

EXT. MALIBU VETERAN'S HOSPITAL - SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA - DAY
1967

A pretty young hippie girl with long blonde hair, wearing a long plain dress, is dancing to a "DOORS" song. The dress is flowing in the same direction as her hair. Her eyes are closed; she is totally into the music.

As we pan away from her she is dancing next to a 60's VW van. Painted on the side of the van in big pink letters is "MAKE LOVE NOT WAR". The driver's door is wide open; we hear the "DOORS" song blasting from the radio.

Then we pan from high above and see around fifty other young hippies protesting the Vietnam war. They are mixed in between other VW vans and a pink and white old school bus. We scan the scene with posters saying "HELL NO WE WON'T GO" "MAKE LOVE NOT WAR" "GET OUT OF VIETNAM, NOW!" "FUCK THE WAR, WE DON'T WANT IT NO MORE" and "PEACE".

Then we scan over the building they are protesting in front of. It is a large beige and white hospital building with a large sign in front that says, "Malibu Veteran's Hospital, San Diego".

Then we scan into the neurological ward, where we see forty beds, twenty lined up on each side of a big room. We see some soldiers lying in beds with three-quarters of their heads missing, others not as bad and some even worse. Some are in halo beds not able to move anything, others just wander about in wheelchairs, some pushing with only one arm, some being pushed by nurses.

All these scenes we just hear the music, no talking or noise, just the music.

Then we pan way above the demonstration and then back to the hippie girl where we started.

And just as the song is coming to an end we see a close-up of the hippie girl's face. She opens her eyes and we see a stream of tears run down. The "DOORS" music stops.

The hippie girl looks up at one of the windows on the third floor of the hospital and makes eye contact with one of the

patients.

We close in on the patient that she makes eye contact with. TOM SACHS, nineteen years old and very good-looking despite his hair just growing back and a small indentation on the top of his head, on the left side. He is in a wheelchair.

TOM

(V.O.)

I've heard that the only difference between a Fairy Tale and a War Story is that the Fairy Tale begins, "Once upon a time", and the War Story starts, "No shit, there I was..." Truth is, I was always in a war story. I've been fighting all my life...

EXT. JUNGLE ROAD - VIETNAM - DAY

Tom Sachs, 19 years old, wanders around the wreckage of a smoking transport truck. Sporadic small arms fire and muffled explosion sound in the distant jungle. Dark haired, strong shouldered, he puts on his rucksack and helmet. He adjusts the straps. A group of troops mill around in small bunches. He approaches a seasoned soldier.

TOM

Hey, huh...I'm lookin' for Bravo platoon, Alpha Squad.

SOLDIER

Infantry...Well, sin loi, my boy. 364 and a wake up...

TOM

That's' what I came for. To fight.

SOLDIER

Well, the 'Nam is gonna love you.

He smiles a crazy smile at Tom and walks away.

Tom notices someone behind him, snaps around. He confronts the

cold black face of the SQUAD LEADER.

SQUAD LEADER
What's your name troop?

TOM
Tom Sachs.

SQUAD LEADER
Well, I'm your squad leader. My
jobs to make sure you don't get
killed and that you don't get
anyone else killed.

TOM
You don't have to worry about me.

SQUAD LEADER
Good. Just do as I say and don't
fuck up. Now follow me.

Tom follows him. He turns to Tom. Points to the smoking wreck
of a transport truck.

SQUAD LEADER (CONT'D)
But, if you're gonna get killed, be
better your first day than your
last.

Tom looks at the destroyed truck.

Squad leader leads Tom into a small grove of trees where a
squad of Marines, six black and one white, are waiting.

JOHNS is muscled and mean-looking, WASHINGTON, JUNIOR and
LEWIS are followers. There are a couple of others and LAMB,
the white guy.

SQUAD LEADER (CONT'D)
Welcome to Alpha, your new family.

Tom musters a smile, but no one bothers to return the favor.

EXT. THE BUSH - SOMEWHERE IN NORTHERN VIETNAM NEAR THE DMZ -
DAY

Alpha Squad is strung out at irregular intervals, combing their way through an area of dense, miserable brush.

ROBERT LAMB, the other white guy, gets his pack snagged on a branch. Tom helps him get unstuck.

JOHNS, who carries THE PIG, a massive 50 caliber machine gun decorated with beads, spits when he goes by. Looks at Lamb.

JOHNS

Asshole.

Lamb looks like he's used to this from Johns.

TOM

What's his problem?

LAMB

I don't get along with him or squad leader, 'specially squad leader. Gives me every shit detail he can think of.

TOM

That's not right.

LAMB

When it comes to Squad Leader there's no right or wrong, just his way. Remember that.

The squad joins SL, who just got finished on the radio. Turns to squad.

SQUAD LEADER

Bravo squad from Charlie got lit up this mornin'. We're gonna look for survivors. Let's move.

Squad Leader heads out. Tom anticipates some action. Excited. He chambers a round in his M-16.

EXT. THE BUSH - DAY

The midday sun is sweltering.

Alpha Squad zigzags its way through heavy brush, rocks and gullies. The hike is taking its toll, the heat draining.

MOVEMENT...

In the nearby vegetation.

Tom drops his canteen...Raises his rifle, aiming.

A figure stumbles out from the bush...It's Lamb.

Tom breathes a sigh of relief. He recovers his canteen. Only a few precious drops remain. He keeps moving.

Suddenly, AK-47 GUNFIRE pops from the tree line. The squad hits the dirt, then they rise back up and start firing back toward the tree line.

Tom empties his clip, reloads and fires again.

INT. VETERAN'S HOSPITAL - DAY

The SOUND OF GUNFIRE continues over TOM'S FACE as sits at the window with no bandage.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT.GRAMP'S WORKSHOP, ADJACENT TO THE SACHS' HOUSE - ARCADIA, CALIFORNIA - DAY

1953

The GUNFIRE SOUNDS CONTINUE. It changes into something else.

BLAM...TOM SACHS AT SIX YEARS OLD is at an anvil smashing a horseshoe with a ball peen hammer...BLAM.

Horseshoes and saddles clutter the work space. Shelves are packed with spurs, leather straps and other horse accessories.

Unconcerned, GRAMPS, cool blue eyes and a head of thick graying hair, tinkers at the workbench, melting hunks of metal with a torch. His chest and arms are a tapestry of tattoos. The letters "USMC" adorn the back of his hand. He also looks the part of a heavy drinker, but one that can hold his liquor.

GRAMPS

Provisions check, private Tommy
Sachs.

Tom salutes Gramps, then pokes about messy room. One by one, he ferrets out bottles of Cutty Sark whiskey. A half a dozen of them, all empty. Toms dog, Blackie, half German Shepherd and half mutt, helps him on the search.

GRAMPS (CONT'D)

(Gramps points)
Try over there.

A cast-iron stove sits in the corner. Tom pries open the great and removes a bundle of rags. He unwraps it.

GRAMPS (CONT'D)

Atta boy, Soldier good thing I've
got you here.

Tom hands over a full bottle of Cutty. Gramps cracks the seal, pour some into his coffee cup.

GRAMPS (CONT'D)

So where to today?

An old Globe wobbles on its stand as Tom gives it a spin. He closes his eyes and stops it with his finger. Gramps looks at the spot Tom's marked.

GRAMPS (CONT'D)

Oh yeah. Old Europe. I fought in
the War over there with the
Marines.

Tom shakes his head, excited.

TOM

I know...

GRAMPS

Well, I'll never forget. There was
one time, we were pinned down in
the trenches, held there by their
automatic guns. And Kiddo, I mean
it was furious. Took many losses we
did, and it looked like there was

no chance of anyone comin' to help
us out.

Tom's eyes light up. He lives for Gramps' stories.

TOM
What'd you do then?

GRAMPS
There'd look to be only one way to
stop 'em, but the Sergeant wouldn't
send a squad into the trenches.

TOM
But you had a plan.

GRAMPS
Somebody had to, Kiddo. I crawled
through those trenches by myself,
toward where the gunfire was
coming. Sergeant thought I was
crazy.

TOM
But you weren't, were you? You were
Brave. Not crazy.

Gramps winks and tosses back a gulp of fortified coffee.

GRAMPS
You got that right. I finally found
the nest and lobbed a grenade just
like a football into the zone.

He shows him how the pass went.

TOM
And you blew it up?

GRAMPS
I did. Saved the rest of our
troops, and we took the village. We
drank French wine and slept and
soft beds that night.

Gramps tosses back another gulp of fortified coffee.

TOM

I'm gonna have stories like you
someday, Gramps.

GRAMPS

You go out there and never run from
a good fight and you'll have a lot
of good stories, kiddo.

TOM

I'm going to travel 'round the
world and come back with stories
'better' than yours, Gramps.

Gramps Smiles. Takes another pull from his coffee.

GRAMPS

I know you will, just hope I'm
around to hear 'em.

TOM

You will, Gramps. Nothing could
hurt us, can it?

Gramps rubs Tom's head.

GRAMPS

That's right, kiddo. We're
invincible.

He pauses, adding a bit more Cutty to his coffee mug.

INT. NEURO WARD - VETERANS HOSPITAL - DAY

The neuro ward has 20 beds lined up side-by-side and another 20 lined up the same way right across from them. Some of the maimed soldiers lying in bed, while others wheel around in their wheelchairs. Tom, head bandaged and in a gown, sits in a wheelchair staring at a picture of the flag being raised at Iwo Jima hanging on the hospital wall. Gramps is standing near him with his arms folded.

A YOUNG MD comes up behind them, studying his chart. He holds a pen to his mouth, clicking it on his teeth.

YOUNG MD

You must be Private Sachs.

Tom gives him a quick glance, then using only his left arm, starts to wheel himself over to his bed.

YOUNG MD (CONT'D)

Let me give you a hand.

Gramps intercedes. He looks stressed and the drinking is just as evident.

GRAMPS

He's got it.

The young MD is wise enough not to insist. He walks over to the head of Tom's bed. The MD keeps clicking the pen. Tom, still in his chair, stares at him... Ice cold.

YOUNG MD

I suppose they've explain the reality of things to you?

TOM

Not really.

YOUNG MD

Um...Okay.

TOM

Listen, doc, I wanna finish my tour. I didn't join the Marine Corps to fight for nine days. Fuck... Am I ever going to move my right side again?

The young MD's look is totally neutral.

YOUNG MD

I don't know. When it comes to brain injuries, it's anyone's guess. Some movement may come back.

TOM

What the fuck does that supposed to mean?

YOUNG MD

It just means that... You might get movement back just in your arm or

maybe your leg too, or neither...
Only time will tell.

TOM

Yeah...Well, that's great doc, thanks
a lot, thanks for fuckin' nothin'.

Gramps leans over and put some soft arm on Tom.

GRAMPS

Easy Tom.

Tom gives Gramps of a dirty stare.
Gramps looks at the doctor.

GRAMPS (CONT'D)

Come on, doc, there must be
somethin' more you can do?

YOUNG MD

We'll talk more later.

The young MD moves down the ward.

GRAMPS

I don't know what to say, kiddo.

TOM

I think he said it all, Gramps.

Tom is frustrated.

A BEARDED PATIENT in a wheelchair watches the doctor go and
then rolls over to Tom.

BEARDED PATIENT

Careful, man. These quacks love
cutting on Fresh Meat. Gives their
civilian careers a boost.

He points across the ward to SERGEANT JACK, a patient in his
early thirties. Sergeant Jack is sitting on the edge of his
bed, he has an odd smile on his face. He stares at a
newspaper.

BEARDED PATIENT (CONT'D)

That's Sergeant Jack. Came in here

complainin' of headaches three months ago. His doctor has cracked his nut twice already tryin' to locate some kind of fuckin' tumor. His brains gone to shit and the doc ain't found a thing. You watch yourself.

He wheels away, leaving Tom and Gramps to look at the oblivious Sergeant Jack.

GRAMPS
Poor son of a bitch.

Gramps needs another drink.

EXT. A RURAL ROAD - NIGHT

It has just stopped raining. Tom, six years old and Gramps are walking down a muddy road, alongside a stream that has overflowed from the heavy rains. Tom is holding a flashlight, almost as big as he is. Gramps is drinking, but you can't tell by the looks of him. Tom shines the light up in a tree.

TOM
(excited)
Hey, Gramps...Look up in that tree.

Up in the tree we see two ducks sitting on a large branch.

GRAMPS
Well, I'll be... They're ducks.

TOM
(confused)
Are ducks suppose' to be in trees?

GRAMPS
No, kiddo, they're not. Guess they just got scared.

TOM
Not us, Gramps... We wouldn't climb no tree, would we?

Gramps pulls out a pint of whiskey and takes a swig.

GRAMPS

You got that right...But you know, there's a lot of people out there, just like those ducks. They get scared easy. It's up to people like us to stay calm, fearless, no matter how rough it gets. We need to be tough.

TOM

You bet, Gramps, we are tough. We're in...in...What's that word, Gramps?

GRAMPS

Invincible, that's what we are, kiddo... We're invincible.

Tom and Gramps share a smile. Gramps rubs Tom's head.

TOM

(proud)
Yeah, that's it, Gramps... We're invincible.

INT. THERAPY ROOM - DAY

Tom's lying on his back, with his head bandaged. The THERAPIST, a black woman in her early thirties, pushes his right leg into his chest. Stretching.

THERAPIST

Okay Tom, just a few more times.

She pushes Tom's leg up again.

TOM

And this is suppose' to get me walkin'? What's the fuckin' point? I'm paralyzed. They owe me over 300 days in 'Nam and the Doctor says nobody knows when or if I'll ever have movement back again.

THERAPIST

Nobody owes you anything, Private Sachs, and you should remember that. And I don't appreciate your language, not one bit. So, you better change that attitude or you're gonna find yourself without a therapist.

Tom is dejected.

TOM

Whatever...

The therapist heads for the door. She stops and turns back to Tom.

THERAPIST

Why don't you lie there by yourself for awhile and think about it.

She leaves the room and closes the door behind her. Tom pulls himself into his chair, using only his left side. He burns with frustration and fights tears.

INT. KITCHEN - SACHS' HOUSE - DAY

CLOSE IN A PLATE OF BACON AND EGGS...

Pull back to see young Tom, six years old, feeding his dog Blackie pieces of bacon.

MOM

Tommy, quit feeding that dog!

TOM

Yes ma'am.

Tom shoves the last pieces of bacon into his mouth and chews it in Blackie's face. Gramps sits next to him, shaking his head, reading the racing form.

Blackie turns his attention to big brother KEN, 10 years old, and much bigger than Tom. He's wolfing down his breakfast. The dog bumps Ken's arm.

KEN

(looking at Tom)

Get that dog outta here or I'll

beat the crap out of you.

Blackie keeps at it, licks Ken's plate.

Furious, Ken snags Tom by his shirt, goes to slug him. Mom catches his arm.

MOM

Watch your language. And don't hit your brother. Tommy, put Blackie outside.

Ken releases his grip and Tom reluctantly grabs Blackie's collar.

KEN

Keep away from my bike too, or else.

Mom shakes her head. What is she going to do with these boys?

MOM

Tommy, do me a favor. While I'm pulling double shifts, try not to pull any stupid stunts. And Dad, don't go encouraging him. And I don't want him at the racetrack. You don't work there anymore, so there's no reason to be there.

Gramps barely acknowledges her. Mom looks at her watch.

MOM (CONT'D)

I'm late. Let's go, Kenny.

Ken grabs his lunch and rushes out the door. Mom pulls off her apron, revealing a bleached white dress. Angelic except for the See's Candy logo on the pocket.

She gives Tom's hair a quick straightening. It's hopeless.

MOM (CONT'D)

Behave yourself today, Tommy. Good-bye, Dad.

Gramps doesn't even lower the Racing Form. Mom rushes outside, the screen door slapping shut behind her. Tom immediately

let's Blackie back in. Gramps lowers the Racing Form.

GRAMPS

Guess it's just you and me, kiddo.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - DAY

Tom Sports a huge grin as he races through the neighborhood on Ken's bike. He can't sit and ride because at six years old, the bike's too big for him. So he stands on the pedals, legs pumping, building up speed. Blackie trails barking.

Tom bails out, tumbling to a halt on a neighbor's lawn. The bike keeps rolling, veers over the curb, and flips end-over-end.

Tom and Blackie playfully roll around and around on the lawn. Blackie licks away at Tom's face. The more Tom laughs, the more the dog keeps at it.

Sitting on a small GIRL'S bike, watching everything from across the street, is a cute little girl, the same age as Tom. Her name is LINDY GRADY and is the sister of Tom's best friend Jerry.

Linda admires Tom's fearlessness and would like to join in with Tom's and Blackie's fun. But she keeps her distance, although their eyes do connect. Tom waves.

TOM

(yells)

Hi Linda.

