

SOUTHERN COMFORT

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## SOUTHERN COMFORT

FADE IN:

BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

EXT. ARMORY

NIGHT

Warehouse district, near the river...

A statue of a Confederate soldier stands in the shadows, his rifle held high and proud. Beyond, a Civil War cannon points out from the darkness.

HEADLIGHTS

bright and blinding from down the street, they pass over the statue and find a sign: "Louisiana National Guard"...The car slowly glides into the Armory parking lot.

ANOTHER SET OF HEADLIGHTS

as a pick-up truck down-shifts. From the opposite end of the street another vehicle approaches, followed by more headlights...and more headlights...and more again.

CUT TO:

INT. ARMORY

NIGHT

Two basketball hoops. Framed photos of Generals and military leaders. An American flag crossed with the state banner of Louisiana...Spelled out in bold letters across the far wall, "This is the Home of the Best Infantry Company in the World."

ONE HUNDRED NATIONAL GUARDSMEN

Some sit or lie on the cement, others lean against the brick wall, still others fueling up on coffee and donuts. U.S. Army fatigues everywhere; boots, bayonets, buttpacks, ammo pouches, canteens hanging from pistol belts, steel pot helmets with camouflage nets...

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CONTINUED:

SATURDAY MORNING

A whistle blows.

FIRST SERGEANT

Fall in!

Grudgingly, the men start to assemble, picking up their duffle bags and forming lines. Again the whistle blows.

FIRST SERGEANT

Come on, fall in!

## ROLL CALL FORMATION

Four platoons, 110 men standing alongside their duffles. The First Sergeant moves before them and begins shouting names from a clipboard. Each man answers with a half-hearted "yeah" or "yo".

FIRST SERGEANT

Marian...Masterson!...Mayhew...  
Maxvill...Meadows...Merritt...  
Middlebrook...

These are the weekend warriors. Some having signed on years ago to duck the draft, some of them just like being in the club, the others in for the money each month and the prospect of a pension.

CUT TO:

## THE COMPANY

Now at parade rest. A man appears at the far doorway.

FIRST SERGEANT

Company!

PLATOON LEADERS

Platoon!

FIRST SERGEANT

Atten-Hut!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY MORNING

The Guardsmen come to attention as Captain Underwood enters and exchanges a snappy salute with the First Sergeant.

FIRST SERGEANT

Company all present or accounted for, sir.

CAPTAIN

Take your post, Sergeant.

CAPTAIN UNDERWOOD

Late forties. Lean and mean. Hair cut yesterday. Boots glistening, fatigues starched. His voice crisp, sharp. Complete command.

CAPTAIN

At ease.

The Company relaxes. Men shift weight, scratch.

CAPTAIN

Platoon sergeants. After your men draw their weapons you'll be in the trucks ready to move out at 0500. There is the possibility some battalion brass will be coming down to observe you people...Please for once in your life could you try to look like soldiers...

PLATOON LEADERS

Platoon!

CAPTAIN

Atten-Hut!

The Company snaps to attention.

RIFLEMAN CLEOTIS WILSON - SPECIALIST 4TH CLASS

Black; 25 years old, a lineman for Louisiana Bell Telephone. His mental agility belies his 11th grade education. Married,

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CONTINUED:

SATURDAY MORNING

two children, a third on the way. As he stands at attention he notices a lone figure slowly making his way across the Armory.

WILSON

Here he is, pride of the regiment.

All eyes target on:

RIFLEMAN TERRANCE LEE ATWATER - SPECIALIST 4TH CLASS

handsome, with the look of youth that comes from living the soft life. His hair flops over his forehead, covering a portion of his glasses. His boots need a shine, his uniform a pressing. Not a sad sack, but he is spoiled Southern. His steel helmet is tied to the duffle bag and clangs out as he drags it across the cement floor. As he passes the Captain, Atwater casually flicks a salute in the officer's general direction.

ATWATER

Captain.

CAPTAIN

You're late, soldier.

To the snickering of the men and the stare of the Captain, Atwater joins 1st Squad, 2nd Platoon. Stands in line next to Wilson.

ATWATER

Did I miss sick call?

RIFLEMAN VICTOR CALVELLI - SPECIALIST 4TH CLASS

standing next to Wilson on the other side. Wears a wedding ring. Thirty years old. A Chemical Engineer transferred down from New Jersey two months ago by Texaco. Not too thrilled about being here.

CAPTAIN

Platoon leaders, move 'em out.

CUT TO:

SATURDAY MORNING

## THE GUARDSMEN

being issued their rifles, checking their equipment, helping each other with their packs, loading gear into the trucks...the vehicles engines kick over, headlights go on.

CUT TO:

INT. REAR OF TRUCK

A fortunate few sit on the folding benches along the sides, the others lying on the floor among their duffle bags and rifles...outside a young Lieutenant passes by, decides to look in for a regulation growl.

LIEUTENANT

You men comfortable?

MEN

Yes sir!

LIEUTENANT

Can't hear you!

They roar back.

MEN

YES SIR!

LIEUTENANT

Good.

The Lieutenant moves briskly on.

ATWATER

Why is everybody always yelling  
around here?

He speaks with the voice of a man with a terrific hangover.

CUT TO:

SATURDAY MORNING

## THE CONVOY MOVING OUT - IN DARKNESS

A roaring line of Jeeps and trucks snorting black exhaust; headlights sweeping past the Armory.

## INT. REAR OF TRUCK

The last vehicle of the ten truck convoy shelters the men of the 2nd platoon; 40 of them taking the bumps, settling down, trying either to get comfortable or, even a better idea, to get some sleep.

## RIFLEMAN EARL LONGBRAKE - SPECIALIST 4TH CLASS

Big and solid. Red of neck. Likes a good time. Nineteen years old. He pulls a six pack of Dixie beer out of his duffle bag and offers it around after popping one open for himself.

LONGBRAKE

Anybody for a brew?

His pal Masterson makes the automatic reach. As does Atwater.

ATWATER

Hair of the dog.

## RIFLEMAN LONNIE MASTERSON - SPECIALIST 5TH CLASS

Late 20's. Works in the oil fields. Completed his three years regular Army and is in the Guard because he likes it. Drives a pick-up, wears a drooping moustache and sideburns...A life model for Longbrake.

GUARDSMAN

Christ. Even the cows ain't up.

SATURDAY MORNING

RIFLEMAN TYRONE SMITH - SPECIALIST 3RD CLASS

Early 20's. Black. Street smart. Happy, as long as he's high, which is almost always.

SMITH

We there yet?

ATWATER

Hey, Tyrone. You ready for this?

SMITH

Shit, I been getting ready all week on reds and whites...blues even.

Longbrake tosses out a few more beers.

ATWATER

Where we spending the weekend?

WILSON

Atchaflaya basin. Don't you ever listen up Atwater?

GUARDSMAN

Why in Christ they taking us to the bonnies for?

WILSON

Don't ask me. Hey Masterson, why in Christ are they taking us to the boonies for?

Masterson looks back at Wilson with mild irritation.

MASTERSON

Cause.

WILSON

Oh I see. 'Long as you put it that way.

Atwater takes a long drink of beer.

CUT TO:



SATURDAY MORNING

EXT. ROADSIDE

DAWN

The convoy rolls through the suburbs of Baton Rouge; all quiet among the rows of houses beyond the rumbling column of khaki colored vehicles.

CUT TO:

INT. REAR OF TRUCK

DAWN

Most of the 2nd Platoon now sound asleep, oblivious to the first rays of sunlight. A slow stretching move by one of the uniformed men...

RIFLEMAN NOLAN YOUNGBLOOD - SPECIALIST 4TH CLASS

Biggest of them all. And all of it's muscle. Teaches ninth grade history and is also the varsity line coach at Lafayette Union High School. He's not one to be taken lightly... Unfortunately he doesn't take himself lightly either, seeing himself as a scholar-athlete and is clearly a man who loves the sound of his own voice.

YOUNGBLOOD

Trust you brought your portable air conditioner, Atwater.

ATWATER

And refrigerator.

WILSON

Atwater's the only man in the history of the Guard that brings satin sheets to summer camp.

MASTERSON

What you all doin' in the truck with us anyway, Atwater? Why ain't you ridin' down on a polo pony?

ATWATER

Listen, my polo pony wouldn't associate with you guys.

SATURDAY MORNING

CALVELLI

lights a cigarette and closes his eyes, trying to block out the bullshit.

CUT TO:

THE CONVOY

Now moving along the Interstate highway. Morning breaking on a sharp, clear day...it's going to be a hot one...A little girl at a Gas Station waves as the trucks pass. The Guardsmen give her the finger.

CUT TO:

INT. TRUCK CAB

DAWN

Three men, Squad Leader Taylor, next to him a Sergeant from the 2nd Squad and...

SQUAD LEADER CLAUDE NORMAN - SPECIALIST, E-5

Behind the wheel. His sleeves are pushed up and his right forearm has a tatoos of a pirate skull. He dropped out of high school to join the Army and fight in Nam, but they stopped the war. Pissed him off. Still has ideas though. Lives alone, keeps two cats. Subscribes to "Soldier of Fortune".

NORMAN

Know what I hear? That they're looking for professionals in Africa.

SERGEANT

Whores?

NORMAN

Mercenaries. In Mexico and Latin America too. Pays \$1300 a month plus transportation.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY MORNING

SERGEANT

Man could retire.

NORMAN

I read about it. They're lookin'  
all the time.

SQUAD LEADER CRAWFORD TAYLOR - SPECIALIST 6TH CLASS

Two tours in Viet Nam. Decorated. Knows how to play the game. Going for his twenty year pension, already has nine in...The men of the 2nd Platoon all respect him; a good man to have on your side.

TAYLOR

They want combat soldiers, Norman.  
Not typists.

EXT. CONVOY

The trucks are moving laboriously down a four lane highway. In the distance an isolated shopping center site stands half constructed.

INT. REAR OF TRUCK

MORNING

Longbrake looks across at the half-asleep Wilson.

LONGBRAKE

Hey, Clitoris.

Wilson cuts him off cold.

WILSON

Cleotis.

LONGBRAKE

Yeah. When we get down in them swamps, be sure you watch out for those snakes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY MORNING

WILSON

I'll watch for them. I just  
don't want them watchin' for me.

CALVELLI

Someone has finally said something that interests him...or  
at least something that he thinks he ought to know about.

CALVELLI

What kind of snakes?

GUARDSMAN

Moccasins. Copperheads.

LONGBRAKE

One a them bites you, you bend  
over, stick your head between  
your knees and kiss your ass  
goodbye.

MASTERSON

quietly reaches into his pocket and pulls out a box of 5-56  
ammunition. Without drawing attention from the others,  
snaps a shell into the chamber of his M-16.

GUARDSMAN

When I was training in Fort Benning,  
our instructor got bit right here by  
a coral snake.

He extends his right arm.

GUARDSMAN

He put his hand on a log, took  
his machette, and cut his hand  
right off, I swear to God.

Groans and smiles; nobody believes him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY MORNING

Masterson leans out over the tailgate of the truck, levels his M-16 at the approaching supermarket construction site and sends a bullet into a huge plate glass window, a quarter of a mile beyond.

SUPERMARKET

The window shatters and falls.

INT. REAR OF TRUCK

A proud smile shines out from under Masterson's moustache; some of the boys think this is the funniest thing they've ever seen.

MASTERSON

I ain't worried about snakes.

He reaches into his shirt and displays the box of live ammunition.

LONGBRAKE

Shit, you sonofabitch. Why didn't you tell me you brought real ammo?

A violent sway from the lurching vehicle.

EXT. HIGHWAY

The truck pulling over hard to the right, onto the shoulder of the road.

INT. REAR OF TRUCK

Braking sounds from the heavy vehicle...The small window separating the truck bed from the cab is snapped open.

NORMAN

Allright, what the fuck was that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY MORNING

ATWATER

Backfire.

LONGBRAKE

Norman?

NORMAN

Yeah?

LONGBRAKE

Fuck you.

MASTERSON

Why don't you get these sons of  
bitches tuned up, Norman.

Taylor's head appears at the window.

TAYLOR

Whatever the hell's going on  
back there, knock it off...

The Guardsmen go quiet. A long moment.

TAYLOR

Okay, Norman let's go.

The window again snaps up...a moment later the truck lurches  
into gear.

MASTERSON

Wide smile. He got away with it.

CALVELLI

His stoical expression doesn't quite mask his contempt.  
Atwater is the only one quick enough to notice. He grins  
across to Calvelli.

ATWATER

Yeah, we ain't smart, but we  
sure have fun.

CUT TO:

EXT. SMALL TOWN

EARLY MORNING

The Convoy leisurely moving down the business section; a shopkeeper is opening his General Store as the trucks roll past...the Old Man gets pelted with empty beer cans.

CUT TO:

INT. TRUCK - THE MEN

Knocked out, sweaty, quiet as they bounce along. Then, finally, the truck grinds to a slow halt.

SMITH

We stopped.

WILSON

You're right up there with the latest news, aren't ya.

Outside the truck a raspy male voice penetrates the morning air.

VOICE

Alright! Let's go in there!  
Outta the truck!

Slowly the men start dropping out over the tailgate. They fall and trip, getting hit with helmets, rifles, duffle bags.

THE 1ST SQUAD, SECOND PLATOON

Atwater, Calvelli, Youngblood, Smith, Longbrake, Masterson, Wilson forming a loose rank and making an unhurried attempt to get organized...They look across at the unfamiliar terrain.

THEIR POV: THE BAYOU

Across a high levee...Marshes stretch to the horizon line. Thin pines rise out of the misty swamps; the trees are bearded with moss but their branches are dead and bare.

SATURDAY MID-DAY

## THE 1ST SQUAD

Still near their truck; around them the bivouac area is jumping with activity as Guardsmen start digging trenches for latrines, laying wire, pitching tents. A Lieutenant is barking orders from the perimeter of the clearing.

LIEUTENANT

Sergeant! Get your men digging in...I don't want to see you. If I can see you, the enemy can see you...Set up your security.

He notices the men of the 1st Squad.

LIEUTENANT

Hey you meatballs! What the hell do you think you're doing there... Why aren't you with your platoon?

ATWATER

Special detail, sir.

LIEUTENANT

What kind of detail?

ATWATER

With the truck. Make sure it's not captured, Sir.

LIEUTENANT

Get over with your unit. Now!  
Load and lock down.

