

SPIT AND POLISH  
"Spit and Polish"  
written by Richard Seltzer

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FADE IN:

INT. RAWLINGS' HOUSE - DAY (MAY 1970)

GEORGE RAWLINGS, a tall overweight college senior, is studying, with books and papers strewn across the living room. Over his shoulder, through the kitchen door, his MOTHER (short, dumpy, and gray-haired) turns on the electric floor polisher, then flips on the black-and-white television with the volume loud. On the TV, scenes from Viet Nam are visible, but the words aren't distinguishable through the heavy static caused by the polisher.

RAWLINGS

(shouts)

Mom, can you shut that thing  
off?

She continues buffing the floor. With one hand Rawlings starts closing his books and with his other he signals to his mother to stop.

RAWLINGS

(shouts)

Mom!

She continues buffing the floor. Rawlings shakes with frustration and indecision. Finally, he heaves a textbook, hitting the polisher and disconnecting the cord. At that moment the television image shifts to the scene of the Kent State massacre. The NEWSCASTER is clearly audible in VOICE OVER for a few moments until Mother recovers from the shock of her son's behavior and yells back at him.

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)

... Kent State University.  
Today National Guard troops  
opened fire on students who  
were protesting the U.S  
invasion of Cambodia. Four  
students were killed and four  
seriously wounded.

MOTHER

My God, George! .Where did you  
get that temper?

She turns off the television and glares at Rawlings.

RAWLINGS

Can you please hold off on the polishing for a while?

MOTHER

A clean floor and a clean house are important. Your father always said so, God rest his soul. It's a matter of pride. Don't they teach you that in college -- the importance of pride and tradition?

RAWLINGS

(whines)

Give me a break, please.

MOTHER

All right, all right.

She walks to the back door.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAWLINGS' HOUSE - DAY

Mother walks out to fetch the mail from the mailbox by the street. MADELINE, a college-age girl who lives next door is walking out to her mailbox at the same time. She wears a halter, shorts and sandals, with lipstick and nail polish. She brushes her shoulder-length hair as she walks.

Mother finds an envelope from the Department of the Army addressed to "George Rawlings." She opens it. Her P.O.V. reveals the text:

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

HEADQUARTERS, FIRST UNITED STATES ARMY

FORT GEORGE G. MEADE, MARYLAND 20755

AHAAG-CFA

LETTER ORDERS NUMBER T-96-4433A

SUBJECT: Active Duty for Training

TC 165. By direction of the Secretary of the Army, the following named individual is ordered to ACTIVE DUTY FOR TRAINING (ADT), with his consent, for the period indicated.

Mother is shocked, motionless. Madeline notices and stops fussing with her hair.

MADELINE

Is something wrong, Mrs. Rawlings?

MOTHER

George's orders have come.  
Orders for active duty for  
training.

Madeline laughs and resumes brushing.

MADELINE

It's only the National Guard.

MOTHER

Yes, thank God, it is the  
National Guard.

CUT TO:

INT. COLLEGE/LECTURE HALL - DAY

In a lecture hall full of students, Rawlings is sitting in the first row. He looks troubled. His text book is open, but in his notebook he is writing and crossing out and rewriting the opening lines of a poem. His P.O.V. reveals the text:  
"In May the bombs blossom.  
The sweet aroma of gas fills the air..."

The PROFESSOR, balding, with glasses, is just finishing writing the following on the blackboard: "The Rubicon, we know, was a very insignificant stream to look at; its significance lay entirely in certain invisible conditions. Middlemarch"

PROFESSOR

The Rubicon was the boundary  
between Gaul and Italy.

In the back row, FRANK DELANEY has a stack of three letters and an open newspaper with stories on the Viet Nam War and the massacre at Jackson State. His face is gaunt and angular; his appearance deliberately unkempt. His words come fast and clipped. Always on his guard, he shadow boxes with the world.

The letters are from Princeton University, Digital Equipment Corporation, and the Dept. of the Army. He is reading the one from Digital as the Professor continues to talk in VOICE OVER in the background.

PROFESSOR (V.O.)

By the simple act of crossing  
that arbitrary line, Julius

Caesar irrevocably committed  
himself to war with the Roman  
Senate and changed the course  
of history.

Delaney's P.O.V. reveals the text:

We understand that you have been accepted by Princeton, but  
we would like you to consider going straight into industry.

Our PDP-11/20 has been an instant success. We can't keep up  
with demand and customers are clamoring for more powerful  
machines of the same kind. We are looking for dozens of  
young engineering graduates like yourself to work in  
computer design.

This would be a ground-floor opportunity with the hottest  
company in the computer business. Please come up and talk  
with us as soon as you can.

Remember, 16-bit minicomputers are the future.

Delaney sets that letter aside and opens the one from the  
Army. He glances at it, smiles, and passes it to the girl  
beside him, MELODY. She wears her hair short and her clothes  
loose and un-ironed so she won't have to fuss about them. He  
jabs at her, and halts his fist right in front of her face.  
She doesn't react.

DELANEY  
(whispers)  
You flinched.

MELODY  
(whispers)  
I did not.

She quickly kisses his fist, then focuses on the letter, and  
holds it so others can read it, too. Madeline who is sitting  
nearby, keeps playing with her hair as if she were watching  
herself in an imaginary mirror. The Professor is now  
seen from Delaney's perspective.

PROFESSOR  
As George Eliot points out  
with this historical allusion,  
man is by nature a maker and  
breaker of rules. It's not  
flashy aimless violence and  
sex that moves this world.  
What matters is the meaning we

give to events, the symbols we  
create by our action and  
inaction.

DELANEY

(to students beside him)  
Sure, buddy, tell that to the  
body bags.

PROFESSOR

What was that, Mr. Delaney?

Delaney takes back the Army letter, looks at it again, holds  
it as if about to tear it up.

DELANEY

I'm trying to decide whether  
to make a symbolic gesture,  
sir.

PROFESSOR

Well, if you wish to tear up  
your draft card, please do not  
do so in my class.

Everyone laughs. All eyes are on Delaney, and the temptation  
for him to make a grandstand gesture is great.

MELODY

(whispers, insistently)  
Do it.

He hesitates, then shakes his head, and tucks the letter  
carefully in his book bag.

MELODY

(continuing)  
Your brother got his hands  
blown off. Doesn't that mean  
anything to you?

DELANEY

(mutters)  
Cool it. There's more than one  
way to make a revolution.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBIA/BACKYARD - DAY

With stacks of lumber nearby, POWELL is using a fence-post digger. Powerfully, built, with a heavy stubble on his face, he's about 25. His voice is deep and authoritative. MRS. BRIGGS comes to the back door and calls to him. She's 30 -- a prim, trim suburban housewife.

MRS. BRIGGS

Mr. Powell, your roommate just called. An old letter just arrived from the Army, forwarded from your old address. It's your orders for training. You've got to report in three days.

Powell squats, puts one hand on a Bible on the ground beside him, and with the other grasps a frisbee. He stares off into space, then stands up, flings the frisbee high in the sky and catches it.

MRS. BRIGGS

(resigned)

I guess now there's no way you'll be able to build that jungle gym for us.

POWELL

That's all right ma'am. I promised I'd do it, and that's what I'll do.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SUBURBIA/BACKYARD - NIGHT

The backyard is illuminated with floodlights. Powell is still hard at work, alone, on a huge and elaborate wooden gym set.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SUBURBIA/BACKYARD - DAWN

Powell is still at work. From the upstairs window Mrs. Briggs stares at him in disbelief.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SUBURBIA/BACKYARD - NIGHT

Mrs. Briggs, MR. BRIGGS, and their six-year-old son FRANKIE watch in amazement as Powell puts the finishing touches on

the amazing structure. After a final nail, Powell steps back, checks it from all sides, then signals to Frankie. The kid shouts with glee, runs up, jumps, and grabs hold of the ladder-like handbars, and moves quickly across, hand over hand. Powell once again throws the frisbee high in the sky.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE/BEDROOM - NIGHT

TOM BEAULIEU, a tall, husky senior at the University of Maryland, is in bed with his wife DEBBIE. She is as tall as he is, with long blond hair she uses to hide her expressive face. He snuggles up to her right shoulder and caresses her naked body in foreplay. He moves slowly, savoring every moment. She welcomes his touch, but is preoccupied with an unrelated concern. She has a piece of paper, crumpled and tightly clutched in her left hand, just out of his sight and out of his reach.

Sensing her tension, he redoubles his efforts to turn her on, which makes her even more tense and annoyed with herself. She wants to enjoy this moment, but can't.

Finally, she pulls away and asks the question that has been bothering her.

DEBBIE

Tom, have you thought about  
Canada?

BEAULIEU

Later. Later.

DEBBIE

That's what you've been saying  
for the last month. You know  
how I feel. We can go to  
Canada and start a new life.

BEAULIEU

And what's your hurry? It  
could be another year before I  
get called up for active duty  
for training. I can finish up  
college, and then...

DEBBIE

(interrupts)

No. We have to decide now.

She hands him the crumpled paper. He unfolds and tries to decipher it while she explains.

DEBBIE

(continuing)

It's your orders. They arrived nearly a month ago, just after Kent State. I didn't want you to know. I just wanted to get you out of here. You're supposed to report to Fort Polk, Louisiana, day after tomorrow. I'm sorry, Tom. I'm sorry.

She throws herself at him passionately while he tries to read the details.

CUT TO:

EXT. ARMY BASE - DAWN

A large billboard reads: "Welcome to Fort Polk, Birthplace of Combat Infantrymen for Viet Nam."

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BESIDE BARRACKS - DAWN

The barracks is a white, clapboard, oblong rectangle, like hundreds of others, hurriedly thrown together during World War II. Bats hover above the barracks and vanish one by one into the eaves, as recruits line up for the first time, outside the barracks, with their duffel bags.

There are forty-seven men in the fifth platoon. Forty-three are National Guard and Reservists -- all white. Four are draftees -- all black and all "recycled" (ROBERTS, ARMSTRONG, JONES, and FRANKLIN). Others include Rawlings, Delaney, Powell, Beaulieu, HATHAWAY, SCHNEIDER, TAGLIATTI, WASLEWSKI, ALEC, COHEN, MACFARLAND, VASSAVION, SULLIVAN, SANDERSON, EVANS, and ALVARDO. The DRILL SERGEANT is 35-years-old short, stocky, of Mexican descent, with a pock-marked face.

DRILL SERGEANT

What a pleasant surprise. This cycle we have Reservists and National Guard. In the middle of a war, we take time out for

a little exercise in make-believe.

(beat)

Armstrong, Roberts, Jones and Franklin -- front and center.

The four blacks take their time following his order. They move fast enough not to be disobedient, but not so fast as to show any energy, enthusiasm or respect.

From Jackson State College, Roberts is tall, thin and athletic. Originally from Memphis, Armstrong went to CCNY for a year, then panhandled for two years in New York City. He is medium height and out of shape. He wears wire-rim glasses and always has a paperback book in his back pocket - a tattered copy of Marcuse's "One Dimensional Man". Jones, from Raleigh, N.C., is the shortest of them. He often looks down, avoiding eye contact with anyone but his friends. Franklin, from Watts in Los Angeles, finds it painfully difficult to stay still and straight -- his feet and hands want to move all the time.

DRILL SERGEANT

(continuing)

Look at these guys, you white boys. They are going to be sharing your barracks with you, going through basic with you. What they score in inspections and training will affect the whole platoon. But they don't give a damn. And they've got good reason not to give a damn. They're draftees. They're in the regular army. They've been through basic before and failed. Roberts has been recycled twice now, and he's proud of it, aren't you boy?

Roberts smiles.

DRILL SERGEANT

(continuing)

He knows that as soon as he passes basic, it's off to weapons school and then to Nam. But you're going to pass this time, aren't you? With these reservists to inspire

you and help whip you into shape, I'm sure you'll make it this time. Get back in line now.

They go back to their former positions.

DRILL SERGEANT  
(continuing)  
Who among you has been in ROTC?

No hands.

DRILL SERGEANT  
(continuing)  
I know some of you went to state schools and were required to take ROTC for two years. Speak up. I'm looking for leaders. Who has had two years of ROTC?

Hathaway, Beaulieu, Sanderson, Sullivan, MacFarland, and Vassavion raise their hands high. Rawlings lifts his reluctantly. The Drill Sergeant steps up to Hathaway, a muscular college boy from Alabama, and reads his name from his fatigues.

DRILL SERGEANT  
(continuing)  
Hathaway, you played football.

HATHAWAY  
Yes, Drill Sergeant. Second-string quarterback for Alabama.

DRILL SERGEANT  
I'm sure you enjoy calling plays. Sorry you won't be doing it here.

The Drill Sergeant walks down the row and stops in front of Beaulieu.

DRILL SERGEANT  
(continuing)  
Beaulieu, you're a family man.

BEAULIEU

Yes, I'm married, Drill Sergeant.

DRILL SERGEANT  
You think being a leader might mean a few extra dollars in the paycheck to send home.

BEAULIEU  
Yes, Drill Sergeant.

DRILL SERGEANT  
Forget it, kid. It won't make any difference at all.

The Drill Sergeant goes to the back row and stops in front of Rawlings.

DRILL SERGEANT  
(continuing)  
Rawlings, would you like to be platoon leader?

RAWLINGS  
I'm sure there are other guys here who would be better at it than me.

DRILL SERGEANT  
Yes. Maybe they would. You don't look like a leader. That's why I picked you. These guys have to learn to respect and obey the rank, not the person. If I give the job to a natural leader, they learn nothing, and you learn nothing. If I give it to you, they've got a challenge and you do too. Congratulations, Mr. Platoon Leader.

MacFarland, you'll be assistant platoon leader.

Caught by surprise, MacFarland groans, involuntarily. He's big, but flabby and out of shape. A heavy smoker, he's often out of breath.

DRILL SERGEANT  
(continuing)

Smile, MacFarland. That means you and Mr. Rawlings, here, get to share a private room. You have no responsibilities, and you're exempted from fire guard and KP duties. You're in fat city, kid; which, considering your gut, is the right place for you.

(pointing)

Hathaway, Sanderson, Sullivan, Vassavion -- you'll all be squad leaders.

Sanderson is a quiet, unassuming, college track star. Sullivan, who is big as Hathaway, is awkward on his feet, which he drags, as if he never learned to use them. But he can walk on his hands like a circus performer. He keeps a Swiss army knife in his pocket and fiddles with it at odd moments.

Vassavion has the flabbiness of a natural athlete who has given up exercise in favor of beer and repose. He has a filthy mouth and a ready wit, especially when drunk. He enjoys grossing out everyone.

The Drill Sergeant walks back out front, and turns to face the troops.

#### DRILL SERGEANT

(continuing)

Remember, gentlemen, you're in this together. Your little vacation time here in the Army will be as pleasant or hellish as you choose to make it.

(beat)

You are fortunate to have the best barracks in the company. Cycle after cycle of trainees have treated this barracks with respect and care. Their hard work and genius is reflected in the center aisle which has a polish beyond compare. Treat it well, and you'll win the company inspection competition day after day.

(beat)

Pick a team of men you can trust with this treasure. One can run the buffer, one hold the cord so it doesn't touch the floor, and one tend the plug. And never, absolutely never, wear shoes when you cross that yellow line into the center aisle.

(beat)

That's my advice, men; and it's only advice. When it comes to the barracks, I expect you to govern yourselves.

Delaney smiles. The Sergeant turns abruptly and glares at him.

DRILL SERGEANT

Delaney!

DELANEY

Yes, Drill Sergeant!

DRILL SERGEANT

Drop and give me ten.

Delaney drops to the ground and does ten pushups.

DRILL SERGEANT

(continuing)

You college kids make me sick. You hate the "system." What the hell's the system? By the time you're done here, you will be the system.

CUT TO:

EXT. PHYSICAL TRAINING AREA - DAY

One soldier after another attempts the ladder-like handbars. These are shown from the same angle as the ones at the Briggs' house in the earlier scene. The rusted metal rungs spin freely in their sockets, making them hard to grip. One soldier after another goes a few rungs, then slips, in agony, holding his hands, bloody, with the skin ripped off. Only Powell and Alec go all the way through, to the amazement of the rest. They, too, have the skin ripped off their hands, but continue despite the pain. Alec is short

and dark-complexioned. There's a bulge in his back pocket where he carries a blackjack.

BEAULIEU  
(to Delaney)  
How the hell do they do it?

DELANEY  
I don't know about Powell, but  
Alec there is cop from  
Chicago. A narc.

CUT TO:

EXT. EXERCISE FIELD - DAY

Drill Sergeant walks between rows, while the Fifth Platoon does jumping jacks, counting in unison with each jump.

DRILL SERGEANT  
Down! Give me ten! Then up and  
run in place.

Everyone drops to the ground and starts doing pushups, counting out loud. Roberts, Sanderson, and Powell finish quickly. Delaney and Beaulieu struggle, but make it. Rawlings and Schneider can barely do one; MacFarland two. Schneider is a fat farm boy from Iowa. He chews bubblegum and blows bubbles, even when trying to do pushups.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROADWAY - DAWN

The Fifth Platoon is running. Sanderson is in the lead by a hundred feet.

Roberts is second, fifty feet ahead of the rest. He throws in a few dance steps and back pedals to show off. At the front of the pack, little Evans struggles to stay even with Hathaway, Beaulieu, Powell, and Delaney. Rawlings and MacFarland are neck-and-neck at next to last. Schneider straggles far behind everyone.

The Drill Sergeant runs along with the middle of the pack and sings in cadence. Trainees join in on the refrain.

DRILL SERGEANT  
Trainees want a weekend pass  
to get damn drunk and chase  
some ass.

