

BORN ON THE FOURTH OF JULY

Screenplay by Oliver Stone and Ron Kovic

Based on the book by Ron Kovic

Draft 1978

Revisions August, 1988

1 EXT. SALLY'S WOODS - MASSAPEQUA, LONG ISLAND - DAY (1957)

1

THE SUN...leafy trees...summer...

A FACE, angelic, womanly, etched in a broad sunburst, calls.
A FACE we do not understand or will ever see again.

VOICE

Ronnie... Ronnie?

The last "Ronnie" drawn out, slowing down...suggesting something mystical, now burning out into the sun as:

RONNIE, 10, looks, hears it, crouched - a stubby crewcut, knees patched with denim, his plastic gun in hand, relieved as...

TIMMY runs up, small and vulnerable in a clumsy crouch, a GI helmet on his head, gun.

RONNIE

D'you hear it?

TIMMY

What?

RONNIE doesn't answer. He wonders, then forgets as he HEARS legs tearing through bush fast. Loud FX. Starts, looks,

RONNIE

Let's go, let's go... We got 'em,
we got 'em!

RONNIE and TIMMY up and moving FAST across trees and tangle; an extended OVERHEAD TRACK drawing out the tension as:

INSECTS BUZZ louder...louder.

TIMMY

Watch out!

...a DIRTBOMB thuds with loud FX on the chest of RONNIE who SCREAMS as TIMMY spins, terrified and:

A HUGE FIGURE hurtles down out of the tree, smacking the ground hard - painted face, sweat, a crown of thorns...

TWO MORE BOYS - JOEY WALSH and TOMMY FINNELLI follow, thudding to the ground, yelling war cries.

RONNIE, fallen to the ground, scrambles to get his Mattel gun up but...

STEVIE is right on top of him, digging his plastic tommygun right into RONNIE's face...he is a big frightening 10 year old and he has blackened his cheekbones in a child's version of an Indian warrior, and in an added touch of the macabre, blackened all his teeth which now shine in a twisted mouth of cruelty and certainty:

1 CONTINUED:

1

STEVIE
You're DEAD and you know it!

RONNIE looking up into that face as:

The blast of the weapon goes off in RONNIE's face.

STEVIE
(over)
Ronnie's dead!

RONNIE - looking up...

HIGH ANGLES - THE WOODS - voice carrying...again

VOICE
"Ronnie's dead!...Ronnie's dead!"

2 EXT. MASSAPEQUA PARADE (1957) - DAY

2

BOOM! - the huge sound of a BASS DRUM as CREDITS ROLL AND:
A NUBILE BLONDE with big cowboy boots and gigantic boobs and
long blonde hair BEATS her drum and

HORNS! MUSIC! and the BAND (marked the "Massapequa Long
Island High School Marching Band") tears into John Phillip
Sousa and it's the Fourth of July and

WHACK WHACK WHACK! The firecrackers blast off in red,
white, blue. An artillery attack over Massapequa and THE
SUBTITLE READS: JULY 4, 1957.

...and RONNIE rides the shoulders of his DAD in a TRACKING
SHOT along the crowd, framed in such a way that we have the
impression RONNIE is floating above the crowd, ecstatic,
waving his red, white, and blue flag up at the crackers -
the greatest day of his life.

RONNIE
Daddy, look at the firecrackers!
Look!

DAD is muscular, stocky, a kind face, late 30's, thinning
hair, looking up too:

DAD
Hey look at that!

In the confusion of the crowd, now coming astride MOM - a
handsome woman, pregnant, with a somewhat tired face,
slightly pinched - also waving a flag.

With her 2 YOUNGER SONS and a DAUGHTER SUSANNE, 12. TOMMY,
6, is pulling on DAD's arm, jumping up and down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

2

TOMMY

Lemme up there Daddy - it's my turn!

RONNIE

No, today's my birthday!...you be quiet.

MOM

Come here Tommy.

RONNIE looking out from his perch at

A FLOAT OF AMERICANA (marked Massapequa USA) motoring down Broadway. Young TEENAGERS populate it like strawberries. Followed by:

THE NASSAU COUNTY MOTORCYCLE COPS - gleaming chrome and black leather, the scouts doing wheelies on the back tires of their machines - crowd APPLAUSE.

MOM has caught TOMMY and spansks him hard on the sidewalk, a quick flash of HYSTERIA.

MOM

What's the matter with you, don't ya ever listen?!

TOMMY has the sullen eyes of the perpetual loser in these quarrels. MOM slaps him up again on the buttocks.

MOM

Answer me!

He stares stupidly at her, as if saying 'hit me again' as

THE CLOWNS dance by behind and a 10 year old GIRL (DONNA) whips up, stops, runs off again, chased by her FATHER.

FATHER

Donna! Come back here...

THE DOVES (Massapequa Women's Auxilary) parade by in white uniforms - the wifery of one of the male organizations.

THE JUVENILE DELINQUENTS, 14-17, of Massapequa look on, at an alienated distance, huddled with their CHICKS near a couple of souped-up convertibles, pointing and smirking at:

THE TOWN POLITICIANS in their cars waving.

TIMMY, dressed up in a Navy uniform, ducks and dodges through the crowd, chased by

STEVIE, in an Army uniform with a COLLIE running and barking at his side - nearly bowling over an OLD LADY who goes "watch out!" and a FAT WOMAN fies "oooooh!"

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED: 3

2

RONNIE, now highlighted from a lower angle over his DAD by 1-2-3 fast background explosions of firecrackers (cherry bombs, ashcans, sparklers). Hold. The moment broken by...

DONNA running up, extending her gift wrapped package, excited.

DONNA
Happy Birthday, Ronnie Kovic!

RONNIE surprised, as his DAD hauls him down to the ground.

RONNIE
For me?

DONNA
Yes. Open it!

He takes it shyly as his MOM notices.

MOM
Oh that's really nice of you Donna.
Say thank you Ronnie.

RONNIE
(still surprised)
T'anks, Donna, but...

His BROTHERS huddle around him, now joined by STEVIE running up with TIMMY.

STEVIE
What is it, open it willya!

DONNA frowning at the interruption by the boys.

DONNA
Leave him alone!

RONNIE opening the box.

RONNIE
Boy...wow!

STEVIE
(in awe)
Hey it's the real thing
Ronnie...feel that!

RONNIE slipping a real \$10 New York Yankees striped blue wool hat over his head with the reverence of a priest handling the crucifix...his eyes peering up from underneath to assuage the impact.

TIMMY
(hushed tones)
Just like Mickey Mantle Ronnie.

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED: 4

2

DAD snaps him up on the side of the head affectionately.

DAD

(to Mom)
Ain't he a little 4th of July
firecracker in that hat.

MOM

Yeah, he's my little yankee doodle
Boy.

Her face. A pause. Ron will remember it forever. Mom with
a firecracker exploding above her eyes.

DONNA motions him with her head - come on. Slyly.

RONNIE, curious, sensing something new and important,
disentangles himself from his FRIENDS and goes up to DONNA.
Her lips glowing moist with a mischievous hint of lipstick.

DONNA

Let's sneak out.

RON

(surprised)
What?...where?

DONNA

It's a secret, Ronnie Kovic.

RON looking back, worried if his parents see him.

RON

Mom'll...

DONNA

Come on - it's your birthday.

Takes his hand firmly. Runs him off - as Roman Candles
explode above.

3 EXT. FIELDS OUTSIDE TOWN

3

The celebration continues in the sky above the town as day
settles into NIGHT. The Music Theme creeping in. Spring.
Youth. Suggesting an onrushing force.

RONNIE doing a handstand showing off...

RONNIE

Hey look Donna...

DONNA

Come on Ronnie Kovic, you're always
showing off.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

3

RONNIE

Yeah, watch this. I could do this
forever if I wanted to...

As he switches from a two-hander to one hand. He holds a
moment but crumples... DONNA giggles, runs over.

DONNA

You think you're the best...

RONNIE

I'll do it someday, you'll see.

DONNA

Kiss me!

RONNIE

What?

DONNA

It's your birthday. Kiss me.

RONNIE

How?

DONNA

Haven't you ever seen your parents
do it?

RONNIE

No...

DONNA

Like this, silly...

A kiss is just a kiss... RONNIE - a face of disgust mixed
with puzzlement, fear, loss...should it feel good or bad?

DONNA

Did you like it?

RONNIE

I don't know...I don't know...

He's scared, hides it by jumping up...

RONNIE

Hey, look how many pushups I can
do!

As he starts...the camera pulling back from the two children
framed in the field with the trees and the sparklers
spiderwebbing the sky...

DISSOLVING TO:

4 INT. KOVIC HOUSE - NIGHT (1957)

4

A MR. TOOTH DECAY COMMERCIAL plays on the black and white set...moving with SUSANNE out to the backyard carrying food...

5 EXT. KOVIC BACKYARD - NIGHT (1957)

5

As SUSANNE comes out with the food, the door banging, we see the FAMILY gathered around the outdoor barbecue, muted -- DAD stoking the hamburgers and hotdogs...

Close on RONNIE looking up at the sky through Navy binoculars.

RONNIE

Hey Mom, look at that! Right there! You see it?

MOM

No. Where?

SUSANNE

(12 years old)

I see it. Yeah.

TOMMY

(8 years old)

Yeah...yeah! Look, Sputnik, Mom!

MOM

(now sees it)

...oh yeah...it's so small...

A SPECK OF LIGHT moving through...the Russian Sputnik, the Music Theme weaving as...

WE MOVE down the FAMILY FACES all looking up...

JIMMY

(4 years old)

...so high...look the Russian plane.

Back to MOM with the new baby PATTY (2 years old) in her lap making ga-ga noises...

MOM

It's not a plane sweetheart, it's a satellite.

JIMMY

(awed)

...satellite?

SUSANNE

(pronouncing it)

Satellite.

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED:

5

Moving to RONNIE...

Dad?

RONNIE

Hm?

DAD

RONNIE
Why did the Russians beat us into
space, Dad?

Moving to Dad feeding more coals in -- a glow on his face.

DAD

Well, the Russians, they don't even
bother feeding their people, they
put all their money into making
weapons and things like that.

RONNIE

But we're supposed to be the best,
Dad?

DAD

You bet we are but we've been
pretty stupid too. We put the
Russians back on their feet after
World War II and they took Hungary,
Poland, half of Europe -- and they
still want more...

MOM

Communism is an insidious evil,
Ronnie, they don't believe in God
and if we don't watch out, they're
gonna take over this country
someday...

RONNIE looking around, and back up at the Sputnik, upset,
feeling the defeat personally, the sense of helplessness...

TOMMY

(over)
What's "hungry"?

MOM

That's where your granma comes
from.

SUSANNE

Granma Kovassovich.

RONNIE

But don't people know? Why don't
we stop them?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED: 2

5

RONNIE (cont'd)
We're supposed to be the best...
We can't let them take over our
country, Dad, what's wrong?

DAD
Well...people're scared of 'em...I
think everybody's scared of 'em
these days...

RONNIE
I'm not. I'm not scared of 'em!

Turning back into the house, angry...

RONNIE
I hate the Communists. I really
hate them. We're gonna come back
and beat them someday...

6 INT. MASSAPEQUA MOVIE HOUSE - NIGHT (1958)

6

John Wayne in THE SANDS OF IWO JIMA, saying something to a
scared young recruit about the Marine Corps and its long
tradition.. "You're screwing up my Marine Corps kid - "

THE BALCONY - MOVING DOWN the FACES, we see STEVIE setting
the pace smothering his DATE...TOMMY FINNELLI trying to keep
up...JOEY WALSH, smiling awkwardly at his DATE as she
glances at him...TIMMY terrified, glancing at his DATE,
evidently irritated at the hand trying to clutch her
shoulder...

and RONNIE totally absorbed in the action on the screen as
DONNA glances at him, wondering.

THEIR KNEES bump and RONNIE's knee jerks away as if hit by a
fast ball...

RONNIE uncomfortably glances at her.

DONNA slides her hand downwards

TAKES HIS HAND -they hold.

DONNA looks over. RONNIE looks back - background MUSIC and
ARTILLERY from the screen mount. His attention distracted.
His face changing.

HIS HAND slides off her hand as

SHE looks over. Why?

CLIP - JOHN WAYNE is leading the charge up Surabachi at the
end of the film...he is hit!

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED:

6

THE FIVE BOYS all watching now, even Stevie; the FIVE GIRLS with varying degrees of interest.

TIMMY

(leans over, whispers to
RON)

Hey Ronnie, aren't you sorry you
missed World War II?

WAYNE is dying, speaking...speaking to

RONNIE, his face lost in the light of the flickering screen, a private world, mysterious - a child's fantasy, fascination with violence, with death...the secret love for a nightmare...WAYNE dies, OVER.

CLIP - THE FLAG is planted on Iwo Jima by the Marines in a reenaction of the famous photograph - accompanied by the Marine Hymn. "From the Halls of Montezuma."

RONNIE has tears rolling out his eyes on the darkness.

7 EXT. MASSAPEQUA LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD - DAY (1959)

7

THE PITCHER releases.

THE FASTBALL wings in with a conclusive THUD as RONNIE swings and misses.

UMPIRE

STEE - RIKE!!!!

CHEERS from the stands - as RONNIE looks back at the pitcher in awe; this guy is fast! ...Stepping out of the batter's box to regain his composure.

RONNIE wears the New York Yankees hat, cleats, and a Number 7 uniform (in honor of Mickey Mantle).

CATCHER

(throwing the ball back)
Okay - Jerry - two down, you got
this guy! He's looking, he's
looking.

VORSOVICH is the baserunner at third.

VORSOVICH

C'mon Ronnie - you got him, you got
him, he's chopped meat.

STEVIE the third base coach, plumper, making all kinds of railroad gestures against his chest, at RONNIE.

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED:

7

STEVIE

(unintelligible)

Oh yeah godzagol gimme a ten blue,
here we go here we go awright
awright okay okay.

VOICE (OVER)

Shuddup you big lug of fat.

TIMMY the nervous baserunner at first base.

THE OPPONENTS' DUGOUT - all of them on their feet yelling encouragement at their pitcher, belittling RONNIE.

RONNIE'S DUGOUT - DAD is the manager. JOEY, FINNELLI, FANTOZZI - everybody's up on his feet. A big moment in the Little League.

VOICES

C'mon c'mon Ronnie -- get a piece
of it! Go! Go!

DONNA is in the stands with GIRLFRIENDS. With her is a BOY, 12. A radio is out - playing Del Shannon's "Runaway".

RADIO

"As I walk along I wonder what went
wrong with our love a love that was
so strong..."

RONNIE nervously making all kinds of batter gestures outside the box...stepping in.

THE PITCHER looking for his sign, sweating - obviously a big moment. RONNIE waiting -

THE PITCHER winds up...fires.

RONNIE in SLOW MOTION SILENCE swinging into it...connecting...

ANOTHER ANGLE - SOUND - THE BALL CRACKING off the bat...RONNIE swinging through as

THE BALL sails over the head of the CENTERFIELDER who chases it.

THE CROWD cheers and yells - featuring DONNA screaming.

TIMMY crossing the plate.

RONNIE rounding third, slapped on by STEVIE...his brother, TOMMIE, is up in the stands cheering. He runs on, the lyric seems to focus on him as he floats on.

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED: 2

7

RADIO

"I'm awalking in the rain tears are
falling and I feel a pain awishing
you where here by me to end this
misery and I wonder, I - awhoo whoo
whoo whoo wonder why, why why
...why why"

RONNIE slides home, just ahead of the ball, underneath the
catcher.

8 EXT. MASSAPEQUA, LONG ISLAND STREET - DAY (1961)

8

One story houses on apportioned lots, small backyards with
laundry lines, a tableau of SMALL CHILDREN wheeling
bicycles, a DOG running past...a DELIVERY MAN...a MOM
calling from her house ("Michael, Barbara! Come'n see this,
you gotta see this...")...a TEENAGER, under his sedan,
fixing it up...an OLDER COUPLE, on their porch, hearing it
on the radio.. under the pressing, destiny-ridden MUSIC
THEME,

the VOICE OF PRESIDENT KENNEDY is growing louder the closer
we get -- as if coming from all the televisions and radios
on the block.

THE SUBTITLE NOW READS: JANUARY 20, 1961.

KENNEDY

"Let the word go forth from this
time and place, to friend and foe
alike, that the torch has been
passed to a new generation of
Americans -- born in this century,
tempered by war, disciplined by a
hard and bitter peace, proud of our
ancient heritage -- and unwilling
to witness or permit the slow
undoing of those human rights to
which this nation has always been
committed, and to which we are
committed today at home and around
the world..."

MOVING TOWARDS RONNIE KOVIC'S HOME from the REAR ANGLE -- a
house like any other. A backyard with a picnic table,
overhanging elm, parallel bars, climbing rope -- into the
house...

9 INT. KOVIC HOUSE - DAY

9

Moving with TOMMY KOVIC towards the TV from which the VOICE
now rises -- in conjunction with the Music Theme -- to its
climax...

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED:

9

The KOVIC FAMILY watches -- DAD, MOM, THREE BROTHERS, TWO SISTERS...the cramped interior features worn inexpensive furniture and a proliferation of Catholic symbols -- crosses, Holy Water, pictures of Jesus, little saying like "Bless My Little Kitchen Lord and Warm It With Your Love"...

KENNEDY

"...in the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger. I do not shrink from this responsibility -- I welcome it. I do not believe that any of us would exchange places with any other people or any other generation."

MOVING past TOMMY KOVIC, 10, stopping to stare, to RONNIE KOVIC, 14, elbows on the floor, watching it, believing it...believing all of it...

CLIP -- KENNEDY - FULL SCREEN

KENNEDY

"...The energy, the faith, the devotion which we bring to this endeavor will light our country and all who serve it -- and the glow from that fire can truly light the world.. and so my fellow Americans: Ask not what your country can do for you -- ask what you can do for your country... My fellow citizens of the world: Ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man..."

ON RONNIE -- visibly moved.

CUT TO:

10 INT. MASSAPEQUA HIGH SCHOOL GYM - DAY (1964)

10

RON, now 17, in the full flower of his adolescence, rolls quickly under his OPPONENT'S arms and drives him upwards in a violent reversing motion that gives RON the upperhand, riding his OPPONENT to the pin in this practice session...

THE COACH, a bullnecked intense man with crewcut and thick bottleneck lenses, blows his whistle...

COACH

Awright! Hit the ropes!

THE SUBTITLE READS: 1964...

TIMECUT TO:

10 CONTINUED:

10

RONNIE in his short hair and wrestling gear, hauls ass up the ropes in a race with the other young WRESTLERS on his team.

COACH
GO! GO! GO! GO! GO! GO! GO!

RONNIE hits the top, slides down.

COACH
Again...Kovic! Keep going! You, Powell, you look like a girl! What's this? Are you a Girl Scout or are you a Boy Scout! DO IT! DO IT! DO IT!

RONNIE back up, with a vengeance.

TIMECUT TO:

10A RONNIE AND OTHERS doing pushups on the mat as

THE COACH walks down the line like a Marine drill sergeant, which he resembles, barking -

COACH
I want you to KILL!! YOU HEAR ME!! KILL You're sweating to win - to win! I want that State Championship, do you want that State Championship...DO YOU! DO YOU!

ALL
(pumping)
YES SIR.

COACH
THEN KILL! PUMP IT! PUMP IT!!

11 EXT. MASSAPEQUA - LAKE - DAY - SNOW (1964)

11

RONNIE AND OTHERS running through the winter SNOW in sweatsuits, breathing clouds of air.

12 INT. KOVIC LIVINGROOM/KITCHEN - DAY (1964)

12

RONNIE, wearing a rubber suit over six shirts and four pairs of pants, and gaunt now, sticks his hand in the Holy Water and crosses himself as he crosses into the kitchen to the refrigerator... past the FAMILY eating an early dinner (meatloaf, steaming mashed potatoes, homemade biscuits, squash with melted cheese, ice tea).. MOM doling out the portions....

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED:

12

MOM

That's a good boy Ronnie... The
rice is on the stove...and there's
fresh fruit in the icebox...

RONNIE opening the icebox, picking out an apple and juice.

MOM

(to Tommy)

...your brother's a hard worker
Tommy. Cause he wants to be the
best. Win or lose, as long as you
do your best, that's what matters.

(partly to Ronnie)

Win or lose, we're still here, we
still love you...

13 INT. RON'S ROOM - NIGHT (1964)

13

MOM holding a PLAYBOY MAGAZINE aloft, angry...an eggbeater
in her other hand.

MOM

Where'd you get this Ronnie?

RON

C'mon gimme a break Ma. Stevie
gave it to me, it's not mine.

MOM

You know I don't allow this Playboy
Magazine in my house!

14 INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

14

MOM chasing RONNIE through the house with the magazine as a
club.. an eggbeater in the other hand...

MOM

You have filthy and impure thoughts
Ronnie. Come here...come
here...(corners him)

RON

I'm sorry Mom. C'mon!

MOM

God's gonna punish you for this!
God's gonna punish you. I want you
to tell Father Bradley! You hear
me! I don't EVER want to see that
filthy magazine in this house
again!

She whacks him with it on the side of the head...

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED:

14

MOM

Throw it away...

As she gives it to him and storms away. RON sneaks another peak at the centerfold...

RON

Sure Mom...

15 INT. MASSAPEQUA HIGH SCHOOL GYM - DAY (1964)

15

RONNIE and OTHERS working curls on the weights, the veins in his forehead standing out.

COACH

(walking)

More, more! Drive your bodies. If you wanna win, you gotta SUFFER. You wanna be the Best, you gonna have to work for it, you're gonna have to fight like you never fought in your life. You're gonna have to bleed for me, you don't know what sacrifice MEANS. If you wanna be the BEST, you're gonna have to go further'n you've ever gone in your life. You gotta pay the price for Victory. The price is SACRIFICE. SACRIFICE, people!

As, in a particularly sour humor today, he slams RONNIE on the shoulder, in the midst of his curl.

COACH

Right, 4th of July?

RONNIE

RIGHT!

COACH

You gonna cry Kovic! You gonna cry Kovic!

Slamming him again. RONNIE, emaciated, is in a trance state.

COACH

Seven more pounds Kovic. SEVEN!! Everybody, I want you to look at this... I want you to see the baby cry... Are those tears?

Camera getting closer and closer on RONNIE as the coach really slams his gut now, RONNIE hunching over with pain:

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED:

15

COACH
 LOOK AT THIS FAT BLOB! CRY CRY CRY
 YOU LITTLE BABY. That's what we
 want, we want you people to cry
 like little babies because that's
 what you are. YOU ARE NOTHING!!
 ARE YOU GONNA CRY, KOVIC?

The camera microscoping RONNIE, holding his belly, about to puke.

Then bracing himself, veins standing out in his forehead, rights himself and yells back at the top of his lungs at the coach,

RONNIE
 I AM A MASSAPEQUA HIGH SCHOOL
 VARSITY WRESTLER! AND I WILL NEVER
 CRY...NEVER NEVER NEVER!!!

His face contorted, the camera very tight now as the COACH slugs him in the belly.

COACH
 YEAH!!!!!!

TIMECUT TO:

16 INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYM - DAY (1964)

16

RONNIE drenched in sweat, is clinched with a wiry OPPONENT with "BABYLON" written on his top.

DONNA, now 17, grown sophisticated and beautiful, her breeding showing, is with A BOY, about 18, evidently from a good family, a little bored with this. With her also, are some GIRLFRIENDS and THEIR DATES

DONNA
 (intent)
 Go Ronnie, get him, get him! Kill him!

MOVING TO: TOMMY and STEVE and TIMMY rooting in the stands and

THE COACH nervously pacing the sideline looking up at the clock and scoreboard. This is the State Championship. BABYLON 3, MASSAPEQUA 2 - 30 seconds ticking off.

COACH
 COME ON KOVIC, GET IN THERE, GET HIM!

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED:

16

BOYS

(on bench)
Go, Ronnie, go!

RONNIE strains, grunts - springs out of the lock and reverses his OPPONENT. CHEERS sweep the room.

DONNA yelling "hold him!...hold him now!", tense, vicariously sharing with her boyfriend.

DONNA

You got him! You got him!

THE OPPONENT bucks grunting - wild spin and

TWO HEADS bang into the mat as the opponent, yelling with primal force, reverses RONNIE with a brute twist and locks him down...

THE CLOCK ticking out - 4...3...2...1 - BABYLON 4 MASSAPEQUA 2.

PANDEMONIUM

The other teams' FANS going wild.

RONNIE'S COACH slamming his hands down in disgust.

DONNA sharing his defeat, now looking as

RONNIE just lies there on the mat... Camera moving on him...tears rolling out of his eyes, the sacrifice Pyrrhic in his face... He won't rise. The defeat is total -- his and his alone.

17 INT. MASSAPEQUA HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY (1964)

17

VOICE

ATTEN - SHUN!