Linda smiles and waves back. Tom smiles.

The moment is broken.

Gramps shows up, a stern look on his face.

Linda feels Tom's in big trouble and starts to ride away. She glances back at Tom, he shrugs his shoulders and gives her a devilish smile. Linda just shakes her head and smiles, then turns and rides off.

Then reality...

GRAMPS

Hey!

Grabs has Tom's full attention, Blackie's too.

GRAMPS (CONT'D)

You heard your brother about that
bike. You know what's gonna happen,
don't ya?

Tom looks at the fallen bike, then back at Gramps, who stands like Gary Cooper in a cowboy movie.

Tom gets up and then fast as he can draws an imaginary six-shooter from his pretend gun belt, but Gramps is quicker with his sidearm.

They both fire, complete with sound effects, and both take fatal hits. They stagger and fall with very dramatic deaths. Blackie runs to Gramps and licks his face as Gramps coughs out his last breaths.

EXT. HARBOR SITE - NORTHERN VIETNAM - NIGHT

Alpha Squad is set up in a wooded area overlooking a clearing. They're serving as backup for an ambush.

RTO monitors the radio. The men huddle close by. Suddenly, the radio squelches and DELTA LEADER comes on, whispering...

DELTA LEADER

(O.S.)

I see 'em. Seven, eight...Maybe
more.

Claymores and trip flares. The lights from the explosives are visible just ahead above the tree line. Delta Leader is louder, panicked.

DELTA LEADER (CONT'D)

(O.S.)

Fuck!

There is the POP of M-16's... Followed by the explosive BOOMS of AK-47's. This can not only be heard on the radio, but in the distance as well.

DELTA LEADER (CONT'D)
(O.S.)
Wait. Over there! I got--!!!

The radio cuts out. Squad Leader grabs the hook, keys it.

SQUAD LEADER
Delta. Delta, come in, over.

Muzzle flashes and the clatter of small arms fire continue across the clearing, 200 meters away. We hear men screaming, dying. The ambush squad is being overrun.

Alpha Squad is ready. Tom's adrenaline is pumping. This is it.

SQUAD LEADER (CONT'D)
Let's move!!!

ALPHA SQUAD...

Is up and running, laying down as much firepower as they can along the enemy flank.

SQUAD LEADER (CONT'D)
Johns, Junior, set up on the left flank!

They run left and drop to the ground. The gun falling right into place. John works The Pig. Junior feeds him.

SQUAD LEADER (CONT'D)
Everybody else on me! Down! Down!

The squad hits the ground firing. Tom fires into the brush where he sees movement, pumped up, a model Marine. Others just spray their M-16's and lob grenades. Thomas is patient, make some kills.

SQUAD LEADER (CONT'D)
Hold your fire!

Silence. Squad leader stands and motions and forward. They move with caution, sweeping through the area.

It's eerily quiet.

FINALLY...

Delta Squad, or what's left of them. Two bullet-ridden bodies lie crumpled together.

They stare at the bodies. Washington breaks the silence.

WASHINGTON

I got one dead body over here.

JUNIOR

I got three over here.

SQUAD LEADER

NVA?

JUNIOR

No...

The Squad is silent, still. They look at their surroundings. There are lots of holes in the trees and branches, but the NVA are gone. Disappeared Into the night.

INT. YOUNG TOM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE IN ON TOM, SIX YEARS OLD. He sits up with a start, awakened by YELLING downstairs. Tom's Mom and Gramps argue

GRAMPS

(O.S.)

What the hell you talkin' about?

MOM

(O.S.)

Daddy, Keep your voice down.

Sliding out of bed, Tom goes to his door, opens it a crack. Blackie jumps down from the bed and starts to whine.

TOM

Quiet, boy...

INT. SACHS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Downstairs we see Gramps drunk. He is unshaven and his clothes look like he slept in them for a week. Tom's mom is trying to help him up from the couch. But, Gramps jerks his arm away from her and stands on his own.

GRAMPS

(yells)

Don't tell me what to do, god
dammit!

Tom peers down through the wooden post and watches...

MOM AND GRAMPS...

Arguing at the foot of the stairs.

MOM

Just don't be so loud. All I'm
saying is you're not setting a good
example.

GRAMPS

Aw, they're just stories. He loves
'em.

MOM

Daddy, it's been two years since
Tommy's dad passed away. He looks
up to you and unfortunately lives
for all those stories you tell him.
I just don't want him living in
fantasy land.

GRAMPS

Give him a little more credit.
There's not a goddamn thing wrong
with a good war story. Never was.

Mom can't reason with Gramps. He's too drunk.

MOM

You're hopeless. I might as well be

talking to that wall.

Gramps could care less. They're his stories and he's going to share them with his Grandson.

GRAMPS

Well, keep talkin' to that wall,
because I'm going to Fitzpatrick's
for a drink.

MOM

No! Not in your condition.

But Gramps is stubborn.

GRAMPS

There's nothing wrong with my
condition and I'll do as I damn
well please.

Mom's losing her patience.

MOM

Simmer down, Dad. You can't go to
Fitzpatrick's when you've had this
much to drink.

Gramps is getting louder.

GRAMPS

The hell I can't!

ON TOM...

He watches. The tension between them scares him.

DOWNSTAIRS...

Gramps walks out and slams the door behind him. Mom sits down on the foot of the stairs, her head down. This is too hard for her. She begins to weep.

ON TOM...

He is frozen at the top of the stairs behind the post.
What can he do.

ON THE STAIRS...

Mom senses Tommy behind her. She turns around, her face wet from crying.

MOM

Oh Tommy! Tommy, please get back
into bed and go to sleep. Please!

INT. TOM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tom closes his door and goes back to bed.
He curls up and lies there with his eyes wide open.

CLOSE ON HIS FACE...

INT. THERAPY ROOM - NIGHT

The place is dimly lit, deserted except for a lone wheelchair. Tom stands at the parallel bars, balancing on his left side, using only one arm and leg. His head is bandaged as he awkwardly tries to shuffle his body along. It is slow and painful going. He slips and falls badly.

CLOSE ON HIS FACE...

He squeezes his eyes tightly shut.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE BUSH - NIGHT

CLOSE ON TOM'S FACE...

His eyes open slowly. He is just waking up.

FROM HIS POV...

The sky is lit up with Tracer bullets and cannon fire hitting the side of a mountain.

EXT. GRADY'S HOUSE - ACROSS THE STREET FROM THE SACHS - DAY

1957

Tom, now TEN YEARS OLD, knocks on the front door. After a moment, MRS. GRADY answers. Linda Grady, all of 10 also, with long brown hair, stands in the hallway behind her.

TOM
Is Jerry home?

MRS. GRADY
He's over at the park, Tommy.

Tom starts to go, then turns and leans inside the house.

TOM
Hey Linda, want to see a card
trick?

Mrs. Grady smiles and leaves the two alone.
Linda doesn't look too interested, but...

LINDA
I guess.

Tom is excited, an audience.

Tom brings a deck of cards out of his back pocket and spreads them like a fan.

TOM
Pick a card, any card.

Linda reaches for an obvious card and then goes for another at the last second.

TOM (CONT'D)
Now watch carefully.

He goes through his trick and with a couple of gestures that only a great magician would have, he turns over the final card.

TOM (CONT'D)
That your card?

It works. Linda is impressed, but tries not to show it.
Tom is proud, not only that the trick worked, but that Linda took the time to watch.

LINDA

Not bad. Are you going to show me
how you did it?

TOM

Sorry, Ma'am. Professional secret.

Tom smiles, Linda doesn't.

TOM (CONT'D)

Wanna come to the park and play
with Jerry and me?

LINDA

(condescending)

Oh, please...

She shuts the door and Tom starts back down the walk. He
pauses to look back and sees Linda staring at him through the
window. He starts to wave, but she closes the curtain right
away. Confused, he shrugs, then race is off to find Jerry.

EXT. ARCADIA MUNICIPAL PARK - DAY

Tom runs along the sidewalk, finds JERRY GRADY. Jerry is a year older than Tom and is on the frail side, puny for his age. He is sitting on the ground drawing circles in the dirt with his finger; he has a football in his lap.

TOM

Jerry.

Jerry looks up. He's been crying.

TOM (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

JERRY

You know that big kid, Puma, with that big dog. He told me I couldn't play here. That it was his park.

Tom searches for the enemy. But nobody's in sight.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Said if he finds me here again, he's gonna have his dog chew my fucking ass.

TOM

He said that?

JERRY

Uh-huh.

Tom ponders that a moment, then boldly walks into the park. He's not scared.

TOM

(turns to Jerry)

Well, the hell with him...Throw me the football.

Jerry wavers. Tom claps his hands together.

TOM (CONT'D)

Come on, let's play.

Jerry stands up and tosses Tom the ball. They start playing catch. Tom keeps backing deeper into the park. Jerry has to follow.

PUMA
(O.S.)

Hey!

PUMA is back. He's a big kid, twelve years old, with a big dog. A ROTTWEILER, growling, showing his razor sharp teeth.

PUMA (CONT'D)
(directed at Jerry)
I thought I told you to get outta
here. This is my park.

Jerry begins to run away towards the street. Tom holds his ground.

PUMA (CONT'D)
(directed at Tom)
You deaf, shitface? You better run
like your pussy friend.

TOM
(defiant)
It's not your park.

Puma looks to Jerry who is already half way through the park. He releases the Rottweiler.

PUMA
Fuck it's not, go get him, boy.

The dog takes after Jerry. Puma turns back to Tom.

PUMA (CONT'D)
I'll deal with you myself.

Puma advances toward Tom. Tom looks back at Jerry briefly and sees him fall down. The dog is halfway there.

As Puma approaches, he swings at Tom, misses. Tom hits Puma in the face. Puma, shocked, steps back, but Tom is not wasting any time, he hits Puma again. This time Puma falls on his backside. Tom turns. He sees the Rottweiler's almost to Jerry. Jerry's trying to get back up. The dog's almost on top of him.

The Rottweiler is just about to pounce on Jerry when...

BLACKIE BURSTS...

Into frame sideswiping the Rottweiler, plowing into him. It's a brutal collision.

The dogs are a flurry of teeth and slaws. The Rottweiler may be bigger, but he's still no match for Blackie. The Rottweiler yelps, then backs off.

Puma, who is in a state of shock as to what just happened to him and his dog, gets up and runs off through the other side of the park. His dog follows.

Tom runs toward Blackie, yelling.

TOM

Blackie!

Blackie runs towards tom. When they reach each other he hugs Blackie who licks him back

TOM (CONT'D)

Hey, boy...Where'd you come from?

Such a touch guy. Where's Jerry?

Tom looks around and finds him on the sidewalk with Gramps. Gramps has his arms around Jerry's shoulders, comforting him. They both are looking towards Tom, watching him and Blackie celebrate.

Also next to Gramps and Jerry is Linda. Linda is impressed and stands there silently admiring Tom.

Tom and Linda make brief eye contact, but the moment is broken when Blackie jumps on Tom and knocks him down. Tom laughs and gets up.

TOM (CONT'D)

(yells)

Hey, Gramps!

Tom picks up the football. Pumps his arm.

TOM (CONT'D)
Go left, Gramps!

He throws a good spiral. Blackie runs after it, Gramps make a feeble move towards it too but Jerry makes a diving steal and catches the ball.

TOM (CONT'D)
Yes! Way to go, Jerry!

Jerry raises the ball over his head in victory, beaming. Blackie runs up to Linda. She kneels down and gives him a hug. She looks up as Tom is running over towards her, and their eyes meet. This time Linda smiles.

INT. NEURO WARD - DAY

Tom, with his head bandaged, sits in a bed with a couple of newspapers, the war is on the front page of both. Gramps, who doesn't look any better than the last time we saw him, grabs the front page of one of the newspapers and starts reading to himself.

A beat...

Gramps looks away from his paper towards Tom.

GRAMPS
Boy, this war sure isn't goin' well
for us. Did you know...

Tom interrupts.

TOM
I don't wanna hear about the war,
Gramps.

Tom grabs the newspapers and throws them into the trash.

Gramps knows not to say a word. One section of the paper falls to the floor. Gramps leans over and picks it up.

Sergeant Jack wanders over, all smiles. He sees the newspapers in the trash.

SERGEANT JACK
(stutters)
Yo..u d..one wi..th tho..se?

Tom ignores him.

SERGEANT JACK (CONT'D)
(stutters)
I..f yo..u're do..ne, I..'d su..re
li..ke tho..se pa..pers.

Gramps digs them out and hands them to him.

GRAMPS
Here you go, soldier.

He happily takes them. And turns to Tom.

SERGEANT JACK
(stutters)
S..o how..'d yo..u ge..t hu..rt?

Tom hasn't got the patience for him.

TOM
I cut myself shaving.

Sergeant Jack starts blinking, but his smile never fades. Then he turns and walks over towards TWO TOURS.

Gramps and Tom watch Sergeant Jack as he leaves.

Gramps turns to Tom.

GRAMPS
He can't help himself Tommy.

Tom is still looking at Sergeant Jack.

TOM
Yeah...I know, Gramps. It's just...
Well, I don't have much patience,
lately. It's nothing personal.

Two beds away Sergeant Jack tries TWO TOURS instead.

SERGEANT JACK

(stutters)

Wha..t ha..ppened to.. yo..u?

TWO TOURS grins, happy to have an audience.

TWO TOURS

Well, I'll tell ya. Was finishing
up my second tour. Third Recon out
of Dong Ha. We were inserted North
of Hill 665...

Tom doesn't want to hear this. These should be his stories.
But... Gramps leans in. Two Tours notices, keeps talking. Tom
turns his back to them.

TWO TOURS (CONT'D)

Had contact from the second we
touched down...

CLOSE ON TOM...

Pressing his temple with his left hand, trying not to listen.

TWO TOURS (CONT'D)

(O.S.)

Must have been twenty of 'em...

The voice of TWO TOURS fades out.

EXT. YOSEMITE VALLEY, CALIFORNIA - DAY

A FOREST OF MAJESTIC REDWOODS...

Yosemite. Soaring over it. Cool, green, serene. Then
descending as two boys race through the trees in a lush meadow
with their Daisy air rifles, whooping it up. It's Tom at ten
and Jerry at eleven.

Jerry dogs himself in, defending a trench that connects to a
series of crude tunnels.

Tom makes a bold frontal assault on Jerry's position.

Jerry cocks his rifle, shoves the barrel into mud and fires a
moist dirt clod.

Tom hits the deck, rolls and fires a dirt volley of his own.
Jerry ducks and it splatters on the trench wall behind
him. Tom takes cover behind a tree.

Linda is playing by the mouth of the tunnel. She throws a clump of mud toward Jerry's position. Jerry runs to her.

JERRY

Quick! Get in! Let's ditch Tom!

She crawls into the opening of the shaft. Jerry sports a devilish grin and calls after Linda.

JERRY (CONT'D)

All the way! Go!

She goes...

Jerry climbs out of the trench and hides behind some bushes near the opening of the shaft and watches.

Tom pokes out from behind the tree and makes his way toward the opening of the shaft. Jerry stays hidden, making Tom believe he's gone into the tunnel.

INT. TUNNEL - DAY

Tom crawls on his hands and knees along the narrow shaft. The light is swallowed up the further he goes in.

DEEPER IN...

At the very end of the tunnel is Linda, she is sitting in a little chamber supported by too rotted beams. The only light she has is from a small flashlight she's holding.

ON TOM...

As a dull THUD overhead sounds and a bit of earth falls from the ceiling. Tom shakes dirt from his hair. Listens.

ANOTHER THUD...

A whole chunk of roof drops this time.

EXT. MEADOW - DAY

Jerry is jumping up and down on the tunnel roof. He's having

the time of his life.

INT. TUNNEL - DAY

Tom has stopped as more dirt falls on him. He figures out that he's been had by Jerry. He turns to head back out as another part of the tunnel collapses.

DEEPER IN ...

Linda is starting to get scared as she starts to cough from all the dust. The falling dirt is starting to fill parts of the tunnel. Then one of the rotten beams overhead brakes and big chunks of dirt start to rain down.

EXT. MEADOW - DAY

Tom scrambles out of the makeshift cave... Finds Jerry jumping up and down on the tunnel roof.

TOM

Nice try, lick butt.

Tom fires a mud clod into Jerry's back.

JERRY

Ow! You die!

Jerry turns around and they commence with their mud war. Then Jerry stops.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Hey, where's Linda?

TOM

Yeah, where is she?

JERRY

(points to the tunnel, panicked)
She's down there!

TOM

I didn't see her.

JERRY

I'm tellin' you she's down there.
She went in there before you...

TOM
(not buying it)
Right. Try again.

But then... The panicked look on Jerry's face shows that he's not kidding. Tom runs to the opening of the partially collapsed tunnel.

