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Semper Fi

(Two-hour Pilot)

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SEMPER EI

TEASER

OPEN ON:

INT. BUS - MOVING - NIGHT

All the passengers on the bus are TEENAGE BOYS. At first sight, it seems that every one of them sits in a seat alone.

CLOSE ON - WADE MADDOX, 19, African-American. He stares out the window, stone-faced.

PAN TO - CLIFF TRUCKEE, white male, 19, skimming through an issue of ATLANTIC MONTHLY magazine, a slight wry smile on his face. He looks up and out the window. His smile fades somewhat, but he seems to resist letting it go entirely away. He's nervous.

PAN TO - LUPE CEPEDA, 18, AND GUILLERMO GARZA, 20, both Latino. They are the only two sitting together in a seat. Cepeda turns and looks dubiously at Garza.

GARZA

Don't give me one of those looks, Lupe.
(clearly facetious:)
We're gonna have fun.

Faint CHUCKLING from several boys near them. PAN TO - ALEX KOSEGIN, 19, white, vaguely ethnic, large-framed. He's the main chuckler. He smiles at Garza, shakes his head, then looks out the window.

BOY'S VOICE

(sarcastic)

Fun.

PAN TO THIS BOY - STEVE RUSSELL, 18, white, jockish, severely-short haircut. More CHUCKLING, in response to Steve. This is NERVOUS LAUGHTER.

VIEW TOWARD FRONT - As the bus approaches --

EXT. GATE

WE CAN'T QUITE SEE what's going on. The BUS DRIVER speaks out a window to someone. Then, he pulls forward. The bus keeps moving.

INT. BUS - MOVING

VIEW OUT SIDE WINDOWS - GRASSY SWAMP, blanketed with FOG, illuminated by HAZY MOONLIGHT.

ON MADDOX - As he checks his digital wristwatch: 3:07 A.M.

EXT. ROAD

WE SEE the REAR LIGHTS OF THE BUS moving AWAY FROM US -- and WE PULL BACK RAPIDLY to the GATE we just passed:

A SIGN: PARRIS ISLAND MARINE CORPS RECRUIT TRAINING DEPOT.

HARSH MALE VOICE (V.O.)
GET OFF MY BUS! NOW!

Over this we SMASH CUT TO:

INT. BUS - STOPPED - LATER

The voice belongs to an AFRICAN-AMERICAN MARINE in UNIFORM (the RECEIVING SERGEANT), who SCREAMS at the boys:

REC. SGT.
MOVE IT! TODAY! THIS YEAR! OFF! GO,
GO, GO! MOVE IT!

The throng of boys pushes off the bus.

EXT. STREET

Right behind the bus, painted on the street are rows of YELLOW FOOTPRINTS. The Rec. Sgt. is already out of the bus, pointing.

REC. SGT.
GET ONTO THOSE FOOTPRINTS! NOW!

Everyone gets onto a set of footprints.

REC. SGT.
FROM THIS POINT ON, THE LAST WORD OUT
OF YOUR MOUTH IS "SIR!" DO YOU
UNDERSTAND?!

The voices answer "Yes, Sir," with varying degrees of volume.

REC. SGT.
WHEN YOU GET AN ORDER, YOU SAY "AYE.
AYE, SIR!"

RECRUITS
AYE, AYE, SIR!

INT. RECEIVING STATION - PHONE BANK

Recruits are lined up behind a row of ten phones -- each one with a Recruit talking and several behind him, waiting.

REC. SGT.
MAKE IT SHORT! IT'S "HI, MOM, I'M HERE
AND I'M OKAY!" GET IT DONE!

MOVE PAST VARIOUS RECRUITS on the phone:

TRUCKEE
Hi, Dad.

TRUCKEE'S FATHER'S VOICE
(from phone)
Cliff?!! Where are you?!!

TRUCKEE
Put it this way -- you don't have any
suck with the alumni association.

MADDOX
(quiet; reluctant; honest)
... I ... love you, too, Mom.

CEPEDA
Stop yelling at me. It was Guillermo's
idea. And you make him think he's my
big brother. Look, just tell Mom and
Dad I'm okay.

REC. SGT.
OFF THE PHONE! NEXT GROUP! GO!

QUICK SHOTS --

HANDS getting a NUMBER: "3015" written on them with a FELT TIP
MARKER.

REC. SGT. (O.S.)
THIS IS YOUR PLATOON NUMBER! REMEMBER IT!

INT. BARBER'S ROOM - LATER

The Barber gives Truckee a buzz cut. Some wait their turn; some
have already had the cut.

REC. SGT.
THE BAD HAIR DAY OF YOUR LIFE!

INT. MALE RECEIVING BARRACKS - LATER

The Rec. Sgt. has some STAFFERS helping bag up PERSONAL ITEMS as Recruit dig out their pockets and lay items down on a long table.

REC. SGT.
GET YOUR STUPID TRASH OUT OF YOUR
POCKETS! NOW! EVERYTHING GOES!

QUICK SHOTS: Rings, watches, wristbands, sunglasses, Walkmans, gum, candy, cigarettes, Star Trek pez dispenser, baseball cards. And prophylactics. PAN UP TO the guy who threw these down:

Truckee, who smiles at the Rec. Sgt.

TRUCKEE
They were too small, anyway.

REC. SGT.
SHUT YOUR HOLE! GET OVER THERE!

CUT TO:

EXT. RECEIVING STATION - STREET - SAME

A FEMALE RECEIVING SERGEANT, white, SCREAMS at a group of TEENAGE GIRLS who are getting off a bus.

FEMALE REC. SGT.
GET ON THE FOOTPRINTS! NOW!

Among them is SHARON EXLER, 19, white. Some of these Girls look tough as steel; others look like girl scouts. Exler falls in between these extremes.

CLOSE ON FOOTPRINTS -- Some of the FEET are MUCH SMALLER than the yellow footprints. CUT TO:

INT. MALE RECEIVING BARRACKS - DAWN

The Male Recruits (now wearing Recruit gear), have not slept, and show tiredness. They stand in a line.

REC. SGT.
"Floor" is "deck." "Wall" is
"bulkhead." "Door" is "hatch." Can
any of you guess what "Porthole" is?
No, it's not a woman who waits by the
waterfront. It is a window. Do you
understand the terminology?

MALE RECRUITS
AYE, AYE, SIR!

EXT. CLINIC - DAWN

Some of the males emerge wearing RECRUIT-ISSUE SPECTACLES, including Garza. They are THICK-RIMMED and HIDEOUS.

GARZA

Why can't I keep using my contact lenses?

REC. SGT.

SHUT UP! YOU DO NOT SAY "I!" YOU SAY "THIS RECRUIT!" ALL RECRUITS WHO NEED VISION CORRECTION WILL WEAR THE STANDARD ISSUE BCG's. -- BIRTH CONTROL GLASSES. WHILE YOU WEAR THESE, YOU CAN BE SECURE IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT YOU ARE THE UGLIEST PEOPLE ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH! MOVE OUT! GO!

INT. MALE RECEIVING BARRACKS - DAY

M-16 RIFLES are issued to the Male Recruits. Their last names are already on the BUTTS, printed on paper that's taped. We see the recruits get their rifles, look them over, see their names:

"MADDOX." "TRUCKEE." "CEPEDA." "GARZA." "RUSSELL."
"KOSEGIN." CUT TO:

CLOSE ON - RIFLE BUTT

With the name "EXLER." PULL BACK ON - EXLER - she's holding the rifle as if it fell from a UFO. CUT TO:

INT. SQUADBAY OF PLATOON 3015 (MALE) - LATER

On each side, a ROW of RACKS (BUNKBEDS) and FOOTLOCKERS. Half the Recruits stand on one side, marked "PORT" on a support pillar. Half the recruits stand on the "STARBOARD" side. Their toes are on a painted line across the floor.

CLOSE ON THREE BELTS - ONE GREEN, ONE BLACK IN THE MIDDLE, ANOTHER GREEN. PAN UP TO:

The three DRILL INSTRUCTORS. The black belt -- the senior drill instructor, STAFF SERGEANT LYLE BRINKOPF, looks like the Marine Corps carved him out of a classic mold -- which, actually, they did. Though bulky, he's in top shape (as all DI's are). His eyes seem to take in everything, whether it's visible or not. He's THIRTY, the top range of age for a DI.

On one side of Brinkopf is SGT. MARTIN, twenty-five, an African-American with a stare tailor-made to cut through the back of your skull. On the other side of Brinkopf is SGT. FANTE, white, twenty seven; a man with an enigmatically placid face.

A LIEUTENANT administers an OATH to the Drill Instructors, each of whom raises a hand in pledge.

BRINKOPF, MARTIN, FANTE

These recruits are entrusted to my care. I will train them to the best of my ability. I will develop them into smartly disciplined, physically fit, basically trained Marines --

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. SQUADBAY OF PLATOON 4022 (FEMALE) - SAME

In which the Female Recruits watch their DRILL INSTRUCTORS take the same oath.

Their senior drill instructor is STAFF SERGEANT JOCELYN HOVIS, African-American, twenty-nine, with a face that's somehow both comforting and stern. The juniors are: SERGEANT TILLMAN, white, twenty-three, a short, mean-eyed woman; and SERGEANT SANCHEZ, Latina, twenty-five, stoic.

HOVIS, TILLMAN, SANCHEZ

-- thoroughly indoctrinated in love of Corps and Country. I will demand of them and demonstrate by my own example, the highest standards of personal conduct, morality and professional skill.

INT. MALE SQUADBAY - MOMENTS LATER

The Lieutenant is gone. Brinkopf, Martin and Fante remain in position at the top of the bay.

BRINKOPF

My name is Staff Sergeant Brinkopf. I'm your senior drill instructor. I wear the black belt. I am assisted in my duties by Sergeant Martin and Sergeant Fante. They wear the green belts.

INT. FEMALE SQUADBAY - MOMENTS LATER

Hovis, Tillman and Sanchez at the top of the bay.

HOVIS

My name is Staff Sergeant Hovis. I'm your senior drill instructor. I am assisted in my duties by your junior drill instructors, Sergeant Tillman and Sergeant Sanchez.

CROSSFADE TO:

EXT. "THE GRINDER" - LATER

A large paved lot. Brinkopf watches as Martin and Fante march the platoon. Fante calls the cadence. CROSSFADE TO:

EXT. THE GRINDER - SUNSET

As Martin and Fante stand by, Brinkopf slowly walks up and down, past the formation of Recruits.

BRINKOPF

You came here from chaos. And now, standing here, you're thinking to yourselves -- there doesn't seem to be a country -- the United States -- out there. Only a confused, formless slag. Some of you may have been high achievers, some of you may have been mediocre, some may have some rough edges. Regardless of how well you were doing, or where you came from, you were being inculcated by a society that told you what was "hip" and "cool." You watched television and listened to music. You sucked in popular culture. Even without your being aware of it, your brain and your body started to become slimy, limpid puss. Two things all of you now have in common: one, you saw you needed to change your lives; two, you met the entry requirements to be here. So, now you're going to experience un-popular culture. It's called "Honor, Commitment and Courage." Cynicism is a standard illness in the world from which you came. And I can imagine that you might think those three words sound kinda hokey, perhaps as foreign to you as if they came from outer space.

(MORE)

BRINKOPF (CONT'D)

But they didn't. You came from outer space. "Honor, Commitment and Courage." As you go through training here, these words will become spiritual to you. You will weep at the sound of them. All of the putrid, stinking individual self-interest and petty "me-ism" which has been injected into you by society will be gone. The world from which you came wouldn't expect you to tear yourselves away from a six pack and a sofa to reach across a coffee table to help another human being. Here, you will learn to depend on each other for your next breath of life. You will do so without hesitation or reservation -- and you will earn that kind of trust from everyone else. We are a team here. You are forbidden to whine and spit out those infantile words "I" or "me" when speaking to a Marine.

Brinkopf makes his way back to the two junior DI's.

BRINKOPF

Some of you may break, may cry, may beg to get out. But I care about you too much to let you out of here. If you fail, then, for your own good, I'll have to give you a fate worse than death -- you'll be "recycled." That means you will be dropped from this platoon and you'll start training over again with a new platoon. Imagine what it feels like to go back and start with a bunch of guys fresh off the bus who look at you and think that you're a loser. There are recruits on this island right now who've been here nine months. Trust me, you don't want to get recycled. So, understand this: you will not get off my island until I say so. Keep your eyes on the goal -- which is to be a part of this brotherhood, this beloved Corps.

(MORE)

BRINKOPF (CONT'D)

In doing so, you will have a country again. The United States does exist. It is a concept and you'll finally be able to grasp it. It will be yours. You will come home to a home you've never known before. Welcome to Parris Island.

FADE OUT.

MAIN TITLES: "SEMPER FI"

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. "THE GRINDER" - NIGHT

Martin and Fante drill the platoon. Fante calls the cadence. The Recruits are visibly TIRED, having been at this all day.

FANTE
LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT RIGHT ...

Martin zips around the Recruits like a hornet, correcting them.

MARTIN
WE'RE STAYING OUT HERE UNTIL IT'S
BETTER! IF IT DOESN'T GET DONE, WE'LL
BE OUT HERE ALL NIGHT!
(each to a different Recruit:)
NOT SO CLOSE TOGETHER! STAY IN TIME!
GET THOSE SHOULDERS BACK! KEEP THAT
RIFLE RIGHT THERE! DON'T EYEBALL ME!

Martin zeroes in on Cepeda.

MARTIN
YOU'RE MARCHING LIKE A BLIVET FULL OF SNOT!
I COULD WALK BETTER THAN THAT WITH YOUR
ELBOWS! GET YOUR BACK STRAIGHT! GET THOSE
KNEES RIGHT! LEFT! RIGHT! CAN'T YOU HEAR
DRILL INSTRUCTOR SGT. FANTE?!

Cepeda gets redder and redder, embarrassment on top of exhaustion. MOVE TO GARZA -- who's doing his best, but blanches at Cepeda's suffering. CUT TO:

EXT. 4TH BATTALLION (FEMALE) GRINDER - SAME

The Female Recruits are marching; they also are tired and showing it. Sanchez calls the cadence. Tillman is pure screaming hell.

TILLMAN
THIS IS THE MOST DESPICABLE BUNCH OF
HUMAN MAKE-UP KITS I'VE EVER SEEN
SASHAY AROUND MY ISLAND! I OUGHTA TAKE
YOUR PANTIES, WRAP THEM AROUND YOUR
THROATS AND HANG YOU FROM YOUR SHOE
TREES! YOU WILL BE OUT HERE MARCHING
UNTIL YOU DIE AND GET REBORN, AND THEN
I'LL WEAR OUT THE NEW BODY!

INT. MALE SQUADBAY - NIGHT

Martin and Fante move through the ranks, referring to clipboards, BARKING for Recruits to go their assigned racks (beds).

BRINKOPF

(to all)

You now have a rackmate. You and your rackmate will depend on each other for many things -- including inspections. Cepeda! Garza!

Cepeda and Garza approach Brinkopf.

BRINKOPF

Since you two are here on the buddy system, you rack together.

CEPEDA AND GARZA

Aye, aye, Sir!

MOVE TO - MADDOX AND TRUCKEE who find themselves rackmates.

TRUCKEE

I'm Truckee.

MADDOX

Maddox.

As they shake hands:

MARTIN

DID I SAY YOU COULD TALK?!

TRUCKEE

(whispering to Maddox)

Glad we had this little chat.

MARTIN

(to Truckee)

DROP, PRIVATE! THIRTY REPS! BEGIN

TRUCKEE

Thirty of any particular -- ?

MARTIN

PUSH-UPS, PRIVATE! MAKE IT FIFTY!

MOVE TO - RUSSELL AND KOSEGIN -- rackmates. KOSEGIN, 18, tall, built, vaguely ethnic, smiles at Russell, secretly offers a hand to shake. Russell, rigid with his correctness, ignores Kosegin. Kosegin does a comic take of pretending he was reaching up to put his hand through his hair.

INT. FEMALE SQUAD BAY - SAME

Tillman shows a Recruit, RITA VELEZ, to her rack -- with Exler.

TILLMAN

Exler!

EXLER

Aye, Ma'am.

TILLMAN

Your rackmate is Recruit Velez.

EXLER

(to Velez)

Hi, I didn't see you with the rest of us when we --

TILLMAN

DID I SAY YOU COULD OPEN YOUR LIP-GLOSSSED SEWER?! VELEZ IS A RECYCLE! AND DO NOT EVER SAY "I!" YOU SAY "THIS RECRUIT!"

Velez, a buxom girl with an attractive but tough face, glares at Exler. Tillman moves away.

EXT. MALE CHOW HALL - NIGHT

Our Male Platoon eats together. Everyone is BREATHING HEAVILY while eating and drinking, causing food bits to drop and liquids to spray. No one talks ... for a beat.

MOVE IN ON TRUCKEE AND MADDOX

As they manage to return to normal breathing. Truckee indicates Martin and Fante, who amble around, eyeing everyone.

TRUCKEE

These stiffs really take it seriously.

MADDOX

Yeah? I think that's the idea. How do you take it?

TRUCKEE

I'll play along.

MADDOX

"Play along?" Right. When they say "jump," you'll be "Pogo" -- just like the rest of us.

TRUCKEE

Sure. Why not? I'm ...

(uses fingers for quotation marks)

"obeying" their "orders" because I've decided I'll "be" a "Marine" -- for now. While I'm doing it, I'll do it all the way. Every time I "obey" an "order," I'm agreeing to obey.

MADDOX:

That's just beautiful. I bet I can guess why you joined up.

TRUCKEE

Tell me.

MADDOX

Somebody clowned you bad. Tweaked the big nerve.

TRUCKEE

What's the big nerve?

MADDOX

The manhood nerve. And you were in a snit when you signed up. "I'll show them."

Truckee gets uncomfortable with this scrutiny; it must be accurate.

TRUCKEE

It wasn't like that.

MADDOX

-- But it was very close to being that.

TRUCKEE

Why did you sign up?

MADDOX

I thought about it a long time. It's a serious life choice. And I chose it.

TRUCKEE

Damn. They're going to put you on a poster.

MADDOX

No. If I were on a poster, guys would get too scared they couldn't match up to me.

Truckee chuckles at Maddox's comment. Russell, down the table, having HEARD this, glares at Maddox. Maddox, seeing Russell, not liking the look, glares back.

RUSSELL

(to the Recruit near him)
When my father and uncles came through here, it was a lot tougher to get in. Now, they let in all ... types.

More glaring between Russell and Maddox. Martin walks down beside these tables, scowling at all the conversations.

MARTIN

WHAT DOES A PUSS BAG RECRUIT HAVE TO TALK ABOUT? CRAM THAT CHOW DOWN YOUR HOLES NOW! GET IT DONE!

INT. MALE SQUADBAY - NIGHT

Utterly exhausted, the Recruits enter with Martin and Fante.

MARTIN

GET ON THE LINE! ON! THE! LINE!

The Recruits go to their racks, stand in front of them, toes on the line. Brinkopf steps out of the office.

MARTIN

TENNNN-HUHHHT!!

The Recruits stand briskly at attention. Brinkopf walks up and down, past them.

BRINKOPF

This was an easy day. Don't get the idea that we'll continue to be this soft on you.

Martin and Fante pass out little WHITE BOOKS.

BRINKOPF

This book is called "Knowledge." It's called that because you will know it. Every spare minute you have, you will study it and memorize it. You may write in it if you like. You may draw pictures if you can't write. But do not fail to know it, know all of it, know it well.

Brinkopf goes back into the DI office. Martin takes over the room.

MARTIN

We end each training day with Basic Daily Routine, or "BDR." You have one hour of unstructured time for personal hygiene to include shower, shave and dental care. When you have completed these mandatory procedures, you may write letters, talk quietly, and study your Knowledge. One drill instructor remains in the barracks at night. If you desire to speak to the duty drill instructor, you will approach the office and bang loudly on the hatch. You will enter the office only when given permission to do so. IS THIS CLEAR?!

RECRUITS

AYE, AYE, SIR!

