

YOUR GRANDFATHER'S SABRE

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. THE U.S. CAPITOL, WASHINGTON, D.C. - DAY, ca. 1984.

A TAXI drives towards the Capitol. KITTY, DEBBY and SANDRA GELLER ride in the back seat.

KITTY MCCULLOUGH is a thin, attractive, middle-aged redhead. Debby is her daughter, and looks like a younger version of Kitty. Sandra is a 40-something friend.

Kitty watches with apprehension as the Capitol draws near.

KITTY

Well, when I joined The American Military Wives Association, I never thought I'd be testifying before Congress.

SANDRA

You've come a long way, baby. You were a natural choice after you bitch-slapped that bureaucrat at the V.A..

KITTY

(Laughing)

First night I ever spent in jail.

Kitty flashes back.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

INT. AN OFFICE BUILDING - DAY, ca. 1982

The Veteran's Affairs office in Monterey, California. Clerks behind desks talk to clients. Clients wait in chairs for their number to be called. Kitty is among them.

A clerk with a desk sign, MR. WEISEL, finishes up with a client. He's a pusillanimous-looking desk jockey.

MR. WEISEL
(Calls out)
Number 78.

Kitty stands and walks towards his desk.

KITTY
That's me.

Kitty sits in a chair next to his desk. She pushes a letter towards him. Mr. Weisel reads it.

MR. WEISEL
Miss...McCullough, is it. I totally sympathize with your plight. But regulations are regulations, and there's no wiggle room in this one.

KITTY
None at all. There's no appeals process. That's all I hoped to get started here today.

MR. WEISEL
I'm afraid not, ma'am. If the new wife wants the veteran's benefits, she gets them.

KITTY
But you don't understand. I don't have enough to eat. I could lose my house.

MR. WEISEL
(Sarcastic)
Have you thought about getting a job, ma'am?

KITTY
(Mocking)
"Have you thought about getting a job, ma'am?"

Kitty's eyes narrow and her face reddens.

She stands up, bends over, and slaps his face.
Everyone in the place looks.

KITTY

(Angrily)

Now listen to me, Mr...!

Kitty looks at his desk name holder.

KITTY

(Angrily)

Mr...Weasel. I had a job...I worked for 28 fucking years as that man's personal chef and bottle washer. I cleaned his clothes, raised his kids, and entertained his commanding officers. I was his horseholder in war zones before you were even born. And you have the balls to tell me that some Jill-Come-Lately is going to get my benefits.

MR. WEISEL

(Meekly)

They're his benefits, ma'am, as the service member. And his wife's. One wife.

Kitty wags her finger in his face.

KITTY

Well that's gonna change, Weasel-Boy. I oughta tear your balls off and ram 'em down your throat.

MR. WEISEL

Ahem. I'm sorry ma'am. Regulations are regulations. It'll take an Act of Congress to change them.

Two SECURITY GUARDS arrive.

SECURITY GUARD #1
Ma'am, you'll have to come with
us.

KITTY
What?

SECURITY GUARD #2
I'm sorry ma'am, but you can't
just go around slapping our
employees. You'll have to come
with us.

Kitty straightens her clothes and composes herself.
The security guards take her under the arms. She
shrugs them off.

KITTY
Never mind. I'll behave.

They walk towards the door.

Kitty flips the bird high over her head.

KITTY
(Shouting)
But you haven't heard the last
of me!

PEOPLE in the V.A. Office CHEER.

The security guards take her under the arms again.
They escort her out of the office.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN, FLASH FORWARD:

EXT. THE U.S. CAPITOL, WASHINGTON, D.C. - DAY, ca. 1984

The taxi drives towards the Capitol. Kitty, Debby and
Sandra Geller ride in the back seat. Kitty watches
out the window, pensive.

KITTY

Who could've imagined I'd put in
28 years as an Army wife and
have to fight for spousal
benefits?

SANDRA

If anyone was ever married to
the Army, it was you, and you
deserve better. You and all the
others you're going to help
today.

Wow, 28 years. And you were an
Army brat before that. I bet
this all brings back some
memories, eh?

KITTY

Does it ever...

Kitty stares out the window pensively again, and
flashes back again.

FADE IN:

EXT. A TROPICAL MILITARY BASE - DAY, ca. 1941

It's Officer's Row in Corregidor, the Philippine
Islands, December 7, 1941. A placid row of army
officer's quarters is nestled among palm trees.

A bomb scream pierces the sky. It gets progressively
louder. It explodes, and three houses are engulfed in
a ball of fire.

More bombs explode in the area. More houses explode.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

EXT. A JUNGLE TRAIL - DAY

The Philippine Islands, ca. 1942. Japanese Army
guards herd a line of ragged U.S. Army soldiers along

a jungle trail. The guards beat U.S. soldiers who stumble. They bayonet those who fall.

We see a nametag on a soldier that says, "McCullough."

<<CUT TO>>

Kitty tosses and turns in her sleep. BUCK, her then, middle-aged, attractive, brown-haired crew-cut Army officer husband, shakes her.

BUCK

Kitty, wake up! Wake up, you're dreaming.

KITTY

No, no!

(Waking)

Buck. Where are we?

BUCK

Saigon, Kitty, but it sounded like your head was in the Philippines.

She strains to catch her breath.

KITTY

I was...It was horrible!

BUCK

Don't worry, dear. Vietnam is no Philippines. The U.S. will do better here.

They lie back on their pillows.

Kitty open her eyes wide.

<<FLASH BACK>>

EXT. A PARADE GROUND - DAY

An Army parade ground, Ft. Kamehameha, Hi., ca. 1924.

A crowd of civilians and military brass assembles in bleachers. A voice blares over the loudspeakers.

VOICE

Good morning, distinguished visitors and family members of the officers and men of the 31st Calvary Battalion and the 12th Coast Artillery Detachment, Ft. Kamehameha, Hawaii. Today's parade marks the graduation of a new class of recruits from Basic Training.

Ladies and Gentlemen: I give you the 31st Calvary Battalion and the 12th Coast Artillery Detachment.

The crowd scans the parade ground. A cadre of officers and flag-bearers march from the barracks. They take their position in the center of the parade ground, in front of the bleachers.

The Army band begins to play, "Pass in Review."

A senior officer, a BATTALION COMMANDER, steps forward. He executes an about-face.

A JUNIOR OFFICER steps forward. He salutes the Battalion Commander.

JUNIOR OFFICER

The troops are assembled, sir.

BATTALION COMMANDER

Very well, captain. Pass in review.

The junior officer marches to the side of the battalion commander.

JUNIOR OFFICER

(In a command voice)
PASS IN REVIEW!

The Army band begins to play, "Pass in Review."

A Calvary company rides forth from the portal of the barracks. The crowd in the bleachers applauds.

More Calvary companies follow. They circle the parade field. Horse-drawn Field Artillery cannons follow. They near the bleachers.

HELEN MCCULLOUGH, a 20-something, red-headed Army wife, watches from the bleachers. She holds Kitty, her 3-year old red-headed daughter, as well as MARY, her 5-year old red-headed daughter. Helen tries to keep Kitty from squirming.

At the head of the first Cavalry company rides CAPT. SAMUEL MCCULLOUGH, Helen's husband and Kitty's father. He's a tall, thin, red-headed Army officer.

HELEN MCCULLOUGH
(Pointing)
Look, Kitty, there's daddy!

KITTY
Daddy!

Kitty squirms loose from her mother and toddles out towards her father and the approaching horses.

The crowd in the bleachers rises to their feet. They gasp and point as Kitty toddles towards the oncoming calvary. Mary jumps and applauds.

Sam sees the approaching toddler. In one movement, he reaches down. He swoops her from the ground. He rides in front of the battalion commander. He salutes with one hand and holds Kitty with the other.

Kitty mimics her father and salutes, too. The crowd laughs and applauds. The battalion commander salutes Sam and Kitty back.

BATTALION COMMANDER
Looks like you've got another

redhead on your hands, Captain
McCullough.

Sam rides past. He holds his daughter on his lap in
front of him.

SAM

Indeed I do, sir; indeed I do.

He finishes his salute. Kitty mimics her father.
They ride past the reviewing stand.

He sings to Kitty under his breath.

SAM

This is the Army, Miss
McCullough.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

INT. A BRICK HOME - DAY

An officer's quarters on Topside, Corregidor,
Philippine Islands, ca. 1941.

Kitty, now an attractive teenager of 16, changes
clothes behind a changing curtain. A short, dowdy
female Filipina servant, LISA, is stationed on the
other side. She throws her clothes over the curtain.
The Filipina servant does her best to catch them.

Kitty steps forth in a new, Betty Grable-like
swimsuit. She steps in front of a mirror. She
admires the new swimsuit.

KITTY

Well, Lisa, what do you think?

LISA

I think Betty Grable better
watch out, Miss Kitty. And all
young men on Corregidor, too.

KITTY

Good answer. I hope the young men notice, especially that handsome Buck Kotzebue. I'd like to be a pinup on his locker.

LISA

Why, Miss Kitty, how you talk! You'd better hurry, or you'll miss trolley to beach.

KITTY

Right you are. Clothes, please.

Kitty takes the clothes from Lisa. She scurries behind the curtain and dresses.

<<CUT TO>>

Kitty and her sister Mary run to catch the trolley. They're both redheaded teenagers. Mary is 2 years older than Kitty, and by now taller and stockier.

It's an almost vertical trolley that runs from Topside, Corregidor, down a cliff face to Bottomside, where the beaches are.

The trolley descends. They admire the beautiful view of Manila Bay.

KITTY

Mary, isn't it beautiful?

Mary watches the young officers walking about at the Middleside stop.

MARY

I know what I think is beautiful.

KITTY

I wish I was old enough to date officers. I love the formal dances at cotillion. Mother and father look so beautiful and so handsome. So do you in your formal, Mary.

MARY

All in due time, little sister.
In the meantime, I've noticed
you turning a few heads on the
beach. And your eyelashes
batting back at a few fine young
specimens.

KITTY

I suppose boys turn to men.

MARY

These boys will be carrying
rifles of their own soon enough.
No need to rush it.

KITTY

Mary, what do you think of these
rumors of the Japanese
attacking?

MARY

I wish I knew, Kitty. They're
pretty tied up in China, though,
and they're talking to
Washington about a non-
aggression pact. Besides, who
could believe that little old
Japan would attack the mighty
United States?

KITTY

Not me. Life is too good for a
young lady here on Corregidor
for any silly old war to spoil
it.

The trolley reaches Bottomside. Several teenage boys
rush to open the door for the girls.

BOYS

Ladies, may we carry your
things?

The sisters hand their cabana bags to the boys.

MARY

I quite agree, little sister.

The sisters laugh. They walk behind the boys to the cabanas. They enter the cabanas, batting their eyelashes at the boys.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

INT. AN OFFICER'S CLUB - DAY

The Officer's Club on Topside, Corregidor, Philippine Islands, ca. 1941. A banner reads, "Cotillion 1941." Officers in Army blue and their wives in formal gowns enter the club.

Sam and Helen enter, Kitty and Mary in tow. Helen pulls her daughters in front of her. She straightens their dresses.

HELEN

Alright girls, mind your manners.

She confronts Kitty.

HELEN

Especially you, young lady. This is your coming out, so make your parents proud.

KITTY

Don't worry, mother. I've been well-groomed...I won't bring the Officer's Club to its knees.

HELEN

Do you remember how to handle the receiving line?

KITTY

Yes, mother: Hear the name, shake the hand or curtsy, make a little small talk, then pass

them on.

The young officers and senior dependent young men ogle the young ladies. Helen notices.

HELEN

(Aside, to Sam)

This could be a long night.

SAM

(Aside)

Don't worry, dear. I've drilled them better than any drill sergeant.

Inside, the officers and their wives line up for the receiving line.

Sam is on the end, then Helen. Kitty and Mary are next. After them stand other officers, their wives and daughters.

The young men begin to introduce themselves. Kitty and Mary curtsy and flutter their eyelashes at the most dashing of them.

Buck, then a tallish, brown-haired, handsome high school junior, enters the line.

BUCK

(To SAM)

Buck Kotzebue, Sir, American Community High School senior.

SAM

Buck. Have you tired of your given name of Albert, Mr. Kotzebue?

BUCK

Yes Sir, I have. When I enlist, I want to be known as Buck.

SAM

Very well, then, Buck.

(To HELEN)

Buck Kotzebue, American
Community High School senior.
Mr. Kotzebue, meet my wife,
Helen McCullough.

HELEN

Mr. Kotzebue, I'm pleased to
meet you. This is my eldest
daughter, Mary.

BUCK

(To Mary)

Miss Mary McCullough, I'm
pleased to make your
acquaintance.

MARY

Mr. Kotzebue, welcome to
Cotillion. I believe you know
my sister, Kathleen.

BUCK

Kathleen. Oh, Kitty. I mean
Kathleen. I always wondered
where your name came from.

KITTY

And now you're Buck, Albert.

Buck blushes.

BUCK

I thought it would be a manlier
name for a battlefield officer.

KITTY

Battlefield. Is the Army
commissioning high schoolers
now...Buck?

MARY

(Aside, to Kitty)

This line is backing up, you
two.

KITTY

Buck, you'll have to tell me

more later in the evening.

BUCK
Certainly...Kathleen.

KITTY
(To the next officer in line)
Captain Jones, may I present
Buck Kotzebue, American
Community High School senior?

Buck moves down the line.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

INT. AN OFFICER'S CLUB - LATER THAT NIGHT

Corregidor Officers' Club Cotillion. Buck seeks out
Kitty.

BUCK
Kitty, may I sign your dance
card?

KITTY
Certainly...Buck.

He takes a long time signing it.

BUCK
Could I get you some punch?

KITTY
I'd love some.

They walk over to the punchbowl. He scoops her a cup
of punch and hands it to her.

KITTY
So Buck, what battlefield are
you signing up for?

BUCK
This one.

KITTY

Why, I didn't know we were at war.

BUCK

We will be. That's all the scuttlebutt.

KITTY

Do you really think so? Piddley-poo. Mary says Japan would never attack the United States.

BUCK

I do think so. And I'm not waiting to be drafted. I've been accepted to Texas A&M, and I'm going to ROTC.

KITTY

Why sir, we'll be rivals. I've been accepted to Texas. An Aggie...whatever will the neighbors say?

BUCK

I hope they'll say you like men in uniform.

KITTY

They'd be right. Maybe even an Aggie.

BUCK

Think you could dance with a civilian, just this once?

KITTY

Why sir, I'll have to check my dance card.

She looks at it. She laughs and holds it up.

KITTY

Why...You Aggie. It only has your

name on it. Ten times.

BUCK

Too bad for these other fellows.

He offers her his hand. She takes his elbow and they walk out onto the dance floor.

BUCK

Look out...Latin dancer and his lady coming.

KITTY

That's right...Your mother's Puerto Rican.

BUCK

And I learned to dance there. Wait until you see what this future Aggie can do.

The band performs a tango.

SONG: "TONIGHT'S THE NIGHT"

TONIGHT'S THE NIGHT
(A Tango)

CHORUS:

C Am E7
Tonight's the night, tonight's the night I make you mine.

 G#m
Tonight the music's so divine,

G7 C
I must make you mine!

C Am E7
You will see, you'll see what you do to me,

 G#m
I must have you completely,

G7 C
Tonight you will see!

VERSE:

C Am
Tonight your eyes are like pools so still,

 Dm E7
I find that I can't resist,

 C Am
You melt away my iron will

B7
And your lips I must kiss,

CHORUS

Tonight you banish all my resistance,
I've become your prey.
I want to hold you at arm's distance,
But I know with you I must stay.

CHORUS

Buck whisks Kitty into a sensuous tango. They whirl around the dance floor.

People step aside. Kitty and Buck hold center stage. The crowd watches, appreciatively.

Kitty and Buck end their dance with a flourish. The crowd applauds.

Kitty, flushed, fans her face with her dance card.

KITTY

Why Buck, you are quite the dancer.

BUCK

That's what happens when you grow up in San Juan, and the barrio in New York. Music and dancing is in the streets every night.

KITTY

I'd like to go there with you some time. Oh my, did I say that...?

BUCK

I'd love to take you some time. But for tonight, the evening is ours.

He looks at her dance card.

BUCK

Well, look, the next dance is mine, too.

KITTY

You...Latin diablo.

BUCK

Si. Disappointed?

KITTY

Not at all.

BUCK

Shall we dance?

KITTY

Certainly. But you really must give these other young men their turn.

BUCK

Of course. I remember my manners. But save the last dance for me.

KITTY

I will...*Diablo*.

Buck smiles, and escorts her back to the dance floor. They dance for a minute, then a JUNIOR OFFICER cuts in. Buck steps aside and offers Kitty to the junior officer.

On the side, Sam leans towards Helen.

SAM

I think we may need to take her home with us tonight.

HELEN

She'll fuss. But I agree.

They laugh. They dance.

Kitty dances with young officers, Buck dances with young ladies.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

EXT. A PARADE GROUND - DAY

Topside, Corregidor, the Philippine Islands, Memorial Day, 1941.

A high plain above a cliff. Coast Artillery gun

emplacements surround the high plain at the edge of the cliffs. 12" Coast Artillery cannons roll out of the ground from several emplacements. They swing seaward.

Mary, Kitty, Buck and Helen walk inside the battlement. Sam walks from alongside a big gun.

SAM

Welcome to our Memorial Day tour.

Sam kisses the ladies on the cheek.

SAM

Here are your helmets for the demonstration. Most importantly, your earplugs. Make sure you wear them...You'll need them.

He gives them the helmets and earplugs. They put them on.

SAM

This is Lieutenant Johnson. He'll escort you during the demonstration.

LIEUTENANT JOHNSON

(Bowling)

It's an honor.

Lieutenant Johnson leads them behind the battlement. He directs them to some observation slits in the wall.

A ship pulls a barge behind it on the horizon.

LIEUTENANT JOHNSON

(Pointing)

There's the target. Your husband's troops get shore leave in Manila if they hit it.

HELEN

That ought to be sufficient incentive.

JUNIOR OFFICER

The problem is, those guns are World War One vintage. And our mortars are from the Spanish-American War.

BUCK

At least the ammo for the big guns fires. My army friends tell me your machine gun ammo clips fall apart if you try to use them.

JUNIOR OFFICER

You're right, we're seriously undersupplied. And the Filipino units train with bamboo for rifles. It'll take time for the war effort to catch up. That's why in the meantime, it's up to these big guns to keep any enemy at bay.

The big guns swing around. They fire, with deafening sound. The observers are bounced up in the air. Kitty and Mary bounce onto the ground.

KITTY

Damn!

HELEN

Young lady...your mouth! Is that language I taught you?

KITTY

I'm sorry, mother. But I wasn't expecting an earthquake.

Helen laughs.

HELEN

That's for first-time observers. After this, you'll know to brace yourselves.

Buck laughs. He and Lieutenant Johnson help Mary and

Kitty back onto their feet. The big guns swing around again.

HELEN

Brace yourselves this time...Here
we go again.

The cannons blast away, one after the other. The shells fall all around the barge. Finally, one hits the barge. It explodes in a huge fireball.

The gunnery crew cheers. The gunnery crew appears over the sides of the big gun, waving. Sam is among them.

Kitty, Mary, Helen & Buck run out from behind the battlement.

HELEN

Good shooting, dear. I've
needed a weekend in Manila.

KITTY

Daddy, no wonder you can't hear
us half the time.

SAM

(Laughing)

What, dear?

Kitty punches him in the arm. They laugh, then walk out onto the parade ground. Filipino troops parade pass, carrying bamboo stalks for rifles.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

Service dependent teenagers, Kitty and Buck among them, play on the beach at Bottomside, Corregidor, ca. 1941.

Kitty and Buck break away from the others. They walk down the beach, hand in hand. They arrive at a cove, surrounded by palm trees.

Kitty leans alluringly against a palm. Buck closes in for a kiss. They kiss, tentatively at first, then more passionately.

BUCK

So tell me, is it true what they say about Latin lovers? Are we the best kissers?

KITTY

Why, *Señor* Kotzebue, you're only ½ Latin. But *that* kiss was the Latin half.

BUCK

I'd better never kiss you again. The German half of me might show up.

KITTY

Don't you dare.

She grabs him. They kiss again, passionately. They slide to the sand, still kissing passionately.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

EXT. THE BEACH COVE, SAME DAY

Kitty and Buck embrace in the sand.

KITTY

Oh Buck, must you sign up for ROTC?

Buck

It'll beat being drafted. And with my father being a colonel, I'm a shoe-in.

There will be war, soon. Everyone says it's just a matter of time.

KITTY

Oh piddley-poo! The Japanese
will never attack the U.S.

Buck

We'll be in Europe, too, before
you know it.

KITTY

Oh Buck, that all seems so far
away.

Buck

Then, we'd better enjoy
ourselves while we may.

He moves in for another kiss.
She punches him in the arm.

KITTY

Why, you Latin *bandito*. I know
what you want. And you're not
going to get it.

She sticks her tongue out at him. She runs away, back
to the Corregidor beach. He laughs, and runs after
her.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

INT. A LIVING ROOM - DAY

Corregidor, ca. 1941. The McCullough family living
quarter's living room.

Helen holds a piece of paper. She shouts upstairs.

HELEN

Kitty. Mary. Come here. Come
here, now!

Mary and Kitty scurry down the stairs.

KITTY

Mother, what is it? What's the matter?

HELEN

We've just gotten orders. We're being evacuated.

KITTY

Evacuated? You mean shipped back to the States?

HELEN

That's right. There'll be a ship in a week. We're to be ready to sail.

Kitty grabs the orders from her mother.

KITTY

San Francisco. And we're to wait in Fort Baker.

HELEN

If we want. I think we'll join your sister Mary in Austin. That way you can start the University in the fall.

KITTY

Does this mean the government expects the Japanese to attack?

HELEN

Apparently. Or maybe they're just taking precautions.

KITTY

Can they order us? I don't remember joining the Army.

HELEN

(Laughing)

You did when you were born in Fort Kamehameha. They're your father's orders, but they concern us. You should be glad they're concerned.

KITTY

I suppose so. I was going to Texas anyway, and it'll be good to see Mary. But I'm frightened for daddy. And this must be incredibly hard for you, mother.

HELEN

More than you know, dear. But these separations come along with the "I do's" to a serviceman. Besides, your father's assignment here is up in December. MacArthur doesn't think the Japs will attack until next spring. Maybe he'll be OK.

KITTY

Oh mother, I hope so.

Kitty falls into her mother's arms, crying softly.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

EXT. A DOCK - DAY

The dock at Bottomside, Corregidor, ca. 1941. Filipino stevedores load ships. Families, soldiers and sailors mill about. They hug, kiss and say good-byes.

Kitty, Helen, and Sam carry hand luggage towards a gangplank. Suddenly, Kitty spies Buck and his family at the other side of the dock. They're loading onto another gangplank.

Kitty runs to Buck.

KITTY

Buck, Buck!

Buck turns. Kitty falls into his arms. They kiss, deeply.

Buck's mother, MRS. ROSE KOTZEBUE, tries not to watch. She's an middle-aged Latina with white skin and jet-black hair. Her husband, LEON, is a 40-something Army lieutenant colonel.

ROSE

Ahem.

KITTY

Oh, Mrs. Kotzebue, excuse me. I guess I forgot myself.

ROSE

That's alright, dear, under the circumstances. I'm glad you didn't forget Alberto. I mean, Buck.

KITTY

(Blushing)

That would be hard to do, ma'am. Where will you go?

ROSE

Like you, we'll wait in Texas. Buck starts at A&M in the fall.

KITTY

And with any luck, the Longhorns will be kicking your butts on Thanksgiving.

BUCK

(Laughing)

We'll see about that. But I'm glad you won't be too far away.

KITTY

(Blushing again)

Me, too.

The ship's whistle blows from the other side of the dock.

KITTY

I've got to go.

(To ROSE)
Señora, vaya con Dios.

ROSE
Thank you, *Querida*, *usted*
tambien. You too.

Rose and Leon gather their hand luggage.

Kitty and Buck kiss deeply and furtively. Tears form in Kitty's eyes. She turns and runs to her ship.

On the other side of the dock, Filipino servants give the departing families flowers. Both families board their respective ships. They wave good-bye from the gangplanks, and then the handrails. The soldiers wave from the dock.

The whistles sound. The women blow kisses to their servicemen. They throw the flowers to them. Tears flow. The soldiers and sailors catch the falling flowers.

Kitty and Helen hold each other, tearfully.

KITTY
Oh mother, I'm so afraid we
won't ever see daddy again!

HELEN
Be strong, dear. You're an army
brat.

The gangplanks are withdrawn. The whistles scream and the ships pull out.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

INT. AN UNDERGROUND TUNNEL - DAY

Corregidor, ca. 1941. Officers gather in a briefing room deep inside "The Rock."

GENERAL MACARTHUR conducts a briefing. He points to a map of the Philippines. Another map of the Pacific is alongside it.

Sam, Leon and other officers sit in chairs and listen to the briefing.

GENERAL MACARTHUR

You know the gist of our defense plan, gentlemen...it hasn't changed since 1926. Corregidor and Bataan, to the north, guard the entrance to Manila Harbor. In the event the invasion comes from the east, our troops fight a delaying action. We hold Bataan with covering fire from Corregidor until help arrives from Pearl Harbor. We estimate help from Pearl, if needed, will arrive in 6 weeks at the longest.

Are there any questions?

An UNNAMED OFFICER raises his hand.

UNNAMED OFFICER

Sir, we've all studied this plan since the War College. But so have the Japanese. Surely they'll try some way to negate it.

GENERAL MACARTHUR

What have changed are the specifics. I'll let our Beach Artillery & Intelligence Officer, Lieutenant Colonel McCullough, answer your question.

Sam stands and approaches the front.

SAM

Naval liaison indicates increased submarine activity off

both the west and east coasts of the Philippines. They take these sorties as intelligence-gathering, since we're not at war with Japan at present. But since they have captured Formosa, here, and the Dutch East Indies, here, the Japanese Naval presence has increased significantly.

The Navy feels that the Philippines and the western Pacific stretch their supply lines too greatly. Hence, they've pulled their main force to Pearl Harbor to be out of reach. Also to be there to relieve us, if necessary, which General MacArthur just reiterated to you.

GENERAL MACARTHUR

Colonel McCullough, thank your for that.

Sam takes his seat.

GENERAL MACARTHUR

Gentlemen, I know we're seriously undersupplied. The war effort will take time to get up and running. But due to the monsoon, our best intelligence is that the Japanese, should they attack, won't move until spring. This should give us a chance to get at least somewhat more up to strength.

In the meantime, Roosevelt has put a priority on Europe, and we're expected to hold with what we've got. What the Japanese really want is Australia, and ultimately to take the war to Alaska and even California. The

Pacific Fleet at Pearl stands in their way to the U.S., and we stand in the way to Australia.

Corregidor, especially, must stand as our Alamo. Washington expects us to hold her until our last round of ammunition.

Gentlemen, that will be all.

They stand at attention. MacArthur strides out.

Sam leans to a fellow officer.

SAM

(Under his breath)

"Until our last round of ammo."
Now if we only had some!

Ext. A TROPICAL AIR BASE - Day

An observation tower: A SIGN: CLARK AIR FORCE BASE.
ANOTHER SIGN: DECEMBER 8, 1941.

Below, B-17's are lined up, wingtip to wingtip. Two OBSERVATION OFFICERS scan the sky with binoculars.

Squadrons of planes in formation appear on the horizon.

OBSERVATION OFFICER #1

Sir, look. At one o'clock.

OBSERVATION OFFICER #2

I didn't know we had any fighters coming in today. Is the radio working?

OBSERVATION OFFICER #1

Absolutely, Sir. It's been on all day.

OBSERVATION OFFICER #2

Get them to identify themselves.

Observation officer #1 goes to the radio.

OBSERVATION OFFICER #2

Wait a minute, those aren't
ours. They're Japs!

Bombs fall away from the Zeroes. They whistle towards
the B-17's. Airmen run for cover. The bombs explode
among the planes.

Some airmen reach their planes and try to take off.
They are all destroyed on the ground.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

INT - DAY

A frame home in Austin, Texas, ca. 1941.

Helen and Kitty gather around a radio. Helen reaches
forward, turns it on, and tunes it in.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

Ladies and Gentlemen, the
President of the United States.

<<CUT TO>>

INT. THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, ca. 1941

A joint session of the House and the Senate is
convened. A microphone stands ready at the podium.

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT approaches the microphone.

ROOSEVELT

Mr. Vice President, Mr. Speaker,
Members of the Senate, and of
the House of Representatives:
Yesterday, December 7th, 1941, a
date which will live in infamy,
the United States of America was
suddenly and deliberately

attacked by naval and air forces
of the Empire of Japan.

<<FADE TO>>

Helen and Kitty in front of their radio. Roosevelt's
voice comes out of the radio.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)

...The United States was at peace
with that nation and, at the
solicitation of Japan, was still
in conversation with its
government and its emperor
looking toward the maintenance
of peace inthe Pacific...

ROOSEVELT'S VOICE fades to the background:

It will be recorded that the
distance of Hawaii from Japan
makes it obvious that the attack
was deliberately planned many
days or even weeks ago. During
the intervening time, the
Japanese government has
deliberately sought to deceive
the United States by false
statements and expressions of
hope for continued peace.

KITTY

So much for "Japan would never
attack the mighty United
States."

HELEN

Ssshhh, child...Listen.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)

The attack yesterday on the
Hawaiian islands has caused
severe damage to American naval
and military forces. I regret to
tell you that very many American
lives have been lost. In
addition, American ships have

been reported torpedoed on the high seas between San Francisco and Honolulu. Yesterday, the Japanese government also launched an attack against Malaya. Last night, Japanese forces attacked Hong Kong. Last night, Japanese forces attacked Guam. Last night, Japanese forces attacked the Philippine Islands.

Kitty and Helen gasp and cover their mouths, wide-eyed.

ROOSEVELT'S VOICE fades to the background:

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)

Last night, the Japanese attacked Wake Island. And this morning, the Japanese attacked Midway Island. Japan has, therefore, undertaken a surprise offensive extending throughout the Pacific area. The facts of yesterday and today speak for themselves. The people of the United States have already formed their opinions and well understand the implications to the very life and safety of our nation. As commander in chief of the Army and Navy, I have directed that all measures be taken for our defense. But always will our whole nation remember the character of the onslaught against us.

KITTY

Oh my God...Daddy!

While Roosevelt continues his speech, Helen leans back towards the radio. Kitty stands and walks over to a bookcase. She looks at a picture of Sam longingly. She lifts it and clasps it to her breast.

<<FADE TO>>

ROOSEVELT at Congress delivers the rest of the speech.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)

No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory... With confidence in our armed forces, with the unbounding determination of our people, we will gain the inevitable triumph so help us God...

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

INT. A DORM ROOM - NIGHT

A University of Texas dormitory room, ca. 1942.
JIMMY, a nondescript, nerdish UT student, turns dials on a ham radio set.

Kitty enters, quietly.

KITTY

How's the reception tonight, Jimmy?

JIMMY

Good. The signal's getting through from Bataan. Nice of the Resident Assistant to let you in.

KITTY

I'd like to see him keep me out.

JIMMY

Unbelievable, isn't it, what these shortwave radios can do? Direct from the front lines in

Bataan.

The radio crackles to life. There are muffled sounds of artillery. A RADIO ANNOUNCER speaks.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

Ladies and Gentlemen of the free world, we broadcast once again from a secret location. Suffice it to say that we're somewhere on the Philippine peninsula of Bataan. We can't say much of tactical value, but we can say our men continue to fight the Japanese invasion with valor. Tojo expected to be in Australia by now, but we've foiled his plans by sheer guts. It's March, 1942, and he's still got a fight on his hands.

KITTY

MacArthur's been evacuated to Australia. I hope Roosevelt's promise of supplies materializes.

The radio crackles. Artillery shells sound closer. The signal grows dimmer.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

Ladies and Gentlemen, that's all for tonight from the Battling Bastards of Bataan. We close our broadcast with our theme song.

The radio plays, "THE BATTLING BASTARDS OF BATAAN."

THE BATTLING BASTARDS OF BATAAN

By

David Von Kotzebue

CHORUS:

We're the battling bastards of Bataan,
No momma, no poppa, no Uncle Sam,
No aunts, no uncles, no nephews, no nieces,
No rifles, no guns, no artillery pieces
And nobody gives a damn."

Kitty holds her hands to her face, trying not to sob.

JIMMY

Hey, come here.

Jimmy holds Kitty as she weeps.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

EXT. THE ISLAND OF CORREDIGOR - DAY

"The Rock," the island fortress of Corregidor, April, 1942.

Barracks, parade grounds, and gun emplacement on Topside. Across the bay, the Bataan Peninsula appears, lush with vegetation. Considerable smoke rises from the opposite peninsula of Bataan.

Suddenly, flashes appear on high ground of the Bataan Peninsula. A SERGEANT in a machine gun nest watches with binoculars.

The sky begins to roar. It grows louder.

SERGEANT

(Shouts to the other men in his
emplacement)

Get down, those aren't ours!

They duck behind sandbags. Artillery and mortar shells

explode all around them. The shells fall with fearsome impact.

The "Mile-Long Barracks" explode. The parade field is decimated. The water tower topples.

Corregidor's big guns swing about. They return fire amidst the enemy barrage. The enemy barrage is so intense, there's almost no place that doesn't explode.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

INT. A MILITARY TUNNEL - NIGHT

The Malinta Tunnel on Corregidor.

The headquarters of GENERAL JONATHAN WAINWRIGHT shakes with the bombardment. Wainwright is a tall, gaunt officer.

Wainwright and his staff confer at a desk. Sam is among them. A calendar behind him says MAY 6, 1942.

SAM

(To WAINWRIGHT)

We fought to the last machine gun nest, ir, even though the men lived on lizards and monkeys the last week. But the Japanese had overpowering numbers and firepower. There's nothing left of Topside.

WAINWRIGHT

You fought well, Sam. Everyone did. We've thrown everything at the Japs except rocks.

(To everyone)

I can't sacrifice the lives of the rest of these boys. I've sent for surrender terms. We've held them off for months longer than they expected. They're

going to be hopping mad.

The ten foot steel gates of the Tunnel implode.
Japanese soldiers pour in.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

EXT. A JUNGLE - DAY

The Philippine jungle, ca. 1942. Japanese soldiers herd a column of American POW's along a road. The U.S. Soldiers stumble forward.

Some carry along the wounded. One soldier helping a wounded comrade stumbles. A Japanese guard hits him with his rifle butt. He bayonets the fallen American soldier. He points his bayonet at the first soldier. He screams and motions him forward.

The first soldier holds his bleeding face and stumbles to his feet. He continues marching in the column of POW's.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

EXT. A BACK YARD - DAY

Helen's house in Austin, ca. 1943. Helen hangs laundry from a clothesline.

An Army sedan approaches and stops in front of her house. An Army chaplain steps out. He's holding some papers. He approaches Helen. He begins to read from the papers.

Helen collapses. The chaplain catches the sobbing Helen.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

EXT. AN ARMY POST - DAY

A Coast Artillery Army post, Fort Baker, CA., ca. 1943. A gate to the Army post reads, "Fort Baker - Guardian of San Francisco." Coast artillery guns point towards the Pacific Ocean. An American flag flies from a high point.

<<PAN TO>>

A military memorial ceremony at the MILITARY CEMETARY on Ft. Baker, the same day. An Honor Guard fires a 3-shot salute towards the Pacific.

Helen, Kitty, and Mary sit at the front of a small crowd in chairs. They wear black. The BASE COMMANDER approaches a podium. Behind him, a street sign post is draped with an American flag.

BASE COMMANDER

Ladies and Gentlemen, you've heard the testimonies this morning about the brave soldiers on Bataan and Corregidor. Their defense of the Philippines made a shambles of the Japanese timetable in the Pacific. They intended to fight in Australia and even California, but the closest they got was to lob a few shells at Santa Barbara. Because of our soldiers' valor, these guns at Fort Baker never had to fire a shot.

Lieutenant Colonel Samuel L. McCullough embodied the finest traditions of the Coast Artillery. His guns defended the beaches at Bottomside. They were the last guns silenced and the last Filipino ground ceded to the Japanese invasion.

Colonel McCullough was to

survive the fall of Corregidor and the Death March that followed. Tragically, he did not survive the horrors of the Prisoner of War camp, and is now buried in Bilabid Prison in the Philippines. After the U.S. is victorious in the Pacific, Colonel McCullough's body will be transferred with full military honors to a military cemetery in Manila.

In the meantime, it's my great honor as the commander of this base to memorialize this brave soldier. On behalf of the U.S. Army, 1st Street on Fort Baker I now rename, "McCullough Street."

The base commander approaches the street sign. He pulls the rope on the American flag. The Honor Guard catches it. The street sign reads, "McCullough Street." The crowd applauds.

The Honor Guard folds up the American flag. They present it to The base commander. He marches to Helen.

BASE COMMANDER

Mrs. McCullough, please accept this on behalf of a grateful nation.

He presents it to her. Helen takes it from him. Kitty and Mary lean towards Helen. They hug.

BASE COMMANDER

Did you know he could have come home?

HELEN

How's that?

BASE COMMANDER

It's time you knew: He had cancer, and could have come home for treatment. But it was an

especially virulent form, and chances for recovery weren't good. Since he felt he had little time anyway, he took his chances against the Japs. And he gave his place to a sick soldier who had a better chance for recovery.

HELEN

(Sobbing)

That sounds like Samuel.

BASE COMMANDER

You know, the government would bring your husband's remains home to the place of your choice after the war.

HELEN

A Manila military cemetery is more appropriate. I'm sure he'd want to be buried among the troops he fought with.

Kitty, Helen and Mary rise and approach the street sign. They stroke the pole. They hug again.

MARY

It won't bring daddy home, but it's something.

Mary and Kitty turn to go. Helen hunches over the flag she's carrying.

KITTY

Mother, are you alright?

HELEN

Your father and I were married for 23 years. I'm not sure I'll ever be alright again.

KITTY

Now don't you talk like that. We'll look after you. Come on, let's go.

Kitty and Mary escort the disconsolate Helen away.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

EXT. A FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY

The University of Texas football stadium, ca. 1944.

A MONTAGE

Texas and Texas A&M play their annual rivalry game.

Cheerleaders cheer.

The crowds on both sides cheer.

Football players run plays.

Finally, both sides run towards the locker rooms.

END OF MONTAGE

An ANNOUNCER'S voice rings out.

ANNOUNCER

Ladies and Gentlemen, at
halftime, it's Texas A&M 17, the
University of Texas 17.

Kitty sits in the Texas stands with some college
friends.

KITTY

Hey, you guys, I've got to go
find someone.

MALE FRIEND

Just so it's not an Aggie.

KITTY

An Aggie! I would never do

that!

She holds up crossed fingers.

They laugh.

FEMALE FRIEND

Traitor!

Kitty sticks out her tongue at them.

KITTY

Piddley-poo. And don't you
girls follow. This Aggie is
mine.

Kitty makes her way towards the field.

On the other side of the field, Buck makes his way
down the A&M stands. He sports an ROTC uniform with a
Sam Brown belt. He scans the field for Kitty.

Kitty scans the field for Buck. She sees him.

KITTY

Buck! Buck! Over here!

He sees her.

They run towards each other. They meet along a
sideline. Kitty embraces Buck.

Buck disengages quickly. Buck offers Kitty his hand.

BUCK

Kitty, it's good to see you.

KITTY

(Upset)

A handshake! Why, you awful
man. Is that any way to greet
an old flame?

BUCK

(Quietly)

No PDA's, Kitty.

KITTY

PDA? Am I supposed to know what a PDA is?

BUCK

Public Displays of Affection. It'll get me demerits...In trouble with the brass.

KITTY

Oh, piddley-poo on your old regulations!

Kitty kisses him. Buck peels her off.

BUCK

It really *is* good to see you. You've really grown up into quite the young lady.

KITTY

Let me look at you. My, my, and you are quite the Third Lieutenant.

BUCK

Soon to be a second.

KITTY

Second lieutenant. Don't you have another two years?

BUCK

I don't want this war to end before I get in it. I'm going into Officer's Candidate School.

KITTY

Oh Buck. Must you?

BUCK

I must. If I wait 'til the war is over, Regular Army commissions will be as scarce as hen's teeth.

KITTY

That might be for the best.
I've lost enough to this war.

BUCK

Your father?

KITTY

Yes. In a Japanese POW camp.

BUCK

Kitty, I'm so sorry.

KITTY

Thank you, Buck. Mother can't be consoled. She sits around staring all day. I may have to drop out of college to care for her.

BUCK

That's awful. That's one of the casualties of war we sometimes forget about. But she's lucky she's got you.

On the football field, the bands begin to play. The players rush out of the locker rooms to their respective sidelines.

KITTY

Buck, this is too short. When will I see you again?

BUCK

I'm staying until the end of this semester. Can you come down to College Station?

KITTY

Aggie-land. And walk around with that awful PDA regulation in force? Piddley-poo.

BUCK

There's always Flirty.

KITTY

(Fluttering her eyelashes)
Flirty? Why sir, whatever do
you mean? Are you being
naughty?

BUCK
(Laughing)
Flirtation Walk. No brass, no
PDA's. No one is allowed except
cadets and their dates.

KITTY
Well, I'm glad they're not
training robots down there. I
accept.

Kitty steals a peck-on-the-cheek kiss.

She whirls around and departs.

Buck turns to leave, lipstick on his face.

He turns right into a SENIOR CADET.

SENIOR CADET
Kotzebue!

Buck comes to attention.

The senior cadet takes out a pad and starts writing.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

EXT. A PARADE GROUND - DAY

The Texas A&M parade ground.

A Saturday parade has just ended. Cadets walk out to
meet family and dates. Buck walks among them.

Kitty walks among the crowd that has just witnessed
the parade.

BUCK

(Waving)

Kitty!

KITTY

Buck!

They meet. Kitty offers him her hand. They shake hands.

BUCK

(Smirking)

No PDA... You're learning,
civilian.

KITTY

Piddley-poo on you, sir. I'm as
Army as you are. Almost. Now
that you've marched on that
parade ground, you march me
right down to this Flirty!

BUCK

(Saluting)

Ma'am, yes ma'am. By the way,
I've brought a blanket.

He shows it to her. It's olive drab.

KITTY

Army issue, olive-drab, how
dreadful. Oh well, I suppose
it'll have to do. And I've
brought our picnic.

She shows him a picnic basket.

BUCK

After this Army-slash-college
food, that looks heavenly.

KITTY

All right, Mr. Third Lieutenant...
March.

Buck laughs.

They walk away.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

EXT. A WOODED PATH - DAY

Flirtation Walk on the Texas A&M campus, a trail through some woods. Kitty and Buck walk along the trail.

KITTY

Hold on a minute, lieutenant.

She turns Buck around. She embraces him.

KITTY

Enough marching, a little kissing.

They kiss, deeply.

BUCK

You remind me what we're fighting for. Come on, I want to show you something.

He takes her by the hand and leads her into the trees.

He takes off his uniform top and hangs it in on a tree branch.

BUCK

There. That warns other cadets that this spot is taken.

KITTY

Why sir, what are your intentions?

BUCK

To enjoy my picnic with you. Without interruptions.

He spreads the blanket. She opens the picnic basket. She takes food out. They recline on the blanket.

KITTY
(Offering him some food)
Appetizer?

BUCK
That would be you.

He embraces her. They kiss.

They lie back on the blanket, still kissing passionately.

FLASH FORWARD:

Buck's uniform top in the tree branch.

Ants enter the picnic basket.

KITTY (O.S.)
Oh, Buck. You are Latin, aren't you..?

FADE IN:

EXT. A WAR SCENE - DAY

The Western Front, Germany, ca. 1945.

A jeep speeds down a road. Buck rides in the front passenger's seat. A machine gunner and two other soldiers ride in the back seat.

The radio squawks to life. The voice of Buck's COMPANY COMMANDER comes over the radio.

COMPANY COMMANDER (O.S.)
Lieutenant Kotzebue, come in...

The JEEP DRIVER pulls the jeep to a halt.

Buck picks up the microphone.

BUCK
Lieutenant Kotzebue here, sir.
Over.

COMPANY COMMANDER (O.S.)

Buck, any sign of the Krauts yet? Over.

BUCK

Not yet, sir. But there's smoke just over the next ridge. It ought to be the Elbe Bridge. I bet Jerry's got some troops guarding it. Over.

COMPANY COMMANDER (O.S.)

Well, go and check it out. Take the bridgehead if you can. If it's too heavily fortified, get their numbers and get back to me. Over.

BUCK

Has anyone reported linking up with the Russians along the line yet, sir? Over.

COMPANY COMMANDER

Negative. But they're blitzing towards these bridges as fast as we are. We'll link up with them; it's just a matter of time.

Buck, remember if you see the Russkies, radio back. Do not, I repeat do not make contact. Do you read me? Over.

Buck turns a dial on the radio.

BUCK

I'm sorry sir; you broke up on that last commo. Say again, over.

More static blares from the radio.

BUCK

Damned Army radios. Did any of

you men hear that last part?

JEEP DRIVER

No sir. It was all broken up.

The other soldiers nod their head in concurrence.

BUCK

Alright boys, let's go make
history.

The jeep driver puts the jeep in gear and floors it
back out on the road.

FLASH FORWARD:

EXT. A TWISTED, DAMAGED BRIDGE - DAY

The Elbe Bridge.

Buck's jeep finds a ridge, behind some trees, with the
bridge in sight. Buck scans the bridge with
binoculars.

BUCK

Bad news, men. The Krauts have
already blown the bridge. There
won't be any crossings here.

JEEP DRIVER

Turn around, sir?

Suddenly, small arms fire rips through the trees
around them. The men duck for cover.

BUCK

(To the JEEP DRIVER)

Looks like we've got some
business to conduct first.

(To the MACHINE GUNNER)

Give us some covering fire.

The machine gunner jumps behind the machine gun.

He sprays the German foxholes with fire.

BUCK

Let's go!

Buck and the other soldiers crouch and advance towards the German positions. Two Germans are hit and die.

Buck takes a bullet in the thigh. He collapses and grabs his thigh.

BUCK

(Grabbing his thigh)

Damn!

JEEP DRIVER

Hold on, sir!

The jeep driver tears Buck's pants leg asunder, revealing a bullet wound. The driver takes out his first aid bandage.

JEEP DRIVER

We'll clean this later, sir.
For now, this'll stop the
bleeding.

Buck holds the bandage to his wound.

BUCK

There may be too many of them
for us.

Suddenly, explosions tear apart the the German positions.

JEEP DRIVER

(Pointing)

Look, sir. We've got company.

Buck peers out from his low spot. Russian infantry soldiers fire from the east ridge. Behind them, tanks fire. The tanks sport Red Stars.

The Germans are cut to ribbons. The firing stops, and there is silence. The American soldiers cheer.

The machine gunner drives the jeep up to Buck. The

machine gunner and the jeep driver help Buck into the jeep. They drive to the bridgehead, waving an American flag. They shout "Amerikanski." as they approach.

The Russians gather on the east bank of the river. They cheer and wave Russian flags.

Buck and his soldiers drive down to the riverside. They find a small boat tied to the shore. They liberate the boat and all the Americans climb in. They row towards the Russian side.

JEEP DRIVER

Hey, sir, you should stand in
the bow, like Washington
crossing the Delaware.

BUCK

If it wasn't for this leg, I'd
be tempted.

They reach the east side. The cheering Russians mob them.

A Russian jeep drives through the Russian soldiers. It flies a Soviet flag. A Russian officer steps out.

It's CAPTAIN OLSHANSKY, a 20-something broad-faced Siberian-looking officer.

Captain Olshansky embraces Buck with a big Russian bear hug. He looks at Buck's name tag.

CAPTAIN OLSHANSKY

Amerikanski Kotzebue. That is
famous name in Russia. Very
great explorer.

BUCK

He was an ancestor of mine. His
side of the family went to
Russia, mine to America.

CAPTAIN OLSHANSKY

Well, now you famous, too. We
must drink vodka.

BUCK

I thought you'd never ask. I'd
be proud to.

The hugs and back-slapping continue. The American and
Russian soldiers exchange hats.

A Russian soldier produces some glasses and a bottle
of vodka.

JEEP DRIVER

(To BUCK)

Sir, these Russians really know
how to fight a war.

BUCK

(Laughing)

They're never too far from their
vodka.

Captain Olshansky fills a glass with vodka and raise
it.

CAPTAIN OLSHANSKY

To America!

The men cheer. He drinks, and they all drink.

The Russians refill the glasses.

BUCK

(Raising a glass)

To the Soviet Union!

The men cheer. He drinks, and they all drink.

The Russians refill the glasses.

CAPTAIN OLSHANSKY

To the end of this war!

The men cheer. He drinks, and they all drink.

The Russians refill the glasses.

BUCK

(Raising a glass)
To dividing Germany in half!

The men cheer. He drinks, and they all drink.

The Russians refill the glasses.

Some Russian soldiers produce Balalaikas. They play and dance. The Americans join in. The vodka flows freely.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

EXT. A TRAIN STATION - DAY, ca. 1945

The Austin, Texas train station. Flags wave and a band plays, "WHEN JOHNNY COMES MARCHING HOME." A jubilant crowd gathers around the train platform. Kitty, Helen, and Mary are in the crowd.

A train pulls up, festooned with American flags. Troops lean out the window and wave.

The people in the crowd strain their necks. When they see their soldier or sailor, they wave and cheer back.

Helen just stares straight ahead.

Suddenly Mary sees her husband, LEONARD. He's a mid-20's Army captain. She waves and calls out his name.

MARY
Leonard, Leonard!

The train comes to a halt. The soldiers and sailors disembark.

Their loved ones embrace them. Mary finds Leonard, and they embrace and kiss.

Kitty, still with Helen, strains to find Buck.

KITTY
Oh mother, isn't it exciting?

Just look at Mary and Leonard.

HELEN

She does look happy. If only
your father were on that train.

KITTY

Mother, I so wish you wouldn't
live in the past. You know
daddy won't be coming home.

Helen looks away, vapidly.

Soldiers stop disembarking from the train. Kitty
looks disappointed.

Suddenly, the wounded soldiers and sailors disembark.
Those on the platform help them down.

Buck appears, on a cane.

A CHOIR gathers in front of the BAND. They sing and
play, "THE LINKUP":

THE LINKUP
By
DAVID KOTZEBUE

In 1945 when three great armies fought tooth & nail,
Adolf Hitler was still alive, but the Yanks and Reds
were on his tail.

So lift a round, and drink it down,
Of Russian vodka, oh so stout!
Drink some cheer, and let us hear
Of Adolf Hitler and his rout!

27 Yanks stormed out that day, with machine guns and
jeeps and trucks,
To find the Reds was the command to a lieutenant named
Buck.

1000 Krauts threw down their arms rather than face
Buck's hot lead,
They also fled from an Army Red, better to be captured
than dead.

But other Krauts had other ideas, and Buck fought
three fierce firefights,
To get to the Russians Buck was itchin', the Yanks
fought with all of their might.
A Texas-sized whuppin' was what they laid on any
Krauts who fought 'em
A can of whup-ass they opened up, no Krauts would ever
forget 'em.

They topped the bank of the River Elbe, did Buck and
all of his Yanks,
On the other bank they looked down the barrels of 100
Soviet tanks.
They commandeered a boat, set afloat and sailed off
into history,
The whereabouts of the Russian might would be no
longer a mystery.

In two short weeks Hitler was dead, and the Nazis did
surrender.
We owe our thanks to Buck and his Yanks, some soldiers
to remember.
Now Ike was glad he had men so bad as the Fightin' 69th
and Buck.

Hitler learned at the cost of his life with Buck he
was just out of luck.

So lift a round, and drink it down,
Of Russian vodka, oh so stout!
Drink some cheer, and let us hear
Of Adolf Hitler and his rout!

He steps down gingerly onto the platform, with some help from others.

KITTY

(Waving)

Buck! Buck!

Buck sees her. He limps on his cane towards her. They embrace and kiss. Kitty leans back and laughs.

KITTY

No PDA, soldier!

BUCK

PDA's are allowed here, ma'am.

They kiss again.

KITTY

Buck, how is that leg?

BUCK

Much better, thanks. But, it did keep me out of the next two weeks of the war.

KITTY

Oh Buck, we read all about your patrol in the papers. But not until 2 days later. They gave the first linkup report to a Lieutenant Robertson.

BUCK

That's because the Reds and I had some vodka to consume.

KITTY

You'll *never* change.

BUCK

(Laughing)

The brass was madder than hell that some lieutenants were getting all the press. They arrested me while they were figuring out whether to court-

martial me or give me a medal.

KITTY

Buck, the paper only reported
the medal.

BUCK

And here it is, on my chest.
The Silver Star. They figured
with all the jubilation a court
martial was too depressing.
Plus, that Jerry bullet through
my leg played on their
sympathies.

KITTY

Well, it's a good thing.
There's no way I'd date a court-
martialed private.

The platform has practically emptied.

Helen, Mary and Leonard watch close by.

BUCK

Date? I was hoping for more
than a date.

With some difficulty, he kneels.

KITTY

Buck. Your leg.

BUCK

(Grimacing)

I'll be OK.

He reaches in his pocket. He pulls out a small box.
He opens it and looks up at her.

BUCK

Kathleen Adair McCullough, will
you marry me?

KITTY

Oh, Buck! It's beautiful!

BUCK

It ought to be, it's imported
all the way from Germany.
Kitty, the whole time I was gone
you were in my mind and in my
heart. Sometimes the thought of
seeing you again was all that
sustained me in that hellhole.
Will you be my bride?

KITTY

Oh Buck! Yes, a thousand times
yes!

She embraces him and almost knocks him over.

KITTY

Oh dear! Let me help you up.

She helps him to his feet and they kiss, passionately.
Helen, Mary and Leonard walk over, smiling. They pat
the couple on the back. Everyone hugs Kitty.
Congratulations are passed to Kitty and Buck. They
start walk off the platform.

Mary separates Kitty from the others.

MARY

Sister, congratulations.

KITTY

Thanks, Mary. Looks like I'll
be joining you in the ranks.

MARY

For a while. But Leonard's
leaving the service. He feels
like he's done his time. And
he's looking forward to civilian
life. So am I.

KITTY

It sounds tempting. But Buck
wants to try for a Regular Army
commission. I think his blood
is olive drab.

MARY

Look at mom. She's never recovered from losing dad. Are you ready for that?

KITTY

Hey, I've got a wounded fiancé and a dead dad, remember?

MARY

I know, Hon. If anyone should know what to expect, it's you. I just worry.

KITTY

And I worry about you. How are you going to handle civilian life? As an Army brat, I don't know if I could.

MARY

Well, whatever happens, just know you've always got a soft place to land.

KITTY

Thanks.

They hug and walk towards waiting taxis. They help a vacant Helen into a cab.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

EXT. A CHAPEL - DAY

A military wedding takes place in an Army chapel, ca. 1945.

Buck and Kitty exit the chapel. He's in Army dress blues; she's in a wedding gown.

A "crossed-swords" unit lines up on the steps. Leonard is among them.

Mary stands on her tiptoes in the crowd, rice in hand. Buck and Kitty duck through the raised sabres. Mary and the other well-wishers throw rice. Buck and Kitty make their way to a limousine. They enter and wave good-byes.

BUCK

You're married to the Army now,
dear. Like the priest said,
"For better or for worse."

They kiss.

<<CUT TO>>

The exterior of the limo.

On the window, "THANK YOU, MA'AM." The limo pulls away.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

EXT. A BOMBED-OUT CITY - DAY, ca. 1946

A German cityscape.

An Army car drives along a German street. Buck and Kitty are seated in the back seat. An Army DRIVER drives.

Buck and Kitty watch bombed-out buildings on every side.

KITTY

Oh my God, Buck, I had no idea
as to extent of the destruction!

BUCK

Fortunately, it's not in Austin
or Washington.

DRIVER

Here we are at Munich, sir.

BUCK

Thank you, driver. Do you know where our quarters are?

DRIVER

That's our next stop, sir.

They drive off through the burned-out city. Barefoot children run up to the car. They cry out, "Chocolate." Kitty reaches into her purse.

DRIVER

I wouldn't do that, ma'am. Not unless you want to have about a thousand of them behind us when we reach your quarters.

He guns the motor and leaves the children behind.

KITTY

I feel so sorry for them...

BUCK

He's right, dear. We'll leave feeding them to the Marshall Plan. Save your chocolate. You'll be surprised what chocolate can buy here.

KITTY

Like Hummel figurines. I love Hummel figurines.

DRIVER

Hummel's, nylons, you name it. You'll get used to the Black Market soon enough.

KITTY

Maybe. But I'll never get used to children begging.

(Pause)

Speaking of children, do you think we can get children's things on the Black Market?

BUCK

Why would we?

(Surprised)

Kitty. Kitty. Are you...? Are we...?

KITTY

(Laughing)

Yes, we are. You're going to be a father.

They hug and kiss. Kitty cries.

BUCK

I wonder what rank babies are born at. Think there's anything lower than a buck private?

KITTY

Buck Kotzebue, you awful man. Our children are not going to be your little soldiers.

BUCK

(Laughing)

We'll see about that.

They arrive at the Army quarters. The driver and Buck rush around to Kitty's door. The driver opens the door. Buck takes her elbow to help her out.

BUCK

Here, honey, let me help you down.

KITTY

(Laughing)

I'm fine. But you can do that in about another six months.

Buck and the driver take the bags from the trunk, and they all walk up to the house.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

EXT. A BATTLEFIELD - NIGHT

Buck sleeps in a foxhole in World War Two. A German soldier slips into the foxhole and begins to strangle him.

Buck fights back. He dislodges the German's grip. He rolls on top of the German and strangles him.

BUCK

Die, you Kraut sonofabitch, die!

FADE TO:

INT. A BEDROOM - NIGHT

Buck and Kitty's bedroom in their quarters in Munich.

Buck sits top of Kitty. His eyes are closed as he strangles her.

KITTY

(Gasping)

Buck! Buck!

She struggles to dislodge his grip. Finally, with one last heave, she lurches him off the bed and onto the floor.

She gasps for air, her hands around her neck. Buck flails around on the floor, and then lurches awake.

BUCK

What? Where?

KITTY

We're at home in Munich, dear.
But I'm afraid you were back on
the Western Front.

She nurses her neck.

Buck comes back to reality. He approaches Kitty.

BUCK

Omigawd, Kitty. Are you
alright?

KITTY

Better than that German,
apparently, whoever he was.

BUCK

You poor dear. I have such...
nightmares.

KITTY

You're the poor dear. I can
only imagine the horror, looking
at the destruction around here.
What you and those around you
must have gone through.

She hugs him.

BUCK

Nice move, though, getting me
off of you. Where'd you learn
that?

KITTY

It's just the Fighting Irish in
me, laddie. So watch out.

They laugh.

Then they're silent.

They fall backwards into their pillows. They stare
straight ahead.

KITTY

I only hope you'll have time to
heal, love.

BUCK

Prospects for peace are good.
After all, we just won the Big
One.

KITTY

I hope you're right, dear, I

hope you're right.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

EXT. A BATTLEFIELD - DAY

A Korean battlefield, ca. 1953.

A makeshift command post. It's a large foxhole, surrounded by sandbags. Buck shouts into a radio microphone.

A RADIO OPERATOR holds a radio next to him. Buck peers over the sandbags. Shells explode on the horizon.

In between the command post and the horizon, a North Korean machine gun nest pins down Buck's infantry company. Suddenly, some machine gun bullets chatter off the command post's sandbags.

BUCK

Damn, we've got to take that thing out. I told my wife I'd stay out of harm's way over here.

RADIO OPERATOR

My wife would appreciate that too, sir.

BUCK

(Laughing)

Just another day at the office.

Buck shouts into the radio microphone.

BUCK

Artillery? Drop two clicks and fire for effect!

Artillery shells explode all around the machine gun nest. Finally, one hits it, and it blows up. Buck's soldiers rush the remains of the machine gun nest.

RADIO OPERATOR

Nice shooting, sir.

BUCK

Ah, artillery. It lends dignity to what otherwise would be a crude, rude, and socially unacceptable affair.

Buck packs his pipe with tobacco from a pouch.

BUCK

I just got mail that I've got another baby due.

RADIO OPERATOR

Congratulations, sir. How many is this?

BUCK

My third. I hope I'm there to see this one born.

So, let's go put more North Koreans in harm's way!

The radio operator laughs.

RADIO OPERATOR

Yes, sir.

He and Buck gather their equipment and join Buck's men.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

EXT. A SWIMMING POOL - DAY

The Fort Benning, Georgia Officer's Club swimming pool, ca. 1954.

Army wives lie on lounge chairs around the pool. Small children play everywhere. Some wives play with their children in the pool.

Kitty sits in her swimsuit on a lounge chair. She holds her newborn, DAVID. Her oldest, Sandra, a 7-year old, and her second, Mary KAY, a 4-year old, play in the children's pool.

A FRIEND tends her 2 young children on the lounge chair next to Kitty.

FRIEND

I don't know how you do it, Kitty. I've got my hands full with my two. I think three would drive me nuts.

KITTY

(Laughing)

Oh, I went nuts a long time ago. First time was when I said, "I do" at an Army chapel altar.

FRIEND

I hear you, girlfriend. I wonder what it's like to have a husband around to help raise these rugrats.

KITTY

No different. They go off to 12 hour days; we stay home and herd rugrats.

FRIEND

So much for the glamour of marrying a "man in uniform." Well, we should get our men back soon, they're saying Korea's about over.

Sandra and Mary Kay splash each other too vigorously.

KITTY

Sandra, Mary Kay! Stop that splashing right now!

Sandra and Mary Kay stop splashing, but stick their tongues out at each other.

FRIEND

Yeah, I'd say Uncle Sam gets a pretty good deal with us. One paycheck and free daycare.

KITTY

And laundry, and cooks, and chauffeurs. And the hostess of the formal dinner for the Commanding Officer and his wife. And the sponsors of the foreign officers' wives. That is, if you want your husband to get promoted.

FRIEND

Did you ever think about having a career of your own?

KITTY

I went to two years of college, but had to drop out when my mother needed care. I wanted to be a nurse, but since she had been an Army nurse, she wouldn't hear of it.

FRIEND

What happened to her?

KITTY

She died of depression, really. She never recovered from losing my dad. It took away her will to live.

FRIEND

That's terrible. But I wonder how I'd handle it.

KITTY

I hope you never have to know.

Kitty takes out a baby bottle and feeds David. Sandra and Mary Kay jump out of the children's pool and begin running around the main pool. Kitty chases them, holding David and the bottle.

KITTY
No running, you two! Stop this
instant!

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

A MONTAGE of Army moves and Army posts.

A SIGN: OKINAWA

Kitty packs 4 kids onto a transport freighter.

Kitty & Buck drive across 2-lane highways in the family sedan.

BURMA-SHAVE SIGNS along the highway.

A SIGN: MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY (ROTC)

Graceland - Memphis, Tennessee.

Bobby-soxers climb all over Elvis' wrought-iron fence.

Kitty & Buck pack 5 kids into a family station wagon.

Kitty & Buck drive across 2-lane highways in the family station wagon.

A SIGN: FORT BENNING, GEORGIA - AIRBORNE TRAINING CENTER

Kitty & Buck pack 5 kids into a family station wagon.

Kitty & Buck drive across 2-lane highways in the family station wagon.

A SIGN: FORT LEAVENWORTH, KANSAS - ARMY WAR COLLEGE

Buck and Kitty greet officers in a formal Army receiving line.

Buck and Kitty host a formal Army dinner for foreign officers.

<<FADE TO>>

Buck and Kitty pack 5 kids into a family station wagon.

Buck and Kitty drive across 2-lane highways in the family station wagon.

A SIGN: UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN AT MADISON

Buck studies a pile of books in a library.

Buck and Kitty pack 4 kids into a family station wagon.

Buck and Kitty drive across 2-lane highways in the family station wagon.

END OF MONTAGE

EXT. A TWO-STORY SUBURBAN HOME - DAY, ca. 1964

The Atlanta home of Mary and Leonard.

They have 2 boys at home, JIMMY, 18; and BILLY, 14.

The Kotzebue station wagon pulls up the driveway. Kitty drives, Mary Kay, 15; David, 14; Patty, 12; and Debby, 10, are inside. Kitty honks the horn.

Mary and her family exit their house and run down to the car. Kitty's children leap from the car and embrace JIMMY and BILLY.

Kitty hugs Mary.

KITTY

Mary, finally! I thought we'd never get here.

MARY

Kitty, it's so good to see you! And look at this brood. Come here, you guys.

They come and hug their aunt.

MARY

I know it's a cliché, but I knew you all when you were knee-high to a grasshopper. Kitty, what are you feeding them, high-test?

KITTY

Mary, you should talk...Look at these strapping lads. Football, like your brother Johnny.

MARY

Oh yes. But not at Air Force, like Johnny. Jimmy's got a scholarship to Notre Dame.

KITTY

A Notre Dame football player! Congratulations Jimmy. You'll outrank the Pope.

Jimmy blushes.

MARY

Well, come on; let's get out of this Hotlanta heat. There's Cokes inside, imported all the way from...Hotlanta.

They go inside.

<<CUT TO>>

INT. MARY AND LEONARD'S HOUSE - DAY

The children play ping pong in the back room.

Mary and Kitty relax with Cokes in the living room.

MARY

Thank God for air conditioning. I don't know how we lived without it.

KITTY

Especially in the car. I can't believe I used to do those

cross-country trips with just the windows down. Seven of us packed into one sedan. If it wasn't for Burma-Shave ads, we'd have all pulled each other to pieces.

MARY

You've certainly had your share of moves, Army wife. Has it been worth it?

KITTY

"Join the Army and See the World." Of course, for Army families that means every swamp Uncle Sam owns. I should've married Navy, since they've got the gravy, as we like to say.

MARY

(Laughing)

Or Air Force. Johnny's just finishing at the Air Force Academy. I'm hoping flying will keep him well above the action.

Well, maybe you can enjoy a little of civilian life now, here in good old Hotlanta. When is Buck due back from Vietnam?

KITTY

His tour is 13 months. But I'm thinking of joining him there.

MARY

In Saigon? Are you out of your mind?

KITTY

Maybe. But Buck says there are dependents there, a good school system, and families are safe in the city.

MARY

It doesn't look that way on TV.

KITTY

Now Mary, do you think the Army would allow us to live in a hot combat zone? Do you think our government would lie to us?

MARY

You mean the ones who said help was on the way to the Philippines? And I know that husband of yours, the eternal optimist.

KITTY

Well, it may be a good opportunity for the kids to sample international life.

MARY

International life is fine. But can't you pick another nation?

Well, my fellow redheaded hardhead, I know there'll be no changing your mind. Whatever your decision, I'll keep the home fires burning.

They toast their Cokes.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

EXT. AN AIRPORT - DAY

Tanh Son Nhut Airport, Saigon, South Vietnam, ca. 1964.

A 727 lands. The stairway rolls to the 727's door. The door opens, and women and children deplane.

By the gate, officers watch for their loved ones. Buck watches for Kitty, Mary Kay, David, Patty and Debby.

Finally, they appear. They run across the tarmac, and embrace their father.

BUCK

Welcome to Vietnam! Let me look at you!

He looks at all the children.

BUCK

I know it's only been a few months, but I swear you've all grown like weeds. Come on, let's go inside.

They make their way to a counter. Buck presents their passports. A SERGEANT waves them inside. They walk towards Baggage Claim.

The SOUND of LOW RUMBLES.

KITTY

(Aside)

Buck, I heard artillery. Tell me it's just practice? You told me this city was safe.

BUCK

It is. That artillery's live, but it's way out on a perimeter. It's quite a ways away.

They arrive at Baggage Claim.

BUCK

You kids'll love it here. We've got a beautiful villa, and four servants. All the housework is done for us.

ALL THE KIDS

Cool.

BUCK

And you'll like the schools. American Community High School,

or ACHS.

DAVID

Do they have sports?

BUCK

Yes, they have baseball...and,
baseball.

DAVID

Only baseball? Who do they
play?

BUCK

The GI's. Believe me, they like
playing ACHS...They like to ogle
the cheerleaders. Oh, that's
right, Mary Kay, there's
cheerleading. And no flirting
with the oglers.

MARY KAY

Rah, rah, ree. Kick 'em in the
knee.
Rah, rah, rass. Kick 'em in
the...

KITTY

Young lady, watch your mouth.

MARY KAY

(Sheepishly)

...other knee.

DAVID

Yeah, but only baseball. I want
to play football, like Johnny
and Jimmy.

BUCK

Not in this heat and humidity,
you don't. But there's an old
French sports club, the Cercle
Sportif, and it's got a pool,
weights, tennis, judo lessons,
that sort of thing. And, would
you believe it, there's even a

water skiing area, right down on
the Saigon River?

DAVID

Cool. I haven't water skied
since Madison.

KITTY

What do they pull them behind,
Army pontoon boats?

BUCK

There's also a Teen Club, with
pool and ping pong, and dances
every weekend.

MARY KAY

I'm gonna like it here...There's
more to do here than there was
in Atlanta.

BUCK

Oh look, here's the luggage.

Buck, David and Mary Kay reach for the luggage.
Patty, Debby and Kitty grab the smaller pieces.

They walk out to the front of the airport. Buck flags
down a taxi.

The TAXI DRIVER opens the doors for the family, and
puts the luggage in the trunk.

TAXI DRIVER

Where you go, GI?

BUCK

Rue Centrale, pas trop vite.

(To the family)

I want to give you a little ride
around the city.

The taxi motors along the busy Saigon streets. The
family takes in the sights: Cyclos (trikes),
bicycles, motorcycles and rickshaws make up most of
the traffic. They see a wagon drawn by a water

buffalo.

DAVID

Look, a longhorn.

BUCK

(Laughing)

That's a water buffalo. And they have equal right of way with every other means of travel.

They see a cyclo-driven snack cart.

BUCK

The tricycles are called cyclos. The carts on them we affectionately call, "Howard Johnson's."

The cyclos and rickshaws are the main taxis for the locals. Look at the legs on the drivers---Not an ounce of body fat.

They see a huge garbage heap at a street corner. Small children, age 10 and under, forage for food in the garbage.

The Kotzebue children stare at them.

PATTY

That's just awful...They're our age.

BUCK

That's life in a third-world country. Compounded by war.

They see beggars, missing limbs, beg on street corners.

BUCK

Whatever you do, don't give them anything. I know you'll want to, but if you give the kids even a stick of gum, soon you'll have a hundred more gathered

around you. And the VC
sometimes use beggars as suicide
bombers.

KITTY

Suicide bombers? I thought you
said this city was safe.

BUCK

From conventional forces, it is.
But there's a small 5th Element,
for you kids, those are
terrorists.

Buck turns around.

BUCK

There's one more thing. Never
put your arm on the window, when
you're wearing a watch.

David, Mary Kay and Kitty all pull their arms inside
the taxi.

DEBBY

Why, daddy?

BUCK

One of their favorite tricks is
to ride by in a motorcycle and
take your wristwatch right off
your wrist.

TAXI DRIVER

That right. Open window and
wristwatch very bad thing.

BUCK

Our villa's very safe. There
jagged glass and spikes on top
of an 8-foot wall all around.

They reach the downtown traffic circle.

They see the Presidential Palace. It's guarded by
sandbags, machine gun emplacements, tanks and troops.

KITTY

(Under her breath)

Safe city? What a great place
to raise kids!

BUCK

What's that, dear?

KITTY

Oh nothing. I was just
remarking how beautiful it all
is. It reminds me of
Corregidor. I just hope we have
a different ending.

BUCK

Don't worry, these aren't the
Japanese. We'll have the VC
routed in no time.

KITTY

Mary was right...You're the
eternal optimist.

BUCK

(Laughing)

I guess I am.

They arrive at their villa. It's a stucco townhouse,
walled on the street side.

They get out of the taxi.

BOR, a 40'ish male Chinese servant runs out of the
villa, followed by his wife, LING. Bor bows to Buck.

BOR

Colonel Buck, welcome back.

Bor and Ling's two Chinese children, Hai and Li, file
out of the compound. Hai is a teenaged girl. Li is a
12-year old girl.

They stand near Bor and Ling. They each bow as
introductions are made.

BUCK

Bor, Ling, Hai, and Li, this is
the new madame of the house,
Kitty.

KITTY

It's good to meet you.

BUCK

And this is Mary Kay, David,
Patty and Debby.

Children, this is Bor, our cook;
his wife Ling, our housekeeper;
their daughters Hai and Li, our
launderers.

Buck pays the taxi driver. The Chinese servants carry
the luggage inside.

A blue-bellied spider monkey looks out from a cage on
the veranda. Buck takes him out and shows him to the
children.

BUCK

And this is Bert, a blue-bellied
spider monkey. I got him just
for your arrival.

DAVID

Cool!

Buck hands him to David. The other children gather
around. They pet Bert.

They walk inside. Ling carries out iced tea on a
tray. They each take a glass.

BUCK

Ice is at a premium here, but I
got some just for your arrival.

He lifts his glass.

BUCK

Welcome to Saigon!

They all lift their glasses and drink.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE TO: A montage of life for the dependents in Saigon.

Mary Kay and David dance in the Teen Club.

"Wipe Out" blares from the speakers. It continues throughout the Saigon montage.

David plays baseball against Army troops.

Mary Kay cheerleads.

Helicopter gunships fly overhead.

A couple of the troops in the gunships moon the cheerleaders.

Mary Kay and the other cheerleaders divert their eyes, giggling.

David and Mary Kay water skiing on the Saigon River.

Gun boats go by and helicopters fly overhead.

A couple of the troops in the gunships moon the water skiers.

Mary Kay falls.

Tanks roll past dead bodies in the streets of Saigon.

The Brinks Hotel in Saigon is bombed.

The Kotzebue family has dinner on their upper deck, to the sound of artillery in the distance.

END OF MONTAGE

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

EXT. AN ARMY BASE OFFICERS' ROW - DAY

MONTAGE of Kitty'S Scene 1 dream:

Three houses explode in a ball of fire.

More bombs explode in the area.

More houses explode.

A line of ragged U.S. Army soldiers is being herded down a jungle trail by their Japanese Army captors.

Those who stumble are beaten.

Those who fall are bayoneted.

END OF MONTAGE

<<CUT TO>>

BUCK

Kitty, wake up. Wake up, you're dreaming.

KITTY

No more. No more.

(Waking)

Buck. Where are we?

BUCK

Saigon, Kitty, but it sounded like you were in the Philippines.

She strains to catch her breath.

KITTY

I was...It was horrible.

BUCK

Don't worry, dear. Vietnam is no Philippines. We'll do better here.

It seems I'm not the only one with post traumatic stress disorder. Go back to sleep, we have to get to the airport early today.

Kitty rests back on her pillow, eyes open.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

EXT. AN AIRPORT - DAY, ca. 1965

Tanh Son Nhut Airport, Saigon.

Kitty gathers her children at the gate. Other families say good-bye to their officers. Buck is next to Kitty.

BUCK

In only 5 months, and I'll be home. Thank goodness Dad retired onto the Monterey Peninsula.

(To the children)

You'll love it there. Sand, surf...beauty like you won't believe.

DEBBY

Yay.

KITTY

(Sarcastically, To Buck)

And then the Pentagon. Do you know that will be 4 high schools for David and Mary Kay?

BUCK

I know honey, that's rough. But no one could have foreseen you being evacuated.

KITTY

Seems to me the Operations
Office over here could have
foreseen it, Colonel Operations
Officer.

BUCK

Now Kitty, you know there are
things beyond my control.

KITTY

We've just been pawns here,
haven't we, Buck?

She waves at all the families departing.

KITTY

All of us. Just a reason for
the government to tell people at
home that things are not so bad
over here.

BUCK

Now, Kitty...

An ANNOUNCER comes over the loudspeaker.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Ladies and Gentlemen, boys and
girls, Flight 1 for the United
States is now boarding.

KITTY

We'll wait in Carmel, only
because we have to. We always
have to. But wrap up this
"easy" fucking war quickly,
won't you, Colonel.

This is for the children...

She offers Buck her lips, coolly. Buck tries to kiss
her closely, but she resists. It ends up in a peck.

KITTY

Alright, children, say good-bye
to your father.

The children gather around Buck and hug him. He kisses Mary Kay and David.

BUCK

You two look after the younger ones, won't you?

DAVID AND MARY KAY

We will.

He lifts Patty and Debby individually, and gives each a big hug.

The family exits the gate towards the waiting 727.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

EXT. AN AIRPORT - DAY

A SIGN: "MONTEREY PENINSULA AIRPORT" ca. 1966.

Buck arrives at the airport, to the greetings of the family.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

EXT. SUBURBS - DAY

The Alexandria, Virginia suburbs of Washington, D.C., ca. 1967.

The Kotzebue family drags bags into their new suburban home.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

EXT. THE PENTAGON - DAY

FADE TO:

INT. THE PENTAGON - DAY

A Pentagon PLANNING ROOM. A map of Vietnam is on a table.

Buck briefs fellow officers.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

EXT. A SUBURBAN TWO-STORY HOME - NIGHT

The Kotzebue's suburban home in Alexandria, Virginia, ca. 1969.

FADE TO:

The interior of the home. Kitty watches the TV news. It's a casualty report from Vietnam.

Buck enters. He's in a civilian suit. He's got a briefcase with a lock chained to his wrist.

He walks up to Kitty. He kisses her on the head. He sets down his briefcase and unlocks it from his wrist.

Kitty lowers the volume on the news.

KITTY

Hello, Mr. Civilian. How'd it go today?

BUCK

Oh, another day at the office.

KITTY

Do you miss the military? Or are you like Patton in peacetime, a fish out of water?

BUCK

(Weak laugh)
Maybe. Only it's not peacetime.

KITTY
Sure, but you're planning the pacification over in Vietnam, aren't you? That's sort of peacetime.

BUCK
Sort of. Pacification while bullets are flying.

(Pauses)
There's something I need to tell you. I got orders for Four Corps in 'Nam.

KITTY
What?! Orders, for a civilian?

BUCK
Yes, even the State Department gives orders to its employees.

KITTY
Buck, you've already done your time. More than your time...You did two tours in the military.

BUCK
The State Department feels I have some special skills and knowledge they need over there.

KITTY
(Angry)
This is so fucked up. Patty and Debby need their father, especially at this time. It was easier when they were little, but they need a dad now that they're older.

Patty, age 15; and Debby, age 13, listen on the stairs, unseen by Buck or Kitty.

BUCK

I know it's hard on them. And you. But I thought this was a good time for this. Patty and Debby are teenagers, and able to handle it. And David's at West Point, and Mary Kay at Army Nurse ROTC. Besides, we knew we'd have this when we signed up.

KITTY

We signed up.. You signed up, mister, not me! Just say no.

(Pauses)

Oh Buck, I'm so sorry I was upset. I just wasn't expecting this.

BUCK

(Holding her, kissing her)

Ssshhh, Ssshhh...

He rubs her hair.

BUCK

One good thing is, with the State Department, families can stay elsewhere in the Pacific while they wait. Think you'd like to go back to the Philippines?

KITTY

The Philippines? Not on your life! Maybe I'll visit my father's grave there, but not live there.

BUCK

The next closest is Taiwan. You and the girls might like it there. There's a solid American community, and you've always liked Chinese culture. I remember back at Leavenworth,

the Chinese officers and their wives raved over your Chinese cooking.

KITTY

I liked our R&R's there from the Philippines. That doesn't sound bad. How often do you get R&R?

BUCK

Every six months. I could make it for Chinese New Year.

KITTY

I'm becoming a Pacific specialist. The Philippines, Hawaii, Vietnam, and now Taiwan.

BUCK

I'll recommend you to the Joint Chiefs...You've got more foreign experience than most of them.

KITTY

(Laughs weakly)

You just come home when you're supposed to. I've already got one relative buried over there.

CUT TO: Patty and Debby make slant eyes at each other.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

EXT. AN ORIENTAL CITY - NIGHT, ca. 1969

An aerial view of Taipei, Taiwan.

A giant paper dragon descends down a hill. It's followed by revelers firing off firecrackers.

<<CUT TO>>

The porch of the Kotzebue's villa in Taiwan.

It's a city villa, similar to the one in Saigon.
Buck, Kitty, Patty and Debby gather on the balcony.
They fire off fireworks and watch the procession.

Below, their four Chinese servants do the same thing.

The Kotzebues all raise glasses.

KITTY

To the Year of the Dog.

ALL

To the Year of the Dog!

They toast.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

EXT. A CHINESE VILLA - NIGHT, ca. 1969

The Kotzebue's home in Taipei, Taiwan.

<<CUT TO>>

INT. of the home.

Kitty sits in the living room. She drinks a glass of
bourbon. The bottle sits nearby on the side table.

She takes out a cassette tape and puts it in a
portable tape player. She starts it, and Buck's voice
comes on.

Buck

Hello, Love. How about this way
of sending letters? Pretty
spiffy, eh?

The sound of gunfire in the background of the tape.
Also the sound of artillery.

Buck
The Viet Cong's on the
perimeter. We've got them on
the run for now.

KITTY
The VC. Buck.

Buck
Actually, it looks like we've
got some North Vietnamese in the
mix, too. We were pretty secure
until they reached Four Corps.

More sounds of artillery and gunfire.

Buck
Whoops, sounds like I may be
needed. I'll record more later.
Bye for tonight.

Kitty turns off the tape recorder.

KITTY
Buck, you motherfucker. You're
just a fucking mercenary.

She laughs.

KITTY
Wow, if mom could hear my mouth
now, I'd get a good mouth-
washing.

She pours herself more bourbon. She drinks.

KITTY
Oh well, the Army's taught me a
few things. Bet my language
would make a soldier blush now.

She drinks again.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

EXT. A RICE PADDY - DAY

A Vietnamese village near a rice paddy, ca. 1975.
Buck stands in a straw hooch. He stuffs papers into a duffel bag.

A 30'ish Vietnamese woman, LIN, watches from near the door.

Gun and artillery fire sound close by. Buck hefts the duffel bag over to near her. He takes her in his arms and they kiss.

BUCK

Lin, I'm so sorry things have turned out this way. But we'd better get you out of this village. The VC won't deal kindly with collaborators.

LIN

I understand, Colonel Buck.

BUCK

Remember, when we get to Saigon, make your way to the river. There will be some boats there to get you out of Vietnam.

We'd better go, the choppers are waiting.

Lin lifts a suitcase, Buck his duffelbag. They run to a waiting helicopter. They're lifted off.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

EXT. A SUBURBAN TWO-STORY HOME - DAY, ca. 1975

The Kotzebue home in Alexandria, Virginia.

A taxi drives up and Buck exits.

Kitty, Patty (now 19); and Debby (now 17) appear on the stoop. Patty and Debby rush Buck, followed by Kitty, in a hug-filled reunion.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

INT. A SUBURBAN TWO-STORY HOME - NIGHT, ca. 1975

The Kotzebue home in Alexandria, Virginia.

Kitty sits in a chair in the master bedroom, in the dark. She drinks a dark liquid. A bourbon bottle and a coke bottle sit on the side table next to her.

She holds a book and some pictures. She turns on a lamp. She looks at the pictures. She looks at a dozen pictures of Lin. She puts them on the side table and takes a sip of wine.

Buck enters. He doesn't see her in the dark. He turns on the overhead light.

KITTY

Hello, Buck.

BUCK

Kitty. You startled me.

KITTY

And I'm going to startle you some more.

She holds up a picture.

KITTY

Who is this..?

He looks at the picture.

BUCK

(Hesitates)

She was my administrative assistant in Ben Tre.

KITTY

Oh. And why do you have a dozen fucking pictures of her in your book?

BUCK

We worked closely together. That's all. And you know photography's my hobby.

KITTY

Glamor photography. Did you take glam shots of all your co-workers?

She holds up the rest of the portraits. Her hands shake. She throws the pictures at him, followed by the book.

He ducks.

KITTY

You must think I was born fucking yesterday. I know what I'm seeing. You bastard!

BUCK

Kitty, you're making too much out of this.

KITTY

Oh, am I? Four fucking tours in a goddamned war zone...I should have figured it out.

She opens a window.

He runs to the closet and grabs handfuls of his clothes. She throws them out the window as she screams at him.

KITTY

"I think we can win this war," he says. "I've got skills they need," he says. What Bullshit! What a fucking fool I've been!

BUCK

(Weakly)

I did think we could win it...

She holds her hand up.

KITTY

Don't! I don't want to hear another fucking word. Four years waiting, the dutiful Army wife back home. Four years raising the kids on my own. Just so you can boff some fucking Gook's brains out! You bastard!

Well, you messed with the wrong redhead, mister! I'm loyal to a fault, but you don't want to get near this redhead when she's mad.

BUCK

Kitty...

She picks up the book again and chucks it at his head.

KITTY

Get out! Get out!

She throws the pictures at him again. She throws the lamp, followed by some more books.

He ducks and runs out the bedroom.

<<CUT TO>>

The exterior of the house.

Buck runs out the front door. He looks at the bedroom window.

His things lie on the lawn. Kitty throws more of his things out of the window. He collects what he can of Lin's pictures. He walks down the road, head hanging.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

EXT. MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA - DAY, ca. 1976

Kitty, Debby and a female, 40'ish REALTOR pull up to a modest frame house on a hill.

They get out and look at the house. It's dilapidated, and the lawn and shrubs are in bad shape.

DEBBY

Oh my...

REALTOR

I know it's not much to look at,
but it's solid. Some TLC, and
it'll be as good as new.

Best of all, it's just a few
blocks from the Presidio.
There's a PX and a commissary,
just like you wanted.

She leads Kitty and Debby to the side yard. They see the fence around Presidio, as well as the parade ground and flag pole.

KITTY

Well, you did get me the
location I wanted.

REALTOR

And it's the most affordable
area in Monterey. It's called
Spaghetti Hill, because most of
the original owners were Italian
sailors on the fishing fleet.
These were their homes when the
fleet was in port.

They go to the front door, and the realtor opens it. They go inside. It's dark, but the realtor opens the blinds and light floods in.

REALTOR

A lot of investors are buying these Spaghetti Hill house and fixing them up. The market is expected to skyrocket. And the neighborhood really is improving. A little paint and paper, and you've got a nice home. And a nice investment.

Best of all, let me show you something.

She leads them onto the back yard deck, which is on the second level. She waves her arm at the view of Monterey Bay.

REALTOR

Voilà! A million dollar view!

DEBBY

Wow. It really is beautiful, mom. And there's an Army post right next door.

(Laughs)

You can't fall too far from the Army nest, can you?

KITTY

I don't know. I'm not too good with a hammer. I'd have to hire out the repairs. How much did you say they're asking?

REALTOR

\$72,000. But I bet you could get them down to 65. At that price, it's way below comparables.

KITTY

That's a stretch on my divorce settlement. I have to get by on half of my ex-husband's military pay.

REALTOR

Why don't you look around some more, and think about it?

DEBBY

Mom, you should do it. The view is worth the price alone. I'll help with the repairs.

KITTY

You're a dear. But there's some Scots in this Irish woman, too. And we're frugal to a fault.

They continue looking at the house, room to room. They both smile and frown.

They join the realtor on the front stoop.

KITTY

Well, it looks like a lot of work, but like you said, really solid. I'll tell you what, if it passes inspection and you can get them down to 65,000, I'll take it.

REALTOR

Excellent! You won't be disappointed.

KITTY

(Laughing)

I hope I won't be overwhelmed.

Kitty and the Realtor shake hands, a walk towards the car.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

INT. KITTY'S NEW HOUSE IN MONTEREY - NIGHT

It's moving day. The movers have left, and Kitty and Debby assemble Kitty's bed. A wrench slips in Kitty's

hand, and she busts a knuckle.

KITTY

Damn! Another nail broken.

DEBBY

Mom, are you alright?

KITTY

I'm fine. But I won't be in any beauty pageants in the near future.

DEBBY

(Laughing)

That makes two of us. Here, let me finish that.

Kitty holds the footboard, while Debby tightens the mattress runner bolts.

DEBBY

There, that ought to do it. Now for the mattresses.

They lift the box springs and the top mattress in place.

KITTY

Deb, you've been a dear. But it's getting late, & you've been at this all day. I can finish up, making the bed and such.

DEBBY

Are you sure?

KITTY

I'm sure. You run along.

Debby looks around.

DEBBY

Well, we got everything in. Can I come back tomorrow to help unpack boxes.

KITTY

Oh hon, that's something I need
to do. Now go on, you've got
your own life to live.

DEBBY

OK, mom. I love you.

They kiss, and Debby leaves.

Kitty walks around her new home.

Outside, the sun sets.

She rummages through some boxes. She finds the liquor
box. She takes out the liquor bottles and lovingly
places them in a cabinet. She leaves the bourbon
bottle.

She prepares herself a bourbon and Coke. She goes out
on the deck and sits in a chair. She lifts her drink
in the air.

KITTY

Well, old girl, here's to life
on your own.

She drinks one half of the bourbon and Coke. She
lifts her drink in the air.

KITTY

House, here's to you. Hope you
don't break me.

She drinks the other half of the bourbon and Coke.
She looks at her empty drink.

KITTY

Oh hell, I'll just bring the
bottle out here.

She rises and heads for the kitchen.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

EXT. KITTY'S HOUSE IN MONTEREY, SUMMER DAY, ca 1978.

The house is trim and tidy, compared to the last scene.

Debby pulls up to the house. She knocks on the front door.

DEBBY

Mom? Mom?

She tries the doorbell. Puzzled, she pulls out her key and enters.

DEBBY

Mom? Mom?

She looks throughout the house. She spots Kitty in the bedroom.

Kitty is passed out in a corner. An empty bourbon bottle and an empty Coke bottle lie on the floor.

DEBBY

Mom!

Kitty awakens, groggy.

KITTY

Hunnhh...

Debby lifts the empty bourbon bottle.

DEBBY

Damn! Come on, you're going to the shower!

She lifts Kitty and guides her to the shower. She starts the water. She puts her in the shower.

KITTY

Eeeek! Some hot, please!

DEBBY

Oh, all right. Now that you're awake.

Debby reaches in and adds some hot water.

While Kitty sobers up, Debby walks to the kitchen. She finds the liquor cabinet. Mostly-empty bottles lie around everywhere.

DEBBY

Damn, she must've really tied
one on!

She goes back to the shower. She reaches in and turns off the water.

DEBBY

OK, that's enough. Let's go.

She helps her mom out. Kitty can barely stand up. Debby helps her dry off and get into her robe. She helps her to the living room and sits her on a sofa.

DEBBY

I'll make some coffee.

FORWARD TO:

INT. KITTY'S LIVING ROOM.- MINUTES LATER.

Kitty waits sleepily for Debby.

Debby brings her mom the coffee.

DEBBY

Here you go.

She puts the coffee on the coffee table. She helps Kitty lift it to her lips for a sip.

KITTY

Ahhhh...

DEBBY

Mom, about your drinking. I'm
worried about you. This looks
like quite a bender, even for
you.

KITTY

(Sheepishly)

I've been trying to do better. I get so scared, living alone on so little. I supported your dad for 28 years, and never developed a work skill of my own. I get so anxious. Sometimes the alcohol just quiets my nerves. But I've been trying to do better, I really have. But yesterday, this came.

Kitty hands Debby a letter that's lying on the coffee table. Debby takes it.

DEBBY

It's from the V.A.

"Dear Ms. McCullough: This letter is to inform you that, due to your ex-husband's remarriage, your veteran's benefits will no longer go to you, but will pass to your husband's new wife. This is in accordance with Section..."

Blah, blah blah! Mom, this is awful! I can't believe it!

KITTY

That's what it says. And regulations are regulations.

DEBBY

This is just not right! You were with dad for 28 years. You were his wife during his Army career...You should get the spouse's benefits.

KITTY

Apparently Uncle Stupid doesn't think so. A wife's a wife, not an ex-wife. Goldie's his new wife.

DEBBY

Golddigger is more like it.
What about Dad? He doesn't need
this.

KITTY

He's just kowtowing to Goldie,
I'm sure. She wants it.

DEBBY

This makes me madder than a wet
hen! We've got to fight this!

KITTY

Fight Washington? That's gonna
be harder than fighting city
hall.

DEBBY

Well, we've got to do it.

KITTY

And in the meantime, what do I
live on? Baloney sandwiches?

DEBBY

Us kids can help. We'll all
pull together.

KITTY

I don't want to bother you kids.
You've got your own lives to
live. I'm paying for my own
sins.

DEBBY

You are not! You've always done
everything that was expected of
you. And now you're getting
screwed by some out-of-date
regulation!

KITTY

Baloney sandwiches aren't so
bad...

DEBBY

Now stop that! We're going to help, and we're going to fight this stupid fucking regulation!

KITTY

Nice mouth. You kiss your mom with that mouth?

DEBBY

Yes, I do.

She gives her mom a peck on the cheek.

DEBBY

One good thing, at least you won't be able to afford the booze for a while.

KITTY

Oh, piddley-poo.

Kitty sticks her tongue out.

DEBBY

I'm serious!

Debby moves over to her mom on the couch. She puts her arm around her.

DEBBY

You really need to beat this thing. I know living like this has taken its toll. And now this regulation thing. But you've got to have a life worth living, whether on caviar or baloney. It sure won't start with a pickled liver.

KITTY

Pickled liver would be a step up. You're right, honey, I know you're right. You're such an angel.

They embrace.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

EXT. A LARGE VICTORIAN HOUSE - DAY

Outside SIGN of THE BEACON HOUSE, an alcohol-abuse treatment center in Monterey, ca. 1978.

<<CUT TO>>

INT. - DAY

An interior room in The Beacon House, an alcohol treatment center in Monterey, CA.

A dozen people gather in chairs in a circle for a support group session. The furnishings are antique'ish, but modest.

Kitty sits nervously in the circle, next to the MODERATOR.

The moderator starts the session.

MODERATOR

Good morning, group.

GROUP

(In Unison)

Good morning.

MODERATOR

Group, this morning we have a new member. This is Kitty.

GROUP

(In Unison)

Hi, Kitty.

MODERATOR

Kitty, why don't you tell the group a little about yourself?

KITTY

(Meekly)

I don't know what to say. This is all so new to me.

MODERATOR

Well, why don't you tell us what brought you here?

KITTY

(Meekly)

I'm so ashamed. I used to be an Army officer's wife. I entertained foreign dignitaries, and attended formal affairs.

MODERATOR

Many of us fell quite a ways.

MALE GROUP MEMBER #1

I'm a lawyer, and I lost my practice.

MALE GROUP MEMBER #2

I'm a minister, and I lost my pulpit.

FEMALE GROUP MEMBER #1

I'm a nurse, and I got fired.

MODERATOR

You're among friends here. We've all walked a similar path.

KITTY

Well, that does make me feel a little better.

MODERATOR

We're not here to judge you. We're here to support you. The first step is to acknowledge that our lives have become unmanageable and we've become helpless over alcohol. Now, would you like to try?

KITTY

OK, I'll try. All my life I've known nothing but the Army. I was raised an Army "brat" and then became an army officer's wife.

They teach you to drink in the Army...Boy, do they teach you to drink! There are cocktails at every event. A lot of men in the military see how much they can drink as a test of manliness. And the wives are encouraged to keep up. My poison of choice was bourbon and Coke.

The group members laugh and nod, knowingly.

But alcohol never took over until the wheels came off my marriage. We divorced after 28 years, and was I scared. I had only supported my husband's career, and had never developed any career skills of my own. I was adrift and afraid. I began to drink heavily to medicate my anxiety. It didn't help my situation, but it blanked out the pain.

She pauses. She begins to tear up.

MODERATOR

It's OK, Kitty. No one's judging you. We've all been there.

Kitty grabs a Kleenex. She wipes her nose and eyes and continues.

KITTY

In between bouts of drinking, I managed to get my life in some sort of order. I bought a

rickety old house up on Spaghetti Hill and began fixing it up. I did get half of my husband's retirement in the settlement. It wasn't much, but I got by. And I was able to buy bourbon...I wasn't going to give that up.

The group members laugh and nod, knowingly.

KITTY

I really hit rock bottom after I lost that retirement. My ex-husband remarried, and my retirement went to the new wife. I was so mad. I'm the one who supported his career for 28 years, and this gal, who's known him for less than a year, gets all his benefits. Just because of some rigid bureaucratic interpretation of marriage.

MALE GROUP MEMBER #1

That's not right.

The other group members shake their heads "no."

KITTY

It's not an excuse, I should have been stronger. But I began to really escape into the booze. I tried to hide it from my daughter, but when she found me one morning after a weekend-long bender, I finally had to face the fact: I was powerless over Demon Rum, or in my case, bourbon. I needed help. God bless them, my daughter and my ex mother-in-law checked me in to Beacon House.

That's all.

The other group members clap.

GROUP MEMBERS
(In unison)
Thanks, Kitty.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

EXT. THE DRIVE-UP ENTRANCE TO THE BEACON HOUSE - DAY,
ca. 1979

Debby's car pulls up to the entrance.

Kitty kisses and embraces the moderator.

Debby hugs them both, too, and then loads Kitty's bags
into the trunk of the car.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

INT. KITTY'S HOUSE IN MONTEREY- NIGHT, ca. 1979

Kitty walks from the living room to the kitchen. She
takes a loaf of bread from a breadbox. She takes out
the last two slices.

She reaches in the refrigerator and takes out some
mayo and a package of baloney. It's the last slice in
the package.

She spreads the mayo on it and lays the slice of
baloney on. Her hands shake.

She puts on the other slice of bread. Her hands shake
as she lifts the sandwich to her mouth.

She begins to cry, uncontrollably. She hurls the
sandwich at the kitchen cabinets. The baloney sticks
to a cabinet.

She falls to her knees, sobbing.

KITTY

Dammit! Dammit!

She clenches her fists and shakes them in the air.

KITTY

This is...baloney!

She laughs and cries at the same time, violently.

She finally cries herself off. She raises herself to her feet. She shakes her fists.

KITTY

This redhead has had enough!
I've had my last baloney
sandwich!

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

INT. KITTY'S HOUSE IN MONTEREY - THE NEXT DAY

Debby enters with two sacks of groceries.

DEBBY

Mom? Mom?

She walks to the kitchen and puts the sacks on the counter. She notices the baloney on the cabinet and the two pieces of bread on the floor.

DEBBY

Oh shit, not again.

She walks quickly to the living room. Kitty is just hanging up the phone.

KITTY

Hello, angel.

DEBBY

Mom, I brought over some
groceries. Are you...OK?

KITTY

I know that look. You mean, have I been drinking? Don't worry dear, no more of that for me.

DEBBY

Thank goodness.

KITTY

I'll admit I was tempted. But I just got off the phone with my sponsor. I'm fine. Hungry, but fine.

DEBBY

Mom, I'm so sorry. I should have brought these over yesterday. Looks like you got tired of baloney.

KITTY

And the baloney. I'm fighting mad!

DEBBY

It's about time! And I've got good news about that. Wait here.

Debby walks out to the kitchen and returns with an envelope.

DEBBY

This came yesterday. It seems some military divorcées have formed a group.

Kitty takes it and reads.

KITTY

It's from a Sandra Geller in New York.

(Pause)

They've formed a group called, "The American Military Wives

Association." They want to add me to their list. Not only yes, but hell yes. The American Military Wives Association, you can count on me.

Kitty signs the card, and puts it in the return envelope with a flourish.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

EXT. THE U.S. CAPITOL, WASHINGTON, D.C. - DAY

A sedan drives towards the Capitol. Kitty, Debby and Sandra Geller sit inside, along with 3 other ladies.

Kitty watches with apprehension as the Capitol draws near.

KITTY

Well, when I joined The American Military Wives Association, I never thought I'd be testifying before Congress.

SANDRA

You've come a long way, baby. You were a natural choice after you bitch-slapped that bureaucrat at the V.A..

KITTY

(Laughing)

First night I ever spent in jail.

SANDRA

Got us some headlines, though. And a date with Congress.

The car pulls up to the Capitol steps.

CUT TO:

INT. THE U.S. SENATE CHAMBERS - DAY

A special hearing of a Senate subcommittee is underway. Kitty stands in front of the Senators at a table with microphones in front of her.

A bailiff takes her oath, and she sits.

SENATE CHAIRMAN

Miss McCullough, may I call you Kitty, like in the papers?

KITTY

Yes, you may, Senator. It seems my reputation has preceded me.

SENATE CHAIRMAN

It has, indeed. I trust there will be no slapping here today?

LAUGHTER in the chamber.

KITTY

I'll try to behave, Senator.
But I am a redhead.

LAUGHTER in the chamber.

SENATE CHAIRMAN

We'll take that into consideration. Now, Miss McCullough, tell the committee your story. Why should benefits be paid to military divorcées?

KITTY

(Reading, partly)

Distinguished Senators, I grew up a service brat, though that's not under consideration here, but my father was a war hero in the Philippines. I myself was evacuated from Corregidor before World War Two started. My father died in a Japanese P.O.W. camp...I still have his flag.

The Army life is the only life I ever knew, so I married Army as well, after the war. We raised 5 of the so-called "baby boomers" while moving from post to post. My husband was an infantry officer, and served in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. In peacetime, we lived in infantry posts throughout the U.S., as well as in Germany and in Okinawa.

My husband used to say I was "married to the Army." What he meant was that with the wives, Uncle Sam got "two for one." I was expected to attend general's receptions, officers' social events, formal balls, and even to sponsor foreign officers' wives. I relished my role, being raised in the Army, and I poured myself into it for 28 years.

After 28 years our marriage fell apart. My husband was already in his second career after retiring from the Army. I got half his retirement in our divorce settlement, so I made do. But when he remarried, my retirement benefits went to the new wife. 28 years, and all I had to show for *my service* was my father's coffin flag.

I postponed my own career to support my husband's. Thanks in part to my help, he rose to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, and then to a GS-15 with the Agency for International Development. I attained the rank of Left Out.

Ladies in the gallery nod, knowingly.

Since I'd sacrificed my own career, I had no marketable skills. I managed with the help of my children and a lot of baloney sandwiches.

Ladies in the gallery laugh and nod.

I was lucky because I had children to support me, even if only on a baloney sandwich level. And I was able to keep my house.

SENATOR #2

Miss McCullough...Kitty. The Veteran's Administration already supports widows and wives of retirees. While your plight is touching, do you realize what your group is proposing will cost this country billions? Please don't slap me.

LAUGHTER from the gallery.

KITTY

(Smiling)

I'm tempted. But senator, do you realize that the country saves many billions more on "Chief Cooks and Bottle Washers." Not to mention launderers, and child care providers.

A couple of cheers ring down from the audience, along with some applause.

All the ladies in the galleries nod with approval.

It's also important for the committee to realize the hardships of military life, even for the dependents. We see the family's tearful good-byes on

TV, and some joyful reunions. Sometimes we're touched by a widow and her family being given the flag from the casket of her service member. But life in-between these vignettes is rigorous. We don't see the children being carted off from base to base, which means they really have no home. We don't see the children being raised by the spouse alone when the service member is in a war zone. We don't see the stress of dreading that official chaplain's visit every day. Most importantly, we don't see the long months of rehab many spouses go through with their service person when they come home missing limbs.

My existence is meager, but if anything unfortunate happens to me, I'm just a few dollars from disaster. Consider the plight of those without any family means of support: After me, you'll hear from wives who have lost everything. They're sleeping under bridges, some of them, and others are occupying shelters. These people are not hobos, they're part of the growing class of unfortunates we're starting to call, "homeless."

Is this the thanks these women and their children get for their faithful years of service? To sleep under a bridge?

(Voice rising)

I think not. I think the greatest nation on earth can do better!

The gallery rises. Cheers ring down from the audience, along with applause. The Senate Chairman lets the cheering and applause subside, and then pounds his gavel.

SENATE CHAIRMAN

Thank you for your testimony,
Miss McCullough. And thank you
for not slapping anyone. We'll
take a twenty minute recess.

He pounds his gavel and rises to go. The people at the table rise to go as well.

Kitty's lawyer, Sandra and Debby all hug her.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

EXT. THE U.S. CAPITOL - DAY

The U.S. Capitol steps. Kitty, Sandra Geller, and Debby exit onto the rotunda.

SANDRA

Well, they did it. We didn't
think they could, but they did.

KITTY

How they can sit there and turn
down wives, widows, and their
children, and sleep at night,
I'll never know.

DEBBY

They're politicians mom, that's
how. They just drive by
homeless people in their limos.

A few reporters are on the steps, with cameras and a few microphones.

SANDRA

Not as many reporters as at a

slap-in.

DEBBY

Not as spectacular, but just as important. Let's go.

They start down the steps, and the reporters rush up.

REPORTER #1

Miss Geller. Are you disappointed with the results? What did you think of the vote?

SANDRA

We feel robbed...raped, almost. The Federal government uses us, then spits us out.

REPORTER #2

It would be pretty expensive. What's your response to that argument?

SANDRA

We committed to supporting our veterans a century ago. And the government supplies support to dependents during regular military service. To end that based on marital status that changes isn't right.

KITTY

Devalued, is how it feels. Supporters of the military that have fallen through the bureaucratic cracks.

REPORTER #1

Miss McCullough, are you disappointed you didn't get to slap anyone?

KITTY

They were too far away. Otherwise, I would've, when I heard the results of that vote.

REPORTER #1
Maybe you should've had a "slap-
in?"

KITTY
I've had enough days in jail.

REPORTER #2
What will you do?

DEBBY
But we'll continue the fight,
best as we can. And the family
will tighten our belts, to take
care of our mother.

Debby hugs her mother's arm.

REPORTERS
Good luck. A few more pictures?

KITTY
OK.

The reporters take some pictures, and then disperse.

The women walk down the Capitol stairs to the bottom.
As they round a corner, they see a bedraggled HOMELESS
WOMAN. She holds a cardboard sign saying, "Veteran -
Please Help."

They all reach in their purses for something to give
her.

KITTY
I used to think they were all
drug users and vagrants. Now I
know better.

They all give the homeless woman some dollars.

ALL
God bless you.

HOMELESS WOMAN
Thank you. God bless you.

They walk on.

<<FADE OUT>>

FADE IN:

INT. KITTY'S MONTEREY HOME - NIGHT

Her bedroom window.

CUT TO:

The U.S. flag over the parade ground at Presidio of Monterey.

Taps sounds. The flag is lowered.

Closing epilogue:

Kathleen McCullough was an Army "brat" for 22 years,
and an Army wife for 28.

Kitty's fight for a Uniformed Services Former Spouse
Support Act was finally won in 1983.

Through it, Kitty and tens of thousands of gained
equal footing with civilian former spouses. Untold
numbers avoided homelessness through Kitty's efforts.

Taps for Kitty was played in 1999.

SONG: "WHAT ABOUT THEM?"

WHAT ABOUT THEM?
(A SONG FOR KITTY)

by
DAVID KOTZEBUE

What about them, what about them?
They give and give, then give again.
They prop us up, they give us prayers;
Sometimes I wonder if anyone cares.

We return, missing limbs and eyes,
Rehab begins, amid screams & sighs.
Long weary days, long weary nights,
To patch us up, who fought the fight.

We trot them off from base to base,
They have no home, no settled place,
They love us who are sent in to fight,
Who hears their tears cried in the night?

A former spouse gave her best years,
She fought the fight, she cried the tears.
For 20 years, she did her bit;
Less than that, & she don't get shit.

Back at home they watch and wait,
Sometimes we return to rehabilitate.
Sometimes their waiting is in vain,
When we're shipped home on a casket plane.

Widows get a pension, it's true,
Because they supported the red, white and blue.
Less than poverty level Uncle Sam gives;
But we died so they might live.

We do a little, but we can do more,
For the families of those who go to war.
They should not face certain poverty,
They gave us their lives for liberty.

What about them, what about them?
They give and give, then give again.
They prop us up, they give us prayers;
Sometimes I wonder if anyone cares.