

**"DEVIL DOGS:
THE BATTLE OF BELLEAU WOOD"**

By

Josh Becker

"This is based on a true story."

FADE IN:

STOCK SHOTS: Black and white stock newsreel shots of World War One: the trenches; Germans in spiked helmets; British soldiers wearing puttees and saucer-shaped steel helmets; French soldiers in their unique, football-style helmets; old military vehicles; wagons pulled by horses; nurses in floor-length dresses and bonnets. A VOICE OVER NARRATOR speaks:

V.O. NARRATOR

World War One; the Great War; the War to End All Wars. In 1917, after three years of brutal fighting, the war has ground to a complete, maddening halt. For three years the battle-lines along the western front have not moved more than a few hundred yards in either direction.

STOCK SHOTS: The Russian Revolution; a group shot of Czar Nicholas 2nd, Alexandra, and the rest of the family (with the sound of a firing squad's rifle reports); Trotsky; hammers and sickles; trains painted with revolutionary murals; statues of the Czar crashing down, etc.

V.O. NARRATOR

With the Russian Revolution and the fall of the Czar in May of 1917, Russia surrenders to Germany. The Germans now unexpectedly find themselves with thirty-four experienced divisions to be moved to the western front. For the first time in the entire war the Germans will outnumber the battle-weary British and French.

STOCK SHOTS: American flags fly; parades of American soldiers marching down streets; troops ships sailing; soldiers at the ship's rails.

V.O. NARRATOR

In April of 1917 the Americans declare war on Germany and soon begin shipping troops to France. The French want to break up the American troops to fill in the holes in their own battle-lines. The American military commander, General John “Blackjack” Pershing, will not allow this. By the end of May, 1918, there have been American troops sitting and waiting in France for over six months . . .

DISSOLVE:

EXT. AMERICAN COMPOUND/ CHAUMONT, FRANCE – DAY

An American flag snaps in the breeze over row upon row of temporary-looking, wooden barracks with black, tar-paper roofs, reposing on green grassy hills.

A TITLE READS: “**CHAUMONT, FRANCE**”

EXT. TRAINING GROUND – DAY

American troops are put through short-order drills by loud-mouth drill sergeants. Marines stick straw-filled dummies with bayonets, crawl through the mud, climb wooden walls with full packs, practice throwing hand grenades, etc.

DISSOLVE:

INT. BARRACKS – NIGHT

The barracks is filled with sleeping Marines on cots lined up along both sides of the room. We move along the lines of sleeping Marines until we come around a wall into the Sergeant’s quarters, where we find GUNNERY SGT. DAN DALY, a 44-year old, thick-necked Marine from Brooklyn, New York, lying on his cot, seemingly asleep. There are piles of hardcover books stacked all around. Sgt. Daly turns from lying on his back to his right side, then suddenly flips over to his left side, then returns to his back—he’s clearly having difficulty getting to sleep. He returns to his side and slowly his breathing evens out, the lines and creases in his face ease up and he begins to fall asleep. Just as he seems to be asleep, Daly bolts awake startled.

DALY
(whispering)
Jesus, shit!

Daly shakes his head, rubs his weary eyes and sits up. He lights a cigarette and a candle, takes a book from one of the piles, puts on reading glasses, sighs deeply and begins to read.

DISSOLVE:

STOCK SHOTS: Germans soldiers in their undershirts yank the cords which fire huge artillery pieces, while other soldiers load in more and more big shells.

V.O. NARRATOR

The Germans now lay down the largest artillery barrage in history and for eighteen hours completely decimate a 30-mile stretch of the line. The French soldiers flee, throwing off their uniforms and getting drunk on stolen wine.

EXT. FRENCH COUNTRYSIDE – DUSK

It's a lovely late spring sunset casting warm rays over the rolling French countryside. A paved road runs into the distance. The road is jammed with REFUGEES: country folk fleeing their homes, pushing carts, carrying bundles, screaming babies. Included among the refugees are ragged, weary, beaten FRENCH SOLDIERS: some still have helmets, some still have weapons, most are drunk, holding wine bottles. A DRUNK FRENCH SOLDIER staggers past a WOMAN WITH A BABY.

WOMAN WITH BABY

(disgusted)

Lache!

A SUBTITLE READS: "Coward!"

The drunk soldier flicks the bottom of his bearded chin with his fingers.

In the distance gunshots can be heard. Everyone turns around, noting the sound, then quickens their pace.

An automobile stalls, blocking the road. Horse drawn carts and the long line of people all come to a halt. The DRIVER of the car looks at his WIFE and little DAUGHTER beside him, then gets out and cranks the starter. It won't catch. The mob surrounding the car grabs hold of the vehicle and begins to rock it. The wife and daughter are thrown around until the driver gets them out of the car just as it is flipped off the road. The mass of refugees and defeated soldiers swarm past like ants.

A German bi-plane buzzes over from the east. It begins firing it's machine guns and

dropping bombs. The refugees dash to either side of the road, throwing themselves to the ground.

A moment later come trucks filled with German soldiers, followed by a seemingly endless double line of marching soldiers.

The refugees and the French soldiers all flee at top speed: wagons turn over, bundles are dropped, people fall down.

V.O. NARRATOR

The German troops move through the hole in the line and make *seventy miles* toward Paris, the biggest movement of the entire war. The Germans are now within forty miles of Paris and have the advantage for the first time since the surprise of their initial attack. They intend to not only make the most of it, they now intend to win the war.

STOCK SHOTS: Marching German troops, horse-drawn wagons pulling machine guns and cannons, lines of trucks.

V.O. NARRATOR

And meanwhile, the Americans continue to wait . . .

DISSOLVE:

INT. BARRACKS – EVENING

A TITLE READS: “**6th MARINES, COMPANY ‘C’ – MAY 29th, 1918.**”

This is the same barracks and the same group of Marines we saw asleep. CPL. MEYERS, a big, good-looking kid of twenty-three from Detroit; PFC. ARGAUT, tall, dark-haired, wiry young man of twenty from Louisiana, as well as PVT. FRENCH, a big, muscular, thirty year old Texan, and PVT. BONNER, a short, goofy-looking, nineteen year old kid are all seated at a table in their undershirts ready to play some cards. Many guys of the 6th are getting cleaned up, preparing to go into town. Pvt. French fancily shuffles the cards.

FRENCH

Come on, fellers, I feel lucky t'night. Ante up.

They ante up.

MEYERS

Deal 'em before ya wear all the paint off 'em.

BONNER

(to Meyers)

Lemme see that pitcher of your sister again,
will ya, Sam?

Meyers takes out a black & white photograph of his pretty, dark-haired sister and hands it to Bonner.

MEYERS

Don't go losin' your heart to a picture of
my sister, Paul. First of all she's older'n
you, second, you live in Tennessee and
we live in Michigan, and third, you've never
met.

BONNER

Details. How could she not like me?

MEYERS

Easy. None of the rest of us do.

FRENCH

Come on! Let's play the Goddamn cards
already!

MEYERS

Hey, Zachio? What're you gettin' all spiffed
up for?

PVT. PROVET ZACHIO, a slick, handsome, dark-haired, devilish kid of nineteen.

ZACHIO

I'll let ya know if it turns out. I hate to talk about
things up front and jinx 'em.

MEYERS

Good luck.

