



The Jolly Greens

George P. Ojala & James H. Ojala

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WRITTEN BY

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DEDICATION

THE CREW OF JOLLY 70, CRASHED INTO SONG NA RIVER, 25 NOVEMBER 1971:

Killed in Action:

Pilot: Major Robert Swenck
Co-Pilot: Captain John George
PJ: A1C Tom Thomas

Missing in Action:

PJ: Tech Sergeant James Thomas

Survivors:

Sergeant Hank Theriot
Sergeant Richard Sneed

THE CREW OF JOLLY 67, SHOT DOWN DURING BAT 21 RESCUE MISSION, 4 MARCH 1972:

Killed in Action:

Pilot: Captain Peter Chapman
Co-Pilot: 1st Lieutenant John Call
Flight Engineer: Tech Sergeant Roy D. Prater
PJ: Tech Sergeant Allan Avery
PJ: Sergeant William Pearson
Photographer: Staff Sergeant James Alley

AND TO ALL THE HUNDREDS OF OTHER MEN IN THE AIR RESCUE THEATER WHO SACRIFICED THEIR LIVES THAT OTHERS MIGHT LIVE.

INTRODUCTION

This is a fictionalized account based on real events and people of a year spent in Vietnam serving in a renowned Air Force unit known as "The Jolly Green Giants". With a few notable exceptions, the sole purpose of the 37th Air Rescue and Recovery Service in that era was to rescue pilots and crews that had been shot down, nearly always in hostile territory. The Jollys' mission was to save lives, not take them, and the men of the 37th were enormously proud of that.

Pilots loved the men of the Jolly Greens. As a retired Navy fighter pilot who flew McDonnell Douglas F-4 Phantom II's off aircraft carriers in Vietnam recently told us, "The Jolly Greens were my heroes. They were the craziest, bravest sons-a-bitches in the war. My buddies and I knew that, if we were shot down, the Jolly Greens would risk their lives trying to save us. Knowing that gave me the courage I needed to fly. I loved the Jolly Greens. We all did. They always had our bSkinny."

By the end of the Vietnam War, the 37th had rescued over 1,000 pilots whose planes had been shot down. During that same period, 14 Jolly Green 53s were felled by enemy fire and three more crashed for other reasons. In all, hundreds of members of the various military branches, not just the Air Force, gave their lives attempting to rescue their stranded comrades from danger.

The 37th was based at Da Nang AFB, RVN.

THE CHARACTERS

Duane "Skinny" Curtis – Airman 1st Class, PJ
John "Scosh" Bryant – Airman 1st Class, PJ
Bob "JSkinny" JSkinnyon – 2nd Lieutenant, co-pilot, Afro-American
John "Jadro" Jadrosich – Captain, HH-53-C, Pilot
Colonel Robert "Big" Johnson – Jolly Green Commander
George "OJ" Ojala – Sergeant, Flight Engineer
Ray "Peas" Peaslee – Sergeant, Crew Chief
Mike Pick – Tech Sergeant, Flight Engineer
Colonel Charles Royal – Base Commander
Barry "Stew" or "BS" Steward – Sergeant, Photographer
Hank "The Riot" Theriot – Sergeant, Flight Engineer

FADE IN

1 EXT. WASH, D.C. — DEDICATION OF VIETNAM MEMORIAL — DAY

1

The MAIN TITLE is followed by this:

WASHINGTON, DC

1991

Several thousand vets are milling around, bedecked in their service uniforms and colors. The Marines among them proudly sport leather vests splashing their signature maroon-and-gold colors. Navy vets favor Navy blue and gold; Army vets, black and gold; Air Force vets, blue and silver; Coast Guard vets, blue, scarlet, and white. Together, their bright colors and distinctive garb add sparkle to an otherwise solemn occasion, making it easy for every vet present to identify other former members of their particular service. The men — and some women — instinctively gravitate to their own service groups, forming pulsating pools of coordinated colors.

One vet is kneeling in front of a headstone with an inscription that reads "Jolly 67" and includes the names of six airman killed in a crash of one of the 37th Air Rescue and Recovery Squadron's HH-53-C helicopters on Good Friday 1972. He's wearing a silk, olive-green flight jacket bearing the iconic cartoon image of the Jolly Green Giant on the left front chest along with a medal bar on the right front chest consisting of 10 ribbons. Among the medals are an Air Medal with six Oak Leaf Clusters, indicating 120 combat missions flown, and a Distinguished Flying Cross, recognizing conspicuous bravery. Charles Lindbergh was awarded a DFC, as were Amelia Earhart and Jimmy Doolittle. The back of the vet's flight jacket shows the image of the Angel Gabriel holding the earth in his hands with lightning bolts for wings. Also there are the words of the 37th's motto: "THAT OTHERS MAY LIVE". Below it are the words: "AIR RESCUE AND RECOVERY SERVICE".

The lone vet stands up as six HH-53-C helicopters execute a fly-by over the assembled crowd. Hearing the once-familiar sound of that sextet of helos, he flashes back to a memorable day in 'Nam in early 1971.

2 EXT. ABOARD DC-10 CHARTER FLIGHT ON APPROACH TO DA NANG AF, RVN —
DAY 2

There's a split screen with the left side showing an HH-53-C helicopter — a.k.a. "Super Jolly Green Giant" or "Sea Stallion" — flying a CSAR (Combat Search And Rescue) mission. The right side shows a chartered DC-10 passenger jet crammed full of military personnel dressed in civilian clothes heading to 'Nam.

The muffled murmur of dozens of conversations can be heard as passengers introduce themselves, talk about where they're from, and trade stories — most of them true, some of them not — in nervous anticipation of what lies ahead. Two men sitting next to each other toward the rear of the plane begin to speak:

FIRST PASSENGER

(extending his hand)

Hi, my name's John Jadrosich.

SECOND PASSENGER

(extending his hand and shaking Jadrosich's)

Hi, my name's George Ojala. Where are you headed?
What outfit are you joining?

JADROSICH

I'm joining the 37th Air Rescue Squadron at Da Nang. How 'bout you?

OJALA

Me too! The same! The 37th. That's amazing. We're both Jolly Greens!

JADROSICH

Isn't that something? I'll be flying one of the 53s as captain. And you?

OJALA

Nothing so fancy. I'm just a lowly buck sergeant. I'm slated to serve as a flight engineer on the 53s. Maybe we'll fly some missions together.

JADROSICH

That would be great. It really is a small world after all.

OJALA

So, it's Captain Jadrosich, then? Am I supposed to salute you?

JADROSICH

That sounds uppity. Just call me "Jadro." That's the name all my friends have hung on me since I was a kid. What should I call you. George, isn't it?

OJALA

George is my given name, but most of my friends call me "OJ" because of my last name, Ojala. Nobody can ever pronounce it right. It's a Finnish name, and nobody speaks Finnish. A lot of people think it's Spanish, but it's not. So I'm an OJ, just like that football player for the Buffalo Bills.

JADROSICH

(extending his hand)

In that case, OJ it is.

OJALA

(taking Jadro's hand)

In that case, Jadro it is.

With that, a life-long friendship is born.

3 EXT. JUNGLE NEAR HO CHI MINH TRAIL, JOLLY GREEN 67 ON FINAL APPROACH TO RESCUE DOWNED PILOT — SAME DAY

3

On board Jolly 67, in a holding pattern.

MAJOR ROBERT SWENCK, PILOT

Pilot to Queen. Pilot to Queen. We're ready to go in.

["Queen" is the call sign for a C-130 aircraft circling nearby. Similar C-130s act as overhead command posts for all missions. "King" is the call sign for the on-ground command center responsible for overseeing all rescue operations. King is located on base at Da Nang AFB.]

Major Swenck has been waiting for a formal OK from Queen to attempt to rescue a downed pilot for a second time. They tried to go in once before, but were shot up with minor damage to the 53

and had to abort. After encountering enemy fire on that first run, Major Swenck called in the two A1E Skyraiders that accompanied every mission. The Skyraiders, call sign "Sandy", went in and dropped napalm and shot up the area where the enemy gunfire came from.

[An A1E Skyraider was a piston-driven, folding-wing aircraft once used as aircraft carrier support during the Korean War. It ran on kerosene and could stay aloft in a rescue area for up to six hours, helping keep the enemy at bay.]

This is Jolly 67's last chance to extricate the downed pilot. Fuel is running low. There's not enough left in the tanks to make a third attempt. It's now or never.

QUEEN

Queen to Jolly 67. Queen to Jolly 67. You're cleared to go. Good luck!

MAJOR SWENCK

(speaking through his headphone to the crew)
Hold on men. Queen just gave us their OK. Get ready, cuz here we go!

Major Swenck commences final approach. Once again, Jolly 67 comes under heavy fire. This time, the co-pilot, Second Lieutenant Henry Klein, is hit in the groin area and Jolly 67 is forced to abort the mission.

MAJOR SWENCK

Pilot to Queen. Mayday! Mayday! Our co-pilot's been hit and is badly wounded. What's the closest hospital? He needs immediate attention. He's bleeding out, and the PJs are trying to stabilize him.

QUEEN

Queen to Jolly 67. The closest option for you is the Hospital Ship Hope anchored in the harbor off the city of Hue. We'll alert them that you've on your way in with a badly-wounded man on board. You're about 30 minutes away. Can you make it?

CAPTAIN GEORGE

Gotcha. I'll do my damndest!

4 EXT. ABOARD DC-10 CHARTER FLIGHT ON APPROACH TO DA NANG AF — SAME DAY. SAME TIME AS JOLLY 67 RESCUE 4

Switching back to the DC-10. A man's voice comes on the speakers.

DC-10 PILOT

Attention passengers. We're beginning our final approach" to Da Nang AFB. We're going to drop out of the sky like a rock on final approach so we don't get shot down. Prepare yourselves for a very rough landing. Fasten your seat belts and hold on tight. And be sure to stow all loose items. Things like luggage may fall from the overhead bins. Don't be surprised if oxygen masks pop out as well. It happens all the time, so don't be alarmed.

The hum of voices ends, followed by dead silence.

The plane abruptly plummets, hits the tarmac hard, and bounces once. As it hurtles down the runway, the pilot jams on the brakes and the DC-10 shakes violently, screeching to a halt only a few yards from the end of the airstrip. Jadro, OJ, and their fellow passengers on the left side of the plane look out the window and see the burned-out wreckage of a civilian aircraft that had recently been struck by enemy fire on approach and crashed, killing everyone on board.

SEVERAL PASSENGERS

(in unison, without prompting)

Oh, fuck!

The aircraft taxis to the terminal and lets the newbies off. Waiting nearby to board is an eager crowd of military personnel from all the services about to return home after spending a year in hell. The Air Force calls it "DEROSing".

5 EXT. TARMAC OUTSIDE DA NANG PASSENGER TERMINAL — DC-10 LOOMS IN THE BACKGROUND — SAME DAY. 4

Jadro and OJ are greeted by Sergeant Bob THERIOT.

THERIOT

Would you gentlemen like to see the barracks first?
Or would you prefer the flight line a couple of

hangars down? From there you can see headquarters.

Jadro and OJ look at each other, smile, and nod.

OJALA

We want to see headquarters.

THERIOT leads Jadro and OJ toward the 37th's headquarters.

OJALA

(addressing THERIOT)

Do you by any chance happen to know Ray Peaslee?

THERIOT

Yeah, of course I do. Peas is Crew Chief of Jolly 67. They just landed. Peas is probably there with them now. How do you know Peas?

OJALA

We served together at Forbes in Kansas and at AST-10 in Brazil before that.

6 EXT. LANDING PAD — HOSPITAL SHIP HOPE (FORMERLY USNS COMFORT) — NEAR HUE PHU BAI (5 MILES FROM THE SOUTH CHINA SEA) — DAY 6

Klein is seriously wounded, and the closest place he can receive emergency treatment is the Hospital Ship Hope.

[NOTE: Project Hope operated an International Health Care Ship of that same name that sailed anywhere in the world where injured people needed help. In 1971, it was stationed off the coast of South Vietnam near Hue to help treat wounded civilians, and military personnel as well. It had a postage stamp-sized landing pad for helicopters ferrying the seriously wounded.]

The waves in the South China Sea look angry. The ship rolls from side to side and up and down in violent seas. A 30-knot wind is blowing. Conditions could not be worse for a helicopter landing.

Major Swenck is the best pilot in the squadron. It takes him five perilous minutes of maneuvering to land Jolly 67. Lieutenant Klein is carefully unloaded from the 53 and carried away on a stretcher.

Leaping from Jolly 67, Tech Sergeant James Thomas, a PJ, approaches the stretcher.

THOMAS
(squeezing Klein's hand.)

Hang in there, man. Were with you.

7 EXT. DA NANG AF — DAY

7

Jolly 67 lands at Da Nang AFB and is directed to a parking space outside of the ramparts.

In the near distance, OJ and Jadro can be seen continuing their stroll alongside THERIOT in the general direction of the Jolly Green compound.

END SPLIT SCREEN

8 EXT. DA NANG AFB — JOLLY GREEN COMPOUND — DAY

8

[EXPLANATION: Da Nang AFB was constructed by the French in stages beginning in the '30s. A series of pill boxes ring the perimeter of the airfield. Their walls consist of re-enforced concrete a foot thick. Da Nang City has one access point located in the middle of the airfield. All military and non-military personnel and traffic enters and leaves through this gate. There is a separate entrance for military materiel such as weaponry and munitions. Both gates are heavily guarded.

Da Nang AFB, including the pill boxes, is surrounded by an 8-foot chain-link fence topped by spools of razor-sharp concertina wire. Guard towers stand at measured intervals along the fencing. Vietnamese soldiers man them.

Inside the protective perimeter stand rows after row of buildings. Some are offices and support buildings for the Air Force. Many are barracks for Air Force personnel. One compound, known as Gunfighter Village, is comprised of two-story housing for the Jolly Greens, an NCO club, an Airmen club for two-strippers, and Chinese and Vietnamese restaurants. Next to the restaurant is a steam bath operated by locals where Vietnamese women walk on your back to loosen limbs and lessen muscle aches. For five bucks you can buy yourself a happy ending — a welcome relief for the customers. Also inside the protective perimeter is a separate compound dedicated to the Marine contingent. Their compound is a self-contained city entire unto itself.

The main compound includes a barbershop, a seamstress shop, a tailor shop, a shoe repair shop, a tattoo parlor, a laundromat, and a convenience store. The mess hall is enormous and sports its own separate water tower supplying its needs.

When the Marine contingent moved out, Vietnamese scavengers entered the deserted compound and stripped it of everything they could carry away while American forces watched, doing nothing.

A paved access road parallels the entire length of the runway. It borders the perimeter fence and is straight as an arrow. Fire brigades use it to move equipment as necessary to fight fires with vapor-suppressing spray foam. Marines sometimes use this same access road to repel enemy incursions. From time to time ambulances can be seen speeding down the its length carrying the dead and wounded.]

In one of two overgrown, swampy areas at the far end of the base, surrounded by menacing spools of protective concertina wire, stand hundreds and hundreds of empty, rusting oil drums, some stacked like poker chips, others scattered haphazardly across the marsh. Nearby, in another swampy area in the opposite far corner, sits a napalm storage dump filled with barrels holding thousands of gallons of napalm ready for immediate air mail, special delivery to enemy forces. Whenever the VC launched one of their sporadic rocket attacks on the base, that cache of napalm was one of their primary targets. A dirt path leads from one swampy area to the other.

Both OJ and Jadro stop and look at a sign that reads in three foot-high letters, "DA NANG IS GREAT". Walking past the building, they see that a rocket has sliced through the roof, exploded, and gutted the building.

OJ, Jadro, and THERIOT continue walking towards the Jolly Green Compound. OJ and Jadro are noticing for the first time the sounds of high tension wires buzzing and cracking all around them. Tension cuts the thick, humid air.

THERIOT

We got rocketed the past three nights and the base is on edge. You'll get used to it.

OJALA

I don't think so.

They continue their tour of the Jolly Green area. There's a six-foot poster of the iconic Jolly Green Giant hanging at the front entrance to the compound given to the squadron by the Green Giant Company.

Three HH-53-C helicopters are parked in the revetments, each one marked by a unique two-digit number ID-ing the craft. The 53s are giant, hulking monsters, with bodies 24'11" high by 88'6" long (the size of a railroad locomotive) with 72 foot-long rotor blades attached. The men standing beside them are dwarfed by the behemoths.

Each Jolly is parked inside a three-walled box made from reinforced concrete and steel. The thick walls are 15 feet high.

THERIOT

(pointing to the walls)

That's to protect the 53s from rocket attSkinny.

There are two more Jollys parked in a nearby hanger that have been cannibalized for spare parts to keep the other six helos running.

An officer approaches the group.

MAJOR SWENCK

Is there a John Jadrosich here?

JADROSICH

Yes, that's me!

MAJOR SWENCK

Would you please come with me.

JADROSICH

(turning toward OJ)

See you later, OJ!

OJALA

Yes, sir, Captain Jadro! See you later.

Lieutenant JSkinnyon escorts Jadro in the direction of the unit headquarters. THERIOT leads OJ to the Jolly Green compound.

[OJ has been assigned to the crew of Jolly 67 that has just landed

and is parked nearby. THERIOT and OJ approach Jolly 67. OJ's friend, Sergeant Ray "Peas" Peaslee, Crew Chief on Jolly 67, is mopping up Lieutenant Klein's blood when OJ and THERIOT arrive. The sickeningly-sweet smell of fresh blood fills the air.

Seeing his old pal OJ appear like magic from out of nowhere, Peas wipes his bloody hands with a rag, tosses the rag aside, and rushes to embrace his buddy. Peas' uniform is covered with Klein's blood. Neither Peas nor OJ notice.

PEASLEE

OJ! You no-good mother fucker. You said you were going to be here sooner. I've been waiting. It's great to see you, brother.

JADROSICH

Who's the mother-fucker in charge here? I'd say you are. It's great to see you, Peas!

OJ and Peas embrace each other in a smothering bear hug.

PEASLEE

(pointing to the blood on his uniform)
Lieutenant Klein, the co-pilot, was shot in the groin today and may have lost his privates.

OJ looks into the helicopter and sees sunlight shining through a streak of fresh bullet holes in the fuselage. On closer inspection, he notices a dozen or more patches covering old bullet holes.

PEASLEE

(continuing with a broken voice)
It's a shame what happened to Lieutenant Klein. This was his first mission after being here less than 10 days. Talk about shitty luck.

OJALA

(muttering softly to himself)
Oh my God! What have I gotten myself into? I'm fucked, fucked, fucked, royally fucked!

The blood drains from OJ's face. Clearly, he's visibly shaken.

PEASLEE

(noticing OJ's obvious distress)

You'll get used to this stuff.

OJALA

I don't see how that could ever happen.

9 INT. DA NANG AFB — JOLLY GREEN BARRACKS — DAY

9

[The Jolly Green barracks are located within a larger compound at Da Nang called "Gunfighter Village".]

THERIOT

(turning towards OJ)

How the hell did you ever manage to land in this god-forsaken shit-hole? You must have done something really bad.

OJALA

You got that right. I mouthed off to the base commander at Lackland in San Antonio, which was really dumb of me. Then I made matters worse by going over his head to the adjutant general on base. How stupid was that?

THERIOT

You're right. That was really stupid! You're lucky you weren't court marshaled.

OJALA

Before that, I was stationed in Brazil as part of AST-10. Peas was there too. We were helping the US Geodesic Service conduct an aerial survey of the country. We were using the same equipment as what they're using here to map the Ho Chi Minh trail for better accuracy in bombing. We flew all over the Amazon region mapping the terrain through the jungle canopy using Tacan equipment. A few times, primitive tribesmen tried to shoot us down with their bows and arrows. After returning to the States and mouthing off to the base commander at Lackland, I was transferred to Fort Walton Beach in Florida to train as a flight engineer for service in 'Nam on air rescue helos. And, just like that, here I am in Da Nang. Ain't life a bitch?

THERIOT

That's quite a story, OJ.

OJALA

Peas was with me at Forbes. He left six weeks before me for 'Nam and stayed in maintenance. I was in maintenance until they rewarded me for my stupidity by making me a flight engineer. They tell me it's the most dangerous job there is in the Air Force.

THERIOT

Yep, that's what they say, for sure. Just think of it. You get to hang your head out the door of a hovering helicopter while the VC are shooting straight at you. It ain't fun, that's for sure. Lucky you. You have my sympathy, dude.

Pararescueman John "Scosh" Bryant steps down from the rear ramp and introduces himself.

BRYANT

I'm John Bryant. Who the hell are you and where do you hail from?

OJALA

Name's George Ojala and I come from Seattle. But call me OJ. That's what all my friends do.

BRYANT

I'm from Seattle, too! Where in Seattle exactly?

OJALA

Actually, my family home is in Kirkland on the east side of Lake Washington.

BRYANT

I know Kirkland well. I used to date a girl from there. Me, I'm from Bellevue.

OJALA

Actually, I went to high school in Bellevue at Sammamish. My folks moved to Kirkland after I started college.

BRYANT

I go by either Scoshie or Scosh, not John. It's because I'm so short. In South Korea, they use a word that sounds like "Scosh" to describe something that's small. They're referring to my height, by the way, not my manhood.

OJALA

(OJ is 6'2" tall, Scosh is 5'6". OJ drapes his arm around Schosh's shoulder. Looking down, he speaks.)

Hey, short stuff. You're officially Scosh to me. Whatcha got?

BRYANT

(looking up)

Fuck you all to hell, cocksucker. Want to go get a beer? I've got some cold Buds in the fridge in my room.

OJALA

A cold beer sounds pretty good to me, but it'll have to be later today. I have to check in at headquarters first. I haven't even been assigned a room yet.

BRYANT

(nodding his head and turning towards Peas)

Hey, Peas. Me and OJ are going to suck some suds in my room later today. Wanna join us after you're through?

PEASLEE

Sounds great! Count me in. What time?

BRYANT

Come by anytime, whenever you're ready. I'll try not to drink all the beer before you get there.

OJ, Scosh, and Peas shake hands. THERIOT leads OJ to the Jolly Green headquarters, part of an area known as "Gun Fighter Village". There he is assigned to a ground-floor room in the two-story barracks located next to the LOX (Liquid Oxygen) plant. There is a total of eight barracks in the compound, most of them two-story, a few of them one story.

As a special perk, by regulation, only flight crews are housed in air-conditioned rooms. There are 16 people on each floor. Entering his new "home" for the first time, OJ slings his duffel bag onto the bed and plops down flat on his back, using it as a pillow as he stretches out and falls instantly asleep.

SAME DAY

10 EXT. DA NANG AFB — JOLLY GREEN BARRACKS — EVENING

10

Half a dozen airmen are sitting, standing, and lying on the ground outside the Jolly Green barracks. OJ joins them and sits down. They're listening to Sergeant Carl Masterson — 5'8" tall, brown hair, slight in build — strumming a catchy tune of his own composition on a 12-string guitar. This is his last night in Vietnam. On the morrow he will be returning to the States, his tour of duty in the war zone over.

Masterson's playing a mix of his own music along with popular songs of the day. OJ is mesmerized by his talent. He'd never heard anyone playing a 12-string guitar before.

MASTERSON

(pausing for a moment and looking at the men around him)

I've been here at Da Nang for a full year. Tomorrow I leave for home. I've been working on this song that's completely different from any song I've written or sung before. I'd like to share it with you. This song is based on rapping on my guitar. You'll see what I mean when I start playing it.

The men around him sit up and pay special attention.

MASTERSON

(singing in a clear-yet-haunting voice)

The eyes of love will thrill you /
The eyes of war will kill you...

11 EXT. DA NANG AFB — JOLLY GREEN HDQRS — DAY

11

The entrance to the 37th Headquarters is located in the back left corner of a hangar where two Super Jolly Greens 53s, cannibalized for parts, stand silent watch. On the exterior wall of the hangar facing the flight line hangs a large sign reading: "NEVER FEAR."

THE JOLLYS ARE NEAR". The sign was easily visible to fighter pilots taking off on a mission.

Colonel Robert "Big" Johnson sits alone on a folding chair on the dais in the briefing room, slowly rocking back and forth on the back two legs of the chair, waiting for flight crews to join him. An inspiring presence, he's in his late 50s and his dark hair is slowly turning gray. He's still an active pilot, and occasionally flies on training missions.

Plaques adorn the wall behind the speaker's podium, along with pictures of Super Jolly Green Giant 53-Cs and a bigger-than-life poster of the Jolly Green Giant himself.

Colonel Johnson commands the 37th. Every morning, he meets with the crews on alert that day to go over detailed procedures to follow should any missions be undertaken. The JGers already know their stuff, but reviewing the procedures yet again is important. This is a meeting they look forward to. It gets them charged up.

Jadro and First Lieutenant Bob "JSkinny" JSkinnyon, his co-pilot, enter the briefing room dressed in their flight suits. Wordlessly, they grab two folding chairs and set them in front of Colonel Johnson.