They slowly move off. The Lieutenant turns his back; Wilson uses this opportunity to give him a quick finger.

CUT TO:

## THE 1ST SQUAD

Sitting in the shade, slowly feeding blanks into the magazine clips. Longbrake is loading the big M-60 Machine Gun, ammo belts draped around his neck.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

SATURDAY MID-DAY

YOUNGBLOOD

Lord, this sun can broil a man  
alive.

ATWATER

Hey Calvelli, bet you thought  
all the Louisiana Guard did was  
beat up on college kids and tear  
gas niggers.

The kind of comment that gives Wilson an opening.

WILSON

Please mistah guardsman, no moah  
canisters. Don't let that shepherd  
dog loose on me.

Longbrake wants to have some fun at the new man's expense  
as well; with studied casualness he points the big M-60 at  
Calvelli.

CALVELLI

Yeah, I remember seeing you guys  
on television, and say, pal...

(pushes machine gun  
barrel away)

don't be pointing that thing at me.

LONGBRAKE

Only blanks.

CALVELLI

I don't care if it's hundred  
dollar bills, don't point it  
at me.

Edgy silence, long looks between the two men. Atwater decides  
to break the tension, only right since he was the one that  
first got the ball rolling.

ATWATER

Longbrake, don't you be picking  
on our new man. Got to be polite  
to them foreign boys.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY MID-DAY

LONGBRAKE

You from New York?

CALVELLI

New Jersey.

LONGBRAKE

Same difference.

CALVELLI

Yeah. Right.

Norman runs up from across the clearing.

NORMAN

Alright, let's hurry it up. Don't just sit there. Soon as you're finished, go over with the rest of the platoon and get squared away.

ATWATER

Yes, Norman.

LONGBRAKE

Fuck you, Norman.

SMITH

Too hot to be hurryin'.

Norman waits impatiently while the Squad slowly pick themselves up.

ATWATER

Suppose you're used to a little more serious soldiering back in New Jersey.

CALVELLI

Yeah, we had things organized. The only thing we did was watch the ball games on tee vee, shoot dice, and sleep.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY MID-DAY

They get up and start moving, again looking off at the bayou and the swamps beyond. Youngblood feels that the sight calls for his personal comment.

YOUNGBLOOD

The primordial swamp. That's where it all started, gentlemen. Right in there.

ATWATER

That's real interesting, Coach.

YOUNGBLOOD

I know that you have trouble dealing with an abstract idea, Atwater.

Atwater walks over near Calvelli, away from the main group.

CALVELLI

Gonna be a long fucking weekend if I have to listen to this shit.

CUT TO:

THE 1ST SQUAD

moving slowly across the clearing; Taylor joins them, draws them into a circle.

They light cigarettes, sit on their helmets.

TAYLOR

I got good news and bad news. Bad news is there is no good news. We're going on an overnight recon patrol.

Massive groans.

NORMAN

Okay, quit your bitching and listen up to Sgt. Taylor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY MID-DAY

LONGBRAKE

Fuck you, Norman.

TAYLOR

That's enough of that...Alpha team will be recon. Bravo team security...Calvelli you're with Bravo.

Looks over his men.

TAYLOR

Levee up this way is our objective, rendezvous point is outside New Iberia. We're going to travel in overwatch and movement in file formation with maximum use of concealment...Smith, you with us?

Smith obviously isn't.

SMITH

Sure am Sergeant. I'm really up for this one.

TAYLOR

Good, cause you're going to be my pace man.

Big laugh from the boys. They know a good joke when they hear one.

TAYLOR

Masterson'll be point...We're talking about 38 kilometers so make sure you fill your canteens at the water buffalo.

ATWATER

Any liquor stores open?

Taylor ignores Atwater.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY MID-DAY

TAYLOR

Every member pitches in and pulls their weight. I don't want anybody dogging it out there. You're all buddies, counting and depending on each other. Everybody does their job.

Turns away.

CUT TO:

THE 1ST SQUAD - AT THE WATER BUFFALO

filling their canteens from the spigots on the tanker truck; fixing their butt packs, adjusting straps, ponchos...Wilson is pulling the big P.R.C. two-way communicator into place on his back, then positions the pads to keep it from cutting into his shoulders.

WILSON

We sure get all the good details.

YOUNGBLOOD

This will be good exercise for you. Put a little muscle in your pants.

Youngblood enjoys his own feeble joke.

LONGBRAKE

That's the last thing I need, Coach. Unless you want to take care of it.

ATWATER

Anything you like, Longbrake. Speaking for myself I prefer women.

MASTERSON

Big chance we got of that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY MID-DAY

ATWATER

Life's full of surprises, son.

MASTERSON

What does that mean?

Atwater's got their full attention. He plays the moment, pausing, smiling.

ATWATER

I have arranged for a little treat for the weekend, boys. Six whores de combat presently awaiting our assault...I'm sure they'll fuck us in a more interesting way than the National Guard of the state of Louisiana has.

MASTERSON

You're not kidding, are you?

ATWATER

I never joke about women.

LONGBRAKE

I haven't been laid in six hours. I'm ready.

MASTERSON

How they gonna meet us?

LONGBRAKE

Yeah, where are they?

ATWATER

Holed up, waiting my call.  
(he moves around to  
Wilson, puts his arm  
around the big P.R.C.  
radio)

That responsibility for contact rests on my old buddy Wilson, and his trusty walkie talkie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY MID-DAY

WILSON

You got one for me?

SMITH

Me? You mean us, don't you  
brother?

Pause.

ATWATER

Now boys remember, the purpose  
of the National Guard is to  
keep you darker brothers away  
from decent Southern women...  
But in the spirit of the New  
South I have made full arrange-  
ments.

Smiles all around. And a few cheers.

WILSON

Atwater, you ain't all bad.

They begin moving away from the water buffalo.

CUT TO:

THE 1ST SQUAD - AT THE EDGE OF THE BIVOUAC

They are now nine combat ready men, walking in file. Sweat  
begins to seep through their fatigues. Twigs and pieces of  
bush now grow from their steel helmets. Sgt. Taylor has  
field glasses, amp, flashlight and compass. Wilson is along-  
side... Longbrake packs the big M-60 machine gun, ammo belts  
draped around his neck. All the rest have M-16 rifles...  
The Squad moves forward, walking up and over the levee toward  
the bayou.

MASTERTON

When I was a kid, people used  
to live all up and down these  
bayous.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY MID-DAY

NORMAN

Government cleared them out.

CALVELLI

Must of been tough leaving a  
real paradise like this.

The Squad clears the crest of the levee. At the fringe of  
the bayou they slowly pull up, look off at the horizon.

TAYLOR

Norman, shape them up and test  
fire. This is as good a place  
as any.

Norman whirls and begins shouting; this is the kind of  
assignment he takes very seriously.

NORMAN

Squad. Form a line. Every rifleman  
20 feet apart!

LONGBRAKE

Hey, Norman?

NORMAN

Yeah, what is it Longbrake?

LONGBRAKE

Fuck you.

The men spread out, open their ammo pouches, slap the maga-  
zines into the breeches of their M-16's, slide the bolts  
and commence firing. Atwater takes advantage of this moment  
to aim and fire at Wilson...

WILSON

Don't do that, mother fucker.

Longbrake's M-60 machine gun spits out a few blank shells...  
Then all goes quiet once more.

TAYLOR

Masterson, we want to move out  
on a heading of zero six five.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

SATURDAY MID-DAY

MASTERTSON

Yo.

He moves off a confident experienced soldier, qualities he shares only with Taylor among the other members of the Bravo team.

THE SQUAD

moving off into the swamp following thirty yards behind Mastertson's point.

The quality of the moment so excites Atwater that he breaks into song:

ATWATER

Over hill,  
Over dale,  
As we hit the dusty trail...

The spirit is infectious; the entire Squad save Taylor, Norman and Calvelli join in.

SQUAD

And those caissons keep rolling along.  
It's hi hi hee  
In the field artillery  
And those caissons go rolling...

Some members of the Bravo Team substitute the words "fuck-up" for caissons.

CUT TO:

INT. SWAMP

DAY

Hot, humid, dense foliage climbing alongside a small bayou, twenty yards wide. The muddy water is still and tepid, punctuated only by floating water vegetation. Birds call, the buzz of insects, a bull frog belches.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

## ACROSS THE BAYOU - MASTERSON

His camouflage blends him into the foliage. He looks right, then left, up the bayou, swings his rifle onto his shoulder and takes a reading.

## THE COMPASS

in palm of right hand. His left hand shields the dial from the blazing sun.

## MASTERSON

snaps the compass closed, tucks it away, wipes the sweat from his face and takes a long swig from his canteen. He gives an arm and hand signal to those behind, holds his rifle ready, and wades across the bayou.

## THE REST OF THE SQUAD

They come out of the growth, in file, as Taylor waits for them. Masterson visible across the shallow body of water beyond.

## LONGBRAKE

Where the fuck are you guys taking us?

## MASTERSON

is almost at the opposite bank when he stumbles...stops, throws his rifle sling over his shoulder freeing his hands... Masterson begins grappling with some fish netting that encases his feet.

## LONGBRAKE

can see Masterson's difficulty from thirty yards back.

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CONTINUED:

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

LONGBRAKE

What the hell is it?

MASTERSON

now cutting the net with his bayonet, tearing it loose from the stream bed...

MASTERSON

Nothing. Just some God damn drag line net.

Frees himself and moves on.

ATWATER

approaches the water's edge, not happy with his immediate prospects.

ATWATER

Christ.

TAYLOR

Go ahead and cross the God damn thing, don't just stand there looking at it.

ATWATER

I can't go in there, I've got a terminal hangover.

TAYLOR

Water will take care of it real nice.

ATWATER

I think I should go back. No kidding. I'm serious.

Wilson pretends to send a radio message on his P.R.C.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

WILSON

Echo 7-1, request helicopter med-evac, top priority terminal hangover. Read me, roger and over.

TAYLOR

Take up your position Atwater.

Atwater crosses, sloshing through the calf-deep bayou, adjusting his backpack as he goes. Smith next approaches the water's edge...

TAYLOR

Smith, how you doin' with the pace?

SMITH

Great. 461 meters...more or less.

Very large smile from Taylor; he's not depending on anyone else for direction or distance.

TAYLOR

Right...Couldn't make it without you, Tyrone.

Both men cross with Wilson.

CUT TO:

EXT. CLEARING

DAY

The 1st Squad eating C rations; they sit a few feet apart, in the mossy shade of a cypress tree. Smith lifts one of the metal containers and for inexplicable reasons becomes engrossed reading the catalog of contents.

SMITH

Meal. Combat individual. Pork, sliced and cooked...crackers, peanut butter, dried prunes...

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

## ACROSS THE WAY

Wilson and Atwater huddled over the P.R.C.

WILSON

(presses the recharge  
button)

7-1, 7-1, this is 7-8, over.

SQUAWKING VOICE

7-8, this is 7-1.

WILSON

Change in orders necessitates  
you make contact with advance  
party. Urgent. Move Operation  
Southern Belle to coordinates  
07-035.

SQUAWKING VOICE

We copy. 07-035.

WILSON

Battle position installations set  
for 2200 hours.

SQUAWKING VOICE

2200 hours. Support troops  
standing by. Over.

He puts the phone back and smiles at Atwater; Smith has  
heard the transmission.

SMITH

(big smile)

Atwater, shittt...get them women.

ATWATER

What's the pace, Tyrone?

SMITH

380, 455, 770. Whatever one gets  
us to those ladies the fastest.

Norman comes back across the clearing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

NORMAN

Okay, off and on. Break time's over. Let's go, move it.

Longbrake can't afford to miss his cue.

LONGBRAKE

Fuck you, Norman.

Atwater slowly rises.

ATWATER

Civilian in peace, soldier in war, I am the Guard.

CUT TO:

THE 1ST SQUAD

Again on the move in close file; the still water churns and the weeds break as the Guardsmen go wading through. Though it is mid-day and the sun is blazing, there is an eerie darkness to all.

CUT TO:

ANOTHER PART OF THE SWAMP

As the Squad comes moving through. Atwater and Wilson dodge among the branches and undergrowth, trailed by Longbrake.

ATWATER

The whole package will cost you sixty one dollars a month, covers everything, house, life, wife and kids.

WILSON

Man, I told you before I can't afford that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

ATWATER

A man in your line of work, climbing telephone poles all day, two kids, another in the oven, you can't afford not to have full coverage.

NORMAN

Knock it off back there!

ATWATER

Ah, fuck you up there.

NORMAN

And keep those God damn helmets on!

WILSON

D. Company. The dirty thirty.

LONGBRAKE

D for douche bag.

ATWATER

Dork company.

YOUNGBLOOD

Doonesbury.

Everybody looks at Youngblood, he can never get anything right.

LONGBRAKE

Doonesbury?

SMITH

(counting his pace)  
478, 479...Dickheads! 382, 383,  
384...

TAYLOR

Okay, knock it off.

They walk a few yards in silence, then:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

CALVELLI

Jesus! Jesus Christ!

He drops to the ground, slapping and pulling at his pants leg.

CALVELLI

It's on me. Shit! Something's  
on me!

Sgt. Taylor is the first one to him. The others gather round.

LONGBRAKE

Got a black widow on ya? Tarantula  
maybe?

Longbrake just thinks it's funny as hell.

CUT TO:

A LARGE WOOD TICK

an inch across and unfortunately deeply imbedded in Calvelli's  
calf.

TAYLOR

Okay take it easy now. Hold  
still.

Taylor has his zippo out and puts the flame to the tick's  
backside...after the insect has pulled back he scrapes it  
off Calvelli's leg with his pocket knife.

TAYLOR

There. It's off.

CALVELLI

It's still bleeding.

TAYLOR

You want it to.

The rest of the men begin itching and scratching.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

MASTERSON

You see that sucker?

LONGBRAKE

If you pull it off, the head  
stays in and you die.

YOUNGBLOOD

You don't die, Cretin. Your leg  
just gets infected.

SMITH

Yeah. And rots off.

LONGBRAKE

Who you calling a Cretin?

YOUNGBLOOD

You.

Youngblood's much too big to argue with; the men of Bravo Team, dork company begin to shoulder their packs and move out.

CUT TO:

TAYLOR

moving through swamp a few paces ahead of the rest of the Squad save Masterson's point. He studies the map a bit, then returns it to his breast pocket.

TAYLOR

Smith, send up the pace.

SMITH

(from behind)

Huh?