TOM (CONT'D)
Linda! Linda!

INT. TUNNEL - DAY

Linda is tucked in a ball, covered with dirt, muddy tears streaming down her face.

EXT. TUNNEL - DAY

Tom throws down his rifle and starts frantically digging out the entry.

TOM (CONT'D)
Help me, Jerry!

Tom turns...Jerry's running back to camp.

JERRY
(shouts)
I'm goin' to get Dad!

TOM
Jerry, wait! Help me! Help me!

But Jerry keeps going. Finally, Tom clears the entry and dives back underground.

INT. TUNNEL - DAY

Tom gropes his way along the narrow passage. More dirt Falls onto him. He covers his mouth to keep from choking.

A faint light shines ahead.

TOM
Linda!?!

He hears a whimper, sees...

LINDA...

Tucked in the corner, clutching
herself, crying, shaking with fear.

Tom crawls to her in a hurry.

TOM (CONT'D)

Come on, Linda... I'll help you.

Tom extends his hand. She takes it. Tom crawls backward,
leading her back to the entry. Linda's eyes are locked on him
as the dirt keeps falling.

EXT. MEADOW - DAY

Finally, Tom and Linda reach the surface...

Dirt falls from their hair and clothes as he pulls Linda to
her feet and she clings to him for all she's worth.

Tom and Linda look into each other's eyes. Tom smiles, Linda
wipes away her muddy tears.

TOM (CONT'D)

It's okay... I'll never let
anything happen to you.

Linda smiles and then gives Tom a kiss on the cheek.

EXT. HARBOR SITE - SOMEWHERE JUST SOUTH OF THE DMZ - DAY

Alpha sits out the midday heat in a shady grove of trees. They
eat cold rations.

Everybody's kicking back except Johns, who's busy cleaning the
pig. Squad leader grimly walks over.

SQUAD LEADER

Pack up. We're on the move.

JOHNS

What's up SL?

SQUAD LEADER

Search-and-destroy into the god-damn DMZ. The old man personally volunteered us to lead in.

John shakes his head.

JOHNS

Man, I'm too short for this shit.

Squad Leader stares directly at Lamb

SQUAD LEADER

Lamb...You're on point.

EXT. THE BUSH - THROUGH THE HILLS INTO THE DMZ - DAY

Lamb leads the column. Tom follows, taking the slack position. Everyone's jumpy. Signs of NVA all around them. Smoldering fires, fresh piles of dug out dirt...zero contacts.

A FINE THREAD OF SMOKE...

RISING FROM A HOLE IN THE JUNGLE FLOOR...

Johns pokes about the source with an old K-bar knife. The hole gets wider and wider.

JOHNS

Looks like we got us a bunker.

As he steps back, SL drops a grenade.

BOOM...

The blast unearths the beginnings of a large tunnel. Johns lobbs another frag into the hole for good measure.

KABOOM...

A wave of green leaves and orange dirt shoots out the opening.

JOHNS (CONT'D)

Sin loi, VC. Dead in there, baby.

SQUAD LEADER

All right, all right. Lamb, get

your ass down there and check it out.

Tom looks at Lamb who is shaking his head. It's true. He does get every shit detail. Tom steps in front of Lamb.

TOM

I'll go.

SQUAD LEADER

I want Lamb to go. You'll get your chance, Sachs.

TOM

(demanding)

But I wanna go.

Squad Leader takes his .45 caliber pistol out of his holster.

SQUAD LEADER

Stand Fast, Sachs. Lamb goes.
That's an order.

Lamb looks from man to man. A wall of black granite faces.

SQUAD LEADER (CONT'D)

Get movin', Lamb.

Lamb scoffs. He drops his rucksack and weapon, pulls out a flashlight and grabs the pistol.

LAMB

Fine. Fuck it.

Dropping to his knees, Lamb works his way headfirst into the tunnel and is gone. The dark pit swallows him alive. Just as he goes in, there is a sustained whine in the air.

SQUAD LEADER

Incomin'!

Alpha Squad hits the ground as a mortar impacts against the side of a hill, near the tunnel. It bursts, raining down hot metal chunks.

Lamb stays down in the tunnel.

Another round... Impacting near the center of the clearing. It is followed by a massive secondary blast UNDERGROUND.

SQUAD LEADER (CONT'D)

It's an ammo dump and we're
standin' right on top of the
fucker! Fall back! Fall back to the
wood line, now!

Alpha is up and moving. Lamb is still down in the hole.

TOM

What about Lamb?

SQUAD LEADER

I said fall back.

Tom hesitates a moment.

TOM

Man...

Tom dumps his gear and charges back to the mouth of the tunnel. Mortar rounds crunch into the ground around him. Huge sections of Earth collapse.

SQUAD LEADER

Sachs! Sachs, goddamn it!

Tom vaults down the shaft.

INT. TUNNEL - DMZ - DAY

The sudden change from daylight to darkness is blinding.

Tom crouches in the narrow shaft, gathering his breath, waiting for his eyes to adjust.

Dull BOOMS overhead... Dirt rains down.

A LONG TUNNEL extends off to the right. Tom makes his way along it.

A TINY ALCOVE...

It's a makeshift radio room. In one corner there's a lantern,

which is turned on, and a radio sitting on a small table with a bunch of maps. Lamb rocks back and forth in a small hammock in the far corner of the tiny room.

Lamb sees Tom at the entrance.

LAMB

Trying to kill me. Squad Leader and all. They want me dead. Buried right here.

Another artillery round, closer. The weak beams GROAN.

TOM

That's bullshit, Lamb. Now get your ass up, we got to move! Now!

Tom reaches for Lamb's arm. Lamb pulls away, starts retreating down the long tunnel with his flashlight and .45 in tow.

LAMB

They don't give a shit! You've only been here a few days. I've been here six months... No one gives a shit about me. Fine. Fuck 'em all!

Lamb has lost it. Tom crawls after him. Lamb swings his .45 up in Tom's face.

LAMB (CONT'D)

Semper Fi! Hurrah for me and fuck you!

Lamb switches off his flashlight and merges with the darkness, laughing.

TOM

Lamb! Lamb don't--!

KAWHUMP...

A direct hit. The roof starts to give way.

Tom spins, clawing for his life back to the main shaft, just ahead of a wave of dirt. He arrives as another round penetrates.

BLAM...

Tom's expelled from the tunnel in a blast of hot air. He lands, hard. Looks back.

CLOSE ON TOM'S FACE...

Cut and burned.

EXT. CAMP CURRY, YOSEMITE - NIGHT

POPS and FLARES as a string of firecrackers goes off in the middle of a blazing bonfire. The campsite, which includes about five families, enjoying July Fourth barbecue, complete with music and dancing.

Couples dance in the meadow. Men converge around the grill, drinking beers and roasting hamburgers and hotdogs. Women rush about spreading blankets and plastic dinnerware.

Gramps, clean shaven, clothes unwrinkled, holds court for the children, spinning his wild yarns.

GRAMPS

Then there's the time I was a
welder on the top of the Golden
Gate Bridge. Lost a man a day up
there...

Tom, ten years old, looks across the fire to Linda. He motions her with his head and she drifts over. Tom takes her hand, leads her away.

INT. SACHS' FAMILY TENT - NEXT TO THE RIVER - NIGHT

Tom fumbles around in his backpack. Linda waits by the flap, worried someone might see her.

LINDA

What is it?

Tom pulls out a gift-wrapped package, hands it to her. Linda is speechless.

TOM

Go ahead. Open it

She dives into the box. It's a wooden crucifix on a leather necklace.

LINDA

Oh, it's beautiful Tommy.

Tom's beaming.

TOM

I made it in Gramps' workshop. He
says it'll protect you.

Linda pulls it around her neck, struggling with the clasp.

LINDA

And what do you say?

Tom reaches around her shoulder, helps close it.

TOM

I say he's right.

LINDA

(smiles)

Good.

She leans forward...And awkwardly kisses him.

EXT. CAMP CURRY - NIGHT

A slow number plays. Couples dance.

Tom and Linda sit off to the side of a fire. Jerry watches,
toasting a marshmallow. It catches fire and he lets it burn.

The Gradys sitting by the fire with a couple of blankets on
their laps also noticed their daughter off with Tom.

MRS. GRADY

Looks like Linda's made a special
friend this summer.

Mr. Grady pulls the pipe from his mouth and nods. Clears his
throat.

MR. GRADY

Yeah, and after that incident in
the tunnel the other day, I'm sure
glad.

They smile at each other and clasp hands... THEN he is wracked

by a fit of coughing and struggles to catch his breath. He finally catches his breath. Mrs. Grady is concerned.

MRS. GRADY
Honey, are you okay?

Mr. Grady stands, pulling his blanket tight around him.

MR. GRADY
Bit chilly. Think I'll call it a night.

He walks off to their tent, stifling another series of coughs.

The celebration is winding down. Parents shuffle their kids off to bed.

Tom and Linda stroll along the river's edge.

They stopped at a low, flat boulder and sit, watching the moon reflect off the water.

LINDA
When you grow up, will you be a policeman like your father was?

TOM
(sounding just like Gramps)
Nope. See the world. Like Gramps. Alaska, the Amazon. Climb far off mountains, sail the seas.

Go wherever there's danger and adventure, you know.

LINDA
(smiles)
Are you going to take me with you?

Tom shakes his head 'NO' and skips a flat rock across the water, one, two, three, four, five, six skips. Tom's done better. Linda is impressed with Tom's skipping of the rock, but mad at the shake of the head "NO".

LINDA (CONT'D)
Tommy Sachs, don't shake your head "NO" at me...You better say "YES"!

TOM

No way. It's too dangerous for a girl. Gotta be strong, ready for anything.

LINDA

Girls can do that.

TOM

Not the kind of things I'm plannin' on. Probably even have to become a soldier, like Gramps.

Tom skips another rock, even better this time.

INT. GRADY'S CAMPSITE - THREE CAMPSITES FROM THE SACHS' - NIGHT

The lantern shines along inside the tent as Mr. Grady hacks away. His sound becomes--

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. NEURO WARD - NIGHT

--Coughs as one of the Vets pounds up his phlegm.

EXT. GRADY'S HOUSE - DAY

Mr. Grady's Memorial Service. People visit the house to pay their last respects. Mrs. Grady, dressed in black, sits in a chair holding a picture of her husband. She is crying.

INT. GRADY'S HOUSE - JERRY'S ROOM - DAY

Jerry, eleven years old, is stretched out on the bed, tossing a football into the air and catching it just before it hits his face.

Tom peeks in from the hallway, dressed in his Sunday best.

TOM (CONT'D)

Hey.

Jerry doesn't respond. He keeps tossing up the ball.

TOM (CONT'D)

You, uh... Wanna play catch?

Jerry flips Tom the ball. Tom goes to throw it back.

JERRY

Keep it. I won't need it no more.

TOM

What do you mean?

JERRY

We're moving up North, to my
Aunt's.

Tom is devastated.

TOM

How long? Are you comin' back?

Jerry turns to the wall, away from Tom. He doesn't respond.
Tom sets the ball on the bed, walks to the door.

TOM (CONT'D)

You keep it. It's your ball.

EXT. GRADY'S HOUSE - DAY

Linda drags a bag of garbage over to the trash bin. Tom pulls
her around the corner of the house.

TOM

So, you guys are really movin'.

LINDA

Sometime next week.

TOM

What about...Us?

LINDA

(not in the mood)

Us?! Tommy, there is no us.

The news hurts. It shows.

TOM

But, wait a second, Linda--

LINDA

Tommy, don't be so stupid.

She goes over to the metal bin and throws the trash in, she starts for the back-door.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Mom needs me inside.

Linda vanishes back inside the house.

EXT SACHS' HOUSE - DAY

Tom sits on the porch, holding his trusty telescope to his eye. He watches.

DOWN THE STREET...

Mrs. Grady, Jerry and Linda prepare to get into their packed car.

They wave good-bye to the neighbors gathered in the street. Through the telescope we see Tom and Linda's eyes meet briefly. She even gives a little wave then she holds up the wooden crucifix and smiles.

Tom pulls the telescope away from his eye and breaks a grin. He fights a tear, but doesn't succeed all the way.

ON THE PORCH...

Gramps, looking decent, steps out and Tom quickly wipes the tear. The car starts down the street in the opposite direction.

GRAMPS

He was your best friend, wasn't he?

TOM

Jerry? Yeah.

Right now, he's thinking as much of Linda...

GRAMPS

Hard thing to lose your best friend. But you'll have others, kiddo.

TOM

I guess.

Tom looks back down the street and sees the car just as it goes out of sight.

INT. NEURO WARD - DAY

A new patient is rolled next to Tom, BEDMAN, a traveling piece of furniture. Paralyzed from the neck down, he's literally bolted to his rotating bed.

AIDE

Hey, Sachs, meet your new buddy.
You're going to love this guy.

Bedman's out cold. The Aide props him face down, at a 90 degree angle, with a view of the floor.

The Aide leaves him there and walks away.

Tom, with his head bandaged, just stares at him.

INT. SACHS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

BLACK AND WHITE WAR...

Slow pull back to reveal the image on a TV.

A John Wayne war movie. Tom, ten years old, is glued to the set.

His brother Ken saunters in and turns the channel to a boxing match.

TOM

Hey, I was watching that!

Tom Springs up, blocking the television as he flips it back to the war movie.

KEN

Get out of the way!

Ken shoves Tom aside and goes to change the station. He

discovers the channel knob is missing.

KEN (CONT'D)

Give me the knob, dick breath!

Tom backs away, holding the knob behind his back.

TOM

No. I was here first.

KEN

You better give it or else.

Tom slides the knob into his pocket.

TOM

Make me.

That's it. Ken dives on his brother and the two wrestle to the floor. Furniture crashes down around them. Tom is getting the worst of it.

Gramps, holding his liquor as good as ever, rushes into the room, whistles.

GRAMPS

Enough!

The two boys freeze, clutching each other by the throat.

GRAMPS (CONT'D)

Let's take it outside.

EXT. SACHS' BACKYARD-DAY

Tom and Ken stand shirtless in opposing corners of a makeshift ring. Tom is scrawny next to Ken. They wear sixteen ounce boxing gloves. Gramps clangs a rusty bell with a hammer and they start to box.

Tom's all guts and fury, but Ken's got the advantage of reach. Tom's punches fall short. Ken's are dead on.

Tom goes down.

He spits and the sight of blood landing in the dirt fuels his

efforts. He hops to his feet and charges.

Neighborhood kids gather around to watch.

MONTAGE OF SHOTS

TOM...

Fights kids his own age, wins hands down.

TOM...

Challenges Ken's friends, not so easy. Gramps coaches him.

TOM...

Challenges the bigger kids. Gramps is his corner man.

Tom loses to the bigger kids. Ken's friends watch with respect as Tom is repeatedly knocked to the ground and keeps coming back for more...

And each time he rises, he's slightly older, stronger...Aging before our eyes until he's no longer a boy, but a solid teenager.

By then, he beats everyone...

END OF MONTAGE

INT. THE BURGER HAMLET-MONROVIA, CALIFORNIA-DAY

1966

FLAMES ...

Scorching a chunk of hamburger meat.

TOM, BOONE, and ANDY, eighteen years old, work side-by-side, grilling hamburgers. Boone has jet black hair, wears his short sleeves rolled up. A New York transplant. Andy is blonde, thin, wears glasses.

Boone's flipping his patties high into the air. One gets away, falls on the floor. He picks it up, blows off the grit and drops the meat back on the grill.

A potbellied MANAGER, comes up from behind, slaps Tom on the back.

MANAGER

Ready to get to work, son?

Tom nods, affirmative. All three of them remove their aprons and follow the manager out the back door.

EXT. BACK ALLEY-BURGER HAMLET-DAY

SNAPPING CARTILAGE...

As a fist impacts with a face. Blood starts coming out from the nose of Tom's opponent, VLADIMIR.

Vladimir, who looks of Croatian descent, is much bigger than Tom, but that doesn't stop Tom from administering a quick series of blows.

The two fighters are surrounded by cheering WORKERS from the restaurant where Vladimir works, and of course Boone, Andy, and the Manager stand among them, rooting Tom on.

BOONE

Come on, Tom!

WORKER

Vladimir, udri ga, udri ga jace!

In English...(Vladimir, hit him, hit him harder!) Vladimir lowers into a crouch, then lunges forward with an uppercut. He connects, stunning Tom. Vladimir steps in closer.

BAM BAM...More blood from both of them.

Vladimir tries to wrap up Tom's arms, but Tom spins away, flinging him against the side of a dumpster...CLANG.

BAM BAM...Tom connects with two quick lefts. Vladimir is trying to hang on. Tom sets him up and CRACKS him with a solid right. Vladimir is out cold. Tom is the clear winner.

