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Freedomland

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Freedomland
By
Elyse Endick

2014

FINAL - HONORS THESIS

"Freedomland"

INT. LIVING ROOM- TELEVISION SCREEN- DAY

The year is 1960, we're in a dingy pre-war New York apartment, and we're watching a test pattern on a snowy black and white TELEVISION.

CU on the screen, so that the wooden sides of the box can be seen, but nothing else. A test pattern sound drones on.

Suddenly, the test pattern switches off, and triumphant music, like a march, begins to blare from the set.

The television displays a black and white image of the American flag, and over it reads the text: FREEDOMLAND!

ANNOUNCER (O.S)
Marlboro Cigarettes proudly present
the following program...

A beat.

ANNOUNCER (O.S)(
Today on Travel Time, we're going
to Freedomland! America's favorite
entertainment park! New, this
summer, in The Bronx, in the good
old state of New York! Freedomland
takes visitors on a journey through
American history. Let's take a
look-see! I've got my friend Billy
here to show us what it's all
about. Ready, Billy?

BILLY, a boy of around eight, stands by the Freedomland entrance. He plays awkwardly to the camera.

BILLY
You bectha!

He runs in through the gates of Freedomland.

The screen fades to black for a beat.

Western music begins to play as, on the screen, two COWBOYS, or rather, two men dressed in ill-fitted costumes, engage in a shoot out, while WHITE, SUBURBAN, MIDDLE-CLASS FAMILIES look on. The cowboys, armed with pop guns, fire "shots" of smoke at one another.

Billy, amid the crowd, stares intently at the gunfight before him, and then glances over to the camera with a wide-eyed grin.

(CONTINUED)

BILLY
Wow, gee whiz!

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM- DAY

JIM RODGERS, sometimes Jimmy, age eight, sits cross-legged on the carpet in front of the television, eating from a bowl of cereal. The images from the TV dance in the reflection of his bright blue eyes. Blond, buzzed hair is hidden by a COWBOY HAT that might be a size too large for his small head. He wears a striped t-shirt, a worn pair of jeans, and a dirty pair of Keds.

He is mesmerized by the television.

JIM
Wow, gee whiz.

The cowboy hat falls in front of his eyes.

CUT TO:

INT.LIVING ROOM- TELEVISION SCREEN- DAY

The little boy on the television sits in a stage coach driven by a bored looking cowboy concierge.

ANNOUNCER (O.S)
How would you like to ride in a stagecoach through Indian territory, back when the West was really wild?!

BILLY
(Turning to face the camera)
Boy, would I ever!

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM- DAY

Jim pushes his cowboy hat back onto his head and inches even closer to the screen.

Unblinking, he takes a spoonful of cereal.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM- TELEVISION SCREEN- DAY

ANNOUNCER (O.S)
 But that's not all! Let's see
 what's happening down in old
 Chicago!

An on-screen wipe changes the scene from the Old Southwest.

A fire blazes out of several blasted-out windows.

The camera pans out to reveal a crowd of children, including the Little Boy, using their weight to work an old-fashioned pump, dousing the fire. They are helped by several TEENAGERS DRESSED AS FIREMEN.

ANNOUNCER (O.S)(CONT.)
 It's the Chicago Fire! Mrs.
 O'Leary's cow has kicked over a
 lantern, and we're gonna need all
 the help we can get to put this
 blaze out!

Billy, overacting, wipes some sweat from his brow.

BILLY
 It's getting out of control! She's
 about to blow!

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
 Haha, don't worry Billy!

A blank-faced TEENAGE FIREMAN comes in with a hose and douses more water on the fire.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)(CONT.)
 He doesn't look too worried-- and
 for good reason! Here at
 Freedomland, they have the Chicago
 Fire every half hour, every day.
 How many times a year is that,
 Billy?

BILLY
 (genuinely stumped)
 Uhh....

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
 Should have paid more attention in
 mathematics, eh, son?

A beat as the fires die down in unison.

(CONTINUED)

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)(CONT.)
Well, no matter. The fires behind those glass windows in that fire proof building always go out on schedule. But it's lots of fun, because it's make-believe! But at the time of the real Chicago fire, buildings weren't fire proof, making this an important event in American history. Brought to life for you here, at Freedomland!

The word FREEDOMLAND and the title card featuring the American flag flash back on screen.

Back to Old Chicago. Billy looks up at the 'burnt' building.

BILLY
Wow, that sure was close! What's next?

Wipe to Little Old New York. A horse-drawn street car ambles down a row of quaint shops.

Billy sits in the front row of the car, sticks his head out, and smiles.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Ride a trolley in Old New York!

An old locomotive. Billy sits up front with the conductor. Both smile.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)(CONT.)
Take the train down to Santa Fe!

A steamboat, "THE CANADIAN", sits in Freedomland's version of the Great Lakes.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT.)
Hey, here's another way people traveled in America's past-- on a steamboat. ALL ABOARD!

Find Billy on the deck, smile still permanently plastered on his face.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)(CONT.)
From the boat's deck, you can see how America really looked in the past. or board a different type of boat, and see how Lewis and Clark travelled on their famous expedition!

(CONTINUED)

Billy, aboard the Lewis and Clark boat, ambling down a 'bayou.'

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)(CONT.)
Hey look! There's an Indian carving
a totem pole!

An angry looking NATIVE AMERICAN MAN dressed in offensively stereotypical garb chops away at a piece of wood as the boat putters past him.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)(CONT.)
Here at Freedomland, you can marvel
at the past, or...

Satellite City, Freedomland's version of Disney's Tomorrowland.

CROWDS marvel at polished plaster ROCKET SHIPS.

CHILDREN, including Billy, drive fake futuristic cars on a track.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)(CONT.)
...look to America's bright future!

An ASTRONAUT hands Billy a soda, and he takes a long sip from the straw.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) CONT.)
So Billy, what did you think of
Freedomland?

BILLY
I loved it! This sure is the
greatest country in the world!

The title card of the American flag.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
You know what Billy, it sure is. So
kids, tell your parents that in the
summer of 1960, the place to be is
FREEDOMLAND!

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN- DAY

EDDIE RODGERS, Jim's father, 40 and beer-gutted, searches the REFRIGERATOR.

Shot from inside the fridge as Eddie roots around. His hand moves past empty glass milk bottles and a nearly empty carton of eggs to find a SIX PACK of beer.

JIM (O.S.)

Dad?

Eddie grabs two bottles of beer and shuts the fridge. He turns to face Jim, seated in front of the TV in the connected living room in the distance.

EDDIE

What is it, son?

JIM

Dad, can we go to Freedomland?

A beat.

EDDIE

Sure, some day we'll go there, Jimmy.

JIM

Thanks, Dad.

He turns back around to face the TV.

EDDIE

You know, rumor has it my crew might be working on that place, helping build one of the rides.

JIM

(Turning back around)
You're pulling my leg, dad.

EDDIE

You'll see. I'll see if I can't sneak you some sort of souvenir, would you like that?

Jim smiles and turns around again.

Eddie uses a bottle opener to open the beer bottle. He takes a long swig and moves to the living room. He sits down on a stained arm chair.

(CONTINUED)

CU on the TV screen again.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
AND NOW, IT'S TIME FOR THE ANDY
GRIFFITH SHOW!

The familiar jingle "The Fishin' Hole," better known as the Andy Griffith theme song, begins to play. As it does, with each whistle, we get a SERIES OF SHOTS of the apartment:

A)The coffee table in front of Eddie's chair, littered with beer bottles, bent bottle caps, a full ash tray, and various food wrappers.

B) Empty bottles in a pile by the TV, near where Jim is seated.

C)Empty bottles where books should be on a book shelf. The shelves themselves have seen better days, and are sloped.

D)An unfinished bottle of whiskey next to a faded picture of a YOUNG MAN DRESSED IN ARMY UNIFORM, arms wrapped tightly around a YOUNG WOMAN. Next to the frame, covered in dust, sits a medal- THE PURPLE HEART-- and a letter-

E)The letter. All we see of the type are the words "AWARDED TO-" "PRIVATE FIRST CLASS EDDIE RODGERS-" "FOR HIS SERVICE IN KOREA-"

F)A still smoking cigarette burning the lacquer off a cheap end table.

G) As the song ends, Eddie finishes off his beer and throws it into the pile by the TV.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

The voices of Andy Griffith and Don Knotts can be heard from the TV as Eddie opens another beer.

Jim looks back at him, then turns back to the TV, laughing along with the laugh track.

CUT TO:

EXT. CORONA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL- DAY

Draped across the front entrance of Corona Elementary School is a sign that reads "PARENT CAREER DAY" in sloppy handwritten letters.

STUDENTS chat on the asphalt playground next to the school. Jim sits alone on a curb reading a CAPTAIN AMERICA COMIC BOOK.

(CONTINUED)

A girl his age, SUSIE CARTER, passes by on her way to the building.

GIRL

Hi Jim.

Jim looks up and smiles bashfully.

JIM

Oh, hi Susie.

She disappears into the building as the school bell rings.

The students on the playground all run to get inside. As Jim gets up, a group of BOYS all push him as they run past.

One of the boys, MIKEY THORNTON, stops to taunt him.

MIKEY

How's your girlfriend Susie?

JIM

She's not my girlfriend, Mikey.

MIKEY

Good. She doesn't belong with a dork with a drunk for a dad, like you.

JIM

He's not-

They push past, laughing.

BOY

Later, dweeb!

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM- DAY

The classroom is over-full, as each student sits beside his or her PARENT.

Find Jim, sitting bored at his desk. The seat next to him, meant for his father, is empty. Other students in the desks surrounding him doze off, as do their parents.

The TEACHER, Mrs. Henderson, a woman of no more than thirty, stands at the front of the classroom holding a stack of notecards, alongside a MAN dressed in an ill-fitted suit and horn-rimmed glasses.

(CONTINUED)

MRS.HENDERSON

Thank you, Mr. McGillicuddy, for that rousing introduction to the exciting world of accounting.

Mr. McGillicuddy nods and shuffles back to his seat beside his doppelganger of a son, dressed in an equally ill-fitting suit and equally unflattering horn-rimmed glasses.

MRS.HENDERSON (CONT.)

Okay, well...next up is Mr. Rodgers, Jimmy's dad, here to tell us about his career in construction. Jim?

Jim glances at the still empty seat beside him, then out the window.

JIM

I think my dad's just running a little late, Mrs. Henderson.

The same boys from the schoolyard begin to laugh in the back of the classroom, lead by Mikey.

MIKEY

Nah, he's early. It's not even five o'clock yet and he's started drinking.

The entire classroom erupts in laughter. Susie turns back in her seat, glaring at Mikey.

MRS.HENDERSON

Alright, alright class, that's enough. We'll hear from Mr. Rodgers when he gets here. Alright, Jim?

He nods and faces the window, choking back tears. The teacher flips to the next note card in her hand.

MRS.HENDERSON (CONT.)

(reading)

Next up is...Mr. Carter, Susie's father, an engineer.

Mikey at the back of the classroom rolls his eyes and turns to his friends.

MIKEY

Another snorer.

(CONTINUED)

Susie's father, MR.CARTER, handsome, young, and well-dressed, stands up from his seat, smiling at his daughter, and makes his way to the front of the class.

MR.CARTER

Thank you, Mrs. Henderson. Hello, class. Now I know what you're all thinking. Engineering-- what's that? Sounds boring.

MIKEY

Sure does.

Mikey's father, beside him, chuckles quietly. Carter takes it in stride.

MR.CARTER

Well, Michael, I think you might have a change of heart in a minute. When you're an engineer you can work on all sorts of exciting projects-- like what I'm doing now.

Susie, beaming at her desk, can't keep quiet any longer.

SUSIE

My daddy works designing the rides for the new amusement park they're building down in The Bronx-- Freedomland.

The students begin to murmur excitedly.

MR. CARTER

(chuckling)

That's right, sweetheart, You see an engineer can design just about anything he can dream of. And you don't need much to start out-- save for an imagination, that is-

CUT TO:

EXT. FREEDOMLAND CONSTRUCTION SITE- DAY

An American flag on a long pole flaps in the wind over the Freedomland sign, half-painted.

An argument takes place without sound between Eddie and the FOREMAN.

(CONTINUED)

MR.CARTER (O.S.)

When I was a boy my family didn't have much; my parents came here on a boat from Europe. But what I did have was a love of learning what makes things tick. So here I am today. That's the American Dream we're promised here in this great country of ours. You can become anything you want to be. You can do anything you want to do. This whole land is yours for the taking.

The argument ends, and Eddie storms off, throwing his hard hat on the ground.

FOREMAN

You're a worthless lazy bum, Rodgers! Don't you ever let me see your goddamn ugly face around here again, you hear me?

CUT TO: INT. CLASSROOM- DAY

MR.CARTER

Well, look at me, I'm rambling. I did bring a little surprise for all you kids.

He reaches into his suit pocket and pulls out a STACK OF TICKETS.

MR.CARTER (CONT.)

Susie, why don't you pass these out to your classmates. They're free tickets to Freedomland, on me.

The excitement bubbles to the surface, and the kids gather around Susie, clamoring for tickets.

MRS.HENDERSON

Alright class, settle down, let Susie pass out your tickets. And what do we say to Mr. Carter for being so generous?

STUDENTS

(In unison)

Thank you.

(CONTINUED)

MR. CARTER

Sure, sure. There's enough for one for each of you and or your parent that's with you today. Go ahead, Susie.

Susie passes out the tickets.

