

Rev. 07/25/89 (Pink)
Rev. 07/27/89 (Yellow)

CHINA BEACH

"Dear China Beach"

Written by

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SECOND DRAFT

July 22, 1989

Rev. 7/27/89

CHINA BEACH

"Dear China Beach"

CAST

MCMURPHY

BOONIE

DOCTOR RICHARD

K.C.

BECKETT

DODGER

FRANKIE

HYERS

HOLLY

KASS

LRRP

SEABEE

PILOT

DOLLY

VIETNAMESE GIRL

MATHESON

NUN

SISTER

BOY

DR. BERNARD

LIEUTENANT

KID

*

*

CHINA BEACH

"Dear China Beach"

SET LIST

INTERIORS:

JET SET

McMURPHY'S ROOM

HOSPITAL

O.R.

Ward

TEMP HOUSING

ORPHANAGE

Hallway

Infirmery

DARKENED ROOM/HALLWAY

EXTERIORS:

COMPOUND

FIREBASE HARRIET

McMURPHY'S HOOCH

BEACH

* ORPHANAGE

Courtyard

Rear Courtyard

Road

*

*

*

*

CHINA BEACH

"Dear China Beach"

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

1 EXT. TRIAGE (STOCK) 1 *

NIGHT SOUNDS. The RIVER, CRICKETS, stifling heat. A corpsman grabs a leisurely smoke outside the sweltering triage. Distant APPLAUSE erupts from the Jet Set. The corpsman turns to look and we FOLLOW HIS gaze, DRIFTING SLOWLY THROUGH:

2 COMPOUND - NIGHT (STOCK) 2 *

It's hot, thick, sticky -- not a hint of breeze ruffling the stoic palms. Two sweaty MPs in a Jeep glide past. A coupla grunts dangle their feet listlessly in the cool waters of the old fountain. Another explosion of APPLAUSE from the Jet Set. Then silence again. They look. What's up? There's no music. A sporting event? Boxing? The grunts swing out of the pool, join some other GIs stepping up into...

3 INT. JET SET - NIGHT 3

The joint is all jammed around one table. All eyes on something we can't yet see. Funeral silence. The new arrivals try to peer over the heads of the rapt crowd. A crap game? Cockfight?

ALL

Oh!!! Yeah! Unbelievable!!!

Another spontaneous outbreak of applause and awed disbelief. Now the rush of money changing hands. Shifting odds, betting.

ALL

I'll take twenty! You're on! I need part of that twenty! The little lady! I want the little lady. I'm on that action!

Boonie's holding bets. The frenzied trader is this steamy; Southeast Asian commodities pit.

BOONIE

One fifty. One sixty-five.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

3

DR. RICHARD

Quiet! Quiet!

Dr. Dick, the referee. Silence falls, all attention swings back to the table as the CAMERA MUSCLES its way through the throng of sweaty khaki, Hawaiian shirts clinging to muscular backs, beer bottles, and cigarettes to find a shaky but determined...

*

4 McMURPHY

4

Overflowing shot glass pressed to her lips. She's staring down a massive lump of LRRP sitting across the tiny cocktail table from her. She slaps back the shot. Wipes her mouth on her sleeve. But there's no applause yet, they're waiting to see the effect. McMurphy seems to lose focus, swoon. Heads shake, worried groans.

ALL

Ohhh... ahhh... uh-oh...

The rumble of a crowd at the racetrack watching their show pony slip into fourth place just before the finish line.

McMURPHY

(fighting it)

No.

(more lucid)

I'm alright.

(defiantly)

I'm alright.

The definition returns to her eyes. She slaps the empty shot glass onto the table, a table we now discover is littered with empty shot glasses. The crowd roars its approval. All attention swings back to BOONIE.

ALL

Fifty! I got fifty. Taking ten on the big fella! You got it, shorty!

The huge LRRP is surrounded by his buddies, a nasty looking group of squareheads who just dragged ass back in from months in the boonies. McMurphy is backed by our gang -- BECKETT, K.C., FRANKIE, HYERS, HOLLY, DR. DICK, Boonie holding the cash, nurses and corpsmen. It's a cacophony.

(CONTINUED)

ALL

Food, it's the food again! Chow!
More chow!

A hush falls over the crowd as Dr. Dick takes a bowl from the tray of the Viet bar girl. All eyes peer reluctantly into the disgusting slime wallowing in the enameled bowl -- black, green, purple, alive (or at least not long dead). He sets it carefully between the two combatants -- a ritual, a sacrament. Involuntary gasps of revulsion and disgust escape from all.

ALL

Oh my God, what is it? I'm going to be sick. Is it alive? Hit a dog once, that was what stuck to the road.

DR. RICHARD

Quiet!

McMurphy and the LRRP stare at each other, no one blinks, but there's a hesitation in McMurphy's eyes. K.C. picks it up.

K.C.

Come on, McMurphy. I'm counting on you, don't let me down.

She rubs McMurphy down -- cornerman to McMurphy's contender in the final rounds of a heavyweight championship bout.

K.C.

Another fifty on the champ here.
(yelling at McM)
Come on, mama needs a new pair of shoes!

*

The rapt silence falls again. McMurphy squares her shoulders, reaches across and takes a lump of the vile stuff in the bowl. Moves it towards her mouth. All gasp.

It is alive! McMurphy grimaces. Hyers can't look. She opens her mouth tentatively, closes her eyes and slides it in. But can she swallow?

Hyers looks nauseous, Frankie shakes her head, even Dr. Dick is squeamish. It sits in her mouth for a long beat (do we see it moving in there or is that just our vivid imagination?) Finally, she swallows, hard. Grabs for a shot and washes the menacing stuff down in one swift motion.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

No applause yet. The question is, will it come back up? She's not so sure. The crowd leans in. She concentrates, hard, harder -- opens her eyes. It's down to stay.

ALL

Yeah! Yes!!! Yes!!!

K.C.

Yeah!!!

All eyes turn back to the LRRP. He didn't think she could do it. Looks down at the bowl of slime. Looks back to his mates. They fire encouragement.

LRRPS

You can do it, Swensen! You're our man, Swede!!!

He turns back, his resolve returned. Grabs angrily for the bowl, takes a mittful of the goo and jams it into his huge mouth. Then the shot -- the eating and drinking equivalent of the clean and jerk. He smiles wickedly at McMurphy. He did it! An uproar. The betting ready to begin again. But then --

THUD! No LRRP. His guys stand around aghast, look down.

LRRPS

Swede? Oh, Swede...

A sack of concrete fallen off the back of a lumber truck.

The place erupts. K.C. leaps up into the air. All slap McMurphy on the back, jostle her (unaware of how precarious her gastronomical situation actually is -- these people would probably hang around talking about fried foods if you were seasick). The boys want to shake her hand, the women want to hug her, she maintains a stoic, frozen smile.

BOONIE

Drinks are on the house!