Boone and Andy go from Worker to Worker collecting the wagers.

They give the cash to the Manager who thumbs through it, giving it a quick count. He stuffs the bulk of it into his apron and hands a few bucks back to Tom.

MANAGER

Here's your cut, son. Nice work. I
just made you employee of the
month.

Boone and Andy are slapping Tom on the back, while pocketing their own winnings.

BOONE

Way to go, Tom.

ANDY

Alright!

Tom wipes some blood from his mouth and smiles.

INT. NEURO WARD-DAY

Tom, with no bandage, sits in his wheelchair, still staring out the window at the protesters, but now he's half asleep.

INT. SACHS' HOUSE-NIGHT

Tom, eighteen years old, wanders in the front door. The television plays to an empty living room as Tom heads towards the kitchen. On the television is a Vietnam newsreel. Tom's interest is grabbed immediately. He stops to listen briefly as the reporter describes the images of war we see. He considers them for a moment, then walks away.

IN THE KITCHEN...

Gramps sits at the kitchen table with an army of empty beer cans in front of him. It is debatable which he's worn the longest, his unshaven beard or his clothes. He's not really doing much of anything. In fact it looks like his sole purpose is just to sit there and get drunk.

Tom comes in, notices all the empties and glances over at Gramps, who seems quite content.

TOM

Gramps...What'cha doin'.

GRAMPS
Nothin'.

Tom doesn't usually comment on his Grandfather's drinking, so he approaches it delicately.

TOM
You leave any beer for me?

GRAMPS
There's plenty. Hell I'm just
gettin' started...Say, thought your
mom told me your prom was tonight?

Tom grabs himself a beer from the icebox and sits opposite Gramps. He pushes away a few of the empties so he'll have some space. He shrugs.

TOM
Yeah, it's tonight.

Gramps is strung pretty tight right now.

GRAMPS
Well, what the hell you doin' here?

TOM
You know I'm not into all that.
Besides, who'd baby-sit you?

Gramps grumbles. "Baby-sit"...

TOM (CONT'D)
Hey, how about Jerry Grady leavin'
for boot camp?

GRAMPS
Marines...Who would ever guessed

it. Such a skinny little kid,
wasn't he. What about that sister
of his? Ever talk to her?

TOM

Nah, not for a long time. Mom's the
only one that keeps in touch.

Gramps is going somewhere with this conversation. Although Tom
Can't figure out exactly where.

GRAMPS

So, kiddo...What you doin' after
you graduate?

Tom looks down at his beer and shakes his head.

TOM

I don't know, Gramps.

He looks up at Gramps. Gramps is still waiting for
an answer.

TOM (CONT'D)

I just don't know.

Gramps finishes his beer and stands up to get another, he's
starting to lose his balance. He pops the beer open with a
rusty church key. Tom, looking for a distraction, grabs a
deck of cards.

TOM (CONT'D)

Five bucks a hand?

GRAMPS

Start dealin'.

Tom starts to deal.

TOM

Hey, Gramps...You ever "really"
been afraid?

GRAMPS

Not that I can remember, kiddo.

TOM

Not even in the war?

Gramps considers that for a moment. Takes another swig of beer (the booze is starting to do the talking now). Sways and lands back in his chair.

GRAMPS

Nah...

TOM

But...was there ever--

Tom finishes his deal, gives himself a blackjack. Gramps cuts off Tom's question.

GRAMPS

Damn it!

Gramps pushes his cards towards Tom in disgust, Tom forgets more questions and deals more-cards. Tom flings down new cards and deals himself another blackjack. He smiles. Again, Gramps flips his cards in disgust.

GRAMPS (CONT'D)

I saw that!

Tom stares at him. He knows this is how Gramps plays--he doesn't like to lose. Besides, he's been drinking.

TOM

Saw what!? C'mon Gramps. You know I'm not goin' to cheat you.

Now, Tom's starting to get irritated.

GRAMPS

Maybe, maybe not. But what I do know is that if you could've gotten a date tonight, you wouldn't be sittin' here with me hittin' all those damn blackjacks.

This really gets to Tom. Gramps is just getting drunker and obnoxious.

TOM

I could've gotten a date. What
ya tryin' to do...Pick a fight?

Gramps just takes another swig. He doesn't respond to Tom's question.

TOM (CONT'D)

You know, with school ending next
week and all...Well, I just thought
I'd hang out with you for awhile.
But what a mistake that turned out
to be.

Gramps had one too many beers.

GRAMPS

Don't do me any favors.

Tom gets up.

TOM

Why don't you do yourself a favor
and think about sobering up.

GRAMPS

Why you--

Gramps tries to stand. The blood rushes from his head. He plops back into his chair.

GRAMPS (CONT'D)

Maybe I should lie down for a
while.

TOM

I think that's a good idea. Let me
help you.

GRAMPS

I don't need your god damn help. Go
on, get out of here. Go out and
do somethin'.

Tom's had enough.

TOM

Fine. Have it your way.

Tom walks out. Gramps is frustrated ...And drunk.

EXT. SACHS' HOUSE-NIGHT

Tom comes out the front door. Blackie greets him.

TOM (CONT'D)

Hey, boy.

Tom leans against the porch rail, cooling off. He looks down the street and sees...

A TEENAGER in a bad tux escorts his PROM DATE to a small compact car. He opens the door, like a true gent, then slams it on her skirt.

Tom has a good laugh. Right then he hears the bolt on the front door lock. He goes and tries the door. Locked. He beats on the door.

TOM (CONT'D)

Gramps! Come on, Gramps open the door!

INT. SACHS' HOUSE-NIGHT

Tom's KNOCKING echoes through the house. Gramps, with a little grin, is just falling back onto the sofa. He mumbles, laughs...

EXT. SACHS' HOUSE-NIGHT

Tom's pissed. He hears a ruckus from down the street. He looks back. The Teenager is trying to get into his car, but he's being teased and harassed by FOUR OLDER TEENAGERS.

Tom perks up immediately, a place to vent his anger. He leaps down the short staircase and walks out the gate. Blackie barks.

TOM

You stay here, boy.

Tom pulls the gate closed and walks with determination toward the Four Older Teenagers.

DOWN THE STREET...

The Four Older Teenagers are terrorizing the Prom couple. Rocking the car, banging on the windows. The girl in the car is scared to death. The guy in the LEADER'S grasp isn't much better.

Tom walks up.

TOM (CONT'D)

(to the Leader)

Hey, why don't you leave him alone.

Tom is calm, confident. The Leader looks at Tom, gives him a sinister smile. The others stop beating on the car and come join their Leader. The Leader lets go of the Teenager.

LEADER

(to Tom)

Oh, you like buttin' into other people's business, huh? That could get you real messed. up, you know.

Tom's doing his best to control himself. Waves the teenager away.

TOM

Get outta here.

/ The boy hops in the car, starts the engine and starts to drive away. He's too freaked out to even thank Tom. The girl looks back at Tom, she mouths "Thank-You".

LEADER

(throws his hands in the air towards the car)

Yeah, get the fuck outta here!

The Leader could care less about the Prom couple, he looks directly at Tom, and he wants him.

LEADER (CONT'D)

Just us now, mother fucker!

The leader moves toward Tom, the other three follow. Tom holds his ground. The Leader gives him a shove. Tom leads with a left and they start trading blows.

In a second, it's four on one and Tom is getting the worst of it.

EXT. SACHS' HOUSE-NIGHT

Blackie is barking his head off from behind the gate.

AT THE HOUSE...

The door opens and Gramps stumbles onto the porch,

GRAMPS

Hold it down, dog!

Blackie continues to bark. Gramps steps further to see what's going on.

He looks down the street.

GRAMPS {CONT'D}
(sees Tom being pounded on)
Son-of-a-bitch.,.

Gramps is sobering up real fast. He runs out the gate, letting Blackie out. Blackie races past him.

GRAMPS (CONT'D)
Get 'em, boy,

Tom's down on the ground now, the Leader gives him a kick in his side.

Blackie charges in to save Tom. One of the Teenagers picks up a huge rock and throws it at the charging dog. It hits Blackie in the head and CRACKS it open. Blackie "Yelps".

The dog's legs fold under him and he slides a few feet along the pavement...The Four Older Teenagers freeze.

Blood starts to pool under his head.

LEADER
Shit...Let's get outta here!

The Four Older Teenagers run off.

All Tom can do is watch them. He holds his side and groans.

Gramps catches up, and he kneels over Blackie.

GRAMPS
Aw, Jesus...

Tom gets up onto his knees. Spits out some blood. Then looks up and sees Gramps on the ground holding Blackie's limp head.

Tom shakes some sense into his head, not sure what he's seeing.

ON GRAMPS...

He cradles the dog.

EXT. SACHS' BACKYARD-NIGHT

Tom shovels dirt into a hole, filling it. Gramps sits on the back porch, a bottle of Cutty next to him. He looks pretty bad. He gets up and walks over to Tom.

GRAMPS (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, kiddo. He was a good
dog...A damn good dog.

Tom looks at Gramps. He's disgusted with the old man's condition. It's all Gramps' fault. A couple of more pats on the dirt and he throws the shovel on the ground.

Tom looks Gramps right in the eye.

TOM
Least "HE" went out fightin'.

GRAMPS
What's that supposed to mean?

TOM
How you plannin' on goin' out, old
man?

Tom shakes his head and walks to the house.

Gramps throws a look at Tom. Then stares down at the grave.

EXT. GREYHOUND BUS DEPOT-EL MONTE, CALIFORNIA-DAY

Tom's mother pulls up outside the bus depot. Tom, eighteen years old, hops out of the car carrying a large Navy surplus duffel bag. Mom cranks down her window.

MOM
Sure you don't want me to wait?

Tom rolls his eyes.

TOM
Mom ... Jeez.

MOM

Tommy, I wish you and your Grandfather could've resolved your problems before you left.

TOM

Yeah...Well, talk to him about that.

MOM

Blackie's death was just as much your fault as your Grandfather's.

TOM

You're always defendin' him, even when it comes to his drinking.

MOM

He's got a problem, Tommy. God only knows, I've dealt with it all my life, But I can't deal with you and him fighting.

She starts to cry.

TOM

Leave it alone, Mom. It'll work itself out. We just need a break from each other.

MOM

I sure hope so.

She takes a tissue and wipes the tears from her eyes.

MOM (CONT'D)

Well, have a safe trip and don't forget to write Mrs. Grady and thank her for getting you this job for the summer.

TOM

I know...I know.

MOM

Oh, and make sure to say hi to Linda for me. Her mother says she's

grown up to be quite the young
lady.

Tom is getting impatient.

TOM
Sure. I gotta go.

MOM
I love you.

He gives his Mom a quick peck on the cheek.

TOM
Love you, too.

Tom waves as she pulls away.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS DEPOT-DAY

Tom walks inside the bus depot...And straight out the back door.

EXT. FREEWAY ON RAMP-EL MONTE-DAY

Tom stands near the freeway on ramp and pulls out a cardboard sign announcing his destination: 'Minnesota.' He proudly raises his thumb and waits for the first ride.

EXT. STREET-FERGUS FALLS, MINNESOTA-SUNSET

A BEAT-UP TRUCK comes to a stop.
Tom hops out of the cab and closes the door. The Beat-up.
Truck drives off.

Tom then straightens himself up a little bit and gazes at the fancy marquee adorning a brick building: "Muggs Famous Concessions & Novelties".

INT. BRICK BUILDING-SUNSET

Tom meets MUGGS. A bloated red-neck with a penchant for big belt buckles and even bigger cigars. He gives Tom the tour.

MUGGS

Get familiar with the product, son.
'Cause these fine articles are what
you're gonna be sellin'.

Workers are busy stacking shelves with supplies...Novelties and concession goods, stuffed animals and tanks of helium. They move with the precision of a military unit preparing for war.

MUGGS (CONT'D)

(towering over Tom)
Got here in the nick of time. Were
expectin' you a couple of days
back. Me and the boys started
takin' bets on what happened.

RUSTY, a big corn-fed boy with a shock of red hair, strolls by balancing sacks of peanuts on his shoulders.

MUGGS (CONT'D)

What were we guessin', Rusty? Car
crash? Train wreck?

RUSTY

Hell, I just figured the California
boy pussied out.

Muggs laughs. Rusty keeps walking, forcing Tom out of his way. Tom's eyes burn holes into Rusty's back until something else catches his eye.

A PRINCESS IN GRAY COVERALLS...

Hopping down from a ladder. She pulls off her cap and a flood of auburn hair spills out. She brushes the hair from her face with a sweep of a gloved hand and walks over to Tom and smiles.

LINDA
Tom. Tommy Sachs.

LINDA gives the stunned Tom a hug. Tom can't believe his eyes. He didn't expect her to be so beautiful.

TOM
Linda. You...You look great.

To the side we see Rusty staring at the two of them with dagger eyes.

Muggs interrupts.

MUGGS
Well, you got one believer in the bunch. Linda swore you'd make it. If she weren't so stubborn, I'd have hired someone else by now.

Linda continues to look at Tom. She also seems surprised at how well Tom has aged.

LINDA
I just told these boys the Tommy Sachs I knew would make it here some way, some how...

MUGGS
(interrupts again)
But you better learn to show up on time. Next time you're late, you can drag your ass right back to California. You understand me, boy?

Linda gives Tom a nod to let him know Muggs means it.

TOM
Yes sir.

EXT. CARNIVAL-HUTCHENSON, MINNESOTA-DAY

Tom, selling cotton candy, notices several soldiers in uniform with their girls. He watches them as they walk down the midway. Something's on his mind. He snaps out of it as he's

distracted by...

EXT. CARNIVAL-ICE CREAM STAND-DAY

A local RED-NECK shoves in from the back of the line where Linda is serving ice cream.

RED-NECK

Hurry up, darlin'! I don't got all day.

LINDA

You'll have to wait your turn, sir.

Tom walks over, still holding- his cotton candy.

RED-NECK

Well then, you just gotta move that cute little ass of yours quicker.

Linda does her best to ignore him.

RED-NECK (CONT'D)

How about you meet me behind the tent and I'll show you what I mean.

Tom moves in.

TOM

'Cuse me.

Tom waves Red-neck over to the side of the stand.

TOM (CONT'D)

Why don't you leave the girl alone.

The Red-neck laughs.

RED-NECK

Get lost...Before I kick YOUR cute little ass.

Tom smiles.

Tom extends the tray of cotton candy. Confused, the Red-neck looks down at it, Tom SHOVES IT into the Red-

neck's face.

Then SLUGS him in the stomach. Redneck drops to his knees, wheezing and coughing.

LINDA
(shaking her head)
Well, I guess some things never
change.

Then she smiles.

LINDA (CONT'D)
Thank goodness.

There's a mad scramble as kids race to eat the cotton candy off the ground. During the commotion the Red-neck rises and skirts out of the area.

A BIG RED TRUCK, RUSTY'S PRIDE AND JOY...The truck skids to a halt. Rusty's at the wheel.

RUSTY
That cotton candy is comin' out of
your pay, California. Now get in.
Muggs wants us to drive into town
and get some supplies.

Tom lingers a moment, staring at Linda. She gives him an earnest smile, brushes the hair from her face.

LINDA
Thanks for your, uh, help.

Tom grins.

TOM
No problem.

He goes to open the truck door.

RUSTY
(points with his head)
In the back.

Tom climbs into the bed of the truck and Rusty pulls away. Looking back, Tom watches Linda wave to him. Rusty also sees

her through the rearview mirror, and he's not pleased.

EXT. CARNIVAL-NIGHT

The fair's closed for the night. Tom trudges along, raking up discarded trash. His white sneakers are now black with soot.

Tom makes his way down the midway.

Linda suddenly leans out of an ice cream stand in front of him.

LINDA

Hey!

Tom's face immediately brightens.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Lend me a hand here, will you?

Tom lowers the window shutters and leans against them. Linda latches them from inside, sealing herself in.

Linda steps out of the side door, locks it. Tom is standing next to her.

TOM

How'd it go today?

LINDA

Fine. How was your day?

TOM

Long.

LINDA

(smiles)

Yeah, goes with the territory. And what about Rusty, how the two of you getting along?

TOM

Well...If you don't mind me sayin', he's a strange one. What's the deal with you and him, anyway?

LINDA

No big deal. We're just friends.

Just slightly Tom raises his eyebrows and shakes his head indicating 'NO'.

TOM

Not according to him.

LINDA

Well, we are just friends, no matter what he says. We dated for awhile, but it was never serious.

TOM

I hate to break it to you, but he sure doesn't see it that way. I'm tellin' ya. You better be careful.

LINDA

Rusty's harmless and if he's not, well...I always have you around to protect me...Right?

TOM

And if I'm not around?

