

# WAR JUNKIES

An American Tale

Based on events of Jim Bennett

As a Vietnam

War Correspondent

Screenplay

By

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WGA:

FADE IN:

EXT. THE L.A. WHISKEY A GO-GO - NIGHT

Dark, fuming smoke billows skyward covering a brightly lit, second story marquee of L.A.'s, Whiskey a GO-GO.

Bold black letters against a white neon billboard reads:

**Steppenwolf, Canned Heat, Three Dog Night, Now playing - May 29th - June 2.**

STEPPENWOLF

"Get your motor runnin'...

From smoke to street.

EXT. SUNSET BLVD. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

At the hands of agitated protestors, American flags lie on cracked, dirty sidewalks and burn on LA's Sunset Boulevard.

Fiery garbage cans roll about snarling Sunset traffic - sidewalk debris, up in flames.

Gathered crowds explode - anti-war outcries.

AGITATED PROTESTORS

Hey, hey LBJ, how many kids you kill  
today? Hey, hey, LBJ! How many kids you  
kill..

**SCREEN READS: SUNSET BLVD. LOS ANGELES CALIFORNIA - 1968**

EXT. SUNSET BLVD. LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

Police arrive en masse in personnel riot trucks west of Doheny Avenue - charging northward up from Larrabee.

STEPPENWOLF

"In whatever comes our way...

INT. A DARK BEDROOM - NIGHT

KNBC Television beat journalist, JIM BENNETT (34) lies alongside his sleeping and very pregnant wife, camera-woman, and mother to his children, BARBARA BENNETT (34).

The phone rings from a nearby night table. No movement - it just keeps ringing. Barb, adjusts her night mask.

BARBARA

(finally - moans)  
Oh, God, Jim. Can you tell your friends  
to call at a decent hour?

JIM BENNETT  
 (eyes shut - whispers)  
 I've tried. They don't listen to me for  
 some reason.

BARBARA  
 I wonder why?

Bennett stirs, tiredly cradles the phone up to his ear - eyes  
 still shut.

JIM BENNETT  
 Hello?

INT. WHISKEY A GO-GO MANAGER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Danny looks out to see Cops and kids on either side - youthful  
 idealism staring down LAPD's blue rank and file, tapping their  
 assault batons.

DANNY RIVERS  
 Jimmie!? JIM! You better get down here  
 with your 16, man! Marines, hippies,  
 cops..

INT. A DARK BEDROOM - NIGHT

Barb, adjusts her pillows, leans in to Jim, and listens in to  
 the conversation.

DANNY RIVERS (V.O.)  
 (phone)  
 Fucking nuns and boy scouts, everybody  
 under the sun is here. This place is  
 about square off! (Click!)

Bennett hangs up the phone, throws his legs over the bed.

From behind, Barb too gets her feet to the floor, opens up the  
 window - reaches for the phone.

JIM BENNETT  
 (beat)  
 What are you doing?

BARBARA  
 Calling Diane to watch the kids.

Barb begins dialing.

JIM BENNETT  
 You're not going.

BARBARA

And you can't shoot and cover the story at the same time, Jim. Not even you can do that. And, besides, it'll be over by the time you wake up Gabe and get him over the hill from Studio City.

JIM BENNETT

Barb!? You're in no shape to cover a riot! What if your water breaks?

INT. BENNETT'S 1965 RAMBLER - NIGHT

Jim, at the wheel, and Barb at the ready.

He races through traffic. She calmly loads her 16 mm with Kodak fine grain color night film.

BARBARA

(smiles)

She was watching Joey Bishop.

JIM BENNETT

Lucky us.

EXT. THE SUNSET STRIP - THE WHISKEY CLUB - NIGHT

Bennett and Barbara pull up at a safe vantage point in their Ford Rambler and quickly get out - open up the rear hatch.

JIM BENNETT

Danny wasn't foolin'...

In the distance, the Whiskey a Go Go - fires, people pushing and shoving, cops, fireman.

Sirens blare. American flags engulfed in flame litter the sidewalks!

AGITATED PROTESTORS

One, two, three, four, we don't want your fucking war!!

Dozens of troopers cordon off the adjacent streets. Frustrated drivers blare their horns.

Bennett shoulders the 16, reaches for Barbara's hand, leads across the intersection.

EXT. MID CROSSWALK - NIGHT

A beaten up PASSERSBY (20's) stumbles towards us on the sidewalk.

He looks to cross Sunset holding a bloody bar rag to his head.

BARBARA

Jim! Grab that guy! The guy holding the rag to his head. Hurry! Give me the camera! Get him as he crosses.

Jim hands Barbara the camera. She rolls film and guns from the Whiskey sign panning across the assault to mid-crosswalk.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

I'm rolling! Burning film! Get him!

Bennett grabs the kid by the arm.

JIM BENNETT

Hey? Hey! Hold up! Mind if I ask you a few questions? What's going on in there?

PASSERSBY

(breathless - bloody)  
Some stupid, idiot, fuckin' threw a bottle, man. Hit me, right here.

Passerby removes his rag and looks at the blood in his hands.

JIM BENNETT

How'd it start?

PASSERSBY

Drugged out hippie mouthed off to a guy whose brother's a Marine, P.O.W. Dumb-ass! The guy jacked him! I think he might even be dead. Then, it just lit up!!

EXT. NORTH SIDE OF SUNSET SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Jim drops the tripod on the adjacent sidewalk. Barbara screws in the camera mount. Thrown beer bottles crash and land nearby.

JIM BENNETT

Jesus... Barb? Bottles!

BARBARA

Yep! I see 'em! I'm rolling.

Smack! Crash! Smoke and ash plume behind Bennett.

JIM BENNETT

(stand-up report)  
Okay... 3,2,1... (beat) Here on Sunset Blvd. and Clarke St., in the heart of Los Angeles, American flags burn openly across the City of Angels sidewalks. LAPD riot police have been called in to secure the entire block.

EXT. 9101 SUNSET BLVD - NIGHT

Bennett leads a pregnant Barb closer to the Whiskey but in front of Gil Turner's Liquors.

A MOTORCYCLE OFFICER (30'S) is seen inside of Turner's separating a cluster of pusher and shovers.

Bennett sees a police helmet fastened to the officer's motorcycle.

Another bottle crashes in the street.

Bennett, keeping an eye on the cop inside, unfastens the chin strap from the handlebar, takes it and places it over Barb's head.

JIM BENNETT

Here, put this on.

BARBARA

We're not stealing that cop's helmet.

JIM BENNETT

We'll give it back. Just take it! You want to belike the guy in the crosswalk?

Barb places the oversized helmet on her head - straps it on.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)

Hey, you look good as a pregnant cop.

BARBARA

I bet.

INT. WHISKEY A GO-GO - NIGHT

On stage, Steppenwolf plays above the crowd.

STEPPENWOLF

"Yeah, darlin' we're going to make it happen"...

GO GO dancers bounce about wildly in cages, twisting and dancing above the smoky trashing below.

Cops, Marines, and anti-war protestors - full throttle.

STEPPENWOLF (CONT'D)

"Take the world in a love embrace".

EXT. WHISKEY BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

Bennett climbs up a pole to get a look over the twelve foot fence at the Whiskey back patio below.

Barb preps film and camera settings in the dark below.

Looking down from above, Bennett sees LAPD's finest pounding the hell of out of rockers and hippies. Patrons drop to the cement like flies.

JIM BENNETT

Jesus... They're killing them.

EXT. WHISKEY BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

Bennett drops back down from the fence next to Barb.

JIM BENNETT

I can see everything below from up there  
but it's going to be too hard to shoot. I  
gotta' find a hole in the fence.

Bennett works his way along the fence line pushing on boards trying to find an opening for the camera. No luck.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)

Son of a bitch... We're going to lose the  
shot.

He turns back to Barb now some twenty feet away and she's up on the pole with the camera slung over her shoulder.

Bennett rushes back to her down the narrow little footpath. Barbara, now up the pole overlooking the patio below.

BARBARA

They are killing them...

Arrives bottom of pole.

JIM BENNETT

What are you doing?

BARBARA

I'm getting the shot.

JIM BENNETT

Get down from there. You're going to kill  
yourself!

BARBARA

I got the shot. You would have screwed up  
the settings.

JIM BENNETT

You can't hold on and shoot.

BARBARA

I got the top of the fence under my elbow.

JIM BENNETT

This is no place for us to have an argument. What if your water breaks?

BARBARA

Jim! Get the sound. Pick up what you can.  
I got the shot! Rolling!

Jim scrambles for the nagra - pushes the mic through a small knot hole in the fence.

EXT. BACK PATIO - NIGHT

LAPD riot cops beat the kids unflinchingly - a real blood bath.

Barb runs film. A steady, professional eye captures black, batons whipping down on the youthful resistance like swinging machetes in a burning cane field.

Danny Rivers steps out to the patio. He throws on a set of flood lights.

JIM BENNETT

The faces!! Get the faces of the cops!

An L.A. PD COP (30's) from below, turns his face up to see Barb (who wears the LAPD helmet) holding her camera and filming him. Barb adjusts and zooms in.

The cop points a baton toward the upper hillside.

LA PD COP

Up there! Get that woman's goddamn camera!

BARBARA

Uh, oh.

EXT. WHISKEY BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

Barb carefully scurries down the pole back into Jim's awaiting arms.

BARBARA

They saw me! They're coming! Shit!



Jim pulls the mic out of the hole, reaches for Barb's hand, turns and leads the way back through the narrow pathway east to the Clarke Street.

JIM BENNETT  
C'mon. Careful... Watch the vine. Don't slip. This way, up the street!

INT. KNBC'S REPORTER'S POOL - DAY

Bennett strides through the aisles of desks swinging the LAPD police helmet from the night before.

JIM BENNETT  
Hey, Tommy?

A young TOM BROKAW (29) turns and swivels. Jim tosses the police helmet his way - catch!

TOM BROKAW  
Jimmie Bennett, pulls out a claw from the grizzly. Nice...

JIM BENNETT  
It was all, Barb. She shot the footage. Money. We're going to take a frame out of it, put the LAPD on a Wheaties box and send it to the mayor.

Brokaw, in confidence, points to the boss's office.

TOM BROKAW  
(in confidence)  
Hey... Sam's trying to sell Bob and Bill they should send him over to Saigon for a couple of stand ups. I'd get in there if I were you.

INT. L.A.'S KNBC STUDIOS - BILL BROWN'S OFFICE - NEXT MORNING  
- DAY

News Anchor, SAM ANDERSEN (40's), infuriated, sits with KNBC execs, BILL BROWN (50's) and BOB MULHOLLAND (50's).

Sam Andersen gets up and paces the floor. Bennett enters. The room grows quiet.

JIM BENNETT  
Hey, Sam.

SAM ANDERSEN  
Jim.

JIM BENNETT  
Pitching Saigon?

Sam grows uncomfortable.

BILL BROWN

Tell him what you feel, Sam.

SAM ANDERSEN

We were discussing ratings and how best cover the war for the station.

JIM BENNETT

Thinking of sending someone over full time?

BOB MULHOLLAND

If it escalates, we'll need our own guy in the field.

BILL BROWN

Sam was thinking a key anchor from the station involved in a few stand ups. Being there. The real stories.

JIM BENNETT

Real stories, huh? You mean, go there, and come right back? Like what the network guys do?

SAM ANDERSEN

It can only add to our credibility.

JIM BENNETT

(laughs)

Who's credibility? That's not reporting, Sam. That's posing. Bob, Bill? You guys know that! National anchors can pull that off but not the local guys. People see through that all day long.

SAM ANDERSEN

You always have the answer, don't you Jim?

JIM BENNETT

You could always report with some frontline troops, Sam. You might get killed, but you'll get your credibility.

BILL BROWN

Alright, enough! Sit down, the both of you.

Andersen and Bennett grab a seat across from the other.

BILL BROWN (CONT'D)

We don't know how we're going to approach this, but, for now, next week, we got Robert Kennedy at The Ambassador for the California primary. I want a steady stream of informative leads up to June 5th, and the both of you focused. Understood?

EXT. VALLEY HOSPITAL IN LOS ANGELES - WEEK LATER - DAY

Jim's red convertible Mustang barrels front and center to a halt at the emergency entrance. Jim jumps out of his convertible.

Neighbor DIANE (30's) stands waiting at the hospital entrance.

JIM BENNETT

She alright?

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Bennett rushes in and finds Barb in her hospital bed resting with eyes closed, holding their new baby. Young MATT (11) and SCOTT BENNETT (13) stand nearby.

JIM BENNETT

Scottie, Mattie... Your mother all right?

MATT

I think so. She's sleeping but, hey, Dad? How come we now have a sister?

SCOTT

(beat)

Yeah, Dad. How'd that happen?

Jim smiles. A NURSE (40's) stands nearby. Jim leans down and kisses Barbara. Her eyes open.

Diane trailes in.

JIM BENNETT

(whisper)

Hey, kiddo. I was out in the field. Diane called me at the office. You okay?

BARBARA

Yeah... Ten fingers, ten toes. Pink and healthy. Hi'ya.

Bennett gently peels the blanket back from the baby's face.

JIM BENNETT  
(whisper)  
Look at her. She's beautiful. The world  
has just been made perfect, hasn't it?

INT. AMBASSADOR HOTEL - BALLROOM - 11:40 P.M. - NIGHT

Addressing his eager, and hopeful CAMPAIGN STAFFERS, ROBERT F. KENNEDY (42) stands victorious from the California primary.

ROBERT F. KENNEDY  
(hope and electricity)  
...the importance of what has happened  
here in the state of California, what  
happened in New Hampshire, and what's  
happened across the rest of the country.  
This country wants to move in a different  
direction. We want to deal with our own  
problems. And, we want peace in Vietnam!

The staffers explode with cheers!

INT. COLONIAL PRESS ROOM - AMBASSADOR HOTEL - NIGHT

Waiting for Bobby Kennedy's entrance and official winning  
primary speech, Bennett and KNBC shooter GABRIEL MARTINEZ  
(30'S) mill about.

Dozens and dozens of local, national and the international  
press prepare their stand ups, makes notes, chit chat.

The political air - jubilant.

**SCREEN READS: JUNE 5, 1968, 11:50 PM.**

Bennett yawns, checks his watch and assesses where he'll place  
his camera.

JIM BENNETT  
He's not going to want to work through  
the crowd.

GABRIEL MARTINEZ  
You think he'll come from somewhere else?

JIM BENNETT  
(looks around)  
The connecting pantry doors are across  
the room. Let's take a chance.

Bennett picks up the sticks (tripod).

INT. BACK SERVICE HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ambassador Maitre d' KARL UECKER (40'S) meets and leads Dutton, WILLIAM BARRY (41) and Kennedy towards the service pantry hallway. **12:10 A.M.**

MAITRE D' KARL EUKER  
This way, gentlemen.

INT. COLONIAL ROOM PRESS AREA - NIGHT

Bennett reviews his notes. Most press corps ready themselves away from the pantry door closer to the podium.

Gabe looks into the lens, points his finger at Jim - rolling. Bennett looks squarely in the camera.

JIM BENNETT  
(rehearsal)  
3,2,1... Coming off victories in Indiana and Nebraska with new-found momentum, Robert Kennedy won the California Primary tonight...

INT. KITCHEN PANTRY - NIGHT

Dutton, Barry, Ueker and RFK turn the corner and enter the kitchen pantry - filled with celebrity supporters.

To RFK's left, an ice machine against the wall and a steam table to the left. **12:14 A.M.**

Robert Kennedy turns to his left and shakes hands with busboy JUAN ROMERO (17).

ROBERT F. KENNEDY  
(smiles)  
Hello, Juan. I know it's late, you must be getting as tired as I am.

Kennedy then turns. He faces openly a Palestinian-Christian, stable boy, named SIRHAN SIRHAN (24).

INT. COLONIAL ROOM - PRESS AREA - NIGHT

Bennett hears shots fired from the inside of the kitchen pantry. Pow! Pow! Pow! Five in all.

Chaos - security details rush in.

More secret service and Ambassador security push past Bennett and Gabe in a flood through the pantry double doors.

Bennett follows those going in - momentarily seeing Bobby lying on the cold tile floor overtaken by gunshots - Juan Romero bent down on his knee at Bobby's side - mayhem.

Bennett, as quickly is pushed back out to the Colonial room.

SECURITY  
Out! Out! Back out!!

Kitchen pantry doors are sealed. No more visual access.

JIM BENNETT  
(breathless)  
Gabe... He's just been shot... Bobby  
Kennedy has just been shot.

INT. KITCHEN PANTRY - NIGHT

ETHEL KENNEDY (40), distraught, is led to the side of her husband Robert who lies the bleeding on the floor.

RFK turns his head and appears to recognize his wife Ethel. Medical attendants arrive.

INT. COLONIAL ROOM - PRESS AREA - MINUTES LATER - NIGHT

Fingers shaking, Bennett begins to write. Notepad reads: RFK - shot in kitchen pantry, Ambassador Hotel. Just won California primary, 42 years old, mortally wounded - shooter, Sirhan Sirhan.

Jim Bennett then lifts his eyes up to Gabe's camera.

JIM BENNETT  
(softly)  
Let's do it, Gabe.

GABE  
Rolling.

JIM BENNETT  
(beat)  
On the eve of his California Primary win,  
Robert Fitzgerald Kennedy, democratic  
candidate for the Presidency of the  
United States...

INT. GOOD SAMARITAN HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Hospital receiving doors push open wide. RFK is rolled into emergency trauma.

JIM BENNETT (V.O.)  
Has just been shot in the kitchen pantry  
at the Los Angeles Ambassador Hotel.

INT. INTENSIVE CARE UNIT - NIGHT

Ethel Kennedy stands bedside. The medical team work over Bobby who clings to his last breath.

JIM BENNETT (V.O.)  
Rushed to Good Samaritan Central  
Receiving Hospital, Kennedy arrived near  
death.

INT. BENNETT'S CAR - 2 A.M. - NIGHT

Bennett and Gabriel Martinez quietly drive. Not a sound or word between them.

JIM BENNETT (V.O.)  
One bullet entered behind the ear,  
dispersing fragments throughout the  
brain.

EXT. KNBC EMPLOYEE PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Bennett and Gabe pull in. Gabe reaches in the backseat and retrieves the camera and negative film.

JIM BENNETT (V.O.)  
Like his bother John Fitzgerald Kennedy,

INT. BENNETT'S CAR - NIGHT

Bennett drives on a wide and empty freeway.

JIM BENNETT (V.O.)  
Robert was the second member of his  
family to be gunned down at the hands of  
an assassin's bullet.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Bennett sits alone staring at the black and white bar TV -  
RFK - a number of empty glasses before him - alone, far beyond  
withdrawn.

JIM BENNETT (V.O.)  
Removing the bullet and bone fragments  
was all in vain for the candidate.

EXT. BENNETT'S HOUSE - 2:30 AM - NIGHT

Bennett's car pulls in to the driveway, headlights out.

JIM BENNETT (V.O.)  
And, so at 1:44 A.M., Thursday, June 6th,  
1968...

A porch light comes on. Barbara opens the screen door. Jim  
turns the motor off.

JIM BENNETT (V.O.)  
Nearly six hours after Sirhan Sirhan lied  
in wait inside the Ambassador Hotel's  
kitchen pantry...

INT. DAUGHTER CLAUDIA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Bennett and Barbara approach the crib of their new born.

CLAUDIA (Month old) sleeps without a care.

JIM BENNETT (V.O.)  
Robert Fitzgerald Kennedy was pronounced  
dead.

Claudia's eyes, open wide.

