

FIRST BLOOD II: THE MISSION

by

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FADE IN:

TITLE SEQUENCE

EXT. V.A. HOSPITAL - DAY

A drab GREEN SEDAN with U.S. ARMY printed on the door
stops at the steps of a fortress-like colonial-style

building.

Iron bars cover the windows.

The lawn sprinklers snap mindlessly to themselves.

A CRT-style printout appears at the bottom of FRAME:

D-MINUS 117 HRS

FAYETTEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

ANGLE ON SEDAN

as the doors open and TWO POWERFUL MPs, one of whom was driving, emerge. The other opens the rear door for COLONEL SAMUEL TRAUTMAN who stands, eyeing the imposing facade of the hospital.

Trautman is in his early fifties and wears the mantle of command sternly but without arrogance.

He takes the stairs with purposeful strides, the MPs falling in behind him.

HOLD ON THE SIGN above the main door as they go inside:

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION HOSPITAL

INT. HOSPITAL

A gray metal door bearing the sign "NEUROPSYCHIATRIC WING" bangs open and a massive ORDERLY in white passes through. He is followed by the two MPs, Trautman, and a SHORT DOCTOR who hustles to keep up with the others.

LOW ANGLE DOLLY PRECEDING the entourage as they stride forward.

The MPs are grim-faced and walk in step.

Trautman and a doctor SINGLETERRY silently walk through the corridor.

They pass the open day-room where somnambulistic patients sit like statuary watching "The Young and the Restless" or watching the wallpaper fade.

Bleak light from an overcast day filters through the barred window.

The vets seem older than their years and although some show the physical scars of combat, there is no doubt that the greatest trauma for these men is behind the eyes.

As they pass the open doors of the rooms of the "chronic ward", haunted eyes turn toward them.

As they approach the nurse's station for the "chronic ward" the orderly nods.

The HEAD NURSE turns to her console.

INSERT - AS NURSE'S HAND

hits a button on the console.

TIGHT ON SECURITY DOOR

as a solenoid-operated bolt snaps back with a loud BUZZ CLACK.

The orderly's good hand shoves the door open.

INT. "VIOLENT" WARD

The entourage enters a long narrow corridor lined with locked doors.

POV DOLLYING ALONG CORRIDOR

Occasionally faces appear at the safety-glass windows set in the doors. Men whose souls have fled. Their eyes track us as we move past.

An emaciated MAN in an untied hospital smock and bare feet stands as if lost in the center of the corridor.

REVERSE ON GROUP

DOLLYING as they detour around the man, whose clawlike hand catches at Trautman's tunic. A hoarse, demented SHOUTING issues from one of the doors, a desperate WAILING from another.

INT. STAIRWELL

CLOSE ON DOOR LATCH as keys RATTLE and the door opens.

WIDER as the group enters a dark service stairwell. The single fluorescent light flickers stroboscopically, a pulsing twilight.

LEWIS

Shit. Maintenance never gets down here.

They descend two flights to a door of steel bars on a sliding track.

The MPs flank Lewis as he unlocks the door.

SINGLETERRY

So what am I supposed to do? Can't transfer him to Leavenworth. He's civilian. So I put him in an isolation cell that hasn't been used since the Spanish Inquisition.

TIGHT ON BARRED DOOR

rolling aside on metal tracks. CLANG.

INT. CORRIDOR

This area of the hospital's basement has been used for little but storage in recent years. Stacks of obsolete equipment gathers dust, leaving only a narrow walkspace.

The steel doors of the isolation cells yawn open, except for the last one.

TRAUTMAN

Maybe you should have tried cutting him some slack.

Lewis opens a cabinet near the single locked cell and removes a SMALL RIFLE. He feeds a SYRINGE-LIKE SHELL into the single-shot bolt action.

TRAUTMAN

(continuing)
What's that?

SINGLETERRY

Tranquilizer syrette gun. Borrowed it from the Animal Control Department.

Trautman pushes the barrel aside with a contemptuous snort and steps up to the cell door.

TRAUTMAN

Gimme a break.
(nods toward door)
Open it.

The two MPs flank the door. One pulls on the latching

lever. Bolts slide. The door swings open, revealing blackness.

LEWIS

(muttering)

Thinks he's the fucking Prince of
Darkness.

One MP tries the switch beside the cell, flicking it several times. Nothing.

He glances apprehensively at the other MP and they step into the dark cell.

INT. CELL

TIGHT ON A HAND, dimly outlined, as it twists a light bulb a half-turn in its socket.

In the sudden light the MPs face an imposing figure.

JOHN RAMBO, wearing only a pair of filthy jeans, stands "ready" before them. The single light bulb on the low ceiling sends glistening highlights over his taught body. A nasty piece of machinery.

Long, matted hair coils onto his shoulders, and an unkempt beard heightens the cheekbones beneath eyes which are deep, reptilian. Intense.

His position, though not overtly threatening, suggests a willingness to strike without warning which gives the M.P.'s pause.

Trautman steps forward between the MPs.

TRAUTMAN

At ease, Rambo.

MED. ON RAMBO

rising from his slight crouch to stand composed, balanced... parade rest.

TRAUTMAN

(continuing to MPs)

Wait outside.

He closes the door until it latches.

TRAUTMAN
Hello, John.

RAMBO
Colonel.

TRAUTMAN
Mind if I sit down?

Rambo motions to the narrow bunk, dropping into an Oriental squat himself as the Colonel sits.

Trautman's manner with Rambo is familiar, somehow paternal. A bit of an ironic grin twitches briefly.

TRAUTMAN
(continuing)
I hear you're not enjoying it here.

RAMBO
I could take it or leave it.

Trautman sighs and leans back.

TRAUTMAN
Seems like I'm always pulling you out of some goddamn toilet or other, doesn't it?

RAMBO
Am I out of here?

TRAUTMAN
That depends on you.
(pause)
Christ, look at you. I give you this easy duty until I can get you an assignment... all you have to do is eat ice cream and watch soap operas... and you have to make it Rambo's last stand.

RAMBO
There were treating me like a headcase.

TRAUTMAN
Hard to believe. You shoot up one little town in Oregon with a fifty caliber machine gun... one little dogpatch town... and everybody

figures your wrapper's broken. No sense of humor.

(pause)

What did you expect? An engraved plague from the chamber of commerce?

Rambo looks at his hands. When he finally speaks his voice seems distant, disembodied.

RAMBO

In 'Nam I flew gunships. Million dollar equipment. Back here nobody trusts me to park cars. I keep thinking it's going to be okay... but I've been out six years and it's not okay. Sometimes I feel like I'm coming right out of my skin.

The colonel nods slowly. He notices a battered shoebox on the floor beside the bed. The cell is absolutely devoid of personal articles otherwise.

TRAUTMAN

This your stuff?

RAMBO

That's it. My life.

TIGHT ON SHOEBOX

as Trautman flips through a number of worn snapshots of the men in Rambo's special forces unit.

They are horsing around, in and out of uniform. A younger, cleanshaven Rambo is among them. He is grinning broadly in one shot.

It seems uncharacteristic of the hardened man we see now.

TRAUTMAN

Hardcore outfit. The best I ever trained.

RAMBO

(coldly)

Those men are all dead.

TRAUTMAN

(glancing up)

You're not.

He fishes something from among the pathetic debris of

Rambo's life.

TRAUTMAN

(continuing)

Congressional Medal of Honor.

RAMBO

(bitterly)

Yeah. Big time.

TRAUTMAN

Plus, what else? Two Silver Stars, four Bronze Stars, two Soldier's Medals, four Vietnamese Crosses of Gallantry and... uh, a handful of Purple Hearts.

RAMBO

Five. I never wanted that stuff.

TRAUTMAN

What did you want?

RAMBO

(haltingly)

I just wanted... I don't know... after all that... I just wanted one person, one person, to come up to me and say "you did good, John." And mean it. That's all.

(pause)

After all that.

TRAUTMAN

You just picked that wrong war to be a hero in.

The colonel studies Rambo a moment, then stands abruptly.

TRAUTMAN

(continuing)

Let's take a walk.

CUT TO:

EXT. V.A. HOSPITAL - DAY

Rambo and Trautman cross the manicured grounds, escorted by the two grim MPs.

A number of wheelchair-bound vets enjoy the sunshine B.G.

and a desultory game of volleyball is in progress.

Still, the impression is of the detritus of war left scattered on a huge lawn like broken toys.

As the two approach a conservatively dressed MAN waiting on a bench under a plane-tree, stands.

TRAUTMAN

Jason Kirkhill... John Rambo.

Kirkhill extends his hand in greeting, but Rambo coolly half-turns to reveal his hands, locked in WRIST-CUFFS separated by a steel bar so that they can hang comfortably at his sides.

Kirkhill grins affably. Drops his hand.

KIRKHILL

Good to meet you, Rambo. How are you?

Rambo scans Kirkhill's face, noting the cold scrutiny all but concealed in the smile lines.

RAMBO

(coldly)
You a spook?

Kirkhill drops the smile.

KIRKHILL

That's right. CIA Special Operations Division.

Rambo turns to Trautman.

RAMBO

I don't work with spooks. Not after that op in Cambodia.

KIRKHILL

I'm authorized to get you out of here. I thought that's what you wanted.

RAMBO

(considering)
What's the job?

KIRKHILL

Classic special forces op... hit

fast... in and out. Two men. Two days.

RAMBO
Why me?

KIRKHILL
(shrugs non-committally)
We like you.
(pause)
At least the computer at Langley likes you. Pulled your file because of various factors. Service record. Area familiarity.

RAMBO
Where?

KIRKHILL
Not yet.

RAMBO
I'm not jumping blind.

Kirkhill's eyes get hard.

KIRKHILL
It's yes or no. In or out... now. If it's "out," we will not have had this conversation. If you come in, you will not be working for us. No knowledge. No comment. Do you understand?

Rambo seems about to turn away.

TRAUTMAN
(to Kirkhill)
Tell him. I'll take responsibility.

Kirkhill looks pained, like he has gas.

KIRKHILL
North Vietnam. What they call the Democratic Republic of Vietnam now.

TIGHT ON RAMBO

as he takes that in. His eyes seem to see all the way there already. Emotions go through him. Exhilaration

mixing with terror of the demon he can't turn away from.
He nods slowly.

TRAUTMAN

We left some people behind there,
John... POWs.

RAMBO

This just occurred to somebody, now?

KIRKHILL

We don't leave our men, Rambo.

Rambo and Trautman lock eyes.
Something flows there... Trautman knows his soul.

RAMBO

You got it. I'm in.

He whips one hand around from his side, tossing the
manacle bar at a surprised Kirkhill's feet.
The wrist-cuffs are still closed.

CUT TO:

INT. RAMBO'S CELL

Rambo stands alone in his cell, the door open behind him.
He hefts the shoebox filled with his worldly possessions,
the scraps of memory, dead friends, and symbols of valor
and violent death.

He upends the box, spilling everything into the open
toilet.

Flushes it. And walks out.

CUT TO:

EXT. FORT BRAGG - DUSK

D-MINUS 84 HRS

FORT BRAGG, NORTH CAROLINA

TIGHT ON BOOTED FEET

clomping in rhythmic lockstep as a platoon of recruits
marches past in close order drill.
The drill sergeant bellows cadence.

SERGEANT (O.S.)

Three-fo-your-lef, lef-right-lef...
Other lef shithead! Square those
pieces away... square 'em away
girls! I said...

WIDER

as the platoon marches past, EXITING FRAME to reveal a
sign mounted beside a security checkpoint in a formidable
chain-link fence.

AIRBORNE SPECIAL FORCES GROUP
OPERATIONS CENTER

INT. CORRIDOR

Kirkhill, accompanied by his basilisk-eyed AIDE, strides
past Rambo's two MPs flanking the door, into a small
room.

INT. BRIEFING ROOM

The room is an austere cubicle with the army's typically
drab furniture in "early functional."
The cold eye of a surveillance camera stares down at a
single table with a seated figure... Rambo, looking like
he may have been there for centuries.

The aide hands Rambo a sealed folder and extends a
clipboard and pen for him to sign off.

KIRKHILL
This is your mission packet...

AIDE
(quietly overlapping)
Sign here, please. And here.

KIRKHILL
Memorize it here. It doesn't leave
this room.

Rambo unseals the folder, removing a sheaf of photocopied
documents, as Kirkhill perches on the table next to him.

KIRKHILL
(continuing)
The twenty-four hundred American
servicemen missing in action in

Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia are officially listed "Presumed Killed." Certainly most of them are.

Rambo is leafing through the contents of his PACKET. He skips a stack of reports and fishes out several grainy 8 X 10 prints.

KIRKHILL

(continuing)

But reports keep filtering in. Sightings by refugees. Nothing verified. Finally, we feel we've got enough to proceed on.

Rambo studies the prints. They seem to be high altitude surveillance photos of a small COMPOUND OF BUILDINGS, surrounded by forests.

KIRKHILL

(continuing)

Memo E-7 on top will cover the details. An abandoned Vietnamese Army base in the North-central highlands may have a compound used as an internment camp. As you can see the intelligence is soft. These LANDSAT photos show huts... barracks. It could be anything.

RAMBO

(flat)

What's the plan?

KIRKHILL

This operation is in two phases. Recon and rescue. You are phase one. Your two-man team will probe the site, confirm the presence of American POWs, if any, make photographic and tactical observations, then proceed to the extraction point without engaging the enemy.

RAMBO

We don't try to pull out any of our guys if we find them?

KIRKHILL

Negative. Absolutely not. The phase two assault team will get them out.

RAMBO

(not pleased)

We just take pictures?

KIRKHILL

Don't look so disappointed. It should be hairy enough... even for you.

CUT TO:

INT. DON MUANG AIRPORT - LATE AFTERNOON

Kirkhill's VOICE continues over the image of: The crowded airport terminal, as Rambo, carrying a cheap flight bag, weaves among jostling Orientals.

KIRKHILL (V.O.)

Your flight to Bangkok is at 06:30. Commercial carrier. Low profile. Rendezvous with Colonel Trautman at the Indra. Room 618. You'll meet your number two man, Lieutenant Brewer. He doesn't get a packet... you brief him verbally.

After a flurry of passport stamping Rambo clears customs and makes his way to the main exit.

EXT. TAXI STAND - STREET - LATE AFTERNOON

Rambo emerges into the stifling humid heat of Bangkok in May and stands, scanning for a cab.

D-MINUS 51 HRS

BANGKOK, THAILAND

Bangkok is a city of fervid motion and the street is chaotic with traffic.

Stepping through throngs of Asians and tourists Rambo reaches for the door of a beat-to-hell Citroen taxi hunkered low at the curb like some metal lungfish.

He spins as a hand lightly touches his shoulder.

MAN

Sorry old buddy, I saw it first.

An American in his late twenties, the man speaks with one of those hard-to-dislike Southern accents. Probably North Carolina.

He is lanky but muscular, with boyish good looks and hair cut so short it barely qualifies as stubble. Though dressed in a loud Hawaiian shirt and Madras slacks, it is painfully obvious the man is military.

His arm is draped around a gorgeous but overly made-up Thai girl.

MAN

(affable)

I kinda got an important date.

Rambo's eyes narrow as he turns wordlessly and climbs into the taxi.

The American grins cockily and tosses his bag to Rambo.

MAN

No problem. We'll share it. Get your tail in there, sweet thing.

INT./ EXT. TAXI

The American and the girl pile into the broad front seat, to the chagrin of the lizard-faced Thai driver.

MAN

(to driver)

Indra Hotel. And don't take the scenic route, Smiley... I know my way around this burg. Comprende?

Rambo speaks quietly to the driver in Thai.

RAMBO

(Thai/subtitled)

Same place for me.

The girl giggles as the American slips his hand up from her stockinged knee, between her thighs.

MAN

Ah, you fair flower of the Orient.

She giggles, like a chirping bird.

MAN

(continuing to Rambo)

She thinks everything I say is funny. Don't you, Angel-pie? Man, Thai women are the best. Got the kinda legs I like... feet at one end and pussy at the other.

He turns to Rambo, who hasn't commented or taken any observable notice of him.

MAN

(continuing)

You don't say a helluva lot, do you, pal? You speak English?

RAMBO

(coldly)

Sometimes.

The girl coos to the American in pidgin English.

THAI GIRL

You got money? I stay you whole week.

MAN

Sweet thing, there's nothin' I'd like more than to wugga-wugga with you for a week, but tonight's all we got.

He lowers his voice conspiratorially, leaning close to her.

MAN

(continuing)

See, I'm on this secret mission, and tomorrow mornin' I head out to...

Rambo grabs the man brutally by his collar.

RAMBO

That's enough, Brewer.

The American freezes at the sound of his name. Turns slowly.

BREWER

(realizing)

You're Rambo?
(pause)
Ke-rist!

Rambo speaks sharply to the girl in Thai.

RAMBO
(Thai/subtitled)
Get out. Now!

The driver, confused, skids to a stop and the girl gets out into the din of a cluttered shop district. A flash of slit skirt and then only fading curses behind them as the taxi moves on.

BREWER
(brightening)
Jeez, I never would have guessed.
You undercover, Lieutenant? Great
disguise.

CUT TO:

INT. INDRA HOTEL ROOM - DUSK

Trautman, sipping a gin tonic at the window, spins around as the door flies open. Brewer storms in, followed a few paces back by Rambo, who closes the door.

BREWER
(to Trautman)
He says he's team leader on this
show.

TRAUTMAN
That's correct.

BREWER
(controlling his
fury)
Begging the Colonel's pardon but I
understood I was up to lead my next
mission.

TRAUTMAN
Not this one. You're on
communications and camera. Same
image-intensified gear you used in
El Salvador last year.

RAMBO

This clown almost blew mission security on the street. I'm not jumping with him.

BREWER

(spinning)

Clown? Now back up there, buddy...

TRAUTMAN

(sharply)

Listen up. You two are married as of now. Get used to it.

RAMBO

(to Trautman)

I say we tape him to a chair.

CUT TO:

EXT. OPERATIONS BASE CAMP - DAY

D-MINUS 36 HRS

BAN BUNG KHLA, THAILAND

A small airstrip transects a meadow bounded by rain-forested slopes. Wreathed in low clouds the mountains march into the distance in increasingly subtler shades of gray like a Japanese watercolor.

Near a cluster of small buildings the scene is one of manic but efficient activity as the high tech base camp is assembled.

An enormous SIKORSKY CH-54 "SKY CRANE" lowers a Winnebago-sized conex container as another roars by. An Army Corps of Engineers work crew, stripped to the waist, scurries through the rotor wash. The blasting air raises curtains of muddy spray and drowns out the yelled commands of the supervisors.

A Vietnam era HUEY UH-1D HELICOPTER nimbly touches down nearby. Rambo, in the pilot's seat, slips off his HEADSET and climbs down. Brewer and Trautman, in fatigues, jump out and join him as Kirkhill approaches.

DOLLYING WITH THEM as they emerge from the rotor noise and Kirkhill motions them toward the MOBILE TACTICAL OPERATIONS CENTER (MTOC).

KIRKHILL

I didn't know you were a stick man,

Rambo.

RAMBO

I was crossed-trained in gunships.

TRAUTMAN

(to Kirkhill)

How long have you been setting up?

KIRKHILL

About 22 hours on site.

TRAUTMAN

Nice work.

They pass a tent-like CAMOUFLAGE CANOPY under which an ALL-BLACK SIKORSKY UH-60 "BLACKHAWK" HELICOPTER squats ominously. It has no markings or insignia. There is another canopy behind it, the contents of which are screened from view.