(beat)  
Sound off!

PLATOON  
One, two!

DRILL SERGEANT  
Sound off!

PLATOON  
Three, four!

DRILL SERGEANT  
Sound off!

PLATOON  
One, two, three, four!  
(beat)  
Sound off!

Cohen, an undergrad from Berkeley, booms forth a verse of his own before the Drill Sergeant has a chance to continue.

COHEN  
Sanderson can run like hell.  
(beat)  
Schneider'd rather sit a  
spell.

Sanderson and Schneider are embarrassed. The Sergeant is ready to yell, then pleased with what he hears, smiles in encouragement, and leads the chorus.

DRILL SERGEANT  
Sound off!

PLATOON  
One, two!

DRILL SERGEANT  
Sound off!

PLATOON  
Three, four!

DRILL SERGEANT  
Sound off!

PLATOON  
One, two, three, four!  
(beat)

Sound off!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE COMPANY HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Trainees line up to receive plague shots, one after the other. MacFarland winces in pain, even before the needle hits his arm. Delaney smiles until the needle is deep in his arm, then grunts in pain. Powell shows nothing.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PHYSICAL TRAINING AREA - DAY

Trainees -- all, even Powell, clutching their left arm where they received shots -- line up to go through the handlebars again. Scar tissue and calluses have partially replaced the skin they lost on the previous try. The bars spin again, and rip the skin again. The big guys -- Hathaway, Waslewski, Sullivan, and Vassavion -- all fall off, despite their best effort. Roberts (laughing) and Evans (with monumental effort) go all the way. Evans is very short -- an energetic, hard worker. While they are going through this exercise, Cohen, the Drill Sergeant, and the rest of the trainees are heard continuing the song in VOICE OVER.

COHEN (V.O.)

Evans swings from bar to bar  
(beat)  
Alvarado wants a brand new car

DRILL SERGEANT

Sound off!

PLATOON

One, two!

DRILL SERGEANT

Sound off!

PLATOON

Three, four!

DRILL SERGEANT

Sound off!

PLATOON

One, two, three, four!  
(beat)  
Sound off!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RIFLE RANGE - DAY

Trainees are prone on the ground, firing at human-silhouette targets. Both Evans and Vassavion hit the bull's eye time after time. The singing continues in VOICE OVER.

COHEN

Rawlings grins from ear to ear.

(beat)

Vassavion wants another beer.

DRILL SERGEANT

Sound off!

PLATOON

One, two!

DRILL SERGEANT

Sound off!

PLATOON

Three, four!

DRILL SERGEANT

Sound off!

PLATOON

One, two, three, four!

(beat)

Sound off!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. IN CATTLE TRUCK ON HIGHWAY - DAY

Over a hundred trainees are crammed into a cattle truck meant for forty. Cohen sings and the others join in.

COHEN

(sings)

Delaney's talkin' politic.

(beat)

His mouth is fast, his mind is sick.

(beat)

Sound off!

TRAINEES

One, two!

COHEN

Sound off!

TRAINEES

Three, four!

COHEN

Sound off!

TRAINEES

One, two, three, four!

(beat)

Sound off!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PHYSICAL TRAINING AREA - DAY

Weeks have past. The platoon once again attempts the handbars. This time Powell, Evans, Sanderson, Beaulieu, Delaney, and Roberts make it all the way. .

Powell picks up a frisbee and throws it high over the barracks.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BARRACKS/BUNKROOM - DAY (THURSDAY)

It's after supper on a Thursday in mid-summer after five weeks of basic training.

Delaney and Hathaway are spread out across their bunks, reading and writing letters. Other trainees are polishing boots, shuffling through their lockers, or lying stretched out on their backs either sleeping or staring upward. Powell very slowly and meticulously runs the buffer to polish the already highly polished center aisle. His attention is totally focused on this activity as if he were carrying out a sacred ritual. Tagliatti holds the buffer cord in the air, so it won't touch the center aisle. He's a college student of medium build, who is always reading old newspapers. Schneider holds the plug in place and makes sure the cord doesn't get tangled on beds or lockers. He waddles when he walks.

Beaulieu is also writing a letter. His P.O.V. briefly reveals the text which is then heard in VOICE OVER as the camera pans around the room.

BEAULIEU (V.O.)

Dear Deb -- The barracks is now in better shape than when it was first built. Cycle after cycle of trainees have kept it in shape for inspections. Some even made improvements to get bonus points.

The camera shows the red rack for the red helmet liner that the fire guard wears each night; the magazine racks that hang on the latrine wall beside the toilets; the homemade plaque, which hangs over the water fountain and was presented by one group of trainees to their drill sergeant, 25 years before.

Next, a long shot shows the masterpiece of the barracks -- the red linoleum center aisle, which extends between two long rows of parallel bunks. Powell continues to buff it, going over the same spot again and again.

BEAULIEU (V.O.)

(continuing)

Thanks to the special efforts of cycle after cycle of trainees, the center aisle shines mirror-bright. No other barracks in Echo Company can hope to match it. As long as we continue to take care of it and don't get gigs for foolish oversights, our platoon would always win inspections. That's a source of pride and confidence -- feelings that are hard to come by in basic training.

As Beaulieu continues in VOICE OVER, the camera focuses on Delaney. Delaney's P.O.V. reveals the text of the letter from Digital Equipment which he is reading:

We are still very interested in you. We understand that your active duty will end in just four months. When you get a weekend pass, please come up and visit. The sooner the better, because this kind of opportunity doesn't just sit around forever. You can learn computer design by doing it -- working with the best in the business and getting paid well for what you do. (I'm sure we can come to terms.)

It's fine to visit on a Saturday or Sunday. Just let us know you're coming. This place is like a college campus. People are so wrapped up in what they're doing and so excited about it that they work crazy hours -- I think there are some who never go home at all.

BEAULIEU (V.O.)

(continuing)

At first it was an annoyance having to walk all the way around to get to a bunk that's just three feet away across the aisle. But by now it's second nature.

(beat)

Everyone in the platoon takes his boots off at the door, but even in stocking feet no one in the platoon crosses the yellow lines that define the center aisle.

(beat)

No one, that is, but the chosen few entrusted with taking care of it. In this cycle of trainees, Evans does the buffing upstairs. The all-important downstairs floor is in the keeping of Powell. Tagliatti helps him with the buffer cord. Schneider tends the plug.

Sanderson suddenly comes racing in in his stocking feet and nearly slides onto the center aisle. Hathaway glares at him, but the buffers continue their work.

SANDERSON

Have you heard the latest?  
Drill Sergeant promised  
weekend passes to the top  
three in the P.T. test.

DELANEY

A hell of a lot of good that  
does me. You and the runt have  
it made already.

SANDERSON

Runt?

DELANEY

Yes the runt -- Evans.

(beat)

Everything's topsy-turvy here. It's the big guys who are hurting, guys like Hathaway, Waslewski, Sullivan, and Vassavion -- the football-player types. They're strong, but they've got a lot of weight to lift for the handbars. It's the little guys who have it easy. Evans just missed a bit on the grenade throw and was perfect with the rifle. It doesn't take muscle to squeeze a trigger.

SANDERSON

Cool it buddy. You've still got a shot at one of those passes if you do good in the mile tomorrow.

DELANEY

Damn. You take this whole army bit like it was some kind of sports camp. Don't you have any sense of justice?

SANDERSON

Sure, fair is fair. If you can outrun me, you can get a pass this weekend. And, if we all keep up the good work, the sergeant says half the platoon, maybe even more will get passes next week.

DELANEY

You're a goddamned political neanderthal.

As Delaney leave in disgust, Sanderson gives him the finger.

SANDERSON

Up yours, too, buddy.

Powell, Tagliatti, and Schneider are seen -- intense and careful -- in a long shot as the camera follows Delaney, in

his stocking feet, stomping out the door and quickly pulling on his boots.

CUT TO:

EXT. FORT POLK - DAY

Delaney moves away from the barracks, toward the trees. No one is looking. He moves beyond the company area, across the road. No one is looking. He starts jogging up the road, past the PX, toward the commissary. He keeps looking over his shoulder. He spots Roberts, Armstrong, Franklin, and Jones, drinking beer off in the woods, beyond the company area. They see him. He speeds up.

They take off after him and soon catch up and run along beside him.

JONES  
(laughing)  
Going AWOL?

FRANKLIN  
(laughing)  
Going home, boy?

ARMSTRONG  
What do you think, brothers?  
Should we cover for him?

Roberts gets in front of Delaney and backpedals, boxing him in and slowing him.

DELANEY  
What the fuck are you doing?

ARMSTRONG  
We're vigilantes, man. You  
left the company area without  
the boss's permission.

They crack up laughing and let him by. Delaney runs away.

CUT TO:

EXT. FORT POLK/PHONE BOOTH - DAY

Delaney runs to a phone booth near the billboard that welcomes recruits to Fort Polk. He dials and gets connected to Melody at her dorm room.

EXT. FORT POLK/PHONE BOOTH - DAY (SPLIT SCREEN)

INT. COLLEGE/DORM ROOM - DAY (SPLIT SCREEN)

Delaney and Melody are shown talking to one another in split screen. The walls of her small college room are decorated with posters of Che Guevara and the Beatles.

The "Revolution" song from the Beatle's White Album is playing in the background. The floor is strewn with xeroxed political fliers that she is collating and folding as she talks.

DELANEY

Melody?

MELODY

Yes, Frank? It's you finally.  
No letters, no calls. And  
you've been gone for nearly  
two months.

DELANEY

Six weeks.

MELODY

Same difference.

DELANEY

Look, I don't have long to  
talk. I'm not supposed to be  
out the company area. I have  
to get back before they notice  
I'm gone.

MELODY

Come on, Frank. Forget the  
cloak-and-dagger. What's  
happening?

DELANEY

Everything at once. I've got  
this job offer from Digital  
Equipment.

MELODY

What? You turned down grad  
school at Princeton to join  
the struggle against the war,  
and now you're selling out to

some computer company? Who the hell are you?

DELANEY

I wish I knew. Sure, I believe in the revolution. I'm doing everything I can here to undermine the system from within. That's why I joined the Reserves. It's all working just as I hoped. But, God, I could help design the world's hottest computer. We could get married.

MELODY

(shocked)

Married?

DELANEY

Why not? Kids, the suburbs, the works.

MELODY

But how could I marry you if you don't believe in the cause?

DELANEY

But I do believe.

MELODY

Then live it -- like you planned. We all have to do our part. You know that. Great movements are made up of small pieces.

AS this scene dissolves into the next, Melody continues talking in VOICE OVER.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BARRACKS/BUNKROOM - DAY

Beaulieu, Hathaway, and Powell are on their beds. Rawlings is coming down the stairs as Melody's voice continues in VOICE OVER.

MELODY (V.O.)

(continuing)

People are dying every day. We can't wait any longer. Do whatever you can now. Remember what you always said -- if everyone opposed to war does something to disrupt the system, the system will fall apart.

Something thrown slams loudly against the door. Then another one strikes. Hathaway and Beaulieu sit up. Sanderson, Evans, and Tagliatti come to look in from the latrine. Tag has a newspaper in his hand. Delaney enters, nearly bumping into Rawlings.

HATHAWAY

What the hell was that all about?

DELANEY

I'm tired, all right.

HATHAWAY

So we're all tired. Big deal.

DELANEY

Yes, it is a big deal. We get maybe four hours of sleep a night. Our minds have been reduced to pulp.

(beat)

A soldier is entitled to eight hours sleep. Officially it's always eight hours from lights-out to lights-on. Officially, it's our own doing if we don't get enough sleep. But there's always a half dozen chores that need to be done after lights-out. And then they wake you up for fire guard or CQ, and you have to break the rules again, getting up an hour before lights-on to clean the barracks or we'd never win inspection.

BEAULIEU

So what?

Delaney takes a drink at the water fountain, then spits the water out into the bowl.

DELANEY

So without sleep, the mind  
loses the power to control  
what it's thinking, to tie  
thoughts together by anything  
more than simple association.  
It becomes a passive inert  
mass.

BEAULIEU

What's eating you, Delaney?  
Why the hell are you always  
whining?

Delaney turns on him, swings at his face, and stops just short. Beaulieu doesn't flinch.

DELANEY

(belligerent)

The truth? My girl is  
pregnant.

RAWLINGS

Melody?

Delaney cringes and nods.

TAGLIATTI

What are you going to do?

DELANEY

I don't know. I just have to  
get back there as quick as I  
can to sort it all out.

TAGLIATTI

Why not ask for a pass for a  
family emergency?

DELANEY

We're not married. She's not  
family.

SANDERSON

So you're asking us to throw  
the race?

Delaney doesn't deny it.

SANDERSON  
 Fuck you, buddy.

He walks out, and Evans follows.

RAWLINGS  
 (gullible, sympathetic)  
 I wish I could help.

Delaney ignores him. Others go back to what they were doing.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE BARRACKS BY TREES - NIGHT

Delaney, alone with Roberts behind a tree, slips him some money and whispers.

DELANEY  
 Just do like you did to me  
 this afternoon. That might be  
 enough. If I get the pass, you  
 get double.

Roberts kisses the money and smiles broadly.

ROBERTS  
 Hey, you're really into this  
 race stuff, aren't you? Yeah,  
 you're real liberal.

CUT TO:

EXT. PHYSICAL TRAINING AREA - DAY (FRIDAY)

Trainees lined up on starting line of circular track. They are in fatigues, with combat boots. The sun is bright. It's 100 F. Everyone is sweating heavily before the race starts. Drill Sergeant, staring at a stop watch, raises his hand, then lowers it quickly to signal.

DRILL SERGEANT  
 Go!

Sanderson gets a fast start. Roberts, Armstrong, Franklin, and Jones sprint, trying to get ahead of him, but can't. Then they begin to slow the pace, shoulder to shoulder, blocking the rest of the field. They let Delaney through,

but deliberately block the rest. The Drill Sergeant shakes his head and laughs to himself. Cohen, slowed to a jog by the trainees around him, sings.

COHEN

(sings)

A bucket needs water; a beggar  
a quarter. The world needs  
order; but just keep walking  
along, along, just keep  
walking along.

One lap, two laps, three. Sanderson runs a full lap faster than the rest, catches up with the pack from behind, and is annoyed that he can't break through for a better time. Delaney is about 20 yards ahead of Roberts. In anger and frustration, Vassavion begins to chant.

VASSAVION

Beer, beer, beer, beer, beer..

With one hand on Franklin and one on Jones, he forces his way through. Evans squirts through after him, before Franklin and Jones are able to close the gap. Evans zips by Delaney, and Vassavion lumbers past him, too, by a hair at the finish line.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE BARRACKS - DAY

Vassavion dances by, cheering, with Evans, like a little kid, on his shoulders. Sanderson runs past and slaps them both on the rear. Delaney follows after the others have moved out of sight, lecturing to Tagliatti, Alvarado, Waslewski, Hathaway, Alec, and Beaulieu, all of whom are not particularly happy at having lost. Rawlings is a couple steps behind.

DELANEY

That's the system for you --  
build up the weak and tear  
down the strong.

RAWLINGS

But Vassavion's no weakling.  
And Sanderson isn't either.

Delaney glares back, then continues to lecture.

DELANEY

That's how the system  
 perpetuates itself -- putting  
 runts and cowards in positions  
 of authority. The system  
 promotes people who know that  
 their authority comes to them  
 not for any merit of their  
 own, but just because of the  
 system.

Roberts comes into view, following Delaney from a distance.

BEAULIEU

System, hell. It was the  
 blacks -- Roberts and the  
 others who blocked us out.

Delaney stops so Roberts can catch up, and greets him with  
 open arms.

DELANEY

Yes, the system. The system  
 that has oppressed them. The  
 system that will send them to  
 Nam. The system that they had  
 guts enough to fight, by  
 botching that stupid race.

Delaney shakes Roberts' hand, slaps him on the back, and  
 inconspicuously slips him more money. Roberts smiles  
 broadly.

ROBERTS

Yeah, man, that's a real good  
 system you've got there.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BARRACKS/BUNKROOM - DAY (LATER FRIDAY)

The screen door slams, and Sullivan shuffles in. He's in his  
 stocking feet and is obviously tired. Powell, Tagliatti, and  
 Schneider are buffing in the background.

SULLIVAN

(shouts)

Where's Roberts?

HATHAWAY

(shouts back)

How should I know?

SULLIVAN

You're his squad leader,  
aren't you?

HATHAWAY

Yeah, but not his nursemaid.

SULLIVAN

He's got CQ from four to six.

HATHAWAY

Big deal.

SULLIVAN

Somebody's got to take it.  
Shit'll hit the fan if only  
one guy's on CQ.

HATHAWAY

If you're so goddamned  
uptight, do it yourself. You  
can't go anywhere anyway.

Powell has finished buffing, and is pleased. Tagliatti and Schneider carefully roll up the buffer cord during the following dialogue.

Hathaway goes back to his letter-writing. Sullivan steps toward the door.

HATHAWAY

(continuing, shouts)

Keep your goddamned feet off  
that center aisle.

SULLIVAN

You treat this floor like a  
Mercedes.

HATHAWAY

It is, you asshole.

Sullivan stops short of the yellow line, kicks a footlocker, turns and plods and shuffles behind the bunks.

HATHAWAY

(continuing, shouts)

Pick up your feet.

Sullivan stops, and stands on his hands. A Swiss Army knife drops out of his pocket.

HATHAWAY

(continuing)

Shit. You know you're not supposed to have that thing.

Sullivan gets down, puts the knife between his teeth, then walks out on his hands.

Hathaway picks up a football and heaves it at the entranceway in a perfect spiral.