JOHNSON

Oh-six-hundred. Your crew will be on alert twenty-four/seven... just in case.

Jadro and JSkinnyon nod.

JOHNSON

I've assign both of you to crew Jolly 67. In the morning you can fly over the South China Sea and get some training time in and get your crew reacquainted with the 53. What you learned in the States doesn't work here. Any questions?

JADROSICH AND JSKINNYON

(speaking in unison)

No, Sir!

JOHNSON

(rising from his chair)

Get some rest. I won't be seeing you in the

morning, so you'll be on your own.

THAT NIGHT

12 EXT: DA NANG AFB — FLIGHT LINE - NIGHT

12

Night lights cast a glow as BS and OJ walk along the flight line. They both wear olive green fatigues with matching green baseball caps, that said Jolly Green Giants on them. Airplane engines DRONE in the distance. They pass by some hangars, A-1E Sky Raider prop aircraft are sitting on the Flight line, along with OV-10's, the Forward Air controllers. Parked further down the ramp sat two HH-53-C helicopters, designated Alpha One and Alpha Two, on alert. Known as Super Jolly Green Giants, they're painted in green-and-brown camouflage with no writing of any kind on the aircraft.

OJ's eyes widen like saucers.

THERIOT

(turning toward OJ)

Come on. Let's check them out.

BS leads OJ to the two giants, stopping in front of the first one, Jolly 67. The side door is open. BS steps inside.

THERIOT

(turning toward OJ)

Come on. let's check this baby out.

OJ steps inside the beast and sees splotches of dried blood in the cockpit area where Lieutenant Klein had been wounded just days before. He eyes the 7.62 caliber mini-gun mounted on the door. On the opposite side of the door is a second mini-gun and a third is mounted on the rear cargo ramp. Hydraulic lines are seen running along both inner walls, controlling the tail rotor, the landing gear, and the Auxiliary Power Unit (APU). The APU is used to power the aircraft before the engines are started. It's also used to operate the electric hoist which lowers the Jungle Penetrator used when rescuing downed pilots. During rescue missions, a PJ (short for Para-Jumper or pararescueman) and sometimes two or three, lower themselves to the jungle floor using the penetrator to assist loading an injured pilot on board via the hoist. Sometimes they use their small arms to fight off the VC. Like mountain climbers, the PJs can quickly repel down the cable when greater speed is required.

OJ walks towards the front of the bird conducting a pre-flight inspection. He opens hatches as he walks the entire length of the aircraft. He stops and opens the engine cowlings, looking for signs of any leaks and any loose objects. He spots a crescent wrench and picks it up. He turns towards Peas and throws the wrench in his direction, purposely missing, but not by much.

PEASLEE

Thanks, OJ!

(Peas would have been held responsible and written up in a report as a demerit had OJ opted to report the wrench. Instead, he threw the wrench at him and never filed a report, thus saving Peas from a lot of crap from his superiors.)

OJ continues on to the rear of the craft, where he climbs up to the tail rotor, 15 feet above the main frame, using retractable round pegs as stairs.

PEASLEE

(noticing OJ stepping on the first peg)

Be careful OJ! Those pegs are always a bit slippery from leaking hydraulic fluids. Those fluids are pressurized to 2000 PSI and they're always leaking all over the place. So watch your step. If you slip, you can really hurt yourself. I've seen it happen too many times. Thank goodness we're on the ground. It really gets hairy when we're in the air, with this bird gets rocking and rolling.

OJALA

(looking down at BS from over his shoulder)

I hear you, man. I'll be careful. I'm not out to break my neck or anything like that.

Finished with his inspection of the tail rotor, OJ climbs back down the pegs and almost slips on one.

OJALA

(grabbing on to a hand-hold and steadying himself)

Yikes! I see what you mean. These sons-a-bitches really are slippery.

THERIOT

What? Did you think I was kidding? There's a lot of ways to fuck up on one of these Jollys. You've got to be careful at all times or you could be in real trouble. Take my word for it.

OJALA

(setting foot again on the floor of the Jolly)

I hear you man. I believe you. I'll be more careful next time. I promise, promise, promise!

OJ makes his way back to mid-ships and sits down at the side door, dangling his feet out the side. Just then a jeep rolls up alongside Jolly 67. It stops in front of Jolly 67 and Captain Jadro and JSkinny jump out. Both are wearing olive green, one-piece flight suits and aviator-style sun Ray Ban glasses. Hanging on the exterior wall of a nearby hangar is a sign reading, "WELCOME TO THE BUSIEST AIRPORT IN THE WORLD".

OJ jumps down from his perch on Jolly 67 and joins the pilot and co-pilot on the tarmac. Together they stroll over to the Jolly Green headquarters building for their morning briefing. Inside the briefing room, the motto of the Jolly Greens is posted on one of the walls. It reads, "THESE THINGS WE DO THAT OTHERS MAY LIVE".

13 INT: DA NANG AFB — BRIEFING ROOM — NIGHT

13

Inside the briefing room, over two dozen folding chairs face a small stage. On the stage is a podium. Alongside the podium is a small table with a slide projector sitting atop it. Mounted on the wall behind the stage is a large, laminated map of Southeast Asia. Hanging on the back wall is a large, pull-down movie screen.

The members of two flight crews, 12 people total, occupy the folding chairs. They are the flight crews of Jolly 67 and Jolly 68. Each crew of six includes a pilot, a co-pilot, a flight engineer, and three PJs. Some days there are only two PJs in a crew. Today there are three. The pilots, co-pilots, and flight engineers are all wearing the same basic olive green flight suit with velcro name tags attached to their chests indicating their ranks. The six PJs are wearing camouflage fatigues They sit in their own group separated from the others.

JADROSICH

(addressing the PJs)

This is it. You guys get up before dawn and run a

couple miles every day. You mother fuckers are bat shit crazy!

PJ

(replying to Jadro)

Well, you're probably right. We may be crazy. But if we ever go down, Charlie will catch you before he catches me.

Everyone laughs. Everyone in the room suddenly realizes the PJ is right.

Captain George "Baked" Baker, 35, pilot of Jolly 68, is sitting behind JSkinny and Jadro.

BAKER

(tapping JSkinny on the shoulder)

I'm George Baker. I pilot Jolly 68. And you two gentlemen are...?

JADROSICH

(turning around awkwardly and extending his hand)

I'm John Jetrovich. Call me Jadro. Nice to meet you. I'm pilot of Jolly 67. And this handsome guy sitting next to me is Bob JSkinnyon, my co-pilot. But his friends call him JSkinny.

BAKER

(grasping Jadro's right hand with his right and JSkinny's right hand with his left in an awkward, over-the-shoulder introduction)

Pleased to meet you both. I guess you can call me by my nickname, Baked. Nobody around here will know who you're talking about if you call me George or Captain Baker. We're rather short on such formalities, and I kinda like it that way. By the way, this is my co-pilot, Jim Swenson. But don't call him that, call him Swede. That's his nickname. He's one of those Scandinavian round-heads, dumb as a brick. But he's a nice guy anyway. Just ask him.

Swede nods his head at Jadro and JSkinny and speaks.

SWENSON

Baked here's a short timer.

BAKER

Twelve days and a wake-up, and counting.

SWENSON

Nice!

Colonel "Big" Johnson enters the room.

JOHNSON

Room! Ten-hut!

Every member of the flight crews rise as one and snap to attention, crisply saluting their commanding officer, a man whom they universally respect, even those who have just met him.

JOHNSON

As you were! Be seated.

Colonel Johnson steps up on the stage, where he is joined by Major Bill "Richie" Richards, a short, wiry, intense man somewhere in his mid-30s. Big and Richie are both wearing olive green flight suits.

JOHNSON

Good morning, gentlemen. And you, too, Captain Jadro – bitch."

LAUGHTER! Grinning at being the butt of this morning's big joke, Jadro nods.

JOHNSON

Before we get started, I'd like to welcome a couple newcomers to the squadron. Captain John Jadrosich and Sergeant George Ojala. Would you please stand up so everyone can admire how handsome you are.

JSKINNYON

They landed earlier this week, fresh out of flight school in Florida.

Jadro and OJ stand and acknowledge mumbled welcomes from their air crews and stifled laughter from the PJ section.

PJ

(clasping his hands and looking heavenward as though afraid)
Oh please, God, please. Please don't make me fly

with these kids! I don't wanna die!

More laughter.

Big gestures with his hands for everyone to calm down.

JOHNSON

(addressing Jadro and OJ)

The two of you'll be assigned to Jolly 67 today. You'll be going out on a training sortie. Nothing serious. We've got some cherry flight engineers and PJs to break in and we'll let you guys have the honor. I hear good things about both of them" from Colonel Johnson. "Now, for the rest of you"

Baked raises his hand. Johnson notices.

JOHNSON

Yes, Baker? Baked is it? Yes, Baked?

BAKER

Sir, I just want to ask. How is Lt. Klein doing?

All eyes turn to Colonel Big

JOHNSON

(shaking his head)

Lieutenant Klein's been med-evaced to Japan. He may lose a leg besides his groin injury.

(Johnson's voice tappers off as he continues)

Getting him to the SS HOPE in time saved his life. It also saved his privates.

Sighs and murmurs can be heard from the air crews and PJs.

JOHNSON

(directing his gaze at Major Richards)

Major? The floor is yours.

Major Richards, grease pencil in hand, approaches the wall map.

RICHARDS

Good morning, gentlemen. FAC's reported five mobile

anti-aircraft along the Ho Chi Minh trail. Also, a possible SAM Site. Sandy two reported elevated troop movements along the trail in Laos. Navy's going to hit the area around oh-ten-hundred hours. So, Alpha One and Alpha Two, be ready.

[Alpha One is call sign for Jolly 67; Alpha Two is call sign for Jolly 68]

Jadro and JSkinny listen intently.

RICHARDS

(eying Jadro and OJ)

As you new guys probably know already, MIGs can show up at any time. The Forward Air Controllers will alert us to any hostile air activity they see coming your way. Any questions?

Nobody has any questions.

RICHARDS

(scanning the room while closing his briefing book)

No questions? Okay. Dismissed. Good luck, men!

TWO WEEKS LATER

14 INT. DA NANG AFB — JOLLY REC ROOM — EVENING

14

In the center of OJ's salt box-like barracks, next to the shower area, is a spacious recreation room where airmen play poker and ping-pong, shoot pool, toss darts, smoke cigarettes, drink beer, and shoot the breeze.

A half-dozen airmen, ranging in age from their late teens to the early 30s, are milling about the room. Some have much longer hair than others and sport mustaches. They're all of lower rank. Lifers, on the other hand, are staff sergeants or higher, and none of them have long hair or mustaches. All are listening to popular songs from the U.S. playing on the Armed Forces Radio. Pat Sajek, later of Wheel of Fortune fame, is the DJ spinning records at this moment. It's the only English-language station available.

Half of the men are wearing civilian clothes and are off duty. The other half are wearing their OD (olive drab) greens. Some of them are off-duty, but haven't bothered to change into civilian clothes.

Others are on alert and dressed for action. At the sound of an alert over one of the lunchbox-size radios, they will spring into action and race to the waiting pair of Jollies. In 10 minutes or less, they will be airborne and on their way to rescue another downed pilot or crew member.

There was always a poker game going, with different players coming and going, depending on who had lost the most. Tech Sergeant Ted Wyman is a PJ serving his third tour. He has a big stack of military script in front of him. No one could use American money, though it spent the same. He had the knack of showing people why they should never play poker.

Wyman always shaves his head, showing off the many scars and dents he's received.

OJ and Peas stand to the side of the poker table, a short distance from Wyman.

PEASLEE

(gesturing toward Wyman and whispering to OJ in a reverent tone)

Wyman was blown out of Jolly 64 when it was shot down, and he was the only survivor.

OJALA

How did that happen?

PEASLEE

He was sleeping off a hangover, lying flat on his back on the back ramp wearing a parachute as a cushion. He had attached the rip cord to a hook on the mini-gun in the rear of the 'copter. He didn't want to fall out. When Jolly 64 was hit by a missile, he was blown out the back ramp, and the parachute saved his life. Basically, he's a mother-fucking asshole and treats everyone around him like shit. We're afraid to even talk to him.

OJALA

I think I'll do the same!

ONE MONTH LATER

Music is playing on Armed Forces Radio.

Peas and Scosh are sitting on a sofa. They both take long drags from their cigarettes. A blue haze fills the room. A ping-pong ball can be heard bouncing back and forth. Suddenly, somebody screeches and loud laughter drifts from the table. Peas turns his head and sees OJ, waving his paddle above his head, prancing around, and whooping in celebration of his victory.

OJALA

(in an excited voice)

Boy, I just whipped your fuckin' ass!

THERIOT

(hanging his head in defeat)

Oh fuck you, bitch. Blow it out your ass!

OJALA

Back at you wimp. I just blew it up your ass!

Theriot stomps out in disgust, muttering under his breath in colorful language.

Scosh has a cigarette hanging in his mouth. He collects OJ's winnings from four frustrated bystanders who made the mistake of betting against OJ. Scosh and OJ had agreed beforehand to work as a team, with OJ winning the games and Scosh collecting the winnings. OJ and Scosh trade fist bumps.

BRYANT

(collecting multi-colored military script)

Come on you assholes. Pay up!

Scosh leaves, chortling to himself. And a lot of cussing is heard from the losers.

THERIOT

Good game, asshole. But you're still not good enough to beat Pick.

OJALA

(taking a long sip from a cold beer)

That's true, but I wasn't playing that asshole, was I? Someday I'll challenge him, and we'll see who's best. But I need to figure out his game first.

The room quiets and OJ becomes the center of attention, but only for a moment. A minute later a stranger walks into the room. Staff Sergeant Barry Stewart a.k.a. "BS" or {Stew") introduces himself.

STEWART

Hey guys, let me introduce myself. My name's Barry Stewart. I'm your new unit photographer and that makes me the new cherry here.

BRYANT

(raising a beer bottle)

To the cherry!

EVERYONE

To the cherry!

ONE WEEK LATER

16 INT. DA NANG AFB — JOLLY GREEN REC ROOM — EARLY EVENING 16

Sergeant Hank Theriot, 22, Afro-American, Flight Engineer, sits at the bar chatting with OJ.

THERIOT

Wanna go smoke some weed?

OJALA

I'm not sure. I've never smoked it before.

THERIOT

That makes you a virgin. There's a first time for everything. It's time we popped your cherry. Come with me.

OJALA

Lead on McDuff!

Theriot gets up and OJ follows him outside to Peas' Quonset hut.

THERIOT

(knocking loudly on the door)

Hey, open the door, mother fuckers. It's me. I'm back, and I'm bring a friend in with me.

Inside, the Quonset hut is filled with smoke from marijuana. OJ notices Peas sitting on one of the bunks sucking on a water pipe. OJ blinks his eyes and coughs.

OJALA

There's lot of smoke in here and it sure doesn't smell like cigarettes. What is it? Is it marijuana?

THERIOT

Shit no, man, this ain't cigarette smoke. It's the good stuff. It's marijuana. It'll curl your toes, blow your mind, and turn you comatose. You gotta try it.

OJALA

I'm ready!

THERIOT

(handing a joint to OJ)

Here, smoke this.

OJ takes a few puffs and stops. He starts to feel dizzy and lays down on one of the bunks. His eyes are spinning in his head and he feels like throwing up.

THERIOT

(raising a make-believe camera to his eye and pretending to snap the shutter)

Man, you mother fucker OJ, you're really blitzed. Click, click, click. I'm gonna take action photos of you, man. Stick with me. You'll be on the cover of Life. I'm gonna make you famous.

OJ nods his head in a stupor and takes another hit.

17 INT: DA NANG AFB — BASE COMMAND HDQTRS BUILDING — DAY

17

Colonel Bob Royal, base commander — 50 years old, 6'3" tall, paunchy, hair dyed black to hide all signs of gray, high squeaky, annoying voice that sounds like nails scratching across a chalk board, dressed to the hilt in a crisp, starched uniform immaculately pressed by his own personal Vietnamese maid — is a fighter pilot at heart who doesn't like it that he can't be flying all the time dropping bombs on the VC (Viet Cong). He's perpetually in a bad mood because he hasn't made general yet. He was just

denied a promotion for the tenth time, his ulcer is acting up, and he feels depressed. So he takes it out on his men.

Royal has a small, yappy dog of indeterminate breed that's annoying to everyone around Royal. If Royal is chewing out a Jolly Greener, the dog will bark like hell, bite down on the Greener's pants cuff, and shake his head back and forth. Royal doesn't like any of the Jolly Greens and gives them constant grief.

Royal has a great fondness for Cuban-style stogie cigars that were actually made in Da Nang City. A constant pungent veil of smoke hung over him and the stale smell of cigar smoke permeated his clothes and followed in his train wherever he roamed on the base.

The Jollys are an unruly bunch. They don't follow regulations when it comes to haircuts, or mustaches, or proper uniforms. Royal never has to look very far to find another reason to get under their skin, and he certainly does every chance he gets. He gives out citations for virtually everything. If a JG didn't comb his hair the way Royal wanted, or wore a mustache that was too long, he tore him a new asshole. Nobody on base liked him or his dog.

On a typical evening, a gaggle of Jollys would be gathered outside their barracks smoking cigarettes for all to see and surreptitiously smoking pot, passing roaches back and forth behind their bSkinny. More than once, their reverie was interrupted by the arrival of Colonel Royal. Royal would sniff the air suspiciously, glower at the men, and demand to know what the men were up to. They'd respond nonchalantly that they were just out enjoying the sweet smells of the Da Nang evening.

ROYAL

(sitting in his office, addressing OJ, Scosh, and Peas whom he had summoned to his office regarding recent code violations)

The three of you are a disgrace to the service. Look at yourselves in the mirror sometime. Your hair's too long, your mustaches are too long, your uniforms aren't to code, you're wearing your ridiculous Jolly Green Giant hats. I should court martial the lot of you, but I'm not going to, not this time, anyway. I'm going to give you gentlemen one last chance to shape up. Get your hair cut. Trim you mustaches. Get rid of those stupid baseball caps. Take some pride in who you are and in serving our great country. I don't want to see

you in my office again looking like this, or you're going to find yourself in bigger trouble than anything you can imagine. Dismissed!

OJ, Scosh, and Peas slink out of Royal's office and head back toward the Jolly Green barracks. Once they're out of sight of Base Headquarters, they turn to each other and gleefully celebrate.

OJALA

(slapping Peas on the side of the head)

Sergeant Peaslee, you slimy piece of shit. Cut your hair and that ugly growth on your lip you call a mustache.

PEASLEE

(feigning terror and saluting with his left hand)

Yes, sir, Colonel Royal, yes sir! Right away, sir! You royal pain in the ass.

BRYANT

(joining in the merriment)

Sergeant OJ, Sergeant Pee. What the hell are you laughing about? This is serious business here. Keep this up and you're going to find yourselves spending the next week in the stockade living on bread and water!

OJALA AND PEASLEE

(giggling while pretending to look afraid)

Yes, sir, Colonel Royal, yes sir!

OJALA

(singing off key)

Dear kindly Colonel Royal
 You gotta understand.
 It's not that we're disloyal
 That gets us out of hand.
 Our mothers all are junkies,
 Our fathers all are drunks.
 Golly Moses, natcherly we're punks.

Peas and Scosh join OJ in singing another verse.

OJALA, PEASLEE, AND BRYANT

(falling to their knees and clutching their hands, just like the

Jets do in the movie "West Side Story")
 Gee, Colonel Royal, we're very upset.
 We never had the love that ev're child oughta get.
 We ain't no delinquents,
 We're misunderstood.
 Deep down inside us there is good.

Peas and Scosh and OJ collapse on the tarmac in riotous laughter, rolling around and punching each other in the ribs until it hurt.

18 EXT: DA NANG AFB — FLIGHT LINE - EARLY MORNING

18

OJ is busy conducting a pre-flight inspection of Jolly 67, preparing for departure. As crew chief of 67, Peas is held responsible for any and all infractions. Having already done his own pre-flight inspection, Peas follows OJ around the bird as OJ double-checks to make sure that Peas hasn't missed anything. Peas carries a clip board with a check list to record any violations or issues. Wearing an olive green flight suit, OJ climbs atop Jolly 67 and opens the cowlings protecting the transmission and hydraulic lines. He's looking for signs of anything being out of place. Suddenly he notices a 12" monkey wrench a mechanic has left lying next to the transmission. Saying nothing, he seizes it and in a single sweeping motion tosses it on the tarmac where it lands with a loud thud two feet in front of Peas.

PEASLEE

(wearing a chagrined look and apologizing profusely, realizing that an overlooked item like this can cost the crew their lives)
 Oh my God! I'm sorry OJ! I don't know how I missed that.

Normally, a senior flight engineer would have cussed Peas out, written him up, and reported him directly to the unit commander for discipline. Instead, OJ says nothing and continues his inspection. Responding to the intense heat and humidity, beneath his flight suit OJ is wearing a pair of olive green, government-issue BVD boxers and his birthday suit and nothing more. Most of the flight crew does the same. They all have learned from experience to wear under shorts so they don't chafe their penises and knock them out of commission.

PEASLEE

(regaining his composure)
 I've checked the ground for hydraulic fluid, OJ,

and haven't spotted any. If you lose hydraulics, the pilot would lose control and this bird would fall out of the sky like a lead balloon. You'd end up having to be rescued yourselves.

OJALA

(speaking icily)

You're assuming we'd survive the crash!

Peas nods with a lump in his throat. As he and OJ circle the bird, Jadro approaches Ojala.

JADROSICH

Sergeant Ojala?

OJALA

I checked for oil leaks, sir, of course. And for signs of any puddling. And I looked for any loose parts on the aircraft. And I didn't find any. One loose screw or a tool left behind can really fuck up our day. I didn't find anything wrong. We're hot to trot.

19 EXT: DA NANG AFB — FLIGHT LINE - EARLY MORNING

19

The crew of Jolly 67 prepares for a training flight. Scosh, wearing camouflage fatigues, is being trained by PJ Sergeant Duane "Skinny" Curtis, also wearing camouflage fatigues. They're kneeling over a backpack filled with supplies.

[NOTE: Add here the "PJ Motto" — whatever that was.]

It's their job to ride the Jungle Penetrator down into hostile territory, apply medical aid, and secure the downed pilot or airman. Occasionally, they may have to fight off the VC. Once the downed airman has been rescued, if he's injured, they fly him straight to the China Beach Hospital at Da Nang AFB for treatment. In some more serious cases, like with Lieutenant Klein, they may fly an injured flier to the SS Hope for specialized treatment.

Curtis is sorting through items in his pack. Pausing, he addresses Scosh.

CURTIS

You've got your medical supplies here.

Skinny takes a .38 caliber pistol from his survival vest.

CURTIS

(addressing Scosh)

You know what this is for, don't you?

SCOSH

Sure. It's for shooting gooks that interfere with the rescue mission.

CURTIS

Here's your GAR-15. (GAR = Ground Assault Rifle; the GAR-15 was a shorter version of the M-16 semiautomatic rifle commonly used by combat troops in Vietnam; the GAR-15 was easier to use in the jungle.) This is the weapon you want to have handy if things really get hairy down there. And here's your emergency radio if you get lost or shot down".

CURTIS

(casting a stern look toward Scosh)

Never, and I mean NEVER, fire your 38 caliber revolver inside the bird. A couple of years ago a new PJ got all aroused after firing his mini-gun at a target flare floating in the water. So he decided to empty the clip from his GAR-15 into the floating flare. And when that wasn't enough to make him happy, he took his '38 and fired six rounds at the flare. One of those rounds got caught in the rotor wash carried the bullet above the rotor blades where it slammed into the top of the transmission case and cracked it. The bottom of the transmission case is heavily armored to protect it from enemy fire coming from down below. It has no such protection on the top. All hell broke loose, and the pilot had to ditch the 53 into the sea, where it eventually sank a few hours later. Thankfully, all the crew managed to get out, but we lost the Jolly.

BRYANT

(shaking his head)

Bad shit, man! Bad, bad shit!

OJ steps inside the bird. Curtis notices and nods. He pulls a laminated card and some flares from his survival vest and hands them to Scosh.

BRYANT
(*eying the card*)

What's this?

CURTIS
This is a blood chit.

Bryant unfolds the card, exposing an 8.5" x 11" sheet of laminated paper. The same message, repeated in several foreign languages, is printed on the paper.

CURTIS
(*addressing OJ and Scosh*)

If you're captured, give your captors this card. It says, "Take me to the nearest U.S. Embassy and you will be paid one hundred dollars in gold" in twelve different languages!

BRYANT
Lots of luck with that. Those mother-fuckers are never taking me alive. I'm either going home alive or in a body bag.

OJ and Curtis eye each other, absorbing for the first time the stark reality of their jobs. They both knew from Jungle Survival School in the Philippines that the VC killed anyone they captured who wasn't an officer. For them, being caught would be a guaranteed death sentence.

