

Milepost 271

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FADE IN:

EXT. THE YEAR IS 2046

UNKNOWN (V.O.)

Never knowing where life's trail
will dump you out, is one of the
most frustrating, misunderstood
mysteries' of our puny existence.

On a long straight stretch of interstate 80 at a rest stop
near milepost 271 in Nevada, leaning on his motorcycle, an
unopened pack of pall malls in his hand.

UNKNOWN (V.O.)

We trod on ever forward making
mistakes and always being surprised
by the vastness of human frailties
until, the end creeps up on us or
just snatches us out with no warning.

Joe sits contemplating his past worth to humanity, just
starting to open the pack. A highway patrol car pulls up
behind him.

UNKNOWN (V.O.)

I never thought much of the end as a
something to worry about, just the end.

Officer Joshua knots gets out and approaches; Joe continues
without giving the officer any notice.

JOSHUA

You got bike troubles. I'll call it in!

OLD JOE

No, just trying to catch-up on some
smoking! Officer,

Joe looks over his sun glasses at the officer's nametag.

OLD JOE

J. Knots, what's the J stand for?

JOSHUA

Joshua, sir.

Joshua admires the BIKE; on the seat is a carton of PALL-MALL.

JOSHUA

Nice bike, I don't believe I've ever seen one of these before?

OLD JOE

It's one of a kind, I built it myself.

JOSHUA

Real nice!
You know sir; more than a pack is illegal in these parts.

OLD JOE

(Pointing at the city limits sign over his shoulder)
The state allows me to have a full carton outside of any city limits. So if I move just 10 feet that way I should be OK right?

The officer looks him up and down:

JOE IS AN OLD MAN, THE OFFICER FIGURES IN HIS 70'S WITH ARTHRITIC HANDS BUT STILL APPEARS TO BE IN GOOD SHAPE FOR HIS AGE.

JOSHUA

Just make sure you're not bothering anyone and you can stay here, what makes you want to smoke all this now at your age.

OLD JOE

I quit smoking back in 95 when I turned 42 because I didn't have cancer and I didn't never want to.

JOSHUA

"That was," as he checks his fingers "51 years ago."
Mister, you're 93 years old?

OLD JOE

Not quite yet, I still have a couple of months before my birthday! I just missed them so much I thought I'd try to do some catching-up, I mean at my age, what's it going to matter.

Joe lights up and the officer (25-30) takes a whiff out of curiosity.

JOSHUA

I've heard about them but never seen one outside of the training aids at the station.

OLD JOE

That's why I came all the way out here, to get away from anyone that I might offend with the smoke.

JOSHUA

So you're going to just sit here and smoke all of these?

OLD JOE

Yes sir, and then I'll be on my way!

JOSHUA

I should still take you in just to keep you from doing yourself any harm but my guess is that you would come right back again.

OLD JOE

You guess right.

JOSHUA

Well you're not hurting anyone except yourself and it is a very lonely stretch of road but it is still a rest stop. Don't bother others with your smoke, OK?

The officer returns to his car and opens the door.

OLD JOE

Thanks officer, if anyone else comes along I won't smoke while their within 50 ft of me.

Joe just sets there looking off into the countryside while the officer drives away.

Joe's thoughts turn to a younger time and a friend long sense gone but never forgotten.

The vision is as clear as if he where there now.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. Somewhere in North Carolinas Blue Ridge Mts. 1973

A gravel road runs along the top of the ridge through a densely wooded area. The sun beams through the leaves of the trees, dappling the ground with shimmering spots of light. The tranquility is broken by a red 65 Ford Galaxy 500 screaming up the road, (Thunder Road) playing on the radio, it **turns onto an old little known logging road for a short distance, stops then backs into a side cut out. JOE (6'2" thin but ruggedly handsome, young man of 19) scurries out** of the passenger side window, as the car is still moving and pulls some brush across the ditch to hide the wood planks they drove over.

Backing the car deeper into the woods is DAN; (6'6" medium build moderately handsome man of 23 with dark wavy hair) pulls the car under some low hanging branches. Dan hocks a big spitball out the window to clear the dust from his throat, and then takes a short sip from the pint bottle on the front seat and adjusts the rearview mirror; hanging from the mirror is a BRONSE STAR metal.

Joe gets back in the car the same way he got out, they sit there for a few seconds in contemplative silence, they can see the road behind them and the dust is starting to settle. The police sirens in the background getting closer, then one car goes by, Dan turns down the radio and looks around to his left. Another car goes by, then -- nothing.

YOUNG JOE

Where hiding because we have shine in the trunk, I get that but we had a good head start, we could 'a outrun 'em.

DAN

Ray-dee-o,,, you know what that is right?

YOUNG JOE

I know what it is!

DAN

We are the only car on this road if they had seen us then we would have been caught for sure.

Dan scrunches down into a restful position and closes his eyes. Joe pulls out a pack of Pall Mall and lights one up,

DAN

Those things are bad for you, you know!

YOUNG JOE

So says the Surgeon General, I've been smoking since I was 12 when I started rolling 'em for my dad

DAN

They don't make you any more relaxed than shine, do they?

Dan takes a handkerchief from his shirt pocket.

DAN

Take a big drag, inhale real deep, then blow the smoke through this.

Joe takes the handkerchief and does as Dan ask.

YOUNG JOE

Yeah! So?

DAN

OK! Now, do the same thing again. Only this time don't inhale before you blow through the handkerchief.

Joe does it again.

YOUNG JOE

Damn, that's nasty. Why would anyone do that?

DAN

Exactly! Why would anyone smoke? All that stays in your

lungs when you inhale. Just
thought you should know that!

Joe takes a short sip from the pint on the seat takes one
more puff off the cigarette and puts it out.

YOUNG JOE
We all die from something
sooner or later.

He puts the pint back on the seat.
Joe looks all around one more time, and then he too slides
down to relax.

The sun is slowly slipping out of sight.

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN:
INT. CAR - NIGHT

Joe is sleeping; Dan is just sitting up and looking around.

DAN
(with a flashlight in Joe's eyes)
Joe!

Joe jumps up in his seat and grabs the light.

YOUNG JOE
(gasps)
Good Googoly moogly! Don't do
that!

DAN
Sorry, go check it out.

Joe gets out and goes to the side of the road to see if it's
clear.

YOUNG JOE
You think they gave up yet?

DAN
I'll bet they are in their
jammies by now.

YOUNG JOE
(Confused)

How would you know they wear
jammies?

DAN

Their wives told me.

YOUNG JOE

Oh! I thought you were gonna
say you had first hand
knowledge.

DAN

See anything?

YOUNG JOE

No a couple of deer, that's
it.

DAN

Get in we can take the back
road down to Cherokee and be
back to base just in time to
get ready for work.

YOUNG JOE

Well . . . if you think we
have to.

Joe jumps in the car and they drive off slowly down the
road.

CUT TO:

EXT. NIGHT,

Somewhere in South Carolina;

Dan is driving along, Joe in the back seat getting some rest
before he has to drive, Dan's head is starting to hurt from
Joe's snoring, then he gets the bright idea of how to make
the snoring stop. He checks the opposite lanes and his rear
view for traffic.

Nothing coming for miles in either direction, Dan starts
drifting to the median; all of a sudden, Joe is being
bounced up and down like a rag doll, first on the seat then
on the floor. Dan checks him in the mirror, down shifts and
grabs hold of the wheel with expert confidence he hits the
gas and spins the ass end around in the moist grass of the
median. Just as Joe is grabbing the back of the seat Dan
slides the car onto the opposite lanes suddenly the car

stops on the other side with the nose pointed in the wrong direction.

YOUNG JOE

(Setting up excitedly)
Holy little green people in
purple jump suits, what's
going on?

DAN

Nothing, I had to swerve off
the road a little to miss a
deer.

YOUNG JOE

Is that all, I thought the
world was ending.

DAN

Uh yeah that's it, go back to
sleep

YOUNG JOE

(Climbing over seat)
That's all right! I'm
refreshed enough to drive now.

DAN

(Turning the car 180 deg)
Get out-a-town. I got it for
the next hour anyway.

YOUNG JOE

(Confused)
You forget something back
home?

DAN

(Defensive)
No! Why?

YOUNG JOE

Well, the fact that you are
crossing over the median and
turning around is a big
giveaway.

DAN

I told you to go back to
sleep; it's a long story.

Joe notices the road sign (SOUTH) they should be going south, that's right but Dan just did a 180 and started back the other way, Joe's face lights up as he thinks he realizes what just happened.

YOUNG JOE
(Snidely)
Yeah right!

DAN
(Smiles)
Just relax, we only have a couple more hours and we will be at the barracks.
Tell me something, be honest?

YOUNG JOE
Sure, what?

DAN
You ever wake yourself up snoring?

YOUNG JOE
To be completely honest, I don't think so.

DAN
Well don't worry at the rate you're going it won't be long before you'll be changing that answer.

Joe knows it is useless to argue with Dan once he has set his mind to something it's all she wrote. So he just sets there and drifts off again.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEXT DAY MCAS BEAUFORT SC

Dan and Joe come out of the chow hall both wearing utilities or more affectionately known as pickle suits. They walk to the car and take the same seats Dan driving and Joe in the passenger seat.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR, DAY

Bob Dylan song playing on the radio.
Water puddles cover the road and as each one is hit, it
sprays up past the car as they head for flight line road on
their way to Station Weapons.
Joe, not satisfied with the selection on the radio breaks
into his favorite lyrics.

YOUNG JOE

Di-did-did you ever meat my
wife, I'd like to have you
meat her, she never married me
for LOVE, all she wants is----
PETER Murphy had a dog, a very
fine dog was he, he loaned it
to his girlfriend just to keep
her company, now all around
the house at night that dirty
old dog would hunt, he'd run
his nose up a ladies close and
try to smell her---- COME away
you naughty dog you make my
precious rise, now you better
get up old man it time for
another round!

Joe actually has a fairly good singing voice

DAN

You ever think of turning pro
with that voice?

YOUNG JOE

Well of course not, I have an
affliction.

DAN

An affliction, what kind?

YOUNG JOE

My body needs food to eat, I
don't think I'd be around long
if I had to depend on this
voice to keep me feed.

DAN

I guess you're right there.

YOUNG JOE

I know I'm right, besides
trying to keep up with all the
girls would be enough to kill
me.

DAN

You have any brothers or
sisters.

YOUNG JOE

3 ½ sisters.

DAN

How in the Sam hill can you
have 3 and ½ sisters?

YOUNG JOE

Not 3 and a ½, we each have
different fathers. Anyway I don't
have any brothers.

DAN

Consider yourself lucky, but if you
ever need one, I'll be only too
happy to give you one of mine.

YOUNG JOE

Thanks, that could come in handy
some time.

Dan turns the car into the parking lot just outside the gate
to the STATION WEAPONS compound. A truck pulls pass them and
stops just inside the gate and other troops get out and
start forming up for morning muster.

DAN

Oh! Here we go again.

Walking past the sign at the front entrance.

YOUNG JOE

Well, how else can you expect
us to believe it unless we
tell ourselves every day.

YOUNG JOE

(reading from the sign)

"In this weapons facility are
the most handsome, suave,

debonair, hardest working
bastards in the United States
Marine Corps"

Dan just shakes his head as Joe reads it.

DAN

You keep that up and the
Ordnance Mafia will be trying
to recruit you.

YOUNG JOE

Ordnance Mafia! They're just
like any other gang there ever
was. A bunch of losers that
can't accomplish anything on
their own.

DAN

You hit that nail on the head,
but don't let them hear you
talking that way.

YOUNG JOE

Don't worry I've had my
dealings with the likes of
them, they're all the same, up
to no good.

They get into formation with the others.

DAN

I'm not sure but it looks like
another hot and humid day here
in beautiful Beaufort by the
sea.

YOUNG JOE

Of that, you can be sure.

DAN

Why do you think the
government spent all that
money sending us to Ordnance
School, educating us about
storage and handling of
explosives if all we are going
to do is gut grass?

YOUNG JOE

I don't think it's personal,
they put all new comers on the
grounds keeping crew until
their skills can be evaluated.

DAN

We have been here now for
what, 8 months!
What's taking so long?

YOUNG JOE

I don't really care as long as
they decide I have what it
takes to get into making
issues and turn-ins, I mean
any dumb schmuck can cut
grass.

(he lightly flicks the
Marine's ear in front of him)

BOB

Hey! That's my ear.

YOUNG JOE

I'm sorry, I thought it was
your ass.

Bob just turns back to the front.
Joe nudges Dan.

YOUNG JOE

Hey Bob, you ever had a big
old pussy stretched over your
head all the way up to your
neck?

BOB

NO!

YOUNG JOE

What are you then, an asshole
baby?

DAN

Got your running shoes on
today dumb schmuck?
I'm going for the big rig this time.

YOUNG JOE

I'll give you a head start,
anyway.

DAN

Don't think I won't take it!

SGT DAILEY

Quiet! fall in!

Roll is called and all are present, then the race begins. Joe flinches in the direction of the farm tractor with attachments for grass cutting, Dan takes off like a shot out of a cannon, but with his tall frame he seems to be moving in slow motion.

Joe just starts to walk in the direction of the smaller lawn tractor. They each get on their machines and start down the road to the magazine areas.

DAN

I thought you were going to
race me for Bertha.

YOUNG JOE

I decided to give you a turn
at the big old girl for a
change.

DAN

You only drove it two days
last week.

YOUNG JOE

Right! And we'll change back
in another couple of days.
It rattles the head too much
to stay with it more than
that.

Each of them have a swing blade in a holder for ditches and those hard to get areas around trees and closely set bushes. Joe stops and tries to cut a portion of ditch that is still full of water from the rains over the weekend. Water splashes on him a little, he turns and walks back to his mower.

YOUNG JOE

(Getting on mower)

Damn, I knew that was going to
happen. I'll get to you later.

DAN
(Looking back over shoulder)
You're not dipping yet?

YOUNG JOE
You know it ain't hot enough
to jump yet, just checking the
water temperature that's all.

Dan just waves to him and they continue cutting.

CUT TO:

BIG COPPERHEAD SLITHERING OUT RIGHT IN FRONT OF DANS MOWER

Dan runs it over with his machine and then gets down and by the time Joe catches up to see what the commotion is Dan was slinging the now dead snake into a treetop.

YOUNG JOE
Holy snakeshit BATMAN that's a
big one! Why you put it up a
tree? If it's dead it ain't
gonna hurt nobody down here.