HATHAWAY

(continuing, mumbles)

Goddamned trouble-maker.

Schneider is walking by with Tagliatti, carefully carrying the buffer.

SCHNEIDER

He's only trying to do right.

HATHAWAY

No, I don't mean Sullivan. I mean Roberts. Why the hell'd they ever put draftees in this company? And why did they have to stick us with them?

SCHNEIDER

You know -- they were recycled.

HATHAWAY

Yeah, four fucking fuck-offs, and we got all of them.

Hathaway keeps writing as Beaulieu walks quietly behind the bunks, into the latrine.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BARRACKS/LATRINE - DAY

Beaulieu enters. Straight ahead are the platoon's two washing machines, with dozens of bags of laundry lined up waiting their turn. Beside them stretch a row of sinks, leading to the showers. Along the other walls, on the

periphery of view, are urinals and a line of toilets, about two feet apart, without partitions.

All but one toilet is occupied, like seats in the reading room at a college library just before exam time. The occupants are Tagliatti, Waslewski, Cohen, Alvarado, Sullivan, and Delaney. The camera pans from face to face.

Tagliatti is reading an old tattered newspaper.

Waslewski sweats profusely. He's powerfully built, but has a large beer-belly. He goes to college nights, and during the day does physical labor in a sheet-metal factory.

Cohen is drumming out a rock tune on an overturned wastebasket.

Alvarado, an Hispanic college student, is reading an old issue of Road and Track.

Sullivan is writing a letter.

Delaney is reading a well-worn copy of Marx -- The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844.

Roberts is standing by a sink, staring at himself in the mirror as he carefully shaves the top of his head.

BEAULIEU

Hey, Roberts, you're supposed to be on CQ.

ROBERTS

May be.

BEAULIEU

Well, what are you doing then?

ROBERTS

Giving myself a haircut. Got to look pretty for the sergeant.

Roberts keeps shaving his head.

BEAULIEU

Well, they're looking for you, Roberts. Don't say I didn't tell you.

ROBERTS

Yeah, everybody's looking for the old Bob tonight. I got me a date. Got me a couple of them. I'm going to have me a big night.

He slaps the pocket where he put the money.

BEAULIEU

You're going to have big trouble is all, if you don't hightail it over to CQ.

ROBERTS

(smiles)

No, man. It's you who's got trouble -- not me, but you.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BUNKHOUSE/RAWLINGS' ROOM - NIGHT (FRIDAY)

In total darkness, several people in stocking feet walk quietly into Rawlings' room. A flashlight turns on to reveal closeup of Rawlings face. He is sound asleep, with his mouth wide open. Three sets of hands reach into the light and spray shaving cream into his mouth. The light goes out and the feet scramble as Rawlings, wakes, chokes, then spits. He stumbles toward the door and turns on the light. Only then does he realize what has happened.

RAWLINGS

(shouts)

What the hell!

MacFarland feigns sleep in the other bunk. Laughter breaks out in the bunkroom down below. Rawlings picks up a book and heaves it at the wall. The sound of that just prompts more laughter. MacFarland (barely containing his own laughter) still pretends to be asleep.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BARRACKS/BUNKROOM - NIGHT

Laughter in the dark is interrupted by Delaney.

DELANEY

Shut up!

Silence.

ALEC  
 (from nearby upper bunk)  
 What's your problem?

DELANEY  
 (whispers)  
 Roberts is gone. His bunk is empty.

ALEC  
 (whispers)  
 Hell. We'd better report it to CQ fast.

DELANEY  
 (whispers)  
 Are you kidding? And fuck everything for everybody? No passes, no nothing? We've got to shut up and not draw attention to the barracks. He just might slip back before the sergeant knows he's gone.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE/LIVINGROOM - DAY (SATURDAY)

The doorbell sounds. Debbie opens the door and finds Beaulieu. He lifts her and kisses her on the breasts, while she hugs him. He carries her to the sofa, and begins undressing her. She starts undressing him, then suddenly freezes.

DEBBIE  
 My God! You're AWOL. Can we get to Canada before they catch you?

BEAULIEU  
 (laughs)  
 Hell, no! I got a pass, a fucking weekend pass, a pass to fuck all weekend.

DEBBIE  
 But how? Why? I didn't know they gave out passes in basic.

BEAULIEU

Look, lady, you're married to a genius. You should see me on those handbars. And boots -- nobody can spit and polish boots the way I can. I've got such great spit, I may make a career of the Army.

She stares at him in disbelief and pinches herself.

BEAULIEU

(continuing, laughs)

I couldn't call ahead. I'd have missed the plane. They didn't give me much warning, and the connections are lousy. I've only got a few hours before I have to head back to the airport again. The bastards.

DEBBIE

And is this the same gentle, sweet-talking husband who left here just six weeks ago?

BEAULIEU

You're fucking right it is.

DEBBIE

Then let's not waste any time, my foul-mouthed soldier boy.

She reaches to unbuckle his trousers and finds a letter in his pocket. It's addressed to "Debbie Beaulieu." She opens it. He takes it away.

BEAULIEU

Not now, pumpkin. We've got serious business to attend to. You can read that when I'm gone.

DEBBIE

But I want it now, soldier boy.

She pulls down his trousers.

DEBBIE

(continuing)

You wouldn't deny me that,  
would you?

He melts.

DEBBIE  
(continuing)  
I want you to read me that  
letter with all its filthy  
words  
while I get reacquainted you.

She licks his belly button.

DEBBIE  
(continuing)  
Read, slave.

While he reads, she caresses and kisses him.

BEAULIEU  
(reads out loud)  
Dear Debbie, It's a crazy  
world, that makes such crazy  
places as this, reducing men  
to chunks of sweating, aching  
flesh. Even trying to shit  
hurts.  
(beat)  
If you were near and I could  
see you, sleep with you, it  
would be tolerable. With you,  
I could tolerate most  
anything. We could just lie  
together and laugh about it.  
It's just one huge practical  
joke. I'm sure that's the way  
the Drill Sergeant takes it --  
like a fraternity initiation.  
Cohen manages to see it that  
way too, manages to bring out  
the humor in things.

(beat)  
But it's degrading. The only  
way to release all this  
pressure, aside from taking a  
poke at somebody (which would  
land you with an Article  
Fifteen or a court martial and  
get you recycled and stuck in  
this damned army for months)

is to masturbate. There's just no other way, and it's so damned degrading. You try to do it quietly, in a barracks full of guys, the bunks no more than three feet apart, the firelight and stair light on all the time, and the fireguard pacing back and forth.

(beat)

And somebody else is in the upper bunk getting shaken by your every move. That's one hell of a way to get a release -- lying there stock-still, squeezing yourself with a sheet. But it works, after a fashion.

(beat)

The imagination takes charge, and I'm far from here. This place never existed. I'm holding you so warm and close. Damn it, I'm horny as hell, and it'll be at least three months before I see you again. You can't imagine what this place does to a guy. I think of you constantly, whenever we get a five minute break, and I can lean against a tree and shut my eyes, or even when I'm running laps around the block at 5 AM, before breakfast, and the thought of you gets me away from this place, and it's something to look forward to - - the next moment when I'll be able to let my mind drift to you.

(beat)

My muscles stop aching as they remember your shape, the pressure of you close to me, the texture of your skin, the delightful, unexpected ways you move. My eye muscles relive with my hands the fullness of your breasts. I remember directly, completely,

not like before, the electric  
touch of your fingers, the  
playful flip of your tongue,  
the way you toss back your  
head to toss back your hair,  
your long legs rubbing softly  
against mine.

Debbie pushes him onto the sofa and climbs on top of him.

DEBBIE

Don't stop or I'll stop.

The camera focuses on her now as he continues reading.  
Her eyes are shut as she savors the sensations of rubbing  
her body against his.

BEAULIEU

(continuing, reading)

Damn it. I need you. My body  
needs you. The pulp that was  
my mind needs you. Hell, you'd  
hate me the way I am now. I  
hate myself the way I am now.  
I can't even write you a  
decent letter. All I do is  
write about the shit around  
me. But damn it, darling, I'm  
caught up in this shit. All  
those stupid rules they threw  
at us five weeks ago are now a  
part of me. I take this  
nonsense seriously.

(beat)

My joys, fears, hopes, and  
miseries all stem from this  
world they've thrown me in. My  
body remembers your every move  
vividly.

(beat)

But it's hard for me to  
imagine the world we used to  
live in. It's unreal and far  
away. The only world I've got  
is this shit. And I hate this  
shit. And I hate myself for  
letting myself be reduced to  
this. Damn it. I love you and  
miss you, and I'm sorry this  
is the way I write and the way  
I think, but they've done it

to me, damn it. They've reduced me to this. When I get back it'll be different, and I'll be different. And I'll be able to forget all this and go back to being me -- whoever that was.

(beat)

But wherever I am and whoever I am, I love you.

She looks down and sees she's clutching a sheet. She crumples it up and throws it in anger.

DEBBIE

Tom, why the hell aren't you here? Why did you do this to me? Why didn't we go to Canada?

She sits down and starts scribbling a letter on the nearest scrap of paper. She says aloud, slowly, the words that she is writing.

DEBBIE V.O.

(continuing)

Dear Tom, Will this war at home and abroad ever end? If it does, I hope our children don't ever have to go through anything like this.

Seeing the same scene, we hear Delaney's voice saying the same words in synch with Debbie. Gradually, Debbie's voice gets fainter and Delaney's stronger, until all we hear is Delaney in VOICE OVER.

DELANEY (V.O.)

Let it end. Let it end for good. Lord, I hope I never have to see another film clip of bombing raids, or of student protesters getting hauled off to jail.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BARRACKS/BUNKROOM - DAY

Beaulieu, in fatigues, is lying on his bunk, clutching a sheet. He wakes up, embarrassed. Only Powell is in the room,

and he is concentrating on reading his book. Beaulieu turns toward the latrine, puzzled, and focuses on Delaney's voice, which is coming from there.

DELANEY (O.S.)  
(continuing)  
Come home and fuck me.

Laughter from the latrine.

DELANEY (O.S.)  
(continuing)  
Fuck this whole world away.  
Make it all simple and  
beautiful. Come. Come to me,  
for me, in me. Come.

More laughter.

DELANEY (O.S.)  
(continuing)  
Love forever. Debbie.

Beaulieu charges toward the latrine, slipping in his stocking feet, banging his knee on a locker, and bouncing off the wall.

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACKS/LATRINE - DAY

Cohen is putting his laundry in the washing machine. Waslewski, standing wrapped in a towel, just got out of the shower. Delaney, Schneider, Sanderson, and Tagliatti are on johns. Schneider is chewing bubblegum and blowing bubbles. Tagliatti is reading his newspaper. Delaney is still holding the letter he was reading.

Beaulieu enters and grabs the letter from Delaney.

DELANEY  
(laughing)  
Hey, wait a minute buddy. I  
just borrowed it. No harm  
meant or done. Just a few  
laughs.

Beaulieu stuffs the letter in his trousers, then swings wildly at Delaney. Delaney ducks and falls on the floor.

DELANEY

Hey, cool it buddy. Can't you take a joke? Anybody who lies around beating his meat in broad daylight ought to expect a little joshing. You've got no right to be self-righteous.

BEAULIEU  
Don't talk to me about rights. Read your own damn mail.

DELANEY  
(laughing)  
I would if I had any.

BEAULIEU  
Well, keep your filthy hands off mine.

Beaulieu kicks Delaney in the stomach.

BEAULIEU  
(continuing, mocking)  
You flinched.

Delaney grabs Beaulieu's leg and pulls him down on the floor. They roll, kicking and punching, on the space among the johns. Responding to the noise, Powell rushes in. The screen door slams loudly, and Hathaway enters, too. Hathaway takes hold of Delaney, and Powell lifts Beaulieu. They pull the fighters apart.

BEAULIEU  
(struggling)  
Let me kill the fucking bastard.

HATHAWAY  
Not while you're in my platoon. I don't give a damn who started this or why. It's ending right here.

He looks around and spots Sanderson.

HATHAWAY  
(continuing)  
Sanderson, were you planning on running today?

SANDERSON

Yeah. But only five miles. I thought I'd take it easy today. After all, it's Sunday.

HATHAWAY

Well, take these guys with you. It looks like they have extra energy to burn off. Got it, Delaney and Beaulieu? You run. You run hard. Maybe you talk a little on the way and work out your differences. But if you go at each other again, believe me, I'll take it straight to the Drill Sergeant and you'll both get an Article Fifteen.

DELANEY

Hey, why should you care? If this Neanderthal loses control and we bash each other up, so what's it to you?

HATHAWAY

We all get punished for what one guy does. Besides, we're at the limit of our patience. This is like a woodshed in a drought. We don't want lightning. One stupid fight could become a free-for-all. I don't want to end up in the guardhouse.

(beat)

I don't want to be stuck in this fucking army any longer than need be. Keep it cool.

COHEN

(echoes)

Real cool.

Cohen starts humming and softly singing the tune from West Side Story, drumming out the beat on a sink.

TAGLIATTI

I don't see how that Sanderson does it, running laps in this heat.

WASLEWSKI

He's nuts.

TAGLIATTI

He thrives on this shit.

WASLEWSKI

That's what I said -- he's nuts.

CUT TO:

EXT. COMPANY AREA - DAY

Delaney and Beaulieu jog side by side, around the company area. Sanderson runs ahead, far faster. He laps them while they talk.

BEAULIEU

You sound like a fucking SDS radical. What the hell are you doing in the reserves?

DELANEY

Better here than Nam.

BEAULIEU

Look. Level with me. You took a couple years of ROTC. Radicals don't take ROTC.

DELANEY

Well, you see, my brother's in the disarmament movement. He joined ROTC, went to Nam and had his arms blown off. I found that rather discouraging. We were both in ROTC because that was the only way to pay our way through school. When Dan came back the way he did, I quit, and got a job working nights in a machine-tool factory.

BEAULIEU

Sorry about your brother. Life's tough. I work at McDonald's and my wife does tempo office work to pay my way through school. We get on

somehow. We don't expect much more. It's no big deal.

DELANEY

Don't get me wrong. I'm not much different from you. I don't believe in the war, but I haven't done a damn thing, yet, to end it.

BEAULIEU

Don't lump me with you. I'm not against the war, and I'm not for it either. I just want to get on with my life, with a minimum of hassle. I'm no protester.

Beaulieu runs on ahead.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BARRACKS/SHOWERS - DAY

Delaney and Beaulieu are side by side in the shower lathering up, relaxing their exhausted bodies. Delaney is turned toward Beaulieu, who is turned away.

DELANEY

Look, Beaulieu, I'm not a protester either. I didn't burn my draft card or join SDS. I played it safe, like you. I found a Reserve unit to avoid the draft. Now the least I can do is to try to undermine the system from within. No bombs, no big deal -- just whatever I can do with my wits to screw things up, without throwing away my future.

(beat)

I've got a girl back home named Melody. She's sure I'm going to do something dramatic for the cause. She thinks I'm going to be some kind of hero, and I know I'm just a piece of shit, who'd gladly sell out for a good job with a future.

Great combination, huh?

(beat)

Hell, it's crazy living this lie. She doesn't write and doesn't want me to write because she's sure Big Brother would read our mail, and I'd be nailed as a rebel.

Beaulieu turns toward Delaney.

BEAULIEU

Debbie's more naive than that.

DELANEY

What?

BEAULIEU

She thinks I'm the only one who reads what she mails me.

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACKS/LATRINE - DAY (SATURDAY)

Beaulieu shaves at a sink. The camera focuses on him. Some of the rest of the room is visible in the mirror. Laundry bags are stacked high around the washer and dryer. All the toilet seats are occupied -- by Tagliatti, Cohen, Waslewski, and others. Tagliatti is reading a newspaper, as usual.

BEAULIEU

(between razor strokes)

Hey, Tag, are you through with the sports?

TAGLIATTI

Yeah, but it's four days old.

BEAULIEU

Well, that's two days better than anything I've seen.

Alec enters the latrine.

ALEC

Ah, shit.

COHEN

Yeah, Alec, it's a full house.  
Maybe you can catch the next  
show.

ALEC  
Bunch of damned  
exhibitionists. Got to spend  
the whole day in the latrine.

COHEN  
A good crap's one of the few  
pleasures allowed us. Even a  
cop like you can  
appreciate that.

ALEC  
Then shit and get done with  
it. This place looks like a  
library.

COHEN  
I say, sir, are the libraries  
like this in Chicago?

ALEC  
Get off it, Cohen.

COHEN  
When I'm done, I will, indeed,  
get off it. But right now  
that's a bit premature. I  
might risk staining this  
immaculate concrete floor, the  
pride of the fifth platoon  
latrine crew.

ALEC  
Cut the bull.

COHEN  
Me Big Chief Shitting Bull.

Cohen starts drumming on the wall -- an Indian war dance.

WASLEWSKI  
Tag, can you toss me the  
toilet paper, please?

Tag throws it, and Waslewski catches it, circus-style, on  
his big toe. He uses some, then tosses the roll to Alec and  
stands up.

WASLEWSKI

Here you go, Alec. It's all yours.

COHEN

Just shit right down and write yourself a letter.

TRAINEE (O.S.)

Formation!

ALEC

(groans)

God.

Cohen drums in cheerful imitation of a trumpet call.

COHEN

Self-control, my boy. That's the first lesson of the Army. Potty-training 101. It's all part of basic training. We must learn to adapt to the shituation.

ALEC

Well, you don't seem to have learned it -- with that goddamned diarrhea of the mouth.

Everyone clears out quickly.