She gives a pair to Mikey and his father.

MIKEY

Gee dad, can we go?

MIKEY'S FATHER

Sure, Mick, we'll go as soon as it opens. I'll take one of the cars from the lot.

She hands a pair to the accountant, Mr. McGillicuddy, and his son, who stare back up at her monotonously. She then makes her way to Jim, who still sits alone, staring out the window.

SUSIE

Here you go, Jim.

He turns to face her and takes the tickets, staring at them wide-eyed.

THE TICKET:

It's a bright orange ticket that reads: ADMIT ONE: TO FREEDOMLAND, THE WORLD'S LARGEST ENTERTAINMENT CENTER. GOOD FOR ANY TIME, DOES NOT EXPIRE.

BACK TO SCENE

JIM

Oh, thanks.

SUSIE

There's one for your father, too. I'm sure he's just held up at work.

JIM

Yeah, that's it.

She stands by his desk for a moment as he continues to stare at the tickets, then moves on. The room chitters excitedly.

(CONTINUED)

MRS. HENDERSON (O.S)
Alright, next is Mrs. Thompson, a
homemaker, to tell us about
exciting options for women-

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT- DAY

Jim enters the apartment. The blinds are closed and it's dark. He flips the light switch and throws his backpack onto the floor.

JIM
Dad, are you here?

He walks into the living room and finds Eddie slumped over asleep in his chair, with the bottle of whiskey in his hands.

Jim gingerly removes the bottle from his father's grip, and places it back on the shelf next to the picture.

He turns on the television, which is playing an episode of *LEAVE IT TO BEAVER*. Angrily, he turns up the volume dial. Eddie opens his heavy-lidded eyes.

EDDIE
What's that for Jimmy? Turn it
down, will ya?

He doesn't. Instead, he crosses over to the kitchen. He shoves the Freedomland tickets into a drawer and then pours himself a bowl of cereal. He reaches into the refrigerator for milk, only to find several empty beer bottles. He sets them by the door, sits down by the television, and eats his cereal dry.

JIM
You missed career day at my school.

Laughter from the television set.

Eddie struggles to sit up.

EDDIE
(to himself)
Jesus, that was today?

He rubs his eyes.

(CONTINUED)

EDDIE (CONT.)

Look, Jim, it wasn't an easy day for me. They were doing layoffs down at the site. I lost my job, okay? I lost my fucking job.

Jim continues to face the TV.

EDDIE (CONT.)

What do you want me to do, you want me to slit my wrists, Jim? I'm sorry I missed your school thing. I'm the worst fucking father, alright? I'm a lousy fucking father.

He stands up and walks over to the kitchen for a beer. With his head in the fridge, he remembers something. Not without grabbing a beer first, he shuts the refrigerator door and fishes in his pocket.

EDDIE (CONT.)

I didn't lie to you though, Jim. I was down at that Freedomland place they're building.

JIM

No you weren't.

EDDIE

You wanna bet? They had uh, too many people there, they had to let me go, but it's great Jim, I'm gonna take you there when it's finished, alright? I promise. Now look, I got you something.

Jim looks up at Eddie, who now stands over him, palm outstretched, holding a FREEDOMLAND SOUVENIR COIN. he takes it and turns it over in his hands.

CU: THE COIN:

Painted silver, with the Freedomland logo on one side, and the American flag on the other. It catches the light from the TV as Jim turns it over and over.

BACK TO SCENE

Jim looks back up, expecting to find Eddie still looming over him. Instead, Eddie sits on the couch, bottle to his lips.

In front of the TV, Jim flips the coin.

(CONTINUED)

As the coin flips in the air, the images on the television begin to change, racking focus to the screen.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

A)

INSERT: CLIPS FROM THE DICK VAN DYKE SHOW

ANNOUNCER (V.O)
THE DICK VAN DYKE SHOW! Starring
Dick Van Dyke.

The theme music plays. Dick Van Dyke trips over the couch.

Laugh track plays.

B)

INSERT: FOOTAGE FROM *MR. ED*

soundbites of the theme song and of Mr. Ed neighing.

C)

INSERT: JOHN F. KENNEDY'S 1961 PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURATION

JOHN F. KENNEDY
Ask not what your country can do
for you-- ask what you can do for
your country.

D)

INSERT: FOOTAGE FROM *THE FLINTSTONES*

Which quickly changes to...

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Now introducing, *THE JETSONS!*

INSERT: CLIPS FROM THE JETSONS

E)

INSERT: THE *CBS EVENING NEWS* WITH WALTER CRONKITE

F)

INSERT: THE ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT KENNEDY

G)

INSERT: THE BEATLES ON *THE ED SULLIVAN SHOW*

(CONTINUED)

H)

The final shot is a sickeningly rapid succession of the all-too-similar sitcoms of 1964-- *Bewitched*, *The Addams Family*, *The Munsters*, and *Gilligan's Island*.

The laugh track from *Gilligan's Island* is heard.

INSERT: CLIP FROM *GILLIGAN'S ISLAND*

END SERIES OF SHOTS

Rack focus back to the coin, which stops flipping and lands in Jim's hand.

The year is now 1964, and Jim is 12.

He pockets the coin and continues to watch TV. He picks up his bowl of cereal, the same brand as before, and eats.

We find Eddie slumped over on his chair, asleep. The coffee table in front of him is even more cluttered with empty bottles. The ash tray has spilled over.

CUT TO:

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASSROOM- DAY

A MALE TEACHER lectures at the front of the class. The chalkboard behind him reads "THE WAR IN VIET-NAM." His droning can only be heard as background noise.

Jim pauses his note taking and looks over to Susie on the other end of the classroom. She's beautiful. She looks over from the teacher to Jim, and smiles. He smiles back and returns to his notes.

Find Mikey Thornton, now Mike, and his friends at the back of the class room. Mike stretches a rubber band between his fingers and aims for Jim's head.

TEACHER (O.S)

There's talk of reinstating the draft for the conflict in Southeast Asia. Does anyone know the last time the United States issued a draft for able-bodied men in the fight against Communism?

The rubber band flies and hits the back of Jim's head. He rubs the back of his and turns around.

(CONTINUED)

JIM
(Whispering, to Mike)
Cut it out, Mike.

The teacher, seeing Jim talking, calls on him.

TEACHER
Jim? Why don't you tell us.

JIM
(Turning back around)
Tell you what?

The class laughs.

TEACHER
(Exasperated)
The last draft, Jim. When was it?

JIM
Oh, the last draft. It was during
the Korean War. My father was
drafted. He got the Purple Heart.

MIKE
What he get that for? Drinking
Korea dry?

The class laughs. Jim balls his fists under his desk, then
lets them go.

JIM
No, actually, he was shot rescuing
another soldier. What was your
father doing, Thornton? Selling
people cars for five times they're
worth?

Mike stands up.

MIKE
Yeah, well, whatever he was doing,
my mother didn't leave him, so I'd
say he's doing pretty well for
himself, huh?

Jim slides out of his seat and pulls back his fist to punch
Mike. The teacher intervenes, pulling Jim by his ear back
into his seat. The class laughs.

TEACHER
Enough!

CUT TO:

INSERT:

Two red DETENTION SLIPS, one reading JIM RODGERS and the other reading MICHAEL THORNTON.

The teacher's hand, equipped with a red rubber stamp, marks the slips "SATURDAY SCHOOL."

CUT TO:

EXT. MIDDLE SCHOOL- DAY

The sound of the bell. STUDENTS pour out of the building.

Find Susie and Jim among the crowd. Jim stares dejectedly at his detention slip.

SUSIE
Saturday school isn't so bad, Jim.

A beat.

SUSIE
Anyway, you did so well on that arithmetic exam. How'd you do it?

He looks up from the slip and smiles at her.

JIM
There's really nothing to it.

SUSIE
Says you! You've always been good with numbers.

JIM
Well, you can't be good at *everything*, Susie Carter. You've got English, Science, Social Studies...Lunch, you always pack the best lunch...

She laughs.

SUSIE
You'll help me study for the test, won't you?

JIM
Uhm, yeah, sure.

(CONTINUED)

SUSIE
Great. Your place?

A beat. He pauses on the school steps.

SUSIE (CONT.)
I mean, we can go to my house
instead. My father would love to
have you for dinner again.

JIM
How about the library?

SUSIE
Sure. See you at six?

Jim nods, and the two go their separate ways.

CUT TO:

EXT. CORONA, QUEENS, NEW YORK- DAY

Pleasant soft-rock of the period plays.

As he walks, Jim flips his Freedomland coin in his hands. He walks through the streets of Corona, Queens. GIRLS play double-dutch in the streets, and BOYS play stickball.

Mike's at bat. He's taller than a twelve year old should be. He hits the ball and it goes flying, hitting Jim in the back of the head. The music stops. He falls to the ground, dropping his coin. Michael laughs.

MIKE
Watch where you're going, Rodgers!

The rest of the boys laugh as Jim struggles back onto his feet.

Jim dusts himself off, wiping the dirt off of his khaki pants.

While he does, Michael walks over, and picks up the coin.

MIKE (CONT.)
You dropped this, Rodgers.

He extends his hand out to give Jim the coin. When Jim reaches for it, he pulls away, laughing.

JIM
C'mon, Mike.

(CONTINUED)

BOY (O.S.)

Mike, c'mon, we have a game going on here.

MIKE

(To boy)

Just a minute, keep your shorts on.

He turns back to Jim, and pushes him back onto the ground.

He then squats next to Jim.

MIKE (CONT.)

I don't like going to school on Saturdays, Jimmy. Maybe you do, dweeb, but I don't.

Jim shakes his head and begins to stand up. Mike pushes him down again.

MIKE (CONT.)

You think you can just walk away from me, Jimmy?

He stands up, and pulls Jim up with him.

BOY

Mike, we want to get back to the game.

MIKE

Yeah, yeah. Hand me my bat, will you?

The girls playing double dutch have stopped to watch. Among them find Susie, who, far away from the commotion, hadn't been noticed until now. She moves towards the action.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM- DAY

Find Eddie sitting in his arm chair, drinking and watching *The Beverly Hillbillies*.

"THE BALLAD OF JED CLAMPETT," better known as THE *BEVERLY HILLBILLIES* THEME SONG plays over A SERIES OF SHOTS:

A)

TV screen playing the show's theme-- "*Now listen to my story about a man named Jed, a poor mountaineer barely kept his family fed...*"

(CONTINUED)

B)

Eddie sitting on his chair, singing along.

C)

CU on TV screen, as Jed Clampett discovers oil on his property

D)

EDDIE

"Oil that is..." Where's my oil,
huh? Swimming pools! Movie stars!

E)

EXT. CORONA, QUEENS, NEW YORK- DAY

The theme song devolves into banjo music.

TV ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

The BEVERLY HILLBILLIES!

Taking his stick ball bat, Mike whacks Jim on the back of the head so that he falls to the ground. Once on the ground he starts to kick Jim repeatedly. The boys and girls crowd around to watch.

Susie pushes her way in.

SUSIE

Stop it, Mike, stop it!

F)

INT. PUBLIC LIBRARY BATHROOM- NIGHT

Susie pats Jim's bloody face dry with a towel. He winces.

SUSIE

Sit still.

Blood from Jim's face drips into the bathroom sink.

The music ends.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

Silence. Susie balls the towel up in her fist and begins to cry.

Unsure of what to do, Jim places an arm on Susie's shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

JIM
I'll be alright, Sue.

SUSIE
It's not that.

A beat.

SUSIE (CONT.)
My father lost his job. They're
closing the park. Freedomland. I
don't know what we're going to do.

Jim holds her in his arms, staring at his reflection in the
mirror.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM- NIGHT

The television still blares. Eddie sits in his armchair
still, laughing at a joke from the equine comedy *MR. ED*.

Jim, whose white T-shirt is covered in dried blood, comes
through the door.

EDDIE
Jimmy, come here and watch this,
it's hilarious!

Jim throws his backpack onto the floor and makes his way to
the kitchen.

JIM
No thanks.

He reaches into the cupboard for his box of cereal and a
bowl. Only a handful of flakes spill out of the nearly-empty
box. He sighs.

EDDIE
You used to love this show!

JIM
When I was eight, yeah, I loved the
show about the talking horse when I
was eight, Dad.

EDDIE
Oh....alright.

(CONTINUED)

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
And now, a word from our sponsors.

A COMMERCIAL begins to play.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM- TELEVISION SCREEN- NIGHT

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Come on down to Freedomland! Open
for its' fourth and final season,
it's fun for the whole family!-

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM- NIGHT

The commercial begins to play in the background.

EDDIE
Didn't you want to go to this
place, Jim?

Jim, in the kitchen, opens the fridge, ignoring him.

THE FRIDGE

there is absolutely nothing inside but bottles of beer.

BACK TO SCENE

He closes the refrigerator door.

JIM
(Facing the fridge)
There's nothing in the fridge but
beer.

EDDIE (O.S.)
There's gotta be something in
there, Jim.

JIM
What am I supposed to eat if you
don't buy groceries, dad?

EDDIE
I'll get groceries tomorrow, Jim.

JIM
No, dad, you won't.

A beat.

(CONTINUED)

JIM (CONT.)

(to himself)

Here's what you'll do tomorrow.
You'll go the store and spend your
whole check from the army on booze,
and then you'll come back here and
watch a show about a talking horse,
or a witch, or a jeanie, or some
happy fucking family that you wish
you could have, that you can't have
because mom left you because you're
such a deadbeat drunk has-been.
That's what you'll do tomorrow.