CURTIS
(*addressing Scosh*)

Keep this card and these flares in your survival vest, especially the flares. You don't want to lose those or your emergency radio. Without those, we have no way of locating and rescuing you.

ONE WEEK LATER

20 INT: JOLLY 67 — DA NANG AFB — EARLY MORNING

20

OJ lowers the retractable flight engineer's jump seat located

between the pilot's and co-pilot's seats in Jolly 67. Captain Jadro sits in the pilot's seat on the left while JSkinnyon occupies the co-pilot's seat on the right. Both officers wear flight suits and helmets. JSkinnyon notices OJ

JSKINNYON

Good morning.

OJ

Good morning, Sir.

JSKINNYON

Grab the pre-flight manual and let's get this turkey on the road.

[The HH-53-C was a slow-moving target with an average air speed of 100 knots and a top speed of 150 knots. Flying over the Ho Chi Minh Trail is like flying into a turkey shoot with yourself as the target. OJ looks around nervously.]

JSKINNYON

(noticing OJ's case of jitters)

Get the pre-flight manual. It's right next to you.

OJ sees it, takes it out, and opens it to the first page. There are listed in proper order all the procedures needed to start the APU, which in turn gives power to the craft so they can start the engines. OJ forces a grin, knowing that JSkinnyon was just fucking with him.

JADROSICH

Okay, let's get started.

OJALA

Yes, sir!

The first step is setting all the toggle switches to start the APU. JSkinny begins flipping switches on the front control panel, according to the order specified in the check list. The instrument panel lights up like a video game.

JSKINNYON

APU started, check.

OJ

Two. Start engines.

The behemoth hums to life!

JADROSICH

(addressing JSkinnyon)

The kid's a quick learner.

JSKINNYON

I like him.

OJ grins as the rotors ramp up to speed.

JADROSICH

*(addressing Peaslee, who's standing
on the tarmac near the Jolly)*

Peas, are we clear yet to taxi?

The Peas crew chief, is responsible for getting the Jolly in the air. He's connected to the copter by a 50-foot long communication cable. Next to him is a 6-foot-tall fire extinguisher mounted on a dolly so it can easily be moved into position in case of an emergency. Peas gives Jadro the thumbs up, disconnecting the cable and moving the fire extinguisher beyond the range of the rotors. He holds two flashlights, each with a six-inch long fluorescent extension. He uses them to direct the pilot out to the runway.

21 INT: JOLLY 67 — DA NANG AFB — EARLY MORNING

21

Jolly 67 takes off.

The massive JGG soars above the glistening waters of the South China Sea. The rotor blades fiercely cut the air, creating a two hundred mile per hour downdraft. They produce a loud pop-pop-popping sound as they slice through the air.

OJ swings the six-barreled M-134 Mini-gun back into the doorway. The other two min-guns are stationary. Noise and vibrations emanating from the engines fill the bird, accompanied by the sounds of the whining transmission and chattering blades. The crew has to yell to be heard. They've worked out a simple sign language to substitute for speech. Middle fingers are used a lot.

Curtis, Scosh, and OJ, each wearing a flight helmet, stand behind the three mini-guns.

A belt of shells stretches from the floor to the mini-gun's chamber. Bryant steps behind his mini-gun and grabs both handles.

CURTIS

(yelling above the noise so Scosh can hear)

Pushing the left trigger shoots 2,000 rounds a minute. Push both triggers and you'll spins out 4,000 rounds a minute.

As Skinny presses both triggers of the mini-gun, his hands vibrate. The six barrels rotate with a burrrr, burrrr sound. A six-foot-long flame belches out gun's mouth. Tracer bullets fire every sixth round, creating a stream of light that looks like the center line of a highway with those small round Bott's dots that glow when light hits them at night. Skinny lets go of the triggers.

Jadro makes a tight turn, creating centrifugal forces strong enough to buckle your knees and move you body in several directions at the same time.

OJ and Scosh watch Curtis's body get squished in the turn. They look at each other and laugh.

BRYANT

(shouting to be heard above the noise)

It's not supposed to be this much fun! OJ you're a natural.

OJ grins and grabs the hoist lever as Curtis gets on the hoist. He's lowered just enough to touch the water. Jadro mistakenly puts him into the water.

BRYANT

Let's bring him up. I think he maybe kinda wet behind the ears.

Everyone laughs.

22 INT: DA NANG AFB — GUNFIGHTER VILLAGE NCO CLUB — EVENING

22

OJ, wearing an olive green flight suit, enters through the main door and passes through a large, dimly lit bar area that includes a pool table in the far back. The bartenders are men from the unit on the older side, 50-ish, compared with OJ, Peas, Scosh, and their

like-minded rebel friends. They need the extra money to send home to their wives and kids and pay all the bills they've accumulated over the years. It's a challenge for them to make ends meet on their service salaries. The lifers are always talking to the bartenders, but rarely to the hippie/weirdo/faggot enlistees] like OJ and Scosh and Peas.

Music is blaring from the radio, tuned in as always to Armed Forces Radio. The sounds of a ping-pong game in progress drift into the bar area. OJ heads down the corridor to investigate.

OJ approaches the ping-pong table. There's a wall-mounted dart board and a shuffle board table in the same area as the ping-pong table. There's also a poker table where loud and animated games of seven-card stud and Texas hold-em go on non-stop day and night.

The room is empty except for Tech Sergeant Mike Pick, a nondescript, chubby figure somewhere in his mid-40s, and Staff Sergeant Mickey "Mouse" Bray, a flight engineer like OJ, slender and in his late 30s. Pick and Mouse both wear olive green fatigues with blue and olive green stripes on their shoulders.

The two NCOs are engaged in a heated game of ping-pong. OJ watches the final volley.

Smash! Pick scores the winning point!

BRAY

Damn it! You never fucking lose.

Pick grabs a beer from a nearby table and takes a swig.

BRAY

I'm getting closer, though.

PICK

Don't kid yourself. I let you score a couple points just to make it interesting.

OJALA

(clearing his throat)

Sergeant Pick?

PICK

Oh, you must be the new guy.

OJALA

Yes, Sergeant, that's me. Airman Ojala at your service.

PICK

(stepping forward and extending his hand.)

I'm Tech Sergeant Pick, NCOIC (Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge) of Flight Engineers.

OJ nods.

PICK

This is Staff Sergeant Bray. He runs the Orderly Room.

Bray and OJ shake hands. Bray retreats to the bar to grab a beer.

PICK

It's pretty simple, Oja-logy or however you're called. Follow the rules. Keep your nose clean, OG.

OJALA

It's OJ, not OG.

PICK

Stay out of trouble and we'll get along fine. The town is off limits from time to time and only opens when it's safe to do so.

Pick takes a swig from his beer and continues.

PICK

There's a lot of temptations out there. Drugs, prostitutes, you name it, every form of sin you can imagine and some you can't.

OJALA

(thinking to himself, That sounds like fun to me!)
Yes, Sarge. I hear that.

PICK

I update the flying schedules daily. Make sure you check the board at Base Ops every morning in case there are any last-minute changes. When you're on

alert, have your hand-held radio with you 24-7. If alerted, your ass better be on that bird in five minutes or less or there'll be hell to pay.

Pick pauses and takes a long swig from his warm beer.

PICK

A couple minutes can mean the difference between life, death, or imprisonment for a downed pilot.

OJALA

Yes, Sarge.

PICK

All right. Any questions?

Before OJ can respond, Pick turns his back to OJ and addresses Bray.

PICK

Come on, Bray. I'll spot you ten points this time.

Bray takes a swig from his beer and suddenly spits it out.

BRAY

Who's the asshole who put a cigarette butt in my beer?

Nobody answers.

Bray approaches the table to start another game with Pick. OJ watches for a few seconds, then turns and leaves.

23 INT: DA NANG AFB — JOLLY GREEN BARRACKS — REC ROOM — MID-DAY 23

Pool balls clack against each other, followed by much yelling and laughter. As usual, '60s music is blasting from the radio. A half dozen or so airmen, clad variously in civvies and greens, are engaged in various activities. OJ, clad in a flight suit, is playing Skinny in a spirited game of ping-pong while Scosh and Stew are shooting pool. Two other airmen are drinking beer and tossing darts. Skinny and Scosh are wearing camouflage pants, olive green T-shirts, and jungle boots. They, along with OJ, are on alert. Three radios sit on a nearby table.

CUT TO:

24 INT: DA NANG AFB — QUEEN/BASE OPS — MID-DAY

24

Radar antennae surround the control tower. The tower stands next to the Base Operations Building where pilots and flight crews attend briefings and change into their flight gear. Below the control tower in the Base Operations Building is a large, windowless room jammed full with all of the electronic equipment needed to direct an air rescue operation. The room has space enough for as many as eight people.

Staff Sergeant King, mid-30s, wearing his baseball cap backwards, monitors a radar screen. A telephone sits on the counter in front of him. Behind King are Sergeant Tim Bodner, 20ish, and Airman First Class Manfred Mann, also in his 20s, both men wearing fatigues. They're sitting at a folding table playing poker. Cigarette smoke fills the room. Subtle radio transmissions can be heard crackling from the speakers as the card players interact. No more than 10 feet away, a trio of airmen sit huddled over their radar screens, monitoring events and communicating with outfits from all of the services all across Vietnam, as well as with forward air controllers and assorted other players in the field from the relative safety of their cloistered room. They speak and move in unison, as though choreographed by an invisible hand, their unconscious coordination the result of countless hours of working together under challenging conditions.

Mann, puffing on his pipe and chewing on the end, throws some chips on the table.

MANN

I see your two dollars and raise you two more.

BODNER

I see your two and call. Read 'em and weep, motherfucker. Three kings.

Grinning, he lays down his cards and reaches out greedily for the chips, intent on raking them in.

MANN

Fuck. Are you shitting me? Can you believe this guy? Not so fast, my loser friend. Take a look at this first. A full house, aces high. Who's the

motherfucker now?

Mann gleefully gathers in the chips with both hands while Bodner hangs his head in defeat and slinks away in search of a Nehi orange, his soda of choice.

25 INT: DA NANG AFB — JOLLY GREEN BARRACKS — REC ROOM — MID-DAY 25

Stew chalks his pool cue, contemplating his next shot. Scosh takes a drag from a cigarette. He directs his comments toward OJ and Skinny (still volleying back and forth at the ping-pong table).

THERIOT

(referring to Pick)

Yeah, the guy's a real asshole. All he and Bray do is drink beer, gulp down hard liquor, and smoke cigarettes. And give us a hard time. That more than anything else. Even when they're shooting pool, or playing ping-pong all day long, they still manage to harass us.

Scosh, tossing a dart, chimes in.

BRYANT

That's all we do, too. Except we smoke pot and take LSD and mescaline. Whatever it takes to escape this hell hole, even if it's only in our heads.

Laughter.

BRYANT

You know what I mean. That guy Pick's a fucking alchie.

Stew hits the cue ball, sinking a difficult bank shot. OJ looks over from the ping-pong table and nods in appreciation. Turning his attention back to the game, he delivers a vicious non-returnable serve using his left hand. Scosh notices, takes a drag, and exhales.

BRYANT

Plus, Pick is a fucking prick. He's the guy that makes the flying schedules every day. You know why we're flying today?. He scheduled today.

OJ shakes his head while making another killer serve.

BRYANT

I'll tell you why. It's because he knows in advance when most of the flights will be. He enjoys giving his latest foil the shittiest flight he can, usually one with Col. Big getting his 10 to 12 hours of sky time to keep from losing his flying status.

Motown music blares from the radio. JSkinnyon cranks up the volume. He and Stew dance.

BRYANT

(raising his voice)

He schedules himself for the light days and gives us all the dangerous shit.

OJ delivers another serve, scoring another easy point. Skinny shakes his head.

BRYANT

(addressing OJ)

I thought you were right-handed!

OJALA

I'm ambidextrous. I can use both hands. Left or right, it doesn't matter. I don't know why, but I'm good at both. I'm a natural lefty, but I can do pretty good with my right hand. In baseball as a kid, I threw and batted right-handed.

BRYANT

(asking OJ)

Can you just play ping-pong just right-handed?
Sure, I'm a lot better as a lefty though.

26 INT: DA NANG AFB — BASE OPS/CONTROL TOWER — MID-DAY

26

King sits, legs propped up on the control panel. Brady and Mann eye their poker hands.

KING

Don't you guys ever get tired of playing that shit?
Have you nothing better to do?

MANN

Don't you ever get tired of staring at that screen?
And no, we don't have anything better to do.

KING

Somebody's got to do it or we'll all get busted!

CHUCKLING.

MANN

Brady plays to keep his mind off of who's screwing
his girlfriend back home.

BRADY

(overhearing Mann's remark, fires back)

Fuck you, you hippie, weirdo, faggot freak. Suck my
cock.

MANN

I would if I could find it.

BRADY

I'm going to beat the fuck out of you!

MANN

Oh yeah? You and what army?

BRADY

(flexing his left arm and pointing to it)

This army.

BRADY

(flexing his right arm and pointing to it)

And this army.

Mann and Brady erupt in laughter, trading fist bumps.

A RADIO TRANSMISSION INTERRUPTS THEM

VOICE OF DOWNED PILOT

May Day! May Day! This is Cobra Two! May Day! I'm
hit and going down. Ejecting now!

King snaps to and goes into action. He pushes the alarm button,
notifying headquarter there's a downed pilot. He waits for Cobra

to come back on line using the survival radio he carries with him in his emergency kit. [Unless the pilot uses his survival radio, there's nothing Rescue can do to help. All they can do is wait.]

Cobra comes back on line using his survival radio and asks for help.

COBRA TWO

I'm seriously wounded. I'm not sure I can make it.

KING

Hold on, Cobra Two. The Jolly Greens are coming.

COBRA TWO

Copy that! Tell 'em to hurry before the VCs get here first.

KING

Just sit tight, Cobra Two. Jolly 67's deploying now.

27 INT: DA NANG AFB — JOLLY GREEN BARRACKS/REC ROOM — MID-DAY 27

An alert horn goes off simultaneously on three separate portable radios in the rec room. OJ, Skinny, and Scosh eye each other, discard their pool sticks, grab their radios, and rush to their aircraft — Jolly 67. Stew hurries after them, camera bag in hand.

28 EXT: JOLLY GREEN 67 (ALPHA ONE - LOW BIRD) — MID-DAY 28

Above mountainous, thickly-carpeted jungle terrain, guided by King (code name for a C-130 aerial command center overseeing the rescue operation), the massive helicopter rushes toward the last-recorded location of an emergency signal for a downed pilot.

29 INT: JOLLY GREEN 67 (ALPHA ONE) - AIRBORNE — MID-DAY 29

Jadro, sitting in the pilot's seat on the left, grasps the cyclic stick steering the Jolly with his left hand. With his right hand he holds a collective stick powering the bird. His feet rest on foot pedals controlling the rudder. JSkinny sits in the co-pilot's seat on the right, talking to Queen, getting directions to the crash site.

OJ, wearing his flight suit, and Scosh and Skinny, wearing combat jungle fatigues, shuffle around in the rear. The top of the entrance door is open. The mini-gun is stowed and the hoist is

ready to go.

Stew, wearing olive green fatigues, his ever-present camera dangling from his neck, is moving about the cabin, snapping pictures left and right as Jolly 67 makes its final approach.

Jadro, JSkinny, OJ, Scosh, and Skinny all wear olive green flight helmets with a ceramic inner liner. Their helmets are outfitted with earphones and a microphone, connecting them with the pilot as he issues commands.

Jadro is tuned into his own separate channel and doesn't hear any of the crew's chatter. He doesn't have to. It would only distract him. He has the option of switching channels as needed to communicate with his co-pilot, JSkinny, or with OJ, his Flight Engineer, or with the entire crew. The rest of the crew has their own dedicated channel to talk among themselves. In order to hear anything, you had to be plugged into a station near you.

OJ has a hot mike switch linking him to both Jadro and JSkinny and to other members of the flight crew as well. When the chopper is hovering and the hoist is being lowered or raised, OJ is essentially in command of the bird. He radios instructions to Jadro and JSkinny to coax the Jolly into the right position.

The pilots are the only ones aboard Jolly 67 who can hear messages from the Forward Air Controller (FAC), or from the A1E Sandy pilots. Messages from the downed pilot are transmitted directly to the FAC, who in turn passes along critical information to Jadro. The system of radio communications between everyone involved in the rescue mission is elaborate and well-planned. Perfect coordination between all parties is needed for any mission to succeed. In the heat of a rescue mission, the role of the FE is of paramount importance. His role is arguably the most critical of all. OJ's eyes are the eyes of Jolly 67; Jadro and JSkinny must place blind trust in his directions. One slip can make the difference between success and failure, life and death.

OJALA

(#1 Son: I think you should add appropriate dialing here demonstrating the types of communications you typically shared with the pilot and co-pilot, and with other members of the crew, during a rescue mission. I have no idea what those communications would be, but I'm sure you do. Come up with a

series of radio exchanges to insert either here, or somewhere else in this sequence of events involving the attempted rescue. Adding dialog brings the scene to life and greatly personalizes it.)

Through the front door opening, OJ watches as Sandy One – call sign for the lead A-1E Skyraider – flashes by, dropping napalm on the mountainous terrain ahead.

OJALA

Wow, would you look at that! It looks like that Skyraider just toasted a bunch of VCs! Let's get this rescue done before the gooks recover their senses and start shooting again!

30 EXT: RESCUE MISSION - CONTINUOUS - DAY 30

An OV-10 Bronco (Forward Air Controller or "FAC") circles over the possible rescue site and spots a parachute but can't see the pilot. The pilot of the Bronco was able to establish radio contact with the downed flier earlier. He tries to do so again, but this time he fails.

31 INT: JOLLY 67 (ALPHA ONE) -SOMEWHERE OVER THE HO CHI MINH TRAIL - DAY 31

Jadro receives an incoming radio message from FAC.

FAC

Jolly, this is FAC. We have a visual of a parachute in the trees a half mile ahead. But no sign of the pilot.

JADROSICH

(speaking to crew through his headset)

Keep your eyes open, guys. We're almost there.

He positions the Jolly into a high hover over the area where the parachute was sighted.

JADROSICH

I see the parachute! I'm moving in.

Jadro maneuvers the Jolly closer to the parachute. At this point he turns verbal command of the aircraft over to OJ, who goes on

hot mic. OJ is now the boss. He directs the pilot to maneuver the Jolly into a high hover. As they enter the hover, Skinny and Scosh debate who will attach themselves to the jungle penetrator. Stew's camera buzzes. OJ stares out the hoist door. The chopper approaches the parachute. A triple canopy (three separate layers of jungle) surrounds the parachute. The 53 settles into a hover 100 feet away, keeping a safe distance so that the wash from the rotor blades doesn't cause problems with the parachute or with the downed pilot, who they hope is somewhere nearby.

OJALA

(directing Jadro on hot mic as the pilot maneuvers the Jolly)

Move 50 feet to the left. Fifty, 40, 30, 20, 10.

Stop! Hold your hover! Now I want you to go down 20 feet. Twenty, 15. Slowly! Ten, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5...Careful!

Keep it steady. Four, 3, 2, 1, stop! Hold it there!

The rotor blades create a powerful whirlwind effect, and the surrounding trees sway madly back and forth as though a tornado has struck. Branches break and pieces scatter in every direction, some of them striking the front and two side windshields of the Jolly. The Jolly jumps in place for a moment, as though someone has goosed it. After a bump or two, it settles down.

JADROSICH

Whoa, Nellie! What the heck was that?

OJALA

Just a random updraft. Nothing to freak out about. You're okay. Let's get this job done.

OJALA

(surveying the ground and speaking into the hot mic)

I can't see the pilot anywhere. Permission to put down a PJ.

JADROSICH

Permission granted!

OJALA

(turning to Scosh and Skinny and shouting at them)

I have permission to send one of you down. Who's first..

BRYANT

(reaching out to grab the penetrator)

I am.

CURTIS

(motioning toward Scosh)

No, wait! I'll go.

BRYANT

Hell no! This one's all mine.

CURTIS

The hell it is!

Skinny and Scosh settle their argument with a quick game of "Paper, Scissors, Rock". Skinny loses but refuses to concede.

CURTIS

(grabbing Scosh's arm as he tries to hook on to the penetrator)

Not so fast, buddy boy! I'm pulling rank on you, so fuck off. I'm going down whether you like it or not. Stand aside!

BRYANT

Hey, don't give me that shit. I'm a higher rank than you are, so fuck you back.

Realizing it's silly to argue when there's a downed flier to save, they finally settle the issue by agreeing to both go. They decide it's a better choice anyway. This way one of them can cover the other in case it's a trap. Before OJ can lower the two of them together, he needs permission to do so from Jadro.

OJALA

(speaking into the hot mic)

Permission requested to send down both PJs. They're telling me they're both needed, one to provide cover while the other takes care of the pilot.

JADROSICH

Permission granted. Put down two PJs, and fast!

OJ's connected to the Jolly by an elaborate web harness, allowing him to lean out of the belly door at a 30-degree angle so he can better monitor what's going on down below.

OJALA

(continuing his conversation with Jadro on the hot mic)

Hold your hover! Hold your hover! I can see a small clearing where I want to put the PJs down. Move backwards 20 feet. Fifteen, 10. That's it. Hold it there. Now I need you to lower 80 feet. Eighty, 70, 60, 50, 40, 30, 20, 10, stop! That's it. Hold it there.

With the Jolly finally positioned properly, OJ pushes Skinny and Scosh out the door and watches as they sway back and forth hitched to the penetrator at the end of the hoist cable like human pendulums. They disappear beneath the Jolly for a brief moment. Stretching out as far as he dares, OJ watches as Skinny and Scosh descend. Stew's camera action continues non-stop as he rolls through film shooting pictures. Deftly manipulating the hoist's controls like a puppeteer, OJ lowers the two PJs to the ground. Stew sets aside his camera and mans the rear mini-gun. Rotors beat the air. Jolly 67 shakes as it hovers directly over the two PJs. The intense vibrations numb OJ's toes. By now, after flying dozens of missions, he's used to it, and it no longer bothers him. He focuses all of his attention on what's happening in the clearing below.

CURTIS

(speaking excitedly into his headset)

I can see the pilot! He's lying face down on the far side of the clearing. I'm heading there now.

Skinny rushes across the clearing to the pilot while Scosh assumes a defensive position, his GAR-15 at the ready. Kneeling over the motionless body of the pilot, Skinny checks for a pulse. NOTHING. He checks again. NOTHING.

CURTIS

(speaking into his mic)

Alpha One. The pilot's dead! I'll bring him up.

FAC

(radioing to Jadro)

Jolly 67! Jolly 67! We've got hostiles approaching. ETA 30 seconds. Get your PJ's out of there, now!

Skinny and Scosh quickly realize they're about to be caught in a trap. They understand that, if they don't make it out of the

clearing quickly, they'll both be dead, just like the downed pilot and Jolly 67 will be in serious danger.

Skinny and Scosh have lost voice contact with Jadro and can't hear him. Skinny picks up the pilot's body and effortlessly drapes it over his shoulders in a fireman's carry. He dashes to the dangling penetrator and, with Scosh's help, ties the pilot's body to the hoist and signals for Scosh to go first. The hoist could normally handle three men at a time easily. But, with the body of a dead pilot to carry, it can't safely handle more than two. Skinny realizes he will have to remain on the ground until Scosh and the dead pilot are both on board the helicopter. Only then will OJ be able to lower the penetrator for him. Meanwhile, Skinny will have to fend off the enemy as best he can, with help from above from the Jolly's mini-guns.

Stew captures all the action from his perch at the belly door of the Jolly with his camera, using a telephoto lens. He reaches over OJ's shoulder to get a better angle and shoots more pictures. As he is taking pictures, Scosh and the dead pilot reach the door and OJ drags them in.

Suddenly shots ring out from the jungle below. Streams of bullets whistle past Skinny's ears. Two North Vietnamese soldiers, both in their 20s, emerge from the dense undergrowth, blazing AK-47s in hand. Skinny drops flat on his stomach in the tall grass, partially hiding his position. He sprays the soldiers with his GAR-15 and both crumple to the ground.

OJALA≥

(seeing half a dozen more VC approaching, radios Jadro)

Rotate to the left 120 degrees! More hostiles are approaching from the south. Skinny is in trouble.

The gooks are firing on him.

As Jolly 67 pivots, Stew on the rear mini-gun and OJ, grabbing the belly door mini-gun, swing into action. The two 7.62 mm M-60 machine guns spew a steady stream of deadly fire throughout the swing. Tracer bullets mark their lethal path. Flames shoot out six feet from the guns' muzzles. The racket is deafening and will ring in Stew and OJ's ears for hours.

OJ

(muttering a children's rhyme he learned in grade school)

Ashes, ashes, all fall down!