CUT TO:

EXT. EXERCISE FIELD - DAY (SATURDAY)

All five platoons of Echo Company line up quickly on the exercise field. Roberts doesn't show up for this formation, nor do Sanderson, Evans, and Vassavion, who have passes, and Sullivan who is on CQ. The CAPTAIN of Echo Company presides as the five DRILL SERGEANTS read their rosters and check off the names quickly and mechanically. The Captain is just a couple years out of college -- not much older than the trainees. This is his first command. Like the trainees, he's self-conscious and awkward. All the sergeants read at the same time, but only the DRILL SERGEANT from the fifth platoon is clearly audible.

DRILL SERGEANT

Powell!

POWELL  
Here, Drill Sergeant!

DRILL SERGEANT  
Rawlings!

RAWLINGS  
Here, Drill Sergeant!

DRILL SERGEANT  
Roberts!

HATHAWAY  
On CQ, Drill Sergeant!

DRILL SERGEANT  
Sanderson!

HATHAWAY  
On pass, Drill Sergeant!

DRILL SERGEANT  
Schneider!

Schneider accidentally swallows his bubblegum, then answers loudly.

SCHNEIDER  
Here, Drill Sergeant!

DRILL SERGEANT  
Sullivan!

HATHAWAY  
On CQ, Drill Sergeant!

The Drill Sergeant stops for an uncomfortably long time and looks around.

DRILL SERGEANT  
Tagliatti!

TAGLIATTI  
Here, Drill Sergeant

DRILL SERGEANT  
Vassavion!

HATHAWAY

On pass, Drill Sergeant!

DRILL SERGEANT  
Waslewski!

WASLEWSKI  
Here, Drill Sergeant!

CAPTAIN (O.S.)  
Third Platoon!

SERGEANT 3 (O.S.)  
All present or accounted for,  
sir!

DRILL SERGEANT  
Roberts!

Hathaway starts to speak, then stops himself.

CAPTAIN (O.S.)  
Fourth Platoon!

SERGEANT 4 (O.S.)  
All present or accounted for,  
sir!

DRILL SERGEANT  
Roberts!

WASLEWSKI  
On KP, Drill Sergeant!

CAPTAIN (O.S.)  
Fifth Platoon!

DRILL SERGEANT  
All present or accounted for,  
sir!

CAPTAIN (O.S.)  
Company!

SERGEANTS (O.S.)  
Platoon!

CAPTAIN (O.S.)  
Dismissed!

SERGEANTS (O.S.)  
Dismissed!

Most of the trainees race to the mess hall to line up and wait for dinner. Some straggle off in small groups. Alec rushes to the barracks. Tagliatti, Waslewski, MacFarland, Delaney follows, more slowly. Rawlings is left alone on the exercise field. He looks lost.

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACKS/BUNKROOM - DAY (SATURDAY)

Trainees enter the previously empty barracks. Alec heads straight to the latrine. Tagliatti, Waslewski, MacFarland, and Delaney stretch out on their bunks. Halfway down the aisle, Powell sits on his bed, his powerful frame bowed, a Bible on his lap. The temperature is over 95o. Everyone is sweating heavily.

WASLEWSKI

(spits)

Goddamn. They treat prisoners of war better than this. I'd like to shove that Bill-of-Rights crap right up that Drill Sergeant's ass.

DELANEY

That's the system for you. Here we are, free citizens, and they've revoked our civil rights and subjected us to this torture without there ever having been a declaration of war, without the express consent of Congress.

WASLEWSKI

All I want is a goddamned beer. There's a PX a block away. And we can't go there.

MACFARLAND

Have a drink of water.

WASLEWSKI

Water? You call that piss "water?" All I want's a goddamned beer.

MACFARLAND

Okay, Waz, okay. We're all in  
the same boat.

TAGLIATTI

Good thing Sarge can't count.  
It sounded funny with three  
guys on CQ.

WASLEWSKI

And me, with my big mouth, I  
said he was on KP.

DELANEY

Where the hell is Roberts?

WASLEWSKI

(licking his lips)  
Maybe he just slipped over to  
the PX for a beer.

TAGLIATTI

Yeah if nobody sees him, it'll  
be all right.

MACFARLAND

Don't anybody tell Rawlings.  
That bastard would turn him  
in.

WASLEWSKI

Here comes Rawlings.

Rawlings enters. Everybody but Powell leaves the barracks in  
a hurry. Screendoor slams.

RAWLINGS

(laughs, weakly)  
They sure got hungry fast.

Powell smiles, then goes back to reading his Bible. Rawlings  
turns to the water fountain, takes a swallow, and spits it  
out.

RAWLINGS

(continuing)  
The water ought to get cool  
while everybody's at supper.  
It needs a rest. We all need  
rest.

Rawlings hesitates, uncertain whether to leave or stay.  
Powell puts down his Bible and speaks.

POWELL  
Would you like to play  
frisbee?

Rawlings grins from ear to ear.

CUT TO:

EXT. EXERCISE FIELD - DAY

Rawlings and Powell throw a frisbee back and forth as the conversation goes back and forth between them. Powell throws it up, so it curves down at Rawlings at an unexpected angle. Rawlings throws it level and direct. They are both good at it.

RAWLINGS  
You have a way about you. It's like you have this inner strength and know just what to do and say. Even when you say nothing at all, you seem so decisive.

POWELL  
(smiling)  
Appearances are deceiving. Sometimes I wish I were either fighting the war or fighting against it. The world is multi-colored and complex. There isn't any single answer, and maybe our reservist compromise is the best choice. I distrust people like Delaney who see everything as just black and white, conservative and liberal, right and wrong, good and evil. I believe that yes-or-no attitude is what leads to war.

RAWLINGS  
I think I know what you mean. There's this girl back home -- Madeline -- who was always on my case because I was neither a hawk nor a dove. I'd always

see both sides of an issue.  
Her worst insult was to call  
me "reasonable."

POWELL

(smiling)

Well, I don't think anybody's  
ever called me that. Certainly  
not my parents when I dropped  
out of med school and became a  
carpenter.

Rawlings falters and misses a catch, then picks it up  
awkwardly and hesitates before throwing it back.

RAWLINGS

Why the hell did you do that?

POWELL

One morning driving to school  
after an all-nighter, I fell  
asleep on the expressway. I  
woke up with a jolt ten miles  
past my exit so scared I was  
more alert than I had ever  
been in my life.

RAWLINGS

What did you do?

POWELL

I just kept driving. I ran out  
of gas a couple hundred miles  
later near a carpenter's shop.  
The owner was kind enough to  
give me a job.

RAWLINGS

But how could you possibly?  
Med school -- you must have  
worked hard for years to get  
as far as you were. How could  
you just throw it away like  
that?

POWELL

I felt like I'd been  
sleepwalking for years. I  
needed to understand. I  
couldn't just live. I needed  
to know why I was

living. I'm still trying to understand. It takes practice.

He heaves a dazzling sky-high curve.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BARRACKS/BUNKROOM - DAY

As Rawlings climbs the stairs, Delaney enters, followed by Armstrong, Alec, and Cohen. Powell is still on his bunk, on the far side of the aisle, quietly reading the Bible. Beaulieu is sitting on bunk, near the entrance, writing a letter. Delaney slides up to Beaulieu (in stocking feet) and makes a fake jab at his face.

DELANEY  
(laughing)  
You flinched.

BEAULIEU  
Cut the third-grade shit,  
Delaney.

DELANEY  
Ease off, soldier. Can't you  
take a joke?

BEAULIEU  
Next time you do that, I'll  
kick you in the balls.

Delaney fakes fear and exaggeratedly protects his crotch, then with a laugh turns to the others, who have gathered by the water fountain.

DELANEY  
Okay, Armstrong, where's  
Roberts? You're his bunkmate.  
You should know.

ARMSTRONG  
He said he was going home.

DELANEY  
Home? Is something wrong at  
home? Somebody sick or  
something? He should have told  
somebody. They'd call the Red

Cross and have them check it out. If it was really bad, they'd give him a pass.

ARMSTRONG

Nobody's sick. He just said he was going home.

ALEC

Freedom, Delaney. You talk a lot about freedom. Well, there's your freedom. He wants to go, so he goes. And what can they do to him? Send him to Nam? He's eleven bang-bang. Mortars. He's going to Nam all right. No place but Nam. There's your fucking freedom - - being so low you've got nothing to lose.

COHEN

That's fucking profound, Alec.  
(starts to sing softly.)  
"Freedom's just another word  
for nothing left to lose..."

DELANEY

Is he coming back? Did he say he was coming back?

ARMSTRONG

He'll be back.  
(beat)  
When he's good and ready,  
he'll be back.

ALEC

He's got thirty days. I heard a hold-over talking about it - - one of the guys waiting for court-martial. Thirty days and you're still AWOL. But one minute more, and you're a deserter, and they'll have the FBI after you.

DELANEY

FBI? These days there are so many deserters the FBI can't hope to touch them. But when

the Drill Sergeant finds out that Roberts is gone, he'll have all of us low-crawling from one end of the company area to the other. And we can forget about ever getting PX privileges or passes. Damn it. I can't take four more weeks of this hell-hole.

ALEC

You're not going to rat on him, are you, Delaney?

DELANEY

Hell, no. What's to gain by ratting on him? As soon as they know he's AWOL, we've had it.

(beat)

But if we can cover it up till he gets back, we'll be all right.

Alec whips out his blackjack and slams it against the wall in anger.

ALEC

That little bastard.

DELANEY

How long do you figure he'll be, Armstrong?

ARMSTRONG

Don't know. But I do know that Jackson, Mississippi's a long ways from here.

COHEN

Shit almighty.

Alvarado barges in, angry and anxious.

ALVARDO

(shouts)

Sullivan! Sullivan!

BEAULIEU

I think he's still on CQ.

ALVARDO

Then fuck him. I've got to get this wash done tonight.

DELANEY

Cool it, buster. My bag's ahead of yours.

ALVARDO

Fuck. All my fatigues stink. The sweat's been fermenting on them for weeks. Sometimes I think they're more alive than I am.

DELANEY

Well, don't blame it on me. Mine stink just as much as yours do. It's the fucking system's fault, giving us one washer for forty-seven stinking guys.

BEAULIEU

When I get out of here, I'm going to write a book about this shit-hole.

COHEN

Sure, why not. Just don't make a big deal about it. It isn't like we're going to be shipped to Nam. This isn't your usual basic training.

DELANEY

Yeah, we've got it easy. The system has given us a few advantages, and we've taken them, so we've got a stake in the system. We don't have as much of a stake as the runts and cowards, but we can be counted on not to shout too loud, not to be too violent. That's how the system perpetuates itself -- by giving us things we'd be afraid to part with. We have to be willing to lose everything, to destroy

everything, if we ever hope to attain freedom.

(beat)

That's what's holding us here, you know -- our compromises with the system. There aren't any walls or armed guards -- just imaginary lines. One step beyond the line from this tree to this building and you're AWOL. One step over that yellow line into the center aisle and...

(beat)

We don't worry about the Drill Sergeant anymore. It isn't a question of what he'd do to us. We've internalized it all. We react automatically. It's like they took out our minds and replaced them with machines. Or rather, we did it to ourselves so we could be good little boys without having to think about it. We form 'good habits,' like good little boys.

Delaney, Alec, Armstrong, Cohen, and Alvarado go outside. The screendoor slams. Beaulieu waits till they are out of earshot, then walks down to Powell's bunk.

BEAULIEU

Did you hear that shit? Do you believe that Delaney guy?

Powell sets aside his book and looks toward Beaulieu with concern.

POWELL

Why do you listen to him?

BEAULIEU

Some of what he says makes sense, but I just don't trust the man.

POWELL

What is it that he says that attracts you?

The camera follows Powell's point of view as he studies the center aisle and the reflection of the sunlight on it. Beaulieu's mirror image is seen distorted on the center aisle as he continues talking.

BEAULIEU

When I first got here, I thought I'd found moral simplicity. The world was reduced to just this barracks. We were all confronted with the same simple rules and orders. You obey or disobey. You cross the line or you don't. The setup was like a sociology experiment. And here's Delaney talking about basic principles -- freedom and rights, the system and war.

While Beaulieu is talking, Powell takes out his handkerchief, spits on it, and carefully and slowly -- his face near the floor -- buffs one little imperfect spot.

BEAULIEU

(continuing)

He's good at making complex issues look simple. Lots of what he says makes sense.

POWELL

So what's your problem?

BEAULIEU

Delaney himself, I guess. He uses words and ideas not to understand better, but to persuade people. When he's done lecturing, I get the uncomfortable feeling that I've been changed in some way. I feel manipulated and used.

Powell, his head still near the floor, turns and looks Beaulieu straight in the eye.

POWELL

Yes. Delaney is dangerous. He, not Roberts, is the one who poses a threat to all of us.

CUT TO:

INT. COLLEGE/DORM ROOM - NIGHT (SATURDAY)

Melody is stretched out studying, with the Simon and Garfunkel album "The Sound of Silence" playing in the background, when Madeline arrives unexpectedly.

MELODY

Madeline? On a Saturday night?  
I thought you had a date?

MADELINE

He decided to go to an anti-war rally instead of the movies. So I dumped him.

MELODY

So what brings you here?

MADELINE

I just got a crazy letter from George. He mentions you. I thought you might get a kick out of it.

MELODY

(laughs)

Since when do you write to George Rawlings? I thought you couldn't stand his guts. You called him an intolerable bore.

MADELINE

And he is. He writes to me even though I don't write back. But sometimes he comes up with something amusing.

MELODY

About me?

MADELINE

And Frank.

MELODY

Frank Delaney? You mean they're in the same unit?

Madeline nods.

MADELINE

Do you miss him?

MELODY

Yeah, I guess I do, even though he drives me batty with that fake jab of his, always playing the "flinch" game, no matter how many times I tell him I hate it.

MADELINE

The last time he did it to me, I asked if he did it because he had a sick sense of humor or because he needed practice pulling his punches.

MELODY

(laughs)

I'll have to remember that line. He can get so uptight and tense, like half of him wants to let loose and the other half keeps holding back.

MADELINE

Don't you wonder what would happen if he let go?

MELODY

(considering)

Hmmm. That could be interesting. And some day he will, I'm sure.

MADELINE

Do you love him?

MELODY

I don't really think about him that way. With the war and politics -- personal feelings just don't seem that important. It would be cheating to just go off and enjoy your life.

MADELINE

(laughs)  
Well, in that case, I'm all  
for cheating.

Melody takes the letter and reads it out loud.

MELODY

(reading out loud)  
Dear Madeline, I know it must seem funny getting these letters from me. Sure we parted as "friends." I haven't forgotten. But you have no idea what it's like here, what hell it is. I need someone to write to, someone to dream of. Just to keep my sanity, I need it. Please let me delude myself a bit. Please don't keep hitting me over the head with a sledge-hammer. Afterall, how can either of us know what things will be like in three months? People change. Just let me believe there might be a chance.

MADELINE

God! What an idiot! I can just imagine him scrunched up in bed with his fantasies.

MELODY

(continues reading)  
Sometimes I regret ever having gotten myself into this mess. I should have paid a dentist to put braces on my teeth and avoided the military altogether. But I've always planned to go into politics after law school. I hate the Army. I know there's no moral justification for Nam. But to get elected to a position of authority so I can do something to prevent future Nams, I have to have served in the military. It's one of the unfortunate facts of politics, one of the compromises that have to be made.

MADELINE

(ironic)  
He's always had noble ambitions. He makes his mother proud.

MELODY

Yeah, it's reasoning like his that keeps this war going. So many people who don't believe in it support it with their actions.

(reads again)  
The platoon hates me for not standing up to the Drill Sergeant, for not voicing their wants and opinions. And the Sergeant is riding me for not being more strict with the platoon, for not asserting my authority, for not giving him the names of slackers so he can punish them. He claims there's no excuse for me getting gigs in inspection, that I should have the others make my bed, straighten my area,

check and recheck. But I can't see burdening them with my problems.

(beat)

They've got little enough time to do their own work. There's nobody here I can talk to, except Powell and maybe Delaney. You know Frank Delaney is here in the same platoon. He and I weren't close back at school, but we knew one another by name, which makes me feel closer to him than anyone else here. I haven't had a chance to talk much to him yet. But I may need to soon.

(reads)

Things are looking bad, and I'll need every friend I can get. Frank says Melody's pregnant. Melody pauses, with a quizzical look, then continues.

(continues reading)

Remember Melody from English class?

He's deeply concerned and wants to get home as quickly as he can to be with her. You could see the love in his eyes.

Clearly, it pained him to say anything

about it. But he needs a weekend pass, and the only way to

get one is to beat others who are better than him at the

mile run. I'd throw the race, but I'm not his competition. I

can't do anything to help him.

MADELINE

(nosey and curious)

Have you decided?

MELODY

Decided what?

MADELINE

Whether to have it, of course.

MELODY

What are you talking about?

I'm not pregnant. I don't know

why he's feeding those guys

that kind of bologna.

MADELINE

Well, what's it sound like?

MELODY

It sounds like he's desperate

to come running home to me.

But that's just not like

Delaney. That's as crazy as

that phone call I got from

him.

MADELINE

He called?

MELODY

Yeah, on Thursday. The same day this letter was written. He said something about taking a job with a computer company and getting married, settling in the suburbs and having kids.

MADELINE

And you don't find that romantic?

MELODY

It just wasn't like him to forget his responsibility to the cause. I figured their brainwashing must be getting to him. He just didn't sound like himself.

MADELINE

(laughs)

Melody, you're incredible. Why fight war with war? You'll only end up with war.

MELODY

What else can a responsible person do?

Madeline looks at herself in a mirror from her purse, and gives her hair a quick brush stroke before answering.

MADELINE

Why not make love instead?