Jim heads for the door.

EDDIE

Where're you going, Jim?

JIM

To get the groceries that you're
not going to get.

He opens a kitchen drawer on his way out and fishes out a few dollar bills. As he does, his hands brush against the pair of forgotten Freedomland tickets. He takes them out of the drawer, rips them up, and throws them on top of the waste basket. He grabs the cash, shuts the drawer, and leaves, door slamming behind him.

Eddie slowly peels himself from his chair and turns knob on the TV set to OFF.

The apartment, for the first time, is eerily quiet.

Rack focus between Eddie and the picture of himself as a young man in his army uniform.

He begins to tear through the drawers in the kitchen, in attempts to find something.

Finally, he finds what he was looking for in the trash: the Freedomland tickets.

CUT TO:

INT. JIM'S BEDROOM- DAY

The next morning.

Jim is sleeping. A calendar over his bed reads SATURDAY.

Eddie enters the room and turns on a TRANSISTOR RADIO on Jim's bedside table to full volume.

(CONTINUED)

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Gooooood morning New York City!
It's Saturday, May 31st, and it's a
unseasonably sweltering 85
degrees...

Jim shoots up, startled, from bed, and looks at his father, skeptically, from head to toe.

Eddie is clean, neatly shaven, and dressed.

JIM
What're you doing, what time is it?

EDDIE
It's 9 am, Jim-

Jim jumps out of bed and begins to run a comb through his hair and get dressed, all while the radio plays on..

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
The Yankees took on the Kansas City Athletics last night, winning nine to one. The Mets took on the San Francisco Giants and won six to two. It's a great day for America's past time!

EDDIE
What're you doing?

JIM
I have to go into school. I've got a detention.

EDDIE
Oh. That's too bad. I had a surprise planned for you.

FIND the Freedomland tickets in Eddie's hand, hidden behind his back.

JIM
A surprise? We've gone over this, dad, the test pattern making a weird noise doesn't count as a surprise.

He continues to get dressed.

EDDIE
No, I-

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
 And say, if you don't have tickets
 to the game, it's a great day to
 head on over to the Bronx and go to
 Freedomland for opening day 1964!
 That's right, America's Biggest
 Entertainment Park is open for the
 summer-

With his shirt halfway over his head, Jim turns to look at Eddie.

Eddie pulls the tickets out from behind his back.

THE TICKETS

Are crudely taped together, the American flag on one ripped straight down the middle.

BACK TO SCENE.

Jim smiles.

JIM
 Really?

Eddie nods.

Jim beams and pulls his shirt on, but frowns when he realizes-

JIM (CONT.)
 I have to go into school.

EDDIE
 C'mon, what'd you even do, kid?

JIM
 You don't wanna know.

EDDIE
 No, I do.

JIM
 I creamed Mike Thornton in front of
 the whole class.

EDDIE
 Really?

JIM
 No. But I would have-

(CONTINUED)

EDDIE

(Clapping Jim on the back)
Hank Thornton's kid? That little
shit deserves it. You should've
finished the job!

Jim laughs.

EDDIE (CONT.)

C'mon. Uncle Sam would want you to
go. I should know. He gave me a
medal for skipping school to do
something patriotic.

Jim smiles and they head out the door, forgetting to turn
the radio off.

Stay on the radio.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

The war continues in Vietnam and at
home, as young men have started to
burn their draft cards in protest.
Activists will be marching in the
city today-

CUT TO:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET- DAY

Eddie and Jim walk down the street, past a storefront with
dozens of TELEVISIONS, playing the news in unison.

While Eddie and Jim walk by, stay on the storefront.

INSERT: ON THE TELEVISIONS

PROTESTORS crowd the streets of New York, shouting and
holding SIGNS.

It's deafeningly loud.

One YOUNG MAN brandishes a lighter from his pants pocket. An
American flag lies on the ground, covered in dirt and
footprints. A GROUP OF PROTESTERS gathers around him,
cheering, urging him to "do it!" The young man looks
hesitant as he pulls his DRAFT CARD out of the inside pocket
of his denim jacket.

He lights the draft card on fire and drops it onto the flag
below. The card and the flag burn on the ground.

CUT TO:

INT. NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC BUS- DAY

Jim and Eddie stand on a crowded bus, stuck in bumper-to-bumper traffic. The roar of the protestors has been replaced with a cacophony of hundreds of honking car horns.

OLD WOMEN, sitting in seats, fan themselves. Everyone drips with sweat in the heat.

EDDIE

Driver, what's the hold up?

BUS DRIVER

Some idiot kids are protesting the war up town, the whole city is at a stand-still, what do you want me to do about it?

Jim presses his face against the cool metal of the handbar.

Seated across from him is a WOMAN in a bright red dress drinking from a glass bottle of COCA COLA with a candy-striped straw. She gazes out the window.

Jim eyes her Coke. Noticing him, the woman snaps upright and plasters on a fake smile. She holds the bottle outright, and begins to talk as if she's in a commercial.

WOMAN

Need a lift on a hot day? A nice, refreshing, cold bottle of Coca Cola will do the trick. The cold, crisp taste of Coke will keep you going all day. And it's good for you, too! Only Coke-a-Cola can give you that refreshing new feeling! Try one today!

She takes a long swig from the bottle. Then, the smile fades, and she goes back to looking out the window.

Confused, Jim looks around to see if anyone has just noticed this commercial break in the middle of the bus. No one seems to be phased.

JIM

Dad, can I get a Coke?

EDDIE

Sure kid, let's get off this damn bus.

(CONTINUED)

Eddie pulls on the stop cable and the bus pulls over, letting the pair out.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOT DOG STAND-DAY

Eddie stands at a hot dog stand stationed outside a subway station entrance.

A sign on the stand reads COKE- 15 CENTS and PEPSI- TEN CENTS.

Eddie counts out his pennies on the counter, emptying his pockets.

He turns to Jim.

EDDIE
Is Pepsi okay?

JIM
Yeah, I guess.

Eddie pays the VENDOR and hands Jim his glass bottle of Pepsi. They turn and head for the subway entrance, Jim ahead of his father.

VENDOR
You trying to catch a train?

EDDIE
Yeah, I'm taking my kid to
Freedomland over in the Bronx.

VENDOR
The Bronx? Good luck. Tell your kid
if he wants to see "Freedomland" he
should go down to 4th Avenue and
watch the protest.

EDDIE
I'll tell my kid what to do,
alright?

He heads for the subway entrance. The hotdog vendor shrugs and lights a cigarette.

CUT TO:

INT. SUBWAY CAR- DAY

Jim and Eddie, standing again, this time on a crowded subway car.

The train slowly inches forward, lurches to a stop, than starts again, over and over again.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBWAY CAR- NIGHT

The subway car surfaces above ground to a dusky late-afternoon sky.

The car passes by a billboard for Freedomland, faded and worn by the wind, the edges of the sign peeling.

Jim's forlorn face can be seen at a window, pressed against the glass.

CUT TO:

EXT. FREEDOMLAND- NIGHT

It's dark now, fully evening, and the park is closing.

Jim runs up to the gate outside the park, past the Freedomland sign he once saw on TV, now faded into sun-stained pastels.

Eddie wheezes behind him. He runs with a limp.

Jim stops at the gate and looks in at the park in the distance.

PARK GUESTS, all white, file out of the park in droves, past a limping Eddie.

An ANNOUNCER can be heard over the park's loudspeaker system.

FREEDOMLAND ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

We hope you enjoyed your day at Freedomland! Don't forget to pick up a souvenir or two as you exit the park.

"THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER" begins to play over the loudspeaker.

(CONTINUED)

Jim fishes in his pocket and pulls out his Freedomland coin. He flips it to the side with the Freedomland logo, and holds it in front of his face, so that the logo and the matching sign can be seen.

Eddie finally catches up, joining Jim at the fence.

EDDIE
I'm sorry, kid.

Winded, he slumps onto the ground. He pulls out a FLASK from his shirt pocket and takes a swig.

Fireworks begin to go off overhead, from inside the park.

Jim sits down next to his father and watches the feet of passerby.

A FREEDOMLAND MAP slips out of someone's hand and, catching the wind, makes its way to Jim. He picks it up and stares at the map of the park, laid out to look like a map of the United States.

EDDIE (CONT.)
We'll come back.

JIM
No, we won't.

A beat.

EDDIE
Jim, let me teach you a lesson that I learned in Korea the hard way: things are rarely as good as you think they are, or were, or going to be.

he takes another swig from the flask.

Jim looks up at the fireworks. Red, white, and blue light shines on his face in bursts. The sounds of the fireworks blasting in the sky rings through the night.

FADE TO BLACK

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM-TELEVISION- DAY

1971.

A hand turns the knob of a newer-model TV, and a color-broadcast begins to play.

Blasts emanate from the screen, like the sound of fireworks in the sky.

A montage of violent images of the Vietnam war play out on the screen.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM- DAY

Jim, now 19, leans against the wall of the living room, talking into the telephone. He wears a red pinstripe McDonald's uniform. He has a wide grin plastered on his face. He laughs.

JIM

(Into the phone)

Sure. Sure, Sue, I remember. I was just a kid then, give me a break. Haha, yeah, alright.

As Jim talks, Eddie sits on his chair, which has only gotten rattier through wear. He nurses a tumbler of ambiguous liquid.

JIM (CONT.)

(Into phone)

Yeah, I gotta go to work in a minute. Sure, i'll see you after...

Eddie, remembering something, sees fit to interrupt Jim's telephone conversation.

EDDIE

Jimmy, before you get to work-

JIM

(Into phone)

Hold on a sec, Susie.

He puts his hand over the receiver.

JIM (CONT.)

Dad, i'm on the phone, alright?

(CONTINUED)

EDDIE

Well, I see that-

JIM

Alright, please respect my privacy,
alright?

EDDIE

Sure, Jim.

Jim puts the phone back to his ear.

JIM

Yeah, sorry Susie, what were you
saying?

EDDIE

I just was gonna tell you that a
letter came for you today.

JIM

A letter? I'm not expecting any-

Realizing, he drops the phone and runs over to the kitchen
table.

The phone dangles on its cord.

SUSIE(O.S.)

(on phone, muffled)

Jim? Jim? You there, Jim?

Jim rifles through a pile of trash and letters on the table,
and finds the letter.

THE LETTER

A printed envelope, addressed to Jim. There is no return
address. It is stamped with American Flag postage.

Jim turns the envelope over in his hands, then rips it open.

Inside is a form letter from the US Army, reading
"SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM-- ORDER TO REPORT FOR ARMED FORCES
PHYSICAL EXAMINATION."

BACK TO SCENE

Jim stares at the letter.

EDDIE

Who's it from, Jim? Is it from your
aunt Ethel? She hasn't sent you

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

EDDIE (cont'd)
 birthday money in about fifteen
 years, maybe she finally
 remembered. Or is she dead? I don't
 remember. Jim?

SUSIE(O.S.)
 (From phone)
 Jim, is everything okay?

CUT TO:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET- DAY

A Fourth of July parade marches down a crowded New York City street. A marching band blasts horns. Children and adults alike wave American flags.

Find Jim and Susie in the parade crowd on the sidewalk. Jim looks morose. Susie stands with her arms draped around his waist. She kisses his cheek, and whispers something in his ear.

A marcher in the parade, ROY, recognizes Jim.

ROY
 Is that Jim Rogers? I think it is.

Jim waves.

ROY (CONT.)
 You shipping out tomorrow, buddy?

JIM
 (nodding)
 I am.

ROY
 (As the parade walks by)
 Well, come back in one piece,
 alright?

JIM
 I'll try.

ROY
 Tell your girl to go on a date with
 me while you're gone. I'll treat
 you real nice, baby.

JIM
 I thought you were a homo, Roy,
 that's why they didn't draft you.

(CONTINUED)

Pan out to reveal that Roy is marching with New York Pride.

ROY
I'll do anything to avoid going to
'Nam, Jimmy. I'll suck a few dicks,
I don't mind.

JIM
Sure, Roy.

He waves him off as his group marches past.

Susie looks up at Jim and laughs. Jim cracks a smile.

SUSIE
Lighten up, Jim. It's the Fourth of
July.

He kisses her forehead.

JIM
I'll just miss you, is all. You'll
wait for me, won't you?

She rolls her eyes.

SUSIE
No, I'm going to make off with Mike
Thornton.

She slaps his stomach, playfully.

JIM
Whatever happened to him, anyway?

SUSIE
I don't know. Who cares. You just
don't come back with a Vietnamese
wife, and I'll be happy.

JIM
There's not a woman in the world
I'd want over you, Susie Carter. I
wouldn't trade you for all the rice
patties in Vietnam.

SUSIE
Gee wiz.

He kisses her as she laughs. After the kiss, he keeps his
forehead pressed to hers.

Lose them in the crowd again as the parade marches on.

CUT TO:

EXT. FLUSHING MEADOWS-CORONA PARK- NIGHT

Fireworks explode in the sky above the New York State Pavilion and the Unisphere. CHILDREN run by with sparklers.

Find Jim and Susie on a picnic blanket on the lawn of Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, amidst hundreds of other couples and families. Jim has his arm around her. It's Susie that looks pensive now.

Then, after a beat:

SUSIE

Jim, you remember my older brother,
Rocky.

JIM

Yeah, what about him?

SUSIE

Where do you think he's been?

Jim creases his brow.

JIM

I don't know, Sue, you haven't
talked about him in a long time.