MARTIN

AT EASE!

The Recruits stay on the line, relaxing slightly. They are too much in shock to believe that they have free time. They hesitate, continuing to stand on the line. Martin and Fante go into the office. A beat. The Recruits continue to stand on the line, slightly moving around, hesitant, afraid.

RUSSELL

(whispering)

I think it's okay to ... you know,
we're on our own time now.

Everyone sits on footlockers. They continue to look around at each other, unsure.

INT. FEMALE DI OFFICE - SAME

Hovis is sitting at her desk. Velez stands at attention.

HOVIS

Velez, sit down.

VELEZ

Aye, aye, Ma'am.

Velez takes a seat.

HOVIS

Let me see your hand.

Velez offers the hand; Hovis inspects a small TATTOO.

HOVIS

You were in the Mujeres Sangres? A bunch of tough Puerto Rican chicks with knives and guns, running around the Bronx.

VELEZ

The drill instructor knows gang signs, Ma'am?

HOVIS

I could write an encyclopedia. Am I scared of you, Velez?

VELEZ

No, Ma'am.

HOVIS

Why am I not scared of you, Velez?

VELEZ

Ma'am ... the word is ...

HOVIS

Go ahead. What's the word?

VELEZ

Ma'am ... the word is ... the drill instructor has seen ... action.

HOVIS

I've been shot at by artillery that's bigger than the cars you stole. I've been gassed, I've walked through fire. Women in the Marines don't get assigned to infantry, but when the rear gets attacked, they see action. What do you think of that, Velez?

VELEZ

(allows a smile)

This recruit think it's pretty cool, Ma'am.

HOVIS

So, you understand why I'm tough?

VELEZ

Yes, Ma'am.

HOVIS

(smile is gone)

No, you don't. I'm tough only because I'm a Marine. That's good enough. I want you to be a Marine, Velez. You've just busted your bazambas in a physical training platoon for three weeks. You've been recycled. You're now going to repeat your first phase of training, and you're doing it in my platoon. And your ratio of body fat to muscle is still a hair over regulation. Talk to me.

VELEZ

Ma'am ... This recruit has never done this dieting garbage before. Counting calories. It's driving this recruit loco. Like some stupid girly-girl. Like this recruit had to fit into some stupid prom dress.

HOVIS

You're in training to be a Marine. Losing weight is a tactical imperative. Do you understand?

VELEZ

Yes, Ma'am.

HOVIS

Here.

Hovis hands her a DEVICE that looks like a WRISTWATCH.

HOVIS

It's a calculator. It goes around your wrist. You use it to add calories.

Velez looks at it as if it were poisonous.

VELEZ

(softly)

This recruit thanks the drill instructor, Ma'am.

INT. MALE SQUADBAY - LATER

The Recruits are all in their "skivvies" -- T-shirts and shorts.

ON TRUCKEE AND MADDOX at their rack. Both of them are reading their "Knowledge."

TRUCKEE

"This is my rifle. There are many like it, but this one is mine." I didn't know we were going to have poetry.

Maddox, reading his own "Knowledge," ignores him. A beat.

TRUCKEE

You want to study together?

MADDOX[†]

Yeah, why not? You could make yourself useful. Ask me something.

TRUCKEE

What's the first general order?

MADDOX

The first general order is to take charge of this post and all government property in view.

MOVE TO - CEPEDA AND GARZA, who are sorting through gear.

GARZA

What is that messed-up look you got frozen on your face?

CEPEDA

Porqué? Everybody else is smiling?

GARZA

Come on, Cepeda, you gotta get into the right attitude.

CEPEDA

What's the right attitude?

GARZA

Mean.

CEPEDA

So, you want me to smile and be mean?

Garza puts on a tight smile and grabs Cepeda's face and squeezes. Cepeda slaps his hand away.

GARZA

That's good. Now you got it.

Cepeda puts on a purposely-stupid fake smile and punches Garza's shoulder.

CEPEDA

Now I got it, hombre?

GARZA

Yeah. Yeah!

MOVE TO - RUSSELL, who's holding court with Kosegin, BOB DEWROCK, a white Southerner, and several other recruits.

RUSSELL

My father's a major, one of my uncles is a captain, another uncle is a lieutenant and my older brother is a gunnery sergeant. The whole Russell family -- we are the type of people who are the backbone of the Marines. We have a tradition. We --

Maddox gives an irritated look over to Russell and makes a LOUD COUGHING NOISE. Russell glares at Maddox, then continues his speech. Truckee looks at both of them.

TRUCKEE

I think your big nerve is being tweaked. The manhood nerve, is it?

Before Maddox can come back with a response, Brinkopf comes out of the office.

BRINKOPF

TENNN-HUT!

Everyone drops what they're doing and gets on the line.

BRINKOPF

Each night, we post a firewatch. There are eight two-man firewatch shifts of one hour each. We'll begin alphabetically. Watch bill will be posted on the bulletin board prior to "Taps." It is your responsibility to check it each night. Recruit Cepeda, you have the last watch from zero-four-hundred to zero-five-hundred. You will come to the office at zero-four-thirty, bang on the hatch, enter, and bang on the lockers. My rack is behind the lockers. Understood?

CEPEDA

Aye, aye, Sir.

BRINKOPF

First fire watch is Private Adams. Take your post.

A RECRUIT grabs a flashlight and goes to his post at the entrance.

BRINKOPF
Prepare to mount!

Everyone stands by the racks.

BRINKOPF
Ready ... MOUNT!

Everyone gets into his rack. Those on top racks hoist themselves up and over. Everyone lies face up, stiff, at attention.

BRINKOPF
AHHHHHHH-D-JUST!

Everyone sinks in their rack. From outside, "TAPS" is played. Brinkopf turns OFF the lights, goes into the office. MOVE IN ON TRUCKEE, closing his eyes. DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COLLEGE DORM ROOM - MORNING (FLASHBACK)

Truckee, in bed asleep, awakens to his PHONE RINGING.

TRUCKEE
Hello? Why're you waking me up at --?
What do you mean, out my window? Why?

Truckee gets up and looks out his window.

HIS POV - ACROSS CAMPUS - As a SIGN is being fastened into place over a DOOR of a BUILDING: "TRUCKEE SOFTWARE LABORATORY."

TRUCKEE
No ... no way. Not possible. Gotta go.

Truckee HANGS UP, then dials a number.

TRUCKEE
This is his son. Yes, emergency.
... Dad? A LAB?! HERE?! Can't you wait
until I graduate before throw your stupid
money at ... ?! AW, FORGET I CALLED!

Truckee HURLS the phone. (END FLASHBACK) DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MALE SQUADBAY - DAWN

Cepeda, in the fire watch seat, sees the clock reach "4:30." He gets up, goes to the office and bangs on the door. He opens the door and goes into

INT. DI OFFICE

Where he stands in front of a row of lockers. He goes to the far edge of the lockers and timidly peeks around. He can just see the FOOT of a BED. He bangs on the lockers. A LOCKER door SLAMS OPEN and Brinkopf, FULLY-DRESSED, stomps out of it, moving for the door. Cepeda, in shock, walks backwards to keep ahead of the charge.

CEPEDA,
(under his breath)
He's not human.

INT. SQUADBAY

Cepeda backs out of the office and turns and walks away from the charging Brinkopf, who emerges, grabs a trash can and HURLS it down the center aisle.

BRINKOPF
GET OUT OF THE RACK AND GET YOUR GEAR
ON! NOW! MOVE IT! WHAT'S TAKING SO
LONG?! MOVE IT! GO! NOW!

Everyone jumps out of his rack, clad only in underwear. People collide with each other. Some step on feet. Hostility flares up. Russell has landed on Kosegin's foot and a fight seems eminent. Elbows stab into ribs; shoulder bump. Truckee and Maddox don't exactly spread sunshine to each other. Brinkopf, meanwhile, keeps kicking the trash can.

The guys tug on their clothes and get on the line, at various speeds and with various levels of neatness -- mostly not good.

At this moment, Martin and Fante enter the squadbay -- they're arriving for the day. They glare in revulsion at what they see. Brinkopf calmly walks the bay.

BRINKOPF
I'm sorry. Did you feel a little
rushed? Would you like to hit the
"snooze" button? How about some room
service?

Martin and Fante take over.

MARTIN
GET YOUR WORTHLESS ASSES UNDRESSED AND
BACK IN THOSE RACKS! NOW!

FANTE
WE'RE GONNA DO IT AGAIN! WE'RE GONNA
DO IT UNTIL YOU GET IT RIGHT! MOVE IT!

MARTIN

WHEN YOU GET OUT OF THAT RACK, YOU WILL
GET YOUR GEAR ON AND GET ON THE LINE --
IN TWO MINUTES! YOU GOT THAT?! I SAID
-- YOU GOT THAT?

RECRUITS

AYE, AYE, SIR!

INT. FEMALE CHOW HALL - MORNING¹

A line of Female Recruits goes through the chow line. Exler is next to Velez. Velez sullenly looks at various food items. She carefully makes selections, then uses the wrist calculator, and a reference book, to enter calories, keeping count. Exler points to the wrist calculator.

EXLER

Hey. I used to use one of those. They really help. You on a diet?

Velez turns and gives her a withering glare.

VELEZ.

Yeah -- I eat whitebread for breakfast.

Exler pulls out of line and moves away. Velez continues grumpily making food selections and doing calculations.

EXT. OUTDOOR SPARING FIELD - PUGIL STICKS - LATER

The Male Recruits are in two lines aiming toward a large MAT. The PUGIL INSTRUCTOR, like all Instructors, is a DI who's not assigned to a platoon. He's wiry and short; wears a whistle. Martin and Fante watch.

Currently, Truckee and Dewrock are fighting with the PUGIL STICKS. They are long poles with thick PADS at each end. The object is to use it like either a bayonet or the butt of a rifle. Each contestant wears a PROTECTIVE HELMET AND STOMACH PAD. The whistle blows and the Pugil Instructor corrects each of them. Then, the whistle again. Truckee is in pretty fair shape and fights with some spirit; Dewrock fights like an animal. The Instructor blows the whistle. He points to Dewrock.

INSTRUCTOR

The winner. NEXT!

WE FOLLOW TRUCKEE, panting and flushed, as he heads back to the back of the line. As he passes Maddox:

MADDOX
 (sharp whisper)
 Let's see you slap some quotation marks
 around that.

EXT. GRINDER - LATER

The Male Platoon drills in marching. Cepeda looks terrible, beaten and worn from the fighting.

MARTIN
 (a condescending, non-regulation order:)
 HIPPIITY-HOP MOB STOP!

The platoon stops marching. Martin's eye holds on Cepeda. Cepeda flushes red, hating it.

MARTIN
 Since some of you are marching like
 blivets full of snot ...
 (to Cepeda)
 DON'T PUT YOUR BEADY-ASS EYEBALLS ON ME!
 (continuing, to all)
 PORT ARMS!

The Recruits obey, holding their rifles in this position.

MARTIN
 And you will march like this until I
 get bored with it. Which is NEVER!
FORWARD ... HUUUUUUUCH!

The Recruits march holding their at port arms. It's clear that it's quickly becoming strain on the arms. Martin counts, enjoying it. Several Recruits near Cepeda glance at him.

CLOSE ON CEPEDA - As sweat drips down his straining face.
DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CAR WASH TUNNEL - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Cepeda, in carwash employee uniform, stands MOTIONLESS, in a daze, getting DRENCHED from the water spraying on cars which are pulled through the tunnel. He stares into a vague distance.

Garza, whose uniform has "MGR" on it, darts into the tunnel.

GARZA
 LUPE?! WHAT ARE YOU DOING? THEY'RE
 GETTING AWAY FROM YOU!

Garza goes to Cepeda, tries to pull him out of the path of the water. Cepeda pulls back, causing Garza to get soaked. Garza then manages to get Cepeda away from the water and against the wall. He signals to another WORKER on break to take over. Then, he squares off with Cepeda.

GARZA

Que pasa, hombre? You gone loco?

CEPEDA

I can't do it anymore.

GARZA

"No puedo, no puedo!"

Garza rubs Cepeda's head in a mocking paternal manner. Cepeda slaps his hand away -- it's playful; but then Cepeda tries to enforce his seriousness.

CEPEDA

It's all circles. The cars come in, they go out. Just like my Papa -- driving his truck around and around in circles. Circles -- me hace infirmo.

GARZA

It's a job. You do it, you get paid. We all have to do it.

CEPEDA

You don't get paid to do it -- you pay. You tear off strips of yourself and you pay them out every day.

GARZA

Stop thinking about it so much! Just go take a break -- ten minutes.

CEPEDA

You think about it, hombre. Isn't that why you kill off a six-pack every day after work?

GARZA

Hey, amigo, you don't worry about what I do. I got you this job. Your family wanted me to hire you.

CEPEDA

Thanks for doing mi familia the favor.

Cepeda starts walking toward the end of the tunnel. Garza catches up to him, grabs his arm and pulls him the opposite way.

GARZA

Wait a minute, Lupe. You know I hired you because ... you're so good at wiping down cars.

They both laugh. Then, Garza lightly squeezes Cepeda's jaw, then lightly slaps him -- a friendly gesture. Cepeda tries to start out again, but Garza pulls him the opposite way.

GARZA :

I'm not letting you quit. For your own good. You quit, and where would you be?

CEPEDA

If you stay, where will you be? Five, ten, twenty years from now? What will you be? A used wash rag?

Garza stops their motion and stares intently at Cepeda, absorbing this, while keeping his grip on Cepeda's arm.

GARZA

If we didn't work here, what would we do?

CEPEDA

I don't know.

GARZA

No sabes? Nice plan, hombre.

A tense beat for Garza as he looks all around him -- the cars, the water, the other workers, the noise. Suddenly, steeling with determination, he DRAGS Cepeda out of the tunnel. They both get MORE DRENCHED.

EXT. CAR WASH

Garza drags Cepeda down the sidewalk.

CEPEDA

Where are we going?

GARZA

We pass this place every day. Time to go inside.

Garza leads him a few doors down to -- a MARINE RECRUITING OFFICE. Dripping all the way, they go inside. (END FLASHBACK)
DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GRINDER - (RESUMING)

PULLING BACK from CEPEDA to the whole group, holding out their rifles, marching, straining. Cepeda glances over at Garza.

INT. MALE SQUADBAY - NIGHT

BDR. Cepeda and Garza are silent, each reading his copy of "Knowledge." Cepeda looks up to see a Recruit, rubbing his sore arms, giving Cepeda a harsh stare. Cepeda returns his gaze to his book.

MOVE TO - RUSSELL AND DEWROCK, walking down the aisle.

RUSSELL
... and my father was caught in the
crossfire. He had to --

Russell passes. His leg knocks Maddox's rifle out of his hands.

RUSSELL
Oh. Sorry. I guess you didn't have a
tight Marine Corps grip on that rifle.

Maddox stands up, faces Russell.

MADDOX
I hear you're really good at using a
Marine Corps grip on yourself.

Now the whole room is listening. The two speak SOTTO VOCE, so as not to attract the DI's attention. Occasionally, they glance up at the office.

RUSSELL
You use the word Marine like you have a
right to. Like you'll ever have a
right to. You don't know from Marines.

MADDOX
Anyone in your illustrious family ever
won the Silver Star?

RUSSELL
You wouldn't know a Silver Star if --

MADDOX
-- I held it in my hands? I did.

RUSSELL
In a pawn shop?

MADDOX
My father was awarded it.

A pause. Russell flushes with embarrassment and ire -- making it obvious he has no such thing to brag about in his own family.

RUSSELL

That's not only a lie, you're stupid if you think anyone would believe it. What did he win it for?

MADDOX

Heroism. In Vietnam.

RUSSELL

Can you tell us the story? Huh? What's the whole story? Go on, tell us what happened. You know, don't you? It's your own father. Right? He told you the whole story, didn't he? So, tell us.

Maddox holds stone-still, glaring at Russell with silent passive-aggression. Truckee gets up and moves to them.

TRUCKEE

I'd like to interject here that Sgt. Martin is the type who will make this whole platoon run all night if you two --

RUSSELL

(ignoring Truckee)

Well? Prove that you're not lying.

MADDOX

I don't have to prove anything to you, except what a mistake it is to be in my face.

A macho beat of tension. Then, Russell and Dewrock move away. Maddox sits back down on the footlocker and picks up his rifle. Truckee returns to his rack area, sits on the floor near Maddox.

TRUCKEE

Like you were going to tell him the story.

MADDOX

I didn't need you to step in.

TRUCKEE

I wasn't stepping in for you, I was --

MADDOX

I didn't need anybody to step in.

Maddox goes back to studying his rifle. Truckee stares at him a beat, then starts reading his knowledge book. On them, WE

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

SOMEONE'S POV - ON BRINKOPF - FUZZY VISION

DOWN the BAY, past other Male Recruits, all standing at attention on the line. The VOLUME is WEAK:

BRINKOPF
... are experiencing the effects of
sleep depri-

The FRAME is JOSTLED VIOLENTLY. Volume gets LOUDER:

BRINKOPF
-vation.

ANGLE ON MADDOX

Being jostled awake by Martin. WIDEN ON:

INT. SQUADBAY - DAY

As Martin moves to Dewrock, whose eyelids are closing and whose balance is tipping. Martin jostles him.

BRINKOPF
Beware the "Z" monster. Do not fall
asleep during classes, or you will be
handed a plate of hell.

CLOSE ON TRUCKEE, whose eyelids drop slowly until closed. MOVE IN ON HIS EYES as they SNAP OPEN -- PULL BACK:

ON TRUCKEE, getting sand in his mouth. Having to SLAP his neck for SAND FLEAS. Martin's face MOVES INTO FRAME, close to Truckee's ear.

MARTIN
DO NOT TAKE YOUR HAND OFF YOUR RIFLE!
DO NOT SLAP AT THOSE SAND FLEAS! STAY
DOWN! MOVE! MOVE!

WIDEN ON:

EXT. SAND FIELD - DAY

The Male Recruits crawl through the sand in full combat gear, with rifles. They must keep close to the ground -- practically flat -- not raising higher than a foot -- and there are WIRES across the sand marking that height -- that they must crawl under. It's HOT and HUMID.

ON TRUCKEE as he gets more sand in his mouth, coughs it out. He gets sand in his eyes. WE GOT TO HIS POV -- with SAND on the FRAME; sound of SPITTING and COUGHING; GRUNTING with exertion. MOVE UNDER A WIRE. BACK TO ANGLE ON TRUCKEE as he struggles to get past the wire.

MARTIN

TURN OVER! TURN OVER! NOW YOU GO ON
YOUR BACK! I SAID ON YOUR BACK!

Truckee, still only halfway past the wire, turns on his back and crawls -- or tries to. He's just kicking sand.

MARTIN

Keep moving.

CLOSE ON TRUCKEE'S NECK -- SAND FLEAS biting. WIDEN ON TRUCKEE as he flails, kicking up sand.

MARTIN

MOVE, TRUCKEE! I SAID MOVE!

Truckee HEAVES upward a little as he tries to push himself forward.

MARTIN

STAY DOWN! YOU'D BE DEAD RIGHT NOW!
SHOT! YOU HEAR ME?! STAY DOWN!

WIDEN ON AREA -- Fante is screaming at someone else. Two COURSE INSTRUCTORS are screaming at others. The Male Recruits struggle along the sand. We see some of them SLAP at sand fleas, then get screamed at.

Cepeda can barely move, and when he does, he starts going SIDEWAYS and gets yelled at.

END OF THE COURSE -- Kosegin, Russell and Maddox are all in a row, having started across the sand at the same time. Maddox finishes first. Russell is right behind him in second place -- and ruefully disappointed. Maddox licks his finger and makes a "mark" in the air, gloating.

INT. MEN'S HEAD - DAY

The Male Recruits quickly move inside. They all SCRATCH their necks, faces, hands. MOVE IN CLOSE on FACES AND NECKS -- and see the FLEA BITES.

MARTIN

THIS IS A FAST HEAD CALL! WE ARE LATE
FOR CLASS! EVERY STALL IS TWO MEN TO A
STALL! DO IT!

