
ROLLING THUNDER

by

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"Rolling Thunder" was the code
name for air operations over
North Viet Nam, 1965-1972.

TWO QUOTES

PRE-CREDITS

Film opens with two FADE-IN FADE-OUT quotes: white letters against a black field.

There is NO SOUND.

FIRST QUOTE

In the first two years after repatriation, 53.4 percent of the deaths of WWII ex-POWs held in the Orient were attributed to violent causes: murder, suicide, in the act of crime or on the highway. This was a violent death rate four times the normal expectancy.

--From the report by the
Committee on Veterans Medical
Problems, September, 1954

SECOND QUOTE

Our returning prisoners-of-war are examples of the high moral fiber...which will help make this a nation...free from crime.

--Richard M. Nixon, "Report on
Crime in America," March 14, 1972

A PAUSE, and then FADING-IN against the black field, red letters reading:

ROLLING THUNDER

A short SILENCE, and the CREDIT SONG begins.

CUT TO:

CHARLIE COMES MARCHING HOME

CREDITS

CREDITS are played over shots of Viet Nam POWs disembarking at Travis Air Force Base.

Even before we cut from the title card, we hear the sharply punctuated beginning of a Country & Western song, "Go Hide John" by Red Sovine.

"Go Hide John" is an upbeat, hard-driving song, full of violence and vengeance. In the song Sovine, a sixtiesh redneck singer with a sandpaper voice, belts out the anger of a returning soldier. When he sings "But I'm alive!" his voice literally ripples with defiance.

The credits are interspersed in a long emotional sequence and hopefully we'll be able to play all of the lyrics of "Go Hide John" (the song runs 2:45). In any event, the lyrics are worth listening to:

"GO HIDE JOHN"

"Thank you, Operator.

(a beat)

Hello, Marie? It's me. I'm back.
Go Hide John. I'm gonna get him.
I swear I'm gonna get him."

I wrote you how I felt from Can Ranh Bay,
He burned his card then stole your love
away,
Now I'm back on the sweet side of the
pond,
And I thought I'd call and tell you go
hide John.

Hide him well and tell him Hell waits on
an airplane,
I depart these California skies at dawn,
You thought the War and all its fire would
kill me in the jungle,
But I'm alive, it's time to go hide John.

Oh, you'll get your divorce I promise
you,
But old John won't be in church to
say I do,

"GO HIDE JOHN"
(cont'd)

He helped you cash and drink up all
my bonds,
And I thought I'd call and tell you
go hide John.

Hide him well and tell him Hell waits
on an airplane,
I depart these California skies at dawn,
Upon my word the next big bird his
troubles comes to Houston,
And I thought I'd call and tell you
go hide John.

"I love you, Marie, and I guess I still do.
(a beat)
But I'm gonna get him. I swear I'm gonna
get him."

Meanwhile, we see the familiar scenes of returning POWs:

A giant Air Force Starlighter taxis up to a 40-foot red
carpet. A cluster of high-ranking AF anxiously stand by.

A pushing crowd of wives, children and relatives strains
for the first glimpse of the returning prisoners. Some
are nervously talkative, some are impatiently silent;
all are nearing a frenzy of anticipation.

Home-made SIGNS are sprinkled through the crowd. They
read:

WELCOME HOME
BEAUTIFUL MEN!

WE'RE ALL PROUD OF YOU

JESUS LOVES YOU

OUR HEROES!

Finally, the giant steel door slowly opens. A CHEER
goes up. A POW cautiously sticks his head out of the
plane. The crowd, as if through some secret signal,
begins singing, "God Bless America" in unison.

The first POW walks down the ramp. He is greeted en-
thusiastically by the AF representative. LATER; he
makes a short speech.

Instead of peaking, the scene instead becomes more lyric
and emotional. In SLOWING MOTION and TRACKING SHOT we
see shots of:

- An ecstatic POW wife breaks through the restraining line of soldiers and rushes into the arms of her awaiting husband.
- Another sinks to her knees with tears of joy.
- A POW, being carried from the plane on a stretcher, pulls himself up and waves to the crowd.
- Tearful strangers embrace.
- A POW holds up a hand-made sign reading:
"GOD BLESS AMERICA."

The returning POWs look gaunt, worn, but in good health.

Then, stepping off the plane, appears LT. COLONEL CHARLES RANE, "our hero." He instantly catches our eye. Tough, individualistic, unsmiling. About 35-45. He makes apologies to no man.

Passing through the reception line he is enthusiastically greeted by his wife JANET and twelve-year-old son MARK. Janet quickly introduces Mark and Rane, since they do not instantly recognize each other.

CLIFF, wearing a policeman's uniform, stands in the crowd watching them closely.

Among the tight, uneasy faces of the returning prisoners, we also see the attractive young face of JOHNNY VOHDEN, a POW we will meet later.

Vohden is likewise greeted by his family: his wife, young son and daughter, sister and brother-in-law.

LATER: Rane rides away in an AF car with Janet and Mark.

CUT TO: AERIAL SHOT of Corpus Christi, Texas.

END CREDITS

CUT TO:

THE INTERVIEW

Charles Rane and AF Colonel WILLIAM MAXWELL are seated behind microphones on a long interview table. A banner behind their heads reads:

CORPUS CHRISTI WELCOMES HOME
LT. COL. CHARLES RANE

Name plates on the table identify Rane and Maxwell. Rane's sky-blue uniform is draped with a multi-colored assortment of medals and decorations. More medals are placed in an orderly row on the table before him.

Col. Maxwell acts only in an advisory capacity. As Rane's Air Force psychiatrist, he is assigned to help "talk him down" during this transition period.

The CAMERA remains STATIC throughout the interview. It does not pan or zoom; we do not see the reporters, cameramen or photographers.

Charles Rane seems ill-at-ease throughout the interview. He tries to be cooperative but really isn't equipped to handle these kind of intellectual questions yet. He seems to have lost the knack of normal conversation.

The unmoving camera emphasizes his uneasiness. Questions jump out of nowhere, anonymous TV cameras grind behind banks of lights, flashbulbs pop erratically.

The tenor of the interview indicates that Rane has been back home at least a couple weeks.

REPORTER 1 (O.S.)

How the folks in Corpus been treating you, Colonel Rane?

Rane has a delayed reaction. It seems to take him a few extra seconds to respond to anything.

RANE

Good. Yeah. Good.

REPORTER 2 (O.S.)

How does it feel to be back home after seven years in Hanoi?

RANE

(pause)

Nice. Real nice.

REPORTER 3 (O.S.)

You have been described by your fellow POWs as a "Gibraltar of Guts." They say you were a moral inspiration to all the prisoners at the "Hanoi Hilton." Would you care to describe any of your experiences?

RANE

No.
(a beat)
Not really.

REPORTER 4 (O.S.)

Navy Comdr. Jack Abel told reporters that you were strung upside down for three days by the North Vietnamese. Is that true?

Col. Maxwell interrupts:

MAXWELL

I don't know if that's a proper question to ask Lt. Col. Rane.

RANE

(interrupting)
No, it's all right, Bill. They can ask anything they want. I'll answer all their questions.

There is an embarrassed silence.

REPORTER 4 (O.S.)

Well? Is it true?

RANE

Yeah. It's true.

REPORTER 5 (O.S.)

Did they do this in order to make you make anti-war statements, Lt. Colonel?

RANE

Yeah.
(a beat)
The V wanted me real bad. Figur'd if they'd get me, they'd get the rest, too.

REPORTER 6 (O.S.)

What methods did they use to coerce you?

RANE
You know, all the stuff you've
been reading about.

REPORTER 7 (O.S.)
Was it true the prisoners were fed
the same food as the guards?

RANE
No. That was just another fiction.

REPORTER 8 (O.S.)
Do you blame the GIs who made anti-
war statements?

Rane hesitates for a moment and looks at Col. Maxwell.

RANE
Well, I don't know what to say
about that. I only did what I
felt I must.
(looks back at Maxwell)
But some other fellers hold a
grudge, I'll tell you that.

REPORTER 9 (O.S.)
Jane Fonda said recently that the
POWs lied when they said they had
been tortured because they were
obviously in good physical condition...

RANE
(interrupting)
That bitc...

Rane's eyes flash. Maxwell immediately interrupts him.

MAXWELL
(under his breath)
Charlie.

Rane calms down.

REPORTER 9 (O.S.)
Well, what do you think of Ms. Fonda's
statement?

RANE
(hack-coughing)
People like that only made our
mountain higher to climb. Those
anti-war people. They just hurt.
We were in there longer cause of
them.

REPORTER 10 (O.S.)

What do you think of President Nixon's policies?

RANE

I support the President 100%. He brought us Peace With Honor. I love this country and nobody could make me say different.

REPORTER 11 (O.S.)

Getting back to your treatment under the North Vietnamese. Is it true that before 1969, when the conditions improved somewhat, you were beaten, given electric shocks, forced to crawl through latrines filled with excrement...?

RANE

(looks toward Maxwell)

I'd rather not talk about it, you know. When we talk too much about it we either get angry or just cry.

REPORTER 11 (O.S.)

But surely you men, being such heroes...

RANE

(interrupting)

You don't understand. I never did anything heroic. I survived. All the heroes died.

REPORTER 12 (O.S.)

Is it true you and your wife have filed for divorce?

MAXWELL

No it isn't true and I think that question is entirely out of order.

REPORTER 13 (O.S.)

The businessmen of Corpus Christi, we have been told, have given you a brand new Cadillac. Plus you have received a color TV and many other gifts. In addition the government recently gave you a \$124,000 check for back pay for hazardous duty. What are you going to do with all this money?

RANE

(determined)

Well I ain't gonna put it in no bank, that's for sure. That's all that stands between me and seven years of dead time. That's all I got to show. I'm keeping it and I'm gonna spend it all on me.

Col. Maxwell stands up, indicating the interview is over. He doesn't seem too pleased with the outcome, but Rane is relieved.

CAMERA follows Maxwell and Rane as they work through the crowd of reporters, photographers and onlookers toward the exit.

Janet and Mark, surrounded by AF personnel, wait by the exit.

As Maxwell and Rane elbow through the crowd, a statuesque TEXAS GIRL wearing yellow slacks and stacks of blond hair walks toward Charlie. She keeps her physical assets up front where everybody can see them.

She brushes herself into Rane; he looks back, somewhat startled. Thrusting her breasts into his medals, she wraps her arms around him and says:

TEXAS GIRL

Oh, you men are so brave.

Flashbulbs pop as photographers catch the scene. Rane smiles awkwardly and the Texas Girl disappears into the crowd. After she leaves, Rane realizes she has put a piece of paper into his hand. He glances at it. It reads:

Linda Forchet TR4-3265

He slips the paper into his pocket and greets his wife and son at the doorway.

CUT TO:

MEMORY WALL

Maxwell's AF car pulls up in front of the Ranes' small isolated ranch-style farmhouse on the outskirts of Corpus Christi.

A bright red El Dorado Cadillac convertible (top down) sits in the dirt driveway.

Maxwell, Janet, Rane and Mark get out of the car. Mark and Rane lead the way as they walk up the sidewalk.

RANE

Change your clothes and we'll throw a football around, okay?

MARK

Sure.

Rane and his son have little in common but blood. In seven years they have developed very different sensibilities. Mark wears his hair shoulder-length and dreams of being Mick Jagger; Charlie assumes all young boys idolize baseball players and astronauts.

They walk into INT. LIVING ROOM. Mark goes into his room to change and Rane wanders out into the back yard. The press conference is still unreeling in his mind.

Maxwell and Janet stand in the living room and talk.

Behind Janet, above the Scotchguard sofa, is Janet and Mark's "Memory Wall." The Memory Wall consists of chronological rows of pictures of Charles Rane taken before and during his capture. These pictures served to keep his memory alive.

The living room bears a woman's touch: frilly curtains, knick-knacks. In one corner stands a new 25" TV stacked with unopened presents addressed to "Lt. Col. Rane." Several POW reorientation pamphlets, including a "Dictionary of Slang" rest on the coffee table.

Maxwell waits until Charlie is out of earshot:

MAXWELL

How has he been, Janet?

JANET

He's doing all right, I think.
He should get out more often.

(MORE)

JANET (CONT'D)

When he doesn't have anything to do he just sits all day. I've seen him spend an hour making the bed.

MAXWELL

That's not too unusual. He has to make the transition at his own speed.

(a beat)

How much longer will you be living here?

Janet is a handsome but somewhat bland woman. All her instincts are kind and generous but right now she's trying to juggle two lives simultaneously.

JANET

As long as he needs me. A couple more weeks, a month if necessary. I just can't let him handle this all alone.

MAXWELL

How do Charlie and Cliff get along?

JANET

Quite well, actually. Cliff thinks Charlie's quite a hero.

MAXWELL

He is.

(a beat)

When will you and Cliff be getting married?

JANET

Sometime in the fall. I'm not sure yet. There's no need to rush.

MAXWELL

We'll have to have a long talk about this in a couple days. There'll have to be some sort of statement to the press. Everybody's interested in Charlie.

(excusing himself)

I've got to run. I'll just say goodbye to Charlie.

Maxwell gives Janet a polite kiss and walks out back.

Maxwell walks across EXT. BACKYARD toward the barn where Charlie is standing. Rane is poking around in the dirt with his foot. He turns as he hears Maxwell walking toward him:

RANE

Hey, Bill.

MAXWELL

I've got to keep moving, Rane. Don't forget the billboard thing in the morning and we have a meeting after that.

RANE

I got it.

MAXWELL

(touches his chest)
You still having the pain here?

RANE

Comes and goes. I see the Doc regular.

Maxwell nods. Mark, dressed in sneakers, jeans and a sweatshirt, walks toward them with a football.

MAXWELL

(to Mark)
Gonna throw some football, Mark?

MARK

It ain't even football season.

MAXWELL

You don't have to have seasons for everything.

MARK

I'd rather be a surfer.

RANE

(stepping back)
Throw it here, Mark.

MAXWELL

(excusing self)
See you later.

Mark hurls the football awkwardly at his father. Mark isn't much of a Quarterback and the ball wobbles in Rane's general direction -- but then Charlie isn't much of an End either, and he stabs at the football like a man catching flies.

After Maxwell exits, Rane, holding the football, stands and looks at his son, not quite knowing what to do next.

CUT TO:

A GUEST FOR DINNER

SUPPERTIME, that same day. Janet, Charlie, Mark and Cliff sit around the small kitchen table.

Cliff, Janet's future husband, is wearing his policeman's uniform. He is about thirty and handsome in an average sort of way. His sharply starched blue uniform gives him a sexiness he would not normally have.