The crowd moves toward the bar. The LRRPs gather up their fallen comrade, bets are settled. McMurphy tries to stand. The place falls silent again, all eyes turn back. Beckett moves in to help. She motions him away. You could hear a pin drop.

McMURPHY

I'm fine.

(as he doesn't move)

I'm okay!

(CONTINUED)

4

CONTINUED: (3)

4

Nobody believes it. She takes a tentative, wobbly step.

McMURPHY

I'm going back to my room now.

All her concentration focuses on that next step, and then one after that. K.C. and Boonie exchange a dubious look.

BOONIE

You okay?

McMURPHY

(a little wave)

Good night.

The crowd follows, will she make it? The betting begins again. Boonie, K.C., Beckett, Hyers, Frankie. McMurphy makes her way slowly toward the steps.

BECKETT

I think she's gonna make it.

K.C.

Not a chance.

And then, she just disappears. A beat and SPLUSH!

RADIO (V.O.)

Red leg. Red leg. This is Bravo six. Send me a grid. Over.

CUT TO:

5
thru
7

OMITTED

5
thru
7

7A

CHOPPERS - DAY (Formerly Sc. 10)

7A

Hyers hangs from the bay of the dust-off. Trying to stare through the shifting smoke below to catch a glimpse of:

7B

FIREBASE HARRIET - DAY (Formerly Sc. 11)

7B

or what's left of it. Men swarm over the smoking, shattered debris of what was Firebase Harriet twelve hours earlier.

(CONTINUED)

7B

CONTINUED:

7B *

Poncho-covered bodies are stacked by the LZ like so much cord wood, NVA dead are hurled into a blastcrater grave, their captured comrades sit on their haunches -- hands locked behind their heads. Itchy, eighteen-year-old grunt jailers stand guard on full lock and load, praying a zip tries the twenty yard dash to the jungle. The wounded wait for the choppers, a small sea of stretchers, plastic field plasma bags and bloodied gauze.

A PILOT standing behind Hyers in the chopper bay yells to no one in particular.

PILOT
(inaudible)
Son of a bitch!

One solitary warrior stands, waiting for the chopper, M-60 slung across his broad shoulders, his filthy face turned up to the stinging rotor wash, dark eyes empty and hard. Dodger.

Bodies, an enveloping silence in ringing ears, acrid smoke stinging blackened nostrils. He turns his face to the morning sky, embracing it.

*
*

DODGER
Aaahhhh!!!

Not joy -- carnal, bestial. A primal declaration. The lion over its prey. He pounds the gun against his chest.

DODGER
I'm alive!!!

It shatters the thick jungle, ECHOES across the remaining scattered remnants of compassion, tenderness. The CAMERA HOVERS UP AND ABOVE him. The flames leap up around him, the bodies. Victor, survivor.

DODGER
I'm alive!!!

CUT TO:

8

INT. McMURPHY'S ROOM - MORNING

8

It's much too bright, too hot and too loud.

McMurphy groans, her mouth dry, head pounding, hair tangled -- she doesn't look good. Shields her eyes from the blinding sun. What is with all this noise? Are they laying the Pan-Am Building cornerstone right outside her window?

(CONTINUED)

8

CONTINUED: (A1)

8

She turns over, drags a pillow over her head. And now a new noise -- WET, HEAVY, CLOSE. The sound overcooked raisin oatmeal would make if you were filling a back yard pool with it. Or maybe the sound of wet...

McMURPHY

Ahhhh!!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Cement! Wet cement's pouring into the window of the room. Yards of the muck -- cold flowing lava.

McMURPHY

Help!!!

Someone is yelling outside.

SEABEE (O.S.)

Yo! Yo! Cut it off! Cut it off!

The cement truck ENGINE IDLES. The flow of cement slackens to a sluggish trickle. A big SEABEE sticks his head in the window, surveys the scene -- one hungover, half-dressed, hysterical nurse standing on a bed staring down at a couple'a tons of solidifying rock filling her room. He smiles his best "ah shucks" construction worker smile, shrugs.

SEABEE

Oops.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

McMurphy bursts through the door, all business. Dried cement clings to her boots and trousers. Applause. She stops. What? Has somebody famous entered the ward? No. Now wolf whistles, it's deafening. It's for her. Is she naked or something?

DR. RICHARD

Your gastronomical fortitude precedes you.

*

She grabs a clipboard, starts on her rounds, Dr. Richard dogs behind her.

DR. RICHARD

Was that green and black stuff in the bowl really alive? It seemed like it was kind of squirming around.

*

He grimaces, shakes his head in disgust.

McMURPHY

(through the fog)
Last night's pretty sketchy.

Another doctor stops to shake her hand, slaps her on the back, chuckles, moves on.

(CONTINUED)

9

CONTINUED:

9

DR. RICHARD

And what were in those banana
leaves, crushed beetles?

McMurphy stops at a bed. Is that who she thinks it is?

DR. RICHARD

Acute alcohol poisoning.

The huge LRRP from last night, the Swede. An IV stuck
in one arm, jaundiced yellow -- in fact, maybe he's dead,
he sure hasn't come around yet. Some of his LRRP buddies
are keeping vigil over their fallen comrade.

DR. RICHARD

How are you feeling?

She nods an unconvincing "okay." Boonie breezes in with
a handful of cash, hands McMurphy her cut.

BOONIE

(admiration)

Eating brains right out of that
monkey's head.

(as she sits)

Gotta go, Mexican night over at
the Jet Set, all the tacos and
tequila you can force down.
Don't be late.

And he's gone.

DR. RICHARD

You look a little tired.

(as she nods)

Why don't you take the day off,
we can cover for you.

She nods again, starts for the door.

DR. RICHARD

(admiration)

Monkey brains...

CUT TO:

10
&
11

OMITTED

10 *
&
11 *

12

EXT. McMURPHY'S HOOCH - DAY (STAGE)

12 *

JACKHAMMERS. Shirtless Seabees ferry chunks of concrete out hand to hand like a turn of the century fire bucket brigade. A huge Seabee works the JACKHAMMER on the mound of rock sculpture that was once her room. McMurphy climbs out the window, followed by Frankie with a few of their things.

*
*
*

FRANKIE

I needed a new wardrobe anyway.
(as McMurphy nods)
Gathered up what I could.

She holds out a frozen pair of bikini underwear.

FRANKIE

Southeast Asian chastity belt,
works better than 'Honey, I have
a headache.'

She holds out a slip of paper.

FRANKIE

New room assignment.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED:

12

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
The archaeological dig here at
Casa de la McMurphy is expected to
last well into next week.

McMURPHY
(reading)
'The General William Westmoreland
Permanent Women's Housing
Facility'? Where's that?

The sound of a SLEDGEHAMMER from behind them.

FRANKIE
It's brand new. Hot showers, flush
toilets, air conditioning.

But McMurphy's staring behind them to a big sign the
Seabees are pounding into the church rubble.