SUSIE

He's in Canada, Jim.

A particularly large firework explodes in the sky with a loud crackle. The crowd oohs and ahs as Susie lets the words sink in.

JIM

Sus-

SUSIE

I called him yesterday, Jim, I
hadn't talked to him in two years,
I called collect. He's doing fine,
he says. He likes it up there a
lot. He's got a job at a lumber
yard, he says they're hiring. Good,
honest work, Jim.

JIM

That's not the life for me, Susie.
What about you, where would you be?

(CONTINUED)

SUSIE

I'd come with you.

JIM

We could never come back, you know that, Sus? Never.

SUSIE

What's so great about here, anyway? What would you be leaving behind, your drunk father? A tour in Vietnam and you'll probably end up just like him.

A long beat as the fireworks drum on.

SUSIE (CONT.)

I'm sorry.

She buries her face in his chest. He runs his fingers through her hair.

JIM

It's okay.

SUSIE

(Muffled, into his chest)

Let's go, Jim, let's run away.
Let's go to Canada, Mexico, I don't care.

He continues to stroke her hair while reaching into his pocket with his other hand. He pulls out his Freedomland coin, rubbed smooth from the years.

He flips the coin in the air.

CU on the Freedomland side of the coin as it flips in the air.

Jim catches the coin and opens his palm.

It's landed on the side with the American flag. He stares at it, then closes his palm.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUS STOP- DAY

Jim, wearing an army uniform, his hair buzzed short, stands at a bus stop with other GIs, MOS.

Susie stands next to him, holding onto his arm.

Eddie stands by his other arm, solemn.

A bus pulls up, already half full with other GIs.

Jim kisses Susie, a long, passionate kiss. He then turns to his father and brusquely shakes his hand. He grabs his bag, beside him, and boards the bus.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUS- DAY

From above, follow the bus as it drives through Queens, crossing over the Triborough bridge into the Bronx.

CUT TO:

INT. BUS- DAY

Jim, sitting on a seat by himself, puts his pack behind his head and closes his eyes.

The Bronx can be seen whizzing by past his window as he settles in, falling asleep.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUS- DAY

The bus drives quickly under the now nearly illegible billboard advertising Freedomland, the engine roaring.

VIETNAM-ESTABLISHING-DAY

The sound of the bus engine is replaced by the loud drone of helicopters, Huey's, flying through the air.

VIEW FROM THE HELICOPTER

The helicopter flies over the jungles of Vietnam. We see huts, winding dirt roads, tall trees.

CUT TO:

INT. HELICOPTER- DAY

A uniformed Jim, wearing tinted glasses to shade his eyes from the glaring Vietnamese sun, sits at a gun turret, raining bullets down below.

At the other turret, behind Jim, on the other side of the copter, sits Africa-American Private LEO BROWN. He's a year or two older than Jim with wide shoulders. A cigarette is pressed between his lips, the carton from which it came in the lapel pocket of his uniform, which is embroidered with his name and rank.

POV SHOT- JIM'S POV:

A VIETNAMESE WOMAN carrying two buckets of water walks down a dirt road.

LEO (O.S.)
She's all yours, Jim.

Jim locks his turret into position, then hesitates. He looks through the scope.

JIM'S POV- THROUGH THE SCOPE:

He aims the scope first at her head. A beat. Then, he moves down to her legs. He shoots, hitting her in square in the thigh.

She falls to the ground, her water spilling everywhere, making mud out of the dirt.

BACK TO SCENE

JIM
That's a hit.

Leo laughs a deep, throaty laugh.

LEO
Who the hell taught you how to fire a gun?

JIM
Same sons of bitches that taught you back at Basic.

LEO
You think the army taught me how to shoot? Watch this then tell me the army taught my black ass.

POV SHOT- LEO'S POV

(CONTINUED)

Further down the dirt road now, the helicopter following its meanderings through the Vietnamese countryside.

TWO VIETNAMESE MEN argue by the bank of a river. One holds the reigns of a cow that stands sedately beside him.

Gunfire from the turret. He hits the first man, and then the man with the cow.

The second man falls into the river.

BACK TO SCENE

JIM

You forgot the cow.

LEO

Let him be, he didn't do nothing wrong.

Jim watches as the corpse of the man trying to sell his cow floats down the river.

JIM

Alright, I'll bite, who taught you how to shoot rice-patty farmers out of helicopters so good?

Leo spits out the butt of his cigarette and pulls another from his pocket. He holds it out behind him, and Jim, pulling a Zippo lighter out of his lapel pocket, lights it for him.

LEO

My daddy did. Every good daddy should teach their son how to shoot. At least if you live in the kind of neighborhood that I lived in.

JIM

And what kind of neighborhood might that be, Brownie?

LEO

Are you pulling my leg, Corona-bitch-ass? Jefferson Mississippi, motherfucker. I must have said it to you six times, but you're too motherfucking busy reading letters from your little sweetheart every night to listen. Jesus. Loverboy.

(CONTINUED)

JIM

(Laughing)

Sorry I've got a girl waiting for me back home, Brownie. How many letters have you gotten?

LEO

Yeah shit, I've got plenty of girls back home. And I only care to hear from one woman in my life, and that's my mama. I don't need no love letters. Now tell me, what your daddy was off doing instead of teaching you how to aim at a Gook?

Jim hesitates.

JIM

I had no reason to learn to use a gun, Brownie; there was no one to shoot at.

He fires from his turret.

JIM (CONT.)

You know, it seems like a lot of bullshit when the heads on TV say it, but it really did used to be a better place, America was. There was no crime, you sit on your front porch with a Coke, you watch the Cameros drive past, and you put your arm around your best girl-

LEO

And then you sing the National fucking Anthem.

Leo fires a round.

LEO (CONT.)

You been living your life with some rosy-ass-tinted glasses, Jimmy. Let me tell you how it was for me. You walk six miles to go to the colored school that barely even has a roof to keep your nappy-ass hair dry from the rain.

He continues to pump the trigger of his turret while he speaks.

(CONTINUED)

LEO (CONT.)

Your daddy makes a few dollars a month working on some white man's farm picking cotton. Slavery's over? I think that's some slavery shit right there. Then you move your black ass up north to Harlem to make something of your life, and Uncle Sam drafts you right up, so that you can repay him for all the good times in Viet-fucking-nam, where you share a tent with some white boy named Jimmy Rogers who tells you how much God loves America. That's my life, Jimmy. There ain't no Coca Cola and Cameros for me.

Jim fires at an unseen target below. He misses.

As the helicopter loops around, Leo aims at the same target.

LEO (CONT.)

That's a hit. What's the score, Curly Sue?

The pilot of the helicopter, CURLY, turns around. He's earned his name from a mess of curly hair matted under his helmet.

CURLY

I'm done tallying your scores, gentlemen. The Curly O'Henry tour of Vietnam comes to its end tomorrow afternoon at O'thirteen-hundred hours, taking with it all scorecards of Gooks hit and all California reefer.

JIM

Screw you, Curls.

CURLY

My regrets. But you'll be happy to know that my flight back to the Golden State takes me on a brief interlude to The Big Apple. Having seen photographs of your girlfriend, Jimmy, I will be making a stop in scenic Corona, which you have spoken so fondly about.

Jim reaches over and shoves the pilot on the arm. The helicopter briefly dips, skimming the tops of the trees.

(CONTINUED)

Leo's cigarette falls from his mouth.

Curly laughs wildly, straightening the copter, enjoying the wild whirring of the rudders in their frantic descent.

LEO

What a crazy motherfucking asshole.

Pan back behind the helicopter to see the destruction below. Leo and Jim have together decimated an entire Vietnamese village.

The helicopter flies on.

CURLY

Alright boys, that's it. Keep your arms, legs and feet inside the vehicle at all times, and please, no flash photography; we're going home.

Leo and Jim push their turrets away.

Without being asked, Jim pulls out his Zippo as Leo reaches back another cigarette to be lit.

LEO

I'm feeling a trip to Dan Nang tonight, boys. What do you say?

CURLY

I wouldn't mind catching one last glimpse of the supple curve of the backside of a Vietnamese courtesan. But I believe this black fellow here owes me a few drinks.

LEO

Bullshit, I paid for your ass two nights in a row last week.

JIM

Alright gentlemen, let's settle this the old fashioned way.

He pulls out his Freedomland coin from his pocket.

JIM (CONT.)

Tails is Curly, heads is Mr. Leo Brown.

(CONTINUED)

LEO
What about you, Jim?

He flashes a smile and flips the coin.

As the coin flips in the air, the helicopter takes a hit from a mortar below.

Curly is immediately consumed in the flames of the blast, which rocks through the front of the chopper.

The copter dips, this time wildly, plummeting towards the ground.

Jim is tossed from the side of the copter as it nears the ground.

As he falls through the air, his Freedomland coin free falls with him.

RACK FOCUS from Jim to the flaming forest behind him.

Back to Jim. As he falls, he reaches for the coin.

He catches it, Freedomland side up.

CUT TO:

EXT. VIETNAMESE JUNGLE- DAY

Dusk.

Jim lies unconscious from the fall, underneath a towering tree. Sweat trickles down his cheeks, and mosquitoes buzz around him.

Music begins to play softly somewhere in the distance.

Jim slowly opens his eyes and rubs his head. There's a thick, bloody gash on his temple, and his hand comes back wet with it. He rubs the blood on his pants leg and stands up slowly.

Disoriented and dizzy, he stumbles forward, falling onto his stomach. Lying on the ground, he hears the faint music. It's familiar to him, but he can't quite make it out.

He stands back up, more sure on his feet now, and begins to walk through the jungle, following the faint hum in the distance.

After a minute he's tired, and leans against a tree to rest. He realizes he's missing something, and begins to root through his pockets, frantically.

(CONTINUED)

It's gone. The one memento from a childhood he never had, his Freedomland coin, is gone.

Pale and panicking, he looks up, and notices a YOUNG BOY among the trees. The boy is not Vietnamese; he's white, and dressed in navy blue pleated shorts and a pristine white polo shirt. He holds out his palm, revealing Jim's Freedomland coin. He closes his hand and motions for Jim to follow him.

BOY
Come on! Follow me!

The boy runs deeper into the jungle. Jim, puzzled, runs after him.

JIM
(Shouting)
Hey kid! What're you doing out here?

The boy is far ahead of him, and Jim has lost him among the trees.

JIM (CONT.)
This isn't funny, kid. Where are your parents? How did you get here?

As he runs further after the boy, the music grows louder and louder, until Jim can recognize it as the FREEDOMLAND THEME.

He catches sight of the boy, running into a clearing. Jim races after him, brushing past trees and thick vines into the clearing.

The boy stands at the entrance to the clearing, which is still shrouded by a wall of moss and vines. Up close, Jim recognizes the boy as BILLY from the Travel Time television program of his youth.

BILLY
C'mon, we're gonna be late!

JIM
For what, what's going on?

He grabs Billy by the collar, trying to hold him still.

JIM (CONT.)
Is this some kind of joke? Did Curly put you up to this? Or Leo Brown?

Billy struggles against Jim's grip, trying to break free.

(CONTINUED)

BILLY

Gee whiz, Jimmy! Let go!

JIM

How do you know my name?

Finally, Billy pushes against Jim's thigh and breaks free, knocking Jim to the ground. Billy runs through the moss and vines into the clearing. Jim stands up and runs after him, shoving away the moss and the vines.

Pushing away the wall of greenery reveals...

Main Street USA, Freedomland.

Billy stands proudly by the Freedomland sign, covered partially by moss.

The Freedomland theme music blares as it finishes, and then ends.

Billy runs up to Jim and opens his palm, revealing the coin. Jim reaches for it, but before he can snatch it Billy runs away, out of sight.

JIM

Hey, come back!

Jim rubs his eyes in disbelief. When he opens them, Freedomland is still there. But his vision begins to blur, and his eyes, heavy, are forced shut.

CUT TO:

INT. ARMY INFIRMARY- NIGHT

The infirmary is nothing but a tent, with dozens of empty white bed is neat rows.

Only one of the beds is occupied.

Jim sits upright in bed, gasping, breathing heavily, suddenly awake, as if from a horrible nightmare.

His head is wrapped in bloody bandages.

He looks around at the emty beds around him, panting.

CUT TO:

INT. ARMY INFIRMARY- DAY

Jim sits up in bed, his head propped against a stack of pillows.

A NURSE winds the bandages off his head, revealing a thick gash, scabbed over.

Leo stands at the foot of the bed, watching. Jim looks up at him.

JIM

How long was I out for?

Leo opens his mouth to answer, but before he can speak the nurse turns around and gives him a look.

LEO

Uhm- not...not for long, Jim.

With the bandages now off, he rubs his scalp.

The nurse walks away to discard the bloody bandages, leaving Jim and Leo alone.

JIM

What about Curly, Leo?

Leo shakes his head. Jim leans back on the pillows, staring at the ceiling of weather-worn olive green tent.

JIM (CONT.)

Leo, I saw something, in the jungle, after we crashed. There was a kid, not a gook but a white, American little kid, he was wearing clothes I would have worn when I was a kid if my dad had any money, and I chased him into the jungle and it was there, Leo-

LEO

What was there?

JIM

Freedomland. Do you remember seeing the commercials as a kid? It was this grand theme park and I always wanted to go-

LEO

Yeah, I remember it, Jim. They used to show that TV show about it all

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LEO (cont'd)

the time, and my mama would turn it off because she said no colored folks were allowed. But they tore that place down years ago, Jim-

JIM

I know, I know they did, but it was there, in the jungle, I saw it, and the kid, he took my coin-

Leo sits down on the bed next to Jim.

