

# LAST FLAG FLYING

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Based on the novel by Darryl Ponicsan

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1 EXT. SAL'S BAR & GRILL - NIGHT

1

A seedy neighborhood. LARRY "DOC" SHEPHERD, wearing a heavy windbreaker, stands idly on the street. An AWOL bag is on the sidewalk at his feet. A garment bag is slung over his shoulder. He studies the little working-man's bar across the street as the title "DECEMBER 13, 2003" comes up.

2 INT. SAL'S BAR & GRILL - NIGHT

2

Small and dark. A pool table, a few booths, not much decor. SAL NEALON leans on his elbows on his side of the bar, doing a crossword. He's in his late 50s and wears a cropped mustache, going gray, like the sides of his short-cropped hair. He wears a black T-shirt, revealing a USMC tattoo on his arm. He smokes a cigar, chewing its end more than it needs. An edgy dude - you wouldn't want to fuck with him. At the other end of the bar, COPS is on a TV that hangs suspended from the ceiling. On the show, a nervous couple try to explain to a sarcastic cop what they are doing in the projects if not buying drugs. Sal's only customer, O'TOOLE, an old functioning alcoholic, is watching. At some point Doc enters, pausing near the door. O'Toole gives him a cursory glance. Doc hangs his garment bag on a hook on the stanchion and takes a stool. He puts his AWOL bag on another stool and settles down with a little uncertainty.

SAL

I ask you, you ever see these cops catch a killer or a rapist on this show? Ever see them put the cuffs on some crooked CEO fuck?

Wanders over to Doc.

SAL (CONT'D)

What can I get you?

DOC

Beer.

SAL

What kind?

DOC

Doesn't matter.

SAL

Bottle or draft?

DOC

Draft.

(CONTINUED)

Sal walks back over and starts filling up a glass while he continues his conversation with O'Toole.

SAL

Nah, they're always just drug users and johns... just people hurtin', trying to find a little pleasure in life.

O'TOOLE

What have you got against cops?

SAL

Nuttin'. What I got something against is good ol' stupidity.

Sal wanders back to Doc and serves him the beer. Doc looks into a manila envelope and withdraws a five dollar bill and lays it on the bar.

SAL (CONT'D)

You comin' or goin'?

DOC

Passing through, kind of.  
(about money)  
Keep it.

Sal takes Doc's money, puts it in the register, and goes back to his crossword.

DOC (CONT'D)

Good beer.

SAL

Yeah, it's from Pennsylvania.

DOC

How long have you had this place?

SAL

Too long.

DOC

It's real homey.

SAL

You think so? Where the hell do you live?

Doc doesn't get Sal's wit.

DOC

New Hampshire. Portsmouth.

(CONTINUED)

Sal is back on his puzzle.

DOC (CONT'D)  
Home of the Navy prison.

SAL  
I know the place.

DOC  
It's an okay town.  
(drinks)  
So you're Sal.

SAL  
That I am.

DOC  
So Sal, how do you suppose I knew  
that?

SAL  
Name's on the sign outside.

Doc smiles, looks around, turns to O'Toole.

DOC  
Not exactly a hot spot, huh?

O'TOOLE  
Not anymore.

DOC  
I like it, though. It's homey.

SAL  
Yeah, you said that. That's why I  
was worried about where you lived.

DOC  
You don't remember me, do you?

SAL  
I don't remember half the women I  
fucked, and that's just the ones I  
didn't have to pay. How am I  
supposed to remember you?

DOC  
Well, I remember you.

Sal looks at him more closely, squints. The cigar droops.

(CONTINUED)

SAL  
Can't be.

DOC  
Could be.

SAL  
No way.

DOC  
Way.

SAL  
Sweet Jesus... Doc?

DOC  
(bemused)  
Doc... Nobody's called me that in a  
long, long time.

SAL  
Fuck me. You made it, Doc.

DOC  
Yeah.

SAL  
O'Toole, look at this. Old buddy  
from 'Nam. I saved his life once.

O'TOOLE  
Then you must be some kind of  
fuckin' hero.

DOC  
He never saved my life.

O'TOOLE  
Didn't think so.

SAL  
And now he's come to kick my ass.

O'TOOLE  
Long overdue and well deserved.  
I'll hold his coat for him.

DOC  
No, I'm not here for that.

SAL  
You gotta excuse me, Doc. I'm shit  
for names.

(CONTINUED)

DOC  
Shepherd. Larry Shepherd.

SAL  
Right. Shepherd. Nineteen year-old  
kid. Navy corpsman.

DOC  
Once.

SAL  
Yeah, well, we were all something  
once. Now we're something else.

DOC  
So you do remember me?

SAL  
'Course I do, you saved my fuckin'  
life.

O'TOOLE  
I thought it was the other way  
around.

DOC  
You heard, I got busted down to E-  
One?

SAL  
Most unfair. The green weenie -  
they broke it off in you. What can  
I say, dear, after I say I'm sorry?

DOC  
How's Mueller?

SAL  
Ol' Mueller the Mauler. Maybe he's  
alive. How should I know? Have  
another beer. On the house. Fuck,  
I'll have one with you.

DOC  
You're not in touch with him?

SAL  
Saw him medevacked out, and that's  
all she wrote.

DOC  
Mueller got hit?

(CONTINUED)

SAL  
Oh, yeah, you weren't there by  
then... it was not pretty.

Sal now comes over closer to Doc.

SAL (CONT'D)  
I still think I rate credit for a  
save.

DOC  
Who? What?

SAL  
You, you fuck. I saved your life.

DOC  
I don't remember anything like  
that.

SAL  
Captain said, Doc is coming  
unhinged. He's gonna blow. Take him  
for two days to Pleiku. Show him  
around Disneyland.

DOC  
I do remember Disneyland.

SAL  
Hell yeah you do.

DOC  
But all I remember is gettin' laid  
and drunk.

SAL  
Well, yeah... that's why it was  
there.

DOC  
Mueller was with us.

SAL  
I did that too. I said, Cap'n,  
Doc's too fucked up for one person  
to handle. Take Mueller, he said.

DOC  
(sarcastic)  
Oh, yeah, and things were much  
better after that.

(CONTINUED)

SAL  
C'mon, Doc, we had a good time,  
didn't we? We had some fun.

DOC  
Sure we did. Not sayin' we didn't.

SAL  
We did, the three of us.

DOC  
Yeah. I laugh sometimes when I  
think about it.

SAL  
Really? Do you?

DOC  
Yeah, kind of.

SAL  
Why not? You got to laugh at every-  
fuckin-thing. I laugh at my  
prostate gland, little son of a  
bitch, laugh every time the doctor  
gives me a fingerwave, two times a  
year.

DOC  
It's good you know how to do that.  
Wish I could do that.

SAL  
So what was it, three years?

DOC  
Ended up about two, with good  
behavior.

SAL  
That's not so bad.

DOC  
It was pretty bad, but it was a  
long time ago.

SAL  
BCD?

DOC  
Yeah, but at some point instead of  
calling it a Bad Conduct Discharge,  
I started calling it a better  
career decision.

(CONTINUED)

SAL  
 Fuckin-A. You're alive and upright.  
 So you got out, and then what? You  
 stayed there?

DOC  
 Didn't really have anywhere else to  
 go.

SAL  
 Fuck all. Listen here, how did you  
 find my lonesome ass?

DOC  
 Easy. On the internet. You can find  
 anybody on the internet these days.

SAL  
 That's fucked.

Doc kind of laughs as O'Toole gives them fresh beers.

SAL (CONT'D)  
 So whaddaya do in Portsmouth, for a  
 living?

DOC  
 Stocking clerk, at the Navy  
 Exchange.

SAL  
 You're shitting me.

DOC  
 (old joke between them)  
 I wouldn't shit you, you're my  
 favorite turd.

3 LATER - O'Toole is asleep on the pool table. Doc is crawling  
 into a booth. Sal is also finding a spot to lay down.

DOC (CONT'D)  
 (stretching out)  
 Don't you go someplace when you  
 close?

SAL  
 Like where?

DOC  
 I don't know, home?

SAL  
 It'll be there tomorrow.

4 INT. MEN'S ROOM - MORNING 4

A dreadful little space full of generational stains and graffiti. Sal washes his face, pulls out some paper towels and dries. He looks at his reflection in the mirror. This is the face he has earned. This is the place he has landed.

5 INT. SAL'S BAR & GRILL - MORNING 5

Doc and O'Toole are still asleep. Sal draws a beer, starts eating a cold piece of pizza.

SAL  
Reveille, reveille, drop your cocks  
and grab your socks. Reveille!

Sal has to stir Doc. Finally he wakes up and looks at Sal.

SAL (CONT'D)  
You want a beer? This is the last  
of the pizza.

Doc shakes his head.

SAL (CONT'D)  
I'm still a little fucked up from  
last night. I'm getting too old for  
this shit, frankly.

DOC  
(sitting up)  
What's the deal with the grill part  
of Sal's Bar & Grill?

SAL  
Gone to rust is the deal.

DOC  
Too bad.

SAL  
Used to put out a righteous burger.  
Serious meat with a nice slice of  
raw onion and nothin' else, except  
for mustard and ketchup, of course.  
No lettuce or pickles or any of  
that crap. But people lost their  
taste for honest hamburgers, so I  
let the grill go. Why? You hungry?

DOC  
Just curious.

(CONTINUED)

SAL

There's Mexicans here now, so we can get some chorizo con huevos. Hell, we qualify for menudo. You got the balls for that?

DOC

No, thanks. There's something I'd like to show you, though, if you're up for it.

SAL

I'm always up for it. Shoot.

DOC

You got a car?

SAL

I'm a fuckin' businessman, of course I got a car.

(stirs O'Toole)

Yo, O'Toole, open up for me today, okay?

O'Toole nods his head, then goes back to sleep.

6

INT. SAL'S TAURUS - MORNING - MOVING

6

Not much of a car. A 20-year-old Taurus Wagon. Sal drives through a light drizzle, on a rural road.

SAL

I just fuckin' love it, you know? It's like priceless.

DOC

What is?

SAL

The Navy. They put the cock to you, then they let you work at the Navy fuckin' Exchange.

DOC

I got five people under me.

SAL

You're a fuckin' inspiration.

DOC

You know what amazes me about you?

(CONTINUED)

SAL  
 Could be anything. I'm a pretty  
 amazing guy.

DOC  
 You turn over your bar to a  
 customer, you get in your car, and  
 you drive me to hell and gone, and  
 you don't even know where we're  
 going.

SAL  
 I didn't think it would take so  
 fuckin' long.

Doc refers to a folded up MapQuest sheet of paper.

7 EXT. RURAL CHURCH - MORNING 7

A humble building that might have been a barn once. It lacks a steeple and stained glass, but it makes up for it with the spirit we will encounter inside. We see the Taurus Wagon in the parking lot.

SAL (O.S.)  
 You gotta be kiddin' me.

8 INT. SAL'S TAURUS - MORNING 8

Sal looks at the place, doubtfully.

DOC  
 C'mon, you're gonna love this. I  
 promise.

SAL  
 I don't know, Doc, you seen one,  
 you seen them all.

Doc grins as they start to get out of the car.

9 INT. CHURCH - MORNING 9

A small black congregation, listening intently to a sermon. Sal and Doc enter, drawing some notice, but then space is made for them. A middle-aged preacher is at the pulpit with the aid of a cane. It is MUELLER.

MUELLER  
 ...Now remember, Jesus and Judas,  
 they were friends...

As the sermon continues, Sal leans toward Doc, whispers:

(CONTINUED)

SAL  
 Oh. My. Fucking. God. Is that who I  
 think it is?

DOC  
 I told you you'd like this.

Sal is wildly amused. He turns and looks around at the  
 others, wanting to share his excitement.

MUELLER  
 But, oh, how a good man can be laid  
 low by a false friend, how havoc  
 can follow the lying smile...

CONGREGATION  
 Amen!

SAL  
 Amen, brother!  
 (whispers to Doc)  
 The dude was a world-class drinker,  
 gambler and cocksman.

DOC  
 Shhhh.

SAL  
 And likely a speed freak. How the  
 hell did you find this place?

DOC  
 The internet.

MUELLER  
 Oh, yes, in the spirit of  
 friendship, have a drink... have a  
 toke... have a snort... the devil  
 has a friendly face and a winning  
 way. But behind that smile, as  
 behind the kiss of Judas...

SAL  
 (whispers)  
 I think he's makin' this shit up  
 just for us.

Reverend Mueller eventually finishes his sermon, looking  
 closely at his two visitors... a long judgemental look. An  
 echoing of Amens rolls wall to wall.

SAL (CONT'D)  
 (shouting out)  
 Oh, Amen, brother! Amen!

(CONTINUED)

MUELLER

Thank you, brothers and sisters,  
and praise the Lord for our  
fellowship here today.

SAL

Praise the Lord!