EXT. FRONT OF THE BENNETT HOUSE - 11 A.M. - MORNING - DAY

A black sedan rolls up the street towards the Santa Monica  
Bennett home.

Bill Brown, Bob Mulholland and NY's RON STEINMAN (40'S) step  
out.

The men approach Jim's house, knock on the door. Bennett  
opens.

JIM BENNETT  
Bill, Bob.

BOB MULHOLLAND  
Jim, this is Ron Steinman from New York.  
You gotta' minute?

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Bennett shakes hands with his colleagues. The executives get  
back in their car, ease out to the street and make a turn.

Bennett works back to the house.

INT. BENNETT'S KITCHEN - DAY

Jim sits with Claudia in his lap at the table. Barb turns down  
the volume of the ongoing RFK news.

JIM BENNETT  
(beat)  
With Bobby gone, they seem to think that  
Vietnam is going to escalate. The network  
wants a full time presence out of their  
bureau in Saigon. Asked me if I'd be  
interested.



BARBARA

(beat)

What'd you tell them?

JIM BENNETT

I told them I'd have to check in with my own Bureau Chief, you.

Claudia smiles and tugs at dead's ear. Jim looks at Barb. She takes Claudia from Jim's lap.

He gets up and stares out the window to see Matt and Scott in the yard.

BARBARA

Bill Brown called me first thing this morning. You were still sleeping.

Jim turns.

JIM BENNETT

Why didn't you wake me?

BARBARA

He wanted to talk to me, and then I wanted you to hear it from them first. He said Ron Steinman and the network reached out about you to him personally. Asked how I would feel about it?

JIM BENNETT

They went right to the top didn't they? What about them?

BARBARA

Kid's will be in school. I'm here with the little one. Diane's next door. I'll still be freelancing.

JIM BENNETT

You think they'll understand their dad being gone?

BARBARA

You've said it a hundred times, Jim. Vietnam is the story of a generation. Our kids generation. Now you have the chance to cover it.

EXT. THAN SA NHUT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - DAY

A Pan American 737 descends, flaps down.

**SCREEN READS: TAN SON NHUT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT VIETNAM - 1969**

INT. THAN SA NHUT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - CUSTOMS - DAY

Customs and its melee. French, English and Vietnamese announcements blend over the others.

INT. THAN SA NHUT TERMINAL - DAY

Other side of customs. Bennett is greeted by a Vietnamese NBC News driver and coordinator attaché, MR. LOI (50'S).

Loi, rapid-fire, broken English.

MR. LOI

Hello, Mr. Bennett - NBC News?! Yim (Jim) Bennett?

JIM BENNETT

Yeah, I'm Jim Bennett.

MR. LOI

I'm, Mr. Loi, NBC bureau. I see your picture in employ-ee file. I'm here to take you to bureau, to Mr. Daniels.

Loi shoulders Jim's larger bag.

JIM BENNETT

Oh, perfect.

MR. LOI

Very happy you're here. Bureau short of correspondents in field. Some in Hong Kong, R & R, others, out on assignments!

Out of the corner of Loi's eye, the voluptuous and sexually aggressive, American blonde photo-journalist, SARAH WEBB BARREL (30's) bounds behind the men through customs and hoards of tavelers.

Mr. Loi covers his face and begins walking quickly.

MR. LOI (CONT'D)

Mr. Bennett, please hurry. This way.

Sarah looks up, catches a piece of Mr. Loi who is traversing away from her with speed.

She speaks with a thin-high, honey-like, desirable voice but one that belies any modicum of common sense or self-assuredness.

SARAH W. BARRELL

Mr. Loi! Loi!!

MR. LOI  
(turns)  
Uh, oh. Please, Mr. Bennett, walk this way. Quickly!

Loi covers his face with Bennett's shoulder bag and strides left and away from Sarah towards an adjoining terminal.

JIM BENNETT  
What's the matter? There, trouble?

MR. LOI  
More than you know! Blonde woman, Miss Sarah Barrell. They call her "Miss Dumb Dumb". Anything but! She just sound's like it.

JIM BENNETT  
She work here?

MR. LOI  
New York newspaper. Photojournalist.

EXT. AIRPORT TERMINAL PARKING LOT - DAY

Loi and Bennett break from the terminal doors toward the parking lot.

MR. LOI  
Scorpion who asks frog for ride across pond, then stings when gets to other side. Mean!

EXT. 1963 MERCEDES - DAY

Loi opens the trunk. He gets Jim's bag inside. Loi then opens front and back passenger doors.

MR. LOI  
More trouble than poison punji! Please, hurry.

INT. 1963 MERCEDES - DAY

Loi slips inside behind the wheel. Bennett slides in the rear back seat.

MR. LOI  
Safe now.

Doors slam. Loi fumbles for his keys. Refers to Jim in the mirror.

MR. LOI (CONT'D)  
Nearly get me killed, four times! Do anything to get picture! Anything. Put people in real danger!

Suddenly, the front passenger door flies open. Dangerous and sexually carefree, she smiles disarmingly at Mr. Loi.

Her unique voice fills the cab with a distinctive, skewed, smoke-like, plummy fragrance.

SARAH W. BARRELL

(champagne whisper )

Hello, Mr. Loi... You running away from me again? You know better than that.

Sarah gives a big kiss on the cheek. Loi's head and shoulders slump - it's over.

MR. LOI

(emphatic)

You don't belong in this car. No give you ride!

Sarah looks into the backseat and sees the handsome but exhausted, Jim Bennett. She winks.

SARAH W. BARRELL

It's only four miles to Saigon. Straight down Trung Chanh 2. I can't cause too much trouble in that amount of time. (Turns to Bennett) He calls me, Miss Punji. Affectionately, I think, but I'm not sure. I'm not as much poison as he says I am.

MR. LOI

We go to Bureau. I go nowhere else. No side-roads, no villages, no hotel bars first, no front-line, no distraction.

SARAH W. BARRELL

No worries, Loi. Straight to the Continental.

Sarah leans over the seat and outstretches her hand to Bennett.

SARAH W. BARRELL (CONT'D)

Hey, there. I'm, Sarah Barrell. Shooter for New York Daily News.

JIM BENNETT

Jim Bennett, KNBC, Los Angeles.

SARAH W. BARRELL

Ah, then you work for Blake Daniels. He's got his finger on the pulse of all of South East Asia.

She turns back to Loi.

SARAH W. BARRELL (CONT'D)  
 (to Loi - in French)  
 What's Daniels got in mind for him, Loi?  
 Where's he going? What's he covering?

MR. LOI  
 (French)  
 I don't know)

SARAH W. BARRELL  
 (French)  
 Da Nang, Pleiku?

MR. LOI  
 (French)  
 Miss Sarah, please, with respect, you go  
 now!!! Find other ride.

JIM BENNETT  
 It's alright, Mr. Loi. If it's on the  
 way. I don't mind.

INT. 1963 MERCEDES - TRAFFIC - DAY

Trung Chanh 2 Expressway.

Traffic, chokes. Loi keeps his eyes straight as can be. Sarah,  
 chats a mile a minute - turns to speak with Jim.

SARAH W. BARRELL  
 Mr. Loi's a little conservative. We've  
 had some adventures. He can be a little  
 gun shy.

Sarah flips down the visor fixing her make up in the mirror.  
 Looks at Jim.

SARAH W. BARRELL (CONT'D)  
 Where you from?

JIM BENNETT  
 Raised in Detroit mostly. You?

SARAH W. BARRELL  
 Upstate New York. Syracuse.

JIM BENNETT  
 Know it well...

Mr. Loi rolls his eyes - checks his watch - haven't heard all  
 this before.

SARAH W. BARRELL  
 Ever cover a war before?

JIM BENNETT  
Just the one back home.

SARAH W. BARRELL  
Ain't that the truth? Half the people  
flying their flags in support of it, the  
other half burning them because of it.

JIM BENNETT  
Any advice?

SARAH W. BARRELL  
Just don't get caught behind enemy lines.

EXT. INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL - DAY

Loi's Mercedes pulls up to the hotel entrance. Sarah gets out,  
closes the door, pops her head through the window.

SARAH W. BARRELL  
(just beautiful)  
Hey, California? Let's get a drink  
sometime. Everybody runs into everybody  
around here, one way or another, if you  
know what I mean?

JIM BENNETT  
Je vais garder mes yeux ouverts. (I'll  
keep my eyes open).

INT. 1963 MERCEDES - DAY

Mr. Loi merges into traffic.

MR. LOI  
Ah, you speak French. That's funny! You  
got it up on her! Now that square with  
me!

INT. NBC SAIGON BUREAU OFFICE - BLAKE DANIELS OFFICE - DAY

Mr. Loi and Jim enter to see NBC Bureau Chief BLAKE DANIELS  
(50's) work a large wall map of Vietnam.

Daniels cradles the phone between head and shoulder. He marks  
X's and circles enemy hot spots on the map as he goes.

BLAKE DANIELS  
(beyond frustrated)  
Listen, that transport was supposed to be  
here three hours ago. Network is up my  
ass, Dave!

Daniels waves Loi and Bennett inside. Daniel's office is a  
mess i.e., papers, reports, 16 mm film canisters!

BLAKE DANIELS (CONT'D)

(cupping phone)

Just move that crap off the chairs. Loi, put it over there. Jim Bennett, how ya' doing? Here, sit down. Puttin' out a fire. Give me a second.

JIM BENNETT

No worries.

The men sit opposite Daniel's desk.

BLAKE DANIELS

(phone))

Listen, if I don't get this film out on the next flight either out to Bangkok or Tokyo, this story doesn't get on the air. Then, I have to explain to a field reporter, who's getting his ass all shot up getting me that story, why his best stuff isn't getting aired. Understand? I need that film on that transport! On hold? No, don't put me on hold. There's no hold. I'm done! Just get it done!!

Daniels hangs up - a world of problems. He leans over his desk and extends a warm greeting.

BLAKE DANIELS (CONT'D)

He wanted to put me on hold. You kidding me? I'm Blake Daniels. Or, what's left of me, anyway. How was the trip?

JIM BENNETT

Long and uneventful.

BLAKE DANIELS

That'll be the last one of those for a while. I apologize for the mess. We're a little understaffed. The suits back home don't know what they've got over here. They can cover Hank Aaron with a thousand reporters but when it comes to a half million soldiers overseas they seem to be short of resources.

Daniels pops an antacid tablet and turns back to his map.

BLAKE DANIELS (CONT'D)

Blues are my hunches. Reds are confirmed.

JIM BENNETT

Battin' about 850, looks like.

BLAKE DANIELS

But this one here, Firebase Cunningham.  
2nd Battalion, 3rd Marines. Just got up  
and running. Vietcong's been scratching  
all over those hills like fleas on a dog.

Daniels carefully positions a Blue pin in Firebase Cunningham.

BLAKE DANIELS (CONT'D)

You ever cover live combat before?

JIM BENNETT

No, but I fought in the South Pacific.  
Navy. Took a torpedo on the starboard  
side, once.

BLAKE DANIELS

Okay, well, action is action isn't it?  
We'll get you outfitted and set up at the  
Continental. Spend a couple of days  
debriefing, get your sea legs. You got  
any boots?

Bennett lifts up his feet and shows him his traveling loafers.

JIM BENNETT

Just traveling shoes. Figured I'd get a  
pair at a PX rather than pack 'em.

BLAKE DANIELS

Forget the PX. Wait for weeks. Loi here  
will get you down to the black market.  
It's actually more efficient.

A second Vietnamese man named MR. NGHIEM (40's) enters - hands  
Daniels a note.

MR. NGHIEM

Binh just call in. Say VC patrols spotted  
North of Firebase Cunningham. Choppers  
leaving Bien Hoa.

BLAKE DANIELS

Good work, Nghiem. Fire Base Cunningham.  
Hot damnit!! I knew it!

Mr. Nghiem exits.

Daniels refers to his map - replaces the Blue pin with a Red  
one. (Confirmed)

BLAKE DANIELS (CONT'D)

Information and hunches. This is how the  
game's played,, Jim. Just like back home.  
Loi, get me Ron Yates.



MR. LOI  
Bangkok. R & R. Back tonight.

BLAKE DANIELS  
What about Carl Robinson?

MR. LOI  
Da Nang. He left three days ago.

BLAKE DANIELS  
We got anybody in the pool?

MR. LOI  
Everyone on assignment or in Tokyo.

BLAKE DANIELS  
Son of a bitch.

Daniels paces. Looks at his map.

JIM BENNETT  
What about me? I could cover it.

BLAKE DANIELS  
From Santa Monica to the battlefield?  
First day? No way. Not even if you have  
taken a torpedo!

MR. LOI  
They take off in thirty minutes, Mr.  
Daniels.

JIM BENNETT  
You lose that coverage, you'll be 0 for 2  
today if your film doesn't get on that  
transport and you also lose Firebase  
Cunningham. NBC brass will wonder why you  
weren't there!

Daniels refers to his map. Rock and a hard place!

BLAKE DANIELS  
(grows agitated)  
You know how hairy it can get?

JIM BENNETT  
Pretty hairy, I imagine.

Daniels smiles and shakes his head.

BLAKE DANIELS  
What size boot do you wear?

JIM BENNETT  
11.

Daniels sits and starts untieing his own boots.

BLAKE DANIELS

You better find a latrine before you leave, son. I've seen grown men shit their pants right where they stand because they thought they were ready and they were anything but...

Jim hands over his loafers. Daniels puts forward his own boots.

JIM BENNETT

I get it.

BLAKE DANIELS

Here, take 'em. Mr. Loi get this man his gear and his credentials. You're on point, Bennett. Listen to those around you and bring back that film. On the way back, make sure to get on a medevac huey. Geneva convention won't let 'em carry side-mounts. No return fire. Catch my drift? You don't want your balls all shot up at least not on the first day.

JIM BENNETT

I'll remember that.

Daniels leans over and shakes his hand.

BLAKE DANIELS

You get the chance, press those commanders. Get the coverage and get out! There's plenty more war to cover. No heroics. No, John Wayne bullshit. We don't do that around here.

JIM BENNETT

Copy.

BLAKE DANIELS

I need you back in one piece and I need that film.

EXT. 7TH AIR CAVALRY CHOPPER PAD - MINUTES LATER - DAY

A TRUMPETER blows the Calvary call!

CH-47 Chinook. Dual rotor blades begin to spin. BINH (30's) Vietnamese 16 mm camera man. French Vietnamese, HENRI TRUNG (20's). The men check their equipment - cameras - film stock - sound nagra wheel to wheel, microphone chords.

Jim is led by Mr. Loi to the film and sound men. Overhead, blades and turbines ignite and spin.

Intros:

MR. LOI

Mr. Binh, Mr. Trung, this is Mr. Bennett.  
He's covering Fire Base Cunningham for  
Mr. Daniels. He just got in today.

CAMERA MAN BINH

Where's Carl Robinson?

MR. LOI

Tokyo.

The men share a look.

JIM BENNETT

Just got in from, ah... Santa Monica.

INT. AIR CAV 7 CHOPPER - DAY

The Chinook flies above the jungle canopy at 150 knots.  
Bennett and his crew share the cabin with a SECOND FILM CREW  
and three other men.

Renowned Singaporean/Chinese combat photographer TERRENCE KHOO  
(28), SAM KAI FAYE (28) and South Vietnamese Army photographer  
TRAN VAN NGHIA (27), sit quietly opposite their counterparts.

Bennett double-checks his strap belt and recognizing Terrence  
Khoo.

JIM BENNETT

Jim Bennett NBC bureau, aren't you Terry  
Khoo? I've seen a lot of your footage.  
It's an honor to meet you.

TERRY KHOO

Thank you...

Bennett, impressed, leans forward to shake his hand.

JIM BENNETT

You've been shooting and filing combat  
since 1962.

TERRY KHOO

Yes. My crew. Sam Kai Faye, sound, and  
Tran Van Nghia, South Vietnamese  
photographer.

JIM BENNETT

My guys.. Mr. Binh on camera. Henri  
Trung, sound.

TERRY KHOO  
 (dignified)  
 We know each other.

The men exchange nods.

GUNNER  
 (beat)  
 Okay, listen up. Ready your positions.

A GUNNER and the CREW CHIEF make ready their 50 cal's. A young SOLDIER (19) smiles at Bennett.

SOLDIER # 1  
 (calm)  
 Not a good idea to make friends out here.  
 Just so you know.

The Crew Chief signals.

PILOT  
 (heavy Arkansas accent)  
 Alright, Binh, Henri, Terry... you know  
 the drill. New guy! Bennett?

JIM BENNETT  
 Yeah?

PILOT  
 I hear this is your first shit storm.  
 We're flying directly into it. You're  
 going to have to make that jump as soon  
 as I give the word. If not, you'll be  
 coming back with me empty-handed. Got it?

Jim nods to the Crew Chief.

PILOT (CONT'D)  
 Prep the LZ on my command. 3,2,1.. Go!

Rockets and hellacious gunfire pound the forward landing zone.  
 Trees, earth and canopy - splintered, obliterated below.

PILOT (CONT'D)  
 Target softened.

Soldiers snap-in ammo magazines. Binh loads his film. Henri checks for sound.

Bennett watches the ground below come quickly into focus.

PILOT (CONT'D)  
 LZ's prep'd. Dropping in!

EXT. FIREBASE CUNNINGHAM LANDING ZONE - DAY

Smoke markers target the landing drop.

7th Air Cav echelon descends. U.S. Army personnel circle below providing gatling cover-fire from the encroaching enemy - the North Vietnamese Army (NVA).

INT. AIR CAV 7 CHOPPER - DAY

Enemy fire and tracers fill the air. It begins to get hairy real fast! Live rounds ricochet and bounce about the cabin.

PILOT

HOLD ON!

Binh, Henri and the GI's ready themselves. Air ship descends.

PILOT (CONT'D)

Coming in...

Jim tugs on his safety belt. It's not releasing. Suddenly, the chopper takes wild rounds inside the cabin.

CREW CHIEF

Wild rounds! Wild rounds!

Advancing enemy NVA step out from a tree line.

PILOT

Gunners! Two and three o'clock.

The gunner and crew chief whirl and begin spilling a wall of gatling steel into the bush at 500 rounds per minute.

PILOT (CONT'D)

Mowing'em down like a row of gooks in a rice paddy.

NVA drop by the dozens in the wide-open fields.

FULL SCENE - MORE - VARIOUS

The Pilot banks a hard right, throwing everyone back into their seats. A GI nearly drops out.

Jim grabs him by the back of the shirt.

SOLDIER # 2

Thanks, man.

The chopper strafes the treeline coming back around to the LZ.

PILOT

Okay. One more time. We're going to try and put this down. Coming up!

Jim's belt is still caught. He struggles, but the hitch won't open.

JIM BENNETT

Damn it...

The Pilot descends quickly to about ten feet off the ground. Tall elephant grass, pushed about by the heavy rotor wash.

CREW CHIEF

Go, go, go!!

The side gunner pours continuous rounds of vicious cover into the bush line.

The Marines, Binh and Henri make the leap. They hit, tumble and pick up their weapons and gear.

Terry Khoo and his men, step off from the landing runner.

Bennett still struggles with his belt - can't get out.

JIM BENNETT

It's jammed!

EXT. LANDING ZONE - DAY

Henri scrambles to safety. Terry and his guys tumble in the opposite direction.

A GI provides cover. Binh waits for Jim to jump but he's still in the cabin fighting for his belt to release.

CAMERAMAN BINH

(calling to Bennett)

Nhay! Nhay! (Jump!)

INT. AIR CAV 7 CHOPPER - DAY

The Pilot looks to see Jim still inside.