LEO

I'd slap you sane right now, but your head has already taken enough of a hit, and that's clear by the way you're talking. Jim, I'm the one who found you. You were in an open field, there was nothing there. You were out cold.

A decorated LIEUTENANT enters the infirmary, shaking hands with an army DOCTER on his way in.

Leo looks toward the entryway.

LEO

(Whispering)

Stop talking crazy shit.

The lieutenant approaches Jim's bed. Leo stands up to greet him.

LEO

Lieutenant.

LIEUTENANT

Private Brown, good to see you. Would you mind giving Private Rogers and I a minute?

Leo looks at Jim.

LEO

Sure.

He leaves.

LIEUTENANT

Jimmy, it's good to see you awake. You were out for awhile there.

(CONTINUED)

He picks up the clipboard with Jim's medical history and inspects it.

THE CLIPBOARD

Sheets of paper filled with typed text, medical terminology. The only word that holds focus is 'CONCUSSION'.

BACK TO SCENE

JIM

No one will tell me how long.

LIEUTENANT

(Ignoring him)

Look, Jim, we think it's best if you go home and rest for awhile. Next fall we'll put you in for another tour.

Jim leans forward in the bed.

JIM

I've had plenty of rest. I don't want to go home and see my girl and get cozy and comfortable and then have to come back here again. I want to finish my tour, do my duty, and, with all due respect, get the fuck out of this God-foresaken place.

LIEUTENANT

I understand, Rogers. Look-

A beat.

LIEUTENANT (CONT.)

Look, i'll see what I can do. You were in a really bad accident. If I can get you with a company and if you can still shoot straight- or as straight as you could before, anyway- you can sit in a chopper and be a gunner and finish out. Alright?

Jim nods.

LIEUTENANT (CONT.)

The gooks won't care if you're a bit sick in the head. In fact, it will probably make it easier for you.

(CONTINUED)

JIM
To do what?

Thinking the answer is obvious, the lieutenant laughs.

LIEUTENANT
To kill them, Jimmy.

He pats Jim on the shoulder as he walks away.

CUT TO:

EXT. ARMY BASE CAMP- DAY

Jim sits at the edge of camp, holding a rifle.

Several empty bottles of Jack Daniels are lined up in a row on the ruins of what used to be some sort of structure.

Firing, he hits two of the bottles, shattering them into hundreds of pieces. He reloads, fires again, and misses. He reloads again, and looks through the sites of the rifle.

A SOLDIER wearing a t-shirt stained with sweat comes up from behind.

SOLDIER
You want to angle your arms a little lower.

Caught off guard, Jim whips around.

The soldier looks surprisingly like a younger version of his father, Eddie. Jim stares at him, concerned.

SOLDIER (CONT.)
I didn't mean to scare you. Just, try angling your elbows a little lower.

Jim does as he's told, and fires. He hits both of the remaining bottles.

Jim stares at his handy work.

JIM
Hey, thanks. You look familiar, what did you say your name was?

No response. Jim turns around to find the soldier has left.

CUT TO:

EXT. HELICOPTER PAD- DAY

A helicopter sits on a makeshift landing pad, rudders whirring at full speed.

Jim and Leo approach, dressed in uniform, with heavy packs slung on their backs.

A SOLDIER, whose back is to Jim and Leo, talks to the Lieutenant, shouting over the rudder. All Jim can see of him is his long blond hair, that sticks out of the back of his helmet.

SOLDIER

I know what the weather report is,
but if we waited for it to stop
raining in this shithole we'd never
get anything done!

LIEUTENANT

It's your call, but I don't want
another crash.

SOLDIER

C'mon, it's me. I don't mean to
insult the dead, but you know I'm a
better pilot than O'Henry was,
alright?

The soldier turns around to face Jim and Leo as they come near. It's Mike Thornton.

LIEUTENANT

Boys, I want you to meet your new
pilot, Warrant Officer Mike
Thornton.

Leo shakes Mike's hand.

LEO

Leo Brown.

Mike extends his hand to Jim. After a beat, he recognizes him.

MIKE

Jimmy Rogers, is that you?

Instead of shaking his hand, he musses his hair. Jim winces.

LIEUTENANT

You know each other?

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

Yeah, old friends in grade school
back in Corona.

JIM

(Under his breath)
I wouldn't say that.

LIEUTENANT

Thornton here just got back from
R&R in Australia.

MIKE

Finest pieces of ass in the world,
ey mate?

He laughs, and jumps in the cockpit, strapping on his
helmet.

LIEUTENANT

(Patting Jim on the shoulder)
You feeling up to this, Rogers? You
don't look so good.

A beat.

Jim slings his pack into helicopter next to his turret.

JIM

Yeah, i'm fine.

He climbs into the helicopter and straps on his loose
helmet.

LIEUTENANT

Brown, go back to base and inform
the Corporal that you'll be taking
off.

Leo nods and runs off.

LIEUTENANT (CONT.)

I'm going into Da Nang for
supplies, so I'll see you boys when
you get back.

Jim nods.

LIEUTENANT (CONT.)

You will be back, Jim.

He walks away.

(CONTINUED)

Jim gets to work filling the turret's clip with rounds of ammunition.

He finishes and pushes the turret's clip back into place. He looks up to find the soldier from before entering the helicopter.

JIM

You're on this detail? I thought this was a three man mission.

The soldier nods.

Jim takes out his shotgun and begins to clean it.

JIM (CONT.)

You know, I never got your name the other day.

Leo comes back from his errand and boards the helicopter.

LEO

We're all set. Were you talking to someone?

Jim looks back to find the soldier gone.

JIM

Uhm... no, I wasn't. Just myself.

CUT TO:

EXT. VIETNAMESE JUNGLE- DAY

All is still, with only the hum of mosquitoes to fill in the silence.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

A) Tall muscular trees with thick vines hanging from them. All is still.

B) Giant ferns flopped over from their own weight.

C) Tall blades of grass, illuminated by rays of sun streaming through the trees at midday.

D) A recently abandoned straw hut; a pot still steams over a dying fire out front.

BACK TO SCENE

(CONTINUED)

Abruptly, find Mike, Leo, and Jim clustered around a VIETNAMESE FAMILY, an older man, a younger woman, and two small children, who have been forced to huddle around a tree.

Mike pulls a large blade from a holster on his hip. He holds the tip of the blade to the man's ear. The man pleads in Vietnamese.

MIKE

Your name Charlie, huh?

JIM

Mike, c'mon, he doesn't understand you, it obviously wasn't him, this man is older than my grandfather.

MIKE

See, they trick you that way, Jim, this gook's probably no older than your father.

He turns to the man, who is crying now.

MIKE (CONT.)

Hey, listen, I was in my Huey and I heard shots being fired from somewhere around here. I want you to tell me where those shots came from, you hear me? WHERE DID THE SHOTS COME FROM?

He presses the knife softly into the man's skin so that blood trickles down his earlobe to his neck.

JIM

Mike. Let's go.

MIKE

It's just an ear. An ear for your life, my life? I think your life is worth at least one gook's ear, Jimmy.

LEO

You ignorant shithead, the gooks think that if their body isn't whole when they die that they won't go to heaven with their Budha god or whatever the fuck they believe. Let them go.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE
(turning to Leo)
Alright.

HE WIPES THE BLOOD OFF OF THE BLADE AND POCKETS THE KNIFE.

CUT TO:

EXT. STRAW HUT- DAY

Mike, Jim, and Leo watch as the Vietnamese family's home burns.

The woman shrieks. The children cry.

Mike hands Jim back his Zippo and pats him on the back.

MIKE
Thanks, Jimmy. I gotta get me one
of these.

He heads back to the Huey.

Leo and Jim look at each other.

LEO
You know this crazy motherfucker?

JIM
Oh yeah, we go way back.

Jim holds out his Zippo, and Leo lights a cigarette.

They turn and walk back to the helicopter.

CUT TO:

INT. HELICOPTER- NIGHT

A violent thunderstorm beats down on the helicopter as Mike continues to pilot it through the air. Leo and Jim are soaked through.

LEO
(Shouting to be heard)
I think you should put her down,
Thornton.

MIKE
Oh ye of little faith! I've flown
in worse weather, I've piloted
while tripping out of my mind man,
I was in a different dimension.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MIKE (cont'd)

I'll keep us in the air, you just
keep an eye out for Charlie.

Jim, bracing himself against the wind and rain with both arms, peers out the side of the Huey. The rain is so thick that he can't see a foot in front of him.

JIM

Yeah, you know what, I don't think
Charlie's gonna be too much of a
problem right now, Mikey. I think
we can make camp for the night.

The Huey rocks to the side, and Mike struggles to yank it upright.

LEO

Not this shit again. Put her down,
Thornton! I already lost one pilot
on this tour, and you're a crazy
motherfucker but I don't want to
lose another Huey.

MIKE

You want me to take her down?

LEO

Yes!

MIKE

You really want me to take her
down?

LEO

Yes, damn it!

MIKE

You got it, buddy.

Mike noses the Huey down. The rain, falling harder now, smacks against the windows and whips its way through the open turret doors. It's white out conditions. Thunder booms and lightening cracks, brightening up the night sky.

As the lightening flashes, a shadow is cast that lands across Jim's face. He reaches for his shotgun, dripping with rain, cocks it, and whips around to find the mysterious soldier.

JIM

How did you get here? You working
for Charlie?

(CONTINUED)

A beat.

JIM (CONT.)
Are you VC? WHO ARE YOU?

LEO
Jimmy, who the fuck are you talking to?

SOLDIER
Jimmy, it's me.

JIM
I don't know who you are.

MIKE
Leo, who's Jimmy talking to back there? Is he tripping? Did you give him something?

LEO
I didn't give him anything, motherfucker hit his head the last time an idiot thought it was a good idea to fuck around with a helicopter.

MIKE
I'm putting her down, we're almost at ground level.

JIM
Tell me who you are!

Jim lunges forward to wrestle the soldier to the ground but, finding nothing there, grabs at the air and nearly falls out of the helicopter. Leo grabs him by his boots and yanks him back to his turret.

CUT TO:

INT. HELICOPTER- DAY

Jim wakes up in the parked helicopter, morning sun beating in his eyes. He's alone.

He rubs the sleep out of his eyes. When he moves his fists away, the soldier stands there.

SOLDIER
You doing okay, Jimmy? You had a rough night.

Jim ignores him, gets up, and exits the helicopter.

(CONTINUED)

CUT TO:

EXT. VIETNAMESE JUNGLE- DAY

The helicopter has been landed in a clearing amid a dizzying clutter of trees.

Jim hangs back, peering out of the Huey at Leo and Mike.

Leo and Mike pore over crumpled, rain damaged MAPS of the area. Mike smokes a joint.

LEO
You're telling me that you have no
idea where we are?

MIKE
Relax, man.

LEO
Man, don't you tell me to relax
while you smoke your reefer.

Mike holds out the smoking joint.

MIKE
You want a hit?

LEO
No, I don't want a hit, I want to
get the fuck out of here, I feel
exposed or some shit, I don't know.
What about the radio? Maybe we can
call in for support.

Mike tosses him a mess of metal, coils, and springs that
used to be a TWO-WAY RADIO.

LEO (CONT.)
Shit.

MIKE
I don't know what to tell you man,
there's no way the Huey's gonna
lift out of here. I say we
just...start walking.

LEO
Oh, why didn't I think of that?!
Let's just walk right out of the
fucking jungle! Let's just stroll
right on out of here!

CUT TO:

EXT. DEEPER IN THE VIETNAMESE JUNGLE- DAY

Mike and Leo trudge through the Vietnamese jungle, Jim trailing behind them. They all wear heavy packs. They all are drenched in sweat.

Mike, shirtless, a cigarette in his mouth, hacks through the thick brush with a machete. Every time he passes a large tree he pulls back the machete and strikes a large notch into the base, marking their path.

MIKE

Isn't there something in this that just-

He pulls back the machete and strikes a large gash into an ancient tree.

MIKE(CONT.)

Makes you feel alive?

Leo shakes his head.

LEO

Jimmy might have busted his head loose, but you're the crazy motherfucker of this company.

Leo turns to Jim.

LEO (CONT.)

You alright, Rodgers?

Jim looks over his shoulder. Behind them, dozens of torn vines and ripped plants and scarred ancient trees lie in their wake.

And in the distance, the soldier, following behind.

Jim straightens, looks forward.

JIM

Yeah... Yeah, thanks Leo, I'm fine.

They continue on.

CUT TO:

EXT. EVEN DEEPER INTO THE VIETNAMESE JUNGLE-DAY

Later. Dusk now.

Mike and company come slicing through a thick wall of vine and brush. By now, Mike's bare chest has been cut raw by thorns and sharp leaves. His long blond hair is matted to his neck.

MIKE

Aw, c'mon man, you gotta be kidding me.

LEO

What?

A SERIES OF SHOTS reveals dozens of unique trees with Mike's machete gashes in the field ahead.

MIKE

This isn't possible, we've been walking all fucking day!

Jim, exhausted and unwell, leans against a marked tree trunk and reaches for his canteen from his pack. He holds it above his lips and shakes out the few last drops. Parched, he leans his head back against the tree.

The snap of a twig behind him causes him to turn around.

It's the soldier. He holds out a full canteen. Jim hesitantly takes it and chugs down large gulps, panting, water dripping down his neck.