Nearby is a cluster of CONEX AIRLIFT CONTAINERS, two of which are joined together to form a building like a double-wide mobile home.

Another unit contains a roaring generator, a fourth is topped by TRACKING GEAR. Cables snake through the mud, connecting the units.

Kirkhill notices THREE WORK PARTY "GRUNTS" kibitzing nearby, taking pictures of each other with a pocket Instamatic. He snatches the camera from a surprised young corporal.

KIRKHILL

This is a covert operation,
numbnuts.

He opens the camera and drops the film in the mud. The corporal reaches petulantly for the camera. Kirkhill drops it casually in the mud as well.

KIRKHILL

(to Trautman
entourage)

Check out the command hut.

He opens the door to the large conex unit and follows the others inside.

INT. MTOC

The "hut" turns out to be a humming electronic womb. In the subdued light banks of VIDEO MONITORS glow, and the status lights of UPRIGHT COMPUTER UNITS line one wall. Workstations for TRACKING, COMMUNICATIONS, AND LONG-RANGE COORDINATION create a claustrophobic jumble of modular equipment racks.

BREWER

Mission control!

They wipe their muddy feet and enter the air-conditioned command center.

Rambo gazes around at the jumble of gear. He runs his hand over one console, causing a seated technician to glare at him.

RAMBO

All this is for us?

KIRKHILL

That's right.

BREWER

(to Rambo)

They call us the field-unit meat-puppets.

CUT TO:

INT./ EXT. CAMOUFLAGE CANOPY - DAY

Rambo and Brewer walk in under an expanse of net camouflage on poles. Sunlight streams through the foliage cover, creating bright mottles on a black object F.G.

CAMERA PULLS BACK and BOOMS UP as Rambo moves forward to reveal the object as an ALL-BLACK JET. It is a modified Gulfstream "Peregrine," a small sleek single-engine executive model, with all insignia and I.D. numbers removed.

MED. ON RAMBO AND BREWER

as they consider the aircraft.

BREWER

Ever do this from a jet?

RAMBO

No.

VOICE (O.S.)

It's easy...

They turn to see a lanky long-haired man in a leather flying jacket duck under the fuselage from the far side and approach them.

MAN

(grinning)

Just have to jump fast.

Two other air crewmen jump down from the open rear passenger door of the plane.

RAMBO

You the pilot?

MAN

(extending hand)

Yeah. Doyle.

(he gestures to the
two in the door)

Lifer and Fuhrman.

Doyle is a product of the sixties' school of ultra-cool, his brain a little torched by too many method-out night-missions.

Fuhrman, the co-pilot, grins too much and Lifer's eyes are just plain scary.

RAMBO

You boys Air Force?

DOYLE

Marines. 'Ex' though. We're private contractors now.

LIFER

You ever do a tour 'in-country'?

RAMBO

Two. 'Eye-corps' mostly.

DOYLE

(to Brewer)

How about you?

BREWER

(defensive)

Vietnam was a little before my time.
So was Korea, know what I mean?

Rambo and Doyle glance at each other... solidarity before
new-meat bozos.

EXT. CAMOUFLAGE CANOPY

DETAIL ON THE GROUND

as the head of a torque-wrench finishes a rough map of
local Southeast Asia, scratched hastily in the dirt.

DOYLE (O.S.)

Thailand. The Mekong. Laos. 'Nam.

With each word he plops the torque-wrench onto the
appropriate place.

ON DOYLE

Gesturing as he continues.

DOYLE

A straight dash across the Laotian
panhandle, through the Annamese
Mountains... some good dicey bits
there... and on to the drop zone.
Eighteen minutes each way in
communist airspace.

RAMBO

We go low to stay off radar?

DOYLE

In the rhubarb, babe.

FUHRMAN

(grinning)

Mowin' the lawn.

LIFER

Dig it.

INT. MOTC - COMMAND HUT

Trautman, looking a bit uncomfortable in Kirkhill's

electronic lair, paces behind the seated Special Operations Officer.

TRAUTMAN

How long before you're fully on line?

KIRKHILL

Couple hours. Let me buy you a coffee.

He turns to a vending machine nestled improbably between two racks of electronics.

TRAUTMAN

You think they'll find any?

KIRKHILL

(feeding in change)
POWs? I don't know. But either way it'll get that subcommittee off our necks. Cream?

TRAUTMAN

Black. No sugar.

KIRKHILL

The League of Families leans on Congress. Then they lean on us. Like we don't have enough to worry about in a dozen dirtwater countries. Damn!

He pounds the machine, which refuses to vend. Trautman watches the Special Operations Officer banging ineffectually on the COIN RETURN, amid a million dollars worth of equipment.

EXT. FLIGHT TENT

A tent next to the camouflage canopy serves as a flight shack for Doyle and his ground crew. Crates serve as tables and stools, and 50-gallon fuel drums are the back wall.

Doyle, with Rambo and Brewer, continues the game plan.

DOYLE

A couple clicks from insertion we go vertical to ten thousand and you punch out. Navigate in free fall

like a regular HALO jump. You'll
have a good moon.

LIFER

(to himself)

I got your moon right here...

BREWER

No problem. Duck soup.

Doyle notices that Brewer has casually lit up a cigarette.

DOYLE

Hey, man... we got fuel on the deck.

I don't like flying without a plane.

Brewer glances at the pool of jet fuel around the pumping
area.

Rambo plucks the cigarette from Brewer's lips.

RAMBO

No smoking on this mission. It's
not healthy.

He looks Brewer in the eye and flicks the lit butt into
the pool of gas.

Which puts it out.

BREWER

Son of a bitch!

Rambo saunters away.

DOYLE

(appreciatively)

Nice trick. Works nine times out of
ten.

EXT. BASE CAMP - RUNWAY - DUSK

The steel planking of the pre-fabricated runway rings
under their feet as Rambo and Brewer run laps. Brewer,
between breaths, is chanting a monologue as they draw
near.

RAMBO

Again.

BREWER

Insertion. Call in to base camp by

TRANSAT. Proceed to point Tango
November for rendezvous with our
ground contact. Indigenous agent.
Co Phuong Bao.

(in same tone)
We've been over this three times.

RAMBO
You stopped.

Brewer rolls his eyes.

BREWER
Co Phuong Bao. The guide takes us
twelve clicks upriver to target at
Ban... at Ban... Bo Peep. Shit!

RAMBO
(flatly)
Start over.

EXT. BASE CAMP - NIGHT

Face-down in the dirt near the flight-line, Rambo and
Brewer are banging off pushups under the floodlight.

BREWER
(mechanically)
... to target at Ban Kia Na. We
probe the site...

RAMBO
(to himself
overlapping)
Ninety.

BREWER
... then proceed downriver to
extraction at point Echo Delta.
Doyle takes us out by helicopter, we
all live happily ever after and
that's the last time, Rambo! I
swear to Christ.

RAMBO
One hundred.

They both collapse, face-down, breathing heavily. Brewer
rises first.

BREWER

Gettin' old, huh?

RAMBO

Yeah.

(pause)

Second set. Let's go.

When Rambo rises it is in pushup position, only this time using one arm. He starts. One, two, three...

INT./ EXT. EQUIPMENT TENT - DAY

D-MINUS 11 HRS

Brewer lifts an OLIVE-DRAB BOX onto the table inside the open-tent. It looks like a large field radio with a complex console set in the top.

BREWER

Transponder-satellite relay.

TRANSAT.

He taps a small collapsible DISH ANTENNA on a tripod connected to the box by a curly-cord.

BREWER

(continuing)

The signal's coded into infrared pulses, picked up by the spy satellite, bounced to the ground station in Okinawa and relayed to the hut...

He points to the MTOC nearby.

BREWER

(continuing)

No radio source. Nothing for the bad guys to triangulate on.

RAMBO

Show me how it operates.

BREWER

That's what I'm here for.

RAMBO

Show me in case you get zapped as soon as we land.

BREWER
(frustrated)
We're leaving tonight, not in a
week.

He sees Rambo's expression.

BREWER
Alright. Alright.

INT. RAMBO'S TENT - DUSK

Rambo sits on his cot hunched over some minute work.

DETAIL

With surgical precision he hones the trigger mechanism of
a FLAT-BLACK CROSSBOW PISTOL.

ANGLE

Rambo raises the crossbow, cocked but empty.
CLICK. It fires smoothly, to his satisfaction.

INT. EQUIPMENT CONEX - NIGHT

CLOSE ON SHIPPING CRATE as a crossbar pries the lid off.

ANGLE ON BREWER

as he raises a telescope-like piece of equipment.

WIDER

revealing Brewer surrounded by shipping crates. He sets
the scope on a long empty table and attacks another crate,
working under a harsh fluorescent lighting unit.

SEVERAL CLOSE ANGLES - JUMP CUTS

Brewer pulls electronic test gear out of bubble-pack and
sets the units on the table.

He hefts an automatic rifle and checks the action.

Another electronic gadget joins the growing array on the
table.

Another, smaller automatic, a MAC-10 MACHINE PISTOL, is lifted out of packing.

CLOSE as Brewer's hands thread a silencer onto the barrel of the Mac-10.

INT. RAMBO'S TENT

TIGHT ON RAMBO'S HAND, holding a special forces LILE-KNIFE. He runs a whet-stone along the blade, methodically.

INT. EQUIPMENT CONEX

Brewer is calibrating his STARLIGHT-SCOPE image-intensifier using a wave-form oscilloscope. Satisfied, he begins mounting it atop the assault rifle.

INT. RAMBO'S TENT

VERY TIGHT ON RAMBO, working in almost total darkness, streaking his face with two shades of green camouflage makeup. The effect is unearthly.

INT. EQUIPMENT CONEX

Brewer, wearing headphones, is running a calibration tone through the audio-processor of his TELESCOPIC MICROPHONE. He clamps it onto the assault rifle.

INT. RAMBO'S TENT

TIGHT ON RAMBO'S HANDS

covered with green greasepaint. Using a candle he expertly darkens the blade of his Lile-knife.

INT. EQUIPMENT CONEX

Brewer is standing at the end of the long table which is now laid out like a banquet with an incredible assortment of gadgets, weapons, supplies, kits, canteens, rations, etc.

Doyle lounges nearby watching the bugs dog-fighting around the fluorescent work light.

RAMBO (O.S.)

You jumping with all that?

They turn to see Rambo watching them from just outside the pool of light.

A spectral figure.

Brewer glances at the array of stuff.

BREWER

Yeah. Why not?

RAMBO

You break your leg, I'll have to shoot you.

He turns and vanishes in the dark.

DOYLE

I think he means it.

BREWER

Crazy fucker.

DOYLE

Well, son. You got that right. Anybody ever tell you about that guy?

Brewer turns quizzically toward him.

BREWER

What about him?

CUT TO:

EXT. RUNWAY - NIGHT

D-MINUS 28 MINUTES

TIGHT ON TURBOJET INTAKE

A black maw. The vanes begin to turn. The RISING WHINE becomes a STEADY ROAR.

C.U. FUEL COUPLER

as a ground CREWMAN disconnects hoses from the sleek,
black fuselage.

ON PEREGRINE - WIDER

as the blue fire roars in the exhaust throat. The air
convulses.

WIDER - TRACKING A VAN

moving beside the black ship, past the wing to the rear
door.

TIGHT ON VAN

as it comes to a stop, the side door FILLING FRAME. Lifer
ENTERS SHOT, reaches for the door latch.

INT. VAN

Total blackness, until light spills in from the opening
door.

Rambo sits, statue-like, hands on knees, wearing a BLACK
BLINDFOLD. Adjusting his eyes for night vision. He's
dressed for the mission: tiger stripe cammies, jump pack,
chute pack, hands and face mottled with camouflage
greasepaint. Ferocious looking. Demonic.

Lifer leads him out.

EXT. AIRFIELD

DOLLYING BEFORE RAMBO, being led as if to execution. Blue
and red TAXI LIGHTS send strobe-flashes of color across
his face as he approaches the aircraft.

INT. PEREGRINE

Rambo is led to the seat next to Brewer's. Trautman helps
Lifer strap him in. Plugs in his intercom jack.

Brewer eyes him cautiously.

He'd move away but all the other seats have been removed.

DOYLE (V.O.)

(filtered)

Ready to roll, Lieutenant.

Rambo adjusting his headset.

RAMBO

Let's do it.

TRAUTMAN

Keep it clean, Rambo, or I'll nail
your hide to the shed.

RAMBO

You got it, sir.

Trautman exits and the steps are rolled away.

INT. COCKPIT

Doyle is all business now.

DOYLE

Zen Rollercoaster, requesting
clearance.

VOICE

(filtered)

You are cleared, Zen Rollercoaster.

EXT. PEREGRINE

The wheel jacks are pulled.
The jet rolls forward.

EXT. AIRSTRIP

The aircraft hurtles down the runway, gathering speed.
The nose picks up.
It clears the end of the runway and then the treeline by a
few feet.

INT. PASSENGER COMPARTMENT

The interior is lit only by a single red light above the
door.
Brewer watches the forest below through the open doorway.
The door itself has been removed.
The ROAR OF THE AIRSTREAM is ferocious.

EXT. PEREGRINE

A sleek silhouette above the moonlit forest, the jet flashes across the rolling terrain just above the treetops.

MOVING WITH THE AIRCRAFT as it dips and rises with the land's contour. The rain forest below is a rushing blur. This is known as some serious flying.

INT. COCKPIT

Doyle is hunched forward, nose inches from the canopy. Eyes wide.
Drinking in the jungle.
All the lights in the cockpit are turned off.

Fuhrman uses a TAPED-OVER PENLIGHT to read the instruments.
Doyle is beyond instruments.

FUHRMAN

Switching communications to burst mode.

INT. MTOC

Kirkhill and Trautman are hunched at the main console.

TECHNICIAN

AWACS Two-Five has acquired. They are holding timeline.

Trautman watches the glowing dot representing the drop-jet crawling almost imperceptibly across a computer-generated map of Central Laos.

EXT. PEREGRINE

The sleek jet races toward the towering Annamese range ahead.

INT. COCKPIT

Fuhrman is grinning. That's bad.

DOYLE

(into mike)
Here comes the sexy part.

INT. PASSENGER COMPARTMENT

Rambo, sitting impassively, removes his blindfold.
The plane begins to pitch and plummet wildly.

Brewer lets out a rebel yell.

BREWER
Whoo-ya! I love it!

EXT. PEREGRINE

MOVING WITH IT as it slices through a twisting canyon like
a knife.
It slithers between the mountainous flanks.

INT. PASSENGER COMPARTMENT

Rambo is methodically checking his pack and harness,
seemingly oblivious to the insanity outside.

DOYLE (V.O.)
(filtered)
We just entered Viet airspace,
gentlemen. Eight klicks to
insertion.

RAMBO
(to Brewer via
headset)
Stay tight on me, Brewer. I don't
want to have to go looking for you.

BREWER
Check.

INT. MTOC

A TECHNICIAN turns from the secondary console.

TECHNICIAN
AWACS Niner-One via Subic Bay
reports them approaching insertion.
Five-by-Five.

EXT. PEREGRINE

D-MINUS TWO MINUTES

The mountains fall behind and the tiny jet hurtles down across the foothills, flying nap-of-the-earth.

INT. PASSENGER COMPARTMENT

Rambo slips his free-fall goggles into place.

DOYLE (V.O.)
(filtered)
Stand by to climb.

EXT. TRAIL - VIETNAM

A VIETNAMESE FARMER trudges down the road with two heavy buckets on a pole-carry across his shoulders. A distant WHINING becomes an approaching ROAR. Like a thunderbolt the black jet flashes over the top of the hill just ahead, thirty feet off the deck.

The farmer is tumbled by the blast of air. He looks up. The jet has gone into a ball-busting vertical climb and is instantly lost among the stars.

FARMER
(Viet/subtitled)
Son of a bitch!

INT. PASSENGER COMPARTMENT

Doyle's voice is matter-of-fact despite the gees they are pulling.

DOYLE
Approaching ten thousand. Eleven seconds to insertion. Ten, nine... Slowing to two-thirty...

The ready light changes from red to yellow. Rambo unbuckles from his seat. Rises. Brewer follows. Lifer steadies them at the door.

DOYLE

(continuing)

... three seconds. Two. One. Have
a nice day.

The ready-light turns GREEN.

LIFER

Go!

Rambo takes a single, powerful running stride from the
opposite wall and is out the door. Gone.
Brewer is right behind him.

EXT. PEREGRINE

The jet dwindles and is gone in a moment above the
tumbling figures.

ON RAMBO stabilizing his fall.
He switches on his pack strobe.

RAMBO

(shouting into mike)

You read me, Brewer?

BREWER (V.O.)

(faint)

Read you.

RAMBO

Home on my strobe.

ON BREWER

diving skillfully. He sees the distant flash of Rambo's
strobe below him and banks toward it like a fighter plane.

He comes alongside the Team Leader and they dive together.
Rambo cuts the strobe.

ANGLE DOWN as a solid layer of cloud rushes up.

They plunge through and the landscape below is an awesome
vista. An unbroken carpet of dark rain forest with a
narrow, meandering river, like a platinum ribbon.

Rambo sights on a distant bend in the river, spreads his
feet and dives. Brewer follows.

They shoot across the uprushing landscape at 135 mph.

INSERT - RAMBO'S L.E.D. ALTIMETER

Numbers flicking: 1,200 feet. 1,000. 800.

Rambo signals.

Their canopies deploy with a MUFFLED CRACK, simultaneously.

RAMBO'S POV

looking down past his swaying feet as the moonlit jungle rushes up... and up...

A mahogany tree lunges like a huge hand. The dark maw swallows us in blackness.

EXT. RAIN FOREST

Moonlight filters down through the foliage of massive trees, showing as shafts in the swirling night mists.

This is one of the most primeval forests on the planet, a place of violent growth and death-filled shadows.

Massive tree roots grip the earth, entwined with vines that climb swaying into the vaulted canopy above. Water drips constantly.

And life is everywhere. Furtive. Timeless. Churning in the shallow pools, under the bark, in the sweating fruit... leaping through the matted foliage above.

A FIGURE rises behind a rotting log, like a being from interstellar space. Rambo removes his goggles and headset, then shrugs out of his chute harness.

He looks around slowly. Taking it in.

RAMBO

(to himself)

Man, what are you doing back here?

Brewer's voice is a reedy chirp from his headset. He raises it to his ear.

RAMBO

You okay?

BREWER (V.O.)

Keep it down, man. I got problems.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAIN FOREST - BARNYARD

Brewer is face-to-face with a mangy PIG, which grunts its annoyance.

He is stuck up to his knees in the mud of a small fenced yard containing a few pigs and chickens.

The yard is adjacent to a large THATCH HUT, and four or five additional HOOTCHES are visible farther downslope, nestled among the trees.

Brewer holds a finger to his lips, cautioning the pig to silence. He lays backward in the black slop as a VIETNAMESE MAN in peasant pajamas comes to the door of the nearest hootch, an island of light in the dark forest.

Smoking a cigarette he looks around, perhaps scanning for the source of the faint crashing he heard a moment before.

Following a dirt road, little more than a trail between the hootches, an OLD WOMAN approaches. She is barefoot, and pushes a rusting bicycle laden with an enormous bundle of firewood.

Brewer struggles to free himself, straining in silence as the pigs step disdainfully around him.

The man flicks away the cigarette. He laughs raucously at something the old woman says and hurries to help her carry the firewood inside.