The Recruits run inside the stalls, two to a stall.

INT. STALL

Cepeda and Truckee bang into each other, fatigued and sleepy. They give each other a weird look as they both stand over the toilet and unbutton their trousers.

TRUCKEE

I wonder if they make the women do this.

EXT. SQUADBAY - LATER

The Male Platoon rapidly moves down the steps from the squadbay to the sidewalk. Cepeda reaches down while he moves, trying to fix something on his boot. His rifle falls off his shoulder and CLATTERS down the steps to the bottom. He quickly moves to it and grabs it. Brinkopf, who is at the bottom, observing, is immediately on Cepeda's case.

BRINKOPF

PRIVATE! WHAT HAPPENED?!

CEPEDA

Sir, I leaned over to --

BRINKOPF

(correcting)

This recruit!

CEPEDA

Sir, this recruit leaned over to fix
his boot and his gun --

BRINKOPF

Rifle! That's a "rifle," never a "gun."

CEPEDA

Sir, I leaned over to --

BRINKOPF

This recruit!

CEPEDA

Sir, this recruit over to fix his boot
and his rifle fell to the sidewalk --

BRINKOPF

The deck!

CEPEDA

-- To the deck and I -- uh, I mean,
this recruit --

BRINKOPF

Start that festering canker of a
sentence over again!

CEPEDA

Sir, this recruit leaned over to fix
his boot and his rifle was on the deck,
I mean, I dropped ... uh ... I mean,
this recruit dropped ... it, the
weapon, uh, rifle, fell ... or slipped,
I mean -- uh, this recruit means ...

BRINKOPF

GET IN FORMATION!

SOMEONE'S POV - ON FEMALE INSTRUCTOR - FUZZY VISION

DOWN the BAY, past other Female Recruits, all sitting on the
floor. The VOLUME is WEAK:

FEMALE RECRUIT (O.S.)

"Depress the detent on the base of the
magazine and slide the base-

The FRAME is JOSTLED VIOLENTLY. Volume gets LOUDER:

FEMALE RECRUIT (O.S.)

-plate to the rear."

ANGLE ON EXLER

BEING JOSTLED AWAKE BY TILLMAN. WIDEN ON:

INT. FEMALE SQUADBAY - DAY

As Tillman jostles TWO MORE RECRUITS AWAKE. Each Recruit has a
towel in front of her which has an M-16 diagram, in parts,
printed on it. Their rifles lie on top of the towels. A STOCKY
RECRUIT, on her feet, was reading from a book.

RIFLE CLASS INSTRUCTOR

Good to go. Next paragraph. You. On
your feet.

The Stocky Recruit sits. A WISPY LITTLE RECRUIT stands and reads -- her voice sounds like a twelve-year-old girl:

WISPY RECRUIT

(reading:)

"Once the magazine baseplate is removed, pull the magazine follower spring from the magazine housing using a back and forth rocking motion."

RIFLE CLASS INSTRUCTOR

(pointing to Velez)

Demonstrate, Private.

As the Wispy Recruit sits, Velez, who snaps herself out of a half-sleep, picks up her rifle, stands, smartly does the action that the manual described. She's done it many times before.

RIFLE CLASS INSTRUCTOR

Good. We will continue tomorrow.

The Instructor looks at Tillman.

TILLMAN

GET YOUR RIFLES ON THE RACK, GET INTO YOUR PT GEAR! MOVE IT!

The Females all jump up, grab their rifles and diagram towels and get to their racks. They hang their rifles and put the towels into the footlocker. They change into work-out gear.

ON VELEZ AND EXLER, as Velez's Knowledge book falls to the floor. Exler picks it up out of politeness, sees VOLUMES of HANDWRITING in the margins of pages. Velez snatches it from her.

EXLER

You're keeping a diary? I do that sometimes. It's a good way to get perspective.

VELEZ

I'm keeping score. I'm keeping track of who crosses me. And when I get a chance for revenge, it'll be nice and ugly.

TILLMAN

SHUT UP AND GET OUTSIDE! NOW! TODAY!

WE WIDEN AND FOLLOW the Recruits as they RUN outside and out onto a

EXT. FIELD - CONTINUOUS SHOT

Sanchez, in PT clothes, is in front, leading them as they jog.

MOVE IN ON - EXLER AND VELEZ, running.

EXLER

We have to make this thing work.

VELEZ

'Scuse me?

EXLER

Being rackmates. :

VELEZ

I ain't nobody's mate, puta. You sleep in the rack below me. So, don't make any noise.

EXLER

I just think we need to make agreements and set boundaries.

VELEZ

If you make me look bad in front of these psycho-bitch drill instructors, I'll cut you.

A beat as Velez glowers menacingly at Exler.

EXLER

Okay, well, that's a start.

INT. FEMALE SHOWERS - LATER

The Recruits, naked, file into the showers. Someone bumps Exler and she slips on a wet tile and falls to the floor, hitting her knee. She winces, grabs her knee. She remains on the floor a moment. MOVE IN ON HER FACE. DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. UPPER EAST SIDE - MANHATTAN - STREET - PRE-DAWN (FLASHBACK)

A STRETCH LIMO pulls to a stop by a curb. Exler FLIES out the door. Her clothes are HALF-OFF and TORN. A ripple of MEN LAUGHING from inside the limo right before the door shuts. The limo pulls away.

EXLER

(dry sarcasm)

Right here is fine, guys. Thanks.

Exler gets up. Her knee hurts; she touches it and limps. She staggers with obvious INTOXICATION. She makes her way to the sidewalk and braces herself against the side of a building. She sits. She looks down the street as the limo turns a corner and disappears. Her mood drops like an anvil. She begins to cry.
(END FLASHBACK) CUT TO:

INT. FEMALE SHOWERS - (RESUMING)

ON EXLER, in shameful pain from the memory. She regains her composure and stands.

INT. MALE SQUADBAY - SHOWERS - NIGHT

Crowded with Recruits taking showers.

MOVE TO - CEPEDA AND GARZA

Bathing next to each other.

CEPEDA

Guillermo, this place is bad for the spirit. I think they try to suck out your mind, then your soul. Then, they stick in a piece of a machine.

GARZA

We want pieces of a machine in our heads. That's why we're here, pardner.

CEPEDA

"Pardner?"

They go to grab their towels and dry off.

GARZA

Show them you can be one of "them."
You know?

CEPEDA

"Them?" You mean a Marine?

GARZA

You know what I mean. Be an "American."

CEPEDA

Que dices? Come on, Garza, you better explain that one. We're already Americans. Come on, hombre, diga me --

GARZA

Aw, pipe down, pardner.

CEPEDA

Stop using that word!

GARZA

Now, listen to me, friend. We're not back on the block anymore. There's no room here for your stupid depressions. You -- the one with a whole family on your side. Ever wondered what it's like to have no family? Huh? And I've done okay, no?

CEPEDA

Hey, Guillermo, amigo, you've done better than okay. You --

GARZA

Just get your head straight and run with the rest of us.

A tense beat. Then, Garza picks up his glasses from a nearby shelf and puts them on -- the lenses are steamed. He makes a goofy face.

GARZA

They're sucking out my brain! They're sucking out my brain!

Cepeda smiles. Garza slaps his shoulder.

GARZA

See? You're all right. You're gonna be fine. ... Just don't mess up anymore. ... Pardner.

Cepeda's face goes sour.

INT. FEMALE SQUADBAY - NIGHT

The Female Recruits, in their skivvies, stand at attention. Hovis stands at the top of the bay.

HOVIS

The scuttlebutt is already flying around this platoon about the three recruits who were dropped yesterday. Yes, it's true -- they tested positive for pregnancy. That's right, between the time they signed the contract to when they got here, they took a little trouble detour. Now, this brings up something that puzzles me.

(MORE)

HOVIS (CONT'D)

You slouches take forever getting into your racks at night. But put you alone with a guy and you do the same thing in an instant! When I say "prepare to mount" tonight, I better see that same speed. What I don't want to see is "'tude." Is that clear?

RECRUITS

AYE, AYE, MA'AM.

HOVIS

Remember how you used to be either "in the mood" to do something, or "not in the mood?" Folks, that's gone from your lives now. Have you picked up on that yet? When you get an order to do something, you get it done so fast, you don't even know what a "mood" is. There will be no "moods" and no "'tudes." Is that clear?

RECRUITS

AYE, AYE, MA'AM!

HOVIS

We're going to hit the racks early tonight. PREPARE TO MOUNT!

The Recruits rapidly get to their racks.

INT. MALE SQUADBAY - LATER

BDR. Everyone at his rack, relaxing. Truckee writes a letter. Maddox studies his rifle.

CLOSER ON TRUCKEE, and we notice he's got some BRUISES here and there.

TRUCKEE (V.O.)

It feels good to be physical.

Truckee accidentally drops his pen, clumsy from exhaustion. He strains ACHING muscles to pick it up. He winces from pain all over his body. He resumes writing:

TRUCKEE (V.O.)

I'm holding up pretty well. Good thing I did all that track-and-field stuff in high school.

He hesitates a moment, then continues:

TRUCKEE (V.O.)

I don't want to think about you, but I
can't stop thinking about you.

He writes a closing, then folds the letter and seals it in an envelope. He writes on the envelope:

Private Exler USMC
C Co., 4TH Bn., RTR
MCRD Parris Island, S.C. ;

And, in the bottom right corner, he writes "Inter-Island" and draws a BOX around it.

CROSSFADE TO:

EXLER

Lying in her rack, her RIFLE, hanging on the rack in FOREGROUND, with "EXLER" on the butt. She stares at the ceiling. ON HER, we DISSOLVE TO:

INT. UPSCALE HOUSE - FOYER - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Exler drops luggage, looking disheveled. Her MOTHER yells.

EXLER'S MOTHER

-- Just think that you can come back here and board with us whenever you crash?! Your childhood sweetheart is a loser, too! He just dropped out of Swarthmore and came home!

EXLER

(shocked; breathless)

... Cliff?

CUT TO:

INT. COFFEEHOUSE - NIGHT

Filled with 20-Somethings. POETRY is being spat out into in mic on stage. Truckee and Exler huddle at a back table.

TRUCKEE

They threw you out of the limo? Why didn't you have them arrested? Sue them?

EXLER

They were all assistant district attorneys.

TRUCKEE

And you were having them all?

EXLER

I wasn't having them all, Cliff. I was dating one of them. We went out with his buddies --

TRUCKEE

-- Going to clubs and getting wasted --

EXLER

-- And he turned out to be a psycho. They all were. They stripped me in the back of the limo. I started fighting back and ...

TRUCKEE

Okay, okay. You were smart to leave that scene.

EXLER

Ya think? So, I guess it's not good that I look in the mirror and vomit at the sight of myself.

They both chuckle. Then, it's clear that Exler has simmering painful feelings. Truckee shakes his head.

TRUCKEE

Sharon, you're so much better than ... you.

Another chuckle. Exler touches his hand.

EXLER

It's good to see you.

Truckee pulls his hand back.

TRUCKEE

Now, hold on. I don't know what you're starting here, but I'm not available to be in a relationship that you turn on and off every few years.

EXLER

You always have been before.

They LAUGH -- Truckee doing so against his will.

EXLER

So, what is the deal with you dropping out of college? What are you going to do now?

TRUCKEE

I've already done it. I enlisted with the Marine Corps.

EXLER

You gotta be kidding me. ... You're serious? The Marine Corps? Man, you'll really go to any length to get back at your father, won't you?

TRUCKEE

I'm not getting back at him, I'm getting away from him. And it's not just about him. I want to do something. Can you understand that?

They stare at each other a beat. CUT TO:

INT. FEMALE SQUADBAY - (RESUMING)

ON EXLER'S FACE, as she mulls over her own memory. CUT TO:

INT. RECRUITING OFFICE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Exler sits with a FEMALE RECRUITER. Exler's dry humor is gone -- she's feeling her pain and slightly self-conscious about having shared it. The Recruiter takes it in stride.

EXLER

... And I hate myself and my life. ... And I can't believe I just told you all that.

RECRUITER

This is a big decision. You're right to put everything out on the table. Women sometimes come in here with self-esteem issues. Later, I see them again when they're Marines in active duty, and they're completely different people. They kick ass and take names.

EXLER

Kick ass and take names? ... Let me see the contract.

The Recruiter smiles. CUT TO:

CLOSE SHOT - TRUCKEE AND EXLER

She's showing him a MARINE CORPS CONTRACT. He gapes at her with DROPPED JAW.

TRUCKEE

You did this because of me?

EXLER

No -- because of me. Maybe I need it more than you do.

(END FLASHBACK) DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MALE SQUADBAY (RESUMING)

Truckee, holding his letter, sits on his footlocker and looks out the window, almost as if he expects to find her window.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

BLACK SCREEN

FADE IN:

SOMEONE'S POV - ON BRINKOPF - FUZZY VISION

OVER THE HEADS of Male Recruits, who are all sitting on the floor. Brinkopf is sitting before them in a chair. The VOLUME is WEAK:

BRINKOPF
... see each other as different.
You're not different in --

The FRAME is JOSTLED VIOLENTLY. Volume gets LOUDER:

BRINKOPF
-- here. You're the same.

ANGLE ON GARZA

Being jostled awake by Martin. WIDEN ON SQUADBAY, as Martin moves to another Recruit, whose eyelids are closing. Martin jostles him.

BRINKOPF
Are you not interested in the subject
of race and ethnicity, Garza?

Garza stands.

GARZA
Sir, this recruit is interested.

BRINKOPF
Care to add something?

GARZA
Sir, this recruit believes in equal
opportunity.

BRINKOPF
Is that all?

GARZA
That's all, Sir.

BRINKOPF
Sit down. Who's next?

Kosegin stands. SMASH CUT TO:

CLOSE ON - KOSEGIN AND RUSSELL

RUSSELL
You're really Jewish?

KOSEGIN
What'd you expect? A short little accountant?

RUSSELL
I don't know. Are you good with numbers?

KOSEGIN
I can count to ten after I lay you out with one punch.

Scattered chuckles from around them. PULL BACK TO WIDE ON:

EXT. LAUNDRY AREA - DAY

A long row of TROUGHS with WATER NOZZLES aimed downward. The Male Recruits wash their clothes. Their attitude, in general, is positive toward this task. They grab detergent, throw in into the mix, scrub the clothes ... and gab.

DEWROCK
What kind of name is "Kosegin?"

KOSEGIN
Russian.

TRUCKEE
Jewish, of Russian decent -- in the Marines. Was your recruiter on acid when he signed you?

Laughter. An ASIAN RECRUIT pipes up:

ASIAN RECRUIT
I'm Vietnamese-slash-American.

DEWROCK
What? You can't be.

ASIAN RECRUIT
My parents were refugees.

TRUCKEE
Russell, what's happened to your beloved Corps? -- You must be ready to jump out of your skin. -- Oh, wait, you wouldn't jump out of a nice white skin like that.

RUSSELL

If you feel like getting rid of your nice white skin, Truckee, I'll peel it off for you.

"Oooohhhs" from the group. Dewrock can't get over the Asian.

DEWROCK

Your parents were legal?

‡

ASIAN RECRUIT

Yes.

TRUCKEE

Hell, Dewrock, they're more legal than what happened to get you born.

Laughter.

RUSSELL

So, Kosegin. Seeing as what your background is ... do you lean to the Left?

KOEGIN

Only when I'm using my left foot to stomp on your face.

Laughter. Even Maddox laughs. Russell glances at Maddox.

RUSSELL

Maddox liked that one.

MADDOX

I sure did.

A beat. Some hostility might arise; Truckee diverts:

TRUCKEE

Maddox, you didn't say anything in "race" class.

MADDOX

I've had "race" class every day of my life.

Chuckles.

MADDOX

What about the Latino gallery? Didn't hear much from them.

Everyone looks at Cepeda and Garza.

GARZA

Hey, I said something.

MADDOX

You didn't talk about what it feels like.

GARZA

What what feels like?

MADDOX

To not be white.

GARZA :

I am white.

A weird hush over the group. Cepeda looks with perturbed wonder at Garza.

GARZA

My ancestors are from Spain, right?

TRUCKEE

Yeah, uh ... but isn't there some Native American mixed in with -- ?

GARZA

A lot of white Americans have Native American mixed in. Right?

To cover the moment and make a save, Cepeda makes a big gesture of slapping Garza's shoulder and pointing to him.

CEPEDA

See? Being Latino in the middle of Texas had no effect on him.

A big GALE of laughter -- everyone relaxes. Garza might be going along with Cepeda's fun. -- BUT IS HE? Under those big ugly, funny glasses -- his face is UNREADABLE as he returns to cleaning.

MADDOX

Crack me up, Cepeda.

More chuckling; various Recruits smile at Cepeda. This is a good moment for him. After a beat:

RUSSELL

Did you ever think it'd be fun to wash clothes?

KOSEGIN

Yeah, really. Pass that detergent.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAUNDRY AREA - LATER

The Female Recruits wash their clothes. Their faces are TWISTED IN IRRITATION.

BLONDE RECRUIT

... bunch of crap.

RED-HEAD RECRUIT

... didn't join the damn Marines to do laundry.

EXLER

Don't they have machines?

BLONDE RECRUIT

I'll take these trousers and strangle Tillman.

INT. MALE SQUADBAY - NIGHT

Fante stands behind three stacked footlockers. He has a stack of mail. All the Recruits sit in rows on the floor nearby.

FANTE

Kosegin.

Kosegin gets up and goes to get his mail. He holds out one hand palm up, the other, above it, palm down. Fante sticks the letter between the hands and Kosegin slaps them down on the letter. Then, he returns to his seat.

FANTE

Russell.

Russell gets up and goes to Fante. Fante looks at the back of the envelope.

FANTE

RUSSELL, THIS HAS WRITING ON THE BACK!

He shows the letter to Russell. CLOSE UP - A handwritten phrase: "DRILL INSTRUCTORS ARE LOSERS." WIDEN on an embarrassed Russell.

FANTE

WHO SENT THIS LETTER?!

RUSSELL

This recruit's brother, Sir. He's in the Corps, Sir. He's trying to make things harder for this recruit, Sir.

FANTE
HE SUCCEEDED! HIT THE DECK AND GIVE ME
FIFTY!

Russell starts doing push-ups.

FANTE
Truckee.

Truckee gets up and goes to Fante. Fante does not hand him the letter. Instead, he looks it over.

FANTE
This is from a "Private Exler" on this island. Forth Battalion.

TRUCKEE
(glancing around at the guys)
Yes, Sir. This recruit knows a guy who's in a platoon over there.

FANTE
A guy? Well, that's amazing. Because Forth Battalion is ALL FEMALES, TRUCKEE!

Laughter from the guys. Some whistles and "ooohs." Fante allows it.

FANTE
Have you checked your buddy close enough to know the gender, Truckee?

More laughter.

TRUCKEE
Yes, Sir. It's a girl.

FANTE
Just so you're certain.

Fante hands him the letter; Truckee slaps his hands on it and sits down.

PAN TO BRINKOPF, leaving the office. He stares for a beat at Truckee, then exits the squadbay.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Brinkopf and Hovis walk toward the lot.

BRINKOPF

Any idea what kind of letters they're writing to each other? I mean, are they just friends, or are they ... ?

HOVIS :

It's more than friends. I've seen her face when she reads his letters.

BRINKOPF

I figured you would you see that. Women show more emotion than men. I look at Truckee when he reads a letter and it could be a balance sheet. What kind of person is Exler?

HOVIS

Poor little pretty rich girl. What about Truckee?

BRINKOPF

Same description. Let me know if you sense anything screwy with these two. I'll do the same.

They each open their car doors.

HOVIS

Lyle?

BRINKOPF

Yeah?

HOVIS

Your wife never comes on base anymore. How is she?

BRINKOPF

Things are tense at home. You know how civilians are. She can't put up with it anymore.

HOVIS

You're coming up on 36 months. Aren't you due for orders?

BRINKOPF

This is my last training cycle.

HOVIS

That oughta make her happy.

BRINKOPF

Oughta. How's your husband?