LEO

We gotta find something to do before dark or we're sitting ducks, man.

Defeated, Mike lights another joint and sits on the dirt floor. Leo sits next to him.

MIKE

You know what, Leonard? I don't even think they have ducks out here. What kind of godless, shit-stained place has no ducks? NO FUCKING DUCKS.

He stabs his joint out in the dirt and throws the butt. He springs to his feet and beats his fist on a tree, continuing to babble.

(CONTINUED)

LEO
Man, what the hell are you talking
about?

MIKE
No fucking ducks. A whole lot of
gooks but not a single duck.

Jim, full of water, stumbles forward and joins Leo on the
ground.

Leo notices Jim's dripping face and the still sloshing
canteen.

LEO
I thought you were out.

Jim holds out the canteen. Leo takes it and warily holds it
to his lips. When he tastes the cool, fresh water, he
drinks.

Mike grumbles, Leo drinks, and Jim stares ahead into the
forest.

In the distance, he sees a shape moving among the trees.

He springs to his feet.

LEO (CONT.)
What is it?

Jim puts his hand on his Colt pistol and moves towards the
shape.

LEO (CONT.)
Jim?

Jim ignores him. He pulls back into his pack for his rifle
and looks through the scope.

JIM'S POV- THROUGH THE SCOPE:

Trees, trees, trees, and nothing but trees.

Then, the shape.

Jim follows it with the scope. It's the boy. The little
white boy with his coin.

BACK TO SCENE

Jim breaks off in a sprint towards the boy.

(CONTINUED)

JIM
STOP! HEY! HEY!

Mike and Leo look at each other, then take off in a sprint after Jim.

MIKE
(after Jim)
If it's a gook Jimmy, just shoot it!

JIM
(yelling backwards)
It's not a gook.

After running a long distance with the packs, Mike and Leo stop to catch their breath.

Jim keeps running.

He looks back to see his fellow soldiers still in the distance. He keeps going.

CUT TO:

EXT. VIETNAMESE JUNGLE- NIGHT

Abject darkness and the sounds of a jungle at night.

Then, the sound of a match being struck. It bursts to life, illuminating Mike's scratched, filthy face. He lights a cigarette pressed between his lips.

MIKE
You find it yet?

A rustling is heard beneath him. Then, the dim light of a nearly-dead electric lantern. It illuminates Leo's face as he stands up.

LEO
Let's go.

They walk on.

MIKE
We should make camp.

LEO
We're finding Jim.

They walk on. Mike has tied the machete to his pack, and now holds an INGRAM MAC-10, a compact submachine gun.

(CONTINUED)

Frustrated, he fires of a round at the darkness surrounding him.

MIKE

I don't want to die for Jimmy
Rogers!

LEO

STOP! YOU CRAZY MOTHERFUCKER, PUT
THE GUN DOWN!

In the silence following the blasts, Leo and Mike can hear, faintly, The Star Spangled Banner.

LEO (CONT.)

Alright, never mind, keep the gun
up.

They walk towards the sound.

They reach a thicket of thick vines. Leo pulls the machete from Mike's pack and cuts through. Mike keeps his Ingram ready to fire.

What they find on the other side, at a short distance, are bright lights, a flapping American flag, the Star Spangled Banner blaring, amusement park rides running, and Jim, on the paved Main Street USA, with the soldier beside him, beaming.

Mike lowers the Ingram.

They walk towards Jim.

LEO

(to himself)
What the hell-

MIKE

I know this place-

JIM

Boys...welcome to Freedomland!

A beat.

MIKE

(to Leo)
I must still be stoned.

LEO

If you see what I see, we're all
stoned. And that's some strong,
strong grass.

(CONTINUED)

A cool breeze blows down Main Street USA, ruffling Jim's hair. He puts his hand on the soldier's shoulder.

JIM
Mikey, Leo, this is Eddie, PFC, he
was separated from his company.

Eddie nods.

JIM (CONT.)
Let's go in.

Jim starts down Main Street.

MIKE
Jimmy, Leo and I are gonna hang
back for awhile. You take ...Eddie
and...have fun.

JIM
Alright, Mike.

He and Eddie start down Main Street together.

EXT. "FREEDOMLAND"- DAY

The next morning.

Leo and Mike sleep outside the entrance to Freedomland. Mike hugs his Ingram like a pillow.

An over-saturated voice rings out from nowhere.

ANNOUNCER (O.S)
Marlboro Cigarettes proudly
presents...FREEDOMLAND!

Jim and Eddie, sodas and snacks in hand, walk under a sign that reads THE OLD SOUTHWEST.

They walk past TEPEES, parked STAGECOACHES, and a Wild West town, complete with a SALOON.

Eddie stops to pull out a MARLBORO CIGARETTE. Jim pulls out his Zippo and lights it for him.

JIM
You know, I always dreamt of this
place as a kid-

EDDIE
I know.

Jim takes a long sip from his soda.

(CONTINUED)

JIM
I still don't know who you are.

EDDIE
Sure you do.

A beat.

ANNOUNCER (O.S)
Watch out! You're in Indian
country!

Suddenly, an ARROW whizzes by Jim's head, causing him to drop his soda onto the ground. The arrow lodges itself in the side of the saloon.

Jim pulls out his Colt pistol, and Eddie follows suit.

ANNOUNCER (O.S)(CONT.)
It's a good old fashioned
shoot-out! But watch out, kids--
this time, the guns are real!

Jim runs for cover behind the stage coach, while Eddie runs into the saloon.

JIM
(to himself)
Well, that's familiar.

Jim peers out from behind the stagecoach, aiming his pistol.

A BAND OF NATIVE AMERICANS, dressed in stereotypical "Indian" garb, such as feathers, war paint, loincloth, and headdress, stand on the dirt road of "The Old West."

To further prove that this is "the Old West," a tumbleweed rolls by.

"The Good, The Bad and the Ugly," the theme from 1966's *The Good, The Bad and the Ugly* begins to play.

One pulls back his arm, aiming his bow and arrow at Jim.

Just as he is about to let the arrow fly, he is shot from above.

Find Eddie on a balcony atop the saloon with a double-barreled shotgun.

The Indian soldier falls to the ground.

Jim looks up at Eddie.

(CONTINUED)

Eddie smiles, and blows on the smoking double-barrel.

ANNOUNCER (O.S)
Shots fired! It's time for our
hero, Jim, to protect the American
west!

The shoot-out begins! Jim springs from his hiding place behind the stagecoach to gun down an Indian soldier wielding a tomahawk that, screaming, lunges at Jim, only to fall, dead, at his feet.

Eddie runs down from the saloon in time to beat a young Indian boy bloody with the butt of his rifle.

Then, a cavalry of more Indians, riding bareback on palomino stallions, thunders in, wielding their own rifles.

The leader, bare-chested with leather chaps, bright red and yellow war-paint streaked on his face, and a bright white feather sticking out from the topknot on his head, fronts the pack.

He pulls up on the reigns of his majestic palomino and stops short before Jim and Eddie. Jim now wears the blood of a fallen Indian painted on his face.

INDIAN LEADER
You must leave our sacred grounds.
This our land. You have no right.

The cavalry trot their horses so that they surround Jim and Eddie on all sides. Jim keeps his finger on the trigger of his pistol; Eddie hugs his rifle close.

INDIAN LEADER (CONT.)
Leave now, and we stop fight. Stay,
we kill you.

ANNOUNCER (O.S)
Oh no! What's in store for our
heroes? Will they fall to the
mighty hand of the Natives? Or will
they be how the West was won? We'll
find out-- but first, a message
from our sponsors--

INSERT: COCA COLA COMMERCIAL

ANNOUNCER (O.S)(CONT.)
Are you hot sitting on the streets
of Saigon?

CUT TO:

EXT. SAIGON STREET- DAY

The woman in the red dress who sold Jim on Coke before now sits on a GI's lap in front of a dilapidated cafe in Saigon. A little VIETNAMESE BOY dressed in rags runs out with a tray and hands them two BOTTLES OF COKE.

The woman and the GI clink bottles. The woman plasters on a fake smile and stares into the camera.

WOMAN

Try Coke!

The woman and the GI smile at each other and knock back their respective Cokes. The little Vietnamese boy looks on in envy.

ANNOUNCER (O.S)

Dried out in Da Nang?

CUT TO:

EXT. DA NANG VILLAGE- DAY

The late Curly uses a flamethrower to clear a swath of village.

He turns to face the camera, holding a Coke with one hand while he controls his flamethrower with the other. Sweat drips down his face from the flames.

CURLY

Try Coke!

He drinks.

CUT TO:

EXT. VIETNAMESE JUNGLE- DAY

Mike stands with his knife pressed to the ear of an ELDERLY VIETNAMESE MAN, much like before.

ANNOUNCER (O.S)

Caught up with Charlie?

Somehow, Mike now has a Coke as he stands next to the victim, who now has a bloody stump instead of an ear.

MIKE

Try Coke!

(CONTINUED)

ANNOUNCER (O.S)
Try a refreshing Coca Cola today!

BACK TO SCENE:

Jim and Eddie are still surrounded.

JIM
Dad, can I get a Coke?

EDDIE
Sure kid, let's get out of here.

A lightening speed, Jim pulls a COLT COMMANDO submachine gun from his pack. Eddie cocks his shotgun.

The shootout begins. The Indian's slow, outmoded shotguns are no match against Jim's submachine gun, and he mows them down easily, splattering the palominos with blood.

The palominos gallop off, leaving their former masters in the dust.

ANNOUNCER (O.S)
Wow, kids! And that's how the
cowboys took the Old West! Make
sure to go to the soft drink saloon
for a nice, refreshing Coca Cola on
your way out!

Jim and Eddie head for the saloon.

For a split-second, one frame flashes of the reality of the event: of dead Vietnamese bleeding out onto the mossy jungle floor. But apart from that flash, we are resolutely in THE OLD SOUTHWEST.

CUT TO:

INT. SALOON- DAY

Jim and Eddie sit at the bar in the saloon, drinking Coke from glass bottles.

They clink them together.

JIM
Cheers.

EDDIE
Cheers.

They drink.

(CONTINUED)

JIM

A bar without booze, must be your worst nightmare.

He laughs. He then looks over at Eddie; he's not laughing. He's stone-faced, stoic.

EDDIE

Before Korea, I never drank. On my wedding day I had one glass of wine, not even. I wouldn't even drink the blood of Christ in church-- I hated the taste.

He takes a long sip of Coke. Jim stares at him.

EDDIE (CONT.)

War changes you, Jim.

Jim shakes his head.

JIM

I just want to go home, to Susie. Start a family. Get a real job. I just want to forget about all of this and start over. Put it behind me. I don't want to hang onto this.

EDDIE

What do you think the alcohol was for? To remember? Nah. Remembering is easy. When I was returning from Korea I had a beautiful wife and a young son I adored to come home to. I wanted nothing more than to just go back to the way things were. But I couldn't forget the things I had seen, the things I had done. Even while I was doing them I said to myself, don't think about this, just do it, do it without thinking, then move on, keep moving forward until you're in your bed in Corona with Sandy. Keep moving until you're in the park with your son playing ball. But once I got home I kept the same attitude. Just keep moving until the next drink. Then everything will be okay.

A beat.

(CONTINUED)

EDDIE (CONT.)

I moved right on past your mother.

Jim opens his mouth to say something, but is interrupted by a beautiful NATIVE AMERICAN GIRL, about Jim's age, who enters the saloon. She wears a short leather dress and a feathered headband, with beads woven through her hair. She holds out a blood-stained white feather in her hands.

NATIVE AMERICAN GIRL

Who killed my father, the Chief?

Eddie smirks at Jim and takes a long swig of his Coke, finishing it.

EDDIE

I'm gonna go get another one of these.

He walks behind the bar to find one, leaving Jim alone with the girl.

Jim avoids eye contact with her, staring at the floor.

JIM

I'm sorry...I did.

She puts a finger to his lips, silencing him.

NATIVE AMERICAN GIRL

In my tribe, it is tradition that if a man can kill the Chief, he becomes the Chief, and weds the Chief's daughter. This is me.

JIM

I-

She silences him again, this time with a kiss.

She presents him with the feather, placing it in the brim of his helmet.

JIM (CONT.)

I have a girlfriend. Back home.
She- she's very-

The girl straddles him, presses her lips to his, and the two kiss passionately.

CUT TO:

EXT. "FREEDOMLAND"- DAY

Mike and Leo sit by the entrance to Freedomland.

Mike balances a joint between his lips, smoking hands-free, and holds his Ingram at the ready.

Leo fiddles with a broken TWO-WAY RADIO from his pack, trying to get it to work.

LEO

Private Leonard Brown to Da Nang
Air Base...Private Leonard Brown to
Da Nang Air Base...

MIKE

(Through clenched teeth
holding the joint)
Would you shut the fuck up already,
Leonard, you're really grinding my
gears with that thing.

To spite him, Leo continues to tinker with the radio.

LEO

Oh yeah? How the hell else do you
expect to get home?

Mike pulls the joint from his lips and lets out a puff of smoke.

MIKE

I don't. We're all gonna die out
here. You are, I am, Jimmy is.
Neither of us are getting back
home.

Leo glares at him, then speaks into the radio again.

LEO

Private Leonard Brown to Da Nang
Air Base...Private Leonard Brown to
Da Nang Air Base, do you copy?

MIKE

When I was 16 I tried to kill
myself.

CUT TO:

INT. MIKE'S ROOM- DAY

1968.