The craft rocks with another concussion blast, pushing rotor blades dangerously close to Binh and Henri!

PILOT

Bravo command. Bravo command. Air Cav  
7... Air Cav 7. Come in command!

The chopper tilts sideways, hovering with it's side door wide-open, twelve-feet off the ground.

JIM BENNETT

The hitch won't open!

PILOT

Jam it in the hole, next to the release!

Bennett jams the belt-hitch and the belt pops loose.

PILOT (CONT'D)  
GO! GO! GO!

Bennett steps onto the landing skid.

EXT. LZ - DAY

The chopper rocks left to right. A second concussion blast hits and Bennett is thrown helplessly off the skids.

JIM BENNETT  
Arghhh...

The chopper cuts left, lifts and flies!

EXT. LANDING ZONE -DAY

Bennett falls from above and slams his chin onto his knee. Dazed, blood pours from his jaw and mouth.

Terry Khoo runs to Bennett and tackles him down for cover. RPG's, tracers and live rounds fly overhead.

TERRY KHOO  
Cover! Get to cover! Find a foxhole!

Incoming shells pound. Bennett keeps low to the ground and scrambles towards U.S. Army foxholes.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD FOXHOLE - DAY

Bennett tumbles into a foxhole and crashes into a couple of American G.I.'s.

JIM BENNETT  
Arrrgghhh...

GREEN BERET MAJOR GORDON PENNINGTON, (30's,) and his Radio Man, CORPORAL BIFFAR, (20's,) spin viciously around with drawn weapons and fixed bayonets.

MAJOR PENNINGTON  
Who the fuck are you?

JIM BENNETT  
Bennett. Press. NBC.

Bennett turns and spits out a tooth in his hand. Blood streams from his mouth onto his right knee.

MAJOR PENNINGTON  
You hit?

We hear radio futz relaying advancing enemy positions.

JIM BENNETT  
No. I don't think so.

We hear an allied Vietnamese voice over the radio.

RADIO FUTZ (RADIO)  
(breaking up)  
Firebase Cunningham, Cobra 9, vector,  
two, zero, eight, enemy now visible and  
advancing.

MAJOR PENNINGTON  
Who is that?

RADIO MAN CORPORAL BIFFAR  
Captain Vo.

MAJOR PENNINGTON  
Keep your head down newsman if you want  
to keep it.

RADIO MAN CORPORAL BIFFAR  
Copy that, Cobra 9, repeat position.

A Vietnamese voice under fire comes over the radio.

VOICE (CAPTAIN VO)  
Vector two, zero, eight.

EXT. FORWARD ENEMY POSITION - DAY

CAPTAIN VO (30's) of the U.S. Allied SOUTH VIETNAMESE ARMY OF  
THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM (ARVN).

CAPTAIN VO  
Visual on advancing PAVN. Request  
immediate air support. Repeat, request  
immediate air support.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD FOXHOLE - DAY

Major Pennington takes the radio. Bennett, right place, right  
time - an unfolding nightmare.

MAJOR PENNINGTON  
Captain Vo? It's Major Pennington.

CAPTAIN VO (V.O.)  
(radio)  
Enemy, approximately a half click north  
by northwest. Request immediate air  
support.

RADIO MAN CORPORAL BIFFAR  
VO'S position is going to get overrun.



EXT. ADVANCED POSITION FIREBASE CUNNINGHAM - DAY

Vo and his men bravely take on overwhelming, heavy enemy fire and mortar rounds.

CAPTAIN VO  
(Vietnamese)  
Mount fixed bayonets!

Allied rifles begin dry-clicking - no ammunition.

CAPTAIN VO (CONT'D)  
(on the radio)  
Coordinates, vector B, 28 degrees... One full click east of Piro Alpha. Heavy NVA advancements. Heavy mortar rounds. Need air support, supplies, more men!

EXT. BATTLEFIELD FOXHOLE - DAY

Major Pennington ducks from a nearby mortar round.

MAJOR PENNINGTON  
They've got him pinned. Where are those FUCKING gunships?!!

Pennington reaches for the radio.

MAJOR PENNINGTON (CONT'D)  
Hold on, Vo. Just hold on to your position. We'll get you some air cover!

Jim writes every word in his note pad: **NO AIR COVER FOR ADVANCED SOUTH VIETNAMESE ALLIED POSITIONS!**

Bennett locates Binh and Henri within eye-shot. He points to the skies and to the front line.

JIM BENNETT  
Binh?!! SHOOT! SHOOT IT!! B-Roll.

EXT. BINH AND HENRI'S FOXHOLE - DAY

Binh dangerously stands up and begins filming. Henri, places his headset on his ears and rolls sound.

EXT. CAPTAIN VO'S ADVANCED POSITION - FULL SCENE - DAY

NVA fiercely advance from a myriad of entrenched rat holes. Weapons drawn, Vo and his men steady themselves for hand to hand combat.

NVA soldiers, within eyeshot, mount their own bayonets. Vo picks up the radio.

CAPTAIN VO  
 (concedes)  
 Visual on enemy. Major Pennington...  
 Major Pennington! Call it in, vector B,  
 28 degrees.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD FOXHOLE - DAY

Vo's voice cries out. Bennett shares a look with the other men.

MAJOR PENNINGTON  
 Unacceptable, Captain! Unacceptable.

JIM BENNETT  
 What are they arguing about?

RADIO MAN CORPORAL BIFFAR  
 Command leader got a visual on the enemy.  
 He's calling an air-strike in on his own  
 position. He'll die doing it - taking as  
 many NVA as he can with him.

JIM BENNETT  
 Where's the air support?

RADIO MAN CORPORAL BIFFAR  
 (shrugs)  
 Welcome to Vietnam, brotha'...

EXT. ADVANCED POSITION - FIREBASE CUNNINGHAM - DAY

Vo and his men squeeze off their last available rounds. 100 PAVN (Peoples Army of North Vietnam) and NVA advance from their entrenched, enemy positions.

CAPTAIN VO  
 LAST CHANCE TO CONFIRM ENEMY POSITION!!  
 CALL IT IN MAJOR!!! VISUAL CONTACT WITH  
 HEAVY NUMBERS OF ENEMY NVA, PAVN!!

EXT. BATTLEFIELD FOXHOLE - DAY

Pennington, resigned, sits back inside his foxhole. He looks up to the skies - no air support - empty skies.

MAJOR PENNINGTON  
 (resigned)  
 Fuck... Looks like you got yourself a  
 story, Bennett. (beat) Call it in,  
 Corporal.

RADIO MAN CORPORAL BIFFAR  
 Sir?

MAJOR PENNINGTON  
That's an order.

RADIO MAN CORPORAL BIFFAR  
Yes, sir. Air command, air command...  
Firebase Cunningham. One full click east  
of Piro Alpha, vector B, 28 degrees.  
Visual on enemy! (beat) Sir?

MAJOR PENNINGTON  
Put in the order.

CORPORAL BIFFAR  
Request bombardment, piro alpha...

EXT. THE SKIES ABOVE SOUTH VIETNAM - DAY

Two Navy Phantoms snap into formation.

NAVY PILOT # 1 (V.O.)  
Copy that Firebase Cunningham. Ordinance  
locked.

EXT. HILLTOP NEAR ASHAU - FIREBASE CUNNINGHAM - DAY

The enemy's last push overruns Captain Vo's position.

Man against man to the very end.

The People's Army and the south ARVN take the fight to the  
other in a bloody scene of hand to hand combat - point blank  
executions, cutting, grenades, stabbing, screaming, men dying.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD FOXHOLE - DAY

Pennington falls quiet. He throws a look to Bennett.

MAJOR PENNINGTON  
Just so you know. His name was Captain  
Vo. Bravest man I've ever served with  
including my own.

Two Navy F-4 Phantoms strafe overhead toward the tree line  
position of Vo and the enemy.

MAJOR PENNINGTON (CONT'D)  
Just get his name right when you tell the  
story.

EXT. SKIES ABOVE - DAY

Phantoms above. Terry Khoo and his men point their cameras to  
the skies.

NAVY PILOT # 1 (V.O.)  
Ordinance released.

Napalm cylinders tumble downward like cast out devils from heaven.

NAVY PILOT # 2  
Copy that, Red leader. (beat) Let it  
burn.

EXT. TREE LINE - DAY

Four hundred yards of dense tropical jungle goes up in an incendiary fireball. F-4 Phantoms bank hard right for open skies.

A sea of gasoline flame.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD FOXHOLE - DAY

Bennett scrambles towards Binh and Henri. A sky of red-gray, tropical ash rains down from above.

EXT. BINH AND HENRI'S FOXHOLE - DAY

Bennett dives and tumbles inside Binh and Henri's foxhole.

JIM BENNETT  
(out of breath)  
Get a stand up, ready.

EXT. FIREBASE CUNNINGHAM - MINUTES LATER - DAY

GI's move out and mop up the last of the rat holes with flame throwers. Tropical ash rains down everywhere.

Terry and his men cover the aftermath, photos and footage.

Bennett finds a small piece bamboo twig. He wipes his mouth clean with his shirt - places the small piece of stick into place over the broken tooth.

He checks his notes again.

JIM BENNETT  
Let's do a stand up.

Henri hands Bennett a microphone.

HENRI TRUNG  
Speed.

CAMERAMAN BINH  
Rolling.

JIM BENNETT

3,2,1... Minutes ago, an attack on U.S. American stronghold Firebase Cunningham was launched by the Communist People's Army of North Vietnam. The base was hit by 30-40 rounds of 122 millimeter artillery fire, resulting in five U.S. Marines killed.

A MARINE PRIEST (40's) tends to the nearby dead and wounded, "Our father who art in heaven".

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)

U.S. Forces anticipated enemy advances but were not prepared for the overwhelming enemy numbers. In a forward position, an allied South Vietnamese commander, found himself out of ammunition and carrying the fight directly to the NVA with fixed bayonets in a scene of hand-to-hand combat. Sacrificing his own life, and that of his command, Captain Vo, ordered a lethal U.S. Naval air bombardment directly over the enemy position, which happened to be that of his own. Jim Bennett, NBC News, Firebase Cunningham, Đa Krông Valley, South Vietnam.

EXT. LANDING ZONE - FIREBASE CUNNINGHAM - LATER - DAY

Bennett, Binh and Henri walk to where medics tend to the dead and wounded.

Major Pennington and Corporal Biffar emerge from the tree line carrying Captain Vo's charred body with help from two G.I.'s.

Pennington covers Captain Vo with a blanket.

A U.S. ARMY SERGEANT MONTGOMERY, (40's,) and G.I., SHERRILL, (19,) stand nearby. A weary G.I. Sherill SNAPS!

G.I. SHERRILL

Don't even know where this shit is coming from, man! Fuckin' Cong, fucking friendly fire... What's the difference? We're gettin' it either way!

Montgomery, mindful of the press, grabs the G.I. by the collar and shakes him.

SERGEANT MONTGOMERY

Shut your goddamn mouth, Soldier. I'll tell you when to speak and when not to speak, you got that grunt?

G.I. SHERRILL  
Sir, yes sir.

Bennett stands nearby but remains quiet. Montgomery (a Southern boy and a bit crazy) eyeballs Bennett hard.

SERGEANT MONTGOMERY  
We'd appreciate it if you'd be mindful of what you report. Sometimes the enemy uses it for their own propaganda.

Bennett says nothing.

SERGEANT MONTGOMERY (CONT'D)  
Now let's get these dead-ass, dinks accounted for and off my front lawn.

Montgomery, walks off. Sherrill in passing to Bennett.

G.I. SHERRILL  
(points upward)  
We're not even here to win this thing, man.

JIM BENNETT  
What do you mean by that?

G.I. SHERRILL  
Only the fuckin', great 'What if?', man...

A soldier pushes Sherrill along so no more trouble is had.

G.I. SHERRILL (CONT'D)  
Look for it.

Bennett turns to see four distant gunships approaching.

EXT. THE LANDING ZONE - DAY

The FOUR AIR CAV 120 ASSAULT CHOPPERS land ceremoniously in echelon. COLONEL JOHNCOX (50's,) disembarks and surveys the scene now that the battle has been fought.

Bennett crosses with Binh and Henri.

JIM BENNETT  
Start shooting when you get the chance.

CAMERAMAN BINH  
Right.

JIM BENNETT  
Colonel?

COLONEL JOHNCOX

Yep?

JIM BENNETT

Jim Bennett, NBC news. I'd like to get a comment if I may on the enemy advances onto Firebase Cunningham?

COLONEL JOHNCOX

Sure... The position has been secured and all enemy targets have been nullified.

Johncox turns away.

JIM BENNETT

But sir, when you say "nullified," are you taking into account the forward ARVN allied position that was overtaken by friendly fire?

COLONEL JOHNCOX

(bristles)

Commander Vo ordered the air-strike because he was face to face with the enemy. Regrettable of course, these things can happen in warfare.

JIM BENNETT

But Captain VO also requested U.S. gunship support but didn't get it. It was only when he was facing the prospect of being overrun, was he forced to call in the coordinates over the enemy, himself and his own men, Colonel.

Jim gestures to the colonel's echelon of gunships.

COLONEL JOHNCOX

What are you saying?

JIM BENNETT

I'm noting, forward positions needed gunship support, sir. Repeated calls. There were none in the area and yet you seem to have flown in with plenty of assault choppers with scout door gunners at the ready.

Johncox steps up close to Bennett.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)

Where were these ships, sir?

COLONEL JOHNCOX

(leveling)

I understand you have your job and I have mine. I suggest you report on what you know and leave how this war is fought to the professionals who are here to win it!

JIM BENNETT

Are we here to win it, sir?

Johncox pivots and turns, leaving Bennett, Binh and Henri stand by.

Pennington approaches with Captain Vo's body.

MAJOR PENNINGTON

(beat)

Well, you're on his shit-list. I need someone to take Captain Vo's body back to his family in Saigon. Sound like something you can do for us?

EXT. A VILLAGE NEAR SAIGON - EVENING

Binh, Henri and Jim, drive down a dirt road and enter a small hillside village. Vo's body lies inside a body bag on the back of the flatbed.

A little hut with a small welcoming light is seen in the darkness.

CAMERAMAN BINH

There. This is it.

EXT. VO FAMILY HUT - NIGHT

Bennett approaches. He knocks on the door. Captain Vo's father, VO TRAN DUC (70's) answers.

He wears the ever constant, ingrained concern for his son's welfare.

VO TRAN DUC

(Vietnamese)

I am Vo Tran Duc.

FOUR CHILDREN push through - excited to greet their Papasan but he's not there.

HENRI TRUNG

(Vietnamese)

This man is a journalist sent by the Americans. He was asked to find you.



INT. VO FAMILY HUT - LATER - NIGHT

Candles light the room.

Vo Tran Duc stares at his savagely burnt son. In Buddhist tradition, Vo Tran Duc pours water over the hand of his deceased son - recites quietly a Buddhist sutra.

VO TRAN DUC  
(Vietnamese whisper)  
Endowed with love, affording protection  
to sentient beings, please come forth  
through the power of your compassion...

Bennett, Binh and Henri respectfully stand by.

VT Duc opens up Vo's shirt and retrieves a small, burnt and charred Buddha necklace, removes it, kisses the forehead of his son, Vo.

He zips up the body bag. He calls out for his grandchildren. They enter the room.

VO TRAN DUC (CONT'D)  
(Vietnamese)  
These men are our friends. Show them your  
respect.

The children bow. Vo's youngest daughter, BIAN (5) smiles at Bennett. She reaches out for his hand. She inspects how big it is compared to her own.

BIAN  
(Vietnamese)  
Tiger paw.

Vo Tran Duc turns and moves to a small side table. He reaches into a polished wooden box, retrieving a precious, hand crafted Vietnamese Hill Tribe bracelet.

VO TRAN DUC  
(Vietnamese)  
I thank you for not leaving him. You have  
honored us, his children.

(Binh whispers the translation to Bennett).

JIM BENNETT  
Your son fought bravely, and died as  
bravely, Mr. Vo. You should know that.

Vo Tran Duc bows, stands before Bennett. He reaches up and places Vo's Buddha necklace around Jim's neck.

VO TRAN DUC  
 (Vietnamese)  
 Vo was born right here in this room. You  
 have brought him back home again.

Vo Tran Duc stares intently at Bennett - maybe even into  
 Bennett's future. He moves closer to him.

The old man peers into Jim's eyes.

VO TRAN DUC (CONT'D)  
 (Vietnamese)  
 You are a lamp to the path of the  
 underworld, and the bridge to my son's  
 final resting place.

Duc then reaches for Bennett's wrist and arm and secures a  
 sacred Gold Hill Tribe bracelet over his right wrist.

VO TRAN DUC (CONT'D)  
 (Vietnamese)  
 In this place, may protection find you,  
 and keep you.

INT. CONTINENTAL PALACE HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

A SOUTH VIETNAMESE FEMALE MUSICAL TRIO performs their best B  
 side, Motown hits.

Blake Daniels sits at a table along with counterpart, ABC  
 BUREAU CHIEF KEVIN DELANY (30's).

BLAKE DANIELS  
 Straight from Santa Monica to Firebase  
 Cunningham. He should have been here by  
 now.

KEVIN DELANY  
 Maybe he went back to the airport and got  
 the hell out.

BLAKE DANIELS  
 I wouldn't blame if he did.

Mr. Loi going over the film reports of the day.

In the bar, a number of others i.e., Terry Khoo, Sam Kai Faye,  
 band Tran Van Nghia back from Firebase Cunningham.

Another group at the far side sits handsome photo journalist  
 and Time Magazine's, SEAN FLYNN (28), son of screen idol Errol  
 Flynn, and short, nearsighted CBS reporter, DANA STONE (30).

Australian BRIAN(DIGGER) WILTON (30's), and long haired  
 photojournalist, reefer-hitting, DENNIS CLAYTON (30's) share a  
 hit.

Blake checks his watch.

BLAKE DANIELS (CONT'D)  
(checks watch)  
He should have been back by now.

MR. LOI  
He was on the Sea Knight for the return.  
It landed.

With film in hand, Bennett enters the front doors along with Binh and Henri Trung. (Helluva' first day).

Jim, Binh and Henri cross and arrive at Daniel's table.

BLAKE DANIELS  
There you are! Sit down. You alright?

JIM BENNETT  
Yeah. We're alright.

BLAKE DANIELS  
Thought we lost ya' for a minute.

The men sit. Bennett, fatigued, dirty, sweaty.

BLAKE DANIELS (CONT'D)  
Jim Bennett, Kevin Delany, ABC Bureau  
Chief. My counterpart. First day out.

Delany and Bennett shake hands.

KEVIN DELANY  
Heard it was a real shit storm up there.

JIM BENNETT  
Yeah. We came in on the medevac, but had a little detour. Brought a charred, South Vietnamese Captain back to his father and family. He was in a forward position, called for U.S Air support. Didn't get it - then called in the napalm on his own position while he was being overrun.

KEVIN DELANY  
I'll let you guys debrief. Nice meeting you, Jim. See you around.

JIM BENNETT  
Okay.

Delany moves to Sean Flynn's table.

Bennett, now wearing the jade Buddha and crocheted bracelet, sits a bit distraught.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)  
The Captain's gave these to me in  
appreciation.

Daniels inspects the bracelet.

BLAKE DANIELS  
I've seen something like this before from  
a Special Forces guy. Sacred stuff from  
tribe to tribe. The French call them  
Montagnards - mountain tribes. Trained by  
U.S. Special Forces, actually.

Daniels examines.

JIM BENNETT  
Pulled it out of a box with markings on  
it.

BLAKE DANIELS  
They exchange these things between  
themselves, a gesture of good will  
between the mountain tribes. It's like a  
jungle passport in a way.