ATWATER AND SMITH

ATWATER

Hey Lightning, Taylor wants the  
pace.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

SMITH

Pace? What pace you talkin bout?  
Oh, the pace. 635?

ATWATER

Tell him it's 635!

TAYLOR AND WILSON

TAYLOR

Wilson, inform Company we're  
crossing phase line Bob.

WILSON

(into phone)  
Echo 7-1, this is Echo 7-8, do  
you copy?

SQUAWKING VOICE

Roger 7-8, go ahead.

WILSON

Have crossed phase line Bob, over.

SQUAWKING VOICE

That's a roger 7-8, you have crossed  
phase line Bob.

WILSON

Okey dokey smokey.

SQUAWKING VOICE

7-1, have received confirmation on  
Southern Belle. Advance party on  
manuevers anticipating small unit  
military penetration.

Wilson breaks into a big, big smile.

WILSON

That is a roger.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

TAYLOR

What was all that about?

WILSON

Damned if I know, I never can understand that man.

He swats at a bug.

WILSON

Damn mosquitos.

Wilson turns, catches Atwater's eye and gives him a big smile and the high sign. Atwater smiles, turns to Longbrake and nods. The word spreads, Operation Southern Belle is a go.

CUT TO:

MASTERSON

He makes his way and stops at the edge of a large bayou, the biggest yet seen, some sixty yards wide. The rest of the Squad trails behind...

LONGBRAKE

as he catches sight of the large body of water.

LONGBRAKE

Looks like they built a new ocean here.

TAYLOR

I can't figure out where the hell we are. We should be right in here.

(looks at his map)

Now either this damn map is wrong or I can't find my way around the block.

MASTERSON

I kept right like you told me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

TAYLOR

Yeah, I know...bayou's must of shifted.

WILSON

Want me to raise Company?

TAYLOR

No need for that. Long as we keep going North we'll be alright.

THE SQUAD

moving along the bank of the bayou.

NORMAN

Get those weapons off your shoulders.

LONGBRAKE

Fuck you Norman. You carry this elephant gun!

Gestures to his big M-60...it does in fact weight forty-four pounds.

NORMAN

Not so close together. Watch your positions.

MASTERTON ON POINT

He stops, looks ahead, further along the edge of the bayou.

HIS POV: TWO PIROGUES

Hand-made dugouts, like big canoes, pulled up on high ground.

MASTERTON MOVES DOWN TO THEM

Both have long poles used for pushing forward. In the shell

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

of one of the craft are four dead neutria (giant furry rats).  
Masterson whistles to the others.

MASTERSON

Over here.

THE SQUAD JOINS HIM

YOUNGBLOOD

Who you think they belong to?

MASTERSON

Us.

TAYLOR

No they don't. They belong to  
the indiginous personnel. Don't  
fuck around with them.

LONGBRAKE

Think they float?

MASTERSON

Hell, yes. They're pirogues.  
Cajuns back here use 'em all  
the time.

LONGBRAKE

They ain't using them now.

Masterson turns to Taylor.

MASTERSON

What say we take them down the  
bayou?

WILSON

Yeah. I can deal with that.  
Way my back feels.

ATWATER

Don't forget I have a very impor-  
tant hangover.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

LONGBRAKE

Hell, we might make New Iberia tonight.

MASTERSON

Put them women under martial law.

TAYLOR

What women you talking about?

SMITH

Atwater's running ladies.

Silence.

MASTERSON

He's got some ladies meeting us.

TAYLOR

Atwater?

ATWATER

It's all set...Noleen The Bayou Queen. And her court...Just a little something for morale.

TAYLOR

Really?

Doesn't seem to be happy with this news.

Youngblood comes forward.

YOUNGBLOOD

...I don't think we should take the canoes. They're not ours.

MASTERSON

That's right they're not ours... Now let's get in them.

They move for the pirogues.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

TAYLOR

Hold on, fungo. Nobody gave you  
an order.

They stop and look at Taylor.

NORMAN

A little R & R never hurts.

ATWATER

Part of being a soldier is learning  
to live off the land.

SMITH

How bout it, Sergeant?

TAYLOR

Well now boys, I just don't know.

Pause.

TAYLOR

What kind of foot soldier would  
take some beat up old boat?

Pause.

ATWATER

We would.

TAYLOR

You're right.

Cheers. Whistles. They break for the pirogues.

NORMAN

Commandeer the swamp craft of  
indigenous personnel!

THE SQUAD

as they divide up, according to Taylor's orders.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

TAYLOR

Wilson, Masterson, Youngblood,  
Atwater with me. Rest of you  
with Norman...Just watch out  
you don't tip the damn things  
over.

Norman, Calvelli, Smith and Longbrake get in the pirogue.  
Longbrake holding the M-60 in his lap.

TAYLOR'S PIROGUE

The men squat down. Taylor has his map out.

NORMAN

Atwater, you take the pole.

ATWATER

Not me, Sarge. Let Youngblood  
do it. He's good at that stuff.

THE PIROGUES GETTING UNDER WAY

They are tricky and rock easily and almost tip, but the men  
keep their balance and both pirogues glide along, side by  
side, racing. The men are laughing and hollering.

MASTERSON SEES SOMETHING

He points back to the shore, laughs...

POV: TWO CAJUN TRAPPERS WALKING ALONG THE BANK

At this distance their features are unrecognizable, but they  
are big, dark and frightening men, in rubber hip boots.

TAYLOR

Where'd they come from?

Smith waves at them, uses a falsetto voice.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

SMITH

Hi, boys. Thanks for the boats.

WILSON

(fruity)

I think they want their boats  
back.

Masterson gives them the finger.

MASTERSON

Fuck em!

TAYLOR'S PIROGUE

Taylor is yelling through cupped hands at the Cajuns.

TAYLOR

We'll bring em back.

YOUNGBLOOD

They only speak French.

THE CAJUNS

staring...silent...ominous even at forty yards.

BOTH PIROGUES

twenty yards from opposite bank.

TAYLOR

Can anybody speak French?

MASTERSON

Sure.

(he yells)

Voulez-vous fuck me!

TAYLOR

Knock that shit off!

Taylor yells and points to the shore.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

TAYLOR

We're bringing them back!

The Cajuns watch them head farther across.

TAYLOR

(to Cajuns)

Just dropping them off.

THE PIROGUES - DRIFTING SIDE BY SIDE

YOUNGBLOOD

They don't understand.

MASTERSON

Dumb coonass bastards.

From no place, Longbrake levels his machine gun at the Cajuns and opens fire.

LONGBRAKE

Let em have it men! Take no prisoners!

THE CAJUNS

dive for cover as the machine gun bursts out.

TAYLOR

Longbrake! YOU ASSHOLE!

Some members of the Squad think this is even funnier than when Masterson took a shot at the supermarket. Masterson snaps off a shot, as does Wilson, Smith and Atwater. Big laughs.

TAYLOR

Knock that shit off!

The Cajuns are no longer visible.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

TAYLOR

Norman! Get your men off and  
get that damn boat back! Now!

NORMAN

Right. Push for that shoreline,  
Smith.

The sound of a single rifle shot.

YOUNGBLOOD

What was that?

WILSON

God they shot him dead!

TAYLOR

shot straight through the head -- killed instantly.

YOUNGBLOOD

drops his pole leaps back for Taylor.

YOUNGBLOOD

No!

The pirogue tips over from the shifting weight and Youngblood's lunging motion.

THE MEN IN THE WATER

They try to swim toward the near shore.

WILSON

The radio and rifle on his back keep pulling him down. He bobs, slapping at the water, then goes under. He's fighting to get free of the radio straps, and not winning.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

## ATWATER IN WATER

Sees Wilson go under and tries to save him. Wilson is panicking, takes Atwater down with him.

## YOUNGBLOOD DOG PADDLING

Reaches Norman's pirogue and tries to climb on, tipping the pirogue over.

## CALVELLI SURFACING

Sees Atwater and Wilson, and swims to help.

## ATWATER, WILSON, CALVELLI

One of the radio straps are free. Wilson is still fighting.

## CALVELLI

Leave him alone. I got him.

Calvelli grabs Wilson from behind the neck. He slides the other strap off Wilson's shoulder and the radio sinks.

## THE SQUAD STAGGERING OUT OF THE BAYOU

Wet, scared, confused, they stumble, ducking behind trees.

## NORMAN

Hit it! Get down.

## MASTERTON

Take cover!

## YOUNGBLOOD

They shot him. They shot him!

## LONGBRAKE

Lonnie! Over here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

MASTERSON

Do you see them? Where are they?

LONGBRAKE

The dirty sons of bitches.

THEIR POV - THE OPPOSITE SHORE

All is still. No Cajuns in sight.

SMITH

Jesus Christ, what's happening?

YOUNGBLOOD

Are they still shooting? Where are they?

NORMAN

Can't see them.

SMITH

Where are they?

NORMAN

Keep down!

LONGBRAKE

There's Atwater and them.

NORMAN

Taylor. We have to get Taylor.

MASTERSON

Come on.

Keeping low, they dart along, wade into the bayou and fish Taylor out.

ATWATER, WILSON, CALVELLI

Coughing up water, they collapse in the mud bank.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

LONGBRAKE

Atwater. Over here.

Atwater, Wilson and Calvelli run toward the rest of the Squad and protective cover.

CUT TO:

MASTERSON - FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER

M-16 held ready, darting through the underbrush along the bayou shore. He peers across the water toward the far bank.

HIS POV

No movement, no-one in sight.

MASTERSON

hesitates for a moment, then turns back toward the interior.

DENSE UNDERBRUSH AWAY FROM THE WATER

Taylor's corpse has been laid out...The men kneel, gaping at their dead squad leader.

Masterson trots up.

MASTERSON

No sign of them.

Norman covers Taylor with a poncho, then starts going through his personal effects.

NORMAN

Where the hell's the map?

ATWATER

He was holding it, I remember.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

MASTERSON

The compass is broken.

YOUNGBLOOD

How'd that happen?

MASTERSON

I must of hit it on the side of  
the boat.

NORMAN

Shit! Youngblood? What the hell  
you tip us over for?

YOUNGBLOOD

I didn't mean to.

NORMAN

And where's your weapon?

YOUNGBLOOD

Lost it.

Norman looks around.

YOUNGBLOOD

Atwater, where's yours?

ATWATER

With Wilson's.

NORMAN

Where's that?

ATWATER

In the water.

NORMAN

Well it's going to cost you.  
You're going to pay for losing  
them you know. \$253.50.

NORMAN

Wilson. Where's the radio?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

WILSON

...With my rifle.

NORMAN

Jesus.

WILSON

How much that gonna cost me?

NORMAN

You're supposed to be in charge of it! What the hell's the matter with you!

WILSON

Hey, man. Kiss my ass.

LONGBRAKE

Let's go get those fuckers.

ATWATER

Sure. All we have to do is swim sixty yards and then find them back in that forest.

Pause.

NORMAN

We'll follow through with our mission. That's our responsibility. Authorities will be back here to deal with these bastards.

WILSON

Those guys were just firing a warning shot to scare us.

SMITH

They're doing a hell of a job.

MASTERSON

Come on, let's haul ass.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

CALVELLI

You know something we don't.

MASTERSON

We need some distance. Instead of us going after them they might decide to come after us.

LONGBRAKE

Shit. There's only two of them.

MASTERSON

Lot more than that. And they're all related.

LONGBRAKE

What about Taylor?

MASTERSON

Leave him.

NORMAN

No. We'll take him with us. He deserves that much.

MASTERSON

I say we leave him. Unless you want to carry him...we can bury him here.

NORMAN

He's an American soldier. He's got the Bronze Star, Purple Heart, and Vietnam Service medal.

CALVELLI

...So what? The quicker we get out of here, the quicker they can come back for him.

ATWATER

Make's sense...Come on Norman, let's get moving.

NORMAN

God damn it we're not leaving him here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

MASTERSON

Who says.

NORMAN

God damn it I got the stripe.  
I'm in charge and I don't want  
to hear any more about it.

CUT TO:

## MOVING THROUGH THE SWAMP

The men are soaked...sweating...Norman leading the way.  
Wilson and Youngblood carry the poncho stick stretcher.  
Masterson patrols the rear, alert for possible attack from  
the rear.

SMITH

Think Norman knows where he's  
going?

ATWATER

Eight to five against.

YOUNGBLOOD

Let's knock off that negative,  
crap. He knows about the army,  
give him that much.

CALVELLI

What I want to know is does he  
know the way home?

ATWATER

Longbrake you are one dumb son  
of a bitch, firing that machine  
gun.

LONGBRAKE

Me? What about you! You shot  
at them!

MASTERSON

Forget it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

CALVELLI

Forget it, shit!

NORMAN

That's right, Longbrake. Who gave you the order to fire?

LONGBRAKE

Fuck you, Norman.

NORMAN

It's not funny, asshole!

Masterson calls up from the rear.

MASTERSON

Hey, he wasn't the one that shot Taylor.

CALVELLI

No, all you guys had a hand in that one.

They trudge by.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMPSITE

DUSK

Fog moving through the swamp in cloud-like patches. Buzzing insect sounds. The men of Bravo Team sit shivering in their ponchos by a small fire.

Calvelli slaps at his face.

ATWATER

God damn bugs.

NORMAN

They're just gnats.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY EVENING

SMITH

Man y'oughta look at them fuckers under a microscope. They got teeth for miles.

ATWATER

I got em in my ears, up my nose and down my throat.

WILSON

Maybe if you wouldn't talk so much they wouldn't get in.

NORMAN

Hell, Merc's wear short pants in Rhodesia. Think of that.

Atwater non-plussed at Norman's illogic.

ATWATER

We'll keep that in mind. I'll tell you something else to think about. We got a dead man here, and we got to find our way out.

LONGBRAKE

I'm telling you after we get Taylor back to headquarters we should come back after these Cajun cocksuckers.

SMITH

You guys handle it. I've had enough shooting to last me a while...

Calvelli looks at Masterson.

CALVELLI

You say these guys are Cajuns?

MASTERSON

Yeah...fuckin' savages.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY EVENING

CALVELLI

What are you talking about?  
I went to some kind of Cajun  
luau when I first got here...

Atwater can't believe what he's hearing.

ATWATER

Cajun luau?

CALVELLI

I don't know what it was called...  
It was some kind of party with  
crayfish and gumbo, all that shit.

MASTERTON

Jambalaya.

