

Kyle's eyes are filled with tears.

He reaches in his pocket, takes out his father's dog tags.

As he starts to give them back, Pollard weakly squeezes his
hand around Kyle's. The one clutching the dog tags.

POLLARD

Keep 'em. You earned them.

He looks at his son proudly.

The medics pick up Pollard's gurney, and carry it toward
the chopper.

KYLE

Dad...?

Pollard looks back.

KYLE

Will you ever come home...?

Pollard looks at him.

Says nothing. A sad smile.

As the gurney is loaded into the chopper.

The rotor-blades CHOP THE AIR.

And the Huey RISES from the street.

Leaving Kyle standing there. Sobbing softly.

He feels the first icy flakes touch his cheek.
Heather steps up to him, her palm out.

It is snowing.

Heather holds Kyle very tightly.
And as they watch the chopper disappear toward the sunrise...
Bing Crosby's "White Christmas" RISES on the soundtrack.

FADE OUT

ROLL END CREDITS