LINDA

(smiles)

You better be.

Tom smiles. There's kind of an awkward pause.

TOM

You, uh...You wanna go get somethin' to eat?

LINDA

I--

Rusty comes around the corner, munching a bag of popcorn. Looks at Linda.

RUSTY

You about finished? Pumpkin.

Linda looks to Tom and shrugs her shoulders.

LINDA

But we do still hang out.

(to Rusty)

Yep. All done.

Rusty looks at Tom. He wonders what he's just walked in on.

RUSTY

Well, let's get. Everybody's
waitin' and the movie starts in
half an hour.

She nods and turns back to Tom. Encouraging.

LINDA

I'll talk to you tomorrow.

She smiles.

TOM

Yeah. See you around.

Linda and Rusty walk off together. Rusty tosses his bag of popcorn on the ground. Turns back to Tom.

RUSTY

Missed a spot, California.

Tom's not happy, he watches them walk away. Rusty turns to Linda as they walk.

RUSTY (CONT'D)

California botherin' you?

LINDA

No. He's an old friend, you know
that.

As they get out of sight of Tom, Rusty grabs Linda's arm...Hard.

RUSTY

Well, I don't like it!

LINDA

You're hurting me.

Rusty relaxes his grip.

RUSTY

Sorry, pumpkin...I just want things to be like before. You know, me and you.

LINDA

Well, they're not. And if you can't accept it, then we'll have a problem staying friends even.

Rusty gets a strange look in his eyes.

RUSTY

Don't say that.

Rusty squeezes Linda's arm, again. She looks at Rusty, she's visibly shaken.

LINDA

Let's just meet up with the others, okay?

Rusty lets go of Linda's arm, abruptly. He still has that look in his eyes.

EXT. FAIRGROUNDS-GREAT FALLS, MONTANA-NIGHT

FIREWORXS...

Bursting overhead in a colorful display.

Tom and Linda sit on top of a VW Camper Van watching the show. The van is painted with peace signs, mushrooms and icons of free love.

A few of Linda's FEMALE HIPPIE FRIENDS sit with them, legs hanging over the side, while passing a joint between them.

Tom and Linda are sharing a second bottle of wine. Linda

whistles and cheers the bursts on. Tom stares up at the latest burst.

TOM
(aloud, to himself)
And the rocket's red glare...

He snaps out of it. Turns to Linda.

TOM (CONT'D)
Your mother's been keepin' my mom
up on Jerry. Do you ever hear from
him?

Linda still looking up in the sky at the fireworks.

LINDA
Not often, but when I do, he writes
about the most terrible things.

TOM
I imagine he has to do some
terrible things just to survive.

A beat.

Linda turns to Tom.

LINDA
Well, he wouldn't have to, if this
stupid country wasn't over there in
the first place. He's fighting for
everything I'm against.

Tom turns and looks straight ahead.

TOM
We're there to stop Communism and
to help those poor people.

Linda still looking at Tom, who is still looking straight ahead.

LINDA
I can't believe you just said that.
For one thing, they don't want us
over there and two, do you really
think Communism is a threat to the

United states, if it spreads
through South Vietnam?

Tom turns to Linda.

TOM

I don't know...I just go by what I
read.

LINDA

Yeah, Government propaganda, it's
all bullshit. Can't you see what
this government is doing, Tommy?

TOM

Hell Linda, I don't know. I'm
just proud of Jerry and proud of
him fighting for our country. Right
or wrong.

Linda looks at Tom disgusted.

LINDA

Let's not discuss it anymore, okay?

TOM

Sure.

He raises the bottle of wine.

TOM (CONT'D)

To Jerry!

Linda's friends heard most of the conversation and one of them
holds up the joint to toast Jerry. The others, including
Linda, raise their hands with the peace sign.

EVERYONE

To Jerry!

Tom and Linda look at each other. Fireworks light up the sky.
Linda lets out a big whistle, and smiling, snuggles up against
Tom.

LINDA

Why don't we take our party down
below.

Tom's grin meets hers.

INT. CAMPER VAN-NIGHT

Lighted candles and flowers fill the cramped space. The fireworks can still be heard faintly in the background. Tom's laid out in the lower berth. Linda puts on some music, then kneels over him.

LINDA (CONT'D)
I'm so glad you're here,
Tommy...Like nothing has changed.

Linda casually removes her blouse. She's not wearing a bra. Tom is a little...Surprised.

TOM
Well...A couple of things sure have
changed.

Tom smiles.

LINDA
Very funny.

The wooden crucifix dangles between her breasts. Tom reaches up to touch it.

LINDA (CONT'D)
Remember once you told me it'll
keep me safe.

TOM
Does it?

LINDA
Every time I look at it, I think
about you and that makes me feel
safe.

Tom looks up into her eyes. She moves down to meet his lips.

EXT. RODEO AND CARNIVAL-BILLINGS, MONTANA-DAY

The crowd's having a good laugh watching the clowns joke

around.

Tom's hustling popcorn in the bleachers. He has a clear view of the ice cream stand where Linda is working. As he moves through the section, he keeps looking over at Linda. She seems to be ignoring him. But as he looks away, she looks up and smiles.

ANNOUNCER

(O.S.)

Last chance to sign up for our
amateur saddle bronc riding
contest. Come show your lady what
you're made of.

Tom pauses a moment. A smile breaks across his face.

INT. ICE CREAM STAND-RIGHT NEXT TO THE RODEO RING-DAY

Linda is serving ice cream to the hot and hungry crowd. She glances in Tom's direction a couple of times only to find him gone out from her view.

Rusty walks over, leans into the booth.

RUSTY

Hey, Pumpkin, doin' anything
tonight?

Linda avoids the question, keeps serving customers.

ANNOUNCER

(O.S.)

Ladies and gentlemen, your
attention please. We have a cowboy
here, come all the way from
California and forgot his boots.

We hear a huge roar of laughter from the crowd.

Rusty is still bothering Linda.

RUSTY

Well, how about it?

Linda stops what she's doing, listens.

LINDA
Quiet, Rusty.

The laughter from the crowd dies down.

ANNOUNCER
(O.S.)
Anyone with a size ten boot willing
to help this California cowboy out?

This gets both Rusty and Linda's attention.

RUSTY
California cowboy?

LINDA
Couldn't be.

RUSTY
I gotta see this.

Rusty runs over to the rodeo ring. Linda pulls off her apron, tosses it to a co-worker.

LINDA
Take over for a minute.

Linda rushes out of the stand.

EXT. RODEO CHUTE AREA-DAY

Tom's shoe less, waiting. A rugged MARLBORO MAN saunters over, tosses him his boots. He gives Tom a tip of the hat, then climbs onto the fence to watch. Tom quickly pulls on the borrowed boots, spurs and all.

THE CHUTE...

Tom mounts up, A COWBOY standing on the chute leans over and shows Tom how to wrap the rope around his fist. Tight.

Tom looks across the ring, sees Linda perched at the edge of the fence. He grins and shrugs his shoulders, Linda shakes her head, but can't help but crack a smile. Then Tom looks back

at the bronc, takes a deep breath, and gives a nod.

The chute opens. The bronc breaks loose, bucks once...Tom lasts through that. And then the bronc heaves a mighty buck, and that's all it takes. Tom goes flying. He crashes down in the dust, hard. Rusty has a good laugh. Linda jumps from the fence and runs to Tom in the middle of the ring.

ANNOUNCER

(O.S.)

Boots, hell. Boy should've asked
for a helmet.

Another roar of laughter from the crowd.

ON TOM...

His eyes slowly open. Linda's beautiful face hovers above him as the dust swirls around them. Linda shakes her head.

LINDA

If fighting doesn't get you killed,
it's good to see you can find other
things that will.

Tom struggles to sit up, proud of himself. Just then Rusty walks up.

RUSTY

Dumb ass...

Linda looks up and glares at Rusty.

EXT. RIVER, NEAR THE FAIR GROUNDS-NIGHT

On the shore, Tom and Linda are holding hands as they lie next to each other in sleeping bags, they both are staring up into the sky observing the Northern Lights, which are brighter than usual.

EXT. THE SKY IN VIETNAM-NIGHT

Flashes of cannon fire from the battleships light up the sky.

EXT. GAMING AREA-NIGHT

Tom whips a softball at a stack of milk bottles...Misses.
Tries again...Harder...Ricochets off the podium.
Tom winds up. for a third try when all of a sudden Linda
steals the ball. She lobbs it, gently...Topples the stack. Tom
is stunned, ego bruised.

Linda looks at Tom and smiles.

LINDA

Trade secret.

She eagerly collects her stuffed doll.

EXT. CARNIVAL MIDWAY-NIGHT

The fair is closed and the rides are powered down. Tom and
Linda stroll down the midway hand-in-hand, kicking balloons
out of their way. The strings of light bulbs overhead shut off
and the place goes dark.

They stop, gazing at the big sky of Montana.

TOM

I've never seen stars as bright as
they are out here.

LINDA

We're just closer to heaven, I
guess.

They kiss.

TOM

Could be.

TOM (CONT'D)

Linda...I...

Linda's eyes go wide.

LINDA

Oh, shit...

A BIG RED TRUCK...

Rolls up behind them, kicking up dust. It's Rusty with a few of the boys. They bail out of the truck.

Rusty hurries over towards Tom and Linda.

RUSTY
What the hell ya doin' with my
girl, you piece of shit?

LINDA
Rusty, I'm not your girl.

RUSTY
You were until this asshole showed
up. He needs to be taught a lesson.

LINDA
Rusty...

Tom interrupts.

TOM
Stay out of this, Linda. This is
between me and Rusty.

Rusty's two friends step forward.

Rusty motions to his two friends. Waves them off.

RUSTY
You guys stay back. I'll handle
California boy.

Rusty pulls out a 10" hunting knife.

Linda is terrified, and she moves towards Rusty.

LINDA
Rusty, please don't!

TOM
(yells)
Stay back, Linda!

Rusty's friends grab Linda.

RUSTY
(wielding the knife)
Come on, boy...

The flash of the knife...Tom barely slips out of the way.

As Rusty thrusts a second time he loses his balance and Tom flings him into a tent post. Rusty drops the knife...Scrambles to recover it.

Tom hits Rusty in the face with a solid right. Rusty hits the ground, hard.

Tom then jumps on him and wrestles the knife away, and he throws it into some bushes. Tom gets ready to hit Rusty again...

LINDA
Tommy, don't!

Rusty's half dazed.

Tom looks at Linda and then back at Rusty who has covered up his head with his arms. Tom pushes off and stands up. Linda breaks away from Rusty's friends and runs over to Tom. The two friends help Rusty up. His mouth is bleeding. Rusty then breaks away from his friends as if he wants to continue the fight...

Just then Muggs comes driving up. When he gets out of the car, he immediately goes to Linda.

MUGGS
(looking at Rusty and the boys)
You idiots get back to camp. Now!

Rusty and the boys reluctantly head for the truck.

Muggs turns to Linda. He looks stoic...Somber.

MUGGS (CONT'D)
Linda, your mother called. You,
uh...You need to call her right
away.

Slowly, but clearly a look of panic settles on her.

CLOSE ON TOM. His jaw is set. His eyes are on Linda.

INT. SACHS' HOUSE-ARCADIA, CALIFORNIA-DAY

Jerry Grady's Memorial Service. Once again people gather to pay their respects. Mrs. Grady talks to Tom's mother as they sit on the couch.

MRS. GRADY

Best thing to bury him here. Right here...Where his father is buried.

Mom can feel the pain Mrs. Grady is in. She tries to make her feel at ease.

MOM

My home is your home. You relax. I'll take care of everything.

Mrs. Grady comes up with a sad smile.

ACROSS THE ROOM...

Tom looks very closely at a picture of Jerry in his Marine Corps dress blues. He's proud of Jerry. Thinking...

Gramps comes up to Tom. His suit looks like he's slept in it, he obviously hasn't slowed down his drinking. Puts a hand on Tom's shoulder.

GRAMPS

He made a damn good-lookin' Marine, didn't he?

TOM

(not looking up from the picture)
Yeah, he did, Gramps.

Linda has walked over. She overheard them.

LINDA

Don't the two of you get it? My brother died for nothing. This

Government doesn't care about him.

Gramps and Tom don't respond. They just watch Linda as she leaves the room.

EXT. SACHS' BACKYARD-DAY

The sky's a gloomy shade of purple. Rain's on the horizon. Tom and Linda sit in silence on the porch steps. Linda breaks the silence.

LINDA (CONT'D)

I'm getting out of this goddamn country. Canada, Mexico, Costa Rica maybe...why don't you come with me?

TOM

I can't.

LINDA

Why not? What happened to the Tom I used to know? Remember? The boy who wanted to travel the world? See it all?

TOM

That's still me. I guess I'm just startin' that trip somewhere else. I'm joinin' the Marines...I wanna go to Vietnam.

Linda's eyes cut into Tom.

LINDA

I don't believe you just said that.

TOM

I don't know why. You know I've always wanted to be a soldier, and this is one fight I've got to be part of. I owe it to myself and now to Jerry.

Linda loses it.

LINDA

Then you're some kind of idiot.
This isn't fucking war games in the
meadow, Tom. Dirt clods and water
balloons. People are dying over
there, for no reason at all. Boys,
like my brother. And maybe you,
too.

TOM

Not me...I'm comin' back.

LINDA

Yeah, that's what Jerry said.

A beat.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Well, while you play war hero, I'm
going to travel the world. I'm
going to do what "YOU" dreamed
about when we were kids.

TOM

And someday I'll do the same.

LINDA

I hope so, Tom. I really do.

She gets up and walks into the house. Before the door closes
behind her, she takes one last look at Tom. She truly cares
for him.

EXT. MARINE AIRBASE, EL TORO, CALIFORNIA-NIGHT

A company of Marines that just graduated from advance infantry training at Camp Pendleton are boarding a TWA airliner headed for Vietnam. It is no different than a TWA commercial flight headed for Paris, France. There is an attractive stewardess greeting the Marines as they board the plane and another four making sure they get to their seats and are as comfortable as possible. Once the Marines, including Tom Sachs are aboard and seated, a CRUSTY OLD SERGEANT comes aboard and stands at the head of the plane, looking down the main aisle. The noise level is very high, due to a lot of talking and laughing from the young soon to be warriors, although they are acting more as if they are going on a vacation than going to war. Then the crusty Old Sergeant yells out.

CRUSTY OLD SERGEANT
Shut the fuck up!

He is dead serious. The Marines quiet down. Tom Sachs looks at the Crusty Old Sergeant, trying to figure out what his problem is.

The crusty Old Sergeant continues in a loud voice.

CRUSTY OLD SERGEANT (CONT'D)
Just keep it up, cherries. Keep up
the grab assing and bullshit. But
you better start lookin' around,
cause you're in an infantry
company, goin' to Vietnam. And
that means only one thing...Most of
you aren't comin' back. Now jack
on that for awhile!

Tom Sachs looks at the Stewardess standing near him, the look on her face is one of concern.

EXT. OPEN FIELD-DMZ, VIETNAM-DAY

A GREEN CH-34 HELICOPTER touching down.

Tom Sachs crouches in the hatch alongside Squad Leader. We

close in on Squad Leader's upper arm. It is muscled and has a tattoo that says "In the valley of death, I am the toughest Mother Fucker". When the helicopter comes to rest, they start to unload, Sachs first, then Squad Leader and then the rest of the squad.

The blades of the helicopter create a dust storm as they run to the end of the clearing, which is lined with trees and bushes. Tom is on point, now that Lamb is dead. The squad moves single file through the bush.

MONTAGE OF SACHS' DAYS IN VIETNAM

ON THE SOUND TRACK, A JOHNNY CASH SONG...

EXT, VIETNAM JUNGLE-DAY

Alpha squad humps through the bush. SL stops and gets on the radio. The troops rest. Sachs takes a drink and empties his canteen. He's overheated and breathing hard, but holding his own.

EXT. VIETNAM JUNGLE-NIGHT

The moon shines bright on the hilly landscape. Sachs is awake on perimeter watch, hidden in the eerie shadows, holding the trigger of a Claymore mine. He looks at his watch. He quietly moves to Johns...Wakes him up. Gives him the Claymore trigger.

Then Sachs crawls back to his spot, lies right down where he was and falls asleep.

EXT. VIETNAM JUNGLE-DAY

Alpha squad is dug in, holding their position. Everything is quiet, men at the ready. We go from man to man, until finally we end up focused on the RTO, THE SCORE SUDDENLY STOPS as a VOICE barks over the radio speaker.

RADIO OPERATOR

(O.S.)

Shit, they're comin' through!
They're headin' the fuck right
through us, straight due North--

Squad Leader shakes his head. Not happy. Gunfire sounds over the radio.

RADIO OPERATOR (CONT'D)

(O.S.)