JIM BENNETT  
I think my own just got stamped.

BLAKE DANIELS  
Story's in the can?

Bennett tosses forward his broken tooth.

JIM BENNETT  
It's all there.

The waitress returns with Daniels' drink but it's Bennett who  
reaches for it.

CAMERAMAN BINH  
Tomorrow, Reuters.

Binh, Henri and Bennett shake hands. The two men exit.

BLAKE DANIELS  
Okay. Stay near your phones.

The tinny, scratchy B side hits continue to play from our  
Vietnamese trio.

Mr. Loi comes back with a fresh, wet-towel and gives it to  
Bennett. He wipes the battle grime off his neck and face.

JIM BENNETT  
Thank you.

Mr. Loi sits.

BLAKE DANIELS

Okay. Loi, get the film out to Bangkok, or Tokyo if it's faster, get it developed, then to New York on the first flight out. Tell those guys to get a dupe-copy back to me before it goes stateside. Guard it with your life, Loi. That's all prime time, right there.

MR. LOI

Yes, sir.

Loi hurriedly carries off the canisters.

BLAKE DANIELS

Here's a few guys you'll be coming across. Terry Khoo and Sam Kai Faye. I use them all the time.

JIM BENNETT

They were on the Chinook on the way out.

BLAKE DANIELS

Sean Flynn. Shooting for Time Magazine.

JIM BENNETT

Errol Flynn's son?

BLAKE DANIELS

Handsome bastard, isn't he? Why he's here and not back in Hollywood chasing all the skirt he can handle is beyond me. His partner to his right, CBS's Dana Stone. Can't see worth a shit but a helleva' reporter.

The Vietnamese-Motown Trio's hacked up version of the 1969 hit Crimson and Clover thankfully comes to an end.

A smattering of applause and raised drinks.

NBC NEWS German cameraman DIETER BELLENDORF (30'S) steps back from the bar.

BLAKE DANIELS (CONT'D)

See that guy over there? He's Mr. Third Reich, himself. We call him, The Fuhrer. Dieter Bellendorf. Good in a bar fight, but if you team up with him, he can also get you killed.

FLASH SCENE:

INT. ANOTHER BAR - NIGHT

Dieter squares off with a number of Aussies.

DIETER BELLENDORF  
Is this a private fight or can anybody  
get in on it?

Dieter swings wildly and connects with an Australian soldier  
in the teeth - full out brawl.

BACK TO SCENE:

INT. CONTINENTAL PALACE HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

Dieter has a satchel handcuffed to his wrist.

BLAKE DANIELS  
Watch this. His little circus act.

He opens up the satchel and drops out a five foot, white  
python down to his feet.

JIM BENNETT  
He carries a snake with him?

BLAKE DANIELS  
(laughs)  
Not just any python. A goddamn Aryan  
white python named, Fernanda.

JIM BENNETT  
Fernanda? Why?

BLAKE DANIELS  
It guards his black market piastas -  
cash, he tucks away in there. One time,  
it bit him. God damned thing about it?  
Dieter bit it back.

Drinks are poured for Dieter's friends. The sideshow gets  
underway. A young girl brings out a live chicken from the  
kitchen.

BLAKE DANIELS (CONT'D)  
Watch this.

Dieter takes the chicken and dangles it over the coiling  
snake. The white python then snaps it up from Dieter's grasp  
in a flash!!

Chicken gone, feathers everywhere! Vawuump!!

DIETER BELLENDORF  
(hilarious uproar)  
Yeeeahh! Meine kleine enforcer!!

Cheers are had, more drinks for friends are poured.

JIM BENNETT  
Well, you don't see that everyday.

BLAKE DANIELS  
(shakes his head)  
Loves battle, the smell of blood. Snakes.

Bennett sips his drink and takes a long look at his new colleagues.

JIM BENNETT  
Colorful. Who's that guy? The long hair?

A very stoned, wild and long haired, Dennis Clayton stumbles away from his drunken cadre at the bar.

BLAKE DANIELS  
(smiles)  
Dennis Clayton. They call him, "the gardener".

FLASH SCENE:

EXT. SMALL VILLAGE HUT - DAY

Wearing a loose fitting silk kimono robe, Dennis carefully tends to his dozen pot plants along with two of his live-in Vietnamese GIRLFRIENDS. (Barely 18).

BLAKE DANIELS (V.O.)  
Let's just say, he enjoys the fruits and passions of life.

EXT. BATTLE FIELD - DAY

Dennis sets his long range lens while tracers fly all around him. Click, click, click.

BLAKE DANIELS (V.O.)  
And, I've seen him stand in the middle of the road with no cover, with enemy advancing right in front of him like he was taking a family photo at a picnic.

BACK TO SCENE:

INT. CONTINENTAL PALACE HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

Dennis climbs onto stage alongside the Vietnamese Motown trio. He leans in to the microphone.

DENNIS CLAYTON  
(drunken)  
Hey, ladies.  
(MORE)

DENNIS CLAYTON (CONT'D)

I just want to thank everyone for personally coming on down tonight to our, little Mekong Delta, lava lounge - where the weed is free, and the ladies, a little, freer... Heeey?

Friend, Brian "Digger" Wilton throws a full beer at Dennis. Friends howl, Dennis drips with brew - boos and hisses.

BLAKE DANIELS

Don't be fooled. Maybe it's the pot but he's got nerves of a VC guerilla.

JIM BENNETT

And, the guy who threw the beer?

BLAKE DANIELS

Aussie. Brian "Digger" Wilton. Photojournalist out of Sydney.

JIM BENNETT

What's his story?

BLAKE DANIELS

He came here on his own. Raised his airfare by boxing kangaroos in bars up and down the coast of western Australia.

Bennett looks to see Sarah Webb Barrell entering the bar.

She wears a tight, sweaty, government issue khaki T-shirt, a shouldering a field pack, a couple of cameras and a "take no prisoner" attitude.

BLAKE DANIELS (CONT'D)

And, lastly, Miss Barrell. Loi said you shared a cab on the way in.

JIM BENNETT

She wasn't taking "no" for an answer.

BLAKE DANIELS

Some voice on her, huh? Somebody called her a "dumb-dumb" and it stuck. She's not stupid, trust me. She just, I don't know, comes across that way.

Sarah approaches the bar - quickly surrounded by friends and colleagues. She throws a passing look to Jim sitting at his table. "Hey, California".

SARAH W. BARRELL

What's a girl gotta' do to get a drink around here?

She turns to her friends.



JIM BENNETT

Between snakes and kangaroos, a pot farmer, and an out-of-tune clarinet who looks like Goldie Hawn, it's quite a group.

BLAKE DANIELS

Colorful as they are talented.

JIM BENNETT

Looks like I've found the last bar before the jungle.

BLAKE DANIELS

(smiles)

Looks like.

# **MONTAGE:**

EXT. BENNETT HOME - SANTA MONICA - WEEKS LATER - DAY

Barb reads Jim's letter by the mailbox. Sidewalk neighbors stop to hear the latest of Jim's adventures.

BARBARA

(reading)

Dear, Barb... you were right. Vietnam is not only the biggest story of my life, but that of a generation.

EXT. SAIGON SOUTH VIETNAM - DAY

Bennett, leaner, observant, strides briskly through the hustle-bustle of Hai Ba Trung St. & Le Duan Boulevard.

JIM BENNETT (V.O.)

Most of my colleagues have a fever for the Pulitzer. They say if you want one, this is the place for it...

EXT. BENNETT HOME - SANTA MONICA - DAY

Barbara continues the letter aloud. Neighbors and girlfriends listen in intently.

BARBARA

(reading)

My Bureau Chief, Blake Daniels, calls the fever, having "The Mark". Where ambition, greets risk, and where risk is sometimes rewarded. He says, "the long-timers don't even see the shells coming anymore".

EXT. LOS ANGELES FEDERAL BUILDING - DAY

Barbara shoots stills at a small protest. Police on one side, protestors on another.

BARBARA (V.O.)

Jim... They're saying Ho Chi Minh's death will undoubtedly escalate the war. The Times are using my stills so happy about that. We'll be missing you for Christmas.

INT. 5TH FLOOR HOTEL HALLWAY - MONTHS LATER - DAY

Elevator door opens. Bennett steps out.

Crisscrossing from room to rooms - international reporters, waiters delivering room service - prostitutes delivering their own kind of room service.

JIM BENNETT (V.O.)

The corporal's statement at Firebase Cunningham, is now haunting me more than ever. The big "What if?" What the hell did that mean?

Bennett gets to his door. Roommate's note reads: "Do Not Disturb" sign.

Black marker reads "Thanks, Digga'."

EXT. CHIPOU CAMBODIA - DAY

Sean Flynn and Dana Stone roar up Cambodian National Highway # 1 on their red motorcycles.

JIM BENNETT (V.O.)

Sean Flynn, young 29 year-old son of actor, Errol Flynn, and Dana Stone thought to cover from the Viet Cong's point of view.

INT. L.A. TIMES - PHOTO DESK - DAY

Barbara stands before a large work table of her own photos. She reads Jim's letter.

BARBARA (V.O.)

Rode their motorcycle up Cambodia's Highway # 1 toward Chapou. Never came back.

EXT. KENT STATE OHIO MAY 4TH - 1970 - DAY

U.S. National Guard fires on protesting students on Kent State's grassy knolls.

BARBARA (V.O.)  
 I'm sure you've heard by now, the  
 National Guard was ordered to shoot at  
 college anti-war, protestors.

EXT. VIETNAM - CAMBODIAN BORDER - MAY 17TH 1970 - DAY

Two jeeps. Bennett, Henri and Binh ride ahead of Terry Khoo,  
 Tran and Sam Kai Faye.

Jim reads Barbara's letter. (Neil Young's - Four Dead in  
 Ohio).

JIM BENNETT  
 (reads)  
 Sixty-seven rounds in thirteen seconds.  
 Four dead, nine wounded. Wondering if it  
 may be safer there in Vietnam?

INT. A DARK ROOM - WORK DESK - NIGHT

Bennett types, then stops, looks over to see:

A trail of pot baggies leads straight to Aussie journalist,  
 Brian 'Digger' Wilson and the long-legged, luscious, Sarah  
 Webb Barrell who make wild and uninterrupted love.

Jim, back to his typing.

JIM BENNETT (V.O.)  
 In the morning it can be an interview  
 with a diplomat at a French, five-star  
 hotel restaurant.

EXT. HOTEL POOL - DAY

Up for days filing reports, Bennett relaxes on a lounge chair  
 in the afternoon sun.

The beautiful, hard-bodied, Sarah W. Barrell arrives wearing a  
 head full of curlers. She begins to strip down to her bikini.

JIM BENNETT (V.O.)  
 Or, in the late afternoon, napalm strikes  
 over enemy positions.

INT. BENNETT HOME - LATE - NIGHT

Barbara stares out the window. Rain pours and pours.

JIM BENNETT (V.O.)  
 Will try and call soon. As always, love,  
 Jim.

**END OF MONTAGE:**

EXT. VILLAGE - OUTSKIRTS OF QUANG TRI - DAY

Two Air Cav Hueys thump through the low mountain clouds above.  
South China Sea Monsoon rain pounds. Dismal, dank, lifeless.  
Bennett looks thin, gaunt, fatigued and a bit short tempered.

**SCREEN READS: EASTER OFFENSIVE, I CORPS TACTICAL ZONE - 1972**

Bennett, Henri, and Sam Kai Fay drive in a covered jeep.

It's quiet between them all. The stink, sweat and smell of  
Vietnam - deep in their bones.

They come upon a funeral procession cutting across an open  
field of dense fog. Henri stops the jeep. They get out.

Three caskets are carried on the shoulders of half a dozen  
family members wailing and following in the procession.

JIM BENNETT

A funeral in middle of hell's half acre.  
That says it all doesn't it? Sam, let's  
get some film.

SAM KAI FAYE

Right.

Bennett leads the others into position. Henri jogs out to  
speak to a family member in the processional.

EXT. A TREE LINE - DAY

Two VIETCONG SNIPERS (20'S), one shooter and one spotter,  
glass our correspondents.

The shooter raises his rifle and sites his scope on Bennett's  
forehead then moves down onto his chest and heart.

Scope hairs track Henri as he approaches the team. Caskets in  
the distance are set down.

A CATHOLIC PRIEST (40) begins with prayers. Henri arrives back  
to the group.

HENRI TRUNG

He said it's a catholic ceremony of three  
ARVN. Viet Cong are close by.

JIM BENNETT

How does he know that?

HENRI TRUNG

They bury their dead in the same day.  
They were killed this morning.

JIM BENNETT  
That means VC are still in the area.

Sam points and rolls film. Bennett, frustrated, reaches over and takes off the lens cover.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)  
(sharp)  
Didn't come all this way to cover the lenses, Sam. We gotta' see what we're shooting.

SAM KAI FAY  
(humiliated)  
Yes. Sorry, Mr. Bennett. My mistake.

The faces of the families, withdrawn and forlorn - the truest of lost causes. Sam Kaye Fay rolls B-roll.

SAM KAI FAYE  
Did you want to do a stand up?

Cross hairs of sniper back to Bennett. Ambush imminent.

JIM BENNETT  
No. I don't want to see any of this.  
Let's get out of here, forget the stand up. Let's get dry, something to eat. It's not safe. Seen enough of this crap today.

Sniper's finger is ready to take down his target. Two more U.S. Gunships are then heard and fly a low patrol overhead.

Sporadic gunship fire bursts seemingly randomly from the choppers open side door.

The VC sniper, takes his finger out from inside the trigger guard.

Sniper lowers his weapon and both VC retreat back into the canopy - gone.

INT. HUE RESTAURANT - LATER - NIGHT

A fatigued yet relaxed Bennett eats dinner with colleagues Sam Kai Fay, Henri Trung, Terry Khoo, and Kevin Delany.

KEVIN DELANY (CONT)  
Especially now. The VC are becoming better armed. Fighting between the two sides is getting more dangerous. Quang Tri? Bloody. Real bloody.

TERRY KHOO  
We did hear of some action taking place up on Highway One.

JIM BENNETT

(smiles)

War Junkies to the end. I'm trying to get Terry to his honeymoon, and Sam back to Singapore, and they're trying to get back to the front line. Forget it, guys. Your replacements will be fine.

Bennett stares at a photo of Terry's future wife.

KEVIN DELANY

What's her name, Terry?

TERRY KHOO

(beaming)

Winnie NG (Ne'eg).

JIM BENNETT

Where'd you meet her?

TERRY KHOO

R & R. She's a secretary in the Hong Kong bureau. The wedding's been planned, she's going to meet me in Germany, ceremony in Paris, honeymoon, south of Italy.

JIM BENNETT

She's beautiful, Terry. All of it sounds like a dream. So, don't go screwing it up now.

A waiter approaches with hands filled with plates of beef-pho.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)

Kind of our last supper, huh? Let's enjoy it.

EXT. OPEN FIELD NEAR HIGHWAY ONE - FOLLOWING MORNING - DAY

Against sound advice, the temptation for one last report is too much.

Terry Khoo, Sam Kai Faye, KOREAN sound man T.H. LEE (30) VN Army photographer Tran Van Nghia begin walking through an open field.

The field - deceptively quiet. Trees lay scorched from an earlier battle beyond.

INT. HUE HOTEL PRESS SUITE - DAY

Bennett, at a work station, sits alongside Kevin Delany overlooking images captured of the brutal Easter Offensive at Quang Tri.

T.H. Lee, tattered and torn, frantically enters the press hooch.

T.H. LEE  
(frantic)  
It's Terry and Sam. They went up Highway  
One.

EXT. FIELD - LATER - DAY

The enemy has moved on. Bennett, Delaney and T.H. Lee come to where Terry and Sam were killed.

GI MARTIN (20's) approaches. He hands to Jim, Terry's camera, and Sam's nagra.

GI MARTIN  
We came across this after we mopped up.  
Thought you guys might want it.

Bullet holes have ripped through the camera casing.

JIM BENNETT  
Terry's camera.

INT. CAMP CAROL PRESS HOOCH - DAYS LATER - NIGHT

Rain pours. Bennett and Delany sit before a movie projector. Sarah, Dennis Clayton, Binh, Henri and others sit nearby.

DELANY  
We found Terry's negative in his 16, and  
Sam's nagra. If you don't want to see or  
hear it, now's the time.

All stay. Delany turns on the projector. Projector light beams forward.

Terry and Sam's last moments. Sam goes down. Terry, shot in the head. Endless white tracer rounds stream from every direction.

Teenage VC then pour out with weapons and drawn bayonets.

More...

INT. DA NANG BAR - NIGHT

Jim and Kevin Delany sit at the bar. Other familiars scattered about. Both are numb. A number of empties sit before them.

KEVIN DELANY

(beat)

They said the Saigon hospital instructed the coffins stay closed during the funeral service in Singapore. But they gave 'em both a hero's welcome.

JIM BENNETT

(drinks - devastated)

Well, that's something I guess.

Bennett gets off his bar stool and turns to those in the bar.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)

Hey, everybody? Hold up your glasses.

The room stands and falls quiet. Jim holds up his glass - the rest follow.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)

To Terry Khoo, and Sam Kai Faye. Two great journalists, two men who loved their friends, two men who told the truth, and two men who died serving it. Here, here.

ALL

Here, here!

We hear the soothing voice of communist radio propaganda artist, HANOI HANNAH.

HANOI HANNAH (RADIO)

How are you G.I. Joe? It seems to be that most of you are poorly informed about the going' of the war.

All throw their empty glasses at the radio!! Smash, crash!

Kevin gets up and tosses a few dollars on the bar.

KEVIN DELANY

I can't stand a second of it more. I'll see in Saigon.

The men shake hands.

JIM BENNETT

See ya' in Saigon, Kevin.

Bennett sits back down but then turns to see Sarah sitting alone in the corner with a tall drink in front of her - inviting.

Binh, Henri, and Dennis Clayton sit across the bar at a table. They go over maps, reports, marking film canisters.



CAMERAMAN BINH  
These roads, okay for travel.

In Bennett's hands, a number of family photos of Barb, Matt, Scott and Claudia. (All growing up without him).

A few Christmas lights tacitly hang about. We hear a tinny version of some distant, forgotten holiday melody.

Bennett, war worn, partially bearded, walks to the end of the bar to phone. He sits.

Bennett fumbles for some change. Life back home, passing him by. Life in Southeast Asia, dangerously escalating.

JIM BENNETT  
(phone)  
No, not Laos... L-O-S, A-N-G-E-L-E-S...

A handful of Green Berets walk in including now, U.S. ARMY Sergeant-Major Montgomery from Firebase Cunningham.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)  
LOS ANGELES!

South Vietnamese Bartender, JOE (40's,) approaches Bennett from the bar side.

JOE  
You want another?

JIM BENNETT  
No, thanks. The call I was on was cut off. Hey, Joe could you try talking to this operator? I want to get a line to the states.

Joe nods, Bennett hands him the phone.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)  
And have your kid send another round to my friends at the table over there.

Joe signals for more drinks to Sarah, Binh and Dennis.

JOE  
(phone - Vietnamese)  
Okay. Hello? We are trying to get through to United States. Dropped call.

Behind Bennett, a battle-fatigued Montgomery gets up and crosses to a slot-machine on the opposite wall.

He swigs a beer, puts in some change and pulls the handle. The machine then jams.

Montgomery's patience grinds to a halt.

SERGEANT MAJOR MONTGOMERY  
(battle weary)  
Hey, Joe. What's up with this machine?  
You got it rigged?

Montgomery taps it then begins shaking the hell out of it - noisy.