100 Senior High School BOYS all rise as:

TWO MARINES in full dress blue uniforms and magnificently spit-shined shoes execute a perfect close order two man drill down the middle of the aisle on the way to the platform.

MARINE SGT.

(barking)

TEXT - CLOSE ORDER DRILL

MARINE SGT. addressing the SENIOR STUDENTS from the podium - Marine Corps flag, U.S. flag, table of materials; SCHOOL OFFICIALS behind.

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED:

17

MARINE SGT.

(polite, very dignified)

Good afternoon - I'm Staff Sergeant Hayes and this is Sergeant Bowers, the United States Marine Recruiting Station, Levittown, New York. We've come here today at the request of your principal, Mr. O'Connor, and members of the faculty to tell you a little bit about the Marine Corps...First of all, young men, let's get one thing straight...

(thrusting out his finger)

Not everybody can become United States Marines. We want the best and we will settle for nothing but the best because there is nothing prouder, nothing finer, nothing standing as straight as a United States Marine...

PROFILE - JOEY, TIMMY, RONNIE, BILLY VORSOVICH, DANNY FANTOZZI, STEVIE BOYER - RONNIE all absorbed, buying every word.

MARINE SGT. (OVER)

Now they got the Air Force, they got the Navy, they got the Army, they got the Coast Guard - and if you want to join them go ahead. They got plenty of room... But if you want a challenge, if you want to try something difficult, try to achieve the impossible - try 13 weeks of hell at Parris Island South Carolina and find out if you got what it takes, find out if you really are a man, then the Marines might be what you're looking for.

18 EXT. MASSAPEQUA HIGH SCHOOL - DAY (1964)

18

OUTSIDE THE AUDITORIUM - ACROSS A CAMPUS LAWN - MUSIC THEME

Spring - the onrushing force - in one sense melodic, stirring, in another rushing, pulling, sucking RONNIE from his youth, pushing him on into manhood.

Whirring bugs flashing through the air... DONNA AND GIRLS in spring dresses, shorts, strolling doing gymnastic tumbles on the lawn, others in far background peeking into the windows of the auditorium and running off, giggling.

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED:

18

MARINE SGT. VOICE (OVER)

(distant)

Tarawa...Iwo Jima...Belleau Wood.
First to fight, we have never lost
a war. We have always come when
our country has called...

19 INT. MASSAPEQUA HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY (1964)

19

RONNIE eyes like 'god, yeah!'

SPIT SHINED SHOES....MOVING UP THE STRIPED PANTS - TO

MARINE SGT.

Now Sergeant Bowers and I are gonna
open this up for questions. Any of
you young men have questions go
ahead and raise your hands.

SILENCE

MARINE SGT.

Now come on, don't be afraid.
Don't forget a good Marine is a
thinking Marine.

STEVIE making a cynical face, at DANNY, BILLY.

MARINE SGT. (OVER)

Stand up...stand up back there,
young man.

A PIMPLY KID with glasses hesitating, getting up at the back of the auditorium.

PIMPLY KID

How old do you have to be to join
the Marines?

MARINE SGT.

18 years old - but with your
parents' consent you can join at
17.

Looking around. Pointing. BILLY VORSOVICH standing, adjacent RONNIE, OTHERS -

BILLY

(proud)

Billy Vorsovich, sir! - when do I
get to wear a uniform like you?

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED:

19

MARINE SGT.

Make PFC out of boot camp, you can be wearing this thing in 13 weeks...any of you young men have any more questions, come up to the stage. Sergeant Bowers and I will be here to answer any questions. Thank you, gentlemen.

20 INT. BOYERS CANDY STORE - DAY (1964)

20

RONNIE, STEVIE, TIMMY, JOEY, BILLY, DANNY finishing their sodas in a booth of the candy store -

RONNIE

I'd like to be just like those guys. They're great!

STEVIE

I think it's all a crock of shit, Ronnie.

RONNIE

You think so? What are you talking about?

TIMMY

My brother's at college at Adelphi, he says there's gonna be a war over there soon in....

RONNIE

Vyet - Nam

TIMMY

Yeah, but it ain't gonna last long he says. The Marines are gonna be the first ones in too.

RONNIE

We don't sign up we're gonna miss it. I'm going in now, not September.

STEVIE

You're crazy!

RONNIE

No, you don't know what you're missing. Our dads went to WWII, this our chance to be part of history.

DANNY

Just like our dads.

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED:

20

TIMMY

I always wanted to be a Marine.
The Marines are cool man. Jerks go
to college.

JOEY

I don't know. The Marines are
crazy. Pop says go into the Navy,
it's the same money -- and it's
safer.

RONNIE

Imagine going all the way over
there -- to Asia? I wonder what
they look like.

STEVE

Who?

RONNIE

The Viet Cong.

JOEY

They're short little slant-eyed
guys. Just like the Japs.

RONNIE

I'm not afraid. You know, "Better
dead than Red".

STEVE

I can't see it. I once shot a
squirrel with my BB gun down at the
Woods. It really felt bad. You
should think about what you're
doing Ronnie, it could be really
dangerous. You could get yourself
killed.

RONNIE

Aw don't worry about me, I'll be
all right. I'm not gonna get hurt.

TIMMY

(to Steve)
Where you going -- college?

DANNY

(interjects)
Mom wants me to go to college.

STEVIE

(defensive)
So? I wanna do something with my
life. I can get a degree in
business administration.

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED: 2

20

RONNIE

Yeah, but don't you think we need
to defend our country?

TIMMY

Yeah, don't you care about anything
but yourself?

RONNIE

They got missiles pointed at us
everywhere. ICBMs! They're moving
in all around us...in Cuba.
They're 90 miles away. They're
taking over the whole world. When
are we gonna stop them.

STEVIE

Yeah sure but I don't see 'em.
They're not here in Massapequa.
I'm gonna take care of number one
-- me, Stevie.

TIMMY mock snores.

RONNIE

Yeah, you have the right to go to
college cause we'll be over there
fighting for your rights.

TIMMY

You couldn't make it as a soldier
anyway, you're a fatso. (laughs).

STEVIE

Laugh. Wait till you get over
there and they're shooting at you.
All I'm saying to you guys is...you
should think about it, Ronnie,
y'know -- just think about it.

RONNIE

Okay Steve, it's all right.
Somebody's gotta stay home, we'll
do the fighting...

STEVIE

(rising to leave, to his
Dad)

Check's on me, Dad. I'll work it
out later okay?

DAD

Okay.

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED: 3

20

STEVIE
(as they walk out,
burping)
Hey Ronnie, who you taking to the
prom?

RON looking through a PLAYBOY on the rack. Notices the name
on the centerfold.

RONNIE
Uh...Roseanne Lombardo.

STEVIE
Who?

RONNIE
She doesn't live here, she lives
over in Lake Ronkonkoma.

STEVIE
She's from out of town hunh. She
gonna stay at a motel?

RONNIE
No...I'm not gonna do any of that
stuff. Who you taking?

21 EXT. BOYER'S CANDY STORE & STREET - DAY (1964)

21

LONG SHOT -- the GROUP coming out of the store -- a sign
"Boyer's Soda Fountain and Candy" -- Burger 60 cents, sodas
35 cents.

STEVIE
Wendy Daniels.

JOEY
Don't get your head stuck in those
knockers.

STEVIE
Yeah, sure who you taking Lucy?
She get her braces cleaned yet...

As they push and shove each other, horsing around...past
Sparky the Barber's -- a pole outside with SPARKY cutting
inside...

Giggling boys, the last time they will ever be together,
they pass on...the camera moving to settle on the "US Marine
Recruiting Station" as RONNIE'S reflection goes by.

22 INT. MASSAPEQUA A&P - DAY (1964)

22

Windows looking out on Broadway, Massapequa...RONNIE hauling empty cartons down an aisle, intersecting DAD who is a manager in the store, balding, early 50s now, in uniform...

DAD

Ronnie, wouldya take those down to section C and check the stock for more toilet paper. Then break open the dog food -- come on now, let's go, let's go (clapping his hands, irritated).

RONNIE

Awright Dad, awright.

Going. Evidently the job is wearisome to him...MOVING with him down a row of canned goods, RONNIE comes around a corner and suddenly sees:

DONNA AND GIRLS at the magazine rack in the high school clothing of '64.

RONNIE intersects her awkwardly.

RONNIE

Hey Donna, howya doing?

DONNA

Hi Ronnie.

She tries to seem casual, both of them self-conscious.

RONNIE

How's everything?

DONNA

Okay...heard you were going into the Marines?

RONNIE

Yeah.

DONNA

Are you sure you know what you're doing Ronnie?

RONNIE

(silly grin)

Well...it's better than carrying these boxes around and working in the A&P the rest of your life.

DONNA

You're always taking chances Ronnie, you're always trying to prove yourself...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED:

22

DONNA (cont'd)

(he waits)

I guess you'll be gone a long time?

RONNIE

(shining)

I'm going to boot camp next month.
I signed up for four years. Just
like you going to college, hunh
Donna. I heard you were going to
Syracuse upstate.

DONNA

Yeah, Syracuse...I was gonna go
into the Peace Corps but they got a
good college... but it's far...it's
gonna be hard...

Pause. RON is having a hard time getting the words out.

RONNIE

I...I was meaning to call you...
Are you.. are you going to the
prom with someone?

DONNA

Uh...well he hasn't asked me but I
think Jed wants me to go with him.

RONNIE

(quick, hurt)

Oh yeah that's great. Jed's a
really nice guy isn't he?

DONNA

I heard you were taking somebody
from Lake Ronkonkoma?

RONNIE

Yeah...no...ahhh you know I don't
know, I don't have time for that
stuff, going to proms. I gotta lot
of stuff to do 'fore boot camp...

Pause.

DONNA

Well, if you're there...maybe we
could dance...one time.

RONNIE

Yeah...maybe...that would be nice.

The OTHER GIRLS whispering, intimidating him.

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED: 2

22

RONNIE

Well, I'll see you 'round before I
leave...

DONNA

Okay...

He pulls away.

She goes, equally awkward.

TRACKING RONNIE as he comes to the STOCK ROOM, looks back.

She is going with her FRIENDS.

He goes in the STOCK ROOM, angry. He blasts a cantaloupe
against the wall.

23 EXT. MASSAPEQUA HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT - RAIN - (1964)

23

RAIN pouring down on Massapequa.

THE SENIOR PROM - Lights, singing, dancing, cars. Beatles'
Music.

24 INT. RON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - RAIN

24

RONNIE in his room alone, hunched on his bed packing a
carton with childhood mementoes, baseball photos, bats,
gloves, the Yankee baseball hat DONNA gave him...Mel Allen's
VOICE on the radio getting more and more excited.

RADIO

Okay two down...Kubek on third,
Richardson's leaning far off the
bag at first and Mantle's got two
big strikes on him now with the Red
Sox ahead 3 to 1 here in the bottom
of the sixth...the windup now...the
pitch...

(sharp FX of the baseball
bat cracking)

THAT'S A HIT!...the Mick...wait!
wait, it's going, going...it's
GONE... over the centerfield
fence, 455 feet, the Mick has hit
it right out to the park and LOOK
at that crowd!... on its feet and
NUMBER 7 is coming round third
base, his 491st home run, from
Commerce, Oklahoma, isn't he great!
I can't think of one man who means
so much to the championship Yankees
as Number 7...

25 INT. CORRIDOR - SAME NIGHT

25

RONNIE is shuffling out the door, barefoot...something of his childhood hanging in the air, but unable to feel the same emotions...despondent...

PASSING his BROTHERS' ROOM - TOMMY, now 14, picking at a guitar string, singing a DYLAN lyric..."The Times They Are A Changing"... JIMMY, the other brother, 12, listening.

26 INT. LIVINGROOM - SAME NIGHT - RAIN

26

MOM in the bedroom, DAD watching the news, a newspaper in hand, dozing, exhausted from work. Waking now as RONNIE shuffles in, watching the NEWS CLIP - an Infantry COLONEL is being interviewed at a base camp someplace, TROOPS moving or convoying in the background; shades on his eyes, a green baseball cap over close-cropped hair, a revolver in his shoulder holster, thick forearms:

COLONEL

...no question 'bout that. The 82nd Airborne and the First Cavalry Division are the newest concepts in mobile warfare. One division is worth about 2 1/2 Russian and six Chinese divisions...

NEWSMAN

But how well do you think the individual soldier will hold up in Vietnam, Colonel?

COLONEL

I've never seen anything like it. I been in World War II - in Korea, these boys - they're gung ho, they wanna eat nails - the finest combat troops we've ever had! It's an honor to lead them.

RONNIE has sat down facing his DAD. A pause between them.

RONNIE

What do you think, Dad - about that?

NEWSCASTER

Do you think, Colonel, the war here will be over soon?

(CONTINUED)

DAD

Oh...I don't know
- 13,000 miles -
it's a long way
to go to fight a
war -

RONNIE

But if we give
them Vietnam,
they'll take the
rest. That's the
way they are.
It's the domino
theory, Dad.
They'll nibble us
up piece by
piece. We gotta
stop them
someplace.

DAD

(sighs)

Maybe...I just
hope they send
you to Europe or
Korea or
someplace safe...

RONNIE

They can't Dad!
They gotta send
me to Vietnam for
13 months, that's
the way it is -

DAD

Well, maybe
they'll put you
on garrison duty
someplace...an
embassy?

RONNIE

Yeah, but they
won't Dad!
Every Marine has
a tour over
there, it's not
like the Army
(stronger now)
What's wrong
with everybody
around here?

COLONEL

Well, that's a
hard question to
answer. But
without being
overconfident,
I'd say at the
outside, yes --
about a year -
Course it's a
guerilla war so
you can't
force...

NEWSCASTER

But do you think
these people -
the Viet Cong -
who've fought the
Japanese and the
French and lived
in these caves
and tunnels for
thirty years - do
you really think
Colonel...

COLONEL

I think that
anything that
lives in a tunnel
can be weeded
out. It takes
time and
patience, and the
support of the
people back home
- and the support
of the press -

NEWSCASTER

Colonel, do you
mean...the Press
is not...

(CONTINUED)

26 CONTINUED: 2

26

RONNIE (cont'd)

Don't you
remember what
President Kennedy
said, Dad, we're
not gonna have an
America anymore
unless there's
people willing to
sacrifice. I
love my country,
Dad.

MOM has come out into the livingroom.

DAD

I know Ronnie, I
know.

COLONEL

I mean that...an
important part in
this war
effort...is the
attitude of the
home front...

ANOTHER ANGLE - DAD doesn't want to think about it, looks
away. RONNIE deeper in frame is exasperated - this mute
climate, this failure to beat a drum on the home front, this
early silence and sadness about the war...

MOM

It's your
decision Ronnie,
it's up to you
whatever you
decide, we're
behind you.
We'll pay for you
Ronnie but you be
careful.

NEWSCASTER

We...we all
know...

She tries to kiss him on the cheek but RON'S eyes are
unsatisfied, on his DAD.

(CONTINUED)

26 CONTINUED: 3

26

RONNIE

Dad, do you
understand what
it means to me to
be a Marine?

Ever since I've
been a kid, Dad,
I've wanted this,
I've wanted to
help my country.

(pause, the
rain)

...and I wanna
go. I wanna go
to Vietnam. I'll
die if I have
to over there...

COLONEL

...remember one
thing now. Up in
Hanoi they don't
allow newspapers
and televisions
to cast any
doubts on
the...system -
the military
system.

The silence. Why is life so anti-climactic at moments like
this and words mean nothing?

DAD

Not a nice night
for the prom...

NEWSCASTER

Well, I...

COLONEL

...and it seems to me sometimes we
forget that.

NEWSCASTER

Well, Colonel the basic question is
do you think the South Vietnamese
Government is a viable political
entity that can stand up to...

COLONEL

If we didn't think so we wouldn't
be here now would we -

(Chopper starts coming in
overhead, drowning out
sound)

27 INT. RON'S BEDROOM/BATH/HALL - NIGHT (1964)

27

RONNIE is kneeling in front of the MIRROR with the CRUCIFIX
in his BEDROOM ("Let the Beauty of Jesus Be Seen In Me")

RONNIE

...sometimes God I'm so confused,
sometimes I think I'd like just to
stay right here in Massapequa and
never leave...but I gotta go.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED:

27

RONNIE (cont'd)
 You gotta help me Jesus...help me
 to make the right decision...I
 wanna do the right thing...

THE RAIN lashing against the bedroom window, suggesting a
 plea to a barbaric god. RONNIE inside on his knees.

28 EXT. KOVIC HOUSE & STREET - NIGHT (1964)

28

LONG SHOT - DOOR to RONNIE'S HOUSE suddenly opening. A
 shaft of light - RONNIE tearing out into the rain.

29 EXT. MASSAPEQUA HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT (1964)

29

THE LIGHTS OF THE PROM - MUSIC - "MOON RIVER" ...RONNIE,
 soaking, runs up - out of breath. Looking. Advances.

30 INT. MASSAPEQUA HIGH SCHOOL GYM - NIGHT (1964)

30

THE DANCERS - A BAND - slow dancing...MOVING ALONG STEVIE
 and his DATE, JOEY, FINELLI, VORSOVICH, FANTOZZI, TIMMY -
 and DONNA dancing with JED - now stops amazed as WE MOVE TO
 RONNIE advancing through the dancers, dripping wet, seeing
 DONNA, a trace of insanity, desperation in his eyes....the
 DANCERS stopping, looking at him surprised...as he totally
 ignores JED, his eyes never leaving DONNA...coming up to her
 -

RONNIE
 Would you dance with me, Donna?

DONNA
 Sure...yes...

He takes her in his arms and they dance...

TRACKING THEM past the other dancers -

...He is not a good dancer, but a wealth of feeling carries
 him.. her head on his shoulder, eyes filled with
 feelings...turning. His head on her shoulder, eyes open...a
 forever dance.

DISSOLVE TO:

31 EXT. VIETNAM - LATE DAY - (1967)

31

SUBTITLE READS: CUA VIET RIVER, VIETNAM - OCTOBER, 1967

RAIN is slanting down in monsoon sheets describing a grey
 tableau of a FISHING VILLAGE spread over several DUNES along
 the South China SEA, bordering on a RICE PADDY.

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED:

31

ANOTHER SECTION OF THE VILLAGE, a TINY HAMLET sits in a woodline astride the inland paddy.

The WIND is sowing confusion.

The fresh-faced LIEUTENANT listens over the radio and barks orders at RON over the wind.

LIEUTENANT
Red Platoon's receiving fire on the northwest edge of the ville. NVA suspects are coming this way...

RON alert, listening now to the imagined sound of distant gunfire...

LIEUTENANT
(points)
...set your squad in a line along the dune...

He's very excited, repeating his orders.

LIEUTENANT
I think we got 'em, I think we got 'em this time Sergeant?

Their POV -- through the rain -- the village. Hard to see anything.

A GRAVEYARD.

In the distance, some movement in the village.

LIEUTENANT
(very excited now)
You see? Look, they got rifles. Can you see the rifles? ...Can you see them?

RON looking very hard through the rain.

RON
Yes, I see them. I see them.

LIEUTENANT
(puts his arm around him)
Tell them when I give the order, I wanna light this ville up like a fucking Christmas tree --- okay!!!
Get going!

Turning back to his radio, overly keyed.

KOVIC running down the line, sinking in the sand, his baggy poncho flopping over the gear on his back.

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED: 2

31

Suddenly, SEVERAL FIGURES break from the huts, running.

As RON runs down the straggled LINE OF MEN, someone starts firing from the end with his M-16. Now the whole line suddenly erupts, pulling their triggers without thinking, emptying everything they have into the huts across the graveyard.

RON yelling, trying to get his men to stop the fire.

Voices screaming in the distance.

RON looking at the LIEUTENANT running up the line yelling across the sand.

LIEUTENANT

What happened! Goddamn it, what happened! ...Who gave the order to fire? I wanna know who gave the order to fire!

Everybody is looking at everybody else with that peculiar awkwardness of a platoon without real leadership.

RON

We better get a killer team out there, sir.

LIEUTENANT

All right, all right Sergeant, get out there with Molina and tell me how many we got...

The VOICES continue to scream from the village, an eerie wailing amid the noise of rain.

RON moving to assemble FIVE MEN.

The LIEUTENANT on the radio; there seems to be increased fire from the distance, coming across the radio. Incipient panic building...

RON leading his five men across the dunes into the edges of the village...

...The Voices, the screams continuing... RON knows something is wrong, the rain beating on his face as he moves cautiously to the lip of the hut...

MOLINA is alongside him... They both turn into the hut and see it at the same time...

MOLINA

Oh God! Oh Jesus Christ!

RON's eyes convey the horror.

32 INT. HUT - DAY - RAIN

32

The floor of the small hut is covered with CHILDREN, screaming and thrashing their arms back and forth, lying in pools of blood, crying wildly, screaming again and again. They're shot in the face, in the chest, in the legs, moaning and crying...

RON

Oh Jesus...

The LIEUTENANT'S VOICE now blasting in on the radio...

LIEUTENANT

Tango Two, how many you got?

An old, OLD MAN in the corner with his head blown off from his eyes up, his brains hanging out of his head like jelly...

RON keeps looking at the strange sight, he's never seen anything like it before.

A SMALL BOY, next to the old man is still alive, though shot many times. He's crying softly, lying in a large pool of blood. His small foot has been shot off almost completely and hangs by a thread.

- LIEUTENANT

(voice)

What's going on? What's going on up there?

MOLINA

(voice)

You better get up here fast Lieutenant. There's a lot of wounded people up here.

A SMALL GIRL moaning now, shot through the stomach.

RON feels crazy, weak, helpless, staring at them...

The other THREE MARINES are looking, staring down at the floor like it's a nightmare, like it's some kind of dream and it really isn't happening...

RON suddenly erupts, jerking the green medical bag off his back, ripping it open and grabbing for bandages... Trying to help the gut-shot girl, tamping the blood.

RON

Let's help them. Help them!...
It's gonna be okay... It's gonna be okay...

(CONTINUED)

32 CONTINUED:

32

He moves to the next body...

...and the next, trying to help, trying to speak but he can't. His fingers searching for the holes the bullets have made, bandaging each as quickly as he can, his shaking hands wet with the blood. It's raining into the hut and a cold wind sweeps his face as he cries now, crying and still trying to bandage them up...

The LIEUTENANT runs up with the OTHERS...radio voices are more and more urgent in the background...

RON

Help me! Somebody help me!!

The LIEUTENANT looking, not quite understanding.

LIEUTENANT

Where are their rifles?

MOLINA

There're no rifles...

A blank look on the LIEUTENANT'S face. He screams to his men.

LIEUTENANT

Well help him then!

The MEN stand in the doorway but they do not move.

LIEUTENANT

Help him, help him. I'm ordering you to help him.

But THE MEN are not moving and some of them are crying now, dropping their rifles and sitting down on the wet ground, weeping with their hands against their faces.

SEVERAL MEN

Oh Jesus, oh God, forgive us.

MOLINA

Forgive us for what we've done.

LIEUTENANT

(screaming)

Get up... What do you think this is! I'm ordering you all to get up.

Some of them slowly crawling over the bodies, grabbing for the bandages that are still left.

The LIEUTENANT now outside the hut on the radio.

(CONTINUED)

32 CONTINUED: 2

32

LIEUTENANT

Hello Cactus Red. This is Red
Light Two. We need an emergency
evac... We got a lot of..
ahh...civilian wounded. A lot of
friendly wounded out here...

The RADIO VOICE blasts back at him, A COLONEL in a chopper
somewhere above...

COLONEL

(voice)

Neg on that... We got heavy NVA
fire on northwest and southwest
sides of ville.. coming toward
you...now... pull back to the
trench in the dunes at XYZ
grid...repeat... Leave the
civilian wounded and get your butts
back on the dune. NOW. Over
out...

The fire is picking up intensely... The dusk coming down
fast... The LIEUTENANT running back into the hut...

LIEUTENANT

AWRIGHT...YOU HEARD HIM...GET YOUR
BUTTS OUTTA HERE...GET BACK TO THE
DUNES... WE GOT A COMPANY OF
CHARLIES IN THE VILLE...LET'S GO...

Some of THE MEN moving...some not!

LIEUTENANT

YOU MEN. YOU GOT TO START
LISTENING TO ME. YOU GOTTA STOP
CRYING LIKE BABIES AND START ACTING
LIKE MARINES...

He's shoving THE MEN, pleading with them, scolding them...
A demented look to his young face...

LIEUTENANT

You're men, not babies. It's a
mistake, wasn't your fault. They
got in the way. DON'T YOU PEOPLE
UNDERSTAND -- THEY GOT IN THE
GODDAMN WAY...

RON now standing, being pulled by the LIEUTENANT, his eyes
on the little boy with the foot hanging by a thread...

...on the little girl, gut-shot, dying...

He knows he must leave. He has no choice... The LIEUTENANT
yelling in his ear...