Brewer looks up, at his chute billowing quietly in the branches overhead.

The old woman pauses at the door, spits a shot of betelnut juice into the yard, and goes inside. The door bangs shut.

TIGHT ON BREWER

sighing with relief.

SUDDENLY A DARK OBJECT SHOOTS INTO FRAME, seizing him. Brewer's head snaps around. The object is Rambo's hand, painted camo-green.

Rambo drags him with a sucking POP from the mud.

The Team Leader glares.

RAMBO

(a freezing whisper)
That's one.

Brewer pauses a moment, assimilating the implicit warning. Then reaches for his harness buckles to free himself.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAIN FOREST - TRAIL

With the hootches visible B.G., Rambo moves silently off along the trail.

Brewer, lumbering under the enormous pack, CRASHES through foliage to catch up. He curses under his breath.

Rambo moves wraith-like through the undergrowth, appearing and vanishing, there... then not there.

Brewer stumbles over a root, THUDS to the ground.

Rambo stops, looking back. His expression grim. He turns and moves on, disappearing into the foliage.

Brewer scrambles up, following.

EXT. RAIN FOREST - CLEARING

TIGHT ON TRANSAT SCREEN as the last letters of the following message appear:

SLM DNK FIELD TM TO SLM DNK
CONTROL/REPORT INSERTION COMPLETED/
PROCEEDING TO RENDEZVOUS/END MESSAGE

WIDER

revealing Brewer hunched over the tiny CRT screen atop the transponder box, typing at a keyboard the size of a pocket calculator.

Rambo squats motionless, watching intently.

Brewer hits the "SEND" button.

CUT TO:

INT. COMMAND SHACK

The chief telecom tech turns to Kirkhill.

TECH

It's coming in.

Kirkhill watches the message print out on the main screen.
Turns to Trautman.

KIRKHILL

They're in! On the money.

A cheer goes up in the command center. The home team just scored.

EXT. RAIN FOREST - CLEARING

Rambo squats, studying his WATERPROOF TERRAIN MAP.
He glances at Brewer who has finished assembling his weapons and gear.

REVERSE ON BREWER

looking like a Martian stormtrooper with his exotic weapons and surplus equipment.
He is sighting through the scope of his assault rifle.
Fully assembled it is as big as a Chrysler and looks straight out of Star Wars.

RAMBO

What do you call that?

BREWER

(crisply)

Modified M-16 A2 and over-under M-79
grenade launcher, with Sionics sound
suppressor, Tracor starlight scope
and LAC/R-100 Laser sighting system.

RAMBO

Batteries not included.

BREWER

(wounded)

This is state-of-the-art firepower.

Rambo picks up another device, a cylinder like a flashlight with a curly-cord running to a pair of earphones.

RAMBO

What's this?

BREWER

AC-System 'Big-Ear' telescopic
mike with built-in audio processor.
Can pull a whisper out of a loud
cocktail party at 50 meters.

Rambo gazes around him.

RAMBO

Cocktail party. Uh huh, right.

(pause)

Let's saddle up.

BREWER

Where's your stuff?

Rambo flips open his rucksack.

BREWER

(incredulous)

That's it? Some C-4, a map and a
knife?

RAMBO

There's a compass in the handle.

Brewer gestures at the Russian-made AK-47 slung over
Rambo's shoulder.

BREWER

And a beat-to-shit AK? Every
twelve-year-old in Nam's got one of
those.

RAMBO

Exactly.

Brewer hefts the separate rucksack containing the TRANSAT.

BREWER

Uh... this thing's pretty heavy.
You got room for it?

Rambo snorts disgustedly.

BREWER

Just a thought.

EXT. RAIN FOREST

Using a stream bed to navigate through dense growth, Rambo glides his legs smoothly through knee-deep brackish water. Brewer follows, swatting and batting at clouds of mosquitos.

A VIPER glides past them, roiling the surface, and disappears into twisted tree roots.

BREWER

You wanna know why I stood up for this show?

RAMBO

(moving off)

No.

BREWER

I was in the brig. They gave me a deal. I blew up this Colonel's golf cart with an M-19. He wasn't in it or anything... it was the symbolic value. Seemed like a good idea at the time.

RAMBO

That's a real good reason to wind up in 'Nam.

BREWER

I've seen worse places.

RAMBO

There are no worse places.

EXT. RAIN FOREST - LATER

Rambo leads them up a steep trail as a dense NIGHT FOG creeps over the ridgeline above.

FOLLOWING RAMBO - HANDHELD

as he moves along a narrow game trail. Shapes loom out of the mist, revealed as harmless trunks or vines only at the last second.

As they top the rise, the trail opens out onto a plateau-like cleared area.

Ahead, an ENORMOUS STONE FACE, wreathed in vines, looms from the mist.

WIDER

as the two walk into the atrium of a RUINED "WAT", or BUDDHIST TEMPLE. Brewer looks awed.

EXT. RUINS OF WAT

Serene despite the ravages of centuries, two stone Buddhas thirty feet tall sit flanking the stairs to the ruined temple. Trees and vines all but obscure the cracked and tumbled forms of ornately carved walls.

The central courtyard is open to the sky. Spire-like structures are dimly visible in the fog beyond.

BREWER

(hushed)

This place is a trip.

RAMBO

Buddhist monastery. Fifteenth century.

BREWER

Damn! Leeches.

He has pulled up his pant-leg to reveal THREE SQUIRMING BLACK WORMS attached to his calf, sucking on him.

Rambo moves off, scanning, unconcerned.

RAMBO

Get used to 'em.

TIGHT ON BREWER

lighting a cigarette, his hands tightly cupped around the glow. Rambo slaps it out of his hand. Stomps it out.

BREWER

(hissing)

You fucking crazy? I need it to burn these things off.

RAMBO

No cigarettes.

BREWER

I had it cupped.

Rambo takes the pack from Brewer's breast pocket and grinds it into the mud under his boot.

BREWER

Look, Rambo. I've had enough of your bad-ass Indian-scout bullshit. You're years out of date... I'm makin' a career out of teaching you the hardware. As far as I'm concerned you're just along to back me up. And I heard about you... about how twitchy you really are. Kill any civilians lately?

Brewer is hurled against a stone wall and pinned with a knife to his throat so rapidly he's not sure how it happened. Rambo is in his face, speaking very softly.

RAMBO

Listen real careful, freshmeat. I don't know why they sent you. Maybe they didn't want to waste a good man. But you screw up once more and I'll kill you myself.

Rambo whips away, moves quietly off.

Shaking with rage, Brewer levels his weapon at Rambo's back. Then he realizes how silly that would be. Frustrated, he jogs to catch up.

BREWER

Man, are you strict.

Moving in the shadows, Rambo walks through the ruins noiselessly. A voice emerges from the mist behind them, an almost childlike lilt.

VOICE (O.S.)

You are first tourist here in long time.

Brewer whips around, centering the AIMING DOT of his sighting laser on a FIGURE sitting on a ledge above them.

Sitting cross-legged and unperturbed is a diminutive

VIETNAMESE WOMAN of about 28. The dot of Brewer's laser is centered on her forehead like a Hindu prayer mark.

She is absolutely beautiful, with wide, calm eyes and strong but sensuous mouth which curves now in a small quirky grin.

WOMAN

You come here see Buddha... ask for truth? Or just lost?

BREWER

(whispering)

Should I waste her?

Rambo pushes his rifle barrel aside and takes a step forward. When he speaks it is in FLUENT VIETNAMESE.

RAMBO

(Viet/subtitled)

I'm not lost. Just looking for someone.

WOMAN

(Viet/subtitled)

Someone called maybe 'Night Orchid'?

RAMBO

(Viet/subtitled)

That's right.

WOMAN

(Viet/subtitled)

I'm Co Phuong Bao.

RAMBO

(to Brewer)

She's our contact.

BREWER

(grudgingly

impressed)

I didn't know you spoke Vietnamese.

Co slides down from the ledge and stands before them, almost two heads shorter than Rambo. Her lithe figure is not entirely concealed by her loose black "pajamas". She wears her hair in a long single braid and has the delicate hands of a child.

RAMBO

I'm Rambo. This is Brewer.

(to Brewer)

Her name is Co.

CO

It means "virgin." My mother was comedian.

BREWER

Howdy, Co.

He sticks out his hand but Rambo motions "no". She bows slightly.

BREWER

Uh, you speak pretty good English. Where'd you learn?

CO

University of Saigon. Have Masters Degree in economics. Not use too much now... Communists in charge. You got time... want to eat?

RAMBO

Sure. Whattaya got?

Co reaches up onto the ledge, her previous perch, and pulls down a small PACK, actually a FOOD TUBE of the sort worn over one shoulder by Viet Cong and other Vietnamese guerrillas.

CO

(opening it)

Nuac mam.

She unrolls several rubber tree leaves holding rice with a pungent sauce. Rambo takes the food and the proffered CHOPSTICKS and, squatting, begins shoveling it expertly.

RAMBO

You really got a Masters Degree?

CO

Sure. I only sound like forty-year-old in your language.

Brewer fumbles with the sticks. Switches to fingers.

BREWER

What's this stuff on the rice?

RAMBO

Fermented fish sauce.

Brewer's expression is less than enthusiastic.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAIN FOREST - RIVER TRAIL - NIGHT

With Co leading through the maze of aimless game trails the group makes its way parallel to a modest RIVER, THE CA.

RAMBO

How do we get upriver?

CO

I have arranged transportation. We meet soon. But I think you to be disappointed.

RAMBO

Why's that?

CO

I go up to this camp two months ago. Nobody there. Empty for years.

Rambo stops, puzzled.

RAMBO

Why would they send us to a deserted camp?

BREWER

Who cares? Let's just do it and get out. Go have a Jacuzzi and get laid in Bangkok. Know what I mean?

Rambo moves on, still concerned. something's a bit off.

RAMBO

We'll check it out.

BREWER

How come we didn't just drop near the camp... save this hassle?

RAMBO

Brewer. Does a jet make noise?

BREWER

Yeah...

CO

(switching to Viet
subtitled)

Where did you find this clown?

RAMBO

(Viet/subtitled)

I thought he was with you.

CO

(Viet/subtitled)

Crazy motherfucker.

BREWER

What's she saying?

RAMBO

She likes you. Says you're dinky-
dau.

BREWER

What's that?

RAMBO

Powerful warrior.

BREWER

Yeah. Dinky-dau, that's me. Hey,
Co. You wanna meet Jake the one-
eyed snake?

Rambo motions suddenly for a "freeze". Co walks on ahead,
toward the river, as the Americans melt into the shadows.

EXT. RIVER - MARSHY INLET

A HOUSE-SAMPAN wallows among the naked tree roots in a
brackish inlet off the main river. On deck are TWO MEN,
loosely speaking. Possibly two of the most misbegotten
specimens the Orient has to offer.

They raise their AK-47s as Co approaches. Exchange a few
quick syllables and Co turns, motioning Rambo and Brewer
forward.

As they pass, two more equally unwholesome-looking men

emerge from concealment and follow them to the sampan.

Everybody grips their weapons tightly.

BREWER

(under his breath)

These guys look like they'd sell
their mothers.

RAMBO

Sometimes they do. They're river
pirates. Opium runners.

BREWER

(hissing)

Pirates? No kidding?

Before they step across onto the sampan, Co introduces the
"captain" in Vietnamese.

Wearing all manner of jewelry, including four wristwatches
and a pair of filthy western-style jeans a size too large,
CAPTAIN TRONG KINH grins and motions them aboard.

The grin reveals bare gum where his upper front teeth
would be. Obviously broken out in a fight.

CAPTAIN TRONG KINH

Wa-ky number one. You come number
one sampan.

RAMBO

(Viet/subtitled)

Thank you, Captain, for your
hospitality. You speak English very
well.

Grinning wider, Captain Kinh motions them inside the
CABIN, a rambling and dilapidated structure of corrugated
sheet metal and woven bamboo.

Kinh barks orders at his men, who cast off from their
moorings and jump aboard. The first light of dawn is
breaking through the trees.

INT. SAMPAN CABIN

A raisin-faced WOMAN in an ao-dai, holding an infant,
shuffles aside as Rambo steps down into the dim smoky
interior.

Brewer, Co and Kinh follow.

The two Americans must stoop in the scaled-down structure. Every conceivable space is crammed with scavenged or looted detritus: ammo cases, hubcaps, radios, a TV with no back, books, dead chickens, an ice-cube tray, a Toyota bumper, outboard motors... there is no operant logic to most of it.

BREWER

Looks like my room in college.

CO

We sleep here today. Safe here while go up river.

RAMBO

What about patrol boats?

Kinh opens a greasy wooden locker, takes out his pride and joy, a Russian-made RPG-7 ROCKET-GRENADE LAUNCHER.

His grin glistens evilly in the gloom.

CUT TO:

EXT. BASE CAMP - DAWN

A beautiful sunrise backs the treeline, stretching long shadows across the quiet camp.

INT. KIRKHILL'S TRAILER

The interior resembles that of a motor home, complete with bunks, kitchenette and a small bar.

Kirkhill is on the phone, pacing... agitated. His reptilian aide lounges on a bunk.

KIRKHILL

(to phone)

No, sir... we're already committed. They're in the jungle right now. I say we play the hand through... if they find something we just bury the report later. It's still airtight.

(pause)

Yes, sir.

He hangs up. Runs a hand through his hair.

KIRKHILL

(to aide)

Goddamn it! Now the goddamn satellite shows the camp occupied... some trucks or something.

AIDE

(grimly)

Oh, boy. It's getting dicey.

Their manner becomes guarded when a KNOCK at the door interrupts them.

The aide unlocks it and admits Trautman.

KIRKHILL

What's up?

TRAUTMAN

Listen, Kirkhill. I'm a bit of a fifth wheel in your setup here... I thought I'd go out with the extraction team tonight. Unless you have an objection.

KIRKHILL

(not liking it)

It's not necessary.

TRAUTMAN

I know.

KIRKHILL

That's a pretty hairy ride. Full Colonels are supposed to be above that sort of thing.

Trautman is calling him on it with a deadpan response.

TRAUTMAN

I know...

KIRKHILL

(shrugs expansively)

Have fun.

EXT. CA RIVER - DAY

Kinh's hideous sampan churns upriver slowly, powered by an ancient outboard motor. It passes other river traffic,

small hand-powered sampans manned by figures in broad conical coolie hats.

With the exception of a rare powered craft, the scene is that of a Vietnam unchanged by centuries. The ebb and flow of regimes and ideologies has little altered the basics of life here.

INT. SAMPAN

Rambo watches through a chink in the sheeting of the cabin as the timeless landscape rolls past.

RAMBO'S POV

A view of the shoreline as brown children splash naked in the shallows where a row of hootches marches up the hill on stilts. The SQUEALS and LAUGHTER come clearly across the water.

Rambo turns his gaze to the sampan interior. Two of Kinh's men, Co and Brewer all sleep soundly.

Rambo watches Co, her face serene in sleep. Childlike. Beautiful.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CA RIVER - LATE AFTERNOON

The water is coppery, silhouetting the sampan as it churns on.

Kinh's wife squats on the foredeck, smoking a long-stemmed clay pipe.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT./ EXT. SAMPAN - SUNSET

The walnut-faced woman hands Rambo two bowls of nuoc mam. He passes one to Brewer.

RAMBO

Have some armpit sauce.

Brewer groans. Opens a C-ration can.

RAMBO

(to Co)

How did you get started working for the spooks?

CO
Spooks?

RAMBO
Intelligence work.

CO
Oh. They talk to me at university before fall of Saigon. Make deal.

BREWER
Everybody's makin' deals.

CO
My brother captain in ARVN... need papers to go United States, or North Vietnamese will execute. They make deal... I stay here and do work... my brother and my son can go United States.

RAMBO
Your son?

Co's eyes drop and her whole demeanor deflates slightly.

CO
Nguyen. He twelve now. Not see him for eight years.

RAMBO
Where's his father?

Co shrugs.

CO
Dead. Killed in war.

Her voice and expression convey the fatalistic acceptance of one who has seen death in all its forms. Expects it as an element of daily life.

RAMBO
Where's Nguyen now? What city?

CO
(noting his concern)
Huntington Beach, California.

RAMBO

It's nice there. He's probably digging every minute. Got a surfboard. Breaking girls' hearts.

CO

(distractedly)

Nguyen is good boy.

Co gazes at the sunset beyond the door. A tear runs down her cheek. She catches herself. Wipes it away almost brutally. She abruptly goes on deck.

BREWER

Some hardened guerrilla fighter they gave us.

Rambo freezes him out with an evil look. Suddenly there is a commotion on deck. The roar of a powerful ENGINE. Co bursts in a moment later.

CO

River patrol!

A FAST LAUNCH roars toward them, silhouetted by the setting sun. UNIFORMED SOLDIERS on deck bring twin 50-caliber machine guns to bear.

Rambo and Brewer dive under filthy bunks. Lock and load their weapons. Co pushes junk in over them. Kinh rips open the cabinet. Slams the shaft of a rocket grenade into the launch tube.

Co barks an order at him. He hesitates. Lowers the weapon.

Co removes a small packet of North Vietnamese bills from inside her blouse and hands it to Kinh.

EXT. SAMPAN

The patrol boat pulls up in an arc, almost swamping them. The soldiers on deck wear the uniforms of the North Vietnamese navy.

The deck gunner racks the bolt on his R.P.K. MACHINE GUN. The captain shouts RAPID VIETNAMESE on a loud hailer.

Kinh's men lounge on the sampan indolently, looking like

fishermen on an evening trawl.

The scrawny woman feeds an infant at one sagging breast.

The PATROL CAPTAIN draws his service pistol and jumps down into the sampan, entering the cabin.

Co sits demurely on one bunk as Kinh greets the officer.

The officer begins poking through Kinh's possessions. He tugs at the crate under the bunk where Rambo lies concealed.

TIGHT ON RAMBO

absolutely motionless. The crate beside his head moves. The officer's boot is visible through a widening crack. An ARGUMENT IN VIETNAMESE is heard heating up.

BREWER

grips the MAC-11 tightly, releases, grips, releases. Sweat runs into his eyes.

THE OFFICER

looks severe as he contemptuously thumbs through a sheaf of bills.

Kinh, gesticulating pathetically adds some more to the stack.

After a tense moment the officer kicks the crate next to Rambo and stalks out, tucking the payola in his tunic.

He jumps off the sampan and the patrol boat ROARS on.

INT. SAMPAN

Rambo and Brewer allow themselves to exhale.

RAMBO

How you doing, Brewer?

BREWER

(shaken)

I need a vacation.

EXT. RAIN FOREST - PRISON CAMP - NIGHT

With Co leading, Rambo and Brewer move furtively along a

tortuous trail. It has rained recently and the forest is alive with glistening reflections, dripping water. The trail winds up a steep embankment.

As they reach the top of the rise, CAMERA BOOMS UP over the shoulder of the embankment to reveal a COMPOUND beyond, dark except for moonlight.

RAMBO

watches from concealment in the foliage. He is invisible with his camo-makeup except for darting eyes.

RAMBO'S POV

looking between the leaves, scanning the prison camp.

Two shabby WOODEN GUARD TOWERS stand at diagonally opposite corners of the compound. There is a simple fence of barbed wire on wooden posts enclosing the area and a main gate with a sentry box.

THREE LONG WOODEN BARRACKS form a U, filling most of the compound. The place seems deserted.