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACKS/BUNKROOM - DAY (SUNDAY)

Hathaway and Schneider are on their bunks. Alvarado and Cohen are standing by the water fountain. The screendoor slams, and Alec walks in. He has a blackjack in one hand and keeps hitting the palm of his other hand with it.

ALVARDO

Put that blackjack away. It makes me nervous.

ALEC

For me, it's just the opposite. It calms me. It relieves the tension to know I've got something familiar to fall back on.

ALVARDO

Better not let the Sergeant see you with that.

ALEC

We're not likely to see him on a Sunday afternoon, now are we? Look, Alvarado, I can take care of myself, thank you.

Delaney enters, wrapped in a towel.

DELANEY

By any chance, were you one of the cops who bashed the heads of students at the Chicago convention?

ALEC

No, I was a student myself then. I was on the receiving end.

COHEN

Times change.

Alec hits his palm very hard with the blackjack.

ALEC

Yes. They change real fast.

HATHAWAY

Alec, take your boots off.

ALEC

Don't be a pain in the ass. It's Sunday. Cool it.

HATHAWAY

I don't give a damn if it's  
Doomsday. Take off those  
boots.

SCHNEIDER  
(gently persuading)  
Go ahead, Alec. We all do it.

HATHAWAY  
And get your damned foot off  
that center aisle. What do you  
think you are? Special or  
something? Everybody else  
walks around, and you can,  
too.

The barracks door slams again. Rawlings enters, wearing  
boots.

HATHAWAY  
Hey, Rawlings, take off your  
boots.

RAWLINGS  
Okay, already. I'm just going  
to my room.

HATHAWAY  
No exceptions. You know that.

RAWLINGS  
Okay. Okay. Just a minute.

Schneider heads for the latrine. Walking past Rawlings, he  
blows and pops a bubble.

RAWLINGS  
(distracted)  
Schneider, please. That  
bubblegum drives me crazy.  
What was I going to say? Yes.  
Where's Roberts? Has anybody  
seen Roberts? He isn't on CQ.

DELANEY  
KP. Remember. He got night KP  
for a week.

Rawlings heads upstairs, without taking his boots off.

ALEC

Quick thinking, Delaney. I forgot about that. That's where he should be.

DELANEY

Yeah. He should be on KP. And he should be on CQ. And he should have gotten somebody to fill in for him on one or the other. But nobody's seen him since Friday, and we don't know where he is.

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACKS/RAWLINGS' ROOM - DAY (SUNDAY)

Rawlings enters, tired and dragging, with his boots on, and discovers Powell sitting on his bunk, carefully polishing his display boots for him.

RAWLINGS

What are you doing? There's no need for that?

POWELL

Well, a little extra spit and polish won't hurt. You get enough grief as it is.

RAWLINGS

(taken aback)

Well... thanks. Thanks for doing it and thanks for being here. I do need to talk to you.

POWELL

Yes?

RAWLINGS

I feel like I passed the exit miles ago, and there's no point in going back.

POWELL

Meaning?

RAWLINGS

I've decided not to go to law school -- at least not now.

And I'm not sure whether I want to pursue politics as a career.

POWELL

Is this some form of personal protest against the war and the "system"?

RAWLINGS

No. I just feel I've got a lot of growing up to do. I have to understand a few things before I can go ahead.

POWELL

What kind of things?

RAWLINGS

Roberts and Armstrong and Franklin and Jones, for instance. I'd like to know why they pulled that block-out routine so Delaney would have a chance to win a pass to go home to his pregnant girlfriend. I'd like to know why they had the sensitivity and the courage to do that, while the rest of us didn't.

POWELL

Why don't you ask them?

RAWLINGS

Maybe I will if I can get up the courage to. It's not easy for me to talk to blacks. I've got a few generations of guilt behind me.

He picks up a boot that Powell just finished and admires the shine.

RAWLINGS

(continuing)

My great-grandfather had a plantation in Tennessee and owned a hundred slaves. My parents were proud when they

told me that, and I was proud of it too.

(beat)

I never paid much attention to news reports about civil rights demonstrations. That was all far away, down south. When Martin Luther King was shot, I didn't know who he was. When Watts and other black neighborhoods burned, I just changed the channel and watched something else. Let those white bigots and Negro radicals fight things out on their own. It didn't affect me. Why should I care?

POWELL

And what's different now?

RAWLINGS

I'm in charge here. I didn't ask to be made platoon leader. It's a burden, not an honor. But I take it seriously. I'm responsible for those four blacks in this platoon, along with everybody else.

(beat)

They're going to be shipped off to Nam as soon as this is over, while the rest of us go back to college and grad school and jobs. And I don't even know how to talk to them. I don't think I've ever had a conversation with a black person in my life. Not that I'm prejudiced. I've just never been in that kind of social situation. And I must admit I feel awkward, and, yes, guilty toward them.

POWELL

I think I know what you mean. I was trained by my parents to feel moral responsibility and guilt, not only for what I

did, but for what I should have done and didn't do.

RAWLINGS

Right. "The sins of omission," my mother calls it. I think back at all the occasions when I could have stood up and said something to fight prejudice and support civil rights, or could have gone a couple steps out of my way to make a friend.

POWELL

It sounds all too familiar. It reminds me of the story of that knight who was looking for the Holy Grail, and once it passed right in front of his face, only he didn't recognize it. All his life he felt the burden of guilt for what he had not done -- for not having seen it and chosen it, and done the right thing.

(beat)

And he kept hoping vainly for a second chance.

RAWLINGS

Yes. That's it. I'm not sure when or how, but I missed the Grail -- I missed that chance to be a true and caring human being, to make the world a little better for someone else. Sure, I'm a "bleeding heart liberal." I'm probably just plain stupid. But I feel responsible for these four blacks I hardly know, and I want a second chance. And I think, I've found a way to help them.

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACKS/LATRINE/SHOWER STALL - DAY (SUNDAY)

Little Evans enters, leading the huge, lumbering Vassavion, who clutches a six-pack of beer to his chest and is magnificent in drunkenness.

VASSAVION  
All hail to Caesar! All ale to  
me!

With considerable effort, Evans pushes Vassavion into the stall, turns on the water, and leaves.

VASSAVION  
(continuing)  
Three cheers for King Richard!  
And three beers for me!

Vassavion leans his head back and lets the water hit his face, then stumbles out.

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACKS/LATRINE - DAY

MacFarland, Sullivan, and Beaulieu are waiting to do their laundry. Vassavion comes staggering in, soaking wet.

SSAVION  
(to himself in mirror)  
At great personal risk, and  
exercising considerable self-  
restraint, I have brought you  
a six-pack -- six bright,  
sparkling, lukewarm, unopened,  
certified virgin cans of  
Schlitz. The fruits of that  
precious week-end pass I was  
so blessed with.

Waslewski comes rushing in and grabs a can.

VASSAVION  
(continuing)  
Drink up, my boy, drink up. I  
feel the thirst coming on me.  
Man lives not by bread alone.  
Give me one of those cans.

He throws down his half-empty can. He stumbles to one of the empty johns and vomits. Waslewski opens a can for himself.

WASLEWSKI

You lucky bastard. I'd give my right ball to get out of this place. Tagliatti enters, carrying his newspaper.

TAGLIATTI

Where's Evans?

VASSAVION

Evans? He was with me a minute ago. While I was painting the town, he was looking for paint. He has the soul of an artist.

Rawlings enters the latrine and nearly trips over a beer can. Vassavion greets him with a magnificent bow.

VASSAVION

Welcome, Prince Hal.

RAWLINGS

You're drunk.

VASSAVION

Then be ye crowned king already? A hollow crown and an empty noodle. 'Tis true 'tis pity, and pity 'tis 'tis you.

RAWLINGS

You're drunk.

VASSAVION

Amen. And hallowed be thy name. And hollowed be thy head. Howl, howl, howl, the beer is foul. A foul ball. We had a ball, and the beer was foul. Out of line, your highness, most definitely out of line. But I'll go straight from honest to goodness. Don't 'arry me, me boy; I'll do it at me own speed.

RAWLINGS

(standing at a urinal)  
Please stay out of sight.

Rawlings quickly buttons up his fatigues and leaves.  
Vassavion chugs a beers and shakes his head.

VASSAVION

I do believe the old boy's  
pissed off. He has no sense of  
humor, no sense at all.

Vassavion stretches out with his head on a laundry bag and immediately falls asleep, with a cherubic grin on his face. Tagliatti, MacFarland, and Sullivan each grab a can of beer, finishing off the six-pack. Waslewski picks up the empties and pours the few remaining drops down his throat, then absent-mindedly crushes the cans in his hand, as if they were paper cups. Sanderson and Cohen come in.

WASLEWSKI

(bellows)

Evans, would you believe that  
Evans? He never so much as  
tasted a beer. A weekend pass.  
That runt had thirty-two hours  
of freedom, thirty-two hours  
in the land of bars and  
brothels. And he spent it  
chasing after paint so he can  
pretty up the barracks. What a  
waste.

BEAULIEU

(looks up from letter)

Paint?

WASLEWSKI

Yeah. And that ain't the half  
of it. You know what color he  
got?

BEAULIEU

What?

WASLEWSKI

Yellow.

BEAULIEU

What the hell can he paint  
yellow?

WASLEWSKI

The lines. The fucking lines for the center aisle. Those fucking lines we're not supposed to step over. He wants to repaint them so they'll be neat and pretty. He thinks it'll be worth bonus points for inspection. Bonus points. God, that runt's out of his ever-fucking mind.

Waslewski trips on a laundry bag, then sits down on it and stretches out on the long line of laundry bags, beside Vassavion. He swallows the last drop from the last can, then pounds the floor with the can.

SANDERSON

You know, that's not a bad idea.

WASLEWSKI

What?

SANDERSON

Going for bonus points. We're going to need plenty of bonus points.

COHEN

You mean because of our little problem with Roberts?

SANDERSON

I mean our problem with all four of the draftees. They just don't give a damn. Whether it's inspections or PT or rifle range they could care less. And they pull down the score of the whole platoon.

SULLIVAN

Hell, yeah. If they got in gear, the whole bunch of us could have passes next weekend.

SANDERSON

And the weekend after that.

Beaulieu kicks the floor with his heel.

BEAULIEU

God, I could use a pass.

WASLEWSKI

Vassavion's such a lucky  
bastard. There he lies --  
shit-faced drunk and half-way  
to heaven.

SULLIVAN

Yeah, Vassavion sure knows how  
to use a pass.

COHEN

(mocking)

Oh, the sweet oblivion of  
drunkenness.

SULLIVAN

Is that a song?

COHEN

No, but it should be.

Waslewski pounds on the wall with both fists.

WASLEWSKI

If I don't get a pass soon,  
I'm going to pound this wall  
to dust.

COHEN

Cool it, Samson. We're all in  
the same boat.

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACKS/RAWLINGS' ROOM - DAY (SUNDAY)

Rawlings is on his bed, writing a letter, with his boots  
still on. The screen door slams three times in rapid  
succession.

ARMSTRONG (O.S.)

Yo! Roberts! You back yet?

DELANEY (O.S.)

(whispers loudly)

Cool it, Armstrong.

Rawlings gets up, quickly goes to the door of his room and shouts.

RAWLINGS

Armstrong! Could you come up here for a minute please. And bring Roberts, Franklin, and Jones, if they're around.

Armstrong, Franklin, and Jones enter and linger awkwardly near the door .

RAWLINGS

(continuing)

Come on in. Make yourselves comfortable.

He removes the writing paper from his bed. Armstrong and Franklin sit down. Jones stays by the door. Rawlings stands by the window.

RAWLINGS

(continuing)

You're probably wondering why I asked you up here.

ARMSTRONG

(cautious and ironic)

The thought had occurred to me. Yes, indeed, sir.

RAWLINGS

(awkward)

I thought we ought to get to know one another.

Armstrong stands up, stretches out his arm, and shakes hands with Rawlings. Meanwhile Franklin picks up the boots Powell just polished and admires the shine.

ARMSTRONG

Sam Armstrong here.

RAWLINGS

(smiling)

George Rawlings.

ARMSTRONG

Pleased to meet you. This is Ben Franklin and Jimmy Jones.

Thanks for the hospitality. We  
be on our way now.

RAWLINGS

Wait. ... Please.

ARMSTRONG

Yes, siree, by George. By  
George Rawlings, indeed, sir.

As a nervous gesture, Armstrong takes the paperback book out of his back pocket (One Dimensional Man) and flips the pages with his thumb. Franklin tries on the boots and gives them a little extra spit and polish.

RAWLINGS

You come from the South?

ARMSTRONG

My, what discerning ears you  
have. Yes, I hail from  
Memphis. Ben, here is from  
Raleigh, North Carolina. And  
Jim comes from Los Angeles.  
You may have heard of the  
thriving community known as  
Watts.

RAWLINGS

You've been to college?

ARMSTRONG

Another point for the platoon  
leader. I spent one year at  
the City College of New York.  
And I spent two more years in  
that fine city in the  
university of the streets.

RAWLINGS

And Roberts?

FRANKLIN

(quickly)

We don't know where he is.

JONES

No idea at all.

RAWLINGS

I mean, did he go to college,  
too?

ARMSTRONG

Yeah, for a while. Then he had  
to take off for a year to earn  
more money for tuition, and he  
lost his student deferment and  
got drafted.

RAWLINGS

(sympathizing)

Shit.

ARMSTRONG

No harm done. It's a lot safer  
here than at Jackson State.

RAWLINGS

You mean the one...

ARMSTRONG

Yeah, where the National Guard  
shot up the women's dorm.  
Right after Kent State.

RAWLINGS

Two people were killed.

ARMSTRONG

Yes, you do read your  
newspapers, don't you, sir.  
But don't you worry your head  
over it. Roberts is a lucky  
son of a bitch. He can take  
care of himself. He got away  
from college, with all that  
nasty anti-war warfare, and  
hid out here in the peaceful  
confines of the Army. But then  
again, aren't you and your  
friends National Guard?

(laughs)

Just joshing, sir.

RAWLINGS

I'm against the war.

ARMSTRONG

No, kidding. It does my heart  
good to hear that, sir.

RAWLINGS

Seriously, Armstrong. The country is going through trying times.

ARMSTRONG

Yes, I keep trying, too.

RAWLINGS

All these Reservists and National Guard, we must seem strange to you. Let me explain.

(beat)

We aren't hawks and we aren't doves.

ARMSTRONG

And you aren't fish and you aren't fowl.

RAWLINGS

Seriously. The conservatives all went into ROTC or volunteered for Nam. The radicals are conscientious objectors or went to Canada or burnt their draft cards and went underground. We're the excluded middle -- neither conservative nor radical. And neither side recognizes our right to exist. To the conservatives, we're cowards, seeking a safe way out. To the radicals we're traitors. At college, just after Cambodia and Kent State, someone I had always considered a friend cornered me and threatened that I'd be one of the "first ones against the wall when the revolution starts." He didn't say "if" the revolution starts, but "when." He and lots of others are certain that it is historically inevitable. I'd have never guessed that he would go that way. His father has millions,

and here he is an advocate of  
a Marxist revolution.

ARMSTRONG

The poor boy, suffering all  
the trauma of reverse poverty.

RAWLINGS

It's some law of human  
behavior that in time of  
crisis, everyone hates a  
reasonable man. You must take  
sides. If you're not for me,  
you're against me.

FRANKLIN

Makes sense to me.

JONES

Me, too.

RAWLINGS

I'm rationally opposed to the  
war in Viet Nam, and I'm sure  
most of the Reservists and  
National Guardsmen here feel  
the same. We don't oppose war  
in general. We could imagine  
circumstances in which we  
would have to go to war  
against different enemies and  
for different reasons. We  
wanted support political  
efforts to end the war, but we  
couldn't justify the more  
radical solutions that many  
students were turning toward.  
We were a small and dwindling  
minority, unorganized, with no  
sense of solidarity with one  
another. We were identifiable  
only by our failure to conform  
with one or the other extreme.  
We were loners in a world  
governed by crowds.

ARMSTRONG

(mock sympathetic)

Poor boy.

RAWLINGS

Here we find ourselves  
internalizing the system we  
opposed, becoming the symbols  
we wanted to stand up against.  
We feel compelled to rebel,  
but have no one to rebel  
against but ourselves.

Armstrong makes the sign of the cross and bows solemnly.

ARMSTRONG

Bless you, my son. You are  
forgiven. Now, may we go?

RAWLINGS

I don't seem to be making my  
point.

JONES

Yeah, the score's still  
nothing to nothing.

Franklin slaps hands with Jones.

FRANKLIN

Right on, man.

RAWLINGS

Roberts seems to have natural  
athletic ability.

JONES

Are you a scout for some  
football team or something?  
I'm pretty good, too, you  
know, when I go all out.

RAWLINGS

That's what I want.

JONES

What?

RAWLINGS

I want you to go all out --  
all four of you. I want you to  
give it your best at PT and on  
the rifle range, and even in  
inspections.

ARMSTRONG

(laughing)

You mean this is just a pep talk? You think with a few well-chosen words you can get us to bust our butts so you guys can get weekend passes? You want us to go flying right through basic to Nam, so you guys can get shit-faced drunk and fuck whores. Sure, buddy, sure. And you believe in the Tooth Fairy?

JONES

(laughs)

Yeah, why should I bust my butt?

RAWLINGS

I can make it worth your while.

FRANKLIN

(showing interest)

You got drugs?

RAWLINGS

(taken aback)

No, money.

ARMSTRONG

Now, let me get this right. You want us to jump through hoops like good little soldier boys. And what are you going to pay us for that?

RAWLINGS

One thousand dollars a piece.