MUELLER

I see we have some visitors among  
us today. Welcome to our Sunday  
services. Would you like to stand  
and introduce yourselves?

Sal needs no second invitation. He springs to his feet, snaps  
off a salute and sounds off:

SAL

Salvatore Nealon, Sergeant, U.S.  
Marine Corps, retired.

Heads in the congregation turn. Whispers become a buzz that  
fill the church. The Reverend totters a bit at the pulpit,  
holding on. RUTH, Mueller's concerned wife, studies how her  
husband is responding. Doc tugs at Sal's sleeve, but Sal  
pulls him to his feet.

SAL (CONT'D)

And guess who this lad is.

10

INT. PARSONAGE - AFTERNOON

10

Mueller, Ruth and their two guests sit at a table laden with  
a ham and heaping bowls of vegetables and greens. Mueller  
sits rigidly, his eyes on Sal and Doc, wary.

SAL

Man, oh, man, southern ham, thank  
you, ma'am. Listen here, Ruth, I  
hope this old man appreciates you.

RUTH

Oh, I think he does.

SAL

'Cause if ever he don't, just pack  
a bag and come live with Sal.

RUTH

You don't have a wife?

(CONTINUED)

SAL

No, ma'am, neither chick nor child.  
I do have a lady friend, but she  
don't cook worth a damn. She has  
other talents, if you know what I  
mean.

Embarrassed, she turns to Doc.

RUTH

And you, Mr. Shepherd? Are you  
single or married?

DOC

I married a wonderful woman, Mrs.  
Mueller.

SAL

Bet she don't cook like this.

RUTH

I get it, Mr. Nealon, you haven't  
been eating well.

SAL

Am now.

DOC

The light of my life, my Mary. A  
heart as big as... anything. A  
real pretty girl, with a great big  
smile...

SAL

Nice...

DOC

She had a little... slowness...  
because of a thing when she was  
born.

SAL

What's that mean, she's retarded?

DOC

No, she could do anything anybody  
else could, she was just kind of...  
delayed. A great mom, a great  
wife.

RUTH

What does she do?

(CONTINUED)

DOC  
Oh, no... I'm sorry. I lost her  
last January. Breast cancer.

RUTH  
I'm so sorry.

Sal stops with fork in mid path.

SAL  
Sorry, Doc. You know me, I didn't  
mean nothin'.

MUELLER  
We pay for the things we say,  
Salvatore.

SAL  
Well, then you can add it to my  
tab.

DOC  
That's all right. You didn't know.

MUELLER  
Your tab is long overdue, I  
suspect.

RUTH  
Do you have any children, Doc?

DOC  
(hesitates)  
Just one, a son. Larry Junior.

RUTH  
Richard and I have a boy and a  
girl, and we have four  
grandchildren.

SAL  
Richard?

MUELLER  
(quickly)  
Honey, don't you have some coffee  
and pie for our visitors, before we  
send them on their way?

RUTH  
(rising)  
I have a peach cobbler for dessert.

(CONTINUED)

SAL  
 Oh, man, peach cobbler... this is  
 livin'!

Ruth goes to the kitchen, looks over her shoulder at her  
 unusual guests.

MUELLER  
 (to Doc)  
 I'm glad to see you prevailing over  
 your hardships.

DOC  
 Doin' my best.

MUELLER  
 You, at least, seem to have turned  
 out to be a decent man.

DOC  
 Try to be.

MUELLER  
 I regret any role I played in all  
 that foolishness that happened back  
 in Vietnam.

Sal shakes his head, as if trying to defog his brain.

SAL  
 What the hell did you do with  
 Mueller the Mauler, preacher? He  
 in the witness protection program  
 or something? Where're you keepin'  
 him?

MUELLER  
 I grew up, Sal, and I found a  
 purpose along the way.

DOC  
 You don't have to feel sorry.

MUELLER  
 I always figured you for a lifer,  
 Sal. Is that the way it worked out?

SAL  
 I re-upped, sure. I was expectin'  
 all the dominoes to start fallin',  
 like they said they would. I was  
 all ready to kill commies in San  
 Diego, but they never showed up -  
 they just all kind of disappeared.  
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SAL (CONT'D)

Can you believe people are now going to Vietnam on fuckin' vacations? They get their pictures taken where fifty-two thousand young Americans took their last dump. Fuck me.

MUELLER

So you mustered out on principle.

SAL

I mustered out with a plate in my fuckin' head and one-hundred percent disability. That was the good news.

MUELLER

How did that happen?

SAL

Fuck if I remember. Somebody hit me on the head with something. I believe drink was involved.

He laughs. The other two can't manage it.

11 LATER - They sit in the living room having cobbler and coffee. Doc hasn't touched his, Sal digs into his, while practically flirting with Ruth. 11

SAL (CONT'D)

...I was on the shy side of insubordination most of the time, but I could get away with it because of my dashing good looks and my boyish charm.

Mueller snorts.

MUELLER

I guess we're all just lucky to be alive, praise God.

SAL

I tell myself that.

Doc sits with his arms on his knees, head down, sinking down into himself. One by one they notice him. Sensing their attention, he raises his head.

SAL (CONT'D)

(nodding to the untouched cobbler)

You gonna eat that?

(CONTINUED)

MUELLER

You okay, Doc?

(a beat)

What's wrong?

Doc shakes his head.

RUTH

It's best to talk, whatever it is that's bothering you.

DOC

My son... because of my son, I came here, found you guys... Maybe I shouldn't have...

RUTH

Your son?

DOC

Larry Junior. A year ago he joined the corps.

SAL

Ooh-Rah.

DOC

But two days ago they came and told me he had been killed.

SAL

Aw, shit, Doc. Why didn't you say anything earlier?

DOC

He died in Baghdad. His convoy got ambushed, and they said he had unloaded his weapon on them and died with his bayonet in his hand.

(beat)

He's coming home tonight. They're gonna bury him at Arlington. Full honors. A hero.

(beat)

Can you guys come with me?

12 LATER - Sal smokes a cigar out on the porch. He listens to 12 what is being said inside, Mueller all over Doc with sympathy and God.

(CONTINUED)

MUELLER

... and I can promise you this:  
someday you will meet your wife and  
your son again, in a better place,  
and all of this will seem like a  
momentary separation.

That does it. Sal tosses his cigar and goes inside.

SAL

Oh come on... what better place did  
they go to? Las Vegas? Miami Beach?

MUELLER

Doc knows the place I speak of.

SAL

Well, then show him. Doc's got a  
map. Maybe he can find it on the  
internet.

MUELLER

Only when you see it will you know  
it, and in your case, Sergeant,  
it's odds-on you'll never get to  
see it.

SAL

Then I guess I won't miss it.

MUELLER

Oh, you will miss it dearly, every  
moment of eternity. Do you know  
how long eternity is?

SAL

It ain't going to matter, but of  
all the billions of people floatin'  
around in your heaven, how come  
none of them ever got the word back  
to the rest of us?

MUELLER

One of them did.

SAL

Oh, that guy... weak on exact  
details, if you ask me.

MUELLER

I'm not asking you.

(CONTINUED)

SAL

(to Doc)

Listen here, Doc, I'm sorry for your loss, but I ain't gonna blow a bunch of smoke up your ass. The worst thing that can happen to anybody has landed on you, and now you got to deal with it.

MUELLER

You were a hazard when you were young, and now you're just an old fool.

SAL

I got your fool dangling, fool.

MUELLER

Fuck you.

SAL

There he is! That's the Mueller I know!

DOC

Please, c'mon, I didn't mean to cause trouble.

SAL

I'll help bury your boy. I might not be able to get you into heaven, but dammit, I can get you to Arlington.

Ruth opens the door from the kitchen, pauses, listens.

DOC

Mueller?

MUELLER

(uncomfortable)

I'd certainly like to help, but...

SAL

Don't worry - he'll stay here and pray for you... very valuable.

RUTH

Richard, could I see you for a moment?

Mueller slowly gets up.

(CONTINUED)

DOC

Please.

MUELLER

I don't get around so well, as you can see.

DOC

It's just in the car.

As Mueller leaves the room, Sal is all smiles.

SAL

Oh, he's comin' with. That's affirmative.

DOC

But he said...

SAL

Don't matter what he said. I guarantee his old lady's gonna shame him. Right now she's in there saying, "You got to go with..."

13

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

13

RUTH

... with that poor man, Richard. He needs you.

MUELLER

He'll have qualified people there to counsel him.

RUTH

Yes, but who will protect him from that... Sal person?

MUELLER

(chuckles)

Well, I do know that a lot of shit can go sideways when Sal is around.

RUTH

What in the world has happened to your vocabulary?

MUELLER

Sorry, dear.

RUTH

You can't refuse friends in a time of need.

(CONTINUED)

MUELLER

Friends? I haven't seen these guys  
in decades.

RUTH

You can't refuse anyone. You're a  
preacher.

MUELLER

They were a bad time in my life,  
honey.

RUTH

The man lost his son, Richard.

They look at each other for a beat, the way long-married  
people can do.

RUTH (CONT'D)

I'll pack you an overnight bag.

14 INT. SAL'S TAURUS - NIGHT - MOVING

14

Sal leans forward over the wheel. Doc is next to him, and  
Mueller is in the back. Sal looks over to Doc.

SAL

That seat goes back a little.

Doc starts to make the adjustment.

SAL (CONT'D)

I've had this car 17 years. She's  
been good to me. Technically it's  
a Taurus, but I call it, a cli-  
taurus...

Doc smiles, and Sal looks at Mueller in the rearview mirror,  
giving him nothing.

SAL (CONT'D)

You have to wear that collar  
everywhere you go?

(no answer)

Take it off, why don't you, and  
relax, Richard.

MUELLER

I am relaxed.

SAL

Never knew that was your name. You  
ever go by Richie? Dick?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SAL (CONT'D)  
 (a beat)  
 You like Dick?

Mueller refuses to take the bait.

SAL (CONT'D)  
 Never heard of any brothers named  
 Richard. Didn't think they named  
 them that.

MUELLER  
 Richard Pryor. Dick Gregory.  
 Little Richard...

SAL  
 Now he likes dick.

Even Doc laughs. The car suddenly fills with light. A semi  
 is tailgating them.

SAL (CONT'D)  
 The fuck..?

MUELLER  
 Change lanes. Get over.

Sal gets pissed.

SAL  
 All right fuck face, you want to  
 play, I'll play.

The speedometer moves to 70, 80...

MUELLER  
 Pull off the road! Get to the  
 side!

SAL  
 Hold tight. I'm gonna jackknife  
 this fucker!

MUELLER  
 You'll kill us all, you son of a  
 bitch!

Sal slows down and pulls over a bit, lowers the window, and  
 flips the semi the bird as the truck passes them. Mueller  
 slaps the back of Sal's head.

MUELLER (CONT'D)  
 What the hell was all that?

Sal's loving this.

(CONTINUED)

SAL  
Seems like you're gonna hafta  
either tighten up your mouth or  
loosen up your collar.

Mueller tries to calm himself down. He's too steamed. He takes off the collar.

15 EXT. ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY - NIGHT 15

The car is parked in front of the cemetery on a drizzling Sunday night.

SAL (O.S.)  
Where're we supposed to go, Doc?

16 INT. SAL'S TAURUS - NIGHT 16

Doc shuffles through a pile of internet maps and papers.

DOC  
Dover Air Force Base.

SAL  
That's in fuckin Delaware.

DOC  
Right. Dover, Delaware.

SAL  
So why're we here?

DOC  
I don't know.

SAL  
You said Arlington.

DOC  
That's what they said.

SAL  
But now you're saying Dover.

DOC  
Yeah, I guess first... Dover. They got to fly in somewhere, so they fly to Dover.

Sal looks behind at Mueller, who looks away.

SAL  
All right, Doc. Dover it is. I'm guessing you got a map.

(CONTINUED)

DOC

Looks like an hour and a half. You want me to drive?

17 EXT. INTERSTATE - NIGHT 17

The Taurus Wagon rolls down the highway.

SAL (O.S.)

Mueller, my man, my mauling brother, can I axe you a personal question?

18 INT. SAL'S TAURUS - NIGHT - MOVING 18

Doc drives. Sal is in the passenger seat while Mueller has the back.

MUELLER

I suspect you're going to anyway, and since I'm stuck here in the backseat you might as well...

SAL

On a Saturday night, are you still up to giving your wife a good fuck?

DOC

C'mon Sal, that's... that's...

SAL

What? I'm curious is all.

Mueller gives him an icy look.

MUELLER

I don't discuss my sex life. It's called respect for your wife, but you wouldn't know anything about that.

SAL

Hold on, I respect your wife. Of course I do. I only wanted to know if you can still cut the mustard. Just makin' conversation on how the years have treated you.

Not taking the bait, Mueller just stares off into the night.

SAL (CONT'D)

Now, Doc here, you don't even have to ask. He don't need no Viagra to fly the flag, do you, Doc?