RAMBO

Check the tower with your scope.

Brewer raises the rifle, sighting through the massive starlight scope.

BREWER'S POV - TELEPHOTO

The image is bright, lurid... black and white with a greenish cast. Like contrasty daylight. He pans up the tower. A Russian-made P.K. 7.62mm machine gun sits pointing skyward. The tower seems unoccupied.

BREWER

Nobody home. Wait a minute!
Cigarette.

A brief glow of light illuminates the face of a TOWER GUARD hidden in shadows.

BREWER

What's he here for?

Nearby, another GUARD saunters out of the forest dressed in NVA regular private's uniform with the sleeves rolled up casually. His AK-47 is slung over his shoulder.

BREWER

slips the telescopic microphone out of his rucksack and clamps it to the side of his scope.

He slips on a pair of small earphones and pans the rifle-scope-mike over the nearest barracks unit.

BREWER

(intently)

Snoring. Five, six guys.
Mumbling... Vietnamese. Somebody
talking in his sleep. A toilet
flushing.

RAMBO

Guard barracks. Take some shots.

Brewer locks a 35mm SLR camera to an adapter on the starlight scope.

He starts clicking off some shots.

Brewer then scans the long hut across the compound.

BREWER

Breathing. Moaning.

(suddenly)

Shit!

He whips off the earphones in pain as a LOW SCREAM echoes across the camp.

It fades into a delirious moaning. Stops.

RAMBO

(nodding grimly)

Bad dreams. Prisoner's barracks.
Shoot some.

Brewer clicks away.

A TINY ENGINE WHINING draws their attention to the main gate where a YOUNG WOMAN on a LAMBRETTA SCOOTER pulls up to the sentry shack.

Brewer zeros on her as she greets the GATE GUARDS.

CO

Cyclo-girl whore from village.
Business slow there.

Rambo takes the earphones, listening to the girl's distant chattering.

RAMBO

She's making him a pretty good deal.

Apparently the guard agrees because he opens the gate and the girl slips inside.

RAMBO

What's that? By the far tower.

Brewer pans to the distant shape.

BREWER

It's a guy in a cage.

RAMBO

American?

BREWER

Can't tell. Pretty tall. He's real scrunched up in that thing.

RAMBO

Let me see.

RAMBO'S POV THROUGH SCOPE

The image is of an EMACIATED FIGURE slumped in a bamboo cage. The man's skin is ghostly white. He seems almost a living skeleton, dressed only in ragged shorts.

His wrists are clamped in a wooden STOCK and blood runs down his arms from the abraded sores.

THE IMAGE ZOOMS CLOSER, MOVES ONTO HIS FACE. TIGHT.

Though gaunt and filthy, he is clearly CAUCASIAN.

RAMBO

Roundeye.

BREWER

Alright. Home run.

RAMBO

(angrily)

Torture cage. Can't stand... can't sit... for days. Sometimes weeks.

BREWER

Bastards. Let's get some shots.

ON RAMBO

MOVING SLOWLY IN as he hands the kluge back to Brewer.

RAMBO

That guy's not going to make it.

BREWER (O.S.)

Nothing we can do, man.

Rambo decides in that moment.

RAMBO

I'm getting him out.

BREWER

What? Are you crazy? We're supposed to take pictures and split. You're gonna blow the whole program.

RAMBO

You never been in one of those things.

BREWER

I suppose you have...

Rambo holds his wrists up, right under Brewer's nose... showing the chafing scars.

BREWER

It's orders! You remember... when they tell you to do something and then you do it. John Wayne is dead, man.

RAMBO

(rising)
You take pictures and split. I'm going in.

Brewer throws down his rifle. He's apoplectic. He can barely form words.

BREWER

Fuck it. Fuck it. Aw... ke-rist.

Then a slow grin spreads.

BREWER

How we gonna do it?

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMP PERIMETER - LATER

MOVING WITH BREWER as he belly crawls to the edge of the cleared area, just a few yards from the wire. He is right under one tower, hidden among ferns.

BREWER'S POV THROUGH SCOPE

as Rambo's silhouette crosses to the wire farther down.

EXT. COMPOUND

DOLLYING WITH RAMBO at ground level as he crawls under the wire and undulates from shadow to shadow.

He reaches the nearest building. Hugs it. Rambo moves on in silence. He is barefoot, the pale skin smeared with mud, and carries only the PISTOL CROSSBOW. Without rifle, pack, harness or grenades to clatter, he moves like a spirit in the material world.

Rambo raises one eye slowly over a window ledge. Inside several guards sleep soundly under mosquito netting. Their rifles are stacked against the far wall.

ANGLE ON GUARD

snoring ludicrously loud. He bats at a mosquito, grunts... turns over.

ANGLE UNDER GUARD BARRACKS

MOVING with Rambo as he crawls among the support posts.

He freezes as a light is snapped on above him. It streams down through cracks between floorboards.

Moving very slowly, Rambo squints through a gap.

RAMBO'S POV

A LOW ANGLE on a UNIFORMED GUARD rummaging in a tiny prehistoric refrigerator, humming to himself.

He takes out a can of COKE, recognizable, although the label is in Chinese characters. Rolls it slowly across

his sweaty forehead. Pops it. The foam now runs onto the floor, drips into Rambo's eyes.

The light snaps off. FOOTSTEPS. Rambo moves on.

EXT. PRISONERS' BARRACKS

There are two rows of rusted iron bunks set out like a hospital ward. Most of them are empty. Seven aren't.

SEVEN AMERICAN PRISONERS OF WAR

Like the man in the cage they are gaunt, scabrous. Dressed in ragged peasant clothes too small for them.

One man, bathed in sweat, moans and tosses with malarial fever. Another is wrapped so tightly in a fetal position his face is between his knees.

They have padded the bare springs of their cots with mattresses of rubber leaves.

Rambo stands a few feet from them as if giving a benediction, the crossbow raised in one hand. He moves on, leaving no trace.

EXT. GUARD TOWER

The GUARD reclines in a folding chair, nodding to the beat of unheard music. A SONY WALKMAN is clipped on his belt and he has the earphones over his GRAY PEAKED CAP. He takes a last drag and tosses a cigarette over the parapet.

EXT. PERIMETER - RAIN FOREST

TIGHT ON BREWER hugging the ground as the smoldering butt lands five feet from him... in the pool of light from a floodlight. He groans, watching the smoke curl up.

Starts creeping his hand toward the butt.

EXT. COMPOUND - CAGE

The man inside opens his eyes when Rambo touches his broomstick neck, feeling for a pulse.

His lips are parched and there is a horrible bruise around one eye.

PRISONER
(barely audible)
Who're you?

RAMBO
American. Come to get you out.

PRISONER
Man, you are one scary-looking motherfucker!

RAMBO
Can you walk?

PRISONER
I could a couple of days ago. Gonna be... stiff.

Rambo quickly picks the lock on the wrist clamps and then slips his LILE KNIFE from its sheath. Starts cutting the lashings on the bamboo cage.

RAMBO
What's your name?

PRISONER
De Fravio. Dave De Fravio.
Lieutenant... Air Force.

The door gives way and Rambo steadies De Fravio as he slumps forward.

RAMBO
(shakes his hand)
Good to meet you, Dave. I'm Rambo.
Okay, I'm going to carry you. Don't cough or make any noise.

DE FRAVIO
Sure thing, Rambo. You gettin' the other guys, too?

RAMBO
Not this time. We'll be back.

Rambo slings De Fravio's gaunt six-foot frame over his shoulder in a fireman's carry and heads off in a crouching run.

LONG SHOT ON RAMBO

crossing a pool of light B.G. as the sentry lounges in his shack.

EXT. PERIMETER - RAIN FOREST

Brewer seems to have lost sight of Rambo. He scans the camp to the treeline and back.

The filterless cigarette is smoked almost to his lips.

WHAM! A BOOTED FOOT SMASHES DOWN on his rifle, pinning one hand. He looks up at...

A NORTH VIETNAMESE GUARD who holds an AK-47 in Brewer's face.

With his headphones on Brewer hadn't heard the quiet approach from behind.

Brewer closes his eyes in profound misery.

There is a soft THUNK.

Brewer opens his eyes as the AK-47 falls into the grass. Looks up to see...

The guard is leaning back against a tree, motionless. The VANED TAIL of a CROSSBOW BOLT protrudes from his neck under the jaw. He is pinned to the tree, quite dead.

Rambo appears from the undergrowth, still carrying De Fravio, crossbow in hand.

RAMBO

(to Brewer)

That's two.

EXT. RAIN FOREST

Brewer and Rambo, carrying the POW, rejoin Co on the ridge, where they had left their gear.

Rambo sets De Fravio down and reaches for his boots.

The POW looks dazedly at his rescuers.

His eyes, in hollow sockets, track from one to the other.

DE FRAVIO

(weakly)
You guys are real... aren't you?

BREWER
Huh?

DE FRAVIO
Sorry, I mean... I talk to people
all the time... I know a lot of them
aren't there. But this is real,
isn't it? You're taking me home
now?

BREWER
That's right, buddy.

De Fravio sits frozen for a moment, then a dry sob wracks
his entire body and he puts his arms around Brewer.
He cries with utter abandon, quietly, while Brewer looks
at him helplessly.

DE FRAVIO
Thank God... thank you...

Brewer looks at Rambo with a stricken expression. Then
puts his arms clumsily around De Fravio, like somebody
holding a baby for the first time.

Co touches Rambo's hand. Motions "let's go" with a cock
of her head. He nods.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAIN FOREST - NEAR PRISON CAMP - LATER

A stocky SERGEANT OF THE GUARD stands over the partially
concealed body of the guard Rambo killed.

He raises his whistle and sends a SHRILL BLAST across the
camp.

Lights come on in the guard barracks.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAIN FOREST - RIVER BANK - NIGHT

The sampan waits beyond a screen of trees as Brewer calls
in on the TRANSAT. Co is helping De Fravio walk
unsteadily down to the boat, B.G. The river bandits eye
the tall, death-like figure suspiciously.

RAMBO

We'd better go for the emergency LZ
at point Zulu Sierra. Tell them
we've got some heat but don't
mention De Fravio.

Brewer starts typing.

CUT TO:

EXT. STAGING AREA - THAILAND

Doyle's ground crew is removing the camouflage canopy from
the UH-60 "Blackhawk" helicopter.

The turbines are warming up with an ASCENDING WHINE.

Doyle and Trautman, F.G., turn as the door to the command
trailer bursts open and a TECH runs out.

TECH

You're go for extraction. Mr.
Kirkhill says wind 'er up. Here's
the hardcopy.

Trautman takes the printout.

TRAUTMAN

(to Doyle)

Alternate LZ Zulu Sierra at 0500.
It says "May have heat. Don't be
late. All our love."

DOYLE

(scowling at his
watch)

Let's get that tent down!

CUT TO:

INT. SAMPAN - CA RIVER - NIGHT

De Fravio seems a little more in focus as he sits huddled
with the others in the cramped cabin.

DE FRAVIO

I gotta tell you, it's just luck you
guys came when you did. They move
us around a lot... We only been at
that camp a week. Got a smoke?

BREWER

(pointedly)

No.

DE FRAVIO

What kind of raggedy-ass rescue you call this?

RAMBO

Why were you in the box?

DE FRAVIO

Well, I caught this cobra, see...

BREWER

You mean the snake?

DE FRAVIO

Yeah. It's not hard once you get the hang of it. In the wrist. Anyway, I did what I always do when I get one...

BREWER

What's that?

DE FRAVIO

(straight-faced)

Put it in the guard's barracks.

(pause)

Man they got pissed. They beat the crap out of me, but... it's kind of a tradition. You oughta see 'em run around.

RAMBO

(chuckling)

You got a bad attitude.

De Fravio grins, showing bad teeth as well.

DE FRAVIO

I know it.

De Fravio eyes Co as she hands him a plate of rice and meat.

DE FRAVIO

Thanks lady. You're pretty cute... doing anything this weekend?

CO

(smiling)
Eat slowly. Don't make yourself
sick.

She exits with the dirty cooking utensils.

EXT. SAMPAN

When Co closes the door to the cabin, Kinh sidles up to her and rapidly whispers something in Vietnamese. He seems to be eliciting a response and eyes her warily.

Co freezes indecisively, then nods yes.

In the stern, B.G., one of Kinh's men is talking quietly on a beat-up military-style FIELD RADIO. His voice is masked by the sound of the outboard motor.

Co whispers something and holds out her hand, palm up. Kinh grins, gapped. He pulls a .45 PISTOL from his belt and slips it to her. Runs his finger along the curve of her neck. She quietly pulls the cocking slide, chambering a round.

EXT. CA RIVER - INLET

The sampan glides into the brackish estuary amid half-submerged trees. It is the original rendezvous point.

Everyone assembles on deck, with Rambo helping De Fravio through the cabin door. Brewer checks his watch.

BREWER

Twenty-five minutes. We'd better
roll.

Rambo freezes... looks down.

An AK-47 muzzle is pressed into his kidney, held by one of Kinh's men.

Two more are covering Brewer, who had just handed his rifle to Co, while donning his pack.

Kinh steps up, grinning. Takes Rambo's rifle. A fourth guard eases an arm around his neck, a long knife held under his jawline.

It has all happened smoothly and with precision planning.

KINH

Wa-ky number ten. Do-ma.

DE FRAVIO

Yeah, fuck your mama-san, too. In
the...

Kinh backhands him to the deck.

TIGHT ON RAMBO

his eyes cold, looking at Co.

She advances on him. Her black almond-shaped eyes
glitter, alien as the depths of space.

She spits in his face.
Kinh snorts a feral laugh.
Rambo doesn't react.

E.C.U. CO

Her eyes dart to the side.

RAMBO AND CO

something, a microsecond flash of understanding, passes
between them.

BREWER

(enraged beyond
belief)
You slope bitch!

She whirls on him, drawing the .45. It is enormous in her
child's hand. Her expression is terrifying.

SHE FIRES

The renegade behind Brewer ROCKETS BACKWARD, his FACE
EXPLODING.

Rambo moves, slapping his guard's elbow, driving the knife
across and away. His teeth snap shut on the man's
forearm. The knife falls.

Rambo's hands are simultaneously seizing the other guard's
AK-47 just as he fires. Rambo holds his hand on the man's
trigger hand, AIMING THE GUN.

BULLETS RAKE FROM GROIN TO FACE on the third man standing

opposite them.

HE SPINS BACK, his rifle BLASTING AWAY harmlessly into the sky.

Co places the muzzle of the .45 against Kinh's temple. His grin is long gone.

SHE FIRES WITHOUT HESITATION.

Rambo drives the butt of the second man's AK-47 into his stomach twice. The bandit lets go.

Firing blind over his shoulder, Rambo vaporizes the head of his guard, whose hand he still grips viciously in his teeth. He releases the hand. Almost like spitting out the dead man.

Clutching his stomach, the last bandit leaps to the shore. FIFTEEN ROUNDS FROM BREWER'S SILENCED MAC-11 stutter quietly into him. He pitches face-down in the mud.

A cloud of blue cordite smoke disappears in silence. The whole thing lasted four seconds.

DE FRAVIO

(slowly)

Wow!

BREWER

What just happened?

Rambo moves over to Co.

She seems to sag, depleted. In shock. He takes the .45 from her limp fingers.

RAMBO

(Viet/subtitled)

Are you okay?

CO

(answering in English)

Yes. But I lose many merits in next life. Very bad.

RAMBO

Why'd they want us?

CO

They heard about escaped prisoner on radio. Make deal. More than we pay.

BREWER

They sold us out? Now I'm pissed.

CO

They were fools. To think there would be reward. And to ask my help.

Rambo puts his hands on her shoulders.

RAMBO

Thanks.

CO

Rambo. NVA coming. Pig dog Kinh say meet them here. Whole garrison from Con Cuong is out.

RAMBO

(nodding grimly)

Let's go.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAIN FOREST - LAOS - NIGHT

At treetop level the all-black UH-60 ROARS down a forested valley at 180 mph, using no illumination but the moon.

MOVING WITH THE HELICOPTER

as it rises and drops with the terrain.

INT. UH-60

Once again Doyle is night-flying in a blacked-out cockpit, putting the landing skids through the treetops.

Trautman stands behind the seats in the main bay.

Night air ROARS in the open door and Lifer, on door gun, dangles his legs in the windstream. The rain forest is a dim blur very close below.

LIFER

(shouting)

Back in Indian country. Just like old times.

He racks the bolt on his M-60 and grins.

Trautman nods politely and looks at his watch.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAIN FOREST - NEAR WAT - PRE-DAWN

Rambo's group circles the ruins as they head for the landing zone.

The trail skirts an escarpment which drops over a hundred feet to the Ca River below. Not far from the overgrown spires of the Wat is a stream which breaks over the cliff in a graceful waterfall dropping unimpeded into a lagoon. The vista is quite stunning in the moonlight.

Brewer is struggling with both packs plus the heavy Transat, since Rambo has De Fravio and Co has her own pack. Brewer scrambles, slipping back on the steep trail.

BREWER

Let's ditch this Transat. We don't need it.

Rambo considers for a moment, then pulls away some underbrush beside a collapsed wall of the ruin.

RAMBO

Bury it here. Work fast.

Brewer gets out his entrenching tool.

A cold pre-dawn light suffuses the rain forest, giving it an expectant quality.

Rambo scans the ridgeline with Brewer's scope.

RAMBO'S POV - TELEPHOTO

Figures of TWENTY OR MORE VIETNAMESE SOLDIERS can be seen threading among the trees.

RAMBO

(to Co)

You better take off.

BREWER

Ain't you coming with us, sweet thing?

CO

My orders stay here.

She turns to head off along a diverging trail. Rambo touches her shoulder. She turns.

RAMBO

See you in California.

Her grin is ironic.

CO

Land of big PX. Maybe I take you for a ride in my Cadillac.

Rambo watches her go. A tiny, anonymous peasant girl.

INT./ EXT. UH-60 - DAWN

Trautman watches over Doyle's shoulder as the helicopter roars between the walls of a mountain pass. The ship is buffeted by turbulence, bouncing and dropping violently.

FUHRMAN

(turning)

Three minutes.

The steep slopes fall away and Doyle dives the ship across the rolling foothills.

We HEAR a faint call, barely audible over static.

VOICE

(filtered)

Zen Hammer this is Slam Dunk One, do you copy? Over.

FUHRMAN

Roger, Slam Dunk One... what is your position?

EXT. RAIN FOREST - NEAR PADDIES - DAWN

Rambo is crouched with Brewer and De Fravio in a hollow beside an earth dike.

They are taking AUTOMATIC WEAPONS FIRE from the trees nearby.

Spurts of earth leap up around them.

Rambo is shouting in a controlled articulate voice into a small PRC-90 FIELD RADIO while Brewer lays down

SUPPRESSING FIRE with his M-16 A2.

RAMBO

(yelling)

Zen Hammer... the heat's on. We're taking fire. Watch for my smoke.

Red and green. Northwest corner of a big paddy.

(to Brewer)

Let's move.

Rambo and Brewer, carrying De Fravio, charge up and over the dike as the ground is ripped around them.

Rambo hurls two SMOKE GRENADES down the dike wall. Columns of red and green smoke begin roiling upward.

The dike on which they are pinned down forms part of the enclosure for a complex of terraced RICE PADDIES which occupy the few flat acres of this hilly terrain. The flooded fields reflect the pre-dawn sky like plates of burnished metal.