OJ sets aside the mini-gun and lowers the penetrator almost to the ground and Skinny rushes towards it. He pulls out his .38 from his vest as OJ hoists him up, firing at several more enemy soldiers as they draw closer. He empties his clip in their direction and two more North Vietnamese soldiers fall to the ground.

Still more enemy soldiers emerge from the jungle.

OJ

(to Jadro)

Turn left 45 degrees! Left 45! Here come more VCs!

Jadro rotates the chopper another 45 degrees as Scosh continues firing the rear mini-gun. He wastes more VCs as they enter the clearing and direct their fire upwards at the hovering Jolly.

A shower of bullets hits Jolly 67. Some bounce off the armor plating; others tear through the unprotected sides of the chopper, passing close to Scosh's head, missing him by mere inches. Undeterred, he opens fire with both triggers and unleashes a ferocious hail of bullets on the enemy below, blowing still more of them away. The body count of dead VCs continues to rise. A heavily-armored Spectre C-130 gunship suddenly appears like an avenging angel, swooping in low over the clearing and spraying the tree line with fire from its Gatling guns and Vulcan cannon. The clearing has become a killing field.

Skinny clings to the hoist for dear life as Jadro pilots Jolly 67 out of its hover and points it east toward Da Nang AFB and safety. Several rounds pass close by Skinny head. Still dangling from the hoist, suddenly he feels a sharp, stinging sensation in his right butt cheek. He has no time to think about it as he is being dragged through the topmost layer of the jungle canopy like a plow, breaking branches left and right as the chopper flees to safety. Finally, after what seems like an eternity to everyone involved, OJ, assisted by Scosh, hauls a thoroughly exhausted Skinny to safety on board the chopper.

CURTIS

(grimacing and speaking to OJ in a pained voice)

OJ, help me! I think I've been hit!

Seeing blood covering Skinny' behind, Scosh, having received special medical training, takes over and attends to the bleeding.

OJALA

(calling to Jadro through his headset)
PJs on board. Let's get the hell out of here!

JADRO

(radioing to the FAC flying overhead)
PJs on board.

FAC

Roger that, Jolly 67.

Jolly 67 continues to rise, turns, and heads back to Da Nang.

SCOSH

(lowering Ack's pants and speaking over the intercom)
Skinny' been shot in the ass. It looks like a
flesh wound. He got lucky. It could have been a lot
worse. If he's really lucky, this my get him laid
up for a few weeks in a nice clean hospital bed
somewhere with lots of pretty nurses to flirt with.

OJ goes off hot mic while Stew sits back, still taking pictures. Scosh kneels next to Skinny, who is lying on his stomach, and puts pressure on the flesh wound. No one speaks. All anyone can do is stare at his crew-mates in silence. Speech escapes them. They gaze blankly at a constellation of bullet holes in the Jolly's fuselage, light shining through them like a cluster of stars. Nobody dares to say the obvious – that they'd somehow miraculously survived a close call with death – out of fear such words might still jinx them. They weren't safely home yet. OJ is literally shaking in his boots.

32 INT: DA NANG AFB – JOLLY GREEN BRIEFING ROOM – NEXT DAY 32

COLONEL JOHNSON

(chewing on his ever-present cigar)
Hell of a mission out there yesterday, gentlemen.
Well done. I hear one of you got shot in the ass.

Laughter fills the briefing room.

ONE WEEK LATER

33 INT: DA NANG AFB – COL. JOHNSON'S OFFICE – DAY 33

Col. Johnson sits behind his desk. Jadro and JSkinny, wearing flight suits, sit on chairs in front of him, Skinny, dressed in jungle fatigues, sits off to the side, facing Johnson.

COLONEL JOHNSON

(addressing Jadro while eying Skinny)

Captain, your PJ did a helluva job. We need to get him his Purple Heart.

JADROSICH

(nodding his head vigorously)

Yes, Sir! No doubt about it.

COLONEL JOHNSON

(Leaning back in his chair)

End of discussion, gentlemen.

He slowly rises from his chair and gestures for Skinny to come stand in front of him.

COLONEL JOHNSON

(addressing Skinny)

Ten-hut!

Skinny snaps to attention, standing stiffly, staring straight ahead. Johnson opens a blue case he lifted from his desk as he stood up. He carefully lifts out a Purple Heart featuring a sculpted side profile of George Washington.

COLONEL JOHNSON

(addressing Skinny)

Sergeant Curtis.

CURTIS

Yes, Sir!

COLONEL JOHNSON

Turn around, your back toward me.

CURTIS

Yes, Sir!

COLONEL JOHNSON

Now bend over and touch your toes.

CURTIS

(sounding a bit confused)

Sir? Yes, Sir!

Curtis bends over and touches his toes as ordered. With a dramatic gesture, Johnson pins the Purple Heart to Skinny' right butt pocket.

COLONEL JOHNSON

(snapping to attention and saluting Curtis)

Stand up and turn around, son. I salute you. You're a real hero. I'm proud of you.

Ack salutes back. Jadro and JSkinny, struggling to suppress their laughter, together salute Johnson. Along with Skinny, they turn and leave the room.

33 INT: DA NANG AFB — JOLLY REC ROOM — DAY

33

A heated ping-pong game is underway between OJ and Peas. Three airmen congregated around the table are shouting encouragement to both players. The familiar smells of old cigarette smoke and stale beer permeate the room. Nobody notices. All attention is focused on the ping-pong match. For the Jollys, ping-pong was a blood sport, and the distribution of sizable sums of money could hinge on the outcome.

OJ is a natural lefty but plays well using either hand. Playing left handed, he crushes a kill shot, dramatically ending the game and sending Peas to an ignoble defeat.

OJALA

(turning toward Stew)

Why don't you take one of those fancy cameras of yours and video me kicking ass in ping-pong?

Laughter fills the room along with booing and middle-finger hand gestures. Scosh suddenly has an idea. He leads OJ outside and addresses him quietly.

BRYANT

I've got an idea. Let's set Pick up and fool him into thinking he's much better than you. We'll get him and his lifer friends to bet a ton of money on him, you'll wipe the floor with the SOB, and we'll

clean up on those mother fuckers. It'll be grand.

OJ grins and trades fist bumps with Scosh.

TWO WEEKS LATER

34 EXT: OVER HO CHI MINH TRAIL — JOLLY 68 (ALPHA ONE) — DAY 34

Jolly 68 (Alpha One) takes the lead on this mission, while Jolly 67 (Alpha Two) flies back-up. Jolly 68 flies at tree-top level above the jungle canopy closely following the undulating curvature of the terrain, presenting the lowest possible profile. Jolly 67 keeps a safe distance, waiting to join the action if called upon by FAC, who will direct them in if and when needed. Jolly 68 closes in on the clearing where six Marines await rescue while Jolly 67 circles in a holding pattern. Jolly 68's pilot, Major Robert Swenck, raises the nose of his aircraft to a 30-degree angle, reducing its speed. For the next few minutes, they will be sitting ducks.

Swenck quickly reverses course, executes a 180-degree turn, and lands. Experience has taught him that this is the fastest and therefore safest way to egress a landing area.

Tech Sergeant James Thomas, A1C Roger Perry, and A1C Bill Pierson, all experienced PJs, are part of the Jolly 68 crew. Thomas and Pierson dig into their flight bags. Thomas pulls out a sawed-off shotgun, loads two cartridges into its side-by-side barrels, and slides it into a leather holster he had specially made for this purpose attached to an ammunition belt holding 10 additional cartridges. Pierson takes out several hand grenades and slips them into a side pocket of his fatigues. Meanwhile, Perry slips on his survival vest and takes up a position manning the mini-gun mounted on the rear ramp.

Jolly 68 reaches the clearing and lands. Thomas and Pierson jump out and secure the perimeter. Ghost-like, six Marines suddenly emerge from out of the jungle, race to the chopper, and clamber aboard. The Marine squad was out on patrol when they encountered a contingent of 30+ NVA (North Vietnam Army). Cornered and in danger of being over-run by superior numbers, they called for help and the Jolly Greens answered.

Thomas and Pierson notice a swarm of NVA homing in on them. Pierson pulls the pins on three grenades, one at a time, and tries to toss two pineapples with one hand and a single pineapple with

the other. In his haste, he accidentally drops one of the two at his feet. Instinctively, using his right leg, he kicks the grenade like a hockey puck and it explodes chest high in the midst of the NVA, administering a devastating coup de grâce to a dozen enemy soldiers.

Simultaneously, Thomas sprays them with suppressing fire from his GAR-15. He's outfitted his rifle with extended clips taped together end to end. As one clip empties, he immediately loads another, sustaining a constant rain of fire. As Thomas fires, NVA continue to advance on his position, closing to within 20 feet. Emptying his last clip, he pulls out his sawed-off double-barreled shotgun and instantly fires the two pre-loaded shells. Loading new cartridges two at a time at a manic pace, he splatters the NVA who are still charging at him with buckshot from nine of the 10 shells hanging from the leather ammunition belt he's wearing.

Sprayed by a relentless hail of bullets and buckshot, all but one NVA fall. Blinded by blood lust, the sole survivor runs towards Thomas screaming curses in Vietnamese at the top of his lungs with a menacing machete raised high over his head. Thomas calmly takes aim. With the crazed machete-wielder less than 10 feet away, he fires his last-remaining cartridge, specisly loaded with vintage U.S. Mercury dimes. The dimes strike their target like a cloud of flying metal disks, stopping him dead in his trSkinny. A normal shotgun shell, in contrast, may damage an on-rushing enemy, but the enemy may well continue advancing. Dime-loaded shells like this eliminate that possibility. Struck by a swarm of dimes, the angry attacker is lifted in the air and falls backwards, still holding his machete high, his face frozen in a horrifying death mask of hatred and surprise.

Thomas and Pierson dash for Jolly 68, heads down, and climb in through the open side door. Still more NVA emerge from the jungle, peppering the Jolly with fire from their AK-47s. Bullets fly everywhere, poking several holes into the Jolly's fuselage but, miraculously, none striking the crew or the Marines. Swenck gets the all clear signal, lifts off, and heads down the valley. The two PJ's trade their standard fist bumps in an emotional show of unity. The six Marines gather around them and playfully pummel them with their fists. Adrenaline surges through their veins. Thanks to the Jollys, they've escaped certain death to fight another day. As they pull away from the clearing, they feel something thump against the Jolly's armored belly.

MARINE SERGEANT

(addressing Thomas, Pierson, and Perry, screaming at the top of his lungs so he can be heard amidst all the noise)

You Jolly Greens are the greatest. You saved our lives. How can we ever thank you?

THOMAS

(Shouting his response)

A cold beer and a juicy steak sound good to me!

MARINE SERGEANT

(laughing, but still shouting)

Consider it done. It's on us. You guys definitely earned your keep today.

At that very moment, a final burst of machine gun fire rakes the Jolly, striking Perry in the forearm. The slug travels down the length of his arm before exiting near his wrist. Momentarily horrified, Pierson hesitates before springing into action. He tears off the sleeve of Perry's uniform and applies a tourniquet just above the wound's entry point, cutting off the flow of blood.

Swenck flies straight to China Beach Hospital at top speed, not bothering to drop off the six Marines. His first concern is for Perry, a member of his own crew. Having been warned by Swenck in advance via radio, a medical team meets Jolly 68 at the China Beach landing pad. Swiftly, carefully, they load Perry onto a stretcher and carry him off to the emergency room. Working feverishly, a team of doctors manages to stabilize Perry, saving him from certain death had they not intervened in time.

Upon landing back at Da Nang, the crew is surrounded by their fellow Jolly Greens, including members of the Jolly 68 ground crew. As they inspect the copter, one of them notices the casing of a rocket-propelled grenade embedded in the armor. One of the NVA must have fired at them with a shoulder-held rocket grenade launcher. Fortunately for the Marines and the crew of Jolly 68, the shell he fired was a dud.

Two days later, Perry is med-evaced back to the States where he's admitted to Walter Reed Hospital in Bethesda, Maryland for advanced treatment by specialists there. None of his fellow Jollys hear from him or see him again. Such was life in the Jollys. You never knew what was coming next, nor where you and your pals would be tomorrow. Maybe killed or missing in action, maybe wounded, or

maybe, a better option, playing ping-pong in the rec room of the Jolly Greens' barracks.

SAME DAY

35 INT: OVER HO CHI MINH TRAIL — JOLLY 67 (ALPHA TWO) — DAY 35

OJALA

(after witnessing from overhead the travails of Jolly 68/Alpha One)

Wow! I'm sure glad we're back-up on this one.

His crew-mates solemnly nod their heads in agreement. They all sense that their time will come. They just don't know when.

THREE WEEKS LATER

36 INT: OVER HO CHI MINH TRAIL — JOLLY 67 (ALPHA ONE) — DAY 36

An alert came in on the radio a half-hour earlier that an A1 Intruder pilot had been shot down somewhere near the southern end of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Acting as Alpha One on this mission, Jolly 67 attempts to pick him up but is driven off by heavy ground fire on their first try. From their aerial platform high above the jungle, the crew of the accompanying FAC spots dozens of VC closing in on the pilot's last-known location.

Queen (call sign for FAC) is in direct radio contact with the pilot on the ground. Trying to distract him, Queen asks about his wife.

QUEEN

If I remember correctly, your wife has the reddest hair I've ever seen, redder than an Irish Setter's.

DOWNED PILOT

You've got that right, only her hair's redder than a Setter's. It's even redder than Lucille Ball's. Fire red, just like her temper. Life's never dull being married to a genuine redhead, I can tell you that.

QUEEN

Copy that!

They continue to talk on the radio.

QUEEN

Get ready! When Jolly 67 starts his final approach, be sure to pop your "Willy P" flare so he can see the white smoke and know exactly where you are.

[A "Willy P" flare is made from white phosphorus. It burns white hot and puts out a cloud of white smoke when lit.]

Jolly 67 continues to hover some distance from where the pilot has been located in order to stay out of the way of the action. Jadro's ready to go in and attempt another rescue, but he wants to make sure the area has been cleared of hostiles first.

QUEEN

(addressing the downed pilot)

Okay? Ready? Pop that flare! Jolly 67 is on its way. He'll be there in a few seconds. Hold on tight!

Six white flares light up the jungle. The VC have their own radios captured from downed fliers and can hear every word Jolly 67 and Queen are saying. They light a circle of white flares in the jungle surrounding the pilot, hoping to draw Jolly 67 to within range of their weaponry.

A pair of highly-maneuverable Sandys plummet from the sky like eagles descending on unsuspecting prey. The first strafes the area around one of the flares, then soars back up into the sky; the second swoops in right after him and drops napalm before pointing his nose skyward. The Sandys strike again in similar fashion five more times—one for each flare—shredding and incinerating all enemy forces lurking in the area. Meanwhile, the real pilot — a Navy fighter jockey — has popped a red flare, not a white flare. The VC falls for the clever ruse, and it costs them their lives.

Jolly 67 hurries to the red flare and assumes a hovering position. OJ lowers the jungle penetrator. The pilot hooks himself on to the penetrator and OJ raises him to safety.

OJALA

(radioing to the crew in general)

I've got him. The pilot's safe and on board. Now let's get the hell out of here! I've had enough of this shit for one day! I need a cold beer, a massage, and a tug job. And a cigarette, too! Anybody got a cig and a match?

CURTIS

*(responding to OJ's words while offering him an unfiltered
Chesterfield and a light)*

No doing it yourself?

OJALA

Hell no! Not after something like this. I need the
real thing. Rescues make me horny.

Everyone breaks out into loud laughter. The rescued pilot, who's
connected to the Jolly's intercom through his helmet's head-set and
can hear everything that's being said, smiles and gives the entire
crew a "thumbs up". Mission accomplished.

37 INT: DA NANG AFB — JOLLY REC ROOM — DAY

37

OJ and Skinny are playing ping-pong. Scosh is watching. All are
listening to '60s music on a boom box. Their favorite tune, the
Doors' "Riders on the Storm", is playing. OJ, serving left-handed,
crushes a serve past Skinny.

CURTIS

(shaking his head)

Shit, shit, shit, and double shit! There's no way I
can beat you.

Scosh, watching from nearby, cigarette butt hanging from his mouth
as usual, chuckles and takes a swig of warm beer.

A1C Jaime Moreno, newly-arrived PJ, barely 21, enters the room.

MORENO

(addressing nobody in particular)

Hey guys!

No one pays attention.

MORENO

(raising his voice so loudly, nobody can ignore him)

Guys!

All eyes turn to look at the newbie

MORENO

Hey, guys, listen! Colonel Royal, Jadro, and several

other officers are inspecting every barracks for contraband. They'll be here in 10 minutes.

BRYANT

(speaking with an overdose of sarcasm in his voice)
Colonel Royal is a royal pain in the ass!

Everyone laughs. Stew enters the room and invites OJ, Scosh, and Skinny to see his room. Once there, they encounter a wall plastered floor to ceiling with several years worth of Playboy centerfolds. It's the most elaborate collage of nudies any of them have ever seen.

STEWART

(wearing a sheepish grin)

Meet my girlfriends. They give me a workout every night and never complain.

The three visitors chuckle and shake their heads.

OJALA

I don't think I ever want to shake hands with you again!

Another round of chuckles.

STEWART

Go fuck yourself, OJ. You should talk.

OJALA

So, now we know what you've been doing with your hands when you're all alone.

More chuckling as OJ, Scosh, and Skinny exit Stew's room.

Returning to the rec room, they notice Moreno standing outside the doorway to the main entrance of the barracks, glancing to his left and gesturing with a slight motion of his hand behind his back for them to be quiet. Colonel Royal and a group of officers, including Jadro, accompanied by Royal's yappy little dog, is slowly approaching the Jolly Green barracks. Royal's god-forsaken dog is notorious for barking at everyone and biting the pants leg of anyone the colonel happens to be bitching at any particular moment. The men joke that, with their whiny, grating, high-pitched voices, Royal and his dog were made for each other. As

Colonel Royal and his entourage move along, they randomly inspect some barracks while ignoring others. They pass by the Jolly Green barracks without stopping and continue on to the next barracks.

MORENO

(cupping his hands around his mouth)

Here they come! Get ready to be hassled and written up. For any minor infractions they spot, you'll be punished by sweeping and cleaning Royal's place, royal pain in the ass that he is.

OJ, Scosh, and Skinny retreat back to the rec room., where OJ and Skinny commence another ping-pong game. Just then, Sergeant Pick enters the room and scans the room with a contemptuous half-grin on his face.

PICK

(addressing OJ)

Oh-Jalopy! I thought I might find you here. I hear rumors you're a pretty good ping-pong player. So, just how good are you?

OJALA

(feigning false modesty)

Not bad, but not necessarily great either. Fair to middlin' I'd say. It depends who you ask.

PICK

(taking the paddle from Skinny)

I'm asking you, hot shot. So let's play. Show me what you're made of. I hope it's not shit like the rest of these goons. How about two bucks a game?

OJALA

(nodding his head in agreement)

Ten and you're on!

PICK

(greedily licking his lips)

Ten bucks a game it is. Choose your weapon.

OJ plays dumb and loses the first, second, and third games by wide margins, playing only with his right hand.

OJALA

(addressing Pick after his third straight loss)

It seems that you're a whole lot better player than I am. Of course, I've had more beers, so it doesn't count.

PICK

(holding out his hand and grinning derisively)

Of course I'm the better player. Anyone here could have told you that. Forget that beer bullshit. That's just a loser's excuse. So, give me my 30 bucks, cocksucker. Pay up, loser. You're not so hot. What the hell were people talking about when they claimed you're the one to beat? My half-blind grandma could whip your ass with one hand tied behind her back.

OJALA

(staring blankly into his wallet and turning to Scosh)

Hey Scosh, old buddy, old pal, old friend. Have you got any money I can borrow to pay this mother fucker before he has a cow? It appears that I'm broke at the moment.

Bryant takes three ten-dollar bills from his wallet, crumples them into a ball, and tosses it on the table in front of Pick with obvious disgust.

Pick picks up the loot and stuffs it into his shirt pocket. He's laughing hard to himself as he exits the room.

PICK

(throwing a final barb OJ's way as he exits)

This is the easiest 30 bucks I've ever made. Anytime you want to lose money, Georgie-Porgie Pudding and Pie, just let me know. I can always use some extra dough, especially when it's this easy.

With Pick gone, Scosh and OJ chortle gleefully. They know they've hooked the detested bottom-feeder Pick and are anxiously looking forward to reeling him in. There's still time left to let Pick win a few more games before the big-money tournament begins. That's when their big payoff will come.

THREE DAYS LATER

Ray "Peas" Peaslee, crew chief on Jolly 67, lives on the far end of the base from the Jolly Green Flight Crews Barracks in a prefabricated, galvanized steel, Quonset Hut-style structure that serves as barracks for members like him of the Jolly Green Ground Crews. Their down-scale quarters includes their own ping-pong table. OJ spends many an hour there matching his ping-pong prowess against all comers, beating everyone he faces handily. Peas lets everyone there in on their plot to fleece Pick and his cohorts, swearing them to secrecy about OJ's superior skills at the game. They have lots of money to spend, and, with few exceptions, have mostly lost it at the poker table, or on women and booze, or on all three. Peas presents the plot against Pick as their one good chance to win some of that lost money back.

Scosh, Skinny, and The Riot are always welcome in the ground crew's barracks. As PJs, one of their duties is to help treat the wounded at the China Beach Hospital off base. That mobility gives them easy access to luxuries such as steaks, wine, and hard liquor — items that are hard to get for their fellow non-com Jollys. In the course of carrying out their duties, the PJs have met scores of military personnel from every service who hold them and their Jolly colleagues like OJ in the highest esteem for their willingness to risk their lives to save others. Whenever a member of a Jolly flight crew shows up wearing his special patches in a bar or restaurant somewhere on base or in Da Nang City and there are pilots there who spot them, they never have to pay for drinks or food. The men whose lives they've pledged to save at the risk of their own invariably pick up the tab.

The Riot has taught Scosh and Skinny the proper order of moves when executing the elaborate, ritualistic handshake black members of all services throughout Vietnam use as their own special bonding ritual. With The Riot's ready endorsement, the two of them are granted access to the base's tightly-knit black community where they are welcomed as honorary brothers.

The Riot later taught the handshake ritual to OJ.

THERIOT

(confiding a special secret to OJ)

Learn this handshake well, OJ. You never know when it'll come in handy. Someday it may save your life. If you're in trouble, run to anyone in our

community and greet them with that handshake.
They'll take care of you.

The Handshake has become another sign of equality among two groups of outcasts: blSkinny on the one hand and white hippie-weirdos like the Scosh and Skinny and OJ whom lifers refuse to accept on the other. The two groups use their special fist bump ritual as their special "in" way of greeting each other. Older lifer sergeants look down on the practice and dismiss it as hocus-pocus voodoo. They dismiss blSkinny like The Riot and his friends as "niggers" and "spooks" and "jungle bunnies". They deride as faggots whites like Scosh and Peas and Skinny and OJ who accept the blSkinny as real people.

At first, OJ didn't know what a faggot was. As a former boy scout, he thought a faggot was a bundle of wood tied together and used as fuel for campfires. When The Riot explained to him that, in the real world, "faggot" was a disrespectful label hung on homosexuals by people who hated them, it opened his eyes to a new reality. He'd never known a homosexual personally, or at least not an acknowledged homosexual. Out of ignorance, he'd referred to them as "homos" without realizing what an insult it was. After The Riot explained to him the real facts of life, he never made that same mistake again. The disassociation he felt from the lifers' open scorn made him feel at one with them, and with blSkinny.

The base is quiet on this particular evening. There hasn't been a rocket attack in weeks. Colonel Royal has nothing better to do than drive around the base looking for infractions, with his yelping little dog riding shotgun by his side in his open Jeep. He doesn't particularly care what infraction he discovers or invents. He's just feeling the need to chew someone out, regardless of the reason. He especially enjoys harassing Jolly Green personnel since they are a different breed entirely and don't give a flying-rat-fuck about following regulations.

On this night he catches OJ, Scosh, and Skinny exiting the Ground Crews Barracks sporting long hair and mustaches that are decidedly not to code. He orders them to accompany him over to the Marines compound to the chair of their Vietnamese barber. Royal instructs him to give the three of them military haircuts. As a final insult, he makes them pay. Several Marines stand at the door to the barbershop, looking on, smiling, and nodding their heads approvingly at the goings-on.

BRYANT

(turning to OJ and Skinny as they leave the shop, rubbing his noggin which is as smooth and white as a cue ball)

I like it. I do. I really do. The wind cools me down having short hair.

OJALA

(turning to Bryant with a look of surprise)

You've got to be kidding me, Scosh. If you ask me, I hate it! That son-of-a-bitch Royal just wants to humiliate us.

CURTIS

(turning to OJ and trying to shush him)

Not so loud, OJ. Royal might hear you. I hate it, too, but there's nothing we can do about it now. We'll just have to let everything grow back. And when it does, Royal won't even notice. We just happened to catch him on a bad night when he had a four-by-four stuck up his ass and nothing better to do to make him feel like he's the boss.