13 CLOSE ON SIGN

13

"THE GENERAL WILLIAM WESTMORELAND
PERMANENT WOMEN'S HOUSING FACILITY
OPENING SUMMER '68"

It's a faded sign standing in front of a --

FRANKIE
Swimming pool looks like it's
gonna be too close to the tennis
courts.
(looking closer)
What is that, an equestrian center?

SMASH CUT TO:

14 OMITTED

14

15 INT. TEMP HOUSING - DAY

15

A shrill ref's whistle, the snap, contact, yelling --
"touch" football played Green Beret-style. McMurphy and
Frankie stand amid two rows of cots in the makeshift
dormitory in the base of the motor pool guard tower.

Kass is trying to take a nap.

KASS
Welcome to temporary housing.

(CONTINUED)

15

CONTINUED:

15

DOLLY

I've been here seven months.

KASS

Ten.

FRANKIE

We could rustle up some pom poms
and pleated skirts, I was on
Spirit Squad in high school.

McMurphy and Frankie lean sideways at precisely the right
moment to allow a rogue pass to shoot between them,
followed by the flying body of the squarehead chasing it.

He careens over a cot and smashes into a footlocker.
McMurphy doesn't have to say a thing, just a wordless
look between the two.

CUT TO:

16
&
16A

OMITTED

16
&
16A *

16B

INT. JET SET - NIGHT

16B *

Dodger sits in the corner at a table in his full battle
gear. Stares out at the river. *

BOONIE

Smoke?

Boonie appears by his side, offers him a cigarette and a
beer. Dodger doesn't even acknowledge Boonie's presence. *

BOONIE

You were out at Firebase Harriet?

Still nothing. Boonie follows Dodger's gaze out over
the water. A little VIETNAMESE GIRL makes her way
through the parting GIs, headed towards them. *

BOONIE

Hell of a ballgame.

DODGER

Don't mean nothin'.

BOONIE

Lotta that going around.

(CONTINUED)

16B

CONTINUED:

16B *

DODGER

(shaking his head)

If you weren't there, you can't
know.

BOONIE

I've been there.

KID (VIETNAMESE GIRL)

Dua con cua qui vi.

The small Vietnamese Girl, threadbare but clean -- urgent.
She's worked her way to them. *

BOONIE

(shooing her away)

Didi mau.

KID

Dua con cua qui vi.

BOONIE

What?

She shoves a bundle toward Dodger.

KID

Dua con cua qui vi.

BOONIE

No speaky. No speaky.

The child is forceful, pleading, arms outstretched to
Dodger, forcing her bundle toward him. Dodger stares
into her eyes.

KID

(quietly now)

Xay nhan dua con.

BOONIE

You understand what she's saying?

Boonie yells. *

BOONIE

Hey, Hyers! Get over here.

The pleading dark eyes of the little girl, the bundle,
the distant, steel eyes of Dodger looking back -- hard,
almost searing through the Kid. Hyers jogs up. *

KID

Dua con cua qui vi.

(CONTINUED)

16B

CONTINUED: (2)

16B *

The girl still hasn't taken her eyes off Dodger, nor he taken his eyes off her. Her pleading is softer still.

BOONIE

(to Hyers)

What'd she say?

She hands Dodger the bundle. He takes it, their eyes never unlocking. Then, suddenly, the Kid turns and runs.

BOONIE

Hey, hey! Come back here.

Boonie takes a few steps after her, but the Kid's fast. Turns back to Hyers.

BOONIE

What'd she say?

Hyers is staring down at Dodger and his bundle. Looks up quietly to Boonie.

HYERS

She said the baby is his.

Boonie looks as if to say "The what?," but instead, looks down at Dodger.

Dodger looks at the fragile bundle in his thick arms and the innocent, gentle eyes of the Amerasian infant staring back up at him. Trusting, silent.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

17 INT. OR - DAY

17

Dr. Dick is examining the baby, all business. Boonie and Hyers watch, rapt. Dodger hangs back by the door.

DR. RICHARD

(to Boonie)

This your baby?

Boonie looks back at Dodger. Dr. Dick follows his gesture, no answer.

BOONIE

Could be anybody's.

DR. RICHARD

You know the mother?

Dodger shrugs, keeps staring out the little window in the door.

DR. RICHARD

About ten months ago, probably a woman?

DODGER

Don't ask for names and phone numbers.

*
*

BOONIE

(grins)

Maybe a receipt?

Hyers plays with the baby, makes silly noises.

HYERS

She's cute as hell.

DR. RICHARD

He.

HYERS

Damn, I didn't think you had it in you, Dodger. A son.

(beams)

What are you gonna name him?

BOONIE

How about Charlie?

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED:

17

HYERS

What do you think, little guy?
Charlie?

(as the baby laughs)

Charlie it is.

DR. RICHARD

If you are the father of this
child I want to see you at
battalion sick call first thing
in the A.M. This baby's got
syphilis.

(finishing his exam)

Also severe diarrhea, he's
malnourished, and distended --
probably worms.

Hyers and Boonie look down at the child. Dodger's still
staring out that window, wishing he were somewhere else.
The baby begins to cry.

DR. RICHARD

Hey, little Charlie, don't cry.

Hyers picks Charlie up, comforts him.

HYERS

We'll fix you up, don't you worry.
You'll be just fine.

Dodger is someplace else, the door swishing back in his
absence.

CUT TO:

18 INT. TEMP HOUSING - DAY

18 *

McMurphy's trying to sleep, pillow pulled over her head,
MOTOR POOL SOUNDS POUNDING in. Now a guitar.

HOLLY

(singing)

'Dominique, nique, nique...'

McMurphy peers out from one swollen, bloodshot eye.
HOLLY, the Donut Dolly, strumming her guitar.

McMURPHY

Oh no, not you --

HOLLY

Hey, Murph. Stupid song, huh?
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

18

CONTINUED:

18

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Hard to play, too.

(sets aside her guitar)

Fried pork rind? My mom sends 'em
over.McMurphy groans, turns away from Holly, tries to close
her eyes.

FRANKIE

(low whistle)

A lot of mail.

Frankie's looking down at Holly's cot, one end is covered
with letters. Holly picks up some letters and an 8x10
photo from her cot, plops down next to Frankie.

HOLLY

What you need is a pen pal. How
about --

She picks a letter out of the pile.

HOLLY

Warren Walker?

Finds a face on the photo, points to it.

FRANKIE

Oh, he's cute -- but I don't date
men with glasses. Too intellectual.*
*

19 INSERT - PHOTO OF WARREN WALKER

19

A cowlicky twelve-year-old with heavy black glasses.
He's standing in the second row of one of those techni-
color elementary school class photos.

20 BACK TO SCENE

20

HOLLY

Mrs. Gunther's seventh grade class,
Golden, Colorado -- they've adopted
us as pen pals.

FRANKIE

(looking closer)

Conspicuous absence of dark
pigmentation in this assemblage.
Got any past presidents in your
pile over there -- Washington,
Jefferson, Jackson?*
*
*

(CONTINUED)

20

CONTINUED: (A1)

20

Holly pokes through the letters, finds another.