SERGEANT MAJOR MONTGOMERY (CONT'D)  
(loud)  
What's the matter with this machine,  
Joe?!

Bennett, looks to Montgomery then back to Joe.

JOE  
Just come in from field. Best to leave  
alone. No worries, Sergeant, be over in a  
minute.

Montgomery's frustration grows - violent with the slot machine. Jim turns back again.

GREEN BERET # 1  
Monty? You're going to pull that thing  
off the wall! C'mon man. Have a beer.  
Relax.

SERGEANT MAJOR MONTGOMERY  
This little dollar choker just took my  
money... Just put a buck in this thing.  
The handle won't even come down!

He rattles it some more - nearly off the wall.

JIM BENNETT  
You going to say anything to him, Joe?

JOE  
(phone)  
Hello? Hello?

Bennett then turns to Montgomery.

JIM BENNETT  
(friendly but drunk)  
Hey, excuse me, Sergeant? I'm just trying  
to get a call out to the states.

Montgomery turns. Bennett turns his back and puts more money on the counter for Joe.

Montgomery grabs his beer from the top of the slot and crosses the room signaling his cadre.

GREEN BERET # 1  
Monty? C'mon, Bama leave it alone...  
We're going to get the MP's in here.

Green Beret sips their beers and move to the edge of their seats - waiting for what's about to happen.

SERGEANT MAJOR MONTGOMERY  
(crossing)  
Just a little fun, boys.

Binh and Henri, Sarah and Clayton watch Montgomery slowly cross.

German Dieter Bellendorf enters the bar with his briefcase in hand - inside, Fernanda, his pet Aryan python.

Dieter sits alongside Sarah and Binh.

SARAH W. BARRELL  
Hey, Dieter. You and Fernanda want a drink?

Montgomery approaches and taps Bennett's shoulder. Bennett turns to face a very too-close Montgomery.

SERGEANT MAJOR MONTGOMERY  
You got a problem?

JIM BENNETT  
Me? No, no, no... Just trying to get a call into my wife, kids for Christmas, which seems to be impossible about now. Couldn't hear the operator, that's all. Can I get you a beer?

Jim turns away.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)  
Joe, a round for my friend, here.

Montgomery sets his beer down on the bar. Very still.

SERGEANT MAJOR MONTGOMERY  
I know who you are. You're that smart-ass reporter a while back from Firebase Cunningham. I remember you.

The bar is silenced. Bennett slowly turns back and looks at all who now stare back at him.

Jim puts his drink down. He's alone, more Green Berets at the table.

JIM BENNETT

One reporter against about five Green  
Beret, huh?

The place gets quiet.

SERGEANT-MAJOR MONTGOMERY

I won't need them.

JIM BENNETT

We have nothing but respect for you boys.  
It's the policies we're after.

Binh, Henri, Dennis and Sarah carefully move their chairs in  
case all hell breaks loose.

SARAH W. BARRELL

We're going to need some M.P.'s.

Dieter clicks open the brads of his suitcase.

DIETER BELLENDORF

M.P.'s won't be necessary.

Montgomery moves closer to Bennett's face. Eyeballs him.

SERGEANT MAJOR MONTGOMERY

This is my jungle and my house.

Moves even closer still.

JIM BENNETT

(beat)

Guess I missed your name on the mailbox.

Montgomery waits, smiles.. Laughs a little... He suddenly head-  
butts Bennett in the face. Bennett's nose smashed!

SERGEANT-MAJOR MONTGOMERY

Oh, you're still the smart one, aren't  
you?

Bennett staggers. Montgomery quickly strong arms Bennett's  
face to the bar.

SERGEANT MAJOR MONTGOMERY

I have no problem with the press, except  
how they make their living off of the  
misery of others.

Montgomery unholsters his pearl handled .45. He points to  
Bennett's temple.

SERGEANT MAJOR MONTGOMERY (CONT'D)

Little different when your staring down  
the barrel of one of these isn't it?

Montgomery slowly presses his finger on the trigger.

SERGEANT MAJOR MONTGOMERY (CONT'D)  
Guys like you give this war a bad name.

JIM BENNETT  
Didn't know there was a good name for it!

Montgomery tilts the grip of his pistol closer to Bennett's temple. His finger slowly squeezes.

SERGEANT MAJOR MONTGOMERY  
I catch you out in my field again,  
telling my boys what to think or what not  
to think, you're going to need more than  
a foxhole to climb in.

Montgomery suddenly wheels away -- fires three rounds into the slot machine across the bar. POW! POW! POW!

Slot chunks FLY and patrons scatter!

MORE - VARIOUS - FULL SCENE

It's on! The Green Beret and Dieter Bellendorf get up in unison.

CAMERAMAN BINH  
Grab the camera, and sound. Get it out of here!

Dieter moves quickly and throws a right cross connecting with a Green Beret.

He then lifts his long white python out of his case. He kisses the top of Fernanda's head.

DIETER BELLENDORF  
Zeit, etwas Wurst zu machen...

Montgomery turns and Dieter throws the snake directly into the soldier's face. The white python wraps around Montgomery's head and neck.

SERGEANT-MAJOR MONTGOMERY  
Ahhh!! Fucking snake, man!!

Sarah grabs beer bottle and cracks it over Montgomery's head.

SARAH W. BARRELL  
Asshole!!

Dieter turns and throws a second short, straight right hand directly into the face of another Green Beret. (He's afraid of nothing).

DIETER BELLENDORF  
Yeah! That's right, take a little fadder-  
lander!

Jim gets up from the floor. Dieter jumps on Montgomery.

JIM BENNETT  
Dieter, no!

Full on melee. Dennis Clayton begins snapping pictures of the whole scene.

MP's rush in.

JOE  
They're tearing up my place!!

The python wraps around the leg of Montgomery. Squeezes.

SERGEANT MAJOR MONTGOMERY  
Ahhhh! This thing is squeezing me!!

Montgomery fires more shots close range at the snake but missing. The snake digs its fangs into Montgomery's pistol hand.

SERGEANT MAJOR MONTGOMERY (CONT'D)  
Arrrgghhh... Get him off. GET HIM OFF  
ME!!

MP's rush in with Batons.

MILITARY POLICEMAN  
SNAKE!!

They back off. Bennett gets up and moves away from the brawl.

JOE  
Back way out. Go! Go!

Dieter picks up his python and tucks it in his suitcase. Sarah, Binh, Clayton, Dieter and Jim find their way out the back door.

Arrests are made - soldiers, Green Beret, escorted out.

INT. PRESS HOOCH SLEEPING QUARTERS - LATER - NIGHT

Dennis, Binh and Henri - fast asleep on adjoining cots.

EXT. PORCH - NIGHT

Bennett and Sarah sit. Two half filled glasses on bourbon sit on a side table within arm's reach.

Heavy tropical rain falls.

Sarah moves closer to Bennett dabbing peroxide on his bruised face. She moves her lips closer over his bruises, kisses them.

Eye to eye, intimate, flirtatious, she pulls back.

SARAH W. BARRELL

(beat)

Ever ask yourself, "Is all this stuff worth it?" What keeps us here?

She keeps dabbing.

JIM BENNETT

Networks want the bloody stuff, I'm looking for the policy, the truth to report. To report accurately, to tell the truth. Those are some things that have kept me here. And, other reasons, career, family.

Thunder cracks and the rains grow heavier.

Sarah screws the top of the antiseptic bottle back on, pours a bit more alcohol into her glass - sits, gets settles.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)

What about you? What keeps you out here?

SARAH W. BARRELL

Because nobody can talk down to a great photograph.

JIM BENNETT

What's that mean?

SARAH W. BARRELL

You take a good picture, and it lasts forever. You kind of, attach yourself to it, or it attaches to you. It almost has a way of overriding who you are, or who people think you are at least. Or, how you sound.

JIM BENNETT

You sound fine.

SARAH W. BARRELL

Yeah, like a, what did I hear someone say one time, like a bag of drowning cats. (laughs) I was a model in my teens. I had all the boys chasing me, well, and this voice of mine, Jesus. People have been calling me an airhead, or dumb my whole life. I know. I hear it all the time.

(MORE)

SARAH W. BARRELL (CONT'D)

Especially from the French correspondents. They just want me to shut up so they can get into my pants. So, sometimes, I just let 'em so I don't have to listen to it. But then they see my work, and then, there's like a shift. That look in their eyes, surprised I took the photo.

JIM BENNETT

You're not dumb, Sarah. I think it just kind of throws them seeing you out here. Blonde woman, (smiles) often in curlers, mixing it up in man's world. They're too busy to give you the benefit of the doubt.

SARAH W. BARRELL

That's why I'm willing to go to the front lines. That's the great equalizer. That's the puzzle they can't figure. It throws 'em. And, I like that. I could have just married a doctor and have been done with it. But, I didn't want that. So, I grabbed my cameras and bought a one way ticket right through Laos to Saigon, just like Catherine Leroy did. I wanted to do something that was beyond how I came across to people.

JIM BENNETT

Is that what keeps you out here?

SARAH W. BARRELL

You know, back home, I've seen demonstrators carrying and leading crowds of people with my pictures. But, the funny thing? If any of those people saw me, they'd probably be throwing bottles at me. They'd just laugh. Funny, isn't it?

JIM BENNETT

No one's laughing.

Bennett and Sarah sit quietly, staring at one another. She reaches out with her fingers and intertwines them with his.

SARAH W. BARRELL

I just wanted to see it all for myself.

Sarah leans in and moves her lips close to his. She looks at him in the eyes.

JIM BENNETT

What do you see now?



SARAH W. BARRELL

(beat)

A man who's a long way from home.

Sarah moves forward and presses her lips to Jim's. She kisses him, holds there, then pulls back, checks in, looks at him intently in the eyes.

She slowly leans in once more but Mr. Binh then steps out and forward to the veranda porch.

CAMERAMAN BINH

Mr. Bennett, big day tomorrow. Press conference. We should probably get some rest.

Moment interrupted, three on the porch.

JIM BENNETT

(turns)

Yeah, thanks Binh.

Binh turns and goes back inside.

SARAH W. BARRELL

Binh always had good timing.

JIM BENNETT

Impeccable.

INT. DA NANG PRESS CENTER - DAY

A MILITARY AIDE (30) ushers in the countless media members. Before them, half a dozen MILITARY OFFICIALS AND CIA ADVISORS behind a long table.

MILITARY AIDE

Okay. We're just about ready to get started.

A chalk board behind the advisors reads: LAOS, CAMBODIA, STOENG TRENG, KAMPONG CHHANG.

MILITARY AIDE (CONT'D)

Ladies and gentlemen, please. Let's get settled.

Bennett, Sarah, Dennis, Binh and Henri enter from the rear and spread out.

Bennett sees a crew of other familiar faces:

AP Press Reporter, PETER BURNET (30's,) young UPI photographer CARL RYKER (22,) DEAN PATTERSON (40,) and ALAIN DES FONTAINE (45,) from Life, Scotsman DANNY BURNS (30's,) and others.

JIM BENNETT  
Gangs all here and more...

Sarah and Dennis take their position and begin shooting their photos. Bennett looks for the best place to position his stand up.

Bennett moves to the gathering of journalists. Familiar faces, old colleagues.

His eye focuses on the large board with a map featuring the cities of Cambodia's STOENG TRENG, KAMPONG CHHANG...

(Pol Pot's precursor to THE KILLING FIELDS).

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)  
(fishing)  
Tom, Pete, Burns... Who's the pup?

UPI's young and inexperienced Carl Ryker appears more than in over his head and lost - he looks stranded, cut away from the pack.

PETER BURNET  
Some kid named, Carl Ryker. His father's  
a big shot at UPI, I think.

JIM BENNETT  
Pretty young to be out here, isn't he?  
What'd do you guys know?

DEAN PATTERSON  
Well, the CIA have Cambodia's generals in  
their back pockets, so I think they're  
going to let us bomb the VC's supply  
lines - officially.

JIM BENNETT  
Any word on the Khmer?

DEAN PATTERSON  
China's "all scorched earth". They want  
those supply lines open. Very nasty over  
there. Should be interesting.

JIM BENNETT  
Thanks.

MILITARY AIDE  
Please. Everyone take your seats.

Bennett strides over to his crew, Binh and Henri. Ryker follows Bennett and sits behind him.

JIM BENNETT  
 (turns)  
 What's your name, kid?

RYKER  
 Ryker. Carl Ryker. UPI.

JIM BENNETT  
 Jim Bennett, NBC. You going in with anybody?

RYKER  
 My bureau chief told me I'd be with Dean Patterson and Alain des Fontaine.

Flurry of activity. TV CAMERAMEN back in through the door, leading COLONEL WHITLEY (40's) and FOUR MILITARY OFFICERS to the front of the press conference.

MILITARY AIDE  
 Please, everyone, take your seats. We've got a lot to cover. Colonel Whitley will be leading the briefing today.

Whitley and his fellow Officers take their seats. Binh nudges Bennett. The camera's ready.

JIM BENNETT  
 Shoot all of this. We'll do a stand-up once we figure out what they're talking about.

Sarah ushers up and sits next to Bennett. Ryker nervously drops his notes and pencils on the floor.

COLONEL WHITLEY  
 Good morning, I'm Colonel Whitley. Let's get this briefing started.

EXT. THE SKIES OF NORTHERN CAMBODIA - DAY

U.S. Gunships fly in echelon.

COLONEL WHITLEY (V.O.)  
 The government of Cambodia is now an ally of the United States. It's no secret we're interested in disrupting the enemy's supply lines, the Ho Chi Minh Trail, that cuts through eastern Cambodia.

EXT. CAMBODIAN AIRFIELD - DAY

Landing, ARVN (South Vietnamese) Soldiers disembark. They take savage incoming fire. U.S. Gunships lift and retreat.

COLONEL WHITLEY (V.O.)  
 Operation Freedom Deal will be launched  
 by the U.S. Seventh Air Force and a close  
 air support campaign will target enemy  
 base areas and border sanctuaries of both  
 the People's Army of North Vietnam, and  
 the Chinese backed, Khmer Rouge.

INT. DA NANG PRESS CENTER - DAY (BACK TO SCENE)

Whitley holds up a manila folder. Reporters stir. Bennett jumps in.

JIM BENNETT  
 Colonel, Jim Bennett, NBC. Hasn't all of  
 this created Cambodia's destabilization  
 that has actually invited in these  
 various factions?

EXT. LAOS AIRFIELD - (BATTLE SCENE) DAY

Allied ARVN (South Vietnamese Army) parameter falls and the  
 NVA begin to overrun all allied South Vietnamese positions.

U.S. Gunships dump supplies, lift, and fly hard and fast to  
 get the hell out!!

COLONEL WHITLEY (V.O.)(CONT)  
 The enemy will find its way in through  
 the path of least resistance. It's our  
 job to find those areas where we can  
 create maximum resistance.

INT. DA NANG PRESS CENTER - DAY

Whitley faces the escalating heat.

PETER ARNET  
 But through any sovereign country we see  
 fit, sir? We're dropping bombs and we're  
 not at even war with Cambodia!

COLONEL WHITLEY  
 This operation is an approved  
 intervention by Prime Minister, Lon Nol.

JIM BENNETT  
 But one that's widening the war.

DEAN PATTERSON  
 Any idea just when this shindig is  
 actually going to kick off?

Whitley hesitates. (It already has). His table of advisors and  
 officers grow quiet. The press chomps at the bit!

Whitley looks over to the wall clock. It reads 08:15.

PETER ARNET

What are you hiding, Colonel?

Whitley throws a look to his fellow brass. They nod for him to continue.

COLONEL WHITLEY

We kicked off at 0:400 hours this morning  
and it continues as we speak.

The room erupts. Disbelief, disdain and bedlam in the press room breaks out.

Reporters leap to their feet, yelling ranting, screaming!!

COLONEL WHITLEY (CONT'D)

All right, that's enough dammit! That's  
enough. Quiet down, all of you. I said  
that's enough! If not, I'm walking out  
and this briefing will be over!!

More grumbling and swearing. Press begins to sit - now they're  
real hungry. Bennett steps forward.

JIM BENNETT

What's the resistance like, Colonel?  
Can we get in today?

COLONEL WHITLEY CONT'D)

Look, off the record. We don't recommend  
you go into these territories at all.  
Reports of the Khmer are like nothing  
we've heard of before. They don't operate  
under any accords. They're not going to  
recognize your credentials. You'd be  
solely on your own. And, I wouldn't  
recommend that to anybody.

INT. AN EMPTY AND ABANDONED BARRACKS - NIGHT

Bennett works over a table putting together the details of the  
morning's mission. Below him, a map of Laos.

Blue push pins suggest the hot locations. Carl Ryker enters.

RYKER

Mr. Bennett?

JIM BENNETT

Yeah?

RYKER

(hesitant)

Carl Ryker from UPI. We met this morning.  
You have a minute?

JIM BENNETT  
Sure, come on in.

Ryker, fresh face and scared. He marvels at Bennett's notes and mapping. (A real reporter).

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)  
You guys picked your entrance point yet?

RYKER  
We have a helicopter so I'm sure where Mr. Des Fontaine is thinking.

JIM BENNETT  
First class, huh?

RYKER  
They're talking about it now. I've never covered anything like this before. It's all pretty new to me.

JIM BENNETT  
Yeah... It's, ah, not like covering the high school football game is it?

RYKER  
(nervous laugh)  
No. It's not. I'm not even exactly sure I'm ready for any of this.

Jim stops what he's doing. (Maybe saving a life here). Offers Ryker a beer.

JIM BENNETT  
Beer?

RYKER  
Thanks.

Ryker sips.

JIM BENNETT  
That's the way I felt the first day I got here.

RYKER  
Really?

JIM BENNETT  
Yeah. Not an hour after landing in Saigon from Santa Monica, I was falling out of a gunship right into the heat of Firebase Cunningham. Knocked out my front tooth in the first 30 seconds. Being new? Is nothing new.

RYKER  
But you got through... You're here, of course, but you got through it?

JIM BENNETT  
Yeah... I got through.

RYKER  
(beat)  
Mind if I ask, what it was that made you a combat journalist?

Jim looks at the kid.

JIM BENNETT  
Why we come, why we stay? Well, that's a long one, Carl. It's more like, "What if" we didn't?

RYKER  
Seemed more romantic, miles away, long before I got here.

JIM BENNETT  
It was for me, too.

RYKER  
I guess I don't have to go.

JIM BENNETT  
There's not one guy in that room who'd blame you, or would think any less of you, if you decided to sit this one out. Seasoned pros sit 'em out all the time. In fact, they'll take notice of your judgment, and judgment saves lives.

RYKER  
Any advice?

JIM BENNETT  
Just listen to the men around you. They're good men. And, don't get caught behind enemy lines.

EXT. PERIPHERAL LZ AT DA NANG - FOLLOWING MORNING - DAY

A well-worn chopper awaits. Blades begin to spin. Bennett, Binh, Henri, Dennis Clayton and Sarah approach.

JIM BENNETT  
He'll take us wherever we want. Everyone sure about it?

EXT. LAOTIAN - CAMBODIAN SKIES - DAY

Jim sits beside Sarah. Binh and Henri ready their equipment.  
Dennis Clayton takes a big hit off a joint.

The Pilot turns back, signals and points downward.

PILOT THAI  
We've crossed into Laos, now south to  
Cambodia. Lotta' snakes!

Jim points due south, southwest. U.S. Strike Fighters line up  
in formation.

EXT. LANDING ZONE - DAY

The chopper descends in tight spiral circles avoiding possible  
enemy gunfire. It lands. Doors open. Everyone gets out.

Bennett signals "3."