OJALA

What are you talking about? That bastard always has a four-by-four stuck up his ass. He was born that way.

CURTIS

You're right about that, OJ. Only, today it's stuck so far up his ass, it's sticking out his navel. Forget about that mother fucker. He's not worth it. He just wants to mess with us. We can't let him. We're better than that. Hoo-rah! WE'RE THE JOLLY GREEN GIANTS! And don't you forget it!

Skinny, OJ, and Scosh erupt in laughter, only to suppress it when Royal notices.

ROYAL

(glaring at the three of them disapprovingly)

Ten-Hut! You men look like normal people for a change. See that you keep it that way. Dismissed!

Royal turns and climbs back into his Jeep, his detested dog hopping in after him. As soon as the man and his mutt are out

of hearing range, the three friends whoop with delight and trade more-elaborate-than-usual fist bumps. They finish their night smoking joints with Peas and The Riot in the safety of the Ground Crews Barracks.

39 EXT: DA NANG AFB — OUTSIDE THE PJ COMPOUND — DAY

39

OJ, Skinny, and Scosh have begun growing new heads of hair and dapper mustaches as they continue to ignore regulations. It's against regulations for the Jolly Greeners to wear their distinctive Jolly Green Giant hats on base, so, of course, they wear them anyway every chance they get. Whenever Colonel Royal notices them wearing their forbidden headgear, he writes them up. He does so more than once for all three men, adding still more disciplinary paperwork to their files, which are already thick enough. Added to that, they have grown accustomed to being assigned to menial duties such as sweeping floors, scrubbing walls, and washing windows.

OJ, Skinny, and Scosh, joined by Peas, The Riot, and Prose, are holding an impromptu barbecue in an open area behind the PJ compound. OJ, acting as head chef, has thrown six steaks on the grill of a large raised brick barbecue. The men are drinking beer and chewing the fat as the slabs of beef sizzle on the hot grill. OJ flips the steaks over and turns to his pals, sharing a story from his time in survival school.

OJALA

(recalling a memory from his time in survival school)

Have I ever told you guys about the first time I ran into Colonel Royal Rat Fuck?

BRYANT

No, you haven't shared that particular lie with us yet. Where and when did that happen, pray tell?

OJALA

Before I was shipped to 'Nam, I had to go through survival school at Fairchild Air Force Base outside Spokane. Colonel Royal and I just happened to go through survival school there at the same time. It was the middle of February and the weather was colder than a witch's tit. I nearly froze my balls off. It was snowy and windy the whole time I was there, which was really weird, because I was

supposed to be learning how to survive on my own in the jungles of Vietnam. Anyway, Colonel Royal and I were there at the same time. We were both put through the same meat grinder. As a final test, we all had to walk five miles through the snow carrying heavy pSkinny, and Royal didn't make it. Half-way through, he collapsed and had to be carried off on a stretcher by a pair of medics. That tells you, the guy's not half as tough as he pretends to be. It's all an act. He's a pussy, and deep down inside he knows it. And he knows I know it, because I was there and I saw it happen. I think that's a big reason why he's so hard on me, and on you because you're my friends. He knows I know the truth, and he can't stand it.

BRYANT

That's quite a story, OJ. After hearing that, I hate the son-of-a-bitch even more than I did before.

OJALA

That's not all. There's more. The first time Colonel Royal called me on the carpet and chewed me out here at Da Nang, I recognized him but he didn't remember me. So, being the smart ass that I am, I said, "I haven't seen you since they carried you off on that stretcher at survival school. I trust you're feeling better." I've been number one on his shit list ever since.

BRYANT

That was a really stupid thing to say. No wonder he hates you. You really are a smart ass. I love it!

Ever since arriving at Da Nang, Royal has been developing a well-deserved reputation as a royal pain in the ass without even trying. Bad behavior toward his lessers comes naturally to him. In the eyes of the Jollys, his superiority complex and penchant for unnecessary nastiness and pettiness and humiliation make him the perfect candidate for holding his high rank.

Taking the steaks off the grill and placing them on a large serving plate, Ojala shares an idea he's been mulling over.

OJALA

Hey, guys. Listen up. I've got a plan for how to take care of Royal's dog once and for all. You know that battery-powered tape recorder I bought at the PX last month? Step one of my plan is, I'm going to buy two more just like it. Then I'll use one of them to tape the sound of his fucking barking dog.

BRYANT

I love it. Or at least, I think I love it. You've got something cooking in that crazy head of yours. Tell me more. I want to hear the entire scheme you have in mind. So what do you do next after recording Royal's fucking barking dog?

OJALA

Step two of my plan is, we use that recording to trick Royal. If my scheme works, we're going to kidnap that fucking dog of his and feed it to Stretch.

BRYANT

(smiling and nodding his head at the thought)

OJ, I have no idea what you have in mind to make that work, but it sure sounds gruesome. You can count me in.

CURTIS

Count me in, too, OJ. Only one thing. How the hell is this going to work? And what does Stretch have to do with it? It sounds crazy, OJ. Please explain!

OJALA

(pulling out a note pad and a pen)

Gladly. Here's how it works...

Everyone gathers around OJ and listens. OJ, Scosh, and Skinny have spoken often amongst themselves about ways they can even the score with their most detested nemesis, Colonel Royal. After mulling it over for months, OJ has finally come up with a plan. His plan involves the PJ compound's most fearsome resident, a pet reticulating python named Stretch. In a macabre feeding ritual, every night, after chugging a few beers, the PJs toss rats and chickens and cats and other small animals into Stretch's glass-walled enclosure and watch as he chows down. With Stretch in mind as chief protagonist, OJ explains what he has in mind to his

friends.

40 - EXT: DA NANG AFB - JOLLY GREEN BARRACKS - DAY

40

Colonel Royal has kept his flying status up to date until now. But the time has come for him to make another flight in order to stay current. He needs three more hours, and he needs them today. His favorite exercise other than harrassing airmen is dropping bombs on the enemy. He is about to go on a mission that will satisfy his need to kill and keep his flying status active. When the plotters learn that he will soon be gone, to make sure, they filter out to the tarmac and watch Royal take off piloting an A1 Intruder. The moment his plane is out of sight, the conspirators swing into action.

They hurry to Royal's compound where his dog is penned inside a kennel. Making sure that nobody's around first, they approach the cage and rattle the sides. The ruckus angers the dog and the dog begins barking loudly. OJ, holding one of his tape recorders, tapes the barking. Scosh tosses several pieces of raw meet into the kennel and the dog forgets the barking and begins gobbling up the meat. With the dog distracted, they open the kennel gate, snatch him up, and stuff him into a flight bag they've brought with them. They double-time it over to the PJ's compound where their co-conspirators are waiting.

Bryant takes the dog out of the canvas bag and throws him into the cage with Stretch. The dog barks wildly, and OJ records the noise on his second tape recorder. Motionless, coiled into a ball, Stretch eyes his next meal. The dog turns and notices Stretch for the first time. Terrified, he starts bsrking hysterically. OJ captures the sounds on his third tape recorder. Suddenly, Stretch strikes, thrusting his body forward out of the tight curl and enveloping the dog in its deadly grip. Royal's pet doesn't stand a chance. The conspirators watch as Stretch slowly squeezes the life out of the dog. The dog's screeches stop, and Stretch releases its dead body from his vice-like grip, seizes it in its maw, and sucks it in with a long series of rhythmic, gulp-like motions. It takes Stretch severals hours to wholly swallow the dog, creating a sizable bulge in his stomach that will remain for several days as he slowly digests his meal.

41 - EXT: DA NANG AFB - COLONEL ROYAL'S QUARTERS - DAY

41

Royal returns from his mission only to discover that his dog is

missing. He scours the immediate area and finds no sign of him. He climbs into his jeep and switches on the ignition. Before leaving the compound, he asks several people he encounters whether any of them have seen his dog. Nobody knows a thing. Acting on a hunch, he drives to the PJ's compound, jumps out of his Jeep, and charges into the PJ's barracks unannounced. He spots OJ, Skinny, and Scosh drinking beer at a table next to Stretch's cage. Surveying the room, he notices a bulge in Stretch's stomach and explodes in anger, rightfully fearing that that lump is his dog. He starts screaming at the three of them and demands that they kill the snake and slice him open. He's certain that he'll find the remains of his dog inside.

They have prepared for this very moment. Being careful to avoid Royal noticing, Scosh pushes a button on his radio, sending a message to Skinny in the barracks next door. Skinny gets Scosh's message and turns on his tape recorder at full volume. Skinny immediately disappears in the opposite direction. He doesn't want Royal to see him or to associate him in any way with the incident. Royal hears the sound of his dog barking and runs out of the PJs' barracks and pivots in the direction the sound came from. When he arrives there, he searches everywhere but can't find his dog.

ROYAL

(addressing an airman standing nearby watching him)

Airman! Have you seen a small white dog anywhere around here? I heard him barking and I thought it was coming from here.

AIRMAN

(standing at attention and saluting)

I heard a dog barking, too, Sir. Was it yours? I didn't see it. I only heard it. Sorry I can't help.

As Royal turns to leave, he is being carefully watched through a pair of binoculars by Peas who is standing outside another barracks 100 yards further on. Seeing Royal standing alone next to his Jeep, scratching his head and looking around, Peas switches on his tape recorder and plays the sound of Royal's dog barking recorded by OJ when he's just been thrown into Stretch's cage. Peas immediately disappears behind a nearby barracks, out of Royal's sight. Like Skinny, he doesn't want to be caught or in any way be associated with the dog's disappearance. Let Royal wonder. Royal hears the cries, rushes to his Jeep, jumps in, and drives in the general direction of where Peas was just standing.

ROYAL

(jumping from his Jeep and addressing two airmen)
Have either of you seen my dog? I heard him barking from somewhere around here. He sounded like he was in trouble. Have you seen him?

FIRST AIRMAN

(saluting)

No, Sir. I haven't seen your dog.

SECOND AIRMAN

(also saluting)

No, Sir. I haven't seen your dog either. Neither of us have. But I did hear a dog barking just now. I think it came from somewhere over there. He sure sounded like he was in trouble. Can we help?

Both airmen point to another area of the compound further on. At that very moment, the pitiful cries of Royal's dog, recorded by OJ just as he is being entwined by Stretch, fill the afternoon air. Without saying another word, Royal jumps back into his Jeep and races on in the general direction of his dog's latest cries.

Like Peas before him, The Riot has been watching Royal through a pair of binoculars. When he sees Royal return to his Jeep, obviously confused, he switches on his tape recorder, playing Royal's dog's swan song.

ROYAL

(early out of his mind in a mix of fury and anguish and frustration, addressing a lone airman standing nearby)

Sergeant! Have you seen a small white dog? He's mine, and he's run away. Just now I thought I heard him screaming from somewhere near here.

SERGEANT

(standing at attention and saluting)

No, Sir. I haven't seen any dog around here. But I did hear some awful noise just now, like a dog screaming. Was that him?

ROYAL

I'm not sure, but I think so. If you see or hear anything, you be sure to let me know.

SERGEANT

(still standing at attention and saluting another time)
 Yes, Sir! I will do that, Sir. You can count on it,
 Sir.

Royal climbs back into his Jeep, swearing to himself as he does so, and takes off in the direction of his quarters, not to return for a month.

ROYAL

(thinking out loud to himself as he drives)
 I'm sure that was him I heard. He sounded like he was in trouble. Maybe he's gone back to my barracks! I've got to find him!

Everyone involved in the plot—OJ, The Riot, Scosh, Skinny, Peas, and all the others—assemble at the PJs barracks. For a moment, the plotters get a sinking feeling that they have maybe gone too far. A moment later, they shrug it off, throw some steaks on the barbecue, and pop more beers. Being careful that no one else is around, Bryant takes out a joint and lights it. He shares it with the others and together they puff away the rest of the afternoon, reliving every detail of the con they've just pulled on Colonel Royal. They swear to one another never to speak of this incident again to anyone, including themselves. As a final triumphant dance, they fist bump, elbow bump, shoulder bump, hip bump, and belly bump, repeating the sequence with each fellow member of their secret cabal.

OJ

(speaking to The Riot, who's standing nearby)
 Sweet! That was really sweet.

THERIOT

Sweet? That was demented. Sweet, but demented. OJ, you've got a twisted mind. I like it! For a white honky asshole mother-fucker, sometimes you're not all bad!

42 — EXT: DA NANG AFB — THERIOT'S BARRACKS — EVENING

42

When The Riot first arrived at Da Nang, he bunked with other Jolly non-coms in the same integrated barracks. After a few months of being picked on because of his skin color, he joined a group of

his fellow black non-coms that had commandeered their own special, separate all-black barracks within the Jolly Green compound. Like-minded blSkinny like Theriot welcomed a chance to self-segregate themselves from the main contingent of non-com Jollys. The potential for racial friction bubbled non-stop just below the surface of everyday life at Da Nang and all across the Vietnam theater with occasional outbursts targeting blSkinny like The Riot.

Their self-isolation gave The Riot and his friends a chance to be themselves without having to worry about what their white counterparts thought or said or did. They plastered their walls with black-light posters, in The Riot's case, with posters of black recording artist Jimi Hendrix; of iconic black Amazons Diahann Carroll and Freda Payne; and of Richard Roundtree, star of Shaft. Dog-eared copies of Jet and Ebony magazines sat on a side table. In ways like this, they created the illusion of living their lives separately, they created a vibrant, colorful, distinctive environment that was a sort of sanctum sanctorum. It was open to white friends, but few if any came. On this particular day, The Riot has invited OJ to visit.

Their conversation opens OJ to an entirely new world unlike anything he experienced in his lily-white upbringing. A pair of Lava Lamps illuminates the nook where they sit while the sound of Jimi Hendrix singing "Spanish Castle Magic" explodes out of The Riot's elaborate sound system. Four of The Riot's black friends stand in a semi-circle around him and OJ. Slowly, one by one, they filter off, leaving The Riot and OJ to themselves.

The Riot and OJ have drunk and smoked themselves into a stupor. Their eyes are drooping; they're barely maintaining consciousness; their animated conversation centers on the differences between Black Power and White Power. Even though he's white, OJ doesn't really understand what White Power is all about. The Riot patiently but forcefully educates him.

A hazy blue mixed cloud of cigarette and marijuana smoke hovers over OJ and The Riot's heads and the smell of stale beer is everywhere. An empty Pepsi bottle serves as an ashtray. The Riot passes OJ a roach and OJ takes a long drag. Slowly exhaling, he surveys the black light posters hanging on the wall behind The Riot's bunk. He focuses on the poster of Jimi Hendrix. The pace of conversation has suddenly ebbed, momentarily stuck in an awkward pause. The sound of Jimi Hendrix performing "The Star Spangled Banner" at Woodstock jolts OJ out of his trance-like state.

OJALA

Hey! Did you know that Jimi Hendrix was from Seattle? That's where I'm from.

THERIOT

Every bbrother knows Hendrix is from Seattle.

OJALA

Yeah, but I bet I know something about him you don't know.

THERIOT

I doubt that very much. I could write a book about Jimi. He was the greatest guitar player that ever lived. It killed me last year when I heard that hee had died. They say he choked in his own vomit.

OJALA

You're right. That was a real tragedy, But do you know his song "Spanish Castle Magic"?

THERIOT

Hell, yes. Of course I do. It's one of my favorites. Would you like me to sing it for you?

The Riot stands up, pretends to play an air guitar, and belts out the words.

It's very far away
 It takes about half a day
 To get there
 If we travel by my... Dragonfly
 No it's not in Spain
 But all the same
 You know
 It's a groovy name
 And the wind's just right
 Hey
 Hang on my darling
 Hang on if you want to go
 You know it's really groovy place
 And it's just a little bit of a Spanish castle
 magic...

OJALA

That's the song, all right. But did you know it has nothing to do with Spain?

THERIOT

I kind of wondered about that, but I can't figure out what else it could be about.

OJALA

It's about a teenage dance club in Seattle called The Spanish Castle. I used to go there all the time. The music was great. A lot of big-name acts showed up. Jerry Lee Lewis. Roy Orbison. Paul Revere and the Raiders. The Ventures. It was a great place to dance your ass off and meet girls.

THERIOT

Those are all white-boy acts. What's that got to do with Jimi Hendrix?

OJALA

When he was just a teenager, before he became famous, he used to hang out there a lot with his guitar, hoping for a chance to perform.

THERIOT

No shit? How do you know that.

OJALA

That's the story that I heard. One day, while he was hanging around, one of the performers blew out his amp and couldn't play. So Jimi offered to take his place and the DJ that ran the place, Pat O'Day, said "Okay!" The legend is, that was the first time Jimi Hendrix played on stage in front of a live audience.

THERIOT

It sounds like a big fat lie to me.

OJALA

Maybe so, but it explains the story behind "Spanish Castle Magic". That song was never about some castle in Spain. It was about a dingy old teenage night club on the south end of Seattle. I can

vouche for that first hand.

THERIOT

OJ. Sometimes you amaze me. Have another hit.

43 — INT: DA NANG AFB — THERIOT'S BARRACKS — EVENING

43

OJ and The Riot are deeply immersed in another one of their endless debates about White Power versus Black Power. They both are high on pot. The Riot sits on his bed with his legs crossed, showing OJ the bottoms of his feet. OJ notices that they are an off-color white.

THERIOT

(slurring his speech, his eyes drooping)

What are you looking at, White Boy? You've got one of those funny looks on your face.

OJALA

(pointing to the bottoms of The Riot's feet)

Hank old buddy, you talk about Black Power all the time. But have you ever noticed the color of the bottoms of your feet?

THERIOT

(twisting his right foot around so he can see the bottom)

They're white! So what? That still doesn't make me a white racist honkey!

OJ gets up and whoops and hollers and does an awkward dance trying not to fall over. Before he can finish his moves, Hank falls asleep.

ONE WEEK LATER

44 — EXT: DA NANG AFB — ROOF OF THE JOLLY GREEN BARRACKS — NIGHT

44

There's an exterior metal stairway bordered by a waist-high metal railing leading to a exterior landing accessing the second floor of the Jolly Green barracks. Beside the second floor landing is a metal post supporting the roof. On many a night, the Jolly Greeners climb up on the railing, grab hold of the post, and shimmy up to within an arm's length of the roof. From there they reach out, grab the raised edge of the roof, and hoist themselves up. On a typical evening, they form a sort of pyramid. One Jolly

stands on the landing, One stands on the railing, another stands on his shoulders, and a fourth stands on the roof. In this way, they pass up coolers filled with beer, lawn chairs, a large "boom" portable radio, and assorted snSkinny. Thus outfitted, from their roof-top aerie, they hold informal parties nearly every night. On this particular night, OJ, Scosh, Peas, and Skinny are drinking beer, smoking dope and cigarettes, and watching the night lights of the base. Suddenly their reverie is interrupted by the sight of an incoming rocket attack. The VC are trying once again to score direct hits on three principal targets: aircraft, the napalm dump at the far end of the base, and the liquid oxygen tanks standing inside a metal-fence revetment right next to the Jolly Green barracks. The firey paths of the approaching missiles are clearly visible, yet the missiles approach in silence.

PEASLEE

(speaking in awe-struck tones)

Wow, would you look at that? Rad!

SCOSH

Cool!

OJALA

It's like the Fourth of July, only these are the real thing. Sweeeet!

ACKERLEY

(reacting as the first missile lands and explodes)

Holy fuck!

EARLY TNE NEXT MORNING, JUST BEFORE DAWN

45 - EXT: DA NANG AFB - JOLLY GREEN COMPOUND - DAY

45

ANONYMOUS AIRMAN

(racing down the hallway of the barracks and screaming)

The compound's been hit. The Jolly Greens have been hit. The VCs have launched another rocket attack.

The Jollys jump to their feet and race to the compound, wearing whatever clothes they have on. Some are in their underwear; others in their flight suits; still others in jeans and T-shirts. Entering the compound, they see flames and black smoke billowing from the stall where Jolly 69 is parked. Firefighters with high-pressure hoses are struggling to put the fire out. Mini-gun rounds start

to go off like Chinese firecrackers, sending bullets and shrapnel whizzing by their heads. They drop their hoses and run.

46 — EXT: DA NANG AFB — JOLLY GREEN COMPOUND — NIGHT

46

The base has been put on high alert and tension fills the air. OJ, Skinny, Scosh, and a bunch more of their Jolly Green buddies have congregated on the roof of the barracks and, in their normal fashion, are drinking beer, smoking various substances, barbecuing steaks and burgers, and playing loud music on a suitcase-size boom radio courtesy of the Armed Forces Network. "Sky Pilot" by Eric Burdon and the Animals is playing. The men sing along to the lyrics, barely in tune and missing some words.

THE ANIMALS

(blasting from the boom radio)

He blesses the boys as they stand in line
 The smell of gun grease
 And the bayonets they shine
 He's there to help them all that he can
 To make them feel wanted he's a good holy man
 Sky pilot
 Sky pilot
 How high can you fly?
 You'll never, never, never reach the sky

He smiles at the young soldiers
 Tells them it's all right
 He knows of their fear in the forthcoming fight
 Soon there'll be blood and many will die
 Mothers and fathers back home they will cry
 Sky pilot
 Sky pilot
 How high can you fly?
 You'll never, never, never reach the sky

He mumbles a prayer and it ends with a smile
 The order is given
 They move down the line
 But he'll stay behind and he'll meditate
 But it won't stop the bleeding or ease the hate

As the young men move out into the battle zone
 He feels good, with God you're never alone
 He feels tired and he lays on his bed

Hopes the men will find courage
 In the words that he said
 Sky pilot
 Sky pilot
 How high can you fly?
 You'll never, never, never reach the sky

You're soldiers of God, you must understand
 The fate of your country is in your young hands
 May God give you strength
 Do your job real well
 If it all was worth it
 Only time it will tell

In the morning they return
 With tears in their eyes
 The stench of death drifts up to the skies
 A soldier so ill looks at the sky pilot
 Remembers the words
 "Thou shalt not kill."
 Sky pilot
 Sky pilot
 How high can you fly?
 You'll never, never, never reach the sky

Suddenly arcing streams of light illuminate the night skies as the VC launch another rocket attack. The men don't run for cover. They figure if their time has come, what good would it do? So they stand on the edge of the roof and watch the latest fireworks display. Just then the roof begins to shake as though an earthquake has struck.

ACKERLEY

(addressing OJ)

Holy shit! What the fuck was that?

OJALA

(addressing Skinny as another earth tremor rattles the barracks)

Those rumbles are from B-52s dropping bombs. They must be blasting Charlie somewhere nearby.

(pointing to flashes of light on the eastern horizon)

See, look! Over there to the east. Those are B-52s dropping their bombs on the VC.

ACKERLEY

No shit?

OJALA

No shit. Of course no shit. I wouldn't shit you, Skinny. You're my favorite turd. Don't you know that yet?

ACKERLEY

I do now, and I'm greatly honored.

OJALA

You should be! Seriously, though, this light show reminds me of my first night here at Da Nang. I was standing on this same spot minding my own business when, all of a sudden, some B-52s started dropping bombs somewhere in that same direction. There were flashes of light that looked like lightning, illuminating the skies, just like now. The clouds looked like pink cotton candy, just like now. And a few seconds after that, the ground started shaking, like in an earthquake, just like now. Whatever they were bombing that night, it seemed like it was all blown to smithereens. The scene that night reminded me of the black-light poster I have hanging on the wall next to my bed with the image of Mordor from The Lord of the Rings. This scene tonight isn't much different, except for the rocket attack on the base. I can do without that, thank you very much. Too much action for my blood.

Skinny, Scosh, OJ, and others have brought their cameras with them, along with tripods. They have set them on time-lapse exposure and pointed them toward the area the VC had bombed the night before. Little did they expect a repeat performance from the VC. When the flashes from the B-52 bombing runs start, the men switch their cameras, refocusing them on the action to the east.

SCOSH

(speaking to nobody in particular)

Wow! This is like Fort McHenry when that guy—what's his name?—wrote the Star Spangled Banner. Here we are in far away Vietnam, watching the rockets red glare, the bombs bursting in air. This is unreal!

The B-52's finish dropping their loads and it's almost midnight. the Armed Forces Radio station is about to go off the air. They always end their broadcasting day by playing the National Anthem. On cue, the voice of the Jolly Greeners' favorite deejay, Pat Sajak, can be heard.

SAJAK

That's all for tonight. Until tomorrow night, I leave you with Jimi Hendrix. God bless America!

The indescribable sounds of Hendrix performing the Star Spangled Banner on his guitar at Woodstock fills the night air.

The Jolly Greeners get teary-eyed and chills run up and down their spines. They get goose bumps on their arms. Wordlessly, they look at each other and trade fist bumps. The radio plays the National Anthem of Vietnam and then turns silent for the night.

