

SPOILS OF WAR

by

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WRITER'S FIRST DRAFT
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OVER BLACK WE SEE OPENING CREDITS

FADE TO:

VIDEO IMAGE

President Bush in the Oval Office delivering an address to the American people.

PRESIDENT BUSH

...This act of naked aggression must be checked. The United States, along with coalition forces from the Middle East, have drawn a line in the sand. There is only one way for this situation to be satisfactorily resolved. The belligerent

forces from the Republic of Iraq must be removed from Kuwait, be it by choice, or by force...

FADE TO:

BLACK

FADE TO:

EXT. DESERT - DAY

From a distance we see a Humvee sitting alone in the middle of a huge, empty desert. Just the Humvee, nothing else for miles. We hear the sound of a man making machine gun-like noises.

JAEGER (V.O.)

At-at-at-at-at. At-at-at-at-at.

DISSOLVE TO:

CU - HUMVEE

There are three soldiers at the Humvee. Second Lieutenant JOHN EPPS, who sweeps the horizon with a pair of binoculars. PFC WES HAMMOND, who is behind the wheel looking very bored, and PFC MARK JAEGER, who is at the Humvee's thirty caliber machine gun, making the noises and shooting at phantom troops. When Jaeger talks it's with all the swagger of a B-movie hero.

JAEGER

At-at-at-at-at. At-at-at-at-at.

EPPS

What are you doing?

JAEGER

What does it look like I'm doing? I'm killing Iraqis. At-at-at-at-at. At-at-at-at--

WES

Could you stop, please. You're giving me a headache.

JAEGER

A headache?

WES

Yeah, a headache. My head hurts. You're making me uncomfortable.

JAEGER

I'm making you uncomfortable. Baking away in a desert in the middle of nowhere facing three-hundred-thousand screaming Iraqis with nerve gas scud missiles, that doesn't bother you. But me making a little noise is driving you out of your skull.

WES

Yes. Yes. That's exactly it. Yes.

JAEGER

Okay.

Jaeger goes right back to playing soldier.

JAEGER(CONT)

At-at-at-at-at.

EPPS

Knock it off!

JAEGER

Don't get pissed at me, just 'cause I want to be ready when this war starts.

EPPS

Ready for what? What are you supposed to be doing?

JAEGER

I told you, I'm shooting Iraqis.

EPPS

No you're not.

Epps points in the opposite direction that Jaeger was 'firing.'

EPPS(CONT)

The Iraqis are that way. Those are our troops you're shooting at.

With his binoculars Epps looks in the direction Jaeger was shooting.

EPPS(CONT)

You know what? I think you got Schwarzkopf. You did! You got the General right in the ass. Now that's good shooting.

JAEGER

Blow me.

EPPS

Another month in this desert and I might just.

WES

Think we're going to do it? Think we're going to war?

EPPS

Not up to us. Up to the Iraqis. All they have to do is get out of Kuwait.

JAEGER

We ought to kick their asses anyway. Even if they do get out of Kuwait we ought to kick their asses.

WES

I don't think we'll go to war. We shouldn't even be here. This isn't our fight, it's a regional conflict. It should be decided regionally.

JAEGER

People are suffering.

WES

People were suffering in Afganistan, and we didn't do anything.

EPPS

That's 'cause the Afganis weren't smart enough to be sitting on top of oil. People suffering is one thing, but when the Yuppies aren't going to have enough gas for their BMWs it's time to break out the tanks. Come on. Pack up. We've got a whole lot of nothing to patrol.

As they pack up and get ready to roll on Jaeger says almost to himself:

JAEGER

We ought to kick their asses. Either way we ought to.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET BAZAAR - EVENING

The bazaar is loud and colorful, a cacophony of Arabic fills the air. The bazaar is filled with vendors actively selling their wares to each passerby, literally shoving them in the faces of prospective customers.

Epps, Wes and Jaeger walk along side by side looking almost like the Three Musketeers, except that Wes is droning on.

WES

...And it's very important when you sit down never to point the soles of your shoes at anyone. It's considered offensive.

EPPS

You know so much about the Middle East, you know where we can get something to eat.

JAEGER

When do you ever point the soles of your feet at people?

WES

I'm saying don't do it accidentally.

JAEGER

Oh yeah. Accidentally.

Jaeger lifts his leg and purposefully points the bottom of his foot at a vendor.

JAEGER(CONT)

I'm sorry. My foot accidentally jumped up in the air where you could see the bottom of it. I hate it when that happens.

(Wes slaps Jaeger's leg down.)

WES

Come on. You're going to get us in trouble.

JAEGER

It was an accident. You saw it was an accident.

WES

I'm just trying to help you guys out. It doesn't hurt to know something about Saudi Arabia.

EPPS

Like learning Arabic? You're gonna learn Arabic you might as well learn were we can get something to eat around here.

WES

I didn't learn Arabic because we were getting shipped here. You don't learn it

in a couple of weeks. I studied it in high school.

JAEGER

Spanish wasn't hard enough?

WES

I thought it would be good to know.

JAGER

Yeah, if you ever need to buy a rug.

WES

Hey, Jaeger. Why don't you try this:
Ashra Ka mahari dahra sahib.

JAEGER

What does that mean?

WES

Don't shoot me, I'm friendly. You can use that when you surrender.

JAEGER

How do you say "Come here, baby. I'm horny." I can use that now.

WES

Don't even try it. You offend a woman out here you're in serious trouble.

EPPS

Don't worry about Jaeger. He uses his personality as a form of birth control.

JAEGER

Blow me. Have I said that to you guys recently? Blow me.

As Epps and Wes walk on Jaeger notices something on a VENDOR'S table. It is a small, square box - slightly larger than a man's palm - fashioned of wood and metal. It is not particularly ornate, but eye catching in its own way. The instant Jaeger picks it up and begins to look it over the Vendor is giving him the hard sell in Arabic. Jaeger holds the box up to the vendor.

JAEGER(CONT)

What is this?

All he gets is more Arabic. Jaeger calls over to Wes.

JAEGER(CONT)

Hey, Wes. Wes!

Wes comes back over to Jaeger.

JAEGER(CONT)

What is this?

WES

Now you need me.

JAEGER

What is it? You know so much about Arabland tell me what it is.

Wes looks over the box carefully.

WES

Well, based on my knowledge of the region, its culture and her people I would have to say it's a box.

EPPS

Can you eat it? If you can't eat it I really don't care what it is.

JAEGER

Ask him what it is.

Wes says something to the vendor in Arabic. The Vendor answers back.

WES

He says it's a box.

JAEGER

Yeah, you're funny.

WES

It's a puzzle box. If you can figure out how to open it there's supposed to be a treasure inside.

JAEGER

(Excited)

For real? A treasure?

EPPS

Oh, man, you're not going to fall for that.

JAEGER

There might be something in there.

EPPS

Yeah, the deed to the Brooklyn bridge.

JAEGER

There might be.

WES

And you're the guy who's going to open it.

JAEGER

I could.

EPPS

You could turn on a light if someone put your hand on the switch.

Decisively, without even haggling about price, Jaeger whips out some money and pays the vendor for the box.

EPPS(CONT)

Well, that showed me. Now, can we eat?

The three men walk on, Jaeger starting to work on the puzzle box.

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

It's filled with young soldiers messing around, playing cards, listening to music, whatever. Jaeger lays on a bunk holding the puzzle box, probing it with his fingers, trying to find a way to make it open.

Wes crosses over.

WES

You get it yet?

JAEGER

Naw, nothing.

WES

You will. You'll get it.

JAEGER

I'll show Epps. He'll be sorry when I get this thing open.

WES

You really think there's a treasure inside?

JAEGER

I don't care if there's a lump of coal in here. I just want to be able to rub Epps' face in it when I crack this thing.

Wes watches Jaeger work the box for a beat.

WES

Jaeger?

JAEGER

What?

WES

You know the fifteenth is the deadline for the Iraqis to get out of Kuwait.

JAEGER

Yeah. So?

WES

That's in two days.

JAEGER

Like I said; so?

WES

They're cancelling all leaves, all passes. No more drills. We stand at full ready starting--

JAEGER

What's your point, Wes? You have a point?

WES

We're going to war, aren't we. If they're doing all that it must mean we're going to war.

JAEGER

It doesn't mean anything.

WES

Why would they do all that if we weren't?

Jaeger, frustrated, finally looks up from his box.

JAEGER

Okay, so we're going to war. We're supposed to go to war. We're soldiers, that's what we do. The guns, the tanks, the planes; you're just now getting the hint we're in the war business?

Jaeger goes back to his box. Wes stands over him for a beat longer, then:

WES

Jaeger?

JAEGER
(For sure aggravated)
What!?

WES
You ever think about dying?

JAEGER
Come on, man. I almost had this thing open.

WES
You ever think about it? You ever worry?

JAEGER
The only thing I worry about is how much Iraqi ass I'm going to be able to kick before this whole thing is over. The only people who I've got anything to worry about are the poor, dumb camel jockeys who don't know enough to get out of the way when I come rolling at them; an M-16 in each hand, and a grenade between my teeth. Now if you'll excuse me, soldier, I'd like to get back to my box. I've got a treasure to find.

Wes lingers over Jaeger for a few more beats, then walks off as we:

FADE TO:

BLACK

FADE TO:

VIDEO IMAGE

President Bush in the Oval office addressing the Nation.

BUSH
Just two hours ago, Allied air forces began an attack on military targets in Iraq and Kuwait. These attacks continue as I speak...Our objectives are clear. Saddam Hussein's forces will leave Kuwait. The legitimate government of Kuwait will be restored to its rightful place, and Kuwait will once again be free.

FADE TO:

BLACK

FADE TO:

EXT. DESERT - DAY

From a distance we see a Humvee sitting alone in the middle of a huge, empty desert. Just the Humvee, nothing else for miles. We hear the sound of a man making machine gun-like noises.

JAEGER(V.O.)

At-at-at-at-at. At-at-at-at-at.

DISSOLVE TO:

CU - HUMVEE

It's like the opening scene all over again. Jaeger is at the machine gun, Epps sweeps the horizon with his binoculars, and Wes is behind the wheel. Only difference is that Wes watches CNN footage of the air war on a Watchman.

JAEGER

At-at-at-at-at.

WES

(Re: His TV)

This is so weird. It's happening, but it's not. It's like a TV show, and we're part of it.

JAEGER

At-at-at-at-at.

EPPS

Will you knock it off! Damn, man.
You're going to annoy the Iraqis into submission.

Jaeger gets down from the machine gun, pulls out his puzzle box and starts to work on it again.

JAEGER

This is stupid. It's going on a month now. How long are they going to let the Air Force piss on those bastards? They can bomb them all they want, Saddam ain't going anywhere without a ground assault. What the hell is the army waiting for?

EPPS

Why you in such a hurry to get to shooting?

JAEGER

I've got to have something to tell people when I get home besides I protected a stretch of dirt that nobody wanted for

nothing in the first place.

WES

The longer the air force hits the Iraqis, the safer it'll be for us when we have to engage.

JAEGER

You know what, Wes? If you get a note from your mommy they might excuse you from the war.

EPPS

You all want to lay off? God. I hope the Iraqis shoot me; put me out of my misery.

JAEGER

OH MY GOD!

Startled, Epps and Wes each pull their guns and spin in Jaeger's direction expecting to have to fire at something.

EPPS

What!? What!?

JAEGER

I did it! I got the box open.

Jaeger has indeed opened the box. We can see something inside of it.

EPPS

You almost got yourself shot, that's what you did.

Wes excitedly goes over to Jaeger.

WES

What's inside?

Jaeger pulls out a small tube sealed with wax.

JAEGER

It's...it's...I don't know what it is.

WES

It's a container. Break the seal.

Jaeger hesitates a beat, which heightens a bit of suspense. All three men can't help but be drawn closer to the container.

EPPS

Go on, man.

Jaeger pokes his finger through the wax and pulls it off the tube. He sticks his finger back into the container and draws out a rolled up piece of paper.

WES

Paper.

EPPS

It's a fortune box.

Jaeger unrolls it.

WES

What's it say?

EPPS

Help, I'm being held prisoner in a puzzle box factory.

We see the paper. Lines are drawn on it, large, crude figures. It's hard to make out exactly what it all is supposed to represent.

JAEGER

It's a drawing, or something. Some kind of art.

Epps takes the paper from Jaeger and gives it a once over.

EPPS

Looks like something a kid would do.

Wes takes the paper and looks it over.

WES

It's a map, I think that's what it is.

EPPS

There you go, Jaeger. Just find the buried treasure, and you're a millionaire.

Jaeger takes back the paper. All excited like a kid on Christmas:

JAEGER

You think?

EPPS

Yeah, that's exactly what I think. You and the five thousand other suckers who bought those boxes. Let's get out of here. We got sand to protect.

Epps and Wes load up and get ready to move out. Jaeger just

keeps staring at the map, eyes lit like candles.

CUT TO:

INT. INTELLIGENCE ROOM - LATER

The room is filled with maps, recon photos, HUMINT reports. They're posted on the walls with various levels of troop strength - allied and Iraqi - indicated. More data is constantly flowing in, analyzed and processed.

Jaeger enters, spots WOODS - a young soldier on intel detail - and crosses over to him.

JAEGER

Woods.

WOODS

Hey, Jaeger. What's up.

JAEGER

I'm looking for a favor. I need a map of Iraqi.

WOODS

A map? All I got is maps. I'm gonna have Delayed Map Syndrome when I finally get out of here. What kind of map you need? Topographical, geographical, thermal?

JAGER

I don't know. A map map.

WOODS

A map map.

Woods pulls out a map and hands it to Jaeger.

WOODS(CONT)

That shouldn't be too hard to read. Iraq is the pink thing.

JAEGER

I could use some recon photos too.

Woods gives Jaeger a sideways glance.

WOODS

Planning on going to war all by your lonesome?

JAEGER

Just...want to be ready when we do.

WOODS

Ready for what? Sight-seeing?

JAEGER

The photos.

Woods starts to dig for photos.

JAEGER(CONT)

Some good ones.

WOODS

They're all good ones. Satellites we've got can snap a shot of the boil on Saddam's ass.

JAEGER

Saddam's got a boil on his ass?

Woods looks up at Jaeger with an expression that says: "What?"

JAEGER(CONT)

I don't know.

Woods goes back to looking, pulls some photos and hands them to Jaeger.

JAEGER(CONT)

Thanks, man. Appreciate it.

Staring at the pictures like they held the secrets of the ages Jaeger starts to exit. Woods mumbles after him:

WOODS

Yeah. You figure out how to win the war be sure to let us know.

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACKS - LATER

Maps and photos cover Jaeger's bunk the way autumn leaves cover the ground. He swings between studying the maps, and reading from a book titled A History Of The Ottoman Empire. Jaeger puts the book down, then slides the drawing from the puzzle box up next to one of the recon photos. He looks at the mosaic he's put together, looks at it like it was having a dialogue with him. Dig it: It is talking. A voice only Jaeger can hear. Right now it's just a little whisper, but the voice is getting louder.

A crossing SOLDIER, carrying a football, calls to Jaeger.

SOLDIER

Come on, Jaeger. We're playing ball.

Jaeger fairly jumps as he comes out of his trance.

JAEGER

No that's okay. I'm gonna...I'm doing some...

The soldier crosses off. Jaeger goes back to staring at his maps, and photos and drawings and books. "What were you saying?"

As it all keeps talking to him we:

FADE TO:

BLACK

FADE TO:

VIDEO IMAGE

Once again President Bush delivers an address.

BUSH

This evening, as I report to you, the military operation known as Desert Storm enters its final phase. The coalition forces that face the tyranny of Saddam Hussein have launched an all out ground offensive...as this last, and most critical part of the campaign begins I ask for your prayers that God may bless each and every one of the coalition forces at our side in the Gulf, and that He may continue to bless our nation, the United States of America.

FADE TO:

BLACK

FADE TO:

EXT. DESSERT - DAY

From a distance we see a Humvee sitting alone in the middle of a huge, empty desert. Just the Humvee, nothing else for miles. We hear the sound of a man making machine gun-like noises.

JAEGER(V.O.)

At-at-at-at-at. At-at-at-at-at.

DISSOLVE TO:

CU - HUMVEE

It's our three boys again, just like we've seen them before: Jaeger at the machine gun, Epps working his binoculars, and Wes at the wheel watching his Watchman.

Jaeger jumps down from the machine gun pissed as all hell.

JAEGER

They finally start the ground war, and where are we? Same place we've been since we got here. Securing freedom for the dirt.

EPPS

Everybody's got a job to do. Figure it this way: At least you get to go home alive.

JAEGER

I'd like to go home alive with a couple of Iraqi scalps hanging from my belt.

WES

Hey, look at this!

Jaeger and Epps come around to Wes' Watchman. We see CNN footage of some Iraqi soldiers - looking very tired, hungry and scared - surrendering to a CNN news crew.

WES{CONT}

They're surrendering to a news crew. You believe that?

Jaeger tosses his hands in the air in defeat.

JAEGER

That's it. It's over. Eighteen hours into the war and it's over.

WES

Those soldiers have got loafers on. What kind of army gives their soldiers loafers?

EPPS

A casual one.

WES

Damn, this is sweet. We are going to be home in no time.

EPPS

Better grab up some sand to take home to your family.

Jaeger bites at his lip. He wants to say something, but

isn't quite sure how, if he should, if... Fuck that, Jaeger.
Just say it.

JAEGER

We...we could go home with something
else.

WES

What?

JAEGER

With...with millions. Millions of
dollars.

EPPS

What are you talking about?

Jaeger pulls out the drawing from the puzzle box.

EPPS (CONT)

Don't even. You're not going to show me
that tired map.

JAEGER

Wait. Wait.

Jaeger starts to tear at his pockets like he's trying to get
at a bee. He pulls out his other maps, recon photos... The
guy's a walking atlas.

Epps looks on in shock at the spectacle.

EPPS

I think you've got some issues to deal
with. Really, when we get out of here
I'm pretty sure it's shrink time for you.

JAEGER

Just listen to me! I've been doing some
reading. In the Sixteenth century this
region was invaded by the Turks. It
became part of the Ottoman empire. When
the Turks rolled in they raped, they
pillaged, the usual stuff. Anybody who
had anything wanted to hide it from these
bastards. They buried their treasures,
drew maps, and hid the maps in puzzle
boxes. I read about this, man. I read
about it.

EPPS

(Sarcastic)

Welllllll, if you read it it must be true.
Was it in the Star, or the Enquirer?

JAEGER

Christ! Wes, tell him. You know this stuff.

WES

The Turks invaded, yeah. I guess people would have hidden what they had. But that doesn't mean what was in that box is--

Jager holds up the puzzle box drawing to one of the maps.

JAEGER

Looks at this! Look at it! The drawing is a map of this area right here. You can see it. The geography, the landmarks. It's the same area.

Epps grabs the map from Jaeger.

EPPS

And you know what that area is? It's Iraq. IRAQ! We're doing a little thing with them right now; Desert Storm. Maybe you've read about it.

JAEGER

What we're doing is kicking ass. For God's sake they got Iraqis surrendering to news crews. The war is over. We've just got to keep shooting people 'cause the army spent all this money, and we've got to put on a show for the taxpayers.

WES

You're not saying what I think you're saying. I can't believe you're even thinking it.

JAEGER

It's right here. This region; an-Nagaf. I got recon photos. There're no troops there, no fighting--

WES

You don't know where the Iraqis have moved to. And our forces haven't even engaged the Republican Guard yet, we don't know--

JAEGER

It's about a hundred miles from where we are now. How long do you think it would take us to--

WES

It's not a hundred miles. It's a hundred miles through three different kinds of terrain: Pure desert, mountains, a river. If the map is even real.

JAEGER

It's real. I'm telling you, it's real.

WES

So you just want to cross into hostile territory in the middle of a war on a wild goose chase? It's crazy. Tell him it's crazy, Epps.

Epps thinks. He doesn't say nuthin', just thinks. It's the thinking that makes Wes nervous.

WES(CONT)

Epps, tell him.

Epps gets a little more thinking in. Wes sees which way this is going.

WES

You're out of your minds, you know that? Both of you. You don't even know if there's anything out there. What the hell are you thinking?

EPPS

I'm thinking about when this war is over. Why you figure I'm here? 'Cause I got tired of being president of GM? If a brother doesn't play ball, or deal drugs there aren't too many big money prospects around, and I'm not particularly interested in spending the rest of my life fighting the oil companies' wars. So I say if maybe there's something out there, what the hell, that's what I say.

Wes can't believe what he's hearing. He pulls out the last card he has to play.

WES

It's desertion.

Jaeger sweeps a hand across the great nothingness.

JAEGER

Deserting what? What the hell are we deserting?

Both Jaeger and Epps close on Wes for the hard sell.

EPPS

It's war. People get lost all the time
in war, cut off--

JAEGER

We disappear for awhile. We disappear,
we came back; nobody knows nothing.

EPPS

But we all got to be in for this. We all
go, or we do nothing.

WES

Epps, you're smarter than this. Jaeger I
understand, but you're smarter.

JAEGER

You know it's real. You know it's real,
and you know it's there. You know it.

WES

You're insane if you think you'll find
anything, and sure insane if you think
you can get us there and back alive.

EPPS

If you say that, then I say you don't
know Second Lieutenant Epps very well, do
you?

Wes buries his head in his hands. He squeezes at it hard
like he'd rather make his brains ooze out his ears than say
what he's going to say.

WES

God! I don't believe I'm doing this. I
don't.

JAEGER

Yes!

EPPS

It's going to be cool, Wes. It's all all
right.

JAEGER

We go, we get rich, we go home. It's
that easy.

Jaeger and Epps start to pack up. To no one in particular,
and not too convincingly Wes mutters.

WES

Yeah. That easy.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - LATER

To strains of Hendrix's Wait Until Tomorrow the Humvee cuts across the desert kicking up plumes of loose sand. It looks more a dune buggy out for a joy ride than a military vehicle.

CUT TO:

I/E. HUMVEE - SIMULTANEOUS

Epps drives, Jaeger rides shotgun, relaxed, feet up on the dash. Wes is in back with a "what the fuck did I get myself into look on his face." The Hendrix comes from a Walkman hooked up to a pair of small speakers. Basically these guys are just kicking it. War? What war? Our boys are just on a beer run. Maybe this wasn't such a bad idea after all.

EPPS

Now this is war.

JAEGER

Roger that.

WES

We're going to get court martialed, you know that.

JAEGER

Hell, we'll just buy our way out.

Epps picks up a map and gives it a read. To Jaeger he says:

EPPS

Hand me the navicom.

Jaeger hands Epps a piece of electronic hardware no bigger than a video box. It's a navigational computer which can pinpoint its location, by satellite, within meters. Basically the ultimate compass. Epps compares the navicom's readout with the map.

EPPS(CONT)

Hold on boys and girls...hold on...

Epps watches the navicom...watches it...

EPPS(CONT)

Yeah! Welcome to beautiful Iraq. Land of enchantment and riches.

WES

Oh, God.

JAEGER

You're such a pussy, you know that?
How'd you get in the army?

EPPS

Cool it, Jaeger. Hey, Wes? Wes?

WES

What?

EPPS

I know you think this is crazy, but a couple of hours from now you're going to be one rich dude trying to buy up every other puzzle box out there.

WES

I'd settle for being alive. Really.
Alive would be fine.

JAEGER

Epps, is that a sand dune.

WES

Oh, no.

EPPS

Why, yes, Jaeger. I believe it is.

WES

No, please, not again.

Epps punches the accelerator and the Humvee jumps forward like a horse out of the gate.

CUT TO:

EXT. HUMVEE - SIMULTANEOUS

The Humvee hits the dune and takes to the air. As it arcs up and over the desert we hear.

WES(VO)

Noooooooooooo!

As gravity takes hold and brings the Hummer back to earth we:

FADE TO:

EXT. HUMVEE - LATER

Epps is still taking it for a joy ride. Wes is still getting sick.

WES(VO)
Came on, I'm serious. Knock it off.

FADE TO:

EXT. DESERT - LATER

The Hummer hits yet another dune and takes flight.

WES(VO)
This isn't funny, all right? I mean it.

CUT TO:

I/E. HUMVEE - SIMULTANEOUS

The occupants jostle as the Hummer touches down. Epps and Jaeger laugh and high five. Wes is content just to go on looking sick.

JAEGER
Hey, Wes, what kind of treasure you figure these people buried?

WES
If! If there's a treasure.

JAEGER
Yeah. If. Whatever. What kind you figure it is?

WES
I don't know. It would be small, easy to transport and hide. Gold or jewels. Probably gold.

JAEGER
Yeah! Gold! How much?

WES
How the hell should I know how much?

EPPS
But that's the great thing about Gold. A little goes a long way.

JAEGER
You know what I'm doing with my part of the gold?

WES
If there's gold. If!

JAEGER
You know what I'm doing with my half?

Epps turns to Jaeger. There's just the slightest, slightest hint of edge brushed across his tone.

EPPS

Third. What you're going to do with your third.

JAEGER

Yeah. I meant... You know what I'm going to do with it? I'm going to buy a Sixty-three 'Vette Stingray. All tricked out and cherry. I'm going to be so sweet.

EPPS

A car? You're going to buy a car?

WES

This is too much. You don't even have the money and you're wasting it.

JAEGER

A car is not just a car where I come from. I had this friend, had this wicked candy apple red Sixty-four and a half Mustang--

EPPS

You're getting gold, and you're going to blow it on wheels?

JAEGER

What are you going to do with your third?

EPPS

Invest it.

JAEGER

Oh, that's fun.

EPPS

It's not about being fun. It's about being smart. You take that money, you take care of it, let it grow, and you don't ever have to do anything again. Ever. That's freedom. That's what I'm talking about.

JAEGER

And I'm talking about enjoying myself.

EPPS

You know, you sound just like a boy who's never--

WES

What's that?

Jaeger and Epps look out the front windshield. A plume of sand rises up from the desert several hundred meters before them. So engrossed in their discussion previously they hadn't even noticed until Wes pointed it out.

Epps reaches over and kills the tape player. A loud quiet comes with it. All three men just stare at the plume as it drifts closer. Finally:

EPPS

Take the binoculars.

JAEGER

Wh-what do you think--

EPPS

TAKE THE GODDAMN BINOCULARS!

Jaeger scrambles up the binoculars, and stares off into the distance. Epps and Wes wait...they wait...

JAEGER

Iraqis.

WES

Oh, God!

JAEGER

Two vehicles. They're not supposed to be here.

WES

Oh, Jesus!

JAEGER

They're not...I had the pictures.
They're not supposed to be here!

EPPS

Shut up! Both of you shut the hell up!

JAEGER

We've got to do something. We've got to turn around.

EPPS

We can see them, they can see us. We run, they chase.

WES

What are we going to do?

Epps thinks. Thinking's not good enough for Wes.

WES(CONT)

What are we going to do!?

EPPS

We're going to keep driving.

JAEGER

They'll shoot us!

EPPS

We run they'll shoot us anyway. If we keep driving they might think we friendlies; Iraqis. Or even if they know we're Americans they might get scared, think we're part of a detachment and keep on going.

JAEGER

They're not going to--

EPPS

It's the only way. We drive!

Epps is right. Jaeger and Wes know it. They shut up and ride. Dig that tension: Wes sweating, Epps giving the wheel a white knuckle grip. Jaeger reaches down and readies his M-16. When he chambers it, it sounds like thunder cracking.

The plume draws closer and closer until it's not just a plume, but two dots. Then it's two jeep-like vehicles. Next we can even make out the passengers.

That doesn't do much to relax our boys.

Us, the Iraqis, we're almost on top of each other now. The vehicles are going to pass within feet. Epps throws in one more thing:

EPPS

Wave at them. Don't look, just wave.

All three throw up some weak, forced waves. THE VEHICLES PASS. Look at that: The Iraqis are waving back. And that's all they're doing, just waving.

Our boys break out into cheers.

JAEGER

Yeah! Yeah!

WES

I think I'm going to throw up. I am.
I'm going to toss.

JAEGER

You see that? Right by us. They went right by. You had them Epps; you called it.

EPPS

Figure they don't want to mess with us anymore than we want to mess with them.

JAEGER

Look at you, not even breaking a sweat. You're cool, boy. You're cool.

They all have a good laugh, but Wes brings that to a crashing halt. Looking back at the Iraqis, in a voice dead with fear:

WES

They stopped.

EPPS

Wha...

WES

Oh, Jesus, they've stopped.

Epps and Jaeger look behind them.

WES(CONT)

They stopped, and they've turned around.

The two Iraqi vehicles have stopped, they've turned, and now they're racing towards our boys. Epps momentarily freezes. Jaeger helps him right out of it.

JAEGER

Go, go, go!

Epps punches it, and the Hummer takes off. The Iraqis are right behind them.

The vehicles all do same hard driving: They twist and turn like wild snakes over the loose sand; hit dunes, take flight... It's the open desert, and our boys have nowhere to hide.

Inside the Hummer it's a rough, rough ride. Our boys are thrown violently about the cabin. For Epps controlling the Hummer is about as easy as riding a wild horse.

The Iraqis turn things up a notch and start sending gunfire our way. Bullets kick up around the Hummer like angry, little bees with a hell of a sting. Epps yells at Jaeger.

EPPS

Shoot them!

Now it's Jaeger who's freezes. Epps returns the favor.

EPPS(CONT)

Shoot 'em!

Jaeger climbs back to the Humvee's machine gun, works the action and starts firing. Unlike before when he was playing, the real thing is much wilder. The Humvee bounces around like a cork in the ocean. Taking aim is nearly impossible. The best Jaeger can do is squeeze off rounds in the Iraqis' general direction.

All Wes can do is cover his head, and stay down like a scared little girl.

JAEGER

Steady it out!

EPPS

I steady it out, they blow us out of the sand!

It's like a dog fight in the dirt. The vehicles weave, cut... One of the Iraqis starts to cut across Jaeger's firing line. Jaeger swings the machine gun around hard and lets loose. A hail of bullets rips into the Iraqi vehicle just above wheel level. It kicks the vehicle up and back, whipping and twisting it horribly in the air time after time, then smashing it back into the ground.

Jaeger is beside himself.

JAEGER

I got him! You see that, I nailed him!

As if in answer the remaining Iraqi vehicle's gunner tears off a salvo that eats up the space right around Jaeger. He's not hit, but it kicks him back down into the Humvee screaming with fear.

EPPS

Damn it!

The boys are running out of options, and Epps knows it.

EPPS(CONT)

Wes, take the wheel.

No good. Wes is too scared to move. Epps reaches back and literally pulls him up and over into the front.

EPPS(CONT)

Take it!

With little finesse Wes takes the wheel as Epps slides over. Epps takes up an M-16 with a grenade launcher. He loads it up, and readies the weapon. Crawling to the back he takes aim.

EPPS(CONT)

Keep it steady.

Wes does his best to give a level ride, but the Iraqi bullets coming at them don't help much.

Epps zeroes in on the target. He takes aim and starts to squeeze back on the trigger. He almost has a shot off when Wes hits a dune rocking the Hummer violently. Epps loses the target.

EPPS(CONT)

Damn it! I said keep it steady.

Epps tries to take aim again. Careful aim. One shot is all he gets. The bullets keep coming, but he's in no hurry. Waiting...waiting... The Iraqis are only getting closer.

WES

Shoot...shoot!

Waiting...

Closer...

WES

SHOOT!

EPPS FIRES! The grenade rips from the launcher, riding a trail of white smoke, and slams into the Iraqis. You know the story: Huge explosion, car parts flying a hundred feet into the air, bodies whipping through space, stuff Bob Dole would hate. But maybe he would like it. They were just Iraqis.

Wes brings the Hummer to a halt. A spastic, scared, relieved laugh escapes him. Jaeger, checking himself for wounds, and Epps, M-16 still in hand, get out. Epps makes his way to the wreckage, sweeping it with his rifle ready to blast any survivors. Yeah, like somebody's walking away from that bang.

Wes finally makes his way over to the others who stand and stare at the burning hulk of whatever it was.

WES

I thought we were dead.

JAEGER

Yeah, well, we're not.

WES

We got to get out of here.

Nobody says anything. This really scares Wes.

WES(CONT)

We have to go back.

JAEGER

We're not going anywhere. Not 'til we get what we came for.

WES

(Incredulous)

We just about got killed. You know what happened? We just about got killed, and you want to go on?

EPPS

Jaeger, go check out the Hummer for damage.

Jaeger starts to cross back to the Hummer. Wes gives him something to take with him.

WES

You're crazy, you know that? You're insane!

Jaeger goes leaving Epps and Wes all by their lonesome. Wes turns to Epps.

WES(CONT)

You know that, right? You know he's sick?

With a flip of his head Epps indicates the dead Iraqis.

EPPS

They shouldn't have been here.

WES

We shouldn't have been here, Epps. There is a war going on!

EPPS

This is miles from the battle lines. They were probably deserters.

WES

Deserters would have run, they wouldn't have engaged.

EPPS

They shouldn't have been out this way,
that's all I'm saying.

Wes starts to get it. It really doesn't matter what he has to say.

WES

We're not going back, are we?

Epps has got nothing to say to the truth. He turns and starts to walk to the Hummer.

WES(CONT)

You bastard! You're trying to get us
killed.

Like a whip Epps snaps around. He grabs up Wes and pulls him close.

EPPS

I'm trying to get us paid. I'm trying to
get us all paid! As long as there's a
chance something is out there we go on.
There's not going to be anymore trouble.
If there is, we go back, but there won't
be.

Almost as an afterthought Epps realizes he's got Wes, and lets him go. Gently he puts it:

EPPS(CONT)

You'll feel different after we find the
treasure. Money has away of making
people feel different.

Nobody's got anything to say to that, so they say nothing. Epps heads back to the Hummer. A beat later Wes follows.

Jaeger is already behind the wheel. Epps rides shotgun this time. Once again Wes is in back. To Jaeger, Epps ask:

EPPS

She okay?

JAEGER

Yeah. Yeah, she's fine.

EPPS

Let's go.

Jaeger fires it up, and pulls out. As they head off we:

FADE TO:

BLACK

FADE TO:

I/E. HUMVEE - LATER

The sun beats down violently as the Hummer rolls along. Epps, Jaeger and Wes all ride along in an angry silence. Jaeger starts to smile. He chuckles to himself. Epps, looking for anything to break the tension smiles a bit himself.

EPPS

What?

JAEGER

I'm just thinking, you know, if the rest of the boys knew what we're doing. I mean if they knew what we were coming back with.

EPPS

You can't tell anybody about this.

JAEGER

I know. I know. But I'm saying, if they knew. We're going to be millionaires, man. Millionaires!

Epps joins in cackling like a Hyena.

EPPS

It'd make their heads explode.

JAEGER

Millionaires, man.

He turns back to Wes.

JAEGER(CONT)

You know we're going to be rich. Admit it. You know. Come on, admit it.

In spite of himself Wes gives a little smile.

JAEGER(CONT)

Ahh, there it is. There it is. You know it.

Singing to Levert:

EPPS

Money, money, money, money...MONEY.

Jaeger joins in.

EPPS/JAEGER
Money, money, money, money...MONEY.

Epps starts to slow down.

WES
What are you doing.

EPPS
Low on gas. Got to refill.

A nervous look punches it way onto Jaeger's face. Epps stops. He and Wes jump out of the Hummer and go around back to the reserve tanks.

Jaeger stays in the vehicle looking all tense. After a beat Epps screams for him.

EPPS(O.C.)
Jaeger...JAEGER!

Time to face the music. Jaeger hauls himself out of the Hummer and goes around to Epps who's got a look on his face like he's just had a spoonful of steaming shit. He points angrily at one of the reserve tanks.

EPPS
Look at it. LOOK AT IT! Shot to hell.
It's been leaking gas since the fire
fight. I told you to check for damage.

JAEGER
...I know.

EPPS
And you missed this? How are you going
to miss something like this?

JAEGER
I didn't miss it. I figured if you knew
one of the reserves got hit you'd want to
turn back.

WES
So, you just let us drive on knowing we
were losing fuel? Knowing we were going
to run low in the middle of nowhere?

JAEGER
...I figured...I figured you'd turn back.

Wes gets a slow boil on.

WES

...You stupid son of a bitch.

Wes lunges for Jaeger, but doesn't have the speed or the skills. Jaeger counters, and sinks a fist into Wes' jaw. Wes goes down, but he manages to take Jaeger to the sand with him. They start to scrape, but it's obvious Jaeger has got the upper hand.

Epps reaches down and yanks Jaeger off of Wes.

EPPS

Get off him.

Jaeger comes up to his feet. Wes wipes some blood from his lips. He looks down at his bloodied hand, then sneers at Jaeger.

EPPS(CONT)

You two fighting's not going to get us anything.

WES

Him getting us stranded out here doesn't do much good either.

JAEGER

We're not stranded. We've got enough gas in the other reserve to get us back.

WES

Then lets go back while we still can.

JAEGER

As soon as we hit the mountain we would have had to go on foot anyway. We're not that far. We can make it.

EPPS

What do we do with the Humvee?

JAEGER

We leave it.

WES

What if someone takes it?

Jaeger throws his arms wide to the empty desert.

JAEGER

Who? Who's going to take it. We mark the location with the navicom, we can come right back to this spot.

Wes has had enough.

WES

You two don't even know how crazy you are. You want to go on your sick, little treasure hunt then go ahead, but mark me absent.

JAEGER

You have to go with us, Wes.

WES

Really? What is that, an order, private?

JAEGER

You have to go with us. You can't walk back...

Jaeger dangles the keys to the Humvee from a finger.

JAEGER{CONT}

And you sure as hell aren't going to drive.

Wes burns a hole through Jaeger's head with his eyes. Epps steps to him.

EPPS

Load what you can; water, tools, weapons. Anything you think we might need.

Wes burns on a bit more, then turns and heads for the Hummer. Jaeger watches him go, then smiles to himself.

JAEGER

Who's he kidding? He wants it as bad as we do. We're going to be fat, Epps. As soon as we get back to Saudivillie you and me are going to--

Epps gets up in Jaeger's face. The menace he projects is very real.

EPPS

We're going to keep going 'cause I want some of whatever's out there. But you ever pull something like trying to get my ass stranded out here again, and I'll kill you myself. You got that?

Jaeger just stands there, his fear swelling.

EPPS{CONT}

SAY IT!

JAEGER

I got that...sir.

Epps storms over towards the Hummer leaving Jaeger to be all scared with himself.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - LATER

A long line of footprints works their way through the sand up to Epps, Jaeger, and Wes. Epps and Wes trek side by side.

Jaeger is behind them, having trouble keeping up. Between pants he gasps:

JAEGER

Hey...hey! Slow up. You don't have to go so fast.

EPPS

Faster we get there, faster we get back.

JAEGER

Yeah. I know. I'm with you.

Jaeger struggles on just a bit more, then:

JAEGER(CONT)

I'm gonna...I'm just gonna stop for a little water.

EPPS

Don't drink up all of yours, 'cause you aren't getting any of ours.

JAEGER

I'm just going to have a little sip, that's all. Just a sip.

Jaeger lets himself drop down into the sand. He looks up. Epps and Wes are still walking.

JAGER{CONT)

Wait for me!

EPPS

You can catch up.

JAEGER

Yeah...I'm right behind you.

Wes looks back at Jaeger sitting on the ground sucking on his water.

WES

Thanks for straightening out Jaeger.

Epps shrugs, like hitting Jaeger wasn't much of anything.

EPPS

Maybe we are crazy for doing this. But if we do it, we do it right. I just needed to explain that in a way I wouldn't have to do it again.

WES

Not much chance of that. Jaeger's an idiot.

EPPS

He's not so--

WES

He's an idiot, and he's not nearly as hard as he thinks.

EPPS

How tough you have to be to make the army? All you've got to do is shoot a gun, and stop a bullet.

Again Epps looks behind him as Jaeger struggles to his feet and stumbles after his two comrades.

WES

Look at him. We ought to just leave him behind.

Epps gives a little laugh like he's just heard a mildly amusing punchline.

WES(CONT)

Like he said: People get lost in wars all the time. And out here? Out here there are eight million ways to die.

All this talk starts to creep out Epps a little.

EPPS

Okay, so he was riding you. Get over it.

Wes smiles a little smile.

WES

I'm just talking.

They walk on.

Jaeger works to catch up, muttering to himself as he goes.

JAEGER

Can't even slow up for me. Wasn't for me they wouldn't even be here. I'm the one that found the map. Should have just come by myself. Should've. Shouldn't even cut them in. Shouldn't.

As Jaeger steps down he hears an audible clicking sound come from under his boot. He goes dead still. Panic races up and down his spine. In almost a whisper he says:

JAEGER

Epps...

Again, louder:

JAEGER(CONT)

Epps!

Like he couldn't be more annoyed Epps turns around.

EPPS

What!?

JAEGER

Mine.

Epps isn't sure of what he's heard.

EPPS

What?

JAEGER

Mine. Land mine!

Epps doesn't say anything, he just keeps on staring. Scared, angry they don't get it:

JAEGER(CONT)

I stepped on a land mine!

Epps and Wes look at each other, then back to Jaeger. Like he's got no time to mess around:

EPPS

You didn't step on any mine.

JAEGER

I heard it click.

EPPS

If you stepped on a mine you'd be dead by now. Nobody uses delayed-fuse mines anymore.

JAEGER

I heard it.

WES

Maybe it's just a can, or something.

Jaeger loses it.

JAEGER

JESUS CHRIST, I'M STANDING ON A MINE.
SHUT UP, AND GET OVER HERE!

Just plain sick of all this, Epps and Wes trudge back over to Jaeger.

EPPS

Paranoid, that's your problem. You're
just paranoid. Why'd the paranoid one
have to find the map?

Epps pulls a knife from his belt. He sinks to the ground and probes the sand under Jaeger's foot. Nothing...nothing... WE HEAR THE SOUND OF METAL AGAINST METAL. Epps goes white. For a second he doesn't move. Tension falls like a steel curtain. Slow, careful, Epps withdraws the blade and stands. Jaeger reads the expression on Epps' face.

JAEGER

Oh, God! Oh God!

EPPS

Just be cool.

JAEGER

It's a mine, isn't it?

EPPS

Just relax.

JAEGER

How'm I gonna relax standing on a mine!?

EPPS

We're going to get off, all right. We'll
get you off of there. Just...be cool.

Epps goes to Wes. The two start to move away from Jaeger.

JAEGER

Where you going?

EPPS

Me and Wes are just going to talk.

JAEGER

Why you got to move away to talk!?

EPPS

We're going to be right over here.

JAEGER

You're moving away because it's going to blow up, isn't it!? It's going to blow up!

EPPS

I said be cool, all right? Now be cool!

Epps and Wes move over and huddle.

WES

What kind of mine?

EPPS

I don't know, and I wasn't about to mess with it.

WES

Should have blown already. Delayed fuse, that's Vietnam stuff.

EPPS

Maybe that's all the Iraqis could afford, okay? Maybe they got it on discount. Maybe the fuse is messed up. Or maybe it's going to go off in two seconds, and we won't have to worry about getting Jaeger down off there, all we'll have to worry about is finding the pieces.

Behind them, pathetically, Jaeger cries:

JAEGER

Epps...

WES

Doesn't matter. We're not going to be able to get him off it anyway.

EPPS

There's a way.

JAEGER

Epps...

WES

Can't do it. Can't do it, and keep him alive.

Epps' eyes narrow. He doesn't want to hear this kind of talk.

EPPS

I said nobody dies. Nobody dies.

JAEGER

Epps, my leg is falling asleep.

Epps thinks, and thinks hard.

EPPS

(To Wes)

We've got rope?

WES

For climbing.

EPPS

Break it out.

Epps crosses back over to Jaeger.

JAEGER

My leg is falling asleep.

EPPS

It's not falling asleep. You've only been standing there for three minutes.

JAEGER

I'm the one who can feel my leg, and it's falling asleep.

EPPS

It falls asleep and you die, so wake it the hell up.

Wes crosses over with climbing rope. Very, very gently Epps wraps the middle of the rope around Jaeger's waist leaving several feet dangling off each end.

JAEGER

How's this going to work?

EPPS

Me and Wes each going take an end of the rope, run our asses of, and yank you off the mine.

JAEGER

That's going to do it, right? I'm going to be okay.

Not too convincingly:

EPPS

You're going to be fine.

JAEGER

You're not going to let me die, are you!?
Don't let me die!

Ignoring the question:

EPPS

When we start running suck up your
breath. You're going to get the wind
knocked out of you.

JAEGER

Don't let me die, Epps. I don't want to
die.

Epps and Wes pick up separate ends of the rope, and take up
positions behind Jaeger. Epps waits a beat, afraid of what
might happen, but there is no choice. He digs in ready to
take off running. Wes whispers to him:

WES

What if it's a Valloro 69? Just going to
bounce right up out of the ground,
explode in the air, kill him and us.

EPPS

You just go when I say go.

WES

Should have at least gotten the map off
of him. Blows up with him then we did
all this for nothing.

Ignoring him:

EPPS

Ready?

WES

Yeah.

Epps takes a couple of deep breaths, holds one:

EPPS

GO!

Wes and Epps are off the the races, churning up sand as they
race away from Jaeger. They scream like banshees as if to
draw strength.

Jaeger does a little chant:

JAEGER

Oh, God. Oh, God!

The rope goes taught. Jaeger's body jerks violently backward as he gets the air punched out of him. As his feet leave the ground the mine detonates.

CUT TO:

POV - JAEGER

A fireball blossoms, and eats up the air towards the camera as THE CAMERA ITSELF RUSHES AWAY from the belching fire and smoke.

CUT TO:

JAEGER

His feet just clear the outer edge of the fireball, but still get licked and burned by flames before he slams to the ground several feet from the explosion.

Epps runs to Jaeger. Wes takes a casual stroll back over.

JAEGER

I'm all right. Oh, Jesus, I'm all right.

All casual like, Wes says:

WES

The map okay?

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - LATER

We see a set of three very odd tracks across the ground. It looks like something has been dragged through the sand. THE CAMERA FOLLOWS THE TRACKS TO EPPS, WES AND JAEGER who crawl on their bellies. They thrust knives into the sand before them searching for mines. We get the feeling they've been at this for awhile.

WES

How long we going to keep this up.

JAEGER

Until we're out of the mine field is how long.

WES

Haven't found a mine for half a mile, or more.

JAEGER

That don't mean nothing. Iraqis could have just spread them out like that; make

us think we're in the clear.

WES

You want to crawl, crawl.

Wes stands and starts to walk. Epps waits a beat and follows suit. Only Jaeger stays down.

JAEGER

You're going to blow yourselves up.

EPPS

Wes is right. If there were any more mines we would have found them. Hell, that one you stepped on was probably old anyway; left over from the war with Iran.

JAEGER

You don't know that. It could be a trick.

EPPS

If we step on a mine we'll know it was.
Let me see the maps.

Jaeger stays down, afraid to get up.

EPPS(CONT)

Get up and give me the maps.

After a beat Jaeger stands and hands over the map from the puzzle box and a recon photo. Epps compares the two, then takes out the navicom.

EPPS(CONT)

We're on course. Northeast, twenty-eight degrees. When we hit the base of the mountain we'll find a pass. I can see it on the recon photo. Shouldn't be too hard to traverse. That'll take us to the top and...

Epps points at a black dot on the puzzle box map with a smaller white dot in the middle.

EPPS

This. Whatever it is.

JAEGER

It's the treasure, that's what it is.

WES

It better be.

Epps starts to pack away the map. Real plain Jaeger says:

JAEGER

The map.

Epps stops, like he almost not sure what Jaeger is talking about. Jaeger extends a hand.

JAEGER(CONT)

The map.

Epps gets it. He hands the map back to Jaeger who tucks it away. Our boys walk on.

EPPS

You're not losing trust, are you?

JAEGER

Just figure it's my map, I ought to hang on to it.

WES

If all we wanted was the map out of you we could have taken it while you were standing on that mine pissing on yourself.

JAEGER

Probably would've too if Epps wasn't around to stop you.

EPPS

I didn't have to stop anything, 'cause nobody was going to do nothing. We're in this together, understand?

JAEGER

Yeah, I understand. Wes doesn't want to come along in the first place, but he gets a third of the find. That's a sweet deal.

WES

I'm getting tired of you riding me, Jaeger.

JAEGER

Anytime you want to do something about it just let--

Epps stops dead in his tracks.

EPPS

Quiet!

They all go quiet. Epps cocks an ear to the air and listens. They all listen. Wind, but that's about it.

JAEGER
I don't hear any--

EPPS
Shut up and listen!

Again they listen. Again they hear wind. Then, there it is; the sound Epps is looking for: A pop, like a big balloon being burst just over the next rise.

WES
Gunfire.

Quick like that Jaeger grabs his M-16 down off his shoulder and is about to ready it when Epps slaps down the muzzle.

EPPS
Don't!

JAEGER
It's a fire fight.

EPPS
Single shots doesn't mean a fire fight.
That's not a battle going on.

WES
What is it?

Epps thinks. Yeah, what the hell is it?

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - RISE

Epps, Jaeger, and Wes edge carefully up to the lip of the rise on their bellies. They're barely visible against the sand. Epps takes out a pair of binoculars and zeros in on the ground below.

CUT TO:

POV - EPPS

THROUGH BINOCULAR LENSES we see a SHI'ITE CAMP: A tent city really. There are several uniformed IRAQI SOLDIERS who are roughing up the Shi'ite men.

CUT TO:

EPPS, WES, JAEGER

JAEGER
What is it?

Epps hands the binoculars over to Jaeger. Who looks down at the scene on the ground.

EPPS
Iraqis. A bunch of them.

JAEGER
What are they doing here?

Jaeger hands the binoculars to Wes.

EPPS
Well, it's Iraq. I'm not sure, but I'm guessing that has something to do with them being here.

JAEGER
What are they doing in the middle of nowhere?

WES
Maybe they're looking for gold.

CUT TO:

POV - WES

AGAIN WE SEE THROUGH THE BINOCULAR LENSES. One of the Iraqi soldiers is pushing around a Shi'ite, having a good laugh about it, then casual as rain pulls out a gun and gives him a bullet, gift wrapped, straight to the brain.

CUT TO:

EPPS, WES, JAEGER

JAEGER
Jesus! What the hell did he do that for? They're Iraqis. Why are Iraqis killing Iraqis?

WES
Those people down there are Shi'ites. You've got Shi'ites in the south of Iraq and Khurds in the North. Neither of them've got much love for Saddam. Probably figured once the war started there might be an uprising, so he sent his soldiers out to slap them around some.

EPPS
They're doing more than slapping.

JAEGER

The Shi'ites are on our side? I didn't know that.

WES

Is there anything you do know?

JAEGER

I know you're a pussy. I know that.

EPPS

All right. Let's get out of here.

WES

The soldiers are going to kill those people!

JAEGER

So?

WES

We have to do something.

EPPS

There's nothing we can do.

WES

We can fight. That's what we're here for: To fight the Iraqis. To help the Shi'ites, and the Khurds.

JAGER

I didn't sign up to help any Shi'ites. All we were supposed to do is get the Iraqis out of Kuwait, and if we aren't doing that then all bets are off.

EPPS

We carrying any ordinance?

WES

Some extra grenades. A Claymore.

Epps thinks, then shakes his head.

EPPS

Not enough. We're out numbered and out gunned. They'd cut us to shreds.

JAEGER

So good bye, Shi'ites. Thanks for playing. We have some lovely parting gifts for you as you go.

WES

We're American soldiers. We don't

abandon people.

JAEGER

Funny you should say that while we're out looking for gold.

WES

You're the one wanted to kill Iraqis so bad.

JAEGER

I've got a new agenda now, it's get rich. The only way the Iraqis figure into that is not at all.

EPPS

(To Wes)

I don't want to see people killed any more than you. But we try to help out we die, and all we do is die.

WES

We can't just go off and--

EPPS

There's nothing we can do. We shouldn't even be here in the first place.

There's a big, loud quiet as our boys just hang there. From down below comes another balloon burst; another gun shot.

Epps lowers his head. He wants to fight, but it's like he said: There's nothing they can do. Epps slides back away from the rise, then Jaeger, and finally Wes disappears back the way they came.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT/MOUNTAINS - LATER

It's the kind of red rock and mesas one would expect to find in a desert; not too steep or rough, but it looks as though they will definitely takes more than a little physical exertion to navigate.

Epps, Wes, and Jaeger approach a path at the mesa's base. Jaeger takes out his maps and looks them over.

JAEGER

This is it. We're right on target.

Epps takes a long gander up towards the top of the mesa.

EPPS

All we've got to do is make it to the

top.

WES

And find the treasure, and get it, and get back to the Humvee, and get the hell out of Iraqi without getting our heads blown off, but that's about it.

EPPS

We're not going to find anything standing here. Let's get to climbing.

They ready their packs and weapons, then start up the mesa.

FADE TO:

Our boys trekking along the pass. They push onward and upward.

FADE TO:

The pass has narrowed, and become more treacherous: The rocks are loose and the footing unsure. The going has slowed considerably as each man must be extremely careful of their steps.

FADE TO:

Our boys stop. The pass has seemingly come to an end. For a short ways the face of the mesa is almost sheer. The three soldiers take it in.

EPPS

Not much of a pass.

WES

Probably was a couple of hundred years ago when whoever drew the map came through here. Worn down to nothing now.

EPPS

Picks up again just on the other side.

They all take a good look at what little there is to cross on, and how far down it is to the hard, jagged rocks below.

JAEGER

Think we can make it?

WES

We make it, or we go back empty handed.

EPPS

Looks like we make it.

Epps and Wes edge their way towards what's left of the pass. Jaeger just stands there staring down. Way down.

FADE TO:

Epps, Wes and Jaeger inch along the pass hugging the face of the mesa. Small rocks churn beneath their feet and tumble to the ground below. No man says a word, they're too busy trying to keep alive, and the air is filled with the sounds of labored breathing.

Each step so very careful: Testing the pass for purchase, making sure the footing is solid. They inch one foot forward, then slide over the next. Their hands probe the cliff face, fingers crawling like spider legs, looking for something, anything, to take hold of.

Sweat drips into Epps eye. He blinks hard and fast trying to clear his vision. Right now he can't really afford distractions.

Slowly, carefully, inch by inch the little death dance goes on.

Jaeger steps. He steps wrong. The pass gives way under his foot and begins to slide down. Instinctively Wes rockets out an arm grabbing Jaeger by the uniform. At first Jaeger smiles, glad for the save. But then he realizes something: Wes is literally holding his life in his hands. All Wes has to do is loosen his grip, and...

The color drains from Jaeger's face. Wes stares back blank as a bowl of water.

Eternity goes on for a second.

Finally Wes yanks Jaeger back up against the mesa's face, then slides on. Jaeger just hangs where he is for a beat clutching the rocks for dear life.

FADE TO:

Epps makes it to the far side of the broken pass. He holds out a hand to Wes and reels him in. Together they both help bring in Jaeger. Wes looks back over the path they've just crossed.

WES

The US Army: Always an adventure.

EPPS

Let me see the map.

Jaeger hands the map to Epps who gives it a going over. THEY WALK AS THEY TALK.

EPPS(CONT)

Should be easy going from here. Stay on the pass straight to the dot.

WES

What do you figure it to be?

EPPS

Got to be some kind of landmark; something distinctive.

JAEGER

X marks the spot.

EPPS

Something like that.

JAEGER

But the white dot in the middle; that's got to mean something.

EPPS

I hope it means something, otherwise...

WES

Otherwise whatever we're looking for could be anywhere.

EPPS

Basically. But the map has been pretty precise so far. I don't think it'll be too hard to--

Our boys step past a grouping of rocks. They stop dead. Sitting before them, in what looks like a small camp, is FIVE IRAQI SOLDIERS. Time clicks by real slow for an instant. It's a delayed reaction, like the beat it takes after you pick up a hot pan before you realize that, yeah, it is burning the flesh from your hand.

EPPS(CONT)

Take cover!

Our three soldiers turn and bolt back the way they came. They run like wild rabbits for a bit, jumping over a rock formation and hitting the deck using the rocks as cover. Like well-trained warriors they peel their weapons from their shoulders, lock and load, and stand ready. They wait a bit, taking several deep breaths like divers about to go under. Finally Epps gives the order.

EPPS(CONT)

Let's hit 'em!

Simultaneously they spring up from behind the rocks and bear down on the Iraqis with their M-16s ready to blow them to kingdom come.

One problem: No Iraqis.

For a beat our three don't move. They hold position, breath coming hard like sprinters at the end of a race. They're eyes flint back and forth scanning for something...anything. There's nothing.

EPPS(CONT)

Cover me.

M-16 still at the ready, Epps raises up taking a tactical stance. He inches forward, sweeping his weapon back and forth before him for any potential target. There is none. The Iraqis have vanished. Epps lowers the M-16, but does not shoulder it.

EPPS(CONT)

Clear.

Wes and Jaeger come up from their cover and cross to Epps. They keep their weapons ready. Eerily they all look around as if trying to spot ghosts.

WES

Where'd they go?

EPPS

I don't know. There's a lot of space up here. They could be just about--

WES

Weird they didn't chase us.

JAEGER

Maybe they're as scared of us as we are of them.

WES

Just seems weird they didn't chase us.

EPPS

What's weird is how they disappeared. Doesn't make sense. Doesn't...

There is a sound; a steady swooshing that starts faint and grows closer like a rolling thunder. Our three start looking around, turning where they stand, trying to find the source of the sound as it rises to a near deafening pitch. There's nothing. They see nothing. Still the sound races closer and closer. Epps, Jaeger and Wes raise up their weapons in preparation to defend themselves against this unseen beast.

From below the edge of the mesa a HELICOPTER GUNSHIP - probably a MIL MI-24 HIND-D ARMED ASSAULT HELICOPTER if you want to be technical - raises up very dramatically into sight. It hangs in the air ominously before our soldiers. On board are the vanished Iraqis wearing nasty grins. The PILOT brings the gunship about and levels her massive machine cannons at our boys.

EPPS(CONT)

Scatter!

Wes and Jaeger don't have to be told twice. They bolt from their spots, and not an instant too soon. The GUNNER lets fly a barrage of shells that literally tear up the ground where our boys were just standing. We see what the chopter's weapons will do to rock. We can imagine what they would do to flesh.

Epps, Jaeger and Wes take cover behind some rocks. The gunship swings around, picks up speed and bears down on them.

More shells fired. They punch into and through the rocks our boys use for cover. Again the three scatter, and just in time as the shells rip their way through the rock.

Our three go sliding down an embankment, crouching low. Their heads whip around looking for the gunship.

JAEGER

Where is it? Where'd it go?

EPPS

Stay low.

JAEGER

Where the hell is it!?

EPPS

Just stay down.

In answer to Jaeger's question the gunship comes swooping up behind them like a bird of prey. Our three have all of about a second to get running before the Iraqis send more shells their way. They kick up chunks of rock as they ping, ping, ping around Epps, Wes and Jaeger who make a wild, evasive run.

Dig it: Up ahead is a narrow passage through rock face. They race for it, hurl themselves into it as the gunship sends a special delivery of white-hot metal their way.

Once inside the passage they have a bit of breathing space. It's too narrow for the gunship to get a good shot through. Our three press themselves up against the rock walls and suck

air.

Beyond the opening to the passage the gunship swings back and forth like a junkyard dog patrolling its kingdom.

Jaeger's worked up a real scare.

JAEGER

What are we going to do? What the hell
are we going to do?

EPPS

We're not going to do anything.

JAEGER

(Panicked)

They're going to kill us!

EPPS

They can't shoot us in here.

WES

And they can't fly around out there
forever.

EPPS

So we wait.

JAEGER

If they land--

EPPS

If they land, we can take them. If they
don't land, then we've got nothing to
worry about.

Wes watches the gunship as it seemingly settles in the air. It floats very steady as if... Wes' eyes key in on something: The gunship's missile pods rotating slightly, coming in line... Wes' eyes go wide like someone just jammed an electric cattle prod in his ass.

WES

Missile!

EPPS

Move!

Epps, Wes and Jaeger sprint for the opening at the far end of the passage as a missile rockets from the gunship's pod. With a wild whine it rides the wind like a deadly arrow straight into the passage. Slamming into the ground it sprouts a terrific fireball that rides on a massive explosion. It races through the passage, lifts our boys from the ground and tosses them out into the open like they were

nothing more than discarded ragdolls.

Jaeger takes cover and cowers. He puts his panic into overdrive.

Wes pulls his rifle. Grunting like an animal he sprays bullets at the chopter, but it's like throwing snowballs at an elephant. The gunship turns on Wes and fires in his direction. It doesn't hit him, but it sends him running.

Epps has had enough of this shit. He scrambles to load a grenade in his launcher as the gunship comes about. It races for him, cannons at the ready. This one is going to be close. Epps locks and loads just as the chopter swings down on him. Epps fires, but the gunship simply jukes up and away from the grenade the way someone might step over a bug. The grenade impacts the rock face behind the chopter exploding harmlessly. The chopter returns the favor by reining down a hail of shells that kicks Epps back FLIPPING HIM UP AND OVER the edge of the plateau. His M-16 goes flying, smashing into the ground far below. Epps manages to grab hold of the plateau lip with one hand. It swings him around, slamming him hard against the cliff face. He hangs there, suspended by his weakening grip, far above the ground.

JAEGER

Epps!

Jaeger and Wes run to him, grabbing him by his arm. They pull and pull hard until Epps can get some kind of purchase, and crawl his way back up to the plateau.

At the same time the gunship lowers itself so that it hovers above and beyond our three. It rotates so that the bay doors are facing Epps, Wes and Jaeger. Three Iraqis are inside, weapons trained on our targets. One of them yells something. Wes translates.

WES

They want us to surrender.

The three share a nervous look. Epps fairly growls:

EPSS

Yeah, I'll surrender.

Jaeger and Wes watch as, shielded by their bodies, Epps palms a grenade from his belt. Wes and Jaeger don't quite smile, but they know now they at least have a chance. As Epps stands the other two turn to face the Iraqis. They all fold their hands behind their necks which, for Epps, hides the grenade from view. Slowly they walk towards the gunship. One of the Iraqis starts to yell something. He lifts his weapon and aims it at our boys. With his thumb Epps yanks the pin from the grenade and lets fly. It's a perfect toss,

landing in the chopper's bay. The Iraqis see the grenade land, they scramble for it. One of them grabs it up and is about to throw it back out of the gunship.

Too late.

The grenade explodes in the Iraqi's hand killing him instantly. It also touches off a fire ball that severely damages the gunship. It rocks, lists, spins wildly out of control.

EPPS(CONT)

Get down!

Our three hug the ground as the chopper's rotors go whipping through the air like throwing knives landing perilously among them. Worse still the gunship, now a lame bird, drops from the sky towards Epps, Jaeger and Wes. All they can do is cover their heads, as if that would do any good against two tons of crashing steel. The chopper rushes down...down, but it just misses them. It slams into the ground skipping over the edge of the plateau, to the rocks below.

Our three pick themselves up. They walk to the edge of the plateau and look down on the crash.

Jaeger, scared painted all over his face, sinks to his knees and looks as if he's about to go into shock.

JAEGER

Oh, God...

Wes looks down at Jaeger with a bit of a disdainful sneer.

WES

Yeah. Just keeps getting better and better, doesn't it?

They stare for awhile, then one by one move off. Us? We:

FADE TO:

BLACK

FADE TO:

EXT. DESERT/MESA - LATER

Epps, Wes and Jaeger trek to a large crevice that runs straight down into the ground. Jaeger takes out his maps and photos. Epps consults the navicom.

WES

What do you think?

JAEGER

Lines up with the map and the photos.

EPPS

We're right where we should be.

Epps tucks the navicom away on his belt and takes a look around. Not much to see.

EPPS(CONT)

I sure don't see much place else around here to hide anything.

Wes pulls a lantern/flashlight from his pack. Going to his belly he shines it down into the crevice.

WES

Can't see anything.

He tosses a rock into it. We can hear it hit the ground below.

WES(CONT)

It's got a bottom.

JAEGER

Guess we know what the next stop is.

EPPS

All right. Let's break out some utility shovels, lanterns, and a claymore in case we have to do any blasting. Me and Jaeger'll climb down, and see what we can see.

WES

What am I supposed to do?

EPPS

Got to have someone here in case we need help making it back up. Doesn't hurt to have a look out either.

JAEGER

Think there might be more Iraqis?

EPPS

Right now I wouldn't be surprised if Eartha Kitt showed up singing Send In The Clowns.

CUT TO:

WE SEE A FEW QUICK SHOTS of Wes securing a line down into the crevice, Epps and Jaeger clipping on rapeling harnesses, the two men lowering themselves down into the great unknown.

CUT TO:

INT. CREVICES - CONTINUOUS

The lantern punches a hole through the darkness as Epps uses it like a machete to blaze a trail. He sinks down...down until finally they touch bottom. He unclips himself from the rope and Jaeger starts down.

The space isn't that big, like a small cave really. It's tight enough that the lantern pretty well lights up the whole of it. But it's big enough that one wouldn't have any idea where to start digging.

Jaeger makes it to the bottom. Wes yells down.

WES

You down?

JAEGER

Yeah, we're down.

WES

What do you see?

EPPS

Nothing.

More to himself:

EPPS (CONT)

A whole lot of nothing.

JAEGER

So where do we start?

Epps takes a look around, then shrugs.

EPPS

Wherever you want.

Epps breaks out his utility shovel from his pack. Jaeger follows suit. He looks around, picks a spot and starts digging.

FADE TO:

WES - LATER

He sits up top, weapon in hand, standing guard.

FADE TO:

EPPS AND JAEGER - LATER

They dig furiously at sperate ends of the cave. They dig with a determination to find something.

FADE TO:

WES - LATER

Still up top, he's given up on standing guard. Now he stretches out on the ground sunning himself.

FADE TO:

EPPS AND JAEGER

Their shirts are off, and they're caked with sweat and dirt. They look like they've been digging for quite some time.

They certainly don't have the same enthusiasm they displayed previously. Now they just seem to dig by rote.

FADE TO:

WES - LATER

The sun has begun to sink noticeably. Wes leans over the crevice.

WES

Hey...Hey! Sun's going down. Epps!
Jaeger! It's getting dark up here.

CUT TO:

EPPS AND JAEGER - SIMULTANEOUS

It's obvious these guys have been digging for hours and come up with nothing. Epps keeps digging, but just barely. Jaeger doesn't even bother anymore. He just sits on the ground sulking.

WES(O.C.)

Epps!

EPPS

I heard!

CUT TO:

WES

He rolls over and scoffs.

WES

There's nothing down there.

EPPS AND JAEGER

Epps notices Jaeger just sitting there.

EPPS

What are you doing?

JAEGER

What does it look like I'm doing?

EPPS

It looks like you're not doing anything.

JAEGER

I'm not. And I'm not doing anything,
because there's nothing down here.

EPPS

Get up and dig.

JAEGER

We've been digging. We've been digging
for hours. If there was anything here to
find we would have found it.

EPPS

Get up off your ass and dig!

Sounding defeated as all hell, and very whiney:

JAEGER

What's the point? There's nothing here.
The map's a fake. Christ, even I see
that now. We're just wasting our time.
We might as well give up and--

Epps spins. Like a bolt of lightning he's on Jaeger,
grabbing him up and pulling him close.

EPPS

You listen to me. The whole reason we're
here is because of you and that map of
yours. I didn't do all this for nothing,
and I'm not leaving with nothing. If you
think for a second I'm giving up just
'cause you're too tired to turn over some
dirt, then you don't know John Epps too
well, do you? So you dig, and you keep
on digging 'til I say you don't have to
dig anymore.

Epps pushes Jaeger back and he goes down to the ground hard.

A fire burns inside him. A fire that burns out of control. Before he even knows what he's doing Jaeger springs to his feet, shovel in hand, bringing it down in a long arc for Epps' head.

Epps bears him coming. He deftly side steps the blow, grabs hold of Jaeger and forces him down. They roll around violently like wild dogs trading blows and trying to work the other into a choke hold.

CUT TO:

WES

He can hear the sounds of the struggle and yells down.

WES

What are you doing...? What the hell are you doing down there?

CUT TO:

EPPS AND JAEGER

They fight on; down and dirty. Locked together they roll around the ground, each trying to get the upper hand. They smash into the lantern, sending the cave into near darkness. At the same time Epps works himself on top of Jaeger. He lands a couple of solid punches, takes a rock from the ground and lifts it high ready to send it crashing into Jaeger's skull. All Jaeger can do is steel himself for the deathblow.

Something catches Epps' eye: A glint of light flashes across his faces. He stares at it; at an opening, a bare seem really, in the side of the cave wall where light seeps through. The rock slips from his hand. Forgetting all about Jaeger Epps goes to the opening. Jaeger himself, as if what just happened hadn't really happened, comes up along side Epps.

JAEGER

Must be a compartment.

EPPS

I feel air. Probably opens up outside somewhere. That's where the light comes from. Couldn't see it with the lanternon.

Jaeger says what they both must have guessed by now.

JAEGER

The white dot; light in the dark.

That's all Epps needs to hear. He starts clawing at the opening with his bare hands. That gets him nothing.

Grabbing up a shovel he starts to whack at it. Jaeger gets the lantern working again, then picks up his shovel and joins in. They keep hitting and hitting, picking up a rhythm like a southern chain gang.

JAEGER (CONT)

Maybe we should blast it loose with the claymore.

EPPS

It's giving.

The rock gives way enough for Epps to pry it free. There's just enough space for a man to reach his arm through. For a beat Epps and Jaeger just stare at the opening almost afraid of what may or may not be in there.

With some trepidation Epps begins to move his hand towards the opening. Slowly it extends closer...closer... Just as it moves beyond the opening. There is a wild, screeching hiss as some small, hairy thing leaps for Epps.

Both Epps and Jaeger recoil, Jaeger going nuts with fear.

JAEGER

Jesus Christ!

Jaeger grabs up his M-16 and takes aim at...whatever it is.

EPPS

No, don't shoot!

Too late. Jaeger squeezes off a few rounds. A couple of bullets hit the thing, but the rest ricochet wildly about the cave and around Epps and Jaeger. All the two men can do is duck and cover - squeezing themselves into tight, fetal balls - as the bullets scream back and forth like little chunks of random death.

Eventually the bullets lose speed and die off. Jaeger and Epps raise up off the ground. They walk to the dead thing that jumped from the opening.

EPPS

It's just a mongoose.

JAEGER

Is it dead?

EPPS

Yeah, Bwana, you got it.

CUT TO:

WES

Yelling down

WES

What the hell are you doing!?

CUT TO:

EPPS AND JAEGER

JAEGER

I think we found something.

They go back to the opening. Epps shines a light inside to make sure there are no more surprises, then reaches an arm in. Jaeger looks on with great anticipation, licking his lips like a hungry jackal, as Epps twists his arm in the opening. Searching...searching...

Epps' face freezes. He goes perfectly still for a beat, then slowly draws his hand from the opening. It clutches a wooden box. It is similar to Jaeger's puzzle box, but slightly bigger. The instant Epps sets the box on the ground Jaeger smashes his shovel into it shattering the ancient wood. From the splinters pours a river of gold coins. Jaeger and Epps are too stunned to do anything but look at it.

CUT TO:

WES

He leans over the crevice.

WES

What is it? What'd you find?

CUT TO:

EPPS AND JAEGER

Incredulous himself:

EPPS

Gold. It's gold.

Jaeger yells it at the top of his lungs:

JAEGER

IT'S GOLD!

CUT TO:

WES

His lips flutter a bit before they land on the word

WES

Gold...

CUT TO:

EPPS AND JAEGER

They scoop up handfuls of the coins and let them run through their fingers.

JAEGER

It's not like I figured. It's cold. And it's heavier than I imagined.

EPPS

I wouldn't know. I never imagined this. Not in my whole life did I ever imagine this.

JAEGER

You don't have to imagine it. Not anymore. Now all you've got to think up is what it's going to buy you.

Epps grabs up one coin and stands.

EPPS

Wes!

With all his strength Epps gives the coin an underhanded toss straight up.

CUT TO:

WES

Wes catches the coin. He turns it over in his fingers. He smiles, and there's nothing pleasant about it.

CUT TO:

JAEGER AND EPPS

Epps yells up.

EPPS

Wes, thrown down a pack.

A beat later an empty pack comes falling down. Epps picks it up and takes it over to Jaeger. The two of them start loading the coins into it.

EPPS(CONT)

I don't think the line will take the

weight of a man and the coins.

(Yelling up.)

Wes!? We'll send the gold up, then me
and Jaeger'll climb back.

WES(O.C.)

Ready when you are.

Epps is just about to attach the pack of gold to the line
when Jaeger grabs his arm.

JAEGER

Wait.

EPPS

What?

Jaeger isn't sure how to say what he's thinking.

EPPS(CONT)

What?

JAEGER

We send the gold up what's to stop him
from taking off and leaving us down here?

EPPS

He's not going to leave us.

JAEGER

What's to stop him if he wanted to? All
he has to do is cut the line...

Good point. What is to stop him?

WES

You ready?

EPPS

(To Jaeger)

All right. I'll go up, then you send up
the gold and--

JAEGER

Why do I have to stay down here?

EPPS

Jesus, Jaeger.

JAEGER

I don't see how that plan's any better.

EPPS

Someone's got to send the gold up. It
can't get on the line by itself.

JAGER
Why's it got to be me?

A tense moment passes.

WES
What are you doing? You ready?

Another moment, then:

EPPS
All right. You go up, I'll send up the
gold, then follow.

JAEGER
Yeah. Yeah, that'll work.

Jaeger goes over to the line and hooks himself on. He's just about ready to climb up when Epps stops him. Serious as a heart attack he says:

EPPS
If you're even thinking about leaving me
down here, you better think again.

Jaeger stares at Epps for a beat, then laughs himself a little laugh. He yells up:

JAEGER
Wes, I'm coming up.

Jaeger starts to climb as Wes helps out by pulling on the rope.

Epps watches him for a bit, then looks at the pack of gold and the rest of the equipment. Suddenly he scurries about gathering up all the things they've brought down.

Jaeger continues his climb, disappearing up into the crevice. A few beats later the rope comes snaking back down from, above. Epps brings over the pack of gold and attaches it to the rope. Yelling up:

EPPS
Okay!

The rope goes taught, slowly drawing the pack up, up into the crevice finally to be swallowed from view.

Epps waits for the rope to come back down. He waits. He waits a beat more. No rope.

EPPS(CONT)
Wes? Jaeger?

He tries to keep the apprehension from his voice, but it creeps in anyway. He tries it again.

EPPS(CONT)

Jaeger?

Still more nothing. What's that sound? It's Epps' breath getting heavier and faster.

EPPS(CONT)

Jaeger!?

Nothing. Then something. The rope snakes its way back down. Epps can't help but let go of a little laugh, like a guy who's just been given a scare by his own shadow. Taking up his own pack Epps hooks up, then starts the climb to the top.

CUT TO:

JAEGER AND WES

They work the rope, helping Epps up. He gets to the lip of the crevice, and pulls himself over. He's breathing hard, and lets his pack slide to the ground. Trying not to sound too rattled.

EPPS

What the hell took so long.

JAEGER

Just had to get the pack unhooked from the line. It didn't seem that long.

EPPS

Not when you're up here with the gold, I guess not.

Throwing Epps' own words back at him:

WES

Not losing trust, are you?

Epps lets this go.

EPPS

It'll be too dark to make our way back now. Let's bed down for the night and head out at first light.

WES

What about the gold?

EPPS

What about it?

WES

Maybe we should split it up now.

EPPS

We started this together, and we're staying together, so there's no point in splitting things up now.

WES

What if we get separated? Way I see it if something happens I want to be carrying my share.

JAEGER

Wes might be right about that.

EPPS

It stays as it is. We're halfway home now. Let's not blow it by people getting ideas.

WES

You're the one with all the ideas.

EPPS

You've had your say, Wes. Now leave it.

WES

Maybe you've got ideas of your own for the gold. Maybe you've already got things worked out.

EPPS

Maybe I do.

WES

Maybe I don't need your ideas. Maybe I can do better on my own.

Epps sees trouble coming, and deals with it the only way he knows how. Casually he turns from Wes as if he's about to let things go. Suddenly he spins back around throwing a punch to Wes' jaw that sends him to the ground.

Wes puts a hand to his mouth. It comes back stained red. Wes goes on the boil.

WES(CONT)

You got no reason to do that!

EPPS

I told you: When I straighten someone out they stay straightened. This is how it works: Nobody touches the gold.

Except when we're on the move and someone's carrying it, nobody so much as opens the pack to get an eyeful of it. Agreed?

Jaeger wastes no time jumping in.

JAEGER

Yeah. Sure. That sounds like a plan to me.

Wes, still on the ground, fumes.

WES

You got no reason to hit me. I'm getting tired of you and Jaeger pushing me around.

EPPS

Then get up and do something about it.

Wes thinks about it, but that's all he does. He's not ready to cross that line yet.

EPPS(CONT)

Then just lay there and bleed.

Epps takes up his pack and moves off to bed down. Jaeger does the same. Wes just lays on the ground...and bleeds.

FADE TO:

BLACK

FADE TO:

EXT. MESA - EARLY MORNING

The first light of day barely begins to fight its way through the dark. Our boys sleep in a circle around the pack filled with gold. Surprisingly they seem to sleep pretty well, but then the last twenty-four hours has taken a lot out of them.

There is a slight sound: Rocks crunching underneath a foot. Someone stirs, someone moves. It's hard to tell who it is in this bad light. They creep towards the pack, inching their way closer and closer. They reach out a hand, just about to grab the pack.

Wes, who obviously wasn't asleep at all, lunges for the person, and takes them down hard. There's the ugly crunch of body against stone as they hit the ground. M-16 in hand Wes straddles the intruder pressing the muzzle of the rifle against his head.

WES

Stay down. Stay the hell down, or I will
rip your stinking head off!

Underneath him, an IRAQI SOLDIER - who already looks very
badly injured; bloody, cut, slightly burned - babbles back in
high pitched and frightened Arabic.

This is enough to wake Jaeger and Epps.

JAGER
What the hell?

WES
I caught him! I caught him trying to
steal the gold.

EPPS
Get off him.

WES
(Slightly crazed)
He snuck in here thinking we were asleep,
only I wasn't sleeping. Would have slit
our throats if I hadn't stopped him.

EPPS
Get off him!

Epps reaches down and physically pulls Wes from the soldier
who still rattles on.

EPPS(CONT)
What happened?

WES
I told you. He tried to steal our gold.
He tried to kill us.

JAEGER
With what? He doesn't have a weapon.

WES
He's a soldier. He doesn't need a
weapon. He's got rocks. He's got bare
hands.

The soldier goes on babbling. Wes has had just about enough
of that. He gives the soldier a kick to the ribs.

WES(CONT)
Shut up!

Epps gives Wes a hard push.

EPPS

Stop it!

WES

I told you; don't push me around.

Even now, frightened but more calmly, the soldier goes on.

EPPS

Tell me what he's saying.

Wes listens, but with disdain. He translates:

WES

Says he's one of the soldiers that was in the helicopter.

JAEGER

He lived through that?

The soldier goes on, and so does Wes.

WES

Says they were deserters, they were afraid to fight, don't believe in Saddam anyway. They flew the gunship up here to hide out. When they saw us they figured we were going to kill them, so they shot first.

EPPS

Why'd he come in our camp.

Wes asks him the question in Arabic and gets an answer. It's enough to give Wes a bit of a laugh.

WES

Says he wanted food. Liar. He wanted the gold.

EPPS

How's he going to want the gold? He couldn't even know we had it.

WES

He...he could have been watching us.

JAEGER

Maybe we should give him some water.

WES

All last night he could have been--

JAEGER

I think he wants something to drink.

WES

I'm not wasting my water on him.

Jaeger gets his water and gives some to the soldier.

WES(CONT)

I don't care what he says, he wanted our gold. Would have slit our throats if he had the chance.

EPPS

Doesn't matter. Whatever he wanted he didn't get it. We've got no need staying around here. It's light enough. Let's pack up and head out.

Jaeger and Epps start to go for their gear. Wes is still on the Iraqi soldier.

WES

What about him? We...we have to do something.

Epps gives an expression that screams: What the hell are you talking about?

WES(CONT)

We can't just leave him. He'll run back to his outfit, report our position...

EPPS

You said he was a deserter.

WES

That's what he says. He could be a spy, or something.

EPPS

You don't know that.

WES

You don't know he isn't.

JAEGER

So we'll take him with us. At least 'til we get back to the Hummer.

WES

He'd just slow us down, and drink our water. And if we ran into any more Iraqis you know he'd sell us out.

EPPS

We don't leave him, we don't take him with us. What does that leave?

By way of answering Wes lifts his M-16 and works the action.

EPPS(CONT)

You're out of your mind.

WES

He's an enemy soldier.

EPPS

I'm not going to let you kill him.

WES

We're at war.

The discussion starts to get real heated.

EPPS

We are not at war! You and I and Jaeger are AWOL. We have no authority--

WES

He tried to kill us. If not just now, then in the helicopter. That's all the authority I need.

Jaeger goes somewhere near panic.

JAEGER

We don't need to do this. We got the gold, all right? Let's just get out of here.

The Iraqi may not speak the language, but he's got a pretty good idea what they are arguing about. He starts to plead for his life

WES

I'm not going to leave him be just so he can stab us in the backs the minute we turn around. I have been through too much to lose it all now just because the two of you don't have the stomach to do what has to be done.

EPPS

I've got no stomach for murder.

WES

It's a combat action.

EPPS

It's murder, and I won't be any part of it.

WES

Then step aside.

EPPS

No.

WES

Get out of my way.

The Iraqi begging goes into over drive. Jaeger just about loses it.

JAEGER

For Christ's sake, we don't need this.
Let's just go. Let's just...let's just
get out of here.

Wes yells down at the Iraqi.

WES

Shut up! Shut the hell up!

Wes moves menacingly for the Iraqi. He thrusts his M-16 forward. Epps grabs it, and throws a punch. Unlike before with Jaeger, this time Wes ducks the blow and swings the butt of the M-16 back at Epps. It's not much of a blow though, and Epps keeps on coming. He barrels into Wes and takes him down.

As the two men tussle the Iraqi sees his chance to get away. He springs up, knocking Jaeger to the side, and bolts past him.

JAGER

He's getting away!

Epps turns and sees this. Maybe he's not for killing this guy, but he certainly can't just let him get away. He takes off running after the Iraqi, Jaeger a step behind.

The Iraqi, face flush with fear; eyes filled with terror like a hunted animal, makes it to the rock face and starts to climb to the plateau above. He knows if he can make it he at least has a chance of getting away. It shows in the desperation he climbs with.

Epps and Jaeger are right behind him. They claw at the rocks, but can't gain ground.

The Iraqi gets closer and closer to the plateau; to freedom. Our two soldiers scramble up right behind him.

The Iraqi gets a hand on the lip of the plateau. He's just about to pull himself up. He's just about to get away--

WE HEAR A SHORT BURST OF GUNFIRE. Three large, bloody holes mushroom open in the Iraqi's back.

CUT TO:

WES

He stands, smoke curling from the muzzle of his M-16 like a white snake, having just send the Iraqi some bullets special delivery.

CUT TO:

THE IRAQI

He arches, stiffens, then falls like a stone past Epps and Jaeger to the ground below like a sack of potatoes.

As the two climb down Wes goes to the body and stands over it like the great, white hunter standing over his kill. All business like he says:

WES

I had to. You saw how he ran. Would have given us away. I had to.

There's a beat of quiet, then:

JAEGER

Maybe we ought to...you know, bury him. Say some words over him.

WES

You want to say some words?

He sneers down at the body.

WES(CONT)

Go to hell. How are those words?

Wes moves off. A beat later Jaeger walks away. Epps just stands there looking at the body.

CUT TO:

EXT. MESA - LATER

Wes, Epps and Jaeger are making the trek back down. Jaeger is shouldering the pack with the gold. Wes has got his M-16. Epps stops, and puts his pack down. He takes out the navicom and a recon photo.

EPPS

We should head Northeast.

JAEGER

Northeast? That's away from the Hummer;
further into Iraqi.

EPPS

There's another pass on the photo. We
can avoid that narrow one we had to cross
on the way up, and it should get us back
down.

JAEGER

It should, or it will? Least going back
the way we came we know what we're up
against.

EPPS

You think you can make that pass weighted
down when you almost fell the first time
you're wrong, and you're not going to
take my share of the gold with you trying
it. We're heading Northeast.

Really calm, cold and direct Wes says:

WES

You've got an awful lot of orders in you.
Always giving orders.

EPPS

I out rank you, that's why.

WES

In the service you do, but we're not
particularly in the service right now.
Way I see it, what we're doing, that
doesn't particularly give you the right
to toss orders around.

Epps loads up his pack pretty much ignoring Wes.

EPPS

We been down this road. I told you how
it is. Unless you feel like there's
something you want to do about it...

WES

What if I do?

Epps says nothing, so Wes tries it again a little harder.

WES(CONT)

What if I do?

He works the action of his M-16.

WES(CONT)

You talk loud, and don't even have a big stick to back it up with.

Real casual Epps takes a grenade from his belt and flips the pin loose. He stands with the grenade in one hand and the navicom in the other. Real calm, like he was talking about the weather:

EPPS

Something happens to me I let go of this grenade. I go, and I take the navicom with me. And how do you suppose you're going to find your way back to the Hummer, when you won't even know what's up or down. It's a big country, and you could be heading for the allies, or wandering right into Bhagdad. That's if you don't die of thirst before you even get that far. How you like my stick now?

Epps and Wes have a stare down. Jaeger, who's getting really good at freaking out, jumps in.

JAEGER

Why don't you put the gun down, all right, Wes? You put the gun down and Epps'll put the pin back in the grenade. Won't you Epps?

The stare down goes on a beat longer. Finally Wes lowers his rifle. He turns to Jaeger and vents what anger he can.

WES

I'm starting to think you're a real bitch, you know that?

FADE TO:

EXT. DESERT - LATER

THE CAMERA PANS over the vast expanse of nothingness. SMOKE BEGINS TO DRIFT INTO FRAME. THE CAMERA FINALLY LANDS ON THE SHI'ITE ENCAMPMENT, or at least what's left of it. Tents are torn down and burned, goods scattered. It looks like a ghost town. Epps, Wes and Jaeger wander into it. They look around, but see no signs of life.

Wes grabs up some Shi'ite garments, white robes, and starts to put them on.

JAEGER

You're going to burn up in those.

WES

The white reflects the sun; it keeps you cooler. That's why they wear them.

Jaeger looks to Epps who just shrugs. Jaeger gets some robes and puts them on. Epps follows suit.

JAEGER

Think the Iraqi's killed them all?

WES

Probably shot a few. Scattered the rest. Murderers.

EPPS

(Pointed)

Murder, or a combat action? It's hard to tell them apart?

They keep on moving, passing straight through the camp. Epps marches ahead, not wanting to even deal with the other two men. Wes talks after him. Really he talks more to himself, and he's not sounding too lucid.

WES

You saw how he ran didn't you? First chance he got he ran out. Would have gone straight to his CO, told him all about the gold. What do you think would have happened then, huh? Then what do you think would have happened? Two thousand screaming Iraqis bearing down on us. You ought to thank me for killing him. I'll get a medal for it. Watch and see if I don't get a medal.

Epps isn't even paying attention, he's just walking on. Almost, as if he senses something is wrong, he stops in his tracks. He looks down at his feet and sees the most curious thing. SAND IS RUSHING AWAY FROM HIS FEET, ALMOST AS IF IT'S GOING DOWN A DRAIN. He looks at it with the same wonderment that a dog watches television.

EPPS

What the hell...?

Epps has got all of about two seconds to ponder this as a moment later the Earth literally drops from beneath his feet. He's standing on a sink hole that opens up swallowing him in loose sand. Immediately he sinks to waist level. He slows there, but still goes down with rapidity. He screams to Jaeger and Wes.

EPPS(CONT)

Help! Help me!

Jaeger drops the gold and runs to the edge of the hole. Wes doesn't move.

EPPS(CONT)

Help me!

Jaeger is paralyzed by indecision. He doesn't want to let Epps drown, but if he gets too close he could easily get sucked into. He flirts back and forth between rescue and safety.

Sand continues to pour in on Epps.

EPPS(CONT)

For Christ's Sake, Jaeger! Help me!
Help me!

Jaeger can't fight himself any longer. He lowers himself halfway into the hole, stretching spread eagle trying to keep some kind of grip on the firmer ground, and reaches for Epps.

Their arms twist and strain for each others. First their fingers meet, then they grab hands. They work a grip down to their wrist, but that's all they can get. Jaeger strains like a field horse pulling Epps against the sand. It may not be enough as he begins to slip down himself. Jaeger twists his head and looks up at Wes. Straining to say anything he pleads:

JAEGER

Wes...Wes!

His words fall on deaf ears. Wes just takes a step closer to the pack of gold coins.

This only serves to energize Jaeger. He digs deeper within himself finding an untapped reserve of strength. He grunts and pulls, the veins on his neck puffing like balloons.

Epps finds some purchase. He pulls, swims, his way up from the sand. A little at first, but like hitting shallow water he's able to lift himself up.

Jaeger jerks him the rest of the way up to firm ground. They collapse, chests heaving like pistons as they suck air.

As Epps regains strength he pats himself down. Suddenly he goes back into a panic.

EPPS

The navicom!

Epps rolls back over and thrusts his hands down into the soft sand frantically looking for the lost computer. Jaeger joins in. They dig and scrape as best they can, but daring to

venture only so far into the soft sand. It doesn't matter.
The navicom is lost.

JAEGER

What are we going to do? How are we
going to find our way back!?

EPPS

We'll find our way.

JAEGER

How!?

EPPS

We'll find our way! We'll...

Epps wants to say how, but he's got no idea. Wes grows a
smug smile.

WES

No navicom. A lot of good you are now,
Epps.

EPPS

Lot of good you were when I was sinking
in the sand.

WES

Without that navicom looks to me like you
forfeit the right to be in charge.

EPPS

And let me guess who is.

Wes casually slides out his M-16.

WES

I'm the one's got the big stick.

EPPS

Suppose I don't go for that?

WES

Then I suppose it'd be insurrection, and
I suppose I'd have to kill you.

(Beat)

I suppose.

EPPS

What about Jaeger?

WES

Nothing about him, unless he's got a
problem about me dealing with you.

JAEGER

Yeah, I got a problem with you killing Epps.

Wes turns and glares at Jaeger, who backs down.

JAEGER(CONT)

I mean, in principle.

WES

{Sneering}

You know, Jaeger, you really are a bitch.

Epps isn't wasting anymore time. When Wes turns to glower at Jaeger he lunges up for him. Wes side steps Epps and lands the butt of his rifle into the side of Epps' head. It opens a wound, and sends Epps back down to the ground.

Epps looks up right into the muzzle of West M-16. Full of poison:

WES(CONT)

You die!

Wes is just about to squeeze back the trigger when a shot rings out. Wes' body jerks like he's just been hit in the back with a truck. The way cut timber falls he slams to the ground motionless.

Epps and Jaeger stare at the body for a beat, then snap their heads in the direction of the shot.

Up on a dune behind them are a group of SHI'ITES on horseback. One of them has a high powered rifle which he has just used to drill Wes. He fires another shot. It pings to the ground between Epps and Jaeger.

Our two remaining men scramble. Jaeger dives for the gold and snatches it up from the ground as bullets zip around it. The two take off running as best they can in the sand. They run wildly, erratically, without looking back. They run until their bodies scream no more, then keep going on inertia. Reaching a dune they tumble down the far side and collapse in a heap at the bottom. They take a moment to catch what breath they can, then:

EPPS

We got to go back. We got to go back for Wes.

JAEGER

Forget Wes.

EPPS

We can't just leave him.

JAEGER

Wes is dead!

EPPS

What if he's not?

JAEGER

Then he will be when those Iraqis get to him. He was going to kill you. He was one blink away from it. He's dead, Epps, and I'm sure as hell not getting my head blow off over his carcass.

They sit there trying to catch their breath. As they do a sound comes from the distance. They freeze, ears cocked, trying to figure out what it is.

JAEGER(CONT)

It's a helicopter.

Quickly, desperately, as the sound of the chopter draws closer, they scan the horizon looking for it. Jaeger spots it and thrusts a finger in its direction.

JAGER(CONT)

There.

Epps scrambles out his binoculars. He targets the helicopter. Jaeger waits in high anticipation.

JAEGER(CONT)

Ours, or theirs?

Epps can't make out for sure. Jaeger asks again with growing anxiety.

JAEGER(CONT)

Ours, or theirs?

Epps takes a long, hard stare.

EPPS

Ours. It's one of ours. We've got to signal them; let them know we're down here.

The instant Jaeger hears this his face twists up like he's thinking something, and he doesn't like what it is he's thinking. Quietly, almost to himself:

JAEGER

No.

EPPS

We need something: A flare, a signal

mirror.

Again Jaeger says it, this time including Epps too.

JAEGER

No.

EPPS

What do you mean no? They can fly us home.

JAEGER(CONT)

They'll ask questions; want to know why we were out here.

EPPS

We'll lie.

JAEGER

They'll search the pack.

Epps finds a mirror in one of his pockets. He stands, ready to signal the chopter.

JAEGER(CONT)

They'll find the gold.

Epps turns sharply back to Jaeger.

EPPS

We're lost, you understand that? We've got no navicom, and no means to find a way back. So right now I don't give a damn about the gold because if we don't get off this desert, and out of Iraqi all it's going to be good for is buying us tombstones.

Epps is back around ready to signal the helicopter. He's about to raise the mirror when he hears the sound of an M-16 action being worked. Epps turns to face Jaeger.

JAEGER

I can't do it, Epps. Not when we're so close. I can't let you ruin everything.

Epps just stares at Jaeger, not frightened, but surprisingly calm.

EPPS

First Wes, now you?

JAEGER

I'm not like Wes. Wes was crazy.

EPPS

(Sarcastic)
And you; you've got it all together.

JAEGER
I don't want it this way. I wouldn't kill you just to kill you, but I can't let you lose the gold for me. Not when we're so close.

EPPS
That helicopter passes, and the only thing we're close to is death.

Jaeger is unfazed. Very politely he says:

JAEGER
Sit down, Epps.

Epps takes him up on the offer. What choice does he have? THE CAMERA STAYS TIGHT ON THE TWO MEN. They don't talk. They don't move. They just sit as WE HEAR THE SOUND OF THE HELICOPTER GETTING CLOSER AND LOUDER. IT REACHES A CRESCENDO, THEN BEGINS TO FADE UNTIL IT DISAPPEARS. The chopter is gone, along with Epps and Jaeger's best chance of getting out of the desert alive.

Jaeger lowers his rifle. Very genuinely he says:

JAEGER(CONT)
I'm sorry about that, Epps.

EPPS
Is it all right if I stand up?

Like he didn't know he was keeping Epps from something.

JAEGER
Oh, yeah. Go ahead.

Epps stands. He looks around trying to figure things out. Not much to figure. There still in the middle of a desert in a hostile country same as they ever were.

JAEGER(CONT)
I'm glad I didn't have to kill you. I'm glad it didn't come to that.

EPPS
Yeah. Well, me too.

JAEGER
I never killed anybody before. I talk a good game, but I'm not like that.

EPPS

Sure.

JAEGER

Really, I'm not. Remember how I was talking I wanted to blow away all those Iraqis? That's all it was was talk. I was scared out of my mind to go to war. I still haven't gotten over stepping on that land mine.

EPPS

You still got a map on you?

JAEGER

What? Yeah.

Jaeger takes out the maps he has and hands them to Epps. Epps looks them over, then looks over the terrain. Without any landmarks or navigating tools the maps might as well be finger paintings.

JAEGER(CONT)

Epps?

EPPS

Yeah.

JAEGER

I don't want to die.

EPPS

Makes two of us.

JAEGER

I know what I did just now was crazy, but you got to understand how much I want that gold.

EPPS

It's all right. I don't like it, but it's over now.

JAEGER

I never had anything before, Epps. I never was anybody. Not the kind of somebody you can be with a pocket full of gold coins. When I was in high school I used to--

Fed up with Jaeger Epps turns on him hard.

EPPS

Hey, you know what? Can I be honest with you? Right now I'm not all that interested in how you're messed up 'cause

you didn't get the bicycle you wanted for your thirteenth birthday. What I'm interested in is how I can keep from getting dead. And listening to sob stories from some about how the system wasn't good to him because he had to work like everybody else instead of being born a Kennedy doesn't do a damn thing to help keep me alive. So do me a favor; either shut up, or...just shut up.

Jaeger isn't sure what to say.

JAEGER

Sorry.

EPPS

Damn.

Epps sits down in the sand, all out of ideas. There's a long quiet before Jaeger says:

JAEGER

What do you think our chances are?

EPPS

If we can find the Hummer, or some friendlies by sundown we might be okay. We've got enough water for that. But we won't make another day otherwise.

Again they sit for a beat.

JAEGER

Wonder how the war's going?

EPPS

It's got to be going better than this..

Epps stands and has a last look around.

EPPS(CONT)

All right. pick a direction.

Jaeger just gives a surprised look.

EPPS(CONT)

We can't just sit here. We've got to start moving, so pick.

JAEGER

You sure you want me too?

Epps nods. Jaeger stands and takes a good look around. He considers things, although there isn't much to consider.

Finally he decisively points in a direction.

JAEGER(CONT)

I pick that way.

EPPS

Okay. Then we go this way.

Epps heads off in the opposite direction.

FADE TO:

EXT. DESERT - LATER

Epps and Jaeger make the long march across the sand. There's so much nothing out there it's maddening.

FADE TO:

EXT. DESERT - LATER

Epps drops down in the sand. He lets his pack slide from his back, then pulls his water and takes a healthy swig. He puts his pack back on and struggles to his feet. As Jaeger crosses he takes Epps by the shoulder and helps to pull him up. The two wade on.

FADE TO:

EXT. DESERT - EVENING

Epps and Jaeger are trekking as they have been doing all day. They look worn out, but they keep moving. Jaeger is several paces behind Epps.

JAEGER

Getting cold.

EPPS

It's a desert. That's what deserts do at night; they get cold.

JAEGER

Epps...Epps! I'm gonna stop for a second.

EPPS

No!

JAEGER

Just let me rest for a second.

EPPS

We've got to keep moving while there's still light.

JAEGER

You know what I'm going to do? I'm just going to take a second. I want to look at the gold.

EPPS

Don't you touch it.

JAEGER

I just want to look at it. Remind me of what I'm dying for.

EPPS

The deal was no one touches it until we get out of here.

JAEGER

Yeah, but we made that deal while Wes was still alive. He's gone. Time for a new deal.

Jaeger takes the pack from his back and starts to open it. Epps turns and races back to him grabbing him by the wrist and forcing Jaeger to let go of the pack.

EPPS

You listen to me. If, if we get out of this I don't care what you do with your share, but until then you've only got one thing to think about and that's staying alive. So you leave that gold alone, or you and I are going to have to have a serious talk.

Epps waits for a response from Jaeger, but gets none.

Jaeger's eyes seem to be glazed, and his stare fixed on a point well beyond Epps. He raises a hand, points off into the distance.

JAEGER

Look.

Epps turns and looks. Off a ways is a light in the window of what looks to be a shack-type building. Epps stares at it as if it were the holy Grail

JAEGER(CONT)

What do you figure it is?

EPPS

Place all alone like that? Must be a boarder check point.

JAEGER

Which boarder? Saudi? Kuwait? Syria?

EPPS

Couldn't be Syria. We couldn't have gone that far north. It's got to be Saudi. Come on.

Epps heads for the shack doing double time. Jaeger puts the pack back on and races to catch up.

EPPS(CONT)

They've got to have water. We'll get same water, some directions, maybe they even have a vehicle.

JAEGER

Epps.

EPPS

We can head back for our lines, and they don't even have to know about the gold.

JAEGER

Epps. What if they're not Saudi.

Epps stops dead, now not more than one hundred meters from the shack.

JAEGER(CONT)

If it's a checkpoint, it could be Iraqi.

Epps considers this.

EPPS

We've got no choice. Either way, we've got no choice.

Epps and Jaeger keep on for the shack walking with apprehension now instead of running. Epps stops less than fifty meters away.

JAEGER

Well?

EPPS

Well, we should identify ourselves.

JAEGER

Yeah, I guess we should.

Epps takes in a deep breath ready to yell to the shack. Instead he turns to Jaeger.

EPPS

Even if they are Iraqis probably all they'll do is take us prisoner for awhile. Got to figure we're still kicking their asses in the war. They don't want any trouble.

JAEGER

Hell, they'll probably just surrender to us. Probably.

Again Epps takes a deep breath. And again just as he's about to cry out he turns to Jaeger.

EPPS

That's if the war is even still going on. Way things were shaping up it's probably long over.

JAEGER

Probably.

Epps takes a beat, then sucks in a breath. He yells for the shack:

EPPS

Hellooooo--

Before Epps can even finish getting the word out machine gun fire erupts from the house and burns towards Epps and Jaeger. They dive for cover, hugging the ground as bullets whistle and ping through the space around them. They are forced back and down against a narrow stretch of rock, but it offers little protection and is chipped away by the hot lead. It's just a matter of moments before nothing stands before them and death. At the top of his lungs Jaeger starts yelling:

JAEGER

Ashra Ka mahari dahra sahib! Ashra Ka mahari dahra sahib!

Just as quickly as it began the shooting stops. From the shack we hear some chatter in Arabic, then the door opens. A few MEN appear in the doorway. They laugh and beckon for Epps and Jaeger to join them.

EPPS

What did you say?

JAEGER

I don't know. Something Wes had taught me. I think it means "Don't shoot. We're your friends."

EPPS

They must be Saudis. It's a Saudi

checkpoint. Oh sweet, Jesus. Come on.
Come on!

Epps hurriedly stumbles in the dark for the shack. Jaeger is just steps behind him.

They enter the dimly lit shack to the good nature of the FOUR men inside. Epps and Jaeger see a fire in an open hearth and go right to it to warm their hands as the four men go on chattering behind them.

JAGER

Oh, man, this is good. What do you think the chances are they've got a whirlpool in this place?

As they rub their hands together Epps looks up. He freezes. Hanging on the wall is a very handsome, nicely framed portrait of Saddam Hussein. Epps nudges Jaeger who also looks up. He also freezes.

JAEGER(CONT)

Oh, God...

EPPS

They must have thought we were Iraqi when you yelled to them. They couldn't tell in the dark.

JAEGER

What are we going to do?

Epps thinks. What are they going to do?

EPPS

Slip out your M-16.

JAEGER

And then what?

EPPS

And then shoot them.

JAEGER

I...I never killed anyone before. I told you that.

EPPS

Well, you're going to start with a bang, 'cause you've got four of them to take down.

Behind Epps and Jaeger one of the Iraqis asks a question of them in Arabic.

JAEGER

Can't you--

EPPS

I don't have a weapon.

Again the Iraqi asks the question. We can tell by the tone of his voice he expects an answer.

EPPS(CONT)

Don't go bitch on me now! You were going to kill me. Kill them!

JAEGER

I just said I would. I don't think I--

EPPS

Shoot them!

The Iraqis sense that something is wrong. They move menacingly for their weapons.

EPPS(CONT)

Shoot them, Jaeger! SHOOT THEM!

Jaeger whips around at the same time pulling his M-16. He jerks back hard on the trigger spraying back and forth, back and forth.

Dig it: The Iraqis do a death dance in the strobe light of the muzzle flashes. They do the twist, they do the jerk, then they all fall down.

The bullets that miss do a nasty job of redecorating the place; shredding walls, eating up wood.

Jaeger keeps firing until his clip is empty. He stands huffing, eyes glazed like he's a million miles away from what he just did. Epps steps up and takes the weapon from Jaeger. That's like an alarm clock that brings Jaeger back to the land of the living. Jaeger takes one look around at all the carnage, then doubles over and gets to puking.

Epps just watches this pathetic sight. When Jaeger is all done:

EPPS(CONT)

Let's get some sleep.

FADE TO:

BLACK

FADE TO:

INT. SHACK - MORNING

The sun has just pushed itself well above the horizon as Jaeger comes awake. The second he does he sees a MAN - Arab, wearing white robes - peering through the window. Jaeger gives a start, and the man disappears. Jaeger quickly shakes Epps awake.

JAEGER

Epp...Epps! There's someone at the window!

This wakes Epps up quick.

EPPS

An Iraqi?

JAEGER

I don't know. He didn't have a uniform on. He...he had on white robes, like the guys who killed Wes.

Epps does some quick figuring, then staying low, scrambles across the floor to one of the dead Iraqis and grabs up his weapon. He grabs another one tosses it to Jaeger.

Carefully, still low, Epps creeps over to the window. Slowly he raises up and looks out.

JAGER(CONT)

See anything?

EPPS

Nothing.

Epps lowers himself back down and does some thinking.

JAEGER

What do we do?

EPPS

We can't stay here. Even if that wasn't an Iraqi soldier it's only a matter of time before some show up. Get all the water you can carry, and we'll head out on foot.

JAEGER

To where?

EPPS

Sun rises in the East. We go the opposite direction. May not find anything, but at least we'll know we're heading towards Saudi Arabia.

As Jaeger gathers up what water he can find, creeps for the door. With the muzzle of his gun he pulls it open a crack and peers out. Still nothing. It's like the man vanished into thin air.

Jaeger, stocked up on water, comes over with the gold and Epps' pack which Epps shoulders.

EPPS(CONT)

Ready?

Jaeger nods. Epps opens the door, and the two men carefully snake their way out weapons at the ready. It seems, though, there is nothing to be ready for. There is no one around.

Suddenly the man appears from around the shack. Epps and Jaeger turn on him targeting with their assault weapons, but they do not fire. The man just stands. He doesn't say anything, he makes no threatening moves. The three stay still as statues for several beats until Epps jerks his head indicating to Jaeger they should move on. That they do, weapons still on the man, until they are beyond his range.

They walk on a little ways. Jaeger spots something, and thrusts a finger in its direction.

JAEGER

Look!

Mounted on a horse, riding on a dune that runs parallel to them, is ANOTHER ARAB MAN. He makes no effort to draw nearer to Epps and Jaeger, but nor does he lose them.

JAEGER(CONT)

What do we do?

EPPS

We keep going, that's what we do. We ignore them, maybe they ignore us.

As if to be contrary to Epps' statement ANOTHER TWO ARABS ON HORSE BACK appear up over a dune before them.

JAEGER

Jesus! How many of them are there?

Epps doesn't know, and he doesn't want to find out. They change direction heading away from the Arabs. But again MORE ARABS ride up over a dune. Epps gets the feeling he and Jaeger are about to be boxed in.

EPPS

I don't like this. Let's go.

Epps breaks into a run. Jaeger is only steps behind him.

Like something out of an old John Ford western dozens of mounted Arabs suddenly appear over a dune. They ride fast and hard for Epps and Jaeger like Apaches heading for a wagon train. They easily overtake our two, momentarily swallowing them amongst the thundering hoofs, and ride on a bit as if playing with them.

Epps and Jaeger stop, then bolt in the other direction. The Arabs ride back, again past Epps and Jaeger swiping them to the ground; the horses kicking up a spray of lose sand over them. It looks like a cattle round up, and our two are the cattle.

Epps and Jaeger get up to make another run of it, and again the Arabs bear down on them. This time they mean business. They completely surround them, cutting off all means of escape. The Arabs start screaming something back and forth in Arabic. We don't know what, but it sounds unpleasant.

Epps and Jaeger come skidding to a halt. They turn in their tracks digging in the scene. It goes like this: They are completely outnumbered and out gunned by a mounted force. Doesn't get any simpler.

Epps and Jaeger drop their weapons. Their hands go in the air.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHI'ITE CAMP - LATER

The mounted Arabs lead Epps and Jaeger, hands tied before them and almost literally being towed by the horses, into their camp. It is similar to the Shi'ite camps we've seen before with several tent dwellings.

As the party enters groups of Shi'ites come over to stare at Epps and Jaeger. They chatter amongst themselves, but our boys have no idea what they're talking about, and that just makes things all the scarier.

From our boy's point of view this is all like an unending nightmare: Being dragged along through a desert, not knowing the language, not knowing what's going to happen. Their world skews and slides as if they were on a tilt-a-whirl.

Finally they reach a tent. One of the Arabs tosses Epps and Jaeger's packs on the ground just before it. Another cuts them loose and **SHOVES THEM INSIDE THE TENT**, then yells something at them in Arabic. He leaves, and our two are alone.

JAEGER

What do you make of them?

EPPS
Shi'ites, I think.

JAEGER
Is that good, or bad?

EPPS
I don't know. They killed Wes.

JAEGER
Why haven't they killed us!?

EPPS
I don't know!

JAEGER
...Maybe...maybe we can fight our way
out.

EPPS
With what? Against how many?

JAEGER
We can't just sit here waiting to die.

EPPS
You come up with a better plan, let me
know.

JAEGER
Maybe...maybe if we traded them the gold.
If we gave it to them they might let us
live; they might not kill us.

From O.C. we hear a voice:

VOICE(O.C.)
I always knew you were a bitch.

Epps and Jaeger's hearts seize up and stop. It's as if they've heard the voice of a ghost, and they have. IT'S WES! He carries with him the pack of gold. Epps can barely get his name out.

EPPS
...Wes...?

JAEGER
You were shot. We were standing right
there, you were shot!

WES
In the flack jacket. Still like getting

hit in the back with a baseball bat.
Took the air right out of me, but I was
just unconscious for awhile. 'Course,
you didn't stick around to find that out.
You left me for dead.

EPPS

We thought--

Like a guy who just took two steps over the edge:

WES

YOU LEFT ME FOR DEAD!

Ohhh, shit. Somebody's crazy. Epps gets the feeling there's
not going to be much dialog going on here. Wes gets real
calm again, which is almost as scary as him acting nuts.

WES(CONT)

When my Shi'ite friends saw that they had
shot an American they were very
apologetic. Turns out we've been kicking
ass in this little war. They figure
we've finally gotten Saddam off their
backs. They brought me to their camp,
cleaned me up, fed me... I'm their new
best buddy. America number one, Joe.
But there's something the Shi'ites can't
figure out: They can't figure out why my
two buddies, two fellow Americans, left
me out in the desert. They can't seem to
figure out what those same two guys were
doing in an Iraqi outpost. It's almost
as if they were Iraqi spies, or
something. And I've got to tell you they
hate anything that's got to do with the
Iraqis. See how I mean?

JAEGER

We had to take shelter in the checkpoint.
Jesus, Wes, I killed the Iraqis in there.

WES

You actually got around to killing
someone. I'm impressed. I guess you're
only half a bitch.

EPPS

Wes, we thought you were dead, and we
thought we were next. Hanging around to
get killed wouldn't have done anyone any
good.

WES

Sure, and I guess it was just convenient

there was one less person to split the gold with.

EPPS

Wes--

WES

Look, I know you guys are telling the truth. It's just the Shi'ites don't know that. I guess you could tell them...but then you don't speak the language do you?

Wes gets right up into Jaeger's face.

WES{CONT}

Do you!?

Of course Wes knows they don't. He allows himself a very sweet, shit eating grin.

WES{CONT}

They're going to kill you slow. I'll see to that.

He steps away and starts to open the pack of gold.

WES{CONT}

Thanks for taking care of this for me.

EPPS

Tell me something, Wes. Are you crazy, greedy, or just stupid? Jaeger says you're crazy.

JAEGER

I didn't say that. I never said--

EPPS

Me? I say you don't have enough brains to be stupid.

For a second Wes is taken by surprise by the statement, but he smiles at Epps' boldness. He sets down the pack of gold and gets right up into Epps' face.

WES

You disappoint me, Epps. Always figured you to be a man; a real bright guy. I had respect for you.

EPPS

That why you tried to put a bullet in my head in the middle of the desert.

WES

That's just what things came to.
Sometimes you can't help that. It
doesn't change me respecting you. And
now you let me down. I expected more
from you, you know? I really did. I
expected you to--

A KNIFE SLIDES UP INTO FRAME UNTIL THE THE TIP RESTS JUST
UNDER WES' THROAT, CHOKING OFF HIS WORDS.

Now it's Epps' turn to go smug.

EPPS
You expect this?

Wes' got nothing to say. To Jaeger:

EPPS(CONT)
Get the gold!

Jaeger grabs up the pack.

EPPS(CONT)
(To Wes)
Now let's try things another way. Let's
try this: You and me and Jaeger are
going to walk out of here. We're going
to walk out all smiling and friendly so
your little Shi'ite buddies won't suspect
a thing. Then we're going to hop on some
horses, and ride away, and live happily
ever after. It's all going to happen
just like that, because if it doesn't
then I'm going to gut you like a fat pig.
You understand me...soldier?

Wes says nothing.

EPPS(CONT)
I'll take that as a yes.

Epps gruffly spins Wes around and presses the knife up
against his back so that it is hidden.

EPPS MARCHES WES OUTSIDE THE TENT, stopping momentarily to
grab up his pack with his free hand. To Jaeger he says:

EPPS(CONT)
Get the water.

Jaeger does as he's told.

WES
They'll kill you. You won't make it ten
feet before they cut you down.

EPPS

You don't know John Epps very well, do you?

JAEGER

Can you ride a horse?

EPPS

No, but I figure now's a real good time to start.

They walk on through the camp towards some saddled horses. They pass a Shi'ite who says something to Wes in Arabic. Epps gives Wes a poke in the back with the knife.

EPPS(CONT)

Don't say anything.

The Shi'ite, obviously expecting an answer, says whatever it was he said again.

EPPS(CONT)

Just keep quiet.

WES

I have to answer him.

EPPS

So you can give us away?

WES

If I don't answer, he'll know something's up.

Epps gives this a lot of thought in a very short time.

EPPS

You answer him, but you answer him wrong and you're going to be staring at your insides while you're dying.

Wes very calmly says something to the Shi'ite. The Shi'ite just stands there for a beat looking at the three men, then suddenly explodes in screams. No way of knowing for sure what he's saying, but since he's going off like a Westec alarm it's a pretty good bet he's been tipped of.

Epps rears back a fist and slams it into Wes' face.

EPPS(CONT)

Bastard!

Epps and Jaeger take off running for the horses, practically leaping into the saddles as Shi'ites come pouring out of

their tents. Forgetting himself, Wes screams in English.

WES

Stop them!

Jaeger and Epps spur their horses and take off riding hard. It's amazing what you can do when a bunch of angry Shi'ites are chasing you.

Wes grabs an assault weapon from a near by Shi'ite and mounts up with blood in his eyes. He leads a charge of armed, mounted Shi'ites that looks like a posse going after some bad men.

Out front Epps and Jaeger pull up for a second.

JAEGER

They coming?

Epps takes a look behind him. He can't hardly miss the sandstorm Wes and the Shi'ites kick up as they ride for them.

EPPS

Oh, yeah. They're coming.

Epps points off to some foothills in the distance. It's the only thing close to cover for miles around.

EPPS(CONT)

Ride for the hills. We'll try to lose them.

They take the reigns to their horses and get to riding.

Behind them Wes yells to his riders, and signals for them to split up, and try to cut off Epps and Jaeger.

Epps and Jaeger hit the hills. They ride up for a bit, then stop to spot Wes. Wes and his crew are better riders and have closed the gap. All the two can do now is try to lose them in the terrain.

Epps and Jaeger ride as best they can, and somewhat erratically to cover their trail. They head up a ways, then cut across in a parallel direction. Jaeger looks back, but sees no sign of Wes.

JAEGER

We lost them!

Just as the words leave Jaeger's mouth a hail of bullets explodes the ground before them. Their horses rear up, and it's all they can do to fight them. Just ahead are the Shi'ites who split off from Wes, having circled around Epps and Jaeger.

The two yank their horses back, and ride hard in the opposite direction with the Shi'ites just behind. They fire on Epps and Jaeger, the bullets pinging off the rocks all around them.

Epps and Jaeger are little more than passengers on their horses as they run wild like stampeding mustangs. And good for it, too, otherwise they might be dead by now. They break for a trail that leads further up the mountain, but it does little to shake loose their pursuers.

As Epps and Jaeger level out they can see the trail below them, and Wes and his posse riding for them. Our two start back the way they came. but the other Shi'ites crest the hill.

JAEGER(CONT)

Which way?

Epps looks from side to side. Either way is certain death. Then he looks off towards an embankment. It is VERY steep. VERY treacherous.

It would take an expert rider to make it down the embankment safely. All Epps knows is there aren't any gun totting Shi'ites in that direction.

JAEGER(CONT)

Which way do we go!?

EPPS

We go this way.

Fear gives way to desperation. Both men whip their steeds hard. The beasts leap to the embankment and start the wild ride down. Both Epps and Jaeger have to lean back in their saddles until they're almost parallel to the ground just to stay on their horses.

Wes sees this and swears. He signals to his men to cut back the other way.

Epps reaches the bottom of the embankment. Jaeger is almost there when he loses control of his horse. Both rider and animal go tumbling in an ugly fall.

EPPS(CONT)

Jaeger!

The horse gets up and bolts off before Jaeger can get to her.

Just then Wes and his men make it back down the trail, and start riding hard for Jaeger.

Epps pulls his horse around and takes off for his fallen

comrade. As he rides in he leans to the side and low. Stretching out an arm Epps literally scoops Jaeger, and swings him up behind him. A couple of rodeo performers couldn't have done it better.

Problem is with the extra weight they can't go very fast. Wes and his men close hard now. The bullets fly fast and furious swarming all around our boys.

Epps whips the horse, trying to get everything she's got to give. This is it: They get away now, or not at all. Their horse finds a little something extra. She goes faster, faster...

Suddenly Epps pulls up hard on the reins. The horse rears up, she goes wild. It takes everything Epps has to control her. But better that than if she'd taken another stride. They've come to the edge of a very, very sharp cliff. Epps may be a good rider for a novice, but no way he could get this beast to fly.

Finally he calms the horse down, but it doesn't matter. Wes and the Shi'ites ride up behind them cutting them off. Wes stands down from his horse.

Epps and Jaeger, with nowhere to go, do the same.

WES

The gold; give it to me.

Epps takes the pack from Jaeger, but doesn't throw it to Wes.

WES(CONT)

Give it to me!

EPPS

If I give it to you, will you let us go?

Wes smiles and lies so badly he doesn't even bother trying to fake it.

WES

Sure. Whatever you want. For old time sake.

Epps has got no choice, really. He tosses the pack to Wes' feet who stoops to pick it up. Wes starts to open the pack.

WES(CONT)

Looks like at the end of the day we finally find out who's better than who, don't we, Epps? Like I said; I expected more from you.

EPPS

It's like I said; you don't really know lieutenant John Epps very well, do you?

Wes rips open the pack. He's got about one second to see what's inside. NO GOLD. JUST A BOOBY TRAPPED CLAYMORE MINE.

Epps grabs Jaeger and yanks to him to the ground.

There is a horrific furry of sound and fire that easily destroys Wes and a few of the Shi'ite standing next to him. The rest, along with the horses, scatter for dear life.

Epps stays down until the coast is clear, then gets up. Jaeger, to say the least, is stunned.

EPPS(CONT)

Damn it. We lost the horses.

JAEGER

The...the gold...

EPPS

It wasn't the gold. It was the claymore mine. The gold's in my pack.

JAEGER

When did you make the switch?

EPPS

It's always been like that. When you left me down in the crevice to send the gold up I figured I'd better...take precautions. I rigged it to blow if anyone opened the pack. Just in case somebody thought they could do better on their own.

JAEGER

But...

EPPS

We had a deal. No one touches the gold until we're out of here. No one breaks the deal, no one had anything to worry about.

JAEGER

What if it hadn't been Wes? What if...I mean, accidentally, what if I had...

EPPS

You shouldn't think about things like that. It'll just make you crazy.

We hold on the two men, on the smoking remains of Wes. We

hold on them, then:

FADE TO:

BLACK

FADE TO:

EXT. DESERT/ROAD - LATER

Epps and Jaeger come up to the road, a small highway. It's eerie; a road in the middle of the desert. Quiet. No cars. They just stand and stare at it for a beat.

JAEGER

Well?

EPPS

A car's got to come along sooner or later. When it does, we jack it.

JAEGER

How do we do that?

EPPS

You lie in the middle of the road, look like you're hurt. When the car stops I run over to the driver and put a gun to his head.

JAEGER

Why do I have to lie in the road?

EPPS

Somebody has to.

JAEGER

Yeah, but why me? What if the car doesn't stop?

EPPS

Then I'm a rich man.

Epps sits by the side of the road waiting for a car. The only thing he gets is more quiet. Jaeger sits next to him. After a couple of beats:

JAEGER

Epps.

EPPS

Yeah.

JAEGER

I want you to know... I don't know. I

just think you're a hell of a guy.

EPPS

Thanks.

JAEGER

This whole time, you've kept your head. You didn't go money simple like me and Wes. You've just been trying to figure how to get us out of here. And you've been fair too. I mean, even after I...you know...

EPPS

Threatened to blow my brains out?

JAEGER

Yeah. Even after that. You didn't take it out on me, except for maybe making me lie in the middle of the road now. But I'd say you've been very fair. I just think it's a hell of a man who can keep from going money simple.

EPPS

Don't make so much out of it. Only reason I haven't figured a way to get all that money for myself is because I've been too busy figuring ways to stay alive. Believe me; if I had a minute to catch my breath I might have played things the way you and Wes had. I'm no better than anybody else. I've just been busier.

They sit a while more. Still no car.

JAEGER

Epps?

EPPS

What?

JAEGER

I'm thinking about taking a trip.

EPPS

Thought you were going to buy a car.

JAEGER

Still am. There's more gold than I thought, and since there's only two of us now... Where should I go?

EPPS

I don't know.

JAEGER

I've never been anywhere. I wouldn't know where to go. Where would you go?

EPPS

How the hell should I know?

Another long beat. Still no car.

EPPS(CONT)

Australia.

JAEGER

What?

EPPS

I'd go to Australia. Lot of land, not many people. I think after this I'd like to quit people for awhile. And the girls go crazy for brothers down there.

JAEGER

Really?

EPPS

That's what I hear. Don't matter. Girls go crazy everywhere for a man with gold.

From the distance we hear the faint sound of a car motor. It draws closer and closer.

Epps and Jaeger stand. Knowing they're so close to the end of a long adventure they become very business like.

JAEGER

Well, this is it. We get the car, find some Americans. We find Americans we'll be all right.

EPPS

We'll make up some kind of lie. They won't find the gold.

Epps and Jaeger just stand staring at each other as the car draws closer.

JAEGER

Okay. See you in a minute.

Jaeger goes out and lays in the car's path. Epps goes to hide behind some rocks.

The car keeps getting closer and closer.

Jaeger yells over to Epps.

JAEGER(CONT)

Epps, I don't think he's slowing down.

EPPS

He'll slow down.

The car gets closer.

JAEGER

He's not slowing.

EPPS

He's going to slow down.

The car gets closer.

JAEGER

Epps...Epps!

The car barrels right for Jaeger. Forget what Epps says, it's not slowing down and Jaeger knows it.

JAEGER(CONT)

Aw, damn!

At the last possible second Jaeger rolls out of the way. The car doesn't slow, tearing across the stretch of road where Jaeger lay, but swerves to avoid him. The DRIVER loses control for a few seconds and is forced to skid to a halt.

Epps runs to the car, rips open the driver's door, and presses the muzzle of an assault weapon to his head.

EPPS

You speak English? DO YOU SPEAK ENGLISH!?

DRIVER

(Frightened)

Y-yes.

Jaeger runs over and jumps in the car. Epps gets in behind the driver, keeping the gun pressed to his head.

EPPS

Where were you going?

DRIVER

Baghdad.

EPPS

What's in the other direction?

DRIVER

This road, it leads straight to Kuwait.

EPPS

Turn the car around.

DRIVER

Please, I beg of you. The American army is there. I am Iraqi. They will kill me.

EPPS

Nobody's going to hurt you.

Epps takes a gold coin from his back and gives it to the driver.

EPPS(CONT)

You see that? Gold. You take us to the Americans, and we'll give you another one. Now drive.

The driver turns around the car and starts back in the direction he came.

They drive on for awhile, mostly in silence. Epps and Jaeger are too anxious to have this all over to say much, and the driver is too scared. Finally the driver starts to talk.

DRIVER

You are Americans, yes?

Neither Jaeger or Epps answer.

DRIVER(CONT)

We didn't not all want this war, do you know? We didn't not all want to invade our brothers and sisters in Kuwait. Now your army crushes us. So few days, and so many have died. And many fear we will all die. Please tell this to your people: We did not want this war.

Still Jaeger and Epps say nothing. Outside the car the traffic flowing in the opposite direction gradually gets thicker and thicker.

DRIVER(CONT)

I have a brother in our army. When I take you back, will you look for him? If he is still alive, will you look for him and take care of him?

This last bit gets to Epps.

EPPS

Yeah. We'll look for him.

Outside the traffic away from Kuwait has gotten so thick everything is at a stand still. There are Iraqi military vehicles pulling out, as well as a good many civilian cars and trucks. It clogs up both lanes, and envelopes the car. Some people try to make their way on foot as it is now much faster.

JAEGER

Look at this.

DRIVER

Iraqis. They are fleeing from Kuwait, from your military.

EPPS

See if you can't drive around this.

The driver tries to work the car free of the congestion, but he's wedged in, and not going anywhere.

From out of the sky swoop down a flight of AMERICAN F-15E FIGHTER JETS. They swing down on the far end of the highway, engines roaring like angry lions. For a second time stands still. Everyone on the road stops and looks up at the jets.

Time starts again, and with a deadly vengeance.

The fighter pilots begin to strafe the highway: Vehicles and people, civilian and military alike. There is no distinction, only carnage.

This is the infamous Al Jahra highway from Basrah to Kuwait City that was strafed with deadly accuracy over and over on the last day of the war by American forces. It became known as the Highway of Death.

The huge shells rip a bloody path, shredding cars and trucks, igniting explosions, straight towards the car with Epps, Jaeger and the driver. With barely seconds to go before they are shot to pieces as well. They dive from the car, Epps dragging the driver out, and scramble for cover along the side of the road.

The planes turn back for another pass.

JAEGER

What the hell are they doing? There're civilians in there.

Not even thinking about what he's doing Jaeger jumps up and screams at the jets.

JAEGER (CONT)
DON'T SHOOT! DON'T SHOOT! THEY'RE
CIVILIANS!

Epps jumps up and drags Jaeger back down to cover as the shells from the jets cut dangerously close to them.

The jets bank and swoop for another run.

Epps realizes there is something wrong. He looks around desperately, but doesn't see...THERE, BACK IN THE CAR!

EPPS
The gold!

Epps runs for the car, trying to beat the jets.

JAEGER
No!

Jaeger lunges for Epps but misses him. Epps snakes his way through the burning hulks towards their car. He dodges, jukes and weaves among shells, shrapnel and explosions that go off all around him. He just makes it to the car, grabbing up the gold, as the fighters once again swing low and cut loose.

A wicked hail of shells reigns down. It sets off a series of violent explosions that knocks Jaeger off his feet. It takes him a beat to recover. By then the fighters have done their job, and fly off.

Jaeger stands. He walks towards the road over the plaintive wails of the barely living. The car, the gold, Epps... they are essentially disintegrated.

AS THE CAMERA PULLS BACK AND UP WE SEE THAT IT ISN'T JUST THEIR CAR AND EPPS THAT ARE GONE. There isn't much of anything left on this road. Just death, destruction and bloodshed.

FADE TO:

BLACK

FADE TO:

INT. MILITARY COURTROOM - MONTHS LATER

Jaeger is cleaned up, in dress uniform, and sitting at a table before a MILITARY TRIBUNAL. He looks very sullen, as if this whole adventure has robbed him of his soul.

The members of the tribunal just look pissed.

CHIEF JUSTICE

The members of this tribunal have reached a verdict. Based on the evidence presented we find the defended guilty as charged of desertion, insurrection, insubordination, and conduct unbecoming. Further the tribunal will recommend that the defendant be sentenced to life imprisonment, and that from this day forward he shall no longer walk as a free man. You should consider yourself quite fortunate, son. There was a time when lesser crimes would have found you before a firing squad. I don't know that a person like you has much to say for himself, but it is your right say something.

Jager doesn't stand. He doesn't look at the tribunal. He just begins to talk.

JAEGER

I'm sorry, I guess. Not for looking for the gold, or leaving my post. You know what it's like to have gold raining out of your hands? That'll give me enough to think about the rest of my days in the brig. I'm just sorry about Wes. He was all right. It was the gold that made him what he became. If I hadn't found that map, if I hadn't talked them into going searching...Wes just might have made it home after all. I guess I feel responsible for him.

CHIEF JUSTICE

The way I view things you're responsible for the lives of two men: Private First Class Wes Hammond, and Second Lieutenant John Epps.

JAEGER

Yeah, well, I've been thinking about that. See, there was an explosion and everything, but I never really saw Epps get killed. And nobody ever found the gold. I guess they both could have been burned to slag. I guess. But there were a lot of bodies out on that road. A smart man could have found some identification to use. A smart man could have made his way up to Syria or Turkey. A smart man could have gotten himself right out of the Middle East. A smart man with enough gold. Way I figure,

right about now old Epps is sitting in a bar in Sydney, or Melboure, or maybe Brisbane telling stories to one of the prettiest Aussies you ever saw.

The members of the tribunal just scoff.

CHIEF JUSTICE

I find it highly unlikely that anyone could accomplish such a thing.

JAEGER

Well, Sir, I guess you don't know Second Lieutenant John Epps very well, do you?

Jaeger allows himself a slight smile as he leaves the tribunal with this question.

FADE TO:

BLACK

END