JIM BENNETT  
Three hours, Thai!.

EXT. CAMBODIAN JUNGLE - DAY

In the distance, our team hears the sounds of mortar-fire and  
a smattering of heavy automatic weapons.

The band readies their cameras, Henri his sound.

JIM BENNETT  
(whispers)  
We get our stuff and get out. Stay tight.  
Watch for snakes. No wondering off.  
Agreed?

The team nods and begins to cut through the jungle.

EXT. A JUNGLE CLEARING - DAY

Our cadre arrives to the edge of a clearing.

Dozens of enemy and South Vietnamese ARVN soldiers lay in  
mound-like heaps, i.e., the aftermath of vicious, hand-to-hand  
combat.

Dead water buffaloes and other farm animals lay splintered,  
bloodied and sprawled about.

Bennett approaches, bends down and inspects the uniforms.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)  
(turns back)  
Kmer Rouge, Vietcong, and south  
Vietnamese ARVN forces. Three armies, all  
right here.



Dennis moves close and snaps pictures alongside Binh who rolls film.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)

Pure massacre.

Sarah clutches her stomach. She turns away and gets sick but then turns back quickly snapping photos.

SARAH W. BARRELL

There must be hundreds of them.

A mortar lands up ahead. Photos click, film rolls - the group presses on.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

The group moves forward through the flora. Continuous and ferocious automatic fire is heard.

An ARVN SOLDIER (16) suddenly breaks from the jungle, running towards our ensemble from the battle front.

Bennett ducks down - signaling the others to do the same.

JIM BENNETT

(whisper)

Down.

The Soldier runs right by Henri.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)

Henri, get that guy. See what's happening up there!

HENRI TRUNG

Hey, hey, hey...

The ARVN Soldier whips around with his bloody bayonet pointing it at Henri.

HENRI TRUNG (CONT'D)

Bao Chi. Bao Chi. Bao Chi.

The soldier stops to catch his breath. Henri approaches offering water.

HENRI TRUNG (CONT'D)

(in Vietnamese)

Bao Chi. Bao Chi... Nhng gì đang xay ra?

Đâu phía tru'o'c? (What's happening?

Where's the front?)

The Soldier frantically points and speaks rapidly - horrified!

ARVN SOLDIER  
 (Vietnamese)  
 Khmer Rouge. Burning villages. Skinning  
 alive. No way out. You shouldn't be here!

Sarah and Dennis approach, change lenses and begin snapping  
 their cameras. Click. Click. Click.

JIM BENNETT  
 What's he saying?

ARVN soldier keeps talking.

CAMERAMAN BINH  
 Fight like this for three days. Many dead  
 on all sides. No stopping, no way out!  
 Khmer Rouge wants to go back to Angkor  
 culture. They kill everyone,  
 everything...

JIM BENNETT  
 (beat)  
 Genocide...

EXT. FRONT LINES - DAY

A heavy, close exchange between more Khmer and ARVN (South  
 Vietnamese Army).

Hot gunfire smatters viciously through the tree line. RPG's  
 fly from both sides - hotter than hell!!

Bennett and the others arrive on the fringe of the scene.  
 Dennis and Sarah continue shooting.

JIM BENNETT  
 Binh. Shoot all you have. Save two  
 minutes of film for the final stand up.  
 Then all back to the LZ.

Binh begins to roll.

Bennett climbs to a small mound overlooking the opposite  
 direction. Worst fears confirmed. Mass graves dug in shallow  
 trenches.

Soldiers, men, women and children. The beginning of... Pol  
 Pot's *The Killing Fields*.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)  
 (hushed whisper)  
 Binh, Henri. Right here, right now. Let's  
 get a stand up. Let's go! Quick.

Binh and Henri frantically set up their shot. Heavy fighting moves closer - all of it approaching. Both signal they're ready.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)

(whispers)

4,3,2,1... We are here, at the scene of what is a ferocious battle, deep inside the northern Cambodian border. Hundreds of Southern Allied Vietnamese forces, are fighting the North Vietnamese, while hundreds of Chinese backed Khmer Rouge lie dead approximately 212 kilometers from the city of Quang Tri. We are being told that the U.S. Military is targeting the Ho Chi Minh supply line and embedded enemy sanctuaries throughout the Eastern Cambodia, which shares its border in part with Laos to the north, and both South and North Vietnam.

An explosion rocks nearby. Henri signals for Bennett to hurry. Bennett looks back to the fighting behind him.

DENNIS CLAYTON

This place is about to go, man!

JIM BENNETT

(on camera - desperate)

We've come across mass graves of men, women and children, signaling what one source says is the Khmer's call for a utopian, ancient Khmer society, one in which it appears, genocide, will be at the tip of its national policy. Reporting from the northern Cambodian jungle, Jim Bennett, NBC news.

EXT. CAMBODIAN SKIES ABOVE - DAY

Carl Ryker's crew and helicopter slice through the canopy with smoke and fire trailing behind them.

JIM BENNETT

That's Ryker's bird! They're hit.

EXT. THE JUNGLE - DAY

Ryker's chopper crashes, tumbles and spins to the ground.

EXT. CRASH SITE - DAY

Dean Patterson and Alain des Fontaine are slumped over unconscious in the cockpit.

Flames burst from the undercarriage.

Young Carl Ryker kicks out the door and stumbles to his knees.

His camera drops to the side of him. He's then suddenly confronted by a group of KHMER ROUGE SOLDIERS (Teenagers).

Bennett signals for his cadre not to move.

JIM BENNETT  
(whispers)  
Don't even breathe.

Bennett and the others, helpless. The Khmer grab Ryker, turn him around and toss a grenade into the chopper - explodes.

Patterson and des Fontaine - gone.

At gunpoint, Ryker is pushed into the jungle by the tip of a bayonet but leaving his camera behind.

KHMER SOLDIER  
(Khmer)  
Walk!

Bennett covers Sarah's mouth to keep her from screaming.

Henri adjusts his headphones and points them in Ryker's direction. The airship's fire crackles in his headset.

There's a momentary pause - we then hear the smattering of machine gun fire. Henri adjusts sound settings.

It grows quiet. Our team moves not a muscle. Bennett sees Ryker's camera.

He carefully makes his way to the blazing chopper, picks it up, puts it in his shoulder pack, and gets back to his cadre.

JIM BENNETT  
(whisper)  
Back to the chopper, back to base.

INT. DEVELOPMENT ROOM - DA NANG PRESS HOOCH - NIGHT

Bennett and Sarah develop Ryker's film. Images swash about in chemical trays below.

Photos reveal: Looking down from Ryker's chopper, one devastated Cambodian village after another.

Pot holes the size of small swimming pools pock the terrain.

JIM BENNETT  
Mk-82's... 500 pounders.

SARAH W. BARRELL  
Why villages?

JIM BENNETT  
Close to supply lines, concealing caches  
of weapons, working with the VC, or just  
plain unlucky.

Other images appear. We see uniformed Khmer men and women who  
carry AK-47's, and who wear red plaid scarfs.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)  
AK's and red scarfs. Villagers actually  
running towards the Khmer Rouge.

SARAH W. BARRELL  
What does that mean?

JIM BENNETT  
It means they're unafraid of them. We're  
destabilizing the countryside. we're  
creating a vacuum. A very dangerous one.  
Our allies are running to the safety of  
the enemy.

Bennett looks at Sarah in the eye.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)  
At least Ryker didn't die in vain. Let's  
find Colonel Whitley.

INT. DA NANG OFFICER'S HUT - DAY

Colonel Whitley and AIDE (30'S) look over maps and field  
reports. Bennett enters from the rear.

JIM BENNETT (O.S.)  
Colonel Whitley?

The two men look up.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)  
The U.S. Military's collateral damage,  
sir? Bombing villages, driving allies  
into the arms of the Khmer Rouge and  
Vietcong! Comment?

Bennett approaches. Whitley gets to his feet.

COLONEL WHITLEY  
All of what you're saying is being termed  
classified. I would suggest to you...

JIM BENNETT  
Cambodia is sovereign, sir. We're not  
officially at war with them.  
(MORE)

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)  
 We're nothing but tourists taking  
 pictures! You have no authority over me.

Whitley's aide steps up and in between Bennett and the  
 Colonel. The aide steps up and into Bennett's face.

Bennett shoves him back with a good push and the aide tumbles  
 over the chair hitting the ground hard.

SARAH W. BARRELL  
 Jim?

JIM BENNETT  
 We lost three reporters today, Colonel.  
 And, what they found isn't going to be  
 silenced.

Bennett tosses the developed film at the Colonel.

The M.P.s enter. Whitley's aide nods to them. One approaches  
 and cracks Bennett in the back with a nightstick.

Jim goes down onto one knee.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)  
 Arrgghh..

COLONEL WHITLEY  
 You're done, Bennett! You just covered  
 your last story in my war!

EXT. DA NANG THE OFFICER'S HUT - DAY

M.P.s throw Bennett down the front steps. Sarah follows.

MILITARY POLICEMAN # 1  
 I'd suggest you keep your boyfriend away  
 from the Colonel, Lady!

MILITARY POLICEMAN # 2  
 (towering)  
 Catch you in here again, you'll be going  
 directly to the brig in Saigon!

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DA NANG - NIGHT

Jim sits with the phone in his ear and an ice-pack on his  
 neck. A half-empty bottle of Johnny Walker stands beside him.

OPERATOR (V.O.)  
 I'm sorry sir, all lines to the United  
 States are busy.

EXT. HOTEL BAR - LATER - NIGHT

Bennett, a bit drunk, fatigued and alone, fingers through  
 Ryker's photos.

Blake Daniels looks over the Ryker's captured images.

JIM BENNETT  
That kid Ryker was twenty-two years old.  
And, Patterson, Fontaine.

Bennett turns on Henri's sound recorder. Hands Blake a head set.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)  
Put these on.

BLAKE DANIELS  
What am I listening to?

Jim pours himself another shot.

JIM BENNETT  
Henri got it all on sound.

Blake hears the Kmer, the fire burning, the smattering of gunshots, Ryker's screams. Jim turns off the machine.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)  
I saw them burn, Blake. Burn right in front of me.

Blake takes off the headset.

BLAKE DANIELS  
(beat)  
They've pulled your credentials, Jim.

JIM BENNETT  
Figured that. For how long?

BLAKE DANIELS  
Indefinitely. Whitley called me personally. Said you grabbed him, put your hands on him.

JIM BENNETT  
It was the aide who stood up. I pushed him back. He fell over the chair and into Whitley. I was the one who got the short end of the stick.

BLAKE DANIELS  
You think it really matters?

Bennett points to Ryker's photographs.

JIM BENNETT  
What's in Ryker's photos, is what they're hiding.

We see the photos of slaughter, rows of bones, skulls.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)

This is what Whitley is burying, along with me.

BLAKE DANIELS

Give me some context.

Photo after photo. Daniels thumbs through Ryker's gruesome images.

JIM BENNETT

Nixon's secret war is leaving a vacuum. And, now those friendly villagers who are eating those 500 pounders, are running straight for the protection of Khmer Rouge.

BLAKE DANIELS

That's what they're hiding.

JIM BENNETT

Exactly. Friendly forces are now being conscripted into the Khmer who are feeding them and putting guns in their hands.

BLAKE DANIELS

Whitley have these photos?

JIM BENNETT

Yeah.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)

It's why he's shutting me up. We came across a South Vietnamese ARVN running for his life. He said something about the Khmer wanting to bring their culture back to the glory days of the Angkor culture. It's bullshit, but that's the pretense Pol Pot's going to be using.

BLAKE DANIELS

It's a precursor to genocide.

JIM BENNETT

And the vacuum we're giving them, is paving the way. That's why the Colonel killed the story, and that's why they've pulled my credentials.

EXT. BAR VERANDA - LATER - NIGHT

Bennett, miserable, and very drunk, leans over the edge of the Veranda and takes in a deep breath of the putrid air.



He begins to get sick to his stomach over the railing. Sarah arrives along with Binh and Henri.

SARAH W. BARRELL  
(beat)  
I'll get him upstairs.

INT. BENNETT'S ROOM - NIGHT

Sarah leads Bennett in the room. He comes through the door, stumbles, knocking over an end-table and lamp. CRASH!

JIM BENNETT  
Whoa!

Jim pitches backward and onto the bed. Sarah slides open the balcony door. Fresh air. Bennett takes off his shirt.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)  
My head is killing me.

Sarah moves to him. She unbuttons his sweaty shirt.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)  
Hey, hey, hey... wait a second. What are you doing?

SARAH W. BARRELL  
Taking care of you. We're going to get the stink of this place off of you. Come on, lean up.

Sarah gets him upright with his legs over the bed.

SARAH W. BARRELL (CONT'D)  
C'mon, shoes off. Take it easy, California. Gimme your shoes.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Sarah struggles with Bennett's heavy and sturdy frame.

SARAH W. BARRELL  
Get inside. C'mon, Jim. We gotta' get you in there?

He puts his arm around Sarah.

JIM BENNETT  
Okay. Good idea... Good.

She helps him in - turns on the water.

Sarah gets his shirt now completely off. Cool water rushes over his back and neck.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)

Ahhh...

Sarah steps into the shower with him and struggles to manage his larger body. She manages to turn Bennett around.

She begins to rub his neck and shoulders with soap.

SARAH W. BARRELL

Let it go... let it all, just wash away.

All the bad things. All the things, Jim.

Bennett grows still.

His shoulders pitch forward from the loss of Terry Khoo and Sam, the separation of his wife and family, the inescapable smell of the caustic jungle, the death, the lies, Ryker, the frontline witnessing of humanities ongoing slaughter of itself.

He's a broken man and this time he knows it. He turns to Sarah - water rushing between them - his eyes, a million miles away.

The look of a man who has seen too much with nowhere to put it.

SARAH W. BARRELL (CONT'D)

It's all right. It's going to be all right.

Sarah caresses his neck and shoulders - brings him back to life, makes it bearable if only for a moment.

SARAH W. BARRELL (CONT'D)

It's okay. It's okay. All of it is going to be okay.

He takes Sarah in his arms intently for the first time. Bennett now leans forward and kisses her.

Again, and again, more, again and again.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Jim gently lays Sarah's head down on the pillow. He inventories her eyes deeply.

They make love.

EXT. CITY DA NANG - FOLLOWING MORNING - DAY

The morning hustle gets underway - motorbikes and military transports.

EXT. HOTEL BALCONY - MINUTES LATER - DAY

Bennett, exhausted, sits with Kevin, Sarah, Binh and Henri - morning cups of coffee.

KEVIN DELANY

Daniels put you on ice, huh?

JIM BENNETT

He had to. But, I didn't touch that Colonel. Sarah was there. But my run here, none-the-less, has come to a very *unceremonious* end.

KEVIN DELANY

Maybe not.

Bennett looks over to Sarah.

SARAH W. BARRELL

(winks)

Henri and Binh put me up to it.

KEVIN DELANY

When Sarah called me, I spoke to David Jayne, Far Eastern Bureau Chief. You want to come to work for me? ABC.

JIM BENNETT

ABC?

KEVIN DELANY

Phnom Penh. The last story. We need some real help there.

Kevin opens up a manila envelope. He places photos on the balcony table.

KEVIN DELANY (CONT'D)

Sarah showed me those pictures from the kid who was killed.

JIM BENNETT

Yeah, Carl Ryker. UPI.

KEVIN DELANY

Someone's gotta' explain it to the rest of the world what this means.

JIM BENNETT

This last tour was a pretty long stretch, Kevin. I don't know. Terry, Sam, now Ryker and the others.

KEVIN DELANY

(beat)

Troops are withdrawing, war is coming to an end, at least for the U.S. part of it. Don't you want even a little piece, of the peace? See what it's going to look like? Don't you want to be here when it's all said and done?

JIM BENNETT

I need to see my family. It's been way too long. I don't think so.

KEVIN DELANY

We'd even suggest you, take some long needed R & R. Why not Malaysia? Penang? We'll fly them over. All expenses covered.

JIM BENNETT

(gradually)

And my credentials?

KEVIN DELANY

Hong Kong. The time you take will give us the space to work through your authorizations.

JIM BENNETT

Binh and Henri?

KEVIN DELANY

Your crew is your crew. Everybody will be set up. We need the experience, we want the coverage and we want you to cover it.

INT. BATU FERRINGHI BEACH - DAY

Jim and Barbara lay together on the white, powder sands. Clear, blue water as far as you can see. Any sign of war - a million miles away.

**SCREEN READS: NORTHERN PENINSULAR PENANG MALAYSIA**

Bennett, gaunt, eyes tired.

JIM BENNETT

(beat)

I was wondering if the boys were even going to recognize me? They sure looked handsome today going to school.

BARBARA

You should see them light up when you're on the news.

(MORE)

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
It's the only thing that saved them.  
Mattie thought he'd never see you again.

JIM BENNETT  
I know.

Bennett leans closer in to Barbara. He places his head on her lap, looks up to her.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)  
Sometimes it felt like it for me, too.

BARBARA  
I've missed you, Jim.

JIM BENNETT  
I've missed you, too.

Waves gently crash on sands. Jim closes his eyes. Grows quiet between them.

BARBARA  
(beat)  
I think of you out there, on the front lines reporting. I read about Terry Khoo and Sam. Others... Sometimes it scares me. Scares the boys, too.

JIM BENNETT  
I know.

BARBARA  
They see it. The "living room war". Every night, we all tune in.

JIM BENNETT  
They talk about it? Me being hurt?

BARBARA  
Scottie just gets quiet. They heard Harry Reasoner say that there were over 50 journalists that have been killed, or missing.

Bennett sits up from Barb's lap.

JIM BENNETT  
I understand. But I'm not looking to get killed out there.

BARBARA  
Like Terry? Sam? I'm sure they had plans to get home someday, too.

JIM BENNETT  
I've been scared. A thousand times I've been scared. Friends have died.  
(MORE)

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)

It gets hard. Some days I can take on the generals with my left hand, other days, I'm reduced to having not a muscle in my right. And, sometimes, Barb, being alone, I'm not...

Barb, reaches out her finger and touches his lips.

BARBARA

(beat)

Shhhhh... I never wanted to think about it.

Jim lets the soft white sand fall through his fingers. The sounds of waves lap up against the tropical shore.

JIM BENNETT

I know.

BARBARA

You've done what you've set out to do. Maybe it's time to come home?

INT. BEACH RENTAL HOUSE - NIGHT

Projector light streams overhead on a white wall before us.

Bennett sits on the middle of the couch along with his boys, Barb and Claudia.

Barb's 16 millimeter home movies flicker before us. Familiar images of home i.e., Bill Brown and Bob Mulholland at the office at KNBC - staff holding up signs for Jim - Claudia taking her first steps, Scottie and Matt, baseball games, folks from the neighborhood, new cars, Santa Monica landmarks.

Bennett, motionless. Jim reaches for his wife's hand. Wedding bands and fingers entwine.

EXT. OPEN FIELD - PHNOM PENH CAMBODIA - DAY

U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia's Khmer Republic, JOHN GUNTHER DEAN (49) stands alongside CINCPAC COMMANDER ADMIRAL NOEL GAYLER (36).

Aircraft land, load, and fly again.

AMBASSADOR DEAN

(over rotor wash)

We're packing it up, Admiral. Kissinger has his head up his ass. That's all I can say about it!

EXT. PHNOM PENH - EVENING - NIGHT

**SCREEN READS: PHNOM PENH - APRIL - 1975**

This part of the world's biggest holiday celebration.

Fireworks fill the sky, droves of Pedestrians parade by in exotic garb, paper mache dragons, clusters of saffron-robed Buddhist Monks.