47 - INT. DA NANG AFB - JOLLY GREEN BRIEFING ROOM - OCT. 22, 1971 - EVENING

47

A powerful typhoon packing winds in excess of 105 miles an hour is fast approaching the coast of Vietnam. It is expected to hit land near Huế, 60 miles north of Da Nang AFB. The monsoon season has already started, and the rain seems to never stop. Often it evaporates 10 feet off the ground, turning into a fine mist when it hits the face. With torrential rains and mighty winds of a monster typhoon only a day away, an emergency meeting has been called of all Jolly Green flight crews.

BRIEFING OFFICER

(addressing the flight crews)

Gentlemen, we have a typhoon headed this way, due to hit land tomorrow. From what the meterologists are saying, this baby is no lady. She's a real bitch, and a serious threat to the base and to the 53s. They won't last a minute sitting outside in 100+ mile an hour winds. It's time for you to take a short visit to Thailand and take your birds with you.

An excited murmur rises from the flight crews.

BRIEFING OFFICER

(addressing the flight crews)

Silence, please, gentlemen. Despite what you may think, this is no vacation. We've got to get the six operational Jollys to safety ASAP or the typhoon might blow them away. The two we've been cannibalizing for spare parts can't fly. They'll just have to stay where they are. They're inside a hangar, so they should be okay. Hopefully. You men are going to fly the other six to Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Force Base, 365 clicks northeast of Bangkok. You'll be flying three two birds at a time, one pair after another after another in 30-minute intervals. Here are copies of the flight plans and specific assignments. Please take a minute and read through them before I get into the details. We haven't much time. I want those six birds ready to fly by sunrise tomorrow. That means you'll need to be up and ready yourselves by oh-four-thirty. No partying tonight, men. All passes have been canceled. After this briefing I want you to head straight to your barracks, pack your bags, and get some sleep. You have a long day ahead of you tomorrow.

JADROSICH

(raising his hand)

Sir, will all six Jollys be ready in time? We usually fly two at a time, not six.

BRIEFING OFFICER

Your ground crews are already working on it. They've been ordered to get every Jolly into top shape and fully fueled by 4:00 a.m. tomorrow morning. If that means they have to work all night, so be it. Don't worry. They'll get the job done. You can count on it.

OJALA

(whispering to Skinny, who's standing right next to him)

Looks like our man Peas has a long night ahead of him.

CURTIS

I feel sorry for him but good for us. I know he'll get things done right. There's not a lot we can depend on in this man's Air Force, but we can

always depend on Peas and his crew. They're like angels sent from heaven the way they care for Jolly 67.

OJALA

I know. It gives me peace of mind when we take off on a mission knowing Peas has prepared Jolly 67 ust for us. I guess that's what true friends are for.

CURTIS

Amen to that!

JADROSICH

(addressing the briefing officer)

Sir, can you tell us how long we'll be in NKP? [NKP is the airport code for Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Force Base]

BRIEFING OFFICER

Good question, captain. Unfortunately, I can't answer you exactly. Two days. Three days. Maybe more. Who knows? As long as it takes for the typhoon to blow over and the airbase here to put itself back in shape.

OJALA

(whispering to Skinny)

This could be fun.

CURTIS

Amen to that! I've heard great things about Thai women. I'd like to find out if they're true or not

OJALA

Double amen to that.

48 EXT. HO CHI MINH TRAIL — OCT. 23, 1971 — DAY

48

Jolly 67 is flying over the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The moonscape-like trail is two miles wide in places, with bomb craters everywhere. When the VCs clear a path after a fresh bombing run, they slice through the ends of the new craters, creating a string of three-sided craters that looks like horse shoes when viewed from above. Jolly Greens always fly in pairs, and Jolly 67 and Jolly 70 are the last of three pairs, with 67 trailing 70. As Jolly 67 crosses

the Ho Chi Minh Trail, it is suddenly surrounded by ack-ack fire from hidden 37 mm anti-aircraft batteries. An array of strobe-light flashes illuminate the jungle accompanied by puffs of brown smoke. A hail of shells explodes around Jolly 67, creating clusters of small black clouds of smoke. During the mission briefing back at Da Nang that morning, the briefing officer had told the Jolly Greeners that the CIA had surveyed the proposed route across the Trail and assured the Air Force that this specific path was clear. Clearly, it's not.

Surprised by the sudden, unexpected appearance of a pair of Jollys headed in the direction of Thailand, the VCs were slow to react to the first pair. When the second pair appeared, they were better prepared. By the time Jollys 70 and 67 reached the Trail, the VCs are on full alert and able to concentrate their fire. They miss their chance with Jolly 70, but they've homed in on Jolly 67 and are unleashing a barrage of anti-aircraft fire. Watching the jungle as it explodes in fire from his perch near the bay door, OJ feels the Jolly jump as Jadro reacts to the ack-ack fire. Everyone knows that, if shrapnel from one of the exploding shells strikes their rotor blades, Jolly 67 will spin out of control and crash, with zero chance of escape for the crew. OJ turns white as a ghost. His hair stands on end.

OJALA

Dear Jesus!

Within a few seconds, Jolly 67 reaches safety beyond the range of the ack-Skinny as they flee to the relative safety of Thailand. The entire crew breaks into cheers.

OJALA

(sounding greatly relieved)

Thank you, Lord Jesus.

49 — EXT: NAKHON PHANOM ROYAL THAI AFB, THAILAND — DAY

49

Jolly 67 reaches NKP last of all six Jollys. OJ, Scosh, and Skinny help Peas put 67 to sleep. They notice half a dozen holes in the copter where shrapnel has torn through the sides. There are no signs of any crew members from the other five Jollys, which are parked on the tarmac nearby. They decide to go to town together after showering and putting on their civilian clothes. They gather at the NCO bar and share a beer or three.

BRYANT

(raising a glass of foamy beer)

Here's to making it safely to Thailand without getting shot down!

CURTIS

(raising his glass)

I second that! And did you notice those holes in the sides? That shrapnel barely missed hitting the hydraulic lines. That would have been disastrous.

OJALA

(raising his glass and clicking the other two)

Roger that. That was really hairy crossing the Trail. I've never seen ack-ack fire like that before. I was sure we were going to die.

BRYANT

(shaking his head)

You've got that right. I felt the same. It's great to be alive.

OJALA

It sure the hell is, so let's celebrate. Let's go for a new record of having a good time.

The four friends cheer and click their glasses together.

50 — EXT: NAKHON PHANOM CITY, THAILAND — AFTERNOON

50

The four friends finish their beers at the Gunfighter Village NCO Club and head out into the city. Crowds of people scurrying here and there fill the narrow streets and alley-ways. Two-story buildings line the main street. Bars and honky-tonks occupy the top floors of most buildings. Their exterior walls consist of storm shutters that are thrown wide open in the hot and humid night. A discordant chorus of loud music pours out from the balconies on all sides. At every ground-floor entrance, aggressive barkers are trying to lure service personnel into their bars with promises of beautiful Thai girls just waiting to be screwed. The four friends stop, listen to an excited barker's impassioned pitch, and decide this is the bar for them. They hurry up narrow stairs to the second floor bar, where ceiling fans keep the rooms somewhat comfortable with their considerable downdrafts. The bar manager greets them with exaggerated gestures and broken English.

MANAGER

Welcome, American friends, welcome. You come to the right place. We have everything to make you happy. You want beer? We got beer. You want ladies. We got beautiful ladies. You want marijuana? We got marijuana. You want Thai sticks? We got Thai sticks. Whatever you want, we got.

BRYANT

You take military script?

MANAGER

You got military script? We take military script. You got US dollars, maybe I give you special deal.

The manager points to tables where a dozen slender Thai women clad in skin-tight silk dresses with slits down the sides are sitting and watching.

MANAGER

Fucky, fucky. Sucky, sucky.

BRYANT

What'll it take for a fucky-fucky?

MANAGER

You want fucky-fucky? No problem. Ten dollah, okay? How 'bout you others? Lots of pretty girls. Give you good sucky-sucky. Come see.

Bryant walks up to one of the tables where the girls are sitting and selects his friend for the night. Skinny and Peas follow suit. The three men and their dates disappear into a back room. OJ remains on the veranda, viewing the scene from a safe distance.

MANAGER

Whatsa matter with you? No want fucky-fucky? Maybe you want boy instead? Boy no problem.

OJALA

I don't want fucky-fucky. I don't want sucky-sucky. I don't want a boy or a girl. I just want a joint to smoke.

MANAGER

Marijuana no problem. You sit here. I bring good
dope to you here.

OJ takes an empty chair on the balcony. Instantly a particularly well-stacked Thai girl joins him. Without saying a word, she sits on his lap and reaches for his penis. The manager returns a minute later and hands OJ a roach he's custom-rolled for him.

MANAGER

(handing OJ the roach)

Here, you smoke this. Very good stuff. Thai weed.
Three dollah.

Lighting the joint, OJ takes three long puffs. By the third, he's feeling totally blitzed. He doesn't realize that the manager has laced the weed with opium. He goes on a mind-trip into another reality. All his cares fade away. The Thai woman continues to straddle OJ's lap and is getting more aggressive. OJ is too stoned by now to resist. At that moment, a Thai policeman appears on the balcony and begins to loudly scold her in Thai. It's against Thai law for prostitutes to practice their profession in open spaces like this. She jumps off OJ's lap and runs into the back room crying while the policeman continues to scream after her.

Having sobered up enough to stand, OJ staggers down the stairs and heads back to the base. He needs to be back before nightfall, and it's already twilight. His three pals are nowhere to be seen.

NEXT EVENING

51 — INT: DA NANG AFB — MARINE COMPOUND, WATER TOWER — EVENING

51

The Marine Compound has been abandoned. After showering and changing clothes upon arrival at Da Nang from Thailand, OJ, Scosh, and Skinny head over to the empty compound and climb up a metal ladder to the top of the concrete water tower. They slide one of the concrete panels comprising the top to the side and climb in. A six-pack of beer they previously stashed at the bottom of the tank awaits them. Standing in chest deep water, the three men grab beers, lean against the tower wall, and drape their arms over the edge. Popping their beers, they marvel at the scene before them.

OJALA

(raising his can of beer in salute)

Look at this! Here we are, cool as cucumbers,
standing in a deserted water tower while everyone
else is frying in the heat.

BRYANT

(raising his can of beer, returning OJ's salute)
Cool! Hoorah!

CURTIS

(raising his can of beer, returning his friends' salutes)
This is fucking rad! In the middle of a mother-
fucking war, here we are drinking beers standing in
chest-deep water. Hoorah!

The temperature is in the high 90s and the humidity is close to
100 percent. The men remain in the cool water for another 15
minutes in a dream-like state, mesmerized by the sights and sounds
of Da Nang AFB at night. Suddenly an air raid siren blares.

OJALA

Oh, fuck! Here comes the VCs again!

The long, bright arcs of an incoming attack fill the night skies.

ONE WEEK LATER

52 — INT: DA NANG AFB — JOLLY GREEN BARRACKS — EVENING

52

OJ, Skinny, and Scosh are gathered around Skinny's bed. Skinny
opens the door of his mini-fridge, reaches in, and pulls out a
handful of small gelatin squares and shows them to his friends.

CURTIS

The Great Pumpkin visited last night and left me
something special.

BRYANT

Holy shit. Are you kidding me? That looks like LSD.

CURTIS

Bingo! This is some of that Orange Sunshine you've
been hearing about. I got it from a PJ friend in
another barracks. It's powerful stuff. Wanna try?

OJ and Scosh both agree and Skinny hands each of them one of the

small squares. They swallow them and sit back on the bunk, waiting to see what happens next. As they drift off into psychedelic dreamland, AFVN-Da Nang FM 99.5 is playing on the radio. The DJ breaks off from spinning records to deliver a special Public Service Announcement.

DEEJAY

(speaking deliberately)

The Armed Forces Vietnam Network presents
 "Everything You Want to Know About Drugs But Don't
 Know Who to Ask. Your questions on drugs and drug
 abuse."

ANNOUNCER ONE

(speaking slowly in a deep, somber, resonant, authoritative voice)

This question comes to us from a group of
 individuals in Da Nang. They asked, "What is an LSD
 trip like?"

ANNOUNCER TWO

(speaking at a faster pace in an almost-chipper-sounding voice)

An LSD trip varies according to the dosage,
 the personality of the user, and the conditions
 under which the drug is taken. Basically, it
 causes changes in sensation. Vision is the most
 remarkably altered. Changes in depth perception
 and the meaning of the object seen are also
 frequently described. Illusions and hallucinations
 can also occur. Thinking may become pictorial and
 daydreaming states are also common. Delusions are
 also sometimes experienced. The sense of time and
 of yourself are strangely altered. Strong emotional
 feelings may range from bliss to horror, sometimes
 within a single experience. Sensations may cross
 over. That is, music may be seen or color heard.
 The individual is suggestible and, especially under
 high doses, loses his ability to discriminate and
 to evaluate his experience.

OJALA

(speaking in an other-worldly voice)

Wow! Wow! This is great! Where have I been? I never
 knew the world was so beautiful, even in war.

OJ reaches out his hands, tracing imaginary pathways in the air.

ONE WEEK LATER

54 — INT: DA NANG AFB — MAIN TERMINAL — MORNING

54

OJ's least-favorite nemesis, Tech Sergeant Mike Pick, is a sadist at heart. He delights in fucking with people for no apparent reason. His so-called practical jokes are unrelentingly cruel and not at all funny. On this particular day, OJ, Schosh, and Skinny are standing in the passenger terminal at Da Nang watching a group of what OJ likes to refer as "the men in black." Others usually call them "bush vets." The men have just returned from a field operation. They are so exhausted, they flop down on the terminal floor and immediately crash. Three of them have assumed their standard jungle position, lying head to head with their legs pointing out. They lay their M-15s right next to them. They sleep like this in the field so as to be ready to instantly sit up and fire their weapons at the first sign of danger. Splayed flat on their backs in a triangular formation, the three men are an obstacle, taking up most of the walking space around them.

As OJ, Scosh, and Skinny watch, Pick appears with a two-striper newbie by his side. They are walking straight toward the sleeping bush vets. As Pick and the newbie pass them, Pick deliberately shoves the newbie, sending him tumbling onto the sleeping men. Abruptly aroused from their slumber, they sit up and grab their weapons, ready to kill. Pick finds the incident hilarious and laughs his ass off at the ruckus he's caused. He continues his walk down the length of the terminal, laughing every step of the way.

OJALA

(addressing Scosh and Skinny)

Did you see what that son-of-a-bitch Pick just did? He pushed that newbie onto those sleeping bush vets on purpose. What a fucking turd. He could get someone killed. That man makes me want to vomit every time I see him.

SCOSH

Yeah, I saw it. The man's a total asshole. Someday he's going to get his just desserts, and I can't wait. I hope I'll be there to see it. Hey, I know two of those guys from China Beach Hospital. Wait here a minute. I want to talk to them. Somebody needs to calm them down. They look mad as hornets,

and I don't blame them.

OJ and Skinny pass the time with idle chit-chat while Scosh talks to his friends. After five minutes, he returns.

BRYANT

Listen up my friends, I've got a plan. It's time we scare the shit out of Pick.

55 - INT: DA NANG AFB - GUNFIGHTER VILLAGE NCO CLUB - AFTERNOON

55

The Gunfighter Village NCO Club is staging its annual championship ping-pong tournament. Mike Pick is the presumed favorite to win it all. Since his arrival at Da Nang, he has never lost a game. Undefeated, he's preened and strutted for most of the past year as uncrowned, presumptive champion. He sees this as his chance to make it official. The big money is on him. Only the men of the maintenance contingent and Scosh are aware of OJ's superior skill at the game. They've kept that fact a closely-held secret. OJ on his part has thrown all of his face-to-face matches with Pick, setting him up for a sting. Scosh is there along with Peas, Pierson, and six of their buddies from maintenance. Another dozen men, mostly senior NCOs, are present to cheer on their favorites and lay down bets. All of them have bet heavily on Pick, who opens as a 10-to-1 favorite based on the odds being offered by Scosh, who's serving as bank. OJ's backers have pooled their money and are placing it all on him.

Eight players have entered the single-elimination tournament, consisting of three rounds of best-of-five matches, with winners moving on. In his opening round match, playing only with his right hand, OJ takes five close games to win his match and move on to the semi-finals. Only he and his backers are aware that he's thrown two of the games on purpose. Pick, meanwhile, dispenses of his opponent in three quick games, giving up 10 points or less in each. The same scenario plays out in the second match, with OJ again barely winning in five close games, two of which he throws. Again he plays only with his right hand. Pick meanwhile demolishes his opponent in three games that are never close. Their wins set up the final OJ and his backers have been dreaming of for weeks: OJ versus Pick. Pick seems a shoe-in for winning it all.

The lifers are waving money in the air, hoping to place side bets, backing Pick at what are now 15-to-1 odds. OJ's backers dip into

their betting pool and take the lifers' side bets.

Pick takes the first game, 21-18, not realizing OJ has let him win. As in the first two matches, OJ is playing only with his right hand. More side bets are placed by the lifers and accepted by OJ's backers. OJ loses the second game in similar fashion and the odds shoot up to 20-to-1 on Pick. OJ remains calm. He lights up a cigarette.

OJALA

(addressing Pick with a cigarette hanging from his lips)

How about you and I make a be between just us? I'm willing to bet you a hundred bucks that I can wipe the floor with you. Are you man enough to take the bet, or are you chicken?

PICK

(turning red at OJ's insult)

You're damn right I'll take your bet, mother-fucker. One hundred bucks it is. You'd better be good for it.

OJALA

Don't worry your pretty little head about it. I've got the money, I'm not so sure about you, though.

PICK

(becoming further enraged and overconfident)

Fuck one hundred bucks. Let's make a real man's bet. How much have you got?

OJALA

How about five hundred?

PICK

You're on. Get ready to lose.

From the start of the tournament, OJ has been drinking heavily from cans of beer that have been filled with Coca-Cola. To Pick and the senior NCOs, it looks like he's getting drunk. On his part, Pick is drinking shot after shot of whiskey. He truly is getting drunk.

OJ barely wins the third game, still using only his right hand, and the fourth game as well. By now, Pick is sweating and doubt is

starting to creep into his thoughts. Without a word, OJ abruptly switches to his left hand and starts taking Pick down. Pick has never played a lefty before and has no idea how to return OJ's left-handed spin serves and shots. OJ wins every point handily. When OJ scores the 21st and final point of the game, securing victory in the tournament, Pick throws his paddle on the floor in disgust and rages at OJ.

PICK

(turning beet-red and breathing heavily)

O-jalopy, you no-good son-of-a-bitch mother fucker. You were playing with voodoo. It wasn't fair. You never told me you were a lefty. You mother fucker, you set me up.

OJALA

(replying in the calmest voice he could summon)

That's right. I'm a lefty. Actually, I'm ambidextrous. But so what? I won. You lost. So pay up.

OJ and his friends remain mostly silent, trading fist bumps. Privately, they want to jump up and down and yell, but they hold back their exuberance not wanting to insult the senior NCOs whom they have just fleeced of all their money. Most of them have bet all their money on Pick and lost every dime. A few have bet more than they actually have. Suddenly they realize they won't have any extra money for the next few months. The lifers all have knots in their stomachs, knowing that they won't have any money to send back home to support their wives and kids. Marital life for them has just become highly problematical. Pick sits at the bar by himself, angry and drunk. He downs three shots of whiskey in rapid succession. Nobody wants to talk to him, and he doesn't want to talk to anybody. He pays his bar tab and stands up.

PICK

(poking OJ in the chest repeatedly as he speaks, speaking in an aggravated tone, and slurring his words)

You god-damned, mother-fucking bastard. I'm going to get even with you. Just you wait! I'm going to make you pay for this. You'll be sorry.

Pick storms out the door without paying for the bets he's just lost.

56 – EXT: DA NANG AFB – FLIGHTLINE – LATE MORNING

56

The 37th has been assigned the task this day of sending a pair of Jollys north to the DMZ to be on hand in case one of the Army's reconaissance planes tracking NV troop movements in the area runs into trouble. Staff Sergeant Mike Pick is responsible for assigning flight crews for the mission. He's chosen Jolly 64 and Jolly 67, including OJ, Scosh, and Jadro.

PICK

(grinning maliciously and addressing OJ as he's about to board)

Have a nice day!

OJ climbs aboard Jolly 67 and speaks to Scosh.

OJALA

(shaking his head in disgust)

That son-of-a-bitch Pick has done it again. He chooses us for missions like this where we'll be in the air for hours and hours with nothing to do but sit and wait. He never assigns himself missions to the DMZ. They're too boring and too dangerous. He's too much of a scaredy-cat to risk flying over the DMZ or into North Vietnam. He just wants to fly short rescue missions where he has a chance to earn a medal. So he gives us all the shit assignments like this.

BRYANT

Someone should tell him, they don't give out medals for being the world's biggest asshole!

OJALA

You've got that right!

Ojala and Scosh trade fist bumps and settle in for a long day in the air. With Jadro at the controls, Jolly 67 lifts off and heads north toward the DMZ.

57 – EXT: OFF THE COAST OF SOUTH CHINA SEA, NEAR QUẢNG TRỊ, JUST SOUTH OF THE DMZ – EARLY AFTERNOON, SAME DAY

57

Jolly 67, acting as Alpha One lead, and Jolly 64, acting as Alpha Two backup, are flying north off the coast of the South China Sea toward the DMZ. Upon arriving, they prepare for the next phase of the operation where they will fly sweeping circles off the coast

for the next hour or two in support of reconnaissance flights over North Viet Nam. The area has been bombed extensively and is comprised mostly a no-man's land of moon-like craters. The area south of the DMZ has been denuded of trees and vegetation by choice, removing all cover that might disguise NV troop movements into the south.

BRYANT

(yelling to OJ and motioning for him to come and see)

OJ. Look! Eighty degrees starboard side. There's red smoke. Can you see it? Over there *(pointing with his finger)*. Someone's sent up a flare. What do you think it is?

OJALA

(rushing to Scosh's side)

I see it. About a mile or so inland. Someone's definitely shot off a flare. It could be one of our guys in trouble. Or maybe it's a trap. I can't tell from here.

OJ goes on the hot mic and radios Jadro.

OJALA

Jadro. Listen up! There's a red flare off starboard side. It looks like one of our guys might be down. What should we do? Investigate? It might be one of us, or it might be a trap. I can't tell from here!

JADROSICH

Roger. I see it. It could be one of us. You're right. Let's see to make sure.

Without requesting permission from FAC (Queen), Jadro angles inland toward the flare.

JADROSICH

OJ, keep your eyes open. I'll need you to guide me when we get closer. You're my eyes and ears on this.

OJALA

(donning a safety harness, hooking it with a carbiner to a stay, and leaning out of the belly door as far as he dares, leaving himself fully exposed to enemy ground fire)

I'm on it! You've got three-quarters of a mile to go. Turn left 10 degrees. That's it. Steady, hold that course.

Skinny assumes his position on the back ramp, releases the rear mini-gun from its stowed position, and sets it up. He scans the ground below for possible danger.

CURTIS

(radioing Jadro)

Rear gun ready to fire.

Scosh assumes his position at the window across from OJ, manning a second mini-gun.

BRYANT

(radioing Jadro)

Side gun ready to fire.

OJ decides not to set his mini-gun up to fire just yet. He's had trouble in the past swinging it into proper position. Over time, extreme stress from repeated firing of the mini-gun has warped the aluminum hinge, making it almost impossible to pull out the sgteel pin and thus release the mini-gun. OJ has brought along a pair of pliers to try to pull out the steel pin, which expands and contracts at a different rate than the surrounding aluminum hinge, locking the two parts together in a tight embrace. It's impossible for OJ to break them apart with him leaning out so far, so he tosses the pliers aside and concentrates on scoping out the ground below, looking for signs of both life and danger. For a moment Jolly 67 encounters heavy small arms fire as it approaches the target. By the time they reach it, they're safely out of range for the moment. OJ continues to lean out from the helo, ignoring the flashing guns and streaking bullets, a few of which bounce off Jolly 67's heavily-armored belly. Suddenly he sees activity on the ground.

OJALA

(speaking to Jadro on the hot mic)

I see three men on the ground. Looks like Army. They're waving. They need help.

JADROSICH

Is it okay to land?

OJALA

All clear. You need to move 50 feet to the left.

JADRO

Roger that.

OJALA

That's it! That's it. Hold it there. Everything's clear below. It's safe to land.

On the ground beneath them to the right lies the crumpled wreckage of an Army Light Observation Combat Helicopter (LOCH). Standard procedure in such cases is to fly around and observe conditions, making sure it's not a trap before going in. Relying on instinct and OJ's instructions, Jadro without hesitation lands his bird 100 feet away from the downed LOCH. The instant Jolly 67 touches ground, three soldiers race towards it, one of them carrying an M-50 machine gun. Another is limping badly.

OJ opens the Jolly's lower door and sets out the retractable step. He reaches out his hand and helps pull all three men up and on board. The look of relief and pure joy on their faces etches a permanent image in his memory. Shot down without a working radio, with no hope of rescue, with the merciless VC only minutes away, the three men have been saved from certain death.