ZACHIO

Thanks.

MEYERS

How 'bout you, Hebel? Where're you goin'?

Everyone turns and looks at PVT. FRANK HEBEL who is the downbeat, secretive guy nobody can figure out. He is twenty-one. Hebel looks up suspiciously.

HEBEL

None of your business.

Everybody chuckles.

ARGAUT

Hebel, you're a peach.

MEYERS

What about you, Matthews?

PVT. SAMUEL MATTHEWS, is movie-star handsome. He's twenty-five.

MATTHEWS

(smiles)

If you ain't askin' officially, corporal, then I say none of your damn business, too. Respectfully, of course.

MEYERS

Just askin'. Don't get sore.

All the dressed-up Marines leave the barracks in a group.

FRENCH

Stop askin' and play the Goddamn cards!

MEYERS

You just dyin' to lose your money tonight? I bet a franc.

FRENCH

I raise you two!

Argaut, and Bonner all look at each other, then turn their cards over.

ARGAUT

Fold.

BONNER

Fold.

They all sit and look at each other for a long second, then they all shrug.

MEYERS

Aw, the hell with it, let's go get a beer.

ARGAUT & BONNER

Sure.

French is taken aback.

FRENCH

Hey! I thought we was playin' cards?

MEYERS

Well, I guess you thought wrong.

ARGAUT

Should we ask Gunny?

MEYERS

Sure. Why not?

Argaut points his thumb at the wall and raises his shoulders.

ARGAUT

He's actin' kind of funny lately, y'know?

MEYERS

Whyat'dya mean?

ARGAUT

Well, you know, he's always readin' all those books and talkin' to himself, and, I don't know, he's got an odd look on his face a lot, too. Honestly, I don't think he sleeps at all anymore.

MEYERS

Hmmm . . .

Meyers obviously knows all of this. He scratches his chin and looks at the wall.

INT. DALY'S QUARTERS – EVENING

Smoke hangs in the air. Daly sits on his cot in his skivvies in a pool of smoky light reading a book ("The Interpretation of Dreams" by Sigmund Freud), wearing half-glasses and smoking a cigar. There is a knock on his door.

DALY
(grunts)
Come on in.

Cpl. Meyers enters the dark, smoky room cautiously.

MEYERS
Hey, Gunny.

DALY
Irv.

MEYERS
What'cha readin'?

DALY
It's a book about dreams. Did you know that you can figure out your state of mind by what your dreams are?

MEYERS
(shakes his head)
No.

Daly picks up the book and waves it around.

DALY
Oh yeah. For instance, if you dream you get to a crossroads, and you turn right, that's good, that's the path of righteousness, but if you go left, that's bad. That's the side of crime and perversion. Y'see?

MEYERS
(nods)
Sure.

DALY

You ever read Nietzsche?

MEYERS

What the hell is that?

DALY

He was a writer, a philosopher. He says that nobody's accountable for anything, morally speaking, that is.

MEYERS

(shakes his head)

Huh. Think of that, would ya. So, you wanna come into town and get a beer?

Daly scratches his chin, looks at his book, then closes it and tosses it aside.

DALY

Sure, a beer sounds good. My eyes are startin' to hurt.

MEYERS

That's cause it's too dark. You need more light if you're gonna read so much.

DALY

Yeah, right. Well, they should never let a Marine sit around this long, anyway. I've never had six months to just sit around and read before. It can really get you to thinking, and brother, that can be a *real* problem.

MEYERS

So let's drink beer.

DALY

Right. Beer. I'm all for it. Let me put on my trousers.

He stands with a groan and starts to get dressed.

EXT. COMPOUND – NIGHT

Privates Zachio, Matthews, Hughes, Arbuckle, Gastovich, Maggione, and Swenson

cross the compound all cleaned up, their hair slicked back, looking dapper in their green wool uniforms and Sam Browne belts. Hebel follows a distance behind. Zachio is whistling *Mademoiselle From Armentieres*.

PVT. CHARLES MAGGIONE, is a big, nineteen year old, Italian kid from the Bronx, asks:

MAGGIONE

Come on, Zachio, where ya goin'?

ZACHIO

(shakes his head)

Uh-uh. Afterward. Maybe.

PVT. ERNEST ARBUCKLE, a thin, pimply-faced, nineteen year old kid, says:

ARBUCKLE

I hope they got a Chaplin pitcher at the 'Y'.
That Charlie tickles me.

He imitates Charlie Chaplin's duck-walk and cane-swinging.

PVT. PETER GASTOVICH, a weasely, slit-eyed, grinning, twenty-two year old, says:

GASTOVICH

I just hope there's some skirts there. And
where the hell do you disappear to, Hughes?

MATTHEWS

Yeah. You got a gal hidden somewheres,
Johnny-boy?

PVT. JOHN HUGHES, the smartest guy in the platoon, with a crooked grin. He's
Twenty-three.

HUGHES

(nods; smiles)

She's a vamp. A Hungarian princess named
Olga. I'd introduce you lunks, but she don't
speak English, and you Joes don't speak-a-da
Hungarian, so, what's the use?

PVT. KNUTE SWENSON, is a big, twenty year old, Swedish kid from St. Paul.

SWENSON
 (grinning)
 Hughes, you're a card.

HUGHES
 That's me. Fifty-one more and I'd be a
 whole deck.

They all chuckle, except Hebel, of course, who lags behind and stares at the ground. They arrive at the main gate.

EXT. THE TOWN OF CHAUMONT – NIGHT

The guys come walking into the quaint French town of Chaumont, with cobblestone streets and gaslights, singing *The Man Who Broke the Bank At Monte Carlo*. Hebel hangs behind, not singing. There is the sound of distant artillery explosions.

MEN
 (singing)
 With a rum-te-tum-te-tum/ And a rum-te-
 tum-te-tum/ I'm the man who broke the
 bank at Monte Carlo . . .

The distant artillery gets quite a bit louder and the guys stop singing. Oh, right, there's a war going on not far from here.

EXT. CHURCH/ YMCA – NIGHT

They arrive at a church with a banner reading, "YMCA – AMERICAN SERVICEMEN WELCOME" with an American flag flying. Soldiers go in and out. Some of our guys head inside, others hang behind. The laggards are: Zachio, Matthews, Hughes, and Hebel. They all look at each other, shrug, and all head off in different directions.

EXT. STREET – NIGHT

Hebel walks down the street a few buildings, makes sure none of the other guys are nearby, then ducks into the alley.

EXT. BAKERY – NIGHT

Hughes walks along an empty street, then steps up in front of a little, closed bakery. Hughes pulls the chain in front of the door ringing the bell. A moment later the old, white-haired baker, M. LAFOLLETTE answers the door holding a candle. He sees Hughes and smiles.

LAFOLLETTE

Ah, *bon soir*, M'sieur Hughes.

HUGHES

Bon soir, M'sieur LaFollette.

The old man waves Hughes in.

LAFOLLETTE

Entrez, s'il vous plait.

Hughes smiles and enters the bakery.

EXT. CHEVAL BLANC CLUB – NIGHT

Zachio arrives at the Cheval Blanc Club, a rollicking nightclub for officers. American officers, many sporting canes and walking sticks (a fad of the time), enter and exit the club talking and laughing. Zachio watches the activity from across the street. He lights a Sweet Caporal cigarette and waits, smoke drifting languidly from his nose.