A teenaged Mike lies on his bed, staring at the ceiling. The sun is bright, but his dark blinds block out most of the daylight.

We look down at him from the ceiling.

MIKE (O.S.) (CONT.)

I dropped out of school, holed myself up in my room, smoked a lot of reefer. I was supposed to take over my dad's car dealership, but I never wanted that. I was always the bully on school, always beating on kids because I felt so shitty about myself. The doctor prescribed me Valium and I took a bunch with whiskey from my father's liquor cabinet and I almost died.

CUT TO:

EXT. "FREEDOMLAND" - DAY

LEO

That's really fucking cheery, Thornton, that's what I really needed to hear right now. Let's keep it light, shit.

Mike ignores him and continues.

CUT TO:

INT. BELLEVUE HOSPITAL- DAY

1968.

Mike is rushed into Intensive Care.

DOCTORS and NURSES work to pump the pills out of Mike's stomach.

CUT TO:

EXT. CORONA STOOP- DAY

1969.

A sickly looking teenaged Mike sits on the steps outside of his apartment building, smoking a cigarette.

He watches as teenaged Jim and Susie walk down the street, kissing, holding hands.

He stares intently, longingly, at Susie, her blonde hair glowing in the New York summer sun.

MIKE (O.S.)

When I woke up in the hospital, I realized one thing: no one will let you die in America. You gotta carry on with your miserable life and marry a pretty girl and churn out a couple kids and mow your lawn and sell used cars at a 200 percent markup. And you gotta do that until you die. How'd you end up here, Leonard?

CUT TO:

EXT. "FREEDOMLAND" - DAY

LEO

Same way as you, I was drafted.

MIKE

No, see there's where you're wrong. All of these kids my age are trying to make themselves shit out blood to avoid uncle Sam's call, and you know what I do? I enlist when I turn 17. Because the only way they'll let you die in America is for your country. They'll gladly send you to your death if you bring a few gooks with you.

LEO

Yet here you are, talking to me.

MIKE

See, isn't that the fucking pits? All of these green little boys with pretty girls to go home to like Jimmy sit in their tents at night and they look up at the sky and

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MIKE (cont'd)

they say *please Jesus let me get home* every fucking night and then they're shot to death, and here I am begging to be taken and my tour's almost up and I'm still here.

Leo is barely listening, still intently fixed on the radio.

CU on Mike as he rambles on.

MIKE

So I say to myself, my next ride in the Huey she and I are gonna go down together, I'm gonna crash her into the ground and they're going to send me and a Purple Heart in a box home to my mother. But then there's a mix up with my usual company and who saddles up but Jimmy Rodgers. And I say to myself, I can't have Jimmy Rodgers blood on my hands. I grew up with this kid, and I spent my whole childhood tormenting him in every imaginable way. I put up the Huey in the storm hoping we'd be knocked down by lightening. I put her down in a red zone thinking we'd be blasted to pieces by Charlie in a second. But Charlie left, and here we are. Turns out it's hard to die in Vietnam, too.

Now Leo's interested.

LEO

You motherfucking rat, are you trying to tell me you knew exactly where we were the whole time?

Mike picks up his joint and puts it between his teeth again.

MIKE

Did. Did know. Now I have no fucking clue. Jimmy lead us here to La La Land and now I have no fucking clue.

Leo puts down the radio and punches Mike square in the jaw. Mike doesn't fight back, and Leo punches him several times and kicks him in the chest. Mike laughs at the onslaught.

(CONTINUED)

Realizing that Mike is too far gone to care, Leo vents his energy by throwing the broken radio at the sign marked MAIN STREET USA.

He sits back down, grabs the joint that's dropped out of Mike's mouth, and takes a hit.

He puts out the joint on the rock beside him and drops his head into his hands.

A beat.

Then, Leo picks his head up, smelling the air.

LEO
Do you smell that?

Mike sits up, blood dripping from his nose.

LEO (CONT.)
It smells like something's burning.

Leo gets up and begins to walk down Main Street USA.

MIKE
Where are you going?

LEO
To see what's going on. Jim might be in trouble. Don't follow me, I'm about done with you.

Mike shrugs and lays back down on the grass. He reaches for his joint, takes a long pull, closes his eyes, and exhales.

Near the sign marked Main Street USA, the low hum of static can be heard.

CU ON THE RADIO:

Static.

Then, the radio comes to life.

VOICE ON RADIO
Private Brown, this is Da Nang Air Base. What is your position? I repeat, what is your position?

CUT TO:

EXT. "FREEDOMLAND"- DAY

Leo works his way through the park at a clip, holding a Colt Commando at the ready.

He passes through OLD NEW YORK, a recreation of the city at the turn of the century. WOMEN carrying parasols lead daintily dressed BOYS in sailor suits and hats and GIRLS in ribboned dresses by the hand down the promenade, past ice cream parlors. MEN in sharp suits and bowler hats sit at the BREWERY and drink and laugh. All are white. A TUG BOAT puttters in the harbor, and a trolley ambles down the street.

A suffragette rally is taking place. One SUFFRAGETTE holds a sign that reads "WHITE WOMEN DESERVE THE VOTE."

From Old New York, Leo finds himself in NEW ORLEANS.

First, he passes by a bloody Civil War battle. A CONFEDERATE FLAG flaps in the wind.

He then walks by a white brick PLANTATION HOUSE sitting on a sprawling lawn. African American SLAVES work the fields.

In New Orleans proper, Leo passes by an ornate restaurant, where BLACK MEN in stiff suits serve white patrons.

He finally finds himself in CHICAGO as it was in 1871. As he passes under the sign marked CHICAGO, a large steamboat ambles by in the bay, and smoke can be seen rising in the distance.

ANNOUNCER (O.S)

It's the Chicago Fire! Mrs.
O'Leary's cow has kicked over a
lantern, and we're gonna need all
the help we can get to put this
blaze out!

The time, the fire is real. Rows of buildings burn, engulfed with flames.

FIRE FIGHTERS work to put out the blaze, to no avail.

FIRE FIGHTER

(to Leo)

Hey, we could use a hand here!

He tries to hand Leo a bucket of water to throw on the blaze, but Leo doesn't move to take it.

The firefighter stares at Leo, then moves on, running towards the blaze,

(CONTINUED)

Leo watches the fire consume the buildings of Chicago, unmoved, glaring into the flames.

CUT TO:

INT. INDIAN TEPEE- DAY

A shirtless Jim lies awake next to Native American girl, who sleeps naked, partially covered by a rough deerskin blanket.

He watches her sleep for a moment, rubbing his hand lightly against her bare skin.

He then gets up, quietly, and dresses. He fits his helmet onto his head, the bloodstained feather proudly sticking up.

Without looking back he pulls open the flap of the tepee and leaves.

CUT TO:

EXT. CABLE CAR OVER "FREEDOMLAND"- DAY

Mike sits in a cable car that moves above Freedomland.

He smokes a cigarette and clutches his Ingram as ever. \

ANNOUNCER (O.S)
America is the future.

With his head leaned against the wall of the cable car, he looks down at the country below him.

CUT TO:

EXT. "FREEDOMLAND"- SATELLITE CITY- DAY

Jim and Eddie enter SATELLITE CITY, Freedomland's take on the future.

ANNOUNCER (O.S)(CONT.)
You are now entering into Satellite City. Here, the promise of what America has to offer lies before you.

Standing on a bridge over an artificial blue lake, Jim and Eddie watch a rocket launch.

The rocket takes off, a tail of flames blasting it off into the stratosphere.

CU on the flames.

CUT TO:

EXT. "FREEDOMLAND"- CHICAGO- DAY

Leo walks among the streets as Chicago burns.

For a moment, we see the situation for what it really is. 1871 Chicago turns into a Vietnamese village, burning from Napalm.

Leo stands still as the chaos unfolds around him, MOS.

Naked children whose clothes have been ripped off from the flames run, screaming.

Women cry and try in vain to shield their children from the blasts.

Men with homemade baskets attempt to throw water on the flames to subdue them, but the flames grow larger, The village's buildings are huts built from straw and thatch, and they burn to the ground.

The flames dance in Leo's eyes.

ANNOUNCER (O.S)(CONT.)

Behind us is our revolutionary past and the pioneer's promise of open lands to explore. There is war and depression, but there is also love and pride. Our past is exceptional. And so is our future.

CUT TO:

EXT. "FREEDOMLAND"- SATELLITE CITY- DAY

Jim and Eddie watch as the rocket vanishes in the sky.

ANNOUNCER (O.S)(CONT.)

So children, as you enter Satellite City, remember this. Remember the American Dream, and its great promise of prosperity for all.

As they watch the rocket disappear into space, Eddie puts his arm on Jim's shoulder.

ANNOUNCER (O.S)(CONT.)

Remember that the future is yours, and yours alone. As we live through this Cold War, and all the wars to come, you alone will be tasked as

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ANNOUNCER (O.S)(CONT.) (cont'd)
the protectors of freedom, to
safeguard democracy, to ensure the
future of liberty and justice for
all the world's citizens.

Jim and Eddie walk away from the bridge and through
Satellite City, past a shop window of retro future
television sets, each showing different historical footage
from the future.

INSERT: THE TELEVISION SETS:

America celebrates its Bicentennial.

The Berlin Wall falls, and so do the Twin Towers.

Nixon resigns.

US soldiers drive tanks through the Iraqi desert.

BACK TO SCENE

All of these images, and Jim and Eddie walk past, looking
only at each other.

ANNOUNCER (O.S)(CONT.)
I do not know what the future
holds. But what I can tell you is,
our future looks bright.

CUT TO:

EXT. "FREEDOMLAND"- "VIETNAMLAND" - DAY

Dusk now.

Jim, Eddie, Mike, and Leo all meet under a sign that reads
"VIETNAMLAND." They look at each other.

ANNOUNCER (O.S)(CONT.)
And no matter what happens, America
will endure. For this is the
greatest country in the world,
built on the principle that all men
are created equal.

The men load their guns with clips and magazines.

ANNOUNCER (O.S)(CONT.)
And with that principal in mind, we
send you, our greatest resource, to
the future with your heads held
high.

(CONTINUED)

Their weapons loaded, they hold them at the ready.

ANNOUNCER (O.S)(CONT.)

In Freedomland, you've lived
America's yesterday. Now, go
forward, with knowledge in your
heads and pride in your hearts, and
shape America's tomorrow.

They walk under the sign, entering into Vietnamland.

While Freedomland was all bright saccharine colors and magnificent structures, Vietnamland is all ruins and swampy greens.

Signs are written in sloppy red paint.

One such sign reads "THE DRANGE RIVER". The men pass this sign and proceed to cross through the river, which flows past their waists, and at some points, past their chins.

Long dead CORPSES OF AMERICAN SOLDIERS float in the river.

Looking down at the corpses, Jim sees HIMSELF among them, floating in the murky water. He looks away.

They manage to ford the river and come to a fair, featuring mock-children's rides.

One such ride is a carousel of sorts, featuring small replica helicopters going around and round in a circle. Agent Orange mists out from the bottom of the helicopters.

Another ride features American tanks moving along on a track.

Finally, they come to a large, dilapidated building, marked "SHOOTING GALLERY."

Leo, Mike, and Jim enter the building. Eddie stays behind.

Jim looks over his shoulder as he enters the building, taking one last look at his father.

CUT TO:

EXT. VIETNAM JUNGLE- DAY

The tail end of dusk.

A helicopter lands in a large clearing.

Several AMERICAN SOLDIERS, led by the Lieutenant, emerge.

(CONTINUED)

One soldier, a field reporter, holds a camera, and films the action.

POV SHOT- THROUGH THE CAMERA'S LENS

The lieutenant barks orders at them, MOS.

They run, weapons at the ready.

BACK TO SCENE

By a large rock, in front of a thick gathering of trees, a soldier finds Leo's radio.

The soldier calls over to the lieutenant, who inspects the radio.

VC GUERRILLAS, from up in the trees, fire on the soldiers below.

The field reporter captures the battle on film.

CUT TO:

INT. SHOOTING GALLERY- NIGHT

The interior of the shooting gallery is dark, lit by small torches on the walls.

The men enter, weapons at the ready.

They come to the gallery, and a mechanical churning, like items moving on a rusty conveyer belt, can be heard.

It's mechanical TARGETS, made to look like racist depictions of VC guerillas making grotesque faces.

The men raise their weapons, and begin to fire at the targets.

As the targets are hit, they fall, and new ones comes to take their place, seemingly never ending.

JIM

There's too many!

MIKE

I'll cover you, Jimmy. Fall back.

CUT TO:

EXT. VIETNAM JUNGLE- NIGHT

CU on the lieutenant and the soldiers feet as they run through the jungle.

There are less of them now.

They run past a small hut in a patch of trees.

A VIETNAMESE GIRL of around 18, who looks very similar the Native American girl that Jim slept with, comes out of the hut, naked but wrapped in a blanket.

Seeing the soldiers, she searches among them for Jim, who left her hours before.

Noticing her staring at them intently, the unit of soldiers stops to question her.

She does not understand them, but shakes her head no at their questions.

LIEUTENANT

Did a group of American soldiers
come by here?

She shakes her head no.

LIEUTENANT (CONT.)

Are you Charlie?

She shakes her head again.

CUT TO:

INT. SHOOTING GALLERY -NIGHT

Mike reaches for something at his belt.

CU on the belt. Mike's hand rests on a GRENADE.

CUT TO:

EXT. VIETNAMESE VILLAGE- NIGHT

Reality.