--Fuck. Oh, fuck, man. Call in some...

AN EXPLOSION... THEN JUST STATIC...

Not good.

SQUAD LEADER

(yells to the squad)

On me now, get your asses over here.

The squad gathers around him.

SQUAD LEADER (CONT'D)

Listen up. The NVA just over ran Delta Squad and they're headed right the fuck for us. Our orders are to hold this position at all cost.

JOHNS

Fuck this, man. I'm too short for this shit.

Sachs is pumped up. He is looking off toward the South. Squad Leader is not happy. Rubbing his head.

SQUAD LEADER

We're truly fucked...

Sachs looks at the other guys. Fear in the veterans' faces. It chills him. But he has an idea.

SACHS

SL, what we need is somebody over there (pointing to the West) on the right flank, to take 'em out when they come at us.

SQUAD LEADER

What's that, Sachs?

SACHS

They're comin' from the South,
right?

He points. SL nods.

SACHS (CONT'D)

What if I go and flank 'em from
around there...

He points to the tree line to the West.

SACHS (CONT'D)

You guys start pourin' out fire and
they'll follow it...And from over
there, I can cut 'em down.

Sachs looks at the faces of the others. Nobody has a better idea. In fact, Squad Leader thinks it's a pretty good one. He continues as if Sachs' idea is his own.

SQUAD LEADER

Right. Johns, you set up halfway
to the trees with your Pig, and as
soon as you see the NVA, you cut
the shit out of the mother-fuckers.

Johns nods.

SQUAD LEADER (CONT'D)

Junior, go with Sachs.

JUNIOR

What?!?

He wants nothing to do with that. Sachs notices.

SACHS

It'll be better if I go alone, SL.

The squad looks at Sachs. Crazy white boy...SL considers it

for a second. Junior waits for the decision.

SQUAD LEADER

Okay, Sachs, do your thing.

Sachs smiles...Hell yes...Junior is relieved. Sachs drops his rucksack and any equipment that will slow him down. He loads up on ammunition, gives the squad one last look, then takes off.

THE TREES.,.

Sachs crosses the bush and hits the tree line. He checks his weapon.

ON ALPHA...

John breaks away and sets up between SL and Sachs' position. Junior goes with him carrying the ammunition for the Pig.

WITH SQUAD LEADER ...

He moves slowly through the waist-high grass...The other men follow. He fans them out.

ON SACHS.,.

He's secured a position with a good view of the area. But no sight of NVA, yet. He's pumped.

ON SQUAD LEADER...

He is scanning the hillside ahead. He spots movement.

HIS POV-NVA...

They're scattered in small groups. Alpha is badly outnumbered.

SQUAD LEADER (CONT'D)

(to himself)

Holy shit...I hope this fuckin' works.

Squad Leader opens fire. So do the other guys still with him.

ON TOM...

Heightened senses. Heart pounding. Ready for this. This is what he came here for.

ON THE NVA...

They're taking fire from Alpha and continue straight for them just as Sachs predicted.

WIDER...

A group of NVA step into Sachs' line of fire, unaware of his presence to their right flank.

A BEAT ...

Sachs opens fire. Four NVA fall. Confused, they try to shift direction, but Sachs has the element of surprise. He drops three more. Sachs then turns and moves behind another set of trees, closer to the Pig.

ON JOHNS...

He waits until more NVA move towards Sachs. Then he opens up on them with the 50 caliber. The Pig cuts into them.

The NVA are caught in a three way cross fire, but their numbers are too overwhelming. Wave after wave keep coming.

ON THE RTO...

He slumps back on his radio, dead.

Automatic weapons are firing everywhere. Men dive to ground. Washington and Lewis crumple to it, dead. Massive confusion.

SQUAD LEADER (CONT'D)

(to his men)

Let's get the fuck outta here! Pull back! Now!

The NVA are not moving towards Sachs anymore. Alpha Squad is taking all the fire.

THE TREE LINE...

Sachs hesitates briefly.

Then he's running...Racing along the tree line right towards the NVA.

Clouds of dust are drilled up around him but he drives on, eyes blazing with a divine fury, shooting wildly, using the tree line as protection.

Junior feeds Johns as he lays out more fire. Then Junior is hit, twice in the chest. He's gone.

ON SQUAD LEADER...

As he reloads his M-16. But before he can start to shoot, AK-47 fire rakes across his chest. He's dead before he hits the ground.

SACHS...

Unloads everything he's got at the enemy. As he ducks behind a tree, he reloads. He steps back out, and then...BLAM!

A SINGLE ROUND SLAMS INTO HIS HEAD...

HIS EYES...LOSE FOCUS, THEN FALL FROM FRAME. AN INTENSE RINGING...THEN SILENCE....

CLOSE ON TOM. EYES SHUT...BODY SPRAWLED OUT ON THE GROUND...BLOOD EVERYWHERE...

VERY SLOW FADE TO BLACK...

THEN SACHS' POV-A SHAFT OF LIGHT...

Cloudy at first, then increasing in brightness to a blinding white. Then, something moves...shapes or figures.

Then the shapes or figures disappear and the bright light starts to dim. Then, a distant but very clear voice.

VOICE

When you go back, there's one thing
you people always forget and that

one thing is--

A beat.

VOICE (CONT'D)

--Everything is going to be okay.

VERY SLOW FADE TO BLACK-AGAIN ...

STILL SACHS' POV...

His eyes are still shut, but flashes of light start to break through. Then the faint sound of gunfire.

More flashes, the gunfire gets louder. All of sudden...

WE SLAM CUT TO THE FIRE FIGHT. FAST, LOUD, BRUTAL--

ON JOHNS...

Belching rounds from the Pig as he advances, firing from the hip, burning the barrel off. Out of his mind. Then he's hit. His body explodes as he's riddled by bullets. Blood flies everywhere.

ON TOM...

On his back, staring straight up, eyes wide open. He's completely paralyzed on his right side. He raises his left arm, feels the gaping hole on the top of his head, on the left side. His hand comes down with nothing but blood and torn flesh.

Reality seems to slow down. Men in green step over him, reinforcements. They move toward the NVA.

The sounds of rifles, explosions, yelling and screaming. In the distance, the thunder of helicopters.

A CORPSMAN is next to him, huffing and puffing, wrapping Sachs' head in a shroud of gauze.

SACHS

How...How bad is it?

CORPSMAN

stay quiet...It's gonna be okay.

EXT. JUNGLE VIETNAM-DAY

SACHS...

Images and sounds begin to float by like a bad dream.

BOUNCING, RUNNING, CARRIED ON A STRETCHER ...

MACHINE GUN AND RIFLE FIRE... EXPLOSIONS...

EXT. LANDING ZONE-VIETNAM JUNGLE-DAY

Four helicopters are ready to take off. The wind from their rotors is fierce.

Sachs is lying on _a stretcher next to a sea of body bags.

INT. HELICOPTER FLYING-OVER THE VIETNAM JUNGLE-DAY

Jam-packed with soldiers. Moaning and groaning. Blood flowing in pools across the floor. A gunner fires continuously. At what, Sachs can't make out. The lights flicker. The world shakes. Empty cartridges from the gun rain down.

Sachs tries to move his right side, can't. He raises his right arm with his left. It falls uselessly back down towards his chest.

DISSOLVE TO:
A FALLING PLATE...

HITS THE FLOOR, SHATTERS.

INT. SACHS' HOUSE-DAY

MOM

DAMN!

She bends down and picks up the pieces.

When she stands, she looks out the kitchen window.
TWO MARINES IN DRESS BLUES...

Slowly exit an official Government car.

Mom puts the broken pieces on the counter as she stares through the window and sees the Marines start to cross the street, heading towards the door. She's scared to death. She turns and leans against the cabinet and slowly slides down to the floor. She puts her hands to her face and starts to cry.

GENERAL

(O.S.)

--for the tremendous sacrifice
you've made for God and your
Country...Words can never fully
express the gratitude and
appreciation your Country holds for
you--

The doorbell rings.

Mom looks up, the look in her face tells it all.

THE PURPLE HEART...

Held suspended in midair by some anonymous GENERAL.

INT. NEURO WARD-DAY

The General leans forward, pins the medal to Tom Sachs' hospital gown. Tom's been gussied up for the ceremony. His head is completely wrapped in a fresh bandage.

GENERAL

Thank you, Marine.

As the General reaches to shake Tom's hand, Gramps, who looks worse than ever and is not holding his liquor as well as before, steps up to interrupt.

GRAMPS

General, he can't.

The General opts for a salute. Starts to turn away.

TOM

Sir, I wasn't supposed to receive
one of these.

The General turns back, struggles for an explanation.

TOM (CONT'D)

I was supposed to be in country for
twelve months, not less than 30
days.

GENERAL

You served your Country son, that's
something to be proud of.
Nobody can ever take that away from
you.

This should console Tom, but it doesn't. He drips with
sarcasm.

TOM

Sir, yes sir.

The General, Adjutant and Young MD move on to another bed.
Gramps sits back down next to his daughter. He's having a lot
of guilt. Tom's mother is just glad her son is home.

THE TWO TOUR VETERAN...

Lies in his bed, surrounded by his wife and four-year-old son.
His son keeps trying to peek under daddy's head bandage. Two
Tours lifts him onto his lap.

Tom notices that Two Tours not only has a Purple Heart, but a
Silver Star too. They lie right next to each other on his
night stand.

TWO TOURS

Couldn't see a damn thing, but we
could hear 'em tossing grenades.
One landed near the LT and, by God,
I went for it. Tossed it behind,
us. It exploded and I caught some
in the back of the head. Nothin'
serious.

He sticks out his tongue and rolls his eyes, making his son laugh. His wife gives him a light slap. He winks at her.

Tom turns away from the happy scene, forces his eyes closed.

INT. NEURO WARD-DAY

Tom, with his head bandaged, lies in bed with his eyes closed. An AIDE brings in the mail.

AIDE

Hey, Sachs, you got a postcard.
Forwarded from good old Vietnam.

Tom opens his eyes and grabs the postcard with his left hand. The postcard is of a river winding beautifully through a dense countryside. He flips it over and reads.

LINDA

(V.O.)

Dear Tom; You wouldn't believe
Costa Rica. You would love it
here. Your Gramps was right,
there's a lot to see in this world
and since you're busy fighting a
war, I plan on seeing enough for
both of us.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Hope this finds you safe. Love
Linda. P.S. Pretty exciting
adventure ...For a girl.

Tom flips the postcard back over and stares at the picture.

INT, NEURO WARD-NIGHT

BEDMAN

HAAAAAAHHHHHHHHH!!!

Bedman, right side up, is groaning and muttering ...senseless words. Eyes open wide, but looking at nothing.

Tom, with his head bandaged, lies in his bed. He can't take Bedman's groaning anymore, he yells for a nurse.

TOM
Nurse! Nurse!

But no one comes. Finally, Tom sits up, takes his left hand and throws his pillow. It bounces off the back of Bedman's head.

TOM (CONT'D)
(yells)
Shut the fuck up!

No good. Tom is stewing in frustration. Getting no sleep...

BEDMAN
(O.S.)
HAAAAAAHHHHHHHHH!!!!

TOM
Goddamnit!

INT. NEURO WARD-DAY

The nurses are doing their morning rounds. They pull open the shades and wake patients for their medications.

The HEAD NURSE walks over to Tom with a tray. Thanks to Bedman, he's wide awake.

HEAD NURSE
How are we feeling today?

TOM
(sarcastically)
'WE' aren't feelin' too goddamn good.

She ignores him, prepares a hypodermic for injection.

HEAD NURSE
Roll over.

Tom grabs the vial off her tray. Reads it.

TOM

Antibiotics. What's the fuckin' point? Give me somethin' so I can sleep. Valium or some shit.

He points to Bedman.

TOM (CONT'D)

Give me what this asshole gets to. sleep all day.

HEAD NURSE

Don't forget who's stripes, Private. You better watch your filthy mouth. Now turn over.

Tom rocks on his side. She opens his gown from behind, pulls down his shorts and jabs him in the butt with the needle. She slaps on a bandage and moves on.

Tom climbs into his chair. He deliberately bumps Bedman as he rolls past. Bedman doesn't flinch.

TOM

Asshole.

He rolls past Sergeant Jack, who currently lives on a different planet.

SERGEANT JACK

(stutters)

He..y. Wha..t cha' do..in'?

Tom's in a rotten mood. He stops and turns to Sergeant Jack.

TOM

Dammit, Jack. Go bother someone else.

Tom rolls away. Sergeant Jack mulls that over.

INT. NEURO WARD-DAY

Tom, with his head bandaged, sits in his wheelchair curling a light weight with his good arm. TWO TOURS is ready to go. The Aide pushes up a wheelchair. Instead of sitting, Two Tours drops his duffel bag into the chair. As he walks by

Tom he slaps him on the back.

TWO TOURS

Don't worry, Marine, I'm goin' back
over. I'll get a few for you, too.

He walks out, peacock proud, with the Aide serving as porter.
Tom watches him go, then looks at his limp arm.

EXT. A LONG DIMLY LIT CORRIDOR-THIRD FLOOR OF THE VETERANS
HOSPITAL-DAY

Tom rolls down the corridor. The young MD comes walking up
the other way, pen still lodged in his mouth.

YOUNG MD

Good morning, Private Sachs. How
are you today?

TOM

Great, Doc. Just fuckin' great.

The doctor knows Tom is frustrated.

YOUNG MD

First visit home today, right?

TOM

Yeah.

YOUNG MD

Well, I guess you're looking
forward to that.

TOM

Yeah, like a goddamn enema, Doc.

INT. NEURO WARD-DAY

Tom sits in his wheelchair, dressed in his civilian clothes
with his head wrapped ...waiting.

Gramps arrives, in his usual shape.

GRAMPS

So, you ready, kiddo?

TOM

I guess.

GRAMPS

C'mon, Tommy. Your Mom is waitin'
in the car. She's really been
lookin' forward to this.

But Tom is far less than enthusiastic.

TOM

Right...

EXT. SACHS' HOUSE-DAY

WHEELS...

Rolling along wooden planks.

Gramps helps Tom up a makeshift ramp added to the front steps.
It wobbles slightly, but they make it to the top.

INT. DINING ROOM-SACHS' HOUSE-NIGHT

Tom sits around the dinner table with his Mom and Gramps,
Gramps has had time to get even more drunk. A huge 'Welcome
Home' sign hangs high on the wall. There's plenty of food and
Tom has a huge plate full of it in front of him.

IT'S AWKWARD...

MOM

Your brother can't wait to get home
and see you. He's got one more
final, before his semester break.

TOM

Yeah, it'll be good to see him too,
Mom.

Tom tries to cut the meat on his plate with a fork. It's not easy, but he's growing accustomed to it.

MOM

Mrs. Johnson sent over a cake, Tommy. Said she remembers how much you liked her double chocolate cake growing up. Oh, and Linda's Mom has been asking about you.

Tom doesn't like the last part.

TOM

Please Mom, the less Linda's mom knows...Well, just please, from now on let's keep everything to the family, okay.

MOM

Sure, Tommy...I understand.

Tom's mom notices the difficulty he's having with his food. Gramps notices too, but he tries not to pay attention. Doesn't want to offend or pity Tom. He's seen it before.

GRAMPS

Hey, kiddo, if you can make it here, then pretty soon we can make it to the track.

MOM

Dad! You know how I feel about that place.

She looks at Tom, who's not listening. He's still struggling with his food. Frustration mixed with determination.

GRAMPS

Ah, there's nothin' wrong with the track. What do you think, Tommy?

Tom looks up at the mention of his name. Mom takes her knife and fork and leans over to help Tom.

TOM

Mom, don't!

MOM

Oh, Tommy, I don't mind.

TOM

Well, I do. I don't need your
help! Please, just leave me alone!

His mother is visibly shaken, she looks down her plate and begins to fidget with her food. Gramps gives Tom a stern stare.

Tom looks at Gramps, then his Mom. He shakes his head.

TOM (CONT'D)

Man...

He pushes himself away from the table and rolls away. Gramps looks at his daughter. This is tough for everyone.

GRAMPS

I'll go.

He walks off after Tom, leaving Mom feeling helpless.

EXT. SACHS' BACK PORCH-NIGHT

Tom wheels around in small, slow circles. Gramps comes out of the house. Tom doesn't look up.

TOM

So, where do you keep the Cutty
these days?

Tom continues circling, then looks up at Gramps.

TOM (CONT'D)

You got any on you, or do you want
me to go to your workshop with you?
We playin' that game again?

Gramps is caught off guard.

GRAMPS

What the hell are you talkin'
about?

Tom stops circling.

TOM

Wasn't that the thing? Play in
your workshop and watch you get
loaded?

He's pushing Gramps' buttons with everything he's got.