(CONTINUED)

32 CONTINUED: 3

32

LIEUTENANT
 DON'T YOU PEOPLE UNDERSTAND -- THEY
 GOT IN THE GODDAMN WAY. KOVIC COME
 ON. NOW.. NOW...

RON breaks, leaving, not looking back...but does, forced to,
 one more time. From the doorway...

The KIDS...looking at him, begging for help...

He tears himself away...

33 EXT. VILLAGE - DUSK

33

The rain is stopping but darkness falls, THE MEN of the
 PLATOON straggled in a messy line, hustling back to the
 dunes... The fire picking up...

VOICES

(lost)
 Pull back! Pull back!

VOICE

GET BACK. IT'S A FUCKING
 COMPANY!!!

VOICE

ZIBOTSKY. WHERE THE FUCK ARE
 YOU!!!

Shots ring out...somebody somewhere screams. An EXPLOSION
 follows. A mine? A booby trap? Who knows?

VOICE

Where's Duderhoffer!!!

A SOLDIER comes crashing out of the darkness, intersecting
 RON, his helmet falling off, poncho stuck in the sand...

SOLDIER

They gonna blow the village...
 They got 155s coming in!!

RON moving on, looking for his squad in a stupor....

RON

...Baker?...Jones?

No answer. Shapes lost in the darkness. Somebody is hit...
 The deep tom tom of 155 shells picking up on the horizon
 over the angry sea... The huge shells blasting into the
 village...

RON seeing a line of MEN forming in a trench along the
 dunes.. putting out fire.

(CONTINUED)

33 CONTINUED:

33

Looking back at the village. The hut in which THE CHILDREN lie is obscured by a nearby 155 round sending up a ball of dust and debris...burying all evidence of the crime...

Incoming fire now...RON feels it, hits the ground, looking back... A MAN is hit somewhere close, crying...

MAN

GOD FUCK I'M HIT. MEDIC MEDIC.

Fire is going out...RON hesitates...can't fire on the village...but there's a SHAPE coming now...fast...right at him...

it must be NVA because RON was the last one out...

RON seeing him with widened eyes, wondering, nerves break from his eyes...

THE SHAPE coming right at him -- fifteen yards, ten...

Close now on RON -- as he looses a burst of automatic fire...

THE SHAPE hit, lurching, but not going down...

RON going for the kill, riddling THE SHAPE with fire...

THE SHAPE crumples in the sand...

A VOICE immediately yells out...

VOICE

WILSON!! WILSON'S HIT...

TWO MARINE shapes run out from behind a dune close to RON towards the SHAPE he just fired at...

RON stares, unbelieving...

...as they pull WILSON back across the sand by his pant legs...the others providing cover fire...

RON moving now towards...THE SHAPE...

...can this nightmare end? ...The 155 shells now wiping the village into rubble and memory behind him...

...and then the face of WILSON, thorny ugly face with red hair and a huge adam's apple, revolving in the last light of the sun dropping across the South China Sea...the eyes staring up...

the throat, shot through the throat, filled with blood...the pain...the pain in the eyes...

RON staring down...

(CONTINUED)

33 CONTINUED: 2

...somewhere WILSON's eyes cross his before he dies gurgling in his blood...

HARD CUT TO:

34 EXT. VILLAGE - DUNES - ANOTHER DAY - SUN

34

SUBTITLE READS: CUA VIET RIVER, VIETNAM - JANUARY, 1968

The opposite kind of day. Bulging, blaring, eradicating yellow heat, yellow sun broiling everything in the landscape... Figurines like shrimp on a sizzler moving towards a HAMLET set on a paddy...

RON in the lead. The look of his eyes tells us he doesn't care anymore... The look is dead, haunted...

The MEN are strung out behind and to the side of him in a loose flanking movement, their expressions stunned by the heat...

as they pass the burned out village where THE CHILDREN died, it sits astride the dune, alongside the charred cemetery... a nasty looking village filled with hatred and death in the air...as is its sister hamlet inland astride the paddy, to which they now destine themselves...

...The solitary SNIPER FIRE erupts from the woodline aslant the village...

A MAN is hit...

THE MARINES are crouching in the rice paddies...radio noises.. artillery strikes called...

...a huge paddy snake shoots past RON who wearily assembles his squad...

RON
Move it up, move it
up...now...let's go.. it's one
fucking sniper...let's get him..
let's go...

He's up...moving across the paddy like John Wayne, his big western shadow attracting all the light...

...as the first bullet takes him in the front of the foot...like some stupid ass geek here he goes crashing down in the rice and the water...bleeding from the heel...looking back...

...radio support...but this is no ordinary sniper day...the FIRE distinctly picking up.

(CONTINUED)

34 CONTINUED:

34

There's a platoon, maybe a company of NVA lodged in that woodline and it's increasingly clear...

...to the LIEUTENANT who's calling in air...and wants to pull his MEN back out of the exposed paddy...

VOICES

(relaying)

...PULL BACK...PULL BACK...

...but RON won't listen...

RON

Fuck no. Let's get these fuckers.
We got 'em. WE GOT 'EM
Lieutenant...

Blood on his shredded boots...the back of his heel blown out, he is a fallen hero now...the million dollar wound...but not enough...his eyes blazing with inner madness...one more...one more try at redemption...for the KIDS...for WILSON...for whatever is left of his shrunken Catholic soul...

A CHOPPER flies somewhere above, firing madly into the woodline. A RADIO VOICE is screaming insane nonsequiturs over RON's ear...

The chopper smoking, barreling downwards over the dune... a whoosh of heat and flame...

Conversational images...the LIEUTENANT's face...yelling something on the radio... then hit in the upperbody, crumpling...

as if it were all normal and it was a sidewalk somewhere and we were playing stickball again...

Overhead Angle -- RON shifting on the ground...the sudden silence all around, the wind shifting across the paddy, eerie in its innocence. Like boys long ago. Playing in a wood... Time out...

RON having his conversation with THE MEN in the paddy.

RON

What's wrong with you guys...hunh?
There's only three of 'em out there... They got the Lieutenant, let's get 'em...

As he moves forward now on his knees firing, the rifle jammed with sand and paddy grass, he pops the jammed bullet out, tries to jam another round in...

(CONTINUED)

34 CONTINUED: 2

34

RON
Let's go, let's go...into the
woodline...

Crouching up on his crushed heel, firing... The rifle jams
one more time...

RON
...we got 'em, we got 'em.

SOUND - THUNDER -- OVER RON'S RIGHT EAR...the sound of the
bullet entering...

...Maybe a face glimpsed, somewhere in the
woodline...oriental eyes...young, scared, a thatch of black
hair...then gone, rifle retreating behind him into his hole
like the tail of a snake...and it's all gone, forever...

BLACKNESS -- a sharp FADE IN over a short harsh SUCKING
SOUND on a FACE (RON), the eyes staring through a filthy
skin mask, bewildered eyes...then

MOVEMENT, delayed, as the BACK OF RON'S HEAD thuds into a
low angle on the ground...again that harsh suck of air...

Face (RON) -- desecrated, hardly able to breathe... a
distant voice over the sucking-sound.

VOICE
Kovic? Kovic? ...you okay?

Heavy ROCKET EXPLOSION nearby now... Shots everywhere...
Somebody else is hit.

His hand digging in the sand, clenching it...

VOICES
JESUS FUCKING CHRIST! ...Let's
getouttahere, let's GO!

RON'S EYES -- as he's suddenly lifted like a sack of hay
and...thrown over a shoulder -- and a big BLACK MARINE is
humping him back across the paddies, screaming, pumping
himself up...

BLACK MARINE
MOTHERFUCKERS! MOTHERFUCKERS!

The SKY... The malignant SUN rattling upside down from...

RON'S EYES...dangling up alongside the shoulder of the BLACK
MARINE...

Faster and faster IMAGES now...

35 INT. MOVING ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIER - DAY

35

The dark inside of the metal monster...rattling, bumping, grinding gears... a nest of WOUNDED MEN rolling like snakes strapped to their stretchers...

VOICES

Get me outtahere...you fucks...you hear me!

Moving to RON...to a YOUNG KID cupping his intestines...another VETERAN SERGEANT vomitting...

YOUNG KID

Oh God Jesus! Mom...Mom, don't let me die, please don't let me die!

36 EXT. VIETNAM - AIRFIELD - NIGHT (1968)

36

RON on a litter with tubes and bottles shoved in his nose and arms, being transferred into a large C-130.

37 INT. VIETNAM - C-130 PLANE - NIGHT (1968)

37

THE INTERIOR OF PLANE is stacked with wounded MEN - more wounded than he could ever have imagined.

PLANE flying...a MAN thrashing with gauze wrapped around his head and eyes.

He is thrashing like a fish, like he was buried alive six feet under ground and was screaming to get out...senseless words.

MAN

...tha...tha...tha...tha tha tha!

(then)

AHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

RON tensing.

VOICES

SHADDUP, SHADDUP YOU HEAR!...SHUT THE FUCK UP!

MAN

AHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

38 EXT. PLANE - NIGHT

38

THE PLANE rocks in the bumpy night somewhere over Asia, lost in a fog of hell...scudding threadbare clouds lit by a raging moon.. from inside the plane - FX like a pack of demons all howling at once.

39 INT. INTENSIVE CARE WARD (DANANG) - NIGHT (1968)

39

FAST IMAGES CONTINUING:

HOSPITAL WARD - confusion, 40-50 cases lining a CORRUGATED ALUMINUM HUT - THE MEN still covered with mud, shredded fatigues, filthy tourniquets, abdominal packs clutched to their stomachs by filthy hands, vacuum bottles swinging from the bottoms of their stretchers, dirty chest tubes stuck clumsily through their skins; the NOISE deafening. In foreground:

MEDIC 1

(moving)

Got twelve hummers here and six rotisserie cases, let's go let's go!

MEDIC 2

(to Medic 1)

Give him 250 milligrams Thorazine IM every 4 hours till he's asleep...Just get him to sleep!

MOVING TO RON - framed by a screaming BLACK SOLDIER next to him. Ron still has the tubes and needles in his arms, groggy,

RON

...somebody?...

A MEDIC, above another LITTER CASE, flicking off data on a sheet with a pencil.

MEDIC 3

(to Medic 4)

...congestion liver and lungs...acute pneumonitis...extensive acute renal tubular necrosis - bilateral...got that?

Intersecting RON.

RON

...somebody...something's wrong with me...

MEDIC 3 quickly inspects his body.

RON

(trying to enunciate clearly)

...they have to operate, soon as possible.. please. - Will you tell them?

His voice is weak. MEDIC 3, without a word or look, turns away.

RON

(raising his voice)

Will you tell them?

SUDDEN THRASHING from the BLACK MAN in background. A NURSE rushing into frame.

(CONTINUED)

39 CONTINUED:

39

NURSE

His heart. Get the machine!

As she hurries off, a CORPSMAN rushes over and jumps on the BLACK MAN's chest, putting his knees right on it and pounding the chest with a fist.

A DOCTOR and the NURSE push the heart pump machine over

CORPSMAN

It's stopped!

The DOCTOR hands a syringe to THE CORPSMAN who plunges it into the BLACK MAN's chest like a knife, as the DOCTOR grabs a long suction cup attached to the machine and places it carefully over the patient's chest.

CORPSMAN

I think he's gone.

The DOCTOR motions THE CORPSMAN off, hurriedly, as he climbs up on top of the body.

ANOTHER ANGLE - the face of the BLACK MAN is now puffy like a balloon, saliva rolling from the sides of it - staring, the whites of his eyes rolling upwards.

DOCTOR

(screaming)

Turn it on!...NOW!

SOUND - SNZZZZZZZZZZ!

The BLACK MAN bucks straight up from the bed towards the ceiling in a grotesque dance. Then, falls back...

THE DOCTOR leans back, relaxing. The tension easing out.

DOCTOR

(over his shoulder)

...I took the Packers at minus seven.

ANOTHER ANGLE - THE NURSE pulling the sheet over the CORPSE. CORPSMEN looking abstractedly at the dead man.

CORPSMAN

Shit, Packers don't have a chance.

RON shifting his eyes quickly as a HAND comes down over his forehead.

A PRIEST appearing, almost miraculously, right above him.

PRIEST

How are you?

Rubbing RON'S forehead slowly and softly.

(CONTINUED)

39 CONTINUED: 2

39

RON
I'm okay Father...when...when will they
operate?

THE PRIEST - the face deeply tired; he has done it many times
before - so often that he doesn't really relate to the individual
in front of him anymore.

In a pedantic tone, marked by a Bronx accent:

PRIEST
The doctors are very busy right now, there
are many wounded today. There is not much
time for anything here but trying to live.
So you must try to live my son...
(soft)
...try to stay alive...try to stay alive..
and we will pray. Are you ready?

RON suddenly understands. A jolt of the eyes. But then it gives
way to the Marine in RON...hardening reflex.

RON
(a glow in his eyes)
I'm ready Father.

ANOTHER ANGLE

PRIEST
I am the resurrection and the life, saith the
Lord; he that believeth in me, though he were
dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever...

Rubbing oil on RON'S forehead and now pressing:

HIS CRUCIFIX to RON'S LIPS...RON hesitantly reaches up and kisses
the cross...absolute fear starting to crawl into his eyes.

PRIEST
(over)
...liveth and believeth in me, shall never
die... We brought nothing into this World,
and it is certain we can carry nothing out
The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away...

40 INT. OPERATING ROOM - NIGHT (1968)

40

RON CLOSE - on an operating table. Analytic lighting...

A MASK now placed over his face...

PRIEST
(over)
...blessed be the name of the Lord

(CONTINUED)

40 CONTINUED:

40

RON

(very weak)

...You going to operate now?

ANOTHER ANGLE - DOCTORS, NURSES...a VOICE, muted and subterranean speaking THROUGH A MASK:

VOICE

Yes. Now son breathe deeply into the mask.
You'll be fine...just fine...there you go..
there.

41 INT. BRONX VA WARD & HALL - DAY (1968)

41

THE SUBTITLE READS: BRONX VETERANS HOSPITAL - APRIL, 1968

The sun just shining in through the windows...sound FX -- THE STEADY DRIPPING of a plastic bag -- urine overflowing onto the floor...plip plop... The ward is silent and filthy...SEVERAL DRUNKS doze in chairs or on the floor...a beat before the drill begins...A FOURTH AIDE crosses, animating us into the:

42 INT. ENEMA ROOM - DAY

42

THREE BLACK AIDES are loudly playing poker on the toilet bowl.

AIDE

What the fuck, motherfucker -- that's my
fucking ace.

The FOURTH AIDE, also black, sticks his head in, trying to roust them out.

FOURTH AIDE

Hey Eddie, need some help in room 13.

EDDIE

Wait a fuckin' second man.

FOURTH AIDE

His catheter's plugging up, he's backing up
into his kidneys.

EDDIE

I said I'd be there when I'd be there. Gimme
a fucking break. Gimme two cards Smitty.

43 INT. HALLWAY

43

THREE AIDES are picking up the paralyzed DRUNKS, some of them fallen from their chairs, and wheel them back to their rooms. Empty liquor bottles in paper bags rattle around. AIDE FIVE picks up one of these bags.

(CONTINUED)

43 CONTINUED:

43

AIDE 5

Let's go! Come on -- Landers! Hopkins!
Move it out...look bright.

As he drinks the rest of the bottle surreptitiously.

A SIXTH AIDE opens a PANTRY CLOSET to discover a PARAPLEGIC shooting up a QUADRAPLEGIC dosed out. The needle is sticking up out of his arm.

PATIENT

(barely cognizant)
Hey motherfucker, take the needle outta my
arm man.

AIDE 6

(taking the needle out)
Hey Gray, now didn't I tell you not to be
doing that shit to him in the A.M..

44 INT. RON'S ROOM - DAY

44

The noise and activity level is starting to pick up as AIDE TWO now wheels ONE OF THE DRUNKS back into RON'S four-man room.

The men themselves reflect a change in the atmosphere, wearing headbands and some hippie-type clothing, smoking dope, pipes, handshake caps, a new cynicism in the men we have not seen in Vietnam.

NURSE WASHINGTON, black, in her twenties, moving towards a bed, intersecting PATIENT 1, tossing a worn piece of bread over the radiator.

PATIENT 1

(excited)
Hey there he goes again!

A flurry of movement.

PATIENT 1

That fucking rat's getting bigger everyday.

NURSE WASHINGTON

That rat ain't gonna bother you you don't
bother it.

PATIENT 1

That's why I'm feeding it.

The NURSE taking a cork out of a metal contraption in PATIENT 3's neck and sticking a long rubber tube in where the cork was, hardly paying attention.

(CONTINUED)

44 CONTINUED:

44

NURSE WASHINGTON

You jes keep feedin' it and everything's
gonna be jes fine...

FRANKIE, a wiry Irish type in his thirties, bounces in clicking his
fingers.

FRANKIE

Hey Kovic, awake up -- come on...six o'clock
special.

45 INT. ENEMA ROOM - DAY

45

TEN TWISTED MEN, all tied down to their striker frames with their
rear ends sticking out and bedpans under them, are packed in the
small room like sardines; some of them lined up vertical along the
walls, some pretending to sleep, refusing to admit this whole thing
is happening to them, others with cigarettes dangling from lips
transistor radios to their ears, others complaining loudly, legs
and arms spasming.

PATIENT 2

Help! I got a headache.

PATIENT 1

Hey Eddie, my stomach feels so bloated.

EDDIE

Just quiet down there, Eddie gonna take care
all you boys...

as he and FRANKIE hurry back and forth placing bedpans under rear
ends, a cigarette dangling from FRANKIE'S lips, whistling between
the lines... THE MUSIC THEME creeps in...

FRANKIE

Okay, okay let's go. Bernstein, whatsa
matter with you today, didn't you eat... You
drinking enough water, I told you you got's
to flush out those kidneys...that's the way,
Feneday, that's the way... ooooh look at that
ass, Hopkins, you been sitting on it again,
ain't you...

Jangling pans, undoing little clips on the rubber tubes, jumping
around, a big can of soapy water above each head and a tube coming
down from it, which Frankie sticks into each man...

RON - waiting, miserable. FRANKIE moving up behind him, changing
the rubber gloves on his hands, squirting lubricant on his fingers.

FRANKIE

My man Kovic! Mister Fourth of July...

Rams his hands up into his rear end, whistling "Yankee Doodle
Dandy"...

46 INT. RECREATION ROOM - DAY (1968)

46

The TV is on to the Chicago 1968 Democratic Convention and the streets of Chicago.

A PARAPLEGIC freaking out, tumbling out of his chair and trying to crawl, screaming, eyes like a mad dog, salivating.

PARA

Agggggh...they're here! They're HERE!!!

PATIENT 4

(mocking)

Who's here, Leon...? Who? ...Gooks?

PATIENT 5

...Get 'em...get 'em!!

PATIENT 4

Chieu Hoy! Chieu Hoy!

PATIENT 6

SHADDUP WILLYA.

PATIENT 3

AGGGGGHHHHHHHHHH.

RON and the OTHERS trying to concentrate on the TV NEWS --

INSERT - CLIP - CHICAGO CONVENTION FOOTAGE - 1968

The PROTESTORS are battling violently with the police...

The faces of the men watching...some angry (fuck that shit man! They outta die, man...take that whole fucking bunch and put 'em in Nam for one fucking week, fuckin' assholes) some like RON just unbelieving...

The faces of the angry young generation, chanting "the whole world's watching. The whole world's watching!" The signs saying "Stop the War" and "U.S. Out of Vietnam" and the BEARDED YOUNG MAN yelling something about cops being "pigs" and "fuck the government that kills with your dollars"... An American flag is burning.

RON watching, angry, joining the others.

RONNIE

"Love it or leave it", you bastards!

47 INT. RON'S ROOM - DAY (1968)

47

TWO DOCTORS, one of them older in his forties, and NURSE WASHINGTON around RON in his bed.

(CONTINUED)

47 CONTINUED:

47

DOCTOR

(sympathetic)

...We want to make it very clear to you, Ron, that...the possibility of your ever walking again is minimal -- almost impossible.. Probably you'll be in a wheelchair for the rest of your life...Do you understand what I'm saying?

ANOTHER ANGLE - RON focusing on the DOCTOR.

RON

(low-key)

I'm gonna walk again. No matter what you tell me Doctor, I know I'm gonna walk again.

DOCTOR

(hesitantly)

Well, good luck, Ron... If you need anything please don't hesitate to call. We're here to help you.

They turn away.

48 INT. HOSPITAL GYM - DAY

48

RON doing pullups, furiously determined. SIX OTHER MEN are on the mats, also working out, AIDES stretching them, one of them JIMMY, a black militant in his twenties, Jimi Hendrix hairdo, coming over to RON, coaching him.

JIMMY

Come on Kovic, thataway, get up there. What'd you do twelve yesterday? Let's see if you can do better...Y'almost got it... come on, keep going...

CUT TO:

RON pushing two 25 pound weights alternately over his head, JIMMY watching him.

JIMMY

You're one crazy Marine Kovic, so gung ho and everything, but you don't know shit about what's going on over here in this country... It ain't about Vietnam man... Why we fighting for rights over there when we don't got no rights at home, man, it's about Detroit and Newark man, it's about racism man, about you can't get a job at home... Vietnam's a white man's war, a rich man's war...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

48 CONTINUED:

48

JIMMY (cont'd)
 You gotta read some books man, there's a
 Revolution going on, Kovic, the brothers are
 getting it together and if you ain't part of
 the solution, then youse part of the
 problem...gotta get hip man.

RON finishing the weights, doesn't seem to have listened...

RON
 Hey Jimmy strap me into the wheel willya?

TIMECUT TO:

48A RON rising up on braces between parallel bars for the first time --
 in front of the same TWO DOCTORS who told him he couldn't walk.
 He's struggling.

RON
 Hey Doc, look...I'm walking...I'm gonna walk
 outta this place Doc, you'll see.

JIMMY
 Come on, that's enough for today.

49 INT. RON'S ROOM - NIGHT

49

Dim shadows...RON lies on his bed on his belly watching as
 A BLACK HOOKER slides her dress off in the shadows.

HOOKER
 (whispering)
 Got the bread?

A rustle of paper money. She climbs up on top of PATIENT 1,
 unseen, not far from RON...pause.

HOOKER
 ...like this?

PATIENT 1
 Yeah...yeah...just suck my tits...

HOOKER
 Honey, anything you want...

On RON.

50 INT. HOSPITAL GYM - DAY

50

RON, using aluminum Canadian braces with chest and leg attachments,
 is moving cockily around the floor. All arms, he's confident,
 bouyant. It's like walking again!

(CONTINUED)

50 CONTINUED:

50

JIMMY

Okay, Ronnie now, easy now, don't do too much at once, don't go too far...

Obviously he is pushing the limit but he keeps on, and as he makes a fast move, suddenly he COLLAPSES AND FALLS...a LOUD CRACK from his leg like the branch of a tree breaking off.

ANOTHER ANGLE -- RON lying on the floor, puzzled. His right leg twisted under him at a curious angle, but he doesn't feel a thing. JIMMY runs over.

RON

O fuck! What's wrong!

JIMMY

(to AIDE 3)

Harry, get the doc.

RON

(starting to panic)

What the hell was that sound? O jeeesus, the bone is coming right through the skin, o motherfucker...

51 INT. RON'S ROOM - DAY (1969)

51

SUBTITLE READS: SIX MONTHS LATER

RON is in a circle electric bed with chest cast and broken leg swollen to twice its original size, paler, weak and filthy looking, unshaven. Two plastic tubes are attached to a BATTERED MACHINE that keeps clanking and pumping loudly -- one tube running a clear fluid into the leg, the other carrying a bright red out...

NURSE WASHINGTON comes over with valiums and a cup of water. Without warning, RON erupts angrily.

RON

I've been laying in my own shit for the last three hours. I've been pushing my call button and nobody comes. Why can't I have a bath? Why can't the sheets be changed in this goddamn place, why can't the goddamn vomit be wiped off the goddamn floor once in a while!

NURSE WASHINGTON

Don't you raise your voice to me Mr. Kovic, you watch your mouth.

RON

Look at my leg! It's twice as big as it ever was! When are you people gonna help me! I wanna see the doctor now!

(CONTINUED)

51 CONTINUED:

51

NURSE WASHINGTON
He's not available now. He's too busy.

RON
He's always too busy.

THE SECOND AIDE, a young black militant, street tough, intersects, sarcastically jovial.

AIDE 2
What's eating you now Kovic, you going off the deep end?

RON grabs the AIDE hard.

RON
FUCKING SHIT! What do I have to do to make you people listen to me. I wanna be treated like a fucking human being!

He suddenly slaps the valium out of the NURSE'S hands.

RON
I don't want this fucking shit. You wanna keep me drugged all the time so I don't know what's going on. THIS PLACE IS A FUCKIN' SLUM.

AIDE 2
We gonna amputate that leg you go on like this.

