

## Act One Scene 6

*Dallas, TX 1994, Fort Polk, LA 1969 and El Paso TX, 1969*

*ED DENNY talking with DR REAGAN*

# START

*(ED DENNY and DR REAGAN pick up where they left off with DR REAGAN's question in Scene 4. Why did you join the military?)*

ED DENNY

My old man had flown in the Second World War over the South Pacific. He was a crew chief on B-17 bombers. Well, — that's what **he** did to get his wings — it was my turn to do something — being an antiwar hippie wasn't an option for me. The Vietnam War — go to the damned thing and do something that mattered or show yourself as a yellow-bellied bum. You see options in any of that?

*(ED DENNY looks to DR REAGAN who acknowledges that she is listening.)*

So I enlisted — decided to become a helicopter pilot. It was the best deal the army had going. I'd be an officer, too — a Warrant Officer **and** a pilot. Any luck, the war would be over by the time I got trained. Hated the idea of the War, but I was gonna have to go either with silver wings and officer's pay, or as a Private, struggling in the mud in some dark jungle. It was a clear, easy choice.

Basic training at Fort Polk was just one eight week period of being yelled at and demeaned. I tried to walk the line, keep my nose clean and my mouth shut — anything to avoid the wrath of the Drill Sergeants.

*(Lights fade on ED DENNY and DR REAGAN.)*

*(The DRILL SERGEANT enters wearing a Smokey-the-bear-hat)*

*(YOUNG ED enters out of breath.)*

*(Note: VINH and CRAIG could stand in as other troops with Male 2)*

DRILL SERGEANT

Listen up, you bunch of wimpy shit-heads — once again you turds failed to complete your little 10 mile march in the required amount of time. Now, I ain't your goddamn high school teacher nurse maid who'll give you a blue ribbon for your weak assed effort today. Weak-asses don't get no goddamn ribbons in Vietnam. Weak-assed turds wind up dead on the battlefield. Now, we're gonna fall out for 15 minutes of R&R and then do 10 more goddamned miles, and if you shit-heads don't make it in one hour flat, not one goddamned hour and 10 minutes like this time, then we'll do it all over again for a third time — double-time the whole way if that's what it takes. Listen up — any of you Warrant Officer Candidates take one step forward and **COME TO ATTENTION**. The rest of the Platoon: **FALL OUT**.

*(YOUNG ED steps in front of DRILL SERGEANT.)*

*Other cast members exit.)*

DRILL SERGEANT(CONT)

Okay, Warrant Officer Candidate! You plan to be a hot-shot helicopter pilot, right?

YOUNG ED

Yes, Drill Sergeant!

DRILL SERGEANT

Pilots are a hell of a lot more than just ordinary soldiers. Pilots are the best of the best — ain't that right?

YOUNG ED

Yes, Drill Sergeant!

DRILL SERGEANT

Then I have an important special mission for you before you rest. Take your trenching shovel, go over there and dig me a 10 foot long latrine ditch — and take the dirt over by them there bushes and PILE IT there — cause I feel a big greasy shit coming on. So FALL OUT you pilot wanna-be and get you some Pile it experience!

*(DRILL SERGEANT exits.  
Lights fade on YOUNG ED as he starts shoveling.  
Light up on ED DENNY and DR REAGAN.)*

ED DENNY

I lived through basic training — **barely**. After basic, helicopter training.

*(Wistfully)*

Huey Helicopters, the best part of my decision to join the Army. My girlfriend at the time was Becky. We had plans to get married — 'someday'. My idea was after I finished college. Then the Army and Vietnam War came up — finishing college would be years away. Didn't want to wait years — so the next thing we knew we were getting married. It was a big full-blown wedding — the story-book type with a tux and wedding gown, both families and all our friends.

*(Lights fade on ED DENNY and DR REAGAN.  
BECKY, and BEST MAN enter. YOUNG ED puts down his shovel and joins them)*

*(Lights up on YOUNG ED, BECKY and BEST MAN about to give a toast at the wedding reception. The actors laugh at various intervals through the wedding scene — a light moment in the script.)*

BEST MAN

I guess it should be me to offer the toast to the beautiful bride and...

*(The BEST MAN turns to look directly at YOUNG ED)*

the homely groom. Love that haircut the army gave you for this special occasion. Pretty different from that long-haired-hippie look you had before you enlisted.

YOUNG ED

Hey! I just couldn't afford to get a haircut! I wasn't no damn hippie - it was survival! And don't **even** start on me again about selling flowers on the street! I had to do **something** to make money.

BEST MAN

Sure Eddy —and those flowers in your hair? — just your marketing strategy?

YOUNG ED

Oh you ahhh....

*(He catches himself before he says asshole)*

Get on with your toast...my....**good** friend.

BEST MAN

Here's to a long and happy marriage for you two. Maybe now Eddy will stop stealing away women I adore. That bullshit's been going on since we were in high school. Remember that sweet little girl, Jeanie Smith? — Lived down the street from us on Mount Rushmore. I liked her first, but you asked her to go steady with you — **she** said yes! So, I switched to Candi Spicer — you asked her to go steady with you and **she** said yes too! You had both of them going steady with you at once, and they only lived five houses apart!

*(BECKY hits YOUNG ED with her floral bouquet)*

BECKY

You never told me you were such a total dog, Eddy.

BEST MAN

*(Turning to BECKY)*

And now it's you he's stolen from me Becky. Let me be the first to kiss the new bride.

*(BEST MAN kisses BECKY)*

Mmmm, seems like the good old-times.

BECKY

Old times? Wasn't that more like this?

*(BECKY throws her arms around BEST MAN and kisses him a big one.*

*YOUNG ED howls.)*

Going steady with two girls at once — what a dog.

BEST MAN

Seriously — you two are made for each other and I wish you happiness

*(He raises his glass and projects his voice to imagined wedding guests)*

Here's to the good old times and newer times.

YOUNG ED, BEST MAN AND BECKY

To newer times.

*(BEST MAN fades away and exits.*

*YOUNG ED takes BECKY in his arms and speaks softly to her.)*

YOUNG ED

Newer times, forever times, for always. I love you, Becky.

*(Lights down on YOUNG ED and BECKY.*

*Spotlight on ED DENNY who is clearly still talking with DR REAGAN but she is not in the spotlight.)*

ED DENNY

We drove away from the wedding in Becky's Camaro, pulling a U-Haul trailer with a Just Married sign on it — old shoes and tin cans dragging behind. Headed right to Alabama. We lived in an old pink trailer outside the Fort Rucker gate. Six short months together. It was a time of love.

*(ED DENNY turns to look at YOUNG ED who steps into ED DENNY's spotlight. They smile and give each other a thumbs up)*

But flight school ended and our honeymooning was all used up. Had to face that I was really going to Vietnam.

*(Lights up on, YOUNG ED and BECKY in each others arms)*

YOUNG ED

We knew this was coming but...

BECKY

.....it didn't seem like it would happen so soon. How're you feeling Eddy?

YOUNG ED

Like I just finished a driver's ed class — now I'm off to race the Indy 500.

*(Beat)*

You'll wait for me won't you?

BECKY

I'll be here Eddy. Keep your head down.

*(YOUNG ED pulls away and loads onto the plane.*

*BECKY waves a little flag.*

**END**