JONES

Are you crazy, man?

FRANKLIN

Are you filthy rich like your friend the Marxist?

RAWLINGS

No. But I have saved up four thousand dollars for law

school, and I would like to give it to you three and Roberts.

ARMSTRONG

What the fuck? You give up law school so these dumb-assed honkeys who hate your guts can get a couple of stinking weekend passes? What kind of dope are you on, man?

JONES

Yeah, let me have some of that. Share the wealth.

RAWLINGS

I'm trying to share the wealth. I wish I could do more. But that's all I have. I realize it's nothing next to the sacrifices you are making going to war. I realize it's nothing next to the prejudice and poverty you've had to endure. But it's all I can do, and I want to do it.

ARMSTRONG

(laughs)

Hold on now, boys. I do believe this man speaks the truth. I hear the true voice of white liberal guilt. He actually means to pay us that money. That's his blood money, his sacrifice to a guilty group conscience. I've seen other victims of this strange disease while panhandling in New York.

FRANKLIN

Cool it, Sam. Don't bite the hand with the golden egg.

ARMSTRONG

Don't worry, Ben. He won't change his mind. He likes it when I insult him. Hell, he'd wear a hair shirt now, if he

could find one. He'll pay. You can be sure, he'll pay.

RAWLINGS

You understand that I want you to do your best.

FRANKLIN

(ironic)

Hell, for a thousand bucks? I'm starting to love this fucking army. If the gooks don't blow me up in Nam, I think I'll re-up. Yeah, man, I'll be a fucking first-class soldier.

ARMSTRONG

You want us to perform as we as Roberts can? Sure, man, we'll out-Robert Roberts. And Roberts is good, believe me. Why he could run all the way home to Jackson, Mississippi and back in just one night, that's how fast he is.

JONES

Yeah, man, I'm pretty fast myself. Why if I turn it on, I bet I can beat Sanderson at the mile.

FRANKLIN

Five?

Jones shakes Franklin's hand in agreement.

JONES

Five bucks it is. You've got a bet, brother.

RAWLINGS

Only one condition.

FRANKLIN

Uh oh, here it comes.

RAWLINGS

Don't tell anyone about this agreement of ours, except Roberts; or the deal is off.

ARMSTRONG  
Whatever turns you on, buddy.

RAWLINGS  
Then we have a deal?

ARMSTRONG  
You most certainly have a deal.

They all shake hands.

CUT TO:

EXT. BARRACKS/JUST OUTSIDE DOOR - DAY (SUNDAY)

Delaney, Hathaway and Beaulieu are huddled together outside, near the barracks' door. Armstrong, Franklin, and Jones come running down the stairs and outside..

RAWLINGS (O.S.)  
Armstrong!

ARMSTRONG  
(in mock subservience)  
Yes, massah.

RAWLINGS (O.S.)  
Don't forget to tell Roberts!

ARMSTRONG  
We shall most certainly follow your wishes with religious zeal.

JONES  
You can bet on that one.

Hathaway signals them to follow him away from the building, over toward the trees.

HATHAWAY  
What was that all about?

ARMSTRONG  
Nothing.

BEAULIEU

Come on. What's Rawlings' interest in Roberts?

ARMSTRONG

The boss man thinks Roberts is a fine athlete. He wants to recruit him for the Dallas Cowboys.

HATHAWAY

Cut the horse crap. We all know Roberts has gone AWOL. Is Rawlings fixing to turn him in?

DELANEY

And us, too, for covering up?

ARMSTRONG

AWOL? I don't know any AWOL. Jim, do you know any AWOL?

JONES

Must be some other Roberts he's talking about. Only Roberts I know is on KP.

FRANKLIN

And CQ.

ARMSTRONG

And ASAP. And PDQ. He's a well-lettered man. A good friend of mine. Known him for weeks. Why I'd trust him a long ways. I'd trust him as far as Jackson, Mississippi.

DELANEY

(to Hathaway)

There's no point in talking to them. They've copped some kind of deal with Rawlings.

Beaulieu kicks the ground in frustration.

DELANEY

(continuing)

We've got to get to Rawlings, and fast.

HATHAWAY

What are you going to tell him?

DELANEY

Not me, you.

BEAULIEU

Delaney, you knew him in college, didn't you?

DELANEY

Barely.

BEAULIEU

Maybe he'd listen to you.

DELANEY

No, Hathaway's the one with authority around here.

He turns to face Hathaway.

DELANEY

(continuing)

Everyone respects you, even Rawlings. Find out if he's already ratted on Roberts. And if he hasn't, talk him out of doing it. He's no hot-head radical militarist. He's an intelligent, educated guy. Appeal to his reason.

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACKS/RAWLINGS' ROOM - DAY

Rawlings is stretched out on his bed again, reading, when Hathaway knocks at the door. Rawlings gets up and opens it for him.

RAWLINGS

Come in. Come in.

Rawlings shakes Hathaway's hand with enthusiasm.

RAWLINGS

(continuing)

I'm very glad you came up.  
I've been wanting to talk to  
you for weeks. You're clearly  
the one the men respect the  
most -- the real leader of the  
platoon. And I wanted to thank  
you, for the fine job you've  
been doing.

He reaches out and shakes Hathaway's hand again. Hathaway is  
puzzled.

RAWLINGS

(continuing)

And what brings you here now?  
Or is it just Sunday afternoon  
sociability? Not that I want  
to discourage sociability. No,  
indeed. I need all the friends  
I can get.

HATHAWAY

Actually, I was wondering  
about Roberts.

RAWLINGS

That's a coincidence. I was  
just talking to his three  
friends about him. Yes,  
Roberts has fine potential.  
They all do, if given a  
chance. And I'd like to see  
them given a chance.

HATHAWAY

(ironic)

You mean you'd like to recruit  
him for the Dallas Cowboys?

RAWLINGS

That would be a fine idea, if  
I could do it. Why he reminds  
me of Calvin Hill, that fine  
running back from Yale.

HATHAWAY

Running back? You'd like to  
see him running back? Shit,  
what a wise-ass you are!

Hathaway stomps out and slams the door behind him, leaving Rawlings bewildered.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BARRACKS/BY THE TREES - DAY

Hathaway rejoins Delaney and Beaulieu.

DELANEY

What did he say?

HATHAWAY

Running back. Shit. He just mocked me and talked nonsense. He knows damned well about Roberts. But he wouldn't admit it. And he wouldn't let on what he's doing. Shit.

RAWLINGS (O.S.)

Delaney! Delaney! Could you come up here for a minute, please?

DELANEY

Now we're screwed. Royally screwed.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BARRACKS/RAWLINGS' ROOM - DAY

Rawlings holds the door open as Delaney enters. Then Rawlings checks the hall to make sure no one else is within earshot and shuts the door.

RAWLINGS

Hathaway was just here.

DELANEY

I noticed.

RAWLINGS

There seems to have been some misunderstanding. I want to make sure it's set right, and quickly.

DELANEY

Well, what are you doing about Roberts?

RAWLINGS

Did they tell you, already?

DELANEY

They told me exactly nothing. But you were just shouting down the hallway about Roberts.

RAWLINGS

All right. I'll tell you. I need to tell you. I need your help, to set the record straight, but not too straight. I've been meaning to talk to you for some time. I've been meaning to do a lot for some time. Now I'm finally doing it.

He laughs nervously.

RAWLINGS

(continuing)

God! I'm finally doing it.

DELANEY

Well, isn't it about time you thought of someone other than yourself? There are 46 people in this platoon you're responsible for.

RAWLINGS

(puzzled)

But I am. I am. That's the point of it.

DELANEY

(exasperated)

The point of what?

RAWLINGS

Can I confide in you?

DELANEY

Are you trying to make some kind of deal?

RAWLINGS

I have made a deal. I made one with Armstrong, Franklin, and Jones. Roberts will be in on it, too, once they tell him about it.

DELANEY

So Roberts gets off scot free? You're only interested in the coverup?

RAWLINGS

I'm not trying to cover anything up. I want to level with you, explain to you what I've done and why. And I want you to let the others know what my intentions are -- that I'm out to help them -- without giving them the full, embarrassing details.

DELANEY

What the shit are you talking about?

RAWLINGS

First, you have to understand where I'm coming from. All my life I've planned on going to law school and then getting into politics. I dreamed of becoming a Congressman one day.

DELANEY

Law. Of course. I should have seen it coming.

RAWLINGS

Then you understand? I can't tell you how relieved I am. I've been under a lot of pressure. The Drill Sergeant has been on my case, and I've been struggling with this question. You might say, I'm obsessed with it, and not

entirely acting like myself.  
It's disorienting to suddenly  
change the direction of your  
life.

DELANEY

(puzzled)

Are you going to slit your  
wrists or something?

RAWLINGS

(laughs)

No. No. I'm giving up law  
school. I'm giving the money I  
saved for law school to the  
four black draftees in our  
platoon. This is something I  
need to do. It's a personal  
sacrifice, a penance. You see,  
if I didn't do this I would  
forever feel hypocritical and  
dishonest. Maybe, having done  
this, someday I will be able  
to go into politics, crazy as  
that sounds.

DELANEY

(incredulous)

You're giving them money?

RAWLINGS

A thousand dollars a piece. I  
know it's crude and selfish of  
me. It's like in the Civil War  
when the rich, if they were  
drafted, could pay the poor to  
take their place. They are  
taking our place, you know --  
going straight to Nam. I wish  
I could do more for them. But  
it's all I have.

DELANEY

(laughs)

And that's what it's all  
about?

RAWLINGS

That and the fact that in  
exchange for the money,  
they've promised to go all out

to help the platoon win the company competition.

DELANEY

Four thousand bucks to charity? Sure. Sounds great. As long as it's your money.

RAWLINGS

I realize it sounds strange. That's why I'd prefer to keep it confidential. I just want to do it. I don't want to be razzed and humiliated for it. Will you help me?

DELANEY

How?

RAWLINGS

Talk to Hathaway. Let him know that I have the best interests of the platoon at heart. Let him know that I've talked the draftees into giving their all in the competition. Let him know that if we all pull together this week and next, there's a good chance we'll all get weekend passes. Just don't tell him or anyone else about the money.

DELANEY

Have no fear.

Delaney takes a fake jab at Rawlings' face.

DELANEY

(continuing)

You flinched.

Delaney does it again.

DELANEY

(continuing)

You flinched again.

RAWLINGS

(annoyed)

Why do you always do that?

DELANEY

I'm just practicing.  
Practicing self-control.  
That's not easy in a crazy  
place like this. The tension  
builds up, and you just want  
to let loose -- "Full steam  
ahead and damn the torpedoes."

He boxes with his own shadow on the wall.

DELANEY

(continuing)

Okay, you let loose by giving  
away all your money. Me? Who  
knows? Maybe I'll bust a few  
heads. Maybe I'll bust yours.

He swings again at Rawlings, who ducks. Otherwise, the punch  
would have  
hit him.

DELANEY

(continuing)

Good move, George. Good move.

RAWLINGS

I don't understand you at all.

DELANEY

Come on, George. Haven't you  
ever wanted to walk into the  
principal's office and tell  
him just what you think of  
him? Haven't you ever wanted  
to go up to your boss and tell  
him he could stuff that stupid  
job? Haven't you ever wanted  
to forget all the  
responsibilities that tie you  
up? There is no tomorrow.  
You're over the brink. You've  
crossed the Rubicon. There's  
nothing more to lose. All bets  
are off. Everything is  
permitted. There's no control  
at all. Have you ever wondered  
what it would feel like to be  
free -- totally free?

Rawlings backs off, cautiously.

RAWLINGS

Cut the bullshit, Delaney.  
Will you keep your word?

DELANEY

Yeah, I probably will, George.  
I probably will. Until all  
fucking hell breaks loose. And  
that could be any minute now.

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACKS/BASE OF THE STAIRS - DAY (SUNDAY)

Hathaway is waiting for Delaney as he comes downstairs.

HATHAWAY

What did he say?

DELANEY

Nothing. He just danced around  
the subject, like he did with  
you. He's into some kind of  
power trip, trying to scare  
us. Lord only knows what he's  
after.

Delaney goes into the bunkroom.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BARRACKS/BUNKROOM - DAY (SUNDAY)

Powell and others are on bunks. Delaney enters as Cohen  
confronts Evans by the water fountain.

COHEN

(to Evans)

What the hell's this nonsense  
about paint?

EVANS

If you've got to play the  
game, why not play to win?

COHEN

God, I don't see how you can  
take this crap seriously.

EVANS

But I don't So they say, don't cross that line. What the hell should I care? Do I really need to cross that line? Hell no. If it were something important, that would be different. But this is all nonsense. So why not play along and beat them at their own game?

COHEN

Don't you have any guts? You just buckle under and do everything they tell you. Don't you have any self-respect? Damn it, why don't you stand up for yourself sometime. Rebel.

EVANS

Rebel? What the hell for? Why the hell should you want to walk there? Why make a big deal of it? It only takes a minute to walk around. If they're dumb enough to want to make a rule about it, okay -- humor them a bit. If you see it as a game and get into the swing of it, you can have some fun, instead of just griping all the time. You sound like you want to break rules just because they are rules. Hell, Cohen, get the team spirit. With freshly painted lines, we'll win the Monday inspection by a wide enough margin to win for the week. That'll give us three weeks we've won and two ties. One more win after that, and we'll have clinched the barracks competition. The second platoon will probably take the PT competition. But we have a good shot at the rifle and the G3, and a damn good chance to come out best overall platoon.

COHEN

Maybe you've got a stronger stomach than me. Maybe you can eat more shit than I can without getting sick. Maybe you can even learn to love eating shit. But I've reached my limit. Just one bit more and I'll... I'll...

EVANS

Gripe some more?

Cohen clenches his fist, then laughs and starts drumming a Beattles tune on the wall.

COHEN

(sings)

"So, you want a revolution. Well, you know... we all want to change the world..."

Beaulieu enters from the latrine.

DELANEY

(smiles)

Not a bad idea, Cohen. Not bad at all.

Beaulieu leans over the water fountain, takes a swallow, and spits it out.

BEAULIEU

That water's hotter than piss.

DELANEY

And just as tasty. But it's wet. Give it credit for being wet.

BEAULIEU

For once, I'd just like to get some simple satisfaction, without compromise.

Cohen switches to drumming the song "Satisfaction."

COHEN

(sings, then hums)

"I can't get no...  
Satisfaction..."

BEAULIEU

I mean there's got to be some  
place in this world where you  
can just live in peace, and be  
with the people you care for.  
Nothing fancy -- just a place  
where the water is cool, and  
you can sleep at night and you  
can be yourself.

The screen door slams. Sullivan enters.

SULLIVAN

(shouts)

Has anybody seen Roberts?

DELANEY

(whispers)

Keep it down. He's AWOL. We're  
hoping he'll come back  
tonight.

SULLIVAN

(whispers)

But what if he doesn't come  
back? We can't cover for him  
forever, and it's a serious  
offense if they find out we've  
been covering for him.

DELANEY

Yes, indeed. And Rawlings is  
liable to rat on him and us.  
And then we'll all get  
screwed. Just cool it, and  
hope, kid.  
Cool it and hope.

He turns to Beaulieu and speaks louder.

DELANEY

(continuing)

What were you just saying,  
Beaulieu?

BEAULIEU

Just that somewhere there's  
got to be a good place to

live, where you are free to be yourself.

DELANEY

No, don't kid yourself. It's Catch-22. The world of business and the world of the army. Milo Minderbinder runs the whole show. The army is big business, an equal opportunity employer -- with all the bureaucracy, waste, and impersonal cruelty of big business.

(beat)

Read the papers, man. They want junior officers for management positions. Foremen are no different from sergeants. They are sucked in by gradual increments in pay, pension plans, and all that crap. From the outside, the Army looks like a bunch of guys who shoot and get shot at. But from the inside it's padded with bureaucrats trapped in a web of slowly accruing benefits. All you've got to do to be able to cash in your chips at retirement is cover your ass. You never have to do anything that might stretch your mind or sap your energy. Just never make a blunder without covering up.

Sullivan takes out his Swiss Army knife and sharpens a pencil over the wastebasket.

DELANEY

(continuing)

The whole setup breeds paranoids. The Army is full of security-hungry paranoids, following the letter of the regulations and passing the papers to the next desk. It's dangerous to make a decision. Any change is dangerous,

shifting the rhythm of covering up activities. You might miss something. The Army's probably the most conservative institution in the world. It has carried the tendencies of big business to their natural conclusion.

(beat)

If you feel crushed and oppressed here, if you feel they've torn you out of your world and thrown you naked and helpless into a world of their making, well, that's just a model of what goes on in business -- what you're going to go back to.

Alec enters, with blackjack in his hand.

DELANEY

(continuing, to Alec)

Between you and Sullivan, we've got a regular arsenal here.

ALEC

We?

DELANEY

Excuse me. I mean you.

ALEC

Yes.

DELANEY

Nothing like a sense of solidarity and comradeship to make the best of a rotten situation.

ALEC

In my book, you've always got to look out for number one. Then you can think about spreading the wealth.

DELANEY

(ironic)

That sounds like a fine  
Marxist principle.

COHEN

Yeah. Groucho Marx.

DELANEY

When will you people ever be  
ready?

Delaney leaves, and loudly slams the screendoor behind him.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FORT POLK - DAY (SUNDAY)

Delaney moves away from the barracks, toward the trees. He moves beyond the company area, across the road. No one is looking. He starts jogging up the road, past the PX, toward the commissary. He keeps looking over his shoulder and around, to make sure no one is following or watching him. He spots Armstrong, Franklin, and Jones, drinking beer off in the woods, beyond the company area. They see him. He speeds up. They take off after him and soon catch up and run along beside him.