It's dark now, but the village is lit by torches.

VC fire at Mike, Jim, and Leo. There aren't quite so many of them-- there's scarcely more than a dozen.

Behind them, a village.

(CONTINUED)

Leo holds off the VC onslaught for the time being, mowing them down with his Commando.

Jim's eyes fall to Mike's belt, and he realizes what his fellow soldier has planned.

JIM
No, no, no, MIKE!

Mike flashes a toothy smile. He pulls the pin from the grenade.

JIM (CONT.)
Mike-

Mike runs forward with the grenade.

MIKE
Tell Susie Carter hi for me when
you get home, will you?

He runs forward, throws the grenade, and lets himself stay within the blast radius. He, and most of the VC, are taken down by the blast as Jim looks on.

Dumbfounded, he stares at the flames.

CUT TO:

INT. SHOOTING GALLERY- NIGHT

Back in the fantasy, Jim stares, dumbfounded, at a row of burnt targets.

Beside him now stands only Leo.

LEO
Watch yourself, Rodgers!

Jim snaps back into the moment. He raises his Commando, and begins to fire round after round, pumping the burnt and unburnt targets alike full of holes until there are no more targets left.

A beat. Silence in the gallery. Jim and Leo stare at the bullet-ridden, burnt VC targets.

CUT TO:

EXT. VIETNAMESE JUNGLE- NIGHT

The lieutenant pulls out a pistol and shoots the Vietnamese girl in the head. Lifeless, she falls to the ground. The blanket falls from her body, revealing her naked skin.

Several of the soldiers, all young men, all tired and hot and panting from running, stare at her pale, naked body.

LIEUTENANT

Let's go.

Unmoved, the soldiers continue to stare.

POV SHOT- THE FIELD REPORTER'S CAMERA

On black and white film stock we ZOOM in on the blood dripping from the girl's head and down to the curve of her upper lip.

BACK TO SCENE

LIEUTENANT (CONT.)

I SAID LET'S GO! MOVE OUT!

They continue on, deeper into the jungle.

Stay on the girl's lifeless body.

CUT TO:

INT. SHOOTING GALLERY- NIGHT

Slowly, the shot, burnt VC targets move from the gallery.

A beat. Leo and Jim share a look.

The targets are replaced by new ones, the time in the form of equally stereotypical caricatures of VIETNAMESE WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

A beat.

Leo and Jim open fire on these targets, as they did the last ones.

With their Commandos they rain bullets on the targets, one after another.

CUT TO:

EXT. VIETNAMESE JUNGLE- NIGHT

The first few of the soldiers leading the pack stop at the edge of an overlook. Below, they look down at a Vietnamese village by a river, currently under heavy siege by Leo and Jim.

In the distance, the remaining villagers, women and children, fall to Leo and Jim's gunfire.

The lieutenant and the field reporter fall in behind them.

LIEUTENANT

What is it?

SOLDIER

I think we found them.

A soldier hands the lieutenant a pair of binoculars and he looks through them at the carnage below.

LIEUTENANT

Shit.

The field reporter begins to film.

CUT TO:

INT. SHOOTING GALLERY- NIGHT

All of the new targets have been riddled through with holes.

Jim and Leo are left panting.

CU on Jim's face, drenched in sweat and full of rage.

CUT TO:

EXT. VIETNAMESE VILLAGE- NIGHT

Pan out from Jim's face to find the village completely destroyed, burning and silent. Leo stands next to him among the ruins.

The lieutenant's company rushes into the village, finding them.

Jim doesn't acknowledge their presence.

He moves among the bodies, now realizing, for the first time, the gravity of what he's done.

(CONTINUED)

Amid several DEAD CHILDREN, Jim finds the lifeless body of a VIETNAMESE BOY of about 8. The boy wears muddy shorts and a ripped white shirt stained with blood.

Jim crouches down next to the boy's body.

The dead little boy's fist is clenched. Jim pries it open.

Pressed into the boy's palm he finds his Freedomland coin.

He takes it and holds it up to his face.

The lieutenant and the field reporter come up behind him.

LIEUTENANT

Come on, Jim. It's time to go.

CUT TO:

INT. HELICOPTER- DAY

Dawn now.

Find Leo and Jim seated in a helicopter as it takes off.

CUT TO:

INT. NEW YORK NIGHT CLUB- NIGHT

Follow a pair of neon plastic BOOTS as they walk across a crowded dance floor and bar area.

CU only on the boots as they walk.

MEN can be heard cat calling the owner of the boots as she walks on.

The boots stop by a table.

Pan up to find that the boots are on Susie's feet. She wears a short, low cut dress and her blond hair is pressed straight. She carries a tray filled with drinks, and sets them down on the table next to a YOUNG MAN WITH LONG HAIR. Other, similarly dressed YOUNG MEN, sit around him.

He takes his drink and passes a wad of bills to Susie.

SUSIE

(brusquely)

Do you need any change?

(CONTINUED)

YOUNG MAN
No, it's for you.

SUSIE
Thanks.

She begins to walk away. The man grabs her arm. He lights a cigarette and taps out the ashes on the table.

YOUNG MAN
Say, how would you feel about
gettin' out of here?

SUSIE
You want me to leave my shift, at
my job, to go somewhere with you?

He nods.

YOUNG MAN
You got it, sweetheart.

SUSIE
I'll pass, but thanks for the
offer. Shouldn't you be shooting
some communists in a rice paddy
somewhere?

He laughs.

YOUNG MAN
I've got flat feet.

SUSIE
Yeah, well my GI has very strong
arches and I don't think he'd be
too happy with you touching me.

She breaks free and walks away as the man's friends all
laugh at him.

She crosses over to the bar while shoving the cash from her
tip in her brassier. Along the way, she picks up EMPTY
GLASSES and collects them on her tray.

She finds her fellow WAITRESSES crowded under the color
television that hangs on the wall above the bar.

SUSIE (CONT.)
What's going on? We've got a full
crowd, they're killing me out
there.

No reply.

(CONTINUED)

She looks up at the television.

CUT TO:

INT. NEW YORK NIGHT CLUB-TELEVISION SCREEN-NIGHT

A NEWS ANCHOR dressed in tweed sits at a desk.

NEWS ANCHOR

Unrest in Vietnam as a troop of American soldiers, who had been out of contact with their commanding officer for several days, and who had received no orders to do so, opened fire on the small river village of Quyen Tu Do, killing all inhabitants, men, women, and children. Thanks to a reporter in the field we have footage of the massacre. The following images are gruesome; viewer discretion is advised.

CUT TO:

INT. NEW YORK NIGHT CLUB- NIGHT

Susie watches the television. The reflection from the light of the TV dances in her eyes.

In response to something on screen she gasps and drops her tray full of empty glasses onto the floor, where they shatter.

One of the waitresses rushes to her side.

WAITRESS

Sue?

CUT TO:

INT. NEW YORK NIGHT CLUB-TELEVISION SCREEN-NIGHT

Black and white images dance on of Jim and Leo's killing spree appear on screen.

The village burns around dozens of DEAD VIETNAMESE BODIES.

The camera finds Jim squatting over the dead Vietnamese boy with the coin.

The lieutenant enters the frame and says something to Jim. Jim turns to the camera, and the camera lingers on his face, capturing the fear, anger, and defeat in his eyes.

(CONTINUED)

CUT TO:

EXT. JEFFERSON BUS STATION- DAY

SUPER: 3 Weeks Later

Leo steps off at a crowded bus station in his home town of Jefferson, Mississippi.

He is greeted by a large EXTENDED FAMILY. Some family members hold hand-painted signs welcoming him home in red, white, and blue. Others cheer when he steps off the bus.

Leo plasters on a smile and hugs and greets all of them.]

After everyone has been greeted, they head out of the bus station.

At the door, an African-American MAN, dressed head to toe in black leather, hands Leo a FLIER.

CU ON THE FLIER:

The grey flier reads "What is the Black Power?" and features drawings of a fist and a panther.

BACK TO SCENE

Leo looks up at the man.

LEO'S MOTHER
You coming, Leonard?

LEO
Yeah mama.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUS STOP- NIGHT

NEWS ANCHOR (O.S.)
In Vietnam news tonight, it appears that soldiers in connection with the Quyen Tu Do massacre will not face charges, though they have been discharged from the army. Private Leonard Brown of Jefferson, Mississippi, and Private Jim Rodgers of Queens, New York, along with the late helicopter pilot, Michael Thornton, who was killed in the attack, were responsible for the deaths of over fifty Vietnamese
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NEWS ANCHOR (O.S.) (cont'd)
men, women, and children. It is
unknown how many of the villagers,
if any, were members of the Viet
Cong.

Jim, dressed in civilian clothes, his hair still trimmed
short, steps off a bus with his pack.

Eddie stands there waiting for him.

Greeting Jim, he extends his hand.

Instead of shaking his father's hand, Jim pulls him into a
hug.

Eddie looks surprised, but, after a moment, settles into the
embrace.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN F. KENNEDY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT- NIGHT

Susie, dressed in jeans for the first time, carries a
suitcase through the crowded airport.

She stops to look down at her TICKET, a one-way to
Vancouver, British Columbia.

She continues on in search of her gate.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM- DAY

From behind the armchair, we can see the television screen.

INSERT- TELEVISION SCREEN:

A remote control is used to flip the channels, but instead
of flipping through shows that would have been on together,
it flips through the years.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

A) Archie Bunker sits in his armchair on *All in the Family*.

B) The *Saturday Night Live* logo appears on screen.

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Live from New York, it's Saturday
Night!

C) A helicopter flies under the M*A*S*H logo.

(CONTINUED)

- D) The familiar *Cheers* theme plays.
- E) Bill Cosby and his television family from *The Cosby Show* dance on screen.
- F) The *MacGyver* logo explodes onto the screen.
- G) The Simpsons jump onto their couch.
- H) The Friends jump onto their couch in central park.
- I) Someone is voted off the island on *Survivor*.
- J) Jon Stewart sits at his *Daily Show* desk. The audience laughs.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

The channel is changed one last time, to the local news.

The year is 2013.

A FEMALE NEWS ANCHOR and an AFRICAN AMERICAN NEWS ANCHOR sit at a desk in front of various computer-generated info-graphics and reads the news.

AFRICAN AMERICAN NEWS ANCHOR

From 1960 to 1964, Freedomland USA served the Bronx community. On August 17th, a plaque will be donated to commemorate the theme park where it once stood.

FEMALE NEWS ANCHOR

Patrons who remember the park have fond memories of days spent among six themed areas based in the past and one, Satellite City, that set its sights on the future.

Footage of the dedication plays.

AFRICAN AMERICAN NEWS ANCHOR

The park was immensely popular, but the land which it was on was to be turned into Co-Op City, the largest cooperative housing development in the world.

The anchors continue speaking in the background.

From the chair, a figure takes a long swig from a bottle of Jack Daniels, stands up, and crosses over to the window.

(CONTINUED)

It's an older Jim.

He stares out the window.

Find, on a shelf, Jim's war helmet, with the blood-stained white feather and the Freedomland coin stuck in it.

Jim removes the Freedomland coin from the helmet, and flips it.

CUT TO:

EXT. CO-OP CITY- DAY

A car drives into a large, largely empty parking lot and parks.

Jim steps out.

He walks towards a CROWD OF PEOPLE.

A MAN with a microphone stands on a small stage and speaks to the crowd.

SPEAKER

So today, we remember Freedomland,
and we also remember our childhoods
in the greatest place that ever
was. Thank you.

The crowd claps and cheers.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Jim?

Jim turns from the stage to see an older, well-dressed blonde woman. It's Susie, and she's as beautiful as ever.

JIM

Sue. Wow, hi.

They embrace.

A YOUNG GIRL of about eight tugs at Susie's jacket.

GIRL

Can we go now, grandma?

SUSIE

In a minute, sweetie, Grandma Sue's
saying hi to an old friend.

A beat.

(CONTINUED)

SUSIE(CONT.)

It's good to see you, Jim.

JIM

You too...I-I don't expect to see you here.

SUE

They asked me to come, as a tribute to my father. A lot of the kids of people who worked on the park are here, so-

JIM

I've really missed you. You just sort of...left. I never really got to say goodbye to you. You wrote for awhile, but-

SUSIE

War changes people, Jim. And I was young, we were both so young. I wasn't really prepared to deal with that.

JIM

Neither was I, I guess.

Another beat.

JIM(CONT.)

You still living in Canada?

SUE

Yeah, still am. My family all settled there. Did you ever...do you have any kids?

Jim shakes his head.

JIM

There was never a right girl after you.

SPEAKER

Sue, come here, we're taking a group photo!

SUE

(to Jim)

I should go. It was good seeing you, Jim.

(CONTINUED)

JIM

Yeah.

She starts to walk away.

JIM(CONT.)

You know, I never really ever got to go to Freedomland. But I remember it so well-- I used to imagine myself there, with you.

She smiles.

SUE

Sometimes those kind of memories are better than the real thing.

Jim watches her walk away, holding onto her granddaughter's hand.

He crosses over to the PLAQUE, black and gold metal with the Freedomland logo inlaid on a marble stone.

He pulls his Freedomland coin from his pocket, sets it carefully on the stone, and walks away.

Behind him, Co-Op buildings and empty parking lots transform into Freedomland the way it was.

Inside the park, find junior-high aged Jim and Susie walking together down Main Street USA.

They smile at each other, and Jim puts his arm around her.

Together, they disappear into the park.

FADE OUT

THE END