GRAMPS

Now listen to me, you little wise
ass. We're goin' talk about your
attitude, right--

Tom interrupts.

TOM

It sucks. Thanks.

GRAMPS

You're goddamn right! And you
better change it. I can take your
crap, but you broke your mother's
heart in there.

TOM

Well, she just doesn't get it. I
don't need her fuckin help. I
don't need anybody's help.

GRAMPS

Yeah? That's where you're full of
shit. You do need help, and a lot
of it.

GRAMPS (CONT'D)

And you better realize that or you
ain't gonna make it through to the
other side of this. I promise you.

Gramps pulls a small flask from his back pocket. He takes a
swig. Offers it to Tom.

GRAMPS (CONT'D)

Is this what you want?

Tom looks right at Gramps.

TOM

Save it. Look, what put me in this
chair I picked up from you. You
and your goddamn stories.
Fuckin' ducks in a tree and all
that shit. I don't look too
invincible now, do I.

Tom goes back to rolling in small circles with his head down.

TOM (CONT'D)

So, I don't wanna hear any more
about it, okay? Jesus Christ,
I'm doin' the goddamn best I can!

Gramps is stung by this accusation...And the truth in it.
Tom turns and wheels back inside.

A FOREST OF MAJESTIC REDWOODS...

DISSOLVE TO:

Yosemite. Soaring over it. Cool, green, serene. A boy's
paradise.

And WE FOLLOW Tom at Ten years old running through it, not a
care in the world. He disappears behind some trees.

Then the CAMERA DESCENDS. Vegetation changes. Palm trees
and twisted jungle foliage obscures everything, becoming...

VIETNAM...

NOTE: THIS SCENE WILL MIRROR THE EARLIER SCENE, BUT FROM A
DIFFERENT POV, SLOW MOTION, MONOCHROME...

TOM, as he was in Vietnam, bursts into the clearing, charging
FORWARD. Clouds of dust are drilled up around him but he
drives on.

ON JOHNS...

Junior feeds him as he lays out fire. He is hit. Junior
goes down.

ON SQUAD LEADER...

AK-47 fire rakes across his chest. He's dead before he hits
the ground.

ON SACHS...Unloads everything he's got at the enemy. As he ducks behind a clump of trees, he reloads. He steps back out, and then...BLAM!

A SINGLE ROUND SLAMS INTO HIS HEAD...

A POINT OF LIGHT...

Blinding...Filling his field of vision. There's movement. Shapes of figures ...Vaguely familiar. And above them...

VOICE

(O.S.)

When you go back, there is one thing you people always forget, and that one thing is--

A beat.

VOICE (CONT'D)

(O.S.)

--Everything is going to be okay...Okay...Okay...

INT. NEURO WARD-NIGHT

Tom, with his head bandaged, lurches awake in bed, breathing hard.

BEDMAN

(O.S.) (Muffled voice)

Help me...Help me--

It takes a moment, but finally Tom cocks an ear, listens.

The voice is corning from Bedman. He is laying face down, his head is around three feet from the ground. But now, for the first time, instead of mumbling, the words are recognizable. In a whisper...

BEDMAN (CONT'D)

--Help me. I don't wanna

die...Please help me.

Tom looks over at Bedman, hesitates.

TOM

Hold on, I'll get a nurse.

Tom yells for a nurse.

TOM (CONT'D)

Nurse! Nurse, come here, quick!

Tom see's the NIGHT NURSE coming down the ward. She arrives.

NIGHT NURSE

(to Tom)

What's the Problem?

TOM

Not me.

Tom points to Bedman.

TOM (CONT'D)

Him. Says he needs help.

Bedman is moaning, but not whispering anything anymore. The Night Nurse checks his pulse, then his head. She looks over to Tom, not convinced.

TOM (CONT'D)

Hey look, he sleeps during the day and moans and groans all fuckin' night. This is the first time he's said anything, at least anything you could understand. He was askin' for help...said he didn't wanna die.

NIGHT NURSE

Well, his pulse rate is up a little, but his breathing is normal. You go back to sleep, I'll check on him later.

The nurse walks away. Bedman continues to moan. Tom looks at him, wondering if he's going to speak again.

The moaning stops. Silence. Tom waits. A beat.

TOM
Hey. You alright?

Nothing. Silence.

TOM (CONT'D)
Hey, pal!

Nothing. Silence.

TOM (CONT'D)
Man ...

Tom throws his pillow onto the floor. Then he lowers his body down, he makes sure his head bandage is tight, then drags himself toward Bedman. Bedman remains silent. Tom slides directly under him, props his head on the pillow and holds Bedman's gaze. Bedman blinks.

TOM (CONT'D)
Well, at least you're still alive.

Badman just stares at Tom. There's fear in his eyes.

BEDMAN
(in a whisper)
I don't...I don't wanna die.

Tom doesn't answer immediately. Then...

TOM
Hey, I understand, completely.
I got shot in the head, thought I
was dead for sure.

Something dawns on Tom. Bedman listens.

TOM (CONT'D)
But, you know?

A beat.

TOM (CONT'D)

Tonight, I remembered somethin'...
And it was somethin' I should of
never forgotten...

(TIME LAPSE)

...You can draw your own
conclusion, I've drawn mine. The
way I figure it, I'm one of the
lucky ones, rather that I lived or
remembered that voice, either
way...I'm goin' to take full
advantage of both from now on.

Bedman continues to listen.

TOM (CONT'D)

I guess what I'm tryin' to tell
you...Well...Just don't fear the
unknown.

A beat.

BEDMAN

(whispers)

Death?

Tom understands Bedman's situation, and the inevitable.

TOM

Yeah, death.

The two men hold each other's gaze; Bedman's eyes have slowly
altered over the course of this conversation. He no longer
seems afraid.

Tom's look is one of satisfaction. By helping Bedman, he may
have found his own answers.

INT. NEURO WARD-DAY

Morning sun slices through the windows. Tom's eyes opening
wide. He's back in bed. Next to him, Bedman has been rotated

upright, horizontal.

The Young' MD, Head Nurse and a couple of Aides stand around him.

Tom stares at Bedman's face. A serenity. He is dead. The Head Nurse covers him and the Aides wheel him and his bed away. The young MD and Tom share a look.

THEN...

Suddenly, something catches Tom's eye.

MOVEMENT...

His little finger on his right hand. It's moving...On his command.

Tom sits upright, stares. The movement is slight, but it is moving! He looks at Bedman's empty space. He starts to tear up.

INT. THERAPY ROOM-DAY

The Therapist walks in and pulls open the blinds. Sunlight pours in, revealing ...

Tom sitting in the center of the room, waiting for her. Staring her straight in the eyes.

TOM (CONT'D)

I know I've been an asshole. But
look...

She notices the little finger on his right hand moving up and down.

THERAPIST

(smiles)

That's a start.

TOM

Doc, I need to walk again.

She removes her coat.

THERAPIST

Let's get to work, then.

EXERCISE MONTAGE

Tom, with his head bandaged, sitting in his wheelchair, is squeezing a tennis ball in his right hand. The ball falls out and the Therapist puts it back.

Tom continues...

The Therapist helps Tom stretch his right hand.

The Therapist helps Tom raise his right arm up and down.

Now for the first time since Tom's been in the hospital his head is not bandaged. His hair is short, just starting to grow out, and there is an indentation on the top of his head on the left side where the bullet went through.

Tom is doing pull-ups, raising himself out of his wheelchair.

Tom wiggles all the fingers his right arm. Then, he lifts his right arm up and down. He and the Therapist share a smile.

END MONTAGE

INT. NEURO WARD-DAY

Tom, with-no bandage, wheels over to Sergeant Jack's bed. Sergeant Jack is lying there staring up at the ceiling.

TOM

Hey, Jack. I got a postcard
from my friend Linda today, wanna
share it with me?

Jack sits up. His head has been freshly shaved, revealing a patchwork of scars across his skull.

SERGEANT JACK

(stutters)

s..ure.

Tom stares at Jack's- scalp, takes a moment then starts to

read the postcard out loud.

TOM

Dear Tom, I'm so sorry to hear you were injured in Vietnam. My mom wrote me when she heard you got hurt, but gave me few details. I hope it isn't serious. You know how I feel about the war and our government. I just wish you would of came with me, instead of joining the Marines. Please write me and tell me how you are doing, and if it's okay, I am going to fly back next month and visit you. I can't wait to see you again. Love, Linda.

SERGEANT JACK

(stutters)

Tha..ts g..ood T.om.

TOM

Yeah, so anyway, this is what I wrote her back.

Tom pulls out a piece of paper from underneath his leg and starts to read again, aloud.

TOM (CONT'D)

Dear Linda, it was good hearing from you. My injury is not serious and by the time you fly back here, I'll be back in Vietnam. But, I do appreciate the thought and would of loved seeing you. From your first postcard it sounds like you are having a great time, it all sounds so exciting. I can't wait to catch up with you someday. Take care of yourself, Love...Tom

Sergeant Jack is confused.

SERGEANT JACK

(stutters)
 Yo..u're n..ot go..in' ba..ck t..o
 Viet..nam. w..hy do..n't y..ou
 w..ant t..o s..ee h..er?

Tom puts the paper back under his leg and looks at Sergeant Jack.

TOM
 Look at me, Jack. Do you think I
 want her to see me this way? Hell,
 we've known each other since we
 were six years old and she's always
 believed I could do anything. I
 don't ever want her to think
 otherwise.

EXT. GIGANTIC REDWOOD, YOSEMITE, CALIFORNIA-DAY

Tom age ten, climbing half way up a gigantic redwood. As he is climbing higher and higher, the limbs start to get thinner and the wind blows harder. Tom stops about three-quarters the way up the tree and looks back down through the branches. Standing on the ground looking up is Linda, who is holding her breath with her arms crossed on her chest. Their eyes meet, Linda is scared to death. Tom turns his head and looks back up the tree and continues his climb to the top. Just as he gets near the top of the tree, he puts his right foot on a thin branch and it breaks. Then the two branches he is holding on to also break. He starts to fall. Linda gasps in fear. As Tom is falling, his arms are stretched out and his hands start hitting branch after branch, slowing his fall down. Then, about half way down the branches become sturdy enough to stop his fall. Linda can't believe her eyes and she lets out a sigh of relief. Tom puts his feet on some secure branches and looks down at Linda, smiles and shrugs his shoulders. Linda just shakes her head.

INT. HOSPITAL WARD-DAY

Sergeant Jack interrupts Tom's thought process.

SERGEANT JACK
 (stutters)

Ho..w'd yo..u ge..t hu..rt a..gain?

TOM

Shot, Jack. Vietnam, remember.

Sergeant Jack thinks for a moment, then nods.

SERGEANT JACK

(stutters)

Th..at's ri..ght. Sor..ry.

TOM

Not a problem, Jack.

SERGEANT JACK'

(stutters)

I..'m ha..ving a..nother sur..gery.

For the first time, Jack's not smiling. He's dead serious.

SERGEANT JACK (CONT '.D)

(stutters)

I.. do..n..t wa..nt hi..m cu..tting
o..n m..e a..ny..m..ore.

Tom can see that Sergeant Jack is looking for help.

TOM

I don't blame ya. I'll tell you
what...I'll try and find out what
in hell he's up to. Alright?

SERGEANT JACK

(inquisitive)

(stutters)

Wh..en?

Now's as good as time as any.

TOM

Well, how about right now.

SERGEANT JACK

(stutters)

Go..od.

INT. NURSE'S STATION, NEURO WARD-DAY

Tom rolls over to the nurse's station. The Head Nurse is busy doing her charts.

TOM

'Cuse me.

Head Nurse looks up.

HEAD NURSE

Yes.

TOM

Is Sergeant Jack's surgeon around?

HEAD NURSE

I'm not sure.

TOM

Well, could you check, please?

ANOTHER NURSE approaches the desk.

ANOTHER NURSE

I just passed him in the courtyard.

EXT. HOSPITAL COURTYARD-DAY

Tom wheels through the courtyard. He sees the SURGEON speaking with a couple of other doctors. As they finish, Tom approaches.

TOM

Excuse me, sir.

The Surgeon turns impatiently towards Tom.

TOM (CONT'D)

I don't mean to be disrespectful or speak out of turn...But I'm friends with Sergeant Jack and I was wonderin' if there's any alternative to all these surgeries, you know, like the ones that require you to cut open his skull.

SURGEON

(dismissive)

No. There's not.

The Surgeon doesn't have any time for this. Tom has all the time in the world.

TOM

Could you tell me why?

SURGEON

Not without you going through medical school first. Listen, this is none of your business. I expect this to be the last conversation you and I have on this subject.

The surgeon turns and walks away, Tom watches, disappointed.

INT. NEURO WARD-DAY

Sergeant Jack lies in bed.

Tom wheels over, dressed up for a weekend home.

TOM

I talked to your Surgeon, but it did little good. He's kind of an asshole. The Nurse told me that you weren't scheduled for surgery till next week. So, we still have time to fight this guy.

Sergeant Jack turns and looks at Tom.

SERGEANT JACK

(stutters)

Yo..u an..d me.., we.. ca..n
fi..ght thi...s gu .. y...Ri..ght.

TOM

Yeah Jack, you and me.

Jack smiles and Tom reaches out, they shake hands. Tom
gives a slight smile.

TOM (CONT'D)

Jack, I'm runnin' late. I'm goin'
home for the weekend. I'll see you
Sunday night, okay?

SERGEANT JACK

(stutters)

o.. ka..y.

INT. GRAMPS' WORKSHOP-DAY

Gramps is clean shaven and. his clothes are pressed. He is
molding a horseshoe, pounding it with a large hammer.

His daughter enters.

GRAMPS

Hi, honey, what brings you to this
neck of the woods?

She looks around the shop.

MOM

We need to talk.

Gramps continues to work.

GRAMPS

Okay, let's talk. By the way,
when's the last time you were here?

MOM

I've never been here, Dad. This
has always been yours and Tommy's
hangout.

Gramps looks at her...He just smiles. Then he goes back to
work.

MOM (CONT'D)

You know, a friend *is* driving Tommy
home for the weekend.

Gramps doesn't look up, continues on.

GRAMPS

That's good, saves you a trip.

Mom fumbles with some old bridles.

MOM

Tommy keeps asking me how you're
doing, with your drinking. Don't
you think it's time you two get
together and work things out.

Gramps stops, sets the hammer down and looks at his daughter.

GRAMPS

I don't think I can, honey. Not
yet, anyway.

MOM

Dad, I know you're trying real hard
to quit drinking, but you really
need to talk to your grandson.

Gramps looks at the globe and gives it a big spin.

GRAMPS

I know...But this sober game isn't
as easy as it's all cracked up to

be.

Gramps stops the globe from spinning. Looks at the country his finger is on.

His daughter puts her hand on his shoulder. She smiles.

INT. NEURO WARD-NIGH

Tom returns to the ward. It's quiet, strangely subdued. The Head Nurse stops him in the corridor. She is very concerned and passionate.

HEAD NURSE

Sachs...Tom, Jack had surgery
Saturday night. He's been
calling for you.

TOM

What? Saturday?

Tom wheels as fast as he can to Jack's bed.

SERGEANT JACK...

Gazes straight up, his head wrapped in fresh bandages. He has a glazed expression on his face and one eye blinks repeatedly.

TOM (CONT'D)

Hey, how you feelin', buddy?

Jack turns to look at Tom, takes some effort.

SERGEANT JACK

(stutters)

To..m

INT. NURSE'S STATION-MORNING

Tom rolls up in a rage.

TOM

Where's sergeant Jack's Surgeon?

The Surgeon steps up behind him, he's holding a chart.

SURGEON

He's right here. And what the hell's your problem?

Tom's not backing down.

TOM

You couldn't wait, could you? You had to cut on my friend.

SURGEON

Watch your tone, or I'll have you up on charges.

TOM

You're the one who should be brought up on charges!

A crowd has started to gather, patients and nurses. The Surgeon is starting to back down, a little.

SURGEON

He needed the surgery.

TOM

Bullshit! You're not helpin' him. You're usin' him like a guinea pig. I swear...If you cut on Jack one more time, I'll find a way to fuck you good.

The whole ward has gone silent. The Surgeon becomes cold, very aloof.

SURGEON

You may not realize it, soldier, but you have just crossed the line.

The Surgeon throws the chart onto the Nurses Desk and storms off.

INT. THERAPY ROOM-DAY

Tom, with no bandage, attacks his therapy with a vengeance,

dragging himself along the parallel bars by his two arms. Though unsteady, he makes it across on sheer determination.

THERAPIST

Keep it up, and some day you may be able to walk out of here with some help.

She holds up a silver brace attached to a shoe that goes all the way up to the top of the thigh.

THERAPIST (CONT'D)

This...With the help of crutches could do the trick, but no guarantees.