CALVELLI

Whatever...They didn't look like  
any kind of savages to me. The  
toughest it got was accordion  
music.

MASTERTON

Cajuns in St. Charles or Lafayette  
are okay. The ones still living  
back here are a whole other story.

LONGBRAKE

They're weird.

Youngblood cuts loose in his most sonorous classroom tone.

YOUNGBLOOD

What he means is they've maintained  
the traditional Cajun culture.  
Really they're magnificent anachronisms.

MASTERTON

Right. They even fuck their sisters.  
Even their grandmothers.

This is too much for Longbrake.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY EVENING

LONGBRAKE

Bullshit.

MASTERSON

I ain't shittin' you. Swear to God.

CALVELLI

What I want to know is will they fuck with us?

MASTERSON

Goddamn right they will.

CALVELLI

Why?

MASTERSON

They don't like outsiders comin' in here.

CALVELLI

If you knew all this, how come you stole the boats?

MASTERSON

Hell I ain't afraid of 'em.

CALVELLI

Terrific.

Pause.

WILSON

Maybe it's about time to divide up the bullets.

NORMAN

What's he saying?

ATWATER

Masterson's got live ammo.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY EVENING

WILSON

In the truck, he was showin off  
a boxful of 5-56's.

Norman looks at Masterson.

NORMAN

What's this a military secret  
or something?

Norman gets up and stands before Masterson. The rest watch.

MASTERSON

No fucking way.

NORMAN

Let me see your weapon.

MASTERSON

Just stay on back.

NORMAN

Let me have the rounds, Masterson.

Takes another step.

NORMAN

We'll divide them up, equally.  
Share them.

MASTERSON

Bull shit.

The others have moved in, close, but not too close.

LONGBRAKE

It ain't right, Lonnie.

NORMAN

Masterson, I'm giving you a direct  
order. Give them to me.

Masterson points his M-16 at Norman.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY EVENING

MASTERSON

You come one step closer Norman,  
and I will.

Tense pause.

LONGBRAKE

Hell Lonnie! We're soldiering  
together!

NORMAN

It's a court martial offense.  
Give me the ammo and we'll drop  
the whole thing, or else I'm  
turning your ass in.

MASTERSON

I don't give a shit what you do.

From Masterson's side Calvelli moves in close, a flash -- then  
a switchblade appears at Mastersons' throat.

CALVELLI

Quit fucking around. Give him  
the bullets.

Masterson slowly undoes his pocket. Tosses the box of  
shells to Norman.

Calvelli puts the rifle away. Starts to move off.

MASTERSON

Where does it go from here?

NORMAN

Court martial?

MASTERSON

Yeah.

NORMAN

We're all soldiering together.

Atwater comes up to Calvelli.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

SATURDAY EVENING

ATWATER

That's how they do these things  
in the Ivy League.

CALVELLI

Villanova's not Ivy League...and  
I had this a long time before I  
went there.

ATWATER

You just brought it along for  
luck.

CALVELLI

First time I ever spent a weekend  
with eight gun toting red-necks.

ATWATER

That's right. If we don't carry  
guns we're carrying ropes...R.C.  
colas and moon pies. Not too smart  
but we sure have fun.

Smiles and walks away.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMPSITE - LATER THAT NIGHT

The men trying to protect themselves from the bugs. Youngblood  
speaks out to no one in particular.

YOUNGBLOOD

We should be in maximum con-  
cealment. What the enemy sees,  
is what he takes.

WILSON

Knock that enemy shit off.

Norman strides up from the other side of the clearing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY NIGHT

NORMAN

I'm gonna post guard; two men,  
four hour shifts.

WILSON

Start with me. Don't feel like  
sleeping anyway.

NORMAN

Longbrake, you take the other  
side. Youngblood and Masterson  
go on relief at 2300...

Norman looks over at Wilson.

NORMAN

Keep the perimeter secured tight.

WILSON

Yeah, yeah.

NORMAN

The password's "Werewolf". Got it?

ATWATER

Password? What are you talking  
about?

Norman moves off.

ATWATER

...What do we do now?

CALVELLI

Nothing to do.

Pause.

ATWATER

You play bridge by any chance?

CALVELLI

Bridge?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY NIGHT

ATWATER

Yeah. It's a card game.

CALVELLI

I play.

ATWATER

Really...Hey, Norman, we got  
the one thing this outfit needed.  
A fourth for bridge...Hey Coach!

Atwater takes out a soggy deck from his pack. Shuffles.

SMITH AND YOUNGBLOOD

Both men at the perimeter of the clearing; Smith lights a  
joint...

YOUNGBLOOD

How can you smoke that crap?

SMITH

(takes a big hit)

I ain't on your team, Coach.

YOUNGBLOOD

God damn right you're not. You  
couldn't make the Squad. That  
stuff kills the will to win.

SMITH

How'd your boys do this year?

He knows the answer.

YOUNGBLOOD

Three and seven. Injuries to key  
personnel.

Pause.

YOUNGBLOOD

What do you do for a living,  
anyway?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SATURDAY NIGHT

SMITH

I work in the welfare department.

Atwater shouts across the clearing to Youngblood.

ATWATER

Come on, Youngblood. We got us  
a couple of pigeons.

Youngblood still looking at Smith, question marks surrounding  
his face.

YOUNGBLOOD

Welfare department?

SMITH

Yeah. One day a week. Hard work  
going down there and picking up  
my check. Those lines get awful  
long.

YOUNGBLOOD

Very funny. Ho, ho, ho.

Now Smith is really having a good time with Youngblood.

SMITH

Course I pick up a little cash  
pimping here and there but most  
of what I turn over comes from  
selling dope to high school kids.

A long look from Youngblood.

YOUNGBLOOD

You're a laugh riot, Smith.  
It's a good thing I don't  
believe you.

He walks away and joins the waiting bridge game with Atwater,  
Calvelli and Norman.

EXT. CAMPSITE

MORNING

First light of day. The Squad has packed up for the day's march; first they have formed a loose circle.

NORMAN

Masterson, you hold point...  
Keep contact in file, don't start  
straggling. Anybody gets behind,  
start shouting, we'll all hold up.

Atwater gives him the wagonmaster bit.

ATWATER

Yeah. Forward ya.

NORMAN

Knock that off. Okay. Let's go.  
As long as we stay North we'll  
be okay.

The Squad heads into the dense forest.

CUT TO:

EXT. NARROW TRAIL

Along the edge of the bayou. Masterson moving cautiously  
along, then stops...

HIS POV

Eight dead rabbits hanging from a tree limb alongside the  
trail. Thin cord around each of their throats. Each animal  
has been gutted.

THE SQUAD

Norman at the head of the column as the Squad comes up behind  
Masterson.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDAY MORNING

NORMAN

Jesus.

LONGBRAKE

What the hell's that supposed  
to mean?

WILSON

Don't mean nothing. Some dude  
just drying his skins.

LONGBRAKE

Funny way of stretching a skin.

NORMAN

You sure these weren't left for  
us?

To no one in particular.

NORMAN

Masterson?

MASTERSON

I ain't sure. But I know how I'd  
bet.

SMITH

There's eight of them.

WILSON

So what?

CALVELLI

There's eight of us.

Pause.

ATWATER

Let's keep going.

NORMAN

Right. We ain't gonna do any  
good right here no matter why  
they was left.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDAY MORNING

He moves off; the Squad slowly following.

CUT TO:

AT A FORK IN THE BAYOU

MORNING

The men are bitten up, eyes bleary red. Beards stubbley. Here the bayou is narrower as it splits. The air hot and muggy. The men try to determine which way they should go.

NORMAN

What do you think?

MASTERTSON

Fork to the right's East. Probably easier to get where we want moving that way.

They move off down the right fork; Atwater yells up at Norman from ten paces back.

ATWATER

You want to be headin North. The Interstate's North.

NORMAN

We're going to the Interstate.

ATWATER

Not if you go East. The Interstate's North.

LONGBRAKE

Fuck you Atwater. What the fuck you know?

ATWATER

I know there's a big fireball in the sky that usually rises in the East and we're walking right into it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDAY MORNING

MASTERSON

You have to go East to go North,  
asshole.

LONGBRAKE

Yeah, right.

SMITH

You want to run that by me one  
more time? You got to go where  
to do which?

CALVELLI

Jesus Christ.

NORMAN

It's my responsibility, Atwater.  
We're going East to get North.

ATWATER

Do what you want, zip.

Atwater moves back to where Wilson and Youngblood are carrying  
the poncho stretcher. They all slosh off, following Norman.

WILSON

Staff command. They should be  
wondering about us, don't you  
think?

ATWATER

No. Not yet.

WILSON

We've been out of contact for  
12 hours.

SMITH

Should be lookin' for us by now.

ATWATER

No way. We were supposed to meet  
the trucks twenty minutes ago. In  
another hour and a half the trucks

(More)

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

SUNDAY MORNING

ATWATER (cont'd)  
 will show up. By two o'clock  
 they'll ask around if anyone's  
 seen us. At three, they'll  
 start checking the bars. By  
 four they'll really get pissed.  
 By five it will occur to some-  
 body that maybe we got lost.  
 By six the Captain will consider  
 calling Battalion. At seven  
 thirty he will. Battalion will  
 tell him it's too late, there's  
 nothing they can do till morning...  
 That make you guys feel any better?

They move past.

CUT TO:

THE SUN

blazing through the foliage overhead.

THE SQUAD - IN FILE

Norman plods by followed by Longbrake and Masterson carrying  
 the stretcher. Despite the fact it is only late morning,  
 the day is already searingly hot.

MASTERSON

He's getting heavy.

NORMAN

Shouldn't be too much longer.

MASTERSON

Why don't we leave him and come  
 back?

NORMAN

No. I told you before.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDAY MORNING

MASTERSON

It's two hundred degrees...This son of a bitch is starting to blow up like a balloon.

Taylor's body becoming distended beneath the poncho.

NORMAN

Don't be calling Taylor that.

MASTERSON

He can't hear me.

NORMAN

I can! And, I don't want you calling him that.

MASTERSON

Shit, Norman. The cocksucker's dead. I'm just talking about the body.

NORMAN

God damn it, Masterson! I don't want you calling him any of that shit!

TWENTY YARDS BACK

Wilson, Smith, Youngblood.

SMITH

Man, somebody put out the sun. My head's on fire.

WILSON

Take your damn helmet off.

SMITH

Want me to get skin cancer too?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDAY MORNING

YOUNGBLOOD

Quit bellyaching like a bunch of women. My high school kids scrimmage with full pads in weather hotter than this.

LONGBRAKE

Hey, Coach.

YOUNGBLOOD

Yeah?

LONGBRAKE

Fuck you.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - HOURS LATER

Masterson running full speed through heavy undergrowth; dodging among trees and bushes, moving to the water's edge at a backwash feed along the bayou's perimeter.

His foot falls squishing loudly against the humming sounds of insects and strident bird calls.

Finally the rest of the Squad moves into view; Norman in first position, Atwater and Calvelli next, then Longbrake and Wilson. Youngblood and Smith trail along, Taylor's body stretched between them.

Norman looks up as Masterson runs to a full stop, then fights to get his breath.

NORMAN

What the hell is it?

More deep breaths.

NORMAN

Wha'd you find?

MASTERSON

We got one up ahead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDAY MID-DAY

ATWATER

What's he talking about?

NORMAN

Something up ahead.

MASTERSON

We got one of them.

CUT TO:

## THROUGH BINOCULARS

Military glasses with coordinate point lines. A Trapper is visible outside his shack on the bayou. He squats in the mud, mending his nets. His shack is four walls sitting up on sticks. A pirogue is pulled up on the bank.

NORMAN

That's him. That's the sonuva-bitch.

LONGBRAKE

Let me look.

NORMAN

Where's the other one?

MASTERSON

Far as I can tell, he's alone.

## THE SQUAD

Masterson sights the Trapper in with his M-16; Norman pushes his barrel aside.

NORMAN

No. We're gonna capture him.

MASTERSON

What for? I can get him from here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDAY MID-DAY

NORMAN

This is the U.S. Army, not  
the vigilantes.

Atwater looks through the glasses.

ATWATER

You sure that's him?

Hands the binoculars to Wilson.

WILSON

Oh, man. No question about it.

Norman pulls out the box of 5-56's and starts dispensing  
the shells.

CALVELLI

Why don't you try talking to  
him before you start blowing  
his head off.

NORMAN

Masterson. Wilson. Longbrake.  
Remember the initial action must  
be decisive. Surprise is the key.  
Five bullets each.

CALVELLI

Hey, you hear what I said?

NORMAN

I heard you...We'll talk to him  
after we've captured him. Rest  
of you are the rear element.  
Stay 100 meters behind us and  
keep down. Marry up when the  
objective is sealed off. Let's  
move out.

They fan out and start through the swamp. Atwater and  
Calvelli watch them go.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDAY MID-DAY

CALVELLI

You always get out of everything?

ATWATER

I don't see you stickin your hand up to volunteer.

CALVELLI

Four of them, with automatic rifles, against the one guy with a knife...I make it even money.

They start trailing the men.

SMITH AND YOUNGBLOOD

Carrying the stretcher, moving after Calvelli and Atwater.

CUT TO:

NORMAN - IN THE SWAMP

He looks to his right, hand signals to Longbrake and Masterson to spread out and get down. Norman drops to his stomach and crawls, cradling the rifle. The side of the shack is visible...He fixes his bayonet.

MASTERSON CRAWLING UP BEHIND THE SHACK

The Trapper has his back turned and sits framed by the supports. The stilts supporting the shack are high enough for a man to walk under.

LONGBRAKE

crawling up on the other side.

(CONTINUED)

SUNDAY MID-DAY

WILSON

To his far right; his M-16 ready.

THE CAJUN TRAPPER

Impossible to tell if this was one of the Cajun men encountered earlier...Mending his net. Half his left arm missing. He works the knife, sewing as he goes...Birds in flight make him look, and turn. He jumps up just as:

THE ATTACK FORCE

comes bursting out at him from all sides.

NORMAN

Freeze!

The Trapper stands, holding his knife, the Riflemen come toward him.

TRAPPER

Quoi? Qui êt es vous?

NORMAN

Easy now. We want to interrogate him.

From all sides they close in on the Trapper; he falls into the Cajun patois.

TRAPPER

Qu'est que vous voulez, hein?

MASTERSON

(pointing with rifle)  
Drop the knife.

NORMAN

Surrender.

CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDAY MID-DAY

TRAPPER

Je n'ai rien fait.