*

HOLLY

*

How about Trudy Lopez?

*

FRANKIE

*

(raises a fist)

*

La raza unida!

*

Frankie's already got her letter open, holds out a wallet sized photo of Trudy for Holly to see.

(CONTINUED)

FRANKIE

(reading)

'I'm eleven'... blah... blah...
 'my older brother Tony is a creep
 ... Could you please let me know
 what you do at Chinabeach.'

(looking up)

Boy that's a tough one, Trudy, if
 the army ever figures it out,
 you'll be the first to know.

HOLLY

They all ask that question. That's
 the assignment. We write them back
 and they read it to the class.

SOLDIER (O.S.)

Heads up!

A football whips toward Holly's head, she ducks as
 Frankie scoops it out of the air without missing a beat.
 Tosses it back in an overhand inbound pass that'd make
 any high school varsity coach stand up and take notice.

HOLLY

How about you, Murph?

McMURPHY

(from under her
 pillow)

Go away.

HOLLY

(shuffling letters)

Diane Driscoll? Tony Graphia?

She isn't going to go away. McMurphy pulls the pillow
 from her head, stares up at Holly, extends her hand.

McMURPHY

Anybody.

HOLLY

Karen Jensen?

McMURPHY

(takes it)

Fine.

A look of grave concern rolls across Holly's face.

HOLLY

You don't look so good, Murph.

(CONTINUED)

20

CONTINUED: (2)

20

Holly sits on McMurphy's cot, suddenly full of big sister concern. Puts a hand on McMurphy's forehead.

McMURPHY

It's MC-Murphy. And all I need
some...

(screaming at
the ballplayers)
... Peace and quiet!

HOLLY

You're burning up.

Peels back the reluctant McMurphy's eyes, a suburban mom trying to decide if little Jimmy needs to stay home from school today. Frankie's impressed with Holly's efficiency.

FRANKIE

You take some nursing or something?

HOLLY

Eight years of Scouts.

McMURPHY

Next time I run into a patch of
poison ivy I'll give you a call.
I need a cold shower.

*

HOLLY

(concerned)
I really think you should stay in
bed.

And, with that declaration, McMurphy stands, smiles "See I feel fine." Then passes out. Holly looks to Frankie, "I knew it."

CUT TO:

21 OMITTED

21 *

21A INT. JET SET - NIGHT

21A *

It's quiet, calm, serene, late. Dodger sits on the steps. A mamasan puts chairs up on the tables.

*
*

BOONIE

Holly nabbed you too, huh?

Dodger hadn't heard Boonie come up behind him. Dodger's clutching a crumpled up letter in his hand.

(CONTINUED)

21A

CONTINUED:

21A *

BOONIE

What are you gonna write back,
about what you do and all?

DODGER

Nothing to say.

Dodger tosses the crumpled up letter, it lands in the
sand. There's a long beat. *

BOONIE

Dr. Richard says we have to take
Charlie to the orphanage. Says
the sisters are real nice, he
knows a doctor over there.

(nothing)

What happened out at Harriet?

The mamasan begins sweeping. *

BOONIE

(sits beside Dodger)

Known you a long time, never heard
your first name.

Dodger drops his head. This is an old game with them,
a dance they've danced many times. Maybe a conversation
and revelation, that's been done before. Repeated here
to recall their friendship in that previous difficult
time.

DODGER

Not gonna work, Boonie.

BOONIE

All these years and I still don't
know your first name.

DODGER

Isn't the same. Everything's
different.

BOONIE

Eugene? Bert? Clyde?

DODGER

If you're not there now you can't
know.

BOONIE

Cyril? Linus? Lyle?

Dodger looks off. Dammit. Bonnie's not gonna give up.

(CONTINUED)

21A

CONTINUED: (2)

21A *

DODGER

You gonna tell me your middle
name, Boonwell?

Boonie smiles, shakes his head.

BOONIE

Never gonna happen. Nope.

DODGER

Trade.

BOONIE

You first.

DODGER

Delbert.

Boonie starts laughing.

BOONIE

Delbert?

(rolls it around)

Delbert. Really?

DODGER

Maybe. Maybe not.

(dropping out again)

I can't do this anymore, Boonie.

BOONIE

(ignoring him)

My middle name.

(deep breath)

Oh man. You can't tell a soul...
Shirley.

(Dodger laughs)

What? It's a family name.

DODGER

Shirley?

BOONIE

My grandfather was named Shirley.

DODGER

My grandmother was named Shirley,
maybe we're related.

Dodger's laughing. Boonie smiles, he was right, he could
get through.

BOONIE

(standing)

I've got to get some sleep.

(CONTINUED)

*

21A

CONTINUED: (3)

21A *

Boonie plucks Dodger's pen pal letter out of the sand,
tosses it back to Dodger. *

DODGER

Hey, Boonwell G. Lanier.

BOONIE

(grins)

Yeah?

DODGER

It's not the same.

BOONIE

Not always, but sometimes,
sometimes it's the same. 0900
hours, tomorrow, the hospital.
We'll drive your little Charlie
over to the orphanage. Don't be
late. 'Maybe' Delbert.

Boonie turns off the lights, heads off. Dodger sits in
the dark, uncrumples the letter in his hand. Tries to
straighten it back out a little bit. Taps it on his
knee. *

CUT TO:

22

EXT. COMPOUND - MORNING

22

Boonie and Hyers stand by a Jeep, waiting. Boonie looks
at his watch, stares out at the compound. No sight of
Dodger. Hyers kicks at the red dirt. Dr. Dick appears
from inside the hospital with Charlie, hands him to
Hyers. Kass follows with a Thompson cooler full of
supplies.

KASS

There's penicillin, chloroquine,
metromidazole.

DR. RICHARD

They don't have much at the
orphanage in the way of medical
supplies. Give this letter to Dr.
Bernard -- it outlines the
treatment we've begun.

(looking)

Where's the proud papa?

Nobody answers. Boonie takes one more look around, he's
pissed, disappointed, angry. *

(CONTINUED)

DR. RICHARD

You know where you're going?
(as Boonie nods)

Well...

BOONIE

Yeah, well...

Hyers climbs into the passenger side with Charlie, Boonie jumps behind the wheel and turns the key. And they pull away, the baby's face staring back, waving -- a tiny marionette to Hyers' puppeteer. Kass and Dr. Dick watch them disappear over the bridge.

KASS

The bastard.

And goes back inside.

CUT TO:

Great balls of fire -- Holly on the ward, activities bag slung over one shoulder, Donut Dolly working smile lighting up her face, she's no stranger here. She yells to a legless kid.

HOLLY

Hey, shorty, better put it out
before it stunts your growth.

The kid laughs.

HOLLY

Matarazzo, catch!

Without missing a step she whips playing cards out of her bag, sends them sailing. Tosses a letter to another kid.

HOLLY

You got a pen pal in Colorado,
Lopez.

Catches a kid reading a Playboy.

HOLLY

Doesn't look like the Reader's
Digest I gave you yesterday,
Matheson!