Rambo slams in another clip and fires in short, controlled burst. Brewer hands a captured AK-47 to De Fravio. The ex-POW opens up with a vengeance.

BREWER

Go for it, man. Good therapy.

EXT. RAIN FOREST - NEARBY

VARIOUS ANGLES as THREE TROOP TRUCKS slide to a halt on a rutted jungle road, disgorging squads of NVA TROOPS.

Mortars are set up. Roughly aimed. THEY FIRE with a CHARACTERISTIC WHUMP.

ON THE DIKE

The Americans duck as a mortar round explodes in the paddy behind them, throwing up a geyser of mud. Brewer picks up the PRC-90 mike.

BREWER

(on radio)

You guys comin' or what?

INT. UH-60

Through the front canopy distant wisps of red and green smoke can be seen. The paddies rush by below in a blur.

FUHRMAN

Roger... we have you on visual. We are coming in. How many are you?

BREWER (V.O.)

(filtered)

Three. We got an American POW with us.

TRAUTMAN

Relay to command. They have one of ours.

INT. COMMAND SHACK - THAILAND

Kirkhill is pacing behind the main console.

TELECOM TECH

Mr. Kirkhill... I have an AWACS relay. Zen Hammer reports the ground team has an American POW with them.

Kirkhill's reaction is unexpected. He whips around.

KIRKHILL

What did you say?

TELECOM TECH

(grinning)

They've got one of ours.

TIGHT ON KIRKHILL

as a look of frustrated rage is replaced by deadly calm.

KIRKHILL

(loudly)

This station is now on Condition Bravo. Harrison. Meyers. Goodell. Out... now!

The puzzled techs drop their headsets and leave.

KIRKHILL

(continuing to tech)

Go to your COMINT priority frequency. Give me the mike... Zen Hammer, this is Coach One. This is an Alpha-Kilo-Victor command priority.

FUHRMAN (V.O.)
(filtered)
Roger, Coach One... go ahead.

KIRKHILL
I want you to abort the operation immediately.

INT. UH-60

Fuhrman can't believe it.

FUHRMAN
Say again, Coach One?

He presses the helmet-headphone tight to his ear, then turns to Trautman, cupping his hand over the mike.

FUHRMAN
(to Trautman)
He wants us to abort before pick-up.

TRAUTMAN
Confirm it.

FUHRMAN
It is confirmed.
(to mike)
Coach One... we have them in sight...
(pause)
Yes, sir.

Doyle looks at both of them and shrugs.

DOYLE
Turnin' around.

FUHRMAN
(to Doyle)
I thought you liked those guys.

DOYLE
I do. But they ain't payin' the

rent, Jack.

TRAUTMAN
Stay on your heading, Captain.

DOYLE
Sorry, Sir. Can't do it.

TRAUTMAN
That's an order.

DOYLE
(implacable)
Sorry, Sir.

Trautman has his hand on the butt of his .45 when he hears the clack of a rifle bolt over the rotor noise and turns.

Lifer has an M-16 in his lap, not exactly aimed at the colonel, but not aimed away, either.

LIFER
(smirking)
We ain't Uncle Sam's misguided children no more, Colonel. We're independent contractors.

FUHRMAN
That's right, Sir. We don't like this, but we are working for Mr. Kirkhill.

TRAUTMAN
You pathetic scum.

DOYLE
(looking down)
Well, if there weren't POWs before, there are now.

EXT. RICE PADDY

Rambo half-supports De Fravio with one arm and fires his AK with the other as they slog through the calf-deep water. Mortar rounds explode on all sides. They watch the UH-60 skimming in low across the paddies, blasting up a curtain of spray.

Almost to them...

It veers in a tight bank and climbs out.

Heads away.

BREWER

Where's he going?

(to radio)

Hey, Zen Hammer, where are you going?

(pause)

Do you read, Zen Hammer? Over. Son of a bitch! They're ditching us!

The water is shot into spray around them. A mortar shell lands so close it knocks them down, drenching them with slimy black mud. The radio disappears in the water. Rising, Brewer takes a round in the thigh. Drops. Disappears for a second... comes up gasping.

Rambo watches the UH-60 diminishing to a black dot. He is so consumed with rage that his expression goes slack... blank... a murderous disconnection from conscience.

And yet, in that same moment, a tremendous surge of blind will clears his mind, a determination to survive, to get out at whatever cost... to find whoever did this.

It is no longer just a mission. It is a very personal piece of business.

He turns and lets his rifle drop into the water. He takes De Fravio's and throws it away.

BREWER

(through gritted teeth)

The fuckers left us, man... they left us.

Brewer wallows weakly, his blood streaming out into the muddy water.

De Fravio looks stunned, lost... eviscerated. He sags to his knees.

DE FRAVIO

Oh... God.

It gets quiet.

In a ragged line, the NVA soldiers advance to the top of the dike. Twenty. Forty. Finally almost eighty, looking

down at the Americans. Rambo slowly raises his hands.

EXT. RAIN FOREST - HILL NEARBY

OVER THE SHOULDER of Co, watching from behind a screen of foliage as the ring of NVA troops converge on the tiny figures of Rambo, Brewer and De Fravio.

REVERSE

TIGHT ON CO, her expression enigmatic. She turns and darts away, vanishing into the forest.

CUT TO:

INT. KIRKHILL'S TRAILER

Kirkhill is pouring scotch over ice in two glasses as the door behind him bangs open.

Trautman's expression could slice a steak.

KIRKHILL

Have a drink.

Kirkhill offers a glass to Trautman who ignores it.

TRAUTMAN

Why?

Kirkhill sets the glass down and sits at the dinette, motioning Trautman to sit as well.

KIRKHILL

(shrugs)

You got five hours? I'll tell you about Secretaries of State, and funding committees and diplomatic relations...

Trautman slowly sits opposite him, his demeanor becoming more reasonable.

TRAUTMAN

Take your time.

KIRKHILL

Look, Colonel... we're all adults here. This is a war. A very quiet, very intense war. People get

sacrificed.

TRAUTMAN

Not my people.

Kirkhill freezes, glancing down.

The muzzle of Trautman's service .45 is jammed into his groin.

TRAUTMAN

(continuing)

But you're right... some people do get sacrificed. Now tell me why you pulled the plug.

KIRKHILL

You think I'm some whacko? I like to hurt people? I'm doing a job here. If I knew what's right or wrong I'd be a goddamned priest, right? So I follow directives... I do what I'm told. It's simple. If your boy had done what he was told, there wouldn't be a problem.

TRAUTMAN

Don't dance me, Kirkhill. You'll be walking funny.

Trautman leans on the .45 a bit and Kirkhill backs into the seat cushion.

KIRKHILL

Look, it was a screw-up, alright? They weren't supposed to find anything. We thought that camp was empty.

TRAUTMAN

This mission was a scam from the word go?

KIRKHILL

Word came down... they wanted an answer. And they knew the answer they wanted: no POWs. But it had to look good. Best effort. The whole dog-and-pony show.

Kirkhill takes a healthy pull from his scotch.

TRAUTMAN

(realizing)

Rambo and Brewer were selected as write-offs.

KIRKHILL

It was clean. Very clean... Rambo was a decorated Vietnam vet, a former POW himself... if he came out and said "No POWs" the sub-committee would buy it. He gets himself caught he's a private citizen, a whacko, acting on his own. If he gets proof, it gets lost somewhere between here and D.C. Airtight. But no... Rambo's gotta be a hero. Thinks he's starring in his own war movie or something. He put me in a corner. No choice.

TRAUTMAN

"Terminate with extreme prejudice."

KIRKHILL

That's a crock. We don't say that. Do you have any idea the shitstorm if he'd gotten back with that guy? If it went public? The White House would have to act through channels. We're talking ransom. Four billion bucks in war reparations to Vietnam to get the others back. That's billion, Colonel. With a "B". For a few guys that've had their brains in a blender for ten years? A pain in the ass to everybody? No way. There's no way.

The colonel has let the pistol drop, until it is dangling, forgotten.

TRAUTMAN

So there never was a Phase Two rescue team?

KIRKHILL

Of course not. You can't get approval to rescue a kitten from a tree after Tehran.

After a long silence, Trautman nods.

TRAUTMAN

I understand.

Kirkhill relaxes. It's going to be okay. The colonel is one of the boys.

KIRKHILL

Here. Drink.

Trautman doesn't take the glass.

TRAUTMAN

(reasonably)

I understand your position.

(pause)

I understand how a maggot like you can just slide out of a jam on a trail of slime. And call it -- expedience.

(viciously)

Expedience!

Kirkhill slams his empty glass down. His tone becomes self-righteous.

KIRKHILL

You're out of your depth, Trautman. Way out. I'm acting correctly here. Not you. Not your gung-ho jungle ace.

(pause)

It's over. Walk away.

TRAUTMAN

It's not over. You made one mistake.

KIRKHILL

What that?

Trautman clicks the safety and reholsters the .45.

TRAUTMAN

Rambo.

EXT. PRISON CAMP - VIETNAM - DAY

D-PLUS 36 HRS

BAN KIA NA

REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

TIGHT ON RAMBO

his eyes ablaze, face crusted with dried mud and sweat.

WIDER

revealing him under guard, arms bound painfully tight behind him, in the back of a troop truck.

He is seized by TWO VIET SOLDIERS and dragged forward, off the truck.

De Fravio hits the ground behind him, and Brewer, moaning on a stretcher, is unloaded. His fatigues are matted to the skin by dried blood from hip to knee.

Camp commander CAPTAIN VO QUOC VINH strides across the compound. He is fairly twitching with suppressed rage at the loss of face brought on by his useless guards.

He screams orders as the troops dismount, roughly dragging forward the three captives.

A VIET SERGEANT turns the captives over to CHIEF GUARD SERGEANT TRAN VAN TAY with a quick salute.

The instant Vinh stops shouting Tay begins, like a relay. The prisoners are prodded forward.

Rambo walks beside a wide-eyed Brewer.

BREWER

Are they going to torture us?

RAMBO

(distantly)
Yes.

BREWER

What... whattaya do?

A GUARD shoves Rambo on ahead as Brewer's carriers stop at the door of an isolation cell.

RAMBO

(looking back)
Hope they kill you by mistake.

Rambo's guard slams his rifle butt into the American's belly, half-doubling him over.

GUARD
No talk!

INT. ISOLATION CELL

The door to a tiny fetid room is opened and Brewer is dumped off the stretcher and flung inside. He lands on his knees and gasps in pain, clutching his leg.

The door clangs shut, leaving stifling gloom.

BREWER
(groaning)
This ain't happening.

INT. PRISONERS' BARRACKS

De Fravio is helped back to his bunk by one of the other prisoners. There are few moments in human experience as devastating as the return to prison (especially this prison). The absolute abandonment of hope.

Several of the POWs sit near him, silently offering their support. It is evident that two of the men, B.G., are as autistic as De Fravio, having succumbed to that withdrawn plane long before.

JENSEN, a prisoner with one leg, settles beside De Fravio on his bunk. Puts a spidery hand on his shoulder.

JENSEN
We were pulling for you, Dave. We
hoped you'd make it.

De Fravio's eyes focus. The merest spark of the old defiant De Fravio glimmers wanly.

DE FRAVIO
Next time.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DUSK

LOW ANGLE on Sgt. Tay, powerful and vicious-looking as a rabid ferret. He raises one fist, holding a LENGTH OF RUBBER STRAP cut from a truck tire, and smashes it down OUT OF FRAME.

There is a SICKENING THUD against flesh.

TIGHT ON RAMBO

grimacing from the blow.

There are board red welts over both collarbones, oozing blood in places.

WIDER

showing Rambo on his knees, at the center of a bare CONCRETE ROOM. A single window admits a shaft of red dusk-light, like a spotlight.

Rambo sways in the spotlight, glistening with sweat, stripped to his G.I. shorts.

In the four corners of the small room are guards with rifles. Others crowd in the doorway, grinning and jostling to see.

WHAM! The truncheon descends against Rambo's face. He sprawls onto the floor face-down, nose streaming blood.

Capt. Vinh enters with a strident shout, stopping Tay from another blow. The two officers exit at a run, leaving Rambo on his face before the guards.

EXT. CAMP COMPOUND - DUSK

An unearthly wind and the THUNDER of several helicopter rotors fills the camp.

Two American-made "HUEY" HELICOPTERS descend to lumpy landings near the guard towers.

One is a UH-1D "Slick" troop carrier and the other is a UH-1B Gunship outfitted with a pedestal-mounted MINIGUN and M-60 door gun.

Captured from the ARVN in 1975, both ships bear the insignia of the Republic of Vietnam.

Beyond the guard tower, and dwarfing the two Hueys, an ENORMOUS HELICOPTER ROARS out of the setting sun. RUNNING LIGHTS and STROBES FLASH as the massive silhouette drops into the courtyard raising a blast of dust.

It is a SOVIET MIL MI-24 assault helicopter.

Its double blister canopies look like huge insect eyes. The STUBWING WEAPONS PODS bristle with rockets and cannons.

It is painted with jungle camouflage and bears the red star insignia of the SOVIET NAVAL AIR WING.

The Viet officers and guards cringe against the rotor blast as the ship settles. The side door slides open.

DOLLY BACK, PRECEDING TWO RUSSIAN OFFICERS who tower above the Vietnamese as they stride across the camp.

Vinh points to the concrete blockhouse and the officers stride past him without slowing. He falls in behind them, trying to keep up.

INT. PRISONERS' BARRACKS

Jensen turns from the window as the MIL MI-24's jet-whine fades.

JENSEN

It's those Russian interrogators again.

Everyone looks grim.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM

Vinh sends the gawking guards scurrying with strident yells as he follows the two Russians into the room. The Soviets stand in front of Rambo. The shorter of the two, LIEUTENANT COMMANDER YATI PODOVSK, has the slight build and unremarkable features of a bank clerk, though for a man in his forties he is in superb condition. The other, LIEUTENANT PALYUSHIN, is another story. He is a tall broad slab of combat muscle, his black hair cut short as a scrub brush. Thick and functional as state sculpture, his features cannot fill his broad, flat face.

Both wear the khaki field dress and black beret of the Naval Spetsnaz Brigade, The "Special Operations Brigade".

At Palyushin's feet, Rambo finds himself looking up at his Soviet opposite number, the BLACK BERET.

PODOVSK

(in Russian)

Put him in the chair.

Palyushin hauls Rambo onto a wooden stool against the wall. Podovsk sits next to him on a small metal desk.

It is almost dark and the only light is from a single bare bulb.

PODOVSK

(Viet to Vinh)

Thank you, Captain Vinh. Leave one guard, please.

Vinh exits with Tay and the other three Viets.

Podovsk adjusts his wire-rim glasses and considers Rambo. He turns Rambo's bloodied face gently, examining the injuries.

PODOVSK

These people are so... vulgar in their approach. I am Lieutenant Commander Podovsk. I do not know who you are. Will you tell me?

Podovsk's English is lightly accented but clear and articulate. He has a nasal condition, however. Rambo doesn't answer.

PODOVSK

(continuing)

No? Not even your name?

(silence)

This is a poor beginning for an intimate relationship. By tomorrow or the next day you will tell me things you would not tell a lover.

Podovsk notices the long criss-crossed scars on Rambo's chest and back.

PODOVSK

(continuing)

I see you are no stranger to pain. Then of course you must know how senseless it is to resist in the long run. Is it possible you have been among my Vietnamese comrades before?

Podovsk catches something as Rambo breaks his gaze, looking away.

PODOVSK

(continuing)

Yes. I think that must be it.
Where were you held? Hanoi? Son
Tay? I apologize. I'm getting
ahead. Sometimes I get too eager.
My comrade and I, in our capacity as
advisors, have been sent from our
center at Cam Ranh Bay to discover
from you certain things... for
example: whether you are working
directly for the American
government... Who your contacts
were... and on and on. Quite a
list. Will you tell me these things
now?

Rambo gazes at a point in space.

PODOVSK

(continuing)

Of course you won't. But, as a
moral man, I felt compelled to ask.

He stands with a shrug of finality and gestures to his
massive assistant.

PODOVSK

This is Lieutenant Palyushin. To
him you are a piece of meat.

(in Russian to

Palyushin)

Proceed.

LOW ANGLE

on Palyushin walking forward.

EXT. CAMP - MAIN GATE - NIGHT

The guard in the sentry box glances up from a newspaper at
the SOUND of an approaching MOTORBIKE. A YOUNG WOMAN
wearing an ao-dai and coolie hat rides up on a HONDA
SCOOTER and stops by the shack.

OVER THE GIRL'S SHOULDER

as she steps up to the guards box and coos something to
the sentry. He grins to see a new face among the whores
from the village, and one so pretty... great luck.

REVERSE ON GIRL

revealing that she is Co, as she dickers price through the sentry box window. He unlatches the gate.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM

An IRON BED FRAME has been brought in and leaned vertically against the wall opposite the door.

Rambo has been tied to the frame spread-eagle by lengths of COAT HANGER WIRE around his ankles, neck and forearms at the elbows.

Palyushin is setting up a box-like PIECE OF EQUIPMENT on the small desk. There are wires running from the bedframe and from a METAL PLATE about the size of a paperback book taped to Rambo's belly.

Palyushin clamps the other ends of the cables to terminal posts on the box, which has a large RHEOSTAT knob and several switches and dials.

PODOVSK

I was sent here because of my command of your language. It will be frustrating if we cannot have a nice chat. Very frustrating.

(Russian to
Palyushin)
Ready?

Palyushin nods and douses Rambo with a BUCKET OF WATER.

PODOVSK

(Russian)
Test please.

Palyushin, without ceremony, twists the knob.

Rambo convulses with an explosive muscle contraction. Slams against the springs. His veins swell as if to burst.

EXT. CAMP COURTYARD

The lights of the camp dim, flickering, under the current load.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM

Rambo slams convulsively against the electric grid formed by the steel bed. His teeth are clenched as if he has tetanus.

INT. PRISONERS' BARRACKS

The lights come up to normal brightness.
De Fravio closes his eyes, sharing a ghost of the pain.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM

Rambo hangs from his bonds, heaving and shivering.

Podovsk turns to him conversationally, as if he were an acquaintance at work rather than a man being tortured.

PODOVSK

Oh, yes. Here is something you might be interested in.

He draws a folded piece of paper from his pocket. Opens it.

PODOVSK

A transcript of the conversation between your helicopter pilot and his commander, intercepted and unscrambled by our overworked cryptography staff.

(reading)

Mmm. "Zen Hammer... Slam Dunk."
Colorful names. Here we are: "Ah, Coach One... we have them in sight."
And the reply: "Abort immediately. Return to base camp."

He graciously shows Rambo the printout.

PODOVSK

It seems they intentionally abandoned you on direct orders. There are the people you protect with your silence? With your pain?

He snaps his fingers and Palyushin cranks the knob. The lights dim.

Rambo fights the scream unleashed within him with every fiber of his being. Straining like a demon, every muscle sharply defined and rock hard.

PODOVSK

(almost kindly)

But you must scream. You must.

There is no shame.

It bursts out, a roar that frays his vocal cords.

EXT. CAMP COURTYARD

Co, moving stealthily in the shadow of a wall, pauses at the SOUND of the scream. Notes its direction.

INT. ISOLATION CELL

In the darkness Brewer rages against the inhuman screaming, pounding the wall.

BREWER

Bastards!

INT. INTERROGATION CELL

Rambo hangs so limply that he might be dead. Podovsk moves in to check as Rambo's head begins to rise.