Masterson moves even closer; eyes threatening, he gestures with his M-16.

MASTERSON

You son of a bitch, drop the God damn knife.

The Trapper realizes what he is being asked to do, he drops the hunting knife.

TRAPPER

Qu'est que vous...

WHACK! Wilson steps in and slams his rifle butt against the Trapper's mouth, instantly dropping him into the mud.

LONGBRAKE

Holy shit!

NORMAN

You broke his jaw.

WILSON

Yeah.

NORMAN

We want him to talk.

MASTERSON

Knocked his mouth clear down to his ass.

NORMAN

How can he talk with a busted jaw?

WILSON

That's his problem.

Longbrake eyes the doorway to the shack.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

SUNDAY MID-DAY

LONGBRAKE

Comeon, Lonnie. Let's see what's  
inside.

Longbrake and Masterson move off toward the entrance to the  
Trapper's hovel.

NORMAN

Jesus, Wilson. What the hell  
did you do that for?

WILSON

The son of a bitch.

MASTERTON AND LONGBRAKE

They climb the rope ladder, position themselves on the porch,  
right and left of the door, rifles ready. With a nod,  
Masterson kicks the door and they move inside, ready for  
anything.

NEAR THE NET

Norman's searching the Cajun, Wilson stands over the fallen  
man...

NORMAN

Where's the rest of your bunch?  
How many more are there?

TRAPPER

Ma bouche.

Norman sees Atwater, Calvelli, Youngblood and Smith arrive  
through the trees.

NORMAN

Come on in, the area's secured.

They come over. All gaze down at the Trapper.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDAY MID-DAY

NORMAN

We got us a prisoner.

ATWATER

Did you have to cut his arm off  
too?

Masterson comes out on the shack porch, waving some pelts tied together. Longbrake's voice can be heard from inside the shack.

LONGBRAKE

All kinds a shit in here.

He steps outside, next to Masterson.

NORMAN

Alright, no looting.

MASTERSON

What do you say to that, Longbrake?

LONGBRAKE

Fuck you, Norman.

NORMAN

Guard the prisoner, Wilson. Tie  
him up. And don't bust him again.

Norman takes off for the shack.

Atwater, Smith and Calvelli give Wilson a puzzled look.

ATWATER

You?

WILSON

God damn right.

SMITH

Why'd you want to go and do  
that for?

WILSON

I don't know, I just got pissed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDAY MID-DAY

SMITH

Damn, man. This army bullshit  
is getting to you.

INT. SHACK

Norman walks in and finds Masterson and Longbrake tearing the place apart. It's a wooden plank hut, sealed with mud and thatched roof. Wooden shelves, with canned goods, buns, burner, and kerosene lamp. Some animal traps. Rag quilt on the floor over a swamp moss mattress. Playboy centerfold on wall next to picture of Christ and crucifix.

LONGBRAKE

Get drunk, Norman.

Longbrake hands Norman a jug...He takes a swig.

NORMAN

Yecch!

LONGBRAKE

Look at this knife I found.

Holds a huge hunting knife, suddenly a spotlight shines on both of them.

MASTERSON

God damn, this boy's a poacher.

Masterson holds two dry cells taped together with a big bulb.

LONGBRAKE

We poached the poachers.

MASTERSON

He shined his last gator.

LONGBRAKE

He don't look big enough to  
night wrestle gators.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDAY MID-DAY

MASTERSON

He ain't. That's what the light's  
for. Freezes 'em.

Longbrake is pocketing the canned goods.

LONGBRAKE

Turnips, corn, white beans, rice,  
hog head cheese...

MASTERSON

Here's a box of shells, half-full...

They start to leave.

NORMAN

Knives, guns, supplies...I'd  
say we conducted a pretty  
successful raid.

THE SQUAD

As Norman, Longbrake and Masterson approach with all their  
goodies.

NORMAN

Wilson, I told you to tie the  
prisoner up.

WILSON

Now how am I supposed to tie  
the man up when he only has  
but one hand to tie?

MASTERSON

Tell you how to do it. You tie  
it around his fuckin neck and  
lynch the sonofabitch.

ATWATER

It's a great old Southern tradition  
but maybe we ought to try talking  
to him first.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDAY MID-DAY

Pause.

ATWATER

Who speaks French...Youngblood?

YOUNGBLOOD

Yeah.

Wanders off toward the hut; pays no attention to them.

CALVELLI

I'll give it a try.

Moves to the Trapper.

ATWATER

You speak English?

The Trapper shakes his head.

CALVELLI

Hier. Quelq'un...shit. I can't  
remember how to say 'shoot'...

ATWATER

How about bang bang?

CALVELLI

Hier quelq'un...bang  
(indicates shooting)  
...un ami...

CAJUN

J'ai fait rien.

CALVELLI

I think he's saying he didn't do  
anything. It doesn't sound like  
any French I ever heard.

MASTERSON

What the fuck is this? I saw him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDAY MID-DAY

NORMAN

Christ, yes.

ATWATER

I was there too. I couldn't swear to anything...I can't even remember if the guy had one arm.

YOUNGBLOOD

While all this has been going on, he has walked over to the shack and begins climbing the rope ladder.

INT. SHACK

Youngblood looks around. Moves off, kicks an old paint can. The red paint inside is still good. He looks at the ax and steel animal traps, finds a glass jar and picks up the kerosene lamp...starts pouring the kerosene into the jar.

THE SQUAD OUTSIDE

Norman is reasserting his authority.

NORMAN

We'll take this man back with us for interrogation at Staff Command, then he'll stand trial.

Atwater and Calvelli look at each other. Longbrake offers the jug of moonshine.

LONGBRAKE

Anyone want some Cajun whiskey?

SMITH

About time one of you said somethin' makes sense.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDAY MID-DAY

MASTERSON

Get us high as a Georgia pine.

Smith drinks then passes it over.

SMITH

If you don't go blind.

NORMAN

Okay, listen up. Everybody over to the rain barrel, fill your canteens. I want to put some miles between us and here. We should make the Interstate by this afternoon.

## INSIDE THE SHACK

Youngblood is enjoying a private joke, chuckling to himself. The paint can now open and brush in hand. He removes his shirt and calmly paints a red cross on his chest.

CUT TO:

## THE SQUAD AT THE WATER BARREL

Longbrake and Masterson are in a water fight, the rest are finishing up as Youngblood comes down the ladder, Calvelli is the first to see him and the Molotov cocktail Youngblood holds in his hand.

CALVELLI

Oh fuck.

YOUNGBLOOD

(laughing)

And the mark of Cain shall stain them forever.

Youngblood is down the ladder, and the entire Squad can now see him as he lights the rag fuse.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDAY MID-DAY

NORMAN

Hit it!

They run for cover...dive for the ground.

YOUNGBLOOD

Slowly walks away from the shack, the fuse burning...Then turns and throws the jar at the shack.

YOUNGBLOOD

Fire one!

THE EXPLOSION

as the shack gets blown away. Brilliant orange flames rocket upward as everything erupts in fire, sending splinters of burning wood flying into the bayou...Debris and flames fill the air.

YOUNGBLOOD

walks calmly to where the rest of the Squad has dived for cover. He stops, looks at them...

YOUNGBLOOD

That'll teach them to fuck with us.

SMITH

Yeah. Right. Can't argue with that.

ATWATER

What the hell did you paint the cross on your chest for, Youngblood?

YOUNGBLOOD

Just part of the joke.

He laughs.



SUNDAY MID-DAY

THE TRAPPER

silently looking at the ruin of his cabin.

CALVELLI

hitches up his rifle.

CALVELLI

Let's get going, Norman.

He starts off.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST

AFTERNOON

Norman leading the Squad slowly forward; Masterson not on point but simply holding position alongside the teamleader.

NORMAN

He sure demolished that shack.  
Blew it clear to kingdom come.

MASTERSON

Yeah. Only problem is that it  
might have been a signal for  
this cocksucker's relatives to  
gather round.

NORMAN

You really think we still got  
to worry about those bastards?

MASTERSON

Shit, yes. But I'll tell you  
who ought to worry about them  
a lot more than me and you.

WILSON

You don't have to tell me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDAY AFTERNOON

MASTERSON

They think you guys are bad luck.

SMITH

They might be right. I been hanging out with niggers my whole life. I haven't got a break yet.

Longbrake is running out of patience.

LONGBRAKE

Any chance we're ever going to get out of here?

NORMAN

God damn right. I figure two hours tops before we hit the Interstate.

ATWATER

Yeah. Either two hours from the Interstate or New York by Friday.

CUT TO:

DEEP FOREST - HOURS LATER

The Squad comes moving forward.

LONGBRAKE

God damn it, Norman, where's the highway? It's been three fucking hours.

NORMAN

It's right around here, close by.

ATWATER

Yeah, right, Norman. It used to run right through here. Those ecology boys must have moved it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDAY AFTERNOON

NORMAN

Fuck you, Atwater.

Atwater calls ahead to Longbrake, twenty yards to the front.

ATWATER

Hey Longbrake, you got anything  
to say to Norman?

LONGBRAKE

Fuck you, Norman.

ATWATER

Thanks, Longbrake.

## THE SQUAD APPROACHING

The iron jaws of six steel traps are just visible above the crude cover of twigs and moss. The Guardsmen move right for them, unaware. Norman is heading straight into one, unseeing.

LONGBRAKE

Hey!

He grabs Norman.

NORMAN

What?

LONGBRAKE

Look what ya almost stepped in!

NORMAN

Jesus Christ!

They gaze at the open jaws.

NORMAN

Some kind of fuckin bear trap.

LONGBRAKE

Lookit this bastard.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDAY AFTERNOON

Atwater, Calvelli, Wilson and Smith move up.

MASTERSON

Eight of them, all laid out.

NORMAN

Just like the rabbits.

LONGBRAKE

They was set for us?

WILSON

Shit, yes.

ATWATER

Either us or the last eight  
bears in the state of Louisiana.

Masterson releases one by shoving a stick into the opening.  
The trap snaps shut, it's jaws clang out, biting.

MASTERSON

Just like a steel pussy.

SMITH

Really? What kind of girls you  
been hanging out with?

NORMAN

Good thing you spotted them,  
Longbrake.

LONGBRAKE

Don't mention it. Anytime you  
need help, Norman.

Calvelli looks at the Cajun, points to the steel traps.

CALVELLI

Q'est que c'est?

No response.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDAY AFTERNOON

MASTERSON

What did you ask him?

CALVELLI

What they were doing here...

Masterson grabs the Trapper and starts squeezing his broken jaw.

MASTERSON

Okay you sonuvabitch.

Still no response.

MASTERSON

Are there any more? Huh? I'm talking to you.

LONGBRAKE

He ain't gonna tell you shit.  
You know that Lonnie.

Masterson releases the Trapper.

NORMAN

Okay. They didn't get us and they're not gonna, we wasted enough time. Let's saddle up; the Interstate ain't far.

Longbrake again moves to point. Smith flanks the right side of the group; moving along the trail's edge...

NORMAN

Don't make any unnecessary noise.  
No talking in formation.

He takes six steps when, from out of nowhere, a wooden stake rips deep into Smith's mid-section.

SMITH

his face frozen in death, eyes staring at the object stuck

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDAY AFTERNOON

in his chest. The stake is fastened to a branch and keeps him standing upright, until his dead weight finally breaks free.

THE SQUAD

Unable to move, they only stare in horror and silence... finally:

NORMAN

Jesus Christ.

Calvelli moves over the dead body to examine the weapon. The stake is finely hand honed and tied to a branch, along with another pointed spear, several feet away. Calvelli slaps the second bent branch with his rifle, releasing another stake which snaps into place a few feet from his stake.

CALVELLI

These fuckers are after us.  
They really are.

The rest of the Squad staring at Smith's body.

CUT TO:

EXT. DEEP FOREST

Within a small clearing. The Squad stands in prayer before two graves. Crude wet-wooden branch crosses. Masterson stands guard with the Prisoner and acts as sentry...Youngblood is speaking in a low, deep tone.

YOUNGBLOOD

Our Father who art in Heaven,  
hallowed be Thy name. Thy  
Kingdom come, Thy will be done,  
on Earth as it is in Heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
and forgive us our trespasses, as  
we forgive those who trespass  
against us. Lead us not into  
temptation, but deliver us from  
evil. For Thine is the Kingdom...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDAY AFTERNOON

Long pause.

YOUNGBLOOD

For Thine is the Kingdom...  
For Thine is the Kingdom...

Long pause. Youngblood continues staring straight ahead. Nervous looks from the rest of the Squad as they turn their attention from the two shallow graves to the hulking Youngblood -- He continues to stare abstractly at his feet.

ATWATER

For Thine is the Kingdom, and  
the Power, and the Glory forever.  
Amen.

Youngblood raises his look to the graves.

YOUNGBLOOD

We give this prayer as dead men  
asking for our own salvation.

Norman steps into the center of the clearing, standing before the entire Squad.

NORMAN

Bullshit. I don't want to hear  
that kind of talk...We're at war.  
That's all there is to it, so I  
want you looking like soldiers  
not mail men. Weapons carried  
at ready...we've got three hours  
of daylight left and we're headin'  
North...Let's move.

He turns and moves across the clearing; the Squad look at one another momentarily and then begin to follow.

CUT TO:

LARGE CLEARING

DUSK

The Squad appears, slowly trudging forward. Norman holds them up in the center of the open space.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDAY EVENING

NORMAN

This is it. We'll bivouac here. Clearing this big will make it tough for those bastards to sneak up on us.

Youngblood sits down on a log then looks continuously at the ground before his feet.

ATWATER

Yeah. Right. Now let's get a few things straight, Norman. Tomorrow morning helicopters will be out looking for us. Damn good chance they'll find us if we stay in clear ground. So what we have to worry about until then is the Cajuns...

NORMAN

We don't know the enemy's disposition or his strength. He may have the advantage of familiar terrain, but we have the advantage of military training. Remember the 5 D's. Detect, deny, deceive, defend, and destroy.

ATWATER

Great speech, Norman. But I want to make our odds a little better.

CALVELLI

What are you going for?

Atwater points at the Trapper, still being covered by Masterson.

ATWATER

Maybe they want him back. Maybe that's all they want. Let's take the chance and let him go.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

SUNDAY EVENING

NORMAN

Bullshit. He killed Taylor.  
The only place he's going is  
with us.

WILSON

They're fixin' to kill us all.

MASTERTSON

You got it.