(CONTINUED)

DOC  
I haven't had sex in two years.

SAL  
Holy shit - why the hell not?

DOC  
My wife was sick.

MUELLER  
(to Sal)  
Weren't you even listening?

SAL  
Yeah, but life goes on.  
(beat)  
Don't it?

MUELLER  
Apparently.

SAL  
Remember your first time?

DOC  
I told Mary all about that. I  
confessed to everything. I wanted  
no secrets from her.

SAL  
Now that's just plain stupid.  
Never do that.

MUELLER  
It was never about you getting  
laid, Doc. It was about Sal getting  
you laid.

SAL  
Duh.

MUELLER  
He had to show you a good time, and  
he only knew his way. Ignorant  
soul.

SAL  
As I recall, you was there too,  
partaking, how shall we say, fully.

MUELLER  
Yes, and I didn't know any more  
than you did what a good time was,  
back in those days.

(CONTINUED)

SAL

Those days? It hasn't changed much. A little whorin', a little drinkin', a little fightin', all things in moderation.

MUELLER

Sounds like the recipe for a wasted life.

SAL

At least it's bullshit-free.

MUELLER

You positive about that?

They fall silent, crossing the Severn River Bridge into Delaware.

19 EXT. DOVER AIR FORCE BASE - NIGHT 19

GATEHOUSE - the Taurus Wagon is parked off to the side as our three wait while the AIR PATROL GUARD finishes a phone call.

19 INT. SAL'S TAURUS - NIGHT 19

DOC

Wonder if anything is wrong?

SAL

He's a guard at a gate - he don't know nothing.

DOC

Wonder if there'll be an honor guard and all that?

SAL

There'll be something - it'll be respectful. It's just not public - there's a blackout on all that stuff this time around.

MUELLER

Yeah, no pictures of coffins, no reminders to the public.

DOC

People should know. Don't they owe it to the guys who've sacrificed?

MUELLER

People are so ready to believe in anything once it's called a war.

(CONTINUED)

SAL

Yep.

MUELLER

Call it war, you got their support.  
War on drugs, war on crime... it's  
all fake. War itself is fake.

Eventually the GUARD comes to the car, and makes the gesture  
of rolling down the window.

GUARD

Gentlemen, the body is in transit.  
The plane's not due 'til 0800  
tomorrow. Come back then and you'll  
be able to wait in the hangar.

DOC

Okay. Thank you.

SAL

In transit. Somebody's always in  
transit, even...

20 EXT. KING'S COURT MOTOR LODGE - NIGHT 20

A cheerless refuge from the rain.

21 INT. KING'S COURT MOTOR LODGE FRONT DESK - NIGHT 21

The guys are in mid check-in.

MUELLER

I thought I'd have my own room.

SAL

Don't get cranky on us old man.

Doc takes cash out of his envelope.

SAL (CONT'D)

Whoa... what's with the wad?

DOC

They took up a collection at the  
Exchange, when they heard.

SAL

See? You got lots of friends.

DOC

They felt bad. They wanted to do  
something.

(CONTINUED)

A HYPED-UP EMPLOYEE enters the front area and changes the channel on the TV that rumbles in the background.

HYPED-UP EMPLOYEE  
You guys aren't watching this?

DOC  
What?

HYPED-UP EMPLOYEE  
They got him!

SAL  
Who?

HYPED-UP EMPLOYEE  
That sumbitch Saddam! They got him  
in a spider hole!

He finds a news station that is showing some footage of the captured Saddam Hussein, submitting to an inspection of body, etc.

22 INT. KING'S COURT MOTOR LODGE ROOM - NIGHT 22

Two queen beds, a TV going with the Hussein footage, and an empty pizza box at the foot of the bed. Doc already looks asleep, while Mueller lays on his bed, almost asleep.

SAL  
How's the rack, Padre?

MUELLER  
It's fine.

Here they are, but where are they? Nothing to do, nowhere to go. Sal just finishes the last piece of pizza and stares at more Saddam Hussein footage.

23 EXT. KING'S COURT MOTOR LODGE PARKING LOT - MORNING 23

They make their way to the car and throw their bags into the trunk.

DOC  
I was wondering...you never went home, so how did you get to pack a bag?

SAL  
I always keep one in the trunk. Sometimes a lady friend wants me to stay over. I hate to say no.

(CONTINUED)

MUELLER

Is there one particular lady friend  
or are there more?

SAL

One at the moment, but I'm always  
holding auditions.

(slams down the trunk)

Let's do this.

24

INT. HANGAR - MORNING

24

Cold and hollow and cheerless. A folding table has been set up with coffee and doughnuts. Only Sal partakes. Across the hangar is a MOTHER, weeping. Her eyes are red from crying. She holds a hanky against her face. Her HUSBAND is a large man, a working man, and he is angry.

MOTHER

(through tears)

I want him to look nice...

FATHER

Irene, that ain't gonna be the boy  
that walked out of our house, that  
waved good-bye.

Another circle of four - mother, father, second wife, second husband - huddle together. One more circle of three waits - a mother, father and daughter.

The hangar door slides open. An Army major and a Marine Lt. Colonel come in. Behind them are four coffins, each on a wagon, each covered with a flag and each with an enlisted man escort.

They space out the coffins. The escorts stand at attention. Our three move toward the Marine. The COLONEL steps forward. He is ramrod straight, around 40, used to being feared. He addresses Sal in a lower voice suitable to the occasion.

COLONEL

Mister Shepherd?

Sal nods to Doc, who stands dumbly, his eyes on the flag-covered box that contains his son. The Colonel extends his hand. Doc shakes it.

COLONEL (CONT'D)

Mr. Shepherd, I'm Colonel Willits.  
The President of the United States  
has asked me to express his deep  
regret that your son was killed in  
action.

(CONTINUED)

Sal can't help himself and rolls his eyes.

DOC

Thank you.

COLONEL WILLITS

He died a hero in the service of his country. He was an inspiration to his fellow Marines.

WASHINGTON, the escort, stands at stony attention. He is a young black man, also a lance corporal. Something is wrong with his ear lobe. It is covered with tiny bumps and looks like it is rotting away. He is 20 and though taught to kill he gives off a sense of basic goodness.

DOC

Can I see him?

COLONEL WILLITS

Sir, that would be ill-advised. Trust me on this. You do not want to see him like that.

DOC

I don't know... I think I have to.

COLONEL WILLITS

Sir, Lance Corporal Shepherd was hit in the back of head. I can assure you he felt no pain... but the exit wound in such a case is devastating... to the face.

DOC

They were behind him? They shot him from behind?

MUELLER

Take the Colonel's advice, Doc. Best to remember him as he was.

Doc thinks about it, looks to Sal.

SAL

I'd have to see him, but that's me. The thing is, you don't have to listen to no colonels no more. Those days are gone.

The Colonel seems to recoil, his jaw tightens. Washington sees it and twitches.

(CONTINUED)

DOC  
I'm gonna see my son.

COLONEL WILLITS  
What you see you will not be able  
to un-see.

DOC  
I understand... but I have to.

COLONEL WILLITS  
As you wish. Lance Corporal  
Washington, escort these two  
gentlemen to the coffee mess.

Washington leads them away. At the table, they turn and watch  
Doc. Washington holds his attention stance.

SAL  
Listen up, why don't you stand at  
ease, you're givin' me a stiff  
neck.

WASHINGTON  
(relaxing)  
Man, never heard anyone talk to the  
Colonel like that.

SAL  
Colonels don't scare me, kid. Never  
have, never will.

WASHINGTON  
You a Marine?

Sal slides up his sleeve and reveals his tattoo.

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)  
I thought so.

SAL  
I got more time in the chow line  
than you got in the corps.

WASHINGTON  
(to Mueller)  
You too?

MUELLER  
Semper Fi, do or die. How do you  
think I got this cane?

(CONTINUED)

SAL  
Hey kid. The fuck's wrong your  
ear?

WASHINGTON  
Baghdad boil.

SAL  
Say what?

WASHINGTON  
Baghdad boil. Everybody's got one.  
You get bit by a teeny sand fly.  
They say it'll go away. In a year  
or two.

SAL  
That's one ugly ear.

MUELLER  
This is a big mistake.

They look at Doc, who braces himself, then buckles at the knees when the coffin lid is lifted. Sal takes a step toward him, but Mueller gently stops him with the crook of his cane.

MUELLER (CONT'D)  
Nothing you can do now. Or do you  
just want to out-tough a colonel?

SAL  
I don't want nothin'. I'm just  
along for the ride.

MUELLER  
Yeah right.

WASHINGTON  
So you were in 'Nam with Larry's  
dad?

MUELLER  
We were.

WASHINGTON  
You know what happened back then?

SAL  
Naw, we were just pullin' triggers,  
killin' gooks.

WASHINGTON  
His dad wound up doing brig time  
behind it.

(CONTINUED)

MUELLER

That's all in the past.

SAL

What do you know about that?

WASHINGTON

Sounded like he fucked up some  
dudes... or some dudes fucked him  
up.

(nobody says anything)

You them dudes?

MUELLER

What exactly did he tell you?

WASHINGTON

Only some bad shit went down. I was  
Larry's best friend. No one else  
knew anything about it.

SAL

You were with him in the ambush?

WASHINGTON

Ambush?

SAL

Yeah, an ambush and a fire fight,  
they said.

WASHINGTON

Okay.

SAL

Okay?

WASHINGTON

If that's what they're saying it  
was, then that's what it was.

SAL

You were there. What the hell  
happened?

Washington hesitates.

SAL (CONT'D)

Spit it out, kid. It's just us,  
Marine to Marine.

WASHINGTON

(nervous)

It was fucked.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)

Me and Shepherd and three other dudes were all day humping school supplies. Tablets, pencils, some new books. It was our last run, pissed-off mode, sand down our throats and up our asses. One guy said he wished he was in the fuckin' Navy. We started dissin' swabbies, calling them chickens of the sea, shit like that. Then Shep says, my old man was a swabby, a medical corpsman, wound up with the Marines in 'Nam. I asked him how long he put in, and Shepherd says about five years, but a couple of them in the brig. Anyway, we was always stoppin' at this little store we called Abdul's Haji Mart for Haji Cokes. It was my turn to make the run but Shep said he'd do it. So he gets out and we're bullshitting. Then this raghead comes up behind him, shouts out Ala Akbar or whatever, you know, God is great, and then he puts a cap in Shep's head.

This sinks in.

SAL

What happened next?

WASHINGTON

Shit man, we went off. Lit 'em all up - that raghead, Abdul, and damn near the whole fuckin' hood.

Sal and Mueller just take this in.

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)

We carried Larry back to the Hummer and went home. Fuck a whole bunch of school supplies.

SAL

He's supposed to get a Bronze Star behind this.

WASHINGTON

Oh, he'll get the Star. The more Stars the better, right?

They look over at Doc as the Colonel lowers the coffin lid. Doc still braces himself against it.

(CONTINUED)

MUELLER

We can't tell him about this.

SAL

We can't?

MUELLER

Let him have his Bronze Star, his burial at Arlington with honors. Let him have his hero. Lord knows he's had little enough in his life.

SAL

You mean, let him have the lie?

MUELLER

Yes. What's more important?

SAL

I don't know, but it's never the lie.

Sal walks toward the coffin, toward Doc and the Colonel. Mueller trails behind, slowed by his cane. Washington takes Mueller's arm and they move a little faster that way. As they get closer, they can overhear the Colonel.

COLONEL WILLITS

I'm sorry sir, but there is always a sound reason for my recommendations.

Doc is trembling, unable to speak. Sal puts a hand on his shoulder. Doc goes into his arms. Sal holds him awkwardly. These men are not used to hugs. He pats his back.

DOC

Sal... he don't have a face anymore.

All Sal can offer is the universal spine stiffener, God's blessing and curse combined:

SAL

Gotta be a man.

Doc nods into his shoulder and stands back, running a handkerchief over his face. Sal takes a moment to stare down the Colonel.

SAL (CONT'D)

How'd this boy wind up dead, mister?

(CONTINUED)

MUELLER

Sal...

COLONEL WILLITS

I beg your pardon?

SAL

Simple question. How'd it happen?

COLONEL WILLITS

The Lance Corporal acquitted himself with dignity and honor, and he died a hero.

SAL

Yeah, well, they're all heroes, ain't they?

COLONEL WILLITS

That they are, sir.

SAL

All heroes, for sure. But how did it happen that he was shot in the back of his head, like a fuckin' dog?

Doc looks at the uneasy Colonel through teary eyes.

COLONEL WILLITS

He was a brave Marine, a credit to the corps, and he served his country well.

SAL

So did we all - all of us here. And we still have to when we get the chance.

DOC

What's going on, Sal?

SAL

I don't know. That's why I'm askin'.

MUELLER

Shouldn't we be making arrangements for the funeral. Isn't that why we're here?

SAL

Were you there, when it happened?