They pass around bowls of mashed potatoes, peas and roast beef. For the moment each seems more interested in eating than talking.

On the wall behind Rane is a grease-spattered map of Viet Nam with certain strategic locations circled with a red Magic Marker.

Finally Charlie breaks the silence:

RANE

How is that new team they have
in Houston, the Astros?

CLIFF

(looking up)

I went to one of their games last
year.

MARK

They ain't much good. Baseball's
dumb, anyway.

CLIFF

(to Mark)

At least they're better than those
Wahoos up in Dallas, the Texas
Rangers. Washington D.C.'s rejects.

Mark giggles: there is an obvious rapport between he
and Cliff.

JANET

Corpus ain't part of Texas anyway.

Janet is referring to a private joke between Cliff and
Mark, who respond with short chuckles. They don't mean
to cut Charlie out of their little jokes -- they just
don't know how to get him in.

CLIFF

If they try to give us some of their
loser teams, we should succede from
the state.

JANET

Nothing succeeds like succession.

They all giggle again.

There's a guest for dinner all right, but it isn't Cliff -- it's Charlie. It's as if he inadvertently walked in on somebody else's family.

RANE

They didn't even have that Astro team when I was here before.

CLIFF

Texas was the better for it, too.

Mark giggles again (everything Cliff says is funny to him) and there is another awkward silence.

RANE

(looking around)

I think I'll have a drink. You want a drink, Cliff?

CLIFF

(eating)

No, not yet, Charlie.

Charlie reaches over to a nearby cabinet and pulls out a quart of J&B. Janet looks on disapprovingly as he pours himself several fingers. Taking a healthy swig, he feels the ripples of relaxation move through his body.

RANE

I kinda like to see them Astros play, you know?

CUT TO:

MISS TAMMY AND THE EMPTY COFFIN

A large billboard somewhere in Corpus Christi reads:

SEND A LETTER TO HANOI:
RELEASE LT. COL. CHARLES RANE

Surrounded by local dignitaries and photographers, Charles Rane, axe in hand, stands at the base of the billboard.

He poses awkwardly for the photographers before chopping down the last leg of the billboard.

A cluster of aging Veterans, their uniforms dripping with decorations, beam with particular pride.

The billboard falls and a CHEER goes up from the crowd.

CUT TO: INT. COL. MAXWELL'S OFFICE. Charles Rane sits in a large padded chair talking with Col. Maxwell. It is a psychiatrist-patient relationship, a relationship somewhat complicated by the fact, however, that they are both wearing their uniforms.

Rane rambles on, speaking as if to no one but himself:

RANE

You know, Bill, it took me three days just to figure out how to tie my damn shoes. I feel like such an ass.

MAXWELL

Seven years is a long time. I'd be happy if I knew which shoe went where.

RANE

Ah, come on, Bill. Don't be so obvious.

MAXWELL

I'm supposed to be obvious, Rane. So you can see it. Because in the end only you can help yourself.

RANE

So what else is going to help me? Carting me around and praising me for a bunch of crap I never did? I don't know if anything can help.

RANE (CONT'D)

Sometimes I can't sleep at night and get up and feel I just gotta tear something. Like the Naval Air Base -- wouldn't that be something for your headlines, Bill?
(pause)

They owe me something, you know, something more than money.

MAXWELL

Why?

RANE

You know.

MAXWELL

A lot of people think the war was immoral. Do you think that, Charlie?

RANE

(irritated)

Of course not. But their money don't solve everything either. Sometimes I think they sent back an empty body and I wasn't in it. Just another coffin. I'm sick of being a hero. I'm sick of being all locked in.

MAXWELL

Maybe it's sex. Maybe sex is the way out.

RANE

You said that before. No, it ain't sex. Everything's sex with you guys, ain't it?

MAXWELL

Has the sex changed?

RANE

No.

MAXWELL

How is it?

RANE

The same.

MAXWELL

That's not too unusual. Sometimes this can go on for six months or more.

RANE

Had a sex dream last night, though. First in years. Figur'd you'd like to hear about it.

MAXWELL

What was it about?

RANE

For a while I had dreams about food and medicine, like before, then I stopped and I was afraid I was going to have dreams about the torture and all. But last night I had a dream and I was screwing Tammy Wynette on a stairs. She was leaning back against the stairs, wearing this sort of fluffy yellow dress without underpants. I was wearing my uniform with my pants half-way down. Miss Tammy sort of had her dress hoisted above her waist. She had her hair stacked up in a sort of curly-cue fashion and kept going, "Oh," "Ah."

(an embarrassed smile)

Does that mean anything, Doc?

MAXWELL

How did you know it was Miss Tammy?

RANE

I came though, Charlie. Now that means something, don't it?

(a beat)

I was always afraid I'd dream I wouldn't. It was like Nam. I'd dream I was going into combat and I'd get there and it was all over. That's what it was like, going to Nam and not getting into combat. It was like getting in bed with a beautiful woman and not being able to come.

MAXWELL

How did you know it was Miss Tammy?

RANE

I just sorta knew. I kept thinking, "Wow, this is gotta be Miss Tammy Wynette." She didn't even sing.

MAXWELL

Do you like her singing?

RANE

Oh, yeah. She's my favoritist singer. I used to keep thinking about that. That Tammy or Loretta Lynn would have a new song out somewhere and I was too far away to hear it. I love that song, "Apartment Number 9."

MAXWELL

Did you tell Janet about the dream?

RANE

No.

MAXWELL

Why not?

RANE

She wouldn't understand.

MAXWELL

Why not?

RANE

She's a woman, you know?

CUT TO:

PILLOW TALK

THAT NIGHT. Rane stands in MARK'S BEDROOM watching his son sleep. On the wall above Mark's bed hangs a large poster of Mick Jagger prancing a devil's jig at Altamont. Charlie closes the door softly, then exits.

Rane walks into the MASTER BEDROOM. Janet, wearing a sheer nightgown, sits up in bed reading Coronet.

Charlie strips down to his shorts and gets into bed next to Janet. The POW "Dictionary of Slang" rests on the bedstand.

Putting down her magazine, Janet snuggles up to Charlie. Her nipples can be seen through the sheer blue fabric of her nightgown.

JANET

How was Dr. Maxwell today?

RANE

Fine, I guess.

She embraces him:

JANET

You know, I thought I'd never have you back in bed again.

RANE

I never thought I'd be back.

JANET

You'll be all right, won't you, darling?

RANE

I'll be all right.

JANET

It's too bad it couldn't be different.

RANE

It's all right, baby, honest. I understand.

JANET

I know. Life can be so hard sometimes.

She runs her hand up and down his leg underneath the covers.

JANET
 (sexily)
 You wanna try it, huh?

RANE
 (hesitant)
 Well, I don't know...it's just...

JANET
 I understand, baby.

RANE
 Dr. Maxwell says I shouldn't rush it.

JANET
 Oh.

RANE
 I'm glad you were able to, ah, get
 along while I was gone. I mean
 really. It's important. A person
 has to live his own life.

JANET
 I understand, darling.

RANE
 I mean, is it good with Cliff?

JANET
 It's good.

RANE
 Real good?

JANET
 It's good enough.

RANE
 I'm glad. That's the way it
 should be.

Janet renews her pseudo-sexual stimulation.

JANET
 But what about you, Charlie. It
 should be good for you, too.

RANE
 If you can live with it, I can live
 without it.
 (weak smile)

Janet's eyes fill up with pathos and sympathy:

JANET
Oh, Charlie, Charlie.

She embraces him.

TIMECUT TO: LATER THAT NIGHT. The room is dark. Charlie, unable to sleep, gets out of bed and begins dressing.

CUT TO EXT. DRIVE-IN THEATER. Rane's big red Caddy (top up) pulls into an outdoor theater. The marquee advertises: "DEEP THROAT--ADULTS ONLY."

CUT TO: Rane sits behind the wheel watching the film. The light from the screen is reflected on his face. MOANS and GROANS are heard OFF SCREEN. He takes another hit from his quart of J&B.

Turning to his left, Rane looks into the cars parked nearby. He sees DARK FORMS engaged in various stages of necking and petting.

Feeling someone staring at him, he turns and looks to his left: there, two cars away, sits a YOUNG MAN hunched in the front seat with a beer can in his hand. The young punk's face is gaunt and drained of color. He wears a green plaid western shirt and Army jacket.

Those who have read another script of mine titled Taxi-Driver will recognize this young man. His name is Travis Bickle.

Travis and Rane stare at each other for a moment: two fuses slowly burning down.

CUT TO:

CLOTHES MAKE THE MAN

Charles Rane drives into Corpus Christi the next morning in his long red Cadillac (top down). He is wearing a red plaid work shirt.

He parks the car and walks down the sidewalk toward BRANNIGAN'S, a fashionable men's clothing store.

INSIDE, Rane is greeted by BRANNIGAN, the owner. Brannigan and his help are all nattily dressed; Charlie looks out of place in his comfortable flannel shirt and work jeans and shoes.

BRANNIGAN

Lt. Colonel Rane! Welcome! We've all been waiting for you. Colonel Maxwell said you would be in sometime this week.

(pause)

We want you to feel right at home and leave everything to us. Don't worry about a thing. We will fix you up so you look fantastic. Everything's on us. It's our honor to be able to do this.

Rane smiles politely and looks uncomfortable from side to side.

RANE

Well, I appreciate this, you know. I really do.

Brannigan gestures for Charlie to follow:

BRANNIGAN

Now just follow me. I have just the thing for you. You will look very nice in brown and we have the latest styles. I have just the suit for you.

Brannigan leads Rane toward a clothes rack.

TIMECUT: Rane, fully dressed in a new suit, shirt and shoes, stands before a tripartite mirror.

Brannigan was right: he does look fantastic. He wears a deep brown velvet suit, a Cardin yellow-and-brown floral patterned shirt and brown high-heeled shoes. He is a transformed man: sexy, debonair, fresh out of the pages of Gentlemen's Quarterly.

Charlie looks into the mirror, recognizes that he's supposed to look sharp, but, jacked up on those goddamn heels, he just doesn't feel sharp.

He starts to hack-cough, but suppresses it.

BRANNIGAN

This suit never looked better than
it does on you, Lt. Colonel Rane.

(a beat)

Try it out. Walk around.

Rane tests the fit of his new suit. Unsteady on his two-inch heels, Charlie walks with an uncertain gait.

BRANNIGAN

(uncertain)

Do you like it? How does it fit?

Rane attempts to put Brannigan at ease:

RANE

Oh, it fits fine. Real nice. I
like it very much.

(a beat)

And comfortable, too.

BRANNIGAN

I'm so glad you like it.

(a beat; hesitant)

Ah, Lt. Colonel Rane, would you mind
if we took a picture of you in your
new suit? To hang in our window.
We're very proud to have you as our
customer.

Brannigan gestures to the rear of the store and a young man walks out with a camera and flash attachment.

BRANNIGAN

Now, Lt. Colonel, if you'll just
sort of stand here in the middle
of the room.

(gestures)

Rane walks to the center of the store, feeling more like a naked man in a bus terminal than a hero.

BRANNIGAN

There, that's fine.

(to photographer)

All right, Bob, you stand over
there.

Rane poses. The photographer readies his camera.

BRANNIGAN

You don't happen to have any medals with you, do you, Lt. Colonel? It would look sort of nice if we could pin a medal or two on the front of the suit. A real touch of class.

RANE

(apologetic)

No, I don't. I left them all at home.

BRANNIGAN

All right then, we'll shoot it like this.

There is a CLICK and a bulb flashes in Charlie's face.

TIMECUT: Rane steps out of the store and walks down the sidewalk toward his Cadillac. Wearing his new suit, he carries a box of his old clothes under one arm.

He glances at his reflection in the store windows as he passes. He is not pleased with what he sees. He is still trying to get the knack of walking on high heels.

Suddenly fed up with what he sees, he stops and stares at himself in a store window. He tucks the box under his left arm, and, walking toward the car, pulls his floral shirt right off his chest with his right hand. At first the shirt doesn't come. He yanks and tugs and rips it off in shreds.

Walking more quickly toward his car, Rane reaches down and removes his shoes one by one, tossing each one a different direction as he goes. He wears yellow-and-brown argyle socks.

He throws the box into the open back seat of the convertible, hops in, starts the engine and squeals off.

CUT TO:

WELCOME HERO

Rane brakes his Caddy into the dusty shoulder in front of his house.

He gets out of the car and walks toward the house in his argyle stocking feet. Under his brown velvet suitcoat are the shredded remnants of a Cardin shirt, and, under that, a sleeveless undershirt.

He notices a brown Ford station wagon (the kind with fake wood on the side) in the driveway as he walks past, but pays it no mind. Three of the license plate numbers are "RFD."

Rane opens the door and walks into the house.

As Rane steps into the LIVING ROOM he feels the presence of someone behind him. The steel blue barrel of a .38 revolver is raised to the back of his head.

A raspy Mexican voice says firmly:

MEXICAN VOICE

Welcome home, hero. Sit down.

Rane walks slowly across the room and sits on the sofa underneath the Memory Wall. To his right is the new color TV; some of the presents atop it have been opened. Among the presents we notice some cologne and -- of all things -- Barry Sadler's 1969 "Green Berets" album.

Rane surveys the room: A fortyish MEXICAN in a Robert Hall suit stands before him with a .38 in his hand. Two young Texas thugs stand against the far wall. They wear cowboy boots, faded jeans, western shirts, Stetsons and shit-eating grins. They also carry revolvers.

The door to Mark's bedroom is ajar. Janet and Mark, frightened, sit on the edge of the bed watching someone out of Rane's view.

MEXICAN

We hear you got some money hid, hero. We'd like to have it.

Rane says nothing.

MEXICAN

You might as well talk up now, hero, cause you're going to talk sooner or later and I can guarantee sooner is going to be a lot preferable to later.

Rane opens his mouth: words come out. He speaks in an empty monotone:

RANE

That money is all I got to show for seven years. I will never give it up.

MEXICAN

You will give it up, gringo. You know that.

CAMERA CLOSES IN on Rane: he says nothing.

The Mexican motions to the two thugs. He speaks in a tired professional tone of voice:

MEXICAN

All right, T-Bird, bust heem. Pegale.

T-BIRD, the first Texan, walks over to Rane and clips him across the chin with the barrel of his gun. Blood appears on Charlie's lower cheek. T-Bird aims his revolver point blank at Rane's left eye.