DAN
By morning, it will start
raining and it won't stop till
that snake is rotted away.

YOUNG JOE
I never heard that before,
some mountain folklore?

DAN
It's an old Cherokee Indian
way to make it rain.

YOUNG JOE
I thought they did a rain
dance for rain.

DAN
That's just for the tourist.

YOUNG JOE

Don't you think we had enough
rain for a while?

DAN

Look at it this way, if it's
raining we're not out here
cutting grass and they might
have to let us do something
else for a change.

YOUNG JOE

That what I like about you
BUTCH, you're always thinking.

DAN

It's going to get hot today!

YOUNG JOE

Tell me something I don't
know!

DAN

You're Ugly!

YOUNG JOE

I said, something I don't
know.

They both get on there individual machines and take off for
the high grass that is growing everywhere.
Joe stops again and takes off his utility top and puts it on
the back of the mower seat then reaches for the swing blade
again.

He walks toward the ditch and swings a couple of times at
the nearly three feet tall grass in the water filled ditch,
as he mutters something about needing more rain the ditches
aren't full yet.

Joe takes another swing this time at the base of the grass
right at the water line and while the grass got cut, the
blade slapped water onto his freshly cleaned highly starched
utilities, getting pissed but really just looking for any
excuse to get into the water. He jumps in the ditch to show
it who is boss and the water goes up past his knees. He
starts cutting the grass, throwing water and blades of grass
everywhere until he is covered with bits of grass and
dripping wet, but the ditch is pristine.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. NIGHT, FIRESIDE, REST STOP NEAR MILEPOST 271

Joe sitting at his campfire, a couple of teenagers approach him.

FIRST TEEN

Hey Old man, what do you know about this area?

OLD JOE

Well, not much. I'm not from around here. I've got a map here. What are you looking for?

SECOND TEEN

What we're looking for can't be found on any map!

OLD JOE

Well then I guess I'm not going to be much help to you, am I?

FIRST TEEN

You trying to be smart or something?

OLD JOE

NO! NO! Just pointing out the obvious.

SECOND TEEN

GHOSTS!

OLD JOE

GHOSTS? Son, there is no such thing as ghosts.

FIRST TEEN

There are a lot of stories told back in town, about people who show up out here and ask to share campfires or food from people who stop here for overnights. They say these people just come from nowhere and then they are gone just as suddenly as they came.

OLD JOE

Any of the stories ever tell
of an old man who shares his
fire and food with strangers?

FIRST TEEN

NO!

OLD JOE

(to second teen)

You ever hear that one.

SECOND TEEN

NO!

OLD JOE

Good, I was a little worried
there for a minute! I mean, I
thought I might be a ghost.

FIRST TEEN

Come on, this old man don't
know anything.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. DAY, STATION WEAPONS

On the road back to the office for lunch.
Dan and Joe, in a race to see who makes it back first.

It is mostly a tie but Joe claims the victory.

In the brake room the rest of the crew is getting ready to
head to main side.

There is; Bob (DORK), Don (ALEUT), Pete (Candy Bear), Harry,
Jake and Moran or (KILLER) as the rest of the crew often
called him.

Dan and Joe mostly hang together as a team, they are the
leaders (in their own minds) the rest of the crew kind of
looks up to them. No real reason they just seem to outshine
the rest.

YOUNG JOE

Who wants to go out to
FROGMORE tonight and try to
catch the lights? We're going

to get some beers and check
out the old fort.

DON

(Very serious)

You don't believe that, do
you?

YOUNG JOE

Have you ever been out there
to see them?
There is something strange
about them. I mean, they seem
to come out of nowhere and
when you try to get close,
they just fade out. I've been
out there a dozen times and
it's always the same, one of
these days I'm going to figure
out what is causing them. I
know it's just an optical
illusion of some sort but it
sure is weird the way it goes
down.

DON

Yeah, count me in, I been
waiting to check out that
fort, they say the place is
haunted. I want to see a
ghost! Come on Pete it'll be
great.

(He reaches into his pocket takes out a knife slices an
apple, offers half to Pete).

PETE

Thanks! Hey Dan you think I
can come along in the car with
you guys?

DAN

(As he counts the yes's)
Uh . . . I guess there's
enough room for you but that's
it, I don't want more than
five in OLD RED and don't even
think about calling SHOTGUN.
(As he points at Pete last)

JAKE

Isn't that the shits, why is it Joe is the only one allowed to be up front?

DAN

Because he's my "A" driver and I don't shift gears with someone in the middle of the seat unless it's my girl. Anybody else wants to go will have to find their own ride! (Looking at Bob).

JAKE

Sorry I asked.

Jake turns to leave and runs into Killer.

JAKE

Get the fuck out of my way.

KILLER

Don't talk to me like that, I'll kill you.

BOB

Can't. I'm working tonight.

YOUNG JOE

(Looking at Killer)

I guess that's that then. Pete, I have to make the admin run this afternoon. Want to go with, we need to get some pop for the mess it's getting low.

PETE

(Surprised)

What? Sgt. Daily and I just bought six cases three days ago. What happen to those?

DAN

(Leans over to Pete)

Just say yes!

PETE

Uh, Yes.

YOUNG JOE
1315, be ready.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAY,

Outside the office door, Pete waits for Joe.
Joe comes out, jumps in the truck and starts it up.

YOUNG JOE
You coming?

Pete runs around to the other side of the truck and gets in
the navy gray crew cab. He looks in the back seat.

PETE
I've never done this before,
are you sure we can.....

Joe who sees the SGT cuts him off.

YOUNG JOE
What, Ride along on the
afternoon admin run?
Sometimes I'm not here then
someone else has to know where
to go, who to see and what to
do. Oh hey SGT. Dailey I was
just telling the PFC the
reason for him to be going
with me.

SGT DAILEY
(Holding out ammo can)
PFC, when you get down to H&MS
31 takes this to SGT Banks and
ask him to fill it with
pneumatic fluid.

PETE
What is it SGT?

SGT.DAILEY
Pneumatic fluid? Don't worry
SGT Banks knows, you just find
him and ask him to fill this
can.

Joe gives the SGT. a smirk as he drives away.

SGT.DAILEY

And don't come back without!

PETE

Do you know what this new
magic fluid is?

YOUNG JOE

It's pneumatic fluid, and yes
I know what it is and so do
you. Its air dip shit, don't
be a patsy all your life.
You're smarter than that.
I like a good joke as much as
the next guy but Sgt. Dailey
makes fun of his troops, that
gets him no respect from me.

They drive to main side and make the rounds of the
headquarters building and all the admin stops on any guard
mail envelopes. After all the mail had been delivered and
picked up Joe starts looking around and driving along all
the barracks roads and then there it is, what he had been
looking for, the soda truck.

YOUNG JOE

Get ready Pete, When I stop
you get sodas, only when I
stop. I'll stop three times;
you get what you can. OK?

PETE

(Grinning)

Sure.

Joe drives slowly noting that the truck driver just entered
the building with a hand truck full of sodas. Joe stops the
truck within 3 inches of the soda truck. Pete reaches out
the window and gets two cases of Coke-a-cola. While Pete is
placing the sodas on the floor, Joe moves the truck forward
to the next slot. Next Pete gets two cases of orange drink,
then two cases of Chocolate soda.

YOUNG JOE

OK! We got our quota for the
week. Make sure they are out
of sight.

Joe drives off away from the soda truck and around another building before heading for the shop.

PETE

Man I never thought it would be such a rush.

YOUNG JOE

Don't get used to that felling after awhile it turns to guilt, and if it doesn't then you're not a good person anyway.

They drive back to the office in silence, and as they come up to H&MS 31.

YOUNG JOE

Pete lets give SGT Dailey his due, OK?

PETE

Ugh, OK?

Joe stops the truck they both get out Pete following Joe. Joe has the ammo can and starts to empty all the contents of all the butt kits around the building into the ammo can.

PETE

What are we doing this for?

YOUNG JOE

You'll see, just follow my lead when we get there OK?

Pete nods in acknowledgement. They finish and return to the office and start unloading the sodas.

SGT DAILEY

PFC where is that pneumatic fluid I told you to get for me?

YOUNG JOE

Sgt. Banks said he was all out of pneumatic fluid but that he had some A.S.H. receiver lubricant that would work just

as good. It's in the truck
I'll get it.

Joe walks by Dan and gives him the high sign to follow.
As they get out to the truck, Joe turns to Dan.

YOUNG JOE

When SGT Dailey opens this he
is going to get really pissed,
you think we can pull off that
little trick with the duce and
a half that we did last time?

DAN

I'll be ready when you are!

They both walk back inside and Joe gives the can to Sgt.
Dailey. Its break time so all hands are present.

SGT DAILEY

I specifically said I
wanted....

(he rips opens the can, cigarette butts and ashes go
everywhere)

As he looks himself over and realizes that he is covered in
ash he starts after Joe who has already gone out the door.
Dan is on his way to get the duce and a half.
Joe turns the corner with Sgt. Dailey close behind Joe heads
around the corner of the maintenance building and...bang. The
duce and a half hits him, he bounces off the grill and onto
the ground, the truck stops Dan jumps out and grabs Joe by
the dungaree collar.

DAN

(Looking up at Sgt. Dailey)
What's wrong with you, chasing
your troops through the area
like an idiot?

There is no response from Joe who seems to be lifeless in
Dan's huge hands.

Dan tries not to smile. Dailey who is about to have a shit
fit because he has just cased one of his troops to get hurt,
and looks to be unconscious, turns and runs for the office.
Dan releases Joe who opens one eye to see if Sgt. Dailey is
still there.

DAN

Don't worry he's gone!

YOUNG JOE

Let's get ready for the fireworks!

Sgt. Dailey returns with the TOP to find that Dan and Joe are fueling the truck.

TOP, (more affectionately known as "DUDE" by his peers) an old rugged looking and very stocky built no nonsense Irish decent E-9 who is not interested in being the brunt of anyone's jokes.

TOP

OK, lad-e-row where's the disaster? Don't bring me out of my office for little pea diddle shit like your troops playing games with your head, you got that SARGE?

SGT DAILEY

Yes Top!

Top points at Joe and Dan and motions for them to come to him.

They do as directed without hesitation.

TOP

Don't be scaring my Sgt. He has a ruff job just keeping himself straight let alone you two!
You understand me?

YOUNG JOE and DAN
(In unison)

Yes sir Top!

YOUNG JOE

Just having a little fun Top that's all.

TOP

You have fun on your time not mine, and keep to a less hazardous level, don't play with my trucks.

YOUNG JOE

Yes sir.

DAN

Well that's another bullet
dogged.

YOUNG JOE

Yeah! Now let's get to the
business at hand.
We need to get our crap
together for tonight.
These boys have never seen the
light.

PETE

I've heard talk about it but I
never gone to see it yet.

Joe shakes the last drop off the nozzle and hangs it back on
the tank, as he turns back around he has a wild look in his
eye.

YOUNG JOE

"The Light" is the lantern of
a Confederate soldier who was
on patrol along Land's End
Road one November night in
1861, on watch for Union
soldiers who were expected to
invade St. Helena Island the
sentry's post was Bermuda
Bluff. A Yankee soldier (or
soldiers) sneaks up behind him
and cut off his head with a
long knife, tossing the head
into the waters Port Royal
Sound -- the body was left
ashore to rot. The poor soul
now goes up and down the road
in search of his head,
carrying his old iron lantern.
You guys be ready right after
chow, we leave at 1800
tonight.

Pete and Bob are walking back to the office building to
finish their brake.

Dan looks around to see that there is no one in earshot.

DAN

So what do you want to set up
for tonight?

YOUNG JOE

We don't have to do anything
special; the bunker is great
all on it's own.
But, I thought I'd bring some
fireworks to shake them up a
little.
Just roman candles!

They finish out the day to the chow hall, Dan brings bread
out with him to feed to the seagulls that wait outside
everyday, Joe can't stand the mess they make but he too is
soft hearted and feeds them right along with Dan.

DAN

We have about half a gallon
left, do you think we should
get some beer?

YOUNG JOE

Yeah, let's get a bottle of
Boones Farm too.

DAN

Don't you ever get tired of
pulling that one?

YOUNG JOE

No, I like taking money from
those that are willing to give
it away.

They get back to the barracks and find all the guys are
ready to go, so in the car and off to Frogmore to view the
lights.

YOUNG JOE

I think we need to have a
thanksgiving diner this year,
just us. What do you think?

DAN

I think that would be great,
where are we going to have it?

YOUNG JOE

At the Weapons station duty room, where else. First thing is, we need a Turkey for the diner. I have an idea where we can get one.

DAN

Yeah, we buy one at the commissary!

YOUNG JOE

NO! I have a better idea. Out here people keep chickens and ducks; there must be one place with a turkey in the yard. All you have to do is wait for me with the car running.

DAN

Is there anything you won't try to get for nothing?

YOUNG JOE

Not that I can think of off the top of my head.

The boys in the back seat, are just listening to the radio but Joe pays no attention to it, he starts in with his favorite tune.

YOUNG JOE

"Di, di, did you ever meet my wife? I'd like to have you meet her, she never married me for love all she wants is..., Peter Murphy had a dog a very fine dog was he, he loaned it to his girlfriend just to keep her company. Now all around the house at night that dirty old dog would hunt, run his nose up a ladies cloths, try to smell her..., Come away you dirty dog you make my precious rise, now you better get up old man, it time for another round."

PETE

Where did you ever get the idea for that?

YOUNG JOE

It's an old family poem that
has been handed down for
years.

Joe knows that no one wants to hear him, even if he does
have the best voice within a hundred miles, so he turns on
the radio, Bob Dylan again.

They arrive at the end of the road to the old bunker, it is
pitch black and the only lights are the headlights of the
car and the moon. Dan turns off the headlights and
remarkably the path is still quite distinguishable, luckily
it is a cloudless night and the moon is about $\frac{3}{4}$ full.

DAN

We've got beer for the week
and shine for anyone who wants
to load up with a little
courage first.
I think I'll save my drinking
for later.

PETE

So when do we see the light?

YOUNG JOE

That comes later, first, let's
go down to the post where they
stood watch for the Yanks.

DON

I guess I'm a Yankee? I mean
I'm from ALASKA that's about
as far north as you can get.

DAN

Don't worry Don, I don't hold
it against ya!