(CONTINUED)

23

CONTINUED:

23

MATHESON

(all grins)

I'm just reading the articles,
Miss Pelligrino.

HOLLY

Holly, Matheson, Holly.

(to another kid)

Moustache is looking good, slim,
another fifty or sixty years and
you might have to trim it.

*

The whole ward's lit up now that she's blown through,
she just has that effect on people. She stops. Looks
around the ward, confused.

HOLLY

Where the heck's Lieutenant
McMurphy?

All the guys' heads turn back down the ward.

CUT TO:

24

DOOR

24

It reads: "BROOM CLOSET." Holly opens it to find --

25

OUR McMURPHY

25

The closet just big enough for the bed, an IV stand and
a couple of people. Paper supplies stacked overhead.
McMurphy looks none too happy. Holly's cheery face.

HOLLY

Hey, roomie!

McMURPHY

Go away.

HOLLY

Not on your life. You need me,
you just don't know it yet.

(spots the TP)

So this is where they keep the
good stuff.

She reaches up and nabs a roll of toilet paper, stuffs
it in her activities bag.

(CONTINUED)

25

CONTINUED:

25

HOLLY

Beats using banana leaves in the bush.

(as McMurphy groans)

Did you write your pen pal yet?

McMURPHY

Go away.

HOLLY

What you need is something to take your mind off how bad you feel.

*

DR. RICHARD (O.S.)

I couldn't agree more.

He's appeared on his daily rounds.

*

HOLLY

How'd she sleep?

DR. RICHARD

Not bad considering it looks like dysentery -- viral or parasitic.

McMURPHY

(very testy)

Would you two stop talking about me like I'm not here?

Dr. Dick begins checking McMurphy out. Holly hauls junk out of her big activities bag, piling it on the bed.

HOLLY

(hopefully)

You need a craft. Needlework?
Knitting? Beads?

Sullen hatred from McMurphy.

HOLLY

Paint by numbers? Lanyard?

McMURPHY

(to heaven)

If there's a God he'll take me now.

Dr. Dick pulls her covers back.

(CONTINUED)

25

CONTINUED: (2)

25

DR. RICHARD

Come on, McMurphy, time to change
you.

HOLLY

Are those... diapers?

*

If looks could kill, McMurphy'd have 'em dead and buried.

DR. RICHARD

(loud whisper)

She's too weak to get out of bed.

HOLLY

I'll give you a hand.

McMURPHY

(stopping her)

If I take a craft will you leave
me alone?

(as Holly smiles)

The lanyard then.

**
**
**

HOLLY

You wrap the green one over the
blue one --

*

McMURPHY

I know how to do a lanyard, I was
a Brownie for God sake!

*

DR. RICHARD

(sotto)

Somebody got up on the wrong side
of the bedpan this morning.

McMurphy struggles up into a sitting position.

McMURPHY

(to Dr. Dick)

And you, I can make it to the
latrine. Get away from me with
that damn diaper!

DR. RICHARD

(to Holly)

She might well be the worst patient
I've ever had.

(CONTINUED)

25 CONTINUED: (3)

25

She shoves him back, swings her legs over the edge of the bed and straightens up. There, a smile, she feels fine.

Then her eyes roll back up into her head and she passes out. Dr. Dick looks to Holly with absolute deadpan.

DR. RICHARD

Grab her feet, will you?

CUT TO:

26 EXT. ORPHANAGE COURTYARD - DAY

26

Bedlam, mayhem, chaos. Children everywhere, playing games, roughhousing. A couple of overwhelmed Sisters try to maintain some order. Boonie and Hyers make their way from the Jeep to the front door, Hyers carries Charlie, Boonie the cooler of supplies -- kids cling to their legs, slowing them down considerably.

KIDS

G.I.! G.I.! G.I. numba one!

Laughter.

KIDS

Numba one! Hey, G.I.! Hey!

They're almost to the wide veranda. A NUN shoves her way through the children.

NUN

Im lang. Di di!

(then French)

Taisez-vous, mes enfants!

The Children don't seem to pay her too much mind.

HYERS

No parle vous francie.

And older SISTER finds them. Talks to the younger Nun.

SISTER

Je vais m'occuper d'eux, soeur.

(to Hyers)

She does not speak English.

She claps her hands at the Children, yells. The Kids seem to heed her, move off. She turns back to Boonie and Hyers. There's an awkward silence. Yes?

(CONTINUED)

26

CONTINUED:

26

BOONIE

We have a baby.

The Sister doesn't seem surprised, turns and starts for the stairs. They exchange a look, follow.

*
*

BOONIE

Dr. Richard at the 510th sent us over here. We're supposed to see Dr. Bernard.

The little woman doesn't slow down.

SISTER

Dr. Bernard is not here today.

The Sister stops at the top of the stairs, turns and takes the baby from them. The nun joins her.

*
*
*

SISTER

Dr. Bernard is here on Thursdays.

*

BOONIE

Only once a week?

SISTER

He also has the Buddhist orphans and the two hospitals.

The Sister hands the child to the nun. Boonie hands the Sister the cooler.

*
*

BOONIE

Here's some medicine and stuff. There's a note in there from Dr. Richard and some ointment for his eyes, he's got --

(can he say syphilis to this old sister?)
-- An infection and all.

SISTER

Thank you.

She looks at them as if to say "Is there anything else? I'm very busy." The GIs showing up with an infant doesn't seem to be very extraordinary. Hyers breaks the silence.

HYERS

His name's Charlie.

Then it occurs to him that it might be offensive, or at the very least sophomoric, to name a homeless Vietnamese infant "Charlie."

(CONTINUED)

26

CONTINUED: (2)

26

HYERS

(wilting)

Supposed to be ironic... I guess.

BOONIE

Hey. Hey!

Boonie's spotted someone, someone walking toward the rear courtyard. Jogs after her.

*
*

BOONIE

That's the girl who gave us the baby!

27

OMITTED

27

*

&

&

28

28

*

29

EXT. REAR COURTYARD - DAY

29

Boonie appears in the open archway, a little out of breath, looks into the rear courtyard. It's a poor but tidy cemetery. The older stone markers of the Sisters are crowded by rows of little white wooden crosses -- hundreds of them.

Hyers and the Sister catch up, stand beside Boonie on the wide veranda.

BOONIE

(quietly)

She gave us the baby. She said it belonged to a friend of ours.

The girl moves slowly through the crosses, laying wild-flowers, bowing at each.

(CONTINUED)

SISTER

We had yellow fever here last month, we lost many children, many babies. She has been very sad.

A wildflower at the base of each cross, then a bow.

SISTER

If you will excuse me.

Boonie nods, but it's too late, the Sister is gone. Boonie looks at Hyers stunned, they both look back to the girl and her gentle ritual. There is nothing to say.

DISSOLVE TO:

*

A single candle flickers murky shadows into the corners of a darkened room. Bars of neon light from the signs in the street below slice through the slats in the bamboo shade.