The SECOND TEXAN, a hulking young man, walks around the other side of Rane and puts a knife to his throat. A drop of blood trickles down his neck.

MEXICAN

Te duele, hero?
(pauses)

Look, I don't want to fool around. I'm as patriotic as the next guy but if you don't tell us where that 124 Gs is hid, you are going to be dead very soon.

Janet's SOBS can be heard from the bedroom.

CAMERA CLOSES IN on Rane again, and all of a sudden we realize how he survived seven years of torture:

It is as if Charles Rane has removed his mind from his body. It doesn't matter what anybody does to his body because he is no longer in it. These men are torturing an empty body.

Rane's awkwardness and uneasiness are suddenly gone. His face is blank, calm, distant; he is now in a world he totally understands. He is more experienced at being tortured than his torturers are at torturing.

He really doesn't have the choice whether to tell them where the money is hidden or not. He could not tell if he wanted to. He has lost his capacity to give in.

As the Mexican's boots step toward Rane, we notice they are made from multi-colored suede patches.

The Texans step aside as the Mexican pulls a gold butane lighter from his pocket. Igniting it, the Mexican runs the lighter up and down Charlie's cheek. Even though he is not tied or held down, Rane does not resist.

MEXICAN

Come on, hero, comeon. Where de mangos hid, hey?

The Mexican pulls his lighter away from Rane's blistered cheek.

T-BIRD

Man, that usually does it.

SECOND TEXAN

Sheet, that old boy is a tough un.
(chortles)

The Second Texan is obviously a low grade intelligence. The Mexican looks at him a moment.

Thinking, the Mexican pulls out a cigarette and lights it with his lighter. Suddenly -- angry and exasperated -- the Mexican chucks down his cigarette and lighter and grabs Rane by his brown velvet lapels.

MEXICAN

Cabron! I can make this damn Texican talk.

The Mexican hauls Charlie into the KITCHEN and the Texans follow.

Passing in front of the grease-spattered map of Viet Nam, the Mexican grabs Charlie by the left wrist and leads him over to the sink. He turns on the faucet, then flips the switch: we hear the familiar grinding sound.

Holding Charlie's hand above the disposal, the Mexican yells:

MEXICAN

Talk now, hero!

Rane says nothing.

The Mexican thrusts Charlie's hand into the disposal. We hear a hideous grinding sound. Rane's face is blitzed with pain.

MEXICAN

Cabron, gringo. Me cago en la
leche de tu puta madre. Maricon.
Concha. Bizocho.

The Mexican pulls Rane's hand out of the disposal and examines it (we do not see the hand).

T-BIRD

(with admiration)

Es un tío barbaro.

MEXICAN

(to Rane)

Talk!

Rane says nothing. The Mexican rethrusts Charlie's hand into the disposal.

This time the Mexican does not remove it so quickly. We here the GRINDING of flesh and bones as we watch Rane's agonized, stoic face. His body cries out for him to break down but he cannot.

When the Mexican finally does remove Rane's hand and switch off the disposal, we see (although only fleetingly) that the fingers have been ground away.

The Mexican walks back toward the living room. T-Bird follows. The Second Texan grabs a kitchen towel and wraps up the bloody mess under Rane's left cuff.

T-BIRD

I don't think we're going to get
it, jefe.

MEXICAN

Maybe not. But we got one more
chance.

As they enter the LIVING ROOM the Mexican calls into Mark's bedroom:

MEXICAN

Melio. Traigame son esposo.

The Second Texan brings Charlie back into the living room and sets him down on the sofa. Rane looks up at the Mexican.

MELIO, a young Mexican hood wearing tight green pants, brings Janet in from the bedroom. Janet tries to scream when she sees Charlie but the only thing that comes from her mouth is a pathetic croaking sound.

The Mexican gestures and Melio forces Janet to her knees in front of Charlie. Melio puts his small .32 automatic to her temples.

MEXICAN

Mano, in another time and place I would be proud to know you because you are... so macho. But now I am going to have to kill your wife if you do not tell me where that money is hid right away. You know I am telling the truth. Your wife is very close to death.

CAMERA CLOSES IN on Rane's face: there is no emotion.

CAMERA stays on Rane's face as we hear three voice tracks simultaneously. One voice is Janet's, another the Mexican's, and the third -- and dominant -- is Charlie's own narrative VOICE OVER. It is an excerpt from something he has told Maxwell: a reminiscence from Hanoi.

JANET O.S.

Tell them,
Charlie! Oh
please, please,
please tell
them! It's
not worth it.
Oh, Charlie,
tell them.

RANE V.O.

They would walk into my
cell, two of them, the one
we called Oil Can Harry and
Ap Chong, his assistant.
They would say "Today is
the day you die Lt. Rane"
and put a gun to my head
and pull the trigger.
And the gun would be empty.
But you were always afraid
because sometimes they did
it to prisoners and the gun
wouldn't be empty...

MEXICAN O.S.

Do that, hero.
Tell them.
You got 15
seconds left.
Come on, talk.
Ten seconds.
Talk. Five
seconds.
Talk, hero.

All these voices abrupt HALT when we hear the sharp sound of a .32 automatic discharging. BAAM! There is an ABBREVIATED SCREAM, a SILENCE, and the THUD of a body slumping to the floor.

Rane's face is as calm and placid as the distant sea.

We hear Mark's SCREAMING VOICE and CAMERA CUTS to him running from the bedroom:

MARK

I know where the money's hid. I know where. It's in the barn. Out back. Under the tools. I saw him hide it.

Even this draws no emotion from Rane.

MEXICAN

(softly)

Menos mal. Show him where, kid. Go on.

The Second Texan leads Mark out back.

TIMECUT: The Mexican and his assistants look at the money briefly as the Second Texan opens the sack on the chair. Rane sits unmoving, Janet's body at his feet. Mark, in shock, sits nearby. Charlie looks over at his money.

T-BIRD

Vamos a quitaros de aqui.

SECOND TEXAN

Yoah-ah. Still the same plan.

MEXICAN

You and T-Bird take the wagon and we'll meet at Big Ed's in Acuna.

The Mexican stoops beside Janet's body to pick up his gold butane lighter.

Melio packs up the money and starts out the front door.

T-Bird gestures toward Mark and Rane:

T-BIRD

What about them?

MEXICAN

We'll have to stop them, of course. There's no stopping now.

(looks at Rane)

Yeah. Kill the poor son of a bitch.

T-Bird raises his revolver arm's length and shoots Mark in the head. Turning half-circle, he aims his revolver and shoots Rane in the head.

Charlie falls off the sofa and slumps to the floor.

MEXICAN

(softly)

Chupate esa.

SCREEN GOES TO BLACK.

CUT TO:

COMING TO

SEVERAL DAYS LATER. The screen slowly comes into FOCUS. We see a NURSE's face.

The Nurse's eyes open with excitement. She calls out:

NURSE

Doctor! Doctor! Come quickly!
He's coming to!

There is the SOUND of FOOTSTEPS and the faces of two DOCTORS come into view. Behind them stands Col. Maxwell. One doctor bends toward us.

CUT to third person POV. The doctors bend over Rane's bed. Col. Maxwell watches them.

Charlie's head, face and left hand are heavily bandaged. His eyes are blurry, his face pale.

Maxwell leans over to Charlie, putting his hand on the edge of the bed.

MAXWELL

Charlie, can you hear me? Can you
hear me?

The doctor looks sharply at Maxwell but Maxwell's return glance indicates he feels he must continue.

MAXWELL

Can you hear me, Charlie? This is
very important. Can you tell us
anything? Who were they?

With great effort, Rane shakes his head "no" and sinks back to the pillow.

The screen goes OUT OF FOCUS and slowly to BLACK.

CUT TO:

MEMORY FAILS

FADE IN: several days later. Rane's HOSPITAL ROOM.

Charlie's bed has been cranked up a bit and he has his eyes open.

Around his bed stand Maxwell, an FBI INVESTIGATOR, and the Nurse. The walls of Charlie's large private room are lined with floral wreaths and bouquets. One bears the legend, "GET WELL SOON, LT. COL. RANE."

Col. Maxwell bends toward Charlie while the Nurse looks admiringly on.

MAXWELL

(reassuring)

You're going to be all right, Charlie. The doctors say everything's going to be all right.

Rane smiles weakly.

A newspaper on Rane's bedstand proclaims: "RANE TO RECOVER"

MAXWELL

I guess I should have known all along. Nothing could ever stop you.

(pause)

I hate to go through this again, but we have to.

(gesturing)

This is Special Investigator Tom Festerhof from the FBI. He's here to help us.

Festerhof draws near the bed:

FESTERHOF

If there's anything, anything at all, you might remember. No matter how insignificant. It might help us. It's been almost a week and the trail is getting colder every day. We have so little to go on.

(a beat; no response)

The entire combined forces of the United States Air Force, the FBI, the Texas Rangers, the Texas State Police and the Corpus Christi Police stand ready at your disposal. All we need is a little more information to swing into action.

Rane draws himself up in his bed a little:

RANE

I'm sorry, Investigator. Like I told you and all those others, it's all a blank. I can't remember anything. Memory fails. The last thing I remember I was coming home from the clothes store.

(a beat)

Haven't the police been able to do anything?

FESTERHOF

We're doing everything we can. The Director has put top priority on this case, as has the President himself. We have instructions to apprehend these murderers at all costs. We've been instructed to add their names to the Ten Most Wanted list once we discover who they are.

MAXWELL

You've got to keep trying to remember. Something has to come back.

FESTERHOF

Do you remember the hand?
(holds up left hand)

RANE

(growing impatient)

No, I don't remember that either. I told you, it's all a blank. Maybe it was the head wound. I'm still dizzy most of the time. There's nothing there...

(gestures toward head)

I was in the car, I walked toward the house, then I woke up here.

MAXWELL

(reassuring)

All right, Charlie, it's all right.

(to Festerhof)

Maybe you should go now.

Festerhof excuses himself and exits.

RANE

(thin smile)

So how are you, Bill?

MAXWELL

(returns smile)

I'm fine, Charlie. Is there anything I can do for you? Anything you would like to know?

RANE

Did you go to the funeral?

MAXWELL

Yes.

RANE

How was it?

MAXWELL

Small, quiet, dignified. The Secretary of Defense was there. Dr. Kissinger. General Westmoreland, Abrams. Westmoreland wants to come back out and visit you. The President sent a telegram. Did you read it?

Maxwell reaches for telegram on bedstand.

RANE

Yeah. Where were they buried? Does it look nice?

MAXWELL

It's very nice, Charlie. Two simple stones. It's in your family plot at Longworth.

RANE

You send them flowers, huh?

MAXWELL

Oh yes, Charlie.

RANE

Lots of flowers?

MAXWELL

Fresh flowers every day.

RANE

(gesturing)

Cause I don't need all these flowers here. You could send some of these over.

MAXWELL
Don't worry, Charlie. It's all
been taken care of.

RANE
Good.

SCREEN GOES TO BLACK.

CUT TO:

THIS TOO WILL PASS

FADE IN: several days later. Charlie is sitting up in bed. His facial bandages have been removed (burn scars remain), and his head bandage is considerably smaller.

On his lap rests a stack of old newspapers. Rane is going through them, reading press accounts of the murders and his recovery. The latest paper shows a picture of him sitting up in his bed smiling and waving.

Cliff, wearing his policeman's uniform, walks into the room. Rane looks up.

RANE
(smiling)
Hey, Cliff.

CLIFF
How are you, Charlie?

Cliff grasps Rane's good hand with both hands and shakes it firmly.

RANE
Great, Cliff. Getting better.

Rane points to the newspaper photo:

RANE
They're making me quite a star.

Cliff is a little surprised by Charlie's "up" mood but doesn't say anything. For his part, Cliff is very "down," almost distraught.

Cliff sees a steel artificial hand lying on the bedstand:

CLIFF
I see they got you a new hand.

RANE
(picks it up)
Yeah. Pretty snazzy, huh? It hurts a little to wear it at first, so I'm just sort of getting used to having it around.

Charlie slips the artificial hand with its twin stainless steel hooks onto his left hand to show Cliff how it will look.

CLIFF

You'll get the knack of it, all right.

Rane puts the artificial hand back on the bedstand.

CLIFF

I got some good news for you, Charlie. Some of the Corpus businessmen are getting together and want to partially reimburse you for your losses, you know, in the robbery.

RANE

No. No. Thank them, but tell them I don't want no more charity. Janet had some life insurance and I got that money coming and I can get along on that. I don't need anything else.

CLIFF

(morbid)

Well, if that's the way you want it.

There is an awkward pause; finally Cliff lets out a deep sigh:

CLIFF

Oh, God, Charlie, life is lonely without her.

Cliff swallows his tears:

CLIFF

She was some kind of woman, wasn't she, Charlie? I don't know how I'm going to get along without her.

Cliff brushes back his tears and sniffs. Charlie reaches out and puts his hand on Cliff's shoulder. Cliff sinks his head into Charlie's chest.

CLIFF

(crying)

We gotta get them bastards. We gotta get 'em. Oh, Janet.

Rane comforts him:

RANE

Hang together, Cliff. You'll be
all right. It'll pass. It always
passes. Life will go on. You
will forget.

SCREEN GOES TO BLACK.

CUT TO:

THE VOICE OF EXPERIENCE

FADE IN: Rane walks down the hospital corridor with Col. Maxwell. Rane is wearing hospital pajamas and a bathrobe -- and his new stainless steel hand.

Several nurses watch adoringly as he passes.

MAXWELL

You all ready to go home, Charlie?

RANE

Yep, I'm looking forward to getting out of here tomorrow.

MAXWELL

It may be kind of hectic.

RANE

Don't worry. I can handle it.

Rane holds up his artificial hand, opens the claws:

RANE

Got a cigarette?

MAXWELL

You're really getting good with that thing.

Maxwell shakes out a cigarette and Charlie picks it up with his artificial hand. Rane places the cigarette in his mouth and Maxwell lights it for him.

RANE

Yep. Just like a regular hand, now. I can hold a newspaper, put on a shirt -- even tie my shoes.

MAXWELL

You've had plenty of time the last couple weeks to think things over. Has anything come back to you? Even the slightest detail? A color, a shape? The police are stymied. They need something to go on.

RANE

No, Bill. It's all gone for good. The dizziness went away but the memory never came back. I'll never remember anything. I think it's better that way.

MAXWELL

Yeah, maybe it is.

(a beat)

Honestly, Charlie, I think you
can cope with these things better
than I can.

RANE

(smiles)

Well, I've had plenty of experience.

SCREEN GOES TO BLACK.