HOVIS

He's in lock-on at Lejune. They leave for the Med in 30 days. Lucky if he gets every other Sunday.

BRINKOPF

You had to go and marry someone in the Corps.

HOVIS

Which one of us is dumber?

BRINKOPF

... Me.

Hovis laughs. Brinkopf gives a slight smile. They get into their cars and drive away.

INT. MALE SQUADBAY - NIGHT

Lights are OUT. All the Recruits are in their racks, asleep. Except for Cepeda, who lies in his top rack, full of anxiety. He whispers very softly to Garza.

CEPEDA

Guillermo? You still awake?

GARZA

Aye, aye, Sir, pardner.

CEPEDA

What was that crap about being white? What's going on with you, hombre? Ever since we got here, you ...

GARZA

Aye, aye, Sir, pardner.

CEPEDA

Will you stop saying "pardner?"

Cepeda leans over the side and looks down at Garza, who is ASLEEP, but whose LEGS are MARCHING.

GARZA

(talking in his sleep:)

Aye, aye, Sir, pardner.

As Cepeda looks around, WE PAN through the squadbay ...

MANY of the Recruits are MARCHING in their SLEEP. Some say:
"Aye, aye, Sir." "No, Sir."

INT. BEDROOM - PRE-DAWN

CLOSE ON BRINKOPF, quietly getting out on his side of a king-size bed. He's careful to be quiet, glancing to the side.
SWISH PAN TO:

WALL MIRROR - BEDROOM - LATER

Brinkopf stands in front of the mirror, fully-dressed in uniform, making adjustments. We can see the reflection of a corner of the bed. Brinkopf gazes through the mirror in that direction.

BRINKOPF

(very quietly)

Told you a hundred times. This is my
last platoon as a hat.

No response.

EXT. CONFIDENCE COURSE - DAY

ON VELEZ, as her face reddens with strain as she "handwalks" -- hands reaching and grabbing rungs on an overhead grid. Among other Female Recruits quickly moving forward, Velez finishes and drops to the ground. WHISTLES BLOW.

COURSE INSTRUCTOR #1

MOVE! GO ON TO THE NEXT!

A WALL - Velez scales it, then down the other side.

A ROPE - She runs, jumps, grabs the rope, swings across a pit, lands on the other side.

TWO-TIER PLATFORM - [INTERCUT BETWEEN VELEZ'S POV AND A CLOSE ANGLE ON VELEZ --] She jumps onto the lower platform, reaches up, jumps up and grabs the deck of the 2nd level, swings himself up, legs first, and grapples his way to getting onto the 2nd level. There, an INSTRUCTOR lies down -- part of the exercise. Velez picks up the Instructor, hoists her over her shoulder and scales back down to the first platform, then the ground. When she takes the Instructor off her shoulder, she almost falls over.

AN ANGLED ROPE - Velez climbs downward, his body on the top side of the rope.

COURSE INSTRUCTOR #2
SWITCH TO LOWER POSITION!

Velez turns so that he's BENEATH the rope, still using her hands and legs to climb further down. [INTERCUT BETWEEN HER POV AND ANGLE ON HER] Her PALMS have LAYERS OF SKIN MISSING. She pants; sweat drips into her eyes. She gets over a POND; she keeps struggling down the rope.

There are TWO OTHER ROPES running parallel to the one Velez climbs. On one of the other rope is Exler, who, when she turns to climb from underneath the rope, loses her grips and FALLS. As she SPLASHES into the water:

EXLER

You gotta be kidding me!

EXT. PUGIL MAT - DAY

ON EXLER, in headgear, getting WHACKED across the face by the butt of a pugil stick. She falls to the mat.

EXLER

You gotta be kidding me!

INT. FEMALE SQUADBAY - NIGHT

The Female Recruits are all standing at ease at their racks, turned to face the quarterdeck. Exler is down in the quarterdeck. Hovis walks around her, close to her, in her face.

HOVIS

"You gotta be kidding me?" "You gotta be kidding me?" No, Exler, we don't gotta be kidding you. And you don't use the word "ME!" YOU GOT THAT?!

EXLER

Aye, aye, Ma'am.

HOVIS

Were you a party girl, Exler?

EXLER

(unnerved by the accuracy)
... Aye, aye, Ma'am.

HOVIS

Did you ride around in limousines, drink champagne, do drugs? Get into all the best nightclubs with a fake id, holding onto the arm of a slimeball?

EXLER
 (more unnerved)
 Sorta, Ma'am.

HOVIS
 Yeah. So, how on earth did I ever know
 all this? Am I psychic? Surely, I've
 never had a anyone like you in my boot
 camp before, now have I?

(to group) :
 Everybody, let's show Exler how
 impressed we are.

(to Exler)
 You tell us which nightclubs you got
 into and we'll applaud.

EXLER
 (self-conscious)
 Studio 20.

Applause from the recruits and the DIs.

EXLER
 (now fully embarrassed)
 Monka's.

Applause.

INT. MALE DI OFFICE - SAME

Brinkopf, Martin and Fante are all writing reports, making
 notes. Truckee appears partially to the side of the door.

BRINKOPF
 Center of my hatch!

Truckee stands in the doorway.

TRUCKEE
 Private Truckee reporting as ordered,
 Sir.

BRINKOPF
 Get in here.

Truckee enters the office. Brinkopf looks over a file.

BRINKOPF
 Is your father some kind of high-
 roller?

TRUCKEE
 Yes, Sir. He has a software company,
 Sir.

BRINKOPF

Well, Daddy was here today. Wanting to talk to you.

TRUCKEE

(blushes; pissed)

This recruit thanks the drill instructor for not letting him see this recruit.

BRINKOPF

You're thanking me?

Brinkopf and the other DI's laugh.

BRINKOPF

Well, I'd like to say you're welcome, Truckee -- but nobody pops in here and sees a recruit. So, tell me, Truckee -- honor student in high school, 4.0 average in first semester of Swarthmore -- why'd you enlist?

TRUCKEE

It's what this recruit wants, Sir.

BRINKOPF

Why not come in after college as an officer? You doing this to kick daddy in the ... liquid assets?

TRUCKEE

This recruit is here to earn the globe, eagle and anchor, Sir.

BRINKOPF

Maybe you are. We'll see. That's all.

TRUCKEE

Aye, aye, Sir.

INT. CHOW HALL - MORNING

Truckee and Maddox eat together.

MADDOX

So, the word's out you got a rich old man, Truckee.

TRUCKEE

And I care because ... ?

MADDOX

So, I was kinda right in the first place. Your head was a little overheated when you joined. Getting back at the pops, huh?

TRUCKEE

Look, you don't know the story, okay?

MADDOX:

What -- being rich, white and privileged? Good point -- I don't know it at all.

TRUCKEE

But I'm glad you get a kick out of it. That's what I want it to be. Me and my Dad -- a joke.

MADDOX

Whatever you say.

TRUCKEE

It's not like you with your father. The Silver Star and all that.

A beat. Maddox can't answer. Truckee's tone grows more interested and sincere:

TRUCKEE

You can be proud of him. Must be a good feeling. What does he think about you joining, Maddox?

MADDOX

He's cool with it.

TRUCKEE

Cool with it? He's got to be thrilled.

MADDOX

He is.

TRUCKEE

I mean -- he is, isn't he?

MADDOX

(getting edgy)

Didn't I just say he is?

TRUCKEE

Yeah.

A beat.

TRUCKEE

You're lucky.

MADDOX

Why's that?

TRUCKEE

On graduation day, you have that to look forward to. Someone who shows up here, glad to see you become a Marine.

Maddox stares at him, uncertain of how to handle this. Something is very wrong. But, he puts on a front, smiling:

MADDOX

Damn right.

EXT. MALE PLATOON AREA - DAY

You could hear a fly fart on the moon. The LIEUTENANT -- the same one who administered the oath -- walks the aisle, doing an inspection of the Male Recruits, who are on the line, in parade uniform, rifles on shoulders. Brinkopf, Martin and Fante watch. The Lieutenant stops in front of Cepeda. He sees PINS on the uniform that are CROOKED.

LIEUTENANT

Private Cepeda, give me your rifle.

Cepeda, clumsily trying to make movements in proper form, takes his rifle and hands it to the Lieutenant. The Lieutenant inspects it. The BOLT slides loosely to the rear.

LIEUTENANT

Break that rifle right now.

He hands the rifle back to Cepeda, who pushes the take-down pin that lets the rifle open and fold in half on hinges.

LIEUTENANT

Where's the recoil spring, Private?

CEPEDA

Uh, this recruit doesn't know, Sir.

LIEUTENANT

Staff Sergeant Brinkopf?

BRINKOPF

Aye, Sir.

LIEUTENANT

Does this private belong to you?

EXT. SAND FIELD - DAY

Under the watchful eyes of Brinkopf and Martin, the entire Male Platoon strain through a grueling series of side-straddle hops, flutter kicks and push-ups in the sand, sweating, getting sand all over themselves. Martin paces back and forth.

MARTIN

KEEP GOING! DRILL INSTRUCTOR STAFF
SERGEANT BRINKOPF DID NOT TELL YOU TO
STOP! DON'T YOU SLAP THOSE SAND FLEAS!
LET THEM BITE! KEEP MOVING! THIS IS
WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO FAIL AN
INSPECTION!

INT. MALE SQUADBAY - LATER

The horribly-exhausted Recruits stagger into the squadbay and go to their racks. Cepeda gets to his rack. HE GETS SPAT UPON by Recruits passing by so fast, WE DON'T SEE WHO -- nor does he. Garza gets to his rack with Cepeda.

CEPEDA

Guillermo! Some guys just spit on me!
Did you see who -- ?!

Garza angrily GRABS Cepeda's face, squeezing hard.

GARZA

I'm making it here. I'm doing it. No matter how hard it is, I just eat it. I get harder. I get meaner. You better do it, too. Get with it, pardner. 'Cause I'm not carrying you. Not this time. And you aren't dragging me down. Got that?

Garza releases him. Cepeda is dumbstruck, hurt. ON HIM, WE

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. MADDOX'S MOTHER'S HOUSE - DAY

MADDOX'S MOTHER reads a letter from him:

MADDOX (V.O.)

Dear Mom, I wanted you to know that when I graduate, I'm going to go visit Dad. I want him to see me as a Marine. I don't expect you to go with me. But I thought you should know about it.

Her expression darkens. She picks up a pen. DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MALE SQUADBAY - NIGHT

ON MADDOX, reading the reply:

MADDOX'S MOTHER (V.O.)

Dear Wade, I don't think your plan is a good idea. You won't get the response from him that you expect. You're setting yourself up for a big disappointment.

MOVE TO - TRUCKEE, who's reading a letter:

EXLER (V.O.)

... are these old feelings for you, or are they new feelings? Maybe they're a mixture of both. All I know is I keep thinking about you. And if I had you in this rack with me, I'd work out every muscle that's sore and then the ones that aren't sore, until they got sore, too.

Truckee, keeping a cool face, adjusts his body in a way that tells us he's getting hot and bothered.

MOVE TO CEPEDA - who's writing a letter:

CEPEDA (V.O.)

Am I useless? Are there some people who can't do anything? Am I someone who can't be anything in this world? Was the car wash was the best I can do? How big is my soul?

EXT. CONFIDENCE COURSE - DAY

ON END of the COURSE. Maddox stands next to Martin, finished, as Russell and a few other recruits finish and move to them.

MARTIN

Not too shabby, Maddox. Russell -- you almost did as well as he did.

Maddox sneaks a smirk at Russell. CUT TO:

UNDERWATER - SOMEONE'S POV

Looking up at the surface, which is getting further away. We faintly hear VOICES.

ANGLE ON MADDOX'S FRIGHTENED FACE - UNDERWATER, letting bubbles escape from his mouth.

MADDOX'S POV - Now moving UPWARD and breaking the surface. The VOICES are louder, clearer; some close, some further away.

WIDER ANGLE ON MADDOX

Who is in FULL COMBAT GEAR with RIFLE, on his back in WATER. A SWIMMING INSTRUCTOR steadies him.

SWIMMING INSTRUCTOR

Arch your back. Use your feet more.

As Maddox steadies and the Swimming Instructor moves back to give him room, WE PULL BACK TO WIDE ON:

INT. INDOOR SWIMMING POOL - DAY

About fifteen of the Male Recruits are in the water in combat gear, floating on their backs. There are several Swimming Instructors working the group. Many of them are SCARED.

ON CEPEDA AND GARZA - Cepeda's freaking, gasping. Garza is steady.

CEPEDA

They're trying to kill us!

SWIMMING INSTRUCTOR

Use your mouth to breathe, not talk.

TERRACE AT END OF POOL

The rest of the platoon, all in full gear and SOAKED, stand in rows, waiting their next turn. The whole room is MOIST with HOT HUMIDITY.

ON MADDOX - as he struggles and GOES UNDER again. Russell, doing better, looks over at him, smirking. The Instructor grabs Maddox and helps him.

SWIMMING INSTRUCTOR

Arch your back.

MADDOX

This recruit is okay. This recruit doesn't need help. ;

SWIMMING INSTRUCTOR

Don't talk; listen. Use your legs more.

MADDOX

This recruit is doing okay, Sir.

SWIMMING INSTRUCTOR

Private, shut your mouth and listen. Now, use the legs more.

Maddox can't stand feeling inferior, but he bites it and goes along with the Instructor.

INT. MALE SQUADBAY - NIGHT

ON CEPEDA, poking around with pieces of his rifle, cleaning. He looks over at Garza, who's deeply-engrossed in his "Knowledge" book. Garza RIPS out a page and EATS it. Without looking at the book, he takes the next page, rips it out and eats it.

CEPEDA

(afraid to speak, but ...)

What are you doing?

GARZA

(staring at Cepeda; from memory:)

"Special guards are detailed when it is impractical to use sentries from the main guard to guard property or an area."

Garza rips out another sheet and eats it. He now looks at a RED-HAIRED RECRUIT while reciting:

GARZA

"Deadly force is justified only under conditions of extreme necessity, and as a last resort, when all lesser means have failed or cannot reasonably be employed."

RED-HAIRED RECRUIT

Garza, I sure as hell wouldn't want to be the enemy when you hit the beach.

Garza rips out another page and eats it, smirking with confidence.

MOVE TO TRUCKEE AND MADDOX

Truckee sees Maddox write "LAWRENCE MADDOX" on an envelope. Maddox is starting to write the address, when:

TRUCKEE

Letter to your father?

Maddox whips the envelope and the letter under his leg to hide them; then tries to be more casual about it:

MADDOX

Damn. Now you up and gotta be a surveillance camera, Truckee?

TRUCKEE

I didn't see anything, Maddox. You have to hide the envelope, too? So, what are you telling him?

MADDOX

I'm not telling; I'm asking. I want him to write me back the whole story of what he did to get the medal. I mean, I kinda know it, but I want him to go into detail. Really lay it out. It'll be good to have it down on paper.

TRUCKEE

I'd be interested in reading it when you --

MADDOX

Excuse me? Reading it?

TRUCKEE

Or you can tell it to me.

MADDOX

Or you can walk on your ears across a powerline.

TRUCKEE

Is that what we do ninth week, or tenth week? ... Come on, Maddox. I'm not like that assbag Russell. I really want to hear about it.

MADDOX

All right, when I get the letter, I'll tell you what he said. Happy?

TRUCKEE

Yeah, actually. I am. Thanks.

INT. LARGE BRIEFING "WAREHOUSE" - DAY

Several MALE RECRUIT PLATOONS (including ours) sit on benches on the left side of the room and several FEMALE RECRUIT PLATOONS (including ours) sit on the right. There are several MALE and FEMALE GAS INSTRUCTORS present. At least one Jr. DI from each platoon also is present, hovering around, watching the Recruits. This is the only gender integrated (but still separate) training exercise.

1ST GAS INSTRUCTOR

You have just nine seconds to properly don and clear your mask, privates. If it takes longer, you may very well never need a mask again. -- Being dead and all. In today's training, you will experience exposure to CS gas, which is a tearing agent. It will not kill you, but it will make you take nuclear, biological and chemical warfare seriously. Our Marines in the Persian Gulf War spent days on end in their masks. Think about them as you enter the gas chamber.

Despite their proximity to each other, the Male and Female Recruits are too tired and too intimidated by the hawk-eyed DI's to look at each other.

Except Truckee, who keeps his head straight ahead, but turns his gaze to the side and catches sight of Exler. He quickly returns his look toward the front.

EXT. WIDE ON AREA AROUND GAS CHAMBER - LATER

The gas chamber is a little brick structure, 15' X 15'. The Recruits are all divided into straight lines of 30 each, waiting their turn.

MOVE TO a line with Truckee, Maddox, Cepeda and Garza, among others of Male Platoon 3015. They watch as the chamber door bursts open and Male Recruits, wearing masks rapidly exit, along with a cloud of gas. Two of them drop to their knees, pull their masks off and COUGH VIOLENTLY.

1ST GAS INSTRUCTOR
DO NOT TAKE OFF YOUR MASKS! THE
EXERCISE IS NOT OVER! IN COMBAT, YOU
COULD STILL BE IN DANGER!

The two suffering Recruits EJECT MUCUS from their mouths and noses.

2ND GAS INSTRUCTOR
NEXT!

The Recruits in the next line, with Truckee, et. al., begin to don their masks.

2ND GAS INSTRUCTOR
DO IT RIGHT! TRUST ME, YOU BETTER GET
THAT THING ON RIGHT!

Everyone has on the mask. The 2nd Gas Instructor signals. The Recruits quickly walk toward the chamber. MOVE WITH THEM INTO

INT. GAS CHAMBER

As they file in, we see a BURNER on a table in the center, manned by the 3RD GAS INSTRUCTOR -- who wears a mask, but is capable of SCREAMING through it:

3RD GAS INSTRUCTOR
KEEP MOVING! BACKS AGAINST THE
BULKHEAD. MOVE DOWN!

The Recruits put their backs against the wall and keep scooting down to allow more Recruits inside. Finally, all four walls are covered by Recruits. The door gets shut from the outside.

The 3rd Gas Instructor puts a small STICK onto a GRID over the flame of the burner. The stick slowly dissolves, giving off CLOUDS of GAS. The 3rd Gas Instructor uses a large piece of cardboard to fan the gas, spreading it throughout the chamber. He appears to be aiming it right at each wall of Recruits.

Some Recruits react quickly -- their legs begin to twitch. They seem to be struggling to breathe.

3RD GAS INSTRUCTOR
(looking at his watch)
TAKE OFF YOUR MASKS AND HOLD THEM ABOVE
YOUR HEADS! ARMS' LENGTH! NOW! DO IT!

The Recruits take off their masks, hold them in the air.

3RD GAS INSTRUCTOR
KEEP YOUR EYES CLOSED!

Some who had open eyes are DRIPPING TEARS. Everyone holds in his breath.

ON CEPEDA, whose legs twitch wildly. He coughs, sucks in gas, coughs more severely. The 3rd Gas Instructor helps him put on his mask.

3RD GAS INSTRUCTOR
CLEAR YOUR MASK FIRST!

Cepeda puts on the mask and just sucks in through the filter, taking in the accumulated gas.

CEPEDA POV - INSIDE MASK

As Cepeda coughs, TEARS splash against the inside of the goggles.

ON CHAMBER

Cepeda spews mucus into his mask and it drips out from behind the edges. The 3rd Gas Instructor checks his watch.

3RD GAS INSTRUCTOR
DON AND CLEAR YOUR MASKS! INSURE YOU
HAVE A GOOD SEAL!

EXT. CHAMBER - MOMENTS LATER

The Recruits run out, wearing their masks. -- Except for Cepeda, who lets his mask fall from his hand and drops to his knees. He VOMITS.

1ST GAS INSTRUCTOR
GET THAT MASK ON! GET ON YOUR FEET! NOW!

Cepeda staggers to his feet, puts on the mask half-assedly and catches up to his group.

1ST GAS INSTRUCTOR
STAY IN YOUR GROUP! YOU WILL BE DOING
THIS AGAIN!

Cepeda moves into the line, barely able to stand, still coughing.