And now the SOUNDS. Primal, unidentifiable, full of fury, hunger and danger. The room is heavy with it -- the sweat, the stench, the stifling closeness of intimacy. Life and death. It could be fear, or murder, or childbirth. Or it could be sex.

Dodger sits up abruptly INTO FRAME. Sweat pouring down his face. He breathes deeply. A silhouette moves behind him, standing. Discarded now, unneeded, she dresses.

Trying to catch his breath. His naked shoulders, chest, his dog tags, the shell casing hanging around his neck on a thin leather strap. He's being watched, another set of eyes, he can feel them. Looks up.

The distant corner, another bed in the darkness. Smaller. Eyes, a child's eyes. A child watching the soldier from the corner of its mother's room. Watching the naked man sitting on the edge of his mother's bed.

The child is only one or two, a toddler, but the eyes are hard, already ancient, empty. They don't blink. Dodger stares back, his eyes hard, ancient, empty. And he doesn't blink.

FADE OUT.

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

31 EXT. RIVER - EARLY MORNING

31 *

Bodies everywhere -- face down in the sand, crumpled over beach chairs. The river licks at the legs of a GI fallen at the waterline, did a bomb go off? Hawaiian shirts, shorts, khakis -- none moving. The dawn breeze ruffles lifeless hair.

*

The CAMERA FINDS Boonie and another lifeguard hoisting the corpses up onto a flatbed truck like so many sacks of flour.

HYERS

Sniper attack?

BOONIE

Mexican night. Have to pull them up from the waterline or they drown.

*

Sets one up in a beach chair, smears zinc-oxide on a nose.

BOONIE

Make sure they don't burn.

Boonie picks a sombrero up off the bench to reveal a head, the head of a man buried in the sand.

BOONIE

The lieutenant.
(puts the hat back on)
I don't want to be the one to wake him up.

HYERS

Have you seen Dodger?
(Boonie shakes his head)

His C.O. reported him AWOL, sent the MPs out looking for him.

Boonie hasn't stopped working.

HYERS

You've known him a long time.

Hyers reaches across, stops Boonie from working.

HYERS

Know where to find him?

Boonie takes a long beat, looks out.

*

CUT TO:

32
thru
35

OMITTED

32
thru
35

36 INT. WARD - LATE AFTERNOON

36

McMurphy's making paper flowers, concentrating hard, this is serious work. The completed lanyard around her neck.

The screens are open, she looks better. Kass redoes the dressing of a patient in the bed next to McMurphy.

KASS

Oh, my God.

McMURPHY

(not looking up)

What?

Kass is mesmerized, McMurphy follows the gaze, her jaw drops. Dr. Richard. And, walking beside him, DR. GERARD BERNARD, mid-30s, athletic, French. They're headed straight for McMurphy.

KASS

Please, Lord, tell me he's the new internist.

They step up to McMurphy's beside.

DR. RICHARD

Dr. Bernard, Lieutenant McMurphy -- my patient with the uninvited intestinal hitchhikers.

KASS

Hi, Jody Kass. Rocky River, Ohio. I'm a Gemini.

*

DR. RICHARD

At ease, Lieutenant.

Kass stays put.

DR. RICHARD

That open wound on your patient isn't getting any younger.

(she moves)

And try not to drool into the dressing, it's already infected. Dr. Bernard is with Catholic Relief Services. He sees a great many more cases of parasitic dysentery over at the orphanage than I do here, I asked him to take a look.

(CONTINUED)

36

CONTINUED:

36

Bernard is already reading her chart, all business.

BERNARD

Turn over please.

(she doesn't move)

Please.

36A

EXT. ORPHANAGE ROAD - DAY (Formerly Sc. 35)

36A

The little girl walks, her arms laden down with yet another small bundle, another child whose life she hopes to save. We watch her from a distance, her sense of singular purpose, trucks roll past, the dust, bicycles -- peasants. She walks on, her head down, her pace clipped.

A Lambretta parked at the side of the road, its driver enjoying a smoke. The man in the cab watches the little girl from the shadows of the umbrella. Watches her gentle walk, watches her but does not move, cannot move. Dodger.

36B

INT. WARD - DAY

36B

DR. RICHARD

She can't keep anything down so we've had her on an I.V. Also antibiotics and metromidazole.

BERNARD

Um-huh. Sounds good.

(to McMurphy)

Haven't we met before?

McMURPHY

Us?

BERNARD

You look very familiar.

What looks familiar -- all he can see is her butt?

McMURPHY

I don't think so.

BERNARD

(to Dr. Richard)

I would add chloroquine to prevent liver abscess, but otherwise you've done all you can do.

Can she die now? Plastic surgery? Adopt a new identity?

(CONTINUED)

36B

CONTINUED:

36B *

BERNARD

It was nice to meet you.

That damned, noncommittal professional smile.

McMURPHY

Thank you, Doctor.

And he's gone. Dr. Richard picks up the quart plastic container from her bedside table, hands it to her.

DR. RICHARD

Stool sample.

And he follows Bernard.

KASS

He touched you.

McMurphy looks to the plastic stool sample container. Pulls her pillow up to her mouth, screams into it, a tantrum.

CUT TO:

37

OMITTED

37 *

38

INT. HORRIBLE DINGY HALLWAY - NIGHT

38

Paper thin walls, BABIES CRYING, cooking smells, mildew, rot. The kid stops outside a door. Boonie digs some cash out of his pocket and the kid is gone. They push open the doorway. The little girl watches from an open door across the hall.

39

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

39

The room we saw earlier. The bamboo curtains, the single candle, darkness. The woman looks up from her cooking, her child at her side.

DODGER

(quietly)

Hi, boys.

He sits on the bed, his face shielded by the darkness.

BOONIE

Lot of people looking for you.

(CONTINUED)

39

CONTINUED:

39

The room is squalid. The woman goes back to her cooking, just that child's eyes.

DODGER

Can't be too hard to find.

Dodger hasn't moved. His silhouette delineated by a hint of eyes and the red glow of his cigarette.

HYERS

The MPs.

DODGER

They want me to go back to Harriet.

Boonie thinks he understands.

BOONIE

You'll be okay.

*

DODGER

You don't understand --
(a rhapsody, a love poem)

It's beautiful. The red tracers going out into the darkness and the green tracers coming back. The flares, the shadows everywhere, ghosts escaped from hell.

(the memory)

And the phosphorus, white, the glowing red comets, trailing those brilliant white plumes. I love it.

Dodger leans forward into the light, his features hard, still.

DODGER

I beat a man to death with my bare hands. His blood was all over me, sticky, it smelled sweet. Grape jelly on the stove at my grandmother's house.

*

HYERS

(very carefully)

Live fast, die young. It's what they taught us to do.

(CONTINUED)

DODGER

(a hard laugh)

I don't feel guilty. I feel great.

I made it and they're dead.

(softly, suddenly

powerful, a

terrible secret)

I'm alive!

*
*
*
*

He's gasping for breath -- control. Turns to the wall, begins hitting it with his fists, gently first, then harder, harder. And his scream, the rage.