EXT. SHADY SIDE STREET – NIGHT

Matthews walks along a side street with large, stone houses and pretty, old, overhanging trees. The rich part of town. The whole street is asleep. Matthews strolls casually along, a stick match in his teeth, his hands in his pockets. He glances up and down the street – nobody there – then slips quickly and quietly into the thin alley between two houses.

EXT. THIN ALLEY – NIGHT

Matthews leans against the wall, flicking his nose with the match. Something touches his foot and startles him. It's a cat rubbing against his ankle and purring. Matthews puts his finger to his lips, miming "Shhh" to the cat. Matthews looks up at the house he's leaning against and grins. He bends down behind a garbage pail, pets the cat, then begins unlacing his high boots.

INT. CHURCH/ YMCA – NIGHT

Sitting among ONE HUNDRED AMERICAN SOLDIERS are Arbuckle, Gastovich, Maggione, and Swenson. They drink hot cocoa, smoke cigarettes, eat donuts, and sing songs led by the 'Y' MAN, a jolly, middle-aged fellow at a piano. He leads them in *Is It True What They Say About Dixie?* while doing a cheesy Al Jolson imitation. Everybody sings happily.

'Y' MAN & CO.

(singing)

Now is it true what they say about Dixie?/
Does the sun really shine all the time?/ Do
the sweet magnolia blossom, at everybody's
door?/ Do the folks keep eatin' possum, 'til
they can't eat no more?/ That's me . . .

EXT. BEHIND THE CHURCH/ YMCA – NIGHT

Hebel steps up to the back door of the church/ YMCA. From inside he can hear everybody singing.

'Y' MAN & CO.

(singing; O. S.)

Now is it true what they say about Swanee?/
Is that dream by the stream so sublime?/ Do
they laugh, do they love, like they say in every
song?/ If it's true, that's where I belong . . .

Hebel looks around secretively, then goes in the back door.

INT. CHURCH KITCHEN – NIGHT

Hebel hesitantly enters the kitchen of the YMCA, where several people are busily brewing up large pots of hot chocolate, coffee, and baking plenty of donuts. Standing at one of the large sinks washing cups is MARY McBRIAN, a plain, forty year old woman, wearing a Salvation Army uniform. She sees Hebel and smiles.

MARY

(loud voice)

Well, hello, Frank. Long time no see.

For the very first time we see Hebel smile.

HEBEL

No it hasn't, you saw me yesterday.

Mary flicks soapy water at Hebel's face, hitting him.

MARY

I was joking, Frank. Don't you ever make
jokes?

HEBEL
 (shakes his head)
 No. Uh-uh.

Mary stops washing cups and wipes her hands. Hebel pulls out a pack of Sweet Caporals and offers her a cigarette, which she takes.

MARY
Merci beaucoup.

Hebel lights a match, igniting her cigarette, then his.

HEBEL
 My pleasure, *mademoiselle*.

MARY
 Okay, so now you make a joke. Go on.

HEBEL
 (shakes his head)
 Uh-uh. I never was much of a joker, Mary.

MARY
 No, more the quiet type, right?
 (he nods)
 Not me. I was always the loud one. I was
 captain of the debate team. Senior. Wheaton
 (continued)
 MARY (cont.)
 High. Class of '98 . . .
 (looks at Hebel)
 . . . The century hadn't turned, and you weren't
 born yet, either. Oh, dear . . .

They smoke for a moment in silence, although there's actually a lot of sound: dishes clattering, soldiers singing, etc. Through the din and tumult, Mary McBrian and Frank Hebel steal an occasional glance at each other – God knows why, but they like each other.

INT. CHURCH/ YMCA – NIGHT

The 'Y' Man with the help of several soldiers sets up a crank projector while other soldiers set up the screen. Arbuckle is delighted, turning to Gastovich, Maggione, and Swenson, he says:

ARBUCKLE

Shore hope it's—

GASTOVICH

—Charlie Chaplin, yeah, yeah. We know. He tickles your funny-bone.

ARBUCKLE

He does. You got a problem with that, Gastovich?

GASTOVICH

Maybe I do.

SWENSON

(interjecting)

You two can park that bull outside.

GASTOVICH

Or what?

Gastovich sticks his face into Swenson's face. Maggione shakes his weary head.

MAGGIONE

Knock it off, the both of youse, why don'tcha.

Soldiers turn down the gas jets, the 'Y' Man cranks the projector and the flickers begin. On the screen we see that is in fact a Charlie Chaplin film – *The Immigrant* (1917). Arbuckle is delighted.

ARBUCKLE

It is Charlie! Ha! I was right!

Arbuckle pushes Gastovich.

GASTOVICH

Oh, shut up already.

On the screen: The deck of an ocean liner rolls back and forth, all the immigrants aboard looking ill. We see Charlie's rear-end, with cane in hand, hanging over the ship's rail, obviously up-chucking. A MARINE hollers out:

MARINE

That's the way it was!

Charlie Chaplin comes up over the rail holding a fish on a line. It's entirely unexpected

and everyone laughs, including the begrudging Gastovich.

EXT. BACKYARD/ NICE HOUSE – NIGHT

Matthews is standing in the backyard of a nice, stone house with his boots unlaced. He picks up a wooden rake, reaches up with it and shakes the limb of a thin tree which goes up past a second story window – tap, tap, tap – the limb hits the window. A moment later the window is opened by an extremely cute, dark-haired, seventeen year old girl named NATALIE. She indicates that Matthews should be even quieter upon entering the house. Matthews smiles, takes off his boots, leaves them by the backdoor and goes in the house. In a moment we see through the window Matthews enter Natalie's room. They embrace, kissing hungrily.

EXT. BAKERY – NIGHT

Above the bakery a light burns in the upper window.

INT. APARTMENT ABOVE THE BAKERY – NIGHT

M. LaFollette, the baker, smokes a pipe and stares down at a chess board. Hughes sits across from him, also smoking a pipe (somewhat awkwardly), also staring down at the board. They both have cups of tea and plates of cake. Hughes scarfs a big piece of cake now and then, always studying the board. Finally, Hughes makes a move. Mr. LaFollette slaps his head with his palm, looking distressed. Hughes grins, gobbling another piece of cake.

EXT. BACKYARD/ NICE HOUSE – NIGHT

Matthews' unlaced boots sit by the back door. The cat comes along, spots the boots and begins to play with the long laces.

INT. CHURCH KITCHEN/ YMCA – NIGHT

There are a pile of eight Sweet Caporal butts on the floor. Coffee cups are being pushed through a window and are building up, unwashed. Mary McBrian and Frank Hebel sit on a bench ignoring the world, smoking cigarettes, drinking cups of cocoa, and talking. They both look at their smoked-down cigarettes, then drop them to the floor.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. LE CHAT NOIR CLUB – NIGHT

Le Chat Noir is the enlisted man's club and sports a sign with a black cat. American service men go in and out. Daly, Meyers, French, Bonner and Argaut step up and enter

the club.

INT. LE CHAT NOIR CLUB – NIGHT

The club is jammed with soldiers, noise and smoke. The door swings open and in strides Daly and his Marines. Daly has his chest out, the cigar clamped in his teeth. Daly and his men march through the crowd, up to the bar and order beers.

Sitting at a table off to one side is an thin, wiry Army CORPORAL and a big, burly TOP KICK (which is a Top Sgt.). The Corporal taps the Top Kick on the arm and points at Daly.

CORPORAL

That's him, Top. Gunnery Sgt. "Fighting Dan" Daly. Two Medals of Honor. That's as tough as they make 'em in the Marine Corps.

The Top Kick furrows his brow.

TOP KICK

Why, he ain't nothin' but an old midget. He don't look too tough to me.

CORPORAL

(shrugs)

Yeah, well . . . Two medals of Honor, Top.

The Top Kick finishes his beer.

TOP KICK

I hear they give out Medals of Honor in the Marine Corps for doin' a good job scrubbin' the latrines.

The Top Kick stands up and he's huge: 6' 4", 250 pounds, a monster.

Daly and his guys are happily drinking their beers when the Top Kick and the Corporal step up. The enormous Top Kick pokes Daly in the chest with his index finger.

TOP KICK

So you're Gunnery Sgt. "Fighting Dan" Daly?

DALY

Have we met?

TOP KICK

No, but we're about to. I hear you got *two* Medals of Honor, zat true?

DALY

I cannot tell a lie, it is true.

Everybody in the vicinity begins to pay attention.

TOP KICK

Well, you don't look so tough to me.

Daly looks up at the guy.

DALY

Yeah, but I bet Grizzly bears don't look too tough to you, neither.

TOP KICK

Come on, let's fight.

DALY

(shakes his head)

No.

The Top Kick pokes Daly in the chest even harder.

TOP KICK

I said, let's fight!

DALY

And I said no.

TOP KICK

Why not?

DALY

'Cause I'm 44 years old, I been in the Marine Corps for nearly 20 years, and if I fought every tough guy that challenged me in a bar, I'd never get outta the brig.

TOP KICK

Well, you'll just have to chance it, I guess.

DALY

No, I won't.

TOP KICK

Yes, you will.

Daly's right eye and eyebrow are visibly twitching.

DALY

No, I won't! No way, no how. Not today, not tomorrow, not the next day. Got it?

TOP KICK

No I don't. I say we're fightin'!

DALY

Well, you're wrong. Now just take a few breaths and calm down.

TOP KICK

(angry)

I don't wanna calm down.

DALY

Sure you do.

The Top Kick simply can't believe it.

TOP KICK

Are you seriously tryin' to tell me that I can't get "*Fighting Dan*" Daly to fight?

DALY

Precisely.

TOP KICK

Well, what the hell happened?

DALY

After 44 years and about 4000 stupid fights, I finally got smart. Y'see, I won't let *you* turn me on and off like a light bulb, is what happened.

I'm the one that's in control of my actions and my emotions, not you.

The Top Kick is flabbergasted.

TOP KICK
So, you're *really* not gonna fight?

DALY
Really and truly.

Everyone chuckles and takes a drink; the tension clears.

TOP KICK
Well, now what'll we do?

DALY
Have a beer.

The Top Kick gets a beer and takes a drink.

TOP KICK
So, how'd you win those two Medals of Honor, anyway?

Daly wipes off his beer mustache, looks around and sees that quite a few people are listening.

DALY
It's not that interesting.

TOP KICK
Come on.

Daly looks around, then sums up quickly.

DALY
The first one was in China in 1900 during the Boxer Rebellion. Second was in Haiti a couple of years ago.

Daly shrugs, takes a drink.

TOP KICK
So what happened?

DALY
 (waves his hand)
 You don't wanna hear.

The Top Kick looks around and everyone in the vicinity is paying attention.

TOP KICK
 Yeah we do.

DALY
 Naw.

TOP KICK
 Unless you still wanna fight?

DALY
 OK, all right. You're probably all too young to remember, but in 1900, in China all the peasants went crazy and started killin' all the foreigners, startin' with the Christian missionaries. The foreign embassies in Peking are in a walled-off compound. When the peasants attacked, and there were thousands of 'em, we shut the gates and defended the compound for 55 days. There were thirty-three other Marines and sailors that got Medals of Honor for that action.

Cpl. Meyers speaks up.

MEYERS
 Yeah, Gunny, but why did *you* get *yours*?
 I've been meaning to ask for months.

Daly looks around and everybody around is listening. He takes a slow drink of beer.

DALY
 Well, there were a couple hundred Marines, from all over the world, mind you, Japanese, French, British, German, all kinds. And there were all these ambassadors from all over the world, and their wives and kids, too. So the Chinese peasants set fire to the wall of the compound. While the other fellas were putting out the fire and fixing it, I worked myself into a

good defensive position and kept the fellas safe while they worked.

MEYERS

How long did you hold that position?

DALY

(thinks)

About 24 hours, I suppose.

MEYERS

And what were you doing for that 24 hours?

DALY

I was shootin' every slope-head that got near that wall, that's what I was doin'.

TOP KICK

How many of these Chinese you figure you shot?

DALY

(shrugs)

A lot.

TOP KICK

What's that mean?

DALY

It means a lot, that's what it means.

The Top Kick and Meyers look at each other.

MEYERS

Twenty?

Daly shrugs and drinks his beer.

TOP KICK

Forty?

(Daly shrugs again)

Fifty?

DALY

Look, it doesn't really matter, does it?

TOP KICK

Sixty?

DALY

Well, actually, it was about 120, OK? But it had to be done. Now let's just drop it 'cause I don't like thinkin' about it.

Everybody looks at each other in amazement. Meyers speaks for everyone.

MEYERS

You shot 120 Chinese peasants in 24 hours? That's five an hour. Almost one every ten minutes—

TOP KICK

—For 24 hours.

Daly looks like he's getting angry, his eye is twitching. He takes several deep breaths and rubs his eyebrows.

DALY

Look, someone had to do it, otherwise they'd of killed every last one of us, women and children included. They'd already killed every Christian missionary in the country, which included a lot of women and kids.

MEYERS

So how'd you get the second one?

DALY

Come on, will ya? Enough already.

MEYERS

Gunny, you never talk about any of this stuff. Now's your chance to finally tell it and be done with it.

Daly looks around at the eager expectant faces, among them a pretty woman of about 35 sitting by herself at the bar, clearly listening. She smiles at Daly. Maybe there is a good reason to tell the story now.

DALY

We're down in Haiti fighting the Banana Wars to keep the United Fruit Company safe from rebels. So me and 20 of my guys are on a patrol in the jungle, when suddenly we're bein' chased by hundreds of these native rebels all firin' weapons at us. While we're crossing a river the Lewis gun falls in and it sinks to the bottom. Well, if we were gonna make it through the night surrounded by hundreds of natives, I figured we might have some use for that machine gun.

TOP KICK

Yeah? So?

DALY

So, I got my men to a decent defensive position, and as soon as it got dark I sneaked out and got the Lewis gun back.

Daly shrugs; simple.

TOP KICK

How?

DALY

How what?

TOP KICK

How'd you get a Lewis gun from the bottom of a river.

DALY

I dove in and got it.

TOP KICK

But a Lewis gun weighs a ton.

DALY

You're tellin' me.

TOP KICK

And it still worked?

DALY

Sure. The ammo didn't go in. Lewis gun's a good weapon, dry it off it's as good as new.

TOP KICK

And did you end up using it?

DALY

(nods)

Oh yeah. If we didn't have it we would've been killed. They attacked all night long.

TOP KICK

And how many of these natives did you kill?

DALY

Personally, I don't know. All together we probably killed a hundred of 'em. They killed eight of my men.

TOP KICK

But now you don't fight no more.

DALY

Well, I try not to get mad anymore, and then when I'm not mad I don't need to fight. I've made peace with the world.

TOP KICK

I got new for you, Gunny, everybody else in the world is in a war.

DALY

Hey, they've got their agenda and I've got mine. 'Scuse me a minute, boys, duty calls.

Daly heads around the bar to where the pretty 35-year old woman named BRIGITTE is sitting and seats himself beside her.

The Top Kick and Meyers exchange a look.

TOP KICK
Your Gunny's nuts.

MEYERS
He's been sittin' around too long and
readin' too many books.

TOP KICK
(nods)
Oh, yeah, well that'll do it.

Everyone nods in agreement and drinks.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. STREET – NIGHT

Daly and the attractive woman, Brigitte, come strolling up the street talking.

A TITLE READS: "**LATER THAT NIGHT.**"

BRIGITTE
. . . And then, I got so mad, I took the
whole bucket of milk and poured it right
on his head. And that was the end of my
days living on a farm.

DALY
So why didn't you stay in Paris?

BRIGITTE
(shrugs)
It's too big, too many people, too many
automobiles. After a few days I just want
to hit people to get them out of my way.

DALY
You're a pretty angry young woman.

BRIGITTE
(grins)
I'm not so young.

DALY

To me you are. Anyone under 40 is a kid.

Brigitte smiles. They stop in front of a butcher's shop, beside which is a yellow door leading to an upstairs apartment.

BRIGITTE

This is it.

DALY

Above the butcher shop.

BRIGITTE

I usually eat pretty well. So, would you care to come in?

Daly looks at his watch and sadly shakes his head.

DALY

No can do. Gotta be back on base in a few minutes. Maybe another time?

BRIGITTE

(smiles wistfully)

Maybe.

They shake hands, then Daly turns and walks away. Brigitte watches him go, the wistful smile still on her face, then goes inside the yellow door.

EXT. BEHIND THE CHEVAL BLANC CLUB – NIGHT

A pile of sweet Caporal butts, these belonging to Zachio. The back door of the Cheval Blanc Club opens and out steps one of the waitresses, YVONNE. She's thirty and has been a cocktail waitress for ten years. With this in mind, she's quite attractive. Zachio pops up from behind a wagon, his hands in his pockets, a cigarette hanging from his lips. He follows along beside Yvonne.

ZACHIO

Bon jour, Yvonne.

YVONNE

(smiles; French accent)

Bon soir, Provet. How long have you been

waiting?

ZACHIO

(shrugs)

Just got here. Where ya goin'?

YVONNE

Home. It's late. Almost midnight. Don't you have to be back at the base?

ZACHIO

Nah. I got special permission from General Bundy, he's my uncle.

YVONNE

(laughs)

General Bundy is *not* your uncle, *Private* Zachio.

ZACHIO

(grins)

No, we just called him uncle. He was more like a friend of the family.

YVONNE

(curious)

Where are *you* going?

ZACHIO

With you.

YVONNE

With me? And then what happens?

ZACHIO

Yvonne, *mon cheri*, then it's up to you. Even if I merely get to walk you home, I am a happy man.

Yvonne glances over at Zachio, amused. He grins back. They turn the corner out of sight . . .

INT. APARTMENT ABOVE THE BAKERY – NIGHT

Hughes and M. LaFollette are done playing chess. They both sit in easy chairs, pipes

in their mouths, glasses of port at hand. Both are in contemplative moods.

LAFOLLETTE

All I ever wanted was to make my wife happy, give her what she wanted, give her the family she never had. I failed on all counts. We struggled and saved and squabbled about every *centime*. She was never able to become pregnant, and when I finally could afford to buy her things, she died. So you see, life is a long series of desiring things you will not have, or will no longer want when you get them.

HUGHES

(sighs)

If I'd known losing would depress you so much, I'd have let you win.

LAFOLLETTE

No, no, no. *Pardon*. I apologize, *Monsieur* Hughes. I've become morose. *Excuse'moi*.

(downs his port)

Ah! So? Why, if you don't mind me asking, are you one of the first *Americains* to arrive here in *Francais*? You must have joined the army right away when America declared war.

HUGHES

(correcting him)

Marines.

(M. LaFollette nods)

Yes, I did. The first day. I was in college . . .

(M. LaFollette looks at him blankly)

. . . Uh, *university* . . .

(M. LaFollette nods and smiles)

. . . Ohio State University. Studying history.

Suddenly, history was going on around me.

Why read about it in books? Why not be a part of it? Besides, the Hun's gotta be stopped, right? We can't let them take over Europe, 'cause next comes the whole world, right? And I don't like

sauerkraut.

LAFOLLETTE

(shakes his head; smiles)

Nor I. You are a very interesting young man,
Monsieur Hughes. And a very fine chess player.

HUGHES

Thank you, Monsieur LaFollette. I was in the chess
club in high school. I really do appreciate your
hospitality. If it wasn't for your cake to look forward
to, I'd be having a much harder time in the military.

(looks at his watch)

I've got to get back to the barracks.

They both stand. M. LaFollette walks Hughes to the door.

LAFOLLETTE

I suppose you must go fight soon.

(Hughes shrugs)

Do me a very large favor, will you?

HUGHES

Sure. What?

M. LaFollette takes Hughes hand and shakes it.

LAFOLLETTE

Don't get killed. The Boche, they are not
playing games, you know, like chess, *compre
vous?*

HUGHES

(grins)

Neither are we.

Hughes leaves. M. LaFollette sighs sadly, closing the door.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. LT. CATES' QUARTERS – NIGHT

Daly steps up to a wooden door marked "Lt. Clifton Cates." Daly considers for a
moment, then knocks. Lt. Cates' voice with a southern drawl is heard.

CATES

(O.S.)

Come on in.

Daly enters.

INT. LT. CATES' QUARTERS – NIGHT

Daly steps inside and finds LIEUTENANT CLIFTON B. CATES, a hawk-faced man from Tennessee with a thin mustache, sitting at his desk writing. He looks up.

CATES

Yes, Gunny, what can I do for you?

Daly doesn't know how to begin.

CATES

Would you like to sit down?

Daly sits down on the cot, looking troubled.

CATES

What is it, sergeant?

DALY

Well, the thing is, I just don't want to fight anymore, sir.

CATES

But we haven't started yet, sergeant.

DALY

Yeah, well, I did, a long time ago. And now I want to stop.

CATES

Are you drunk?

DALY

No, sir. I've been reading these book, see? And I see now that I was getting' mad for no reason. And when I get mad is when I fight.

CATES

So you're not getting mad anymore.

DALY

Correct. Therefore if I'm not mad, I'm not fighting.

Lt. Cates doesn't understand.

CATES

Sergeant, you're the most decorated man in the company. Hell, in the entire battalion. You've seen more action than anyone here.

DALY

My point exactly. And now that I've found some inner peace, I feel that I've fought enough.

CATES

You know we're going to get called up to the line any day now

DALY

I know. I fear that I've possibly waited too long as it is.

Lt. Cates is developing a sharp headache in his eyebrows.

CATES

So, what are you looking for? A transfer? A discharge? You're pretty close to your 20 years, aren't you?

DALY

Yes, sir. Five months.

CATES

This is madness, sergeant. How can I convince you?

DALY

I don't think you can, sir. I've been thinking about this a lot. It would really take something big to get me to change my mind.

Cates and Daly look at each other for a long moment. Suddenly, a loud siren goes off and a voice is heard coming from the P.A. system . . .

VOICE

General quarters! General quarters! All personnel, general quarters!!

Cates and Daly both look around, then look at each other. Cates shakes his head.

CATES

How's that? Good enough for you?

Daly looks a bit spooked.

DALY

Uh . . . I suppose so.

CATES

Good. I'm going to pretend like I didn't hear any of this, sergeant. Go get the men and get ready to move out.

In walks CAPTAIN LLOYD WILLIAMS, a tall, good-looking, 40-year old officer with a walking stick.

WILLIAMS

Our time has come, Lt. Cates.
(sees Daly)
"Fighting Dan" Daly.

DALY

Cap'n Williams.

WILLIAMS

Just the man I wanted to see.

Daly stands and salutes. Williams tells Cates.

WILLIAMS

You know, Sgt. Daly and I were shipmates on my very first tour. 1908, the China Sea. We were aboard the U.S.S. Newark.

DALY

Yeah, that was some rough sailing, too, as I recall.

WILLIAMS

And I was just a kid, too. Seasick all the time.

(claps his hands)

Well, gentlemen, time to go fight a war. And you know what? Lt. Cates, Sgt. Daly, you're just the men I want to see. As it turns out, we don't have very many vehicles here in France and we're waiting for the French to supply them. We do, however, have a motorized machine gun unit right here with their own vehicles. Lt. Cates, Sgt. Daly, I want you and your men to accompany them—guard them. Understand? A French truck will be here momentarily. As soon as it arrives, board and embark. No dilly-dallying.

Daly stands and salutes.

DALY

Yes, sir.

WILLIAMS

Good. Get your men ready.

DALY

Yes, sir.

Daly and Cates exchange a look. Daly turns and exits.

DISSOLVE:

INT. BARRACKS – DAY

Lt. Cates comes striding in to the barracks wearing a long coat and a helmet, his walking sticks in his hands. Daly sees him.

DALY

Atten-shun!

Sgt. Daly stands before his men, who are all lined up and ready to go.

Lt. Cates steps forward whacking his swagger stick into his palm.

CATES

All the men here, sergeant?

DALY

(winces)

Private Zachio ain't showed up yet, sir.

CATES

(nods)

Men, this is it. We move out right away. The Germans have advanced seventy miles toward Paris. The French and the British have fallen back. We're gonna go fill the gap in the line. This is America's entry into the great war, men. I don't need to tell you this is important. It is. I'm proud to be the first to fight, and I know you are, too. Let's get out there and not only show 'em what kinda grit Americans have, let's show 'em how much grit American *Marines* have, all right?

The men speak simultaneously.

MEN

YES, SIR!

Lt. Cates turns to Sgt. Daly.

CATES

Any problems, Sergeant?

DALY

No, sir.

Lt. Cates nods, salutes, turns and leaves.

DALY

(to men)

You heard the Lieutenant, let's get them bony asses movin'! *Let's go!*

DISSOLVE:

EXT. WOODEN GARAGE – DAY

A wooden garage sits in a flat, open area near some woods. Ten 1917, U.S. Military Dodge trucks are parked both inside and out.

A TITLE READS: "7th U.S. (MOTORIZED) MACHINE GUN BATTALION."

INT. GARAGE – DAY

A field telephone rings and is answered by CAPTAIN CHARLES F. HOUGHTON, a blond, thirty year old from a rich family in New York City. He holds a hand-carved, ivory and pearl, walking stick on his lap, and smokes a cigarette with his feet up on the desk.

HOUGHTON

Yes.

(listens; jumps to his feet)

Yes, sir! Right away, sir!

(listens)

Chateau-Thierry. Don't let 'em cross the Marne River. Got it, sir! We'll be there first, sir, I assure you!

Capt. Houghton hangs up the phone, turns and yells:

HOUGHTON

All right, you greasy machine rats! Gather 'round.

Forty men crowd in. In front is LT. JOHN BISSELL, who looks like he's sixteen.

HOUGHTON

That was Major Taylor on the horn. It looks like we're up to bat. We're the nearest motorized unit with our own vehicles. That means we've got to get to the objective first, before anyone else. Everyone of these Goddamn trucks better be running and in perfect tune, I can tell you that!

BISSELL

They are, sir.

HOUGHTON

Then let's stop talking about it and get these flivvers cranked up!

Men start running in all directions. Engines fire up. Drive shafts turn. Exhaust smoke belches out. Big Hotchkiss machine guns are loaded into the trucks, as well as boxes of ammo.

EXT. BARRACKS – DAY

Our guys of the 6th Marines, fully equipped in long coats, boots, puttees, rifles, ammo belts, steel helmets, and 70 pound packs, are lined up in front of the barracks. A French military truck pulls up before Daly and his men. The truck is driven by two small, uniformed, French Indo-Chinese (now known as Vietnamese) men. Gastovich turns to Maggione.

GASTOVICH

I never seen fellas like this. Where you boys from?

The VIETNAMESE DRIVER, busily smoking a cigarette, replies in broken English, with an Asian accent:

VIETNAMESE DRIVER

We from French Indo-China. From the Tonkin Province. You know where that is? I bet you don't.

All the guys turn and look at Hughes. Hughes looks back at his expectant buddies, tapping his forehead.

HUGHES

. . . That's near Siam, right?

VIETNAMESE DRIVER

(nods; impressed)
Yeah. Right. How you know that?

Hughes' buddies slap him on the back and punch him in the arms. Knute Swenson is really impressed.

SWENSON

How do you know all that bunk, Hughes?

HUGHES

What can I say, boys? It's not that I'm really so smart, it's that you fellas are so *damned* dumb.

Cpl. Meyers looks around anxiously.

MEYERS

Speakin' of dumb, where the hell is Zachio?

All our guys start to climb aboard the waiting truck. Lt. Cates come walking up with a full pack. PFC Argaut reaches out for the pack.

ARGAUT

Here, let me get that.

Gastovich whispers to Maggione.

GASTOVICH

Ass-kisser.

Lt. Cates asks Sgt. Daly:

CATES

Any word on Zachio?

DALY

(shakes his head)

No, sir. Not a sign.

CATES

We can't wait. Let's move it out, sergeant.

Daly sighs and nods.

DALY

Get a move on, ya sons of bitches! The Kaiser's waitin' t' tuck ya in!

One of the Vietnamese drivers gets in the cab, while the other goes around to the front of the truck and cranks the drive shaft, attempting to start the engine. It doesn't catch the first time.

Cates, Daly, and Meyers all look at each other with troubled expressions.

MEYERS

Zachio'll get court-martialed for sure. I shoulda looked out for him, it's my responsibility.

CATES

(shakes his head)

No it's not. He didn't come back last night. It was out of your hands at midnight.

MEYERS

Technically.

CATES

Which is all that counts, technically. We are in the military after all, corporal, *technically* speaking.

The Vietnamese man in front gives another crank and the engine catches. He runs around and jumps into the passenger seat. The driver puts the truck in gear and starts to pull away.

Just then Pvt. Zachio comes running up at top speed between the rows of barracks. He's got no shirt or shoes on, and is holding his pants up.

ZACHIO

Hey! Hold on! Wait for me!

Everybody in the rolling truck sees him at the same time.

EVERYONE

(relieved)

Zachio!

MEYERS

Come on, Zachio! Run!

ZACHIO

I'm runnin'! I'm runnin'! Whaz it look like I'm doin'!

Cates and Daly share a smile, shaking their heads. Meyers and Daly reach out for Zachio's hands. As they grab him he lets go of his pants. Zachio is hauled into the truck with his pants around his ankles. Maggione asks for everyone:

MAGGIONE

Zachio, where you been?

Zachio sees Lt. Cates and Sgt. Daly looking down at him. He quickly pulls up his pants. Zachio smiles, and shrugs, becoming coy.

ZACHIO

Everyone doesn't need to know 'bout my love life.

DALY

No, no, Zachio. We're all just *dying* to know.

Zachio looks around at all the expectant faces, then smiles happily.

ZACHIO

Yvonne from the Cheval Blanc.

He shrugs humbly. Everybody looks at each other, then back at Zachio.

EVERYONE

No!

Pvt. Zachio smiles, nods, and winks.

ZACHIO

Oh, yeah.

Everyone looks at Zachio and smiles wistfully, considering the idea . . .

DISSOLVE:

EXT. WOODEN GARAGE – DAY

The ten Dodge trucks, their backs covered in O.D. green canvas, each containing four men and two big, Hotchkiss machine guns, sit in a line with their engines running, all waiting . . .

Our Marines with their Vietnamese driver pull up beside the first truck in the line. Capt. Houghton speaks to Lt. Cates.

HOUGHTON

Lieutenant Cates?

CATES

Yes, sir.

HOUGHTON

Good. I'm Captain Houghton.

CATES

Yes sir.

HOUGHTON

Let's get moving, if you please.

Capt. Houghton points his stick and the column of trucks drives off up the road. The Marine's truck falls in behind and they all speed off in a caravan.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. THE PARIS-METZ HIGHWAY – DAY

The ten trucks of the 7th Motorized Machine Gun Battalion, as well as the one truck of Marines, race up the main road running east, the Paris-Metz Highway – a paved, two-lane road. The trucks are brought to a dead halt as they are engulfed in a multitude of REFUGEES. Old women, old men, young kids – no men anywhere near draft age – carts, wagons, goats, cows. Also quite a few French soldiers, their blue uniforms shredded, bloody, and torn; they are defeated and drunk on stolen wine. The battered FRENCH SOLDIERS say to the passing Americans:

FRENCH SOLDIER #1

La Guerre est fini!

FRENCH SOLDIER #2

Fini la guerre!

INT. MARINE'S TRUCK – DAY

In the back of the truck Bonner asks Daly.

BONNER

Hey, sarge, what're they sayin'?

DALY

They say the war's over.

BONNER

Is it?

DALY

For them, maybe, but not for us. We're just startin'.

Everybody nods and grunts.

EXT. CHATEAU-THIERRY/ THE MAIN BRIDGE – LATE AFTERNOON

The sun is beginning to set on the small town of Chateau-Thierry, with the Marne River running right beside it. Most of the town has been bombed to smithereens and the place is deserted.

All that remains of the French army are SIX, BLACK, FRENCH COLONIAL SENEGALESE SOLDIERS (including a SERGEANT, a CORPORAL, and four Privates) guarding the main bridge across the Marne River. These are magnificent-looking, jet-black men with white helmets, white uniforms with short pants. They have appropriated colorful cloth and tied it around their heads, on the sleeves of their uniforms, and around their necks as capes. They also each have their own pile of booty: a bird cage, a painting, a clock, a goat, a chair, etc.

A TITLE READS: "**CHATEAU-THIERRY – MAY 31st**"

The 7th Motorized Machine Gun Battalion cautiously approaches the main bridge into Chateau-Thierry. The Senegalese soldiers put down their booty and take defensive positions. The trucks grind to a quick halt. Captain Houghton calls out:

HOUGHTON

Who are you?

The SENEGALESE SERGEANT, who speaks English well with a French accent, calls back:

SENEGALESE SERGEANT

Who are *you*?

HOUGHTON

We're Americans, come to relieve General Degoutte.

SENEGALESE SERGEANT

We are French. We fight for General Degoutte. Where are the rest of the French soldiers, please?

Houghton points over his shoulder with his thumb.

HOUGHTON

They went that-a-way.

All six Senegalese soldiers step out into the open, their colorful cloth flying. The Americans look at them in astonishment.

BISSELL

Where are *you* fellas from?

SENEGALESE SERGEANT

We are from French Senegal. In western Africa.

BISSELL

Geez, what're you doin' *here*?

SENEGALESE SERGEANT

We've been here for two years already, Yank. What're *you* doing here?

HOUGHTON

Have you seen any Germans?

The Senegalese soldiers shake their heads.

SENEGALESE SERGEANT

Planes and balloons, captain. And we've heard them. They're all around. We were ordered to not let the Hun cross this river.

HOUGHTON

(nods)

Us, too. Any of you men know how to use explosives?

A SENEGALESE CORPORAL nods and salutes.

SENEGALESE CORPORAL

Oui, Capitaine.

HOUGHTON

Excellent.

(points)

Let's get your, uh . . . *belongings* off the bridge,
if you don't mind.

The soldiers salute, pick up their junk and move it off the bridge.

The 7th Motorized Machine Gun Battalion, as well as the 6th Marines, all gather around Captain Houghton, who points with his walking stick.

HOUGHTON

Sgt. Daly, I'll speak with you in a second. Lt. Cates, you and your Marines go in and make sure Chateau-Thierry is completely secure. You see any sign of the *Boche*, you high-tail it back here as fast as you can. Got it?

(Lt. Cates nods)

Move!

CATES

Yes, sir.

Cates nods at his men and they all run off.

HOUGHTON

Lt. Bissell, set up the Hotchkiss guns in emplacements all along this side of the river. Say every twenty yards, and check your fields of fire. Understand?

(they all nod)

Then move!

Lt. Bissell and the guys of the 7th dash off.

Sgt. Daly looks at Capt. Houghton quizzically.

DALY

So, what about me?

HOUGHTON

I made sure to bring dynamite thinking the engineers might not be here yet and we might need it. Well, the engineers *aren't* here yet, and we *do* need it. I think we've got to be

ready to blow that bridge the moment we see the Hun.

Captain Houghton points to the main bridge into Chateau-Thierry, directly in front of them. Daly nods.

DALY

That's a peach of an idea, captain.

HOUGHTON

I don't know how to rig it, do you, Sergeant?

DALY

(shakes his head)

No. But those colored boys said they did.

HOUGHTON

(nods)

Lead the patrol, Sgt. Daly, and be prepared to blow that bridge as soon as possible. Understand?

(Daly nods)

Go!

DALY

(salutes)

Yes, sir.

Sgt. Daly runs over to the Senegalese soldiers. Capt. Houghton points his walking stick at the town across the bridge. He looks back over his shoulder and sighs.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. BRIDGE – LATE AFTERNOON

Lt. Cates and his Marines in two lines dash stealthily across the main bridge into the town of Chateau-Thierry.