OJALA

(trading eye contact with the three men)

Welcome aboard!

The men say nothing, just nod their heads in appreciation. One of them signals his thanks with a Thai wai, pressing the palms of his hands together in a prayer-like gesture, his fingers pointing upwards. His two companions notice and repeat the gesture. All three theatrically wipe their helmets in an exaggerated sign of relief. OJ returns their wai, adds a thumbs up, turns his head to survey the area one last time, and radios Jadro.

OJALA

(via hot mic to Jadro)

All three men are safely aboard. No signs yet of any gooks. Let's get the hell out of here before company arrives!

In one seamless motion, with Jadro at the controls, Jolly 67 rises

from the crash site, angles southward, and returns to Da Nang. As they distance themselves from the downed HOCH, OJ spies a squad of NV converging on the wreckage. One of them raises his AK-47 and unloads a magazine in the direction of Jolly 67, but the bullets fall harmlessly to the ground.

58 - EXT: DA NANG AFB - TARMAC - LATE AFTERNOON, SAME DAY

57

News of the dramatic, unexpected rescue arrived an hour earlier and a gathering of 15 people has congregated on the tarmac inside the Jolly compound, awaiting Jolly 67's return. They watch excitedly as Jadro lands the 53 and taxis into the compound. They wildly applaud as the three Army men exit first, followed by the crew, with OJ and Jadro exiting last. With fire hoses, the welcomers douse the returning heroes. Loud cheers are heard and many hugs exchanged. Someone uncorks a bottle of champagne, shakes it, and sprays the Jolly crew. A second bottle is opened and passed around. Pick looks on from a distance with his arms folded across his chest. Scowling and muttering to himself, he walks away in disgust.

ONE WEEK LATER

59 - INT: DA NANG AFB - BRIEFING ROOM, JOLLY GREEN HEADQUARTERS - AFTERNOON

59

A small group of Jollys has been called together for a medal ceremony on the stage inside the unit's briefing room. Captain Pete Chapman, one of the squadron's HH-53 pilots, presides over the ceremony. Four airmen are receiving medals, three of them Air Medals for having completed 20 combat missions. Mike Pick is one of those three. OJ, meanwhile is receiving the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Force's third-highest medal, for conspicuous bravery in action. An Air Force photographer is the only witness to the ceremony. Captain Chapman stands in front of OJ and reads the citation accompanying the medal.

CHAPMAN

(speaking in a solemn voice)

Airman First Class George P. Ojala distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as the Flight Engineer of an HH-53 Rescue Helicopter near Quảng Trị, Republic of Vietnam, on the 12th of May 1971. On that date, Airman Ojala's exemplary knowledge

and outstanding technical skill, displayed under extremely hazardous conditions, culminated in the rescue of three United States Army helicopter air crew members from the site of their crashed helicopter. With disregard for his own personal safety and despite the threat of hostile ground fire, Airman Ojala exposed himself in the open door of the helicopter to man his defensive gun position and direct the pilot to a successful landing and recovery of all survivors. The professional competence, aerial skill, and devotion to duty displayed by Airman Ojala reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

Chapman sets down the citation, picks up OJ's DFC, pins it to his right chest, and salutes.

CHAPMAN

Congratulations, Airman Ojala. We're all proud of you.

OJ returns Chapman's salute and turns to shake hands with two of his fellow medal winners. Pick refuses to shake OJ's hand and hurries out of the briefing room, swearing to himself. He's angry that OJ has been awarded the DFC. His Air Medal is nice, but nowhere comparable to a DFC. With the ceremony completed, OJ returns to his barracks.

60 — INT: DA NANG AFB — JOLLY GREEN BARRACKS, LATER THAT SAME DAY 60

Ojala enters the Jolly Green barracks and runs into Scosh and Skinny.

BRYANT

(slapping OJ on the shoulder)

OJ! Look at you! A DFC. Allah, Allah, Allah! Hail the conquering hero!

OJALA

(speaking in a subdued, reflective voice)

Cut the conquering hero crap, Scosh. I'm no more a hero than any other member of the crew. We all put our lives on the line that day. We all do every time we go out on a rescue mission. You deserve this medal as much as I do. You were there. The

same goes for Jadro. The same goes for you, too, Skinny. If you ask me, the brass just wanted to boost the squadron's visibility. If I get a fancy medal like this, it makes the squadron look good. And if the squadron looks good, it makes the brass look good, too. This medal is more about them than it is about me.

BRYANT

You're much too modest, bro'. What you did that day was chill. You should be proud. I know I'm proud of you. We all are. You're the only crew member that's been awarded a DFC since I got here at Da Nang. That must mean something.

OJALA

Yes, it certainly does. It means I'm the lucky son-of-a-bitch they happened to choose this time in an effort to make themselves look good. Those mother fuckers don't give a damn about you or me or much of anyone else save for themselves. They hog the glory while we get ourselves killed. Fuck them all, I say!

OJ, Scosh, and Skinny trade fist bumps and light up a joint. They're off duty with something worth celebrating.

61 — INT: BIEN HOA AIRBASE — JOLLY GREEN BRIEFING ROOM — AFTERNOON 61

It's November 25, the day after Thanksgiving. Elements of the 37th Da Nang are taking their turns as part of a "permanent" temporary assignment (TDY) at Bien Hoa Airbase in south-central Vietnam, 25 miles northeast of Saigon. Every two weeks, a new pair of Jollys and crews from Da Nang replaces the previous two Jollys and crews. Every man in the flight crews of the 37th squadron and every operational HH-53-C takes their turn in the rotation. The NCOs — OJ, Scosh, and Skinny included — consider it a cushy assignment compared to what they're used to. For them, it's a pleasant break from what they have come to consider the oppressive scrutiny of the brass at Da Nang. Officers like Major Robert Swenck and Captain John George, on the other hand, take the Bien Hoa TDYS far more seriously. They view it as their responsibility to monitor everything and remain ever on alert, even when they're not scheduled to fly on a particular day. The NCOs have little responsibility in comparison and view things much differently.

Hedonists at heart, they're especially impressed by the six pool tables sported by the Bien Hoa NCO rec room. At Bien Hoa, the 37th Da Nang NCOs feel unencumbered, almost-but-not-quite like being on leave. Their mission at Bien Hoa remains, nonetheless, the same as it is at Da Nang: to help rescue American military personnel from danger. Jollys 64 and 70 are on alert today, with 70 designated lead as Alpha One and 64 designated as backup as Alpha Two. Sitting inside the briefing room at headquarters, Major Swenck, pilot of Jolly 70, and Captain George, his co-pilot/navigator, are playing cribbage, waiting for an alert that may or may not sound. Most days it doesn't.

SWENCK

(looking up from the cribbage board and addressing George)

I'm starting to wonder if we'll ever get a rescue mission here. It's not at all like being at Da Nang, where something seems to be happening most of the time. I'm getting bored just sitting around waiting for something to happen. It seems like nothing ever does. My hand's getting tired writing all these letters back home. But I'm happy for that chance to connect with my family and friends.

GEORGE

I feel pretty much the same way. We're here to save lives, not to play cards or cribbage or just piddle around. But that could still change. They say there's a lot of our troops withdrawing this way. They're going to need air cover, and that could create action for us. At least, that's what command keeps telling us.

SWENCK

That's the scuttlebutt I've been hearing, too, but who really knows? I wouldn't mind flying a mission every day if I could. It would keep my mind off of how much I miss home. Going out on a rescue mission is what I came here to do, after all. It gives me a charge, and at this moment I could use some recharging. If you ask me, the more rescue missions we fly, the merrier.

Swenck turns his attention back to the cribbage game.

SWENCK

(calling out a winning move in verse)

Fifteen Two - and the rest won't do. Fifteen Four
- and the rest don't score. Fifteen Six - and the
rest don't mix. Fifteen Eight - and the rest won't
mate. Bingo! I've pegged out. I win. You owe me
another five bucks.

GEORGE

I can't decide whether you're a better pilot or a
better cribbage player.

SWENCK

Both.

Before George can hand over a five-spot to Swenck, a loud voice on
their alert radios interrupts them.

BIEN HOA JOLLY GREEN COMMAND

Attention Jollys! Attention Jollys! We have a
mission. Get to your aircraft immediately and
get yourselves airborne. We'll fill you in on the
details once you're in flight.

Swenck and George leap to their feet and race to the tarmac,
leaving behind their alert radios and the cards on the table lying
face up right next to the cribbage board. Lying beside them is a
crisp new five-dollar military script.

62 - EXT: SONG NA RIVER, SOUTHEASTERN VIETNAM - SAME DAY

62

The Jollys have been deployed to the scene of a C-46 Chinook
helicopter that's crashed in a rice paddy due to an engine
malfunction without fatalities. With twin rotors and ample room
for passengers and cargo, the Chinook is carrying 14 personnel,
including the crew. The race is on to rescue the men before the
VC get there. Acting as navigator, Captain George directs Major
Swenck to the site. In a coordinated effort involving both Jollys
and helicopters from the Army and Navy, all 14 survivors are
rescued and delivered safely to Binh Thuy Airbase southeast of
Saigon. With their part in the rescue mission completed, the two
Jollys head back to Bien Hoa Airbase, ecstatic at having played a
key role in a successful rescue mission of this scale. They follow
the serpentine course of the Song Na River, maintaining their
altitude at 40 feet. The territory on their right, to the west,
is held by the VC. The territory on their left, to the east, is

held by friendly forces. Along the way, a heavy rainstorm strikes, and the two Jollys are separated. Continuing on alone, Jolly 70 is intermittently peppered with ground fire from the VC. Suddenly Jolly 70 is sprayed with bullets. One of the rounds strikes Captain George, sitting in the co-pilot's seat on the right, in the stomach, tearing apart his internal organs and killing him instantly. He slumps forward over his cyclic stick, sending Jolly 70 diving nose first into the river. Its rotors slice into the Song Na's waters, flipping Jolly 70 upside down. It crashes into the river belly up and begins sinking.

The Riot is seated on his jump seat in the cockpit area between Swenck and George when Jolly 70 flips. As it sinks, he's fully submerged and gagging from the water he's swallowed. Near the point of drowning, he sees his life pass before him as he fights to exit the doomed bird. He thinks to himself, "Oh fuck, oh shit, I'm going to die!" Suppressing his fear, he struggles to the surface only to gag at the jet fuel forming an oil slick there. He spits it out and grabs on to an auxilliary fuel tank that has broken loose and is bobbing in the water an arm's length away. Using it as a flotation device, he manages to stay afloat and not drown despite a broken leg and dislocated shoulder. The current carries him to the east bank, where friendly villagers wade into the river and help him ashore. Sneed, who had been standing at the hoist door, is miraculously thrown free from the wreckage and manages to swim to safety despite his own traumatic injuries. The bodies of Swenck and George remain strapped to their seats in the cockpit area. The body of Prose remains strapped to his seat in the rear of the helicopter. A blow to the head by one of the rotor blades killed him instantly. No signs can be found anywhere of Thomas. The Riot and Sneed are rescued alive. The bodies of Swenck and George and Prose are later recovered when a crane lifts the broken hulk of Jolly 70 from the Song Na. No sign of Thomas is ever found. He's declared Missing In Action and presumed dead.

63 — INT: DA NANG AFB — BRIEFING ROOM, JOLLY GREEN HEADQUARTERS — SAME DAY

63

Back at Da Nang in the Jolly Green compound, word spreads like wild fire that one of the squadron's Jollys on TDY to Bien Hoa has crashed. OJ, Scosh, and Skinny rush to the briefing room, hoping to learn more details. They wait and wait and wait for more news. Finally a briefing officer appears with an update.

BRIEFING OFFICER

(reading from a type-written sheet)

This message has just been received from Bien Hoa: "This is to to inform you that HH-53C Jolly 70 has crashed into the Song Na River northeast of Bien Hoa. A rescue mission is being undertaken. No word yet as to survivors. We will update you as soon as we have more information to share."

(the officer looks up and addresses the men directly)

That's all we know at this time, gentlemen. I can't tell you anything more.

He salutes crisply and leaves the room without saying another word. Mike Pick is one of the men in the room when the announcement is made. Upon hearing the officer's words, he mutters to himself.

PICK

Better them than me.

OJ, Scosh, and Skinny overhear Pick's words and stare at him in a mixture of disbelief and disgust. He becomes more hated than ever, if such is possible.

As the three friends leave the briefing room, they notice the card table where Swenck and George were last playing cribbage. Everything remains frozen in time, the same as when they took off on their final mission.

64 — INT: DA NANG AFB — JOLLY GREEN BARRACKS — LATER THAT SAME DAY 64

OJ and Scosh have retreated to OJ's room where they share a joint and worry about the unknown fate of their friends.

BRYANT

(addressing OJ)

Oh my god! Can you believe it? Some of our best friends are on Jolly 70. For all we know, they might all be dead. Fuck, oh fuck, oh fuck!

OJALA

Unfortunately, I can believe it. But it hurts like hell just the same. But think about it for a second. That's what we're here for, isn't it? To save lives. We can't choose when somebody gets in

trouble and needs our help. That's up to karma or the VC or God or just plain bad luck. But that doesn't make news like this any easier to swallow. Nothing can.

Just then, Jadro appears at the door and knocks softly. He stands motionless and silent, waiting to be acknowledged. He knocks again, this time more loudly. OJ and Scosh finally notice him. They look up and are struck by his solemn look. Fear grips their hearts.

OJALA

Jadro! What's the latest? What have you heard?

Jadro takes a deep breath before answering.

JADROSICH

(fighting back tears, his voice cracking)

Word just came in from Bien Hoa. They say Jolly 64 went in to help rescue Jolly 70. They extracted Theriot and Sneed. They weren't able to reach any of the other men. It looks like the four of them are either dead or missing in action. They won't know for sure until they pull Jolly 70 out of the river. Major Swenck. Captain George. AIC Prose. Tech Sergeant Thomas. They're all gone.

Grief fills the room. Nobody says a word. Everyone just stares blankly into the distance. Life has gone out of them.

65 — INT: DA NANG AFB, GUNFIGHTER VILLAGE NCO CLUB — THREE DAYS LATER 65

Scosh and OJ enter the Gunfighter Village NCO Club and find an empty table. Before sitting down, OJ speaks.

OJALA

(announcing in a loud voice)

Jolly Green needs a drink!

Six drinks show up at their table in short order. OJ and Scosh slowly drain them while discussing the loss of Jolly 70 and the death of four friends.

BRYANT

I just can't get over losing four of our brothers. It's the first loss since I got here. I'm still in

shock. Something's changed inside of me which I can't explain. I feel empty. Lost. Angry. Alone. And I can't shake it. I've tried, but I can't.

OJALA

I feel the same way. You know that mantra we've been chanting ever since we got here? "Yea though I fly through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I shall fear no evil because I'm the biggest mother-fucking giant in the valley." It feels empty to me now. It's just bull shit crap someone thought would inspire us and keep us from thinking about the dangers we face. That's all it is. Nothing more. I don't ever want to hear those words again.

BRYANT

Me neither. We may think we're giants, but we can get shot down and killed just as easy as anyone else. Hell, we're like sitting ducks in a Turkey Shoot when we're hovering over the jungle trying to rescue someone. We're mortals, not immortals. We're not giants. We're just a bunch of normal guys sent here to do Superman's job. We can't save the world. At least not all of it.

OJALA

You're right. We can't save the whole world, but we can at least try to save as much of it as we can. We're here to do a job. And that job's to save lives. I'm going to try to remember that whenever I think of Jolly 70, and Major Swenck, and all those others. What's crazy about this is, Swenck was the best damn Jolly pilot in the squadron. The last time I flew with him, I told him so. I said it was always an honor to fly with him. And now he's dead. I just can't believe it that he's gone. Or that George and Prose and Thomas are gone, too. What's our motto? "This we do that others might live"? They gave their lives so that those 14 Army guys on that Chinook could live. That's how I look at it. They're the real heroes here. I'd gladly give up my DFC to have any one of them back. Somehow I feel guilty. It makes no sense. None of this does. This job just gets crazier by the day. And it sucks.

BRYANT

I feel it too, bro'. I feel it.

The two friends sit motionless, listening to Armed Forces Radio playing "Joy to the World" by Three Dog Night and saying little.

ARMED FORCES RADIO

(playing "Joy to the World" by Three Dog Night

Jeremiah was a bullfrog
Was a good friend of mine
I never understood a single word he said
But I helped him a-drink his wine

And he always had some mighty fine wine
Singin' joy to the world
All the boys and girls now
Joy to the fishes in the deep blue sea
Joy to you and me

And if I were the king of the world
Tell you what I'd do
I'd throw away the cars and the bars and the war
Make sweet love to you

Sing it now, joy to the world
All the boys and girls
Joy to the fishes in the deep blue sea
Joy to you and me

You know I love the ladies
Love to have my fun
I'm a high life flyer and a rainbow rider
A straight shootin' son-of-a-gun
I said a straight shootin' son-of-a-gun

Joy to the world
All the boys and girls
Joy to the fishes in the deep blue sea
Joy to you and me

Joy to the world
All the boys and girls now
Joy to the fishes in the deep blue sea
Joy to you and me

66 — INT: DA NANG AFB, AIRMEN CLUB GUNFIGHTER VILLAGE — ONE WEEK LATER

66

A new crop of unburnished Airman First Class and NCO PJs and Flight Engineers has just joined the squadron. They're gung-ho about their mission to save lives and unaware of the potential for tragedy that looms in their future. Someone introduces them to the Jolly Green jingle. They like it and decide to make it their own credo. It lifts their spirits. Sitting in the Da Nang Airmen Club, three of them practice it loudly while drinking beer.

NEWBIES

(speaking in loud voices, their words slurred by too much alcohol)

"Yea though I fly through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I shall fear no evil because I'm the biggest mother-fucking giant in the valley."

OJ, Scosh, and Skinny listen from a nearby table. They shake their heads, and OJ speaks.

OJALA

You know, I want to tell them to shut the fuck up, but I can't. We were the same when we first got here. All gung ho and full of silly ideas. Let them have their fun. They'll know what we know soon enough. Let them enjoy their honeymoon while it lasts.

SKINNY

(raising his glass in a toast)

Here's to honeymoons!

The three men clink their glasses and down their drinks. They order another round but remain mostly silent as the newbies continue to party.

67 — INT: DA NANG AFB — JOLLY GREEN BARRACKS — ONE WEEK LATER

67

The Riot survives the crash of Jolly 70 with a dislocated shoulder and broken leg. For the next week, he stays in the barracks at Da Nang while his injuries heal. At last word comes that he is about to be sent back to the States for R & R and additional medical treatment from specialists there. The Air Force indicates that, once he's fully healed, they will return him to Vietnam to serve out the remaining balance of his 12-month tour of duty. As The Riot packs his bags and prepares to leave, OJ appears at the door

to his room.

OJALA

(standing a respectful distance away from Theriot)
 Hey, man. I just wanted to say goodbye and wish you good luck. It's been an honor serving with you. I'm happy for you that you'll have a chance to visit your folks while you're back in the States. I hope you have a great time. And, while you're at it, kiss a pretty girl or two for me.

THERIOT

(speaking slowly in muted tones)
 Thank you, brother. I appreciate that. But the Air Force says they plan to send me back here after I'm better, so this might not be the last time I gaze upon your ugly white face.

(pausing briefly, he continues)

So, tell me, honky. Who's going to keep you straight about Black Power versus White Power? You were just starting to get the message, and now this shit happens. You're lost without me. You're probably going to turn back into a racist white mother fucking pig.

OJALA

Don't worry about me, bro'. You've taught me well. I won't forget. I promise.

The two friends trade an elaborate hand shake comprised of twists and turns, bumps and hand slaps. As OJ turns to leave, The Riot taps him on the shoulder. OJ turns, and The Riot embraces him with both arms.

THERIOT

Stay safe, white boy.

OJALA

Stay safe yourself, darkie. See you again sometime.

THERIOT

Not if I see you first.

They trade one last fist bump, then OJ leaves.

[The Riot and Sneed both have lots to say about the crash, which we need to insert into this scene as dialog]

68 – INT: DA NANG AFB – JOLLY GREEN BARRACKS – TWO MONTHS LATER

68

OJ receives a letter from The Riot, the first he's gotten since his injured friend returned to the States. He opens it and reads it to Scosh and Skinny.

OJALA

(reading in his best attempt at a stentorian voice)

Hey OJ! Greetings from America. It's good to be home, but I hate to admit it. I miss you and my friends at Da Nang. How the hell are you? As for me, it's been one crazy time since I got back here. The doctors have tried to fix my leg and shoulder, but I think they're all sadists. They made everything hurt more before things got to feeling better. I'm okay now, but no thanks to them. The good news is, I ain't never coming back to 'Nam. The fucking Air Force was planning to send me back to serve my last four months of duty, but I messed with their plans. A friend of mine had a friend in Congressman Jerry Pettis' office, and he helped me get a letter to him. I told him what had happened to me, and what the Air Force was trying to do.

He must not have liked what he read cuz he wrote or called somebody he knew at the Pentagon and managed to queer the deal.

So I'll be finishing my service time here in the States, safe and warm and far away from that little war you're fighting over there in Southeast Asia. Don't worry about me. I'm healing up well. I just thought I'd let you know what's going down with your buddy, The Riot. Peace on, brother. Stay safe! Hank (a.k.a. "The Riot") P.S. I have one final request for you, honkey. Would you please pack up my stuff and have the Air Force send it to me? When I left, I left everything there. I thought I would be back. I'd like to get it back, if someone hasn't stolen all of my stereo equipment already. I've miss that more than I miss you.

BRYANT

That's great news for Hank. After all he went through, it wouldn't of been fair for him to have to come back here. He's done his time. He's risked his life enough times. He deserves something good. Something better than what he had here.

OJALA

That's for sure. If you ask me, we all do!

BRYANT

So, what do you say? How 'bout we head over to Hank's old room and start packing up his stuff? It's the least we can do for a friend. With any luck, he left behind some of those black girlie magazines he kept hidden under his mattress.

OJALA

I hear you. Let's do it! We'd better talk with someone first, though, to get an official okay.

The next day OJ and Scosh get the necessary approval. They spend their afternoon packing The Riot's stuff for shipment home.

69 — INT: DA NANG AFB — JOLLY GREEN BARRACKS — AFTERNOON

69

OJ, Scosh, and The Riot decide to do something different to add excitement to their Da Nang routine, which they find boring at times. Bryant and Theriot each order a Honda Dax 70cc minibike for themselves. They're following the example of OJ, who previously purchased a used Vespa from an airman DEROSing back to the States. Scosh and The Riot became jealous watching him ride it around and decided they needed minibikes of their own so they could share in the fun. The Dax 70s arrive disassembled in crates. Scosh and The Riot assemble theirs themselves. With that task completed, they prepare to set out on a new adventure.

BRYANT

(rubbing his hands together and viewing his handiwork with pride)
That's it! Done! I'm ready to go. What do you say we take these babies out for a spin?

THERIOT

I'm ready, too. Let's do it!

OJALA

That goes for me, too. Onward and upward!

BRYANT

Are you sure you can keep up with us in that piddly-ass Vespa of yours? Vespas are for pansies. Didn't you know that?

OJALA

The hell they are! Just you watch!

The three friends jump on their new toys and race down the length of the perimeter road paralleling the main runway, whooping and hollering as they go. Bryant takes the lead, but The Riot overtakes him. OJ trails. Bryant closes the gap on The Riot, but The Riot reaches their destination first – the piles of empty barrels and napalm stored at the far southern end of the base.

THERIOT

I win! You jive-ass slow pokes haven't a chance against The Riot. It's about time you realized that.

BRYANT

Oh, yeah? Race you back.

Scosh immediately turns around and races back to Gunfighter Village. The Riot gets a late start and is unable to catch him. OJ again brings up the rear.

BRYANT

I won! Admit defeat, wimp. Who's the slow-poke now?

THERIOT

Oh, yeah? Let's go again.

He spins around and speeds down the perimeter road. Neither Scosh nor OJ has a chance of catching him.

OJALA

It looks like the two of you are the real winners here, but it's close. One of you keeps getting ahead start on the other. The only way to determine the real winner is to make the race fair. I have an

idea. How about I be the starter? That way ou two can line up side-by-side and wait for my signal. That way you'll both have an even chance.

THERIOT

Sounds good to me.

BRYANT

Sounds good to me, too.

OJ takes his position 15 feet in front of The Riot and Scosh..

OJALA

(holding his right hand high over his head)

Ready, set, go!

OJ drops his right hand and Scosh and The Riot take off down the road. They battle back and forth and cross the "finish line" side by side with no clear winner.

SCOSH

I won!

THERIOT

The hell you did. I won!

OJALA

(arriving moments after the fact)

What's the argument here? Who won? Who's the chsmpion?

SCOSH

I won! I am!