CUT TO:

A RASPING SOUND

FADE IN: Late that night. It is about 2 a.m. in the dark hospital.

The CAMERA slowly DOLLIES down the darkened corridor.

In the distance we hear a RASPING SOUND: krerww, krerww.

The silent TRACKING SHOT continues. We pass stationary hospital carts, closed doors, a night nurse silently working.

The RASPING SOUND grows louder: Krerww, Krerww.

We TRACK around a corner in the corridor and approach the partially open door to Rane's room. We track in.

The RASPING SOUND is now louder. KRERww, KRERww.

We TRACK across the room toward Rane's bed.

A small night light shines about Charlie's bed. Rane is sitting up, working on something in his lap.

We TRACK closer: KRERWW, KRERWW.

The CAMERA CLOSES IN on Rane's work: he is slowly sharpening the hook of his artificial hand with a long metal file. With each long stroke, the claws become sharper.

CUT TO his face: it is hard and determined.

We suddenly realize Rane has never forgotten his night of torture. He knows what he must do.

KRERWW! KRERWW!

CUT TO:

D DAY

Approximately 8:30 a.m.: Charles Rane, neatly dressed in a conservative suit, walks briskly down the hospital corridor with Col. Maxwell. There is considerable excitement up and down the corridors: Rane is being released.

Several nurses and hospital personnel smile, wave or shake hands with the passing war hero. Charlie is also smiling, nodding goodbye.

Approaching the front door, Rane and Maxwell brace themselves. OUTSIDE: they are greeted by a cluster of pushing-shoving newsmen and photographers.

MAXWELL

(calling out)

All right, men. You know the agreement.
Only photographs. No questions.

Rane poses for photographers and the cameras click away. After a moment, Maxwell thanks the newsmen and leads Rane to an awaiting Air Force car.

MAXWELL

(to photographers)

Tomorrow, men.

TIMECUT: Rane and Maxwell ride in the back seat of the AF car. A serviceman acts as chauffeur. Rane looks ahead with concern:

RANE

(to Maxwell)

Where are we going?

MAXWELL

I thought you'd want to stop at the cemetery a moment.

RANE

Well, not just yet. I want to come home and rest first. Just for a little while.

MAXWELL

You want me to stop over for a while?

RANE

No, I want to be alone. I'm sick of crowds. I'll see you again tomorrow.

MAXWELL

Well, okay.

(to driver)

Go to Lt. Col. Rane's home.

TIMECUT: The AF car pulls up in front of Rane's home and Charlie gets out.

Maxwell gets out to follow Rane but Rane waves him off. The AF chauffeur also gets out but Rane waves him back also. Charlie walks toward the front door.

Maxwell and the chauffeur look at each other, shrug, and get back into the car.

Once inside the INT. LIVING ROOM, Rane peeks through the front curtain to see if Maxwell has left yet. After a moment, the AF car drives away.

Rane turns and walks directly through the living room. The room has been straightened and cleaned; there is a new carpet, but Rane doesn't even pause long enough to notice.

Entering his CELLAR/WORKSHOP, Rane walks directly to his gun rack. He starts pulling guns out of the rack and placing them on a work table.

It is an impressive collection: 2 nickel-plated Colt Commander .45 automatics, a Smith and Wesson 357 Combat Magnum, a snub-nosed Colt Cobra .22 revolver, a Winchester 12 gauge Super 6-shot pump shotgun, 2 Browning B-SS 12 gauge Double Barrel shotguns, plus clips and boxes and boxes of ammunition.

With his good hand, Rane clamps the Winchester 6-shot into his workbench vice and proceeds to saw off the barrel. The barrel CLANGS to the cement floor. CU: lying on the floor, the sawed-off barrel looks like the leavings of a major amputation.

Rane starts carrying his guns into the LIVING ROOM.

TIMECUT: soon they are all spread on the sofa.

Going into his BEDROOM, Charlie removes his suit coat and shirt. He removes his freshly pressed blue AF uniform out of the closet on a hanger and places it on the bed.

Rane removes the medals from the uniform and places them on the bed beside it.

TIMECUT: Rane, wearing his uniform, finishes loading the last of his guns into the roomy trunk of the big red Cadillac. CU: the guns lie in neat rows on an old blanket. Rane removes a .45 and closes the trunk. Placing the .45 under the front seat, he walks back toward the house.

In the KITCHEN Rane rummages about for some food, but can only find a package of stale OREOs. He picks up the package and a quart of J&B and walks back toward the living room.

In the BEDROOM, he removes a stack of twenty dollar bills which had been hidden under the dresser. There appears to be about \$500.

When he slips the wad of bills into his pants pocket, Charlie feels something unusual there. Fishing around in his pocket, he comes out with a piece of paper. It reads:

Linda Forchet TR6-3265

He looks at the paper a moment and walks back toward the living room. As he passes the bed, we notice the medals are no longer lying on it.

By the time he gets in the LIVING ROOM, he has his mind made up. He sits down and dials the phone. He waits for the phone to ring. It does, and a girl's pleasant Texas VOICE comes on the other end.

LINDA (O.S.)

Hello, JK Vending Machines.

RANE

Is this Linda Forchet?

LINDA (O.S.)

Yes it is.

RANE

Well, hello, Linda. This is Charlie Rane. Remember me? We met at a press conference a couple weeks ago. You were...

LINDA

Wow! I remember. Of course I know who you are, Col. Rane.

RANE

How are you?

LINDA (O.S.)

(puzzled)

I'm fine. How about you? I read about it in the papers. It was horrible...

RANE

I'm great. It was nothing. The papers always play these things up.

(a beat)

Listen, Linda, I was thinking of taking a sort of little vacation and I wondered if you'd like to come?

LINDA (O.S.)

Where you going?

RANE

Oh, I thought I'd head over toward Acuna. Del Rio, that area. There's some nice country around there.

LINDA (O.S.)

There is?

RANE

Well, it ain't bad. No crowds. You wanna come?

LINDA (O.S.)

Gee, I really can't, you know, Colonel? I got a job. What would my boss say? I just can't up and leave.

RANE

(persuasive)

Ah, come on, Linda. You don't want to miss the chance of a lifetime, do you? We'll only be gone a couple-a days. We'll have a great time. When will you get another opportunity like this?

LINDA (O.S.)

Well...

RANE

I knew you'd love to come.

LINDA (O.S.)

I didn't say I was gonna come.

RANE

Are you?

(a beat)

Aw, com'on, sweetheart.

LINDA (O.S.)

Maybe...

RANE

Good, I'll pick you up in an hour.

LINDA (O.S.)

An hour?

RANE

Sure. Can you be ready?

LINDA (O.S.)

I don't get off work until five.

RANE

Gee, I can't wait that long. Can't you get sick or something? I'm a nice guy, Linda. Honest, really I am.

LINDA (O.S.)

I don't know why I'm doing this.

RANE

No second thoughts, now.

LINDA (O.S.)

Okay, I'll figure out a way. Don't know how, though. But you can't meet me here. And I have to go home and get some things. My hair needs to get done, too.

RANE

I'll take care of that. Where'll we meet?

LINDA (O.S.)

We can meet in the coffee shop on the corner by my apartment. That's the Eat-Rite coffee shop. The corner of 4th and Sam Houston. Right next to the Sav-More Drug Discount store.

RANE

See you in an hour, Linda.

CUT TO:

5% REAL

Rane's long red Caddy (top down) pulls up beside the EAT-RITE COFFEE SHOP. He HONKS the horn and waves inside.

Linda Forchet comes bundling out, an overnight bag in her hand. She is wearing a short pleated purple skirt, a "grab-me" yellow pullover and mounds of enticingly coiffured blonde hair.

Linda is everything Tammy Wynette sings about: ex-cheerleader, ex-wife, 9-to-5 community chest. She's about 95% plastic, but the 5% that ain't gives her an edge on just about everybody else.

LINDA

Hello, Lt. Colonel. Some car you got.

RANE

Welcome aboard, Linda.

Rane's Cadillac works its way through the late morning traffic. Ever since his "accident," Charlie Rane's personality has taken a marked turn for the better. He seems more at ease, genial, confident. That uncertainty and unnamed fear are gone -- or, perhaps, they have simply been driven underground, replaced by a deeper motivation which allows him to appear calm on the surface.

LINDA

I pretended I got sick. I said I had cramps. Here, you know.
(hold lower abdomen)
Woman-type sick. That always works.

There is no immediate response from Rane so Linda picks up the thin conversational thread again:

LINDA

You don't give a person much time.
(a beat)
Where we going again?

RANE

Going to 'cuna. You ever been there?

LINDA

That's a greaseball town, right?
Over the line?

RANE

Yeah. Down from Del Rio.

LINDA

What's there?

RANE

Action. Some guys I used to know.

The car radio has been playing softly, but Linda's ear catches a song she likes.

LINDA

Oh, Tammy Wy-nette.

Linda turns up the radio.

Rane drives up the ramp to the expressway. Putting his hand on Linda's bare knee, he says:

RANE

Now watch this baby go.

Charlie trounces on the accelerator: in a great arrogant burst of exhaust the huge red convertible fishtails down the highway.

The radio plays as they speed west:

"Just follow the stairway,
To this lonely world of mine,
You'll find me waiting here,
In apartment number nine."

CUT TO:

MANLY ARROGANCE

Somewhere west of Carrizo Springs, Rane pulls off Highway 83 and drives into an "EAT GAS" truckstop.

A young Texan station attendant looks on with awe as Rane wheels the Caddy next to one of the pumps.

RANE
(getting out)
Fillerup. Ethyl Supreme. Oil
'n water.

Linda hops out and follows Charlie as he heads toward the restaurant. Her hair is pathetically windblown and she gropes for the hairbrush in her purse as she walks.

LINDA
Jesus, Charlie, we was going so
fast the words blown right outa
my mouth.

They catch the stares of several truckers as they enter the INT. TRUCKSTOP. Feeling their stares, Rane cups Linda's left ham in a display of manly arrogance. Embarrassed, Linda removes his hand from her ass.

Rane slides into a vinyl booth and Linda plops down across from him. They appear on very amiable terms.

Rane slides the menu toward him but doesn't look at it. Linda vainly tries to brush her windblown hair:

LINDA
Gee, I never thought you'd remember
who I was.

RANE
Oh, I don't forget, Linda.

Linda, a little embarrassed, tries to excuse herself for picking up Rane:

LINDA
Golly, I'm just such a fool for
Army men. Just show me anything
in a uniform and I get all wet.
(laughs at herself)
I should be kept on a leash around
Army bases.

RANE
You from Army people?

LINDA

Yeah, I was an Army brat. Dad was stationed at the Naval Air Station in Beeville. Then he got promoted and we moved to Corpus. He always said I shoulda stayed Army. He was real upset when I married Sam.

RANE

Why?

LINDA

'Cause Sam was intellectual and all.

RANE

(interrupting)

No, why did you marry Sam?

LINDA

Well, he just knew everything. He was real smart, not like me. I'm about as bright as a night-light. He'd made a gob of money in real estate and was handsome. The marriage wasn't his idea. I hit on him. But then he started getting into politics and dropped me like a hot potater. He's an aide to something or other now in Austin. I read his name once in the paper. Sometimes his mother calls -- she always liked me.

RANE

That doesn't sound too bad to me.

LINDA

Well, it wasn't so hot, I can tell you. Me about as sharp as a napkin and this guy always saying what is what. It was like that song, you know, "Satin sheets to lie on, satin pillows to cry on." That's Jeanne Fruit. Well I had them satin sheets up to here.

(gestures)

I mean Sam was important and all but he wasn't ever a real man. Never was. Just a talker. But I didn't do no worse than my girlfriends. The ones that ain't unhappy jus' hang around the Naval Officers Club.

RANE

(smiling)

Not like some people we know.

LINDA

(shrugs)

Well, you can meet some nice guys
at the Officers Club.

The waitress walks over:

WAITRESS

Ready to order, folks?

Rane replies without ever taking his eyes off Linda.
Linda smiles apologetically at the waitress.

RANE

Two cheeseburgs, fries and chocolate
malts.

LINDA

Make mine light on the ice cream,
heavy on the malt.

The waitress takes the order and leaves. Looking at the
jukebox selector in the booth, Linda searches for a coin
in her purse. Rane pulls out a quarter and gives it to
her.

LINDA

Thanks.

Linda puts the quarter into the box.

LINDA

Damn. This is one of those new
machines they got now. Only two
plays for a quarter. That's a
crime. I can't live without a
jukebox.

Linda pushes two selections and turns back to Charlie:

LINDA

You see, I suffered, too, Charlie.

Loretta Lynn's "Fist City" comes on the box.

RANE

I remember that song. It was
around before I left. Loretta
Lynn.

(smiles)

LINDA

She's a grandmother already.

RANE

No kiddin'? Wow. I heard Kitty Wells died. Is that true?

LINDA

Kitty Wells? Hell no. She's got her own TV show. Every Saturday morning. "The Kitty Wells Show." It's with her whole family.

RANE

Maybe it was somebody else.

LINDA

Patsy Cline?

RANE

No, no. Patsy Cline died long before I even left. That was ages ago. In a plane crash. I saw her perform once in San Anton. Maybe nobody died. Maybe I just got it all confused.

LINDA

I don't know anybody who died. Do you know all the new singers?

RANE

Nah, not at all.

LINDA

Who do you know?

RANE

Well, I remember the Queen, Kitty Wells, and Cute 'n Country Connie Smith, and Miss Tammy of course. I liked Bonnie Guitar a lot. And Dolly Parton -- she's nice.

LINDA

Did you ever hear Susan Raye? She's real good.

RANE

Nope.

LINDA

She's from California. Bakersfield.
(MORE)

LINDA (CONT'D)

She's got a song that goes:

(sings)

"I guess my heart has a mind of
its own."

RANE

But that's an old song. I heard
it before.

LINDA

And then there's Jeanne Fruit,
and, let's see, Barbara Fairchild,
"The Teddy Bear Song." And little
Tanya Tucker. She's only 14 years
old. Donna Fargo. Conny VanDyk.

RANE

Wow, I never heard of any of them.

LINDA

We should stop and get a stereo
and some albums. I'll help you
pick 'em. You missed a lot.

A young child about 8 walks by the booth and spots
Charlie's shiny stainless steel hand. He stops and
stares at it.

His mother calls reprimandingly from a nearby booth:

MOTHER

Billy!

Rane replies to the mother:

RANE

It's all right, ma'am.

The little boy connects Rane's uniform with his artificial
hand:

BILLY

Was you in the Army, mister?