Brightly lit lanterns hang everywhere. Phnom Penn, festive before its inevitable fall.

Bennett, Binh and Henri walk the streets. Hordes of villagers from all directions flood every block of the city.

Bennett takes notice of more U.S. airships flying overhead.

INT. DENNIS CLAYTON'S HOOCH - NIGHT

Bennett, Binh and Henri enter. Smoke, booze, and a wild, crowded room. Sarah approaches, refreshed - all smiles.

The atmosphere is light, lose, the gang back for the final trek.

SARAH W. BARRELL

Hey, Mr. Bennett. There you are.  
Wondering if I was riding shotgun on this one?

She leans in and kisses his cheek. Reaches for his hand.

SARAH W. BARRELL (CONT'D)

C'mon, Dennis is in rare form.

Dennis, clothed only in a batik sarong, swings lazily, smoking a joint in a makeshift hammock in the middle of the suite.

JIM BENNETT

There he is. The mayor of Phnom Penh himself.

Topless Cambodian girls, smoke pot, dance about.

DENNIS CLAYTON

(very stoned)

Jimmie!! Heeey, man... Hold up, for a sec...

Dennis finalizes dreamy moons and squiggly designs on the reed-thin bodies of two giggly, topless Cambodian girls, LUCY AND MARIE (20's.)

DENNIS CLAYTON (CONT'D)

I mean, if you're going to have a war, no sense having it in a place where there's sand and flies, where you can't even look at the women.

JIM BENNETT  
And, in your case, painting them?

DENNIS CLAYTON  
Taking it up a notch, Jimbo! Taking it  
all up!!

Bennett and Sarah make their way through the dancing, and  
drinking crowd.

A drunk Digger, does a mock interview with two Cambodian  
Hookers.

JIM BENNETT  
Fielding front line reports from the  
local talent?

DIGGER  
Ab-sa-fucking-lutely, my man.

Bennett and Digger outstretch for a hug.

DIGGER (CONT'D)  
JIMIO!

JIM BENNETT  
Digga'...

DIGGER  
Look at you... (beat) Hey, Sarah. You're  
looking good.

SARAH W. BARRELL  
(smiles)  
I'm always looking good, Digger.

DIGGER  
Oh, you're a bad girl...

Sarah breaks off and explores.

SARAH W. BARRELL  
Bye... I'll see what I can find out.

Sarah sashays away. Tosses a look to Digs. (Remember the good  
old days?). Oh, he knows all too well.

DIGGER  
(beat)  
God, I loved fucking that chick. Look at  
her? She knows what she's doing. That  
dumb-shit thing and that voice is just an  
act. She's got it over everybody.



JIM BENNETT  
Voice is real, dumb-shit thing a con.

DIGGER  
Right? Our last hurrah, huh Jimmy?

JIM BENNETT  
Looks that way. Back to fightin'  
kangaroos, hey, Digs?

DIGGER  
Ain't that the boring truth?

Digger hands Bennett a beer.

JIM BENNETT  
I saw the Sea Knights coming in and out.

DIGGER  
Operation Eagle Pull. Bout an eight week  
exit. Everybody in this room has their  
ticket punched for that last ride out. As  
soon as they get the word, the flag is  
coming down from the embassy pole. Then,  
it's adios Cambodia, brotha', and let the  
slaughter begin.

JIM BENNETT  
Kissinger's walking away. What a fucking  
prick.

DIGGER  
Ambassador Dean will be forced to hand  
our allies over to Pol Pot - the butcher!  
They don't even know it yet. That's the  
story, Jimbo!

JIM BENNETT  
Ain't war grand?

DIGGER  
Get that shit on film, and you'll be  
pulling a Pulitzer out of this sewer yet.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

A map of Cambodia. Bennett and team make their plans.

JIM BENNETT  
So, every province north of the city to  
Laos, west to Thailand, east over to  
Vietnam through the Mondulhiri province,  
we can forget. National One north would  
be a suicide mission.

HENRI TRUNG

Sok Ngoun from Reuters mentioned the Red Cross is in the south who may be abandoned.

CAMERAMAN BINH

Vantha from A.P. said National One going south of Prey Veng, sections of it are open.

JIM BENNETT

We could team up with some of the Cambodian press who know it. Find an Air America guy, or a Cambodian chopper who's willing to go in to an open stretch.

SARAH W. BARRELL

If we get stranded?

JIM BENNETT

The only exit, would look like, Neak Luong.

HENRI TRUNG

I think there's a ferry there.

JIM BENNETT

We could get back to Saigon down the Mekong. That's if worse, comes to worse.

EXT. BENNETT'S BALCONY - NIGHT

Bennett faces the now empty Phnom Penh streets below him. A pair of woman's hands rest on his neck and shoulders.

Bennett turns to see Sarah. From head to toe, provocative, stunning, half lit wearing a half open kimono robe - inviting, very available.

Sarah moves closer and places her arms around his neck. Rubs his neck and chest. But, there's now something different about Jim.

SARAH W. BARRELL

Looks like we'll have to start thinking of the next front to get to.

Patiently, Bennett stares at her - the lost girl before him.

JIM BENNETT

Sarah...

Sarah opens her kimono, her warm moving closer to his.

She leans forward, gradually leading her lips to meet with his - Jim is unresponsive.

SARAH W. BARRELL  
What is it? (whisper) What's wrong?

JIM BENNETT  
I can't.

Bennett, reaches for her arms and brings them back to her side. He pulls himself away.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)  
This is my last run. This is where it ends for me. No more assignments. No more creative takes on all the bloodshed. No more foxholes, no more friends dying, no more weeding through the lies, or the "What if's?" I'm going home, Sarah.

Sarah, crestfallen, her life's lifeline, cut. Lost.

SARAH W. BARRELL  
Home?

JIM BENNETT  
Like Terry and Sam should have. Like we should do now.

Sarah leaves his arms, steps back.

SARAH W. BARRELL  
Penang, must have given you a taste of it again.

JIM BENNETT  
It did. They're my world. It's time for me to go back to them.

SARAH W. BARRELL  
(weakly smiles)  
The last noble assignment.

JIM BENNETT  
Something like that

SARAH W. BARRELL  
(beat)  
I'm envious.

JIM BENNETT  
It's me who's envious of you. You made this place, and all the places we've been, bearable.

His assured touch of old, now slips away. She turns and ties up her kimono.

EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT

Sarah steps out in her lacy kimono wrap to the balcony - empty streets below.

SARAH W. BARRELL  
I'm feeling pretty dumb right about now,  
wouldn't you say?

Jim steps out to the balcony next to her. City streets and sounds below.

JIM BENNETT  
There's no reason to. I wanted to be  
here. I wanted to have our time. I want  
you to remember that. This isn't a  
goodbye... It's just, a getting back to  
our worlds.

SARAH W. BARRELL  
But what if you no longer have one to  
back to?

JIM BENNETT  
(trails off)  
I, I don't know...

Jim stands beside her - looks out to the empty streets.

SARAH W. BARRELL  
It's funny, I never thought I'd ever see  
the end of anything. Never thought it  
would look like this.

JIM BENNETT  
Like what?

SARAH W. BARRELL  
(whisper)  
Like a dirty street, and a very young  
girl trying somehow to find love in it.

She turns to Jim, smiles weakly, then turns from the balcony toward the empty room and to the door.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Wearing high heels and a tight kimono, Sarah quietly shuts Bennett's door. A BELLHOP approaches from the hallway holding a note.

BELLHOP  
Mr. Bennett's room?

SARAH W. BARRELL  
 Oh, I'll take it. He went to bed. I'll be  
 seeing him in the morning.

BELLHOP  
 Sign here.

EXT. PHNOM PENH SKIES - DAY

Half a dozen U.S. Sea knight choppers fly over the Le Phnom  
 Penh hotel.

EXT. POOL AREA - LE PHNOM HOTEL - DAY

Dennis Clayton and several others urgently load film, adjust  
 their cameras and look to maps.

Sarah approaches, sharper expression, slightly scorned -  
 black slacks and a tube top, statuesque, hair, again up in  
 curlers.

SARAH W. BARRELL  
 Morning Dennis. You guys going out?  
 What's happened?

DENNIS CLAYTON  
 (sober as a judge)  
 Digger heard something about Sean Flynn.  
 Nothing confirmed but possible remains  
 may have been found.

INT. REPORTERS PRESS AREA - DAY

Sarah opens the note meant for Bennett.

It reads: "Jim, possible remains of two journalists found.  
 Sean Flynn? Dana Stone? Maybe.. Be safe out there! Digs".

Sarah's fingers with her long red nails begin typing.

**Her report reads:** "Time Magazine Photojournalist Sean Flynn,  
 son of famed actor Errol Flynn, who was abducted by Viet Cong  
 forces in 1970, remains found along with a second set"...

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - DAY

Bennett and company walk toward the elevator.

CAMERAMAN BINH  
 Miss Sarah filed a story this morning.

JIM BENNETT  
 What story?

CAMERAMAN BINH  
 Sean Flynn.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Elevator doors open. Bennett and the others step out.

JIM BENNETT  
Get the guys over to the airfield. I'm  
going to check something out.

INT. HOTEL FRONT DESK - DAY

Bennett approaches the FRONT DESK MAN (30'S).

JIM BENNETT  
I'm, Jim Bennett. Were there any messages  
left for me?

FRONT DESK MAN  
Ah, let's see. Just one last night.  
Signed for by, Miss Barrell in 204. Note  
says, she'll give it to you this morning.

JIM BENNETT  
Can I have that signed receipt, please?

INT. HOTEL PRESS HOOCH - DAY

Bennett stands intently over the Associate Press teletype  
machine. Press room filled with international associates.

He reads Sarah's report.

JIM BENNETT  
Time Magazine, Sean Flynn, son of...  
abducted by Viet Vong in 1970... remains  
found... Sarah W. Barrell, A.P. New York  
Daily News.

Bennett turns. He sees Sarah standing nearby. He stands up.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)  
(careful - lethal)  
You file this story?

SARAH W. BARRELL  
Yes. I filed it.

JIM BENNETT  
Remains of Sean Flynn? Found? You confirm  
this somehow between last night sometime,  
and now... 6:45?

SARAH W. BARRELL  
I filed it, Jim.

JIM BENNETT  
Who confirmed it?

SARAH W. BARRELL  
Sources.

JIM BENNETT  
What sources?

SARAH W. BARRELL  
Maybe you were sleeping. Maybe you needed  
your rest to file your last adventure.

JIM BENNETT  
What sources, Sarah?!

SARAH W. BARRELL  
SOURCES!!

Bennett produces the receipt along with her signature on it.

JIM BENNETT  
Like this source?! The note that was  
meant for me?! That you signed for? That  
source?!

Sarah turns to leave. Bennett reaches for her arm and leads  
out of earshot from the others.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)  
And what if this hunch of yours is wrong?  
You going to sit with Sean Flynn's  
mother, Lili Damita and tell her all  
about it? They haven't even declared him  
officially dead yet, and you're out there  
telling the world they found him? You  
don't think there's not a dozen reporters  
at her front door right now?

Sarah slaps Jim across the face!! Other reporters leave the  
press hooch.

SARAH W. BARRELL  
(malicious)  
I don't work for you!

EXT. STREETS OF PHNOM PENH - DAY

Boarded up storefronts. Families walk briskly with supplies,  
food and clothing. Villagers continue to pour into the city.

EXT. OPEN AIR FIELD - DAY

U.S. Sea Knights from America's Operation Eagle Pull land and  
depart.

Bennett, Binh, Clayton, and Henri pack up their gear. Blades turn from an awaiting Cambodian chopper.

Cambodian cadre: They are, combat journalists, CHHOR VUTHI (AP) (28), HONG HO (UPI) (34), SUN HEANG (Freelance) (22), and LANH DAUNH RAR (AP) (27) begin loading up their gear.

Jim boards the chopper.

EXT. CAMBODIAN SKIES - DAY

Chopper strafes the canopy overhead following Cambodian National Highway # 1 - southward.

INT. CHOPPER - DAY

Bennett, Binh, Henri and Dennis Clayton prepare their gear.

The Cambodian press, pack their things and also their small arms weapons - loaded to the teeth.

Bennett shares a look from Henri and Binh - takes a breath, checks his watch.

JIM BENNETT

Okay boys, last run of our stay. Let's make it memorable. 60 kilometers out. It's 8:30 now. Nine o'clock touchdown, ten to eleven scout and shoot, 11:15 pick up, back to base by noon and on a ship to the Gulf of Thailand for drinks and dinner by five o'clock.

The crews of journalists shake the hands of their corresponding colleagues.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)

It's been an honor gentlemen.

EXT. PREY VENG PROVINCE - DAY

Chopper descends onto a deserted southern National Highway # 1. Landing, the eight men get out.

JIM BENNETT

(to pilot)

One hour. See you in one hour.

The pilot signals. Chopper slowly lifts, circles back and ascends northward.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)

Let's get off the road.



EXT. PREY VENG DIRT ROAD - DAY

The men huddle and drop to a knee. Mortar fire looms in the distance. Boom... Boom... Boom...

HENRI TRUNG

No more than five clicks away.

JIM BENNETT

Okay, let's go down one of these side roads. We'll flank the outskirts of the action on foot.

INT. PREY VENG SIDE ROAD - DAY

All eight men come upon a Catholic church in the distance. Transport trucks hustle nuns, priests and villagers into them.

No sign of the enemy.

CHHOR VUTHI

(Cambodian)

Red Cross.

JIM BENNETT

Looks like our last story. They're getting the last ones out. Let's cover this and get back.

EXT. PREY VENG CATHOLIC CHURCH - DAY

Binh and his counterpart Sun Heang begin filming. Weeping nuns, and catholic villagers appear torn to leave.

INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS WORKERS press those to board.

LANH DAUNH RAR

(Cambodian)

Where are you taking them?

RED CROSS WORKER

(Cambodian)

Neak Luong. To the ferry, across the Mekong.

JIM BENNETT

Let's get our stand ups and back to the pick up zone.

Bennett and Sok Ngoun of Reuters stand side by side as their camera and sound men roll.

SOK NGOUN

4,3..

JIM BENNETT

2,1...

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)  
 As all of Cambodia is days  
 from its complete collapse to  
 the encircling Khmer Rouge...

SOK NGOUN  
 (Cambodian)  
 Pockets of villages in Trey  
 Veng Province are being  
 evacuated by the  
 International Red Cross.

JIM BENNETT  
 Ambassador John Gunther Dean  
 has given his instructions in  
 conjunction with the U.S.  
 Navy along with the  
 International Red Cross...

SOK NGOUN (CONT'D)  
 (Cambodian)  
 To evacuate all who wish to  
 leave.

JIM BENNETT  
 This is Jim Bennett, ABC  
 News, in Prey Veng Province -  
 Cambodia.

SOK NGOUN (CONT'D)  
 (Cambodian)  
 For Reuters, deep in southern  
 Cambodia, Sok Ngoun, Reuters.

EXT. LANDING ZONE - NATIONAL HIGHWAY # 1 - DAY

Our team of eight arrive to the pick up point. From the  
 distance, approaching is the Cambodian pilot and chopper.

JIM BENNETT  
 He's right on time.

The distant chopper above begins its descent.

Suddenly from the parameter, a Khmer RPG rocket launcher  
 whistles straight over the trees, directly into the cabin of  
 the rescue aircraft.

The ship rocks with an explosion!

The chopper loses control. The cabin begins spinning wildly  
 about. Blades above, crack, rotor can't hold the ship's  
 ballast.

A second RPG rocks the craft a second time. Helplessly it  
 spins downward to the ground. An explosion fills the air!!

Incoming mortar fire begins slashing into National Highway.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)  
 Trees!! Get there!

The men run into the jungle for cover.

EXT. TREE LINE - DAY

Terrified and out of breath, the men huddle.

DENNIS CLAYTON

That was our only way out. We can't start walking north. That's 50 miles. We'll be dead in the first three.

LANH DAUNH RAR

Khmer.

More shells pound the countryside. The Cambodian press pull out their weapons.

JIM BENNETT

Okay... Then, it's Neak Luong. Our only hope is finding the Red Cross we saw at the church. Maybe we can get there in time and cross with the ferry.

EXT. STREETS OF PHNOM PENH CAMBODIA - NIGHT

Dancers, parades and flags wisp about in celebration of the ancient Maha Songkron (Khmer New Year).

City streets fill with both refugee villagers and city residents.

INT. CAMBODIAN JUNGLE - DAY

Bennett, Dennis Clayton and company, fatigued, thirsty, now walk in two separate groups. Both teams keep in eye contact.

JIM BENNETT

Smoke. Shhhh...

EXT. BURNING VILLAGE - DAY

The team arrives on the outskirts of a burning and ransacked village.

Bennett signals for the team to hold still.

Remnants of the Khmer lie in heaps of limbs, scarred bodies, dead animals, black and charred mangled tin roofing - apocalyptic.

JIM BENNETT

They killed everything.

Chhor Vuthi positions himself and begins shooting film from the fringe.

Binh looks to Bennet for direction. Bennett motions for Henri's sound.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)  
 (whispers)  
 Yeah, shoot, quietly. Henri, give me some sound.

HENRI TRUNG  
 (whisper)  
 Sound up.

Bennett gets to one knee.

JIM BENNETT  
 (whisper)  
 Outside a village near Neak Luong,  
 nothing less than a scene of prophetic,  
 violent collapse.

From Bennett's vantage point, we see his Cambodian counterparts, Chhor Vuthi, Lanh Daunh Rar and Hong Ho step inside the confines of the destroyed village.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)  
 (whisper)  
 Working through the southern provinces,  
 the Khmer is exacting a scorched earth  
 policy as a way of ethnic cleansing with  
 everything they come across.

The groups are now separated and out of eye contact  
 BENNETT (CONT'D)

(whisper)  
 Henri, Binh. Cut it. Get down. Back up  
 slowly.

Bennett sees:

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

From far away, a young CAMBODIAN BOY (11) comes into view on a village road riding a bicycle through the heaps of the dead.

Now, all three Cambodian press walk about freely the burning shacks.

The Press Crew begin filming as the boy snakes his way to them.

JIM BENNETT  
 What are they doing?

Bennett checks his own parameter. The boy arrives to Chhor Vuthi, Hung Ho, Lanh Daunh Rar, Sok Ngoun, and Sun Heang.

CHHOR VUTHI  
 (Cambodian)  
 When did this happen?

The boy stops his bike and shrugs.

He then pulls out an automatic weapon from his bicycle basket. He points it. Caught off guard, Vuthi and the others pull out their own weapons.

The boy begins to unload.

Lanh Daunh Rar gets a round off and hits the kid in the throat. Rounds continue to spill from the boy's grip.

AMBASSADOR DEAN (V.O)  
All presumed captured or killed by NVA or  
the Khmer Rouge.

The boy and the five Cambodian men all drop to the ground - dead.

INT. U.S. EMBASSY - AMBASSADOR'S OFFICE - PHNOM PENH - DAY

Kevin Delany, Digger and Sarah settle into chairs across from AMBASSADOR JOHN GUNTHER DEAN (40's.)

AMBASSADOR DEAN  
Protocol states, I contact the families  
first.

KEVIN DELANY  
Please, Ambassador.

EXT. VILLAGE PARAMETER - DAY

Petrified, Bennett signals for his cadre to follow him away from the scene.

JIM BENNETT  
Keep your heads down.

INT. BEACH RENTAL HOUSE - PENANG - DAY

A U.S. MILITARY OFFICIAL (40'S) sits soberly with Barbara to report the news of Jim's possible death - devastated.