Tom wasn't going to waste any time, he quickly attached the brace to his right leg. Then he raised himself up gently and it locked in place at the knee. Tom was standing on his own two feet!

INT. THERAPY ROOM-DAY

Wearing the brace, Tom tries to walk the length of the bars. He steps first with his good leg, then drags his bad leg, along.

Faster and faster he goes, until he loses the rhythm and falls.

THERAPIST {CONT'D}

Fuck!

Tom frowns, mockingly, at her foul language.

TOM

Hey, doc, I don't appreciate that kind of language. If you don't watch it, I'll have to find another therapist.

Tom then gives her a sly smile.

The Therapist gives him a look back.

THERAPIST

Very funny, Private Sachs. Now once again, from the beginning.

The Therapist helps Tom climb to his feet, he prepares for another pass just as the Young MD comes into the room.

YOUNG MD

(to the Therapist)

Arm looks good. What about the leg?

THERAPIST

Still nothing.

The Young MD turns to Tom.

YOUNG MD

So Tom, I hear you put on quite a show with Captain Beckman, Sergeant Jack's surgeon.

Tom ignores him, keeps making strides.

YOUNG MD (CONT'D)

Well, for what it's worth, I agree with you, and I'm not the only one. Believe me, he's done other things that are questionable.

(MORE)

YOUNG MD (CONT'D)

His superiors are reassigning his
duties pending a full investigation
on all his activities for the past
two years.

Tom looks over at the Young MD with a look of satisfaction on
his face. He drives on.

YOUNG MD (CONT'D)

(to Tom)

You know, Sergeant Jack needs a lot
of help and support.

Tom makes it to the end of the bars.

TOM

(looks at the Young MD)

I understand that, Doc and I wanna
be there for him.

INT. HOSPITAL WARD-DAY

Tom, with no bandage, is sitting in his wheelchair next to his
bed reading a newspaper.

NURSE TWO

Sachs, you've got a phone call.

Tom wheels to the Nurse's Station and picks up the phone.

TOM

Hello.

There's a concerned look on Tom's face.

EXT. HOSPITAL COURTYARD-DAY

Tom is wheeling his chair in circles, his mind is obviously
somewhere else.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM-HUNTINGTON MEMORIAL, PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

DAY

Gramps is in a hospital bed with his head bandaged. Tom, with no bandage, is sitting in his wheelchair next to Gramps' bed. His mother stands by the door.

MOM.

I'll leave the two of you alone for awhile.

Mom leaves the room. Tom wheels closer to the head of the bed.

TOM

Hell, Gramps, you look like me, when I first got back from Nam'.

Gramps smiles.

GRAMPS

Don't make me laugh. It hurts too much.

TOM

So, what happened?

GRAMPS

I fell, and some damn table got in my head's way.

TOM

No...I mean the drinking.

GRAMPS

I tried, kiddo, but just too many years of hittin' the bottle, I guess.

TOM

Sorry, Gramps.

GRAMPS

Thanks...But there's more important things to talk about than my drinking.

TOM

And what's that Gramps?

GRAMPS

Well, you know, you and your mother were right.

Those stories I used to tell you when you were a kid, well...I never should of. I just wanna apologize, I...

Tom interrupts.

TOM

Don't, Gramps, you don't have to apologize for anything. Those stories were the best part of my growin' up.

Gramps feels a sigh of relief.

TOM (CONT'D)

It's what kept me from backin' down from any fights. Hell, those stories made me who I am today, plain and simple.

Gramps can't help but smile a little at that.

GRAMPS

I just never thought any of those drunken stories would get you killed and well...Vietnam, that was too damn close.

Tom gives a little smile.

TOM

Who knows, Gramps...Maybe we are invincible. That bullet didn't kill me, and hell, you're still around.

Gramps looks at Tom, gives another slight smile.

GRAMPS

Let's just not push it, okay? Huh,

kiddo?

Tom even gives a bigger smile.

TOM

You got it...Why don't you get some
rest now.

Gramps nods and Tom turns his chair and starts to wheel out of
the room.

GRAMPS

Tommy.

Tom looks back over his shoulder

TOM

I know, Gramps. I know.

Gramps smiles.

EXT. COURTYARD-HOSPITAL-DAY

Sergeant Jack is getting some sun. His head is bandaged, and
he is sitting at a table. Tom, with no bandage, rolls up to
him.

TOM

Hey, Jack, got another postcard
from Linda. Want to hear it?

Jack is excited. He likes Tom sharing his letters with him.

SERGEANT JACK

(stutters)

Y..eah.

Tom has a postcard in his hand and also a piece of paper. He
puts the paper down and starts to read the postcard.

TOM

Dear Tom, I'm so glad your injury
is not serious, but I can't believe
you have to go back to Vietnam. I
wish you could see what this

government is doing to you and all the other young men, it's criminal. I think the hardest thing for me is to love someone so much, who is so much like me, but in other ways so different. I don't think I can ever live in the United States again, in fact my mom is moving to Costa Rica to be with me. I just pray you'll see things differently someday and join me, so we can experience all the adventures out there, together. Love, Linda.

Jack looks at Tom, who is still looking at the postcard.

SERGEANT JACK

W..ell?

Tom looks at Sergeant Jack.

TOM

Well what? Okay...Now this is what I wrote her back.

Tom puts the postcard down and picks up the paper.

TOM (CONT'D)

Dear Linda, I'm sorry to hear that you still hate this government so much and that you are so adamant about never living here again. You are right, we are alike in so many ways, but I believe in this country and in this war. You have been and always will be the love of my life, and I wish things could be different, but they are what they are. Love, Tom.

Sergeant Jack just stares at Tom.

TOM (CONT'D)

It is what it is, Jack.

EXT. BRIDGE-YOSEMITE, CALIFORNIA-DAY

Linda and Tom, ten years old, are standing by a wall on a bridge looking down at the river. They are wearing their swimsuits. Tom hops on the wall and moves over to the edge. Linda looks up at Tom; she is concerned that he is going to jump into the river.

LINDA

Tommy, what are you doing?

Tom looks back down at Linda.

TOM

I'm jumpin', what do you think.

LINDA

Please don't Tommy. It's too dangerous.

TOM

I've jumped from higher places.

LINDA

Yeah...But, you've never jumped from this bridge before. There could be big rocks down there.

Tom smiles and shrugs his shoulders.

TOM

Well, we'll find out soon enough, won't we.

Tom turns around facing the river and bends over. He's just about ready to jump. Linda is scared and it shows.

LINDA

Wait! I'll make you a deal...If you don't jump, I'll give you a kiss.

Tom smiles, turns around and looks back down at Linda.

TOM

On the lips?

Linda rolls her eyes, Tom turns to jump.

LINDA

Okay, okay...on the lips.

Tom turns and climbs down. He goes up to Linda and puts his hands on her shoulders. She moves forward and gives him a kiss on the lips. Then she puts her hands on his chest and draws back away from him. Tom pulls her back and kisses her on the lips, Linda pulls back again and looks at Tom. She is caught off guard, but likes it.

LINDA (CONT'D)

What was that all about?

TOM

The first kiss was your deal, the second was just because I like you.

Linda goes up to Tom and kisses him on the lips again. This time Tom is caught off guard.

LINDA

That's just...Well, because I like you too.

They look into each others' eyes just as they have so many times in the past.

Then Tom smiles and turns and jumps back up on the wall. Linda is startled.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Tommy! What are you doing?

Tom turns and looks back down at Linda.

TOM

I just figured since we like each other, then it doesn't matter if I jump or not...You'll kiss me again.

Before Linda can respond Tom turns and jumps. As he is headed for the water, Linda jumps up on the wall and leans over.

LINDA

Tommy!

Tom hits the water, makes a big splash and goes under. Linda looks down at the splash, but doesn't see Tom come up. Seconds seem like minutes as Linda just stares at the water. Then all of a sudden, Tom pops up to the surface. Linda is relieved, but also mad. She yells...

LINDA (CONT'D)

Tommy, Tommy Sachs...I'll never
kiss you again!

INT. HOSPITAL-WARD-DAY

Tom, with no bandage, is sitting in his wheelchair next to his bed. He is reading a postcard. He puts it in his lap and wheels over to Sergeant Jack's bed.

TOM

Well, Jack...Looks like this is our
last postcard from Linda;

Tom has Sergeant Jack's full attention.

Tom picks up the postcard and starts to read.

TOM (CONT'D)

Dear Tom, you're right, things are
what they are and for that I'm very
sorry...I guess love is not always
enough. I don't know what else to
say, except I will always love you.
Take care and stay safe...Linda.

Tom slowly puts the postcard down.

INT. NEURO WARD-NIGHT

Moonlight cuts through the window into the dark ward. Tom, with no bandage, is sitting in his wheelchair, at the window. He hasn't moved from the very same spot he was in at the beginning of the movie, when he was watching the demonstrators and made eye contact with the hippie girl. But this time he

is asleep fitfully, sweating, tossing...

EXT. YOSEMITE RIVER-DAY

Tom and Jerry as young boys, ten and eleven, balanced on the rail of the bridge. Tom leaps into the air and executes a perfect cannonball.

Tom surfaces, laughing, waves for Jerry to follow. Jerry takes a deep breath and jumps...Feet first.

Jerry flounders in the water, coughing, gasping for air.

JERRY

Tom...Help me!

Tom swims over to him and tries to hold him up.

TOM

Jerry, relax. I've got you.

Tom tries to keep Jerry's head above water. But Jerry's flailing doesn't help.

There's something wrong. Tom can only move the left side of his body. He's struggling to keep himself afloat. He watches as Jerry goes under. Tom's left alone.

All becomes still...Quiet...surreal.

TOM (CONT'D)

Jerry, I'm sorry...

Tom goes under.

INT. NEURO WARD-NIGHT

Tom, sitting in his wheelchair next to the window just as we just saw him, fitfully, sweating, tossing...He awakes with a start...Drenched with sweat.

He looks out the window and sees a few of the hippies still protesting under the stars. There are scattered lights from a few of the cars' headlights. The hippie girl who Tom's eyes had met with earlier is sound asleep in her van.

INT. NEURO WARD-DAY

Tom's bed is stripped down to the mattress. A set of crutches lean against the bed next to a small suitcase. Tom is sitting on the edge of the bed dressed in civilian clothes. His hair is short, just as we saw him at the window. He grabs his special brace and attaches it over his pants. After it is attached, he stands up and locks it in place at the knee...

EXT. FAIRGROUNDS-NEW TOWN, NORTH DAKOTA-DAY

We scan from way above, looking down at a quiet fairgrounds.

Superimpose over the scene...THREE YEARS LATER...

INT. CAMPER-FAIRGROUNDS-NEW TOWN, NORTH DAKOTA-DAY

Tom, hair down to his shoulders and a five o'clock shadow, is sitting at the edge of his bed in a cramped camper. He has some gym shorts on and reaches down and picks up a blue T shirt matching his shorts. He rubs his eyes, stretches and yawns, then puts his T-shirt on.

EXT. RIVER-NEAR THE FAIRGROUNDS-NEW TOWN, NORTH DAKOTA-DAY
Tom with his long hair and blue T-shirt and shorts is limping towards the river, barefoot. His limp on his right side is very noticeable. The fairgrounds behind him is quiet, way too early for any visitors. Most of the carnies are still asleep. Tom reaches the riverbank and starts to stretch his right leg. Then he takes off his T-shirt and jumps into the river and starts to swim. The river is not flowing fast, but when Tom starts to float on his back, the river starts taking him down stream. Tom is content, just enjoying the ride while looking up into the sky.

EXT. FAIRGROUNDS-NEW TOWN, NORTH DAKOTA-DAY

We pan above the fairgrounds, it is packed with people, enjoying the rides and all.

As we pan back down we pan over to the merry-go-round. It is full of children. There is a crowd of people around the ride watching the children having a good time. Parents wait with their children to get on next.

There is an old man running the ride, he is around seventy years old and has grey hair with a grey beard. Tom limps up to him.

TOM

Take a break, Johnny.

JOHNNY

Sounds good.

Johnny starts to walk away, stops...Looks back at Tom.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Oh, by the way...One of the kids on the ride just dropped this.

He walks back to Tom and hands him a crucifix, one that looks just like the one he gave Linda years ago.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

See ya in a few.

As Johnny walks away, Tom looks down at the cross, then to the merry-go-round. He watches the children as they go around and around. Then he glances towards the people in the crowd, then right back to the merry-go-round, wondering...could there be another cross, just like the one he made?

Tom pulls the lever to stop the ride, the merry-go-round starts to come to a halt. As Tom is looking at the children on the merry-go-round, a female voice speaks out from behind him.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

The boy in blue.

Tom turns around, it's Linda.

LINDA

The boy in blue, it's his cross.

TOM

Linda?

She smiles, then Johnny walks up.

JOHNNY

She put me up to it, kid. Go ahead
and take off for awhile, from what
she's told me, the two of you have
a lot of catchin' up to do.

Tom looks at Johnny, then back to Linda. He is totally caught off guard. Then, Tom limbs over to THE BOY in blue, he is around threeyears-old. People are unloading their children all around them, as others are loading their kids on for the next ride, Tom helps The Boy in blue off the wooden horse and sets him down on the ground. Tom kneels down and shows him the cross.

TOM

Is this yours?

THE BOY

(nodding his head)

Huh, huh.

Tom hands The Boy the cross.

TOM

You must be a very special boy for
someone to give you a cross like
this.

The cross is cupped in The Boy's hands...He is staring at it.

THE BOY

This will protect me,

Linda is standing behind them. Tom turns and looks up at her, she smiles.

EXT, RIVER-NEAR THE FAIRGROUNDS-DAY

The Boy, with his shirt off and the wooden crucifix dangling around his neck, is at the river's edge. He is trying to skip rocks across the river, but not doing too good of a job. Linda

and Tom sit next to each other, not far from The Boy. Tom is looking straight ahead while fidgeting with some rocks with his left hand.

Linda is looking at Tom.

LINDA

When your mother told me you were working here, on break from school.

Well...r couldn't think of a better place to introduce Tommy to you. And I was hoping the Tom I was looking for was the same one I knew from before.

Tom turns to Linda.

TOM

And?

Linda puts her hand on Tom's shoulder, while looking at him.

LINDA

I can see that the person who made me that cross all those years ago is still you. That's why I gave it to Tommy. I told him what kind of boy made it. I told him about his father.

TOM

But how come you didn't tell me about Tommy, before now?

Linda with her emotion building, briefly looks away.

LINDA

I'm sorry, Tom, but after Jerry's death, I just couldn't deal with this government and the war. I couldn't stay and you didn't want to go. I didn't know what to do.

Tom gently turns Linda's head towards him.

TOM

Together, we could of worked through it.

LINDA

How, when you couldn't even be honest with me, when I wrote you in the hospital.

TOM

I guess I let my pride and at times, my...I guess you'd say unrealistic outlook at things get in my way.

LINDA

Well...Even now, I think this government has a long ways to go, but I was wrong in not wanting Tommy to grow up in this country, and I made a big mistake in keeping him away from you.

TOM

And I never should of let you go in the first place...At least not alone.

Tom leans in and kisses Linda...A long passionate kiss.

EXT. RIVER'S EDGE-NEAR THE FAIR GROUNDS-DAY

Tom picks up Tommy and puts him in his right arm and leans down and picks up a couple of rocks with his left hand as Linda watches. Tom cocks his left arm and skips a rock across the river, four, five, six skips. Tommy is impressed.

TOMMY

Wow!

Tom smiles and hugs Tommy, then proceeds to skip another rock, as the rock takes each skip (in slow motion) we close in on the splashes, each time getting closer to the splash, until the last splash turns into a splash of a water drop into a puddle of water.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A RURAL ROAD-DAY

A couple more drops hit the puddle, then we pan up and see Gramps walking along a road with Tommy, his four year old great-grandson. It is just after a rain storm and the area is flooded just like it was when Gramps walked the same road with Tom, eighteen years earlier. Tommy looks up in a tree and points to something. He is excited.

TOMMY

Look, Papa!

Gramps looks up into the tree and sees two ducks sitting on a large branch.

GRAMPS

Well, I'll be...They're ducks.

Tommy looks up at Gramps, with a confused look.

TOMMY

Ducks?

GRAMPS

You know about ducks, don't you?

Tommy just shrugs his shoulders.

Gramps takes out his flask and takes a swig. Then he looks back down at Tommy and smiles.

GRAMPS (CONT'D)

Well, kiddo...

We pan up and away from Gramps and Tommy to the ducks sitting on the branch.

TOM

(V.O.)

The rule is this: War stories don't have fairy-tale endings. But it's like Gramps once told me, "The best things about rules are the exceptions to 'em"...Just like ducks in a tree.