RANE

Yep.

BILLY

(looking at hand)

Did you get that in the Army?

RANE

Yep.

BILLY

Wow. That's neat. Kin I touch it?

RANE

Sure, Billy.

Billy runs his hand up and down the glistening hook.

BILLY

Wow. I wish I had one of those.

RANE

Well, maybe when you grow up and go in the Army you can get one.

BILLY

You really think so?

RANE

Sure. It happens all the time.

BILLY

Gee.

MOTHER

(from distance)

Come back to the table, Billy.

BILLY

(looking back)

I gotta go now.

RANE

Here, I've got a present for you.

BILLY

What?

Rane reaches in his back pocket and pulls out one of his medals. He hands it to Billy.

BILLY

Wow! Kin I keep it?

RANE

Sure, it's yours. I've got plenty of them.

BILLY

Gee, thanks.

Billy walks away, admiring his new present.

RANE

'Bye, Billy.

Billy walks off. Rane looks back at Linda. Tears are coming down her cheeks. He holds her hand:

RANE

Oh, baby. Come on. Pull yourself together. Your malt's coming.

CUT TO:

BAIT IN THE TRAP

The big red Cad hauls ass down U.S. 277. 100 mph, maybe more. The SOUNDTRACK plays on:

"You better move your feet,
If you don't want to eat,
A meal that's called Fist City."

TIMECUT: Rane and Linda pull into the Del Rio city limits. Population 10,000.

Crossing through the town, they drive south toward the border.

Rane pulls off the road and drives into the lot of the NO-TELL MOTEL. It is about 4:00 p.m.

Linda, straightening her hair -- now a hopeless task, watches Charlie as he checks in, comes out with a key and walks into a nearby room.

Linda picks up her overnight bag and follows.

INSIDE the MOTEL ROOM Rane walks into the bathroom and washes his face and hands. Linda sets her bag down and flops onto the bed. The walls of the room are pink, the tufted bedspread purple, and a print of a bullfighter decorates one wall.

Linda watches Charlie soulfully. "Her man" strips to the waist, and washes his sinewy trunk with a damp washcloth and redresses.

Linda pulls up her thin yellow ribbed pullover just below her breasts, revealing a deliciously tanned band of skin. Kicking off her shoes, she sensuously sets her heels against the purple bedspread.

Leaving the bathroom in a mess, Charlie walks back into the room and eyes Linda. Rane hack-coughs: he is not well.

Seeing the messy bathroom, Linda says playfully:

LINDA
Don't you ever clean up behind
yourself?

RANE
That's why God made Mexicans.

Smiling apologetically, Rane turns and walks toward the door: he has priorities higher than sex.

Rane opens the door and walks outside. Linda, shocked, jumps up and runs after him.

OUTSIDE, she finds him resting against the Caddy waiting for her.

LINDA

Hey, whatcha doing? Don't you want me to come along?

RANE

Of course I do. I was just waiting for you.

LINDA

Where are you going?

RANE

Into Acuna. Boys Town.

LINDA

(shocked)

Boys Town! God! What are you going to do there?

RANE

There are some men I need to find.

LINDA

What am I doing here?

RANE

I want you to help me.

LINDA

Help you?

RANE

Some of these men may recognize me. I need someone they don't know.

LINDA

Don't know? Who are these men?

RANE

They're the men that hurt me, Linda.

LINDA

(catching on)

My God! Oh no. Not this. You just brought me along as a decoy, didn't you? You just want to use me. Oh no. I'm about as slow as a Chinese funeral. I never catch on.

RANE

I want you to help me. This is something you should do.

LINDA

God, why do I always end up with the crazy men?

RANE

That's 'cause there's a shortage of the other kind. You have to take what you can get.

LINDA

Not me.

RANE

(sincere)

Linda, I need your help. You can help me.

LINDA

Yeah, like bait in a trap.

RANE

There are worse things.

(pause)

Linda, this means little to you, but it means everything to me.

(a beat)

Will you come?

LINDA

Well, I ain't got much choice, do I?

CUT TO:

THE INSIDE MAN

Charlie and Linda pass through Customs, pay the 20¢ toll and cross the border into Acuna.

They pass through the business district of Acuna -- a pretty sorry-looking place -- and head south. The peasants look up in wonder as the giant car passes.

They pass through the "proper" business district of Acuna and reach a large, vacant, weed-infested, bottle-strewn field. Rane thumpety-thumps the Cadillac across the field. The field is kept unkempt to separate the town proper from the Boys Town -- and with good reason.

The Acuna Boys Town (because that's where the "boys" go) is about the seediest of all the seedy border towns stretching from Tijuana to Neuvo Laredo. Most of the other border towns halted their forward progress in about 1935; Acuna, however, is suspended in 1890.

Rows of tacky bars and brothels are banked up from the gutted one-lane white dust streets. There are few electric lights and horses and carriages amble down the narrow street. The bars have names like "El Lobo," "El Coyote," "El Caballo."

Rane drives his big convertible down the middle of the narrow street, forcing the horses and carriages to the side as he goes. It is an arrogant breach of convention. Border lowlife look down at Rane and Linda from the high curb embankments.

Rane finds an opening between two buildings and pulls the car into it. He cuts the engine.

Looking down the row of seedy bars, his eyes light on a painted sign reading "La Mujer Negro." He motions to it:

RANE

That's a good starting place. Go over there. Ask for a guy named Big Ed. Say you've been sent to see him.

LINDA

Whatja mean, go in there? That's greaseballville in there. No decent person would go in there.

RANE

Nothing can happen to you. It's broad daylight.

LINDA

I was willing to do something
for you, Charlie, but not this.
Let's go back. This is painful.
Humiliating.

Rane starts to run out of patience. There's no way, of course, he's going to go back. Instead of getting angry at Linda, however, he speaks with passion.

RANE

Linda, I'll make this short but it's important. There is something you have to understand. These things are not important. Honest. All these external things like pain, humiliation, sorrow, pleasure, fame, happiness, love, sex, glory, emotions, they are nice, but they are not important. You can live without them. They exist on the outside; they are not real. The only thing real is the inside, the interior life, and that has nothing to do with the outside. The life that comes from within... here...

(holds heart)

... and here...

(holds head)

... these are the real things. That is where you live. Nothing else matters. I'm telling you the truth now. You may have not heard it before but it's the truth nonetheless. Once you live inside those things don't matter.

(a beat)

Honest, Linda, believe me.

It is a deranged speech -- but persuasive. Linda is nearly mesmerized.

LINDA

You're crazy, Charlie. As crazy as a jaybird in the snow.

RANE

Will you go?

(a beat)

For me?

LINDA

I don't suppose anything can happen. Poor Linda. Here she goes again.

RANE

Will you?

LINDA

Yes. For you, Charlie, for you.

She embraces him and they kiss. She is still embracing him as he reaches under the seat and pulls out his nickel-plated .45 automatic. He slips it into his shirt.

RANE

All right, let's go.

CUT TO:

TIO TACO

Thrusting all her WASP sexuality before her, Linda struts into the dingy bar. The snuff queen comes home.

Every eye turns to greet her. There are several exclamations of "Vaya Mujer" ("What a woman!").

A young unattractive half-naked white girl is dancing to the Spanish R&B jukebox. A couple lackadaisical Mexican hookers work the bar.

Linda walks up to the FIRST BARTENDER:

LINDA

I'm looking for Big Ed. I was sent here for him. Do you know him?

1ST BARTENDER

No entiendo. No Ingles. Que se yo?

A SECOND BARTENDER walks up:

2ND BARTENDER

Big Ed? Don't know nobody by that name.

(calling out)

Hay alguien que sabe "Big Ed"?

No one answers. Finally a DRUNKEN MEXICAN calls out:

DRUNKEN MEXICAN

Big Ed?

2ND BARTENDER

Si. Big Ed.

DRUNKEN MEXICAN

I know Big Ed. Big Ed's a friend of mine.

2ND BARTENDER

Well, this lady is a friend of his.

The Drunken Mexican walks over to Linda.

DRUNKEN MEXICAN

I know Big Ed. Follow me.

He gestures for her to follow him to the back of the bar. She does.

As they pass he sees a little local Acuna color: three drunken Mexicans sit in a booth with an old car battery on the table. They take turns holding the live wires attached to the battery, each seeing who can hold on the longest. Each effort calls for more laughs and more beers.

The Drunken Mexican leads Linda into a small PRIVATE ROOM at the rear of the bar.

It's pretty clear by now that our Mexican friend isn't going to tell Linda about Big Ed until she provides him with certain obvious favors -- and even then it's doubtful. Linda seems uncomfortable.

DRUNKEN MEXICAN

Why do you want to see Big Ed?
He's my friend.

LINDA

I'm gonna be his girl. I was sent here.

DRUNKEN MEXICAN

Good. Big Ed likes beautiful gringo girls.

CUT: Charles Rane strolls into the INT. BAR looking for Linda. Unable to find her, he seems upset. His artificial hand is artfully tucked into his pants pocket.

He walks to the rear of the bar where he overhears the voices of Linda and the Drunken Mexican.

CUT: INT. PRIVATE ROOM

DRUNKEN MEXICAN

(cocky)
I'm Big Ed's friend. He likes people who do things for me.
(a beat)
Do something for me and I will tell you where to find him.

LINDA

(uneasy)
What?

DRUNKEN MEXICAN

You know, this.
(points to crotch)

LINDA

Big Ed wouldn't like that.

DRUNKEN MEXICAN

Oh si, he would very much.

(a beat)

Besides you have no choice, puta.

LINDA

I can leave.

DRUNKEN MEXICAN

You will not leave, bitch.

The Mexican puts his hand up to Linda's cheek.

The door opens: Charles Rane, tall in his sky-blue AF uniform, walks in.

The Mexican looks at his partially hidden hook:

DRUNKEN MEXICAN

You look like you could use a hand, gringo.

(laughs)

RANE

(to Linda)

You did real fine, Linda. Now wait for me in the car.

DRUNKEN MEXICAN

She goes nowhere, Yankee.

RANE

Go on, Linda. You did real good.

Linda gets up and Charlie takes her seat. The Drunken Mexican gets up to follow her.

RANE

No se para.

The above is a Latin American pun meaning both "Don't stand up" and "Don't get an erection."

The Mexican chuckles and sits down. Rane sits down and puts on a phony polite smile:

RANE

Now, spic, you're going to tell me where Big Ed is.

DRUNKEN MEXICAN

I tell you nothing, maricon.

RANE

You tell now.

DRUNKEN MEXICAN

Screw.

The Drunken Mexican gets up from his chair, dragging his right hand across the table as he goes.

Rane suddenly whips his sharpened left hook from underneath the table and sinks it into the back of the Mexican's right hand, locking it to the table top. The Mexican YELPS.

With his right hand, Charlie pulls the .45 from his waist and aims it point blank at the Mexican's face:

RANE

Now, tio taco, you're going to tell me where Big Ed is or I'm going to spread your brains against the wall.

DRUNKEN MEXICAN

I don't know no Big Ed.

Standing up, Rane presses the .45 against the Mexican's forehead, forcing him to his knees.

RANE

Don't mess with me, taco-face. I could make a stone talk.

DRUNKEN MEXICAN

(crying)
Don't know. Don't know.

RANE

Talk or die.

Rane prepares to pull the trigger.

DRUNKEN MEXICAN

Go to the El Lobo. They know where he is. Ask Billy Sanchez, the bartender.

RANE

Good.

Rane removes the hook from the Mexican's hand and tucks his .45 back into his shirt.

The Mexican, holding his bloody hand, runs from the room.

Charlie wipes his bloody hook against his blue pants and prepares to exit.

Walking back into the INT. BARROOM, Rane sees the patrons, bartender and stripper, staring at him in silence. Looking at the doorway he sees several Mexican toughs waiting for him.

Using his hook hand, he pulls open his shirt to reveal his shiny .45. There is a pause, and the group breaks up. Rane strides through the bar and out the door.

CUT TO:

JUST THE PRELIMINARY STUFF

Night is falling as Rane and Linda walk down the street toward the El Lobo. The streets, having no electrical lighting, are dark and foreboding.

As they approach the El Lobo Linda says:

LINDA

Let me take care of this one my way.

RANE

Okay with me.

The entrance to the El Lobo, a classy (?) private club-brothel, can be seen at the end of a narrow alley.

Rane pauses a moment, letting Linda walk ahead of him.

Several Mexicans check the guests as they enter the El Lobo. Linda simply struts through them. Again: vaya mujer.

INSIDE, Linda walks up to the bar and sits down.

The El Lobo is several notches up from the La Mujer Negro -- or down, depending on your viewpoint. On stage two naked teenage girls, one white and one black, close dance with each other in front of a red-neon-lighted Spanish band. And this is only the early show.

The bar is dripping with hooker, gangster and Texas macho types. Linda's up front sexuality fits right in.

Linda calls the bartender over:

LINDA

Is Billy Sanchez here?

BARTENDER

Ahorita.

The Bartender walks off and comes back with Billy Sanchez, an American.

BILLY SANCHEZ

Yeah, baby?

LINDA

I'm looking for Big Ed.

BILLY SANCHEZ

You're a real nice piece of something, honey babe.

LINDA

I'm Big Ed's new gal. I met him up in Corpus. He told me to meet him here.

BILLY SANCHEZ

Ah, Eddie gets it all, you know? Why can't I get some, honey?

Charlie Rane walks into the El Lobo, surveying the scene. His eyes stop as they catch the dancing teenage couple.

LINDA

You look pretty good to me, Billy S., but I'm already a day late for Big Ed and if he don't find me quick he's gonna get angry.

Rane walks over to the bar and sits several patrons away from Linda.

BILLY SANCHEZ

Well, he ain't even here. They all went to El Paso.

LINDA

All?

BILLY SANCHEZ

Yeah, the whole bunch.

LINDA

Was T-Bird with them?

BILLY SANCHEZ

T-Bird?

LINDA

Yeah. He drives a Ford wagon.

BILLY SANCHEZ

Ah, Jimmy the T-Bird Jones, the Texaskan. Yeah, he's with 'em. They all went to Paso to celebrate. They made a big score.

LINDA

Where are they?

BILLY SANCHEZ

They'd be at the John Wayne house.
Big Duke used to live there.

LINDA

Where's that?

BILLY SANCHEZ

Hmm. On Peacock. Off Arroyo.
A couple houses south.

LINDA

Thanks, Billy. Thanks a lot.