RON
All I'm asking is to be treated like a Human Being. (the AIDE chuckles). I'm a Vietnam Veteran. I fought in Vietnam and I gotta right to be treated decently.

AIDE 2
Vietnam? ...Vietnam don't mean nothing to me man or any these other people. You can take your "Vyet...Nam" and shove it up your ass!

Walks out, cackling.

Moving to RON -- an incredible pause. He's about to do something very violent, grasps the water pitcher to throw it when suddenly the MACHINE next to the bed CUTS OUT (FX). He stops, worried.

RON
Hey.

NURSE WASHINGTON
(calling to the AIDE)
Marvin!

(CONTINUED)

51 CONTINUED: 2

51

The SECOND AIDE comes back, pissed. Together with WASHINGTON, he tries some buttons, levers. Puzzled, he kicks it. Nothing.

AIDE 2

(to machine)
Fucking asshole!

Kicks it again harder. A RATTLE but no movement. RON freaking, pathetically pleading now.

RON

What's he doing! What's he doing!
(to the NURSE, whining)
Please get the doctor willya, please
Washington. I don't wanna lose this leg.
Please get the doctor! PLEASE.

TIMECUT TO:

51A A YOUNG DOCTOR (THIRD DOCTOR) -- not seen before -- comes up, optimism in his face. The SECOND AIDE and NURSE WASHINGTON are ultra-polite now.

DOCTOR

How you doing Eddie, now let's see what's wrong with this...

Checking the machine as RON waits, scared.

AIDE 2

Well, I tried to help Mr. Kovic, Doc.

RON, desperate, grabs the DOCTOR as he brushes the bed.

RON

Look Doc, I'm trapped in this bed, I've been here for six months. They're telling me if they don't get this pump working, they're gonna cut my leg off. I want my leg Doc. What do we do! What do we do?? First of all, do we have another pump Doctor...do we have a pump anywhere in the city...in the country?

DOCTOR

Well, it's the only one we have Eddie.

RON

No. It's Ron...Ron Kovic, Doctor...

DOCTOR

Ron! Sorry...sorry, it's the war in Vietnam, Ron. The cutbacks. The Government's just not giving us the money we need to take care of you guys. We're doing our best...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

51 CONTINUED: 3

51

DOCTOR (cont'd)
 (contemplating the machine, shaking
 his head)
 ...it's really too bad, it's not fair at all.

RON
 Listen Doc...I've really tried hard to keep
 this leg, y'know, really hard...I've done
 everything...and I'm trying to be calm,
 y'know...really calm...what do we do????

DOCTOR
 Yes, I completely understand...maybe we can
 rig a substitute, let me see if there's
 something in the basement...

TIMECUT TO:

51B RON lies there alone...the MACHINE silent...nothing happening --
 looking up at the ceiling in a sweat, his drenched hair spreading a
 stain across the dirty, greyish pillow...hoping...

Suddenly a CLANKING SOUND and the MACHINE starts up -- by itself...
 RON looks over at it -- bewildered, scared...

52 EXT. KOVIC HOUSE & STREET - DAY (1969)

52

THE SUBTITLE READS: MASSAPEQUA, NEW YORK - 1969

A CAR DOOR SLAMS and DAD, balder now in his late 50's, comes around
 the front of the car and opens RON's door, sliding the WHEELCHAIR
 out of the back seat.

JIMMY
 (now 15)
 Mom! Ronnie's home...

PATTY
 (now 13)
 Ronnie!

VOICES
 (repeating the message)

LATE AFTERNOON, Septemberish...MUSIC THEME now suggesting the
 beginnings of a new process, a Fall theme...

A MOVEMENT through the lawn and house - voices, vibrations
 relayed...

TOMMY and JIMMY and PATTY emerging from varying angles, moving
 towards the car to help...

53 EXT. THE NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

53

Taking note...people ceasing their labors on their front lawns and casting curious looks, some from behind curtains, KIDS in the street playing touch football, stopping...nothing seems to have changed on the block except for automobile styles.

RON, his leg healed, into the wheelchair - though strong and efficient, there is still a struggle to it, a tension, a hint of saying 'let me do it, I can do it...you see,' all overly polite.

RON

Wow, it's good to be back in the neighborhood. Did you paint the house Dad, everything looks different. Hey Major, come here boy...(a mutt coming over) Hey, I haven't seen you in a long time.

His DAD watching, calm as TOMMY, 18, comes up -- almost unrecognizable from before with long hair, bare feet, a hippie look.

RON

Hey Tommy, how ya doing. Wow you really got big...I can hardly recognize you.

TOMMY

Hey Ronnie! Welcome back.

Hugging him.

RON

You're really growing up, so good to see you...Hey Jimmy!

As Jimmy, 15, also with long hair, shy, comes over.

JIMMY

Hi Ronnie. Good to have you home, are you out for good now? Do you have to go back?

RON

Yeah, for good, forever, come here you little squirt!

Enfolding him in a hug as PATTY, 13, joins it.

PATTY

Hiya Ronnie.

RON

Hi Patty...look at him...is that Jackie?

JACKIE, the smallest brother, 7, ambling out...

RON

Boy, you're all looking great. Look at you. Tommy, you working out, look at those muscles...

(CONTINUED)

53 CONTINUED:

53

TOMMY

Yeah, it's all that polevaulting. I read that story about you on the front page of the Massapequa Post, d'ya see it?

RON

How many pushups can you do?

DAD

Here...lemme...

RON

(overly polite)

Yeah? No, no Dad that's okay...that's okay.

Wheels the chair forward himself as DAD tries to help, moving a few feet up the lawn. A tension in the air, subtle as RON feels himself the center of attention and doesn't want it, not now.. looking off at the NEIGHBORS watching. He turns back, shy.. pointing to the WOODEN RAMP leading from the lawn to the porch.

RON

You built that Dad?

DAD

Yeah.

PATTY

All by himself.

RON

It's really beautiful Dad.

SUSANNE, 23, comes up...

SUSANNE

Hi Ronnie, it's good to have you home...

RON

Hey Susie...wow look at you. You look so pretty...boy you're looking really great.

A kiss rather than a hug. SUSANNE more than the others registering the fact of the chair with her large mournful eyes, a strained, high-strung young girl... He looks at her breasts. She shies...

RON

So where's Mom?

A flick of his eyes catching it -- the door banging...

TOMMY

In the kitchen. Where else? Making dinner...

MOM is standing there outside the kitchen, looking at him (before he has seen her), her eyes flicking from the wheelchair...

(CONTINUED)

53 CONTINUED: 2

53

moving now across the lawn...looking older, wearier...

RON

Hi Mom.

MOM

Ronnie (closer) Ronnie!

RON

It's so good to be home Mom...better than seeing me in the hospital hunh?

MOM

It's good to have you home Ronnie.

She leans over and gives him a hug, not quite a full embrace, something reluctant about it, something missing, she's trying to give but doesn't quite know how. A long moment. Their eyes, their faces...

ANOTHER ANGLE -- the FAMILY drawing around him like a portrait.. like a shield...EIGHT PEOPLE and A DOG...a feeling he must say something...

RON

It's really great to be home...it's really great...hey there's Angie...Grace how ya doing...

The NEIGHBORS starting to close in now.

RON

Dominick...hey it's so good to see all of you...Mrs. Castiglia...

He sees MOM shaking her head from side to side, twisting up her eyes and trying to hold it back with her teeth but can't...she suddenly sobs...breaks from the circle...

RON

Mom...please...

She goes back to the house, SUSANNE following.

SUSANNE

Mom.

RON

Hey Mr. Fantozzi...how ya doing? Margie...

Trying to be bright, cheery...surrounded by the NEIGHBORS now, greeting everybody as we pull away.

54 INT. RON'S BEDROOM/BATH/HALL - DAY

54

RON wheeling into his old BEDROOM, TOMMY and DAD with him.

Not much has changed -- the mirror and crucifix, welcome home cards, flowers, but depressing, cramped, harking back to another age when the room seemed larger and filled with dreams.

DAD
(bypassing into the bathroom)
Fixed up a bathroom for you...put a wider doorway in...ramp...levelled out the shower stall. (opening the stall).

ANOTHER ANGLE -- RON next to a carton in a corner, lumped full of toys, baseball bat, catchers mitt, toy gun -- holding the New York Yankees hat Donna gave him.

RON
Oh thanks...thanks Dad...

55 EXT. BACKYARD - ANOTHER DAY (1969)

55

The BARBECUE is going...the old swing, the seesaw...JIMMY MOVING from the kitchen in his baseball uniform, bypassing RON in new clothes, the baseball hat on his head, sitting at the table cramped with the FAMILY eating...

RON
(to Mom, Dad, heated)
...they burn the flag, they demonstrate against us. They have no respect. They have no idea what's going on over there, Mom. There are people sacrificing and getting killed everyday over there and nobody back here seems to care, it's a buncha shit!

MOM
Ronnie! Don't use that language in front of the children. I agree with everything you say but...

RON
Where were they when we needed them Mom.. when we were out there everyday...when we were getting hit. You got my letters! What rights do they have? I served my country -- and they just take from it. They just take,..."love it or leave it" that's what I think...

ANOTHER ANGLE -- Pause. TOMMY, finished eating, gets up. A strained look on his face.

TOMMY
I gotta do some homework. I'll see you Ron...

(CONTINUED)

55 CONTINUED:

55

MOM - giving him a sharp look as he leaves. A silence. DAD has his eyes down as he drinks his coffee, an obtuse quality, hard to judge what he's thinking.

RON
- and then the other side is angry 'cause
we're not winning the war. How can we win in
a situation like that - how can we win?

Hears the sound of his own voice, tired of it.

RON
What's wrong with Tommy?

MOM
Nothing...

DAD
Nothing...

RON
Nothing? Come on - (pause) what, is anybody
listening around here? ...Tommy! ...Tommy!

TOMMY stops reluctantly at the porch, looks back, then down...

ANOTHER ANGLE - the faces. MOM is troubled.

MOM
Tommy's gonna fail English he don't start
working on himself.

SUSANNE
(to RON)
He doesn't believe in the war...

An edge to her low-key manner, evident she doesn't agree with RON either.

RON
What?

SUSANNE
...he thinks we're doing the wrong thing over
there...he thinks it's all a mistake.

RON - an 'oh' look on his face -- rolling towards TOMMY...

The family silent, expecting a blow up...

RON
Tommy? ...what's the problem? You just walk
out? You don't talk anymore?...you don't
think we're right in being over there Tommy?

(CONTINUED)

55 CONTINUED: 2

55

TOMMY

(reluctant)

Come on Ron.

RON

Come on, what, I say anything you don't like?
Spit it out, Tom...do you believe in the
demonstrators?

TOMMY

(on the edge)

I just don't...I just don't -

RON

What!

TOMMY

Well I just don't think it's right...for you
to say it's a bunch of shit... I don't think
it's right.

RON

Whaddya mean, what are you trying to say
Tommy...? Spit it out...you wanna burn the
flag, you wanna tear down our country..."love
it or leave it" Tommy, "love it or leave it".

TOMMY

(increasingly nervous)

I think they...they're trying to say they..
("yeah?")... They don't want more people to
come back like you...

RON

Oh yeah...that's great of 'em, that's easy
but where were they when our country needed
'em, where?... "love it or leave it", Tommy.

TOMMY

(in pain, on the verge...)

You served your country Ronnie...but what did
you get out of it -- look at you now...I'll
see you Ron...

He exits. MOM yelling at him over RON, who sits there, a blank
angry look on his face...

MOM

What does he know! What does Tommy know
about anything...

(to Ron)

He's a good boy but he's hanging around those
creepy long hairs who take drugs, they smoke
pot...

(CONTINUED)

55 CONTINUED: 3

55

SUSANNE

That's not true Mom! That's not the reason....

MOM

What do they know, Susie, what do they know! Have they ever worked for a living? When Ronnie was Tommy's age, he was working the A&P nights, he was....

FIXING on RON's face - his anger challenged, yelling in at TOMMY,

RON

I volunteered Tommy! I don't think you know what you're talking about Tommy, you don't know! Where you ever there! Where you ever there! "Love it or leave it" Tommy! ...Mom I can't believe what Tommy said.

56 EXT./INT. BOYER'S HAMBURGERS - DAY (1969)

56

A Fantasy. The Camera in semi-slow motion moving on the huge figurine of a WOMAN, holding a hamburger aloft... A Waltz on the Muzak...stained cathedral windows and plastic space balls hanging from the ceiling shaped like hamburger planets... Microphone orders... Signs, banners everywhere..."Win A Trip to Miami with any purchase larger than \$9.89"... "Free Baby Food -- Bring Your Baby"..."Special Discounts for People Over 80"...

...the WAITRESSES, all teenagers, moving in space costumes, their names written in phosphorescence across their backs... The mars burger, the mercury, the venus, moon shot, space cakes... A place one senses will never survive the late great madness of the '60s but for a time there...you had to believe...

Over this march through the fantasy we hear young STEVIE BOYER'S voice etching in the reason why.

STEVIE

(over)

...It's part science part hunch Ronnie -- I put up a place in Hapauge last year, no super highway, no supermarket, the boonies right, the heart of America... about eighty seats right? No, I - say, I want 150 seats... My operations guy yells at me, you're crazy Steve! ...I says to him, schmuck -- think big! Stevie's Golden Rule Number One -- the Monotony Factor -- the higher the level of monotony in a town, the more people want to eat and hang out. Rule Number Two -- the Expansion Factor -- business always expands to tax the facilities provided. Put two cash registers in even if you only need one now...put in 150 seats now, not 75.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

56 CONTINUED:

56

STEVIE (cont'd)

And you'll see, you're challenging - the manager, you're challenging the town which is grateful for your belief in them.. and you're even challenging the customer... The proof: My Hapauge Boyer's grossed 85 grand last six months and now my competitor's rushing in to build...but I was first and the people always remember that. The people are loyal...

...the camera now coming to rest on STEVE BOYER, showing RON through his impeccable KITCHEN AREA, past white-aproned teenage EMPLOYEES, the GIRLS in tight uniformed purple mini-skirts... We find him a self-assured, well-dressed (in late sixties mod) executive fresh out of business school, puffed with the right edge of prosperous baby fat, selling the dream to the bewildered RON..

yet he seems older than RON, as if RON missed a beat on his generation...indicating a row of HAMBURGER PATTIES, all doughnut shaped with holes in the middle, COOKS' hands preparing them...

STEVE

You probably think this is just a hamburger Ron...an' you're right. A patty is just a piece of meat -- but it can be a piece of meat with character... See...here...? The doughnut hole in the patty? My idea gets us eighteen patties to the pound 'stead of sixteen... Saves about 40,000 a year.

...moving towards another pair of HANDS stuffing the oatties with condiments and covering it with a pickle...

STEVE

...you plug the hole with lettuce, tomato, chopped onion, spices, our secret sauce.. cover the whole thing with a pickle, see.. here, try it...you don't see this at McDonald's on Sunrise Highway...got a drive-in window too. First one in Long Island!

CUSTOMERS' FACES shuffling up to the counter one after the other, receiving the nicely packaged result.

STEVE handing RON his burger, eyeballing a YOUNG WAITRESS who walks by in a tight mini. He leers after her...

STEVE

...clean, cheap and fast. Feed the family for \$3.95. And check out those chicks, willya? I got 'em all wearing those new mini-skirts. It was my idea. It's good for tips and the customers always come back. Yeah...I like it short and tight...

(CONTINUED)

56 CONTINUED: 2

56

RON's eyes avoiding the WAITRESS, tasting the burger which isn't bad.

RON

I remember when you used to rent us your toys. Yeah, you were always pretty smart Stevie... I still owe you a twenty bucks for that baseball glove.

STEVE, basking in it, checks out his french fry batter.

STEVE

Forget it. Hey, I always took care of you Ronnie, didn't I?

RON

Yeah sure you did Steve, you ripped me off every chance you got...(sees Steve's face) No, Stevie, I'm only kidding (laughs).

STEVE

I thought about you over there, I really did. I read all about it in the Massapequa Post. How's your Mom? Your Dad?...Still working at the A&P...

(Ron nods)

Yeah...like my old man...he's still got the candy store. Doesn't believe I'm doing this great. Hey you don't mind if I ask you a personal question Ronnie?...

(waits, Ronnie knows what it is)

...but can you...can you...you know...you know what I mean?

RON

I'm okay.

STEVE

Oh wow -- great! I thought so...at least they didn't get that.

RON

Yeah...

STEVE pats another passing WAITRESS 2 on the ass.

STEVE

Me I like it short and tight.

RON laughs with him.

RON

...heard you got married?

STEVE

(a little ashamed)

Yeah, Wendy Daniels.

(CONTINUED)

56 CONTINUED: 3

56

RON

That girl you took to the prom?

STEVE

Want you to come over and meet her. Got a beautiful little kid. Jessica. A beauty... yeah, Massapequa's changed Ronnie, it's no Mom and Pop operation anymore. The old fucks in Congress can't rep this District anymore... Prices, real estate values -- everything's shot up. The Marchesi brothers are cutting down Sally's woods for a sewage disposal dump... Can you believe that...

Moving with RON through the operation to his OFFICE.

STEVE

...I wanna push out Ronnie. Copiague, Jericho, Bayville, Valley Stream -- I wanna make "Boyer's" a whole Long Island thing, I want something better for the people of Long Island than McDonald's and Colonel Sander's... This is our town now Ronnie...

57 INT. STEVE'S OFFICE - DAY

57

There in Stevie's Inner Office with telephone, scrawled notes, pictures on the wall addressing business groups, receiving an award. A magnetized football game, a new color TV...hitting the Long Island map on the wall.

STEVE

...and I want you to come to work for me.. with me...

RON looking at a picture of STEVE'S new wife and the little child.

RON

What do you mean...I mean what are you...

STEVE

I mean I want you to come to work for me. You're part of it Ron, this is the time to get in on it... You're a war hero and you can benefit...you should.

RON

What...what do you think I could do?

STEVE

Well...I mean...eventually you could be a manager of one of these places...right here in Massapequa if you want...just like your Dad...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

57

RON

I never managed a store Steve.

STEVE

Nor would I start you there Ronnie... You could learn...

RON

Yeah, but I...I don't really want to be in a store y'know why... It's not for me...

STEVE

You gotta keep busy Ronnie, y'know, and I think in a few years with hard work you could be a rich man...

RON

It's real nice of you Steve but y'know, I get 17 hundred a month from the Government and I just wanna look around a little bit right now y'know.

STEVE

Ronnie, that's charity money. This isn't.

A troubled look from RON, who then conceals it, wheels around the little office looking at objects. STEVE doesn't realize.

STEVE

I'm saying, you gotta put the war behind you Ron, you gotta forget about that chair you're in.

RON

(soft)

Yeah...sometimes you know I think people.. they know you're back from Vietnam, their face changes...the eyes, the voice...the way they look at you...

STEVE

(reflective)

...yeah...the people here...they don't give a shit about the war Ron. To them it's a million miles away. And it's all bullshit anyway. The government sold us a bill of goods and we bought it. And we got the shit kicked out of us! For what? For lies -- for bullshit lies...

RON

(softly)

Whaddaya mean "we" Steve? You were in college...

(CONTINUED)

57 CONTINUED: 2

57

STEVE

Hey, I mean we all believed it Ronnie. We saw it on Television. We all lived...

RON

On television? What are you talking about Steve, I don't know what you mean, you saying nobody believes it now?

STEVE

(defensive now)

...it was you bought that Communist bullshit Ronnie... They were gonna take over the world, Finelli, you, Walsh, the whole town was devastated...for what? For bullshit...

RON

Hey, no...no...don't tell me that Steve. I didn't know nothing. I didn't know.. anything... I believed -- I believe -- in that fucking war okay? ...and I'm not too crazy about people running around saying...

STEVE

Hey Ronnie I didn't mean...

RON

I mean I gave three quarters of my body for that war Steve and if you give three quarters of your body for something you'd better believe it man, you'd better fucking believe it...

STEVE

Look Ron...hey peace brother...

He flashes a peace sign.

RON

Steve I don't...

STEVE

Ronnie, Ronnie, I understand your anger...I sympathize with it...and you got every right in the world... but you can sit in that chair and you can piss and moan about the war all you want, you can go down to Times Square and pass out leaflets, you can demonstrate, but it ain't gonna change a thing...but if you wanna job...if you wanna start over again and put it behind you...then I'll give you one... I'm here for you...but if your head's not gonna be there Ronnie...then I don't know what I can do for you...I don't know...

RON looks...nods...about to say something but doesn't...

(CONTINUED)

57 CONTINUED: 3

57

STEVE

You okay?

RON

...okay Steve...okay...I gotta move on now
okay... It was good seeing you, really
good... We'll talk again.

A big hug...with a smile that doesn't smile... STEVE is sincere in
his hugging...but RON has been turned inside out. And isn't...

STEVE

...you think about it now, okay boy...take
your time -- peace man...

Flashing the peace sign once more.

DISSOLVE TO:

58 EXT. 2nd 4th OF JULY PARADE - DAY (1969)

58

A BANNER flapping in the breeze:

WELCOME HOME RON KOVIC

SUPPORT OUR BOYS IN VIETNAM.

Silence, surreal.

JULY 4, PARADE - MASSAPEQUA, harking back to the nighttime parade
sequence when Ron was a young boy. But now it is a harsh summer
sun - DAY - burnt out streets. A glare...and the silence.

THE CROWD shading its eyes from the glare - a tension in the air.

THE HIGH SCHOOL MARCHING BAND is almost past...a DRUM FX in the
distance...something coming up the street.

THE SOFT PURR of a big CADILLAC CONVERTIBLE moving down Broadway,
FX of this SOUND strong in surrounding SILENCE as we MOVE UP into
the car and see a LEGION DRIVER and LEGION COMMANDER, both in
peaked hats, waving to the crowd... and MOVING

... into the back seat, RON looking out at the crowd with a tight
nervous smile. A flag is draped across the back of the car...

PAST THE 7 & 11 STORE - TEENAGERS coming in and out with
purchases, pointing...PAST THE CROWD, silent, few of them waving,
just staring at RON like a ghost come back from the dead - uneasy;
an aquarium feeling with the yellows of the sun bouncing off the
Massapequa architecture...PAST Sparky the Barber's ("Unisex
Haircuts Now \$4.96") and SPARKY in his barber's uniform waving ...

The town has truly changed -- modernized, more commercial, more
signs, the sixties finally crawling over the fifties...

(CONTINUED)

58 CONTINUED:

58

RON watching...DRUMS in background...once he was staring from this sidewalk, up at his heroes. Now he is the hero - and he's a Martian.

A LITTLE BOY at the edge of the sidewalk turns to his MOTHER.

LITTLE BOY

Who is he, mom?

MOM

(in conjunction with the silence)

He was wounded in Vietnam, shhhhh...

A beat. The LITTLE BOY looking back at him, worshipful.

LITTLE BOY

When I grow up, can I be in the parade like him?

MOM pulls her child closer.

59 EXT. FOURTH OF JULY CEREMONY - DAY (1969)

59

A WOODEN PLATFORM with red, white, blue bunting. POLITICIANS, DIGNITARIES...

A CHOIR of CHILDREN sing "Oh say can you see..." as RON rolls down the platform past them, directed by one of the LEGION COMMANDERS to his position on the podium

TIMECUT TO:

59A THE LEGION COMMANDER is a vigorous middle-aged man of Korean vintage, speaking effectively at the podium.

LEGION COMMANDER

Today is July the Fourth and I believe in America!....and I believe in Americanism.

THE CROWD fighting the heat and the glare. A FATHER catching his 6 year old son and spanking him hard.

FATHER

I told you never to do that!

RON on the platform, looking out into the crowd seeing

HIS FAMILY close to the platform MOM and DAD holding hands...with

TOMMY, JIMMY (18), SUSANNE (23), PATTY(13), JACKIE (8)....

LEGION COMMANDER (continuing)

- and most of all, most of all, I believe in victory for America.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

59 CONTINUED:

59

LEGION COMMANDER (continuing) (cont'd)
 Some people are starting to say the war is wrong, that we shouldn't be there. There are some people who would like to tear our country down -- but who're the kids who are defending their right to protest?...

He turns and points at RON.

LEGION COMMANDER
These are the kids who care about this country. These are the kids who went over there, just like we did once, who are putting their lives on the line everyday for Freedom and Democracy, so you and I here in Massapequa can live free...

A GROUP of TEENAGERS watching - silent.

A GROUP of BUSINESSMEN - equally silent...

RON watching, uncomfortable at being singled out.

LEGION COMMANDER
 ...These are the kids...from Massapequa and all the towns across the country, the kids who never had the chance to go to college, kids who respect their flag, their parents, their Government, and their religion...kids like Joey Walsh. He was the first and we got a street over in the park named after him.

THE PARENTS of Joey Walsh, a mid-40's blue-collar couple, looking down.

LEGION COMMANDER (OVER)
 And Danny Topinka...Billy Vorsovich...