They all head down the path in line behind Joe, He
always seems to be in the lead when it comes to exploring or
protesting. Behind Joe are Jake, then Pete, and then Don,
followed lastly by Dan.

They get to the bunker and Joe lights a match at one of
the dark openings in the wall.

YOUNG JOE

I've got a few candles,
anybody want to see inside?

Joe walks inside and the match goes out as though someone had blown it out, he lights another match.

DON
Look at all the graffiti on
the walls!

Everyone follows in with Dan pushing from behind.

DAN
This is cool, I can't believe
we are all in here at one
time, it looks much larger
inside than the outside does.

YOUNG JOE
As long as we are all here, I
can light a candle now and get
the show started.

Joe lights one of the roman candles he brought, it burns as if it were a real candle for about a second then starts to pop off the fireballs in rapid succession, Joe aims them at the walls.
For about a full minute everyone is in a panic then it goes dark again but the shouting remains.

DAN
As long as we are all here, I
guess I can light my candle
now?

ALL
NO!!!!

DON
I can't see a damn thing,
where is the wall?

As everyone stumbles out of the bunker and shake the smoke from their cloths, Joe is already out and having the time of his life watching the others trying to regain their composure.

DAN
I don't know what is funnier,
watching them snort and spit

or watching them scramble in
the bunker!

YOUNG JOE

I think it's all funny. Hey!
You guys ready for the light?

DON

I thought that was the light!

DAN

Of sorts, but there is more to
it than just a few sparklers,
once you see it you'll never
be the same. Joe your pants
are smoking!

Joe looks down to see that a spark from the fireballs had
settled into the cuff of his trousers and has started to
blaze. He reaches down with the other Roman candle and
lights it from his cuff then pats out the cuff with his
hand. Armed with a new candle he aims it toward the opening
of the bunker and lights up the interior all over again.

YOUNG JOE

Come on everyone, this way to
the old tree.

The five of them gather up, get into the car and start back
up the road the way they came. As they near the end of the
road;

YOUNG JOE

There is also a story of a
school bus, full of kids that
died when their bus crashed
into the tree on the corner of
this very intersection. One
night on the way back from a
game and the lights are
supposed to be them searching
for their way home for all
eternity.

DON

Where do you get all this crap?

YOUNG JOE

A little time in the library
and a little time in the bars
talking to the locals, it all
comes down to research.

They get to the corner, park the car just off the side
of the road and wait.

After a few beers and some conversation, mostly Joe telling
tales about the fort that no one else seemed to know about.

Don points down the road to a light that seems to be
sort of moving in slow motion, but it is hard to tell if
it's moving toward them or away from them.

YOUNG JOE

See I told you, have you ever
seen anything like that?
Wait; let's see if it gets
closer.

DON

Are you nuts? I don't want it
to get closer!
We should be getting the hell
out of here right now.

YOUNG JOE

Don't worry Don it only comes
to about 300 yards away and
then it's anybody's guess
where it goes from there.

PETE

Are you sure it will stop
before it gets too close?

YOUNG JOE

I've been out here a dozen
times; it's always the same.

They all just stand there looking at this light for a
moment. It seems to move from left to right then left again
first one light then two then back to one again.

YOUNG JOE

Let's find out what this is
come on!

Joe starts running in the direction of the light.

Just as Joe gets about a hundred yards away, the light just seemed to be gone no one really had an explanation as to where it went.

YOUNG JOE

Have you ever seen anything like that before?

DON

I'm not so sure what I seen now!

YOUNG JOE

(looking at his watch)

That can't be right, I've got 10:30, the lights start around 9:00. That would mean that we have been standing here for an hour and a half. Dan what time do you have?

DAN

(looking at his watch)

I'm not falling for this one I think we just got started late.

Now we all have work to get to in the morning so let's get our butts back to the base.

CUT TO:

INT.

On the way back to base, driving along the dark road, Dan sees a flash of light up the road then all of a sudden a figure along the side of the road, at first he thought it might be a deer, then he realized it was clearly a person. Dan veers to the left to make sure there is enough room for passing whomever it is that's out walking this late at night alone.

As the car is about to pass the individual, Jake tosses a bottle out the window and hits the figure in the head.

YOUNG JOE

STOP! STOP!

Dan didn't see Jake throw the bottle but in his rearview mirror he did see the figure fall to the ground. Dan stops the car off the road and turns around in his seat.

DAN

What happened?

Dan and Joe both get out of the car and go back to see if the man is OK.

DAN

Did you see who did this?

YOUNG JOE

No but I'll bet you a months pay it was Jake.

They get to the figure on the ground and see that it is an old black man, both Dan and Joe look back at the car, no one else has even moved from their seat. Don, Jake and Pete are talking.

PETE

Look man, I'm not about to get on either one of their bad sides and besides that. I like living!

Pete gets out of the back seat on the driver's side and stands along side the car.

DON

I'm with him, you need to tell Dan that you didn't see him until it was too late and that you where just trying to get rid of some of the bottles before we got back to the base.

Dan and Joe are both checking the old man for cuts, they don't find any and no blood seems to be present. The old man is just coming around when Jake walks back to where they are.

JAKE

Are you kidding me, all this over an old NIGGER?

Joe and Dan just look at each other and Dan is about to grab Jake when the old man starts pleading for forgiveness.

YOUNG JOE

Old timer, you just set easy now there's no reason for you to worry we're not going to hurt you. We want to help you.

Please just relax, we are going to get you off the road.

OLD MAN

No sir, I aint hurt, no sir.

DAN

Look at this old man Jake. What do you see?

JAKE

Looks a lot like a NIGGER to me!

Dan connects with a right backhand to Jake's mouth. Jake just about passed out from the force of the blow. He hits the ground and grabs his face at the same time.

DAN

What do you see now? Never mind. I see him riding in your seat so we can get him some help.

JAKE

Bullshit! You're not serious.

Dan motions to Joe to get the old man to the car.

DAN

If I thought it would do you any good, I'd stomp a mud hole in your ass right now. I can see that's not going to work, so here's the deal. He rides in your seat and you set here on the side of the road. Normally I wouldn't leave a MARINE on the side of the road at any time of night, but you're obviously not a marine. So, you think about that the next time someone ask. What do you see?

JAKE

He's just an old fucking NIGGER! Who cares what happens to him?

DAN

Obviously you don't!

Dan turns to walk to the car; Jake grabs his arm. Dan had already expected this so he was ready. A fast block and a good punch to the chin takes Jake off his feet again, this time much more dazed than the first. Dan grabs Jake by the collar and lifts him to his feet, then with an arm around his Dan brings him to the car and puts him in the front passenger seat.

DAN

No matter how much I wanted to, I couldn't just leave him out here. You shift!

YOUNG JOE

I have to ride bitch because of this asshole?

DAN

Make sure he knows how much you dislike it maybe, just maybe he will think twice the next time, if there is a next time.

They get in the car and start for the hospital. They get less than a mile down the road when the old man starts to ask them to let him out of the car.

OLD MAN

Please Capt'n, don't hurt me again.

YOUNG JOE

(While looking at Jake)

You don't have to worry sir!
We are not gong to hurt you!
The people who did hurt you
are already gone. We want to
take you to see a Dr. and make
sure you are not hurt more
than you might know.

The old man is not sure about what is really going to happen but for some reason he seems to believe what this young man is telling him.

DAN

Just relax sir, nobody else is going to hurt you while you are with us.

Don and Pete are just sitting in silence; not sure what to think of the situation, one thing is for sure they will not be throwing any bottles out the window.

YOUNG JOE

(Just loud enough for Dan to hear)

Let's take him to the local police station and hand him over to them.

By the time we take him to the hospital, they check him out and we bring him back here, then return to the base it will be time for us to go to work.

DAN

You're always thinking aren't you! What about Jake, we going to turn him over too?

YOUNG JOE

For now, I don't know!

JAKE

I'm right here, would you mind not talking about me as if I'm not!

DAN

Shut up! Or you won't be here. The only reason you're not standing back there on the road by yourself is you're a fellow Marine but your recent actions have jeopardized that as well, so just shut up!

Dan looks in the rearview mirror at the old man, who seems to be calm but still wary of the situation.

DAN

OK! There is a local station just up the road. We can take him there! Just what are we

going to tell them without getting all of our asses in a sling?

YOUNG JOE

I'm thinking! I'll have something by the time we get there, I hope!

As they come up to the police station Joe looks at Jake.

YOUNG JOE

You better remember this the next time, on second thought, there had better not be a next time!

YOUNG JOE

(Turning back to Dan)
Just pull up past the door, I'll get the old man in and turn him over to them.

YOUNG JOE

(Pointing down the street)
I'll meet you at the laundry mat!

JAKE

What are you going to tell them?

DAN

I told you to shut up, or would you like to be the one who takes him in?

Jake gets out to let Joe out; Joe helps the old man out of the back. Jake starts to get back into the front seat when Dan leans over, grabs the door handle and pulls it closed.

DAN

I don't think so!

Jake gets in the back seat with Don and Pete, as the car pulls away Joe is helping the old man up the stairs.

Inside the station there are two officers, one sitting behind the desk, the other just coming up the hall with a coke in his hand.

Joe pushes through the door with his elbow while helping the old man in to sit down in a chair near the door.

YOUNG JOE

Officer, this gentleman needs some help!

1st Officer

(Behind the desk)

What seems to be the trouble?

2nd Officer

Hey, that's Uncle Lincoln! What happened?

YOUNG JOE

I'm not really sure sir! We found him on the side of the road.

2nd Officer

We? All I see is you!

YOUNG JOE

My friends and I, we thought he might be hurt or worse so we stopped to check.

2nd Officer

Where are these friends of yours now?

YOUNG JOE

Excuse me, I brought this gentleman in to get him some help!

1st Officer

OK Paul, you see to Uncle Lincoln is it? I'll talk to our Good Samaritan here. Now, let's here what happened.

YOUNG JOE

We were on our way back to the base, we saw a heap on the side of the road and decided

to stop and see what it was,
and here we are.

1st Officer
So where are your friends now?

YOUNG JOE
Down the road getting sodas.

Just as the officer was about to ask another question,
Dan walks in the door with sodas and hands one to Joe. He
nods in the direction of the 2nd officer and the old man.

DAN
Is the old man OK?

2nd Officer
He's going to be fine!

The 1st Officer is pondering the situation and decides
that these boys are being honest. He pats Dan on the
shoulder and reaches out to Joe to shake his hand.

1st Officer
(Shaking Joe's hand)
Thanks to you boys he won't
have to walk home with a
headache. Officer Jennings
will take him. You boys have a
good night.

DAN
Goodbye old timer, you be
careful walking the roads at
night.

2nd Officer
Thanks gentlemen, have a good
evening!

YOUNG JOE
No problem sir, glade to help!

Dan and Joe walk out the door, down the steps and half
way to the laundry before they speak.

DAN
Don't ever invite Jake to tag
along with us again!

YOUNG JOE

Oh don't worry, I was already
sorry he came this time,
before the old man.

No one says a word as Dan and Joe approach.

DAN

(Looking straight at Jake)
You ever pull a stunt like
that again and I'll turn you
over to the cops.
If not for Joe I might have
turned you over to them
tonight.

Dan turns to walk to the car, Jake starts to open his mouth
when Joe puts a hand on his shoulder and says.

YOUNG JOE

You want to end up in a cell
tonight? Just utter a sound.
That's all he's waiting for,
you say one more word and
there won't be a damn thing
I'll be able to do to keep him
off of you.

They all get in the car and head for base.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. DAY, NAVADA ROADSIDE MILPOST 271

Joe standing next to his bike when a young black man pulls
up just behind him.

Joe still thinking about that night in South Carolina so
long ago and the one thing that Dan always said; "Always
consider man as good until he proves different"...

YOUNG MAN

Is there anything I can do to
help you sir

OLD JOE

Thanks son, but I'm just taking a rest.

Joe looks down at the gas tank, 9 packs in the carton.

YOUNG MAN
(Looking at the open carton)

OK! I just thought I'd check, being out here so far from everything, you never know.

OLD JOE
Thanks young fella, it's good to know that there are still young men in this world who can find the time to check on others who might be in need.

YOUNG MAN
No problem old timer. That's a nice bike you got there, who makes this?

OLD JOE
I built it myself many years ago, maybe before you where even born.

YOUNG MAN
I guess so; it sure looks like nothing on the roads these days. I don't see any solar panel so is it Hydrogen cell or compressed air driven?

OLD JOE
Guess again... Gas, I know it's illegal to operate gas engines since the mid 30's but trust me I won't be going too far.

YOUNG MAN
Where do you even get gas from these days?

OLD JOE
Like most other things the liberals have gotten outlawed in this country, you hoard

them away and never let anyone know but I'm using corn squeeze-ins, and like I said, I'm not going far.

YOUNG MAN

You're just an old rebel aren't you?

OLD JOE

Well I guess I've been called worse but that will do for now.
So what line of work are you in?

YOUNG MAN

I'm in aerospace design.

OLD JOE

Maybe you can tell me. What ever happened to the Harrier Jet?

YOUNG MAN

The Harrier became obsolescent when the Osprey was introduced; they just didn't want to let them go. There is one squadron of them still on Okinawa, so I'm told.

OLD JOE

Got some hot coffee if you want some.

YOUNG MAN

Thanks Old timer, but I need to get myself down the road. You be careful out here at night.

OLD JOE

Careful is something I never was much good at, although I plan to be off the road when night comes around. I got plenty of space out here to choose from.

As he points a thumb over his shoulder to the open desert behind him.

YOUNG MAN

OK! You take care.

Joe gets a look at the young mans plates as he takes off, (South Carolina).

OLD JOE

(talking to himself)

Do you think? No that would be too strange.

Joe examines the road in both directions to see what might be coming next, nothing in either direction, and the road is visible for many miles. So he gets to the task of making a campsite ready.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. DAY,

Long stretch of straight road on the far side of the flight line from the ammo dump.

Joe in the old panel van and Dan in the crew cab both waiting for a HARRIER to come in and drown out the noise of the engines so they won't be noticed while they race toward the finish.

Joe points to the far end of the road. The noise level is just starting to change.

A harrier jet is just coming over the tree line at the end of the runway.

DAN

Here he comes, get
ready!,,,,,,,,,,,,, get set!
,,,,,,,,,,,,,GO!