BILLY SANCHEZ

Why don't you stay and see the
show? It gets pretty good later.
This is just the preliminary stuff.
Maybe there'd be something you'd
like here better than El Paso.
Drinks on me.

LINDA

(smiling)

Could be.

Rane seems a little upset: his disciple has learned her lesson too well. He walks over to Linda and Billy. He threateningly raises his sharpened hook to Billy's face and says:

RANE

El cigarillo?

Sanchez replies:

BILLY SANCHEZ

Sure.

And gives him a cigarette. Rane picks it up with his hook and Billy lights it for him.

All three turn and watch the show for a moment. A FAT NAKED MEXICAN man has stepped on stage and the two naked teenage girls are bending down, kissing his feet, working up. Microphone in hand, the Fat Mexican sings as he is being mock-seduced.

His singing is sort of a south-of-the-border parody of Screaming Jay Hawkins: all yelps and chants.

FAT MEXICAN

Yow, ah. Get it, get it, get.
Cupe, cupe, cupe. Eee-oww!

The patrons cheer. Rane watches closely.

TIMECUT: It is about 8:30. All is dark in the streets of Acuna Boys Town.

Rane and Linda get into the Cadillac. Rane starts the engine, turns on the lights and pulls into the narrow street.

Proceeding slowly down the dark street, Rane sees some figures in the distance. There is the glint of a gun. We see the partially-lit face of the Drunken Mexican.

Rane says to Linda:

RANE

Get down.

Linda crouches behind the dashboard.

Charlie raises the .45, fires two shots into the air and trounces on the accelerator.

Spitting white dust, the giant car charges forward.

A few shots harmlessly discharge at the Cadillac as it speeds through the street.

CUT TO:

A PACK OF OREOS, A QUART OF SCOTCH AND THOU

Rane and Linda pull into the motel gravel lot.

Rane gets out of the car and walks into the motel room.
Linda, exhausted, follows.

INSIDE the MOTEL ROOM, Linda drops her tired body into an easy chair. Charlie steps into the bathroom, splashes some cold water on his face and walks back into the bedroom.

He picks up Linda's overnight bag and proceeds toward the door.

LINDA
(astonished)
Where do you think you're going?

RANE
El Paso.

LINDA
That's 450 miles! I'm pooped.

RANE
You can sleep in the car.

LINDA
In the car -- at 110 miles per hour?

RANE
Just crawl in the back seat.
I'll put the top up.

LINDA
(ironic)
The grand concession.
(a beat)
What about food? I'm hungry.

RANE
There's food in the car.

Linda stands up:

LINDA
Sheeit. Don't you ever sleep in a bed?

RANE
We'll sleep when it's all over.

TIMECUT: Rane's Cadillac (top up) cruises at high speed through the night down Highway 90. A C&W station plays softly on the radio.

INT. CAR: Linda is all huddled up in a corner of the back seat. The half-opened pack of OREOs rests in her lap. She listlessly pulls out an OREO, twists it in half, examines each half and munches on one of them.

Charlie sits at the wheel, tugging at the quart of J&B as he drives.

TIMECUT: Later that night, about 2 a.m. Linda is asleep in the back seat.

Charlie takes another drink of J&B. The bottle is half-empty. Feeling sleepy, he turns up the CAR RADIO.

The vast desert countryside stretches into miles and miles of dark nothingness. Two lonely headlights flash through the night.

The radio plays Jeanne Fruit:

"Satin sheets to lie on,
Satin pillows to cry on,
Still I'm not happy don't
you see,
Big long Cadillac,
Tailor-mades upon my back,
Still I want you to set
me free."

Rane mumbles along with the song: "Big long Cadillac... I want you to set me free."

The song FADES OUT but Rane keeps mumbling to himself, as if he wants to say something but can't verbalize it.

There is a sudden explosion -- BLOWOUT! -- and the Cadillac CAREENS madly to the right.

Rane struggles frantically to maintain control of the runaway car as it charges into the desert night.

Linda, bouncing about in the back seat, SCREAMS. In the middle of this nightmare ride the car RADIO starts up with a hillbilly song.

The Caddy bounces across several low gullies and ridges and Linda is tossed over the front seat into the dashboard. The open bottle of J&B smashes against the dashboard beside her.

The Cadillac finally thumps to a rest hundreds of yards from the highway. The radio BLARES.

Charlie turns down the incongruous radio and then, relaxing his arms, gives out a deep sigh. He is shaking with fear and exhilaration.

Linda, her face livid in the moonlight, trembles out of control. She tries to speak but can only stammer and cry.

WEeping, she falls on Charlie's shoulders.

LINDA

Charlie, Charlie.

Charlie puts his trembling arms around her.

RANE

Linda.

They hold each other for a moment. The radio plays softly in the background.

Their lips meet and they begin kissing passionately. Soon they are embracing, petting.

Rane's fear and adrenalin are transformed into sexual current: he becomes sexually aroused.

Slipping his hand under Linda's pullover, Charlie begins to lift it up. She helps him.

Linda pulls her top over her head, revealing her breasts. She leans back across the broad red leather of the Cadillac front seat.

On the verge of sex, still shaking from her brush with death, Linda begins to talk uncontrollably. It is as if there had been a torrent of words and feelings damned up by her brain, and that dam had suddenly burst:

LINDA

I don't know why I threw myself on you like that I was just sitting there listening to all you went through and I started getting excited and I could hardly stand it I had never done anything like that before except once and that was at a rodeo but normally I never would 'cause I'm not like that and I got so embarrassed when they took the pictures what am I doing here...

Rane puts his hand on her mouth:

RANE

Ssh.

He removes his hand and slowly hoists himself on top of her. She lets out a SIGH -- and so does he.

LINDA

Oh, Charlie, you're some kind of man. Some kind of man.

FADE OUT.

SOLILOQUY

FADE IN:

As the CAMERA slowly FADES IN we discover it is not the next morning as we expected, but LATER THAT NIGHT.

CAMERA OPENS on clear Texas night sky. Tens of thousands of stars are aligned in numerous configurations and constellations.

Moving slowly across the sky, the CAMERA studies the heavens. So do we.

As we study the moving patterns of stars, we hear the dry, monotoned VOICE of Charles Rane remembering a past experience:

RANE (V.O.)

It was sometime in 1968. Spring. Those who came after 1969 will never know what it was like then. The V had me stretched out face-up over a chunk of concrete. My hands and feet were tied to the floor, the concrete was under my backbone. The blood had stopped flowing to my head so long before I couldn't remember how many days I'd been there. My tongue and brain had dried out like old cork. Though I wasn't a believer, I asked God to come and take me then. I figur'd it was the least He could do. Then, Charlie, that night He did. He reached into my body and took out my soul. It came out like a long sliver being slowly pulled from my heart. Nothing had ever felt so good before, and after that it never hurt as much again.

LINDA (O.S.)

(interrupting)

Charlie?

Rane, who had been lying back against the front seat staring at the heavens, turns and looks at Linda cuddled up beside him.

RANE

Yes?

LINDA

Whatcha doing?

Thinking. RANE

Oh. LINDA

She cuddles up beside him and goes back to sleep.

FADE TO:

MUTANT MUSEUM

DAWN BREAKS over the desert. Far off the highway, Rane's dusty red Cadillac sits stranded amid the sand and tumbleweeds.

INT. CAR: Linda, her pullover spread across her breasts, feels a JOLT and wakes up.

She looks out the back window and sees Charlie jacking up the car. The trunk door is closed.

Dressing quickly, Linda gets out and walks around back.

LINDA

'Morning, ugly.

RANE

(smiles)

Same to you, beautiful.

She embraces his shoulders. They exchange a short kiss.

TIMECUT: Rane pounds the hubcap on the new tire. He opens the trunk and hefts the old tire and jack into it with his good hand.

Linda stares in shock as she sees the row upon row of guns carefully placed in the trunk. Rane says nothing.

TIMECUT: The Cadillac (top down) speeds down U.S. 90.

TIMECUT: Rane pulls into an ECONO-GAS station. Linda gets out and heads toward the Ladies Room. Charlie says something to the station attendant.

Next to the Econo-Gas station stands FRED DOBB'S MUTANT MUSEUM. It is a low ramshackle structure decorated with hand-painted signs and pictures.

The pictures, painted against a red backdrop like a carnival sideshow, depict various animal mutants: a two-headed calf, Siamese twin sheep, a one-eyed horse and a five-legged dog. Homemade sideshows of this sort are not unusual in this part of Texas.

Charlie meets Linda as she emerges from the Ladies Room. Throughout the last day, Linda's immaculately conceived plastic snuff look has slowly been unraveling.

Her hair hangs about her neck, her pullover and skirt are hopelessly wrinkled, her makeup is faint and uneven. She grows more beautiful by the hour.

Linda's demeanor indicates she wants to have a "talk" with Rane. They stand before Fred Dobb's colorful panoply of mutants:

LINDA

Ah, Charlie, I've been thinking.
About this trip and all.

RANE

Yeah?

LINDA

Don't you think it's going a little too far, huh? Shouldn't we be going back to Corpus? They're bound to be wondering where you are.

RANE

I suppose they are.

LINDA

Won't the doctors want to see you?

RANE

I suppose they would.

LINDA

I want to go back. I should get back. Let's go.

RANE

Okay.

LINDA

(takes his arm)

Great.

They start walking toward the car. Reaching in his pocket, Rane pulls out the wad of twenties. Pulling off several hundred dollars, he gives them to her.

RANE

You can take a cab back with this.

LINDA

No, we were going to go back together.

Rane nods his head silently "No" and holds out the money for her.

LINDA

It isn't right. I shouldn't take your money.

RANE

Take it, Linda. I won't need it where I'm going.

LINDA

Won't you come back with me?

RANE

It's too late. I'm only pointed in one direction now. I have no choice.

They look at each other and walk back toward the Cadillac. Rane hands Linda her overnight bag from the back seat and pays the station attendant.

They exchange a long kiss. The station boy looks on.

LINDA

I ain't sorry I done this, you know.

Charlie looks pained. He says nothing.

LINDA

It was real though, huh?

RANE

Wasn't it?

Rane climbs into the front seat and starts the engine. They glance at each other a moment, each hoping the other will relent. Neither does.

Rane slips the car into gear and pulls out of the station. Linda calls after him:

LINDA

Charlie! Charlie! Wait for me!

Charlie slams the Cadillac to a stop and backs to where Linda is standing. The station attendant stares in amazement.

Rane, relieved, smiles as Linda gets in. He notices the station attendant watching:

RANE

Hey, station boy! Come here.

The station boy walks over. Rane digs a medal out of his back pocket and gives it to the attendant.

RANE

Here. This is for you.

The station boy examines the medal.

STATION ATTENDANT

Wow. A Purple Heart.

RANE

(expansive)

It's a present from my lady friend here.

STATION ATTENDANT

(to Linda)

Thank you, ma'am.

Linda smiles, and as she does...

Rane tromps on the accelerator and the huge red Cadillac lurches forward in a burst of exhaust and spitting gravel.

A quarter mile down the highway one could still hear the squealing tires.

CUT TO:

FOREPLAY TO GUNPLAY

It is about 11:00 a.m. when Charlie and Linda drive their Cadillac (top down) through the streets of El Paso.

They both look worn and exhausted. Charlie's uniform is soiled and wrinkled; there are still bloodstains on his left leg. Linda is disheveled.

They drive slowly through the bustling streets, looking about as if oddly surprised to find civilization still exists.

Rane spots a clean middle-class motel and pulls in.

TIMECUT: Charlie and Linda, having checked in, trudge to their room. Linda doesn't bother to bring her overnight bag.

INSIDE the MOTEL ROOM, Rane walks directly to the bathroom and begins freshening up. He strips to the waist. Dampening a washcloth, he begins to wash his upper torso.

Lying on the king-size bed, Linda watches Charlie silently.

Looking into the mirror, Rane runs his hand over his day-old beard. He turns back toward Linda:

RANE

Did you bring your razor, Linda?
I forgot mine.

She does not answer. Charlie walks into the bedroom.

RANE

Did you? Bring a razor?

Linda speaks softly but forcefully:

LINDA

Where are you going, Charlie?

RANE

El Paso. Peacock.

LINDA

No, you're not.

RANE

I'm not?

LINDA

No. Not yet at least. You're coming to bed with me. You're sleepy and need rest. You're still sick.

RANE

I ain't much sick.

Linda says nothing. Charlie looks wistfully at his waiting Cadillac.

RANE

You got the razor, though?

LINDA

Yeah. I got the razor.

Charlie sits on the bed and Linda runs her hand across his tight stomach and chest.

LINDA

You know you don't have to go at all if you don't want to.

He begins undressing her.

RANE

How am I going to get any sleep if you don't open the bed?

Linda pulls off her top and opens the bed.

LINDA

You always sleep with your shoes on?

Charlie flops his feet on the bed.

RANE

Only when I'm too tired to take them off.

Charlie and Linda look at each other a moment. They embrace.

RANE

Oh, darling.

LINDA

I love you, too, Charlie.

TIMECUT: two hours later. Linda, naked, sits up in bed.

Charlie, dressed and shaved, sits at the small writing table. In front of him is a spread-out map of El Paso and three guns -- the two nickel-plated .45s and the Browning Double Barrel.

Rane inspects, hefts and tests the guns. He loads them.

Hearing Linda rustle in the bed, he turns around and smiles at her.

LINDA

(pause)

I was serious about what I said, Charlie.

RANE

What was that?

LINDA

About not having to go. You don't have to, you know.

Rane says nothing. He gathers up his map and guns.

RANE

I know.

Rane starts toward the door:

RANE

If I'm not back by morning, get out of town. Catch a plane, ride the hound, do what you need. There's money in the drawer there.
(gestures)

Linda looks at him a second then says playfully:

LINDA

"Roses are red,
Violets are blue,
A pie's got a crust,
And so do you."

Charlie can't help but laugh. He gives Linda an abbreviated military salute.

RANE

Catch you later.

Charlie exits. Close on Linda as her cheekbones drop.

CUT TO:

STAKEOUT

Watching the street signs, Rane pulls up to the corner of Peacock and Arroyo and turns slowly down Peacock.

It is an old wealthy section of town.

Driving slowly down the street, Rane examines the houses on both sides of the street.

In the rear of a large brick house, Rane spots the brown wood-paneled Ford station wagon. The letters "RFD" appear on the license plate.

Rane parks his car at a safe distance and waits.

After a while, someone walks out onto the front porch and walks back in. T-Bird.

Rane waits some more.

He fishes around in the glove compartment, comes out with a brown-bagged pint of J&B. He pulls the paper back, unscrews the cap and takes a hit.