A WITHERED WOMAN with her equally pale DAUGHTER, like a Wyeth painting.

LEGION COMMANDER (OVER)
 Phil and Larry Powell...

The WOMAN makes a shivering gesture of the head, like a wounded bird.

LEGION COMMANDER - very emotional now.

LEGION COMMANDER
 ...and Tommy Finelli...six boys from Massapequa, all of them knew what honor, duty, and sacrifice meant...

RON listening - ironic he is not dead.

(CONTINUED)

59 CONTINUED: 2

59

LEGION COMMANDER (OVER)
 ...they paid the highest price, they died for it.

CROWD AND COMMANDER -

LEGION COMMANDER (OVER)
 This town's been hit hard, it's always been hit hard...Ask Doc over there, he was in the First War, a lot of us were in the Second, and Mayor Vorisak and me were in Korea... and that's why we can't give up, that's why we're gonna win in Vietnam ...because ...because Massapequa's been there before and because of those six wonderful boys and...
 (voice quivering, pointing his finger)
 and because of him!

RON inclines his head and stares into his lap.

THE CROWD clapping - fighting the heat and the glare.

His parents clapping but TOMMY obviously doesn't share this feeling, looking down. His MOM pushes him on the shoulder. DAD restrains her.

COMMANDER motioning.

LEGION COMMANDER
 Ron, come over here and say a few words..
 would you, please?
 (to crowd)

Ron Kovic, folks, was born on the Fourth of July, 1946 - so let's give him a big hand on this great birthday...

RON looking - why does he have to speak? APPLAUSE, OFF.

SHARP LOW ANGLE with FX SOUND - as HANDS move reluctantly onto wheels of the chair and spin it towards the podium where the COMMANDER waits...across squeaky wooden flooring, bumping, SOUND, magnified with the tension he feels in the chair.

RON moving to the podium in FG with CROWD in BG - the first time he has addressed a crowd. RON - shifts in his seat, very nervous.

RON
 I - uh - just want to say...for all the guys in Vietnam...that we're...doing our best...

His legs start to spasm, and he tries to control it -- making flurries of movement - hands to chest, to belly, onto wheel. Gulps hard, suddenly, as if trying to breathe...more and more hesitant, a circle closing tighter and tighter on itself.

(CONTINUED)

59 CONTINUED: 3

59

MOM putting away her tiny little U.S. flag, looking at DAD, concerned.

TOMMY also picks up on it as does SUSANNE.

RON

...and the boy's morale over there is real high...and...we're gonna win that war.

He gulps hard again, the wave rising up involuntarily from his belly area, his hands going there, surprised and writhing in his seat, trying to find a more comfortable position.

RON

and you can be, you can be real...

His head drops forward, he gulps. He can't go on. He's crying.

RON

I'm sorry...I'm sorry...

ANOTHER ANGLE - linking RON and the CROWD waiting.

MOM worried...

THE COMMANDER and DIGNITARIES looking at one another; the COMMANDER moving RON off...

...past the banner: WELCOME HOME OUR VIETNAM VETERAN RON KOVIC.

RON'S FAMILY comes up to the platform, as they get him down to the ground.

DAD

You okay Ronnie?

MOM

It's alright, Ronnie, it's gonna be okay..
You did your best.

TOMMY

...just give him some air willya Mom.

The CROWD watching. An embarrassing silence before the LEGION COMMANDER gets back to the podium...

LEGION COMMANDER

...and we'll continue fighting 'cause of boys like Ron Kovic and the sacrifice he made will not be in vain...like he said, we're gonna win that war! Now let's have a round of applause for the man who's done so much for Massapequa...

(etc. introducing Mayor Vorisak)

RON being wheeled away from the podium trying to get some air. Just wants to be alone. A VOICE calls out.

(CONTINUED)

59 CONTINUED: 4

59

TIMMY

Ronnie! Ronnie...Ronnie!

RON would rather not respond but then is confronted by:

TIMMY emerging from the crowd -- with a loose-fitting Marine fatigue shirt on.

TIMMY

Ronnie!

RON under his breath, shocked, almost doesn't recognize his friend.

RON

Timmy? That you?

TIMMY

O'Jesus man!

HUGS RON really tight, burying his face in his shoulder. The CROWD watching all around them.

RON

(over Timmy's shoulder)
...I heard you were still... When'd you get out?

As TIMMY pulls back, RON is shocked:

TIMMY - the same boyish look, light skin, freckles, but a SCAR now, like a clean crack in an eggshell, all the way across his forehead.

The face is old, now permanently wounded, the eyes where death lives.

TIMMY

Man, I...Man I...Man I...

THE CROWD, curious, pressing closer.

TIMMY feeling their stress, looks back at RON who is silent looking at his friend's scar.

TIMMY

C'mon, let's get out of here... Let me help, Mr. Kovic.

DAD

Yeah, sure, Timmy...

As TIMMY takes the back handles of the chair and begins pushing him THROUGH THE CROWD - a silence as people part for them...the two cripples, one pushing the other, forging their own parade.

60 INT. KOVIC LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

60

The television is on (now a color set)...

TELEVISION CLIP -- A WAR PROTEST IN WASHINGTON, D.C. - Chaos, anger, teargas, confusion briefly seen...

MOM

It's starting...

As DAD flips the channel to:

TV CLIP -- "Laugh-In" lead in.

The camera moving to the BACKYARD...

61 EXT. KOVIC BACKYARD - NIGHT (1969)

61

NIGHT - RON and TIMMY, in semi-shadow, at a table...drinking beer, insect sounds, the moon drifting by...

RON

You see that hedge? Right over there?

TIMMY

Yeah...?

RON

...that second telephone pole?

TIMMY

Oh yeah...yeah.

RON

Yeah, I hit 60 home runs over that hedge one summer. I think I counted every one of them.

TIMMY

Yeah, you were the best, Ronnie, the best I ever saw. You shoulda gone to that tryout for the Yankees...when that...

RON

...tag?...remember...in Sally's woods?

TIMMY

...tag on Hamilton Avenue...

RON

...tag down at the beach...

TIMMY

...tag on the roof...

RON

...tag in the supermarket...

(CONTINUED)

61 CONTINUED:

61

TIMMY

Running bases, stickball, whiffleball, that day, I cut my wrist?

RON

You slipped on an acorn or something.. running bases.

TIMMY

I slipped on an acorn? Yeah I cut my artery and I thought I was going to die for sure.
(giggles)

RON

(chuckling)

You were a mess... That time you hit that foul ball right into ole Mrs. Brink's window and she came out screaming, remember?

TIMMY

Yeah - but then we painted her fire hydrant pink...

RON

And she called the cops!

TIMMY

Yeah...an' my old man really beat the shit out of me! (laughing, then a pause).

RON

I wonder what happened to her.

TIMMY

Dead I hope.

RON

I wonder what happened to Donna?

TIMMY

Donna Peters, oh yeah... oooh, nice right? I heard she went upstate...to college.. Syracuse...

RON

Yeah?

TIMMY

Real bright...gonna be a lawyer or something...

RON

(embarrassed)

I used to write to her, y'know... long letters from Nam. Real crazy stuff, y'know...how much I loved her, and everything...God!

(CONTINUED)

61 CONTINUED: 2

61

TIMMY

She write back?

RON

Kind of. Couple of times. I didn't know what to say. I guess I sounded like a jerk.

(shrugs)

Who else used to play?

TIMMY

You know...

RON

Come on, tell me.

He wants to hear the names again.

TIMMY

Well, let's see, Bobby Moore at first, Harry Silvanti at short, Grady Rogers third...

RON

No! No! Rogers got sick...it was Finelli at third.

TIMMY

...Yeah, you're right! Tommy Finelli. He hit .512 one year. I remember that year, yeah...He got hit in the First...an RPG.. just blew him away...they couldn't even find him.

RON

Rick Jones in left...Billy Vorsoovich in right, he could hit, he had the power!

TIMMY

Yeah, but he was always flunking English.

(starts to giggle)

He had a hard time with English. You know he got killed by one of his own mortars up at the DMZ.

(giggling)

That's really crazy man.

ANOTHER ANGLE - Ron can't help it, starts to laugh too - the kind of laugh with hysteria in the eye of it.

RON

Shit! I heard about that...and Phil and Larry Powell? I can't believe it...

TIMMY

They were great wrestlers, weren't they fucking tough...You know when Phil got killed...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

61 CONTINUED: 3

61

TIMMY (cont'd)

Larry - he wasn't too much in the brains department either - he went and joined up the next day.

RON

(laughing harder)
Oh God!

TIMMY

...And then he got it... There was a land mine or something and he got hit in the head with a tree. Isn't that funny? He goes all the way over there and gets killed by a fucking tree... You know it's funny. I think the whole fucking town got devastated. I don't think we have a fucking friend left. I think it's really funny.

They laugh...MOM comes to the backdoor, glances at them, then goes back to her TV.

RON

Yeah, yeah - when'd you get hit?

TIMMY

Hunh?...Oh, September 18 - near Dong Ha...
(pause)

...lotta bad shit up there, things I don't wanna talk about...it was crazy over there.. you know what I mean, you understand? .. shooting anything that moved?

RON

Yeah...yeah...

TIMMY

...we burned down a whole village one day.. there was this gook with her baby...we torch the whole fuckin' hut and she was screaming...

RON listening, thinking back...

TIMMY

Where'd you get hit?

RON

Me. Oh January 20th, someplace I don't even remember...near some river up in the DMZ... Walked into a whole fucking battalion of 'em... I was shot in the foot, no big deal...and I was running around like...it was the woods again, like I was John Wayne or something..."come on Charlie Motherfucker, rat tat tat rat tat tat"...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RON (cont'd)
and then there was this crack right above my
right ear and...
(shifts, sighs)

TIMMY
How was the hospital?

RON
Bad. Really sucked.

TIMMY
Yeah. I know. Sometimes I get these really
bad headaches at night you know and I'm
thinking the dummies in the hospital - they
put this plate in backwards or something, man
- like I'm going crazy you know, they just
come over me...they just come...and I feel
like - like I'm not me anymore -- like I'm
somebody else.

RON
How do you handle it? How do you take care
of it when that happens?

TIMMY
(giggles)
Well mostly I do a lot of drugs. You just
try to get through it man, any way you can..
you know what I mean...

RON
When I was in the hospital -- I kept thinking
it wasn't so bad y'know, it made sense...

TIMMY
Whaddaya mean it made sense?

RON
(pause)
...cause I failed.

TIMMY
Whaddaya mean?

RON
'Cause I...'cause I killed somebody one
night.

TIMMY
We all killed somebody Ronnie, you can't feel
bad about it, you had no choice, that's
something those demonstrators will never
understand, it was either them or us...

(CONTINUED)

61 CONTINUED: 5

61

RON

...but that night it changed my life...it's as if nothing's ever gonna be the same again...

(shifts, takes a deep breath,
doesn't speak)

TIMMY

You don't gotta talk about it Ronnie. It was insane over there man, it was...

RON

...but there's times, there's times I'd just wished...I'd just wished I'd run back to the rear that day -- the first time I got hit, when I took the shot in the foot, I could've just run back you know, I had the million dollar wound, I mean who gives a fuck now if I was a coward or not. I was paralyzed and castrated that day -- why? 'Cause I was so stupid -- and I'd have my dick and my balls now and I think... I think I'd give everything I got... everything I believed in, all my values -- just to have my body again...just to be whole again....

Pause. A look between them. RON's got tears in his eyes.

RON

...but I don't...I never will...and that's the way it is, isn't it?

62 INT. TRAIN - SYRACUSE, NEW YORK - DAY (MAY, 1970)

62

NINE MONTHS LATER.

RON on the train, the platform bypassing the window as the train pulls to a stop... Looking out ill at ease in his best shirt, jacket.

63 EXT. STATION PLATFORM - SYRACUSE - DAY (1970)

63

RON coming out of the train onto the PLATFORM - looking...not there. He's wearing a white shirt and tie.

PASSENGERS hurrying to the exits, then: DONNA appears coming the other way - looking for him. She has grown into a beautiful, young woman.

RON sees her - before she sees him. A leap of the soul. As if for one moment he can stretch up out of the chair and walk to her again.

DONNA sees him, across exiting PASSENGERS - a flash in her eyes, starts towards him, as if also suspending her disbelief...

(CONTINUED)

63 CONTINUED:

63

HER POV - PAST exiting PASSENGERS - then RON appears on the platform, fully revealed in THE CHAIR...

DONNA continuing - but a flash of the head, the inner collapse of spirit. It is him.

RON, smiling now, friendly - SHE approaches -- stretching his arm in a comradely fashion, holding her - as they kiss hello. Two strangers...

DONNA muted, smiling - saying something. He nods.

64 INT. STUDENT COFFEE SHOP - SYRACUSE - NIGHT (1970)

64

RON and DONNA share a pizza and some cheap red wine in a student hang out. Posters against the war, black arm bands on the KIDS, a charged electricity in the shuffling, talking. DONNA seems a little distracted.

RON

(embarrassed)

Remember those letters... I wrote you from over there?

DONNA

Sure.

RON

Crazy stuff, huh? Long letters. I guess I told you a lot of stuff I couldn't tell you in school.

DONNA

They were beautiful letters.

RON

Yeah?

DONNA

They were...

RON

I don't think the spelling was too good.

DONNA

Who cares if you can spell. There was a lot of feeling in the words...

(Pause)

...I'm so sorry for what happened to you Ronnie. My mother called me. I wanted to reach out to touch you. I felt so frustrated...I just stood there in the hallway of my dorm shaking and...and I couldn't say anything.

(CONTINUED)

64 CONTINUED:

64

As she remembers the moment, we see the loving look in RON'S eyes. If anything this now is the moment he has earned through his chivalry. How sad it seems...she pushes back her tears, angry at herself instead.

DONNA

...We grew up believing all that stuff Ronnie, never questioning a thing. Nothing they told us was the truth. I even opposed the demonstrators at first, my mother told me to stay in the dorm, not get involved, to study and I wouldn't get into any trouble. "Stay in the dorm", "don't rock the boat" that's the way everybody from Massapequa is (laughs) "don't rock the boat", "play it safe"...but there's a world out there and it's bigger than Massapequa...

RON looking at her as if he agrees with everything she said. She takes it as a signal to go on...

DONNA

Did you see the killings on television? Kent State? It's as if the war's happening right here, now. That girl laying in that pool of blood in the parking lot. I feel so angry Ronnie, I don't believe anything they say anymore. That war is wrong Ronnie. I'm sorry I sound like I'm giving a speech but all that crap they taught us in High School -- about America always being right. And did you see that poster...that picture of the children killed at My Lai? They killed babies Ronnie. Babies! ...Vietnam's ruining our country. I don't believe in any of it anymore. I don't even believe in God anymore Ronnie. It's all a buncha lies!

Pause. RON suddenly feeling anxiety, takes a deep breath.

A YOUNG RADICAL interrupts...pressing some leaflets on DONNA.

RADICAL

Donna, need help getting these out.

DONNA

I can't right now. Later.

RADICAL

Don't forget nine o'clock we got the meeting...

He goes, eyeing RON...

(CONTINUED)

64 CONTINUED: 2

64

DONNA

(distracted)

I'm sorry, it's so crazy right now. We got a Kent State demonstration tomorrow. Part of the national protest. I'm on the Organizing Committee... We...

(breaks off seeing RON'S look)

RON

Can we get outta here, take a little walk...a few minutes?

She pauses.

DONNA

Sure...

65 EXT. SYRACUSE CAMPUS & TOWN - NIGHT

65

DONNA pushes RON past the QUAD where the STUDENTS are gathering, exchanging information. A LOUDSPEAKER announces tomorrow's demonstration.

LOUDSPEAKER

FOUR STUDENTS HAVE BEEN KILLED AT KENT STATE. BEGINNING AT NINE O'CLOCK TOMORROW MORNING WE'LL BE ASSEMBLING AT LINDSEY HALL AND MARCHING TO THE FEDERAL BUILDING. BRING YOUR POSTERS AND BANNERS AND PICKET SIGNS...

Some of the STUDENTS smoking marijuana, listening to some acid rock on their transistor...OTHERS handing out leaflets...a sense of urgency in the air...

RON looking on as if on another planet.

RON

So what are you gonna do with yourself after school?

DONNA

...I don't know. Six months ago I woulda told you I was gonna be a lawyer. I knew exactly what I wanted to do. But now I don't know what I want to do. It's so crazy now. Each day is so intense, you don't know if there's gonna be a tomorrow, you know what I mean?

RON

Yeah...I been thinking about a lotta things too. I been thinking about leaving the country....

DONNA

Massapequa?

(CONTINUED)

65 CONTINUED:

65

RON

No. The whole country. America. I feel like getting out. Seeing the world. Mexico. South America maybe. Some place far. Some place in the sun...

DONNA

Why now? It's an exciting time in this country...

RON

I wanna get away from everything. The whole thing's been so crazy Donna. The war. The hospital. My Mom. My Dad. Everybody in the town. I just can't face those people. They remind me of Vietnam...of everything I was before. I just gotta clear my head out...

DONNA

Then you should do it Ronnie, get out of Massapequa,...like I did. Find yourself...

RON

Yeah...I should...
(glances at her, a pause)
what are you...? You seeing anybody, you got a boyfriend.

Trying to sound casual but it hangs there tense suddenly in the air...DONNA delicate...but her eyes cannot help but smile...

DONNA

Yes...someone. I've been living with him 'bout a year now...

RON

(quick)
Oh that's nice...Your parents know you're living together?

DONNA

Oh God no! They'd have a fit if they did... yeah, I think you'd like him, he's really sensitive. He got out of the draft, his father got a doctor to write a letter. He took me down to Washington to a couple of big demonstrations against the war. It's really incredible y'know -- the vibes.

RON

Yeah.

DONNA

They come from all over the country. Like an army. There's this togetherness about the people Ron, ...young and old...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

65 CONTINUED: 2

65

DONNA (cont'd)

and all the music, have you heard Jimi Hendrix's "Star Spangled Banner", it's wild, ...and the love, and anything goes, you should come Ron -- you could really help...we're building a whole new community, we could change the World, Ronnie. Do you believe that Ronnie, we could change the world?

RON

Oh I don't know Donna, I don't know...I'm just starting to think about all these things y'know...

DONNA

Have you ever read about the life of Mahatma Gandhi Ronnie or Henry David Thoreau on "Civil Disobedience"? That essay changed my life -- it taught me that people have a right to stand up and speak out when an injustice is being done -- that it's their obligation, their duty as human beings. Gandhi believed that one person with the Truth was a majority...could win...even women are fighting for their rights Ronnie...

They are in a secluded area of the quad, under a tree. She stops, comes around, thrusting out her breasts defiantly at him in her t-shirt.

DONNA

I'm proud of who I am as a woman. I believe in Woman's Liberation. I feel like nothing's holding me back now. I can do anything I want to do, be anything I want to be. I never felt prouder than I do right now about being a woman, Ronnie. Nothing can stop us.

RONNIE looking at her. All healthy sexuality, pride, defiance. He's inspired.

RON

It sounds really beautiful Donna...

Cicadas buzzing in the Spring night...a COUPLE making out quietly near them...guitar music from the distance...feelings of nostalgia invade him.

DONNA

(inviting)

Then join us Ron...you can make a difference, we need people like you...

He rocks in his chair, to an old memory of music, as if it's a night long ago.

(CONTINUED)

65 CONTINUED: 3

65

RON

... remember the night of the prom Donna?
Remember? "Moon River...wider than the
sea...my huckleberry friend..."

Singing, eyes closing, weaving in the chair like a happy idiot,
willing to make fun of himself in front of her but enjoying the
memory...

But to DONNA it has another sadder implication which she can't
transcend. She hates the out-of-fashion romanticism...and is
surprised by it here and now...

RON

Remember?

DONNA

Of course.

RON

(singing)

"Moon River...for me" (finishes) Boy was I
crazy that night. Running through the rain
to get there...to dance with you. What an
idiot hunh.

DONNA nods, sickened. He seems to have totally missed the point of
her woman's liberation theme. She attempts a smile, trying to
share the spirit. Everything he says now sounds totally
misplaced, yet felt.

RON

I just had to dance with you 'fore I went in,
y'know... It was like... It was like I knew
it...

He doesn't notice her discomfort, takes her hand.

RON

...an' I made you that promise that I'd come
back...an' I'd love you forever...

DONNA

(knowing where this is going)

Oh Ron, please don't...you don't have to...

RON trying to keep it light, nostalgic, but...

RON

No. I wanted so much... I wanted to keep it
together for you Donna, you know, to come
back from that war a bigger, better...Man. A
hero...whatever...(a little laugh,
embarrassed) I think that's why I always
tried to be the best -- baseball,
wrestling...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

65 CONTINUED: 4

65

RON (cont'd)

I wanted you to see me at my best, I don't know why that is with people, but...you know it's like...it's never enough... It's like you do something at twelve 'cause you wanna show everybody you can be fifteen, and when you're fifteen you wanna be eighteen, and when you're eighteen you wanna be twenty-one, you really wanna be a man so you go out and join up and you go to...War...and War is like this big secret see -- it's something only a few people in this country really know about -- and you think if you know what that secret is...then you think ah! Then finally at last, I'll be a man... and when I'm a Man -- then I'm gonna have you "Donna" -- ...like you're part of a timepiece you know... when I'm twenty-one I'm gonna have Donna and that's just the way it is...and everything... everything I ever did, hitting that home run that day you were up in the stands with that stupid guy and that crazy song playing "awalking in the rain...awhooo whooo whoo whoo..." was for you Donna...it was for you. (pause). I wanted to shine. I really wanted to shine for you, Donna... 'cause I loved you...goddamn it I really loved you...I just never told you.. (exhales, a long beat) Jesus!

He's crying against his will as she reaches out, bewildered, lost, her eyes shut with pain, and puts her hand on his cheeks, trying too late to erase the tears.

66 EXT. SYRACUSE CAMPUS - DAY (1970)

66

The STUDENTS have taken over a BUILDING -- waving protest banners and flags from the windows. Starting to trash the place now -- desks, papers, file cabinets being thrown out the windows onto the lawns.

CHANTS

FUCK THE PIGS! FUCK THE PIGS! ONE - TWO -
THREE - FOUR WE DON'T WANT YOUR FUCKING WAR!!
FIVE - SIX - SEVEN - EIGHT, WE DON'T WANT TO
ESCALATE!

The COPS are forming at two ends of the quadrangle, emptying out of their vans...LOUDSPEAKERS shouting orders...

...as RON looks on with DONNA and her BOYFRIEND, a tall, lean intellectual young man of pleasant demeanor..."Peace Now" and "Stop the War" buttons. They are in a LARGE GROUP in the center of the quadrangle listening to one of the SPEAKERS, a young, black Veteran in cut off fatigues, his medals pinned to his chest.

(CONTINUED)

66 CONTINUED:

66

On the platform behind him are OTHER YOUNG VETS mixed with STUDENT LEADERS, the UNIVERSITY REVEREND, and a few TEACHERS...

The SPEAKER is a fiery, moving man, waving a document in the air.

SPEAKER

It says right here People -- in the Declaration of Independence, if the Government fucks you over, it's not only your RIGHT but YOUR FUCKIN DUTY, PEOPLE...to BRING IT DOWN!!!

A huge roar from the agitated crowd, sensing the POLICE closing in.

CHANTS

RIGHT ON! POWER TO THE PEOPLE MAN! REMEMBER KENT AND JACKSON STATE!

RON has never heard words like this...his eyes hungrily roving through the crowd...

...to a FEW HIPPIES all painted up, long hair, flowers, one of them breast-feeding a BABY...A tab of acid being passed in a priestly manner.

...guys and girls passing joints..a guy beating a drum...

...a

SPEAKER

...If Jefferson and Tom Paine and those dudes were here today, d'you think they'd be with Nixon or with us? (ad lib answers "WITH US!") Shit yes, Nixon's the same as King George!

On the loudspeakers, the COPS are advising the STUDENTS to get out of the Dorms...

LOUDSPEAKER

YOU ARE ORDERED TO DISPERSE. YOU HAVE FIVE MINUTES. THIS IS AN UNLAWFUL ASSEMBLY. IF YOU DO NOT DISPERSE, YOU WILL BE ARRESTED.

SPEAKER

First he invades Cambodia and bombs the shit out of it, and then he kills four kids at Kent State 'cause they tried to protest. This guy's gotta go!!!

(ROARS -- "BURN BABY BURN!")

Right on! The people of this country been fucked over cheated and lied to by all of 'em, Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson. The whole war is a big rip off... people are dying over there to make some fat cat capitalist businessmen rich, this whole generation's being sold out People...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

66 CONTINUED: 2

66

SPEAKER (cont'd)
and we GOTTA DO SOMETHING. WE GOTTA GET RID
OF THIS GOVERNMENT NOW. (Roars -- "BURN BABY
BURN! POWER TO THE PEOPLE!").