AMBASSADOR DEAN (V.O.)  
Remnants of the craft were found by  
Cambodian patrols.

EXT. CAMBODIAN JUNGLE - DAY

Bennett, Dennis, Binh and Henri work through the tundra in a full out sprint.

AMBASSADOR DEAN (V.O.)  
The region is now under...

Mortar rounds, again pound the charred village behind our cadre.

INT. KNBC - LOS ANGELES - DAY

Bennett's stateside colleagues gather in Bill Brown's office.

AMBASSADOR DEAN (V.O.)  
NVA and Khmer Rouge occupation.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

Bennett and his team work through the jungle to Neak Loung.

AMBASSADOR DEAN (V.O.)  
Mr. Jim Bennett of ABC News. Mr. Dennis Clayton of Life magazine, Vietnamese cameraman, Bao Binh, French-Vietnamese sound man Henri Trung. And, five Cambodian press members.

INT. U.S. EMBASSY - AMBASSADOR'S OFFICE - PHNOM PENH - DAY

Kevin, Digger and Sarah sit quietly in the face of the worst news imaginable.

AMBASSADOR DEAN  
The flag over this embassy will be brought down tomorrow morning first light.

EXT. U.S. CAMBODIAN EMBASSY - DAY

U.S. American flag is brought down the pole and folded up by U.S. military personnel.

EXT. OPEN AIR FIELD - DAY

U.S. aircraft land and lift.

Sarah, Kevin Delany, and Digger, climb inside a U.S. Naval Sea Knight transport chopper.

Sarah, forlorn, takes one last look for a sign of Jim Bennett - nothing. The hatch door closes and the ship lifts skyward.

EXT. CAMBODIAN JUNGLE - DAY

Bennett, Dennis, Binh and Henri. Trees above - Spider monkeys follow our cell with incriminating screeching, the rattling of trees above.

DENNIS CLAYTON  
Shut those fucking monkeys up.

EXT. VILLAGE PARAMETER - DAY

A handful of Khmer infantry arrive at the parameter and jump onto the Bennett's trail.

Monkeys rile at fever pitch in the trees above - all providing a crumb-like, unwelcome, pathway to our heros.

EXT. NEAK LOUNG HILLSIDE - DAY

Bennett and company arrive to a nearby clearing. Below, the ferry of Neak Luong.

We see the Red Cross refugees clamoring to hold on as the ferry pulls out.

DENNIS CLAYTON

It's pulling out. There's the Red Cross  
on the boat. We fucking missed the boat,  
man!!

EXT. NEAK LOUNG - MEKONG DELTA - DAY

Neak Luong's ferry, takes on enemy bombardment from Khmer artillery placements.

The ferry begins to tilt. Women, children, monks and nuns begin to slide into the Mekong Delta. Pitiful screams of help.

EXT. NEAK LOUNG HILLSIDE - DAY

Bennett and company look on to the Khmer's attack. It's horrifying - women and children drowning, taking rounds and automatic fire.

Bennett turns his head back. He hears the sounds of distant monkeys screaming in the trees.

HENRI TRUNG

Khmer.

JIM BENNETT

Run! Run!!

The four men hit the forwarding canopy and run for their lives.

EXT. CANOPY FOREST - DAY

Khmer troops enter the trail.

Automatic weapons and bayonets. They make ground. Rounds are fired. They cut aggressively through the bush.

Bennett and team begin losing ground. Dennis Clayton suddenly slips and falls into a six foot, deeply dug, enemy punji pit.

His body drops through two rollers of bamboo spikes - impaled - instantly.

DENNIS CLAYTON

Arrgghh...

Bennett and team hold. Bennett grabs Clayton's camera but then more enemy fire.

JIM BENNETT

Run!

EXT. CANOPY TRAIL - DAY

Sprinting up the trail, it's the Khmer who is making ground. They leap over Dennis and the punji pit one by one.

A close range automatic burts into Dennis's body makes sure there is no life in him.

MORE - VARIOUS

Bennett and band are quickly losing ground. Khmer weapons are raised and aimed at the backs and heads of our heroes.

Shots fired.

Our team makes their way through a small creek bed, out of breath and nearly overtaken. They fly past with their last bits of strength.

Suddenly, from the periphery of the trail, barely visible to the naked eye, MONTAGNARD HIGHLAND TRIBESMAN raise their automatic American made M-16's.

The Khmer leap through and over the creek.

From behind our company, a barrage of M-16's open fire onto the four leaping Khmer infantry men.

A full ambush - enemy Khmer are cut down in their tracks and fall dead in the creek below.

Bennett and the others stop. Nowhere to run any longer. Death appears imminent.

The lead MONTAGNARD TRIBESMAN points his weapon at Bennett and slowly approaches.

The Tribesman stands before Bennett and looks at him. Weapons drawn. The Montagnard then reaches for Bennett's necklace of the jade Buddha.



TRIBESMAN  
Buddha...? American?

He then reaches for Bennett's wrist.

The Tribesman runs his fingers around the sacred leather bracelet given to Bennett by the ARVN Captain Vo's father.

The man lowers his weapon.

MONTAGNARD TRIBESMAN  
(Cambodian)  
This way.

EXT. MOUNTAIN MONTAGNARD CAMP - LATER - DAY

Bennett and team are led by the friendly natives to the highlander camp. Waterfalls pour from upstream rivers above.

Approaching, they are welcomed by the friendly Montagnards.

Bennett and tribe sit. Water and food is brought out. Binh and Henri translate for the Tribesman leader.

JIM BENNETT  
(beat)  
Tell them, we were cut off from getting back to Phnom Penh. Arrived at a church. The Red Cross were evacuating refugees. Came across a village, destroyed by the Khmer. Three men and a Khmer boy were killed.

Bennett sips. Henri translates.

EXT. HILLSIDE ABOVE MEKONG DELTA - NEXT MORNING - DAY

Momentarily peaceful, the armed Tribesman lead Bennett and crew down a narrow path toward the Mekong Delta.

EXT. MEKONG VISTA - DAY

The Montagnards and Bennett stop at canopy's edge.

Before them, the Mekong Delta. An exodus of thousands of refugees stream out of Cambodia down the Mekong for safety - small boats, canoes and makeshift bamboo rafts.

Bennett turns to express his gratitude - the Montagnards have vanished.

EXT. FLAT OPEN BARGE - DAY

Overcrowded, hot and humid, Bennett and team find a corner of the flat deck to rest their heads.

Wispy, peaceful clouds float, and drift aimlessly overhead.

JIM BENNETT

I wonder if they got out? Sarah, Digger?

Binh shakes his head with the unknown.

EXT. MEKONG DELTA - BARGE - DAY

It grows quiet. We hear only the tiring diesel engine and splashing of water against the hull of the rickety barge.

Bennett, Binh and Henri share a look.

Huddled in groups are families, villagers, children, Cambodian refugees.

The loud, chattering groan of the overworked diesel barge is trancelike, momentarily warm and monotonously comforting.

The men shut their eyes, and find a moment of peace and rest in what feels to be a relative reprieve.

The Captain slows the engines. Bennett opens his eyes.

Dark clouds then begin to gather above. Distant sporadic light automatic arms fire miles ahead.

EXT. CAPTAINS PERCH - DAY

Bennett and company move to the front of the barge. The Mekong's shores narrow considerably miles ahead.

The ship's captain, glasses the river.

JIM BENNETT

What is it?

BARGE CAPTAIN

NVA firing on boats downstream in the narrow passage. Two miles. They hear the engines.

JIM BENNETT

Can you cut 'em?

BARGE CAPTAIN

The current will push to shore if I do.

The Mekong then begins to dangerously narrow.

BARGE CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

Get everybody to lie flat.

EXT. MEKONG SHORES - DAY

Vietcong begin to line the shores with automatic weapons.

EXT. FLAT OPEN BARGE - DAY

Refugees lie flat and still, crying, terrified. The mass of black clouds grows heavier above.

The wide open barge then gradually enters the north tip of the narrow ambush alley.

Bennett, the Captain, and all those on the boat, lie flat and wait for the impending attack.

All movement - still.

Small drops of rain from the Mekong squall and from the black clouds above begin to delicately land onto each of the fearful faces of women and children.

The barge trudges closer to the Mekong's narrow margins.

Ambush - minutes away.

The rain falling from above begins to get heavier and heavier. Each drop, now like a single, falling glass of water, pounds the deck of the barge and Mekong.

The dark squall reaches the delta waters itself - blackening the boat from view, surrounding our travelers - beginning to mute all sound from the barge and its travelers.

The driving rain muffles the thumping diesel engine. The barge continues through the narrow passage unmolested.

No enemy fire. The shoreline -no longer visible from the Captain's perch, the barge not visible to the perched Viet Cong.

JIM BENNETT

They can't hear us. They don't know we're here.

The Captain throttles his engines and breaks free of the narrow shores.

Escorted by dark clouds and driving rains above, our weary band of evacuees look to break free to wider, open waters.

EXT. U.S. RIVER GUNBOAT - LATER - DAY

With weapons drawn, U.S. personnel pull stealthily shipside to the barge.

They arrive to see Bennett, his crew and 90 refugees huddled on the flat deck - sleeping.

Staring down the barrel of an American M-16, Jim recognizes he is now in friendly hands.

JIM BENNETT  
(wakes)  
Jim Bennett. ABC News.

INT. ABC NEWS STUDIO - DAY

Harry Reasoner.

ABC'S HARRY REASONER  
Reports confirm North Vietnamese enemy forces lie just on the outskirts of Saigon, the capital of South Vietnam. The fall of the Saigon now appears imminent and days away...

INT. FLIGHT TERMINAL - PENANG INTERNATIONAL - DAY

Bennett exits the causeway to see an astonished Barbara and his kids waiting.

He runs to them, and they to him, embracing, holding, weeping.

JIM BENNETT  
I'm here... I'm here. I'm here.  
Everything is okay... We're all okay.

His boys hold on to their dad for dear life. Jim wipes the tears from Barbara's eyes.

Bennett stands and kisses Barbara.

JIM BENNETT (CONT'D)  
Get everything packed, and everyone home.  
Clear everything out of the house. We're all going to be home soon.

EXT. SAIGON - DAY

U.S. Huey lands. Bennett steps out.

INT. ARMED FORCES RADIO - DAY

ARMED FORCES RADIO DJ (30'S). He hangs up the phone and places a needle on a record.

Exit Saigon broadcast forthcoming:

**Code for: "GET OUT OF SAIGON - GET TO THE EMBASSY FOR EVACUATION"!**

ARMED FORCES DJ  
And it's 105 and here's a little Bing  
Crosby with White Christmas to cool  
everyone down.

INT. BUREAU OFFICE - DAY

Bennett smiles and lifts Daniel's old boots onto Blake's desk.

JIM BENNETT  
(smiles)  
I believe these are yours?

EXT. U.S. EMBASSY - DAY

Thongs press against the embassy gates to get to the choppers  
atop the embassy roof.

Kevin Delany works to get his colleagues through - sees  
Bennett - astonished!

JIM BENNETT  
Hey!! Kevin! Kevin!! Get Binh and Henri  
on that list! I'm going to find them!!

EXT. NEWS BUREAU BUILDING - DAY

The streets are restless with evacuation movement. The fall of  
Saigon, imminent. Radio broadcasts throughout.

We hear the scratchy cry to escape "White Christmas". *I'm  
dreaming...*

*Of a white Christmas...*

EXT. BUREAU STREET - DAY

Bennett exits the bureau's front doors and sees Henri who  
loyally waits for him - anxious.

JIM BENNETT  
They're going to get you out, Henri. You  
and your family. Your name's on the list  
with Kevin Delany. He's there at the  
embassy but you got to find him.

Bennett reaches out to Henri and the men hold on to one  
another.

ABC'S HARRY REASONER (V.O.)  
Saigon is days away from falling to North  
Vietnam's communist forces.

*Just like the ones I used to know...*

We begin to hear the familiar sounds of Bennett's Smith-Corona typewriter.

JIM BENNETT (V.O.)  
The Vietnam war started with B-52  
bombers...

*Where the tree tops glisten...*

JIM BENNETT (V.O.)  
Who gutted both its enemy in the jungle,  
and its own people back at home.

INT. EMPTY PRESS HOOCH - DAY

It's empty but for Binh who loads up more film to shoot one more time. Jim approaches.

JIM BENNETT (V.O.)  
Then it ended with the cracking of  
Vietnamese knuckles...

Binh stops loading film.

JIM BENNETT (V.O.)  
Clinging to embassy gates, insisting they  
leave with U.S. personnel.

EXT. THE CITY OF SAIGON - DAY

Communist Vietcong pound the landscapes with heavy ordinance.

JIM BENNETT (V.O.)  
First and last of a lot of things in  
Vietnam.

Pow! Pow! Pow! Evacuation choppers fill the sky.

JIM BENNETT (V.O.)  
The first war in color.

*To hear sleigh bells in the snow...*

JIM BENNETT (V.O.)  
The first war broadcast on a radio.

EXT. SOUTH VIETNAMESE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE - DAY

North Vietnamese forces storm the gates with tanks and army personnel.

JIM BENNETT (V.O.)  
The first war on TV.

A communist flag is unfurled from left to right across the palace steps.

JIM BENNETT (V.O.)  
The first war of the freelancer.

*I'm dreaming of a white Christmas...*

INT. A DARKROOM - MONTHS LATER - NIGHT

From a black negative developing pan, chemicals wash about. Dennis Clayton's camera lays nearby - opened.

JIM BENNETT (V.O.)  
The first war with no censorship.

Film swashes from left to right in a developing tray.

JIM BENNETT (V.O.)  
And, the first war America has ever lost.

INT. A DARKROOM - NIGHT

Bennett then sees an image appearing of the group.

BARBARA (O.C.)  
Jim?

Jim turns on the light, and turns off the radio. No more Vietnam!

We hear a knock on the door.

We see the room is covered with photos of his friends and colleagues. Dennis's last images - both beautiful and horrific.

BARBARA (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Everyone is here, baby.

Bennett opens the door for Barbara. Standing next to her is their five-year-old Claudia. Barbara hands Jim an envelope.

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
This came for you at the station.

Jim opens the envelope. A letter from Sarah and a NY Times News article.

JIM BENNETT  
(beat)  
I'll be out in a minute.

INT. SHABBY APARTMENT - DAY

**SCREEN READS: SALISBURY MOZAMBIQUE**

A handsome British-born Rhodesian bush War Mercenary MAJOR ANDRE DENNISON(30's), sits on the bed and counts large bundles of tautly wrapped money.

Sarah, steps out from the bathroom, toweling herself dry.

*'Where treetops glisten, and children listen'*

Suddenly, kicking the door open, Dennison faces FOUR CONGO GUNRUNNERS who open fire at point blank range execution style.

The men then swing their weapons to Sarah. We wait a beat, then...

INT. A DARKROOM - NIGHT

Bennett stands in the middle of his darkroom with the article in his hand.

Article reads: SARAH WEBB BARRELL, U.S. PHOTOJOURNALIST, COVERED WARS ABROAD.

SARAH W. BARRELL (V.O.)  
(familiar voice)  
Dear, Jim.

INT. DINGY BATHROOM IN MOZAMBIQUE HOTEL - DAY

Major Dennison's, bloody and lifeless body lies splayed in the background.

SARAH W. BARRELL (V.O.)  
*Working my way into Mozambique through  
Salisbury.*

Sarah, looks in the mirror, reaches for a scissors and begins cutting her blonde hair all away.

SARAH W. BARRELL (V.O.)  
*Promising to get it right this time -  
reporting accurately and telling the  
truth.*

Sarah then opens up the medicine cabinet and reaches for a a band-aid box for a small, hidden snub noise .38.

SARAH W. BARRELL (V.O.)  
*Like you said, the only things we truly  
have. Faith, hope and love. SWB.*



INT. DARKROOM - NIGHT

Little Claudia appears through the door and in the hallway.

CLAUDIA  
Are you coming, daddy?

Claudia reaches for his hand.

INT. WHITE HOUSE PRESS CORPS ROOM - DAY

PRESIDENT GERALD FORD (60's) somber, stands before the White House Press Corp.

**SCREEN READS: U.S. PRESIDENTIAL PRESS CONFERENCE MAY 6TH, 1975**

HELEN THOMAS (30'S). United Press International.

REPORTER HELEN THOMAS  
Mr. President, what are the lessons of Vietnam in terms of the Presidency, the Congress and the American People?

PRESIDENT GERALD FORD  
(contemplates)  
Miss Thomas, the war in Vietnam is over. It was sad and tragic in many respects. It would be unfortunate to rehash as to the individuals who might be to blame.

EXT. BENNETT BACKYARD - DAY

Strings of lights hang about. A barbecue smokes against the back fence.

Barbara, Matt, Scott stand by.

Jim Bennett steps forward to greet his friends and quickly surrounded by those who love him.

JIM BENNETT (V.O.)  
(finally)  
No roll call of the dead in Vietnam will ever be complete until it concludes with the names of the dozens of journalists who died in search of the truth and covering the entire Indo-Chinese holocaust.

Friends, neighbors, colleagues await.

JIM BENNETT (V.O.)  
Their names don't appear on any memorial. They probably never will. But for all my colleagues who have died in the service of this profession.  
(MORE)

JIM BENNETT (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 I can only say they were no less heroic,  
 no less patriotic, nor any less concerned  
 in reporting the war, than of those who  
 fought it.

Jim kisses his wife.

JIM BENNETT  
 It's good to be home.

Jim steps forward - he is greeted by his welcoming friends.

*"And May All Your Christmases be White..."*

*We slowly, fade to black...*

*THE END*

In memory of those who sought the truth and gave their lives to report it.

Sarah Webb Barrell, Pham Tram, Pieter Van Thiel, Jerry Rose Bernard Kolenberg, Thanh My Huynh, Dickey Chapelle, Charles Chellappah, Sam Castan, Bernard Fall Byron Highland, Ronald Gallagher, Philippa Schuyler, Robert Ellison,

Hiromishi Mine, Michael Birch, John Cantwell, Ronald Laramy, Bruce Piggott, Charles Egglesto, Ignacio Ezcurra, Tatsuo Sakai, Alain Saint-Paul, Paul Savanuck Oliver Noonan, Gilles Caron, Claude Arpin, Guy Hannoteaux, Akira Kusaka,

Yujiro Takagi, Sean Flynn, Dana Stone, Dieter Bellendorf, George Gensluckner, Willy Mettler, Takeshi Yanagisawa, Terro Nakajima, Roger Colne, Welles Hangen, Yoshiniko Waku, Tomoharo Ishii, Ramnik Lekhi, Gerry Miller,

Kojiro Sakai, George Syvertsen, Rene Puissesseau, Raymond Meye, Johannes Duynisveld, Frank Frosch, Larry Burrows, Henri Huet, Kent Potter Keizaburo Shimamoto, Francois Sully, Alexander Shimkin, Sam Kai Faye,

Terry Khoo, Gerard Hebert, Hiroo Wakabayashi, Dinh Trinh, Man Hieu Nguyen Van Giang Vu, Hung Dung Vu, Van Vu Do, Paul Leandri, Sou Vichith, Michel Lauren, Gilles Caron, Claude Arpin, Guy Hannoteaux, Akira Ku, Yujiro Takagi

George Gensluckner, Willy Mettle, Takeshi Yanagisawa, Terro Nakajima, George Syvertson, Gerry Miller, Ramnik Lekhi, Tomoharu Ishii, Kojiro Sakai, Yoshiniko Waku, Welles Hangen, Roger Coln, Rene Puissesseau,

Raymond Meye, Johannes Duynisveld, Kyoichi Sawada, Frank Frosch