TIGHT ON RAMBO

as he looks up. His eyes seem like diamond drills. There is such determination born of rage in his expression that Podovsk stops. Takes a step back. Snaps his fingers.

Rambo convulses and begins to scream. Podovsk nods to his assistant.

INSERT - PALYUSHIN'S HAND

cuts off the current. But the scream CONTINUES. GETS LOUDER.

BACK TO SCENE

The Lieutenant looks up, puzzled. Rambo is going berserk. His body is an out-of-control

machine, lashing and tearing at the frame. The scream breaks and becomes a FEROCIOUS HOWL.

The Viet guard steps forward, alarmed and unnerved. His rifle is raised, warding off evil.

Podovsk motions him back and steps closer himself. The bedframe begins to twist, creaking and warping under Rambo's frenzied assault.

TIGHT CUTS - RAPID SUCCESSION

A weld. Springs pop.
Podovsk takes a reflexive step forward.
Rambo's hand shoots out, free suddenly, like a grappling hook.
Palyushin hits the CURRENT.
Rambo jerks Podovsk into a headlock, a death embrace.
Podovsk screams. Convulses.

 PODOVSK
 (to Palyushin)
 Nyet! Nyet!

The Russian lashes about, convulsing in the current.

The lieutenant cuts the power.

Rambo snatches Podovsk's MAKAROV PISTOL from his holster. Aims it at his temple before Palyushin can reach for his. The Black Beret eases his hand away from his holster.

ON THE GUARD

Frozen. A FIGURE slips through the door behind him. Co cuts his throat in one motion with a BUSH KNIFE.

She covers Palyushin with the guard's AK-47 as she circles to Rambo who is still enmeshed in metal wreckage. Rambo smashes the Makarov into Podovsk's temple twice, then holds Palyushin transfixed by his pistol sights as Co works quickly at his bonds. There are superficial cuts on his forearms, ankles and neck from the wire.

Rambo SCREAMS hideously and with cold premeditation to mask the sound of her work. The effect is bizarre, surreal, maniacal.

 CO
 (whispering)
 We get out. Split up. They not

want me.

Rambo steps from the wreckage and advances on the hulking Black Beret, pistol ready.

Again he screams, almost a war cry now, and smashes his fist into the Russian's face with the force of his entire body behind it. The big man's head ricochets off the wall into a second piledriver punch. Palyushin goes down.

Podovsk groans and stirs until Rambo twists the knob. Despite a bad connection, Podovsk jerks spasmodically under the collapsed metal frame, lying in the puddle of water.

Before Co can use the knife on Palyushin, Capt. Vinh enters, his expression agape. He turns and bolts.

INT. CORRIDOR

Vinh dashes out, SHOUTING MANIACALLY. Behind him Rambo hurtles through the door, a blur, and smashes Vinh against the concrete wall.

Vaulting over the crumpled camp commander without slowing, Rambo hits the outside door at a full run. Just as Sgt. Tay is opening it from outside.

EXT. COURTYARD

Tay's AK flies from his hands as he tumbles back. Rambo spins into him with a FLYING ROUNDHOUSE KICK which pitches him onto his back, an inert heap.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM

The transformer box shorts out under the continuous load, frying with a bright FLASH. The lights of the camp go out completely.

EXT. COURTYARD

With Co close behind him, Rambo runs toward the compound fence.

A SHOUT FROM NEARBY. A RUNNING GUARD and Co open up with

their assault rifles simultaneously.

The guard dives for cover.

Rambo lifts the wire for Co to wiggle under. She reciprocates for him as the TOWER GUARD spins his long-unused PK MACHINE GUN and opens fire.

Co fires from the shoulder.

The tower guard flinches at the unexpected return fire. Dives. His shots go wild. Co's AK empties. She drops it.

Rambo and Co make it into the forest, running full out. MORE AKs OPEN UP behind them. Both TOWER PKs.

EXT. RAIN FOREST

HANDHELD PRECEDING RAMBO at a dead run as he crashes through foliage. The forest is an insane blur. TRACERS WHIP BY, ruler-straight lines of red light... deadly fireflies.

BARK EXPLODES from tree trunks around them. Leaves are ripped into green confetti.

They angle away from the blind firing. Stop at a GAME TRAIL.

RAMBO

(panting)

You are amazing.

Co is furious at his dawdling.

CO

(pointing down trail)

Di di mau! Go! Go!

She spins and sprints away along the trail, disappearing in a moment. Rambo hesitates an instant, then runs the other way.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM

Palyushin, his nose and mouth streaming blood, claws his way up the desk and reels across the dark room to Podovsk. He hurls the metal frame off his superior, who groans feebly.

EXT. COURTYARD

A guard holds Sgt. Tay's shoulders as he retches. Palyushin strides out of the interrogation blockhouse and jerks the sergeant to his feet by his collar. He points to the forest.

PALYUSHIN

(Viet/subtitled)

Find! Now!

He releases the Viet sergeant and briskly walks toward the MIL MI-24. Tay weakly calls orders B.G., rounding up his guards.

The RUSSIAN PILOT is waiting dutifully near his machine as Palyushin approaches. The Black Beret makes a circular hand signal... WIND HER UP.

EXT. RAIN FOREST

Rambo at a dead run zig-zags along the dark game trail.

The path steepens and he claws at exposed roots... climbing as much as running. Behind him is the rising sound of rotors.

EXT. RAIN FOREST - NEAR CAMP

Using HAND LIGHTS to follow his footprints, Tay's SQUAD OF SIX GUARDS jogs into the jungle. Behind them, through the trees, the massive assault helicopter and its escort of Hueys rise into the night.

The three choppers switch on their HIGH INTENSITY SEARCHLIGHTS as they thunder overhead. Shafts of light pierce the jungle. Sweeping. Searching.

EXT. FOREST

Rambo is climbing rapidly, using roots as handholds to ascend the steep trail.

The WHUMP-WHUMP of the helicopters approaches, the glare of light flickering behind him. Rambo moves into a densely woven thicket. Freezes, watching. Moves on.

EXT. FOREST - NEARBY

The guards are ascending the trail like hounds.

EXT. FOREST - TRAIL

Rambo crashes through foliage as a SEARCHLIGHT SWEEPS TOWARD HIM.

It races over him, backlighting him as he dives off the trail.

The searchlight flicks past him. Snaps back.

TRACERS rip down through the trees.

RED SLASHES OF DEATH.

Rambo tumbles, rolls, comes up running. He tears through the jungle in a frenzy.

The foliage is alive with blasting air.

He dives over the edge of a muddy ravine, dropping through tangled vines. Catching, clawing, dropping.

He runs on.

Totally manic.

They can't target him.

He hits a solid trail and sprints, really covering ground.

The shaft of light scans back and forth behind him.

Then farther away. They've lost him. For the moment.

ANGLE ABOVE JUNGLE CANOPY

as the choppers circle, seemingly dueling with lances of light.

EXT. TRAIL - NEARBY

Rambo, moving rapidly, but more carefully, glides among the trees. He stops at the BANK OF A TINY STREAM, setting down knife and pistol. Scooping stinking BLACK MUD from the stream bed, he begins to slather it over his pale skin with quick, sure strokes. Arms. Legs. Body...

TIGHT ON RAMBO'S FACE

eyes closed, as he smears the goo thoroughly over every exposed area. His eyes open. It is a neolithic, feral visage that turns away into the foliage.

ON THE GUARDS

moving forward cautiously. Unfamiliar with tracking, and little else really except bullying weak prisoners, they crash around clumsily, falling and cursing in the dense thicket.

CLOSE ON RAMBO

moving in absolute silence nearby. He freezes. Fifteen meters away is a SMALL WILD PIG, asleep under a knot of vines. Rambo fires the makarov, hitting the earth near the pig. It squeals and leaps up.

THE GUARDS

wave their AKs, looking for the source of the shot. They hear something crashing through the undergrowth to the right. Movement in dense brush. They open fire.

The CRASH OF SUSTAINED FIRE is deafening. They blast blindly away, lighting up the forest. Their attention is so focused, the din so loud, they do not notice a dark figure moving up behind them.

Rambo snatches the wayward last guard into a thicket, knife buried to the hilt, hand over his mouth.

Tay shouts repeatedly to cease firing and the others finally stop.

They move away, advancing on their "target." Tay gingerly parts woven branches, revealing the pig, riddled with hundreds of 7.62mm rounds. He turns to the others.

TAY

(Viet/subtitled)

Where's Trang?

The other guards look around, puzzled.

ON RAMBO

A shadow in shadows. He slips the clip from the AK-47 he has liberated, but finds it almost empty. Sets it down quietly.

Tay spreads his men out to sweep the area in an arc. The guards advance, stricken with a growing unease.

EXT. RAIN FOREST

LOW ANGLE through the trees as the Soviet assault helicopter passes overhead, its searchlight sweeping. The canopy of foliage lashes violently as the rotor wash blasts through it. Monkeys SHRIEK and leap about.

ON RAMBO - FOREGROUND

as the godlike shaft of light moves through the brush behind him. Searching. Passing within a meter of him. He moves quickly off.

The disk of hideously bright light passes over two guards, blinding them. One trips and goes down. The other, the outermost man of the sweep, waits for him to rise. And waits.

GUARD

(Viet/subtitled)

Vuoc? You alright?

The guard moves cautiously to his friend's last position. Ahead face-down in a shallow stream, is the BODY OF VUOC, his blood running away with the water.

Approaching the body warily, the guard plays his flashlight around him in a full circle. Nothing.

DETAIL ON MUDBANK

Featureless matted vines and mud. Suddenly A PAIR OF EYES SNAP OPEN.

ON THE GUARD

kneeling over Vuoc in the F.G. Behind him there is silent movement among the gnarled roots and vines in a muddy embankment.

Blending flawlessly with the mudbank, Rambo's mud-encrusted figure has been in PLAIN VIEW, YET CONCEALED, until he opened his eyes and moved. He emerges noiselessly and moves up behind the guard, looming above him.

INT./ EXT. MIL MI-24

Palyushin mans the forward cockpit, the WEAPONS BAY. His hands clutch the handles of a machine gun as he scans the jungle below. The pilot directs the searchlight as he flies.

Palyushin touches his nose gingerly. It is clearly broken, becoming a thickened, purplish mass.

EXT. RAIN FOREST

Realizing they are without their flankers, the two CENTER GUARDS call out and move toward their last positions. They stand together at the top of the mudbank, gaping at the two bodies sprawled below.

ANGLE ON TAY

isolated, calling for his men to sound off. He hears a distant shout, then a quick burst of gunfire.

TAY

Bui? Phong? Than?

There is no answer.

INT. MIL MI-24

Palyushin points at something on the ground. The pilot banks, arcing around his searchlight's target.

EXT. RAIN FOREST

Tay moves forward hypnotically, as if transfixed.

The celestial shaft of the searchlight burns down ahead. He approaches. Like a vision he sees the BODIES OF HIS MEN sprawled in the quivering disk of light. One has been stripped of his clothing. He stares around, terrified, staggers back, lip quivering.

Tay drops his rifle and runs back through the jungle.

EXT. RAIN FOREST - RIDGE

Rambo climbs steadily. The mud, dissolving in sweat, runs in streaks off his body. He has stopped to slip on the FATIGUE PANTS he took from one of the guards. The pants come to mid-calf but the material will protect against brambles and insects.

He has also acquired an AK-47 with EXTRA MAGAZINES.

His pockets bulge with SOVIET-MADE GRENADES.

Rambo moves on into the mountains.

EXT. RAIN FOREST - DIRT ROAD

Tay stumbles out of the underbrush into a pool of light.
The headlight of a VIET ARMY TROOP TRANSPORT.

A squad of men runs past him into the jungle, fanning out.
Another truck arrives.
The search is on in force.

INT./ EXT. FLIGHT CENTER - NAKON PHANOM AFB - DAWN

An F-4 PHANTOM JET taxis amid MOVING GROUND EQUIPMENT
under the floodlights as the sky slowly lightens.

D-PLUS 53 HRS
NAKON PHANOM, THAILAND

PAN OFF THE FLIGHTLINE onto Trautman gazing out the window
of a small office. He looks haggard. Soul-weary.
With the receiver cradled at his ear he is waiting for a
call to connect.

TRAUTMAN

Bob, hi. Did you get my telex?

(pause)

Yeah, I know what time it is
there... do you know what time it is
here? Look, is there anything you
can do up the line? You owe me one.
I'm calling it in.

(pause)

Yes, this time.

(pause)

I know you're a general and I'm only
a colonel.

(long pause)

So that's it, huh? Back off. Come
home... that's it?

(pause, then frostily)

Thanks, buddy.

He slams the receiver into its cradle, and sits,
pondering. He is about to make a somewhat bizarre
decision for a full colonel.

Trautman opens the door and the young corporal in the office beyond turns in his chair.

TRAUTMAN

Get me a "Loach," I'm going back out to Ban Bung Kla.

CORPORAL

Yes, sir.

INT. ISOLATION CELL

BLACK SCREEN. There is a SCRAPING SOUND and light appears as a CEMENT BLOCK is removed at floor level. De Fravio's face appears in the rectangular hole.

DE FRAVIO

(whispering)

Hey, Brewer. You okay?

Brewer crawls stiffly to the opening, squinting at the glare.

BREWER

(hoarsely)

I could use a beer.

EXT. GUARD BARRACKS - CELL

The cement-block wall of the cells adjoins the raised wooden barracks. De Fravio and Jensen have belly-crawled beneath the building to the cell, where they have long used a loosened block to communicate with prisoners in "the hole."

DE FRAVIO

Your buddy made it out last night.
The place went apeshit.

BREWER

Really? How come he didn't take me?

DE FRAVIO

Maybe because you're shot in the leg.

BREWER

Oh, yeah. Listen, how long do they keep you in this disease hole?

JENSEN

Who knows? I was in there for a month once. De Fravio did three months.

BREWER

How do you keep from coming unglued?

JENSEN

Concentrate on a problem. Like, I built my dream house in my head, brick by brick. Board by board. If something really takes a day, I thought about it for a whole day. Like that.

DE FRAVIO

I built a shopping mall.

JENSEN

(urgently)
Guards. See ya.

They slide the block into place and Brewer sits in front of it, COUGHING TO HIDE THE SCRAPE as the door is opened by two guards.

Morning light blasts in, blinding him, as one guard hauls him roughly to his feet, despite his wounded leg.

BREWER

(menacingly)
Watch it. Don't fuck with me, man!
(jerks a thumb at himself)
I'm dinky dau!

The guards guffaw and drag him off.

EXT. RAIN FOREST - MORNING

A line of Viet soldiers moves through the shimmering jungle.

CAMERA BOOMS UP

as they move past, revealing others beyond, and the tops of parked trucks.

The MOVE ENDS ON RAMBO, watching from the branches of a

tree as they move by only a few meters below. The choppers search methodically nearby.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM

Brewer is trussed tightly, his elbows tied together and drawn up painfully by a cord attached to a ceiling fixture.

Palyushin looms in front of him, holding the truck-tire bludgeon.

Podovsk, looking the worse for wear with a bandage covering half his face, sits on the stool. The gaze of his exposed eye is malevolent.

PODOVSK

(wearily)

I think you know where he is going. Is there a rendezvous point? Some guerrilla contract? A transmitter perhaps.

BREWER

(earnestly)

No way. If I say anything... that's three.

The interrogator scowls, briefly perplexed.

PODOVSK

(rising)

I cannot be responsible for the safety of the prisoners if he is not captured. This government now considers the existence of POWs an embarrassment. An unmarked grave in the jungle may be their solution. I am only an advisor.

BREWER

Advise my dick, you Siberian scumbag.

Palyushin explodes with a brutal blow to Brewer's ribs, which doubles him over in agony. He struggles to regain his breath, dragging at the air like a terminal emphysema patient. Brewer slowly raises his head.

BREWER

(sneering)

Ke-rist. Whattaya trying to do,
man, tickle me?

Palyushin snarls and smashes the truncheon down even
harder.

EXT. RAIN FOREST - DAY

Rambo runs crouching along a shallow gully, trying to duck
around the end of the advancing line of Viet troops.
He emerges from dense foliage onto a DIRT-TRACK SIDEROAD
only to see a FLANKING SQUAD of about ten men jogging
toward him. They shout and hit the deck, opening fire, as
he dives on into the underbrush.

Rambo runs, zig-zagging radically as small-arms fire laces
the woods around him. He crashes through foliage,
abandoning stealth.

LONG LENS WHIP-PANNING with Rambo as he charges down a
long slope, the trees a green blur. He crosses his arms
over his face and batters through the brush with blind
force.

EXT. HOOTCH

Rambo bursts out of the dense tangle, dragging streamers
of vines, and finds himself in an EXPLOSION OF SQUAWKING
CHICKENS.

He is in the muddy door-yard of a rural HOOTCH, part of a
SMALL HAMLET, of about a dozen buildings.
Pigs scatter, grunting their surprise, as Rambo sprints
across the yard. Over a low rail fence. Between the
hootches.

Soldiers charge down the slope behind him.

EXT. HAMLET

Rambo emerges onto the main "street" at a dead run,
tearing a swath through the everyday village activities.

The Viet peasants scatter as the fierce American charges
through their midst. A giant by their standards to begin
with, Rambo is now a mud-caked nightmare, trailing vines
and brambles... his face a mask of dark streaks topped by
encrusted hair.

He crashes into a panic-stricken young man on a bicycle, spilling them both. Rolls. Comes up running.

Rambo changes course to intersect with an ANCIENT TRUCK which is accelerating away, headed out of the village. The truck, rusted and mud-caked into a brownish lump on wheels, is hauling a load of CHICKENS in a WIRE MESH CAGE on the flat bed.

Rambo leaps onto the running board of the cab and points his pistol through the window at the terrified OLD MAN driving.

RAMBO
(Viet/subtitled)
Keep driving.

EXT. ROAD

Rambo clings tightly as the truck rattles and bounces over the rutted road, which shortly emerges from a stand of trees to run along a field of ELEPHANT GRASS.

Rambo sees soldiers converging on the road through the trees on the other side. Behind him, more emerge from the village and open fire.

A bullet shatters the filthy windshield and the old driver loses control. The truck veers into a ditch, slews, hurling up a sheet of water and flops ignominiously on its side.

Rambo lands clear. The old man begins to sob helplessly. The chickens scatter in all directions.

CLOSE ON RAMBO, freeing a RUSTED GAS CAN from the twisted wreck of the truck bed.

WIDE from behind the soldiers as they pour AK-47 bursts into the truck 50 meters away. A figure dashes from the now-burning vehicle into the field of tall grass, disappearing.

EXT. ROAD - EDGE OF GRASS

Two troop trucks are deploying soldiers as a group of OFFICERS stands near the chicken truck. Sgt. Tay climbs down from a six-by cab. Directing operations is Capt.

Vinh. His face is bruised and abraded, and one arm is on a sling.

Vinh motions Tay impatiently toward where he stands at the edge of the elephant grass, and Tay wades into it, joining him. Beyond them the coarse grass becomes an impenetrable wall almost EIGHT FEET HIGH.

Vinh snorts in disgust at Tay and points at some trampled stalks. There is a bright smear of blood, and beyond, another. Vinh cuffs his sergeant.

VINH

(Viet/subtitled)

You see? Not a demon. A man. Now, we find where he's crawled to die.

Tay indicates that the others should go ahead of him, to have that honor.

A line of THIRTY REGULARS moves into the grass. Only the RADIO ANTENNAS of the squad leaders are visible above the waving stalks. The helicopters arc in from the distant ridgeline, converging.

EXT. ELEPHANT GRASS

POV, HANDHELD, MOVING SLOWLY THROUGH THE GRASS. The point man parts the stalks ahead. It is a quiet, eerie world, with only the SWISH OF THE GRASS and the occasional SOUND-OFF CALLS of the troopers. There is a clear trail of blood smeared on the grass, indicating a serious wound.

VARIOUS CLOSEUPS of the regulars as they advance, each man realizing how utterly isolated he really is, in his own island of space in the green sea. It is hot. Some of the soldiers have their fatigues unbuttoned, sleeves rolled up. Sweat pours off them.

POV, HANDHELD, following the trail of blood. The grass is parted ahead and a small clearing comes into view. Slowly moving up on SOMETHING LYING IN THE GRASS. TWO CHICKENS, THEIR THROATS CUT, are lying beside the gas can, which is upright with its cap off. A bizarre little shrine. There is no sign of Rambo.

REVERSE on the squad leader, puzzled, wary.

INSERT - RAMBO'S HAND strikes a match, igniting a wet trail of SPILLED GAS with a WHOOSH.

The squad leader looks up, seeing the river of fire snaking toward him through the waving stalks.

He turns, panicked. Crashes into the men behind him.

Shrieks at them to move. They trample over each other to run as the trail of fire reaches the can.

VOOM!

Tay sees a tremendous fireball erupt ahead. Hears SCREAMING. He freezes in his tracks as the nightmare begins again. Shrieking, a man runs toward him, ON FIRE, charging past.

Vinh shouts futilely into a radio. Firing blindly, several troopers open up.

EXT. ROAD

From the trucks it is apparent that the grass is burning on its own, in a long line where the "fuse" was laid out and in a widening circle around the explosion site.

EXT. IN THE GRASS

Black smoke rolls through the grass, and troopers stumble about, coughing as the wind carries it toward them.

The choppers have moved in close overhead and their rotor-wash fans the fire, adding to the confusion.

FAST HANDHELD PRECEDING RAMBO

as he snakes rapidly through the stalks. He stops. Hurls a grenade. Runs on, navigating by instinct in the dense smoke.

VINH

is knocked down as a grenade detonates near him.

A trooper helps him up, sees a figure running nearby... fires. Hitting one of their own. More grenades. Random firing. The din is incredible, the pandemonium absolute.

A VIET SOLDIER, reels through the grass. Obviously a

recent conscript, the soldier is probably only 18 years old, and like all Vietnamese, looks even younger. He is terrified.

He stumbles over the body of another trooper. As he rises, a shape slashes through the grass right in front of him.

He has never seen an American, but it looks as monstrous as the descriptions.

He raises his AK but Rambo is quicker, kicking it out of his hands. The kid flops on his butt and finds himself staring up Rambo's rifle barrel. He closes his eyes and pops into his mouth his BUDDHIST PRAYER MEDALLION, hanging from a chain around his neck. He bites down and waits for oblivion.

When he opens his eyes there is nothing in front of him but grass.

Nearby, Vinh leads the retreat as his men fall back, dim shapes rushing blindly through the murk.

He staggers, coughing, out of the stand of grass to see Tay, sitting dazed nearby. Tay gives him an evil smirk.

Barking orders like a maniac, Vinh calls for MORTARS to be set up. Five mortars are positioned. Elevation set. Mortar bombs poised above the launch tubes. The helicopters clear off.

When the last wounded man is dragged clear, Vinh signals for a sighting round.

It EXPLODES beyond the wall of flame. The mortars open fire.

The field explodes seconds later with the first salvo. Earth and shredded grass are hurled skyward. A second salvo lands. A third. And on and on, pulverizing the entire area.

EXT. TREELINE - NEARBY

Rambo watches, fascinated by the tremendous destruction unleashed on innocent acreage nearby.

He slips slowly into the woods, glancing back frequently at his trail. He stops occasionally to replace a disturbed twig or leaf, or to rearrange branches when he passes through. Total "sterilization."

The mortars thud on distantly as he creeps away.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM

FULL SHOT as Palyushin delivers a crippling blow to Brewer's ribs. Brewer cries out hoarsely and slumps.

CLOSE ON BREWER as his head slowly rises to look at the big Russian.

BREWER
(panting)
This your first day?

Podovsk catches his assistant's hand before he swings.

PODOVSK
You think you can provoke us into beating you unconscious? We are not that... unskilled.

BREWER
I've had it with you, ratface.
Don't piss me off!

Podovsk takes the "fan belt" from Palyushin and smashes it across Brewer's face. Again. Brewer scream hideously. And again.

CLOSE ON BREWER

We see only the top of his head. We don't want him to rise up, but he does, agonizingly. Blood streams over the area where his eye is already swelling shut. Don't say anything, Brewer.

BREWER
(hoarsely)
Aaargh. God damn that... was... good!
(shouting)
Do it again, you fuck!
(screaming)
Come on... I love it! You hear me... I LOVE IT!

Podovsk looms before us, swinging in slow motion, INTO THE LENS. The scene FADES OUT.

EXT. RAIN FOREST - DAY

Under overcast sky Rambo emerges at a steep-walled ravine. There is a swaying SUSPENSION BRIDGE of rope and woven vines crossing to the jungled slope beyond.

Looming at the top of that slope is the ruin of the Wat on its plateau, wreathed in streamers of blowing mist.

Not far away is the waterfall, pouring itself into the gorge below.

Rambo stops at the far side of the bridge, examining the vine-cables.

He starts pulling grenades out of his pockets.

EXT. PRISON CAMP - DAY

Palyushin crosses the compound to the Huey gunship which has just touched down. The other Huey hovers above the trees B.G.

The big Russian appreciatively pats the MINIGUN bolted in the main door as he climbs in.

Palyushin enters the cockpit, motioning for the VIETNAMESE PILOT to take off as he slips a headset over his black beret.

The ship rises, and the two Hueys bank across the jungle.

INT. MOTC - THAILAND

D-PLUS 58 HRS

The telecom tech turns as Kirkhill enters.

TECH

(handing him a sheaf
of papers)

More AWACS intercepts. The Russian takes time to translate.

Kirkhill scans a long PRINTOUT TRANSCRIPT.

KIRKHILL

He's giving them a run for their money. Says here they've got two Hueys from Danang. I didn't know those dinks had Hueys.

TECH

Half their air force is our stuff.
Captured.

KIRKHILL
Typical...

TECH
Sir, there's something else... a
TRANSAT relay. Just came through.

KIRKHILL
What?

He snatches the sheet from the tech.

E.C.U. - PRINTOUT SHEET

It reads:

KIRKHILL/I'M COMING FOR YOU/RAMBO

KIRKHILL

stares at the sheet for a long time.

EXT. RAIN FOREST - NEAR WAT - DAY

Rambo finishes dismantling the TRANSAT unit. He sets the pieces back into the hole of the CACHE he and Brewer buried before their run through the jungle.

He begins shoveling earth back into the hole.
A beautiful PURPLE MOTH-ORCHID drops onto the ground by his hand. He freezes.

VOICE
You not so hard to catch, dinky dau
Rambo.

Rambo looks up along the tumbled stone wall. Sitting near the top in shadow, perched on a tree limb, is Co, beaming like a Cheshire cat.

RAMBO
(relaxing)
Christ. How'd you get here?

CO
(climbing down)
Took bus, most of way. I knew you

would come here.

He helps her down the last few feet, and stands looking at her, marveling.

RAMBO

And how'd you sneak up like that?

CO

Carefully. Don't want to get shot by you. Bad karma. Anyway, you need me.

RAMBO

I do?

CO

You think you are... (she uses a Viet word).

RAMBO

(translating)
Invulnerable.

CO

In-vul-nerabo. But you get ass kicked without me.

Rambo has to laugh.

RAMBO

Yeah. We're a pretty good team.

Co looks him over carefully. She touches his forehead.

CO

You look like hell. Wounds infected. Come up to the ruins, I have medical kit.

Rambo lets her lead him to the path up the hill.

EXT. RUINS OF WAT

The stone Buddhas look on complacently as Co attends to Rambo's minor wounds. During the ensuing conversation she cleans, applies salve and bandages the wire-lacerations and the numerous slashes from brambles and saw-edged elephant grass.

CO

You try get across Laos? Get to Thailand?

RAMBO

(nodding)

Yeah. Got some business there. What are you gonna do?

CO

(shrugs)

Go United States. See Nguyen. Maybe teach economics. Buy Cadillac. Watch "Dynasty."

RAMBO

How you going to get there? You can't trust the spooks to pull you out. They'll use you up and throw you away.

CO

I know. I go with you.

RAMBO

I couldn't get you in.

Co stops her work and replies very quietly.

CO

Yes you can.

RAMBO

How?

Co's gaze holds his and her Cheshire grin flickers.

CO

As wife.

Rambo realizes she is serious. The silence drags when he realizes how good that sounds to him at this moment. And how small a price that is to repay her.

RAMBO

(with finality)

Okay. Done. You got it.

She seems a bit shocked, then smiles impishly.

CO

You too easy.

Co's hands have been all over him but only now does he become aware of them on his shoulders.

She draws her face up to his but Rambo pulls back from the kiss. Co looks puzzled as he slowly disengages from her contact.

CO

You don't feel love, Rambo?

He leans back against the wall.

RAMBO

Look, Co...

CO

Why you don't feel love? Not allowed?

(her tone becomes aggressive)

Dead inside, maybe? You make yourself dead already so they can't kill you? In-vulnerabo? Bullshit!

She advances on him until her face is close to his, her words finding their mark.

CO

(continuing)

Bucu bullshit!

(pause)

I have enough death already.
Husband. Mother. Father.
Brothers. Death everywhere.

She points into the undergrowth nearby, to a ghostly blossom growing there among the tangled vines.

CO

You see? A flower like that need good soil to grow. Many time under earth is bones of animal... or person. Killed in jungle. Make soil rich. Grows most beautiful flower. You call orchid. Many deaths in jungle. Vietnamese, V.C., American. Many beautiful flowers.

Rambo studies her intently. An emotional moment for him.

He takes her flawless face in his hands, draws her closer.

Suddenly his head snaps around. A distant THUDDING of COPTER ROTORS becomes audible, growing slowly louder.

Rambo leaps up, sprinting to a crumbled parapet. Below, in the valley, the two Hueys are slowly scanning, like angry insects.

EXT. SUSPENSION BRIDGE

A COLUMN of VIET SOLDIERS jogs across the swaying bridge.

ANGLE PAST AN OBJECT IN F.G.

as the lead man approaches, almost across the bridge. The object is a CLUSTER OF GRENADES lashed to a tree to which one of the main support cables of the bridge is attached.

A FINE WIRE runs down to the bridge walkway.

PING. The wire pulls a pin.

EXT. WAT RUINS

Rambo whips around as an explosion rips through the jungle.

EXT. BRIDGE

The bridge begins to collapse, dumping half the soldiers into the ravine as one side drops. The others run back. The second cable tears away. The bridge swings down, spilling the remaining men.

EXT. RAIN FOREST - TREETOP LEVEL

The two Hueys bank steeply and ROAR straight TOWARD CAMERA, passing overhead.

EXT. RAIN FOREST - NEAR WAT

Rambo and Co head into a trail which leads down the backside of the plateau. Rushing toward them is a PLATOON of VIET REGULARS.

Rambo opens fire, scattering them off the trail.
He and Co make it back to the Wat as return fire rips
through the jungle.

Rambo throws two grenades down the hill and sprints with
Co deeper into the maze of the ruined monastery.

The soldiers fall back as the grenades detonate ahead of
them.

INT./ EXT. HUEY ONE

Palyushin speaks into his helmet radio.

PALYUSHIN
(Viet/subtitled)
Get your men back. I'm beginning an
attack run.

The Huey THUNDERS toward the ruins, banking in an arc to
aim the "minigun."

EXT. RUINS

Rambo sees the Huey coming in on a high arcing trajectory
and knows he's in trouble. Dragging Co, he dives under a
section of wall which has collapsed like a lean-to.

INT./ EXT. HUEY ONE

Palyushin's thumb depresses the FIRE CONTROL SWITCH.

An AWESOME ROAR fills the sky. A COLUMN OF ORANGE FIRE
blasts from the minigun as its gatling-gun barrels rotate
in a blur.

One of the most ferocious anti-personnel weapons used in
the Vietnam war, the GENERAL ELECTRIC M-134 Minigun fires
six thousand 7.62mm rounds per minute. Since every fifth
round is a tracer, the impression is of a solid shaft of
fire sustained between ship to ground.

The SOUND is not that of a machine gun but rather a SOLID
HELD NOTE OF THUNDER, like a god belching.
One of its nicknames was "Puff the Magic Dragon."

EXT. RUINS

The effect on the ground is unbelievable. Trees are blown to kindling. The foliage is pulverized, and blown upward like mist.

The tracers hit the ground like an orange curtain stripping the stones of growth, blasting up a cloud of emulsified jungle.

In their crevice, Rambo and Co huddle, covering their ears.

A fusillade of chips and splinters whips around them.

Suddenly, the thunder cuts off.

Rambo rolls out. Fires well-aimed bursts at the retreating Huey.

INT. HUEY ONE

Palyushin hears rounds whacking the underside of the ship. He calmly orders the pilot to turn back.

EXT. RUINS - CREVICE

Rambo crouches in the opening, watching the ship bank.

CO

(terrified)

What was that?

RAMBO

Minigun. Come on. Let's move.

He's coming in on our open side.

They sprint across the courtyard as the minigun ROARS again. The CURTAIN OF DEVASTATION sweeps toward them as they run. They make it behind one of the Buddhas, just as the hail of death passes across it.

The rounds blast a layer of weathered stone off the serene face.

Behind Rambo the second Huey pops above the trees, firing with a conventional door gun, an M-60.

Rambo fires back.

Tracers flash around him. He reloads. FIRES.

CO CRIES OUT. She is SLAMMED AGAINST THE WALL.

The second Huey banks away. Rambo crouches beside Co's

crumpled figure.

INT. HUEY ONE

Palyushin turns to the pilot.

PALYUSHIN

(Viet/subtitled)

Return to staging area. We have to reload.

EXT. RUINS

Rambo cradles Co, whose blouse is drenched with blood. It runs over his hands as he holds her helplessly.

She is as white as the jungle orchid. Her eyes focus slowly on Rambo.

CO

(almost inaudible)

Dinky-dau-Rambo.

Rambo is rocking her, willing the life to stay in her, his expression anguished.

RAMBO

John. My name is John.

CO

(very weak)

It doesn't hurt. Why doesn't it hurt?

INT. HUEY ONE

Palyushin coordinates the air operation.

PALYUSHIN

(Viet/subtitled)

Air Two, circle in a holding pattern.

(Russian/subtitled)

Air Three, are you in position?

INT./ EXT. MIL MI-24

In the spacious MAIN COCKPIT which overlooks the lower WEAPONS BAY blister, PODOVSK is seated with the Russian pilot.

PILOT
(Russian/subtitled)
Ready, Air Command.

PALYUSHIN (V.O.)
(Russian/subtitled)
Begin your run.

The pilot turns to Podovsk.

PILOT
(Russian/subtitled)
How many are down there?

PODOVSK
(distantly)
One.

The pilot looks at him strangely. The massive assault helicopter noses down and thunders forward across the jungle.

EXT. RUINS

VERY CLOSE ON RAMBO, rocking gently.

RAMBO
... you're gonna love it there.
It'll be great. We can do what we
want... you and me... go to the
beach... with Nguyen... watch him
ridin' his surfboard...

Co's eyes are glazed, half-open. She is gone.

Rambo sobs. Somehow this one tragedy renders all the others pale.

RAMBO
(continuing)
Oh, God...

He kisses her mouth fiercely. Trying to make her live, to infuse her cooling flesh with some of his vast will.

INT. MIL MI-24

PILOT

(Russian/subtitled)

500 meters. Final approach.

EXT. RUINS

Rambo lays Co with infinite gentleness in the lap of the stone Buddha. In the lap is one slightly cupped hand, palm upward, stripped of foliage by the minigun. Co lies in the palm, barely filling it.

Single sniping rounds WHACK occasionally near Rambo. He is oblivious.

Rambo removes the tiny BUDDHIST PRAYER MEDALLION from around her neck and puts it on. Straightens her clothing. Looks up at the broad stone countenance.

Its expression is, as always, enigmatic.

He turns as the assault chopper approaches, running dead at him.

TWO LONG METAL CYLINDERS detach from the stub wings and drop, beginning their characteristic TUMBLING.

RAMBO

(awed)

'Palm.

He spins and runs, leaving his rifle.

EXT. RAIN FOREST

Rambo slashes through the trees like a madman, running with everything he has.

Behind him the NAPALM CANISTERS hit the ground at the edge of the ruins.

An ENORMOUS FIREBALL blossoms through the jungle. The canisters' inertia carries them forward, SPEWING TWENTY-METER-LONG ARCS OF FLAME. The inferno engulfs the Buddhas and rolls forward through the trees, silhouetting the tiny running figure of Rambo.

Just as the firestorm reaches him he dives at a dead run

off an embankment. Into a rushing MOUNTAIN STREAM about five meters wide.

UNDERWATER SEQUENCE

Rambo dives to the bottom as a sun-bright CANOPY OF FIRE rushes across the surface with a muffled ROAR.

The stream is only about two meters deep and is swiftly flowing. The napalm on the surface lights the bottom orange despite the daylight. He seems suspended in a fiery maelstrom.

MOVING WITH RAMBO'S figure we dive at giddy speed over the tortuous streambed like some weird amusement park ride. Rambo tumbles over and between smooth boulders.

He strains to hold his breath as the fire diminishes above.

Then it is gone. He is clear.

Suddenly the rocks END, dropping away.

EXT. RAVINE - WATERFALL

Rambo tumbles clear of the falling water as he drops down the face of the CATARACT seen earlier.

He hits the surface of the pool with a tremendous SPLASH.

ANGLE ON WATER

boiling with turbulence as he surfaces, gasping. He weakly sculls at the surface as the current carries him along.

Above, on the escarpment, a FIRE-STORM rages, lighting up the jungle.

The Buddha is at the heart of the holocaust, reminiscent of a self-immolating monk. Co's pyre is magnificent.

EXT. BRACKISH ESTUARY

The pool at the base of the cataract empties into swampland near the Ca River.

Rambo lets the increasingly torpid flow carry him until he catches sight of a familiar object: The abandoned sampan of the river bandits, still moored among the huge tree

roots.

EXT. SWAMP - SAMPAN

Rambo clambers aboard and goes into the cabin. Still in its wooden locker is the RPG-7 ROCKET GRENADE LAUNCHER and a rack of ROCKETS in a carrying pack. With rapid movements Rambo dons the pack and picks up the launcher. Moves to the stern. Pulls hard on the starter rope of the filthy outboard.

Across the estuary one of the Hueys is moving over the trees, getting closer. The motor starts on the third pull.

INT./ EXT. HUEY TWO

The VIET PILOT banks, motioning to his door gunner. Below them is the sampan, chugging across the estuary.

The pilot descends as the gunner opens fire. The .30 caliber slugs riddle the sampan, sending splinters flying.

It EXPLODES, its incredible hoard of junk hurled flaming into the swamp.

The Huey lowers farther, rotorwash whipping the water into churning froth.

The Viets scan the debris, spotting a FLOATING BODY.

ANGLE AT WATER LEVEL

as the corpse rolls slowly over. It is Kinh, the crazy bandit leader.

EXT. MARSH - NEARBY

WATER LEVEL. The Huey, hovering 40 meters away, begins to turn toward us.

SOMETHING RISES from the surface scum in CLOSE F.G. among the gnarled tree roots.

A HULKING FIGURE dripping water and mud and strands of swamp weed.

Rambo.

The launcher tube across his shoulder.

REVERSE - CLOSE ON RAMBO

as he wipes filthy water out of his eyes and returns to the SCOPE-SIGHT, blinking, taking his time.

WIDER

The Huey's M-60 opens up, walking a parade of waterspouts toward him across the water.

Rambo FIRES.

With a tremendous BACKBLAST the rocket leaps out, a fiery arrow, and strikes the Huey square in the canopy.

FLASH! CRACK! The Huey drops into the swamp, its rotors twisting up and flying off. The FUEL TANKS EXPLODE.

Rambo pivots, reloading. He takes aim and fires again. The rocket roars into the rain forest, the blast sending approaching soldiers scattering.

He reloads. Fires again, flinching away from the rocket exhaust. His expression is grim, his movements methodical.

He pivots again. Fires.

Rounds start hitting around him. He holds position.

Reloads.

Fires.

Beyond the trees, off the river road, the troop trucks are parked. Nearby is a REFUELING TRUCK for the helicopters. Rambo's rocket makes a direct hit.

A FIREBALL BLASTS UP AND OUT, seeming to fill the jungle.

INT. HUEY ONE

Palyushin sees the smoke rising from the carnage ahead as he returns with the minigun reloaded.

He motions the pilot to hover over the partially submerged wreckage of the other Huey.

EXT. SWAMP

WHIP PANNING with Rambo as he sprints along the horizontal trunk of a fallen tree.

He vaults off the end.

Catches a skid of the hovering Huey with one hand.

Palyushin's door gunner swings his sling-mounted "free 60" around to bear. Too late.

Rambo's hand shoots up, catches him, pulls him out.

INT. HUEY

The pilot feels the weight shift and looks back, seeing Rambo on the skid. He "pulls pitch" hard.

The Huey climbs, arcing radically.

EXT. HUEY

Rambo slips, dangles.

He crashes through the upper branches of a tree as the Huey climbs, banking in a tight arc.

The rain forest rolls beneath his dangling legs.

He heaves himself up.

INT. HUEY

Palyushin lurches out of his seat.

He spins in time to see a filthy, bloody and very intense-looking Rambo clambering in the gun door.

He rushes Rambo with a kick but Rambo ducks and swings the M-60 door gun on its mount, blocking the Russian.

The two lock eyes and square off, crouching in the low compartment.

The pilot turns around and gapes in amazement, allowing the craft to sideslip.

Palyushin lunges as the Huey pitches wildly.

Rambo blocks in a sweeping SHAO-LIN CHUN ROUNDHOUSE, ending in a fierce hammer punch to Palyushin's face.

They trade blows and blocks furiously, finally grappling like wrestlers.

They crash together into the wall by the minigun AMMO CANISTER. The Huey yaws and recovers. Open space roars outside as they strain near the doors, trying desperately to maintain footing on the pitching floor.

Palyushin goes half out the door but clings tenaciously, surging back inside.

He hammers into Rambo, slamming him mercilessly back.

A vicious kick drops Rambo. The Black Beret grabs his

hair and HURLS HIM TWO-HANDED TOWARD THE DOOR.

Rambo desperately catches the handles of the door gun, stopping his plunge into space. His weight swings the gun around in its sling, pointing it into the ship.

Completely outside the helicopter, Rambo hangs from the handle with one hand. Pulls the bolt with the other.

And drills a long burst into Palyushin at point blank range, blasting him out the far door in an explosive spray of blood.

The pilot turns, terrified, as Rambo advances on him. Rambo eases up beside him, slipping his hand onto the COLLECTIVE STICK.

Reaching across he opens the pilot's door. And FLINGS HIM OUT!

EXT. MARSH

A figure tumbles from the low-flying Huey and splashes into the estuary. The Huey dips and bucks, then rights itself and flies off as the pilot surfaces, gasping.

CUT TO:

INT. MOTC - THAILAND

Kirkhill looks like he hasn't slept in days as he stirs his ten thousandth cup of machine coffee.

KIRKHILL

Well, have they got him yet?

The tech rereads the COMINT transcript.

TECH

Um... actually, no. It looks like he shot down one of their gunships...

KIRKHILL

Christ almighty.

TECH

... and then he, uh... took the other one.

KIRKHILL
(exploding)
What?

TECH
He... took it.

Kirkhill sinks slowly into a chair.

EXT. PRISON CAMP - VIETNAM - AFTERNOON

Sgt. Tay is sitting on the steps of the guard barracks,
looking a bit like a lost soul.
The sound of a rotor gets louder.

A shadow falls upon him. He looks up squinting.

A shape, an outline... in the glare of the sun.
Tay has a moment of apprehension.
Then...

EXT. RAMBO'S HUEY

Rambo unleashes the minigun. The left guard tower
VANISHES IN A CLOUD OF FALLING SPLINTERS as thunder rolls
across the valley.

The Huey pivots nimbly. The minigun roars again.
An orange lightning bolt vaporizes the right tower.

VARIOUS ANGLES IN CAMP

as the thunder fades.

Tay starts to run.
The prisoners dive for cover.

Three off-duty guards in the guards barracks go for their
rifles.
They don't make it.

FROM RAMBO'S POV

The guards barracks seems to disintegrate as the minigun
sweeps across it... a SHOCK WAVE OF DESTRUCTION behind
which only flying kindling remains.

He pivots a last time and annihilates the sentry post with
a one-second burst. Three guards have managed to take

cover behind a truck by the main gate. They begin firing.

LOW ANGLE ON THE HUEY, a roaring silhouette in the metallic mist. The minigun speaks.

The truck is ripped open like aluminum foil, shrapnel flying. The guards CEASE TO EXIST.

A spray of red mist and tattered scraps of uniforms settles to the ground.

It is all over in seconds.

The Huey settles to earth in the center of the compound. Tay, crouching, squints against the rotor blast. Wild-eyed, Capt. Vinh steps from his partially collapsed office and raises his side-arm pistol.

Tay snatches it from him with a terrified cry and an expression which says: ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR FUCKING MIND?

The Sgt. flings the pistol away and turns toward the Huey.

Out of the boiling, blasting dust and smoke a FIGURE EMERGES.

To Tay, Rambo is Death incarnate.

He is encrusted with dried mud, dried blood, streaked with rivulets of sweat. His eyes burn.

Rambo has detached the door gun from its sling and, with the feed belt over one shoulder, carries it like a rifle.

He motions with the muzzle. Tay and Vinh flop forward, face to the earth, hands laced behind their heads.

Rambo moves past them, eyeing the wreckage of the camp warily.

INT. ISOLATION CELL

Darkness.

The door is kicked open and Rambo is there, silhouetted.

Brewer is a sorry mess, but alive. He raises his head, blinking.

BREWER

Gawd, you look awful.

RAMBO

You comin'?

BREWER

(trying to rise)

Hold your pantyhose. Here, gimme a hand.

Rambo helps Brewer, who is nearly crippled with pain, to his feet, and supports him as they exit.

EXT. CAMP COURTYARD

The seven prisoners are helping one another into the copter as Rambo and Brewer hobble up.

RAMBO

Can you handle the door gun?

BREWER

Duck soup.

Tay and Vinh are still face-down and De Fravio covers them with an AK-47, found in the rubble.

Smoke swirls in the idling rotor wash as the barracks begins to burn.

DE FRAVIO

Am I dreaming this? This is not real, right?

(to guards)

I oughta grease you pricks, but I've known you too long.

RAMBO

Let's go, De Fravio. Move it!

When De Fravio is aboard, crammed in with the others in the main bay, Rambo remounts the M-60 and jumps into the pilot's seat.

He brings up the RPMs.

The TURBINE WHINE INCREASES.

Brewer, crouched behind Rambo, yells forward.

BREWER

We got company. You better pull
some pitch, buddy.

Behind them, diving out of the sun's glare, is Podovsk's
massive assault helicopter.

Rambo pops the Huey off the ground and runs hard at the
treeline.

The MIL MI-24 NOSEGUN begins firing and the ground erupts
behind the Huey, fountains of earth chasing it as it
climbs out.

At full climb the laden Huey barely clears the trees and
Rambo immediately banks tight to get out of the nosegun's
field of fire.

The Soviet chopper tightens its arc, but swings wide, and
Rambo spirals back.

Brewer swings the door gun and gets off a long burst as
the ground reels dizzyingly below and the horizon tilts.

RAMBO

(shouting)

Brewer! You know what that thing's
packing?

BREWER

It's a Soviet MIL MI-24. Probably
has 12.7mm nose cannon, heat-seeking
rockets and wire guided missiles,
plus...

RAMBO

Forget it.

Rambo noses the Huey down, building speed. Tail high, it
shoots across the treetops, its NOSE RADIO ANTENNA ripping
through the uppermost foliage.

THE SOVIET COPTER

rolls on its side in a tight turn, despite its bulk.

Twice the size and power of the Huey, and faster at the
top end, the high-performance assault ship is a formidable
opponent. But Rambo pits skill against technology, using
the agility of his craft as his primary strategy.

ANGLE BACK

past the dodging Huey as the Soviet ship falls in behind, steadily gaining.

PAST BREWER

who flinches as trees rush by seemingly inches away at 120 MPH. The POWs are flung against the bulkheads as the Huey plummets and swerves.

DE FRAVIO

I think I'm gonna be sick.

INT. SOVIET COPTER - COCKPIT AND WEAPONS BAY

The pilot turns to Podovsk.

PILOT

(Russian/subtitled)

They're approaching the border.
Should we notify the Laotian Air
Force?

PODOVSK

(driven)

No. We'll take them ourselves.

Inside the COMPUTERIZED WEAPONS BAY the GUNNER hunches over his TRACKING SCREEN. Rambo's Huey is a shimmering blob weaving behind a targeting reticle.

The RANGING RADAR emits a rhythmic PINGING which INCREASES in frequency.

EXT. SOVIET COPTER

TWO AIR-TO-AIR ROCKETS flash from support pylons on the stub wings and roar toward the Huey two hundred meters ahead.

ANGLE ON HUEY

as the rockets skim past, missing only barely, to explode in the jungle.

OVER RAMBO'S SHOULDER

through the front canopy, as the Huey flies through the rising fireballs.

Rambo sees what he needs, a narrow river, a tributary of the Ca, slicing through the rain forest.

The Soviet juggernaut is gaining as Rambo dives his gunship "onto the deck," tearing down through an opening in the trees and skimming over the surface of the river. The Soviet craft can't follow.

The enormous trees form a canyon, the walls of which overhang the river. Rambo is actually zig-zagging beneath the jungle canopy in places. They flash in and out of dense shadows.

The landing skids throw up spurts of muddy water as the Huey banks. Two more rockets arrow toward them. One explodes in a tree above. The other flashes past. Hits the river ahead. They fly through a wall of spray.

Brewer gives his REBEL YELL.

BREWER

Hell. This is just like fucking
Star Wars, man!

DE FRAVIO

(puzzled)
Star Wars?

Brewer grins, realizing. Slaps him on the shoulder.

BREWER

You're gonna love it.

RAMBO

(shouting)
How much we got left in that
minigun?

Brewer opens the enormous ammunition canister.

BREWER

Pretty low. Couple of seconds
worth.

Rambo is plugged into some insane second sight, knowing the curves before they curve. He flies with absolute concentration.

INT. SOVIET COCKPIT

The pilot is sweating, trying to stay on Rambo's Huey.

PILOT

We're in Laos, Sir.

PODOVSK

I know that!

(to gunner)

Fire all your rockets. Take him
down!

INT./ EXT. HUEY

As the forest explodes around them. The chopper is buffeted. The forward canopy is shattered by shrapnel. Rambo is hit in the shoulder and chest. His left arm broken above the elbow. One of the prisoners is moaning, holding his bloody forehead.

Rambo pulls up on the collective, sending blinding pain through his arm. The Huey shoots up out of the jungle, spinning as it pops up. It slips sideways through the air, seemingly going out of control. Then it arcs back, ROARING RIGHT AT THE CAMERA.

INT. SOVIET COCKPIT

Podovsk watches Rambo's turn, realizing he has stood to fight.

PODOVSK

(Russian/subtitled)

We've got him.

The pilot stares apprehensively as the Huey comes at them.

In the weapons bay, the tone of the ranging-radar rises to a shriek. The gunner tenses to fire.

EXT. HUEY

Rambo throws the gunship sideways and climbs in one motion... bringing the minigun to bear.

He is a samurai and the Huey his sword.

TIGHT ON RAMBO

facing the Soviet leviathan, clear-eyed, in the Void Way,
as they say.
It will be a battle of one stroke. He waits. Feeling his
breathing. Feeling the ship like an extension of himself.

ANGLE

The minigun BLAST FORTH ITS STREAM OF FIRE.

ON RAMBO

watching. A shadow passes over him.

WIDE

as the Soviet ship thunders over them and flies on.

ANGLE

The barrels of the minigun continue to rotate, dry-
firing... empty. Clicking like an air-ratchet.

ANGLE ON SOVIET COPTER

showing the riddled, glassless cockpit... the slumped
bodies.

WIDE

as the MIL MI-24 slowly brodies sideways and drops,
gracefully, into the rain forest.

It shears through trees, breaking up, and EXPLODES
GLORIOUSLY.

INT. HUEY

Rambo is tensed, like a thousand volts are flowing through
him. Slowly, he relaxes. He knows they have made it.

BREWER

(exultant)

The thrill of victory, the agony of
defeat!

Rambo banks the Huey, ascending toward the mountain pass
and, beyond, Thailand.

CUT TO:

EXT. STAGING AREA - THAILAND - DAY

Lifer lounges in the gun door of the "Blackhawk" as the ship sits at ready, turbine idling.

TRAUTMAN (O.S.)

Getting ready to go somewhere?

Lifer turns to see Trautman step around the fuselage of the chopper.

LIFER

Hey, Colonel. You're not cleared to be on this base anymore.

CLOSE ON TRAUTMAN

TRAUTMAN

(quietly)

I know.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAOS - NEAR MEKONG RIVER - DUSK

D-PLUS 60 HRS

The battered Huey lumbers and dips over the terrain, barely in control.

INT./ EXT. HUEY

Rambo seems drained of color, sunken into the seat, flying on nerve.

Several of the prisoners are asleep. The wounded man's forehead has been bandaged. Brewer is holding court.

BREWER

... and there's this guy with a black helmet and cape, right, and he's got this sword... except it's not a sword, it's light...

DE FRAVIO

There's the Mekong.

They look forward as a broad river appears beyond a ridge-
line less than a kilometer ahead. The Thai border. A
cheer goes up. A home run.

ON RAMBO

seeing something as they approach the river.

EXT. MEKONG - TREELINE

The BLACK SIKORSKY rises slowly above the trees directly
ahead.

INT. HUEY

C.U. RAMBO, he blinks, trying to clear his vision which
has become light and shimmery.

The hovering ship looks like the Archangel of Death.
It seems like a vision. He flies straight toward it.

INT. MOTC

Kirkhill has cleared the operations center. He is alone.

KIRKHILL

(to mike)

When the unidentified helicopter has
crossed the river into Thailand,
shoot it down with air-to-air
rockets. Then proceed to the crash
site and fire your remaining rockets
into the wreckage. Is this
understood, Zen Hammer?

DOYLE (V.O.)

(filtered)

Ah, Sir... I'm experiencing a little
hearing problem.

KIRKHILL

What are you talking about? Why?

DOYLE (V.O.)

(filtered)

Well, uh... I've got something in my
ear.

INT./ EXT. SIKORSKY

What Doyle has in his ear is the muzzle of Colonel Trautman's M-16.

Behind them on the deck of the gun bay Lifer is out cold. A tarpaulin among a stack of ammo cases where Trautman had been hidden is thrown back. Doyle knows better than to mess with him.

Trautman switches off the radio as Kirkhill shouts incoherently.

INT./ EXT. HUEY

As he approaches the black Sikorsky Rambo sees Trautman with a rifle to Doyle's head. He nods as they pass.

INT./ EXT. SIKORSKY

Rambo's Huey passes by them, crossing into Thailand.

TRAUTMAN

Escort them on in.

EXT. MOTC

Rambo's Huey, followed by the Sikorsky, descends toward the landing field. As the techs and other camp personnel stand watching, Kirkhill raises a pair of powerful field glasses.

KIRKHILL'S POV - TELEPHOTO

The image of the Huey seems to waver insubstantially through the long lens. It looks like a death ship, the Flying Dutchman with a crew of corpses and a demon at the helm, coming in out of the dusk sky.

He slowly lowers the glasses. Face ashen, Kirkhill backs into the command center and closes the door.

The Huey sheers sideways across the staging area. Its skids clip the top of the MOTC, shearing off communications gear. It hits the ground. Bounces.

Slews around, scraping hideously.

And stops.

The Sikorsky settles behind it.

The two choppers whine-down. Standing beside the cockpit, Trautman gets on the Sikorsky's loudspeaker.

TRAUTMAN

All base personnel. Prepare medical facilities to receive American POWs.

A cheer is raised among the ground contingent as they surge forward.

ON RAMBO

sliding painfully out of the flight seat. Brewer gawks at the pool of blood collected in the hollow of Rambo's seat.

Rambo goes to the gun door. Takes De Fravio's AK-47.

DOLLYING WITH RAMBO as he limps toward the MOTC with relentless determination. The well-wishing ground personnel fall back, letting him pass.

Trautman, B.G., sees him and strides forward to intercept.

OVER RAMBO'S SHOULDER

DOLLYING, as he approaches the command center. Kirkhill's aide, in dark glasses, moves forward to restrain him.

Rambo motions him aside with the AK. Goes to the door. It is locked.

INT. MOTC

The lock is shattered by a LONG BLAST from Rambo's AK. The door is kicked open. Rambo stands silhouetted.

He looks like what we never saw in "The Monkey's Paw." He moves into the humming command center, among the mission control electronics, reeking of the jungle, blood and death.

LOW ANGLE

as Rambo walks to Kirkhill, looming. Stopping.

Kirkhill quails as Rambo grasps him by the collar and flings him backward into a chair.
He raises the AK. Muzzle to Kirkhill's forehead.

RAMBO

Mission accomplished.

Pulls the trigger.
The weapon CLICKS, EMPTY.

HOLD ON KIRKHILL, trembling.

EXT. MOTC

Rambo steps unsteadily out into the waning light.
He takes a deep, slow breath. Starts to walk. He salutes as he passes Trautman but says nothing.

In the B.G. they are carrying the POWs in stretchers or pushing them in wheelchairs toward the MEDICAL TRAILER. Rambo watches Brewer posing with his arms around Jensen and another POW for the grunt we saw earlier. His pocket Instamatic is clicking away.

BREWER

(expansively)

Cover of Time Magazine, baby!

Rambo walks away... alone.

DE FRAVIO (O.S.)

Hey, Rambo!

Rambo turns. De Fravio, propped up on one elbow on his stretcher as he is carried past, gives him a broad, appreciative grin.

DE FRAVIO

You did good, buddy. Real good!

Rambo stands blinking for a second. He raises his hand in a big "thumbs up" and allows himself to grin.

CUT TO BLACK

END CREDITS