DODGER

Aaaahhhh!!!

A heavy bag -- right, left, right, left -- until it's a fury of punches, the primal yell, the rage. And then he slows, exhausted. His hands, he's crying. He leans his forehead against the wall to calm his tears.

Then the toddler begins to laugh, delighted. Thinks it's a show, applauds, giggles.

(CONTINUED)

39 CONTINUED: (2)

39

*

DODGER

It's beautiful. It is so very
beautiful.

We STAND BACK, Boonie and Hyers, the woman watches, the
child. His bloody hands, he's alone.

*

*

SLOWLY FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

40

INT. ORPHANAGE INFIRMARY - DAY

40

It's a very sad place. The faces in the beds, staring out at them -- fatally ill faces, faces in bodies without legs, faces that have been severely burned, faces without hope of ever leaving this sad little room. *

The bassinets, the children, Dodger. He stands above the infants, looking down -- confused, which is which?

BERNARD (O.S.)

(simple statement)

You're not to be in here.

Dr. Bernard. He's just walked in, begins his rounds immediately, efficiently, checking a dressing here, a wound there. Dodger is sheepish, out of place, wants to say something but doesn't know what or how.

DODGER

Two men brought a baby here, two soldiers.

Bernard doesn't even look up from his work on the children.

DODGER

A boy, we named him Charlie.

BERNARD

We have many babies here.

The Nun breezes in, Bernard looks to her.

BERNARD

Faites le partir.

The sister moves to Dodger, gently ushers him toward the door.

NUN

Je vous en prie, monsieur...

DODGER

A little girl gave him to me.

(stopping)

She said the baby was mine!

Bernard looks up, takes a measure of the man.

(CONTINUED)

40

CONTINUED: (A1)

40

BERNARD

And is it?

DODGER

I don't know.

(CONTINUED)

40

CONTINUED:

40

BERNARD

Why do you care.

DODGER

(slowly)

I should care.

BERNARD

Do you love the mother?

No answer.

BERNARD

Did you even know the mother? Her name? Her family? Her village?

DODGER

(quietly)

No.

BERNARD

Who will care for him when you get back home? Are you married? Your mother and father?

A BABY begins to CRY. Bernard picks it up, comforts it.

BERNARD

You pick up a child, hold him in your arms, you take responsibility for that child for the rest of your life. The prostitutes give birth and leave them on our doorstep. 'Tre bui doi.' The dust of the earth, that's what the peasants call them. 'Tre bui doi.'

(a fury now)

Well, here they are. Take your pick. Hold one. Take one in your arms. You are responsible. They are all your children! Which? Which do you want? Choose!

Dodger can't look up, the room is deathly silent. Bernard waits for a long beat. Then returns to his work in disgust.

BERNARD

I don't have time to ease your guilty conscience, I have sick children who need my attention.

And that's it. Dodger stands, ignored, frozen as Bernard and the Nun return to their work.

41

OMITTED

41

41A

INT. WARD - NIGHT

41A

McMurphy sleeps in her bed. It's late. Very late. Very dark. She wakes with a start. Standing at the end of her bed in the shadows -- Dodger.

McMURPHY

(through the
deep sleep)

Hi.

DODGER

You doing okay?

McMURPHY

I'll live.

(a beat)

Your hands.

He hangs back in the shadows, his hands on the end of the bed -- bruised, scabbed.

DODGER

Picked a fight with a wall.

McMURPHY

(the old joke)

The wall won?

DODGER

I knew a boy. Lived in a white house on a green street, had a bicycle and a paper route. His dad gave him an old .22 on his tenth birthday. The father and the boy'd leave early, before it was light, head into the forest looking for squirrels and rabbits. New snow, the forest all birch trees. Cold, crisp, pure, perfect.

He stops. It's quiet. A beat.

McMURPHY

(she knows)

This boy, you keep in touch?

DODGER

No, I lost track. He was just a boy, like a lot of other boys.

McMURPHY

He's still there. He'll have a son and he'll give his son that rifle and they'll go hunt squirrels together in that forest.

*

(CONTINUED)

41A

CONTINUED:

41A

DODGER

I don't think so.

(looks around)

Hospitals are like a forest.

Clean, pure, the smells. I used
to think everything could get
fixed in a hospital.

*

McMURPHY

Some things can get fixed.

DODGER

Not the important things.

He turns to leave. She reaches out for him with a hand.

McMURPHY

Dodger.

Her outstretched hand, his eyes -- he doesn't take her
hand.

DODGER

Get better, McMurphy.

McMURPHY

You, too, Dodger.

DODGER

I'll live.

And he's gone. McMurphy lowers her head. Quietly.

McMURPHY

Some important things.

DISSOLVE TO:

42

CHOPPER - DAY

42

And Dodger's face, sitting in the open chopper bay in
full battle gear. The face is stone. The chopper pulls
up and away from --

43

OMITTED

43

43A

COMPOUND - DAY

43A

Dodger's headed back. In the rubble of the church, the
little girl watches him leave.

44

OMITTED

44

*

44A

INT. WARD - DAY

44A *

And the ward door. We LINGER ON the door for a moment.
Why are we looking at this DOOR? Then, a TOILET FLUSH
and it CREAKS open. *

McMurphy tucking in her fatigue shirt, tightening her
belt absentmindedly. Applause. She looks up. *

A semicircle of nurses, doctors, patients. Boonie, Hyers,
Dr. Dick, Holly. All applauding, wolf whistles. *

ALL

More! More! Encore!

She blushes bright red, turns her head back against the
door in embarrassment. Is there any place to hide? *

DR. RICHARD

'Ten huh!

Everybody comes to motley attention. McMurphy turns back
around, are they all gone yet? Dr. Dick snaps a smart
salute.

DR. RICHARD

First Lieutenant Colleen McMurphy,
N-1246791, A.N.C., 510th Evacuation
Hospital, China Beach. We present
you with the Order of the Golden
Toilet in recognition of this,
your extraordinary first trip to
the head. *

Boonie beats out a martial beat on a bedpan. Holly steps
from the line, approaches with a small ring pillow. On
it, McMurphy's lanyard with a miniature gold toilet
attached to the end.

Holly slips it over McMurphy's head. The huge LRRP,
Swede, taps a similar medal hung around his neck.

LRRP

I got mine yesterday.

The little gold toilet hangs from the lanyard McMurphy
made.

McMURPHY

My lanyard.

BOONIE

Hyers made it. *

(CONTINUED)

44A

CONTINUED:

44A *

HYERS

Boonie found the gold paint.

BOONIE

It was Holly's idea.

They all look sheepish, hoping she'll approve.

McMURPHY

It's beautiful.

(she's moved)

Thanks, everybody.

There's applause.

EVERYBODY

Speech! Speech!

McMURPHY

I never thought I'd be happy to see one of these outdoor latrines again, but it's all I've dreamed about for a week. Splinters, scratchy toilet paper and all.

There's general laughter.

McMURPHY

It was great.

(re: the medal)

Thanks. Thanks for everything.

Applause. The group begins to break up.

DR. RICHARD

(to McMurphy)

You want to stay away from the lasagna special over at the mess tent for a couple more days.

She holds up her hand -- enough said, she doesn't feel that well yet. Holly yells after the departing crowd.

HOLLY

Hey, I need everybody's pen pal letters in the morning! This is it, you guys! I mean it! Tomorrow!

There's a general murmur of acquiescence. Holly starts to go, McMurphy taps her medal.

McMURPHY

Your idea, huh?

(CONTINUED)

44A

CONTINUED: (2)

44A *

HOLLY

Everybody helped out.

There's a beat, then Holly starts off.

McMURPHY

(hard)

Hey.

(softer)

Thanks.

A moment, the annoying Dolly and the tough nurse.

HOLLY

No sweat.

CUT TO:

45

FIREBASE HARRIET - DUSK

45

Dodger sits in the hole, smoking. Another nervous new KID's in there with him. The sound of DISTANT GUNFIRE CRACKLING in the dense jungle.

KID

It's starting already?

Dodger nods quietly. A rushed 2nd LIEUTENANT tosses himself down into the hole.

LIEUTENANT

We've got a division of N.V.A. coming up the valley, coupla klicks! We're gonna drop the big boys on the other side of the treeline 19:20 hours, so stay in your hole, and pull your helmet down over your boots, got it? In your hole!

And he's gone. The Kid might throw up.

KID

A division, how many's that?

DODGER

Too many.

The Kid looks wildly back out at the treeline. Dodger isn't paying attention. He's pulled Holly's battered pen pal letter out of his pocket, opens it carefully. Words scrawled on lined tablet paper, a child's hand, a wallet-sized photo.

46

BOY'S PHOTO

46

All youthful impishness. Glasses. Brightly-colored jumper.

47

DODGER

47

unfolds the letter slowly. Begins to read.

BOY (V.O.)

'My name is Larry Novak. I am twelve years old. I am very sorry you have to go to Vietnam. I bet it's scary there. Did you ever have to shoot anyone yet? I hope you never have to...'

48

DR. DICK

48

The CAMERA MOVING SLOWLY THROUGH triage, he's sitting at the desk, reading another letter.

GIRL (V.O.)

'... you're probably expecting an attack anytime now. I just hope it doesn't happen...'

49

BOONIE

49

in the lifeguard stand, reading.

BOY (V.O.)

'... How do you like the war? I am about 5,000 miles away and I don't like it very much...'

50

FRANKIE

50

her letter spread out on the hood of a Jeep in the motor pool, the CAMERA STILL MOVING.

BOY (V.O.)

'... anyway, the way I'm feeling now I'd be glad to trade places with you. The kids in some of my classes are pretty bad...'

*

51

HYERS

51

in the open bay of a chopper, headed out to an LZ, holding the letter against the whipping wind.

GIRL (V.O.)

'... Don't tell Mrs. Gunther, but I don't like her very much. I hope you or anyone else doesn't get hurt over there...'

*

52

BECKETT

52

working over a corpse, letter propped up on the body, CAMERA NEVER STILL.

BOY (V.O.)

'... I have a very close cousin in the Marines over there. Will you please take care of him if you see him...?'

*

53

McMURPHY

53

in a corner of triage.

*

GIRL (V.O.)

'... Not all of us think that the men in Vietnam are wasting time or accomplishing nothing, for even a kid like me can see that you're helping our country...'

*

54

DODGER

54

the SHELLING CLOSE, HEAVY, THUD! THUD! He doesn't seem to notice. Reads quietly, engrossed.

BOY (V.O.)

'... War is a stupid thing, isn't it?'

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

54

CONTINUED:

54

BOY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Because God put man on earth
to live in peace, not in war. God
be with you and bring you home
safely. Your unknown friend,
Larry Novak.'

The big guns have stopped, now the SMALL ARMS FIRE, VERY CLOSE. Dodger folds the letter carefully, puts it back into his pocket, bows his head. The Kid in the hole with him screams, begins FIRING.

CUT TO:

55

DUST-OFF CHOPPER

55

dropping down onto:

56

COMPOUND - DAY

56

landing pad. A bloodied, battle-wearied Dodger hangs from the bay door, wounded piled behind him. The hospital crew on the ground waiting for them.

The second it touches down Dodger leaps off, starts walking. Drops his gun, then peels off his ammunition bandelero, then his web belt.

BOONIE

Dodger?

(CONTINUED)

56

CONTINUED:

56

Boonie with an armload of supplies, his friend goes past. Dodger just keeps walking faster now, over the bridge, his pack falls. Hyers steps up to Boonie.

*
*

BOONIE
(concern now)

Dodger.

*

Dodger starts to run.

*

CUT TO:

57

ROAD - DAY

57

Dodger running, sweat pouring. He rips his fatigue shirt off furiously, then the T-shirt, his face contorted in pain and rage. Not a marathon, a primal dash -- full of fury, a race against himself, a race against the beast. And now the scream, the scream we've heard from him before.

DODGER

Aaahhhh!!!

And he runs faster, uncontrolled, tears streaming down his face. Arms pumping, trying to outrun his hell.

CUT TO:

58

EXT. ORPHANAGE - DAY

58

Boonie and Hyers out of breath, rush into the courtyard. Gasping for breath, holding sides stitched with pain. The children are all gathered on the veranda, looking in through windows, into the doorway, looking at something inside. Boonie and Hyers push their way up through the kids.

CUT TO:

59

INFIRMARY ENTRANCE

59

More crowd, now including sisters. Hyers and Boonie push their way into the:

60

INFIRMARY

60

On the floor, below the window, leaning against the wall -- Dodger.

(CONTINUED)

Face blackened from battle, bloodied hands holding an infant to his cheek tenderly. Eyes closed, crying. The sisters obviously concerned, frightened.

*

BERNARD

(pushing his
way in)

Excuse moi...

Steps in, stops, relaxes. Watches. Dodger rocks back and forth gently with the baby, loving, tender, the hands of a father.

BOONIE

(quietly)

He's probably not even yours.

Dodger just nods. Holds the child even closer, a life-line, a tether. A long beat. Then Bernard begins slowly, softly.

BERNARD

So for the second time the Pharisees called the man who had been blind, and said, 'Speak the truth before God, we know that this man is a sinner.' And he answered, 'Whether or not he is a sinner I do not know; all I know is this -- once I was blind and now I can see.'

Silence. Dodger brings the child even closer to his face. The dirt, the blood of Dodger -- the white purity of the child.

The little Girl who first brought Dodger the baby watches from the corner. Dodger sees her through his tears, their eyes. She knows, he knows. Turns his gaze back to the infant.

He brings the baby to his lips, kisses him tenderly on the forehead, hugs him gently to his chest.

DODGER

(barely audible)

I'm alive.

A smile, quiet tears of joy.

FADE OUT.

THE END