NORMAN

Gag and blindfold the Prisoner,  
Wilson.

ATWATER

Norman, you're a dumb asshole.

Norman steps forward and slams Atwater in the face with his  
right fist.

YOUNGBLOOD

still sitting on the log, staring downward.

NORMAN

speaks very calmly to the now flush-faced Atwater.

NORMAN

I don't want any more talk like  
that.

ATWATER

Yeah, right. You got the stripe,  
Chief.

NORMAN

God damn right I do.

He looks over at Longbrake.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDAY EVENING

NORMAN

The jokes are over.

Then at the Squad.

NORMAN

Tomorrow morning we're heading North with the Prisoner. The man that killed Crawford Taylor, the man whose buddies killed Tyrone Smith...In case you forgot Atwater, they were friends of ours.

Long pause.

NORMAN

Now let's get unpacked and bedded down. I'll post security. No fire tonight.

The Squad drop their packs, begin undoing them.

CALVELLI

looking at Atwater as he rubs the spot alongside his chin where Norman hit him.

He moves closer; Atwater unsnaps the buttons on his back-pack...

CALVELLI

You might be right about the Cajun.

Atwater looks up at him.

ATWATER

Why the hell didn't you say something?

CALVELLI

I don't know...I just can't believe any of this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDAY EVENING

ATWATER

Let me know when you start.

YOUNGBLOOD

still sitting on the log.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMPSITE

NIGHT

Moonlight is now the only source of illumination.

THE TRAPPER

tied to a tree near the edge of the clearing. A sock stuffed into his mouth and held in place with friction tape.

His eyes turn and follow Longbrake moving across in front of him, approaching Norman who is busy working while seated on a canvas groundcloth.

LONGBRAKE

stops to watch Norman put small rocks into an empty can of peas taken from the shack.

LONGBRAKE

I got something to tell you,  
Norman...hey what's that for?

NORMAN

Fragmentation...Remember your  
training. You shouldn't of  
been sleeping in the survival  
class.

LONGBRAKE

Yeah. I musta missed that one.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDAY NIGHT

NORMAN

S, size up the situation. U,  
understand what you're up against.  
R, remember where you are. V,  
value living. I, what's I?

LONGBRAKE

I don't remember.

NORMAN

Improvise. Even blank rounds  
can save your life.

He pours the gunpowder of a shell into the can.

LONGBRAKE

Atwater told me to come over and  
talk to you.

NORMAN

What's he want?

LONGBRAKE

It's Youngblood. There's something  
wrong with him. He won't talk.  
Atwater says he's gone crazy. You  
better come on over...I think Atwater's  
right.

CUT TO:

NORMAN - MINUTES LATER

now standing near the comatose Youngblood; the rest of the  
Squad behind, looking over his shoulder.

NORMAN

Youngblood, look, we all have  
had a rough time and I can  
understand if you're not feeling  
too good...Why don't you just  
talk to us about it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDAY NIGHT

No response.

NORMAN

Come on, Youngblood.

No response.

NORMAN

I'm giving you an order, Youngblood.  
Now God damn it talk to us.

No response.

Norman turns to the rest of the Squad.

NORMAN

I don't know.

Shrugs.

WILSON

I do. The motherfucker's crazy.

Longbrake

What are we going to do with  
him?

NORMAN

Leave him there. Maybe he'll  
feel better in the morning.

Atwater

Bullshit! You're going to tie  
his ass up, Norman. This is  
the guy that made his own bomb,  
remember? I don't want him  
walking around here tonight,  
while we're sleeping.

The entire Squad now staring at Norman.

Calvelli

He's right.

Longbrake

He is, Norman.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDAY NIGHT

Norman looks over at Masterson.

MASTERSON

Won't hurt any to tie him up.

NORMAN

If he's tied up we lose potential  
firepower.

ATWATER

Jesus Christ, get a God damn rope  
and quit jerking off about firepower.

NORMAN

Remember what happened the last time  
you shot your mouth off to me, Atwater.

CALVELLI

Come on, Norman. He's right. He's  
way too big and dangerous.

Pause.

NORMAN

Okay, Wilson, there's forty feet  
of rope in my pack. Go get it.

Turns and walks away.

CUT TO:

THE SQUAD SLEEPING

NIGHT

Heavy rain is falling.

CALVELLI

on sentry duty at the far side of the clearing. He stands,  
listening...Thinks he heard something...sits back down and  
pulls his poncho over his head.

Pause.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDAY NIGHT

Then again he stands; listens and looks...

He can see the rest of the Squad sleeping; The dark forest surrounding all...A twig cracks in the bush...after a moment Calvelli starts to move quietly; not waking any of the others. Calvelli now travels through the underbrush to the edge of the bayou where he sees:

MASTERSON

holding the Trapper's head under water. The Cajun is on his stomach, a rope ties his arms behind his back -- Master-son lets his head up momentarily then pushes it back into the muddy water. The Trapper goes under, spitting bubbles.

CALVELLI

What the hell you doing?

MASTERSON

This man's going to talk to me.

CALVELLI

Let him up.

MASTERSON

You stay out of it.

Keeps holding his head under.

Pause.

CALVELLI

God damn it let him up!

MASTERSON

Sure.

Masterson yanks the Trapper's head out of the water, pulling him up by the hair. The Trapper surfaces, lungs bursting for air.

MASTERSON

Now you happy?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDAY NIGHT

Masterson shoves the Trapper back in.

In a flash, Calvelli's right hand slashes out - the switch-blade cutting along Masterson's poncho...a warning slash.

MASTERSON

That's the second time you pulled that on me.

Masterson takes out his bayonet. The long blade glistens in the night rain.

Calvelli backs away.

Masterson keeps coming.

Slash...slash.

Calvelli has no choice. The two men circle.

CALVELLI

Okay, you got it.

Masterson lunges for the gut. Calvelli takes the feint and leans back as Masterson continues the thrust upwards, barely raking Calvelli from jaw to cheek. A fine line of blood seeps out of the razored cut. Masterson smiles.

They circle each other, feinting for an opening; Masterson's bayonet cutting circles through the falling rain.

Calvelli's left hand grabs Masterson's right wrist in mid air, pulling it sideways, pitching Masterson off balance. Calvelli pounces, the two men go down, each holding the other's knife wrist.

ROLLING IN THE MUD

Once, twice. On the third roll the flash of the Cajun Trapper coming to his feet breaks Calvelli's concentration. For a moment, their eyeballs lock.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

SUNDAY NIGHT

## TRAPPER

Kill him.

They roll over again. Calvelli on top, on bottom, on top again. Loses the switchblade.

His leverage has Masterson's wrist bent backwards, forcing the bayonet from Masterson's grip. They roll over and come apart.

Each man up quickly, each dives for the blade lost in the mud.

Calvelli now has the bayonet. Masterson now has the switchblade.

Masterson lunges. Catches Calvelli off guard. Calvelli throws his left arm up to block the stab. The switchblade plunges into the lower flesh of Calvelli's bicep and sticks...

Calvelli's knife hand lashes up, misses, but his knuckles catch Masterson flush on the jaw, a solid right hook. Masterson stumbles backwards, leaving the switchblade stuck in Calvelli's arm.

## ACROSS THE WAY

Norman, Atwater, Wilson come running up through the underbrush. Stop and stare at the two struggling men.

## CALVELLI

leaps on top of Masterson; they both go down hard...

Masterson on his back; Calvelli on top of him.

Calvelli's left wrist is pressed tight under Masterson's jaw, pinning him, gagging him. Calvelli's shaking right hand holds the bayonet shoulder high...Masterson is totally vulnerable, his empty arms stretched out in surrender...totally at Calvelli's mercy.

Calvelli brings the bayonet up higher.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDAY NIGHT

TRAPPER'S VOICE

Kill him.

Hesitates.

Higher.

Hesitates.

Then plunges it deep into Masterson's heart.

The sound of laughter.

Calvelli keeps leaning on the bayonet...All his weight...  
Then slowly comes back up, staring at the dead man beneath  
him.

He can't believe what he's done. Can't believe it. But  
it's there. Staring up at him. He did this. With his  
own hand.

Calvelli gets to his feet.

Sees the shocked faces of Atwater, Norman and Wilson; dis-  
covering for the first time that they've been watching.

Pause.

Wilson walks over to Masterson's body; looks at his  
unblinking eyes.

WILSON

He's dead. Masterson's dead.

Pause.

ATWATER

Your Prisoner got away, Norman.

Pause.

NORMAN

What were you doing fighting  
each other?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDAY NIGHT

Norman stands there, unable to comprehend.

NORMAN

Jesus. We're not supposed to  
fight each other.

Longbrake arrives, crashing through the vegetation -- he  
sees Masterson's body stretched before him.

LONGBRAKE

Lonnie!

He rushes over.

Looks at Calvelli still holding the bayonet.

LONGBRAKE

You mother fucker!

Springs at him but is caught and held back by Wilson and  
Norman. Longbrake wrestles against their grasp -- fighting  
to get at Calvelli who stands calmly looking at him, hands  
at his sides.

LONGBRAKE

Let me get him, God damn it,  
let me get him.

ATWATER

keeps looking straight at Calvelli.

DISSOLVE:

YOUNGBLOOD

bound by heavy ropes, standing erect, almost at attention.  
His eyes remain clouded over, unseeing.

THE CLEARING

NIGHT

Twenty yards beyond Youngblood a few hours after Masterson's

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDAY NIGHT

death. The rain continues to pour down.

Atwater and Wilson are digging a grave with their short infantry shovels.

CLOSE BY

Longbrake squatting down by Masterson's poncho covered body. Watching as the grave expands with each bite of the spades... His steel helmet shining in the downpour.

AT THE LOG

Calvelli seated; calmly, emotionlessly watching the grave digging. Norman crosses behind him and approaches Atwater and Wilson.

WILSON

How many graves we gonna be leavin back here?

Norman arrives in time to hear this last remark.

NORMAN

No more of ours, I can tell you that.

WILSON

Yeah. You can tell me that.

Calvelli stands, calls over to the gravesite.

CALVELLI

Be quiet.

WILSON

You talkin to me?

CALVELLI

I'm talking to everybody.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDAY NIGHT

Norman turns away from Calvelli, unable to face him; Wilson and Atwater continue shoveling.

CUT TO:

MONDAY MORNING

THE CLEARING

DAWN

The Squad huddled together in the pouring rain; forty yards beyond them is Masterson's freshly dug grave marked with a wooden branch cross, steel helmet on the cross strut. The Guardsmen are all shivering inside their ponchos; their packs in place ready to march...Atwater holding the end of the rope that binds Youngblood.

NORMAN

We have three casualties, we're not gonna have any more. Survival is a mental outlook. Shock and fear can be overcome by a sense of responsibility; Loyalty to country and military duty...Desire to return to home and family. If you are not prepared mentally to overcome all obstacles and hardships, the chances of coming out alive are greatly reduced.

ATWATER

Getting wet listening to all this, Norman.

NORMAN

God damn you Atwater. I'm trying to do my best. It ain't easy.

ATWATER

I know you are, Norman.

NORMAN

You figure you can do any better?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MONDAY MORNING

ATWATER

Yeah.

NORMAN

I'm the team leader! You ain't even an E-5. You're...you're only an E-4!

ATWATER

Big deal.

Pause.

WILSON

I'm with you. Sorry, Norman.

NORMAN

The rest of you guys feel that way?

ATWATER

Longbrake?

LONGBRAKE

Norman, you promise that this asshole's gonna be court martialed.

NORMAN

He's got to be. He killed a fellow soldier.

Longbrake looks across at Atwater, shrugs.

LONGBRAKE

Changing horses in midstream never did make much sense.

ATWATER

Calvelli?

CALVELLI

What's this voting bullshit? You know the way?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MONDAY MORNING

ATWATER

Yeah. I can find it, if it ever stops raining.

CALVELLI

Then let's go.

ATWATER

Come on Youngblood, let's go home.

Atwater tugs on Youngblood's rope, starts leading him away.

NORMAN

Wait a minute Atwater. You can't just march off. We're a Squad. A unit...

LONGBRAKE

Fuck him. Let him go.

NORMAN

It's desertion.

CALVELLI

Right.

Atwater and Calvelli and Wilson start off. The other two watch. Atwater stops.

ATWATER

You coming?

Norman moves toward Atwater. Then Longbrake.

Atwater's tone to Norman is soft, gentle.

ATWATER

You're still in charge, Norman. I'm just the guide.

They trudge away at an angle to the rising sun.

CUT TO:

MONDAY MORNING

EXT. SWAMP

EARLY MORNING

More heavy rain. The men are soaked, shaking, filthy, hungry, tense. The surrounding vegetation is impenetrable, allowing little sunlight to filter through; moss hanging from the trees like bearded columns.

ATWATER AND CALVELLI

Leading the way. Behind Youngblood, quietly accepting his leashed condition, are Norman, then Longbrake -- Wilson trails.

ATWATER

Arm okay?

CALVELLI

Yeah, it's okay.

Pause.

ATWATER

Want to talk about Masterson?  
Look, I know he was a real son  
of a bitch.

CALVELLI

I don't want to talk about him.

ATWATER

It was self-defense.

Pause.

ATWATER

Pisses me off, those other guys  
gettin our whores while we're  
out here.

CALVELLI

Do me a favor. Shut up.

They move forward in silence.



MONDAY MORNING

WILSON

Still trailing the rest of the Squad. Bird calls, branches and twigs snapping underfoot, then another sound.

Twang.

Twang. Twang. Twang.

Wilson stops, pulls his M-16 to the ready position.

WILSON

Hey.

The others ahead stop...listen.

Twang, twang, twang.

A Jew's harp, not far off.

Wilson suddenly wheels and fires into the swamp. The rest of the Squad drop and move to cover, sighting along their M-16's.

All is still...

Quiet...

Twang. Twang. Twang.

NORMAN

Wilson?

WILSON

I thought I saw something.

NORMAN

Where?

WILSON

Over there.

NORMAN

You sure?

WILSON

You heard it.

NORMAN

Nothing now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MONDAY MORNING

Carefully, they get up and continue walking along the edge of the bayou.

Twang. Twang. Twang.

WILSON

Motherfuckers!

He snaps.

Starts to run off through the brush, firing his M-16.

Twang. Blast. Twang. Blast.

Wilson continues running, chasing the sound...Stops, his face twisting into an agonized mask...He tries to scream, mouth open, nothing coming out. When the cry finally bursts out it is a deafening cry of shock and terror.