(CONTINUED)

COLONEL WILLITS

No, I wasn't.

SAL

Where were you?

COLONEL WILLITS

With all due respect, that's none of your business.

SAL

With all due respect, Doc here ought to get to talk to somebody who was. You weren't.

(to Washington)

Were you?

Washington hesitates, glances at the Colonel staring at him, but then reluctantly answers.

WASHINGTON

I was there, sir.

The Colonel doesn't like how this is going at all, but it's too late.

COLONEL WILLITS

Very well. Lance Corporal Washington, tell him what happened.

Washington takes a deep breath.

25

LATER - Sal is at the coffee table. Mueller approaches from the hangar door. Doc is leaning back against the coffin, considering what to do. The Colonel and Washington stand on either side of him.

MUELLER

Where are we with this?

SAL

Where we was, pretty much. He'd like his son's face back.

MUELLER

I called my wife. I'm going home. I'll take the bus.

SAL

You quittin'?

MUELLER

Quitting what?

(CONTINUED)

SAL

We'll know in a minute or two.

Sal sees the Colonel once again approaching Doc so he wanders over to him.

SAL (CONT'D)

Yo, Doc.

Doc looks up.

SAL (CONT'D)

What's it gonna be here?

Doc stands up straight, looks the Colonel in the eye.

DOC

I can't bury him in Arlington. Not now.

COLONEL WILLITS

He qualifies and he deserves that honor.

Doc digs out his wallet, rifles through it, and produces a photo of his son. He holds it out, in front of the Colonel's face.

DOC

Here, this is what his face looked like. He was a good-looking boy.

(shows the photo to the others)

See? The high school girls were all over him. He was a good-looking boy. I'm taking Larry home.

COLONEL WILLITS

I assure you that is a bad decision and you will come to regret it.

Doc tries to push the cart. Sal hands his cup to Mueller and joins him. They push together.

COLONEL WILLITS (CONT'D)

Hold on. The Marines will transport the body, at no cost to you, anywhere you choose.

They keep on pushing.

(CONTINUED)

COLONEL WILLITS (CONT'D)  
Gentlemen. I cannot release the  
Lance Corporal's body, except to a  
licensed mortician...

Mueller steps up.

MUELLER  
Or to a clergyman, isn't that the  
case?

The Colonel hesitates, as Mueller hands him Sal's cup and  
begins to put on his clerical collar.

COLONEL WILLITS  
Correct.

MUELLER  
So I guess that would be me.

Using his cane, Mueller walks behind Doc and Sal as they push  
the coffin. Washington stands next to the Colonel, impressed.

26 EXT. HANGAR PARKING LOT - MORNING

26

Sal and Doc push the cart, Mueller trailing behind. They come  
to a stop, not before dinging the car.

DOC  
Sorry about that.

SAL  
Forget about it.

They stand silently, awkwardly for a moment. What now?

MUELLER  
Now how you gonna get him home?  
Strap that coffin to the roof of  
Sal's car?

SAL  
We could do that. We'd need help  
liftin' it up. Maybe we...

MUELLER  
Don't be ridiculous.

SAL  
Why not? Tell me a better way to  
be. You wish you could be  
ridiculous, but it's too late now.

(CONTINUED)

MUELLER

Doc, let the government take care of the transport - that's the kinda thing they're good at.

DOC

I don't like the government right now.

MUELLER

You don't have to.

DOC

I don't trust it any more.

SAL

Hell, we could rent a truck.

DOC

Yeah, let's do that. We'll stay here, and you can take the car and go find a truck. Pay for it out of this.

Doc gives him an envelope full of cash.

SAL

Consider it done. One truck, comin' up.

MUELLER

(to Doc)

I'll be going with Sal. He can drop me at the bus station. I think I'll be going back home now.

For a moment no one says anything.

DOC

I understand, Mueller. I'm sorry for dragging you up here.

MUELLER

I thought I could be of some help. I thought we were going to a funeral.

SAL

We ARE going to a funeral, it just looks like it's going to take a little longer to get there.

Doc doesn't want to make this any harder than it is.

(CONTINUED)

DOC  
It's okay, Mueller. I'm just glad  
I got to see you again.

MUELLER  
I'm sorry, lad.

A handshake and a hug, awkwardly trapping his cane against  
him.

MUELLER (CONT'D)  
Glad I got to see you too. God  
bless you, Doc.

27 INT. SAL'S TAURUS - DAY - MOVING

27

Sal drives, Mueller next to him. They maintain a silence,  
then -

MUELLER  
We should stop and ask somebody  
where the bus station is.

SAL  
It's a small town, we'll run into  
it. Give you a few more minutes to  
enjoy my company.

MUELLER  
Always a pleasure.

SAL  
Before you bail on us.

Mueller stares straight ahead.

SAL (CONT'D)  
So, what's on your agenda? Read the  
bible all the way home, leftover  
ham for supper, say a little  
prayer...

MUELLER  
Oh, I'll say a little prayer long  
before that. The bigger question  
is, what's on your agenda?

SAL  
I feel I owe him one. Nothin' more,  
nothin' less.

MUELLER  
Even though he says you don't owe  
him a thing?

(CONTINUED)

SAL

All the more reason.

MUELLER

What would have happened, way back then, if we hadn't... you know?

SAL

Doc wouldn't have ended up doing two years in the brig, that's for sure. And we wouldn't have had to see what we did.

MUELLER

What was that?

SAL

You don't remember?

MUELLER

I remember a lot of shit... what are you talking about?

SAL

A certain platoon buddy, shot, writhing around on the ground dying, with nothing to help him cause we'd taken all the morphine for ourselves.

MUELLER

He was going to die, anyway. He had no chance. Minutes.

SAL

Maybe.

MUELLER

There was nothing we could do at that point.

SAL

Yeah, and we did nothin'. Sometimes you ought to do a little more.

Sal sees a Ryder agency and pulls to the curb.

28

INT. U-HAUL RENTAL AGENCY - DAY

28

A nervous older WOMAN, smoking a cigarette, is behind the counter, dealing with Sal and Mueller.

(CONTINUED)

WOMAN

I have a van that would work for you, but you might be happier with a truck that's got a hydraulic tail lift.

SAL

Ohhh, a hydraulic lift. I like it.

WOMAN

What will you be hauling?

SAL

(hesitates)

Your truck with the lift'll handle it.

WOMAN

Will you be dropping it off back here or at another location?

It catches Sal short. He hadn't thought about that.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Don'tcha know?

SAL

Guess I'm gonna return it here.

WOMAN

And when will that be?

Again, Sal has to think about it. The agent's suspicions start to grow. She grows more nervous. Terrorists?

WOMAN (CONT'D)

You don't know how long you'll need it?

SAL

Better give me a week.

MUELLER

Oh my, a week, he says.

Now she looks uneasily at Mueller as she taps her keyboard.

SAL

Now Mueller, it's outta your hands now.

At "Mueller," the agent's head jerks slightly, not sure what she heard.

(CONTINUED)

SAL (CONT'D)  
 ... Just have a seat and take a  
 load off. I'll handle this.

Mueller makes his way to a chair and sits. The woman is  
 fretting inwardly.

WOMAN  
 I need to see your driver's  
 license.

SAL  
 Yes, ma'am.

He empties one pocket of change and keys and a cigar cutter.  
 The woman looks at that with apprehension. Out of the other  
 pocket: cash, cards and hard candy. He finds the license.

WOMAN  
 Norfolk, Virginia?

SAL  
 Gotta live somewhere.

WOMAN  
 What brings you up here?

SAL  
 With all due respect, that's none  
 of your business.

Now she's really worried.

WOMAN  
 Just trying to be friendly.

SAL  
 Really? Okay. Well, I'm here  
 because of a death in the family.

WOMAN  
 I'm sorry.

SAL  
 (smiling)  
 That's all right. It wasn't my  
 family.

WOMAN  
 Will you be the only driver?

Again, he has to think about it.

(CONTINUED)

SAL  
I'll have some help.

WOMAN  
Then I'll need to see the other  
driver's license. Is it that  
gentleman there?

SAL  
His holiness? His holiness can't  
hardly walk, let alone handle a big  
rig with a hydraulic lift.

WOMAN  
Whoever, I'll need their license.

SAL  
I'll drive it myself.

WOMAN  
So you are the only driver?

SAL  
Yes, ma'am. I be the wheelman.

Paranoia deepens.

WOMAN  
Insurance on the vehicle?

SAL  
What about it?

WOMAN  
Would you like to get some?

SAL  
Not necessary.

WOMAN  
How will you be paying?

SAL  
Cash.

He pulls out Doc's brown envelope.

MUELLER  
And get directions.

SAL  
Oh, yeah, where's the bus station?

She can't wait to call the police.

29

EXT. STREET/INT. U-HAUL TRUCK - DAY - MOVING

29

Sal and Mueller are driving along in the rented truck.

SAL

Sixteen or sixty, put a dude behind the wheel of a big rig, got to feel like hot shit.

MUELLER

It's a rented U-Haul with an automatic transmission.

SAL

Bigger than anything you ever handled.

MUELLER

Look Sal, Doc's boy is dead. Try not to forget that.

SAL

I haven't forgotten that. But we're still alive, right? With time tickin' fast away. If a minute comes up that's not too terrible, I'm gonna try to enjoy it. You used to be up for some fun.

MUELLER

Still am.

SAL

Really?!

MUELLER

As long it's right in God's eyes.

SAL

'God's eyes?' God don't have no eyes.

MUELLER

Oh, He's got eyes. And ears too. He hears every insult you send His way. There will be a reckoning, Sergeant.

SAL

A reckoning?

MUELLER

I assure you of that.

(CONTINUED)

SAL

Then great - then I reckon I'll take that opportunity to stand at attention and say to God, "Hey, where were You when they were rapin' children or with the genocide and all that? Where were You when they flew airplanes into buildings, killin' thousands of folks just goin' to work, and the murderers shouting Your name, or You by some other name. Same difference. Where were You when Doc's kid was buyin' Cokes and some raghead blew his face off?" You see, I ain't gonna explain myself to God, I'm gonna make Him explain Himself to me!

MUELLER

I'm going to pray for your soul.

SAL

And I'm bettin' at the end of it, if the fucker even exists he'll say "Get your ass in here, you're my kind of dude."

(beat)

At least that's what I'm hopin'. If He's a tight-ass God, I'm fucked.

MUELLER

It might be time for a lube job on that plate you got in your head.

SAL

Don't fuck with my plate, it's pickin' up WOR in New York.

Mueller just stares at him. Sal notices the radio.

SAL (CONT'D)

Looky here.

He turns it on. Rap music. An Eminem song (something from "The Eminem Show").

MUELLER

Turn that shit off.

SAL

(he doesn't)

You've heard this stuff, right?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SAL (CONT'D)

Now, I've been known to get in a face or two, but even I find some of this stuff offensive. And damn hard to dance to...

MUELLER

For once you and I agree on something.

SAL

Don't it make you a little ashamed to be an African American?

MUELLER

No, not really.

SAL

Well, it ought to, dignified old gentleman like you, who'd be the first to agree just how far this stuff is from Motown.

MUELLER

Why should I feel ashamed? This dude is white.

SAL

The fuck ...!?

MUELLER

That's affirmative. White as rice.

SAL

That's comin' out of a white mouth?

MUELLER

Yep - a white sewer mouth.

SAL

Then, by God, fuck me. I ought to feel ashamed myself. Only I never did much identify with the white race.

MUELLER

Oh really? Now I'm curious. What race do you identify with?

SAL

Green. The corps - that was the only culture ever made any sense to me.

(beat)

You ever miss it?

(CONTINUED)

MUELLER  
Not for a minute.

SAL  
I don't believe you.

30 INT. BUS STATION - DAY

30

Sal carries Mueller's bag and waits while Mueller hobbles back with his ticket in hand.

SAL  
No problem?

MUELLER  
Not unless being stuck on a bus for the next seven hours is a problem.

SAL  
Busses are real nice now. Recliners, a shitter in the back. Maybe you'll meet some poor redneck and save his soul. How many points you get for that? Is it a point system?

MUELLER  
I'm just hoping I can sleep. I didn't sleep too well last night.

SAL  
Me either. Remember when we could sleep in a hole in the ground, with bullets zinging just overhead?

MUELLER  
You can't go back, Sal.

SAL  
Who'd want to?

MUELLER  
We can't redo the choices we made back then. All we can do is learn from them and try to do better in the future.

SAL  
Yeah, I know that.

MUELLER  
But you're still gonna do it, aren't you?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MUELLER (CONT'D)

You're gonna take Doc and his dead son to Portsmouth and try to make it fun.

SAL

You ought to come with.

MUELLER

Can't do that.

SAL

All right. Well, I'd better get started.

He extends his hand and they share an affectionate shake.

SAL (CONT'D)

I still can't believe it, you of all people, a preacher.

MUELLER

Goddam right.