JONES

(laughs)  
You run away.

FRANKLIN

(laughs)  
You left the plantation  
without the boss's permission.

Armstrong gets in front of Delaney and backpedals. He slows down and forces Delaney to slow down.

JONES

You runaway slave.

FRANKLIN

We gotta bring the runaway  
slave back.

ARMSTRONG

All the way back from Jackson,  
Mississippi.

DELANEY

(impatient)

Okay, guys, okay. Let me by.

ARMSTRONG

What do you think, brothers?  
Should we cover for him?

DELANEY

Cut the crap. Didn't you get  
paid?

ARMSTRONG

(puzzled)

How'd you know about that?

DELANEY

I don't have time to haggle.  
I'll talk to Roberts as soon  
as he gets back -- if he gets  
back.

Armstrong moves aside and Delaney races by. He's almost out  
of earshot by the time Armstrong replies.

ARMSTRONG

No need to do that. We're  
going to cut him in.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FORT POLK/PHONE BOOTH - DAY (SUNDAY)

Delaney runs to a phone booth near the billboard that  
welcomes recruits to  
Fort Polk. He dials and gets connected to Melody at her dorm  
room.

EXT. FORT POLK/PHONE BOOTH - DAY (SPLIT SCREEN)

INT. COLLEGE/DORM ROOM - DAY (SPLIT SCREEN)

Delaney and Melody are shown talking to one another in split  
screen.

MELODY

Hello.

DELANEY

(softly)

It's me again.

MELODY

Twice in three days. My God,  
this must be true love. Or are  
you calling to apologize for  
besmirching my reputation.

DELANEY

What?

MELODY

You've been telling the world  
you got me pregnant.

DELANEY

Damn that Rawlings.

MELODY

Yes, Rawlings. He wrote to  
Madeline, and everyone in six  
states probably knows by now.  
So what shall we name our kid?

DELANEY

Sorry. I just wanted a pass,  
really bad.

MELODY

That's touching. I mean,  
really it is. I underestimated  
that side of you -- the  
sentimental side, I mean. And  
I was glad to find out that  
you felt that way. It got me  
to thinking.

DELANEY

What do you mean?

MELODY

I mean revolution and love.  
Make love not war. We'd lost  
the original sense of that. We  
were becoming the very thing  
we were trying to stop. We  
were becoming the system in  
trying to fight it. I looked  
at myself in the mirror this  
morning and didn't like the  
person I saw there.

DELANEY

Please understand. I don't have long to talk.

MELODY

Yeah, you're not supposed to be out of the company area. Come on, Frank. Forget that baloney. I don't need it and don't want it. You've been gone for nearly two months.

DELANEY

Six weeks.

MELODY

Same difference. I miss you. All right. I admit it. I miss you.

DELANEY

Honestly, there's no time for that sort of talk. The pass was just for the job -- to get an interview to get the job.

MELODY

I know. You said before -- to get married and have kids. I thought they'd brainwashed you, but now I know you're wonderful, and yes -- do it. I'm ready. I'm with you.

DELANEY

But that was all wrong. You were right. We have to do our part. And I am. The situation is becoming critical. The whole platoon is near the breaking point. The explosion could come at any time.

MELODY

(angry)  
Good God, Frank. Take that record off the turntable and play the other one, the one about the world's hottest computer and what it means for us.

DELANEY

It's not a game, Melody. Soon, maybe even tonight, I will start a riot and get a dozen of these guys thrown into the guardhouse.

MELODY

What the hell for, Frank?

DELANEY

I'm undermining the system from within, just like we hoped and planned. It's all working out.

MELODY

And what's going to happen to you?

DELANEY

I don't know. That's why I'm calling. This may be the last you hear from me for a long while.

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACKS/RAWLINGS' ROOM - TWILIGHT (SUNDAY)

As Rawlings is licking and sealing the envelope for a letter to Madeline, he glances down at the floor beside his bed.

RAWLINGS

(softly to himself)

Where the hell are the boots?

His boots are missing -- the ones Powell polished for him, his second pair of boots, the ones he never wears, the ones with the special glossy shine for inspections, the ones that every morning he has to dust off or he'd get a gig.

He stands up suddenly, drops the letter on his bunk, gets down on his belly and crawls under the bed. He reaches again and again through empty space.

He checks MacFarland's boots. They have MacFarland's name tag.

He checks his own wall locker.

MacFarland's wall locker is locked.

He checks his footlocker. He knows the boots couldn't be there, but he checks under the underwear he's never worn, so carefully rolled for inspection. He checks under the handkerchiefs he's never used, behind the shaving cream, under the razor he's never used, under the shaving brush that he wouldn't know how to use.

He can't find his boots.

RAWLINGS  
(bellows)  
Where the hell are my boots?

The whole barracks falls silent.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BARRACKS/STAIRCASE - TWILIGHT (SUNDAY)

Rawlings stands at the top of the stairs as Sullivan, Cohen, and Alvarado gather below. They are all puzzled.

RAWLINGS  
This has gone far enough. I  
want my boots back.

Beaulieu and Schneider enter from the latrine.

RAWLINGS  
(voice is getting shrill)  
Where are they?

SULLIVAN  
Where are what?

RAWLINGS  
My boots, you fool.

Sullivan slips the Swiss Army knife out of his pocket and plays with it while he talks.

SULLIVAN  
On your fucking feet. Why  
didn't you leave them at the  
door like the rest of us?

Everybody but Rawlings breaks out laughing. Attracted by the laughter, the crowd grows larger. Rawlings slowly and deliberately comes down the stairs.

RAWLINGS

Of course, I'm not looking for  
the ones I wear. I'm missing  
my inspection boots -- the  
spit and polish boots. Where  
the hell are they?

No one answers.

RAWLINGS

(continuing)

Where is MacFarland?

MacFarland enters from the bunkroom.

MACFARLAND

Right here, Fats.

A few trainees laugh.

RAWLINGS

Well, give them to me.

MACFARLAND

What?

Rawlings stands face-to-face with MacFarland. The rest of  
the platoon crowds in close.

RAWLINGS

The boots. Give me the boots!

MacFarland stares him hard in the eye. Rawlings starts  
shifting his weight from foot to foot, clenching and  
unclenching his fists.

WASLEWSKI (O.S.)

(shouts, from the front

steps, where boots are left)

Give him boots! The boss wants  
boots!

Suddenly, dozens of boots come flying through the door at  
Rawlings. One hits him hard on the side of the head. He  
loses his balance and falls backward. Rather than catch him  
or cushion his fall, the crowd backs away. His back hits the  
floor. His head hits the bottom step. He grabs the banister  
and pulls himself to a sitting position.

RAWLINGS

Where are my boots?

COHEN

I bet Roberts has them.

ALEC

Or maybe the boots have  
Roberts.

COHEN

Yeah, I hear the boots went  
AWOL and took Roberts with  
them.

RAWLINGS

Just where is Roberts, anyway?

He pulls himself to his feet.

RAWLINGS

(continuing)

Where is he?

Cohen leans on the screen door, holding it open, and drums a  
tune on the screen as he softly sings.

COHEN

(sings)

"Freedom's just another word  
for nothing left to lose."

WASLEWSKI (O.S.)

(from outside)

Yeah, man, Roberts is free.  
Free as a bird.

VASSAVION

(shouts)

Down with the king! Give me  
liberty, or give me MacBeth!

RAWLINGS

Oh, shut up!

VASSAVION

Now is the summer of our  
discontent.

CUT TO:

EXT. BARRACKS/NEAR DOOR - TWILIGHT (SUNDAY)

Bats come out from under the eaves and fly away.

Tagliatti, Waslewski, and Alec are standing outside, near the door. Cohen is just inside, holding the screendoor open. Tagliatti is holding a rolled up newspaper.

Delaney arrives, out of breath. He just got back from the phone booth.

TAGLIATTI

Been jogging again, Delaney?  
Are you becoming a running nut  
like Sanderson?

DELANEY

What's going on?

WASLEWSKI

We're giving Rawlings the  
boot.

ALEC

You almost missed the  
revolution.

COHEN

Didn't Lenin have the same  
problem?

DELANEY

And you, Tag, are you going to  
rebel?

TAGLIATTI

I'm not ready yet. Just give  
me time.

DELANEY

Always more time. Yeah, we're  
just reservists. The rebels  
are somewhere else. The hawks  
are somewhere else.

(beat)

This is limbo.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BARRACKS/BASE OF STAIRCASE - TWILIGHT (SUNDAY)

Rawlings is standing near the base of the stairs. Sullivan, MacFarland, Cohen, Alvarado, Beaulieu, and Schneider are near. Delaney, Tagliatti, Waslewski and Alec enter from outside. Alec is playing nervously with his blackjack. Sanderson and Evans push forward into this crowded space from the latrine. Hathaway and others stand at the entry to the bunkroom.

Then Armstrong, Franklin, and Jones start to push in from outside. They are awkwardly pulling off their boots while others, unseen, push them from behind, nearly knocking them over.

ARMSTRONG

Hey, watch it back there!  
What's your hurry, buddy? This  
ain't no rock concert.

The slow surge of people forces Rawlings and others into the bunkroom.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BARRACKS/BUNKROOM - TWILIGHT (SUNDAY)

Powell is still on his bunk on the far side of the aisle. His Bible and frisbee are beside him.

Hathaway backs off to let Rawlings back in. The crowd follows Rawlings in. Some move to the other side of the aisle. Everyone but Rawlings is in stocking feet. They all respect the center aisle and do not cross the yellow line.

More and more trainees crowd in. Some, including Armstrong and Franklin, climb on upper bunks for a better look. Most line up three and four deep all up and down both sides of the aisle. Their feet are all just back of the yellow lines. Everyone is facing toward Rawlings, who has his back to the aisle and has been forced to the edge of the line.

The silence is ominous.

Schneider, who is standing near Rawlings, blows a big bubble. Alvarado, beside him, pops it with a finger and laughs, breaking the silence and the tension.

Rawlings, distracted, stumbles backwards into the center aisle.

Others fill the space that Rawlings had occupied.

Rawlings is all alone, in his boots on the sacred aisle.

EVANS

Come on, Rawlings, get off the aisle! You're ruining it.

Stepping very carefully, Rawlings goes this way and that, trying to get off the aisle, but people behind pushing forward to see won't let people in front step aside to let him in.

SANDERSON

What are you waiting for? Move it!

Sullivan stands on his hands. The knife drops out of his pocket. Delaney picks it up quickly and puts it in his own pocket. Sullivan walks along the line on his hands.

COHEN

Way to go, Sullivan! Way to go!

Mocking Sullivan, Cohen walks the line behind him in stocking feet, doing dance steps forward and backward. He hums the tune to the Beattle's song "Revolution."

Meanwhile, someone picks up Powell's frisbee and flings it across the aisle, narrowly missing Rawlings. Someone on the other side catches it and throws it back. And, in the background, the frisbee keeps going back and forth, up and down from one end of the bunkroom to the other.

Someone else picks up a football and starts it going the same way.

Trying once again to get off the aisle, Rawlings shoves Vassavion.

Vassavion shoves back.

Rawlings moves toward Vassavion and shoves Hathaway by mistake.

Hathaway swings wildly.

Rawlings ducks and rams his shoulder into Hathaway's belly.

Vassavion pounds Rawlings on the back, and Rawlings falls.

Lying in the aisle, Rawlings makes eye contact with Armstrong and Franklin on an upper bunk.

ARMSTRONG

(to Rawlings)

Deal or no deal, we ain't your slaves, whitey.

RAWLINGS

It's all right, Sam. Do what you want. I don't expect you to support me. My side of the bargain holds, regardless.

FRANKLIN

Now, that's what I call a deal.

Cohen dancing by Rawlings, still staying on the line, drums on Rawlings' back to the tune of "Revolution."

EVANS

God! It's going to take a lot of spit and polish to clean up this mess.

Waslewski spits a huge gob on the center aisle.

WASLEWSKI

You've got that all wrong, Evans. That's spit and Polish. It's fine Polish spit we need.

He spits again. This one lands on Rawlings. Rawlings, on his back, swings his legs wildly and trips Waslewski, Vassavion, and Hathaway. They all roll and slide onto the center aisle.

Straining to look, the crowd moves forward, toppling Cohen and hand-walking Sullivan onto the aisle.

Alec nervously hits his palm with the blackjack. Tagliatti hits his hand with a rolled up newspaper. The frisbee and rubber football keep flying from hand to hand.

Delaney jumps up on a footlocker and raises high a fist, like a lightning rod.

DELANEY

(shouts)

Power to the people!

MANY

Power!

OTHERS

Power!

DELANEY

Down with all pigs!

MANY

Right on!

VOICE IN CROWD

(mumbles)

Kill the fucking bastard.

Some laugh nervously.

Rawlings tries to stand up, and is tripped by Waslewski.

Hathaway dives on top of Rawlings, pinning arms with knees, and starts slapping his face back and forth, harder and harder.

VOICE IN THE CROWD

Give him one for me!

ANOTHER VOICE

And for me.

ANOTHER

And me.

COHEN

Give him one for the Gipper!

Everyone laughs, so Cohen grabs two boots lying on the floor, pulls them on untied, and starts jumping and dancing like a cheerleader.

COHEN

Go team, go! Push him back,  
push him back, way back.

DELANEY

Power!

CROWD TOGETHER

Power!

Vassavion stumbles to his feet, waving his arms drunkenly.

VASSAVION

(yells)

For mine is the power and the  
glory!

CROWD TOGETHER

Go get him, Vass!

VOICE IN THE CROWD

Give him that boot he wanted.

ANOTHER VOICE

(throwing a boot)

"Give him this one!

Vassavion pulls the boot on his right foot, and stands, unsteadily between Rawlings' spread-eagled legs, his toe near Rawlings' crotch.

VOICE IN THE CROWD

Give him a Vass-ectomy.

Suddenly, the room is quiet, except the slap of palm against cheek, as Hathaway keeps hitting Rawlings, mechanically and rhythmically.

Everyone watches, both hoping and fearing that Vassavion -- the drunken giant with the boot -- will kick. The quiet becomes oppressive.

With a surge of strength, Rawlings shoves Hathaway off him and scrambles to his feet, ready for a fight.

COHEN

(chants loudly)

Hold that line! Hold that  
line!

When no one responds to his attempt to get attention, Cohen takes three running steps and slides heels-first down the center aisle, tumbling into Waslewski, who knocks over Vassavion. He leaves a long ugly gash down the middle of the floor.

Delaney raises his hands high.

DELANEY

(shouts)

The time has come!

The attention of the crowd focuses on Delaney.

DELANEY  
(continuing)  
The time has come!

He pulls out the Swiss Army knife, opens it, and approaches Rawlings.

Football and frisbee keep flying by.

Hathaway catches the football and holds it.

Delaney jabs at Rawlings' face with the knife. Rawlings pulls his head back just in time.

DELANEY  
You flinched.

A few trainees laugh, nervously.

Delaney steps forward. Rawlings steps back.

Delaney jabs again. Rawlings pulls back.

Delaney jabs again. Rawlings, fearful, with open mouth, pulls back.

The frisbee flies by, and Rawlings looks, just as Delaney jabs again. The knife punctures Rawlings' cheek and sinks in up to the hilt.

Delaney, shocked, lets go and steps back.

Complete silence.

The knife hangs there -- the blade visible inside Rawlings' open mouth.

After a long, shocked delay, Rawlings pulls the knife out, then heaves it at the wall, where it sticks and quivers.

Cheek bleeding, fists clenched, Rawlings faces Delaney.

Delaney grabs the blackjack from Alec and again advances on Rawlings.

HATHAWAY  
(from a distance)  
Wait!

Delaney keeps advancing with deadly seriousness.

Beaulieu with a boot held high as a weapon, and Tagliatti with his newspaper follow Delaney. Others fall in behind them.

Jones suddenly steps in front of Beaulieu.

JONES

Hold it. Give the man a  
fighting chance.

Armstrong and Franklin jump off the bunk and lock arms with Jones to hold back the mob.

Meanwhile, Delaney slowly moves toward Rawlings, looking for an opening, while Rawlings backs up, defensively.

On the far side of the aisle, Schneider spits out his bubblegum and turns to Powell.

SCHNEIDER

Why don't you do something?

POWELL

Blessed are the peacemakers.

SCHNEIDER

Hell, if you're a  
conscientious objector, why  
are you in the reserves?

Powell turns away, picks up his Bible as if to read it, then whirls around and flings it, like a frisbee, at Delaney. It hits Delaney in the face and knocks him off balance. He drops the blackjack.

COHEN

(laughing)

Right on, Powell! Throw the  
book at him!

From the other end of the bunkroom, Hathaway heaves the rubber football. It hits Delaney from behind. He falls face-first and his head bangs the floor.

POWELL

Enough!

Embarrassed silence.

Hathaway steps forward, and picks Delaney up, pinning his arms behind his back.

Then he pushes Delaney onto a footlocker, where Delaney crouches with his aching head in his hands.

Schneider helps Rawlings and coaxes him away from Delaney. Tagliatti fetches a first-aid kit from his locker. Powell quickly takes over and starts treating the wound.

DELANEY

(murmurs quietly)

I told you so. I told you  
about the system...

The screendoor slams. A SQUAD LEADER from the second platoon enters.

SQUAD LEADER

An hour till lights out!

Silence. Tagliatti and Schneider move to shield Rawlings from sight, as Powell continues his treatment.

SQUAD LEADER

(continuing)

God. What the hell happened?

HATHAWAY

Nothing, buddy. Nothing at  
all. Just turn yourself around  
and get the hell out of here.

SQUAD LEADER

God, looks like you had an  
explosion or an orgy. Somebody  
sabotage the place or  
something?

HATHAWAY

(roars)

Get your goddamned boots off  
that center aisle.

SQUAD LEADER

You've got to be kidding.  
There's nothing I could do to  
it that hasn't been done  
already. Whoever did that sure  
did a hell of a job. Was it  
the first platoon? Did they

sabotage you? It sure is a break for us. You guys used to be unbeatable. But believe me, it wasn't us who did it.

Hathaway picks up the Squad Leader by the shoulders of his fatigues.

SQUAD LEADER

Okay, okay, I'm going. It wasn't me who did it. You don't have to take it out on me.

The screendoor slams behind him.

Powell keeps working on Rawlings. Delaney staggers to his feet. And quiet, subdued, without anyone having to give the orders, the other trainees push the bunks back to the walls and get on with their chores. Schneider, Tag, and three others get on their hands and knees rubbing a new coat of wax on the floor, while Evans carefully repaints the yellow lines.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BARRACKS/STAIRCASE - NIGHT (SUNDAY)

MacFarland keeps washing and rewashing the same clean, easily reachable windowpane, just trying to look busy. `Now and then he glances about guiltily; and when he thinks someone is looking, he makes a show of putting tremendous effort into the cleaning of that one clean windowpane.

The latrine crew walks past the staircase, on their way to work on the johns and urinals. They put masking tape across the latrine entrance behind them.

Alec, Alvarado, and Delaney go to work on the stairs with toothbrushes, scrubbing away at the corners and crevices. Delaney looks weary. There is a bad bruise under his left eye. It is swelling.

Whistling "Revolution," Cohen walks by to join the latrine crew.

COHEN

Hey, Delaney, that eye's turning black already -- Bible black.

He laughs. When nobody laughs with him, he takes a jab at Delaney. Delaney ducks.

COHEN

You flinched.

Now everybody laughs, except Delaney, who grimaces in shame. So Cohen pokes again and again. Even Alec, Alvarado and MacFarland join in the fun. Delaney flinches and ducks, but doesn't fight back. Eventually, they lose interest, and Cohen steps over the masking tape, into the latrine.

ALEC

(whines)

Those damned shitheads have closed off the latrine again. One damned urinal and one damned john is all they ever leave us. Shit. When I have to shit, I have to shit.

DELANEY

(mutters)

That's the system for you. They have barracks inspections theoretically for the sake of hygiene. But in the Army, what matters is the looks, not the facts -- just what can be neatly filled in on an official form.

Seeing he has an audience again, he warms to the subject and slips back into his old lecturing tone.

DELANEY

(continuing)

That latrine will be spotless. But to keep it as clean as we have to, we can only use it half the time. The rest of the time, we've got to go piss under the trees. So we pollute the one bit of shade where we can rest for a break, and end up sitting on our own piss.

ALEC

Damn it, Delaney. I think we've had enough of your lectures.

DELANEY

(insisting)

But that's how the system works. We wind up seeming to do this to ourselves. And we are, afterall, guilty -- guilty of going along with the game, playing by their rules. And every time we do, we wind up sitting in our own piss. Let's face it, only Roberts is really free.

ALEC

Wake up, Delaney. You nearly killed a guy. You're damn lucky he's not pressing charges. That's freedom, Delaney -- not having to spend the next 20 years in Leavenworth. Enjoy your freedom.

Humbled, Delaney avoids eye contact and returns to his scrubbing with redoubled energy.

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACKS/RAWLINGS' ROOM - NIGHT (SUNDAY)

Powell is sitting on the bed, once again polishing Rawlings' dress boots, when Rawlings enters, with a thick bandage on his cheek.

POWELL

I just love these boots.

RAWLINGS

(laughing)

You're incredible... Thanks.

POWELL

They took care of you pretty quick, didn't they?

RAWLINGS

Well, the folks at the post hospital said it was a strange kind of wound to get from an "accident." But nobody wanted to press the issue because they didn't want to have to deal with the paperwork mess they might get themselves into. You wouldn't believe how fast they stitched me up and pushed me out of there.

POWELL

(shaking his head)

Lord, that was some moment -- I didn't know whether to cry or laugh when I saw that knife dangling from your cheek.

RAWLINGS

You did a heck of a job with that first-aid kit -- probably saved me a few stitches, or so they said. You're good at that stuff. You ought to go back to med school.

POWELL

Yes, I believe I will. It's time.

RAWLINGS

Yes, it's time for me, too. I feel a lot older now than I did this morning. I don't dare look in the mirror for fear of seeing gray hairs. I'm going to go straight to law school when I get out of here. I'll borrow the money somehow. An old man like me can't afford to wait.

POWELL

(laughs)

Here we are planning the rest of our lives, and we've got four more weeks of this to go.

RAWLINGS

Well, then don't stop  
 polishing. Those blessed  
 boots, those useless, never-  
 to-be-worn boots, those boots  
 that are just for show have  
 got to pass inspection in the  
 morning.

POWELL

Yeah, so much of this Army  
 routine is just for show. So  
 much of life is just for show.  
 And just or unjust -- the show  
 is real.

RAWLINGS

In May, just after Cambodia  
 and Kent State, I wrote a poem  
 to express my frustration. I'd  
 like to be able to think like  
 a college student again, to be  
 self-righteous and clever and  
 have all the answers. But now  
 I've been at Fort Polk, slept  
 in the same barracks, shat in  
 the same johns, low-crawled  
 over the same fields as men  
 who died in that war I wrote  
 so cleverly about. God, those  
 words would sound hollow now.  
 It's just as well I gave the  
 only copy to Madeline, the  
 girl-next-door, who probably  
 threw it out. She thinks I'm a  
 bore, and she's right.

(beat)

Here I am, sitting on easy  
 street. What right do I have  
 to write crap like that? Just  
 a few more weeks of this hell  
 and all of us -- all but  
 Roberts and Armstrong and  
 Jones and Franklin -- will be  
 going home.

(beat)

Who can blame Roberts for  
 running? Chances are that in a  
 few months he'll be in the  
 jungle waiting for the booby  
 trap or bullet that'll turn  
 him into rotting meat.

Rawlings crosses himself, then goes over to the window and stares out at the row of barracks and the scrub-pine forest beyond.

CUT TO:

INT. COLLEGE/DORM ROOM - NIGHT (SUNDAY)

Melody and Madeline are in Melody's room. Melody has a sheet of paper in her hand.

MELODY

You say George actually wrote this? There's a lot you never told me about this guy.

As Madeline leans forward to look, her hair falls in her face, but she doesn't brush it back and doesn't seem to notice.

MADELINE

Yes, maybe there is. Hearing you read that letter from him yesterday got me to thinking. I dug this out of a drawer and read it for the first time.

MELODY

Are you going to write back to him?

MADELINE

Yes, I think I will. He wrote this poem in history class, sitting in the front row, as he always does.

MELODY

(reading)

In May the bombs blossom.  
The sweet aroma of gas  
fills the air.  
The sing-song  
Mekong  
May song  
me  
doe  
ray  
me lie  
me down to sleep,

and pray the Lord  
(what else can one  
two  
three  
four,  
right face  
the press of the crowd,  
shouting, mad  
men giving orders  
on the borders  
of insanity,  
a neutral nation,  
at least officially,  
but everyone knows  
thysself  
is an archaic term  
in jail,  
waiting for trial,  
by hook or by crook,  
we'll pull this  
impotent giant  
to a hard  
line on  
and on and on and  
onward, Christian  
humility  
in defense of freedom is no  
situation  
comedy,  
featuring  
Nixon, Mitchell, Agnew,  
and a fourth horseman of the  
Apocalypse  
to be announced,  
so stay tuned  
to loony tunes,  
on most of our network  
stations,  
brought to you by,  
bye  
happiness  
is a warm gun,  
in the age of hilarious,  
who cannot wash away our sins  
with a flood  
of tear  
gas,  
for there was a limited supply  
of war,  
one day  
in May

the bombs blossom.

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACKS/BUNKROOM - NIGHT (SUNDAY)

As everyone continues their cleaning, Beaulieu finds a letter under Delaney's bunk, and sits on the bunk to read it. Meanwhile, in the background, Cohen starts singing again, softly, until others join in. Even Sanderson joins in. They sing snatches of such songs as "I got to get out of this place..." "Oh Lord, how I want to go home..." "Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose...", and "Power to the people..." Alvarado marches back and forth, using a broom as a mock rifle and imitating the Drill Sergeant instructing the troops. He holds out the broom.

ALVARDO  
(mocking Drill Sergeant)  
Remember, men. This is your  
rifle.

He at grabs his crotch.

ALVARDO  
(continuing)  
And this is your gun.

ALEC  
(to Cohen)  
Sometimes he sounds more like  
a drill sergeant than the  
Drill Sergeant does.

Sullivan takes down the plaque to polish it and looks it over.

SULLIVAN  
Shit! It's all here. The same  
damned wisecracks. They  
scribbled them here on the  
back with all their  
signatures. This thing must be  
nearly thirty years old, and  
they were making the same dumb  
wisecracks we do.

The room is starting to look good. The floor still has to be buffed, but first the wax will have to sit for a while, and

the paint will have to dry. There is just one jagged scratch in the middle of the center aisle that the wax doesn't mask.

Beaulieu taps Delaney on the shoulder. Delaney flinches.

BEAULIEU  
I'd like to have a word with  
you outside.

Delaney hesitates, not wanting a fight. But Beaulieu gestures insistently and goes out the door. Delaney reluctantly follows.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE BARRACKS NEAR TREES - NIGHT (SUNDAY)

Delaney and Beaulieu walk in and out of moon-cast shadows. In the background, the songs and other barrack's noises continue. Delaney moves cautiously, ready to duck, expecting Beaulieu to start a fight. Instead, after a few awkward moments, Beaulieu hands him a piece of paper.

DELANEY  
What the hell is this?

BEAULIEU  
A letter of yours I found when  
we were cleaning up.

DELANEY  
You read it, I presume?

BEAULIEU  
Yes, but not to the entire  
platoon.

DELANEY  
So you know about the payoff?

Beaulieu nods.

BEAULIEU  
And that your girl isn't  
pregnant and you'rethinking of  
taking a job with a computer  
company instead of saving the  
world.

DELANEY  
(continuing)

But you didn't say a word.

BEAULIEU

Those guys are going to give you hell for the next four weeks anyway.

DELANEY

(humbled)

Thanks.

Delaney tears up the letter into very small pieces. Beaulieu picks up pebbles and tosses them at the trees.

BEAULIEU

By the way, which will it be? Are you still going to save the world?

DELANEY

Well, I've certainly made a botch of things here. I don't know what came over me.

BEAULIEU

Somehow we all got caught up in it. That's why we're all going to ride you hard -- because we all were guilty.

DELANEY

Thank God the wound wasn't serious.

BEAULIEU

(smiling)

Do you think that computer company could use a writer?

DELANEY

I don't know. It wouldn't hurt for you to try them. Maybe I'll see you there.

BEAULIEU

Maybe I will, or maybe my wife and I will hitchhike around the world instead. It's time for a change.

He pauses to throw a few more pebbles.

BEAULIEU

(continuing)

Do you know when we got married?

DELANEY

Of course not.

BEAULIEU

It was Saturday, August 28, 1965. We were fresh out of high school. We'd been going together for a couple of years, and our dream was to just take off, the two of us. We'd live together -- no need to get married -- and we'd bum our way around the world.

(beat)

But she was afraid I might get drafted, and married men were exempt. So we planned to get married first -- a big church wedding to make our folks happy. Only they changed the law right before the wedding, and only marriages before August 26 counted for the exemption.

DELANEY

Such luck.

BEAULIEU

That meant the only way to get an exemption was to go to college. So I talked my way into a state school for that fall. I got a part-time job at McDonald's and Debbie did tempo work to pay the tuition and make ends meet. When the war dragged on, and it looked like I'd be drafted when I got out of school, I found a reserve unit.

(beat)

That's why I'm here.

DELANEY

More or less, that's why we're all here.

BEAULIEU

We never really had a chance to get started, to do any of the things we dreamed of. Everything's been on hold.

DELANEY

(automatically)

That's the system.

BEAULIEU

Yeah. You're right about the system and what it does to people. Just five weeks, and it's like I've never been anything but a soldier.

DELANEY

I never cease to be amazed at how adaptable people are to the craziest sets of rules. It's like we're afraid what we might do if we didn't have rules -- any rules at all -- to guide us. Shit, we might end up stabbing one another for no good reason.

He laughs, awkwardly, self-consciously.

BEAULIEU

Yeah, individual freedom is important, but it's only half the story. In the big scheme of things, we as individuals don't amount to much. For a little while, this is our drill sergeant, our barracks, our army, our country. But just for a little while. There have been millions before us. There'll be millions after us.

DELANEY

So what are you getting at?

BEAULIEU

There's nothing particularly noteworthy about us and what we say and do. Yes, we scuffed up the floor a bit. But by the time Powell gets done with it, it'll all be good as new, almost -- all but that one jagged mark down the middle. He can't get rid of that. That's what we'll leave for posterity: a jagged scratch on a piece of linoleum.

DELANEY

Sounds like you're a great admirer of the center aisle.

They start walking back toward the barracks.

BEAULIEU

Well, silly though this competition is, it 's a shame to leave a blemish like that for the next cycle of trainees. The guys who came before us did such a great job that we hardly had to touch that center aisle for it to come out shining, unbeatable. I wonder how much work went into that, how many years of work by generations of trainees who never met each other and knew they never would meet, but who left this as a legacy to whoever might come after them.

(beat)

And they left this fragile shine that was a source of comfort and security and pride for us.

DELANEY

So what does that have to do with thumbing your way around the world?

BEAULIEU

Well, to me, that kind of travel is freedom. And

freedom's the first half of what it's like to be a human being -- you were right about that. But the second half is pride, respect, tradition -- feeling connected to the past and the future.

DELANEY

Yeah, I have to admit I hope that Powell can do something with that nasty gash.

BEAULIEU

Well, if anyone can patch it up or hide it, Powell can. And we've got four weeks left. Maybe by then it'll be all right, and the next cycle will get it good as new, as good as we got it, as good as if we'd never been here and messed things up. Maybe a little better, with those yellow lines repainted.

They look in through the window toward the center aisle.

DELANEY

Yes, I must admit, it does look really sharp with those bright yellow lines.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BARRACKS/BUNKROOM - NIGHT (SUNDAY)

Everyone is still at work. The screendoor slams.

SQUAD LEADER

Five minutes to lights out!  
God, it looks good now. Shit!  
When the buffing's done, you guys could be in good shape again. How the hell did you do it?

Nobody answers. He leaves.

SCHNEIDER

Maybe there won't be an inspection.

ALEC

(whines)

Yeah, you can count on it. If we get the place in shape, they won't inspect it.

EVANS

And if we didn't, they would. We'll be ready. I just hope those damned bat exterminators don't come again.

HATHAWAY

(laughs)

Have you grown to like the bats?

EVANS

We can live with bats. I just don't want the exterminators messing the place up. We can still win tomorrow.

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACKS/BUNKROOM - NIGHT

Hours later, long after "lights out," the barracks still hums with the buffer and clanks with the opening and closing lockers. Everybody has something that still has to be done. The room is dark except for fire and stair lights. The screendoor closes softly.

SCHNEIDER

(whispers)

The Drill Sergeant's coming.

Word that the Drill Sergeant is coming echoes and re-echoes through the muffled scrambling of feet and creaking of bedsprings. Whispers follow, racing up and down both sides.

COHEN

He's going upstairs.

WASLEWSKI

It's Rawlings he's after. Rawlings. He's going to bawl out Rawlings.

ALVARDO

Now the shit's going to hit  
the fan.

BEAULIEU

He probably heard all about  
our little party here tonight.

COHEN.

Quiet. I can almost make out  
what he's saying. It's  
something about Roberts.

DELANEY

Roberts?

VASSAVION

Shit.

DELANEY

You say Rawlings is ratting on  
Roberts?

WASLEWSKI

That goddamned Roberts.

ALEC

Goddamned my foot. Roberts is  
the only one of us with an  
ounce of guts.

Loud footsteps go down the stairs. The screen door slams  
shut. A full minute of absolute silence. Cohen is nearest to  
the door.

COHEN

(whispers loudly)

God! It's Roberts, Roberts  
himself.

MANY

(repeat, in succession)

Roberts!

In the conflicting shadows of the fire light and the stair  
light, Roberts enters the bunkroom and slowly rubs his  
freshly shaven head with his towel.

DELANEY

Quick, Roberts, catch the Drill Sergeant. Rawlings just  
ratted on you. You're in a heap of trouble. Catch him, and  
let him know you're here.

ROBERTS

He knows I'm here all right. What's this bit about ratting, man? What've I done that somebody's ratting on me?

DELANEY

This is the Army. You don't just go home when you feel like it.

ROBERTS

Home? Who the hell went home?

COHEN

Well, where've you been?

ROBERTS

Taking a shower.

BEAULIEU

Yeah, but where've you been all night?

ROBERTS

Look, man, cool it. I just got off KP.

BEAULIEU

And where did you sleep last night and the night before?

ROBERTS

Hell, I was bone-tired. How'd you like KP three days in a row? I just sacked out in the kitchen.

DELANEY

Well, then what was the Sergeant pissed off at?

ROBERTS

He saw me in the shower. You know, man -- no showers after lights out. But I'll be damned if I'm going to bed stinking of garbage and shit. Hell no, man.

COHEN

There's your freedom, Alec. There's your dignity.

ALEC

Yeah, damn it, I didn't have guts enough to take a shower.

FADE OUT:

THE END