Along the edge of the bayou in front of him a scarecrow looms...

THE SCARECROW

Smith's black skin stretched out on the two crossed poles; Taylor's white head sits at the top of the pole where Smith's neck ends.

WILSON

As the rest of the Squad come pounding up behind him...

ATWATER

Holy Christ.

LONGBRAKE

They dug 'em up.

NORMAN

Jesus. Jesus. Jesus.

YOUNGBLOOD

His eyes take in the Scarecrow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MONDAY MORNING

YOUNGBLOOD

I pray the Lord my soul to take.  
 I pray the Lord my soul to take.  
 I pray the Lord my soul to take...

Twang, twang, twang.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST

HIGH NOON

Hot, muggy.

The Squad moving in file; Atwater leading the way -- still holding to the edge of the bayou. Wilson pulls alongside Atwater.

WILSON

Atwater, you still want to write me up a policy?

ATWATER

Don't have my forms with me.

WILSON

That ain't funny.

ATWATER

Nobody ever wants insurance till they need it...Look Cleotis, right now there's state troopers, helicopters, hound dogs, everybody in Louisiana's out looking for us...

WILSON

They better make it quick.

ATWATER

I want you to remember this tomorrow when I make you sign.

A few more paces; Norman calls out from twenty yards back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MONDAY MID-DAY

NORMAN

Atwater. Hold up. We'll take  
two minutes rest.

The Squad pulls up...Seat themselves, remove their helmets --  
Youngblood remains standing, almost like a huge fleshy robot  
at rest.

CALVELLI

Lights a cigarette...his last. He crushes up the package,  
tosses it away...Looks across at Atwater who is cleaning his  
glasses on his shirtfront. Calvelli rises, moves to Atwater...  
looms over him.

CALVELLI

Get up.

ATWATER

What?

CALVELLI

Get up. I want to talk to you.

ATWATER

Yeah?

CALVELLI

Away from the rest of them.

Atwater stands, he and Calvelli move away from the others.  
Atwater turns back to Calvelli, curious about the moment.

ATWATER

Okay.

Pause.

CALVELLI

I want to know what the fuck's  
going on.

ATWATER

I don't get you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MONDAY MID-DAY

CALVELLI

I'll make it real simple...I'm down here two weeks and get sent out with a bunch of rednecks and two spades, all of a sudden guys start coming out of the trees and killing us...Now I'll ask you again. What the fuck's going on? What do they want?

Pause.

CALVELLI

I want to know what the rules are.

ATWATER

I figure you know better than me. You're the one that brought the knife. And you're the one that used it...

Pause.

ATWATER

I'll tell you something. I'm a city boy, born and raised in Baton Rouge, and went to Vanderbilt, sell insurance for my father's company and don't work too hard...You want to know what's going on back here? I haven't got the slightest fucking idea. God damn Cajuns are weird and they're killing us...

Calvelli shrugs.

CALVELLI

Right back where I grew up.

ATWATER

That's what I thought. I'm depending on you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MONDAY MID-DAY

CALVELLI

When you go into somebody's  
territory...

ATWATER

Yeah.

CALVELLI

They want to kill you.

Turns and walks back toward the others.

CUT TO:

EDGE OF THE BAYOU

AFTERNOON

The Squad moves along in silence, all of them save Youngblood  
are apprehensive. As they pass, backs turned...

Something moves along the bank of the bayou...The mud rises  
in a heap, dripping...from the slime a form emerges...

A CAJUN MUDMAN

All mire and hair, a troglodyte in appearance...He aims his  
rifle at the Squad's back, smiles and fires.

THE SQUAD

As the swamp explodes with gun fire.

NORMAN

Ambush! Snipers!

They dive for cover. Gunfire comes at them from all over.  
Front, rear, side. The Squad shoots back blindly, spraying  
everything...Youngblood alone stands. Atwater rolls back  
for the abandoned rope end...grabs, tugs it and brings  
Youngblood down.

ATWATER

Youngblood! For Christ's sake!

MONDAY AFTERNOON

NORMAN AND WILSON

From behind the stump of a dead cottonwood.

NORMAN

They got us flanked. We're pinned down.

WILSON

Motherfucker!

Norman fires twice then is out of ammo...

NORMAN

Cover me!

WILSON

With what? All I got is blanks.

Norman's contact with reality is now problematical.

NORMAN

No radio contact or ammo or air support, mortars. We got nothing. How we supposed to fight on that?

WILSON

Don't ask me. You're the one supposed to know.

NORMAN

Fire the God damn blanks...

Wilson opens up, Norman breaks for it.

NORMAN

He crawls thirty yards, dodges, runs...his M-16 left behind with Wilson. A burst of rifle fire and he darts in that direction...dives for cover behind a huge cypress and sits panting for a moment. Mudman appears thirty yards before him, firing...but has no idea of Norman's new position --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MONDAY AFTERNOON

Norman reaches into his pocket and pulls out the can he loaded with gunpowder and pebbles. The can is bound tight with vine and a rag fuse is stuffed in the top. Shaking, Norman fumbles for a match, and lights the rag. It ignites. He holds the grenade, peeks out from behind the tree, stands and throws the grenade at the Mudman...A perfect toss.

MUDMAN

As the grenade hits and extinguishes itself. Nothing. No explosion. Mudman turns, sees Norman, and fires.

NORMAN

Running like hell, bullets kicking all around him...

THE SQUAD

Norman tears past them...

NORMAN

Pull back! Retreat!

They move away to the continuing shots of the Cajuns.

Sweating, panting, the men trip and stumble over vines and roots, sloshing in mud. Branches slash at their faces...

LONGBRAKE

I can't go no more.

ATWATER

Come on, Longbrake.

They pound forward, regroup, hurry on.

WILSON

They after us?

NORMAN

Keep going.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

MONDAY AFTERNOON

More running forward, trees, limbs, underbrush, mud...But no more rifle fire. Norman pulls them up. Atwater is panting, fighting for oxygen.

ATWATER

No.

CALVELLI

I don't hear anything.

WILSON

Yeah, I hear it now.

Norman frantically starts digging through his pockets.

ATWATER

Helicopter!

NORMAN

My mirror. Where's my mirror!

Through the mist, skirting along the treetops, the helicopter, coming right at them. The men start waving, jumping, shouting. Norman is flashing his mirror...The Chopper passes right over their heads...and is gone.

The men of the 1st Squad stand in disbelief. Longbrake starts walking off, after the helicopter.

LONGBRAKE

Over here, over here.

Norman slowly starts to put away his mirror, then decides to first clean its surface on his poncho.

NORMAN

I don't see how he missed us.

WILSON

I could see his face.

NORMAN

Why didn't he see my signal?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MONDAY AFTERNOON

ATWATER

Not enough sun.

WILSON

Hey? Where's Longbrake?

NORMAN

I don't know.

ATWATER

He was here a minute ago.

LONGBRAKE

Now running through the swamp after the vanished helicopter. He tries to move faster...faster...faster...oblivious to the brush and moss.

CLEARING

Shallow water and mud. Longbrake comes bursting through the surrounding vegetation and begins splashing through the opening in the forest -- his face turned upward, still vainly looking for the chopper.

Then he slows down.

Slower.

Slower.

Full stop.

Begins to sink.

Quicksand.

CUT TO:

THE SQUAD

Norman yelling...

NORMAN

Longbrake! Longbrake!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MONDAY AFTERNOON

Looks back at the others.

NORMAN

Spread out. We have to find him...  
Buddy teams, you and me, Wilson.  
First team to find him fire a  
blank every five minutes. Other  
team will work its way there.

CALVELLI

What if we don't find him?

NORMAN

Wait an hour, fire five blanks  
and then one every five minutes.  
Both teams will work back to each  
others.

Norman and Wilson start out; Atwater looks at Calvelli,  
shrugs.

ATWATER

Come on, Youngblood.

Jerks the rope.

CUT TO:

LONGBRAKE - UP TO HIS CHEST

He sees something...reaches out..pleading to be saved...

A CAJUN BOY

ten or eleven years old, sits at the edge of the bog;  
Fascinated, he watches Longbrake sink...Laughs at him.

CUT TO:

ATWATER AND CALVELLI

leading Youngblood through the swamp.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MONDAY AFTERNOON

ATWATER

Longbrake! Longbrake! You  
dumb red-neck where are you!  
Longbrake!

CUT TO:

WILSON AND NORMAN

They move, cautiously looking...then leap backward, startled as a Cajun with a huge black beard appears before them, Mudman behind them...off to one side a third Cajun with a Hawk-like face. Blackbeard steps forward, holding a razor-edged Bowie knife...

CUT TO:

LONGBRAKE

up to his neck...the Cajun boy watches Longbrake slowly disappear. Mouth, nose, eyes, forehead. A few gurgling bubbles and the swamp is once again still...The Boy moves off into the dense foliage and vanishes.

Atwater's voice can be heard faintly in the distance.

ATWATER

Longbrake!

CUT TO:

WILSON AND NORMAN

Norman leaps toward Hawk-face, swings his rifle by the barrel and pole-axes the big man. Killing him instantly. Another Cajun appears at his side, Norman bayonets his mid-section.

NORMAN

Take off!

Wilson starts running across the clearing. Norman reaches for Hawk-face's rifle...and is brought down by Mudman's

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MONDAY AFTERNOON

bullet, straight through the back and heart.

WILSON

running through the swamp. Never looking back, he dodges and darts, cutting and weaving through the towering ferns... Eyes and lungs on fire, he staggers through the thicket and mud...doubles over, holding his side, breathing like a locomotive. He splashes his face from a pool of swamp water, rinsing and spitting, then forces himself on...Running again... then trips, recovers, scrambling now on all fours, knees not touching the earth...He pitches forward and drops exhausted, shaking, afraid to move.

BLACKBEARD AND MUDMAN

Coming at Wilson, he slides back, away, as they move silently closer. Wilson is on his feet now, back to a tree, cornered. He screams and lunges at the Cajuns, swinging his M-16 like a ball bat.

CUT TO:

EXT. SWAMP

Late afternoon sun; Atwater, Calvelli and Youngblood.  
Atwater fires five blanks.  
They wait.  
And wait.  
And wait.

CALVELLI

The only thing we're doing is  
telling the Cajuns where we are.

ATWATER

They haven't had too much trouble  
finding us up to now.

YOUNGBLOOD

It's just part of the joke.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MONDAY AFTERNOON

Which makes no sense, but he is quite mad.

ATWATER

WILSON!

Pause, he shouts again.

ATWATER

NORMAN!

CALVELLI

Let's go.

They move up a steep embankment, cross through a ridge of ferns and begin a descent toward a new series of bayous and interlocking waterways. The maze of brackish water and dense foliage stretches before them like a vast crossword puzzle...beyond lies a forest of dead trees, leafless branches pointing upward, almost in surrender.

CALVELLI

Jesus.

ATWATER

No fucking way out.

Pause.

ATWATER

Where the fuck are the helicopters?  
Where the fuck are we?

CALVELLI

I thought you were the one that  
knew.

ATWATER

I know where we're going. I just  
don't know where we are.

CALVELLI

Yeah...We better find something  
to eat.

CUT TO:

MONDAY AFTERNOON

EXT. MUD BANK

Along the edge of the murky water. The three men trudge forward. Youngblood trailing, still being led by Atwater holding the short throw of rope.

ATWATER

Wait.

Calvelli stops; Atwater points to a large nest-like conglomeration of mud and branches.

ATWATER

There's food.

CALVELLI

What?

Atwater goes to the dark mound, kicks it, waits, then warily kicks it again. Suddenly an explosion of mud and water as a small alligator thunders out of its nest and into the reeds beyond...Atwater watches it go then reaches inside the nest and hands Calvelli a large, leathery egg. He reaches back inside and pulls out two more, gives one to Youngblood. Atwater stands holding one in his hand.

ATWATER

Protein.

Atwater smiles. Starts to bite, then waits for Calvelli, who tops his and sucks it down. Atwater looks at him.

ATWATER

I don't think so.

CALVELLI

Come on, before it hatches.

ATWATER

You liked yours so much, you can have mine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MONDAY AFTERNOON

CALVELLI

Eat it. You're going to need all the strength you can get...I don't want you falling down on me.

Atwater downs his.

ATWATER

Chow time, Coach. Going to untie you.

Atwater begins to loosen Youngblood's ropes.

CUT TO:

WALKING DOWN A SMALL BAYOU

LATE AFTERNOON

The three men now close to the limits of endurance. They move slowly along the deep banks, water covered with green pads. Youngblood remains untied.

CUT TO:

EXT. MUD BANK

EVENING

Atwater and Calvelli dig at the steep walls with their bayonets, making natural depressions wider. They claw at the dirt, passing it out in the steel pots. Youngblood stands watching the men carve out shelter for the evening.

LATER

The three of them lie on their sides. A small fire is boiling water in one of the steel helmets.

ATWATER

Tomorrow this time you'll be sitting in your den with a beer and the tee vee, listening to your old lady's bullshit.

Pause.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

MONDAY EVENING

CALVELLI

Yeah.

Calvelli starts cleaning his wound.

CALVELLI

Full of dirt.

ATWATER

Infected?

CALVELLI

Probably.

ATWATER

Let me help you with that.

Atwater wraps up Calvelli's arm.

CALVELLI

Some nurse.

ATWATER

Yeah, but I'm easy.

Pause.

CALVELLI

Terrific state you got here,  
Atwater. They send out two  
helicopters.

ATWATER

What do you want them to do  
send out the National Guard?

CUT TO:

EXT. BAYOU

DAWN

Sun starts to filter through the covering fog. Atwater  
sleeping heavily, exhausted...Calvelli in a sentry position...  
fatigue has taken its toll with him as well -- he sleeps

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TUESDAY MORNING

fitfully...Youngblood nowhere to be seen.

The ground begins to shake, a roaring noise...Calvelli awakens as the sound and shaking increase...Then suddenly from fifty yards away a train whistle blasts...from out of nowhere a locomotive and flatcars roar by at seventy miles an hour. The railroad embankment obscured from Calvelli's vision by the dense foliage.

Atwater leaps to Calvelli's side. They both run toward the embankment, shouting to each other above the roar.

ATWATER

Where the fuck did this come from?

CALVELLI

I don't know but I love it.

Big smiles on both men's faces; they slap five.

After a few moments, the end of the train whips by...

ATWATER AND CALVELLI

Maintaining their smiles...

ATWATER

Never been so glad...