1ST GAS INSTRUCTOR
Okay, take the masks off.

-- And we see Truckee, Maddox and Garza, dripping tears, faces flushed red, breathing labored. They cough and spit. Truckee, through his coughing, flashes a wry smile to the others -- an attempt to show he's not affected.

Cepeda leans on Garza. Garza violently shrugs him off. Then, Garza steps on Cepeda's foot. He looks at Cepeda with a weirdly unreadable expression, the tears coming down from under the goofy glasses, the mouth tight with rage. He shoves Cepeda out of the line. Cepeda falls to the ground.

1ST GAS INSTRUCTOR
ON YOUR FEET, PRIVATE!

Cepeda pulls himself to his feet and goes to the end of the line, away from Garza.

INT. GAS CHAMBER - LATER

Female Recruits go through the ordeal. Some kick their legs and collapse, coughing. One SCREAMS. The 3rd Gas Instructor helps her get her mask on.

EXT. SURROUNDING AREA - LATER

The lines of beleaguered Recruits wait to do it again. DI's walk all around, keeping watch.

ON TRUCKEE, who catches sight of Exler in the near distance. She sees him. He signals toward the row of PORTA-JOHNNS. Then, he steps out of his line and moves to Martin.

TRUCKEE
Sir, this recruit requests permission
to make a head call.

MARTIN
Get it done.

As Truckee moves away, we FOCUS on Exler in the background, also asking permission.

ON ROW OF PORTAS

Truckee quickly walks to one, opens the door, hesitates. The only supervisor who could spot them at this angle is the 2nd Gas Instructor, who's facing away, yelling at a line of freshly-gassed Recruits.

Exler quickly moves right up to Truckee, then past him into the porta. Truckee steps inside, closes the door.

INT. PORTA-POTTY

They look at each other, breathing heavily.

EXLER
I don't believe this.

TRUCKEE

You think anyone saw us?

EXLER

We could get in big trouble.

TRUCKEE

Couldn't we?

They throw arms around each other and kiss. Truckee sees TEARS running from her eyes.

TRUCKEE

You're so happy to see me, you're crying.

EXLER

Very funny. What about you?

Truckee blinks -- there's tears running from his eyes, too. They both cough briefly, then kiss again. They pull back.

EXLER

Why did we sign up for this?

TRUCKEE

Tell me about it. It's whacko.

EXLER

Are you going to try and get out?

TRUCKEE

Are you?

EXLER

I think about it every day.

They both start feeling each other's arms and backs.

EXLER

Damn. Your body's getting nice and cut.

TRUCKEE

Your body's getting hard, too.

They kiss again. Exler coughs. They kiss again and Truckee coughs. They kiss again and they both start HACKING badly (still from gas residue). They seem to recover, try to kiss again and they both then hack so hard they cough up SPITTLE and MUCUS.

TRUCKEE

(talking through hacking)

Our luck ... our one chance to see each other ... and ...

EXLER
 (talking through hacking)
 Yeah ... I've been ... dreaming about
 this ... moment and ... now ... I'm
 spitting mucus on you.

They start LAUGHING, which causes them to hack and spit up even more. Truckee grabs the handle of the door.

TRUCKEE
 I'll go first.

EXLER
 Don't forget to write.

Truckee slowly opens the door, only a crack. As he starts to step out, the door is WHIPPED WIDE OPEN by -- Martin, who stands there, glaring. Next to him is Tillman. SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. GAS CHAMBER AREA - LATER

A somber confrontation. Truckee and Exler are braced at a rigid position of attention in front of a MALE CAPTAIN and a FEMALE CAPTAIN. Near them stand Brinkopf and Hovis.

MALE CAPTAIN
 Just how in the hell did this happen?

BRINKOPF
 Sir, the sanitary service guy was working on some of the porta-johns. We had to use what was available, so male and female recruits were taking turns on the same row.

FEMALE CAPTAIN
 That Private is out of here. I want charge sheets on my desk by noon chow.

HOVIS
 (to both Captains)
 Ma'am ... Sir ... can we have a private word?

The Captains exchange a look and nod. They lead the DI's a few steps away, out of the two Privates' earshot.

HOVIS
 These two privates were an item before they enlisted. They've been exchanging letters. Private Exler is a good recruit. I'd like to handle this short of Article 15.

BRINKOPF

Same with my Private, Sir. He's got what it takes, given some extra guidance.

As the Officers sullenly mull this over, there's a ROARING SOUND nearby. A sanitary service truck is SUCKING out of some porta-johns. Everyone reacts -- the smell is obviously deadly. Then, the Male Captain looks at the Female Captain. CUT TO:

EXT. SANITARY TRUCK - LATER

Truckee and Exler are assisting with the sanitation process. As they handle the huge flexible hose, they are GAGGING from the odor. Sounds of GURGLING and SLURPING from the machine. Truckee VOMITS. Exler, in a gag reflex, does the SAME. CUT TO:

MONTAGE:

-- Truckee cleaning toilets.
-- Exler cleaning toilets.

INT. MALE SQUADBAY - NIGHT

Truckee, drenched in sweat, exhausted, staggers into the bay, led by Martin. It's BDR time; Recruits hover around, staring at the arrival.

Brinkopf comes out of the office, not happy. He glares at Truckee. Everyone goes silent, watching.

BRINKOPF

Attention on deck.

Everyone gets on the line, at attention, Truckee included. Brinkopf has been holding something behind his back. He reveals it -- it's an old SIGN from a GAS PUMP: "SELF." Holes have been crudely punched into each side of the top and a chain has been fastened to them. Brinkopf hangs the sign from Truckee's RACK.

SNICKERING. Martin walks down the aisle, his eyes searching out the offenders. Everyone has a stone face.

BRINKOPF

Funny, is it? You should all be wearing it. I've never had a platoon with so many selfish people in it. Who scores the highest, who's the "winner." That attitude means none of you are winning. Can you grasp that?

ON MADDOX, who's particularly stung by this. He looks at the "self" sign, glances at Russell, then averts his eyes.

Brinkopf goes back into the office. Martin starts toward the office. He pivots, looks at the group.

MARTIN

If this sign comes off Truckee's rack, you'll all do what he just did for the last seven hours.

Martin goes inside the office.

RUSSELL

Nice, Truckee.

DEWROCK

Did they make you cry, rich boy?

Truckee does his characteristic wry smile and gives a "thumbs-up" to everyone to show he hasn't been affected. Some Recruits chuckle; others are disgusted. Truckee grabs a pen and paper.

MADDOX

You going to write your girlfriend another letter?

TRUCKEE

Nah, she and I have kinda run out of chat for the time being.

Maddox moves closer to Truckee.

MADDOX

Damn, Truckee, you smell like every cleaning market on the product -- and like the stuff you were cleaning up.

TRUCKEE

Thanks.

MADDOX

Who are you writing to?

Truckee hesitates, too embarrassed to answer. He simply starts writing.

MADDOX

Daddy. You're writing to dear old Dad.

TRUCKEE

What of it?

MADDOX

Gonna have him get you outta here?

TRUCKEE

Again -- what of it?

MADDOX

(dripping sarcasm)

I'll be sad to see you go. I wanted to
be in active service next to you.
You'll be sorely missed in the field.

Truckee doesn't respond, but is clearly stung. He simply forces his hand to write the words:

"DEAR DAD, GET ME OUT OF HERE. USE ANY MEANS NECESSARY."

As Maddox, disgusted, goes back to his rack, we RACK FOCUS ON

GARZA, who's rolling up a sheet. He suddenly DASHES toward the back door.

RUSSELL

HEY! GARZA IS LEAVING THE SQUADBAY!

Martin, Fante and Brinkopf SPRINT out of the office.

EXT. STAIRWELL LANDING - CONTINUOUS

Garza quickly ties one end of the sheet to the railing, gets onto the railing, starts to tie the other end to his neck.

The three DI's are outside and on him too fast. He jumps, without the sheet being affixed to his neck. Brinkopf and Fante grab him by his shirt and hold him, dangling. Martin, meanwhile, is sprinting down the staircase to get beneath Garza.

Brinkopf and Fante grapple for a bit and Garza's shirt comes off. He falls and THUDS against the sidewalk below (not a far drop, but bruising). A gaggle of Recruits have their heads poked out the squadbay door.

As Brinkopf and Fante run down the steps to join Martin:

BRINKOPF

GET THE HELL BACK INSIDE!!

Cepeda, Maddox and Russell have caught sight of the scene. They turn and herd the others inside.

ON SIDEWALK

Martin has hold of Garza, who fights back furiously. His goofy glasses make the spectacle eerie. Brinkopf and Fante arrive and help restrain him.

GARZA

I'LL KILL YOU ALL! EVERY LAST ONE OF
YOU! YOU HEAR ME?! I'LL KILL YOU!

Martin and Fante drag Garza down the sidewalk. Brinkopf starts back up the steps.

INT. MALE SQUADBAY - SAME

Cepeda looks out the window at Garza as he's being dragged away.
Garza CATCHES his gaze.

GARZA

AIN'T YOU COMING WITH ME, CEPEDA?! WHY
YOU STAYING THERE?! AIN'T YOU COMING?!
YOU GONNA STAY THERE AND BE A PUPPET
FOR THE ANGLO FASCISTS?! ARE YOU,
PARDNER?! YEE-HAW!

Brinkopf enters the squadbay, walks up the aisle.

BRINKOPF

Privates, every once in awhile, a
recruiter sends us an exploding
hairball. Everybody, up to the
quarterdeck. Time to have a little
talk.

-- AND BAM! -- Cepeda DASHES OUT the back squadbay door.

BRINKOPF

WHAT THE HELL?!!

Brinkopf dashes into

INT. DI OFFICE

And grabs the phone.

BRINKOPF

This is Staff Sergeant Brinkopf, Lima
Company. We got a runner.

EXT. 3RD BATTALION GROUNDS

ON CEPEDA, running like a demon. He's crying, breathing heavily
-- but he's really moving.

EXT. SWAMP - LATER

With MP vehicles in the background, running SIRENS, WE STAY ON
CEPEDA, who runs out into the swamp water. His feet stick in
the mud; he struggles against the weeds, but he keeps moving
until he finally gets to water that's deep enough to let his
body drop into it. He swims. -- And he swims fast, slapping
his way through the weeds.

In the moonlight, he finally sees what lies ahead -- another mile or so of thinning swamp and then open sea. He looks back at the land. LIGHTS flash toward him. He can hear the MPs:

MP

Man, that son of a bitch got pretty far, didn't he?!

A BOAT is coming toward him. He stays in place, treading water.
ON HIM, WE

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - BRINKOPF'S HOUSE - MORNING

Brinkopf, in front of the full length mirror, glances toward the bed. He returns his gaze to the mirror.

BRINKOPF

(softly)

Just a little more patience. That's all I ask. Is that too much? Only a few more weeks now.

INT. DI OFFICE - PRE-DAWN

Brinkopf confers with Martin and Fante.

BRINKOPF

I'll be the first to admit, I didn't see this coming with Garza.

MARTIN

None of us did.

BRINKOPF

Well, that's unacceptable. For each of us. And things have been coming apart even before that. The mistakes you two have made in the rifle drill and having uniforms out of order.

MARTIN

I just had that buckle fixed and it popped right in the middle of --

BRINKOPF

Forget the specifics. I've made some blunders, too. I'm talking about the big picture. Fante, when did you break up with your girlfriend?

FANTE

Two weeks ago. But --

BRINKOPF

We all got problems at home. They have to be left at home. We have to keep up the front at all times. We're the example these recruits look to. Constantly. Is that clear?

MARTIN

Rodge.

FANTE

Check.

A CORPORAL escorts Cepeda to the door of the office.

CORPORAL

Staff Sergeant Brinkopf? I think this one's yours. Call battalion when you decide what to do with him.

The Corporal hands Brinkopf a file, then leaves.

BRINKOPF

Inside, Cepeda.

CEPEDA

Aye, aye, Sir.

Cepeda enters the office. Martin and Fante leave, shutting the door. Brinkopf pores over the file.

BRINKOPF

I know you had a tough thing happen. Your buddy went whacko.

CEPEDA

Sir, may this recruit say something?

BRINKOPF

Go ahead.

CEPEDA

Sir, Garza is not an "exploding hairball," like the drill instructor said. He's a rio lobo. Does the drill instructor know what that is?

BRINKOPF

A river wolf?

CEPEDA

Sir, what's called a "lone wolf." He's been on his own since he was fifteen -- no family in this country. He's had it muy difical and he's done pretty well. This recruit doesn't know what happened to Garza's mind, but his spirit is good.

BRINKOPF

I make cracks in the heat of the moment, Cepeda. But, considering the circumstances, I apologize.

Cepeda is a bit stunned -- he can't conceive of a DI apologizing. A beat.

CEPEDA

This recruit thanks the drill instructor, Sir.

BRINKOPF

Your psych eval came back okay. You're officially fit to continue training. The Lieutenant thinks you ought to be recycled, but he said he'd go along with my recommendation. I can keep you in this platoon, or I can drop you. Let you go. You'll be out of here. And I'll do that.

A beat. Cepeda stares at the floor.

BRINKOPF

But you have to answer one question first.

CEPEDA

Yes, Sir.

BRINKOPF

YOU RAN TWO MILES AND WADED THROUGH A SWAMP AND SWAM ANOTHER HUNDRED YARDS! WHERE THE HELL WAS ALL THAT STRENGTH, ENDURANCE AND DETERMINATION DURING THE LAST SEVEN WEEKS OF TRAINING?!!

Cepeda stares at him a beat.

CEPEDA

Sir, this recruit ... doesn't know how this recruit did all that.

BRINKOPF

You don't know? That's your answer?

CEPEDA

This recruit must have been motivated, Sir.

BRINKOPF

Exactly. So, what's it going to be, Cepeda? Decide. Right now.

CEPEDA

Sir ... this recruit still wants to try and be a Marine.

BRINKOFF

You'll do more than try, Cepeda. As of right now, you're on Trial Training. You've got ten days to show me your stuff. You will be closely observed and regularly counseled. Just blink when you're not supposed to and you'll be recycled. Is that clear?

CEPEDA

Aye, aye, Sir!

EXT. SAND FIELD - DAY

The Female Recruits crawl through the sand with their rifles, doing the combat exercise. MOVE TO the LINES of those who await their turn. Next to Exler, an ASIAN RECRUIT groans.

ASIAN RECRUIT

This can't happen again.

EXLER

What?

ASIAN RECRUIT

This is the third pair of glasses I've broken in two days. They only let you have two, but they gave me three just to be lenient. And now the third one's broken. I'll get beasted for this.

Exler inspects the glasses, which have tape holding on the broken stem, but not effectively. She takes off the tape. She grabs her backpack and works for a moment, pulling loose a thick thread. She strips loose a thick thread from the backpack. She pulls out a small length of it, then breaks it off. She manipulates it to fit into the screw hole openings on the stem and the lens frame. She ties it off tight. She holds out the glasses and swivels the stem back and forth. She puts the glasses onto the face of the Asian Recruit.

The Asian Recruit takes off the glasses, studies the repair job, swivels the stem a few times, then puts back on the glasses.

ASIAN RECRUIT

(to nearby Recruits)

Wow, Exler fixed them. -- Who woulda thought?

EXLER

(dryly)

You're welcome.

INT. MALE SQUADBAY - NIGHT

ON TRUCKEE, who's staring at a LETTER he's just opened. It says:

"I'M WORKING ON IT. I'LL GET YOU OUT OF THERE IN NO TIME."

WIDEN TO INCLUDE MADDOX, who looks over at Truckee.

MADDOX:

Is that your rescue letter, Truckee?

TRUCKEE

It sure is.

MADDOX

Can I read it? Or just tell me what it says. I really want to know.

TRUCKEE

Very funny.

Cepeda ambles over to Truckee.

CEPEDA

Truckee?

TRUCKEE

Yeah?

Maddox looks up at this exchange.

CEPEDA

I want you to know something. I know you always do your little smirks and stuff, but you're still here. One of the things that gives me enough strength to stick it out is -- you. I mean, with todos las cosas you could do, you could have -- you chose this and you're staying with it. Just wanted to tell you, man.

Cepeda walks back to his rack. Maddox looks at Truckee, then over to Kosegin.

MADDOX

Hey, Kosegin.

KOSEGIN

Yeah?

MADDOX

When do we get issued helmets?

KOSEGIN

I don't know.

MADDOX

Damn. I need something to throw up in.

Truckee doesn't respond to the joke. He simply looks again at the letter from his father.

EXT. RAPPEL TOWER - DAY

An ominous-looking metal structure 50 feet high, with stairs leading to the top, which is a large round platform. TWO RAPPEL EXERCISES are in process with the Male Platoon. Both require the Recruits to use one hand above them and one hand below their butts, holding the rope (the "brake" hand), with the Recruit in a sitting position.

One exercise is done against a wall which is built all the way down one side (only one) of the tower. The Recruit uses his feet to push away from the wall repeatedly, bouncing, as he goes slowly down the rope, controlling his speed with his lower hand.

The other exercise is practically the same, but with no wall -- so it's just going down a rope with no other surface to help control the descent.

1ST RAPPEL INSTRUCTOR has charge of the wall/bounce side. Dewrock, facing the Instructor with his back to the abyss, holds the rope, but will not jump.

1ST RAPPEL INSTRUCTOR
GET DOWN THAT ROPE! GET DOWN THAT
ROPE! NOW!

DEWROCK
S-sir ... this recruit can't do it.

1ST RAPPEL INSTRUCTOR
GET DOWN THAT ROPE, PRIVATE! DO IT!!

On his SCREAMING, MOVE OVER TO

THE FREE-ROPE EXERCISE

Maddox is next. He takes the rope, faces the 2ND RAPPEL INSTRUCTOR, his back to the edge.

2ND RAPPEL INSTRUCTOR
NO ONE HAS DONE IT RIGHT YET!
(to Maddox)
Well? JUMP, PRIVATE!

MADDOX'S POV - THE WHOLE WAY DOWN

-- At the Instructor, then, turning, looking down fifty feet to a 3rd Instructor who's spotting the rope on the ground.

-- Turn back, push off -- see the 2nd Instructor looking down.

2ND RAPPEL INSTRUCTOR
USE YOUR BRAKE HAND TO CONTROL THE
DESCENT!

-- Spinning around, seeing the legs of the tower, beyond that, the treetops.

-- Looking down, seeing the line of Recruits.

-- MOVING DOWN TOO FAST --

2ND RAPPEL INSTRUCTOR (O.S.)
USE YOUR BRAKE HAND!

-- Then moving slower.

ANGLE ON MADDOX'S FACE

Sweating, taking controlled deep breaths.

RESUME MADDOX'S POV

-- Looking all the way up at the 2nd Instructor on the platform.

-- Spinning around. THUD!

-- Looking at his feet on the ground.

WIDE ON AREA

As Maddox moves toward the line.

2ND RAPPEL INSTRUCTOR
FAIR! THAT WAS FAIR!

WIDE ON TOP OF TOWER

As Cepeda gets into position. He stares at the 2nd Instructor. He looks down, then back at the Instructor. A beat.

ANGLE ON RECRUITS IN LINE

Russell and some others show contemptuous low expectations in their eyes as they look at Cepeda.

ANGLE ON EDGE OF PLATFORM

Cepeda continues to hesitate.

2ND RAPPEL INSTRUCTOR
 YOU WAITING FOR ME TO ASK YOU TO
 DANCE?! JUMP OFF MY DECK! JUMP! NOW!

WIDE ON TOWER

Cepeda jumps off, slides quickly down the rope, brakes with his bottom hand, lets himself slide more, brakes again -- over and over. His eyes are set in determination; he looks up and down alternately, focusing his attention on the task. He gets down to the bottom.

2ND RAPPEL INSTRUCTOR
 PRIVATE, GIVE YOUR NAME!

CEPEDA
 CEPEDA, SIR!

2ND RAPPEL INSTRUCTOR
 GIVE CEPEDA AN "OOO-RAH!"

ALL RECRUITS
 OOO-RAH, CEPEDA!

2ND RAPPEL INSTRUCTOR
 CEPEDA, THAT WAS EXCELLENT! GET BACK
 UP HERE! YOU'RE DOING IT AGAIN! -- AS
 AN EXAMPLE FOR EVERYONE ELSE!

ON MARTIN, who stares blank-faced at Cepeda, then casts a glance to Fante, who returns the look. There's a hint of satisfaction in their eyes.

INT. POOL BUILDING - DAY

ON EXLER as she floats along, holding her rifle, struggling like hell, but fiercely-determined to keep afloat, treading with her feet.

SWIMMING INSTRUCTOR
 Doing good. Arch your back. Stay
 relaxed.

Someone sinks. The Instructor moves to that person. We got to:

EXLER'S POV

-- Seeing the ceiling. GLUGGING some water, SPITTING. Water
 WASHING OVER CAMERA.

-- Looking to the side -- A PAIR OF BOOTS step along, on the
 edge of the pool, tracking her every move. PAN UP -- it's
 Hovis, silently hawkeyeing Exler.

-- Straight up -- seeing the ceiling. WATER SPLASHES OVER CAMERA. GULPING, SPITTING. Then breathing.

ON VELEZ AND THE BLACK RECRUIT

Who are standing at the end of the pool, wet, having finished.

BLACK RECRUIT

Damn. Exler is getting it done today.

Velez just stares, taking Exler under consideration. A BLONDE RECRUIT comes up behind Velez.

BLONDE RECRUIT

Hey, fatso. I read that crap you wrote in your book about me.

VELEZ

How'd you read that?! How'd you see it?!

Tillman's approaching.

TILLMAN

SHUT YOUR HOLES!

BLONDE RECRUIT

You oughta write about yourself -- you know, the old days, when you were turning tricks in the barrio school yard.

Velez PUNCHES her. Tillman is joined by other DIs to the scene in a hurry.

INT. FEMALE SQUADBAY - NIGHT

Exler sits on her footlocker, studying her Knowledge. Velez is not there. The back door opens. Tillman marches in Velez and the Blonde Recruit, who are barely able to stand, dripping sweat, gasping for breath.

BLACK RECRUIT

Oh, man ... they really got beasted.

Velez staggers to her footlocker and sits on it, wheezing. She and Exler make eye contact. Sanchez steps out of the DI office.

SANCHEZ

Well, our two bad little girls are back -- just in time for an early lights out. PREPARE TO MOUNT!

Everyone rapidly strips down to underwear and gets next to her rack. Velez has to lean against hers.

SANCHEZ

MOUNT!

The lower-rack Recruits throw themselves down into their racks. The upper-rack Recruits have to hoist their bodies up and over. Velez hoists, gets one leg up ... is almost there ... then FALLS to the floor.

SANCHEZ

WE DIDN'T GET IT DONE! PREPARE TO MOUNT!

Everyone has to get out of their racks again and stand by the racks. Velez pulls herself to her feet.

SANCHEZ

And ... MOUNT!

Again, everyone either throws or climbs themselves into their racks -- except Velez, who, again ... almost does. She FALLS to the floor.

SANCHEZ

WE DIDN'T GET IT DONE!

TALL RECRUIT

(under her breath)

Kill that bitch.

TILLMAN

WHO SAID THAT?! SGT. SANCHEZ IS
TELLING YOU TO MOUNT! THAT'S ALL YOU
DO -- YOU DO NOT RUN YOUR HOLES!

SANCHEZ

PREPARE TO MOUNT!

Exler looks at Velez's face as she struggles back to her feet. Velez looks back at Exler, tired, vulnerable.

SANCHEZ

And ... MOUNT!

Again, everyone throws or climbs themselves into the racks. Velez is yet again on the edge of her top rack, only one leg over. Exler SHOVES Velez's ASS and Velez goes up and over, falling onto her rack.

Tillman darts right to them, staring at Exler, who whips her arms back down and drops into her rack. Then Tillman stares at Velez, who stares back in dread.

Tillman simply looks up the bay at Sanchez. A beat. Sanchez snaps OUT the LIGHT. Tillman and Sanchez go into the office.

The following dialogue is in very soft, careful whispering:

VELEZ
Exler.

EXLER
Yeah?

VELEZ
I got you figured out.

EXLER :
You do?

VELEZ
Yeah. You've never had a female friend.

A beat. This hits Exler deeply.

VELEZ
Am I right?

EXLER
Not even close.

VELEZ
No?

EXLER
No, you're wrong. I've had plenty of female friends.

VELEZ
Tell me about them.

EXLER
Why?

VELEZ
You wanted to make this "rackmate thing" work, didn't you? Let's talk.

EXLER
My female friends ... are all ... they were ...

VELEZ
"Were?"

EXLER
Okay, they were all bitches. They were just competing with me for the attention of men.

VELEZ
Those are the only kinda chicks you've ever hung out with? Your whole life?

EXLER

Yeah.

Velez chuckles, restraining herself so she won't make noise.

EXLER

I'm just tired enough to tell you all this.

VELEZ

Hey, rackmate -- I'm just tired enough to tell you ...

EXLER

Tell me what?

VELEZ

I never had any good female friends, either.

EXLER

What kind did you know?

VELEZ

All kinds. It doesn't matter now. I just wanted to say -- thanks for boosting my ass up over the rack.

EXLER

Sure.

Silence. Exler waits, expecting more conversation. Silence.

INT. MALE SQUADBAY - SAME

There's a small group around Cepeda, laughing and joking. He's "in" now. Truckee is among them, but is a little distant.

Fante pokes his head out of the office.

FANTE

TWO MINUTES TO LIGHTS OUT!

Truckee gets up and WE MOVE WITH HIM to:

HIS AND MADDOX'S RACKS -- Maddox just stares at a letter that's in one hand, while the envelope is in the others. His face is CONTORTED with a storm of emotions. Truckee looks at him.

TRUCKEE

You've been reading that letter for two hours. Your father must've really laid out the story in gory detail.

No answer from Maddox.

TRUCKEE

Are you going to tell it to me?

CLOSE ON MADDOX

MADDOX'S MOTHER (V.O.)

I'm not going. Wade, you don't really know this man. And I ... don't know him anymore, either. He's not a part of our lives.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FRONT PORCH - SUBURBAN HOUSE - (FLASHBACK)

Maddox holds a letter on MARINE STATIONARY. His MOTHER, a woman in business clothes, watches him.

MADDOX'S MOTHER

(continuing)

He's never been a part of yours.

Maddox looks at her, his face showing his confusion. His Mother, softening, tenderly touches his shoulder.

MOTHER

But, if you want to go, then ...

INT. PRISON CORRIDOR - SAME

Maddox walks with TWO MALE MARINES in DRESS BLUES, one WHITE, one AFRICAN-AMERICAN. They are led by a PRISON GUARD. Maddox keeps looking at one Marine, then the other. He's completely nonplused.

MADDOX

Why did this take so long?

BLACK MARINE

The original paperwork got lost. The officer who wrote him up found out and pushed it through. You know, in a few months, a law goes into effect that won't allow prisoners to receive medals. This one's just in under the wire.

INT. AREA OUTSIDE CELL - MOMENTS LATER

The Guard slides open a PORTAL. After a beat, the FACE of an AFRICAN-AMERICAN MAN, around 55 years old, appears. His eyes are hard, bitter. He takes in the scene, with contemptuous irritation.

GUARD

Your son is here with two Marines.

Lawrence looks at Maddox. Maddox washes over with a surge of emotions. Lawrence shows none.

BLACK MARINE

(to the prisoner)

Lawrence Maddox? I'm Captain Thomas Siler and this is Gunnery Sergeant Robert Howard.

No reaction from Maddox's father (LAWRENCE). The White Marine opens a box. Inside is a COMBAT MEDAL.

BLACK MARINE

Mr. Maddox, I have been instructed by the Commandant of the Marine Corps to read the following citation. "For exceptional gallantry and intrepidity in the face of grave personal danger while engaged in combat with enemy forces in the Republic of Vietnam, the Secretary of the Navy takes great pride in presenting the Silver Star to then Corporal Lawrence Maddox, United States Marine Corps, for heroic action as set forth in the following citation."

LAWRENCE

This supposed to be funny?

The White Marine proffers the box to the Black Marine, who is about to lift out the medal. The Young Maddox reaches over for the medal, picks it up, looks at it in wonder, then asks permission with a look to the Black Marine. The Black Marine nods. Maddox solemnly passes it through the portal to his father. The Guard steps close, on alert. Lawrence takes the medal and glares at Maddox. He looks at the medal.

Lawrence's face changes. It seems as if he's been shaken off his resigned hardness; his whole life runs around and around in his mind. Maddox sees this. Lawrence looks back up at Maddox with a vulnerable look. At that instant -- the Guard SLAMS shut the portal.

GUARD

Okay, folks. Let's go.

EXT. PARKING LOT - LATER

Maddox walks with the Marines. They arrive at their car. Maddox goes to his own.

MADDOX

Why would you bother giving a medal to him?

WHITE MARINE

No such thing. Afternoon, Sir.

The two Marines get into their car and drive away. Maddox gets into his car, but doesn't shut the door. He sits there, stunned, watching the departing Marines' car. He begins to CRY.
(END FLASHBACK) DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MALE SQUADBAY - (RESUMING)⁴

CLOSE ON MADDOX, OVER HIS SHOULDER - ON LETTER

It only has these lines:

"I MADE THEM MOVE UP MY EXECUTION. IT'S NEXT TUESDAY AT
8PM. SEND FLOWERS."

Maddox's hand trembles. He keeps staring at the letter.

TRUCKEE

Maddox? Are you going to tell me what
he said?

MADDOX

Uh ... yeah, man. I'll tell you ...
later. I'll tell you later.

ON MADDOX, WE

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

FADE IN:

EXT. MALE PLATOON AREA - MORNING

Brinkopf addresses the Recruits, who stand with rifles at port arms.

BRINKOPF

You have held her in your arms for nine weeks. You have gained intimate knowledge of her -- inside and out. You can fix her when she's got problems; make her feel good. You've been cleaning her whole body, up and down. Now ... you're going to learn how to do her and do her right. FREE-ZENT -- HUNNNH ("Present arms")!

The Recruits hold their rifles out in front of them. SOUND OF RIFLE SHOTS OVER AS WE DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RIFLE RANGE - DAY

TWO CROSS-CUT PANS:

-- DOWN THE FIRING RECRUITS' FACES

-- DOWN THE TARGETS

-- Each of them reacting to the SOUND and the KICK of the rifle.

Russell -- holes sprout in the center circle.

Dewrock -- some miss the target, others get close to center.

Kosegin -- all around the target.

Cepeda -- missing the target entirely, every shot.

Maddox -- same as Russell, grouping shots inside center circle.

Truckee -- some in center circle, some outside the target.

ANGLE ON CEPEDA

The PRELIMINARY MARKSMAN INSTRUCTOR leans in close to him, speaks very softly (only these Instructors and the Swimming Instructors have a soft delivery).

PMI

Ease up a hair on that grip. It's too tight. There you go. Relax the arm. Yeah. Try it.

Cepeda fires.

ANGLE ON TARGET

A hole sprouts way outside the target, on the outer edge of the board.

INT. MALE SQUADBAY - NIGHT

Kosegin and Cepeda grip their rifles, practicing the hold and the aim.

CEPEDA

(to Kosegin)

You're doing well enough to pass. I'm the one who's going to get recycled.

KOSEGIN

Concentrate. It's a breathing thing.

MOVE TO TRUCKEE AND MADDOX

They both clean their rifles.

MADDOX

You shot pretty well out there.

TRUCKEE

Thanks.

MADDOX

Why?

TRUCKEE

Why?

MADDOX

Why are you even trying anymore, since you're gonna get out of here?

TRUCKEE

Well, I have to keep the bases covered. It's possible that I won't get out of here. And I don't want to get recycled.

MADDOX

Outstanding. So, until your Dad springs you, you're gonna be an exemplary recruit --

TRUCKEE

Shh.

Truckee indicates Cepeda. Cepeda turns from his rifle and looks straight at Truckee.

CEPEDA

I know all about it, Truckee. You're trying to weasel out of here. Pendejo. You coulda told me before I made myself look stupid.

They look stares for a beat. Cepeda seems tougher, but is still affected emotionally. He turns away from Truckee and resumes practicing his hold.

TRUCKEE

I love being "the popular one."

Russell walks up to Maddox.

RUSSELL

Where'd you learn to shoot?

MADDOX

What's it to you?

RUSSELL

Hey, relax, Recruit. It's just a question.

MADDOX

Well, Recruit, I just listened to the instructor and did what he said.

RUSSELL

You never shot before?

MADDOX

Oh, you're thinking, when I was in a street gang?

RUSSELL

No. Gangbangers aren't marksmen. They drive up and shoot unarmed people at point blank range. You're a marksman. You must've shot before.

MADDOX

Well, I haven't.

RUSSELL

Pretty good, Maddox. You're giving me a run for the money. But I will win series high shooter.

MADDOX

(impulsively; can't help it)
I don't think so, Russell. It's as good as mine.

Russell snorts and walks away.

TRUCKEE

I like how you two have a growing,
maturing relationship.

MADDOX

That's beautiful, Truckee, but how
about your mature relationship with a
girl in a portable toilet?

TRUCKEE

You wouldn't understand.

INT. FEMALE DI OFFICE - SAME

Hovis sits at her desk, making notes. BANGING on door.

VELEZ'S VOICE

Private Velez, reporting as ordered,
Ma'am.

HOVIS

Center of my hatch.

Velez steps into the doorway, holding her Knowledge book. Hovis motions her inside. Velez comes inside, stands before Hovis. Hovis points to a chair. Velez sits.

HOVIS

I want to see that book.

VELEZ

This recruit would like to say, no
disrespect, that this is a private diary,
Ma'am.

HOVIS

From what I hear, you don't write about
yourself, you write about everyone
else. Is that true?

VELEZ

... Yes, Ma'am.

HOVIS

I'm simply asking you to allow me to see
it. If you refuse, that's your right.

VELEZ

... Yes, Ma'am.

Velez hands the book to Hovis. Hovis opens it, looks through the pages of handwriting.

HOVIS

(reading)

"Larue has an overblown self-image. She strides down the deck like she's some kind of hot news item. The only way she'll get into the headlines is to wipe her butt with a newspaper. For her, that would be a favorable mention."

(turns pages; new entry:)

"Gonzales could give a rat nausea. Her idea of dental hygiene is remembering to swallow her food after she chews it."

(turns pages; new entry:)

"Blonner is so white, she farts chalk. And she's so stupid, they had to use forceps to get her out of third grade. Appalachians are the kind of people who rip down a "deer-crossing" sign so that deers will stop crossing the road."

Hovis flips through a few more pages, glances at entries, then closes the book and hands it back to Velez.

HOVIS

Velez, this makes me wonder.

VELEZ

(prepared for worst)

Uh, Ma'am, this recruit ... uh ...

HOVIS

Have you thought about being a writer?

VELEZ

A what, Ma'am?

HOVIS

A writer. A combat correspondent. When you graduate from here, you'll be given a Military Occupational Specialty. And that depends on the needs of the Corps. We do have a little latitude in this area, Velez. So, what do you want to do, assuming you graduate?

VELEZ

This recruit doesn't know, Ma'am.

HOVIS

You've got a knack for words. You'll have to learn to be a bit more positive in your approach, but ... I think you could do it. I'm a correspondent -- at least, when I'm not a drill instructor. It's one of the best jobs for women in the Marines. You go everywhere with the infantry. You're right by the action, wherever it is. Think about it. If you're interested, I'll put in a recommendation.

VELEZ

... uh ... Yes, Ma'am.

INT. BRINKOPF'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Brinkopf stands in front of the mirror, straightening his uniform. He glances over at the bed. And, for the first time, WE PAN OVER TO IT. -- ONE HALF of the bed has MUSSED COVERS, the other is UNAFFECTED. NO ONE THERE.

Brinkopf goes to the bed, sits on it, stares at the phone. He picks it up and punches a number. His voice is overly-sollicitous.

BRINKOPF

Hi. It's Lyle. No, no, wait, don't hang up. I just want to know if she's okay. Good, good. Look, is there any chance she'll talk to me? Doesn't have to be right now. Anytime. I mean, two whole months of not hearing a damned thing from a woman I've been married to for -- ... No, please don't hang up. I'm not yelling at you. I just want to talk to her sometime. Well, could you tell her I want to? Just talk? Please? And tell her ... I've got the flower garden really shaped up now. Even ... lilies. Thanks. Okay. Bye.

He gets up from the bed, terribly shaken. He goes to the mirror and looks at himself. He stiffens with forced composure. Transformed into his role as DI, he strides out of the bedroom.

EXT. RIFLE RANGE - DAY

The Male Recruits, firing. PMIs watching, giving pointers.

ON MADDOX AND TRUCKEE as they both look over and see Russell's target with holes grouped in the center.

MADDOX
Can't let Russell win.

SERIES OF SHOTS: MADDOX'S FACE - HE FIRES. MADDOX'S TARGET - HOLE SPROUTS NEAR THE CENTER. RUSSELL'S FACE - HE FIRES. RUSSELL'S TARGET - HITS CLOSER THAN MADDOX'S. MADDOX'S FACE - FIRES. MADDOX'S TARGET - A BETTER SHOT. RUSSELL'S FACE - FIRES. RUSSELL'S TARGET - NOT AS GOOD AS MADDOX'S LAST ONE.

ON CEPEDA

Tense, knotted. He fires.

CEPEDA'S TARGET -- another miss. There's only a few holes around the outside of the target board.

WIDER ON CEPEDA

Who's very upset. Maddox, right beside him, fires away.

CEPEDA
I'm not going to qualify.

The 1st PMI, down the line some distance, cranes over and spies Cepeda's target, scowling. He starts walking toward Cepeda.

CEPEDA
That's it. He's going to take me off the line. Right now. I get recycled.

Maddox lowers his rifle and sees the PMI coming. He turns back to his sight, aims. Cepeda aims, desperate, nervy. Both FIRE.

ON CEPEDA'S TARGET

As it SPROUTS a hole right on the edge of the bullseye.

WIDE ON CEPEDA, MADDOX AND TRUCKEE

Truckee, on the other side of Maddox, saw what he did. The PMI arrives near them, scowling at the targets, glancing down at both Cepeda and Maddox.

A VOICE over SPEAKERS from the RANGE CONTROL TOWER:

VOICE
CEASE FIRE! CEASE FIRE!

2ND PMI
CLEAR AND LOCK! MAKE 'EM SAFE! WATCH THE BUTTS FOR YOUR SCORES!

Cepeda looks at Maddox. Truckee looks at Cepeda, then Maddox. Maddox briefly glances at the 1st PMI, then looks at his target.

The 1st PMI takes another look at Cepeda's target, then looks at Maddox, then at Cepeda. He says nothing. He walks away.

CEPEDA
(to Maddox)
You shot my target?

MADDOX
Who? Did what? I don't know what
you're talking about.

CEPEDA
... Thanks.

MADDOX
Don't mention it. I mean that -- do
not mention it.

A loud "YEAH!" in the background. WE WIDEN TO SEE Russell, standing, holding up a fist in victory from seeing his score. Maddox, Truckee and Cepeda all look at each other.

EXT. LAUNDRY AREA - SUNDOWN

The Female Recruits do wash. Exler and Velez are side by side.

EXLER
(confidentially)
Velez, something happened to me today
when I was firing the rifle.

VELEZ
Yeah?

EXLER
I ... got excited.

VELEZ
Yeah, you did okay. Made some nice
shots.

EXLER
No, I mean ... I got ... excited.
Turned-on. ... Sexually.

Velez GUFFAWS.

EXLER
Oh, louder, please, make sure they can
hear it at the other end.

Velez reels in her laughter.

VELEZ

Sorry. Exler, you are in full effect,
you know that?

EXLER

In full what?

VELEZ

You kick. You crack me up.

EXLER

So, you're saying you think it's really
out there, what I told you?

VELEZ

It's ... nah. I think it's probably
pretty common.

EXLER

But you didn't feel that way? When you
were shooting the rifle?

VELEZ

Me? Uh ... well ... uh ... maybe.

Velez laughs. Exler shoves her, also laughing.

VELEZ

Think it says anything about that in
the combat manual?

INT. MALE SQUADBAY - NIGHT

BDR. Cepeda once again has a friendly small group around him,
including Kosegin. Russell has his own little group, including
Dewrock.

Truckee sits on his footlocker, reading a letter. Maddox sits
hunched on the floor, twisted with nerves. Truckee doesn't
notice his mood yet. He lowers the letter and smiles at Maddox.

TRUCKEE

Well, buddy, my father's coming here
tomorrow to see the commanding general.
He's got an appointment. He'll
probably pull it off, knowing him.

Maddox has no reaction. He's so upset, he can't even put
attention on Truckee. Truckee moves closer.

TRUCKEE

I figured you'd want to know.

Truckee shows the letter.

TRUCKEE

You want to see the letter?

No reaction from Maddox.

TRUCKEE

Come on. No response? He might really get me out of here. I can't leave without some final insult from you. I need "closure."

Truckee moves closer and sees that Maddox is in real pain.

TRUCKEE

What's the matter?

MADDOX

In ... about a minute ... he'll be dead.

The CLOCK on the wall shows ALMOST EIGHT.

TRUCKEE

Who will be dead?

MADDOX

I wanted him to see me as a Marine. Before he died. You know, you're the one ... who gave me that idea.

TRUCKEE

Are you talking about your father?!

MADDOX

Yeah. He ... He's going to die. In a matter of seconds.

TRUCKEE

Die? What are you talking about?

MADDOX

Execution. He's on death row. He dies at 20 hours ... which is ... coming up ... right ... now.

(pause)

He's dead.

Truckee whips his head to look at the clock, then back at Maddox. He drops the papers and grabs Maddox's hand. The two young men impulsively EMBRACE. They hold for a beat.

TRUCKEE

My God, Maddox. You didn't tell me ...

MADDOX

Now you know.

TRUCKEE

... I'm ... sorry.

PAN OVER TO OTHERS

The two main groups -- the one around Cepeda and the one around Russell -- everyone is silent, looking over at Truckee and Maddox.

RED-HAIRED RECRUIT

What happened?

DEWROCK

If I heard this right ... Maddox's father, on death row ... just got ...

He drags his finger across his neck.

KOSEGIN

... Oh, man ...

Cepeda, deeply stricken, starts to stand, wanting to go to Maddox. But he sits, not wanting to disturb him. He stares in sympathy.

Dewrock chuckles softly, slaps Russell's knee.

DEWROCK

Guess we know about his "big hero Marine" father now, huh?

Russell, outraged at Dewrock, plants a foot on his chest and SHOVES him off his footlocker, sending him flat onto the floor. Then, Russell turns to once again look toward Maddox with a sympathetic expression.

WIDEN ON SQUADBAY AS -- the PHONE RINGS in the DI office. Brinkopf's voice can be heard, getting louder, offering protests and resistance ... then getting very soft. Another beat. Brinkopf steps out of the office.

BRINKOPF

(softly)

Maddox. Telephone.

Telling a recruit that he has a phone call is like telling him he has a limo and a date outside waiting to pick him up. Never, ever, ever happens; period.

So, it takes Maddox a moment to absorb this. He finally gets up and moves toward the office.

WE MOVE WITH HIM AND ADJUST FRAME

TO INCLUDE OFFICE

As Brinkopf stands by the doorway and Maddox goes inside, to the desk. He picks up the phone.

MADDOX

Hello?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. LAWRENCE MADDOX'S CELL

Lawrence is on a phone, with a MAN in a SUIT outside, next to a watchful GUARD.

LAWRENCE

It's me. I'm still alive.

Maddox's knees buckle. He drops into the chair.

MADDOX

I thought you ... !

LAWRENCE

They wouldn't change the date.

MADDOX

Oh, man, oh, man, I thought ...

Truckee moves up right by Brinkopf.

BRINKOPF

Where are you going, Truckee?

TRUCKEE

Sir, this recruit ... uh ...

MADDOX

(into phone)

How long can you talk?

LAWRENCE

My lawyer's making sure I get some phone time. You wanted to hear the story about how I won the medal?

MADDOX

Yeah. Yeah, I want to hear it -- damn right I do!

Maddox looks over and motions Truckee inside.

TRUCKEE

Sir, uh ...

BRINKOPF

What do you two think ... ?

Then, we see that same glimmer of something vulnerable in Brinkopf's face -- that we saw when he was on the phone at his home earlier. He looks at Maddox, then at Truckee. He shoves Truckee inside the office and shuts the door -- leaving himself OUTSIDE the office. He glares at the staring platoon of Recruits.

BRINKOPF

As you were -- or I'll find something for you to do.

The Recruits all turn away, and start up their various conversations.

INT. DI OFFICE - SAME

Truckee sits on the floor near Maddox. Maddox listens intently on the phone.

MADDOX

(repeating so Truckee hears:)

... a piddly little patrol ... Delta Company, 5th Marines out of An Hoa ... uh-huh ...

LAWRENCE

We called it Arizona Territory. Cowboys out looking for Indians, ya see? Point squad stepped in it deep. I was out on flank with a fireteam, and I see 'em get nailed.

[NOTE: Maddox will keep repeating things to Cliff:]

MADDOX

Yeah ... Four, five guys blown away and the rest pinned down ...

LAWRENCE

I don't know what the hell happened next. I just grabbed ahold the M-60 and opened up. Took 'em in the flank. I dragged a couple of the wounded guys back into cover. And then I chucked a couple of frags at the enemy.

MADDOX

There was a break. You picked up the gun and nailed 'em. Kept moving forward ...

LAWRENCE

And then four or five of 'em come at us from a treeline with AK's.

MADDOX

Uh-huh ... You laid down a base of fire while your guys pulled the wounded to the rear. Yeah, go on ... we're listening ...

He looks at Truckee, who's staring hard at him. A beat. ON THEM, WE

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT SIX

ACT SEVEN

EXT. AERIAL SHOT - BASE - DAY

The ADMINISTRATION BUILDING and surrounding environs, including the revered STATUE of IRON MIKE. Drilling next to the statue is PLATOON 3015. On the street near the Admin Building is an idling LIMO.

MOVE IN ON PLATOON - Being drilled by Martin and Fante. Brinkopf watches.

MARTIN

DETAIL ... HUNHHH! LEHHH-FT FACE!

The Recruits stop, turn to the left and stand in formation. Martin looks to Brinkopf, then past him with surprise. Brinkopf turns and sees a CIVILIAN MAN rapidly striding toward the platoon. Behind him is the company's Lieutenant, who is surprised by the Civilian's movement. The Man has long grey hair pulled back into a pony tail and bright red glasses. He'd look like a hippy if it weren't for the Armani suit.

CIVILIAN MAN

Cliff?!

Brinkopf moves into the path of the Man. It intimidates the Man enough to make him stop. Brinkopf faces the Lieutenant and salutes.

BRINKOPF

Sir, Staff Sergeant Brinkopf, Platoon 3015, sixty-five recruits in training.

LIEUTENANT

Staff Sergeant Brinkopf, this man has been here trying to get a release for his son.

BRINKOPF

Yes, Sir -- he's been here before.

CIVILIAN MAN (MR. TRUCKEE)

I'm not leaving until I speak to him.

Brinkopf turns and faces the platoon.

BRINKOPF

PRIVATE TRUCKEE! FRONT AND CENTER!

Truckee goes to Brinkopf and presents himself -- at attention.

BRINKOPF

Talk to your father.

A tense beat. Truckee looks at his father. The Lieutenant casts a curious glance to Brinkopf.

MR. TRUCKEE

(to Truckee)

Dude, it looks like I'll have to go through the Navy to get you out. The Marines are impossible to deal with.

Truckee gives the platoon an embarrassed glance.

LIEUTENANT

The Marines are not impossible to deal with, Mr. Truckee. If the drill instructor recommends dropping your son, I'll sign the papers.

Mr. Truckee looks with surprise at the Lieutenant.

MR. TRUCKEE

You mean to tell me ... I just met with a general who won't drop him, but if I ask a sergeant ... ?

LIEUTENANT

The General won't drop your son at your request, but he'd back my recommendation. And I'll back the drill instructor's.

MR. TRUCKEE

What kind of hierarchy is that?

(to Brinkopf)

Will you drop my son?

BRINKOPF

(to Lieutenant)

If Private Truckee wants to be dropped, then that's my recommendation.

ALL EYES on TRUCKEE.

MR. TRUCKEE

(to Lieutenant)

What now?

LIEUTENANT

We get him away from the platoon, out of their sight.

BRINKOPF

So he doesn't infect the rest of my
Recruits.

LIEUTENANT

He'll report to casual company to wait
out the paperwork.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. BUILDING - SAME

Exler, on cleaning duty with other Female Recruits, catches
sight of the scene from a window.

EXLER

Oh, no ... no way.

Her expression drops into scornful disappointment.

EXT. PARKING LOT - RESUMING

Mr. Truckee stares at Truckee, who's frozen in place. A beat.
Truckee turns and looks at Brinkopf, then at the Junior DI's,
then at the platoon. It physically hurts him when he makes eye
contact with Maddox, and then Cepeda. He looks back at his
Father.

The LIMO DRIVER, miscuing, gets out and goes to the back door and
opens it. -- This action somehow triggers an implosion in
Truckee. He's gagged by the gauche indulgence of it.

MR. TRUCKEE

Well? Cliff? He just told you to ...

Truckee stands motionless.

BRINKOPF

Private Truckee, I didn't hear your
decision.

INT. BUILDING

ON EXLER, pretending to clean the window, staring hard at the
scene, shaking her head in revulsion.

EXLER

Truckee, if you do this ...

EXT. PARKING LOT

Truckee grows intensely agitated, still not moving.

TRUCKEE

I enlisted to spite you.

MR. TRUCKEE

No kidding. We'll rap about it later. Do whatever process they want you to go through, sign whatever you sign. Let's get a move-on.

TRUCKEE

But now, I'm not doing it to spite you.
(to Brinkopf)
Sir, this recruit requests to remain in training with platoon 3015.

MR. TRUCKEE

What? ARE YOU WHACKO?!

Mr. Truckee, SEETHING, starts to mindlessly pace in circles.

TRUCKEE

I appreciate what you did for me, working to get me out of here. And I know I asked you to do it. And I know it was an effort. But it took going this far for me to ... I don't know ... to have it "click" in. I want to see this through.

MR. TRUCKEE

WHAT HAVE THEY DONE TO YOU?!

TRUCKEE

They haven't done anything to me -- to any of us. We've done it to ourselves.

He looks at --

MADDOX, who returns the look, then --

CEPEDA, who returns the look, then --

PAN BACK TO TRUCKEE and his father.

MR. TRUCKEE

(to the Lieutenant)

HE'S GONE CRAZY! HE'S NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS ACTIONS!

TRUCKEE

Yeah, Dad, I am. I'm responsible for my actions. -- Amazing, isn't it? I'm staying.

A long beat of Mr. Truckee doing a slow burn. Then:

MR. TRUCKEE

Okay. Go ahead and play out your joke.
See how funny it is.

Mr. Truckee gets into the back of the limo. Before the Driver can shut the door, Mr. Truckee pulls it shut with a SLAM. The Driver goes to the front, gets inside and pulls away.

INT. BUILDING

Exler gasps. A smile forms on her lips.

EXLER

Oh, my God ...

EXT. PARKING LOT

Watching the limo move down the street, the Lieutenant moves near Brinkopf.

LIEUTENANT

He sure didn't find a limo in Beaufort,
South Carolina.

BRINKOPF

No, Sir, must've ridden it in from
Savannah.

LIEUTENANT

Carry on, Staff Sergeant.

BRINKOPF

Yes, Sir.

As the Lieutenant walks away, Brinkopf turns to Truckee.

BRINKOPF

Private Truckee, you are requesting to
return to platoon 3015?

TRUCKEE

Yes, sir.

BRINKOPF

Don't ask me. Ask them.

He points to the Recruits.

TRUCKEE

Platoon 3015, this recruit requests
permission to re-join you.

The Recruits are silent, unsure of the protocol.

MARTIN
YOU HEARD THE QUESTION!

MADDOX
Ooo-rah, Truckee!

Maddox looks over at Cepeda, then Kosegin.

CEPEDA & KOSEGIN
Ooo-rah, Truckee!

Maddox, Cepeda and Kosegin look at Russell.

RUSSELL AND MORE RECRUITS
OOO-RAH, TRUCKEE!

ALL THE REMAINDER
OOO-RAH, TRUCKEE!

Truckee smiles, then wipes the expression off his face and gets into the formation.

EXT. FEMALE PLATOON AREA - DAY

A FEMALE LIEUTENANT finishes an inspection of the Recruits, who are on the line. The Female Lieutenant, now near the end, seems to have been checking EVERY rifle.

FEMALE LIEUTENANT
(to Hovis)
Inspection complete. Looking better than acceptable, Staff Sergeant Hovis.

HOVIS
Thank you, Ma'am.

The Female Lieutenant leaves the area.

HOVIS
At ease.

The Recruits CHEER and give each other handshakes and high-fives.

HOVIS
Private Wilson.

The Black Recruit (of earlier scenes) steps up to Hovis, at attention.

HOVIS
Let me see that rifle.

Black Recruit hands her rifle to Hovis. Hovis checks it thoroughly. She notices something.

HOVIS

The swing swivel is broken. Did you rig this?

BLACK RECRUIT

... Yes, Ma'am.

HOVIS

How did you do it?

BLACK RECRUIT

This recruit just ... Ma'am, this recruit just ... uh ...

HOVIS

Who fixed this rifle for you, Wilson?

Exler steps up to Hovis.

EXLER

This recruit did, Ma'am.

HOVIS

How did you do it, Exler?

EXLER

This recruit used one of the butt screws and stuck a dowel through it.

HOVIS

Why did you do it? It should've been sent for repair.

EXLER

Ma'am, the rifle broke just a few minutes before we got on the line.

HOVIS

Do you realize that a Marine Corps Lieutenant just checked over this rifle in an official inspection?

EXLER

Yes, Ma'am.

A beat as Hovis stares at her.

HOVIS

Pretty impressive, Exler.

EXLER

This recruit thanks the drill instructor, Ma'am.

EXT. THE FLAGPOLE - NIGHT

-- Which is held up by a STATUE of the FLAG-RAISING MARINES at IWO JIMA. At the top of the pole is a huge AMERICAN FLAG, flapping in the breeze. The Male Recruits stand at attention in formation, each loaded up with full combat gear, including backpack and rifle. All three DI's are present. Brinkopf looks at his digital watch: "3:00 AM." He walks up and down past Recruits.

BRINKOPF

You are about to begin "the crucible." Fifty-six straight hours of combat simulation and obstacle negotiation, the very last part of which is a nine-mile march to this flagpole. When -- and if -- you get to this spot, I will personally hand you the emblem of the globe, eagle and anchor. You will finally be a U.S. Marine. Are you ready for the crucible?

RECRUITS

YES, SIR!

EXT. SUNKEN MUD CRATER - DAY

A POND without the water. A team of fourteen Male Recruits gets into position -- LYING ON THEIR BACKS in the mud. They PASS a series of HEAVY AMMO BOXES over themselves, one to the next -- Truckee, Maddox, Cepeda, Russell, Kosegyn, Dewrock and others -- STRAINING in the exertion. There are BOOMS and FLASHES all around them to simulate EXPLOSIONS and GUNFIRE.

TRUCKEE

Things must weigh a hundred pounds.

MADDOX

I don't think the object of this is to guess the weight.

Brinkopf observes from nearby.

BRINKOPF

Keep the boxes low. If they get hit by gunfire, they blow up.

ANGLE ON ENTIRE LINE of Recruits, we see the last box start up the human chain.

BRINKOPF

Last box. What do you do now?

After passing the box, each Recruit in turn ROLLS onto his stomach. This end of the line begins to CRAWL FORWARD through the mud.

MOVE TO TOP OF THE LINE

As the last box gets to the stash of boxes. All the Recruits now rapidly crawl up to the head of the line, grouping together.

BRINKOPF

Get across that field. Fast.

The Recruits grab the boxes -- two to a box -- pick them up, and begin to RUN. Brinkopf follows them and we MOVE TO

THE FIELD

Where the BOOMS and RIFLE POPS continue. POP-UP TARGETS appear along the way. The Recruits "return fire" by aiming and pulling the triggers on their (unloaded) rifles.

BRINKOPF

Stay low. You earned yourself some casualties.

Brinkopf moves among them and points at three different Recruits:

BRINKOPF

You, you and you -- you're hit, get on the ground.

Cepeda and Kosegin stoop to grab a "wounded" Recruit. They grab him under the armpits and drag him across the ground -- while continuing to carry the heavy ammo box. Maddox and Truckee do the same thing with another "wounded" Recruit.

Russell and Dewrock, who, like the former, is carrying his own box, come together to grab the third "casualty." They drag him along. They all get to a

POND

-- This time WITH water. They begin to wade through the waist-deep water, having to hold UP the casualties and ammo boxes.

BRINKOPF

I see some heads that are asking to get blown off.

The Recruits hunch lower while still wading and carrying. It's absolutely grueling.

MADDOX
 (to Recruits without casualties).
 RETURN FIRE! KEEP THE PERIMETER
 COVERED!

The Recruits w/o casualties (all are carrying boxes) aim their rifles and mime firing, positioning themselves around the Recruits with casualties. Russell and Maddox exchange a look -- tense.

They all sludge out of the pond and get to solid ground again. They are immediately faced with FOUR CONCRETE TUNNELS (CULVERTS) that are thirty feet long, but only four feet high.

BRINKOPF
 Keep moving fast. Through the tunnels.

The Recruits begin to move toward the tunnels in a disorganized way, with too many heading for the same one. Maddox pulls Truckee and their shared burdens forward, points out tunnels.

MADDOX
 SPREAD IT OUT!

The Recruits split up so that only a few go through each tunnel.

INT. TUNNEL

Maddox and Truckee have to get very low to keep their casualty from scraping the top of the tunnel. Their BREATHING is loud and labored. A POP-UP TARGET appears at the far end of the tunnel. Truckee, seeing and reacting faster than Maddox, lifts his rifle and "shoots."

MADDOX
 Good move.

EXT. FIELD

The Recruits emerge from the tunnels and head for a WIDE CANAL OF WATER with NARROW BOARDS across it.

BRINKOPF
 Stay on those boards. Do not fall in
 the water.

The Recruits get to the canal. They have to cross by balancing themselves as they take careful steps across the boards.

BRINKOPF
 ALWAYS STAY LOW! You're still under
 fire.

The Recruits have to bend down and keep up the "tight-rope" walk. Everyone carries an ammo box -- and, of course, our select group also still have casualties. GRUNTING, GROANING, HEAVY BREATHING. This is brutal exertion.

Dewrock FALLS into the canal. This causes the casualty to fall with him, though Russell still hangs onto one arm of the casualty. The ammo box BANGS down against the board, held by Russell's other hand. The water is about six feet deep, so Dewrock TREADS, as learned in the swimming pool. He holds up the casualty by one end; Russell still maintains a grip as well.

RUSSELL

(to approaching pair of Recruits)

Help me grab the box!

The Recruits, of course, have their own box. One of them reaches down and also takes hold of Russell's box. But Russell is still holding onto one arm of the casualty, who's half-sunken in the water.

Maddox and Truckee have reached the other side. Maddox sees the situation.

MADDOX

Truckee, go help get that box.

Truckee goes onto the board to help the Recruits take Russell's box. Maddox gets onto the board next to Russell's board. He reaches out to Russell.

MADDOX

Grab my arm.

RUSSELL

Look, I got this covered. I don't know what you --

MADDOX

Come on, man, grab my arm.

Russell grabs Maddox's arm. Their arms are linked across the span from one board to the other.

MADDOX

Dewrock, can you get the casualty up to us?