THERIOT

The hell you did! I won! I am!

OJALA

(acting as peacemaker)

I was watching from behind, and it looked to me like you were dead even. Why not call it a draw?

The friends agree and repair to the NCO Club to talk about their exploits as Evil Knevel wannabes over beers.

OJ, Scosh, and The Riot continue their minibike escapades every night they possibly can for the next two weeks. Eager to ride again after spending the previous day on alert, they head to the fenced enclosure where they store their bikes when they're not using them. The enclosure is located adjacent to the Jolly Green headquarters and is surrounded by a chain link fence with an unlocked gate. Inside are concrete posts set in the ground with iron rings attached. OJ, Scosh, and The Riot chain their bikes to those rings. Tonight they discover when they enter the enclosure that someone has cut the chains. Scosh and The Riot's Dax 70s are gone. OJ's Vespa remains, tossed on its side with its front headlamp bashed in.

BRYANT

What the fuck happened here? Where the hell are our bikes? This place is supposed to be safe! How could anybody possibly get away with stealing our bikes?

OJALA

It looks to me like it was the Vietnamese. They're around here all the time. They know the guards' schedules. They know when the best time would be to pull off something like this. Remember what happened when the Marine compound closed and everyone left? Vietnamese soldiers and mama-sans swarmed in the minute everyone was gone and stole everything they could get their hands on. They stripped the place bare. You guys saw it. We all did. My bet is, this is just more of the same shit. We're not respected here. We all know that. So why wouldn't a Vietnamese steal from us if given the chance? It happens all the time.

THERIOT

Sorry, OJ, but I'm not agreeing with you on this one. I say it's an inside job. One of our guys probably did it.

OJALA

Yeah, maybe, but who? They can't possibly ride the bikes on base. We'd find out about it soon enough.

THERIOT

No, of course not. I think they stole them for the money. They probably sold them to some Vietnamese contacts or maybe to one of the mama-sans.

OJALA

That sounds possible. But what rat-fucking turd would do something this rotten to his fellow Jollys?

THERIOT

I can think of one asshole who I wouldn't put it past to do something like this.

OJALA

Who?

THERIOT

Pick. Who else? He'd pimp his sister if it made him s dime.

BRYANT

Pick! Now that makes a lot of sense. Just think about it. He's been giving us a lot of grief lately about our bikes. He knows they're here. And he knows when we're away. Didn't he have us all out on missions yesterday? That would've been a perfect time for him to swipe our bikes. He knew we were out flying somewhere. Fuck, man. The more I think about it, the more I think it probably was Pick. He's the only slimy butt hair in the squadron I know that would stoop this low.

OJALA

We've got to get even somehow with that son-of-a-bitch. I've been thinking about it, and I have a plan. But we're going to need help to pull it off.

BRYANT

Let me here it, bro'. Count me in whatever you have in mind. As long as it reams Pick a new one, I'm in. I don't care what it is, as long as it's bad.

OJ picks up his battered Vespa and leans it against a post. He unlocks the bicycle lock from the cut chain and uses it to fasten together the longer of the two lengths of chain left from where

the original chain had been cut. There's just enough chain left to resecure the Vespa to the iron ring. With that task completed, he turns to The Riot and Scosh.

OJALA

Okay, let's go to my room and smoke a joint. I'll explain my plan after I'm buzzed. I could use a high right now.

OJ, Scosh, and The Riot leave OJ's Vespa behind and walk to the Jolly Green barracks.

One Week Later

71 - INT: DA NANG AFB - PERIMETER ROAD - NIGHT

70

OJ still has his Vespa. He orders a new headlight. When it comes in, he installs it and decides to take a ride by himself. The night sky is clear. A full moon illuminates the base with a ghostly light. OJ kick starts his Vespa and points it south in the direction of the napalm dump. Three hundred feet down the perimeter road, he passes a guard tower where Vietnamese guards look down on him passively. Without thinking, he flips them the bird. He still wonders if it was them, not Pick, who stole the Dax 70s and smashed his headlight. He'll never know for sure, but he can't help but wonder. His faith in the system has been badly shaken - not for the first time and not for the last. As he accelerates to full speed, tears well up in his eyes from the wind. He can just barely make out the details of the road ahead.

Suddenly he hears a gunshot from somewhere behind him and feels a bullet whiz by a few feet from his right ear. Immediately he hunkers over his handlebars, creating the lowest profile he can. He hears a second gunshot and feels another bullet whiz by. He's not sure where it's coming from. It's probably the VC, he tells himself. They're always lurking somewhere outside the perimeter fence at night, looking for a chance to fire on people or lob in a rocket grenade or two. He half corrects himself, realizing it's just as likely it's one of the Vietnamese soldiers in the guard tower he's just flipped off. After all, the shot had come from behind him, not from his right. It could be one of them. He realizes what an idiot he's been and the mortal danger he's exposed himself to. The road ahead is clear. Side roads leading into the main base complex intersect here and there. He takes the next side road he comes to and races back to the relative safety

of the main compound. He's out of range of his would-be assailant, and no more shots are fired. He vows never to go night-riding again. The next day he sells his Vespa to his mama-san for \$25.

72 - INT: DA NANG AFB - MAIN TERMINAL - AFTERNOON

72

Pick is leading a fresh batch of newbies through the terminal, the same way he's done many times before. Along the way, he spots another band "men in black" lounging on the terminal floor. Pick gets to the men and shoves one of them into the sleeping men. Enraged by the interruption in his sleep, the man sits up, grabs his GAR-15, aims, and shoots Pick in the chest. Pick falls to the floor in shock. He clutches his chest, checking for wounds. There aren't any. The man in black was shooting blanks. Everyone in the terminal hears the GAR-15's report. Their eyes are focused on what happens next. Just then one of the men in black takes out a grenade, pulls the pin, and tosses it straight at Pick. Instinctively, Pick catches the pineapple. Pick looks down and realizes what he's done. He turns ghostly white. Shreiking in terror, he tosses the grenade away. A pool of urine forms around him. The stench of fresh feces fills the air. Onlookers quickly realize that it's a joke. Word spreads. A crowd forms around the soiled Pick. People point at his wet pants. A few hold their noses. Soon they are all pointing and laughing at Pick. OJ, Schosh, The Riot, and Skinny are part of the crowd.

OJALA

Did you see that? It worked better than I could possibly have imagined. He peed and shit in his pants. What a turd, literally!

BRYANT

Those men in black played their parts perfectly. And so did Pick, although he didn't realize it.

OJALA

It serves him right, the bastard. He made it easy for us, though. He always follows the same routine when he brings in fresh meat from the farm. He's like clockwork. That's the only good thing I can say about the SOB.

THE RIOT

You're giving him too much credit, but okay. But Pick is a creature of habit. He never passes up an

opportunity to humiliate somebody. Just like now. We owe those guys free beers. They really came through.

BRYANT

Yes, we do. But remember, they hate Pick almost as much as we do. He's pulled this kind of shit on them before. I swear, the guy's a sadist. He gets his jollies making other people suffer. It's about time someone turned the tables on him. He deserved it.

OJALA

He may be a sadist, but he's going to have to get his kicks some other way. He's never going to try this trick again. Not after today.

OJ, Scosh, The Riot, and Skinny trade more elaborate fist bumps than normal as two MPs crouch down around the stricken Pick, trying to calm him down and figure out what exactly had happened. By now, the men in black have all disappeared. The newbies are standing around, wondering what they should do.

NEWBIE ONE

What the hell was that about?

NEWBIE TWO

I haven't a clue. Nobody seems to.

NEWBIE THREE

I think this is someone's twisted way of saying, "Welcome to Da Nang!"

73 — INT: DA NANG AFB — GUNFIGHTERS VILLAGE OFFICERS CLUB — EVENING 73

Seeking to inject some excitement into what is often a monotonous existence for his men, Col. "Big" Johnson arranges for an all-girl band from the Philippines to perform at the Officers Club. He invites all Jolly Green flight crews. The lights dim and five pinup-worthy Philippino girls strut onto the stage dressed in hot pants that look like they were sprayed on and skimpy red-sequined tops that glitter in the spotlight. The lead singer seizes the mic, twirls it around like a lasso, tosses it in the air, catches it, and breaks out into the Rolling Stone's "Let's Spend the Night Together." Her native Tagalog accent shows clearly through her spoken English.

LEAD SINGER

(strutting as she sings in cock-rooster, Mick Jagger style)

My, my, my, my
 Don't you worry 'bout what's on your mind (oh my)
 I'm in no hurry I can take my time (oh my)
 I'm going red and my tongue's getting tied (tongues'
 getting tied)
 I'm off my head and my mouth's getting dry
 I'm high, but I try, try, try (oh my)
 Let's spend the night together
 Now I need you more than ever
 Let's spend the night together now
 I feel so strong that I can't disguise (oh my)
 Let's spend the night together
 But I just can't apologize (oh no)
 Let's spend the night together
 Don't hang me up and don't let me down (don't let
 me down)
 We could have fun just groovin' around, around and
 around
 Oh my, my
 Let's spend the night together
 Now I need you more than ever
 Let's spend the night together
 Let's spend the night together
 Now I need you more than...

The audience goes wild. Everyone stands. Men in the back of the room climb on their chairs to get a better look. The cheers and cat whistles nearly drown out the music. In sexy, no-holds-barred fashion, the girls perform songs by Cher, Rod Stewart, Janis Joplin, The Temptations, Ike & Tina Turner, Jean Knight, The Jackson Five, Freda Payne, Diana Ross, Aretha Franklin, The Delfonics, The Beatles, The Fifth Dimension, and others. The band finishes its set and exits stage right to loud applause. They return for an encore and set the men's imaginations afire with a hip-grinding reprise of "Let's Spend the Night Together."

After an intermission, the band returns to the stage, the lights dim, and they begin playing David Rose's "The Stripper." A spotlight switches on and a tall, buxomous Asian woman enters stage right. She's dressed in a clinging red silk dress with a high Mandarin collar and slits up both legs revealing black fishnet

stockings and a garter belt. She wears long black gloves and stilleto heels. She shakes her hips and thrusts out her breasts. A deafening wave of whistles and cheers fills the hall. The stripper struts onto center stage, slowly peels off one of her gloves, and tosses it into the audience. The cheers grow louder. She peels off her other glove and tosses it, too. The cat whistles intensify as she tears off her dress and casts it aside. Chants of "Take it off! Take it off!" fill the hall as, item by item, she disrobes in her best burlesque house, Gypsy Rose Lee style. By the time she gets to her G-string, men are down on their hands and knees, howling and crying louder than ever, "Take it off! Take it off! Col. Big is one of those men.

The stripper slips out of her G-string, twirls it in the air over her head, and tosses it at Col. Big. He catches it in his mouth and shakes it back and forth like a happy dog that's just been thrown a fresh bone. The men around him howl with delight like a pack of wolves at a full moon. Leaning back, bending her knees, propping herself up with her two arms, the stripper spreads her legs wide. She kicks out her left leg, then her right leg, then plants her feet and sways sideways back and forth. By now, a dozen Jolly Greens, led by Col. Big, are down on their hands and knees in front of the stage, wagging their tongues like they are performing oral sex.

By the end of the evening, Col. Big has won the total devotion of every man in the room. When he stands up to leave, the men cheer, wolf whistle, and stomp their feet in thanks.

EVERYONE

Hoorah! Hoorah! Hoorah!

ONE WEEK LATER

74 - EXT: NEAR THE DMZ - AFTERNOON

74

The ground war has been winding down, but the air war has picked up, keeping the men of the 37th as busy as ever. Jolly 67 is on a routine mission covering action near the DMZ when they start to take ground fire. The crew can see lights from tracer shells as they streak by. Some shells strike Jolly 67, punching holes in the side and sending fragments flying everywhere. One of those fragments hits Skinny.

CURTIS

(recoiling in shock and pain)

I'm hit! I'm hit!

Scosh rushes to Skinny and looks for signs of injury. Skinny's right back pocket has been torn open and blood is seeping through the gap.

BRYANT

(clasping Skinny on the shoulder)

You, my friend, have been shot in the ass!

CURTIS

(looking back over his shoulder and grimacing)

How bad is it? It hurts like hell!

BRYANT

It's not too bad from what I can tell. It missed your manhood by a couple of inches. That's the good news.

Skinny moans as Scosh tends to the wound.

BRYANT

(speaking through his headset to the rest of the crew)

It looks like Sergeant Curtis has been shot in the ass again. This time it's the right cheek, not the left. Now he'll have a matched pair he can show off to the girls back home. What some people won't do to win a Purple Heart.

Nobody laughs at his joke this time. They've seen too much bloodshed. The men remain silent as Jolly 67 returns to base.

75 — EXT: REMOTE, UNNAMED VIETNAMESE VILLAGE NEAR BORDER WITH LAOS —
AFTERNOON

75

Jollys 67 and 70 have been alerted that two pilots have been shot down near the border with Laos. Jolly 67 flies lead as Alpha One on this mission as Jolly 70 flies Alpha Two back-up. As they approach the area where the two fliers are believed to have parachuted, they can hear the stranded pilot and co-pilot frantically calling for help on their emergency radios.

Jolly 67 locates the pilot and sends Scosh down with the Penetrator to execute a rescue. As Scosh and the pilot are winched back up,

heavy ground fire erupts all around them. Several shells penetrate the skin of Jolly 67, but nobody is injured. With Bryant and the pilot safely aboard, Jadro flies the copter to a safe position above the range of the ground fire and hovers there. Meanwhile, Jolly 70, which has been in a holding pattern, prepares to attempt a rescue of the co-pilot. They anxiously await instructions from FAC. Unexpectedly, FAC comes on the radio and advises Jolly 70 to stand down and return to base without attempting a rescue. Perplexed, Jollies 67 and 70 return to Da Nang feeling they've only half-accomplished the mission they set out for.

76 — EXT: ABOARD FAC NEAR LAOS BORDER — AFTERNOON

76

While Jolly 70 was awaiting instructions on rescuing the co-pilot, FAC was in direct radio contact with him.

FAC

Stay where you are. We have your position identified. We're sending in a Jolly to rescue you. Hold on!

Downed Co-pilot

(screaming in a terrified voice)

You've got to hurry. Villagers are approaching me. They're carrying machetes and axes. I need help NOW!

Gunshots are heard, then angry shouting and loud screaming.

Downed Co-pilot

I can't keep them away from me. They're attacking me! Help! Help! Help!

The co-pilot's screams suddenly stop. Angry shouting in Vietnamese continues for a short time. Suddenly the radio signal is cut off by a blow from a villager's machete.

Without waiting for authorization from FAC, two A1E SkyRaiders swoop in on the location where the co-pilot was last heard from. On their first run, they drop napalm. On their second and third runs, they pepper the landscape with thousands of rounds of Gatling Gun fire before peeling off and returning to base.

77 — INT: DA NANG AFB — JOLLY GREEN TARMAC — AFTERNOON

77

Spectre gunship - Prometheus- a C-130 gunship is load vbed to the tee's with weaponry. There are 2-20 mm gatling guns that

could fire 6000 rounds a minute. They also had 2-40mm cannons w/ radar homing and warning gear. and 2-20mm Vulcan gatling guns each could fire 2500 rpm. There isn't any open spaces to speak of. The parachutes were down a narrow corider and hard to get to. They were loaded with specilized electronic gear that could hear the ignition switch on trucks.

This gunship 44 (Combs) is shot down, no survivors. The two Jollys on alert are ready to go, just waiting to hear from the crew. There were several survival radios come on air w/no further contact. The aircraft just disappeared w/ no smoke or anything. The next day, Tom Combs and Bob Wollman both crew chiefs get on Specre 22 to go search the same areas for the crash site. It is hit and flyable. The pilot tells everyone to bail out. Tom and Bob go to get there parachutes and there is only one. They do paper rock sissors to see who harnesses in and who is held. Tom is lighter and is outside man. They look to see how to tie them both together. The first position puts Tom facing Bob's crouch. Tom says no fucking way. He turns around facing out. They need to jump and not get caught in the props. They jump and are floating down. Both are scared. No survial vests and no survival radios. How are they going to be saved?

Jolly 70 is Alpha 1 and has been airborne and are directed to scene by FAC. Pete Chapman, pilot, says over intercom they will be there after going over the next mountain top. He is going full bolt when they get over the moutain top and there is the parachute w/ the two of them right in front of him. The Major raises nose of aircraft and the parachute is caught on the refueling probe. Chapman-that was an easy pickup. They land and are saved!

The JG arrives at Da Nang and the celebration with water and the bubbly is repeated. This was SAVE 600. This was the number of people saved by the 37th. There was a ritual of going to the save sign w/a picture of the Jolly Green Giant on top and the changing of the numbers. It was celebrated by the Green's with pride.

Jadro, OJ, Bryant and Curtis were getting to be old timers and were close to DEROSing and they were ready. They all hear the siren and ran to Headquarters to get ready for the next mission.

They were briefed on the pending rescue. A C-130 Specter gunship had been hit and would eventually crash into the jungle. The pilot gave a running account on the radio and said they had 15 people on board.

The crew had been parachuting out of the aircraft over a large area and all needed to be rescued. Jolly 67 and Jolly 63 left the runway and the second pair of Jolly's were starting their engines. This would be the biggest rescue for all the Jolly Greens in Vietnam.

Several of the Airmen were picked up by the CIA Helo's, several by local troops and the rest by the Jollys. It was the highest point in the war for the Green's.

When the rescue was over and the crews debriefed, The crew of 67 decided to go into Da Nang city and get drunk. When they got drunk and stoned they are seen going into a tattoo parlor and are seen getting tattoos. moaning, and groining ouching.

77 - INT: DA NANG AFB - JOLLY GREEN BARRACKS - AFTERNOON

77

There was a serious downpour: The six aircrew members are seen taking showers under the eves of the building. They would move into the runoff from the building, just like taking a shower. They still are heard moaning and groaning.

A two striper sees them and asks them:"What did you all do this time?" They look up to the stairs to see who it was. They turn around and showed their left butt cheek to the man. Everyone had the "Green Feet" tattooed on it. They sorta laughed and groaned.

78 - INT: DA NANG AFB - JOLLY GREEN BARRACKS - AFTERNOON

78

Col. Royal was three days from DEROSing when a shit-hot mission crosses his desk. He jumps up and goes to the Flight Line. He orders one of his pilots to Stand Down and climbs into the aircraft and takes off.

He gets to the site and goes in to drop his bombs and his plane is hit. He sees that he needs to bail out. He calls out over the plane's radio and says: "Mayday" "Mayday" He gives his coordinations and bails out.

He drifts down and lands in triple canopy jungle. His parachute hangs from one of tallest trees and he can barely can see the ground. He hears the sound of trucks moving by. Then he hears the North Vietnamese talking and jabbering as they pass under him. If they had looked up they could have seen him. They didn't.

He pulls his survival radio out and talks in a small voice: "Help me". "Help me" "Please" The FAC hears his voice and talks back to him. "Are you OK.?". Royal is scared and says : "Hurry" "I want out of here"

Jolly 67 is on it's last mission and answers the call. They get to the area and fly around waiting to get the word to go in. The FAC goes on the radio and tells the Jolly: "The area is swarming with Charlie" "Let us go in and take care of them,before you go on Final Approach".

The FAC calls in "Puff" the Magic Dragon. The C-47, a propeller driven aircraft was from the Korean War. It had been mothballed and put back in service, It was like the A1E 'Sandy'. Jets were not capable of flying slow. It was loaded with mini-guns and cannons that could put a bullet every six inches over a complete football field.

Royal hears and sees the tracer rounds popping all around him. He hears Sandy's engines as they put napalm close to where he was hanging.

Bullets fly over his head and he hears the 'twang' of them going by him. Royal is scared as hell and promises to himself "that he will take them to dinner". The Forward Air Controller come on Royal's survival radio: "Are you under your parachute?" Royal: "Yes". "The Jolly is ready to come and get you".

Jolly Green 67 is cleared to go on Final Approach. Jadro sees the parachute and hovers over it. OJ puts Bryant down the hoist. He stops the hoist when Bryant signals. He reaches over to cut the pilot's parachute cords and frees him from his perch.

He gives the all clear and OJ brings the pilot into the door. Royal looks up to his savior and sees OJ. They both look at each other. Royal sees that is OJ and his mouth drops open. OJ stands up and salutes him. Royal broke down in tears and grabs his leg: Saying: "I'm so sorry" and "thanking him" at the same time.

They arrive back at the Airfield and park on the tarmac. The crew is there with the fire hoses and champagne. This time they see the Full Bird Colonel and recognize him.

They hose him down as well. They give him a partially shaken champagne bottle. He raises it in the air and turns around with thanks on his lip. And takes a big swig.

80 — INT: DA NANG AFB — JOLLY GREEN BARRACKS — AFTERNOON

80

The next evening he has the entire Squadron over to the Officers Club for dinner:

CAST PARTY:

[the Movie crew gets to celebrate and becomes part of the screenplay. Every one gets to dress up in Air Force garb and gets to choose their own Rank. The names of each person will be on sewn on their chests. And they keep their own uniform.]

[The dinner is planned for all the film crew and the event is catered. Everyone is invited who takes part in creating this movie.

The crew will be asked: What do you like? The food menu would fit their needs. A question: What do you like to drink: that would be provided. The scene shows everyone happy].

This event is filmed and recorded for a separate Special. Pictures of the staff would be taken in uniform.

I am so sorry that I treated you like shit". He offers them a 'spread' to remember. They had Surf (lobster) and Turf, anything they wanted to eat, or drink. Royal and his officers help with the serving.

Royal tries his hand at cutting on the Roast Baron Of beef. One person tells the Colonel: "Hey" "Your cutting that so thin" "I can't see it". Royal cuts him a two inch slab of beef.

Royal even has the base band play for them.

Royal was a changed man when he left Vietnam. It was learned he was treating his men with Honor and Respect. His men did the same back.

He became a respected figure where ever he was stationed.

81 — INT: DA NANG AFB — JOLLY GREEN BARRACKS — AFTERNOON

81

Jolly 67 was turned over to the new crew. Captain Peter Chapman was the pilot, First Lt. John Call was the co-pilot. Tech Sergeant Al Avery was number one PJ. AIC Pierson was the other PJ. Steward had left Da Nang and Sergeant Alley was his replacement. The FE was Tech Sergeant Roy Prader.

Capt Chapman had been in 'Nam for six months and had just gotten his orders to the States. He volunteered to go in for a downed airman Colonel Hambleton. Call Sign BAT-21. Another Jolly Green had been shot off the pickup a week earlier.

Several days later Jadro, OJ, Bryant and Curtis are dressed as civilians. They are ready to DEROS out of Country.

SPIT SCREEN

On left side is Jadro, OJ, Bryant and Curtis getting on the aircraft. On the right screen is Jolly 67 on final approach to a rescue. As the plane gets off the ground and goes over the water, the entire personnel on the plane start screaming and whooping: "We made it". "We actually made it"

The other screen shows Jolly 67 going in on their final approach to save the pilot. They get into a hover over BAT 21. Under heavy ground fire they abort the mission.

Within a mile or so from the pickup zone Jolly 67 goes belly up and falls to earth in flames with no survivors.

There is a continuing flashing light on OJs face and he is startled. He is no longer in Vietnam. He realizes he is at the Vietnam Memorial.

The security guard says: "hey this movie is over" He walks away muttering: "Those poor Veterans"double closings possible

82A — INT: DA NANG AFB — JOLLY GREEN BARRACKS — AFTERNOON

82A

1). A shot from a '38 is heard (very loud). The screen goes to the end of an old movie film running out and the clicking sounds it would make. The screen goes white and lights in theater comes on. No credits at all. (Have to go to the Internet to find out Who is Who. Or have a handout]

82B — INT: DA NANG AFB — JOLLY GREEN BARRACKS — AFTERNOON

82B

2) There are fireworks going off above the Memorial and it is night. OJ is startled out of his reveille by a security guard flashing a light in his face. He realizes he is at the Memorial. The fireworks go on and the credits are seen on the screen. Just as the credits are finished a very loud shot rings out and the screen goes dark and lights come on.

-END-

PLACE THESE TWO SCENES SOMEWHERE APPROPRIATE:

[On a previous mission, an FE another helo inserted a book of matches between the two attachments, bypassing the pin. When they went out to test fire the mini-gun, his Rube Goldberg fix failed, and the mini-gun swung inwards when the FE grabbed the handles and tried to point it outwards. Reflexively gripping the triggers, the FE unleashed a rain of gunfire that shot off the tip of the auxiliary fuel tank. Thankfully, the tank had anti-foam cells that kept it from exploding. That FE immediately became the laughing stock of the unit. Men would mimic him, acting in pantomime like they were firing the gun while falling backwards on wobbly feet, pointing their imaginary weapon in all directions. Everyone would laugh their asses off at the sight of one of these performances.]

[Christmas 1971, Bob Hope, Jackson 5, Vida Blue, Jim Nabors, Anne Margaret, etc. at Da Nang]