The eyes of both men tighten.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE TRACK

Youngblood's body hanging from the limb of a cypress tree; the rope that Atwater bound him with now forms a hangman's noose.

Atwater and Calvelli slowly approach the corpse.

CALVELLI

Poor son of a bitch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TUESDAY MORNING

ATWATER

Did he do it himself or did  
they help him?

Calvelli shrugs.

CALVELLI

Doesn't make any difference  
now.

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. TRACKSIDE

MID-DAY

Two figures against the horizon line trudging slowly forward.  
Thick foliage to their left, a long low reach of bayou to  
the right.

IN THE DISTANCE

Across the stretch of water a small movement...

CALVELLI

Over there.

Atwater looks.

ATWATER

What is it?

Both men staring.

CALVELLI

A truck. Fucking truck.

He starts running...Atwater lopes after him, tossing his  
rifle aside...the truck almost looks as if it's floating on  
the water...they move closer...the horizon line changing  
with their progress -- crushed-shell road revealed on the  
far side of the bayou.

As the truck moves toward the railroad crossing Calvelli  
starts running faster, screaming...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TUESDAY MID-DAY

CALVELLI

Hey! Wait!

THE TRUCK

Has made a full stop at the crossing. The vehicle is a flat-bed, old, delapidated, rusty...An Elderly Cajun Couple in the front seat. Calvelli runs up, Atwater a few paces behind.

CALVELLI

Wait...uh hello...

The Elderly Man smiles nervously back at the two disheveled soldiers. The Woman doesn't smile at all.

A very long pause.

Atwater and Calvelli so moved by their first contact with civilization that words are difficult...Atwater notices the reluctance of the couple.

ATWATER

They're scared.

CALVELLI

What?

ATWATER

Your guns. The way we look.

Calvelli sets his M-16 down.

CALVELLI

No bullets anyway.

Smiles at the Elderly Cajun Man and Woman.

MAN

You want lift?

ATWATER

Yes. Oh God yes, do we ever.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TUESDAY MID-DAY

Both Cajuns laugh.

MAN

You get in back.

CALVELLI

Sure. Next town. Right?

MAN

Sure. Sure.

The Elderly Man's grasp on English is limited; a problem of little matter to Atwater and Calvelli, they hop on the flat-bed of the pick-up...The battered vehicle pulls off.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD

The flat-bed pick-up chugging along, Atwater and Calvelli stretched out in back. The truck turns down a narrow lane.

ATWATER AND CALVELLI

Watching the marsh country slip by on either side of them.

CAJUN

How far?

ATWATER

You're asking me?

The flat-bed moves into a clearing...Many cars and trucks parked nearby; Campers, hay wagons...

CALVELLI

What the hell?

EXT. CLEARING NEXT TO A HUGE BAYOU

Two hundred or so Cajuns; men, women, children, and assorted animals, have gathered next to a huge bayou for what is

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TUESDAY MID-DAY

known to the locals as a Shivaree. Music, dancing, gumbo, crayfish, jambalaya, alcohol make for a generally festive atmosphere.

## FLAT BED TRUCK

The truck bearing Atwater and Calvelli rolls into the clearing.

## ATWATER AND CALVELLI

Hearing the music look over the truck to see what's going on. The sight of two hundred Cajuns even at play is not reassuring.

CALVELLI

What the hell is this?

ATWATER

I think it's one of those Cajun luau's you were talking about.

CALVELLI

What happened to the town they were taking us to?

Atwater shrugs. The truck has now stopped in what is currently passing for the parking area. Atwater and Calvelli jump down off the truck to confront the couple getting out of the truck.

CALVELLI

Where's the town? We want to go to town.

MAN

Eat first. Go 'town later.

CALVELLI

No. We want to go to town now.

MAN

First, eat. Have good time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TUESDAY MID-DAY

WOMAN

Shivaree. You have good time.  
Town after.

The couple is open, friendly and not to be dissuaded. Atwater and Calvelli exchange a look and allow themselves to be led to the clearing. The woman continues chattering to them as they move off.

WOMAN

You eat. You drink. You have  
good time...

CUT TO:

BAYOU'S EDGE

Atwater and Calvelli cleaning themselves up in the bayou. Children playing in the water around them. A short distance away, the band plays enthusiastically for a crowd of dancers clogging on wooded planking laid out on the soft ground.

CALVELLI

What do you think?

ATWATER

I think I feel better. Cleaner  
anyway.

CALVELLI

What about safer?

ATWATER

Yeah...On the other hand I don't  
think I'd lie down and go to sleep.

CALVELLI

Maybe we should forget about Mom  
and Dad and try for town by ourselves.

ATWATER

What for? If they're still hunting  
us, they'll find us in the swamps.  
We'll be safer here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TUESDAY MID-DAY

CALVELLI

Okay, but we grab a ride with the  
first car that leaves.

They are startled by a popping sound behind them. They  
wheel around...

YOUNG CAJUN GIRL

A sweet faced, smiling girl of about twelve has opened a couple  
of cans of beer which she now offers to our boys. Their sharp  
reaction makes her a little nervous. They smile.

ATWATER

Thank you.

CALVELLI

Merci.

She smiles and runs off.

ATWATER

Relax, boy. These are the good  
Cajuns.

CALVELLI

(unconvinced)

Yeah. You relax.

Atwater takes a long swallow of beer.

CUT TO:

EXT. CLEARING - LATER

The party is now in full swing. Calvelli is at the food  
table being served a huge plate of crawfish and gumbo.  
General gaiety abounds everywhere except Calvelli's face.  
As he takes his plate and moves through the crowd.

CAJUN FACES - CALVELLI'S POV

Strange smiles, missing teeth...All appear sinister to Calvelli.



TUESDAY AFTERNOON

CALVELLI

He sits down under a tree. He starts to eat, but continually looks around.

CALVELLI'S POV

He scans the dancers, the band, everybody. He seems to catch people staring at him and then looking away as their eyes meet. A pirogue poles up the bayou and beaches. Two men get out. At this distance they could be the two Cajuns who killed Taylor.

CALVELLI

He stares at them. Atwater suddenly appears and sits down next to him.

ATWATER

What's the matter with you, boy?

CALVELLI

Look at those two guys?

ATWATER

What two guys?

CALVELLI

Getting out of the boat.

He looks.

ATWATER

Yeah..?

CALVELLI

They don't look like the guys we took the boats from? The ones who killed Taylor?

ATWATER

I don't know. They were too far away then. And they're too far away now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TUESDAY AFTERNOON

CALVELLI

I think it's them.

ATWATER

Man, don't go gettin' paranoid  
on me.

CALVELLI

I got reason to be paranoid. So  
do you.

He gets up and starts for the food table. Calvelli continues  
to watch the two men.

CALVELLI'S POV

The men move into the clearing. It's impossible to say  
whether or not they are Taylor's killers.

CALVELLI

Watching them.

THE BAND

Playing louder...faster. Ocarina guitar, violin, accordion,  
Jew's harp.

CYPRESS TREE HOG CAGES

Two huge four hundred pound porkers in wooden cages. Two  
Cajuns approach the cages. One draws a huge gutting knife  
and runs it across the bars. The hog squeals. The men  
laugh. Then each man uncoils a rope and ties a noose. They  
are joined by the two men from the pirogue.

CALVELLI

He watches the conversation. He gets up.

(CONTINUED)

TUESDAY AFTERNOON

## CYPRESS TREE

The four Cajuns talking and laughing. It now becomes clear they are tying the ropes into hangman's nooses.

## FOOD TABLE

Atwater is receiving a giant plate of food. He turns to see Calvelli moving quickly towards him, bumping into people, knocking over plates on his way. Finally as Calvelli reaches him.

ATWATER

Jesus, will you take it easy.

CALVELLI

I'm getting out of here right now.

ATWATER

What for?

CALVELLI

I don't think I want to stay for the hanging.

He gestures in the direction of the cypress tree. Atwater looks.

## CYPRESS TREE

Two of the men are throwing the nooses over the branch of the tree, and testing them for strength.

## ATWATER AND CALVELLI

Atwater laughs.

ATWATER

Those are for bleeding the hogs.

CALVELLI

You're fucking crazy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TUESDAY AFTERNOON

ATWATER

I'm telling you...

CALVELLI

I'm not staying to see if you're  
right.

Before Atwater can say anything, Calvelli suddenly takes off.  
Atwater follows.

DANCE FLOOR

Calvelli trying to move through the crowd on the floor.  
Suddenly he's boxed in. A group of people with their arms  
locked together dance around him. They try to pull him into  
the dance. Calvelli panics. He punches one man, pushes  
another aside and races for the forest. The music stops.  
General confusion.

ATWATER

Moving across the dance floor.

ATWATER

No. Wait! You don't understand!

Atwater runs off after Calvelli.

CUT TO:

CALVELLI

Running in dead panic...branches and foliage cutting at his  
face and arms, mud underfoot...he slows...begins walking,  
the carving knife in his right hand.

A small glade appears before him. He enters, sees:

THE CAJUN BOY

He smiles, gestures to Calvelli...A very innocent looking

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TUESDAY MID-DAY

child; the same innocent looking child that watched Longbrake sink into the quicksand. Calvelli approaches cautiously, still holding his knife.

CALVELLI

I want to go home.

The boy gestures Calvelli closer...closer.

Then Blackbeard steps out from behind a tree. Aims his rifle at Calvelli.

CALVELLI

Can't believe it anyway...He smiles as Blackbeard fires, runs for him. Blackbeard fires again...Calvelli gets to him, puts the knife hard into his stomach...

Now Blackbeard can't believe it. Knife sticking out...only the handle visible. He shoots Calvelli again. Again.

CUT TO:

ATWATER

Running through the swamp; he can hear gunfire...he approaches a dense thicket, moves through, comes out into the glade...

EXT. FOREST - GLADE

Atwater crosses to the two bodies. Calvelli sitting up against a tree, eyes open and very dead. Blackbeard on his back, face frozen into a final mask.

The Cajun boy nowhere to be seen.

Atwater moves near Calvelli, looks at him.

ATWATER

We had it made. We had it made.

Sound of a Jew's harp. Atwater turns...

TUESDAY MID-DAY

MUDMAN

Standing there with his rifle...levels it...fires as Atwater dives for the ground.

ATWATER

The bullet slams into the log near his head, he rolls, another shot tears into the wood...

He can see Blackbeard's rifle, and the knife sticking out of his middle...Both out of reach...He rolls again as another shot tears home...Jumps up, makes a break for the trees... another shot...

EXT. FOREST

Atwater running through the swamp...running, running, running.

MUDMAN

Following the trail of army combat boots. He moves silently, relentlessly...

ATWATER

Still running but very fatigued...SLOWING...SLOWING...SLOWING.

Lungs bursting, he bends, doubles over, gasping...Can't move another step. He kneels down, starts to untie the lace on his combat boot...

CUT TO:

MUDMAN

He moves through the terrain, following the visible trail of footsteps leading past

TUESDAY MID-DAY

## A THOUSAND YEAR OLD DEAD CYPRESS

Huge, bleached white, petrified. Just as Mudman walks by...

## FROM THE MASSIVE HOLLOW TRUNK - ATWATER

His timing is perfect. The bootlace garrote has Mudman around the neck.

## THE STRANGULATION

Mudman pitches and spins, a wild Brahma bull, snorting and bucking, but his rider hangs on...Mudman runs backward, crushing Atwater against the great tree. Again. Again. But the garrote doesn't lessen...

## ATWATER HANGING ON

Mudman's elbows are pistons driving into Atwater's sides... Mudman reaches back, grabs a handful of Atwater's hair, tries to pull Atwater's skull off, but the garrote doesn't lessen.

## MUDMAN CRUMPLING

As the breath is choked out of him; his legs can no longer support his weight...He stands quivering...makes one final desperate reach back...

## MUDMAN ON HIS KNEES

Then to his stomach...he flops face first into the mud... Atwater still sitting on his back, squeezing...Finally Atwater's hands let go of the two pieces of wood to which the bootlace is tied...

## ATWATER

Staggeres to his feet. He takes Mudman's rifle and knife...

TUESDAY MID-DAY

## THE CAJUN BOY

comes out of the swamp, in front of Atwater.

Atwater backs away, he doesn't want any more...The Boy kneels next to Mudman...quietly sits there.

## ATWATER

looking at the Boy and the dead Mudman...he turns and runs, still carrying Mudman's rifle.

## A BAYOU

dark water and moss covered lily pads. Atwater wades through, coming out in open marsh...up ahead he can see:

## A HILLY SLOPE OF GRASS - THE LEVEE

He runs for it, sprinting, just as a Helicopter comes zooming across the tree tops...Atwater climbs the slope on the run...

## ON TOP OF THE LEVEE

Running along its stone bed road, Atwater waves and chases the Chopper. Though it's gone from sight he still runs...

FAINT MUSIC IS HEARD...voices singing, in Cajun French.

Atwater looks around, listens, starts walking away from the levee, toward the direction of the singing...the music gets louder with each step.

He stands poised, rifle ready...

## A WOODEN BUILDING AHEAD

Pick-up trucks and campers parked in front. Some of the vehicles attached to trailers and outboard motor-boats...



TUESDAY MID-DAY

ATWATER

Walking toward the bar. The music is very loud. Unmistakingly Cajun French.

OUTSIDE THE BAR

He stops and gathers himself, wiping away the dirt and sweat and blood...Lifts the rifle, bursts through the door ready to fire...

INT. BAR

Atwater's momentum carries him into the center of the room... A sign on the wall, "World's Greatest Jambalaya, World's Friendliest People". In one corner a group of Cajuns singing along to the Juke Box. The rest of the bar filled with...

NATIONAL GUARDSMEN

in their clean fatigues. They play pool, cards, pinball, darts...Some dance with Cajun Women. One of the Guardsmen looks up as Atwater enters.

GUARDSMAN

Atwater. Hey! It's Atwater!

The rest of the Guardsmen look up from their tables.

ANOTHER GUARDSMAN

Jesus, Atwater, what the hell kind of show you been putting on?

ANOTHER GUARDSMAN

We been lookin' all over for you guys.

ATWATER

looks over at him. The Guardsman is at a table with Atwater's four smiling Cajun girls...Their smiles more than a touch confused by his disheveled appearance.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TUESDAY MID-DAY

ANOTHER GUARDSMAN

Come on, Atwater. Have a beer.

Atwater just keeps standing there and looking at them.

FADE OUT: