

EXT. RURAL ROAD - NIGHT

SUPER: Colonial Massachusetts - 1690

A line of lighted torches pierce the darkness. They faintly illuminate the women that carry them. Women that chant in a strange language.

They veer off the narrow country road into a field and gather under a massive oak tree. They plant their torches in the ground to create a circle, several feet in diameter.

Then, using twine they connect the torches to create a pentagram in the center of the circle. The women then hold hands and march around the circle counterclockwise.

WOMAN 1

We banish thee, O creatures of
water and light and call the
Spirits of Phantasm and Fire to
this assembly.

WOMAN 2

We call upon the Lords of the
Underworld to make us your
handmaidens, for goodness and
virtue be cast forth and for dark
spirits to enter herein. We invoke
thee that thou may teach us the
ways of your power and attach us to
your unholy mission.

MUSIC arises as a wooden flute and the striking of a drumhead.

The torches cast longer shadows as the women dance and then writhe to the music that becomes faster and faster. This is followed by loud, demonic-like shrieking and black prayers to Satan himself.

The torch fires rise higher, glow brighter. Suddenly the tree's crown bursts into flames, flames that burn hot but do not consume the tree itself.

The music and shrieking end. The Women lay face down on the ground, daring not to look up, as a large, dark Demon hovers among them.

DEMON

So shall I use thee at my will.

INT. CRAIG MACKEY'S BEDROOM - DAY

It's empty. Walls stripped bare. Tall packing boxes crowd the middle of the room. The flaps on each box hang open.

Contents of one box peek out from the open top. Athletic shoes, a baseball glove, several sport trophies. On top is a framed photographic portrait of an adult male, late 20s, dressed in formal Army attire. Appears serious, determined.

A pair of HANDS close the carton flaps, tape it shut.

EXT. MACKEY HOME - DAY

SUPER: June 1990

MOVERS load a large moving van. CRAIG MACKEY, 17, stands off to one side, watching with his TEENAGE FRIENDS. Craig is tall, slim but muscular in a wiry way. Thick blonde hair. Dressed in the popular summer uniform of that era; Jams, OP T-shirt and unlaced hi-top tennis shoes.

He is upset. His Friends attempt to console him.

INT. MACKEY FAMILY VAN - DAY

RICHARD MACKEY, 45 drives. Next to him, HELEN MACKEY, 43. In the second row are Craig, ALLISON MACKEY, 10 and BRETT MACKEY, 8. The two younger children BICKER in typical sibling fashion. Craig ignores them, stares out the window.

INSERT SHOT OF ROAD SIGN.

LEAVING STAMFORD, CONN. COME AGAIN REAL SOON.

Helen notices Craig's silent brooding. Reaches over the front seat, grabs his knee, shakes it affectionately, smiles. Craig smiles weakly, pats his mother's hand.

INT. MACKEY FAMILY VAN - NIGHT

Richard drives while everyone dozes.

The van's headlights illuminate a small road sign.

WELCOME TO MASSACHUSETTS

INT. MACKEY FAMILY VAN - MORNING

The family eats from fast-food bags. The younger children playfully argue. Craig joins in.

EXT. LYNNFIELD, MASS. - DAY

It's a small township 150 miles northeast of Boston and 25 miles west of Salem. The surrounding woods and farmland blend into the homes and shops of Lynnfield proper.

EXT. MACKEY HOME - DAY

The minivan drives into a residential street. The moving van is parked in front of a large, brown wood shingle house. The Movers are unloading, boxes and furniture into the house.

The Mackeys EXIT the minivan. Stand at the curb, stare at their new home that in shape, style and architecture is so old New England.

BRETT

Is it haunted?

Craig LAUGHS. The first show of emotion since leaving Stamford. Richard starts unloading the minivan. Helen goes to speak with the Movers. Allison and Brett RUN INTO the house. Craig slowly follows.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

An enormous entrance foyer and hall. A big hall mirror. Craig ENTERS, checks himself out in the mirror. Pokes his head into the living room. Furniture already in place.

Stairway at the end of the hallway. Allison and Brett come RUNNING DOWN the stairs.

CRAIG

Well?

BRETT

It's not bad for an old dump.

Allison takes Craig's hand.

ALLISON

Craig...are we going to be happy here?

Craig smiles, kisses her cheek.

CRAIG

I promise everything will be fine.

She hugs him. Brett nudges her. The RUN OFF again.

INT. HOUSE, THIRD FLOOR - DAY

Craig WALKS UP to the top floor. The wood steps CREAK.

INT. CRAIG'S BEDROOM - DAY

He gently pushes open the door. A large bedroom whose windows provide bursts of sunlight and a soft cross breeze. Bed, desk and shelves already in place. Personnel effects cartons sit in the middle of the floor.

He ENTERS, starts to open a carton. Stops. Flops down on the bed. SIGHS.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Craig explores the backyard.

JOE (O.S.)

So, what do you think?

Craig, startled by the voice. Turns to find JOE GAST, 17, standing at the fence. He's not as tall as Craig, dark curly hair, piercing coal black eyes. He smiles

JOE (CONT'D)

Sorry. Should have knocked. Your Mom said you were back here.

He vaults the fence.

JOE (CONT'D)

I'm Joe Gast.

They shake hands.

CRAIG

I'm Craig Mackey.

JOE

I know.

Craig is surprised. Joe smiles at his reaction.

JOE (CONT'D)
It's not everyday the new county
school superintendent is a
neighbor. It's big news in a small
town like Lynnfield.

INT. CRAIG'S BEDROOM - DAY

Joe is stretched out on the bed while Craig unpacks.

CRAIG
So, what's your Dad do?

JOE
He's manager at the local car
dealership. Fords and Toyotas. You
have a car?

Craig nods.

JOE (CONT'D)
Good, around here they're an
absolute necessity...to get to
school...down to South Lynnfield...

CRAIG
What's there?

JOE
Hang outs...the mall...fast food
places...movies....it's the only
action unless you drive to Salem.

CRAIG
What's the school like?

JOE
Nothing unusual. There's nerds,
jocks, druggies...the farm kids
keep to themselves. You ask them to
hang out after school but they
always got to rush home and harvest
potatoes or something like that.

Craig unpacks some athletic trophies and plaques. Joe gets up
to look at them.

JOE (CONT'D)
Hey! A soccer star.

CRAIG
I was an All Conference striker.

JOE
I'm midfield. You gotta come out
for the team.

CRAIG
You guys any good?

JOE
We're not bad. We could be a whole
lot better with a proven goal
scorer. Do any other sports?

CRAIG
I run track. A distance runner, the
mile, 2,000 meters...whatever.

JOE
You're going to make a lot of
friends...guaranteed.

Joe peeks into an open carton, removes an 8X10 photo of a
young Army officer.

JOE (CONT'D)
Who's this?

Craig's initially angry at Joe but the anger quickly melts.
He gently takes the picture from Joe.

CRAIG
That's my dad. My real dad.

Joe's confused. Craig wants to stop but knows he can't at
this point.

CRAIG (CONT'D)
I was born Craig Nolan. My dad was
an officer in South Vietnam. He
died in a car accident just before
I was born.

He takes another photo and plaque from the carton.

It's a photo of his father in jungle fatigues, combat gear.

The plaque is a Unit citation for bravery awarded to:

2nd Platoon, Alpha Company, 262nd Light Infantry Battalion.

It's dated October 18, 1969.

CRAIG (CONT'D)
Mom remarried when I was four.
Richard adopted me.

(MORE)

CRAIG (CONT'D)

As far as I knew I was always Craig Mackey. I found the pictures when I was 10, stored in an old foot locker. Mom never wants to talk about it. It upsets her...a lot His parents are dead. So, all I have are these.

JOE

Hey man...I'm so sorry.

CRAIG

My life has such a big hole it in. All I have of him are these photos. Sometimes I'll stare at them for hours, trying to get some idea of what he must have been like.

INT. JOE'S CAR - DAY

Joe and Craig cruise through Lynnfield in a red Toyota convertible.

JOE

How come your folks didn't let you stay behind for your senior year?

CRAIG

I wanted to. Mom vetoed it. Richard said she had something called separation anxiety.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Joe steers into a gas station that's a living monument to 1940s Americana. Two pumps on a small concrete island in front of a wood frame, creaky looking building. A one-bay repair shop is attached on the right. No hint of activity.

Seated in the shade next to the soda machine are ROLAND GLEASON, 75 and CARLYLE CRENSHAW, 80. Even though it's a warm early summer day, they're both dressed in heavy overalls.

Joe stops at the soda machine. GETS OUT.

JOE

I'm dying of thirst. Want one?

CRAIG

Sure...thanks.

Craig GETS OUT.

ROLAND

So now you're driving one them damn Jap cars.

JOE

Despite what Iacoca says, they're built better...sexier too.

ROLAND

Can't work on the damn things. And the way your father stocks parts, better I fly to Tokyo and pick them up in person.

CARLYLE

Now that's a fact.

JOE

Craig, the gentleman with Toyota envy is Roland Gleason. He owns this museum. His friend is Carlyle Crenshaw, town elder and unofficial historian in these parts.

Joe gestures towards Craig.

JOE (CONT'D)

This is Craig Mackey. His dad is the new school superintendent. The family just moved into town.

ROLAND

More people!?! Lord...I remember when this still was a small town.

CARLYLE

Now that's a fact.

JOE

I'm giving him the fifty cent tour.

CARLYLE

You been to The Witches Oak?

CRAIG

The Witches Oak?

CARLYLE

You'll see on the road leading east out of town.

ROLAND

Legend is, back in colonial days,
witches gathered there to consort
with the Devil.

CRAIG

Consort?

JOE

That's a polite New England way of
saying they did some serious
screwing.

CARLYLE

Ain't no legend. That's a fact.

Craig wants to laugh but the serious, near demented, look on
old Carlyle's face stops him.

CRAIG

I thought all that witchcraft
business happened in Salem.

CARLYLE

Some of them evil bitches got out
of Salem before they got found out.
Ended up here...recruited like
minded sisters to the occult. My
great grandmother told me they
could assume the shapes of rabbits,
birds and cats to travel thorough
the night undetected.

Craig grows fascinated by Carlyle's drawn, hollow and
weathered face that seems to glow with new energy.

CARLYLE (CONT'D)

And each eve before the seasons
change, the witches from around
these parts would gather beneath
that oak and dance in raging
revelries and please themselves in
frightful rites under the watchful
eye of their Dark Master.

He slumps back in his chair, exhausted. His eyes slowly
close, the hollows in his cheeks deepen.

ROLAND

A lot of strange things have
happened over the years. People
vanishing into thin air and the
like.

JOE

I know lots of people who can't
wait to vanish from Lynnfield.

Carlyle rouses from his stupor. He talks in a trance-like
state, as if it's not actually him that's talking.

CARLYLE

Sometimes the oak is surrounded by
fire. Yet not one leaf or piece of
bark burns. And it's said that if
you fall under it's spell you'll
see the faces of the spirits who
rule it.

Carlyle slumps in his chair, all energy drained from his
frail body. Roland checks on his friend. Craig's totally
bewildered by what he's witnessed.

JOE

Time to get out of here.

INT. JOE'S CAR - DAY

As they drive away, Craig looks back at the old men.

CRAIG

That old dude, it was like he was
talking from some other
place...like a mystic.

JOE

He gets weird that way...a lot.
Seems his family is regarded as
being not all there mentally.

CRAIG

Is it true about the Witches Oak?

JOE

I heard the stories growing up.
When you're little, you'll believe
anything. Then you're stuck trying
to separate the various layers of
bullshit.

CRAIG

Do you believe any of it?

Joe just looks at him.

EXT. THE WITCHES OAK - DAY

It is a huge, magnificent, intimidating tree sitting in a field just off the road leading east out of town. No other trees sit in that field.

It's stunning crown of branches reach out in all directions and during a breeze, they move like arms that beckon one to come closer.

Joe's car APPROACHES, pulls off the road. Turns off the engine. Sits on the back of his car seat. Craig imitates him.

CRAIG

That's a hell of a tree.

JOE

If it were located in Salem it'd be a popular tourist attraction. Here, it's just part of forgotten folk legends.

Joe, who had lively and boisterous most of the day lapses into quiet reflection.

CRAIG

You seem to know more about it than you're letting on.

JOE

Listen for about ten seconds.

They do.

JOE (CONT'D)

What do you hear?

Craig shrugs.

CRAIG

Nothing.

JOE

Right. No birds. Ever. That tree should be crawling with birds. They don't even fly close to it.

CRAIG

What do you think it means?

Joe slides back down into his seat. Starts the car.

JOE

Best not to think about it.

EXT. SOCCER FIELD - DAY

It's a soccer scrimmage. Lynnfield Consolidated High versus Danvers High. Danvers presses towards the Lynnfield goal. A DANVERS PLAYER shoots, smothered by the LYNNFIELD GOALIE.

He feeds a quick outlet pass to Joe. He dribbles upfield, spots Craig one-on-one with a DANVERS FULLBACK. Joe feeds the ball to Craig. With his back to the Fullback, he chips the ball over the Fullback's head, spins around him and chases the ball.

The DANVERS GOALIE attempts to cut down Craig's shooting angle. He dives at Craig's feet. Craig just taps the ball under the sprawling Goalie, leaps over him, catches up to the ball, does a showboat dribble into the goal.

His TEAMMATES CHEER, congratulate and hug him.

INT. TEAM BUS - DAY

It's a group of happy PLAYERS. Craig, sitting in the back, is the center of attention.

PLAYER ONE

I tell you, man. We never beat Danvers in anything. Ever!

CRAIG

Let's not get too excited. This was just a scrimmage.

The Lynnfield Players kid Craig about his casual, confident attitude.

JOE

I think we've found our team captain. Right!

PLAYERS
(unison)

Right!!

The Players CHEER, APPLAUD. Craig smiles.

INT. MACKEY KITCHEN - DAY

The Family, minus Craig, seated around the table. He comes RUNNING INTO the kitchen, grabs a piece of toast, gulps down his glass of orange juice.

HELEN
Craig...slow down...

CRAIG
Can't...got to pick up Greg...and
Marty...I'm late!

HELEN
Have a nice...

Craig RUSHES OUT the kitchen door. SLAMS it behind him.

HELEN (CONT'D)
...first day at school.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Jammed with STUDENTS. Craig and Joe putting things in their hall lockers. A group of GIRLS stroll by them, slow down, look them over. KATHY FITZPATRICK, 17, an attractive redhead approaches.

KATHY
Hi Joe. Who's your friend?

JOE
Craig Mackey, this is Kathy
Fitzpatrick.

KATHY
(flirtatiously)
Oh...that's right...you're the
captain of the soccer team. I hear
you're pretty good.

CRAIG
I do my best.

She rejoins her friends. Resume their trek down the hall.
Kathy turns her head to smile at Craig.

Joe whistles.

JOE
So now you're the guy who made the
Queen of the Angels sigh.

They LAUGH.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Craig seated in class. The teacher, WILLIAM SCOTT, 40, discusses a class assignment.

SCOTT

Welcome to World History. We'll spend a lot of time learning how people lived in different historical eras. The lessons, and I admit it, tend to be impersonal and frequently dull.

JOE

I always believed the Roman Empire collapsed from boredom.

The STUDENTS laugh. Even Mr. Scott finds it amusing.

SCOTT

In response, your semester term paper must focus on two distinct areas. First, you'll examine a particular historic era you find interesting and then you'll describe what it's like to be eighteen years old in that time.

The Students react favorably. Craig, especially, pays close attention.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Every teenage generation labors under the delusion that their problems and trauma are unique. That they invented the wheel, so to speak. With a blend of imagination and scholarship, you'll discover you have more in common with the past than you know.

BELL RINGS.

Students EXIT QUICKLY. Craig approaches his teacher.

CRAIG

Mr. Scott, I want to do my paper about the late 1960s I was wondering if I could write about two different types of teenagers. A middle-class kid who becomes, you know, a hippie and a kid from a blue collar family that gets drafted and goes to Vietnam.

SCOTT

That's very ambitious. I grew up in the 60s so I can be extra critical. So, please do it! I look forward to reading it.

CRAIG

Thanks, Mr. Scott.

He starts to leave.

SCOTT

Good luck this afternoon against Middleton.

Craig gives him the thumbs up sign.

CRAIG

Piece of cake.

EXT. SOCCER FIELD - DAY

Craig moves towards the Middleton goal, keeping pace with his LEFT WING, dribbling the ball up the sideline.

The Left Wing gets within thirty yards of goal, he kicks a high, centering pass. With the ball in the air, Craig lengthens his stride. He breaks behind the MIDDLETON DEFENDERS. The MIDDLETON GOALIE comes out of the goal, leaps in the air to get to the ball. Craig outleaps the Goalie, heads the ball past him and into the goal.

Final score is Lynnfield 3, Middleton 1.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Craig, Kathy, Joe and his DATE seated in a booth talking about Craig's game-winning exploits.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Craig opens his car door for Kathy. She smiles, then gives him a long, intense kiss.

INT. CRAIG'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

His desk is covered with stacks of books. "The Hippie Trip", "If I Should Die in a Combat Zone", "Psychedelia", "All That We Had", "The Magnificent Decade: 1960-1970".

He's reading "America Takes Over" from the Time-Life series on Vietnam. He sticks a piece of paper into his typewriter.

Types, "Life of a San Francisco Hippie".

He stretches back in his chair. Reaches up on his bookcase shelf. Grabs the picture of his Father in combat gear. Stares at it.

INT. MACKEY HOME, FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

Craig on the couch, focused on the television which is playing the Russian roulette scene from "The Deer Hunter". Brett ENTERS, sits next to Craig.

BRETT

What's this?

CRAIG

It's a movie about the Vietnam War. I'm watching it for a paper I'm writing.

BRETT

What's going on?

CRAIG

The American soldiers are Viet Cong prisoners and they're forced to play Russian roulette as part of their torture.

Craig and Brett watch but their reactions are markedly different as the scene intensifies. Craig is swept up in the human tragedy. Brett is bored.

BRETT

Boy, they're really dumb.

CRAIG

What are you talking about?

BRETT

Rambo would have blown them all away with a machine gun or grenade launcher or something.

He jumps up, uses his hands to imitate firing a weapon.

BRETT (CONT'D)

Batta-batta-batta-batta-boom! No more Vietnamese. Those guys are lame. They deserve to die.

Brett EXITS. Craig is angry.

INT. MR. SCOTT'S CLASSROOM - DAY

He's at his desk. Craig ENTERS. Hands Mr. Scott his term paper.

CRAIG

I wanted to get this to you right away.

Scott thumbs through it.

SCOTT

I'm looking forward to reading it.

CRAIG

Can I ask you something personal?

SCOTT

(smiling)

Go ahead.

CRAIG

What did you do in the 60s?

SCOTT

I flunked out of college. Not wanting to be drafted, I enlisted in the Air Force. I was ground crew in Okinawa, loading and unloading C-130 transports heading for Vietnam.

CRAIG

Seems like it was such a strange time. There were so many things you could be. So much going on. The war, the hippies, the riots.

SCOTT

Someone wrote that living in the 60s was like being locked in a room with a maniac that had a loaded gun. A lot of people got hurt and a lot of them never recovered.

CRAIG

(softly)

Yeah...I know.

SCOTT

The war?

Craig nods.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
A family member?

CRAIG
A distant relative. I never met him
but I heard a lot stories. I'd give
anything to meet him. Ask him what
it was like.

SCOTT
Sometimes, maybe it's better we
don't know.

INT. MACKEY FAMILY VAN - DAY

They're driving out of town on the east road. All the trees
have dropped their leaves, giving them a bleak look that
signals the approach of winter.

BRETT
Why do we have to leave town for
Thanksgiving anyway?

ALLISON
You've been told one hundred times
we're visiting mom's cousin Alice.

BRETT
But Timmy Jasper and I were going
to build a tree house.

HELEN
We'll be back Saturday. You'll have
plenty of time. Besides, Cousin
Alice has a son your age.

BRETT
Probably a dork.

RICHARD
That's enough, Brett.

Craig ignores the chaos Brett creates. His interest peaks
when he realizes their approaching The Witches Oak.

CRAIG
Dad...stop a minute.

Richard begins to slow down.

RICHARD
What's wrong?

CRAIG
I want to look at that tree.

The van stops at the side of the road, next to The Witches Oak.

RICHARD
Odd. It still has all its leaves.
Unusual this late in the season.

ALLISON
What's so special about this tree?

RICHARD
That's The Witches Oak. The local legend is that it's haunted by the spirits of the witches that used it as a meeting place.

ALLISON
Witches?

RICHARD
It's just an old story, honey.

BRETT
It's dumb.

Craig, who normally ignores Brett, is angered by his remark.

CRAIG
First, you say the men who fought in Vietnam were dumb. Now, the tree is dumb. You're the one who's dumb. You're an idiot.

Richard and Helen are disturbed by Craig's outbreak. Allison is surprised. Brett is deeply hurt.

HELEN
Craig...apologize.

CRAIG
No mom, I won't. Not this time.

A blanket of tense silence covers the family.

EXT. THE FAMILY VAN - DAY

It slowly pulls away. A sudden and strong wind causes the tree's branches to appear to reach out toward the van.

INT. SOUTH LYNNFIELD MALL - DAY

The mall decorated for the Christmas shopping season. Cheerful Christmas music heard everywhere.

INT. JEWELRY STORE - DAY

Craig and Joe lean over a display case. A SALESGIRL helps them as Craig points to an item in the case.

CRAIG

How about those earrings...there.

SALESGIRL

They're lovely. She'll love them.

JOE

How much does love cost today?

SALESGIRL

They're ninety dollars.

CRAIG

I'll take them.

Joe whistles.

JOE

Now that's true love.

Craig shrugs. Reaches for his wallet.

CRAIG

Kathy's just...well...special.

JOE

Got to hand it to you. I've known her since the sixth grade and I've watched countless guys take a run at her. All they got for their trouble was a case of frostbite.

INT. THE MALL - DAY

JOE

Let's pick up Marty and Dave, get a party started.

CRAIG

No, I'm going to go home and do some running, put in a few miles, get ready for track season.

JOE

It's three days until Christmas. Track season ain't til spring.

CRAIG

Informal workouts start end of January. I can't just show up, and say I'm ready to run two thousand meters.

Joe's humbled by Craig's scolding.

JOE

Sorry.

Craig pats Joe on the back.

INT. MACKEY HOME, KITCHEN - DAY

Craig ENTERS.

CRAIG

Anybody home??

He spots a note on the kitchen table. Picks it up.

INSERT SHOT

HELEN (VO)

We took the kids to do some last minute Christmas shopping. Should be home around 6:30. Love, Mom.

Craig looks at the clock. It's 3:30pm. Checks the calendar.

NOTICE: It's December 21. Written in the little square is: Winter Solstice, First day of Winter.

EXT. LYNNFIELD - DAY

The winter sun begins to cast its long shadows as Craig jogs along the east road. A light coating of snow blankets the ground and CRUNCHES under his jogging shoes. That and Craig's breathing are the only sounds.

EXT. WITCHES OAK - DAY

Craig APPROACHES the tree, slows down as he nears. His eyes are drawn to it. He accelerates and DISAPPEARS down the road.

The tree's crown sways and rustles. Sparks of light and fire jump from its trunk.

EXT. EAST ROAD - TWILIGHT

Craig sees the sun begins to set. Stops. Takes several deep breaths. Turns, begins walking back.

EXT. WITCHES OAK - TWILIGHT

Craig slowly trots. Stops, leans forward, puts his hands on his knees. Draws deep, raspy breathes. The sun sinks below the horizon.

Suddenly there is the distinct sound of LAUGHTER, LOUD WHISPERING, THE BABBLE OF DIFFERENT VOICES. Craig is frightened. His heart racing, breathing loud and accelerating.

Seemingly out of nowhere and with no warning, a violent wind arises. Craig pulls up his sweatshirt hood. The wind's intensity increases, snow begins blowing, blinding him.

Craig stumbles, falls, scrambles to his feet. He gropes, seeks some shelter from the sudden winter squall. The only potential refuge is The Witches Oak. Craig reaches the tree. Flattens himself against it as the wind HOWLS around him.

The VOICES, LAUGHING returns, this time louder. Sparks of fire and light jump from the tree. Craig panics, tries to run away but his arms are mysteriously pinned to the tree. He pulls as hard as he can but it's in vain.

Lightening CRACKLES around the top of the tree. Craig SCREAMS and YELLS for help.

INT. CRAIG'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The pictures of his Father shake and move.

EXT. THE WITCHES OAK - NIGHT

Craig continues to YELL for help. In his fright, he closed his eyes. Opens them. The tree bark seems to change shape. The face of an OLD CRONE forms in the bark. Craig SCREAMS in terror. A bolt of lightening strikes where he stands.

INT. CRAIG'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

CRACK OF LIGHTENING fills the room.

The pictures of his Father spontaneously shatter, fall to the floor. Erupt in flame and quickly burn to ash.

EXT. THE WITCHES OAK - NIGHT

The squall has ended as quickly as it arose. Calm has settled over the area. Craig is nowhere to be seen.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Craig, in the hospital bed, wakes up SCREAMING.

A NURSE RUNS INTO the room.

NURSE
(soothingly)
It's alright. It's alright. You're safe.

Craig stops screaming. He is wild-eyed, sweats heavily. His breathing slows. He lays back down.

CRAIG
Where...? Where...?

NURSE
You're in the hospital. You were unconscious when the police found you. You've been out four days.

CRAIG
Four days!?! Four? Then today must be Christmas.

His remark startles the Nurse.

CRAIG (CONT'D)
Where's my Mom and Dad?

NURSE
You didn't have identification. We
didn't know who to call.

Craig doesn't believe she doesn't know who he is.

CRAIG
I'm Craig Mackey. My dad is Richard
Mackey, the school superintendent.
We live at 17 Sherwood Lane.

NURSE
I'll find the Doctor and let him
talk to you.

She EXITS.

Craig stares at the window that's across the room. He NOTICES the bright sunlight. Slowly sits up, moves to the edge of the bed, waits for his dizziness to pass. Walks on unsteady legs to the window.

EXT. CRAIG'S POV - DAY

It's not pastoral Lynnfield in winter but the concrete and skyline of a major city bathed in brilliant daylight.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

The DOCTOR and Nurse ENTER.

DOCTOR
Shouldn't try to be so active,
especially....

Craig faces them.

CRAIG
Where am I?

The question surprises the Doctor. He smiles.

DOCTOR
San Francisco General Hospital.

Craig slumps to the floor. The Doctor and Nurse rush to help him to his feet.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
Told you not to try to do too much.
You're still weak.

Craig is terror stricken. The color has drained from his face. He's helped back into the bed.

CRAIG
How did I get here?

DOCTOR
The police found you unconscious in
Mission Park.

Craig's voice takes a tone of panicked urgency.

CRAIG
No..no...the last thing I remember,
I was jogging and there was a snow
squall...the tree! It was the
Witches Oak. It's possessed just
like old man Crenshaw said.

The Doctor and Nurse look at each other. As far as they know this patient is mentally unbalanced. Craig sees their doubt and suspicion.

CRAIG (CONT'D)
What the hell is the matter with
you two? My name is Craig Mackey. I
live in Lynnfield, Massachusetts
and I have no idea how in the hell
I got here.

DOCTOR
You've probably been under the
influence of some hallucinogenic
and you're confused, disoriented.

CRAIG
Hallucinogenic!?! I've never taken
drugs.

DOCTOR
We're not your parents on the
police. You don't have to put on an
act. It's the hippie movement...the
drugs and free love that attracts
kids like you.

Craig's eyes show fear and paranoia.

CRAIG
 (stutters)
 Hippie...hippie...San Francisco.

Covers his face with his hands.

CRAIG (CONT'D)
 No, this isn't happening. This
 should be Christmas Day, 1986.
 Where are my clothes? I got to get
 outta here.

The Doctor and Nurse are certain they're dealing with someone
 totally delusional. The Doctor approaches while the Nurse
 LEAVES quietly.

DOCTOR
 Take it easy. I'm sure there's an
 explanation for what's happening.

CRAIG
 Get away! What have you done to me?

Craig jumps out of the bed, RUNS OUT of the room.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Craig acts like a frightened animal. The Doctor chases him
 down the hallway.

INT. NURSES STATION - DAY

Craig stops. Startled by this crazed boy, the NURSES
 instinctively back away.

Craig spots a calendar behind a nurses' desk. It rips it off
 the wall.

INSERT: The calendar page says: March 1967.

Craig drops it like it's a poisonous snake.

CRAIG
 (screaming)
 No-o-o-o! No-o-o-o!!

He RUNS OFF. The Doctor APPEARS, continues to chase.

DOCTOR
 Call Security. It's an emergency. A
 patient is suffering a drug-induced
 panic attack.

NURSE 2 signals Security on the intercom.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY 2 - DAY

PEOPLE hustle out of Craig's way. He skids to a halt at the elevators. Frantically pushes the buttons. A SECURITY GUARD APPEARS in the hallway.

GUARD 1

Hey you, wait right there.

Craig tries to go in the opposite direction but he's cut off by SECURITY GUARD 2 and the Doctor. Craig heads for the Exit Door but Security Guard 1 intercepts him. Holds him until Security Guard 2 can help restrain him.

Nurse 1 APPROACHES, hands the Doctor a hypodermic needle. With help from the Security Guards he gains control of Craig's arm, gives him the injection. It takes only a few seconds and Craig stops struggling.

DOCTOR

(breathing heavily)

Dumb damn kids. They'll swallow anything they think will give them a new high.

NURSE 1

Now what do we do?

DOCTOR

Let's get him through the night. Exam him in the morning and then release him.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - DAY

Craig, in his jogging sweats and running shoes, wanders the streets. He looks in shop windows, talks to PASSER-BYES.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO 2 - DAY

Craig lazily crosses the street.

TROLLEY BELL CLANGS.

Suddenly from over the rise of the street, the Trolley Car APPEARS. Craig has to scramble madly to get out of its way.

INT. GOLDEN GATE PARK, THE PANHANDLE/HAIGHT-ASHBURY - DAY

A street sign marks the intersection of the 600 block of Asbury St, with the 1500 block of Haight St.

Craig is bewildered by the density of sights and sounds. A group of SHIRTLESS YOUNG MEN frantically beat on bongos. Several YOUNG GIRLS clang tambourines as they sway and undulate to the beat.

Craig sniffs the air. Wrinkles his nose at the pungent, overwhelming aroma of marijuana.

He wanders through the crowd observing PEOPLE openly and casually sharing joints. A HIPPIE GIRL tries to pass one to him. He quickly backs away.

OTHER HIPPIES in the throes of LSD trips BABBLE AND PRATTLE, jump up and down to music only they can hear.

Several HELL'S ANGELS stride through the crowd, heading right at Craig. They are massive, scary men with long, greasy hair and beards. Dressed head to toe in leather.

They swagger through the Hippies. A definite air of danger walks with them. Craig sees they're bearing down on him with no intention of stepping aside. He moves to get out of their way, trips over someone's leg. The Hell's Angels laugh.

RILEY (O.S.)
Hey man...watch it.

Craig looks up to see who's speaking. He's face to face with RILEY, mid-30s, relaxing on a blanket.

CRAIG
I'm sorry. I didn't mean....

Riley waves his hand.

RILEY
Not your fault, man. I shouldn't have been so hostile. Definitely not cool.

Riley stands. His hair hangs down past his shoulders. He has a magnificent blonde-red beard. Wears denim and buckskin covered in psychedelic patches. Has Indian beads, a headband and bells on his buckskin boots.

RILEY (CONT'D)
I'm Riley.

CRAIG
Riley who?

RILEY
Just Riley.

CRAIG
I'm Craig.

RILEY
Where you from?

CRAIG
I...I don't know anymore.

Riley smiles, nods.

RILEY
That's cool. Shows you're striving
for a new level of consciousness. I
can dig that.

CRAIG
Riley, what's going on here? Why so
many people?

RILEY
A funeral.

CRAIG
Funeral??

RILEY
For Sugar Bear. Everyone knew him,
everyone loved him. He was one
beautiful cat.

CRAIG
What happened?

RILEY
He was run over by one of them
fucking tourist buses. Like the
whole hip community is smashed
about this.

CRAIG
This is a strange funeral.

RILEY
Sugar Bear would have dug it.

Riley starts to walk towards the bandstand. Craig's natural
reaction is to follow him.

CRAIG

Riley!

Riley stops, looks at Craig. Sees the desperation in his eyes.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

I got no place to go.

Riley nods, indicates Craig should stay close to him. They mingle with the crowd. The music tempo increases. An ANNOUNCEMENT comes over the band's PA system that people can go to a certain tent and receive free dope.

Each chorus of music, each joint smoked, each LSD tab dropped produces a wilder and more emotional level at this love-in-style funeral.

EXT. CLAYTON ST. - NIGHT

Riley and Craig walk. Craig's head moves as if on a swivel as he tries to absorb all the sights. They reach their destination; a rowhome. Riley, using long strides, bounds up the steps and INTO the house. Craig follows but pauses to read what's painted on front door. Haight is Love.

INT. HIPPIE HOUSE - NIGHT

A large, spacious "pad". PEOPLE wandering throughout. Craig keeps falling behind Riley as he stops to read all the posters, bulletins and psychedelia on the walls.

INT. HIPPIE HOUSE/KITCHEN - NIGHT

A group is gathered in the kitchen, cooking and eating dinner. These are the permanent occupants. Over the oven is JC and his wife, MILLIE. Seated around the table are MAX, FARMER, DAVE, ZERO, BABBS, LA and SUNSHINE. They all are in their late teens up to late-20s.

Riley and Craig ENTER. They rush to greet Riley, hug and kiss him. Craig hangs back.

DAVE

Man, wasn't that an outta sight happening today?

RILEY

It was spiritual to see so many beautiful freaks turn out to say good-bye to Sugar Bear.

Dave points to Craig.

DAVE
Who's the stray?

RILEY
Hey everyone! This is Craig.

Everyone smiles. Riley motions him to come closer.

RILEY (CONT'D)
He's gonna be part of the family.
Craig...this is Dave.

Craig attempts to shake hands. Instead, Dave embraces him.

DAVE
Welcome, man. Peace and love.

Craig is startled. Riley leads him to the oven.

RILEY
This is JC and his wife, Millie.

They also welcome Craig affectionately. Riley leads him around the table.

RILEY (CONT'D)
This is Max, Farmer, and Zero. And
the women here..Babbs, LA and
Sunshine.

Each, in turn, greet Craig with hugs and kisses.

LA
You want something to eat?

Craig nods eagerly. LA smiles at him. She is a petite young woman with long, flowing dark hair. She wears a full-length peasant dress.

CRAIG
Yes...please.

She motions for him to sit next to her.

ZERO
Don't be so uptight. You're with
friends.

CRAIG
But we just met. You don't know me.

ZERO

You're cool. Riley spoke for you.

The others nod in agreement. Millie puts a plate of stew in front of them.

RILEY

He'll be alright, once he undergoes some major ego restructuring.

FARMER

Maybe he needs a new name.

The group verbally agrees.

MAX

Yeah...he doesn't look like a "Craig".

RILEY

New name...new outlook.

SUNSHINE

Well, what does he look like?

LA

Thor. He looks like Thor.

JC

Thor?

LA

The Viking god of thunder and lighting...great strength...blonde..handsome.

Everyone looks at Craig for his reaction.

CRAIG

Yeah...groovy...I guess.

They're pleased at Craig's reluctant acceptance.

INT. HIPPIE HOUSE/KITCHEN - LATER THAT NIGHT

Riley and Craig are alone. Riley puffs on a joint. Offers it to Craig. He refuses.

RILEY

So, the people you met tonight...we're just a group with on desire to make capital gains.

(MORE)

RILEY (CONT'D)

So, we set up The Free Store and Free Kitchen.

CRAIG

You just give the stuff away?

RILEY

Kids are arriving from all over the country. Most ain't got anything to eat...wear...or place to sleep. We set up the stores because the materialistic society won't take care of these people.

CRAIG

What do you want me to do?

RILEY

You're free to do your own thing.

CRAIG

What if I can't figure out what that is?

RILEY

Your path will find you.

INT. HIPPIE HOUSE/THIRD FLOOR - NIGHT

Riley leads Craig to the third floor.

RILEY

Listen, man, for the time being you'll be sleeping in the crash room. Once you become really cool with the rest of the family, someone will invite you to share their room.

Riley pushes open a partially closed door.

LOUD, BOISTEROUS TALKING, LAUGHING, CARRYING ON.

The room is full of Hippies who decided to crash at the house for the night. They drink wine, smoke marijuana.

HIPPIE 1

Hey Riley, what's happening?

RILEY

Love, brother. It's all around us.

Riley's greeting is met with choruses of "outta sight", "too much", "groovy".

RILEY (CONT'D)

I want you cats to meet Thor.

Greetings are SHOUTED OUT.

RILEY (CONT'D)

He's gonna spend the night in here with you bozos, so be cool.

Riley EXITS.

HIPPIE 2

Here you go, man. You can stretch out here.

He points to an old mattress lodged in a corner. Craig carefully sidesteps some already sleeping people. Gets to the mattress, sits. Finds himself face-to-face with a grinning, large, bearded hippie. He smiles back. Hippie offers him a joint. Craig declines.

HIPPIE 3

Hey man, don't be so uptight.

CRAIG

It's just that I had plenty at the funeral.

HIPPIE 3

Dig it.

Hippie 3 leans in Craig's direction. Craig's nose wrinkles as he takes in the distinct aroma of body odor.

CRAIG

I'm wondering...I'm kinda new around here. Is there some rule against taking a shower?

HIPPIE 2

Depends if it's your bag, man.

HIPPIE 3

Society's whole concept of cleanliness is plastic and anti-earth. Covering your body with chemicals to smell sweet. Man, this is the way nature intended to smell.

CRAIG

Well...you smell...I mean what
you're doing...it's far out!

This is met with the now-expected chorus of hippie jargon.

EXT. CLAYTON STREET FREE STORE AND FREE KITCHEN - DAY

The store and kitchen sit side-by-side.

INT. FREE STORE - DAY

A haphazard arrangement of old furniture, housewares and clothing bins. Zero sweeps the floor, Babbs stacks clothes in a bin. Craig sits behind the counter, reading a book.

The book's title is: Witchcraft in Colonial New England.

Craig now dresses as a full-fledged member of the hippie community. Wears a brightly-colored tie-die T-shirt. Faded jeans covered with patches. Love beads hang around his neck. His hair has grown long and wild.

Riley ENTERS. Talks briefly with Zero and Babbs then goes to Craig. Reads the title of his book.

RILEY

Witchcraft! Heavy negative vibes.

CRAIG

It says that in the spaces between the bark and the tree, spirits could be trapped by those who knew how. Then those trees become in-between places; borders between space and time.

RILEY

I can dig that. You should read Nathaniel Hawthorne. He believed the forests of New England were repositories of evil.

Craig is surprised by Riley's knowledge. Riley smiles, winks at him.

CRAIG

Right...a tree like that, you know, enchanted, can act like a doorway between dimensions. Maybe that explains how I got here.

Zero, standing in the doorway, starts waving his arms.

ZERO

Here comes a whole bunch of them.

With that cue, Craig and Riley reach into a box and pull out cards with prices on them. They hand some to Zero and Babbs. They quickly put price cards on each clothing bin and other articles throughout the store.

They finish just as a group of TOURISTS APPEAR in the front of the store. They congregate, talk among themselves and slowly ENTER.

The Tourists wander through the store, mostly examine clothing. A FEMALE TOURIST, carrying paisley bell bottoms approaches Babbs.

FEMALE TOURIST

How much is this, dear?

BABBS

It says five dollars but you can pay whatever you feel is fair. You can have it for free.

The Female Tourist, surprised by the offer, hands Babbs a ten dollar bill.

FEMALE TOURIST

Keep the change.

BABBS

Thank you for the love offering.

This scene is repeated multiple times. They also pose for pictures with family members and tip generously. The Tourists LEAVE. Zero, Babbs and Craig gather around Riley as he counts the money.

RILEY

Today's guilt trip netted one hundred and twenty dollars. Can't get over how the straights always overpay.

BABBS

Especially when we tell them they can have the stuff for nothing.

Zero and Babbs LAUGH. Craig watches a TALL, SKINNY HIPPIE who SNUCK IN as the Tourists left. The Hippie quickly takes clothes from a bin and stuffs them into a shopping bag.

CRAIG
 (yelling)
 Hey, man! I told you yesterday not
 to come back.

The TT Hippie stares at Craig. It's eyes make it obvious he's stoned.

TT HIPPIE
 (mumbles)
 This is a free store, man.

CRAIG
 It's free is you need it. This is
 the fourth day in a row you've come
 in.

Knocks the bag out of his hands.

CRAIG (CONT'D)
 Half that shit probably doesn't
 even fit you.

Riley picks up the bag, hands it to the TT Hippie.

RILEY
 You're right. It's free. Here, it's
 yours.

The TT Hippie LEAVES.

CRAIG
 He's stealing.

Riley puts his arm around Craig.

RILEY
 You can't steal what's free. Sure,
 he doesn't need all that shit and
 he probably thinks he's getting away
 with something but that's alright.
 C'mon, let's go food shopping. The
 kitchen's running low.

EXT. CLAYTON STREET - DAY

Craig steps outside, waits for Riley. A black cat approaches, begins rubbing up against his leg. The car purrs contently. Craig picks it up.

CRAIG
 You're the blackest cat I've ever
 seen. Who do you belong to?

RILEY
My guess is the Devil.

Riley steps up to pet the cat. He's greeted with a loud, menacing hiss and growl. Craig strokes the cat's head which calms her down.

CRAIG
What the hell was that all about?

RILEY
She's a demon cat. She's as mean as hell itself. She attacks people. Really nasty piece of work. I've never seen her let anyone pick her up like this.

CRAIG
Maybe I'm the devil.

RILEY
Don't joke about stuff like that.

Craig puts down the cat, rubs her head.

CRAIG
Go on, Demon. Catch up to me later.

Demon meows then takes off down the street.

EXT. HAIGHT STREET - DAY

CRAIG
Riley, what did you do before you...uhh....??

RILEY
Dropped out?

CRAIG
Yeah...that.

RILEY
I was a banker.

He smiles when he sees the look on Craig's face.

RILEY (CONT'D)
I was an investment officer in the trust department. Managed money for a lot of rich folks. Made a lot of money myself.

CRAIG
Why'd you quit?

RILEY
I lived a false life, worrying
about promotions, bonuses. New
cars, bigger homes, country clubs.
All wrapped up in take..take..take.
My spiritual life didn't exist. Two
years ago I came to San Francisco
for a bankers' convention. Came
down here as a tourist..all the
love and giving blew my mind. I
never went back.

CRAIG
Did you have a family?

Riley nods.

CRAIG (CONT'D)
What happened to them?

Riley shrugs.

RILEY
Doesn't matter.

EXT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Riley grabs a shopping cart. Craig starts to enter the market
but stops because Riley continues down the street. Craig runs
after him.

CRAIG
Hey! What are you doing? You said
we're going to buy some food.

RILEY
Buy? What makes you think we're
gonna buy food?

CRAIG
The money we made at the store?

RILEY
That's for rent, electric, water.

Still pushing the cart, Riley makes a right turn into the
alley behind the supermarket.

CRAIG

Then where are we gonna get the food?

Riley stops at market's huge garbage dumpster.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

You can't be serious!

RILEY

We can feed thirty people on three dollars when we combine it with a dumpster run. They throw away a lot of good stuff, tons of near fresh fruit, vegetables, bread....

Riley hoists himself into the dumpster. DISAPPEARS.

CRAIG

How do you expect people to eat food pulled from garbage?

RILEY (O.S.)

What do you think you've been eating all these weeks?

Craig slumps against the dumpster, sinks slowly to the ground.

RILEY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Oh wow! A whole case of scooter pies. Too fucking much!

Riley's head pops into view.

RILEY (CONT'D)

We hit the jackpot. Hey, man. You just gonna rest or you gonna get in here and give me some help?

EXT. AVALON BALLROOM - NIGHT

Poster board in the front.

TONIGHT

Big Brother and the Holding Company. Quicksilver Messenger Service. Moby Grape.

ROCK MUSIC pours out from the inside.

INT. AVALON BALLROOM - NIGHT

Riley and the entire "family" are gathered in the middle of the ballroom, while onstage, Big Brother and The Holding Company performs "Bye, Bye Baby. Bye. Bye."

They pass around joints as they dance. One's handed to La. She takes a hit, holds it out for Craig. Craig shakes his head. La nudges him. He takes the joint, takes a drag, holds it in. La wraps her arms around his neck, kisses him repeatedly.

INT. HIPPIE HOUSE - NIGHT

The dancing and pot smoking has changed location. The old record player blares "Let's Get Together" by the Jefferson Airplane. The family sings along.

La comes up to Craig. They stare at each other in form of THC bliss. They kiss. Lightly at first then passionately.

LA

I want you to move in with me and I
don't want you to ever move out.

The dancing, singing continues.

INT. LA'S ROOM - MORNING

Craig and La snuggled together in bed as sunlight begins to fill the room. Craig's eyes slowly open. He studies the sleeping woman nestled up against him. He kisses her on the forehead, gets up.

INT. HIPPIE HOUSE/KITCHEN - DAY

Riley takes a small metal coffee pot off the stove, pours himself a cup of coffee. Craig ENTERS.

RILEY

Hey, man! Good morning.

CRAIG

Please tell me you didn't get the
coffee grounds from the dumpster.

Riley LAUGHS. Craig pours himself a cup of coffee.

RILEY

How'd it go last night?

CRAIG

She's..well..can't describe it. A real special person.

RILEY

She's been digging on you since the beginning.

CRAIG

How come she waited until now?

RILEY

She needed to make sure you were really tuned into our scene. No offense, man, there's a lot of times we don't have the slightest idea where your head is at.

CRAIG

You can't expect a straight to get this scene right away.

Riley appears troubled, sits next to him.

RILEY

All of us here were raised as straights. We know what that's all about..but you..

There's a scratching at the kitchen door. Riley opens it. Demon, the black cat, ENTERS, saunters up to Craig, jumps into his lap.

RILEY (CONT'D)

...like the evil cat loves you. And only you. Why? It's like you're from some strange place...like another planet. Or worse.

CRAIG

The place I'm from doesn't exist...yet. I'm trying to discover why I exist...in this time...in this place.

Craig's statement leaves Riley speechless.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

Riley, what are you going to do when...what would happen to you if this way of life ends?

RILEY

It can't end, man, because it's based on what Jesus taught us. His greatest commandment...love thy neighbor as thyself. That means it's eternal.

Craig looks at Riley. His eyes reveal sadness. Craig reaches over and hugs him.

EXT. HAIGHT-ASBURY - DAY

Craig comes up the street, NOTICES a large CROWD on street corners. A SPEAKER uses a bullhorn. Hanging from a wall is a banner: Haight Peace Coalition Against the War.

PEOPLE carry a variety of placards that call for peace, praise Ho Chi Minh, the Viet Cong. Craig stays and listens to several Speakers.

INT. HIPPIE HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The Family sits in a circle, passing a joint. Riley ENTERS, sits next to Craig.

RILEY

OK. Tonight is it.

CRAIG

(worried)

For what?

RILEY

You've been a family member four months now. You still haven't shared the experience that truly will liberate you to experience the potential for a new life.

CRAIG

LSD? Look, I'm totally into grass. I like it.

DAVE

Ain't the same, man. Acid is the path to a new world of brotherhood.

RILEY

All the questions you've been asking...about fate, existence, your reason for being.

Taps Craig's forehead.

RILEY (CONT'D)
The answers are in here.

Holds the LSD tablet out for him. Craig grabs it.

RILEY (CONT'D)
It'll help you see the reality of
yourself more clearly.

Craig looks at La.

CRAIG
What if it goes wrong?

LA
We'll all be here for you.

Craig pops the tablet into his mouth. Swallows it.

INT. HIPPIE HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Craig is spread eagle on the floor, chanting incoherently.

RILEY
What do you see, man? What do you
feel?

CRAIG
I'm losing control. I can feel it
in my guts...my body...I feel like
I'm melting into the floor.

Holds his hands out in front of him.

CRAIG (CONT'D)
My hands...I know they're my hands
but they seem like bright flames of
fire.

LA
Let your old ego die and
concentrate on finding a new
understanding and love.

CRAIG
I can see the place where I'm from.

RILEY
The place that doesn't exist?

CRAIG

It exists but I'm the only person
in the world who's been there.

RILEY

Where?

CRAIG

The future. I'm from the future.

The Family members react with astonishment.

RILEY

What's in like in the future?

CRAIG

A bad scene. No one's interested in
love or brotherhood. It's all about
materialism...what you can grab for
yourself.

DAVE

Tell us something that happens in
the future.

CRAIG

Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison and Jimi
Hendrix will die from drug
overdoses. Martin Luther King and
Robert Kennedy will be
assassinated.

MAX

Make him stop.

RILEY

It's his trip. We got to follow.

CRAIG

Don't make me talk about the future
anymore. It scares me.

LA

What should we do?

RILEY

I don't know.

DAVE

First trips are always weird.
Remember how Zero spent his entire
trip reciting the dialogue and
lyrics to "My Fair Lady"?

(MORE)

DAVE (CONT'D)
Thor couldn't possibly know
anything about the future...

RILEY
(to himself)
Unless he really is...

INT. CRAIG'S POV - NIGHT

His acid trip hits high gear. The world is charged with brilliant, pulsating colors. A red, white and blue swirl appears. He's drawn to it as it surrounds him. At its core is a flicker of shining white light.

CRAIG
I see it, Riley. The center of the
universe.

Riley's voice sounds to Craig like it's distended, distant.

RILEY (O.S.)
Go to it. Embrace it.

Craig enters the core. He feels like he floats towards it. Even though the light is overpowering, he can look directly at it. He reaches for the source only to be plunged into hallucinatory darkness.

CRAIG
Something bad is gonna happen. I
can feel it.

RILEY (O.S.)
Hang in there, man. Talk to us.

From the end of what Craig perceives as a long tunnel, tiny shafts of light stream towards him. They increase, swirls in tight circles. The Witches Oak appears from the light's center.

CRAIG
You've got to stop this. Stop this
right now.

RILEY (O.S.)
Relax, you've got to ride it out.

Craig sees a vision of that night he was swept into time. He sees himself pinned against the oak, the face that emerges from the bark, the storm. The lightning strikes and his body tumbles through a void. Then, he sees the grove of trees in Mission Park, surrounded by fog and mist.

Suddenly the area is buffeted by a storm-driven mist that gathers in a tornado-like funnel around one particular tree. It swirls at great speed. Then all elements of the storm dissipates. Craig lays unconscious in Mission Park.

CRAIG

I see it. I see how I got here.

Now his vision is filled with the lush green of a tropical rain forest. In the distance the outline of a MAN APPROACHES. As he comes closer, Craig sees he is a soldier in jungle fatigues. He comes to what seems like a few feet. Stops.

It's an image of his father, 1st Lt. Frank W. Nolan. In his drugged mind Craig imagines they stare at each other. His father turns, marches back into the jungle. Stops. Looks back at Craig.

Gives the silent hand command signal that means, "follow me".

CRAIG (CONT'D)

Dad! Dad! Wait. I'm coming. Wait for me. Just wait!

INT. HIPPIE HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Family members watch fearfully as Craig thrashes on the floor, calling out for his father.

Demon comes scurrying down from the second floor. Hisses and spits as she moves towards Craig. Her green eyes shine like emeralds. She climbs on his chest, purring loudly, lays on his heart. Craig's violent movements slowly end.

LA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Craig sleeps, his head resting on La's lap. She gently strokes his face. Demon watches from the foot of the bed. Riley ENTERS.

RILEY

Is he cool?

La nods. Riley sits on the edge of the bed.

LA

How are the others?

RILEY

Totally freaked. This was scary.

LA
Do you...?

Riley nods. Tears form in La's eyes. She kisses Craig on his forehead.

LA (CONT'D)
I'm going to lose him.

RILEY
(softly)
He never was ours to keep.

EXT. HAIGHT-ASBURY - DAY

Craig walks the streets aimlessly. He finds the Haight-Asbury Peace Coalition...holding a big rally in Buena Vista Park. He stands at the crowd's edge listening to the SPEAKER.

SPEAKER
Man, right across the bay the war machine uses its repressive power through the draft to send kids to Vietnam like lambs to the slaughter. Can we sit here and just let it happen?

CROWD
No!!

SPEAKER
What the fuck should we do about it? We should go over to Oakland and liberate those either too scared or too ignorant to liberate themselves?

EXT. ARMY INDUCTION CENTER/OAKLAND, CA - DAY

It's a huge gray building without windows. Several hundred DEMONSTRATORS picket the building, chanting antiwar slogans.

BUS ENGINE ROAR AND WHINE. POLICE SIRENS. An Army bus arrives escorted by police cars. Stop in front of the center. The door to the center opens.

POLICEMEN EXIT their cars, push the Demonstrators aside, ignore their taunts and invective to create a corridor from the bus to the center.

Craig presses closer as fifty draftees EXIT the bus, lead by NON-COMS. Their racial composition is 60% white, 40% black.

Demonstrators press against the police line. Demonstrators call out to the Draftees, urging them to desert.

Several break the police line to reach the Draftees. The Police removes them. Other Demonstrators attempt to stop the Police. The push/shove of the budding confrontation reaches the chain-reaction stage. When several Policemen brandish a billy clubS, a riot ensues.

Policemen begin chasing, clubbing any Demonstrator within reach. Demonstrators surround police cars, vandalize them. Violence escalates. The Draftees hold their ground, don't seem inclined to run.

However a WHITE DRAFTEE starts to blend into the crowd, edging away from the others. As he puts more distance between himself and the others and no one notices, he RUNS AWAY.

Craig sees this, chases after him.

EXT. THE STREETS/OAKLAND - DAY

The White Draftee, RUNS INTO an alley.

EXT. THE ALLEY - DAY

The White Draftee stops when he hits a dead end. Starts to run back out when Craig APPEARS. They stare at each other. Then the WD runs right at him, tries to knock over Craig in an escape attempt. Craig tackles him. They wrestle, exchange punches. Craig triumphs, stands, helps the WD to his feet.

WD

What do you want?

CRAIG

Why you running?

WD

I don't want to die.

While they don't like alike, WD and Craig's overall physical characteristics; height, weight, hair and eye color are identical. WD had been carrying a large manila envelope he dropped during the fight. Craig picks it, looks inside.

CRAIG

What's all this?

WD

Papers...my orders.

EXT. ARMY INDUCTION CENTER/OAKLAND, CA - DAY

The riot has ended. The Demonstrators scattered. The Draftees are lined up as the SERGEANT yells out their names.

SGT.
Rallo?

RALLO
Here.

SGT.
Rausch?

RAUSCH
Here.

SGT.
Reynolds? Reynolds? Where the hell
is Reynolds?

CRAIG (O.S.)
Here, Sergeant.

Stands in front of the angry Non-Com.

SGT.
Oh, were you out doing some last
minute sightseeing?

CRAIG
I'm apologize, Sergeant. I lost my
head and chased one of them damn
troublemaking hippies.

SGT.
What happened?

CRAIG
I kicked the shit out of him.

The Sergeant's face wrinkles with a slight smile.

INT. ARMY BUS - DAY

Craig ENTERS the bus, finds a set. Opens the manila envelope,
begins reading the contents,

EXT. FORT LEWIS, WASHINGTON - DAY

The bus pulls up to the main gate, waved through.

EXT. BARRACKS AREA - DAY

The bus stops. A CORPORAL and MASTER SERGEANT are waiting. The Draftees STEP OFF the bus. Their leisurely pace does not please the Corporal.

CORPORAL

Act like you're in the Army! So
stop being a bunch of candy-ass
civilians. Fall in along a straight
line.

As the Corporal BARKS orders they attempt to form a straight line, to stand at attention and look military. When they finally faintly resemble soldiers, Master Sgt. EMERSON LEWIS, 40, tall, reed-thin, APPROACHES. The Corporal salutes him.

LEWIS

(southern accent)
Thank you, Corporal.

He walks up and down the ragged line, eyeballing each man. Some visibly shake under his gaze.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

I'm Master Sgt. Emerson Lewis. For the next nine weeks I will be your mother...father...confessor and tormentor. I'll make your lives more miserable than you've ever imagined possible. My job is to teach you how to survive...to be alert...to be strong. The reason guys don't come back from the 'Nam is they believe they're goddamn supermen. There are no supermen in Vietnam. Only the living, the dead and the soon to be dead.

INT. POST BARBER SHOP - DAY

Craig in the chair, getting the standard G.I. haircut.

INT. QUARTERMASTER'S COMMISSARY - DAY

The now clean-cut Draftees in line, getting their gear. The routine is repeated for each man. Arms extended, CLERKS pile on fatigues, boots, helmets, assorted other gear.

EXT. DRILL FIELD - DAYBREAK

The sun rises over the platoon doing calisthenics. Air is punctured with GRUNTS, GROANS and the SHOUTING of Lewis and his Staff.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

The platoon wears combat gear and full packs as they run behind Lewis' jeep. After a few miles, several SOLDIERS collapse. Craig at the head of the pack, setting the pace.

Lewis looks back, sees Craig. Smiles.

CRAIG (V.O.)

Dear Riley and Family. Please forgive me for leaving so suddenly. There's no way to explain it but to say I had to do it.

EXT. OBSTACLE COURSE - DAY

Craig crawls under barbed wire while live ammunition is fired over his head.

CRAIG (V.O.)

Basic training is brutal. My platoon sergeant is mean as hell.

EXT. BAYONET PRACTICE - DAY

Craig has squared off with another SOLDIER for bayonet fighting. Lewis keeps a watchful eye on the action. Craig overwhelms his opponent, earns quiet praise from Lewis who loudly BERATES the other Soldier.

CRAIG (V.O.)

He's concerned about us and it shows.

EXT. RIFLE RANGE - DAY

Craig fires his M-16 rifle at down range targets. The SPOTTER announces he's scored many bullseyes. The INSTRUCTOR pats him on the back.

CRAIG (V.O.)

Truth is...I love this.

EXT. M60 MACHINE GUN RANGE - DAY

Craig fires from the prone position. Targets are life-size cut outs of Viet Cong. Craig's sure aim and the M60's fire power rip apart the targets.

CRAIG (V.O.)

Seems being a soldier is my destiny. The understanding and knowledge I've sought all these years will finally be found in that small green corner of hell called South Vietnam.

INT. HIPPIE HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Riley reads the letter to the Family

RILEY

Give my love to everyone, especially La. When I have more time I'll write her personally. I've enclosed some money from my pay to help with expenses. Riley, I'll send as much as it takes to keep you out of those fucking dumpsters. I love you guys. In this fucked up world, you're all the family I have.

Love. Thor.

INT. COMMAND HQ, FORT LEWIS - DAY

COLONEL BENJAMIN MURRAY, 55, at his desk. Sgt. Lewis is present. They're examining papers in a folder.

KNOCK ON DOOR.

MURRAY

Enter.

Craig ENTERS. Stands at attention, salutes.

CRAIG

Private Reynolds reporting as ordered.

MURRAY

At ease, Private. Do you have any idea why you were summoned?

CRAIG

No sir.

Murray taps the papers on his desk.

MURRAY

I need to ask you about your request for assignment.

CRAIG

Is anything wrong, sir?

MURRAY

Son, we process thousands of draftees a month. Not once has anyone made an assignment request this specific.

LEWIS

Why did you request assignment to Alpha Company, 262nd Light Infantry Battalion?

CRAIG

I understand they see a lot of action.

LEWIS

Understand? From who?

Craig's eyes dart back and forth. Finally fixes his gaze on Murray.

CRAIG

Sir, I'm a damn good soldier. I finished at the top of my class. I'm going to Vietnam no matter what so why is there a problem?

MURRAY

The 262nd is stationed in the Iron Triangle. Lord knows they need all the men they can get. Your request will be approved.

EXT. THE IRON TRIANGLE, SOUTH VIETNAM - DAY

A Huey helicopter prepares to land near a group of rice paddies.

INT. HELICOPTER - DAY

Craig and other SOLDIERS seated inside. A DOOR GUNNER signals them to get ready.

EXT. RICE PADDIES - DAY

The Huey hovers a few feet from the ground. All Soldiers JUMP OUT from both sides. When they're clear, the Huey flies off.

A PLATOON SGT. waits for them.

PLATOON SGT.

Alright everyone, ease up a bit.
Follow me and if we draw fire hit
the deck and wait 'til it's over.

The Soldiers walk with weapons at the ready. The countryside is green, lush and beautiful. In the near distance are bullet-ridden plantation mansions. Although it's quiet everyone's on edge. React to any sound, even a twig snap.

EXT. ALPHA COMPANY - DAY

Alpha Company is dug in on the other side of the plantation mansions. Approximately one hundred and sixty men including officers and non-coms.

The perimeter is fortified with barbed wire and concertina. Dugout, sandbagged bunkers dot the area. As the new Soldiers MARCH IN, the VETERANS prepare to greet them.

VETERAN 1

Hey cherries, welcome to the Nam,
you fucking dog face bums.

VETERAN 2

I'm short, man. I'm outta here in a
couple of days. Which of you
maggots is replacing me?

VETERAN 3

Look at all the FNGs.

VETERAN 4

Hey twinks...better keep your asses
down because Charley don't play.

As he marches by, Craig looks closely at the Veterans. They're dirty and mean looking. Also, they're young. Eighteen, nineteen and twenty-year-old grunts lead by officers not much older.

They're marched up a bunker. The Sgt. ENTERS. RETURNS with FIRST SGT. STAN CLARK, a short, bulky white man carrying a clip board.

CLARK

Welcome to Alpha Company. I'm First Sgt. Clark. My advice is forget about your wives, girlfriends, families, etc. Psy attention to what's going on around you. Nothing else.

His consults his clipboard.

CLARK (CONT'D)

Kelley...Alvarez...Santos. First Platoon.

CLARK (CONT'D)

Huber...Reynolds. Second Platoon.

FLOYD HUBER, 19, tall white Southerner.

Clark gives both groups directions on how to find their respective platoons.

HUBER

Ever since basic I've been surprised by how many spics and niggers they let in the Army.

CRAIG

Keep that shit to yourself because there'll come a time when your life might depend on the help of a spic or...you know.

They're greeted by Platoon Sgt. WILLIE SCOVILL, 25, a compact, muscular black.

SCOVILL

Huber? Reynolds?

They identify themselves.

SCOVILL (CONT'D)

I'm Scovill, platoon NCO. I'm putting both of you in Donley's squad. Go find him.

EXT. HOOCH - DAY

Huber and Craig APPROACH a hooch, a South Vietnamese hut. Two elderly Vietnamese; a MOMMA-SAN and POPPA-SAN busily cook over an open fire.

NOISE AND LOUD TALKING FROM INSIDE THE HOOTCH.

The SOLDIERS OF FIRST SQUAD are seated around the hooch like they own it. Like the other veterans they are mean, dirty and rowdy and young. There are nine men; four blacks, three whites and two hispanics. Craig and Huber ENTER.

SOLDIER ONE

Hey! What are you guys doing?
Looking for pussy?

SOLDIER TWO

All we got is old Mama-San. You've
fucked her, right, Three Eyes?

THREE EYES, 19, a Hispanic. Has steel-cold eyes, a scarred, pock-marked face.

THREE EYES

Hell no! She's for that fat-ass
Clark.

CRAIG

We're looking for Donley.

CORPORAL ED DONLEY, 20, a lean, taunt white man. Short brown hair and oversized ears, sitting in a corner.

DONLEY

Here.

HUBER

Glad he's not one of them.

Craig gives Huber a dirty look.

CRAIG

We've been assigned to your squad.
I'm Tom Reynolds.

HUBER

Floyd Huber.

Donley stands, greets them.

DONLEY

Finally, replacements. Hey! Say
hello to our FNGs.

HUBER

FNG?

THREE EYES

That's for Fucking New Guy, you
stupid twink.

His voice is distant and menacing.

THREE EYES (CONT'D)

I'm Ernesto Moreno but I'm known as
Three Eyes.

CRAIG

Tom Reynolds.

Craig extends his hand. They shake. Three Eyes extends his
hand to Huber but Huber won't shake.

HUBER

Floyd Huber.

The others take the initiative to introduce themselves. A
white soldier, HERB, PROFESSOR, KERNER, 19, invites Craig to
sit with him and BILLY BOWERS, 18, a black soldier.

KERNER

I'm Herb Kerner. The guys call me
Professor.

CRAIG

How come?

BOWERS

Cause he fucking knows everything
about Vietnam.

KERNER

I never heard of the place until I
got drafted. Then I read everything
I could get my hands on.

BOWERS

I'm Billy Bowers, from Mississippi.
Where you from?

CRAIG

Massa...California.

Craig notices that Three Eyes LEAVES the hooch.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

That guy...Three Eyes...what's his
story?

BOWERS

He's our point man...as cold blooded as they come. Definitely not a man to be fucked with.

KERNER

He's crazy friendly, I call it. If you piss him off, he'll go for broke on you but he's probably the best fucking point man in Nam. We take less casualties than a lot of other squads because of him.

CRAIG

Is it as bad out here as I've heard?

BOWERS

It's funky. We was out seventy days before we returned for stand down. Now that you guys are here it won't be long before we're sent back out.

KERNER

You gonna partner with the guy you came with?

Craig looks over at Huber who sits alone.

CRAIG

No. He has an attitude problem.

KERNER

Yeah...well...that racist shit fades pretty fast in the jungle. You got no choice. We gotta stick together...help each other.

BOWERS

Be careful who ends up as your partner. The wrong one can get you dead in a hurry.

EXT. KERNER/BOWERS BUNKER - DAY

Craig helps Kerner and Bowers fill sandbags to reinforce their bunker.

BOWERS

Officer approaching. It's the Lieutenant.

LIEUTENANT FRANK NOLAN, 25, APPROACHES. Everyone stops. When Nolan gets Craig is the only one who salutes.

NOLAN

Private, you'd do well to forget military formality out here. Viet Cong snipers are all around.

BOWERS

He's a FNG, sir. He didn't know.

NOLAN

Reynolds, right?

CRAIG

Yes sir.

NOLAN

I'm Lieutenant Nolan. Wanted to drop by to greet you, welcome you to our exciting little corner of the world. Glad you're here.

The color drains from Craig's face. Lower lip trembles. Nolan sees how peculiar Craig looks.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

You OK, Reynolds?

CRAIG

So much has happened so quickly. It's catching up to me.

NOLAN

Take care of yourself. You guys help him get squared away.

BOWERS

Yes sir.

Nolan nods. WALKS OFF.

INT. BUNKER - NIGHT

Kerner sets a claymore mine at the entrance.

KERNER

That should take care of any uninvited visitors.

Kerner reaches into his shirt pocket, pulls out a pack of cigarettes. Offers them to Craig and Bowers. They accept then they all light up.

CRAIG

The officers...what are they like?

Kerner and Bowers look at each other, as if deciding which one should start.

BOWERS

They're the shits. They ain't no fucking good.

KERNER

You haven't met Captain Anderson, the company commander. The war is a career advancement tool for him. We run a lot of missions to run up body counts.

BOWERS

He'd dust off anyone of us for a high kill ratio.

CRAIG

What about Nolan?

Kerner shrugs.

KERNER

He's not any worse or any better than any other brown bar.

CRAIG

What would you guys do if...would you keep fighting if you knew..

Craig's obviously has trouble putting his thoughts into words, as if he's being forced to reveal a dangerous secret.

KERNER

What is it? Spill it.

CRAIG

What if you knew there's no way we're going to win this war. That you could die for nothing.

Kerner and Bowers LAUGH.

BOWERS

That ain't no secret.

KERNER

The only ones who haven't figured it out are the generals and politicians.

BOWERS

Go ahead, man. Tell him

KERNER

The French occupied this country starting in the 1850s...knew the people, their customers. They built forts all over the country...and they got the living shit kicked out of them at the end. If they couldn't win after all that, we don't have a fucking chance. All we do is wander around the countryside like a bunch of goddamn Boy Scouts without a compass.

EXT. COMMAND TENT - DAWN

The Soldiers of 2nd Platoon are in a morning "stand to". Formed in a circle, helmets on, packs secured, weapons ready. CAPTAIN ANDERSON, Nolan, Scovill and a SOUTH VIETNAMESE ARMY SCOUT occupy the center, mapping out the day's movements.

The Veterans look bored. Some eat their C-rations. The FNGs appear jumpy, nervous. Anderson GOES INTO the command tent.

NOLAN

We've gotten reports of increased Viet Cong activity...

KERNER

Viet Cong, around here? There must be some mistake. Aren't we winning Vietnamese hearts and minds...?

Scattered laughter. Scovill walks towards Kerner.

SCOVILL

Anymore smart shit...and that man walks point.

NOLAN

We're to locate and engage the enemy. Find any weapons cache or supplies...destroy them. Head 'em out, sergeant.

SCOVILL

Second squad, take the lead. Three Eyes, you're on point.

EXT. RICE PADDIES - DAY

The platoon walks along a earthen dike, part of an effective dam system that supplies water to the rice paddies, where VIETNAMESE PEASANTS work the paddies.

VETERAN 2

How come we always get sent the fuck out?

HUBER

Afraid of seeing some action?

VETERAN 2

I got two months left and I don't want one of you cherries getting my shit blown away.

EXT. POINT POSITION - DAY

Three Eyes, about fifty yards ahead, follows a trail that leads into the jungle. He goes a few yards. Stops. Although there's no apparent danger, he carefully hides in the brush next to the trail.

Several VIET CONGO SOLDIERS APPEAR from the opposite direction. They pass by Three Eye's position. He comes out of hiding, guns them down.

EXT. RICE PADDIES - DAY

The platoon line stops when it hears weapons fire. Instinctively they hit the ground. As they do, the unique sound of AK-47s comes from the jungle.

Three Eyes comes RUNNING OUT of the jungle. Bullets nip at his feet.

SCOVILL

Cover him! Cover him.

American fire concentrates on the areas that zero in on Three Eyes. He seems to physically outrun enemy fire. He reaches the dam's retaining wall, leaps over head first, splashes down into the water.

Mortar rounds come from the jungle, hit the platoon. Cries from the wounded and dying. The call of MEDIC fills the air. Craig is fighting well. So is Huber. Other FNGs are so scared they lay on the ground, don't return fire.

SCOVILL (CONT'D)

First and Second squads...get up to
the tree line and get those
bastards.

As the two squads move, they receive suppressing fire from the M60 machine gun and M79 grenade launchers. Bowers is hit in the shoulder. Falls. Kerner stops to help him.

By the time the squads reach the tree line, it's over. The Viet Cong faded into the jungle. There'll be no body count because blood trails show they dragged their dead and wounded with them.

EXT. RICE PADDIES - DAY

Nolan sits by the RADIO MAN as he calls for a medevac. The men of First and Second squads return. The MEDIC concerns himself with the wounded. The dead are covered. Nolan goes to each dead soldier, uncovers their faces.

Seems he's trying to memorize who they are. Craig starts to move towards him then veers off and heads for Bowers whose shoulder is being wrapped by the Medic.

CRAIG

How you doing.

Bowers smiles.

BOWERS

I got the million dollar wound! I'm
going home, baby. Back to the
world.

Bowers' smile fades, looks up at Kerner.

BOWERS (CONT'D)

Now who in the hell is going to
look after you?

KERNER

I think Reynolds can handle it.

Craig is surprised. Rare for a veteran to partner with a FNG.

KERNER (CONT'D)

He did real well.

Craig looks for those FNGs that didn't do well. It's easy to recognize who they are. They're being shunned by the rest of the Soldiers.

EXT. RICE PADDIES - DAY

The medevac chopper takes off. Craig and Kerner wave good-bye to Bowers. Scovill calls Second Squad together. He holds the platoon's M60 machine gun that Nam grunts call the "pig".

SCOVILL

OK...Zilkowski is a KIA. So, who wants to carry the pig?

No volunteers. All eyes avert Scovill.

SCOVILL (CONT'D)

C'mon now...we'll sit here until someone steps up.

HUBER

I'll take it.

KERNER

Don't do it. Don't be the hero.

Huber tests the heft of the weapon.

HUBER

I like the way it feels...real powerful.

KERNER

You brain-dead asshole. The pig man is the first to draw Charley's fire.

SCOVILL

That's enough. Move out.

Kerner walks next to Craig.

KERNER

That's one dumb fucking hillbilly.

EXT. JUNGLE TRAIL - NIGHT

A column of VIET CONG walk single file down the trail. One hits a trip flare wire. It goes from total darkness to a bright, hellish glow as flares light up the area.

The killing begins when elements of Second Platoon set off claymore mines set along the trail. EXPLOSIONS mingle with the SHOUTS and CRIES of the Viet Cong

They're trapped in an L-shape ambush. Caught between the M60, more booby traps and Americans on either side of the trail. Their only choice is to charge into the Americans.

Craig holds his position as the VC charges. Then, his M16 jams. A VC fires at Craig from near point-blank range but he's not hit. Kerner kills the VC. By now, the surviving VC have broken through the American line and disappeared into the jungle.

Craig and Kerner stare at each other. Disbelief fills Kerner's eyes.

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

The platoon is out of the jungle and made camp for the night. Kerner and Craig are sprawled out, trying to relax. Nolan, who has been walking the line, APPROACHES.

NOLAN

You men did great today. Get some rest. I'm sure we'll run into the VC again...soon.

CRAIG

Thank you, sir.

Nolan LEAVES. Kerner waits until he's out of earshot.

KERNER

I want to know how that gook missed. A blind, deaf-mute could dust you at that range,

Three Eyes APPEARS, stands over them.

THREE EYES

He is blessed with special powers. You can't see it but I can. A special aura surrounds him. The bullets passed right through him. It's true. I saw it.

He makes the Sign of the Cross. Craig laughs nervously.

THREE EYES (CONT'D)

Tomorrow, when I go on scout patrol. I want your magic with me.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

Three Eyes, Kerner, Craig, a SCOUT and a RADIO MAN form a five-man LURP or scout patrol. They're out in the open along the top of a hill ridge with the jungle below them.

Three Eyes, on point, raises his hand, palm upward; the signal to stop. He goes belly down, so do the others. He motions them to crawl to his position.

He's at the edge of a clearing, points to activity happening in the clearing. Craig and Kerner peek through the brush. They see a VIETNAMESE MAN and VIETNAMESE WOMAN fucking.

The Woman has her legs high in the air as the Man ardently thrusts between them. Three Eyes pulls a hand grenade from his flack jacket.

KERNER
(whispering)
It's just a couple of dinks fucking
in the grass.

Three Eyes point to the right of the couple. Kerner spots the automatic weapons.

THREE EYES
(whispering)
VC.

KERNER
(whispering)
You could bring an entire company
down on us.

Three Eyes shakes his head.

THREE EYES
(whispering)
They're guarding something. We
gotta find out what it is.

CRAIG
(whispering)
Let's wait until they're done.

Three Eyes winks at him.

THREE EYES
(whispering)
How many times have you
said..."When I go, I want to go out
fucking".

He tosses the grenade. It lands close to the couple.
EXPLOSION followed by SCREAMS.

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

The patrol cautiously ENTERS the clearing. Three Eyes approaches the now-motionless forms. Kicks the Man. His dead body rolls off the Woman. She is still alive. Three Eyes motions to the Vietnamese Scout. He interrogates her.

KERNER

I wish I could be as sure as you
there's no VC in the area.

THREE EYES

Trust me.

The Scout approaches.

SCOUT

She say she not VC. Man forced her
for sex.

Three Eyes nods. Picks up one of the AKs. Points it at the Woman.

THREE EYES

Ask her again.

Scout and Woman converse again in Vietnamese.

SCOUT

She say she no VC.

Three Eyes shoots her dead with the AK.

THREE EYES

Look around, find that they were
guarding.

After a few minutes, the Scout finds something. CALLS the others over. Carefully removes brush and sod, uncovers a wooden trap door.

KERNER

Bingo! Probably full of weapons.

Craig reaches for the door. Three Eyes stops him.

THREE EYES

Could be booby trapped.

To the Radio Man.

THREE EYES (CONT'D)
Signal the rest of the platoon.

EXT. THE CLEARING - DAY

The platoon is scattered around the edge of the clearing. The trap door rigged with wires so it can be opened from a safe distance. Three Eyes pulls on the wires, the door slowly opens. Soldiers move towards it. Three Eyes waves them off.

THREE EYES
Could be on a time-delay fuse.

He crawls to it. Examines the trap door. Peers into the opening. The platoon closes in around him.

SCOVILL
See anything.

Three Eyes stands up.

THREE EYES
It's booby trapped.

SCOVILL
What'd you see?

THREE EYES
Don't have to see to know.

SCOVILL
The Lieutenant needs someone to go down in the tunnel. C'mon shit heads, it's part of our mission.

HUBER
I'll go if I can keep what I find.

SCOVILL
We'll think about it.

KERNER
Don't do it. Three Eyes says it's rigged.

HUBER
He said he didn't see anything

Three Eyes uses his finger to tap the middle of his forehead.

THREE EYES

God blessed me with special sight.
The only thing in that tunnel is
death.

HUBER

That's just bullshit.

KERNER

They can't order you to get down
there.

Turns to Scovill.

KERNER (CONT'D)

Send down the Scout.

SCOVILL

Can't. He's a civilian.

Kerner turns to Lt. Nolan.

KERNER

Radio the base. Have them send out
a tunnel rat or a "chieu hoi" (A VC
defector).

NOLAN

Don't have the time.

THREE EYES

Let's blow it closed with grenades.

NOLAN

There could be important maps or
plans down there. Could have a big
impact. I can't order you Huber.
It's your decision.

Huber strips to the waist.

HUBER

We're wasting time.

Craig grabs his arm.

CRAIG

Don't!

Huber pulls away. Scovill gives him a flashlight and .45
revolver. Huber DISAPPEARS down the hole.

Kerner MUMBLES, shakes his head. Craig looks at Three Eyes
who runs his forefinger across his throat.

Then, a muffled BOOM from the tunnel.

SCOVILL

Get him out of there! Get the Medic
on the double.

Craig drops his pack and weapon, jumps down into the tunnel.
DISAPPEARS.

The MEDIC ARRIVES just as Craig REAPPEARS, dragging up the
bloody and blown-to-bits Huber, still alive but not by much
and not for much longer.

The Medic works to patch him up but there's no way to save
him. The Medic shakes his head, finds Huber's shirt, covers
his face.

No sound. No reaction. Craig finds the M60. Cradles it easily
in his arms as he picks up the ammo boxes that he hands to
Kerner.

EXT. ALPHA COMPANY BASE - DAY

It pours rain as 2nd Platoon RETURNS. Soldiers are weary
soaked and muddy. Craig carries the M60 across his shoulders.
His eyes dull, lifeless.

INT. BUNKER - DAY

Craig and Kerner STUMBLE INTO their bunker. They collapse.
They're soaked, the floor muddy, water seeps through the
sandbags. They fall asleep.

EXT. TAY LOC - DAY

SUPER: January 8, 1967

A helicopter armada fills the sky.

ANDERSON (V.O.)

Intelligence reports that the
entire Fifth North Vietnamese
Division is gathered at the
Cambodian border just above Tay
Loc. That's over five thousand
crack troops plus thousands of Viet
Cong. This is an immediate threat
to Saigon. The 262nd will work with
the First and Twenty-Fifth Infantry
Divisions in this operation.

(MORE)

ANDERSON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Our company has the honor of
setting up an advanced fire base to
lure the enemy into the open and
destroy them.

EXT. LANDING ZONE - DAY

Helicopters hover mere inches over the dense brush,
undergrowth and elephant grass.

SOLDIERS in each chopper JUMP OUT. Each chopper takes off
immediately, replaced by another.

OFFICERS and NON-COMS quickly confer. Scovill APPROACHES
Second Platoon.

SCOVILL
Dig in here. Cambodia is a couple
of clicks that way. Let's be ready
when company comes a-calling.

EXT. LANDING ZONE/FIRE BASE - DAY

The men of Alpha Company carve their fire base out the dense
brush and elephant grass. Anything they can't dig out, they
blast it from the soil until there's just bare earth to
create cleared fields of fire.

Bunkers dug and sandbagged. Coils of sharp-edged concertina
wire strung five deep around the established perimeter.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

A NORTH VIETNAMESE SCOUT PATROL hides in the jungle, observes
the American activity.

EXT. ALPHA FIRE BASE - DAY

Craig and Kerner excavate their bunker, fortify it with
sandbags. Three Eyes, carrying a shovel, APPROACHES.

THREE EYES
Mind if I dig in with you?

KERNER
Sure, we'll just add an extra room.

THREE EYES

It's gonna get hot real soon.
They're watching us right now. I
can feel their eyes.

EXT. FIRE BASE/ALPHA COMPANY - TWILIGHT

Donley uses his pack shovel to nail together two pieces of
scrap board. He writes on it. Takes it to the edge of the
concertina and plants it in the ground.

The sign reads:

WELCOME TO FIRE BASE LITTLE BIG HORN.

INT. CRAIG/KERNER/THREE EYES (C/K/TE) BUNKER- NIGHT

A deep bunker with a gradual incline to above ground. The M60
positioned at the entrance, protected by sandbags.

Kerner sleeps. Craig smokes a cigarette while Three Eyes sit
at the entrance. He motions Craig to join him.

THREE EYES

Listen.

THE FAINT SOUND OF TRUCK ENGINES.

THREE EYES (CONT'D)

Gook supply trucks.

CRAIG

How can you be so sure?

THREE EYES

I see them.

He taps his forehead with his finger.

THREE EYES (CONT'D)

My father is Mexican and a member
of the Otami Indian tribe. My
mother is Navaho. They are
descendants of shamans and medicine
men. My special inner vision comes
from them and my ancestors. Your
magic is powerful. It blocks me
from seeing who you really are.

EXT. FIRE BASE/ALPHA COMPANY - DAY

Kerner, Craig, Three Eyes, Donley and other members of Alpha Company sit around the bunkers; smoking and eating.

KERNER

On one side of the road is an American. On the other side is a NVA. Well, the American tries to figure out how to get the gook to raise his head so he can get a clear shot. So he hollers "Ho Chi Minh is a rotten commie cocksucker. Then from the other side, the gook yells, "Lyndon Johnson is a war mongering capitalist motherfucker. Then they both died.

DONLEY

What'd they die from?

KERNER

They were standing in the middle of the road shaking hands and they got run over by a supply truck.

Everyone LAUGHS. It fades quickly at Lt. Nolan WALKS BY. He understands what the silence means and keeps walking.

KERNER (CONT'D)

Most of us are going to buy it this time out just so he can make captain.

CRAIG

How can you be so damn sure.

Goes after Nolan.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

Sir!

Nolan waits for Craig to catch up.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

I need to ask you something.

NOLAN

Go on.

CRAIG

The men say you volunteered us as bait...

Nolan's face flushes with anger.

NOLAN

Who the hell do you think you are?
Questioning orders? The Army has
given each of us a job to do. Make
sure you do yours when the time
comes.

He STORMS OFF.

EXT. BEYOND THE WIRES OF THE FIRE BASE - NIGHT.

A THREE MAN LISTENING POST (LP) sets up in the jungle about
300 yards beyond the wires. They find a mortar crater large
enough to hold all of them.

RADIO MAN 1 activates the portable radio.

RADIO MAN 1

LP Checkmate to White King. LP
Checkmate to White King.

INT. NOLAN'S BUNKER - NIGHT

The platoon's radio crackles.

SECOND PLATOON RADIO MAN

White King to LP Checkmate. Keeping
the line open. Ready for silent
alerts. Over.

NOLAN

Where's your weapon?

SECOND PLATOON RADIO MAN

In my bunker.

NOLAN

Better get it.

INT. C/K/TE BUNKER - NIGHT

Craig lays out the M60 ammo in neat stakes. Three Eyes sits
at the entrance, stares into the darkness.

THREE EYES

Soon...soon.

The words barely escape his mouth when the SOUND OF INCOMING MORTARS pierce the night. The rounds shower in, shake the ground.

EXT. FIRE BASE - NIGHT

Then comes the flash of rockets. They strike causing bursts of deadly light and THUNDEROUS EXPLOSIONS.

INT. C/K/TE BUNKER - NIGHT

They're huddled inside as the barrage intensifies. A rocket EXPLODES next to their bunker, bursting sandbags, showering them with dirt.

EXT. FIRE BASE/ALPHA COMPANY - NIGHT

The sky is ablaze with rocket flashes and mortars. The company's MORTAR PLATOON SCRAMBLES OUT of their bunkers. Sets up, returns fire.

EXT. ARTILLERY BATTERY/REAR ECHELON - NIGHT

After receiving the enemy's coordinates, they begin firing.

EXT. BEYOND THE WIRES OF THE FIRE BASE - NIGHT

The LP tries to get as low as possible as mortar rounds fly overhead from both directions.

All around them the shadowy figures of the NVA move silently through the jungle.

EXT. FIRE BASE/ALPHA COMPANY - NIGHT

Both sides rain ordnance on each other. The NVA fire stops. Then so does the American artillery.

EXT. NOLAN'S BUNKER - NIGHT

He comes running out.

NOLAN
Sgt. Scovill! Get 'em up and get
'em ready.

Scovill, low crawling among the bunkers calls out to the men of Second Platoon.

SCOVILL

You heard the man, ground hogs. Get out of those cozy little holes and get ready for company.

EXT. CRAIG/KERNER/THREE EYES (CKTE) BUNKER- NIGHT

Craig sets up the M60 in a sandbagged fox hole next to their bunker. Kerner clips ammo on the M60's ammo belt.

EXT. BEYOND THE WIRES OF THE FIRE BASE - NIGHT

Thousands of NVA/Viet Cong EMERGE from the jungle, headed for the fire base. The Three-Man LP watches the human tide wash by them. The Radio Man repeatedly flicks the radio on/off switch; the signal that danger approaches.

The dense silence is broken by these clicks. Clicks from other listening posts begin. They run together into an ominous SPUTTER cascade that sounds like popcorn popping over an open fire.

EXT. M60 FOXHOLE - NIGHT

KERNER

Tommy...

CRAIG

Yeah?

KERNER

I came into this war a whole man. I'll leave it the same way or not at all. If I get really fucked up...lose my legs...arms...get blinded. I want you to finish the job. I'm not going home a vegetable. Promise me.

Craig nods.

CRAIG

Same here.

EXT. ALPHA FIRE BASE - NIGHT

The NVA ramps up the mortar and rocket attacks. While others scramble for cover, Craig and Kerner stay in the M60 emplacement. Three Eyes jumps in with them.

Flares turn night into day, REVEALING the NVA/Viet Cong hurling themselves at Alpha Company's section of the line. They're hit with murderous American FIRE. Tracers streak red across the clearing.

Craig fires the M60 wide open. NVA soldiers pop like balloons on a carnival midway, fall against the wire. The sticky smell of blood rises into the air. They still keep coming.

Nolan scurries from pressure point to pressure point, trying to brace up the line. Using bangalore torpedoes, the NVA blast through the wire and spill inside.

The Mortar Platoon opens up on the NVA rushing through the wire. Bodies explode, fly apart. Yet they keep coming. They seem to be everywhere, rushing through the night and the firestorm like water through a shattered dike.

They zero in on the advancing enemy. Round after round slows but never stops their advance.

Because of its accuracy and firepower, the NVA continuously attack the M60. Craig fires so wide open the barrel glows hot, YIPS like a small dog. The bullets rip through the NVA, popping skulls like watermelons under a sledgehammer.

NVA bodies pile up in front of the foxhole. They block Craig's line of fire. He stops firing. Three Eyes hops out of the foxhole, pushes bodies aside.

Kerner attempts to stop the human waves with his M16 and grenades. A NVA SOLDIER makes a strong rush at the foxhole. Kerner blasts him but as he dies, he tosses a grenade that lands in front of the foxhole.

EXPLOSION. Dust, metal and blood splatter fly. When the smoke clears, Three Eyes is dead, Kerner seriously wounded.

Craig tries to reposition and reload the M60. A NVA SOLDIER 2 has his AK-47 aimed directly at Craig. He pulls the trigger but the only sound it makes is the METALLIC CLICK of the firing pin hitting an empty chamber.

He swings the AK-47 at Craig's head, connects, knocks Craig to the ground. Before he can press his advantage, he's killed by a burst of M16 FIRE.

Nolan JUMPS INTO the foxhole. He quickly checks Three Eyes and Kerner.

NOLAN
 Medic! Medic!
 (to Craig)
 Get the pig back into action.

Nolan works as ammo carrier. Smoothly attaches the ammo clips, directs Craig's fire.

CRAIG
 Where's the sun?

NOLAN
 If it doesn't come soon, we won't
 live to see it.

EXT. SKY OVER THE FIRE BASE - SUNRISE

The sun begins to rise. From the horizon, a fleet of helicopter gunships APPEAR.

EXT. THE FIRE BASE - SUNRISE

The NVA that attacked in waves RETREATS.

The helicopter gunships fly low over the jungle, apply the final blows to the now-defeated enemy.

Craig finally stops firing. He can't release his grip on the M60. As if, during the long night, it became part of his body.

Nolan pats him on the shoulder.

CRAIG
 Sir...thanks for saving me. It
 means a great deal.

Nolan is surprised.

NOLAN
 You know, Reynolds, the word on you
 is that you're...well...a bit
 strange. I tend to agree but you're
 also one hell of a soldier. I'm
 going to put you in for sergeant.

He WALKS AWAY.

TWO SOLDIERS and a MEDIC carry Kerner on a stretcher.

Craig RUNS UP to them. Kerner's right leg heavily bandaged.

CRAIG

Doc...is going to be alright? He's not going to lose...

MEDIC

He won't go dancing for awhile but he should heal good as new.

Kerner grabs Craig's hand.

KERNER

Three Eyes...??

Craig shakes his head.

KERNER (CONT'D)

He was right about you. The gook dropped that apple right on top of us...but you don't have a scratch. How? Why? What makes you so special?

Craig let's go of Kerner's hand. Kerner's carried away.

KERNER (CONT'D)

Tell me! I have a right to know!

EXT. ANDERSON'S COMMAND TENT, REAR ECHELON - DAY

Anderson receives field reports. Nolan APPROACHES.

NOLAN

Second Platoon, seventeen dead, fourteen wounded.

Anderson shakes his head.

ANDERSON

Jesus. Your men were heroic. I'm putting them in for a unit citation.

NOLAN

Thank you. That'll be a great comfort to Scovill and Kelly and Moreno...Canale...

COLONEL MARK POWELL, 50, the tall, swaggering commander of the 262nd APPROACHES. NOLAN and ANDERSON salute. Powell returns the salute.

ANDERSON

Colonel, this is Lt. Nolan. It was his platoon that bore the brunt of the NVA assault.

The Colonel salutes the Lieutenant.

POWELL

Lieutenant, I want you to accompany me to meet with the network news correspondents. Talk about the bravery of your men and their sacrifice.

INT. FREE STORE/SAN FRANCISCO - DAY

Riley fools around with a small b/w TV sitting on a counter. La APPROACHES.

LA

Where'd you get that?

RILEY

It was donated.

The picture comes on. No sound, just static. Riley fools with the knobs and rabbit ears. He's tuned into a network news report on the Vietnam War.

TV REPORTER

Here, less than a mile from the Cambodian border, the 1,200 men of the 262nd Light Infantry Battalion battled 5,000 North Vietnamese regulars. The pivotal confrontation happened in the early morning hours when the North Vietnamese launched an all-out assault in an attempt to overrun and annihilate the American positions.

The scene cuts away to rows of American body bags waiting to be loaded onto helicopters.

TV REPORTER (V.O.)

Casualties in the forward area were in many cases as high as fifty percent but the Americans managed to withstand and push back the enemy.

Riley looks at La. Tears stream down her face.

EXT. BIEN KHE - DAY

Bien Khe is Alpha Company's rear-echelon base; a collection of barracks and bars for officers, non-coms and grunts. Here they can shower off the dirt and blood, sleep on mattresses and get rip-roaring drunk.

A Huey lands just outside the main gate. Craig GETS OUT. He has Sergeant stripes on his sleeves.

INT. NON-COM BAR - DAY

Craig ENTERS, looks around. Has trouble spotting a familiar face. Finally sees Donley at the bar. Donley's happy to see him, orders beer for both of them.

DONLEY

How was Japan?

CRAIG

Had a great time. Look at this

Rolls up his right sleeve. Reveals a long, green tattooed dragon on his forearm.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

Got bombed the first night, decided to get a permanent souvenir. So, what's going on here.

Donley shrugs.

DONLEY

Lot of FNGs. All eager to head out and kill gooks. Bunch of fucking dummies. They'll learn. Anderson's gone...got a big command slot at Division...the fucking blood sucker. The new CO is some lifer named Windsor.

CRAIG

And the Lieutenant?

DONLEY

Since the stand down, he keeps to himself a lot. We took 60 percent casualties. That's tough to absorb when you're in command.

EXT. BIEN KHE - NIGHT.

Craig walks across the compound. Approaches the Officers' Club. The front door CRASHES open. Nolan STUMBLES out, obviously drunk. He attempts to steady himself on unsteady legs. Falls. SWEARS. Tries to get up, falls again.

CRAIG
Let me help you, sir.

NOLAN
I don't need your goddamn help.

Mellows when he sees who it is.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
Sorry, Reynolds. Nothing personal.

CRAIG
Let me help you to your B.O.Q.

NOLAN
Don't you listen? I don't need help.

He tries to walk away. Sits down then passes out.

INT. NOLAN'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Officers are housed in mobile trailers, usually one per. Craig drags Nolan into his trailer, rolls him into bed. Finds a chair to sit in.

Nolan stirs, lifts his head. Surprised to see Craig.

NOLAN
You know, Reynolds, the more I'm around you...the less real you seem. I mean, who are you to care about me? Makes no sense.

He points to Craig's tattoo.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
Why in the hell did you do that?

CRAIG
Seemed like a good idea at the time. Decided I wanted something to always remind me of the time I spent here.

NOLAN

I don't believe any of us will have that problem, no matter how long we live. I'll always remember the faces. Kids who should have been home humping their girlfriends back home instead of humping in the jungle. Dying. For what I can't figure out. A real modern children's crusade.

He lays down in his bed, pulls the covers over him.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

Thanks for your help...even though I didn't need it.

CRAIG

You're welcome, sir. Good night.

NOLAN

I've seen a lot of damn good soldiers over here but if I had to fight back-to-back with one man, you'd be the one.

EXT. THE JUNGLE - DAWN

Alpha Company, lead by CAPTAIN GARY WINDSOR, mid-30s, moves through the jungle during an RIF (Remain In Field) operation. Windsor, tall and lanky, heads the column with TWO VIETNAMESE SCOUTS.

Lt. Nolan, Craig behind him, leads Second Platoon. With the exception of Donley and a few OTHERS, the platoon is primarily FNGs. They TALK BOLDLY of how they'll react when they encounter the enemy.

CRAIG

Shut the fuck up! You'll have more than you can handle soon enough.

The column stops. As if by some instinct bred by jungle combat, Craig and Donley sniff the air.

DONLEY

You catch a whiff of that?

CRAIG

Gook shit, for sure.

Capt. Windsor and the Scouts APPROACH Nolan

WINDSOR

Lieutenant, I want your platoon at the point. There's a NVA camp somewhere up ahead.

NOLAN

Yes sir. Sergeant, get 'em moving.

Craig uses hand signals to deploy the platoon. They move slowly, quietly through the bush.

They ENCOUNTER a NVA forward encampment. They ambush and attack a mostly sleeping enemy.

GUNFIRE quickly brings the rest of Alpha Company ON THE RUN. Beyond the encampment they discover a row of bunkers. Second Platoon surrounds them while the remainder of the force assumes defensive positions.

Windsor and the Scouts APPROACH.

WINDSOR

Tell whoever is in there to surrender.

SCOUT 1

(Talks in Vietnamese)

NVA OFFICER (O.S.)

(Answers in Vietnamese from the bunker)

After several exchanges, TWO NVA OFFICERS COME OUT of the bunker. They surrender, are patted down. Another rapid exchange in Vietnamese follows.

SCOUT 1

They say they from 176th NVA.

That fact causes a stir among veteran Soldiers.

FNG 1

What's the big deal about the 176th?

CRAIG

They mutilate our dead. Then they stick their unit patch on the forehead to let us know it was them.

Scout 2 comes RUNNING from the forward position.

SCOUT 2

They three more in next bunker.
They want surrender.

WINDSOR

Bring them in. Then fall back. I'm
going to call for air strikes.

NOLAN

Sir. We have the initiative. We
know this ground. We know this
enemy. The minute bombs begin
dropping they'll retreat deeper
into their tunnel system and wait
it out. Then they'll pour out like
a swarm from hell. We've seen it.
We survived it. We can take them.

WINDSOR

My order stands.

EXT. THE JUNGLE - DAY

Alpha Company has fallen back 500 meters. American air power
puts on an impressive display. First, fire from Cobra
helicopters rake the camp. Artillery WHISTLES in from
overhead.

Two jets SCREAM IN from 3,000 feet to near treetop level. One
drops 1,000 pound bombs. The other scorches the earth with
napalm. Veterans smoke or eat their C-rations. The FNGs
attempt to see as much as possible.

The attack finally stops. Windsor is on the company radio.

WINDSOR

The observation chopper says the
NVA camp is wiped out. Let's move.

NOLAN

Sir, we've lost the element of
surprise. They'll regroup and be
waiting for us.

CRAIG

The Lieutenant is right, sir.
You're going to walk us straight
into their guns.

Windsor ignores them. Turns to the Radio Man.

WINDSOR

Send word down the line. We're
going in.

EXT. NVA CAMP - MORNING

The Scouts and NVA prisoners lead Second Platoon. The once
NVA camp looks like the charred surface of the moon.

The prisoners stop. Prisoner 1 stoops to the ground. There's
a line of twigs stuck in the ground as if kids built a play
fence a couple of inches high.

PRISONER 1

(talks frantically)

SCOUT 1

He say NVA still here

PRISONER 1

Beaucoup NVA...Beaucoup NVA.

SCOUT 1

Maybe we turn back.

WINDSOR

Maybe they're lying. They're still
the enemy.

Windsor gives the order to keep advancing.

The Scouts and the Prisoners CHATTER incessantly as they
approach the jungle treeline.

SCOUT 1

They say is trap. NVA
near...waiting.

WINDSOR

I'm tired of their bullshit....

The words die in Windsor's mouth as the NVA launch their
ambush and he's among the first casualties.

AKs and machine guns have opened up on Alpha Company from
close range. Soldiers fall, scatter, seek cover in a now-
coverless landscape.

Many of the FNGs, paralyzed by the sudden and ferocious
attack are quickly cut down.

Craig, prone on the ground, fires at the muzzle flashes in the trees. Bullets splatter the ground around him. His section of the platoon is pinned down by a machine gun.

He crawls towards the treeline, tosses a grenade. EXPLOSION. Machine gun goes silent.

Nolan YELLS for the men to fall back. Smoke grenades are deployed. The able-bodied grab the wounded, drag/carry them out of harm's way.

Nolan's attention is focused on helping his unit retreat to safety. A NVA SOLDIER emerges from the smoke, takes sure aim at his back.

Craig YELLS to warn him but the noise of battle drowns him out. Scrambles to his feet, sprints towards Nolan. Kills the NVA Soldier with his M16.

Nolan turns quickly, stunned to find he was that close to death. Renewed burst of fire from the treeline. Craig is hit, collapses. Nolan crawls to help him.

NOLAN
Medic! Medic!

CRAIG
Dad...dad...

NOLAN
Easy...you'll be alright.

The MEDIC ARRIVES. Craig's been hit in the left shoulder and leg. Medic applies pressure bandages and a tourniquet.

All around them, the battle rages.

Nolan and the Medic drag Craig away from the action. Alpha Company digs in to fight a retreat holding action. M60s, M79 grenade launchers and flame throwers attempt to hold the enemy in check while the dead and wounded are retrieved and evacuated.

EXT. LANDING ZONE - DAY

Craig's carried on a stretcher to await the medevac chopper.

CRAIG
Where's the Lieutenant?

STRETCHER CARRIER
Back at the point, calling in an
air strike.

Four American jets fly overhead. When they drop their deadly cargo, the ground shakes. Next come attack helicopters and then most notably, "Puff the Magic Dragon", a Douglas AC47 gunship with 3 mounted machine guns that could saturate fire in a large area in only three seconds.

Nolan RETURNS to check on the wounded.

NOLAN

How you doing, Sergeant?

CRAIG

Please don't evacuate me. I'm not hit that bad.

NOLAN

You've done more than your share of fighting. It's time to go home, where you belong.

Nolan pats his shoulder. Craig grabs his hand.

CRAIG

I belong here...with you. If I leave I'll never see you again. Please, dad. I've got to stay.

Stunned, Nolan looks at the Stretcher Carriers who just shrug. One uses a hand gesture that indicates Craig is out of his mind.

Medevac choppers APPEAR, begin landing.

NOLAN

Just take it easy...son.

Having successfully pushed the NVA deeper into the jungle, elements of Alpha Company gather at the Landing Zone.

As the first medevac lands. Craig rolls off his stretcher, tries to stand. A Medic rushes over to him.

MEDIC

What the fuck are you doing?

Craig falls. The Medic tries to roll him back on the stretcher but Craig fights him.

CRAIG

Please let me stay.

MEDIC

Are you sure you weren't shot in the head?

Nolan helps get Craig back on the stretcher

MEDIC (CONT'D)
He's lost his goddamn mind.

Nolan's angered by Craig's behavior.

NOLAN
Reynolds, as your commanding
officer, I'm ordering you on that
medevac and out of here.

Hesitates, seems uncertain whether or not to continue.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
Be a good soldier...and a good son.
Do as you're told.

Craig stops struggling. Soldiers lift the stretcher, carry it to the waiting chopper.

EXT. MEDEVAC CHOPPER - DAY

His stretcher is loaded aboard with others. He looks out. Nolan gives him the "thumbs up" sign.

INT. CHOPPER - DAY

B.G. The ignition of the helicopter engine. The WHUP-WHUP of the blades starting slowly but soon picks up to full speed.

It begins to slowly ascend. Craig struggles to sit up. He gives Nolan a return "thumbs up". Nolan nods, waves.

Craig cries and the tears flow freely.

CRAIG
(softly)
I love you, dad. I love you.

The chopper rises quickly. The men of Alpha Company become specs on the South Vietnamese landscape.

INT. FREE STORE/SAN FRANCISCO - DAY

Riley, La, Max and Sunshine busily arrange stock and sweep the aisles. Sunshine turns, drops what she's holding, lets out a SMALL SCREAM. The others turn quickly to see what's startled her.

Craig stands at the head of the mail aisle, duffle bag at his feet.

CRAIG

Anyone know where I can crash for
the night?

La rushes to him, throws herself into his arms. She can't stop kissing him. Max SUMMONS the others. Soon the entire FAMILY surrounds him, embracing, kissing him, congratulating him and laughing in blessed relief.

INT. LA'S ROOM - NIGHT

La and Craig are in bed...making love...screwing...fucking. Whatever you want to call it, they're doing it with an animal ferocity as they release more than a year's worth of desire, longing and physical need. They moan, curse and scream like wanton banshees as they seemingly intend to destroy peace and quiet plus the mattress and bed frame.

INT. HIPPIE HOUSE/KITCHEN - NIGHT

The rest of the Family gathers at the table for dinner. The house rocks with the energy from the passion created upstairs. They do their best to ignore it.

SUNSHINE

I can't believe how much she loves
him. Saving herself like she did
the entire time he was gone.

RILEY

I just hope she knows what she's
doing.

ZERO

Sounds like she does.

RILEY

I mean, I hope she doesn't try to
trap him. That could create real
cosmic issues.

INT. FREE STORE - DAY

Everyone is cleaning up from an apparent busy day. Riley signals everyone to leave, except for Craig and La.

The two lovers wrap up everything. Craig takes a seat at the checkout counter.

Picks up a book titled, "Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft" by Sir Walter Scott. Dog eared pages indicates he's been reading it for awhile.

His hair is noticeably longer, indicating time passage since his return.

The cat, Demon, jumps into his lap, purrs loudly. He rubs her head. La pulls up a chair.

LA
Craig? Craig?

He's absorbed in his book, doesn't respond. She yanks it out of his hands. He's surprised but Demon leaps onto the table, hisses in La with evil intent, fur standing tall on her back.

Craig picks her up, place her on the floor, swats her rear which causes her scurry away.

CRAIG
You can return when you manners improve. (To La) I'm sorry I'm still not use to being called by my real name.

She kisses him.

LA
Have you made a decision?

Craig shakes his head.

CRAIG
Let's close up and go for a walk.

EXT. HIPPIE HILL/GOLDEN STATE PARK - DAY

Hippie Hill is a marijuana smoking zone within Golden State Park. Sometimes the smoke haze is so dense it looks like low hanging clouds.

Craig and La lay on the grass, share a joint.

CRAIG
I've been here three years. My birth is two years away. How can I exist in two separate eras and not royally fuck up the universe?

LA

The universe is already fucked up.
How could our staying together in
the present make it any worse?

CRAIG

I don't know and that scares me.
When I first landed in Vietnam, I
couldn't be hurt. Something was
protecting me. Then I got wounded
and I realized I could die here,
even before I'm born. How does that
finally resolve itself? There'd be
no stop or rewind button if it all
goes to shit.

She moves closer to him, lays her head on his shoulder.

INT. LA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Craig sits in an overstuffed chair, reading "The Early Days of San Francisco". Around the chair are many books on magic, witchcraft and magic. La ENTERS, kisses him on the cheek but he doesn't notice.

LA

Have you found what you're looking
for?

CRAIG

I'll know soon.

LA

Ready for bed?

CRAIG

Not yet. I want to finish this.

She undresses and parades in front of him.

LA

How about now?

He closes the book. Rises out of the chair, embraces her.

EXT. MISSION PARK - SUNSET

Mission Park is a small wooded area in front of Mission Delores; the first Spanish mission established in San Francisco.

Craig, Riley and La ARRIVE.

RILEY
When's sunset?

Craig checks his watch.

CRAIG
About fifteen minutes.

RILEY
And this is the place?

CRAIG
This is where I was found. I saw it during the LSD trip.

LA
And one of the trees is inhabited by spirits?

Craig points to Mission Delores.

CRAIG
The Franciscans founded the mission to convert the local Indians to Catholicism. Whenever the Indians refused, the priests would use the Spanish soldiers as enforcers. Their favorite means of persuasion was to hang a few Indians in front of the mission.

RILEY
I'm sure that changed a few minds.

CRAIG
Hanging was the worse thing you could do to an Indian. They believed a rope around the neck prevented the soul from leaving the body and going to join their ancestors. When they buried the bodies, the tribal elders would plant trees over the graves. The tree roots would capture the souls and prevent them from being dragged to the underground.

LA
So a tree becomes a doorway between different times and spaces?

CRAIG
Like the Witches Oak back home.

RILEY

Like tonight?

CRAIG

The space opens during the transition of the seasons. Tonight it's from winter to spring. I got zapped the night when fall turns into winter.

RILEY

I've heard a lot of weird stories from people tripping out of their minds. This is the weirdest of them all. Thing is...I believe every word of your story.

CRAIG

But does it automatically reverse itself? There's no guarantee it'll take me back home.

RILEY

That's up to you.

CRAIG

How?

RILEY

You landed here because that's what you wanted. The paper you wrote for school. Constant thinking about your father. Wanting to meet him. The cosmic forces just had to tap into your subconscious. So, maybe all you got to do is what Dorothy did in "The Wizard of Oz". Just click your heels and say, "There's No Place Like Home".

The sun's last rays fade over the horizon. Storm clouds gather over Mission Delores. Wind velocity increases.

Craig scans the trees that rim Mission Park. Dense fog appears out of nowhere and swirls around one particular tree.

CRAIG

(pointing)

That's the one.

La grabs him.

LA

Let me come with you.

CRAIG

You wouldn't be happy in my time.
You'd be out of place, like I am
here. I'll never love anyone as
much as I love you.

They kiss as the storm intensifies around them.

RILEY

At least tell us where you live.

Craig smiles, shakes his head.

CRAIG

What? So you can mysteriously show
up? I couldn't bear to see you all,
twenty years later.

From a pocket on his fatigue jacket, Craig takes out a large
packet of photographs.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

I've got everything I need to keep
you..the Family..my Dad...all the
guys in the 'Nam with me always. I
want to remember you the way you
are now.

Removes his Army dog tags, hands them to La. She looks at
them, quickly puts them back around his neck.

He hugs her, then Riley.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

God bless you both.

He RUNS to the tree.

LA

(crying)

God bless you can keep you safe.

Riley fights back his own tears.

RILEY

I thought you didn't believe in
God?

She looks at him, tears steadily streaming down her face.

RILEY (CONT'D)

Yeah...so do I.

EXT. MISSION PARK/THE TREE - SUNSET

As the light fades, the tree's crown bends in the rising wind. Craig flattens himself against the tree trunk. Fog swirls at his feet. Lightning CRACKLES above him.

The storm reaches a high pitch. Craig is totally enveloped by the fog.

CRAIG

There's no place like home. There's
no place like home....

EXT. MISSION PARK - SUNSET

Riley and La watch Craig VANISH in the fog. Riley shields her against the biting wind.

RILEY

You didn't tell him, did you?

La shakes her head.

The sound of lightning makes them flinch. Several bolts strike the tree and they fall to the ground, just as quickly as it arose, the squall ends and calm returns. Riley and La run to the tree.

EXT. MISSION PARK/THE TREE - NIGHT

They reach the tree. Even though they saw it hit by lightning, it is unharmed. The fog vanished and Craig is nowhere to be seen.

RILEY

Far fucking out.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Helen Mackey sits silently, wringing a handkerchief. Richard paces. There's a decorated Christmas tree. The hospital sound system plays Christmas music.

Then the seasonal calm shatters as they hear Craig YELL from a room down the hall. Richard and Helen and multiple HOSPITAL PERSONNEL RUNS towards the sound.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Craig sits upright in the bed. A DOCTOR and TWO NURSES check him. He has been hooked-up to a life support system. Helen and Richard ENTER. When she sees Craig, she breaks down.

RICHARD

What happened? What happened?

DOCTOR

Not totally certain. The monitor suddenly registered a surge in brain wave activity. Then he woke up, like out of a bad dream.

Craig realizes where he is.

CRAIG

Mom! Mom! I'm back. I made it back!
Riley was right.

Helen, sobbing, rushes to hug him.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

Don't cry, Mom. I'm OK, honest. It was like Riley said, it was all up to me.

HELEN

Riley? Who's Riley?

CRAIG

Oh, wait 'til I tell you where I've been. You won't believe it. You just won't believe it.

He glances around the room. His eyes dance with eagerness. In return he receive nervous stares.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

I went back to 1967. Riley ran the hippie house in San Francisco where I lived.

The nervous stares have morphed into worried ones.

DOCTOR

Craig...the only place you've been is this room. You've been in a comma for the last four days. You were struck by lightning out by The Witches Oak.

CRAIG

Four days!?! That's how long I was out in the San Francisco hospital. Don't you see, it's more than a coincidence.

DOCTOR

Craig, people in comas tend to experience vivid, realistic dreams. The trauma that causes the coma releases the subconscious.

CRAIG

It wasn't a dream. I have proof. Where are my clothes?

DOCTOR

They've been disposed of...

RICHARD

When they brought you in, they showed us your clothes. It seemed like they had been burned off your body. They were little more than raggedy ashes.

DOCTOR

It's hard to figure out why your weren't burned more severely.

Craig's beginning to doubt his own sanity.

CRAIG

Wait! Wait 'til you see my tattoo.

Looks at his right forearm. It's heavily bandaged. He begins pulling at the wrappings. Richard and the Doctor restrain him.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

Take off these damn bandages, then you'll see.

DOCTOR

There's no tattoo on the arm.

CRAIG

(agitated)

It's a long, green dragon.

DOCTOR

That arm sustained second degree burns from the lightning strike.

(MORE)

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

It'll take some time to heal then
we might consider skin grafts.

The eagerness in Craig's eyes has been replaced with panic
and paranoia.

CRAIG

What are you trying to do to me? I
was in San Francisco. I lived with
a hippie family...then went to
Vietnam. Mom...I found Dad. We
fought together..side by side.

Craig's apparent delirium causes his Mother to faint. He
reaches for his dog tags, is startled when they're gone.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

What have you done with my dog
tags? La put them around my neck.

Craig's on the verge of violence. He YELLS, CURSES. A NURSE
prepares an injection. An ATTENDANT ENTERS. Craig is
restrained and given the injection. Richard comforts Helen
who pleads for help for son. The injection does its work.

INT. WAITING AREA - NIGHT.

DOCTOR

This incident was a catalyst that
dredged up a lot of personal
trauma.

RICHARD

He was deeply, personally involved
in his big school project.

HELEN

For the first time, we had an
honest talk about what happened to
his Father.

DOCTOR

A Vietnam Veteran?

HELEN

The war broke him. He came home an
alcoholic. He drove drunk one too
many times. Craig was only eighteen
months old when he died.

DOCTOR

The dreams seemed so real because
he wanted them to be.

HELEN

Will he be all right?

DOCTOR

Physically, he'll be fine. With a lot of love, understanding and counseling there's no reason he shouldn't come to terms with what's happened.

INT. CRAIG'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

The room is dark except for the low, soft glow of a small bedside lamp. Helen ENTERS, moves quietly to his bedside. Leans over, kisses him. His face shifts in her direction, giving her a more direct, close-up look at his face.

She studies his features. The more she looks, the more disturbed she becomes.

EXT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Richard waits as Helen EXITS from Craig's Room.

RICHARD

Ready to go?

Helen nods, looks back at the room.

HELEN

I know that's Craig but there's a change in his face. Like he's aged so much in the past few days.

Richard puts his arm around her. Kisses her.

RICHARD

You've been through a lot. Don't make it harder on yourself by imagining things that aren't there.

They move down the nearly empty hospital corridor. Pass a YOUNG NURSE who wishes them a good night.

EXT. CRAIG'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

The Young Nurse KNOCKS on the room door.

YOUNG NURSE

(softly)

Craig! Craig! Open the door.

INT. CRAIG'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

The repeated knocking wakes him up.

CRAIG
Come on in.

The knocking stops. Replaced by a scratching sound on the door. He gets up, opens the door. Demon is at his feet. Rubs herself against.

Craig picks her up. Closes the door.

CRAIG (CONT'D)
What the fuck? How'd you get here?

The cat's emerald green eyes glow in the dark. She "meows".

CRAIG (CONT'D)
Never mind. Stupid question.

He scratches her head, walks towards the room's windows. He pulls the blinds open. Moonlight streams into the room. He stares at the full moon that's high in the winter sky.

He leans against the window sill. He's confused, troubled, depressed. Shakes his head as a few tears trickle down his cheeks.

CRAIG (CONT'D)
You'll back my story, won't you?

EXT. THE WITCHES OAK - NIGHT

The full moon illuminates the big tree. As a steady breeze blows through the crown, there's a sound resembling a small wind chime.

Moonlight reflects off something metallic. Wrapped around a tree limb is a set of Army dog tags.

There's a name inscribed on the dog tags:

Reynolds, Thomas P.

THE END