Then down the street comes a long white Lincoln Continental. A large pair of steer horns is mounted on the hood. A young Mexican is driving. In the back sits a big Texan dressed in a flashy lime green cowboy outfit, and, next to him, sits the Mexican in a new black suit with a red tie.

Rane slouches in the front seat and watches them pass. The Continental pulls up in front of the Wayne House and HONKS its horn.

After a moment, several men come walking out of the front door and step down the steps. We recognize: T-Bird, the Second Texan and Melio, now wearing tight orange pants.

They all squeeze into the Continental. We overhear a few snatches of conversation:

T-BIRD

Hot damndeddy. We gonna have a time! Estupendo!

SECOND TEXAN

Chiquita banana, here I come!
(chortles)

The Mexican lights up a cigarette with his butane lighter.

There is laughter as the Continental pulls away from the curb.

Rane turns his car around and follows them at a distance.

Rane follows the Continental south through El Paso until it reaches the Stanton Street Bridge. Rane waits as the Continental passes through customs after a perfunctory look-through.

Rane follows. The BORDER GUARD waves him over.

BORDER GUARD

Where you going, soldier?

RANE

Juarez.

BORDER GUARD

How long will you be there?

Rane tries to keep one eye on the vanishing Continental:

RANE

A couple hours.

BORDER GUARD

(handing him card)

This is a 24-hour entry permit.

RANE

Thanks.

Rane starts to pull away. The Guard calls after him:

BORDER GUARD

Hey, wait!

Rane stops the car. The Border Guard walks up. He looks at Charlie's artificial hand.

BORDER GUARD

Aren't you Charles Rane, that POW?

The Continental is completely gone from sight, lost in the maze of Mexican streets.

RANE

(wary)

Yeah?

BORDER GUARD

You're real famous. I've been reading all about you in the paper.

Rane shrugs.

BORDER GUARD

Hey, do you mind if I have my picture taken with you? My wife talks about you all the time.

Charlie has now completely lost the trail of the Continental.

RANE

(resigned)

Sure.

The Border Guard goes back into the Customs Office and re-emerges with a SECRETARY and a Brownie Starflex.

The Border Guard poses beside the car as the Secretary snaps the picture. Just before the camera clicks, Charlie lets out with his big beaming officious smile.

BORDER GUARD

Hey, thanks a lot.

Rane reaches into his back pocket and pulls out another medal. He gives it to the Border Guard.

RANE

Here, this is a present.

The Border Guard seems puzzled as he looks at the medal.

Rane SQUEALS off.

Rane now wanders through the side streets of Juarez. He has lost the trail. The Continental is not to be found anywhere.

TIMECUT: an hour later. Rane, driving down a side street in the red light district, sees the white Continental with the steer-horn hood ornament.

He slows down and parks.

One large stucco house seems to be the focus of all the activity on the street. Spanish MUSIC comes from within.

He watches for a moment. Melio walks out on the front porch with a drink in his hand. After a moment, a Mexican girl joins him and they sit on the old porch sofa together. They cuddle and share drinks from his glass like a couple of high school sweethearts. Very touching.

Rane looks down at the seat beside him. There, lying against the red leather, is a nickel-plated .45 automatic.

TIMECUT: Rane is still sitting in the front seat. Melio and the Mexican girl have gone in the house.

Rane looks down at the .45 then up at the brothel.

He thinks a moment, tucks the gun under the front seat, starts up the engine and drives away.

CUT TO:

DREAMS OF BUNNIES

About 5:30 p.m. Rane pulls into the motel parking lot. The front seat of his Cadillac is stacked high with boxes and packages.

INSIDE the MOTEL ROOM, Linda absentmindedly does her fingernails on the bed as she waits Charlie's return. She has let her hair down.

She looks up anxiously as Charlie walks in. Seeing him, she drops her fingernail file and rushes to his arms.

LINDA

Charlie! You're all right!
What happened?

RANE

I didn't do it.

LINDA

No?

RANE

I changed my mind. It wasn't worth it. I went to the store instead.

LINDA

Oh?

RANE

It just hit me. I was free and didn't have to do anything. So I didn't.

(a beat)

I bought you some things. Let me go get them.

Charlie walks outside. In a moment, he returns piled high with boxes and packages. He sets them to the floor.

LINDA

Wow! What's all that?

RANE

(smiling)

Lotsa stuff. I got a record player. One from Sears. They said it was a good one.

Rane tries to rip open a cardboard box containing a \$69.95 portable stereo. His hook is not too efficient at this operation so Linda drops to her knees and helps him.

LINDA
 Jesus, Charlie, you didn't have to
 do this.

RANE
 I know.

Linda tears open the box and starts hauling out the
 stereo.

LINDA
 Where's a plug?

RANE
 I also got you some clothes. And
 some records.
 (holds package)

TIMECUT: Rane and Linda have placed the turntable on
 the chair and sit on the floor beside it. The two
 speakers sit on the floor to their right and left.

Linda has put on the clothes Charlie bought for her.
 The empty bags lie next to her old clothes on the bed.
 It's just like Christmas.

Linda is wearing bell-bottom blue jeans, black leather
 boots and a red turtleneck sweater. Aphrodite, step
 aside.

On the floor by the stereo are several opened record
 albums: Susan Raye's "My Heart Has A Mind Of Its Own,"
 Loretta Lynn's "Here I Am Again," Tanya Tucker's
 "Delta Dawn," and others.

"MY HEART HAS A MIND OF ITS OWN"

"No matter what I do,
 No matter what I say,
 I just can't seem to turn
 the other way,
 When I'm with someone new,
 I always think of you,
 Guess my heart has a mind of its own."

LINDA
 What are we going to do now?
 Go back to Corpus?

RANE
 What do you want to do? We'll
 do whatever you like.

LINDA

Put as many miles between me and Texas as I can. Let's go up north somewhere where it's cold. Where there's Eskimos and snow and people who never leave their houses.

(a beat)

And where they make love like bunnies all day.

RANE

(smiles)

Sounds great to me.

Linda embraces him:

LINDA

I'm glad I stuck it out with you, Charlie.

RANE

As long as we're in El Paso, there's someplace I'd like to go before we leave, if it's all right with you.

LINDA

Where's that?

RANE

I've got an old friend that lives here. His name is Johnny. Johnny Vohden. (Pronounced voh-dean) I knew him a long time.

LINDA

Yes?

RANE

Yeah. I knew him for quite a few years. In Hanoi.

(a beat)

I'm sure he'd like some company. He was just a young kid. But God he was a tough one. The best of them all. Now there was a real man. I could hear him groaning at night. He would hit the floor groaning then three minutes later he would be tapping out Morse code relays on what had happened that day and what he had seen. I would have given my heart to have helped him then.

(a beat)

That was a man.

CUT TO:

REAL ARMY

INT. Johnny Vohden's LIVING ROOM. Evening.

Nine people are crowded into the Vohden's lower middle-class living room: Charlie and Linda, Johnny Vohden and his wife BETTY-ANN, his son JOHN JR. aged 10, his daughter SUZY aged 8, his aging FATHER, his SISTER and BROTHER-IN-LAW.

Family photographs sit atop the piano, a framed poster of Yosemite Falls hangs above the worn green sofa. A color TV plays silently in the corner. The pea-green rug is worn through in two places beside the Woolworth coffee table.

With the exception of Charlie, Johnny and Linda, everyone else in the room rates pretty low on the interest scale. The old man has one foot in the clouds, the other in the grave. The kids are bored shitless and the sister and brother-in-law chatter aimlessly.

Johnny Vohden, about 26, lean, handsome (we saw him in the credits), sits sandwiched on the sofa between his wife and sister. He once had soft babyish features, but they have grown prematurely hard and expressionless. He seems very uncomfortable, no longer the "man" Charlie had described.

Johnny wears a Sixties tab-collar white shirt which seems a size too big for him. His hair is still cut short. He looks pathetically from side to side.

Linda is wearing the new clothes Charlie bought for her and Rane wears his freshly pressed and cleaned AF uniform.

Everyone is sipping from an unmatched set of coffee cups. A plate of sugar cookies sits atop a stack of POW pamphlets on the coffee table.

SISTER

(to Suzy)

Suzy, see if anyone else wants some more cookies.

Suzy gets up in perfunctory little girl fashion and offers the cookie plate around the crowded room. There are a few takers.

SISTER

Col. Rane, John has said so much about you. You must be the most famous person we know. You're a real hero. That's pretty rare.

BROTHER-IN-LAW

Yeah, there ain't many heroes anymore.
Everything is buy cheap, sell expensive.

They wait for Rane to answer: he says nothing.

SISTER

That's really some car you got
there, Col. Rane.

Johnny starts a smile:

JOHNNY

Yeah.

Then swallows it.

RANE

It's a little dirty just now.

BROTHER-IN-LAW

What kind of engine you got in
there, Charlie, the 500 cc?

RANE

It's a bug un.

They all laugh.

JOHN JR.

The Eldorado is the last factory-
made American convertible. All
the other companies stopped making
them. Cadillac will probably stop
making 'em, too.

BROTHER-IN-LAW

(cutting in)

Those things cost a fortune.

SISTER

Then the Japanese will start making
them. We'll have to start buying
our Cadillac convertibles from Japan.
They do everything anyway.

BROTHER-IN-LAW

I'm just afraid one of them Japs
will get ahold of an atomic bomb
and take it into his basement and
figure out in two weeks how to
make one for \$49.94. Then every
kook in the country could buy one.

John's father mumbles something:

FATHER

Mumble-mumble-mumble-mumble.

JOHNNY

What's that, Pop? What did you say?

SISTER

Speak louder, Dad.

He mumbles a little louder:

FATHER

Mumble-mumble-mumble-mumble.

JOHNNY

"They're all made" what, Pop?

SISTER

Niggers. He says they're all made by niggers.

JOHNNY

(confused)

What is, the atomic bombs?

SISTER

No, the American cars, stupid.

JOHN JR.

That's just grandpaw. He always talks that way.

BROTHER-IN-LAW

Yeah. Well even white people don't make things any good no more.

BETTY ANN

There's no more craftsmanship left in this country. I bought that TV there...

(continued)

She gestures at TV: A Situation Comedy is playing.

BETTY ANN

(continued)

... from R.C.A. because I wanted to "Buy American" during the war and all, but it broke down three weeks after I got it and when the R.C.A. man came to fix it he said all the parts were made in Japan anyway. So next time I'm going to buy one straight from Japan.

We see Johnny's face: he is bored, listless, as uneasy as Charlie was at the outset of the picture. He is an outsider in his own home.

Charlie's heart goes out to Johnny. He remembers the man he once was. They look at each other a moment, then quickly turn away like children caught in the contemplation of a crime.

The Sister, Brother-in-law and Betty Ann, for their part, are not knowingly obnoxious. They love Johnny and think they are doing the best thing for him by helping "cheer him up."

SISTER

(to Linda)

How about you, Linda, do you have a TV?

Linda responds cautiously and politely. She wishes to say nothing which would embarrass Charlie.

LINDA

Yes, I got a Japanese one. A Sony Triniton.

BETTY ANN

(to Johnny)

See? Some people have some sense.

SISTER

That was advertised at the Democratic Convention, wasn't it?

BROTHER-IN-LAW

Yeah.

(to Johnny)

Sammy Visser got one of those.

There is a short pause:

BETTY ANN

(to Johnny)

You remember Sammy Visser, don't you?

JOHNNY

(uneasy)

No... not exactly.

BETTY ANN

Of course you do. Sammy Visser. He played tackle for the Dallas Cowboys. He went to El Paso High School.

BROTHER-IN-LAW
 (astonished)
Everybody knows Sammy Visser.

SISTER
 He was a couple years ahead of you
 in high school.

BROTHER-IN-LAW
 Sure.

Johnny just shrugs.

SISTER
 (changing subject)
 Well, maybe we should get one of
 those Sony Trinitons next time.

BROTHER-IN-LAW
 Our old TV is still good.

Charlie looks at Johnny; he looks like he's going to puke.

JOHN JR.
 I read someplace that the only
 good things Americans still make
 are can openers.

BROTHER-IN-LAW
 (to Betty Ann)
 How's the garage sale coming?

Charlie looks at Johnny.

BETTY ANN
 We start Monday. I got everything
 all picked out and labeled...
 (looking at Johnny)
 Johnny's going to help me with
 the sale, and John Jr.'s going
 to tack up all the signs...

SUZY
 (interrupts)
 Me, too, Mommy. I'm going to help,
 too.

BETTY ANN
 Of course, Suzy. Suzy's going to
 help the customers. We got to
 make the signs yet. Judy Danoff
 made \$40 on her sale last week and
 she just had a bunch of junk.

Charlie looks deeply into Johnny's blank face. Deep inside Johnny's head wheels are slowly turning.

Rane politely cuts into the conversation:

RANE

Hey, Johnny.

JOHNNY

Yeah, Charlie?

RANE

(softly)

Come with me a minute. There's something I want to ask you.

JOHNNY

Sure.

Charlie gets up and walks toward the bedroom. Stepping over some legs, Johnny follows him.

Johnny's sister whispers to Betty Ann as they exit:

SISTER

(whispering)

They probably want to talk about the war.

CUT TO: JOHN JR.'S BEDROOM. Rane and Johnny are standing next to the junior-sized bed.

Plastic model B-52, F-100 and F-4 fighter planes hang on threads from the ceiling. Charlie and Johnny must look through the planes to see each other.

Rane puts his arm on Johnny's shoulder:

RANE

Johnny.

JOHNNY

(smiles)

Hiya, Charlie.

RANE

How are you?

JOHNNY

You know. Been havin' some trouble.

RANE

It's a long way back.

JOHNNY

Sure is, Charlie. Sometimes I...

(pause)

You know there was so much stuff
I wanted to talk to you about then.
But I can't remember it now.

RANE

It's all right.

JOHNNY

I just wanted to say I was never
a hero like you, Rane.

RANE

Neither was I. Listen, Johnny,
you heard about me?

(holds up hook)

JOHNNY

Yeah, read it in the papers.
That's too bad. I was looking
forward to meeting your wife.
What was her name, Janet?

RANE

Well, I found them, Johnny. I
found them that killed my wife
and kid and took my money and
my hand. They're in Juarez.
Now. There's too many of them
for me to handle alone. I need
your help. Will you help me get
them, Johnny? It may be bloody.

JOHNNY

Oh, Jesus, Charlie. Oh, I don't
know. God, I can't. My wife, the
kids. I gotta take care of them.
What will Betty Ann think?