A YOUNG VETERAN walking through the CROWD, spots RON, comes over...
Seeing him, RON tries to shrink back as the VET gives him a
high-fiver... The VET seeming to know RON is a vet.

VET
Hey brother, Larry Boyle, what's happening
man.

RON
Ron Kovic.

VET
Welcome brother...to the War at home... You
gotta get up there, man, say a few words to
these dudes. Wake 'em up man...

RON
No. No. Not today. Thanks anyway...

VET
(looking him right in the eye)
Peace, Ron...and welcome home...

He goes... RON stirred, something in him reluctantly moved by the
man... DONNA noticing it, smiles...

SPEAKER
We're the ones put our bodies on the line --
for people who didn't even care about us when
we came home. I loved this country once...

The SPEAKER now rips the medals from his chest and brandishes them
in his hands...

SPEAKER
...And all this I won over there...the Purple
Heart, the Bronze Star, all the Commendation
Medals and the rest of this garbage...don't
mean a thing. FUCK THIS SHIT.

Shaking with emotion, he hurls them into the distance...

RON is shocked. He's never seen or heard something like this. As
he catches DONNA'S eyes for a moment.

She has her fist in the air yelling "RIGHT ON, BURN, BABY, BURN!"
Beautiful yet cruel in her anger, she embodies the revolution, RON
looks away.

The CROWD is getting crazier -- now lighting up a straw effigy of
Nixon, a mask of his face at the top.

(CONTINUED)

66 CONTINUED: 3

66

CHANTS

ONE - TWO - THREE - FOUR WE DON'T WANT YOUR
FUCKING WAR!

BOYFRIEND

(to Donna)

The pigs are gonna come down. We better get
him outta here. It's gonna get heavy...

DONNA

You take him. I wanna stay...

RON seeing this exchange...

BOYFRIEND

Come on Ron...

RON

Donna, you gonna be okay....

A friendly rushed smile, wheeling him out...his POV on DONNA
receding, swept away in the angry CROWD... A quick look to him but
she has no time caught up in the NEXT SPEAKER, the ANGRY REVEREND.

ANGRY REVEREND

Is this going to be another Kent State? Is
that what you policemen want? Do you have to
kill your kids to protect your government,
your authority, your homes? Do you think
they're a bunch of bums like Spiro Agnew
said? They're not bums...

The first of the gas cannisters goes off...

...as the COPS charge the Building and the Rally at the same
time...trying to break everything up at once...

Police cars...Sirens...gas cannisters...

The COPS are charging into the occupied Building... Pulling out
the STUDENTS chanting...

CHANTS

THE WHOLE WORLD'S WATCHING! THE WHOLE
WORLD'S WATCHING!

DONNA yelling at the COPS, retreating with the mass of STUDENTS.

RON being wheeled over the grass at full speed by her BOYFRIEND..
into a sequestered doorway...

BOYFRIEND

Stay here. I gotta get Donna!...
(exits running)

(CONTINUED)

66 CONTINUED: 4

66

COPS run by...gas...They move in Roman phalanxes of might, hitting their clubs on their leather gloves in a rhythmic chorus of sound, sweeping all before them, the triumph of the State.

CHANTS

(STUDENTS from buildings)

THE WHOLE WORLD'S WATCHING! THE WHOLE
WORLD'S WATCHING!

A STUDENT being beaten by PLAINCLOTHESMEN...pushed into a car and driven off...

RON watches it all...the dawn of a new war...repelled yet seduced.

67 EXT. ARTHUR'S BAR & STREET - NIGHT (1970)

67

ARTHUR'S BAR - MASSAPEQUA - late NIGHT. Disco music, lights.. COUPLES necking in their cars, doors slamming, stumbling, SHOUTING matches between disillusioned lovers -

68 INT. ARTHUR'S BAR - NIGHT (1970)

68

Psychedelic lights PRESENTING MONTEZUMA'S REVENGE - a Credence Clearwater "SUSY Q" type sound, amplified bass beat - a young local group, with long hair, sullen demeanors...their gals dancing in strapless tops, chewing gum; working class mamas with short hair in green t-shirts ("Sure I raise Hell, So What?") and black shiny slacks; the papas in jeans, a hint of Presley in their hip rolls as they dance; college boys swilling beer in sweat shirts with signs on them, 'Olympic Drinking Team', sockless loafers, long sideburns, the hair getting longer...

THE BACK ROOM - A GIRL, JENNY, in jeans playing pool, cigarette to lips, lining up a shot.

RON is in his chair on the outside of a corner booth with TIMMY, several beer pitchers in front of them. With them are TWO GUYS in their 40's, crewcuts, windbreakers with 'Brigadeer Factory Renegades Baseball Team' written across the back. A sign on the wall over them: 'If You're Drinking To Forget, Pay Before You Start.'

RON

(a glassy stupid look)

That's what the hospital guy said, "you can take your Vietnam and shove it up your ass"...that's what Vietnam's all about and you can take it and shove it up your ass.

MAN #1

(yelling at the waiter)

Double rye, beer chaser...they never fought that war to win anyway. Should nuke fucking Hanoi y'ask me and get all our boys outta there...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

68

MAN#2 is sullen, off to the side, an edge of drunkenness. As RON glassily looks over at the Dance Floor...a slow tune now, the couple shuffling head to head. Moving down to their feet. A beat...

RON turning back to TIMMY -- unconsciously itching his own nipple...

RON

Vyet...Nam...Vyetnam, somebody oughta write a song...about something got under your skin... Remember Del Shannon..."Runaway".

(crooning)

"As I walk along I wonder what went wrong with our love A love that was so strong awhoo whoo whoo whoo"...OOOH Vyet Nam... I'll tell you what went wrong, awhoo whoo whoo -- Vyet Nam baby. It was the wrong fucking war when you gotta come back to a dogshit hospital where they don't give a fuck if...

TIMMY

Okay, Ronnie, okay, knock it off, come on...

RON

...when it was just "a waste of fuckin' time, and it was all one big fuckin' mistake right and I'm sorry but you can take your Vyet Nam and shove it up your ass..."

MAN #2

Why don't you shove it up your ass pal... okay? Just 'cause you're in a fuckin' wheelchair you think everybody's gotta feel sorry for you?

RON

What?

MAN #2

You ain't the only Marine here. I was on Iwo Jima. We lost 6 thousand the first day. So don't go crying in your fucking beer to me You served, you lost, and now you gotta live with it. You're a Marine, semper fi, they didn't pick you, you...you picked them so stop moaning and pissing about it!

RON

(to Timmy)

Who is this guy?

(to Man #2)

I think guys like you are assholes that's what I think.

(CONTINUED)

68 CONTINUED: 2

68

MAN #2

Yeah, I bet you do buddy, you sorry motherfucker... 'cause you know if they win.. if they win... it's guys like you they're gonna put up against the wall first... 'cause they know you sure as hell can't trust a traitor.

RON rolls up to him eyeball to eyeball...

RON

You called me a traitor!

MAN #2

Man, if you weren't in that fucking chair...

RON

Well I am in the fucking chair, so come on, motherfucker! Go ahead, go ahead take a fucking swing, take your best shot. I'll fight you sitting down... top of the ninth, motherfucker!

As RON pulls his siderail out and wields it like a bat. A shoving match starts. The MAN stands, ready to haul off on RON as MAN#1 and TIMMY jump in, separating them.

MAN #1

KNOCK IT OFF BOTH OF YOUSE... TAKE IT OUTSIDE... PHIL!

MAN#2 breathes hard, eyeballing RON, then shrugs contemptuously, and exits... MAN#1 following...

RON upset, breathing hard...

RON

FUCKING BULLSHIT!

RON rolling past the dance floor to the jukebox, a bottle of beer in hand, desperately aggressive now; at the jukebox JENNY, the pool cue girl, 19, shaking her ass, picking records.

RON

Hey, what's happening? What's your name?

TIMMY

(following)

C'mon, Ronnie, let's go.

JENNY

(chewing gum, relaxed)

Jenny.

TIMMY

...Ronnie?

(CONTINUED)

68 CONTINUED: 3

68

RON
 Lemme alone, go find somebody, willya..
 Jenny? Jenny, how'd you like to go to Mexico
 tonight?

TIMMY drifts off.

JENNY
 Mexico? Whadaya mean - Mexico?

RON
 I think you're really beautiful, that's what
 I mean.

JENNY
 Oh yeah?

RON
 Yeah! Come on, come on, let's go to Mexico.

JENNY
 What do you got in Mexico?

RON
 I know this really special place, it's in the
 sun...on the ocean...we'll go tonight, we'll
 get a plane.

JENNY
 I think you're crazy, man.

RON
 Yeah. I am. I'm crazy. You wanna see me
 walk? (makes a funny face) Hey, you want to
 dance? I can dance. I dance crazy.
 (rocks around in his chair)
 Come on -

RON throwing a 'wheelie' on the dance floor, riding the back legs
 of his chair, like an athlete twisting and shaking his shoulders,
 his eyes popping open and closed, sweating a lot, set to "Midnight
 Train to Georgia".

STEVE coming in with a DATE, and OTHER GUYS and ANOTHER GIRL,
 intersecting the BARTENDER.

STEVE
 (to the BARTENDER)
 Hey Bill.

BILL
 Steve.

STEVE
 (looking around)
 What's going on?

(CONTINUED)

68 CONTINUED: 4

68

BILL

Same old shit.

STEVE spotting RON on the floor, amazed.

STEVE

Let's get a table -

JENNY spinning.

JENNY

Bet you practiced a lot?

RON

Yeah...crazy!

Looking at her.

Breasts bob as she dances.

RON, more and more agitated, takes one of her hands and spins her around his head - she's pushing the dance to a reckless point.

RON POPS a big "wheelie" and CRASHES onto the floor...

THE BAND keeps blasting. SOMEBODY steps past him trying to get out of the way. A WOMAN laughs. Then the BAND STOPS.

WOMAN 1

You okay...you all right? I didn't mean to laugh...(giggling)

MAN #1

Is he okay?

MAN #2

Him again?

MAN #3

Fuckin' shitfaced!

STEVE'S VOICE

Hey Ron...Ron?

RON, looking upwards groggily.

HIS POV - STEVE and TIMMY leaning over him, Steve predominant in the frame, Timmy more receded -

RON now crawls along the floor, reaching for his toppled chair. HANDS reaching in to help; he shakes them off.

RON

Lemme alone...I can do it. Where's my chair?
Gimme my chair.

THE FACES looking at him -

(CONTINUED)

70 EXT. KOVIC HOUSE & STREET - NIGHT (1970)

70

The car drives away. RON is soaking wet in the rain, wheeling up the ramp alone and BANGING through the front door. His pants are off almost down to his knees, half naked.

71 INT. RON'S BEDROOM/BATH/HALL - NIGHT (1970)

71

HE THUMPS against a wall in his ROOM, muttering something incomprehensible.

RON

Shitzagod fuckout!

Coming face to face with himself in the MIRROR - and the CRUCIFIX ('Let the Beauty of Jesus be seen in me')...

...a crazed concentrated look, sweat, rain, a bruise from the forehead where he fell...he can't stand himself - feels the body on the crucifix, grasps it as...

MOM comes in, wrapping her bathrobe, worried - followed by DAD.

MOM

What is...?

RON

Oh Mom...howya doing?

She freezes, seeing his state.

MOM

Ronnie what are you doing?
(to Dad)

He's drunk...he's drunk. I knew it. We have
a drunk for a son ...Eli!

DAD is moving past her, ignoring her outburst, starting to prepare RON'S bed.

DAD

Go to bed, honey, it's okay.

Passing RON who is waving the crucifix at his Mom -

RON

Look, Mom, look at the cross, isn't that what
you believe in?

MOM

(looking away)
Oh God! Eli!

RON

But I don't, I don't believe in him anymore.
You know why? 'Cause he only spent 3 days up
there and me I gotta spend the rest of my
life. I wish I were dead like him -

(CONTINUED)

68 CONTINUED: 5

68

TIMMY

Leave him alone. Let him get in himself. He knows how to do it. Give him some room.

MAN #2

(distant)

Get him the fuck outta here, he's drunk.. get'im home.

STEVE

(leaning in close)

It's okay, it's okay...he got hurt in 'Nam... Ron? Lemme help?

RON dragging himself into the chair, a painful muscular movement, shaking his head.

RON

(gasps)

Leave me alone!

Stalls, strains - then pulls himself in...his head bobbing sickly from side to side.

RON

(murmuring)

I'm fine. Come on. - Let's dance.

STEVE

Denny, get the car.

69 EXT. ARTHUR'S BAR & STREET - RAIN - NIGHT (1970)

69

RON, shitfaced, is lifted into Steve's CAR, a big Cadillac with room for 3 on the front seat, Ron in the middle propped up - FIGURES around him, lost in shifting shadow...RAINING now... doors slamming.

RON

(yelling)

Where's Jenny? Hey Jenny!

STEVE

Hurry up, let's go!

TIMMY

You okay?

ANOTHER ANGLE - RON being propped up on the seat...the car MOVING - windshield wipers.

STEVE

That's right, that's good now.

A GIRL LAUGHING.

(CONTINUED)

69 CONTINUED:

69

MAN #1

Shut up, willya Janet.

RON

Who is this chick?

TIMMY

Are you okay - is everything all right?

STEVE

He's really smashed, we got to get him home right away.

RON

(at Steve)

Y'know this car looks like shit, Steve - you got no taste!

STEVE

Fuck you.

RON grins, leaning over on a shoulder with imitation fur, bleary-eyed, mocking Steve.

RON

Yeah, you're full of shit Steve... You're just a greedy fuck man. All you care about's yourself man -- Stevie Boyer who rented us baseball gloves. Hey "peace brother" (flashes the Victory sign)...

TIMMY

Come on Ronnie, come on.

RON

...but you don't really give a shit about Vietnam or the guys who died over there, Stevie. You're just eating hamburgers counting the money man. How much you make today Steve?

STEVE

Fuck you I don't gotta listen to this shit, you shitfaced fuck...

RON

To you it was a waste of fucking time and I was a schmuck for going. Yeah, you know everything Steve, all you college boys know everything except one thing -- FEELING, man, feeling somethin'... pain, suffering, compassion, somethin'...I don't know. You got no sense of nothing outside your own personal Fucking Self...I feel sorry for you...

(CONTINUED)

69 CONTINUED: 2

69

STEVE
SHUT THE FUCK UP. What are you saying!! I
tried to help you man, Fuck...

JENNY
Whatza he saying?

RON
I love you man...you're like my brother, we
grew up together but you're never gonna
understand...you're never gonna understand...

TIMMY
He don't mean it Steve, he's...

JENNY
Whatza he saying?

RON
(into her fur)
I wanna make love to you...have babies, lot's
of babies...go to your place...

JENNY
Whatza he saying?

TIMMY
Howza his legs, his legs okay?

JENNY
Fuck! (astonished) He's pissed all over the
fucking seat! (moving) Look, my dress! Oh
God, how dey gonna clean dis dress? Two
hundred dollars!

TIMMY
Shaddup.

MAN #2
Hey asshole, you just peed all over Janet's
dress. (grabbing Ron)

RON
How 'bout dat! Whatza address?

STEVE
Leave him alone, he's fuckin' nuts, he's
outta his skull.

MAN #2
(insane paranoid)
Get the bum home! Get him home! Drop him
off! I don't want to see him!

TIMMY
Awright, awright.

71 CONTINUED:

71

MOM

Oh! You don't know what you're saying...

RON

...but see that's the problem Mom. I'm not dead. I gotta live. I gotta walk around and remind 'em of Vietnam and they don't wanna know, they don't wanna see us, they wanna hide us! They wanna hide us 'cause it's a can of SHIT! That's why...and I'm the fucking dummy...

MOM

(to Dad)

He won't listen, he won't change.

DAD

(calm, to Ron)

Ronnie, please...

RON

...'cause I believed everything they told us Mom. Go fight. Go kill. Sergeant man, Marine Corps!...

(a drunken salute)

Yo, Squad left, right, lef-rye, LEF-RYE, ABOW FACE!!!

HE wheels around and violently, sweeps all his baseball and wrestling trophies off the bookshelf.

MOM

RONNIE!

RON

IT'S ALL A LIE MOM. THE WHOLE THING'S A LIE!

72 INT. KOVIC HALL & LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

72

MOM rushes out of the bedroom...RON chasing after her now, followed by DAD.

MOM

STOP IT! GO TO BED! He won't lissen...He won't change. WHAT DID THEY DO TO YOU IN THAT WAR! WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU!! YOU NEED HELP RONNIE. YOU NEED HELP!

RON

NO! YOU NEED HELP MOM -- WITH ALL YOUR GOD AND YOUR BULLSHIT DREAMS, IT'S ALL A LIE, YOU'RE A LIE, THE WHOLE COUNTRY'S A LIE.

TOMMY, JIMMY, SUSANNE, PATTY, JACKIE all sticking their sleepy heads out of their rooms, hearing this slamming of doors...

(CONTINUED)

72 CONTINUED:

72

TOMMY

Whatza? ...Ronnie, what going on!!

RON, THUMPING against the narrow walls in the corridor, chasing Mom.

MOM

GO TO BED. PATTY...SUSANNE!...GO TO SLEEP..
TOMMY, GET YOUR BROTHERS OUT...

(to RON)

YOU'RE GONNA WAKE UP THE WHOLE NEIGHBORHOOD!!

RON

I DON'T CARE. LET 'EM ALL KNOW!! TELL 'EM
ALL!!

73 EXT. KOVIC HOUSE - NIGHT

73

The VOICES carrying out into the night through the thin walls.

RON

I DON'T WANNA HIDE IT ANYMORE. THE LAMBS,
THE CASTIGLIAS, THE WALSHES, LET 'EM ALL
KNOW...

74 EXT. THE BLOCK - NIGHT

74

LIGHTS coming on in various windows...A HEAD peeks out.

A NEIGHBOR steps out of his front door...

RON

LET 'EM ALL KNOW. LOOK WHAT THEY DID TO ALL
OF US. THIS WHOLE BLOCK. THIS WHOLE
COUNTRY. THEY LIED TO ALL OF US! THEY LIED
TO ME AND THEY LIED TO YOU. THEY SENT US
OVER THERE TO FIGHT COMMUNISM AND ALL WE DID
WAS SHOOT WOMEN AND CHILDREN. FOR WHAT MOM!

75 INT. KOVIC LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

75

RON in a primal rage.

RON

THEY SAID IT WAS OUR SACRED DUTY AS CATHOLICS
AND AMERICANS. THEY SAID THAT COMMUNISM WAS
AN INSIDIOUS EVIL. THE CHURCH BLESSED THE
WAR, THEY TOLD US TO GO, THEY BLESSED THE
BURNING VILLAGES AND THE KILLING. THOU SHALT
NOT KILL MOM THOU SHALL NOT KILL WOMEN AND
CHILDREN MOM...REMEMBER MOM YOU TAUGHT IT TO
ME -- ISN'T THAT WHAT THEY TAUGHT US. THAT
COMMUNISM WAS AN INSIDIOUS EVIL MOM.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

75 CONTINUED:

75

RON (cont'd)

BUT THEY'RE THE EVIL MOM, THEY'RE THE ONES WE SHOULD BE FIGHTING. THEY LIED TO ME GROWING UP, THEY LIED TO ALL OF US BUT IT'S NOT GONNA WORK ANYMORE...NOT FOR YOU. FOR ME. FOR ANYBODY ELSE.

MOM

STOP IT STOP IT! AS LONG AS YOU'RE IN THIS HOUSE YOU WILL NOT TALK THAT WAY...ELI, PLEASE STOP HIM...

76 INT. MRS. KOVIC'S BEDROOM

76

As she flees the livingroom for her BEDROOM, filled with religious objects. RON pursues her, brandishing the crucifix...

DAD

RON. COME ON NOW. YOU MADE YOUR POINT. NOW...

RON

NO I DIDN'T MAKE MY POINT. TELL HER DAD. THEY'RE KILLING EVERYBODY NOW. IT'S ALL FALLING APART MOM. KING. KENNEDY. KENT STATE. WE ALL LOST THE WAR MOM. FUCKING COMMUNISM WON. IT'S ALL FOR NOTHING...

(in a quieter tone)

Tell her Dad, it's all a lie, tell her God's as dead as my legs...there's no God and there's no Country! ...it's just ME... and this wheelchair...forever...for nothing...me and this dead penis...

ANOTHER ANGLE --

As he grabs the rubber tubing of the external catheter taped along the inside of his thigh, he shreds the tape...he's pissed all over the seat. The leg bag is broken. He's soaked.

MOM

ELI! OH PLEASE! PLEASE. I CAN'T STAND IT ANYMORE!

MOM shuddering, doesn't want to see it, cornered in her bedroom.

DAD horrified, reluctant to challenge RON's emotion. The CHILDREN behind him, staring through the open doorway, fascinated.

DAD

RON...NO! NO! NOT WITH YOUR MOTHER! FOR GOD'S SAKE!

RON

...The church they say it's a sin if you play with your penis, but I sure wish I could...

(CONTINUED)

76 CONTINUED:

76

MOM

Don't say "penis" in this house!! Oh Jesus, Mary and Joseph! Why Why Why!...He won't let go, he won't let go!! What can I do! What can I do!

RON

...I didn't even get time to learn how to use it Mom -- it's gone in some fucking jungle over in Asia...Gone for...

MOM

ENOUGH!!!!

As she slams the BEDROOM DOOR on the whole FAMILY, a SHRIEK blasts down the block...

77 EXT. THE BLOCK - NIGHT

77

MORE PEOPLE gathered...listening...the silence now hangs over the torpid night air...

78 INT. MRS. KOVIC'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

78

MOM and RON are alone in the bedroom...the silence...MOM is crying now, broken by the strain...the tears coming like a little girl.

RON staring at her, realizes her pain...in a quiet voice...

RON

"Enough"...yeah I know...I'm sorry Mom you gotta be so upset...I'm sorry it happened this way...

MOM

Oh Ronnie Ronnie...why, why did it happen this way?...I loved you...I loved you most of all Ronnie. I remember when you came back from the hospital and I stayed up with you all night... I prayed for you over there Ronnie, you didn't know how much I prayed...you were always the best, the brightest little boy... that little smile of yours could light my heart up Ronnie, such a little devil you were, God! God!!!

(sobs)

I loved you most of all Ronnie...

He sighs, rolls over to her...he puts his hand out, runs it over her tears... He kind of laughs, thinking the strangest thought at this moment, then in a confessional tone:

RON

You know Mom...I never made love to a girl... once in my life...

(CONTINUED)

78 CONTINUED:

78

MOM looking up at him, questioning eyes...

RON
No. Not in school. Not as a Marine. Not
here...No place.

He waits. They share a look.

MOM
What can I do Ronnie? What do you want me to
do?

She reaches out, touches his face, tenderly...

RON
I don't know...I don't know...

Bewildered. He doesn't know. He sighs and in one powerful
gesture, not fraught with malice but with anger and confusion, he
SNAPS the plastic crucifix in two pieces and...

ANOTHER ANGLE -- tosses the pieces at her feet.

RON
Keep it...

79 INT. RON'S BEDROOM/BATH/HALL - NIGHT

79

DAD lifts RON from his chair to his bed. In his arms. A moment.
The two pieces of the crucifix. RON's two arms flopping over and
his pants down, DAD gently lowers him into the bed...then removes
his piss-soaked pants...undoes the broken urine bag...

Runs a warm washcloth along the legs, cleaning him. A stoic calm
tenderness.

RON
(regretful, eyes closed)
I'm fucked up...I'm fucked up.

DAD
Ronnie...maybe a little trip is all you
need...that place down in Mexico you were
talkin' about? Maybe some rest...

RON
I don't wanna go to Mexico. I don't wanna go
no place.

DAD
(rubbing him)
What can I do Ronnie, what do you want?

(CONTINUED)

79 CONTINUED:

79

RON

(murmuring)

I want a woman, Dad, I want somebody to love me...I wanna be free again. I wanna walk in the backyard on the grass. I wanna put my bare feet in the ocean. I wanna run along the sand and feel it on my feet. I wanna stand up in the shower with the hot water streaming down my legs, in the morning...I wanna explode, Dad. I wanna get out of this crazy fucking body I'm in...

(about to cry)

I wanna be a man again...I just wanna be a man again.

DAD moving rigidly, now connects RON's catheter tube to the long plastic tube that runs adjacent the bed...and closes the bedside lamp.

In the dark, a quiet sob.

RON

Good night Dad...

DAD

Good night...son.

DISSOLVE TO:

80 EXT. VILLA DEL SOL - MEXICO - DAY (1970)

80

SUBTITLE READS: VILLA DEL SOL, MEXICO (JULY, 1970)

Moving along a vista of Caribbean, rocks, beach, a scalding red sun setting over the horizon...WHEELCHAIR MEN moving along the oceanfront, LOCAL AIDES in jeans and workshirts...MUSIC THEME.

81 EXT. VERANDA - DAY (1970)

81

A POKER GAME in progress at the center of the village - red sun setting in background.

HARDCORE AMERICAN TYPES, exclusively paras and quads, with cowboy hats, boots, colorful clothing, and big-busted LOCAL WOMEN, their skirts up, sitting on the edges of wheelchairs, their arms thrown around their MEN, rubbing their tits.

Files of tens and twenties on the table; high stakes. Mescal, tequila, rompopo, beer bottles -

CHARLIE

Hey big brown eyes - what's your name?

RON

Ron...Ron Kovic.

(CONTINUED)

81 CONTINUED:

81

CHARLIE

Where from?

RON

Massapequa...Long Island.

CHARLIE

Hey, you guys, say hello to Ron Kovic. Just got in from the States

Their heads bob up - mumble greetings, ad lib, and quickly back to the game:

VET 1

Why don't you bet. You got all the fucking money.

VET 2

(folding)

Fuck you.

VET 1

Son of a bitch - won't bet.

VET 2

(reaching for his woman on his lap)
Put your hand in my crotch baby. My fucking dick ain't been hard in fucking months.

VET 1

(irrational)

Son of a bitch - won't bet -

RON

What's your name?

CHARLIE

Charlie...Charlie from Chicago.

RON

How long this game been going on?

CHARLIE

55 hours.

RON

Yeah...how long you been down here?

CHARLIE

A hundred fucking years.

RON

Yeah?

(CONTINUED)

81 CONTINUED: 2

81

CHARLIE

Yeah and I'm never going back. Fuck the States. I got my room. I got my woman. I got my bottle. That's all the fuck I need, it's simple. I want something simple. Fucking V.A. - nobody understood, nobody cared. Nobody gave a shit and the women.. the fucking women, they didn't even want to look at me, the goddamn fucking women. The fucking States. I ain't ever going back...

(reaching for his woman who is six months PREGNANT)

Come here baby, you're beautiful, ain't she beautiful.

RON

(drinking)

Yeah -

CHARLIE

Get on down to town and get yourself one, man. Fuck the shit outta you even if you're paralyzed. Ain't that right, Martha?

Presses her mammoth tits. She squeals - and slaps him up on the side of the head. He grins madly.

WOMAN

You're no good.

CHARLIE

Fuckin A! You know when you're really drunk on this mescal shit -

Producing a mescal bottle with a dead worm floating near the quarter mark.

CHARLIE

- is when you swallow the fucking worm, and you don't even know it!

RON laughs. A LOUD EXPLETIVE from across the table.

ANOTHER ANGLE - as VET 1 slams his losing cards on the table.

VET 1

FUCK!

VET 2, snuggling his GIRL, laughs.

VET 1

Laugh. Motherfucker - go ahead, you're gonna get yours.

VET 2

(laughing)

You oughta stick to gin rummy, Meyers.

(CONTINUED)

81 CONTINUED: 3

81

VET 1

(menacing)
Yeah? Just when you're humping that Mexican jumping bean, I'm gonna blow you away. I got a gun...I got a fucking gun...

A SKELETAL VET 3 rolls over, intersects RON very briefly - with haunting eyes.

SILENT VET

Don't stay here man, get the fuck out!

CHARLIE

(drinking from the bottle)
Y'ever try fucking with a blowdryer?

The SILENT VET pulling away.

RON

(bewildered)
No...never.

CHARLIE

On the nipples, over the ears - it ain't bad.

A somewhat malevolent cast to his face -

CHARLIE

You know what they say. If you don't have it in the hips buddy, you better have it in the lips...

(obscene movement with his tongue and lips)

Big Ass!

Pinching her in the ass hard, she squeals.

82 INT. MEXICAN WHORE BAR - DUSK (1970)

82

SOUND - A FAT MADAME blows a wrestling coach's whistle DOOR OPENS -- and 25 WHORES file out, sniffing the customers...

HIGH ANGLE - BAR - some 20 MEN, local and tourist types, wait at the various tables. RON is the only paraplegic, drinking tequila. The patterns in the room shift and settle as the whores sit with the chosen customers, leaving Ron conspicuously alone, aware of his isolation.

THE PAINTED FACES, all ages...a jukebox PLAYS...A YOUNG WHORE, snapping her pocketmirror shut, comes over to him, a gold tooth in her mouth, a look like a mouse around a crippled cat...

RON nervously looking away from her stare, drinking.

WHORE

Are you from the Villa del Sol?

(CONTINUED)

82 CONTINUED:

82

RON
Yeah. Yeah.

WHORE
Do you want to sleep with me?

ANOTHER ANGLE -

RON
No!...No.

She waits. Fidgeting he steals another glance at her.

RON
I..was..just...I'd just like to look
around...come in...yeah I'd like to sleep
with you...yeah, yeah, I'd like to...yeah...

WHORE
Then come.

83 INT. WHORE'S CUBICLE - NIGHT (1970)

83

A tiny CUBICLE - dirty mattress on the floor, dirty windows a wooden crucifix, a squashed candle which she lights...shadows... her FACE coming towards him...glows...

RON
(genuine)
Nice place...

WHORE
What?

RON
Nothing.

WHORE
Dinero...Quince dolares...

Movements, paper sounds as he passes his roll, uncaring. She takes what she wants...and a little more...

RON, tense, slowly taking off his shirt on the bed watching as THE WHORE, glowing reddish against the curtains, takes off her clothes in two quick easy gestures...

WHORE
(indicates his pants)
Why don't you take off?

RON
I can't...I can't take them off...they were
paralyzed in the war.

(CONTINUED)

83 CONTINUED:

83

WHORE

Vietnam?

RON nods 'yes'. Curious she indicates his crotch, moves closer.

WHORE

You let me see?

RON

(deeply uncomfortable)

No. No...I can't move it. It's no good.

WHORE

Yes!

Moving to undo his pants' buckle.

RON

No, please! Please no!

Prevents her. The WHORE points to his chest.

WHORE

Que es? Que es.

ANOTHER ANGLE -her finger pointing to a tiny bullethole in his right shoulder, reddened scar tissue.

RON

That's where the bullet went in...

THE WHORE nods back. Then:

WHORE

Your cock? Can move?...can stand up?...
sometimes?

RON

No...never...my spine. It broke my spine.
It...

THE WHORE - a moment. She reaches out, touches his face gently. He closes his eyes, trying to respond to the touch.

She shifts, slowly pushing her breasts towards his face. He inches his lips into them, burying his mind -

TIMECUT TO:

83A HER LONG HAIR tumbles down over his face, lashing it like a wave.
She pulls him downward, her breasts raking his chest.

HER HAIR trails down past his eyes which now react in surprise as
She sucks his nipple...FX sound...around and around. It is very
painful for RON.

(CONTINUED)

83 CONTINUED: 2

83

Each second a realization of what he's lost on an even deeper level.

HIS POV - the top of her head splayed with black hair circling in smaller and smaller patterns as:

PROFILE - her LIPS make fast lizard-like steps around the nipple.

HER TWO HANDS spread upwards across RON's face...caressing, scratching...

RON -- sweat all over his chest, neck, face -- a painful beauty in his eyes. The awareness of his loss, mixed with the wonder of the first time, bring tears to his eyes...

OVERHEAD ANGLE -- flesh moving, the crucifix...

HIS CRYING EYES -- buried between her thighs...

WHORE

Si! Si! Es guapo! Bonita!

THE WHORE arching, thrashing as he licks her off...she is muttering something like "Ay Dios! Que signes, que bueno...mata, mata!"

TIMECUT TO:

83B RON holds the WHORE in his arms, in the candlelight, exploring her facial contours with his fingers, her eyes...

A KNOCK at the door.

VOICE

ELENA! AHORA!

WHORE

...minuto!

RON, uninterrupted, gazes upon her as if the first woman ever made, worship in his eyes.

RON

(excited, shifts)

I want to show you...okay?

She nods, confused.

MOVING to his pants...RON undoes them...exposing himself off. THE WHORE, not that interested, looks, frowns...

WHORE

Si...is nice cock...baby skin...

He doesn't notice the layer of her reaction underneath.

(CONTINUED)

83 CONTINUED: 3

83

RON

(laughs)
 Yeah, that's fosure...Never been touched...
 (caresses her)
 I like you very much. Mucho amor in mi
 corazon...

She giggles, pushes him away. He's silly.

WHORE

You come and see me tomorrow...yes, four
 o'clock good time...

RON

I'll come every day...Maybe we could live in
 the village hunh...and I'd never have to go
 back to the States...

She's dressing, giggles.

WHORE

Si...you get dressed hokay?

RON

...we'll live right by the sea, we'll go
 fishing together...

WHORE

Si, guapo...we get married...
 (she cackles at that thought)

RON

Why not! That'd be great!

WHORE

Hurry up now...(exiting) Tomorrow okay?

RON

Manana...

WHORE

Yes - manana...

84 EXT. RON'S MEXICAN BUNGALOW STREET - NIGHT (1970)

84

RON, in a happy mood, wheels back towards his casa in the VILLAGE that NIGHT. Snatches of GUITARS off, RADIOS...intersecting VET 2 from the poker game. He is motorized in an electric wheelchair, his head bobbing as he croaks a MEXICAN SONG to himself...

We FOLLOW him as RON wheels past.

VET 1 from the poker game is hunched in shadow atop a cement ramp leading to one of the casas, an insane look on his face, he rolls forward suddenly with a YELL right down the ramp - building up a burst of speed.

(CONTINUED)

84 CONTINUED:

84

SLAMMING into VET 2, sideswiping and toppling his chair over. VET 2 scrabbling around in the grass as VET 1 laughs like a maniac.

VET 1

Laugh, motherfucker, why aren't you laughing now?

VET 2

You son of a bitch! I'll fucken burn your tires with a zippo lighter when your not looking!

85 EXT./INT. RON'S ROOM & RAMP - NIGHT (1970)

85

RON up the ramp into his room. Very austere, one bed, one chair, one table, a glass and tin pitcher of water. A whining VOICE from an adjacent room, separated by a cheap partition.

VOICE

Nina?...Nina? Is that you? Who's that!

RON

It's me. Ron.

VOICE

(slurring)

Is that you? Will you get somebody for me?
Will you get Nina for me? Somebody?...Ron?

A detached voice, with no body. RON, trying to ignore it, pours himself a shot from the mescal bottle on the cheap coffee table.

86 EXT. JEWELRY SHOP - MEXICO - DAY (1970)

86

THE NEXT DAY - RON peers into the cluttered window of a little JEWELRY SHOP in town - and rolls in, all excited.

87 INT. MEXICAN WHORE BAR - DAY (1970)

87

RON wheeling into the BAR of the same WHOREHOUSE later THAT DAY, intersecting the FAT MADAME with her whistle around her neck.

RON

Por favor? Elena?

MADAME

She upstairs now, she come down...beer?

RON

Mezcal.

TIMECUT TO:

(CONTINUED)

87 CONTINUED:

87

87A MOVING to RON waiting at a table with a bottle of mezcal - a gift-wrapped box on the table in front of him, which he picks up as

The WHORES at the bar glance at him.

THE GIRL now comes down the stairs...

RON looking as

HIS POV - She is now followed by a PORTLY AMERICAN who good-naturedly reaches over and pats her ass...

and she returns the intimacy with a good firm squeeze of his nuts...

RON watches, smiling.

HIS POV - the MADAME intersecting MARIA ELENA at the foot of the stairs and telling her something and MARIA ELENA now looking over with a tired expression...now fixing a smile as she sees him.

ELENA

(to Madame, in Spanish)

Oh, the one from Vietnam...Si....

RON sees it and draws the GIFT-WRAPPED PRESENT discreetly across the table and into his pocket, ashamed that he's gone too far as:

She is next to the table now, with a weary smile.

ELENA

So - today we get married no?

RON

Sure, why not -

She plants a kiss on his cheek...his eyes.

A SECOND BUSINESSMAN intersects, patting her ass.

MAN

Hey, Elena, c'mere, c'mon...Sweetheart.

ELENA brushing him away.

ELENA

I'll be with you later...

(turns to RON)

You want drink or we go fuckee fuckee now?

RON

Uh...yeah...yeah, let's go, sure -

88 EXT. 2ND MEXICAN WHOREHOUSE - NIGHT (1970)

88

RON wheels down a row of GIRLS in a REAR COURTYARD, an expert now...NIGHT, a bizarre lighting setup in the courtyard coming from the ground up -

WHORE

(calling to him and fading as he passes)

Hey Meestah, you wanna suck my teetie...look this big teetie. I fuck you good, come... Hey'merican, you taste my pussy...is hot. Hey guapo I geeve you blow job, you never have like this - (pulls up her dress)

RON

(wheeling to a stop, at ONE GIRL, indicating with his head)

Okay.

A FACE, somewhat lost in shadow, clicks her shoes off the wall and makes her turn into a lighted doorway.

89 INT. 2ND MEXICAN WHOREHOUSE - NIGHT (1970)

89

RON is using a blowdryer on WHORE'S pussy. She's not too wild about it, a sullen not too bright young lady.

2ND WHORE

Is too hot...not too close.

RON

Is fun...

2ND WHORE

Feenish!

(sits up, he clicks the dryer off)
Dinero! 500 more...

RON

You said 300 was it.

2ND WHORE

500 more. I really show you good time...I love you baby. (touching him)

RON

Sure you do...Fuck...
(dishing out the money)
You're a liar and you know it...

2ND WHORE

No! I no lie...is too hard with you make love...you no pay enough...

(CONTINUED)

89 CONTINUED:

89

RON

Fuck you...you're just lazy...suck my nipples...

(lies back)

No fuck it! Fuck it! You keep the money...I don't want you to touch me. Fuck you...take the money and get outta here, bitch...

(crawling off the mattress into his chair)

2ND WHORE

You go. Is my place. You get out. No come back...

(cursing him in Spanish, "impotent, crippled, gimp...")

She starts laughing at him in a savage, low key way. He glowers back at her...wanting to hit her...catching himself...

90 INT. RON'S CASA & RAMP - DAY (1970)

90

RON drinking more mezcal as he tries to scrawl a postcard home. He tears it up...pulls out a rumpled old letter he's never sent, folded into little parts from his address book...he unfolds it.. nearby we notice copies of "Jonny Got His Gun", "All Quiet on the Western Front", a biography of Gandhi...

His eyes reading the old letter, water marked.

INSERT: LETTER: "Dear Mr. and Mrs. Wilson...I don't know how to tell you this. I knew your son in Vietnam. He was..."

He stops...something defeated in his eyes. He knows he will never send this letter... he ponders it as the VOICE from the other side of the wall becomes onerous...

JOE

(slurring, crying)

Nina!...Nina!...Nina!...Nina!

RON

Shit!

JOE

Nina! Nina! Where are you!

Exasperated, RON puts the letter back in the address book, rolls to the door of the bedroom.

91 INT. JOE'S ROOM - DAY (1970)

91

RON rolling in.

RON

SHUT UP WILLYA JOE - JUST SHUT THE FUCK UP!

(CONTINUED)

91 CONTINUED:

91

JOE
(in mocking echo)
Nina...is that you Nina?...Nina.

The room is dark and JOE, 20, is wallowing in his own filth in his bed, on his belly - bedsores holes the size of fists in his naked buttocks...

...bottles of liquor strewn around the bed, half eaten food, cockroaches, the smell of death. RON approaching - into the darkness...

JOE rises up, and stares at RON. He has the most beautiful pathetic eyes, now watery with pain and delirium, and a body like a skeleton, incandescent with high fever, close to death.

In a weak moving voice, obstinate:

JOE
Is that you Ron? ...Can you help me? Can you help me?...

RON reaches his hand in - and soothes JOE'S face.

RON
You're hot Joe...You gotta bad fever...you gotta go back to Dallas, Joe. Have you seen your bed sores, they're gettin' worse all the time. You gotta go back to the V.A..

JOE
(shaking his head)
No way man...never gonna go back!

RON
You got blood in your urine, Joe. Let me call somebody for you, let me call somebody.

JOE
Nina...get Nina, Ron.

RON
Nina's gone, Joe! She won't come back. She left 3 months ago. She won't come back.

JOE
(shaking his head)
She wouldn't leave me - Nina - she wouldn't leave me -(drooling on his chin)

RON
Oh hell with you, Joe!

Rolls away - angry, guilty.

(CONTINUED)

91 CONTINUED: 2

91

JOE
 Ron, can you help me...can you help me? Ron?
 Will you get somebody for me?

RON
 Fuck you!

AS RON slams the door of the CASA, departing -

JOE (OFF)
 Nina?...Nina? Is that you...Nina?

92 INT. RON'S ROOM - NIGHT

92

The Nightmare...Images, fragmented...

WILSON running up in slow-motion over the dune with the grey light...

RON firing three times...over this JOE'S VOICE: "Nina...Nina...is that you Nina?...get Nina Ron"

RON waking up startled, silent...His heart beat way up...An old nightmare...As he listens. The sound of the waves. The heat. The sweat...the mosquitoes...

93 INT. 3RD MEXICAN BAR - DAY (1970)

93

RON, drunk, in another BAR, counting his dwindling cash reserves...

ANOTHER ANGLE - reaches over without even noticing it, empties the bottom of the mezcal bottle, worm and all, into his mouth. Looks around, barks at the BARTENDER.

RON
 Mas!

VOICE
 (yelling)
 That goddamn fucking slut!

CHARLIE from the poker game, a sombrero on his head and a serape, rolls out from the curtains in the back, angry and drunk and hurt.

CHARLIE
 I'm gonna kill dat hoor laughing at me! She can't talk to me that way!

RON
 (recognizing him)
 Charlie! Hey Charlie!

The WHORE screaming something from a backroom. The action mounting in speed as CHARLIE intesects RON, hardly recognizing him.

(CONTINUED)

93 CONTINUED:

93

CHARLIE

That bitch thinks it's funny I can't move my
dick. Fuck you. Fuck all you Mexican
motherfuckers! They made me kill babies
man...they made me kill babies...

The BARTENDER coming over -

BARTENDER

You don't like the place, get out!

CHARLIE

Fuck your syphilitic mother!

RON

Hey leave him alone, he's my friend. Hey!

A FLASH of the WHORE, bleeding from the nose, trying to get out the
back room, restrained by ANOTHER WHORE and a PIMP.

WHORE

(in Spanish)

GET HIM, GET THAT PIG!

BARTENDER

Get out, get the fuck out, I don't want to
see you in here again.

CHARLIE

Don't touch me! Don't touch me!

RON

...goddamit you hear me!

CHARLIE

She made fun of my fuckin' dick! I wouldn't
be here if it weren't for that fucking war!

94 EXT. STREET - MEXICAN VILLAGE - DAY (1970)

94

BARTENDER

...blow both your fucking heads off!

RON

...fuck you, fuck all of you, fuck MEXICO!

CHARLIE

...babies, man babies! They made me kill
fuckin' BABIES!

95 INT. "NOWHERE" TAXI - DAY (1970)

95

In the back of the cab - moving along a dusty road in the middle of
an empty mesa.

(CONTINUED)

95 CONTINUED:

95

RON

(Worried) You sure you told him the right place?

CHARLIE

Villa Rosa - I told him Villa Rosa.

RON

Villa Rosa?

CHARLIE

Villa Rosa.

DRIVER

Si!

CHARLIE

Great fucking whore house there, wait till you get there.

(remembering)

That goddamn fucking slut! That MEXICAN scumbag cunt!

RON

Fuck her, she ain't worth shit. I think I saw a sign - Villa Rosa, Charlie. Ten minutes ago.

CHARLIE

Fucking A she ain't worth a shit. That fucking hoor, man, making fun of me. Making fun of me. And they made me kill babies, man. On top of that - they made me kill babies.

(to the driver)

Hey how far the fuck you going - tacohead!

RON

You sure it wasn't that turn back there...the sign that

CHARLIE

He's fucked us! He's fucked us!

RON

Who!

CHARLIE lashes a slap up against the head of the cabdriver.

DRIVER

Caraho!

RON

Charlie - hey!

(CONTINUED)

95 CONTINUED: 2

95

CHARLIE

Look at that meter, it's rigged, he's rigged
the fucking meter. Hey - asshole!

Slaps him again.

DRIVER

Pendeño! Es hombre loco!

Hits CHARLIE back. Slaps traded. The car almost goes out of
control.

CHARLIE

I told you fucking Villa Rosa!

DRIVER

Vaya par carajo!

RON

Hey what are you...

Trying to restrain CHARLIE from jumping over the seat and
throttling the DRIVER, RON gets accidentally smacked by the driver
and now hits back - all THREE of them flailing and shouting.

96 EXT. MEXICAN LANDSCAPE "NOWHERE" - DAY (1970)

96

CHARLIE and RON circle each other like worried vultures in the
middle of nowhere, a silence all around, the sun setting angry and
red in the

LOW HILLS of the MESA - the CAB disappearing in a cloud of dust a
mile away as:

RON

Now what are we gonna do?

CHARLIE

Fuck em...

RON

Sure...yeah. How we gonna get outta here?

CHARLIE

...Fuck em all! Fuck the whores, fuck the
cabdrivers, fuck MEXICO, fuck Nixon, fuck
Vietnam, fuck em all!

RON

Yeah I know, Charlie - but how we gonna get
outta here?

CHARLIE

...They made me kill babies man - little gook
babies. You ever have to kill a baby?

(CONTINUED)

96 CONTINUED:

96

RON

Yeah - okay - come on, let's go...let's get a ride...let's get back to the Villa.

Wheels out, down the side of the road, going nowhere - nothing in sight - CHARLIE following.

CHARLIE

Fuck you...whaddaya mean "okay" - whaddaya mean "okay" - you ever kill a baby - you ever kill a little gook baby?

UP THE ROAD - RON wheeling, lathered with exertion, hoping for an upcoming vehicle, CHARLIE still on his tail.

CHARLIE

Did you! Did you!

RON

What!

CHARLIE

Did you ever have to kill a baby?

RON

HOW DO YOU KNOW WHAT THE FUCK I DID!

CHARLIE

Yeah, I didn't think so. I didn't think so. You're full of shit.

RON

No, you are. Leave me the fuck alone willya. You're nuts. You're fucking nuts! The fuckin' sun's going down and who knows what the fuck comes out here at night. We gotta get outta here...

CHARLIE

Yeah - you never looked at yourself in the fucking mirror. You're a scumbag! You're like all the rest of them gimps, like...

RON

Will you shut up, will you just shut up! How the fuck do you know...you don't know nothing. Maybe I killed...babies. Maybe I did.

Circling back behind CHARLIE, trying to get away, very uncomfortable but CHARLIE cuts off his path, grabs his chair.

CHARLIE

You're full of shit Kovic. You never killed babies!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

96 CONTINUED: 2

96

CHARLIE (cont'd)

You never had to kill babies because you never put your soul in that war. You never put your soul on the LINE MAN -

RON

How do you know! How do you know what the fuck I did over there! Maybe I did kill babies. Maybe I killed more babies than you did, you fuck, maybe I killed a WHOLE BUNCHA BABIES but I don't talk about it!!! I don't have to talk about it.

CHARLIE

WHY NOT KOVIC. WHY THE FUCK NOT. WHAT ARE YOU HIDING! WHAT ARE YOU -- BETTER THAN ANYBODY ELSE! YOU A HERO! IS THAT WHAT YOU ARE -

KOVIC -- a flash now...what is he hiding? Why? It's all very puzzling in the heat with this madman staring him in the face. His eyes like red saucers of pain, hurt, terror...

CHARLIE

(repeats)

What the fuck you hiding, Hero! ...don't shit me Kovic, you never killed a baby...ANYBODY ANYTHING! Did you Kovic...did you?

RON

Did you?

CHARLIE

Did you?

RON

Did you!

CHARLIE

You ever look at yourself in the mirror Kovic?

RON

Did you?

CHARLIE

Fuck you.

RON

You!

CHARLIE turning fast - etched and blackened out by the SUN flaring hugely behind him in a ghostly bath of light - looming up over RON suddenly.

CHARLIE

No!! You!!! Fuck you!!!

(CONTINUED)

96 CONTINUED: 3

96

Spits full in RON's face. RON lashing out - a headlock.

Dumping him out - CHARLIE pulling RON down with him. They roll in the dust, socking, scratching, biting - drunk and ridiculous, in the midst of this vast, empty landscape.

ANOTHER ANGLE - fighting. Curses. RON getting the upper position as they drag their legs through the dust behind them.

RON

FUCK YOU!

CHARLIE

(resilient)

NO. You...FUCK YOU!

RON hitting him...hitting him...

CHARLIE'S FACE CLOSE - pain, hurt - but he smiles through the mashed nose bleeding on his face.

RON realizes what he's doing...his movements lessen, and lessen, and he stops.

TIMECUT TO:

96A

A BATTERED VEGETABLE TRUCK brakes to a stop on the road, and an amiable-looking MEXICAN gets out, puzzled at the toppled chairs looking over at,

THE TWO FIGURES lying exhausted in the dust, side by side, still. CHARLIE looking at the DRIVER motioning.

