

Act One Scene 9

Cu Chi, Vietnam May 1970 — the Officer's Club

YOUNG ED is with WARRANT OFFICER #1 and WARRANT OFFICER #2

START

YOUNG ED

So, I'm flying this mission dropping grenades along the banks of a canal. We hit every damn hole, flushing out the VC. Our door gunners were getting all of them. 20 confirmed kills!

(WARRANT OFFICER #1 gives YOUNG ED a high-five)

Just taking care of business right?

WARRANT OFFICER #1

Damn right!

YOUNG ED

Then we circled back around and landed. Ground troops had 10 bodies out of the holes, lined 'em up neatly so we could count our "confirmed kills". I almost lost it! Jaws stretched open like they'd been screaming when they died. All I could think — they were all just boys.

WARRANT OFFICER #2

(Speaking sarcastically)

Oh yeah, just boys....

(Faking a bit of a boo hoo then firmly saying)

Course, they **were** just boys who wanted to grease your ass.

YOUNG ED

I'm telling ya, I don't know how you handle the stress. Every day we're flying way too many hours, and I know I'm new at this, but how do you handle seeing real people getting killed? I flew into our LZ yesterday — lots of wounded — heaps of uniforms all over covered with blood and splashes. Jagged holes, pieces of bone — what do you do with that?

(The other two men don't look at him.)

Lt Sparks says; "Either they miss you, or they hit you. You hear gunfire, rest easy, means you're alive — they just missed. You'll never hear the shot that gets you." Aren't you always wondering if the next one's gonna be you?

WARRANT OFFICER #1

Even if I am the next one, there's nothin' I can do about it. You just gotta stop thinking about going home.

WARRANT OFFICER #2

Right on, man. You're here doing this until you're not. Just that simple. If you're lucky you go home, back to the real world.

WARRANT OFFICER #1

You get used to it, eventually. Hey — we're all going to die someday — maybe soon, maybe not. Everyone's depending on you, so you need to do your damned job — and kill some Vietcong while you're at it.

YOUNG ED

"You get used to it eventually". That's heavy — something I'm gonna have to wrap my head around. Guess you're saying I need to think less on the bullets, and just slide on in to my eventual insanity.

(As they raise their glasses CRAIG enters the Officer's Club and goes to order a drink.)

WARRANT OFFICER #2

Speaking of depending on each other — there's the guy everyone wants to fly with — Craig Fox. He is one hell of a pilot. Stays calm and gets the job done.

YOUNG ED

Just looked at the schedule — I'm flying with him tomorrow — first time. Sounds like I'll get to see how to do this right.

END

(YOUNG ED gets up with his drink and walks over to introduce himself to CRAIG. YOUNG ED and CRAIG engage in conversation in the background.)

WARRANT OFFICER#1

Denny doesn't seem to be taking it all too well.

WARRANT OFFICER #2

Did you hear what happened to him the other day?

(WARRANT OFFICER #1 shakes his head)

Shit! He's only been here two weeks and he gets hit with a body!

WARRANT OFFICER#1

Hit with a body? What are you talking about?

WARRANT OFFICER#2

The infantry flushed out three bad guys — they started shooting at Denny's gunship. He was right on top of them — had to make a steep dive close to the ground. A blown-up torso flew up and splattered on his chopper's nose. Gore everywhere! He said he saw the guy's face as he bounced off the ship.

WARRANT OFFICER#1

Oh holy Jesus! That would freak anyone out! *(Beat)* Can you imagine facing your scrambled powdered eggs the next day?

WARRANT OFFICER#2

You heartless bastard!

WARRANTOFFICER#1

I'm just trying to do my bloody job like the rest of us — can't let that shit get to you.

(Pause)

What do you think about my hooch maid? She does a great job cleaning but I'm pretty sure she's carrying bombs for the VC at night. Cute little baby she carries around — he can't be more than a few months old.

WARRANTOFFICER#2

If we turned her in there would still be the ARVNs *(Pronounced R-vns)* fighting next to us. Who knows who to trust? The VC have those tunnels everywhere — I know they're everywhere because I see gooks running out of nowhere with RPGs and machine guns — then I don't see them. They just disappear. They're going **somewhere**.

WARRANT OFFICER#1

So you're thinking that some of the South Vietnamese — the guys fighting next to us — are letting them know where we are?

WARRANT OFFICER#2

They seem to show up at just the right time — then poof, gone. The South Vietnamese would just as soon have us out of here — so why not help the other side.

WARRANT OFFICER #1

They have to have a pretty good plan to get their own sorry asses out of the way.

WARRANT OFFICER #2

Yeah...I don't know of course. Just a gut feeling.

(WARRANT OFFICER #1 looks over to YOUNG ED and CRAIG)

WARRANT OFFICER#1

Looks like Denny and Fox hit it off.

WARRANTOFFICER#2

(Stands up to leave)

Yup. Well, I'm flying tomorrow too. Let's split. See you in the morning.

(WARRANT OFFICER#2 starts to exit then turns back to WARRANT OFFICER#1)

Hey! Do you know what that shit was for dinner?

WARRANT OFFICER#1

Well...it had some applesauce on it so I'm thinking pork chops.

(WARRANT OFFICER#1 and WARRANT OFFICER#2 rub their guts, grimace and exit.)

(YOUNG ED and CRAIG are still standing with their drinks and talking)

CRAIG

So, when did you start flying Denny?

YOUNG ED

Mineral Wells — Fort Wolters. Learning to fly is why I signed up for this rodeo. You?

CRAIG

Oh, I was trying to fly out of my crib, — my first solo flight was fixed wing when I was 16. I'll be a commercial airline pilot — someday.

YOUNG ED

I keep hearing about what an ace you are.

CRAIG

(Humbly disregards the compliment)

I'm surprised they let kids like us fly these expensive machines. Almost makes this war worth it eh? Get some sleep — we've got a job to do.

YOUNG ED

I'll see you on the flight line.

(YOUNG ED and CRAIG exit)

(Blackout)