Rane puts both his hands on Johnny's shoulders and stares
at him compassionately:

RANE

Johnny.

(a beat)

It don't matter.

(a beat)

Let's go, Johnny. Understand?

Johnny looks back at him then slowly smiles:

JOHNNY

Yeah. Let's tear some ass.

Johnny and Charlie walk out of John Jr.'s bedroom and slip into the MASTER BEDROOM. They hear the VOICES from the living room as they move from one bedroom to the other.

Johnny closes the door to the MASTER BEDROOM and the VOICES cease. All is quiet.

Johnny opens the closet and pulls out his freshly-pressed sky-blue AF Lt.'s uniform. He places it carefully across the bed. He bends down to the floor of the closet, rummages through some boxes and comes up with his service .45 automatic and a clip. He places these on the bed beside the uniform.

TIMECUT: Charlie and Johnny, standing tall in their uniforms, walk out of the bedroom toward the LIVING ROOM. Johnny has the .45 tucked in his waistband.

Betty Ann looks up in horror as she sees them coming.

BETTY ANN
(her voice rising)
Where are you going, John?

JOHNNY
I'm going out with Charlie for a while. I'll be back in a couple hours.

Betty Ann knows what's happening:

BETTY ANN
(near hysterical)
No, no! You can't go with that madman! He'll get you killed for sure! I won't lose you again, Johnny!

Johnny walks toward the front door. Betty Ann runs to him and grabs him desperately.

BETTY ANN
No! He's crazy! You've got to stay here. Think of the kids! We don't want no hero in this house! We want you!

Johnny grabs Betty Ann by the shoulders and shakes her. This not having any effect, he slaps her.

JOHNNY

Betty Ann!

(she settles down)

Betty Ann. Listen.

(a beat)

Be real Army for me, huh? Huh?

Betty Ann says nothing.

Looking back into the living room, Johnny waves goodbye to his father:

JOHNNY

So long, Pop.

Johnny's father returns the wave.

FATHER

Mumble-mumble-mumble-mumble.

Johnny walks out the front door. Charlie follows.

Linda, who has said nothing, now gets up and goes out the door after them.

OUTSIDE, Linda stands on the dark front lawn with Charlie and Johnny.

LINDA

Charlie?

RANE

Yes, Linda?

She walks up to him:

LINDA

You're going, huh?

RANE

Yeah. I'm sorry. Honest. I tried to keep my word to you. But I couldn't. Forgive me.

LINDA

You coming back?

RANE

Of course, darling.

LINDA

Really?

Charlie puts his arms around her:

RANE

I don't know if you can handle this but I'm going to tell you the truth. The truth is that I love you, baby, and that I'm coming back for you and that everything's going to be all right.

LINDA

Charlie.

They embrace.

Rane breaks free and walks toward the awaiting red Cadillac with Johnny. He turns back and says to Linda:

RANE

Alaska, baby.

CUT TO:

FIRE BASE JUAREZ

NIGHT: Charlie and Johnny, dressed in their uniforms, and smiling broadly from the front seat of a red convertible, pass the border guards and cross over the bridge into Juarez.

Just a couple-a soldier boys on the town.

Rane drives through the streets of Juarez. He pulls slowly down the road where the brothel is located.

Rane cuts his lights and pulls to the side of the curb. Ahead they can see the big white Continental and its steer-horn ornament.

They sit and look a moment, then Charlie turns to Johnny:

RANE

They're all in there. Three Mex and three white. One old white, two young. Old Mex wears black suit, red tie, patched suede boots. Old white named Big Ed looks like Joel McCrea. Big feller with C&W lime green suit. Two Texas hicks with Stetsons. Mex Melio about 25, a hotdogger, wears tight orange pants. One young white named T-Bird. Speaks Spic. Another young Mex, no description. Six in all. The white Continental is theirs. With the horns.

(a beat)

They'd recognize me, so I'm going around back. You dog it in and case the place. Lie low till you hear a shot, then come out shooting.

TIMECUT: Charlie and Johnny stand beside the open trunk.

Charlie loads the two nickel-plated .45s and tucks them into his belt. He hefts and loads the Browning double barrel.

Johnny pulls an old AF duffle bag out of the trunk and shoves some rags into it.

Johnny pulls out the sawed-off six-shot Winchester, loads it and places it among the rags in the duffle bag. He pulls out his own .45 and places it in with the Winchester. He puts an extra clip in his pants pocket.

Johnny zips the duffle bag and hefts it. Charlie pulls out the .357 Magnum and motions for Johnny to load it for him.

Johnny loads the Magnum revolver and Charlie tucks it into his waistband behind his back.

Adjusting himself, Charlie closes the trunk.

RANE

Ready, Lieutenant?

JOHNNY

Start the ball rollin', Colonel.

They slowly walk toward the lighted brothel.

Approaching the brothel, they split up. Charlie, crouching over, sneaks around the rear of the building.

Johnny, swinging his duffle bag, saunters down the sidewalk and walks up the steps to the brothel.

He is greeted by the MADAM inside the door.

MADAM

Hola, soldado.

JOHNNY

Howdy, ma'am. What's happening?
They told me this was a good place
for a soldier to have a good time.

MADAM

You come to the right place,
soldier-boy.

They walk into the parlor. An Old Mexican sits on the sofa singing and playing "La Golondrina" on his guitar.

JOHNNY

I want a nice pretty young lady.
(forms outline with
hands)

Lindo. Very lindo.

MADAM

Follow me.

He does, noticing a couple house thugs as he goes. She takes him into an ancillary room where two young girls are sitting.

MADAM

Candida.

(to Johnny)

This is Candy. Muy lindo.

JOHNNY

How much?

MADAM

For this one, soldier, thirty dollars half hour. The best in the house. She speaks some English.

JOHNNY

Si. I like to go first-class.

Johnny pulls out thirty dollars and gives it to the Madam.

Candy stands, looks at Johnny and says:

CANDY

Va.

Candy walks up the central bannister as Johnny, duffle bag in hand, follows. We have ample opportunity to study the layout of the brothel.

When he reaches the top of the stairs, Johnny hears the LOUD VOICES of several men. We recognize one of the voices: T-Bird.

Candy walks one way down the carpeted corridor, while Johnny intentionally walks the other way. Candy calls him back:

CANDY

Hey, gringo!

Johnny peeks into one room and sees a pair of multi-colored suede patches boots on the floor. Love-making sounds come from within the room.

JOHNNY

(to Candy)

No rooms here?

CANDY

This way.

(gestures)

Johnny listens in on the next room he passes. He hears a card game in progress:

MELIO

Paso.

T-BIRD

Marca... two dollars.

SECOND TEXAN

Paso.

Candy calls back to Johnny:

CANDY

Coming?

JOHNNY

Sure am.

Johnny follows Candy down the hallway. She enters a small room and he follows.

INSIDE the ROOM, Candy closes the door behind them. Johnny sits on the edge of the bed, placing the duffle bag at his feet.

JOHNNY

Boy, am I tired, honey.

CUT TO: REAR OF BROTHEL. A young MEXICAN-AMERICAN stands guard by a rear stairway.

Setting his shotgun down, Rane walks over to the Mexican. Before the Mexican can reach for his small revolver, Charlie claps his hand.

RANE

Listen, amigo, why don't you just scam? All hell's gonna break out inside there and you ain't gonna wanna be around.

The Mexican-American seems confused.

MEXICAN-AMERICAN

I guard here. No one comes in.

Rane puts his hand on the Mexican-American's face as if he were giving him a benediction.

RANE

I'm not fooling, son. If you don't leave you'll be dead.

Rane pushes his face away.

The young Mexican-American does not take his advice; instead he reaches for his revolver. Rane wrenches the Mexican-American's arm behind his back, spins him around and, reaching around with his sharpened hook, slices open his throat.

The Mexican-American gurgles a moment, then falls over. Charlie walks back to pick up his shotgun.

CUT TO: CANDY'S ROOM. Johnny sits on the edge of the bed, his ears cocked: waiting, listening.

Strains of "La Golondrina" can be heard in the background.

CANDY

You just sit there?

JOHNNY

I ain't got much energy left, baby. You're going to have to help me.

With a sigh of resignation, Candy walks over to the bed and begins unbuttoning Johnny's AF shirt. Johnny's ears are perked, listening for even the slightest sound.

CUT TO: EXT. STAIRWAY. Carrying the Browning shotgun, Rane stealthily walks up the rear stairs. The two nickel-plated .45s in his waistband glimmer in the moonlight.

Reaching the top of the stairs, Charlie peeks into the corridor. It is empty. He enters.

Rane tiptoes down the carpeted corridor, listening and looking as he goes.

CUT TO: CANDY'S ROOM. Candy, having removed Johnny's shirt and undershirt, unties his shoes and pulls them off. The socks follow.

Listening closely, Johnny hears Charlie's footsteps coming down the hall. He is all ears now.

As Candy reaches for Johnny's belt buckle his hand drops down toward his duffle bag, revealing the guns.

Rane's FOOTSTEPS tiptoe down the hall.

Candy loosens Johnny's belt. She puts her hand in his waistband.

CU: Johnny's hand slips into the duffle bag and clasps the handle of the .45.

CUT TO: CORRIDOR. Charlie looks through an ajar door: he sees the patched suede boots sitting on the floor.

Hoisting the huge Browning B-SS waist level, he poises himself and slowly kicks the door open.

The door slowly opens: inside, the Mexican lies rutting with a whore.

Rane waits for the Mexican to notice him.

The Mexican's eyes look up and recognize Charlie. Rane says softly:

RANE

Stand up, amigo. Die on your feet.

The Mexican slowly gets up. The whore crouches at the rear of the bed in horror.

MEXICAN

Ah, Texican, you are such a macho.

Rane discharges both barrels of the Browning, blowing both the Mexican and his whore into the wallpaper.

CUT: CANDY'S ROOM. Johnny hears the blast, grabs his .45 out of the duffle bag and smashes Candy across the face with it. She reels against the far wall.

JOHNNY

Bitch!

Johnny reaches into the duffle bag with his other hand and pulls out the sawed-off pump shotgun.

Candy SCREAMS.

Carrying a gun in each hand, Johnny bursts out of Candy's room and jumps into the CORRIDOR.

He arrives in time to see Charlie chucking down the Browning B-SS and pulling one of the nickel-plated .45s from his waistband.

Their eyes meet. The brothel is filled with the sounds of SCREAMING and PANIC. No more "La Golondrina."

RANE

Johnny!

JOHNNY

Charlie!

Johnny tucks his .45 into his waist and they each move toward a door.

A door opens: a drunken T-Bird is looking up from the bottle-strewn card table in bewilderment. Melio scrambles for a gun. The Second Texan holds a long knife.

T-BIRD

Hot damn.

SECOND TEXAN

Sheeit.

Three successive blasts from Johnny's 12 gauge pump shotgun send the poker players flying in every direction. We notice a bit of T-Bird here, a bit of Melio (in orange pants) there. The bodies of a couple women join the melee.

The Second Texan, SCREAMING, covered with blood and holding his knife, charges toward Johnny. Another blast from the Winchester sends him spinning backwards.

Rane pushes open his door and finds there an innocent American businessman cowering under the bed and a frightened whore cowering atop it. Rane is too keyed up to stop now: he plugs them both with the .45, first the American, then the whore.

Rane steps back into the corridor next to Johnny. There is the SOUND of running feet from the end of the corridor. Charlie turns and fires. Candy's bloody body rolls down the carpet.

There is a sharp RETORT from the opposite end of the corridor. Charlie grimaces. Blood spreads from a bullet wound in his side.

Johnny wheels around and sees Big Ed standing behind Charlie with a smoking .38 in his hand. Big Ed is wearing his unbuttoned lime green Western shirt with the rhinestone wagon wheels on it. Two blasts from Johnny's shotgun send Big Ed bouncing on his butt down the hall.

Johnny throws down the shotgun and pulls his .45.

One door remains unopened on the second floor. Johnny and Charlie approach it with their .45s drawn at arm's length.

Two young half-naked Mexicans, one of them Big Ed's chauffeur, burst out of the room firing their revolvers.

They are cut down in the crossfire of .45 slugs. Johnny catches a surface wound in his right forearm.

Johnny ducks down, crossing in front of the opening at the top of the stairs. A bullet flies past his head as he runs.

He notices several Mexican thugs standing at the foot of the stairs out of the corner of his eyes. They have drawn guns.

There is no immediate danger. Johnny and Charlie rest a moment, looking at each other across the bannister opening.

It is possible for them to retreat out the back stairs, but they do not.

Charlie drops his .45 and pulls a freshly loaded one from his waist. His shirt is soaked with blood.

Johnny discharges the spent clip from his .45 and inserts a fresh one from his pocket.

They look at each other a moment, deciding what to do.

Charlie yells to Johnny in Vietnamese:

RANE

Chung ta di di!

Johnny replies:

JOHNNY

Death! Da Nang! Hanoi!

They jump into the bannister opening and rapidly discharge their automatics down the stairs.

A Mexican falls at the foot of the stairs. Charlie catches another bullet in the chest and falls down the stairs.

Johnny calls to him as he falls:

JOHNNY

Charlie! Charlie!

Johnny is hit in the upper shoulder with a .38. He is stopped but for a second, then comes back firing. Another Mexican falls. Only one remains.

Blood flows down Johnny's right breast.

Charlie yanks the 357 out of his back, pulls himself up on the bannister and blasts the remaining Mex across the blood-spattered room.

Simultaneously, Charlie catches a slug in his throat. Trying to speak, he gurgles blood and dies.

Though Charlie's killer is already dead, Johnny plugs him again. And again.

There are no more men at the foot of the stairs. Only bloody bodies, scared whores and a discarded guitar.

The CAMERA SLOWLY PANS up the stairs from Charlie's dead body to Johnny still standing at the top of the stairs. He stands bareback in bare feet, his belt hanging loose. Blood covers his right breast and left forearm. Contorted bodies lie on the floor behind him.

There is a .45 in his hand. He is SCREAMING at the top of his lungs.

His gun is empty but Johnny cannot stop firing it. His finger manickly pulls the trigger: CLICK, CLICK, CLICK, CLICK, CLICK, CLICK.

The image FREEZE FRAME. SOUND abruptly HALTS.

Johnny is caught mid-trigger pull, his mouth frozen open in a never-ending scream. Keyed-up, ready to go. A force in motion, unable to stop. Pure energy.

The FREEZE FRAME HOLDS as we hear only the SOUND of ROLLING THUNDER.

THE END