THE TRUCK DRIVER picking up one of the chairs. RON - a mess, looking up through the dirt and scratches disfiguring him at the sky - sober.

RON

(off)

You okay?

CHARLIE

(bleeding mouth)

...fuckya, you're full of shit -

RON reaches over and grabs CHARLIE'S forearm, tight.

RON

I had a town once Charlie. I had a mother and a father and there was a place I believed in, there were things that made sense Charlie. You remember? Things that made sense, things you could count on before...we all got so lost...

(CONTINUED)

96 CONTINUED: 4

96

CHARLIE

(deeply sad)

Yeah...yeah...

(tears)

...yeah.

LONG SHOT - the DRIVER slamming the door of the truck. RON AND CHARLIE huddled together inside...and the TRUCK pulls out, framed by the hills.

MUSIC THEME -

97 EXT./INT. BUS IN GEORGIA - DAY (1970)

97

DAY - riding past farm fields, down a road - now in a Greyhound Bus.

RON looking out.

PAST A ROAD SIGN - MILLAN, GEORGIA - POP: 9,901.

98 EXT. GEORGIA TOWN BUS DEPOT - DAY (1970)

98

RON wheels off the BUS at the DEPOT - a spartan Main Street, agricultural community. He hesitates - almost ready to get back on the bus, which now departs.

99 EXT. GEORGIA CEMETERY - DAY (1970)

99

A CEMETERY -- hundreds of tombstones, mostly marked with Confederate flags indicating Civil War dead...

A BLACK CABDRIVER waits by his cab in the sleepy air...

RON rolls through the tombs, looking...

ANOTHER ANGLE -- he finds it...slowly coming to face it...

A TOMBSTONE is marked simply "William Charles Wilson, Born 1948. Died 1967 -- In the Service of His Beloved Country" ...

He falls into a state watching it...Him and Wilson. Locked in this strange cosmic dance across time...Interchangeable. He dead. Wilson alive. His ghost calling from the grave. "Remember me. Remember me...Tell them how I died. Tell them. That I did not die in Vain, Stumbling Confusion. Remember Me..." And RON is now hearing the SOUNDS of that last struggle on the windy grey beaches of Vietnam and the obscene CRASH of SHOTS and the gnashing, struggling SOUNDS of MEN screaming and dying...and WILSON'S BREATHING through his windpipe, gurgling in his own fetid blood as he dies, his big eyes staring up...as he rolls over and dies...and the SOUNDS die...

...and a voice breaks through time...snapping him out of it...

(CONTINUED)

99 CONTINUED:

99

MAN'S VOICE

Hey, Bobby! Over here! ...come on...

A BOY, about 12, scampering by, looking at RON, a toy gun in his hand...

...as his DAD waves him over to another section of the cemetery. His MOM planting a flag on a grave there.

RON looks around. Back in present time. Knows what he has to do now...as he looks at the grave a beat longer, then unlocks his brakes and executes a military like right face and goes...

100 EXT. GEORGIA FARM & ROAD - DAY (1970)

100

The battered TAXI pulls up in a cloud of reddish dust towards at a FARMHOUSE isolated in flat, rolling hills. Some hanging cypresses shade the yard. It is hot, muggy, a broken swing, dilapidated porch, barn, peeling paint...

RON is getting out as DOGS bark off...

The MONGRELS running up, surrounding the taxi as RON waits in his chair.

MR. WILSON emerges from the house, curious, shooing the dogs away. He's in his late 50's, a poor farmer, sun-creased frame, deep rural accent..

MR. WILSON

Don't worry, they won't bite...Come on now, get away now, get yourselves away...they probably jes afraid of that chair there...

MRS. WILSON peeking through the screen door, holes in it, flies...a suspicious frown.

RON and MR. WILSON - the dogs have ceased barking, sniff around.. they're edgy around each other...

RON

...hello Mr. Wilson...I'm Ron...Thanks for...

MR. WILSON

Any friend of Billy's a friend of ours.
(gruffly)

Well, why don't you come on in, my wife fixed up some chicken you want some...
(turning back to the house)

CAROLYN WILSON, his gaunt wife now comes out onto the porch -- followed by a YOUNGER WOMAN, early 20s, JAIMIE, a tragic look on her face. With her is a BOY about three, a dumb look on his face...

RON seeing them from his approaching POV in the dust...

101 INT. WILSON'S HOUSE - DAY (1970)

101

CAROLYN serving coffee in the small LIVING ROOM to RON who is glancing through a photo album on his lap - flipping the pages politely... yet in total agony, the parents feeling it, wondering, fearing what is going to happen.

RON

Thank you...

MR. WILSON

Yes sir, it was some funeral. Marine Honor Guard came all the way down from Atlanta in their fancy uniforms, fired their rifles up into the sky, the drums were beating...

Sitting on the couch, bounding the LITTLE BOY, 3, in his lap.. JAIMIE in her chair, docile...mementoes from World War Two on the mantle next to a picture of Billy.

MR. WILSON

Course it was nothing like the Big War hundred years ago down here but there was.. Billy...and Bruce - Bruce Crabtree...and Andy Henderson.

MRS. WILSON

And the Rutledge boy...Lance.

MR. WILSON

Yeah...Lance, nice boy.

RON looking over at JAIMIE.

JAIMIE looking at him.

MR. WILSON

For the life of me, I still can't quite figger that war out...why we had to go all that danged way to fight it...why's we had to lose all those young men. I can't figger that out - but... we got a proud tradition in this town. Billy's great grandfather, he was at First Bull Run, and my pa was over in France in 16.

MRS. WILSON

- and don't you forget now you were over in the Pacific in 44. Guadalcanal...

RON

- Is that right?

MR. WILSON

Yeah...well we probably fought in every war this country's ever had

Fondling the BOY on his lap, stoic.

(CONTINUED)

101 CONTINUED:

101

MR. WILSON

- an I reckon we're ready to do it again if we have to...

A look of pain on the MOTHER's face...RON about to speak - checks it. His eyes falling on the photo album across his knee.

A PHOTO of BILLY - in full combat gear, grenades, rifle, bandoleers - chest puffed out, a big grin, especially staged for his wife and parents back home...

ON RON - grief...a lot of grief all of a sudden.

MRS. WILSON

Course they never quite knew how it happened and all. There was this letter from his Colonel, I think it was...

RON

Colonel Moore...

MR. WILSON

That's right, Colonel Moore. And it said there was this real bad ambush one night. Told us Billy "distinguished" himself in the fighting. Told us Billy died real quick. That's good...he died real quick.

A pause. Everybody looking around the room now, bounding looks off each other...

RON

I was...his squad leader. I didn't know Billy real well. He was new, kinda quiet.. We didn't talk much to the new guys...he was about 19 wasn't he?

MR. WILSON

That's right. 19.

Pause.

RON

Yeah I think he told me he was married and you were pregnant...

JAIMIE says nothing but EYES.

RON

...I was there the day he was killed...It was a strange day. We went out on a patrol near a beach area. It was very confusing...there was a lot of screaming and firing and it was getting dark...and... and there were these children...these babies...that we killed... by mistake. We shot up a whole bunch of villagers...

(CONTINUED)

101 CONTINUED: 2

101

THEIR FACES. Sensing what's coming... THE MOTHER shaking her head...

MRS. WILSON

How awful...

RON

(struggling now)

...then it got real dark and we had to pull back...and we...and we got all scattered up and down, in the dunes...in the dunes we got scattered...we were feeling real awful about the babies...people were making no sense, they were yelling anything, firing at anything...it was...it was a nightmare.. and...that's when your son was killed...

(pause)

...that was when it happened. He was the last one to come back over the dune and.. this is very difficult for me to say...but I think...

(pause)

I think I may have killed your son that night. I think I was the one...he was coming at me. And I was scared. I was confused. And I raised my rifle three times... the shots...and the body fell in the dune...

The SOUNDS of the battle lightly etched in over the Speaker. Haunting him...

The face of JAIMIE...moving to MR. and MRS. WILSON... mute as if they knew...or really what difference did it ultimately make who killed their son. Their pity, their terror is not for themselves or their boy, dead long ago...but for RON who's in agony, crying now...

RON

...I'm sorry. I just had to come here to tell you. I've been afraid for years to come here...But...I've lived with this long enough. I can't live with it anymore... I can't bring him back. Forgive me...I want to live. I want to go on with my life. I'm sorry but that's what happened. That's the way it happened...and I can't change a thing...

It sits there in the air...the eyes of JAIMIE say it all...

MRS. WILSON

We sure understand, Ron, we sure understand the pain you've been going through.

(CONTINUED)

101 CONTINUED: 3

101

MR. WILSON

...we understand, son, we do understand the way...these things happen...in war...
(pause)

MRS. WILSON

...can I get you some more coffee Ron?

Silence. Both older people are very shaken, maintaining a calm surface. The eyes of JAIMIE concede nothing. RON knows -- the forgiveness can only be given by himself.

RON

I gotta go now...I know you want to be alone...I'm sorry...

As he goes...

JAIMIE

(at the door)

...what's done is done, sir. I can't ever forgive you. But maybe the Lord can...

He looks back. Her eyes. Haunting, forever-accountable eyes. He goes.

02 EXT. WILSON HOUSE

102

LONG OVERHEAD ANGLE -- as RON exits the house and rolls down the steps...the dogs barking again...the MUSIC drifting up of light pipe and drum chords set soft to "When Johnnie Comes Marching Home Again -- hurrah hurrah..." carrying into the next scene...

103 EXT. MIAMI CONVENTION CENTER - NIGHT (1972)

103

MUSIC - BOOTS on pavement...MOVING UP to:

A PIPER AND A DRUMMER AND ANOTHER YOUNG MAN carrying a U.S. flag with the stars and stripes sewn upside down on the cloth - all of them in Vietnam Veteran fatigues, utilities, boots, medals, the drummer wearing a symbolically bloodied bandage across his forehead...

FOLLOWED by a ragtime army of YOUNG PEOPLE whistling in haunting rhythms to "When Johnny Comes Marching Home Again" down a large MIAMI AVENUE fringed by palm trees - many of them women, many of them vets with bush hats, medals, long hair, beards, mustaches, tough eyes, road tired...their cars draped with slogans and VC or VVAW flags...

SUBTITLE READS:

ONE YEAR LATER - THE REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION - MIAMI, FLORIDA - MONTH, 1972.

(CONTINUED)

103 CONTINUED:

103

The WOUNDED now appear - blind vets, amputated vets, proudly escorted, parting now onto RON and two other PARAS abreast of him in chairs pushed by FELLOW VETS. RON now has a full mustache and is unshaven, his hair longer than ever...a banner above their heads: STOP THE WAR - VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR -- "hurrah! hurrah!" up from the song...

As SPECTATORS watch from the sidewalks or porches...ANGRY MEN.. CHEERING MEN...OLD JEWISH LADIES on their verandas...mostly neutral, curious looks...

SECRET SERVICE cars trailing...suits, earplugs, walkie talkies.

COPS in full riot gear filing out of a TRUCK on a quiet street. STATIC of a walkie talkie..."proceed to 5th and Cyprus...cordon off...contain...separate...the hippies...marijuana busts...traffic violations..." ...SOUNDS of the WHISTLING MARCHERS in the distance.

104 INT. MIAMI CONVENTION CENTER - NIGHT (1972)

104

Into an ocean of thundering SOUND...

RON and the TWO OTHER PARAS are in the hall, wheeling their way closer to the stage...

with them is a FOURTH MAN, a redheaded guy with a beard, floppy bush hat, jungle fatigues who is pushing RON at the parade. He's inside now, and helping push RON and the TWO OTHERS.

...past the YOUNG REPUBLICANS yelling "FOUR MORE YEARS. FOUR MORE YEARS!!"

...past MEN and WOMEN in summer suits with happy Republican pink faces looking with some concern and possibly apprehension at these three scruffy Vietnam Vets rolling into their midst...

A NEWS CAMERA filming them. RON angling into the camera, playing the crowd looking for people to listen.

RON

Do you hear me? Can I break through your complacency? Can I have an inch...a moment of your compassion for the human beings who are suffering in this war...do you hear me when I say this war is a crime... when I say I am not as bitter about my wound as the men who have lied to the people of this country...do you hear me?

But they hear nothing. Deaf, blind, dumb, roaring for their leader as he now appears...the sound waves rolling up the hall...

CLIP - NIXON now coming to the podium. A huge smile. A pause before he stretches out his arms in his famous victory pose. The ROARS pound over RON and THREE COMRADES continuing to wheel closer.

(CONTINUED)

104 CONTINUED:

104

Like assassins, deep in enemy territory; their POV -- the hall looming like a jungle far away. The tension in RON -

CLIP - NIXON

NIXON

Mr. Chairman, delegates to this convention,
my fellow Americans...

105 INTERCUT RON speaking at the same time to a NEWS CAMERA.

105

RON

WHY DO THEY WANT TO HIDE US? Why won't they let the veterans of that war speak tonight? Because they don't wanna know, they don't wanna see us, they wanna hide us because they've lied and cheated to us for so long -- but we're not gonna run away and hide anymore, we're going to win because we LOVE this country. We love this country more than they could ever know. We fought for it, we gave our bodies because we loved it and believed in everything it stood for and tonight we're ashamed of it, and we've come from all the little towns, thousands of us to get this country back again, to make it whole again. Truth, honesty, integrity - this is the lost American dream here tonight, and we're gonna take it back!

106 INTERCUT CLIP - NIXON

106

Talking about Vietnam. The completely counter argument about ideals, patriotism, ideology - the basis of the Cold War. Cognent, coherent, something we've all heard before -- and totally false to its core.

107 INTERCUT RON -- to the cameras. He has become a professional 107 orator now, his voice and eyes and overall intensity the same RON but older now, polished, a political leader.

RON

We're never never gonna let the people of the United States forget that war, because the moment we do, there's gonna be another war and another, and another, that's why we're gonna be there for the rest of our lives telling you that the war happened, it just wasn't some nightmare, it happened and you're not gonna sweep it under the rug because you didn't like the ratings like some television show...this wheelchair...this steel is your Memorial day on wheels, your yankee doodle...

(CONTINUED)

107 CONTINUED:

107

A BIG FAT GUY with a "Four More Years" button runs up and shouts in RON's face.

FAT REPUBLICAN

TRAITOR!...

He spits in his face. A commotion starts. The REDHEADED VETERAN pushing the FAT REPUBLICAN. The TWO OTHER PARAS joining in...

RON

Is that what we get! Spit in the face! I've got as much right to be here as any of these delegates! I FOUGHT FOR THAT RIGHT. YOU'RE NOT GOING TO STOP ME! YOU'RE NOT GONNA TO SHUT ME UP! I'M GONNA REMIND YOU OF THIS WAR FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE SO WHAT HAPPENED THERE NEVER HAPPENS AGAIN...

THE SECRET SERVICE AGENTS now making their move to shut the commotion down...a GROUP of them rush down, throwing up their arms, surrounding the wheelchairs, trying to block the TV coverage on RON.

PARAPLEGICS

STOP THE BOMBING STOP THE WAR STOP THE BOMBING STOP THE WAR

ANOTHER ANGLE -- RON yanking his chair around. Locking his brakes and linking arms with his TWO COMRADES, all of them yelling.

PARAPLEGICS

STOP THE BOMBING STOP THE WAR!

CLIP - NIXON

Continuing his argument. Nothing can be heard of the PARAS at this distance nor does NIXON show any expression except his smile as:

108 INTERCUT - THE PARAS AND THE SECRET SERVICE

108

The war in the pits is on. The angry or surprised REPUBLICANS looking on as the AGENTS struggle with the PARAS pulling at their handles but the chairs are braked and won't give. They heave with all their strength, then start jerking them backwards, bouncing their chairs....

AGENT 1

Get 'im outta here! Now!

AGENT 2

Where are the fucking brakes on this thing! Come on, let's go...

AGENT 1

(shoving the cameras away)
Get 'im outta here, get 'im outta here!

(CONTINUED,

108 CONTINUED:

108

PARAPLEGICS
STOP THE BOMBING STOP THE WAR! THEY'RE
SHOOTING WOMEN AND CHILDREN!

109 INT. MIAMI CONVENTION TV BOOTH - NIGHT

109

T.V. MONITOR - RON and HIS TWO COMRADES being lifted in their chairs by a BEVY OF AGENTS who hustle them down the aisle.

NEWSMAN (OVER)
...disabled veterans protesting the war in Vietnam. We're gonna try to get a mic down there and...

110 INT. MIAMI CONVENTION CENTER - NIGHT

110

RON in the midst of FOUR AGENTS, yelling.

RON
...is this how they treat their wounded veterans! What are you doing! What kinda country is this! What kinda country is this!

T.V. MAN and SOUNDMAN following, blocked by the AGENTS.

PAST PEOPLE in the CROWD holding their thumbs down like it was a gladiator match, motioning him out with their arms - get him outta here!

CROWD
THROW HIM OUT. THROW THE BUMS OUT..
TRAITORS...COMMUNISTS!

RON
Why don't you people listen to me! Why are the men who've fought for this country being GASSED AND BEATEN in the streets outside this hall! Why won't you listen to them - why!

A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN IN A SUMMER DRESS looking at RON with a pathetic patronizing sneer...

AGENT 2 blocking RON'S face with a souvenir book as he tries to speak to the TV CREW...

THE REDHEADED VETERAN is motioning to the AGENTS, leading the way out of the Hall...

RON
I've got as much right to be here as any of these delegates. I FOUGHT FOR THAT RIGHT!!!

RON taken out of the hall -- as NIXON keeps on going OVER.

111 EXT. MIAMI CONVENTION CENTER - NIGHT

111

RON AND HIS TWO COMRADES are wheeled out past the GATE in the outer fence. Confusion in the streets all around. RON separated from the TWO OTHER PARAS who are put under arrest.

AGENT 2

Get the car, get the car!

RON

What's going on, what are you doing! You have no...

Suddenly the REDHEADED VIETNAM VETERAN is leaning over him, from behind, grabbing for his hands trying to handcuff him in an angry voice.

REDHEAD

SHUT THE FUCK UP. YOU'RE UNDER ARREST KOVIC!

RON doesn't quite understand, resisting...

RON

What?

AGENT 2

(helping to handcuff)

Come on you bastard. You're going to jail.

RON

I'M A VIETNAM VETERAN. I HAVE A RIGHT TO SPEAK OUT. I GAVE THREE-QUARTERS OF MY BODY IN VIETNAM...

REDHEAD

YOU SHOULDA DIED OVER THERE YOU FUCKING TRAITOR...GET IN THERE.

(handcuffing, to Agent 2)

I'd like to take this creep and throw him off the roof...

RON

(urgent)

I DON'T HAVE ANY BALANCE!

Squirming to avoid the cuffs, angering the AGENTS, RON is flopping from side to side in the chair without balance.

AGENT 2

SHUT THE FUCK UP!

RON

I DON'T HAVE ANY STOMACH MUSCLES, DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? I DON'T HAVE ANY BALANCE, I'M PARALYZED!

AGENT 2

GET HIM THE FUCK OUTTA HERE!

(CONTINUED)

111 CONTINUED:

111

REDHEAD
SHUT UP YOU SONUFABITCH!

As he tips the chair and RON crashes to the pavement, flailing.

REDHEAD
GET YOUR FUCKING HANDS BEHIND YOU!

RON, his legs twisted awkwardly beneath him, thrashing, trying to fight back as the RED HEAD, in his Vietnam uniform, pins him to the pavement like a steer yanking his arms hard up his back and cuffing him like he was a normal adversary...

RON
DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND! I CAN'T WEAR CUFFS! I
CAN'T!

The REDHEAD tearing the medals from RON'S chest.

REDHEAD
SHUT UP YOU SONUFABITCH

AGENT 2
GET HIM THE FUCK OUTTA HERE. CAMERAS!

INTERCUT TO:

VETS running, escaping the candlelit GAS FUMES...VETS coughing, gaging, it looks like war,

VET 1
KOVIC'S GETTING BEATEN! IN FRONT OF THE
HALL! LET'S GO!

OTHER VETS repeating it...running...

INTERCUT TO:

The REDHEAD hauling RON up now, arms clamped in cuffs like a dead sack of grain, and throwing him back into his chair...

REDHEAD
Stay put!

Nervously now looking around, some guilt in his expression after his catharsis, the other TWO AGENTS yelling...

AGENT 1
GET HIM OUTTA HERE. CAMERAS...GET HIM OUTTA
HERE...

A CAMERA CREW running up...

The REDHEAD dragging RON in the chair to...

The SECRET SERVICE SEDAN rolling up, red light revolving on its hood.

(CONTINUED)

111 CONTINUED: 2

111

REDHEAD

Get in there, you fucking traitor.

Hauling him out of the chair and trying to stuff him in the back seat...RON yelling with pain and frustration...as we hear another LOUD YELL and...

HALF A DOZEN VETS converge on the REDHEAD and AGENT 2 -- surging over them - separating them...beating them...pulling RON away...

VET 2

RON! RON! YOU OKAY?

RON

Get me my chair! Get me my chair.

A BIG BLACK VET throws RON over his shoulder and runs out of there, reminiscent of a similar image on a battlefield long ago, and ANOTHER VET grabs his chair...

MORE SECRET SERVICE AGENTS AND POLICE have joined the fray -- now clubbing and beating down the VETS who fight back as best they can...

INTERCUT TO:

THE BLACK VET slinging RON to a safety area...

VET 3

You okay man?

RON, through the blood on his puffed lips:

RON

I'm okay. I'm okay...Where's the cameras?
Get the cameras over here. We gotta get this
on TV. They gotta see this!

A CAMERA CREW running up in the near distance...

THE VETS circling RON who becomes a focus of leadership.

VET 4

(runs up)

Eddie's been arrested. They beat Peterson.
McClosky...he's gased real bad. Cavastani's
got a concussion. It's a mess over there by
the front of the convention. They're
attacking our people.

VET 5

(joining them)

We gotta help 'em! They got twenty of our
people trapped on the side of the hall. We
gotta stop 'em. They're trapped!

(CONTINUED)

111 CONTINUED: 3

111

RON

Okay, okay, let's go...

As he wheels out in the lead, bypassing OTHER VETS, directing their energies, motioning in his direction.

RON

Let's go...let's go...one more time.

THE VETS falling in behind him.

A PHALANX OF COPS forming now to prevent them from moving around the Hall, sticks at the ready, gas fumes drifting away in the night.

MORE VETS falling in abreast and behind RON -- more and more. Carrying their brothers limping, gas masks hanging from their necks.

Camera moving backwards with them as the CAMERA CREW films RON wheeling, himself in the apex of the army of YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN.. blood all over him...

THE COPS moving forward as one...faces unseen in their riot helmets.

BULLHORN

You are ordered to disperse. You are in unlawful assembly. You have thirty seconds to disperse.

RON AND THE VETS - moving forward against them, the ranks filling in now...a silence of determination.

RON

Spread it out! Spread it out!

THE COPS MOVING - an overwhelming armed force. Hitting their clubs against their leather gloves.

THE LINE OF VETS - MOVING

RON at the center out front, his eyes fixed on the enemy, ready to die. ANOTHER PARA rolls up out of nowhere alongside, angry and ready for the fight!

PARA

Let's go brother.

RON

(acknowledges him)

We gonna win this thing brother. Keep going, keep going. We got 'em, we got 'em.

THE T.V. CREW filming from the side as RON AND HIS COMRADES swing past us and on into the breach.

(CONTINUED)

111 CONTINUED: 4

111

THE COPS surge, the clubs about to come down...

FREEZEFRAME TO:

112 INT. DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION - MADISON SQUARE GARDEN - 1976
(CLIP)

THE SUBTITLE READS: "FOUR YEARS LATER - THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL
CONVENTION - MADISON SQUARE GARDEN, NEW YORK CITY, JULY 15, 1976"

From a very wide shot of the Convention, where RON is introduced by
the LOUDSPEAKER, we cut to an EXTREME CLOSE UP of RON as he starts
his address, pulling out to reveal his face...the podium..the
flags...as he speaks...

RON

I am the living death. You're Memorial Day
on wheels. I am your Yankee Doodle Dandy.
Your John Wayne come home. Your Fourth of
July firecracker Exploding in the grave...
Twelve years ago when I was 18 years old, I
left Massapequa, Long Island and joined the
United States Marines...I wanted to serve my
country...I wanted to be a good American...
I couldn't wait to fight my first war, and I
went with the others like our fathers before
us with hope in our hearts and dreams of
great victory...

Blending into the MUSIC THEME now...of tragedy overcome. Of life
renewed...

The music is joyous as we can cut to a series of SHOTS of the
Veterans marching down Manhattan streets in their 1984 Welcome Home
Parade -- and the real RON KOVIC as he is now in 1988 -- still
fighting for "Truth, Justice, and the American Way".

THE END