DEWROCK

Yeah.

Dewrock takes the casualty and pushes him up so Russell and Maddox can use their other arms to pull him up. They DRAPE him over their linked arms. Then, they use their free hands to grab Dewrock. They move slowly to the far side of the canal. They lay the casualty down, then drag Dewrock up and over, onto the ground.

Brinkopf stares hard at Maddox, then looks over the whole group and the field ahead of them.

BRINKOPF

Get across that field and up that hill.

The group keeps moving, running, low to the ground, carrying their heavy burdens. BOOMS and POPS. Targets. Run and return fire. Their feet hit SLICK MUD spots. Some Recruits fall, get up and resume the struggle. Other slide a bit, get their balance and go on. They start up a steep HILLSIDE.

Dewrock SCREAMS and drops to the ground, grabbing his ankle. Russell has to lower his "casualty" and let the ammo box drop. Brinkopf rushes out to the spot -- as does a NAVY CORPSMAN (medic). The Corpsman immediately takes off Dewrock's boot and begins to treat him for a fracture.

BRINKOPF

Give me your rifle, Dewrock.

Brinkopf takes Dewrock's rifle and hoists the "pretend casualty" onto his shoulder. He grabs one handle on the ammo box. Russell takes the other. They move down field as a team, with Brinkopf filling in for Dewrock.

The whole team gets to a

WATER OBSTACLE - TOP OF HILL

Where they stop momentarily. It's a large HOLE filled with water. Over it is a very SLIGHT STRUCTURE, just an A-FRAME with a PLATFORM.

BRINKOPF

You must get these ammo boxes and casualties across -- no going around it. Figure it out.

MADDOX

Five men up on the frame first!

Maddox jumps up, grabs onto the frame. All the Recruits hesitate, with a large contingency staring at Russell.

RUSSELL

YOU HEARD MADDOX! LET'S GO!

Russell moves under Maddox, helps push him up. A glance between Russell and Maddox. Three other Recruits join them.

MADDOX

Use that pole to support the box and hand it up here.

Cepeda and Truckee grab a pole from the ground.

TRUCKEE

Is that why it was laying here, Sir?

BRINKOPF

I don't know. Figure it out.

Truckee and Cepeda slide the pole through the handles of an ammo box.

TRUCKEE

-- Keep it at one end of the pole. We gotta raise it up.

Other Recruits join them and help them hoist up the pole so the end with the box goes higher upwards. The box stays hanging at the upward end of the pole as they tilt it upward further and further, moving it toward the Recruits who are perched on the frame. Then -- the box SLIDES DOWN the pole. Everyone has to quickly release the pole and let the box crash to the ground.

BRINKOPF

Now, that would probably have blown you to bits.

BOOMS and FLASHES in the distance. POP-UP TARGETS.

BRINKOPF

And you are still under fire. Keep yourselves covered.

Some of the Recruits make a perimeter and "fire" their rifles back at the targets. Cepeda, Truckee, Kosegin and others get the box on the pole again.

MADDOX

Don't raise pole too high. Can't let that box slide again.

The Recruits on the ground get the box lifted into the air on one end of the pole. They tilt it up as much as they can and, just as it starts to slide down, they slightly lower it. Maddox, Russell and the other perched Recruits grab at the box and wrestle it up onto the platform with them.

When they have the box secure, Maddox and Russell look at each other. Then, Maddox looks down at the team.

MADDOX

Next box!

Cepeda and Truckee slide the pole through the next ammo box.

CEPEDA

ALTO! Stop there. That's the right spot on the pole to lift it even higher without sliding.

TRUCKEE

(to the others)

Let's keep it steady!

They lift the pole, raising upward the end with the box, keeping it from sliding. They lift it to a further angle than before and ... the box stays still.

KOSEGIN

You called it, Cepeda.

The Recruits on the frame grab the box -- more easily, since it's closer this time.

MADDOX

Damn, team, looking nice now.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

All the Recruits -- CAKED with THICK PLASTERED MUD on their CLOTHES AND THEIR FACES -- lie on their sleep mats, on the ground. Some pick at rations they've been eating; others are asleep.

Truckee, Maddox, Cepeda and Russell inspect their FEET and HANDS:

-- ENORMOUS BLISTERS, SWOLLEN TOES, BLEEDING TEARS, POPPING BLISTERS, PEELING OFF DEAD SKIN. -- JAMMED, SWOLLEN THUMBS, BLISTERS, BLEEDING CUTS.

TRUCKEE

My eyeballs are throbbing. I'll have to rip 'em out to take a nap.

MADDOX

It's already too late to nap, anyway.

RUSSELL

We can rest when we're dead.

CEPEDA

I've been dead for the last two hours.

TRUCKEE

Speaking of time, anyone have any idea what time it is right now? Or, better yet -- what day it is? Is this the second day? Second full day? Or partial -- ?

RUSSELL

(not mean; tired)

Aw, shut up, Truckee.

CHUCKLING. Kosegin, writing on a torn piece of cardboard, approaches.

KOSEGIN

You guys -- you haven't pledged your wager for the pool yet.

MADDOX

The pool?

KOSEGIN

Yeah. Everyone's good for five dollars. At the ceremony, when we get the eagle, globe and anchor pinned on, the person who does not cry gets the money.

TRUCKEE

Oh, well, hell, you might as well just hand the money over to me right now. You know what I'm gonna do at the ceremony -- a "thumbs up" and a grin.

MADDOX

What's this all about, Kosegin? You mean everybody usually does cry at the ceremony?

KOSEGIN

Put your name in, Maddox. Find out.

TRUCKEE

Who's going to determine the winner?

KOSEGIN

Sgt. Martin.

BOOMS and FLASHES in the background. Brinkopf steps INTO FRAME.

BRINKOPF

THAT'S IT, PRIVATES! YOU HAD YOUR TWO HOURS! PACK YOUR TRASH AND GET READY TO MOVE OUT!

Recruits are leaping to their feet, rolling up their mats and tying them to backpacks; putting on the backpacks and grabbing their rifles. They assemble in lines.

BRINKOPF

You are tired, fatigued, your feet have blisters and your bones feel like they've cracked. Am I right?

ALL RECRUITS

YES, SIR!

BRINKOPF

You've heard this hundreds of times, but I'm going to repeat it: the motto of the Marine Corps is "Semper Fidelis" -- Latin for "Always Faithful." That means Always Faithful. That means, when you become a Marine, you will be a Marine for the rest of your life, whether you are in active duty or not. No one and nothing can take that away from you.

ON MADDUX as he SHARES A GLANCE WITH TRUCKEE. Then back to WIDE.

BRINKOPF

Each and every one of you is going to finish this crucible. I know you can. Am I right?

ALL RECRUITS

YES, SIR!

BRINKOPF

TWENTY MORE EVENTS BEFORE THE NEXT TWO-HOUR BREAK! CAN YOU DO IT?!

ALL RECRUITS

YES, SIR!

BRINKOPF

Sgt. Martin and Sgt. Fante, do you believe they can do it?

MARTIN AND FANTE

GOOD TO GO!

BRINKOPF

MOVE IT OUT!

Martin and Fante become traffic directors, pointing different TEAMS (groups of 15) to different parts of the nearby WOODS.

INT. WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

Our featured Male team of fourteen -- STILL with the burdens of ammo boxes and some casualties -- now RUNS RAPIDLY through THICK BRUSH and TREES in PITCH BLACKNESS. Only TWO FLASHLIGHTS. Cepeda holds a map and Maddox uses one of the flashlights to consult it -- as they run. Suddenly -- simulated enemy: BOOMS and POPS. POP-UP TARGETS.

BRINKORF

Stay low.

The Recruits "return fire," stay low and keep running.

MADDOX

(re: map)

GO TO THE LEFT!

The team starts turning to the left, still running. They come to a steep hill, still in the thick of the woods. They move down it, some falling, some banging into trees. Truckee falls. He sits up, but does NOT get to his feet.

MADDOX

Truckee! COME ON!

Truckee hesitates. Maddox and Cepeda grab his arm and yank him to his feet.

CEPEDA

Only doing this, amigo, 'cause we want you to suffer with us.

DISSOLVE TO:

CRUCIBLE MONTAGE - FEMALE:

-- (DAY:) The Female Recruits crawling prone up a 45-degree-angled ROCK PILE -- WHILE CARRYING a heavy AMMO BOX, two-to-a-box. Velez and Exler are a pair. Everyone getting SCRATCHES, slipping, kicking up rocks. The Blonde Recruit SLIDES backwards, getting very SCRATCHED.

-- (NIGHT:) Teams of two Recruits carry a "casualty" on a stretcher through GNARLED WEEDS that SNATCH FEET. Velez and Exler almost trip, almost spill their "casualty." They wrest control of the stretcher and keep going. Another pair of carriers FALLS and DUMPS the "casualty." DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FIELD - DAY

A FEMALE team, doing the crucible, including Exler and Velez, marches toward their next obstacle.

ON VELEZ AND EXLER

Velez winces as she walks.

EXLER

What is it?

VELEZ

My knee. I got an old injury.

They keep walking. Exler reacts, looking toward Velez's legs.

EXLER

I can hear your knee popping.

VELEZ

Well, stop listening.

EXLER

You should go to the medical corpsman.

VELEZ

Shh! I'm finishing the crucible, Exler.
No way am I gonna be recycled again.

As they keep walking, Velez notices TEARS in Exler's eyes.

VELEZ

Exler? You got some problem, too?

EXLER

The toes on my right foot. I think a couple of them are broken.

Exler stops a beat, almost ready to scream. She forces herself to keep walking. Velez throws an arm around her, helping her along. Exler throws an arm around Velez.

VELEZ

Now, listen, Exler, you look like it's pretty bad. You got no choice. You have to go see the corpsman. I'll help you.

Velez steers Exler to the side. Exler steers them back forward.

EXLER

I'm going to finish the crucible, too, Velez.

VELEZ

You can't and you know it.

Velez steers Exler to the side. Exler steers them back forward. She looks intensely at Velez.

EXLER

Why is it that you can bear the pain
and finish, but I can't, according to
you? Huh? Is it because I'm Exler?
The girly-girl?

A beat. Velez steers them off to the side again.

VELEZ

Pretty much, yeah. :

It was just a joke, and they BOTH CHUCKLE. Then:

EXLER

If we go to the corpsman, I'll report
your knee problem.

Velez stops them from moving. Then, she steers them back
forward again. They continue to walk with the rest. Velez
shakes her head.

VELEZ

All right, loca. Better hide those
tears, though.

The team arrives at a SLANTED WALL. It slants TOWARD them.

BLACK RECRUIT

Who's got the best upper body strength?

VELEZ

Right here!

BLACK RECRUIT

I don't know ... how's your weight?

EXLER

Her weight is fine, thank you. How's
your weight?

Exler moves Velez toward the wall. She kneels down.

VELEZ

(whispering)

Not you -- your foot.

EXLER

Get up there.

Velez gets onto Exler and Exler boosts her up. Velez grabs onto
the top of the wall and pulls herself up with strong, straining
arms. She kicks up her legs and manages to get on the top of
the wall.

BLACK RECRUIT
Excellent! Next person up!

Two more Recruits go to the wall and one gets boosted by the other until she's on top with Velez. The group continues to boost up one Recruit after another -- with Velez and her partner grabbing them and pulling them up and over.

EXT. WIDE SHOT - WOODS - NIGHT:

BOOMS and FLASHES. TIME DISSOLVE:

EXT. WOODS - SUNRISE

Out of the woods marches the entire Male Platoon in formation. Brinkopf in the lead, the two Jr's on the side. The Recruits look like HELL -- dirty, bruised, panting for breath as they REPEAT BRINKOPF'S COUNT-OFF. Martin and Fante dart all around, hawkeying the Recruits to see if anyone's truly hurt.

PAN TO - A TRUCK carrying Recruits who are MEDICAL CASES. The truck slowly ambles along a road with the disappointed human cargo.

BACK TO THE FORMATION ... and, suddenly, Russell YELPS with pain. He stiffens and keeps walking, his face bulging and reddening. Martin hawkeyes him.

MARTIN
Are you okay, Private?

RUSSELL
(forcing a "hearty" reply)
YES, S-SIR!

Martin keeps an eye on him for a beat, then moves away. Maddox and Truckee quickly put arms around Russell's shoulders, as he does with theirs, and they pull him into the CENTER of the formation to HIDE HIM. Picking up on this, Cepeda and Kosegin MAKE ROOM by moving to either side of those three.

MADDOX
(softly to Russell)
Can you walk?

RUSSELL
No, man. It's my ankle. It's killing me. I just got all the way through the crucible and ...

MADDOX
-- And you're going to get to the flagpole.

RUSSELL

You guys ... you can't hold me for the whole march. It's nine miles.

Russell looks at Truckee, then Maddox. Cepeda and Kosegin look over. Some intangible, unnamable essence rises in all of them. They've never felt anything like it before.

Martin is once again moving up toward them. Maddox and Truckee nudge Russell. They must let him go. They remove their arms. Russell makes do marching as best he can in total pain. Martin hawkeyes Russell for a long beat, then moves away. Maddox and Truckee immediately put their arms around Russell's shoulders again -- and he, theirs.

AERIAL SHOT - PAN ACROSS VAST DISTANCE

From wilderness to the base, over the base to --

THE FLAGPOLE. TIME DISSOLVE:

EXT. FLAGPOLE - LATER

All the Male Recruits stand in lines before the flagpole. MUSIC plays over a sound system. Brinkopf moves along the lines, stopping at each Recruit to hand each an EMBLEM -- the GLOBE, EAGLE and ANCHOR. There's SNIFFLING and WET EYES all around.

Brinkopf moves to CEPEDA.

BRINKOPF

Cepeda, you know what a "phoenix" is?

CEPEDA

Yes, Sir. It's a bird that dies and then comes back to life.

BRINKOPF

It rises out of the ashes, born anew. Does this bird exist?

CEPEDA

No, Sir. It's a legend.

Brinkopf hands the emblem to Cepeda.

BRINKOPF

No, Marine, it's not a legend. It's real. You are a phoenix.

Cepeda begins to weep. Brinkopf squeezes his shoulder, moves to MADDOX.

BRINKOPF

Does me good, Maddox, to shake hands
with a born leader.

Brinkopf shakes Maddox's hand. Maddox heaves with one big SOB -- the result of trying to resist it -- then trickles tears and smiles. Brinkopf hands him the emblem, squeezes his shoulder. He moves to TRUCKEE.

BRINKOPF

Truckee, it must feel good to have
someone be genuinely proud of you for
things you have actually done yourself.
Well, that's me. I'm proud of you.

That's just a bit too much for Truckee. He gives the "thumbs up," he smiles, and ... TEARS RUN down his face. Maddox, Cepeda, Russell and Kosegin -- all of whom are also crying, see Truckee and chuckle through their tears. Brinkopf hands him the emblem.

TRUCKEE

Thank you, Sir.

TIME DISSOLVE:

EXT. FLAGPOLE - AFTERNOON

And the FEMALES get their emblems. Not a dry eye among them. Hovis moves from Velez to Exler, who's at the end of a row. She hands the emblem to Exler. Exler breaks into tears. Then, she FALLS to the side, onto the ground, grabbing her foot. A CORPSMAN, at the ready, runs to her. Velez moves out of line and kneels by her. The Corpsman takes off Exler's boot and sock and starts to treat the fracture.

Hovis steps out of the lines and stands over Exler.

EXLER

Does this mean this recruit didn't make it?

HOVIS

You have a globe, eagle and anchor,
Marine. You damned well did make it.

Hovis moves back into the line to resume giving out the emblems. Velez takes Exler's hand.

VELEZ

You and me -- we're Marines. And, if you
and I are equal, Exler ... then, that makes
me feel pretty good about myself.

EXLER

If we're equal, then that's the
greatest accomplishment of my life.

Their hands squeeze tighter. They both drip tears.

EXLER

Velez, you're in full effect.

They laugh.

INT. MALE DI OFFICE - DAY

Maddox, Truckee, Cepeda, Russell and Kosegin all stand before
Brinkopf.

BRINKOPF

You all want to be infantry?

MADDOX

Yes, Sir. Assigned together.

BRINKOPF

Even you, Truckee? You don't want to
be a computer weenie?

TRUCKEE

(pretending to consider it)
"Computer weenie ... " Sir, the drill
instructor makes it sound so
respectable ...

Russell and Maddox both playfully punch Truckee's shoulders.
Everyone laughs. Then, a beat as Brinkopf looks them over.

BRINKOPF

Well, it's not up to me how you get
assigned in active duty.

RUSSELL

Yes, Sir, but the drill instructor's
recommendation carries a lot of weight.

BRINKOPF

I want you to think about this -- the Marines are first in. First to fight. And the first Marines in are the infantry. Infantry gets shot at, shelled, flamed, gassed, booby-trapped. Infantry walks right into the piles of bodies, holds pieces together until the medical corpsman get on the scene. U.S. Marine Core Infantry opens the hatches of hell. If it's what you want, I'll back you. Because I don't have any doubt that each of you can do it.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MALE SQUADBAY - DAY

All the Marines of platoon 3015 are busily getting into their DRESS UNIFORMS and making sure everything looks right. Bunkmates helps each other -- Truckee with Maddox, Kosegin with Russell -- and Cepeda. These last five are all next to each other.

TRUCKEE

I don't have anyone coming to see me graduate.

MADDOX

My mother wasn't sure she could make it. I don't know if she's happy about me doing this.

CEPEDA

Both my parents will be out there. I just hope they didn't bring my sister.

KOSEGIN

Why not?

CEPEDA

She's really mad that I enlisted. She's the type that might even interrupt the ceremony.

TRUCKEE

Kosegin? What about you?

KOSEGIN

Yeah, both my parents. -- Mainly because of shocked disbelief.

These four look at Russell, who's sullen.

MADDOX

Russell, you probably have a whole crowd out there.

RUSSELL

Sure do.

A beat.

MADDOX:

They'll be proud.

A brief smile from Russell. Another beat.

TRUCKEE

So, why did you get assigned to motor pool?

RUSSELL

I've done a lot of work restoring classic cars. And my test score on mechanical was off the map. They need guys who work on engines.

KOSEGIN

Is that what you'll be doing? Maintenance on vehicles?

RUSSELL

And drive them.

CEPEDA

Drive? Military vehicles? You mean, like those amphibious monsters with hi-tech gadgetry? What are you complaining about?

Everyone chuckles. Russell's mood raises a little. Brinkopf, Martin and Fante come out of the office. The Junior DIs are more relaxed than before.

MARTIN

Attention on deck.

The Marines stand at attention on the line. WE PAN DOWN THEM. Now, at attention in these sharp and austere dress uniforms, they look DIFFERENT. The DI's move down the rows, inspecting.

BRINKOPF

Thirteen weeks later. Did I tell you that you would come home to a home you've never known?

THE WHOLE PLATOON

YES, SIR!

BRINKOPF

Do you now understand what the United States is?

THE WHOLE PLATOON

YES, SIR!

BRINKOPF

Something that gives things to you?

THE WHOLE PLATOON

NO, SIR!

BRINKOPF

Then, what?

THE WHOLE PLATOON

THE COUNTRY WE SERVE, SIR!

BRINKOPF

And what is the Marine Corps?

THE WHOLE PLATOON

WE ARE THE MARINE CORPS, SIR!

BRINKOPF

You're damned right you are. Platoon 3015, you are leaving this squadbay for the last time. Say goodbye to your childhood. I am taking you out and presenting you to the Commanding General and the world. Give me a "Semper Fi."

THE WHOLE PLATOON

SEMPER FI!

BRINKOPF

RIGHT FACE!

The platoon smartly turns to face right.

BRINKOPF

FORWARD ... HUHHHHHCH!

The platoon marches out of the squadbay. WE PAN ACROSS the FACES, among them, Maddox, Truckee, Cepeda, Kosegin and Russell.

The squadbay EMPTIES. We HEAR the CADENCE being called. We LINGER in the empty barracks, hearing the platoon get further away. And WE

FADE OUT.

THE END