SAL

Think we'll ever bump into each other again? We're not that far away.

MUELLER

Never know. He moves in mysterious ways.

31 EXT. HANGAR - DAY

31

The back of the parked truck is open and Doc pushes the coffin up to it as Sal joins him.

DOC

This is a lot of truck.

SAL

Never go small, kid. Check this out.

He pulls a small lever and raises the lift up to the level of the coffin. Together they half-slide, half-lift it off the wagon and onto the lift. Sal leans back against the lift and lights a cigar.

SAL (CONT'D)

I was wondering, though. What would your kid have wanted?

(CONTINUED)

Doc thinks about it for a beat.

DOC

To drink beer with his friends.  
Chase girls. He was twenty-one, he  
wasn't thinking about dying.

SAL

You can make this a lot easier on  
yourself.

DOC

I don't want to make it easier on  
myself.

SAL

(chuckles)

Yeah. Guys like you and me, we  
take all the shit 'til it's  
disaster, and then we're cool, the  
worst has happened, like we always  
knew it would.

DOC

They sent him to a God-forsaken  
desert because... who knows why?  
It wasn't to protect America.  
It's like that jungle they sent us  
to. It wasn't a threat to us. And  
then they sent him back to me in  
this, with more lies... a hero,  
honors, Arlington. I ain't going to  
bury no Marine. I gotta bury a son.

32 EXT. HANGAR - DAY

32

Washington stands outside the hangar, watching the U-Haul  
truck pull away, wistfully. Then he walks away.

33 INT. U-HAUL TRUCK - DAY - MOVING

33

Sal drives toward the gate.

SAL

Some rig, huh?

Doc doesn't answer but is looking out the window. Something's  
wrong. A DAFB Police Car pulls in front of them, slows,  
bringing them almost to a stop. Another Police Car blocks  
them from behind, trapping them. They come to a stop.

BULLHORN VOICE (O.S.)

Get out of the truck. Walk away,  
hands above your head.

34 INT. BUS STATION - DAY

34

Mueller sits in the waiting area, quietly reading his bible. A man in a cheap RAINCOAT is talking to the ticket agent, looking over at Mueller. Another man in a black ANORAK takes a seat next to him.

ANORAK  
Taking a bus today?

MUELLER  
Yes, to Richmond. And you?

ANORAK  
Richmond, huh. That home for you?

MUELLER  
No, but it's getting close. Why?

Cheap Raincoat has walked over and is standing in front of Mueller.

RAINCOAT  
You're the one they call the Mullah?

MUELLER  
The what?

RAINCOAT  
Mullah.

MUELLER  
I'm waiting for a bus to Richmond, reading the scriptures.

ANORAK  
What, the Bible? Checking out the competition?

MUELLER  
Who are you two? What do you want from me?

ANORAK  
That depends.

RAINCOAT  
We're from Homeland Security.

MUELLER  
What?!

Sal crushes an empty Bud can and tosses it the length of the room, missing the basket. As he grabs for a fresh one, Doc retrieves the empty and deposits it on top of the others in the plastic-lined wastebasket of the very same room they occupied the night before. Sal pops another can.

SAL

It used to mean something. There used to be an esprit de corps, a unity, a well-earned pride, some goddamn common sense. I don't know what it means anymore.

DOC

Fuck 'em. Fuck 'em all.

SAL

Fuck 'em all! I spent the best years of my life defendin' this country.

DOC

I think your best years are still ahead of you, Sal.

SAL

Fuck you.

DOC

It's true. It can be true.

SAL

Will you sit the fuck down? Look at me - all my future is behind me. I got a scrambled brain held together with a steel plate. And they look at me and what do they see? A fuckin' terrorist!

DOC

An apology would have been nice.

SAL

Oh they're sorry. Sorry they didn't smoke our asses.

A KNOCK on the door. They look at each other, like, what now? Sal eventually shrugs his shoulders and Doc cautiously opens the door. Mueller steps in and drops his bag. He stares down Sal. Sal gets off the bed he's been sitting on, Mueller's bed. He smooths it, and steps aside. Mueller lies down in his overcoat.

(CONTINUED)

SAL (CONT'D)  
You forget your toothbrush?

Mueller says nothing. He needs a moment. Then -

MUELLER  
I called my wife from the police station. The damn police station. Only after they decided I was not a Muslim radical. And not a mullah, but an old preacher named Mueller.

Sal thinks this is hilarious.

SAL  
Mullah the Mauler! Its all over - this country's fucked.

DOC  
Was Ruth upset?

MUELLER  
Oh yeah, she wanted me to come right home. But I told her that when times demand it, even old men should become threats.

SAL  
(interrupting)  
Fuckin' A right it is! It's like during the pinko scare....

MUELLER  
(icily)  
I believe I was talking.

Sal raises his hands - sorry and continue.

MUELLER (CONT'D)  
I told my wife I was not coming home until we were done. Where's your boy?

DOC  
They've got him again.

MUELLER  
Tomorrow we get him back and take him home.

36

INT. KING'S COURT MOTOR LODGE DESK - MORNING

36

Our three come into the lobby and are met by the Lt. Colonel and Washington.

COLONEL WILLITS

Good morning, gentlemen.

SAL

What's the deal, colonel whatever your name is - where's Larry?

COLONEL WILLITS

Willits. Colonel Willits. I've been briefed on last night's snafu. Totally ridiculous, the rental agent apparently went off the deep end, but there it is and what's done is done.

He addresses Doc.

COLONEL WILLITS (CONT'D)

I hope, given further time for reflection, that you can see that Arlington is a resting place that should not be refused in anger. There lie heroes. The details of the Lance Corporal's death are what they are, but make no mistake: his death was heroic. He was in a foreign and hostile land doing the decent thing. He deserves to lie beneath the sacred soil of Arlington. He would want that. I urge you to choose that for him.

DOC

Thank you. I'm gonna take my son home and bury him in New Hampshire. Not in his uniform. I'm going to bury him in his graduation suit.

COLONEL WILLITS

As you wish. Your government will fly the coffin, at no expense to you, to Portsmouth and a funeral director of your choice.

DOC

No, we're taking him with us now.

(CONTINUED)

COLONEL WILLITS

With all due respect, you're cutting off your nose to spite your face.

SAL

Take a look at these faces. Think any of them care about your fuckin' opinions? With all due respect.

DOC

We can go by train.

They all kind of look at each other for a moment and arrive at a consensual "why not?"

COLONEL WILLITS

Okay, I'll make the arrangements.

(punches out a number on his cell phone)

Lance Corporal Washington here will be going with you.

(in phone)

Colonel Willits here. You are going to make a few things happen, ASAP.

SAL

Hold on, Colonel, we don't need no babysitter.

COLONEL WILLITS

(in phone)

Stand by.

(to Sal)

I wasn't implying you did. Washington's on TDY, escort duty. You don't want him, he goes right back to Baghdad.

DOC

Guys?

MUELLER

We could use the help.

SAL

Does he pull per diem?

COLONEL WILLITS

Of course.

Sal grins at Washington.

(CONTINUED)

SAL  
 Then fall in, Washington!  
 (to Colonel)  
 But he takes his orders from us.

COLONEL WILLITS  
 He takes his orders from ME. But,  
 he will accommodate you in any  
 reasonable way you ask, because I  
 just ordered him to. Is that  
 clear?

SAL  
 Well, you're a fuckin' force of  
 nature, ain't you? It would have  
 been fun to run into you in the  
 field in my younger days.

COLONEL WILLITS  
 You think so?

SAL  
 One of us woulda got fragged.

37 INT. HANGAR - MORNING

37

Everybody is back at the hangar where the casket has been taken. They see six more flag-draped coffins being wheeled into the hangar. Their casket is loaded onto one carryall while the civilians pull away in another. Sal turns back to see Washington, in the distance, standing at attention with the Colonel in his face.

COLONEL WILLITS  
 I don't give a fuck what they say.  
 The Lance Corporal is ours. He's a  
 Marine until he goes into the  
 ground, and he remains a Marine for  
 the period he is under the ground,  
 plus one hundred years. I will not  
 have three over-the-hill veterans  
 pissing on my corps. Is that  
 understood?

WASHINGTON  
 Yes, sir!

COLONEL WILLITS  
 You're a Marine, and your mission  
 is to see your brother home. You're  
 in charge, and when IN charge, TAKE  
 charge. Understood?

(CONTINUED)

WASHINGTON

Yes, sir!

COLONEL WILLITS

There's going to be a mortuary affairs detail at every step of the trip. You will protect the dignity of that dead Marine, and see that he is buried with honors. In his uniform. Not in some pussy civilian graduation suit! Understood?

WASHINGTON

Yes, sir!

COLONEL WILLITS

And don't let that Sal asshole outflank you. He's old but he's dangerous. Don't let that happen - kill him first.

WASHINGTON

Sir?

COLONEL WILLITS

That is not an order.

WASHINGTON

Yes, sir.

COLONEL WILLITS

And just because that crippled preacher reminds you of your father, don't trust him.

WASHINGTON

I never knew my father, sir.

COLONEL WILLITS

Lance Corporal, do you have a personal problem?

WASHINGTON

No, sir!

COLONEL WILLITS

Then get on it.

WASHINGTON

Yes, sir!

He jumps into the other carryall and it takes off.

38 EXT./INT. RAILROAD STATION - DAY

38

Alongside the train at the Wilmington, Delaware station, the "mortuary detail" of six service members, including Washington, carry the box containing the coffin. They eventually load the container onto a cargo car. Washington stands next to it in the car and salutes, as do the other five, before walking away. Doc stands back a little as Sal chats with the attendant, JOHN REDMAN, who also saluted.

REDMAN

I was there the first time. Gulf War, they called it then.

SAL

You got back.

REDMAN

Yeah, and I'm not pissin' blood and my babies are all okay. Filthy little war. But righteous.

SAL

Oh yeah...

REDMAN

Can't let the big ones swallow up the little ones.

Redman turns to Doc and shakes his hand.

REDMAN (CONT'D)

John Redman. Don't worry - I'll look after your boy.

39 INT. TRAIN - DAY - MOVING

39

Sal and Doc sit next to each other, facing Mueller, who's reading his bible. Sal watches him read.

SAL

When did you become so old?

MUELLER

I think it happened over the past thirty years. Same as you.

SAL

I categorically deny it.

MUELLER

You can deny it all you want to, but that ain't gonna stop the clock or turn it back.

(CONTINUED)

SAL

What do you make of that grunt,  
Washington?

MUELLER

What about him?

SAL

I don't know, he don't say much,  
him and his Baghdad boil... that's  
some gnarly shit.

MUELLER

What do you want to know about him?

SAL

I don't want to know nothin' about  
him.

MUELLER

Sounds to me like he is an  
individual heavy on your mind.

SAL

Nothin' heavy about it. Just  
wonderin'.

MUELLER

Go back and talk to him, if he's  
such a mystery to you.

SAL

Everything's a mystery to me...  
except you.

MUELLER

Please.

SAL

I think I'll go back and talk to  
him.

MUELLER

I'm sure he'll enjoy that.

DOC

Tell him he can come sit up here  
with us.

SAL

I'll do an invite.

40 INT. MEN'S ROOM - DAY - MOVING 40

Alone in the restroom, Sal takes a toke on a joint, waving away the smoke.

41 INT. CARGO CAR - DAY - MOVING 41

Sal enters, slowly walking over to Washington, sitting next to the coffin.

SAL  
You're welcome.

WASHINGTON  
For what?

SAL  
Are you on a train in Baghdad? No, you're not.

Washington just kind of nods as Sal finds a seat on some boxes.

SAL (CONT'D)  
TDY. Sometimes it's fun, sometimes it's a bitch.

WASHINGTON  
I don't mind. He was my best friend.

SAL  
You didn't hang with the brothers?

Washington looks up at him.

WASHINGTON  
There's no rule. I just liked the dude. He had my back and I had his. He was honest, said what he thought. Simple, in a good way. He never had an attitude.

SAL  
Sounds a lot like his father.

WASHINGTON  
What about the honest part?

SAL  
Doc is not a dishonest man.

WASHINGTON  
What about that brig time?

(CONTINUED)

SAL

That could have been any of us. He got fucked. I know things you don't.

WASHINGTON

Yes, sir.

SAL

Doc was a lot younger than us, a kid, and technically he was in the Navy. He wanted to be our friend and we took advantage of it. We'd done him a favor and now he was doing one for us. But then it all went to shit and someone had to take the fall. C'mon up with us for a while. Redman here will look after your friend.

REDMAN

No problem.

WASHINGTON

That's all right.

SAL

No, you have to get out of here for a while.

WASHINGTON

Why?

SAL

Come talk to Larry's father, say something nice.

WASHINGTON

I don't know what I can say.

SAL

You'll come up with something.

42 EXT./INT. PHILADELPHIA STATION - AFTERNOON

42

The train pulls into the station.

CONDUCTOR (V.O.)

Philadelphia... Arriving Philadelphia.

43 INT. TRAIN CAR - AFTERNOON

43

Washington sits with the others, a bit uncomfortable. They look out the window at the people on the platform, waiting for the train, carrying shopping bags. Finally -

SAL  
Look at them.

DOC  
Who?

SAL  
Them. All the shit they bought.  
They don't have a clue.

MUELLER  
Ordinary people, out for a day of shopping.

SAL  
Fuckin' sheep is what they are.

WASHINGTON  
I wouldn't mind being one of them.

SAL  
Well, yeah, it's better than being shot at.

WASHINGTON  
Rather be fighting them over there than in our own backyard.

SAL  
Sound familiar?

MUELLER  
Oh yeah...

SAL  
(to Washington)  
See, we fought the commies in 'Nam so we wouldn't have to fight them on the beaches of Malibu.

WASHINGTON  
Guess it worked.  
(a beat)  
Marine's gotta be willing to die on order.

(CONTINUED)

SAL

Yep - that's always been the mission, and it's a bunch of crap.

MUELLER

There needs to be a reason. This time we were told there was an imminent danger. Arsenals of horrible weapons... a possible mushroom cloud.

SAL

Lies. It's always the same ol' shit: stay the course, if we pull out now, our heroes will have died in vain...

MUELLER

But I want to believe in our leaders, I want to believe in our country. We're a good country.

SAL

Yes we are, but when you catch your government lying to you, everything changes.

Passengers hurry on board. The doors shut and the train pulls away.

SAL (CONT'D)

So, how's the living over there?

WASHINGTON

It's all right. They got a shopping mall out near the airport. There's a new Burger King and Pizza Hut. We're livin' pretty good for a combat zone, but they sure hate us.

SAL

We gotta be the only occupying force in histroy that expects people to like us.

WASHINGTON

When you go out, you never know what's gonna happen. But coming from Oakland, I'm used to people dying all of a sudden.

DOC

Really?

(CONTINUED)

WASHINGTON

In high school, one of my best friends was killed by a stray bullet. My father was robbed on the street, and they put one in him. But I didn't even know who he was 'til he turned up dead.

SAL

Jesus, kid...

WASHINGTON

I'm only sayin'...

SAL

So you joined the Marines to get away from all that in Oakland?

WASHINGTON

No, sir. I wanted to strengthen my character. It was that way with Larry too. We wanted to test ourselves, to forge ourselves into the men we wanted to become.

SAL

That's what we used to think. Every generation has their war. Men make wars, and wars make men... Never gonna end.

MUELLER

Maybe we need to try something else.

DOC

When Larry was little, he played with toy soldiers. He dug trenches for them. He put them through basic training.

WASHINGTON

Mr. Shepherd, Larry was where he wanted to be. He hated it. We all hate it. But it's where we were sent, and we'll do what we have to do. We signed up for it.

DOC

He must have been embarrassed, me sitting out the last part of our war in the brig...

(CONTINUED)

WASHINGTON

No, sir, Larry wasn't embarrassed - he loved you. You know what made him different from most of us in the unit?

DOC

What?

WASHINGTON

He had a happy childhood.

DOC

He said that?

WASHINGTON

Yes, sir. He had a mother and father who loved him... and each other. Nice house to live in. Good food to eat. School... football... nice friends... on and on.

(beat)

Mr. Shepherd, it was my turn to get the Cokes. That was my bullet, not Larry's. I should have been the one...

Mueller puts his hand on Washington's knee, letting him know it's okay and not to think like that.

DOC

A gray car pulled up to the house... a Marine Lieutenant and a Navy chaplain. Shiny brass belt buckles. I kept looking at those shiny buckles. "The President has asked me to express his deep regret..." Killed in action. In action - nothing about shot in the back of the head buying Cokes for the guys. Nothing about killed trying to get the Baghdad school system up and running.

(looks out the window,  
looks back)

The school system in New Hampshire is in rough shape.

(beat)

Why wasn't Larry back in New Hampshire delivering stuff to our own schools?

Nobody can say anything.

(CONTINUED)

DOC (CONT'D)  
Is that a stupid question?

44 INT. CAFE CAR - NIGHT - MOVING

44

With two glasses of beer, Sal wanders from the bar over to the table where Doc and Mueller sit. Mueller has a cup of coffee, and Doc a beer. As soon as Sal sits he downs a glass in one gulp.

MUELLER  
Thirsty?

SAL  
Huh?

MUELLER  
That went down awfully fast.

SAL  
Well I'm drinking for two, now that you've got all old and boring.

He starts to drink the other glass.

MUELLER  
Might be you're an alcoholic. I am. I recognized that and owned up to it. That's the first step.

SAL  
At least we're not drug addicts.

MUELLER  
Not anymore, praise Jesus.

SAL  
We never were.

MUELLER  
We took the shit, didn't we?

SAL  
We needed the shit.

MUELLER  
If we needed it the corps would have issued it to us.

SAL  
In a way they did.

(CONTINUED)

DOC  
That shit was meant for pain. All  
drugs are.

SAL  
So what's wrong with takin 'em  
then?

MUELLER  
Morphine? It's kind of addictive.

SAL  
So's pain.

DOC  
We weren't the ones who were in  
pain, though.

SAL  
The fuck we weren't.

MUELLER  
That's a different kind of pain.

SAL  
Pain is pain.

SAL (CONT'D)  
Back from the war less than a day,  
his best buddy in a coffin, and all  
he's talking about is a Burger King  
and Pizza Hut at the shopping mall.

DOC  
He just doesn't want to talk about  
it. We never did.

MUELLER  
You asked him.  
(new thought)  
Next stop I need to call Ruth.

SAL  
You need one of those mobile  
phones. You could be talking to her  
right now. Ten year-old kids have  
'em. They've practically quit  
making pay phones.

45 EXT. TRAIN - NIGHT

45

As the train speeds to New York, we hear all the guys in mid-  
conversation. This time, however, it is revved up and  
boisterous.

(CONTINUED)

MUELLER (O.S.)  
 ... So we ended up at Disneyland to  
 resuscitate Doc, who was  
 metaphorically drowning...

46 INT. CARGO CAR - NIGHT - MOVING

46

The guys sit on improvised seats in the baggage car, bull-shitting.

SAL  
 I got your metaphoricals -  
 dangling! Stick to the story!

WASHINGTON  
 Wait a minute. They got a  
 Disneyland in Vietnam?

Everybody laughs.

MUELLER  
 That's what they called all the  
 bars and houses of ill-repute that  
 sprung up near the base.

SAL  
 And it was the company fucking  
 commander's doing! He's the one  
 who told us to take a couple of  
 days off and get Doc's ass over to  
 Disneyland before he had a total  
 meltdown.

DOC  
 I was having some problems...

SAL  
 He sure as shit was, and the  
 biggest one was that it was time  
 for him to get his cherry busted.  
 How old were you, Washington, first  
 time?

WASHINGTON  
 Thirteen.

SAL  
 I rest my fucking case! My point  
 exactly. Doc was eighteen.

DOC  
 I was nineteen.

(CONTINUED)

SAL

One year worse. It was time.

DOC

No, it wasn't. The right time was when I met Mary, and we committed to each other.

MUELLER

I think thirteen is way too early, too, by the way.

SAL

Don't wreck my story. Believe me kid, he was ready. We killed some time in the bars then found the perfect little whorehouse.

WASHINGTON

That's so uncool.

SAL

What?

WASHINGTON

Paying for sex. Whores and pimps... it's disgusting.

SAL

Jesus, what the hell has happened to your basic GI?

WASHINGTON

I just think some things shouldn't to be bought and sold.

DOC

Actually, it wasn't all that bad.

The others laugh. Mueller leans a little toward Washington.

MUELLER

Jesus had not yet entered my life. I yielded to bad impulses.

SAL

Yielded to 'em? You smoked 'em, drank 'em, and fucked every impulse! Old Mueller the Mauler here would get the five dollars/ five minute special - he was like a jackrabbit.

Sal makes a quick humping motion. Mueller fights a smile.

(CONTINUED)

MUELLER

Everything seems funny years later,  
but I don't care what anybody says,  
it was a dereliction of duty, pure  
and simple.

SAL

I got your dir'liction swinging,  
you old coot!

WASHINGTON

The whores I know, I don't want to  
be around.

DOC

But this was like going to a  
friend's house... and then you end  
up having sex with the friend. And  
then you pay them.

They laugh again. In spite of everything, they are having a  
good time... a good moment at least.

SAL

Next day, I gotta admit, I was sick  
of hearing about that little Asian  
whore. Oh, Doc was quite proud of  
himself. Said he had a hard-on so  
big he couldn't bend his fingers or  
blink his eyes.

Another round of big laughs.

SAL (CONT'D)

Fuck me... God, I really miss that,  
having a boner you can hang a towel  
on. My johnson used to stand up and  
watch me shave, now it watches me  
pull up my socks.

They all crack up.

MUELLER

Don't encourage him.

47 INT. PENN STATION - NIGHT 47

The train is grinding to a stop in Penn Station.

48 EXT. 8TH AVENUE - NIGHT 48

Our three walk downtown, away from the station. Sal takes a  
deep breath.

(CONTINUED)

SAL  
New York, New fucking York.

MUELLER  
Let's not wander too far.

SAL  
Just far enough to find the first  
Blarney Stone.

Which is right across the street. Sal turns and goes inside.  
The others have no choice but to follow.

49 INT. BLARNEY STONE - NIGHT

49

They sit at the bar. Sal has escalated to a shot and a beer.  
Mueller has a ginger ale; Doc, a beer.

MUELLER  
How much time do we have?

SAL  
Enjoy, old man. It's the Big Apple.  
We got the time.

MUELLER  
I have to call my wife.

SAL  
See? Again, you need a fuckin'  
wireless telephone. You could sit  
right here and dial her up and you  
wouldn't have to get off the stool  
and hobble the full length of this  
place and have to stand on your  
feet next to the shitter just to  
say, "I miss you, dear, I hope you  
still love me, even though I used  
to fuck whores."

Though on his way, Mueller swings his cane around toward  
Sal's head, just missing as Sal ducks.

SAL (CONT'D)  
I'm still too quick for you,  
floatin' like a butterfly.

Mueller continues on as Sal waves to the bartender.

SAL (CONT'D)  
One more, please, before Grandpa  
Moses gets back.

(CONTINUED)

The bartender pours another shot. Doc takes some money out of his brown envelope.

SAL (CONT'D)  
 Drink up. Here's to duty and honor.

Sal knocks back the shot.

DOC  
 I guess it woulda been an honor,  
 the whole Arlington thing.

SAL  
 Sometimes the real honor is turning  
 down the honor.

DOC  
 Wouldn't you be honored?

SAL  
 Don't matter to me. Drop me  
 anywhere. You know what I put down  
 when I have to write who to notify  
 in case of emergency?

DOC  
 Your lady friend?

SAL  
 County coroner.

50 LATER - Mueller has rejoined the group.

50

SAL (CONT'D)  
 Request permission to have another,  
 sir?

MUELLER  
 Ain't nobody gonna tell you you  
 can't have a drink. Someday you're  
 gonna have to tell yourself.

Sal signals the bartender to pour another.

SAL  
 Barkeep, I'm gonna have just one  
 more drink... and then I'm gonna  
 have another.

MUELLER  
 You have a drinking problem.

(CONTINUED)

SAL

No problem, really. I think I got it down.

(offers toast)

Born in pain, live in fear, die alone.

He chugs it.

MUELLER

Could you be any more Irish right now?

SAL

Nope, though my mom was half Italian. I got the best of both - I'm an Irish drinker and an Italian lover.

Doc has been watching the TV above the bar. It's the same footage of Saddam getting his physical exam, along with other shots, like the picture of his two sons displayed after they were killed.

DOC

I lost one, he lost two.

SAL

I guess he thought it was worth it.

DOC

It wasn't worth it. Not to me.

Now George Bush Jr. is on the TV, giving an interview.

DOC (CONT'D)

Would it be worth his twin daughters? He's got twins, right?

SAL

Who? The cheerleader?

Sal gets up and goes over to the bartender.

DOC

Who?

MUELLER

He was a cheerleader in college.

DOC

Would it be worth their lives? Even one of 'em?

(CONTINUED)

MUELLER

Good luck gettin' that answered.

51 EXT. BLARNEY STONE - NIGHT 51

The three of them come out, Sal and Doc none too steady. They go in one direction, stop to get their bearings, then go in another direction. Sal spots a phone shop across the street and attempts to cross in the middle. Mueller hooks him with his cane and pulls him back.

52 INT. PHONE SHOP - NIGHT 52

An overwhelming display of hi-tech. A CLERK is helping them.

SAL

How many minutes do I get again?

CLERK

On this plan, five hundred.

SAL

Every month?

CLERK

Will that be enough?

SAL

Enough? How can anybody talk for more than five hundred minutes a month on a fuckin' telephone?

MUELLER

We're gonna miss our train, sure as God made little green apples.

With a flourish, Sal slaps his MasterCard on the counter.

SAL

This goes through, you got a sale young lady, and I go hi-tech.

53 LATER - as Sal signs the papers... 53

CLERK

You can call other people who use this same plan and it won't count against your minutes.

SAL

Get out. Now, that's a helluva deal.

(CONTINUED)

MUELLER

What do you care? Who do you know on this plan?

SAL

You two fuckers! Get you some phones, right now.

MUELLER

Don't need one, don't want one.

DOC

I wouldn't mind having one, to tell you the truth. I've often thought about it.

SAL

Done! Barkeep, a couple phones for my partners here.

DOC

So he and I can talk anytime, even though he's in Norfolk and I'm in New Hampshire and it don't cost us nothing, right?

CLERK

That's the deal.

DOC

C'mon, Mueller. With three-way calling and all we can talk to each other at the same time.

MUELLER

Well, we're doing that right now, aren't we?

DOC

C'mon, Mueller.

MUELLER

What if I don't like it? Now I've got a contract for two years?

SAL

What if you fall down? A real possibility with your gimpy knee. And you're in a ditch, and you can't get up, and nobody can see you, and it starts to rain, and the ditch fills up with water? Looks like you're gonna drown. Farewell, old Reverend Mueller.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SAL (CONT'D)  
 Ah, but with your wireless phone  
 you can call for help.

CLERK  
 And 9-1-1 calls do not count  
 against your minutes.

Mueller looks like he is weakening.

SAL  
 Sold!

54 EXT. 35TH STREET - NIGHT

54

Sal hurries on ahead of the other two, dialing a number on his new phone. He ducks into an enclave off the street and is momentarily out of sight. Mueller's phone rings and he fumbles to answer.

MUELLER  
 Hello?

SAL  
 (disguised voice)  
 Is this Reverend Mueller?

MUELLER  
 What?

SAL  
 This is God. It don't count  
 against your minutes to talk with  
 me.

They've now caught up with Sal, who emerges with a big smile on his face.

MUELLER  
 Don't be burning my minutes with  
 foolishness.

He hangs up.

DOC  
 Call Redman back on the train.

They once again fall into pace together as Sal dials.

SAL  
 (in phone)  
 Hey, Redman, guess who this is!  
 Right!  
 (holds phone against  
 chest)  
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SAL (CONT'D)

He knew it was me. Listen up, John,  
I'm calling you on my new  
wireless...

(to Doc)

What's my phone number?

DOC

It's in the display.

SAL

What display? There's no number.

DOC

It comes on when you turn on the  
phone.

Sal turns it off and on. He takes a pen out of his pocket and  
writes the number on his palm.

SAL

John? Shit, I lost him.

DOC

Well, you hung up on him.

SAL

Shit.

MUELLER

You don't even know how to use that  
thing.

He dials again.

SAL

John Redman, sorry about that.

(beat)

What? Oh.

DOC

What's he saying?

SAL

They're on their way to Boston.

DOC

The train's left without us?

MUELLER

Well, that's just outstanding. I  
warned your ass.

(CONTINUED)

SAL  
We'll catch the next one. Redman  
says they'll wait for us.

55 INT. PENN STATION - NIGHT

55

The three of them seem to be wandering in different directions, getting information. Finally they come together.

SAL  
Good news. We can catch the  
express, right to Boston.

MUELLER  
When?

SAL  
Seven a.m.

DOC  
Oh, jeez...

Mueller gives Sal a withering look.

56 INT. BAR - NIGHT

56

They're having dinner at the bar. Sal has his phone on the bar. Mueller has put Doc between them. The bartender switches the TV to a basketball game.

SAL  
Oh look, a show on black history.  
Is it that month already?

MUELLER  
Very funny.

Back on the game, a player steals the ball, breaks away and goes airborne. He stuffs it.

SAL  
Let me point out something to you.  
The butt-ugliest shot in basketball  
is the slam dunk. What does it  
mean, anyway? What does it say  
about the dude who stuffs it?

DOC  
That he's pretty darn tall.

(CONTINUED)

SAL

Dudes were tall before. They didn't go around hammerin' the ball through the hoop every time down the court. Ugly fuckin' shot and now they're stuck with it. Hangin' on the hoop, all that shit. Now, you take the fade-away jump shot; a man is covered, fenced away from the basket, he goes up, drops back, arcs that puppy over the defense. Beautiful. Elegant. Earl-the-Pearl skillful.

DOC

Free throws are what win or lose the game.

SAL

Well, but they interrupt the fucking action. They're boring and there are too many of them. You're not supposed to be bangin' into each other. Fouls should be shameful, but, fuck, there ain't no shame anywhere anymore.

MUELLER

Look who's talking. Have you ever been ashamed about anything? Ever in your life?

SAL

Only once.

They fall silent, then resume their meal.

SAL (CONT'D)

Boston was where he was from.

He expects someone to say something but no one does.

SAL (CONT'D)

I'm checking to see if he's got any family still there.

DOC

Why?

MUELLER

Because he's drunk.

SAL

What does that have to do with it?

(CONTINUED)

MUELLER  
This happen every time you drink?

SAL  
Pretty much.

MUELLER  
Then don't drink.

SAL  
It's what I got instead of God.

MUELLER  
Okay, I get it. I found God, Doc  
did his time, and you got drunk.

SAL  
And maybe he got the best of the  
deal.

MUELLER  
He was gonna die anyway, Sal.

SAL  
But he didn't have to suffer. Not  
that much anyway.

DOC  
Jimmy Hightower! We can't even say  
his name. We all feel guilty about  
how he suffered as he was dying,  
but did it ever occur to you that  
maybe nobody would have been shot  
at all, and everyone would still be  
alive if we'd all been doing our  
jobs instead of fuckin' around?

57 EXT. PENN STATION - NIGHT

57

They make their way back to Penn Station.

MUELLER  
Now we only got, what, three more  
hours to wait.

SAL  
On the town - two old jarheads and  
a chicken of the sea.

DOC  
Only we ain't dancing.

SAL  
Fuck, we're hardly hobbling.

(CONTINUED)

Even Mueller has to smile.

Suddenly we hear the odd electronic tones of Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head. Sal jumps, spins around. The music is coming from his chest.

SAL (CONT'D)  
The fuck...!?

MUELLER  
It's your fancy new phone.

SAL  
It does that?

DOC  
Answer it, Sal. It must be John Redman.

Sal digs the phone out of his pocket.

SAL  
(answering)  
Hello?

FEMALE PHONE VOICE (O.S.)  
(with Indian accent)  
Mr. Nealon...?

SAL  
Yeah.

FEMALE PHONE VOICE (O.S.)  
My name is Sharon. How are you this evening, Mr. Nealon?

SAL  
Not all that great, frankly.

FEMALE PHONE VOICE (O.S.)  
I'm sorry to hear that. I wanted to let you know that my manager will be in your area in the next few days and would love to show you how to make a twelve to twenty percent return by investing in international market funds.

SAL  
Wait a minute... I don't even know my own fuckin' number, how the hell did you get it?

(CONTINUED)

FEMALE PHONE VOICE (O.S.)  
 Have I called at an inconvenient  
 time?

SAL  
 What do you think, bitch?

He makes like he is going to throw the phone across the  
 street, then smiles and tucks it away.

58 INT. PENN STATION - EARLY MORNING 58

As the place comes to life, our three pull their aching bones  
 off the benches and try to wake up.

59 INT. TRAIN #2 - MORNING - MOVING 59

On the way to Boston, the three of them are half-asleep. Doc  
 stares out of the window.

DOC  
 What were their names?

SAL  
 Who?

DOC  
 His sons. Saddam's. The ones they  
 shot up and put on display like it  
 was the old Wild West.

SAL  
 Fuck, Doc, it's too early in the  
 day.

DOC  
 I was just thinking.

SAL  
 I don't know. Weird-ass A-rab  
 names. Hugo and Queasy, like that.

MUELLER  
 They were named Uday and Qusay.  
 Fairly simple names.

SAL  
 Sure, if you're used to Leteesha  
 and Kuamme.

MUELLER  
 You're a racist as well as an  
 alcoholic.

(CONTINUED)

SAL

You forgot sexist. Fair to everybody. What did you name your kids?

MUELLER

Otis and Sally.

SAL

Now that's nice. A kid should always be able to spell his own name. Named her after me, didn't you? Sally.

MUELLER

Say what?

SAL

After old Sal. I ever have a kid I'll name him after you, Dick. First he'll be little Dick, then he'll grow up to be big Dick.

DOC

What if it was a girl?

MUELLER

Look at him, Doc. Even if he had any left swimming in him, what woman of childbearing age is gonna spread her legs for him?

SAL

Your Sally, if you'll make the introductions.

Sal once again jumps out of range of Mueller's cane.

MUELLER

I swear I'm gonna brain you, I don't care if there's already a plate in your head. I'll put another one 'em there.

SAL

Seriously though, padre, can I ask you a personal question?

MUELLER

No.

SAL

How come you married a black woman?

(CONTINUED)

MUELLER

What?!

SAL

Don't you tell me you never had a white woman. It was the 70s.

MUELLER

As I recall, white dudes finally admitted having an eye for black women.

SAL

Oh, yeah, I'm gaga for the sisters myself. And they dig me too. Well, a couple of 'em did... for a time... then I'd say somethin' stupid.

MUELLER

No, you? Say something stupid to a black person?

SAL

'Course I had a couple bouts of yellow fever too... and always did have a sweet tooth for the Latin babes. I got nothin' against white women, mind you. They're okay, some of 'em. But we were talkin' about you marrying a black woman.

MUELLER

First of all, who I married is none of your business.

SAL

That's why I'm being so polite about it.

MUELLER

I'll tell you why. God told me to.

SAL

Whoa. To marry a black girl?

MUELLER

No, to marry Ruth.

SAL

He told you that?

MUELLER

He did.

(CONTINUED)

SAL

Like He told the Reverend Pat Robertson who was gonna win the election?

MUELLER

Pat Robertson is a complete phony.

SAL

How come God never talks to me?

MUELLER

Because you can't listen. And he doesn't talk to Pat Robertson either.

SAL

But He does talk to you?

MUELLER

I didn't say that. I said He told me to marry Ruth and be a decent man and to preach the word.

SAL

So he does speak to you.

MUELLER

He didn't talk to me in words. He touched my heart.

DOC

Maybe it was Ruth who touched your heart.

MUELLER

Oh, it was. It was God through Ruth. I was down and out, and I didn't care about nothing. A recovering alcoholic with shot up legs. Then one day I found Jesus...

SAL

Where was that, bump into him on the street?

MUELLER

In my heart, the only place you can find Him. I went down there like it was a scary cave, which in a way it was, a dark, unexplored place.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MUELLER (CONT'D)

Went down afraid and alone, came back up fearless and with Jesus at my side. Next Sunday I took myself to church...

SAL

Hallelujah! And there was Ruth.

MUELLER

Right there, and everything came together for me.

DOC

That's a beautiful story.

SAL

Sorry the fuck I asked.

(beat)

If God wants to keep holdin' out on me, I get it. But would it kill Him to pat me on the shoulder or shake my hand like a man? And if he'd also like to deliver a nice black girl with a great ass, so much the better.

60

EXT. BOSTON STATION - DAY

60

Walking just outside the Boston train station, Sal is in front of the other two, talking on his cell phone.

DOC

What's he up to?

MUELLER

Look at him wheeling and dealing...  
Mr. Cellular Phone.

Sal hears them talking about him and turns toward them, still on the phone.

SAL

(to Doc and Mueller)

We've got an errand to run.

DOC

We got enough time?

SAL

Sure.

(CONTINUED)

MUELLER  
 (simultaneous)  
 No.

SAL  
 I'm on with Redman. He and  
 Washington just got to New  
 Hampshire. We'll see 'em there.  
 (to Redman)  
 We'll see you there.

He closes his phone.

A60 INT. DOVER, NH STATION - DAY A60

Redman closes his phone and walks back over to the baggage car, where Washington and 5 other service members are starting to carry the box containing the coffin. Redman salutes as they walk away.

We follow the mortuary affairs detail through the baggage/storage area of the train station and down an elevator to the loading dock where a hearse, and the funeral director LELAND await.

61 INT. TAXI - DAY - MOVING 61

The taxi is driven by a turbaned driver.

MUELLER  
 She's been living with it all these  
 years. What good's it gonna do her?

SAL  
 We're long overdue, the way I  
 figure. She ought to know the truth  
 and we ought to be men enough to  
 say it.

MUELLER  
 How'd you find her?

SAL  
 I got O'Toole to call his  
 granddaughter and have her look it  
 up for us on the world wide web.

DOC  
 What can we possibly say to her?

SAL  
 The truth. If it'd a been me, I'd  
 want the other guys to go see my  
 family.

(CONTINUED)

MUELLER  
Where is your family?

SAL  
They're all dead. I think I have a  
cousin left, in Scranton.

The cab pulls up to a small house. They look at the place but say nothing.

62 EXT. HIGHTOWER HOUSE - DAY 62

At the door: Mueller knocks with his cane. They wait. He knocks again.

DOC  
Maybe nobody lives here anymore,  
maybe.

The door opens, revealing a woman in her 80s. She is wary.

MRS. HIGHTOWER  
Yes?

None of them seems able to speak.

63 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY 63

Some time later, they're all sitting around in the living room. Mrs. Hightower directs them through a series of framed pictures and Christmas card photos that they pass around.

MRS. HIGHTOWER  
This was the last picture we ever  
got from Jimmy. And this is Jimmy's  
little girl all grown up.

DOC  
So, how old was she when he died?

MRS. HIGHTOWER  
Four months old. Her mom eventually  
remarried and they moved to San  
Diego. Here's my great-grandkids.

MUELLER  
Look at that. He'd be a  
grandfather.

MRS. HIGHTOWER  
I've never met them in person, but  
they call every now and then. So  
you three were with my Jimmy?

(CONTINUED)

The old woman stares at him blankly.

SAL

Yes ma'am. We'd already fought us a long year, and most of us were still breathing. But that extension... that four more months they added on... some of us couldn't handle it, and, I think we didn't all...

MRS. HIGHTOWER

What was it all for?

SAL

They said they knew, and we believed them. But now... we just came here to tell you what happened.

MRS. HIGHTOWER

Are you some of the men he saved?

Sal is just frozen. Doc and Mueller look at him wondering how he's going to respond.

MRS. HIGHTOWER (CONT'D)

Thry told me he saved three or four of his buddies, before...

SAL

Yes ma'am. We are.

MUELLER

He was a great guy, Jimmy.

DOC

Yeah, we've never forgotten him.

MUELLER

That's why we're here, ma'am. We owe him.

SAL

We just wanted to come by and pay our respects.

MUELLER

Let you know he's still in our hearts.

MRS. HIGHTOWER

That is so sweet of you boys. I can't thank you enough.

64 EXT. HIGHTOWER HOUSE - DAY 64

The door opens as they exit. Sal gets the last hug in.

SAL  
Take care of yourself.

MRS. HIGHTOWER  
This makes my week. Please come  
back anytime.

DOC  
Thank you, ma'am.

MUELLER  
Bless you, Mrs. Hightower.

MRS. HIGHTOWER  
You boys be careful out there.

SAL  
We will.

65 INT. TRAIN #3 - LATE AFTERNOON - MOVING 65

They sit in silence, not saying much. Even Sal stares out  
the window at the sunset.

66 EXT. DOVER, NH STATION - NIGHT 66

Washington waits for them, next to a hearse and Leland.

67 INT. FUNERAL HOME LIMO - NIGHT - MOVING 67

Washington sits next to Leland. In the back seat are Sal, Doc  
and Mueller. Outside the window are shells of abandoned  
plants and factories, lying idle. Sal just stares out the  
window.

SAL  
Looks like things used to get made  
here.

LELAND  
Used to.

SAL  
Even morticians better watch out -  
they might be outsourcing  
undertakin' next.

(CONTINUED)

LELAND

Never happen - American funeral directors are the best in the world.

Sal mutters a monologue... not that anyone is much listening at this point.

SAL

So were the American factories. We could make anything, quality stuff. That's how we won two world wars. Don't be surprised if somebody figures out that it's cheaper to ship a body to Mexico and back than to do it up here. They'll ship it to China or India once they figure out it'll save 'em a buck. Don't matter how good you are.

(new mumbly thought)

Just a matter of time till they start outsourcing soldiering. Hell, get a bunch of starving young people from all over the world, put 'em in a uniform and tell 'em to try to stay alive. When their tour is over we ship 'em back to where they came from... no VA hospitals, or pensions. You lost an arm? You got PTSD? Tough shit, we're flushing you down...

68 EXT. DOC'S HOUSE - NIGHT

68

The limo pulls into the driveway. As the others get out, Sal quickly goes to the nearest bush in the yard to pee.

MUELLER

If you had any more manners, you'd be a dog.

Sal continues peeing, emphasizing his relief.

SAL

Now I'm seeing God.

69 INT. DOC'S HOUSE - NIGHT

69

In the small, dark den, embers glow in the fireplace. Washington lies awake on the sofa.

70 INT. DOC'S ROOM - NIGHT 70

Mueller lies awake. He can't help but notice the pictures of Doc and his wife, Larry Jr, etc. Actually, it feels like Mary still lives there. It seems Doc's barely touched anything since last January.

71 INT. LARRY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 71

Sal is laying on a trundle bed, pulled out from under Larry's bed, where Doc rests. The room is lit by moonlight. Now an as-he-left-it shrine to Larry, they're surrounded by the various photos of family and friends, sports mementoes, music posters, etc.

SAL

You gonna want to stay on here,  
alone?

DOC

I don't know - haven't thought much  
about it.

SAL

Portsmouth? The brig right there.  
You might want to try another  
place. A fresh start.

DOC

But Larry would be here. Mary, too.

SAL

You could always come visit. You  
got close friends here?

DOC

Not too many. Not too close.

His voice trails, he's falling asleep. Sal jabs him in the ribs.

DOC (CONT'D)

What?

SAL

Move to Norfolk. You could work in  
my bar.

DOC

I never worked in a bar before.

SAL

Trust me - it ain't that hard.

(CONTINUED)

DOC

Your place don't seem all that busy.

SAL

That's my fault. I let it go. It needs new blood. We could get the grill part going again. I need a partner.

DOC

A partner?

SAL

Yeah. The bar'd be half yours, and when I bite it, it'll be all yours.

DOC

Sal... you don't owe me nothing.

SAL

This ain't paying off no debt. I really do need a partner, and I got nobody to leave the place to. You could stay with me for a while, but then you'd have to find your own place, 'cause I like to pursue the ladies and, frankly, you'd cramp my style.

SAL (CONT'D)

You thinkin' about it?

DOC

I am. I'm picturing it. It's kinda funny.

SAL

Might be time for another BCD in your life.

Doc smiles.

DOC

Better career decision...

SAL

Yeah, and if nothin' else, it might be fun. What's wrong with that?

72 INT. DOC'S HOUSE - MORNING

72

Sal, Mueller and Washington are in the kitchen having coffee. Sal punches some numbers in his cell phone, waits for an answer.

MUELLER

You purely love that thing, don't you?

SAL

I can't get that fucker O'Toole to answer. The place could be burned down for all I know.

He puts the phone away. Doc comes in with a suit on a hangar.

DOC

Larry's graduation suit.

WASHINGTON

Looks a little small.

DOC

You think?

WASHINGTON

Yes, sir. Larry bulked up. That's gonna be way too tight on him.

DOC

I guess I could go down to Penny's and buy him something new.

WASHINGTON

We still got his dress blues.

MUELLER

Remember how we used to call the dress blues the tuxedo? By law you could go to any formal function wearing that uniform.

SAL

Not that we ever got invited to one... or would have gone if we did.

MUELLER

Still, it was good to know you were always dressed for any occasion.

(CONTINUED)

SAL

No one ever forgets the first time you put it on and looked at yourself in the mirror - I'm in the U.S. Marine Corps, and I look pretty fuckin' good.

MUELLER

I do remember that feeling.

WASHINGTON

Yes, sir. I'm glad to know you never forget it.

MUELLER

Larry must have looked sharp.

DOC

He did. He was proud as a peacock in that uniform.

WASHINGTON

I know that for a fact.

SAL

Pride is the thing.  
(to Mueller)  
It's no sin.

MUELLER

No, of course not. Not that kind.

DOC

I could bury him in his dress uniform, even if.

SAL

Yeah. It means you did something. You served. Fuck what the politicians did, you served. You didn't weasel out of it. You didn't think it was somebody else's job. You took it on, man, and you looked sharp doing it.

DOC

I'm gonna. I'm gonna bury him in his uniform.

MUELLER

Good.

WASHINGTON

Never regret it, sir.

(CONTINUED)

SAL  
Fuckin' A.

73 EXT. FUNERAL HOME - MORNING 73

Establishing shot.

74 INT. FUNERAL HOME - MORNING 74

Doc is in the background, talking to Leland about various details. Washington, forever on duty, stands next to the coffin. In the foyer, Sal and Mueller sit on opposing benches, waiting for Doc. Sal is studying Mueller, looking at him over his folded arms.

MUELLER  
Why're you looking at me like that?

SAL  
I'm sizin' you up. I'm gonna buy you a new suit of clothes.

MUELLER  
Say what?

SAL  
I'm gonna dress you up for the occasion.

MUELLER  
Why, may I ask?

SAL  
Because I love you.

MUELLER  
I don't need a new suit of clothes. It's you needs some grooming.

SAL  
Neither of us is properly dressed. But we will be, you watch.

MUELLER  
The things that come into your head. And out of your mouth.

SAL  
The loving you thing rattled you, didn't it, old man?

MUELLER  
It's very disturbing.

75 INT. LARRY'S ROOM - DAY

75

In close-ups: The ritual of a Marine putting on his uniform. Then we see it is Sal... and Mueller... putting on uniforms complete with the proper insignias.

SAL

Did I deliver or did I deliver?

MUELLER

The dude gave you these for nothing?

SAL

On loan. Tailor-mades. Once I told him why, no charge.

Now they each don the hats, positioning them just right. Looking good. Doc comes inside and is stopped cold. He looks at them, speechless. A flood of memories engulfs them all.

76 EXT. GRAVESIDE - DAY

76

Mueller's cane leans against an empty folding chair. Doc sits at the next chair. Friends and classmates of Larry have gathered behind him. Next to the graveside is the headstone of Doc's wife. Mueller stands at the head of the grave. Sal at the foot, in their dress uniforms. On the other side, Washington stands at attention as the minister backs away. They salute. Ceremonially, Sal and Mueller fold the flag into twelve tight triangular folds. Mueller takes Washington's arm and Sal carries the flag over to Doc. Sal then holds out the flag to Doc, whose eyes are red, his lower lip is quivering.

SAL

Doc, I don't know how grateful the nation is... or how much the President might regret your loss and all that... but here it is, your country's flag.

MUELLER

Put it somewhere and let it remind you of what your son must have felt in his heart.

Doc nods.

77 INT. DOC'S HOUSE - DAY

77

The post-funeral meal. A buffet is set up. The crowd of mostly young people mills about and speaks in soft tones. Sal, still in uniform, has a young pretty YOUNG WOMAN cornered.

(CONTINUED)

SAL

Well... technically speaking I'm no longer on active duty... but if I was, well, look at me. Could you resist all this?

GIRL

It'd be hard.

78 INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - DAY

78

Washington pulls down a pair of skivvies drying on a line in the shower. He folds them and puts them into his AWOL bag.

The corner of an envelope is visible in a zippered pocket of the bag. He takes it out. Guilt-stricken. He sits on the toilet, looking at the sealed envelope.

79 EXT. BACK PORCH - DAY

79

Doc and Washington. Doc holds the envelope.

WASHINGTON

Everybody wrote one, sir. I gave mine to Larry, he gave his to me.

DOC

What does it say?

WASHINGTON

I don't know, sir.

DOC

What did yours say?

WASHINGTON

(beat)  
I forget.

They look at each other. Washington finally lowers his head.

80 INT. HOUSE - DAY

80

Mueller approaches Sal and the girl.

MUELLER

You have to come with me.

SAL

I'm in the middle of something, padre.

GIRL

Bye, Sarge, nice talking to you.

(CONTINUED)

She goes. He watches her longingly as she blends into the group. He sighs.

SAL

Remember how it used to be?

81

EXT. BACK PORCH - DAY

81

Doc is sitting on his back porch. Mueller sits across from him while Sal is still standing.

SAL

You gotta open it, Doc.

MUELLER

He wanted you to have it, so...

Doc looks from one to the other. He opens the envelope, unfolds the letter.

As Doc reads silently, we soon see a series of images and we hear his son Larry's voice. On a shelf in the living room we pan through a series of photos on display: Larry Junior as a kid, and in his graduation suit. Mary, a smiling Larry and Larry Junior, a happy family portrait. The folded flag from the funeral.

LARRY{V.O.}

Dear Dad. If you are reading this, then you've been notified. I was always prepared to sacrifice my life for my country. You have to be ready to die defending what you love. I need you to understand that I am honored to die in this way. Don't feel bad that my life was so short. It was a good life. I know you never wanted me to join the Marines, but you supported me even so. I had the greatest father and I love you. Now I am with mom. We will both watch over you. Dad, I want you to bury me in my uniform, next to Mom. Your loving son, Larry.

Sal is now sitting next to Mueller. Doc looks up at them, saying nothing.

FADE OUT.