They take off almost simultaneously, the crew cab is a little faster but Joe has a plan to win at any cost. As they both come into the turn, Joe on the inside and Dan on the outside, Dan starts to pull away as he has the stronger of the two heaps, Joe sees that Dan is gaining the lead and decides to take a chance. He drops into second turns off the road to the inside and guns it across the brush toward the finish. Dan is still on the road and makes the final turn on

his way to the finish when he sees Joe in the brush slinging mud and water everywhere.

It's close but Joe slides up on the road just a half a length in front of Dan and glides to the finish as Dan brakes and slides to a stop alongside.

Both are laughing at the sheer thrill of the race when, the TOP appears at the corner in his car.

They wave and Joe pulls around Dan to allow the TOP to make his turn onto the flight line road.

As Joe comes in line with Top's window.

TOP

What was that all about lad-e-row?

YOUNG JOE

(hesitates for a second)

Uh? Oh that! I was just telling the PFC that his right rear turn signal was out sir.

TOP

I see! Next time it can wait till you get to the shop don't you think?

YOUNG JOE

Yes Sir TOP!

With his right arm extended and giving the sign for turn signal and then a thumbs down in hopes that Dan would see this and get the message.

CUT TO:

Joe drives on up the road as he looks in the rearview he sees the TOP stopped Dan too.

TOP

How you doing lad-e-row?

DAN

Fine TOP how are you doing?
Had occasion to chew any young Lt. ass lately?

TOP

Not lately but the days not
over yet!
Make sure you get that
taillight fixed, OK?

DAN

Huh? Oh you mean the turn
signal. Sure thing TOP!

TOP waves and pulls off, Dan turns and heads off up the road
to catch up to Joe.

By the time Dan gets to the yard Joe is already washing the
mud off the panel van with a garden hose.

DAN

"Every shortcut has its
benefits and its penalties".
You must always consider them
to see which one outweighs the
other.

YOUNG JOE

You are truly a philosophical
wonder, I don't care how you
look at it I still won that
race.
(under his breath)
I think!

Dan turns and walks his victory walk toward the break room,
it's like the Pink Panther cartoon character, when he knows
he is right and no one can say anything else, it would only
be fruitless.

Joe turns the water off and heads in to the break room
behind Dan.

DAN

You get the tanks topped off
Joe?

YOUNG JOE

I did, and I washed the
windshields too.

Joe starts down the hall to the head when Bob jumps up to
follow him.

BOB

Where ya going?

YOUNG JOE

I'm going to take a shit, you want to come and watch me blow it out my ass?

BOB

There was no call for that, I just thought I might be able to learn from you.

YOUNG JOE

Think again asshole, I don't need any apprentice. You got that?

BOB

Sure, sure I got it.

Bob turns and walks back to the table and sits down.

It is Friday, and everyone is getting ready for the softball game and beer. Joe and Dan are just waiting for the Capt. to turn his back for five minutes; they want to get on the road for another weekend at Dan's parents near Asheville, NC. Dan is getting ready to start his week of guard duty on Monday and Joe is preparing for a week in ST. Louis to see some old friends after 2 years.

DAN

Hope the Capt. gets a few beers down soon, I want to get started home.

Joe is tossing softball up in the air and catching it himself.

YOUNG JOE

You and me both. Nothing like a good start to the softball game to get the beer flowing. Joe motions out to the field where Pete and Bob are just standing around.

YOUNG JOE

Hey, you two just going to stand there, you need a ball to get things going. Joe tosses the ball to Pete.

YOUNG JOE

That should get things going soon, I hope!

DAN

Lets start out in say fifteen minutes?

YOUNG JOE

You got it.

They both turn and walk in different directions so they don't bring attention to themselves. Dan had already parked the car down the road at the H&MS parking lot. Once the game gets started no one will ever know they where gone.

SGT. DAILEY

Let's go men out on the field and choose up sides.

YOUNG

JOE

Now what do you mean choose sides it's always you leaders against us peons, why the change?

SGT. DAILEY

It's been noted that some peons are missing from some of the games.

YOUNG JOE

Well those sneaky little shits, what could possibly be more important than a bunch of men running around in circles fondling balls and playing with their bats. Excuse me but I need to get a beer!

Joe heads for the sidelines and the beer cooler.

DAN

You hear the news; they're choosing teams.

YOUNG JOE

Yeah! If we just drink our beer and ignore them when they call our names, we can still leave.

I mean, what are they going to do? Make us catch the ball, I don't think so.

Sides are chosen and Dan and Joe are on their way, then Joe remembers he has to turn in his riffle from morning drill practice before they leave.

YOUNG JOE

I need to stop by the armory for a few minutes.

DAN

When are you going to get out of that drill assignment?

YOUNG JOE

When the TOP takes me off his shit list I guess.

They look at each other.

BOTH

Never!

They arrive at the armory and Joe gets out and takes his riffle from the trunk.

YOUNG JOE

This will just take a moment and we're on our way.

Joe goes inside and turns in his riffle. On the way back to the car a young marine stops him.

YOUNG MARINE

Interested in buying a rifle?
Joe looks at him.

YOUNG JOE

I have one, thanks anyway.

Joe heads back to the car.

DAN

What'd slim want?

Referring to the young marine.

YOUNG JOE

He ask if I wanted to buy a
riffle.

DAN

Wonder what kind!

Dan backs out and turns the car in the direction of the
young marine. He gets along side him.

DAN

What kind of riffle are you selling?

Young Marine

M14!

DAN

How much?

Young Marine

\$400

DAN

Get serious, you want to sell
a hot M14 for \$400? You don't
really expect to sell it, do
you?

Young Marine

I never said it was hot.

DAN

I never said I was in the
market, just asking the price
that's all. Have a nice
weekend!

Dan waves back at the Young Marine as they drive away.

JOE

I thought you where
interested, what happened?

DAN

I just wanted to see what he was up to. Didn't you think it a little strange that he would be asking total strangers and in broad daylight?

JOE

Well the thought never occurred to me actually.

DAN

Just last week I heard a couple of Marines talking about a 14 that came up missing from the armory. The poor schmuck that it belonged to must be going nuts. Who knows, maybe that was him trying to get a line on who took his.

JOE

Or NIS trying to get a line on who might be in the market and then chasing them down to investigate them.

DAN

"Always be suspicious, just don't let it turn into paranoia."

Car driving out the gate.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAY

Dan and Joe pulling into the drive at Dan's girlfriends, Heather comes out and plants a big kiss on Dan.

HEATHER

Are you going to come in?

DAN

Later babe, we have an errand to run first, I'll see you around 7pm.

HEATHER

Just so you know, I'll be
right here.

Dan backs out of the drive and pulls away.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR

JOE

You don't deserve that girl.
You are always making her
wait!

DAN

If you don't make them wait
now and then, they begin to
think they have you right
where they want you, when that
happens your freedom is no
more.

They drive out of town and up into an old logging road,
about 8 mile into the woods there is shack that seems to be
deserted. Dan flashes the headlights and two men step out,
each from behind a tree that didn't seem big enough to hide
a squirrel, let alone them.

JOE

Are you going to make a run
this weekend?

DAN

No, but I have to tell them
that so they won't be
expecting us to show, and
don't stare at them.

JOE

You told me that last time,
What is it with the starring?

DAN

It makes 'em nervous. They
think people who stare at them
are revenuers.

Dan gets out of the car and walks over to the two men. Joe
sits listening to the radio and trying not to stare.

Joe just listens to the radio and drums on the dash to the beat of the music.

DAN

You done good, they think
you're some kind of hillbilly
the way you beat on the dash.

JOE

Hell I am a hillbilly, just
not from these hills that's
all.

They turn around and head back to Dan's parents. Joe is ready to get on the road home but first he wants to see Dan's sister, she has a thing for Joe but he has his eyes set on a little Philippine girl in Savannah GA. Where they spend most of their off duty time during the week.

DAN

You're going to talk to Brenda
this time aren't you?

JOE

Yes! I was going to talk to
her last time but you wanted
to get the car loaded for the
run.

DAN

This time you don't have that
excuse. Don't hurt my sister,
I'll slap a knot on your head.

They pull into the yard and the whole family comes out to meet them, not what you might expect to see after the meeting with the local brew masters. They make a good-looking family. Dad, Mom, Sister, and the three little brothers, Steve, Matthew and Michael. Michael being the youngest and Dan being his idol. Makes Joe wish he had little brothers, but Dan's family accepted Joe just like their own.

DAD

Welcome home boys, good you
could make it again.

MOM

Come on in, we got supper on
the table.

After a good meal everyone sits and has a cup of coffee.

DAN

I'm going to Heather's, you ok here?

JOE

Your sister wants to go to the movies, is that OK with you?

DAN

You remember what I said?

JOE

Yes, and I plan to take care of that right away.

Dan turns and walks out the door.

DAN

Meet me at the Dairy Queen Drive In at 9:30.

BRENDA

It's going to be a long movie.

DAN

I know how long it's going to be, we are seeing the same movie.

Dan turns and walks out the door. Brenda and Joe look at each other for a moment and then they also get up and walk out the door, only pausing long enough to say goodnight to Mom and Dad.

MOM

Goodnight, you two behave yourselves.

Dad just waves.

They get in the family car and start down the road, they can see Dan's tail lights on the road ahead of them.

CUT TO:

EXT. DRIVE-IN

Brenda and Joe in the car paying admission then parking in a space.

JOE

Brenda.

Brenda

Yes.

JOE

Uh! You want anything from
the snack bar?
I'm going for popcorn and
soda.

Brenda

Popcorn and soda should be
just fine.

Joe takes off for the snack bar and as soon as he does
Brenda's old boyfriend Buddy comes up to talk to her.

Buddy

Brenda, I need to talk to you!

Brenda

Buddy, I don't know what you
think we need to talk about.

Buddy

Sure you do, we need to talk
about us. Who is that guy
you're with?

Brenda

He is a friend of my brothers,
why?

Buddy

It doesn't matter, what I mean
to say is I was wrong and I
want you back.
I don't care what it takes,
even if I have to go through
this new guy! I have missed
you and I need you.

Brenda looks out through the window at him.

BRENDA

I'll have to think about it,
now you go away he will be
back soon.

If I decide to get back with
you I'll let you know at
school or we will meet
somewhere else. Now go on,
get.

Buddy takes off with a discouraged look on his face.

Joe returns with the snacks.

JOE

One of your many Bows come to
court you?

BRENDA

(smiling)

Just a friend looking for
information.

Joe is careful not to push it any further; he has an idea that she is no longer interested in him like he thought. Now that he feels that she has a boyfriend that she could be getting back together with, he is much more comfortable just talking to her.

JOE

So, have you seen the previews
of this?
I understand it is a really
good movie.

BRENDA

I haven't seen the preview but
I heard some friends talking.
What kind of a name is MUSH
for a movie anyway?

JOE

It's not MUSH, it's "MASH"
M*A*S*H 4077th

The music starts and the movie begins.

Brenda and Joe watch the movie, sitting close enough that Joe could put his arm around her but he is still waiting for that right moment to come around when he can tell her that they are not a couple.

She too is trying to figure out what she will say to him about her decision to get back together with her boyfriend.

JOE

Brenda, you know I think of your brother as if he were my own blood, and for that reason I think it only fair that I tell you.

BRENDA

You think you will be friends with Dan for a long time.

JOE

Ah! What do you mean, will we be friends for a long time.

BRENDA

I mean will you be friends after you move to another base.

JOE

I don't know! I hope so, of course we will be friends as long as we are in the same unit or even the same base but friendships fail over time and distance, we might keep in touch for awhile but sooner or later we will forget all about one another. Time takes care of us that way, or we might go crazy just trying to keep up with all our friends.

Joe did not really believe what he was saying to be true but he thought it might be better for Brenda if she thought he didn't really care.

BRENDA

I'm not sure that is true, I think you really do care about Dan like your own brother. That's why I have to tell you

this; I care about you as much as I do about Dan and for that reason you need to know that we can only be brother and sister.
Just like Dan and I are.

She looks up at Joe, puts her right hand on his left cheek and kisses him on the other. A sister to brother kiss.

BRENDA

I love you like a brother, and I always will.

Joe is speechless, he can't even move but he was just so thankful that she was letting him of like this, that is that he didn't have to hurt her.

JOE

I love you too, like a sister that is.

Joe put his arm around her to keep her warm. They sit silently through the remainder of the movie.

BRENDA

What time did Dan say to meet him?

JOE

9:30 at the Dairy Queen, Why?

BRENDA

It is only 8:00 now what will we do until 9:30?

JOE

Well, you can drop me there and then go home.
Or, you're big girl you can go do whatever you want.

BRENDA

Are you sure you don't mind?

JOE

I'm sure.

CUT TO:

EXT. NIGHT, OUTSIDE THE DAIRY QUEEN

Joe gets out of the care and Brenda slides into the driver's seat.

JOE

Thanks for keeping me company
through the movie.

BRENDA

You're welcome, thanks for
being a big brother.

Brenda waves as she drives away.

JOE

Stay out of trouble... go home
soon.

Joe is new to this part of town, not sure what to think of the crowd hanging around the Dairy Queen, but much like the popular gathering point in his own home town. There are several HOT CARS and a lot of HOT CHICKS, and just like back home there are guys looking to try and be a big shot in front of their girls.

Joe walks past a group of boys about his own age and inside to the counter and orders a cherry-coke. He sits quietly without incident until Dan arrives.

DAN

Where is Brenda?

JOE

Oh! She went home, I hope.

DAN

Did you have that talk with
her like I ask you?

JOE

Yes, as a matter of fact she
had more of a talk with me but
we still came to the same
conclusion.

DAN

OK! Let's go.

JOE

Where are we going?

DAN

To get a sample of our next
run.

CUT TO:

EXT. NIGHT,

Somewhere in the Blue Ridge Mountains, outside of a little
country store.

Dan comes out with a brown paper bag. He gets in sits the
bag on the floor next to Joe's feet, they drive away.

JOE

So this is our next load when
I come back from leave?

Joe looks into the bag.

JOE

It's Budweiser!

DAN

This is our offering to the
suppliers of our next load
when you come back from leave.
What can I say they like
Budweiser, but only for
starters.

They pull up to a logging road that has a gate blocking the
way.

JOE

You want me to get that?

DAN

No! Just wait a minute.

He flashes his lights a couple of times. Dan turns the
lights off and they sit there for a few minutes. Just as Joe
is about to speak a crusty old man steps into the road just
on the other side of the gate. Dan sticks his head out the
window.

DAN

Hey old timer, are the snips
running this side of the
mountain this late in the
season?

OLD TIMER

Just up the road about 500 yards.

JOE

What happen with the other bunch you talked to earlier?

DAN

Their going to be relocating around the time we will be looking to buy.

JOE

So, getting a new contact before hand is why we are here?

DAN

You sure do catch on quick!

They stop around the 500-yard mark as the old timer suggested. Dan gets out and tells Joe to stay put. Dan walks about 30 feet forward of the car like he is looking for something, then suddenly he just stops.

Then he starts making hand gestures and takes something from his pocket.

He moves to the left side of the road and reaches down behind a tree and comes up with a half-gallon plastic milk container. He returns to the car sets the paper bag with the beer on the ground and before Joe can say anything they are nearly half way back down the road in reverse.

JOE

I'm not sure these guys are the friendly kind.

DAN

Non of them are the friendly kind, it just happens that some are less friendly than others. Just remember that you should never come out here without me.

JOE

You don't have to worry about that brother.

They drive for a few miles and finally stop in a turn out on the road next to the river.

DAN

OK! Let's have a taste of this shine.

JOE

Hope it's as good as the last batch..., we could have sold 9 times what we had with us.

They each take a sip of the shine and look at each other, their eyes tearing up and holding their breath while swallowing, then each shaking their head and fanning their mouth, trying to get the burning to stop.

DAN

(rasped voice)
Smooooth!

JOE

(barely able to talk)
Nice!
Do you think we will live through the sample?

DAN

(less raspy)
Not to worry.

They start for home knowing if they drink any more now they might never make it to the house. By the time they get home the shine is nearly half gone and they are both nearly passed out. They stumble to the front porch and stop.

DAN

(with a finger pressed haphazardly to his lips)
Shush, don't want to wake the family.

They quietly make their way to the front door and through the living room. Down the hall and to the stairs leading to the second floor. Dan looks up the stairs with an expression of dread. He has navigated these stairs many times but very few times when inebriated. Dan starts up quickly at first then slower and slower.

DAN

Uh Oh!

JOE

(seeing that Dan has lost his balance)
This is gonna hurt!

Dan's feet got ahead of his body and he is falling back down the stairs. Joe puts his hands up to block him and try to catch him but Dan's 235, 6'6" frame is just too much without being prepared.

Dan falls back, hits Joe and they both tumble down the remaining stairs to the bottom.

DAN

(again with fingers pressed to his lips)
Shush, don't want to wake the family.

DAD

Too late for that now! You boys OK?

JOE

Yes sir, sorry to wake you.

DAN

Good night Dad.

They make their way up the stairs finally and Dan goes into his old room, Joe crashes on a couch at the top of the stairs.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEXT DAY, ASHEVILLE BUS STATION

DAN

(hand on Joe's shoulder)
You get back, let me know.

JOE

You bet, Thanks.

CUT TO:

INT. BUS, PASSENGERS GETTING SETTELED

Joe takes a window seat and gives Dan a two finger salute.
The bus leaves.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEXT NIGHT, STATION WEAPONS AMMO STORAGE BUNKERS

Dan performing his first of hourly physical checks of locks and seals on small arms bunkers to ensure all is secure, pulls on a seal and it comes off in his hand, looking up to make note of the bunker #2 as realizes that this is where 7.62 ammo is stored.

CUT TO:

(Dan in thought of)

INT. OFFICE/INVENTORY ROOM

Door to issue office open, key locker closed but the key is hanging in the lock.

CUT TO:

EXT. NIGHT AMMO STORAGE BUNKERS

Dan placing the seal onto the locked door properly this time. He pulls to insure that it is correctly attached.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUS STATION

JOE GETTING OFF THE BUS

Dan pulls around the corner just as Joe starts to pick up a pay phone.

DAN

Need a ride MARINE?

JOE

Thanks, I was just going to call my deadbeat friend and ask him to come get me.

DAN

Well this ain't much but I
LIKE IT!

JOE

So, how's things?

DAN

Well guard duty was about the same as always. When we head for the hills this weekend we will have a little extra-added company.

JOE

Taking someone else home for the weekend?

DAN

Something like that. You'll see when the time comes.

CUT TO:

INT. DAN'S CAR

They ride back to the base.

DAN

So, was it worth the trip?

JOE

I saw a few people I didn't know where still around, mostly everyone has gone. I guess it's true!

DAN

What's true?

JOE

You can never really go HOME!

CUT TO:

INT. BARRICKS

Joe returning from a shower, puts his things away and starts getting dressed.

DAN

Let's go to the club for a steak dinner.

JOE

You know, I think the club gets their steaks from the Dumpster out behind chow hall.

DAN

They are a little tuff aren't they!

JOE

A little tuff, if they where any more tuff they would be souls on your boots.

The enlisted club is a little slow, even for a Thursday night Joe stops someone he knows and Dan continues to the bar and orders four beers, Joe catches up to late to stop him.

JOE

I was just talking to a guy from supply, he says there is a seafood special the Club over on the Navy annex. They down their beers and head for the Navy Club.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR

Joe starts out with his did di

JOE

"Di, di, did you ever meet my wife? I'd like to have you meet her, she never married me for love all she wants is..., Peter Murphy had a dog a very fine dog was he, he loaned it to his girlfriend just to keep her company. Now all around the house at night that dirty old dog would hunt, run his nose up a ladies cloths, try to smell her..., Come away you naughty dog you make my precious rise, now you better get up old man, it time for another round."

DAN
(reaching for the radio)
I wish you could sing, then I
wouldn't need this damn radio.

JOE
Hey, I need to take piss!

DAN
Hold it till we get out of
town.

JOE
I don't think I'll be able.
I've been holding it for an
hour already.

Dan checks the streets to see if there is anyone around.

DAN
(as he pulls to the curb)
OK! Make it quick.

Joe takes off for a telephone pole; he is already close to being wiped out because he has not eaten anything yet. First thing, he does when he gets there is grab the pole to try and steady himself and keep from falling over. He unzips his pants and starts relieving himself on the pole. No sooner than he has finished, a cop car pulls up beside Dan.

OFFICER
You boys OK?

DAN
Yes sir! My friend is feeling
a little sick, just got off a
long bus ride.

OFFICER
Get moving along soon OK?

DAN
No problem officer here he
comes now.

Both officers look, they see Joe walking in the direction of the car.

They both wave to Dan and drive off.

JOE

Friends of yours.

DAN

With you around it wouldn't hurt to have some friends on the force, but I don't know those two.

JOE

Are you trying to tell me that I get you into trouble?

DAN

I'm just saying that you have a knack for being in the right place at the wrong time, but that's why I like being around you, there's never a dull moment!

JOE

Well isn't that just sweet, you really like me!

They drive on to the NAVY club where they get out of the car and make their way to the entrance.

JOE

Looks like we are just in time!
(he motions in the direction of driveway)
Three cars pull in, loaded to the gills with sailors.

DAN

Hope this don't get out of hand!

They make their way in and find a seat, order their food and enjoy the atmosphere.

JOE

We should come here more often; these sailors are a much friendlier bunch.

DAN

Maybe it's because they are
being watched closer

Dan nods toward the door and over at the bar Joe spots the
SP's.

JOE

Well I guess that explains
most of it, but I still think
it's a nicer place.

They continue their meal and depart. Then down the road to
the drive-in movies.

CUT TO:

EXT. DRIVE-IN

M.A.S.H. is playing again, and they thought it would be a
good movie to test the new brew on and it's just worth
watching over and over again.

DAN

I don't think I'll ever get
tired of watching this flick.
Don't ask me why, I think it's
the pranks they pull on each
other that keep me interested.
Reminds me of your
shenanigans.

JOE

(a surprised expression
on his face and his hand on
his heart)
ME? I can't believe you would
suggest for one moment that
HAWKEYE or TRAPER are anywhere
near my level.

They find a parking spot and get out of the car.

Dan opens the trunk and Joe reaches in.

JOE

"I forgot all about this the
last time we where out".

He holds up a bottle of Boones Farm Strawberry wine.

JOE

"Do you think there is a
sucker in the house tonight"?

DAN

There always is.

Dan grabs his last pint of shine and closes the trunk. They walk down to the front row of cars and look around for a good spot to sit.

DAN

Why is it that everyone thinks
they can find their true love
at a drive-in movie.

JOE

I don't know but its great for
sales and suckers for the
game.

DAN

What ever made you decide to
drink a bottle of that stuff
to begin with?

JOE

Pure boredom I guess, for some
reason, one night I had
nothing else to do. Just
decided to see how fast I
could down a bottle. Ever
since it's been a money maker.

Dan nudging Joe.

DAN

Hey, sweet thing like to set
with someone through the
movie?

JOE

How much have you had to drink
already?

DAN

What?

JOE

Take a good look at her. Are you sure you want that sitting with us?

DAN

Not us, YOU!

JOE

Whoa, big man. If you want to go on a NAG hunt that's fine but at least ask me if I'm interested before you get started.

DAN

I have a girl, I just thought since you let Brenda off the hook you might be in the market.

JOE

Have a little sympathy will ya'. She might be someone's sister too.

The movie starts; Dan and Joe drink some shine and enjoy the film. All around them are groups of girls and guys all there for the same thing.

CUT TO:

EXT. DRIVE-IN

As the previews start, a couple of boys approach Dan and JOE.

First BOY

I'm told you have shine for sale.

DAN

I think you have me confused with someone else.

Second BOY

Scuttle Butt has it, you could help us.

DAN

What are you looking for?

Second BOY

At least a pint.

DAN

I tell you what, you go talk to my friend and I'll talk to your buddy here and see if we can figure something out.

Joe and the second guy walk away.

First BOY

How much?

DAN

Fifteen.

First BOY

I'll take one.

DAN

We're dry right now. Give me your # and I'll call you.

First BOY

Is there any deposit required?

DAN

NO! You pay when you get the goods.

Dan signals to Joe to come back.

Second BOY

That bottle of Boones Farm,
You drink that stuff?

JOE

That's just for starters.

Second BOY

What do you mean?

JOE

I drink this before starting anything else.

Second BOY
Must take you all night to get to the good stuff.

JOE
Just takes a minute, it clears my throat for the rest of the night.

Second BOY
A minute? You saying you drink that whole bottle in a minute.

JOE
Or less!

First BOY
I've got to see this. Go ahead lets see you drink that in a minute or less.

JOE
Well, I'm not exactly ready to start drinking yet.

First BOY
Yeah, Yeah, I thought so. All smoke and no fire. Talk a big show don't ya'?

JOE
Well I guess you got me, but it would be a shame For it to go to waste like that.

Second BOY
Here is the # just leave a message with the duty NCO.

First BOY
So, let's say \$10 to down the whole thing in a minute or less?

JOE

I don't know. I'm still thinking.

First BOY

I guess you're just not all you said are you.
Come on, 10 bucks and I say go!

JOE

I don't know about you saying go. Let me see, time starts when I put the bottle to my mouth.

First BOY

I thought so, you can't do it can ya'? OK! How about \$20 and we say go.

Joe gives Dan a nod.

JOE

OK, but just give me a second to get ready.

Joe just gets the cap off the bottle,

Second BOY

GO!

Joe puts the bottle to his mouth swallows twice, he struggles a little, bubbles rise in the bottle but nothing seems to happen, the bottle is still full he struggles a little more swallows again then almost instantly the bottle is half empty. Joe swallows again and another third is gone then again and another instant drop in the contents then he swallows one last time and it's all gone.

JOE

TIME!

DAN

I got 46 seconds, anyone got something different?

First BOY

It's a trick, how in the hell
can anyone swallow that much
booze so fast.

JOE
No trick, just slick.

The movie starts and everyone settles down to watch.

DAN
You OK!

JOE
OH ya'! I'm always OK with
making a fast \$20.

DAN
I still can't get over how you
do that.

JOE
Have you ever tasted this
stuff? It's like drinking
strawberry flavored water.
Anyone who has never tasted it
thinks it is just like any
other wine. That's when they
think they got you beat. The
ones who have tasted it think
it sucks and wouldn't dream of
consuming a whole bottle let
alone in less than a minute,
so they think they got you
beat too.
Either way I can't loose.

DAN
It does make for cheep
entertainment, not to mention
the extra bucks.

They settle back and watch the movie while sipping on the
shine, cap full at a time.
The movie ends and they make their way back to the car. When
they get to the car Don is waiting.

DON
Hey guys, can I get a ride
back to the barracks with you?

DAN

Sure, (a thumb to the back seat)

JOE

Are you OK, where's your bike?

DON

Yeah! I'm fine just had a little more to drink than I planed on, so I'll get the bike tomorrow.

JOE

Did you come out here by yourself?

DAN

Hey, you writing a book?

JOE

Just a question!

DAN

Some things are private, if he wants us to know he'll tell us.
Get in the car!

CUT TO:

EXT. NIGHT, BARRACKS

Don thanks Dan for the ride and goes to his cubical, it's 10:00 PM taps are just playing, Dan and Joe share a cubical with two other ordies. On the way to their cubical Joe decides he is hungry and stops at the soup machine to get some beef stew. Dan continues on to the cube. All is quite and he settles down to get some sleep. Joe has got his soup and tosses it back and forth from hand to hand to try to cool it off before opening it, he pops the lid and loses his grip on the can, and it falls to the floor landing open side down. Joe picks up the can and most of the contents remain on the floor.

JOE

"Damn it"

Pissed that he just lost 50c and too drunk to care about a little dirt he sits down and proceeds to eat from the

steaming heap. Just then the duty NCO comes down the stairs from making his rounds.

DUTY NCO
What the Hell? Oh man that's
grouse!

Joe looks up to see the Duty cover his mouth and run away.

JOE
Not bad, needs a little pepper
though!

He realizes what the Duty NCO must be thinking and he starts to explain what happen but then it makes him smile, so he makes short work of the soup, gets some paper towels from the head and cleans up the remaining mess. Then heads for the cubical.

JOE
Hey Dan, you won't believe
what just happened.

Dan is already asleep, in the top bunk next to the window, still fully dressed. Joe turns out the light and gets into his top bunk closest to the door to the hallway.

Joe reaches on top of his wall locker to check that the broom handle he placed there is still within reach. It is, he turns on his side and goes to sleep. Dan turns and moans then is quiet again. Joe goes to sleep.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT, SQUAD BAY

DAN
Uh oh!

Dan jumped from his bunk and landed off balance, holding onto the wall locker to try and keep from falling, but he weighs more than the wall locker and it fails to keep him from going over.

As luck would have it the wall locker was at an angle to the bunks and was stopped from making it way to the floor. Dan looks around the room to see if he woke anyone up. All still asleep. He makes his way to the head and splashes some water on his face.

Looking in the mirror and tugging at the bottom of his eyes with both hands to check the red.
He shakes his head a little and heads back to his bunk, leaving the wall locker in its position still leaning against the bunk.

INT. DAWN, NEXT DAY

DUTY NCO

Get-up, Get-up, Get out of the rack.

Joe, in a single motion instantly grabs the broom handle and swings it in the direction of the door over the divider to the hallway. It hits the edge of the door and the Duty NCO retreats back out the door.
Joe turns back to replace the broom stick to the top of his wall locker and sees Dan's mess.

JOE

What happen over there?

DAN

(up and getting ready for a shower)
I think I had too much shine last night.

JOE

You did put away a good share of it, but that's no reason to take it out on your wall locker.

DAN

Well when I got in the rack last night I thought I'd be fine so I tried to go to sleep. Laying on my back was comfortable until it started to burn, so I turned onto my side, that was better, then after a few minutes it started to burn so I tried the other side, the same thing after a few minutes. Then the last

resort, I tried sleeping on my stomach but the same thing, so it was pretty much like that all night.

They get their things together and head for breakfast.

CUT TO:

INT. DAN'S CAR

DAN

I just finished my 2 weeks of guard duty; I'm glad it's over with for another 4 months.

JOE

So what can we do to get out of here early today?..... I got it!

After lunch we ride back in the truck, then we go on the afternoon admin run and take Pete with us. We grab the car and Pete drives the truck back. We can take off nobody will even know we are gone. They only look for cars leaving the lot. As long as the Capt. is happy no one really cares.

DAN

You know what? I think you have a pretty good plain there.

CUT TO:

EXT. AMMO AREA

They get on with the morning just like all the rest, out on their grass cutting excursions. Joe is ranting on about something.

JOE

Come all ye sinners gather round, let me tell you about evils of JOHN BARLEY CORN,

NICOTINE and the TEMPTATIONS
of EVE.

Dan just shakes his head and goes back to looking for a snake.

JOE
OH SHIT!

DAN
What's wrong, get your
trousers wet again?

Dan turns around to see Joe grasping his right leg with both hands.

DAN
What happened? (as he goes to
take a look)

JOE
I was just swinging away and
this got caught on the blade I
guess.

DAN
Well this is a fine mess you
got yourself into this time.

Dan looks at the wire in Joe's leg, a one in a million shot.
He grabs the wire and pulls it out.

JOE
I'm crippled for life; I may
never walk again. Oh the
agony, the pain.

DAN
There's nobody else here.

JOE
I just couldn't pass up the
opportunity.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. DUSK, NEVADA, MILEPOST 271

Joe with his bike and truck now well off the side of the road and a heap of firewood, the light of day is just starting to fade to night. It gets cold out on the desert at night and the cold makes the old scare from that wire hurt Joe rubs his leg where the scare is to warm it up. The road has quieted down a lot, only the occasional car rushing past in either direction, even though the headlights are visible five minutes away. He starts his fire and opens the saddlebag on his bike. Takes out a cloth bundle and unrolls it, inside is a sawed off shotgun, bottle of morphine tablets and a nickel bag of pot.

CUT TO:

INT. DAY, DOCTORS OFFICE, A FEW DAYS EARLIER

DOCTOR

These morphine tablets might stop working in the final hours and your pain will only get worse.

JOE

Well I have a couple of other things for back-up when that happens.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEVADA ROADSIDE

Off in the distance Joe thought he could hear the faint sound of gunfire, perhaps someone having a little target practice.

JOE

(to himself)

30-30 or 30-06.

Joe puts the shotgun back into the bag with the handle up, morphine tablets and the pot on the log he has for sitting on then gets ready to settle down. He listens again to the distant gunfire. Looks around a little and sees a rider coming down the fence line.

COWBOY

Saw your fire thought I'd better check it out, not many campers in these parts and the

grass is a little dry, could cause big trouble if it got outta hand.

JOE

I think I cleared enough room around the outside to keep it from jumping.
How about a cup of brew, takes off the chill?

COWBOY

Don't mind if I do, thanks.
So what brings an old gentleman like you out to these parts?

JOE

I just needed to get away from the rat race for a bit. If you know what I mean.
Was that your gunfire I heard before?

COWBOY

No! I heard that too. There is a ranch up the road, maybe someone getting a jack rabbit for stew. Maybe I can get one if you need.

JOE

I have plenty to eat. Enough for both of us if you would like some.

COWBOY

Thanks, but I need to get on down the line, I have to meet up with my boss in about an hour. Take care and keep a watch out for snakes.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. EVENING, MARINE BASE GATE

Dan and Joe in the car heading out the front gate. Dan driving this time, turns left instead of right and Joe is quick to let him know he has turned the wrong way.

JOE

What are you doing it is already late and you want to go to town first?

DAN

I told you we would be having company with us this weekend!

JOE

OK! I give up who is this mystery guest?

DAN

Just give me a couple of minutes.

Dan turns the car into the bus station parking lot and starts to get out.

JOE

So what's the deal?

DAN

I've got a package here I need to get.
Just wait, I'll be right back.

JOE

OK! But don't blame me when we get home late.

Joe turns up the music and sets back to listen. A couple of minutes go by and Dan returns.

DAN

There's a problem the manager is looking for another key.

JOE

Key? Key for what?

DAN

The locker, it has something stuck in it, the key isn't working.

JOE

Take your time, I'm sure
Heather won't mind seeing you
a little later than usual.

DAN

It will only be a minute or
two more, just hang on.

Dan turns and walks back behind the bus station where the lockers are. Joe is setting listening to the radio when he sees flashing lights coming up the road, thinking nothing of it even as they turn into the bus station. Joe continues to listen to the music on the radio.

Some time goes by and still there is no sign of DAN. Then and officer approaches the car.

OFFICER

Good evening, you waiting for
someone.

JOE

Yes sir! My friend is inside.

OFFICER

Your friend's name DAN?

JOE

Yes sir!

OFFICER

We have your friend and we'll
be taking him down to the
station, you need to follow
us.

You have a license?

JOE

Yes sir!

OFFICER

It will be a few minutes just
follow us when we pull out.

JOE

Yes sir!

Joe's mind is racing, what is going on here, what has happened, what will happen. The squad car pulls out onto the main street and Joe pulls out and starts following them.

Joe is still trying to figure out what is going on when he starts thinking of what is in the trunk, Joe was trying to figure out what to do when it hit him. He was following the officers through every turn then when they made their last turn into the station parking lot Joe saw his opportunity. Instead of following them into the parking lot he kept going straight.

CUT TO:

EXT. NIGHT, Down by an inlet.

Joe empties the trunk of anything that might be used as evidence if they should want to search the car. Then he drives back to the police station.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT, POLICE STATION

Joe walks inside.

DESK SGT.

What can I do for you young man.

JOE

A couple of officers brought my friend here a few minutes ago!

Just then the officer that talked to Joe at the bus station comes out of the next door.

OFFICER

Where did you take off to?

JOE

Oh! I saw the tank was on empty and I thought I'd better fill it up.

OFFICER

You know why we brought your friend here tonight.

JOE

No sir!

OFFICER

You sure you don't know what this is all about?

JOE

I don't have a clue. Dan told me to wait in the car, that he'd be right back, then you came and told me to follow you here. That's all I know! Now I'm just wondering what the Sam Hill is going on.

OFFICER

Your partner tells us the same thing.
OK! Wait here, don't disappear again.

JOE

No sir, I'll be right here.

Joe is worried that the officer didn't push the disappearing issue any further. Joe waits for what seems to be hours, then the door opens and Dan walks out.

DAN

Let's go.

Joe gets up and they walk out the door and around the building to the car. Joe tosses the keys to Dan they get in and drive away.

JOE

OK! You going to tell me what just happened?

DAN

While you were on leave and I was on guard duty, I was checking the seals on the small arms igloos one night and found that one of the seals was open, so I got the keys and a forklift and took a case of 7.62, it was easy. Then I just put the seal back on making sure it was latched properly.

DAN

The next day I brought the rounds out here in a suitcase and put them in a bus locker, everything should have been ok but I didn't realize the station manager checks the lockers after 48 hours then holds any items for 30 days. Only thing is when he pulled that case out and it dropped to the ground like 90 lbs. of lead. I guess he got nosey and opened the case, I wish I could of seen his face. They both laugh at the thought then quiet again.

JOE

So now what? I mean, why they let you go.

DAN

They had to; it was an illegal search and seizure. They will be reporting it to the base. First thing Monday morning I'll have to see the Capt. and let him know what happened. Until then we are on the road home.

JOE

We need to go down to creek road, I dumped the ammo cans and what few rounds where in the trunk out in the brush in case they wanted to searched the car.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY, OUTSIDE THE CAPT'S OFFICE

Dan standing tall in his khaki uniform.

DON

What's with the khakis?

JOE

Don't ask It's a long story.
And Dan needs to tell the
Capt. first. Then I'm sure
everyone will hear all about
it.

TOP

What's up with you Lad-e-row
got jury duty or something?

DAN

No sir, I need to see the
Capt.

The Capt. walks out of his office and to the coffee pot.
Fills his cup and walks back to his desk.

CAPT

What can I help you with young
man?

Dan closes the door behind him and lays out the whole sorted
affair to the Capt.

The Capt. is speechless as Dan leaves his office, then he
calls in the Top and they start working on what should be
done.

CAPT

Top come into my office
please.

TOP

What seems to be the problem
sir?

The Capt. lays out the whole thing to TOP.

TOP

I'll tell you what I think we
should do to him, make an
example that shows what
happens when someone crosses
the team.

CAPT

The only choice is that I must
go and talk to the Col. before
he gets his briefing from the
Sgt. Maj.

He takes off for Headquarters hopeful that he is not too late.

JOE

Well, I guess we'll just have to keep our fingers crossed.

JAKE

Yeah right! I got my fingers crossed.

JOE

I think you better change that tone boy!

DAN

It does no good to worry about something that's not happened yet. The rounds are recovered and I turned myself in, the most they will do is take some money and maybe a stripe. Hey, they might kill me but they can't eat me.

JOE

How can you be so nonchalant over this?

DAN

"LIFE GOES ON".

JOE

What?

DAN

LIFE GOES ON! No matter what happens, look around and you see that LIFE GOES ON. A plane crashes, and people die LIFE GOES ON. Regardless of what it is that happens, no matter how much you want it to stop and feel the pain with you, relentlessly LIFE GOES ON and then there is the whole spilt milk thing.

JOE

Are you sure you don't want to
kick the SHIT out of
something, If this happened to
me I'd be ready to wail the
crap out of something or
someone.
Even if it was my own fault.

DAN

And that's where I hope to
teach you a few things about
life.
Humility can be your best tool
sometimes, just remember who
is responsible for your
actions, YOU and you alone are
to blame if things go wrong.
Your actions alone can't make
you or break you. It's your
attitude in a situation that
can be your worst enemy or
your best friend.

JOE

(as he pulls up his pants legs)
Now that's deep, wait a minute
I don't want to get any of
this on my trousers the smell
alone could take years to get
out.

DAN

Like I said they might kill me
but the can't eat me.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAINTENANCE BUILDING

Dan and Joe both take off for the area and resume their
grass cutting like any other day.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAY, OUSIDE THE CAPT OFFICE

Dan waiting to see the Capt. Once the Capt. has his little
talk then the TOP takes his turn.
Joe is waiting to find out what will happen.

JOE

So! What is the verdict?

DAN

I have to go see the COL
tomorrow at 0800.

JOE

Good luck!

The next day Joe is more anxious than Dan. Still Dan is nonchalant about the whole thing.

In the COL s office he reports then stands quietly waiting the Col.'s remarks.

COL looking over Dan's records and shaking his head a little.

Dan's record shows that he served two tours in Vietnam, that he was wounded twice in his first and that in his second tour he received the BRONSE STAR for saving a pilots life during which he could have lost his own.

The COL closes the record.

COL

Marine, what possessed you to
do this?

DAN

It was just a case of the dumb
ass, no excuse sir!

The COL thinks for a moment.

COL

You are busted to PVT
suspended, and forfeiture of
\$300 for two month.
Consider yourself blessed
MARINE, dismissed.

DAN

Sir! Yes sir!

Dan takes a step back then executes a sharp about face and departs the office.

SGTMAJ.

Sir?

COL

If not for that Marine I
wouldn't be here today. You
know I was pulled from my
plane when I crash landed
after being shot while on a
bombing run. I made it back to
home base but my gear was
damaged, Well that young man
there put himself in harms way
to get me out of the wreckage,
then went back to the plane to
get the hung ordnance off so
it wouldn't get burned and
blow up.

Dan knows that he was lucky this time and plans to make sure
that he never falters again.

Now, what will he say to explain how he got off so easy.
Maybe the truth, he is not happy with telling anyone what
happened it seemed so long ago and sometimes like it
happened to someone else not him. But it did happen to him
and now he has to tell someone else.

Dan returns to work after changing into his dungarees.

JOE

How did it go?

DAN

I got a fine of \$300 a month
for two months and busted to
PVT, suspended.

JOE

Holy crap! That's screwed! A
case of ammo can't cost that
much.

Well, like you said they
didn't eat you but they sure
killed you for a couple of
months.

Dan is relieved that Joe is not thinking it was too easy this
way he will never have to tell Joe why the COL let him off
so easy.

DAN

Now you know never to do
anything like that
right?

JOE

Right!

They don't talk about it ever again.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. NIGHT, FIRESIDE NEAR MILEPOST 271

Old Joe sitting beside the fire, he takes a bottle of Southern Comfort out of his pack and takes a swig of it. He is starting to think that the pain is only going to get worse if he doesn't take one of those pills now, instead he looks for his cigarettes and finds an empty pack throwing it in the fire he gets another pack from the carton, four packs remain now. Will he outlast the carton or will it outlast him.

He starts opening the pack,

YOUNG WOMAN

Excuse me. Mister!

A young woman approaches him from the darkness.

CINDY

Could I get one of those from you?

JOE

Sure!
This is no place for a young lady to be all alone!
What brings you way out here?

CINDY

I was riding with this trucker when he decided he wanted more than just conversation!

JOE

Good thing you come along I was just about to throw out this stew.
Want some?

CINDY

Just the smoke, thanks anyway.

JOE

Well, I'll leave it here to
keep warm. In case you change
your mind!

The young woman takes the smoke and turns to look up and
down the road, then back at Joe.

CINDY

So, what are you doing out
here so far from the old folks
home.

JOE

Just catching up on some free
time!
They don't let us out much for
fresh air.

CINDY

You're not some weird serial
killer that's like too old to
cut it anymore?

JOE

If I am, you will be the first
to know!

CINDY

If you decide to kill me just
make it quick will ya?

JOE

I'm too old to do anything
quick anymore.
You want to get warm and eat
something, be my guest. Just
show a little respect for the
kindness that's being offered,
or take off.

Joe turns and walks out of the fires light.
The young woman walks to the roadside and squats down.

CINDY

(under her breath and to herself)
Old fart,

Joe returns and sits down on the log then reaches for the pot of stew.

JOE

Guess I'll throw this mess out!

CINDY

Wait, maybe I could eat some!

Joe grabs a stick from the fire to light his cigarette with. The young woman returns to the fireside and accepts the stew.

CINDY

Sorry about the rudeness, being on the road makes a person leery of anyone giving things without expecting something in return you know what I mean.

JOE

I do, so why would you be out on the road all alone? I mean a pretty thing like you should be home with your family, not hitching rides from strangers.

CINDY

I would be home now but my so-called date decided if he took me out far enough from town, I'd put out for him instead of the alternative.

JOE

Obviously you took the alternative.
Good for you, don't ever let anyone think they got the better of you.

Joe takes another sip from his bottle as his mind starts to drift again to his younger days.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. DAY, STATION WEAPONS

Dan and Joe returning to the break room after another day of grass cutting.

DAN

Well here we are again,
another week of glorious
vegetation control behind us
and the whole weekend ahead.

SGT DAILEY

L/CPL I got some news for you!

JOE

Is it good news or bad?

SGT DAILEY

Bad news for you Good news to
me, you have orders to go to
JAPAN.

Joe never wants anyone to have the last laugh so he turns it back on the SGT.

JOE

Wrong, it's good news for me.
I finally got that transfer I
was asking for.
When do I leave?

SGT DAILEY

NOVEMBER! Between now and then
TOP wants you to work in the
inventory section, so Monday
you report to CPL BATES.

JOE

That's still almost three
months of your stupid shit to
put up with SARGE.

The Sgt. turns and goes back into the office.

DAN

You really requested a
transfer?

JOE

No, but I'm not giving him the
satisfaction of gloating.

DAN

You just have to be the top dog don't you!

JOE

That's not it at all, I just will not allow someone to think they have control of my life.

DAN

We're not going home this weekend, got any planes?

JOE

I thought I might spend some time in Savanna!

DAN

Not a bad idea I guess, and you could introduce me to this girl friend of yours.

JOE

Yeah! Every time I go to see her she fixes me this really big steak. I can never eat all of it, I'm not really that crazy about steak anyway.

DAN

What are we waiting for? Let's go!

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. DAY, SAVANNA, GEORGIA

They pull up to the front of the apartment building and jump out of the car.

JOE

Here we are, just one thing. She's shy, don't take it the wrong way.

They enter, the introductions are over and Yong disappears to start cooking the steaks.

DAN

She sure is a pretty little thing.

JOE

Thanks, I thought you might approve.

DAN

Well if it's any consolation, she is a great improvement over that HOG you was with last month.

JOE

Oh man I can't believe you even brought that up, I was so drunk I couldn't have told you my own name. She played a mean guitar though.

DAN

That's a likely excuse, I mean that girl was so big I thought when she called for a taxi they would have sent a wrecker to haul her home.

JOE

She was a little hefty.

DAN

A little hefty, if she had been any bigger
You might have gotten lost and never been found.

JOE

I got news for you, I did fall in and for a moment or two I thought I was lost for ever, but I ran into this other guy in there and as soon as I helped him find his car keys we drove right out.

DAN

Well you are doing much better now.

YONG

Here are steak for you and friend.

JOE

Thank you, but you know you don't have to fix steak for me every time I come to see you.

YONG

I like fix steak for you.

DAN

This is really good. I don't know why you would complain.

JOE

I'm not complaining, I'm just not that partial to steak that's all. I prefer beef in the form of a stew you know, that way it cooks up tender and tasty.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAY, STATION WEAPONS

The sun is shining and it looks like a great day to be out in the open air. This morning is going to be different for Joe, he has a new job today, and he hopes to do well at it, he hates the thought of going to Japan just to cut more grass.

CPL BATES

L/CPL, come with me! We have to inventory the grenade lockers this morning.

DAN

You have a good day, and keep your bootlaces loose. In case you need more digits to count on.

JOE

Thanks, with friends like you
who needs enemies!

Joe takes off with the CPL and SGT Dailey tells Dan to get on the truck with the grass cutting crew. Joe thought that was a little strange that he didn't take Bertha.

CUT TO:

EXT: EQUIPMENT LOCKER

Jake is getting some equipment ready for the day.

CUT TO:

EXT: GRASS CREW ON THE TRUCK

Jake is driving the truck, Dan and the rest of the crew are in the back making ready their equipment for the day, Dan has a sling blade and is a little relieved that he is not on a riding mower. He looks around enjoying the open space and fresh air as a pleasant change.

JAKE

OK! Everyone off here.

All grab equipment and dismount the truck.
Dan is last and grabs a green machine from the back.

ALL

Talking about the night before
and the good time they had.

JAKE

Dan,,,,,, Sgt. Dailey ask me
to make sure and get the ditch
over on the end of DELTA road,
it might be a little too much
for me alone. Give me a hand?

DAN

Sure, I guess the boys can
handle this till we get back.

Dan puts his sling blade and the green machine back on the bed of the truck then jumps on the passenger side running board. Jake drives of and hits the horn slightly to make sure everyone sees them going down the road.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. DAY, STATION WEAPONS

Cpl. BATES and Joe just get started good on their second magazine when they are told to report to the office.

JOE

Just when I'm starting to get
the hang of it, now what!

They get back to the office and Sgt. Dailey grabs Joe and takes him to the TOP.

SGT DAILEY

Come with me, Top wants to see
you.

JOE

Damn, Son! What seems to be
the problem?

SGT DAILEY

TOP will tell you all about
it, just come along!

TOP

Lad-e-row, I need you to go
out open the gate and keep it
open, there's an ambulance on
the way.

JOE

An ambulance? Who got hurt?

TOP

We're not sure yet, right now
I need your help OK?

JOE

OK TOP!

The gate is right outside the Tops office and he figures to keep Joe away from the accident.

JOE

(to himself)
What the fuck is going on?

Go open the gate and keep it
open, I need your help my ass.

Joe is at the gate for what seems like hours before the
ambulance arrives.

Then he thinks they will be back soon with whomever it is
that got hurt.

He waits again for what seems to be at least an hour.

Then the ambulance returns from the area only to keep right
on going through the gate and down the road. Joe never even
got a hint as to what was wrong or who it might be.

Joe closes the gate and returns to the Tops office.

JOE

What happen?

TOP

There was an accident; Dan was
hurt pretty bad.

JOE

What? How?

TOP

We are checking, they said
they couldn't find us. We are
so far away and they had never
been here before.

Joe turns to his attention to the crew returning from the
area.

JOE

One of you assholes want to
tell me what happened?

DON

He fell off the truck, the
mirror was loose and he lost
his balance.

JOE

Who was driving?

DON

Jake, but he is a little
broken up right now.

JOE

Wait till I get my hands on him, you think he's broken up now.

SGT DAILEY

You need to calm down; we don't know the extent of his injuries yet, just take it easy and relax OK.

JOE

Don't ever tell me what I need to do, you got that.

SGT DAILEY

Now look here.

JOE

Oh go fuck yourself.

Joe walks out the door looking for Jake, he is nowhere to be found.

CUT TO:

EXT. AMMO AREA

Jake setting in the truck behind the equipment shed. His hands gripping the wheel so tightly his knuckles are white his head down. He looks up then gets out of the truck and takes a sling blade handle from the back of the truck and smashes against the iron side rail of the truck again and again until it breaks into what must be a thousand pieces. Sgt. Dailey finds Jake and approaches him with some caution.

SGT. DAILEY

Jake, you OK?

JAKE

NO! I'm not OK. I don't know what happened!

SGT. DAILEY

Don't worry about it, right now the Top wants to see you, and if I where you I wouldn't go anywhere near Joe right now. Come this way, we'll go through the office Capt.'s door.

JAKE

Why should I be avoiding JOE? I need to let him know what happened was an accident that's all.

SGT. DAILEY

Not right now, he's a little hot about the ambulance taking so long to arrive.

JAKE

Him and me both. What where they doing?
It must have taken them at least an hour to get out there.

They make their way around to the Capt.'s private entrance and go into the Top's office.

TOP

Come in, Sgt. Dailey that's all thank you. Close the door Jake, have a seat.
I'm told that you have been asking about a place in the organization. Are you still interested?

JAKE

What would be my initiation?

TOP

I think you have pretty much accomplished that, don't you.

JAKE

I can't say that I understand what you mean.

TOP

Just the way it should be, never talk about it.

JAKE

It what? Look Top I'm grateful for the gesture, but I don't know what you think I've done.

Right now I don't really care about anything else, I just want to make this day go away.

TOP

I get it Lad-e-row, take the rest of the day off and get yourself together.

Jake is not normally this slow to pick up on things. It finally hits him, what Top is inferring.

JAKE

You don't seriously think that this was intentional?

TOP

We consider your merits to date not any one action.

JAKE

Merits, are you fucking kidding me? Let me tell you what you can do with your organization.

TOP

OK Lad-e-row, you need to settle down and think before you speak you're next words. I mean chose you're next words very carefully.

JAKE

You're right Top, I think I'll just take the rest of the day off. Thank you.

Jake walks out of Tops office and to his car. The rest of the day seemed like it was 10 years long to JOE all he wanted was to see if his friend was OK!

SGT DAILEY

FALL IN!

Everyone gets into formation, Top comes out to address them.

TOP

Lad-e-rows, let this be a lesson to you. Never ride on

the side of the running board of any vehicle. Now we have a young man in the hospital in Charleston, SC and it is not looking good.

Joe is so upset that he can't even think straight; he walks out and gets in the passenger seat of Dan's car. Sitting there for a moment before he realizes that Dan won't be coming. He slides over to the driver's side and takes off.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT BARRACKS CUBICAL

JOE

Someone please explain to me what the fuck happened.

DON

The mirror on the passenger side is loose and Dan must have slipped off.

JOE

Hey, that alone won't make you fall off the truck. Both Dan and I have ridden on the passengers side before, there never seemed to be a problem!

BOB

You know Dan is not the most coordinated.

JOE

He's more coordinated than you are.
Jake, you got anything to add to all this?

JAKE

I was driving the truck just like any other time when you have been riding on the running board.

Joe is not convinced that it was an accident Jake doesn't seem to be all that disturbed about it but he has no proof otherwise.

CUT TO:

EXT. Day, station weapons morning muster.

SGT. DAILEY

All present or accounted for
TOP.

TOP

Lads, let me make this clear
to everyone, there will be no
more riding on the running
board of vehicles. Do you
understand that?

ALL BUT JOE

YES SIR!

CUT TO:

EXT. DAY,

Joe drives Dan's car to Charleston. Dan's parents and sister
and brothers are there and Joe is greeted as one of the
family.

MOM

Joe, are you all right?

She hugs him and holds his hand.

JOE

I'm fine ma'am! How are you?

MOM

We are doing ok! Joe, what
happened?

JOE

I don't know, I wasn't there
when it happened.
If I had been maybe I could
have prevented it somehow.

MOM

No son, I'm glad you weren't
there.

JOE

I feel that if I had been there I could have done something to prevent this. Dan was riding in my place on the truck.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. NIGHT, NAVADA ROADSIDE

Old Joe sitting at the fire with the Cindy who has finished the stew. Joe reaches down and picks up the Pall Mall pack, takes the last one and grabs another pack.

He looks into the carton, 3 packs left. He wonders how much of his life he will be able to remember before he dies. How much more pain he will have to endure before he is allowed to have some rest.

CINDY

What happened to your friend?

JOE

He died a week later never having regained consciousness, and then I went to Japan for thirteen months.

CINDY

What about that girlfriend of yours, the one in Savanna?

JOE

I married her; we had long and wonderful life together! Until a few years ago, she passed away one night in her sleep lying in my arms. I wish I could have given her all she ever wanted but I failed at that too.

CINDY

She must have thought you did all you could to stay with you for so many years!

JOE

She was a good woman and a true friend, better than I ever deserved, but that's another story.

The morning is starting to dawn traffic is picking up and the young woman decides it is time for her to be on her way.

CINDY

(takes a bandana from her pack and ties it on Joe's arm)

This is for sharing your fire and your stew.

Thanks for the story, don't stay out here too long.

You could catch your death of cold.

Cindy turns and walks toward the roadside.

JOE

Is that a promise?

She waves back at Joe as she gets close to the road, just then a truck pulls over and she climbs in and closes the door. She waves again and then she's gone.

Joe sits back down on the log and takes another morphine pill.

It looks to be a perfect day not a cloud in the sky but will he make it to sunset.

Joe's mind once again starts to wonder back to the events just after he finds out that Dan has died.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. DAY, STATION WEAPONS BREAK ROOM

Sgt. Dailey calling for formation

SGT DAILEY

All present sir!

TOP

Lads, I've got some bad news for you.

Dan was removed from life support by request of his

family and pronounced at 1800
hrs last night.
He will be buried in the
family's plot on the 12th.
For those of you who wish to
attend, the uniform will be
Alphas or Bravos.
(Top heads for his office.)

CPL BATES
Joe, I've been ask to talk to
you about escorting Dan's
remains home.
I know you where his closest
friend and you know the family
well.
Would you like to be the
escort?

(Joe
only nods)

CPL BATES
Report to the Col. in ALPHAS.

JOE
When?

CPL BATES
Now, they're waiting for you.

CUT TO:

INT. DAY, Col.'s OFFICE

COL
L/CPL you have been ask to
accomplish a hard task today,
are you up to the challenge?

JOE
Yes sir!

COL
There is a chopper waiting to
take you to Charleston Naval
Hospital where you will
receive further instructions.
Make sure the rules are
followed.

JOE

Yes sir! Thank you sir.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAY FLIGHT DECK

Joe comes out of the hanger and is escorted to the waiting Huey Helicopter. Inside he is given a headset, he puts it on.

PILOT

Get strapped in, first ride in a helicopter?

JOE

Yes sir.

PILOT

Well don't worry, we'll get you there in no time.

JOE

I'm not worried sir.

PILOT

I'm told you're going to escort duty today, someone you know?

JOE

My best friend sir.

PILOT

I'm sorry to here that MARINE.

They are silent for the remainder of the trip.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAY, LANDING PAD NEER CHARLSTON NAVAL HOPITAL

Joe gets out of the helicopter and is meat by a Sailor, they get to the door and Joe turns around. In the helicopter; both the pilot and co-pilot are saluting, Joe returns the salute. The helicopter takes off and Joe and the Sailor enter the building.

SAILOR

I'm ----- Bradley, have you ever escorted before.

JOE

No!

SAILOR

Then I'll be instructing you on the rules and regulations for escorting human remains to their final destination, this way please.

Joe follows the sailor to a room and is given a book for escorts. Joe looks at the book but it really isn't sinking in yet just what they think his role should be.

JOE

I'm here to escort my best friend home to his family, have you ever had to do that?

SAILOR

No and I don't ever want to.

JOE

I don't want to either, but I feel it's my duty to him to be there.

SAILOR

I understand. This way please.

Joe is taken to another office and given specific instructions. Joe is in a sort of Dream State as he is announced and reports to the officer.

NAVY OFFICER

Marine, are you listening to me.

JOE

I'm sorry sir; I'm a little overwhelmed with all that has happened so quickly.

OFFICER

I said, that you must insure that no one touches the body, he has extensive tissue damage and sever bruising, I repeat you are not to let anyone

touch the body for any reason.
Do you understand?

JOE

Uh! Yes sir, no touching.

OFFICER

OK! Sailor, take the L/CPL to
the loading area.

SAILOR

This way L/CPL.

JOE

Thank you sir.

The Sailor takes Joe to an elevator and down to the loading area where the casket is already being loaded; Joe shakes the sailor's hand and gets into the hurse.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAY, CHARLSTON, SC. AIRPORT

At the airport the casket is unloaded and Joe is taken to the boarding area.

CUT TO:

EXT. LATE DAY, ASHVILLE AIRPORT

The casket is loaded into a hurse as Joe is getting off the plane. The driver/owner of the funeral service is waiting for Joe.

DRIVER

I'm Mr. ----- I will be
taking care of the body and
preparing it for the services,
come with me.

CUT TO:

EXT. NIGHT, OUTSIDE THE FUNERAL HOME

Joe just sort of standing around not knowing what to do with himself.

MR. -----

MR. Haley is here for you.

JOE
Heather's father?

Mr. Haley
Joe you come stay at our house
tonight, we will bring you
back tomorrow for the
ceremony.

JOE
I don't think I should leave
him here.

Mr. Haley
He is in good hands and you
can't do anything for him
right now, come on get some
rest.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAY, DAN'S HOME

The family all around the front of the house, the hearse
drives up to the front yard and Joe gets out.

CUT TO:

INT. DAY LIVING ROOM

The casket is positioned near the front door and Joe is
standing guard over Dan.

MOM
Joe, take some time to have
some food and drink.

JOE
Thank you Mom I'm fine, just
let me stay
here.

MOM
Yes son you stay wherever you
want.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT, LIVING ROOM

Joe still in same position friends and family still paying their respects.

MOM

Joe, I want to hold my boy's hand once more.

JOE

(thinking about the
Capt's. orders)
Can you ask everyone else to leave the room?

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT LIVING ROOM

Joe and Mom standing next to the casket.

JOE

I can't allow you to remove his gloves, but you hold his hand as long as you like, I'll be right here.

After a few moments time.

MOM

Dan would have wanted you to have this.

Mom holds out a silver dollar in her hand.

JOE

I couldn't take that, I'm sure he would rather you gave it to Michel. Please give it to him.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRAVESITE, MILITARY SERVICE.

Some of the men from the office show up to pay their respects. Top is there too and wearing Charlies, just as he told everyone else not to do. Joe stands at the gravesite for a long time after others have gone.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAY, MORNING OUTSIDE THE BARRICKS.

Morning and all are getting on the truck to go to work. Joe is back on guard duty again to finish out his assigned two weeks.

JOE

Don, can I borrow your bike?

DON

Shouldn't you be getting some sleep?

Joe holds out his hand for the keys.

DON

Just make sure you bring it back with a full tank.

JOE

Thanks.

Joe stumbles around not knowing what it is that he should be feeling.

All he really wants is to forget that any of this has happened.

He is going to be expected to show up for his guard duty in about eight hours but sleep is not going to come easy so he gets on Don's motorcycle and heads for town.

CUT TO:

INT. LITTLE COUNTRY STORE

STORE CLEARK

That will be \$3.50

Joe pays the tab and takes his brew outside to a table under a tree.

There he sets and begins to inebriate himself. First the wine, which is short work and then the beer, after the first six-pack, Joe is still not numb so more drastic measures are warranted.

He has a bottle of Comfort in his pack on the bike, perfect.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRY STORE

BOB

Joe, what are you doing here
you're supposed to be on duty?

JOE

What time is it? Never mind,
I'll be there in time to keep
Sgt. Dailey on his toes the
rest of the night.

Joe takes off on the bike and gets to the barracks just as
Jake is locking the truck.

JOE

(as he grabs the keys from Jake's hand)
I'll take those, wouldn't want
to be late for duty now would
I.

CUT TO:

EXT. DUSK, AMMO AREA

Joe gets to the gate at the entrance to the ammo dump, it
should be closed but the Sgt. has left it open and Joe in
his drunken stupor decides he is going to teach this Sgt. a
lesson.

He runs the gate and proceeds to hide in the area.
Not thinking clearly and talking to Dan who is obviously not
there.

JOE

Ha, just what the hell is he
thinking leaving the gate open
like that, any body could just
drive right through?

DAN

(in Joe's mind)
Don't think you should try
this.

Joe turns on the first road to the right and drives behind
one of the igloos and waits.

JOE

I'll sneak up to the office
this way.

CUT TO:

INT. TRUCK,

Joe is looking through the woods at the office, he can see that Sgt. Dailey has taken the other truck to look for who has run the gate.

Joe punches the peddle to the floor and the truck jumps forward into the ditch that Joe knew was there but forgot about in his drunken state.

CUT TO:

EXT. DUSK, AMMO AREA

Sgt. Dailey looking into cab

SGT. DAILEY

I got you now you shit.
There's no way you can get out
of this one.

JOE

Oh, go fuck yourself.

DAN

(in Joe's mind)
Oh man, you got yourself into
a good one.

The Capt. and the Top arrive and are now at the truck with Sgt. Dailey.

CAPT

Get him out of there, get him
to the office and put some
coffee in him.

TOP

We can put him in the brig for
this one; being drunk on duty
will get him busted for sure.

CAPT

We are not going to bust him
for being human. Tell me Top,

haven't you lost a few friends
in your time and busted up a
few vehicles along the way?
You know damn well what he is
going through.

TOP

Yes I do but this is not the
NAM and his buddy didn't die
in front of his eyes.

CAPT

Do you think that really makes
a difference? His friend is
still dead and he is still
here, you know what that does
to a man's head!

Top just nods and walks to the office.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. NAVADA, NEAR milepost 271

The roadside where Joe is still smoking cigarettes, popping
morphine tablets and washing them down with Southern
Comfort.

Even though it has gotten busier, it is still a lonely
stretch of road and JOE prefers it to stay that way, with
every move, he feels death getting closer.

Still holding the bottle of Southern Comfort, he downs the
last swig and lights up another smoke.

Joe is having trouble standing and figures he had better
start getting things ready.

Just as he is getting on his bike for what he figures to be
the greatest ride of his life or death. A car is being
pulled over about a half mile down the road from him.

The trooper gets out and approaches the car just as Joe (now
feeling weaker) starts on his ride.

Just as Joe gets past the car he looks in his rearview, it's
Joshua. Joe starts setting everything up for his ride when
he will no longer be able to hold on by himself. He looks in
his mirror again, sees a flash from the window and Joshua
fall to the ground, the car takes off.

JOE

Oh shit, not now! What the hell is wrong with people these days?

JOSHUA

Shots fired, Officer down, milepost 271.

Joe puts his bike in the fast lane even though he is only going 30 mph. In a strained effort, he pulls the double barrel shotgun from below his left leg, and holds it on his right arm, then as the car comes along side he points it at the front tire and fires both barrels, the car swerves left into the median and flips over. It takes almost all of his strength to stop and it is all he can do to turn around, he needs to get back to the officer to see how he is doing.

JOE

(Talking to GOD now)
I always thought you had a sick sense of humor, but this is really screwed up.

Joe makes it back to Joshua in time to see that he is still moving.

Joshua is bleeding profusely and Joe is fading fast. Now down to his last bit of energy; Joe makes it to Joshua, he takes the bandana from his arm and sticks it into the Joshua's chest wound with that Joe sees there is another wound in his arm, if this one is not stopped he will bleed out. Joe is too weak now the only thing he can think of is to try and hold the pressure point, but his hands are too arthritic or maybe that is a good thing.

JOE

(Once again talking to GOD)
Is this what you wanted? Not exactly what I had in mind you know.

Joe forces his fingers open, wincing in pain he puts his hand on Joshua's arm just above the wound, the arthritis forces his hand back into its deformed state and restricts the flow of blood.

JOSHUA

(out of his head a little)
Hey old-timer, can I try one of those cigarettes?

JOE

I'm not too sure I should give you one, it's been said that they can kill you. You're a little too young to start smoking, don't you think?

Joe takes out the pack from his pocket, one left. He lights it and puts it in Joshua's mouth.

JOSHUA

(choking a little)
I don't think I'd be able to get used to that, it taste like crap.

Joe takes it back and puts it in his own mouth.

JOE

I guess that's about enough of that.

JOSHUA

So what is it that appeals to you about them.

JOE

It's an acquired taste like sushi or chitlins. Once you get past the thought of it or the smell it's not half bad.

JOSHUA

I guess I won't be going out for sushi or chitlins any time soon.

JOE

Don't worry about that you got lots of time for those decisions. You have a good long life, OK?

JOSHUA

I sure hope so, thanks for coming back. I couldn't get hold of it right to stop the bleeding.

I thought, I'd had it for
sure!

Other officers arrive.

Joe is still holding Joshua's wound closed. Both hands on
the artery, his head down on top of his hands.

An officer directs the ambulance to the duo on the ground
while Joshua directs their attention to the car down the
road.

The paramedics but the officer into the ambulance and close
the doors.

JOSHUA

The old timer, he's OK?

PARAMEDIC

He didn't make it I'm afraid,
but I think he just might have
saved your life.

CUT TO:

INT. DAY, HOSPITAL ROOM

DOCTOR

You're a very lucky young man.
If you had lost anymore blood
you wouldn't be with us right
now. How are you felling?

JOE

A little light headed and my
arm is cold.

DOCTOR

That's the painkiller.

Doctor adjusts the drip.

DOCTOR

That should help, just call
the nurse if you have any
pain.

Doctor exits as Joe's lawyer enters the room.

LAWYER

In his last will and testament he left his bike and his truck to you.

JOSHUA

What? How could he have done that?

LAWYER

You are the Officer assigned to patrol the section of highway between Winnemucca, NV and milepost 271, right?

JOSHUA

Yes, but how?

LAWYER

I'm just the executor of the will, it states that: Upon his death, the patrol officer who is assigned to that section of road between Winnemucca, NV and milepost 271 is to receive (1) Motor Cycle year 2013 and (1) Truck year 1932 FORD flat bed.

JOSHUA

I don't understand. He must have had family somewhere that would want them.

LAWYER

He had inoperable cancer, and these are the terms of his will that is legal and indisputable. Other valuables of the estate have been divided among remaining family members. There is however a condition!

JOSHUA

What's that?

LAWYER

It states that the recipient of said motor cycle and truck would have the remains cremated and then spread them from the moving motor cycle, at sunset, near the spot his body was found.

JOSHUA

What if I decline to receive them?

LAWYER

There is a stipulation to that effect that I am not at liberty to reveal.

JOSHUA

I have to; it wouldn't be right not to keep his final wish.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. RANCH HOUSE, NEAR DENVER COLORADO ONE MONTH EARLYER

Joe is opening a letter from the mother of his son.

LETTER

Joe,
If you are reading this I have passed, just thought you should know that you have a grandson working in Nevada as a Highway patrol officer, he is assigned to a section between Winnemucca, NV and milepost 271. Maybe you can see him sometime I hope, just don't tell him who you are. I don't want to let anyone know about that part of my life. Chris thinks that Kevin is his biological father. I'd like to keep it that way. Sorry I know how much having a son meant to you, Please forgive me.

His name and badge # are on
the back of his picture.

I'm sorry

Love,

Kyong Hui

FADE IN:

INT. LAWYERS OFFICE ONE MONTH EARLIER

LAWYER

Joe, what can I do for you
today

JOE

I need to make an amendment to
my will.

LAWYER

Janet, bring your note pad.

JOE

I prefer to keep this between
you and I only.

Janet comes to the door.

LAWYER

That's OK Janet, we don't need
you after all.
Close the door for us, thanks.

Joe hands the picture to his lawyer; it's Joshua. On the
back;

Joshua Andrew Knots
Badge No.334

JOE

This needs to be worded very
carefully.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. ROADSIDE NEAR MILEPOST 271

Joshua on Joe's bike with urn in hand takes off at slow speed, as he approaches the milepost 271 he turns the urn to allow the contents to pour out.

As the urn empties Joshua turns the bike around and takes a bunch of flowers out of the side bag and places them on a fence post nearest to where Joe encountered his demise.

JOHSUA

Old timer, I'm not sure what you had in mind when you decided to come out here from where ever it is you come from, but I'm sure glad you showed up.

Happy trails.

Final scene:

Joshua standing at roadside, the ghostly image of young Joe walks from the fence to the side of the road and a ghostly image of a 1965 FORD Galaxy 500 stops. Dan is driving; Joe jumps in through the window.

JOE

Can we stop to pick up my girl?

DAN

You got it.

THE END