EXT. A STREET IN CHATEAU-THIERRY – LATE AFTERNOON

Lt. Cates and his men move in quick bursts through the streets of Chateau-Thierry. The Marines kick in doors and burst into houses and businesses – but there's no one there.

EXT. THE BANKS OF THE MARNE RIVER – LATE AFTERNOON

The 7th Machine Gun Battalion digs in setting up the big Hotchkiss guns on the south bank of the Marne River, on the opposite side as the town of Chateau-Thierry. The Hotchkiss guns are water-cooled like automobiles. Beside the main bridge, there is also a railroad trestle spanning the river. The men dig holes, set up the guns, load in the ammo, cock the bolts to make sure they recoil, setting fields of fire, getting ready.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. THE MAIN BRIDGE ACROSS THE MARNE – LATE AFTERNOON

As the sun sets, Capt. Houghton paces back and forth in front of the main bridge across the Marne. He swings his walking stick and smokes a cigarette. Lt. Bissell runs up to Capt. Houghton and salutes.

BISSELL

'Scuse me, sir.

Houghton brings his stick to the brim of his cap.

HOUGHTON

Yes, Lieutenant.

BISSELL

The Hotchkiss guns are all dug in and ready, sir.

HOUGHTON

Good. Get back there and be on alert.

BISSELL

Yes, sir.

Lt. Bissell runs off.

A moment later Sgt. Daly and the six Senegalese soldiers come dashing up holding a big reel of black wire which is unspooling behind them.

HOUGHTON

How did it go, Sergeant?

DALY

(shrugs)

They sure looked like they knew what they was doing.

The Senegalese Corporal takes out a detonator, licks his index and middle fingers, and places them on the contacts beside the upraised plunger. He pushes the plunger down, quickly recoiling as his two licked fingers get shocked.

SENEGALESE CORPORAL

Merde!

They step to their left and crouch down in a freshly dug hole, the first machine gun emplacement. The Senegalese Corporal strips the ends of the wire and attaches it to the contacts on the detonator. He hands the rigged detonator to Sgt. Daly, who in turn offers it to Capt. Houghton. He shakes his head and declines, pointing at the detonator.

HOUGHTON

How long have you been in the Marines, Sergeant?

DALY

Almost twenty years, Captain.

HOUGHTON

Go ahead. You do the honors.

DALY

(nods)

Yes, sir.

Capt. Houghton turns to Lt. Bissell.

HOUGHTON

Hold your fire until I say so. Pass the word.

BISSELL

Yes, sir.

Bissell runs off to the next machine gun emplacement. Daly turns to Capt. Houghton.

DALY

You ever read Nietzsche?

HOUGHTON
 (surprised)
 Why, yes. In college. Why?

DALY
 Well . . . Do you think we're all morally
 accountable?

HOUGHTON
 (thinks for a moment)
 To whom?

DALY
 (nods)
 Ah. Good question.

Suddenly they all hear the chatter of distant small arms fire. Everybody looks up. The small arms fire gets louder and more insistent. Brows furrow; eyes squint; fingers on triggers tense; Sgt. Daly's hand tightens on the plunger.

Suddenly, there's Lt. Cates and his men running as fast as they can, their weapons held at high port, dashing through the streets of Chateau-Thierry toward the bridge, looking highly unnerved. As yet, the cause of their consternation is not visible. Lt. Cates and the Marines are two hundred yards from the bridge when GERMAN SOLDIERS, wearing black boots and pointed Kaiser helmets, can be seen chasing them. Ten German soldiers, twenty, thirty, forty . . .

The Marines are just reaching the far side of the bridge when it can now be seen that there are innumerable Germans all over the place, as well as troop-filled trucks rolling up behind them. German soldiers pour out of the trucks and join the chase. As the Marines get on the bridge they have *several hundred Germans behind them*, firing their weapons while running.

Bullets are whizzing all over the place, tearing out hunks of stone on the bridge. The Marines duck as they scuttle hastily across the bridge. Daly counts the men as they come off the bridge.

DALY
 Two . . . four . . . six . . . eight . . . nine.
 Damn! There *were* eleven.

But nine seems to be it. Capt. Houghton turns to the wide-eyed Daly, detonator and plunger tightly in his hands. The Marines are all off the bridge.

HOUGHTON

Sergeant, the bridge . . .
 (Daly doesn't move; the
 Germans are twenty yards
 from the bridge)

Sergeant . . .
 (ten yards)

Sergeant . . .
 (five yards)

Sergeant, for God's sake anyway . . .

The lead German soldiers step onto the bridge and Sgt. Daly jams down the plunger – **KABOOM!!!** – the bridge explodes right in the German's face. Five German soldiers go sailing into the air, and at least twenty go down with shrapnel wounds. The rest scatter. Captain Houghton raises his hand and waves it.

HOUGHTON

(yelling)

FIRE!

The Hotchkiss guns all open fire. Hot lead streams across the river, pouring into the crowds of Germans, caught in a state of total confusion. German soldiers drop everywhere, the rest turn and run. Finally, no more Germans remain upright across the river. Capt. Houghton raises his hand.

HOUGHTON

(yelling)

CEASE FIRE!

Bit by bit the Hotchkiss guns stop their racket. In a moment all is quiet; just the sound of running water. Simultaneously, all of the Americans bust into a wild war cheer.

MEN

YAHOO!

They've tasted blood. The war for the Americans has finally begun.

Capt. Houghton turns to Lt. Cates.

HOUGHTON

Where are your other two men?

CATES

(shrugs)

Bonner and Swenson. Don't know. Didn't see 'em go down. We were in kind of a hurry, sir.

Capt. Houghton nods thoughtfully.

INT. BARN – LATE AFTERNOON

Crouched behind a wagon and sundry other barn items are privates Bonner and Swenson, their rifles held tightly in front of their faces. All around the barn is the sound of massive movement: trucks, marching men, orders barked in German. Pvt. Swenson whispers to Pvt. Bonner.

SWENSON

We shore went an' done it now.

Bonner nods in agreement.

BONNER

(whispering)

Damn-tootin'. I knew we shun't a stopped t' eat that cheese.

SWENSON

I was hungry, so was you.

BONNER

But now m' belly hurts.

SWENSON

Mine, too.

As their stomachs gurgle, we . . .

DISSOLVE:

EXT. BARN IN CHATEAU-THIERRY – NIGHT

A barn sits at the edge of Chateau-Thierry. Just past the barn we can see a whole troop of Germans, with trucks and tents, bunking in for the night.

INT. BARN – NIGHT

Privates Bonner and Swenson are still stuck in the barn, crouching behind the wagon,

their weapons in hand. They can clearly hear the Germans talking while they eat, metal spoon on metal plates, etc.

BONNER
(shrugs; whispers)
I guess if we're gonna go, we best do it now.

SWENSON
(nods; whispers)
Yup. 'Sides, it stinks in here.

BONNER
No help from you.

SWENSON
Or you. OK . . . ?

They both nod their heads in a one, two, three count, then dash to the barn door.

EXT. BARN – NIGHT

Swenson and Bonner come out the barn door, their weapon before them. They both peer around the corner of the barn and see the troop of encamped Germans. The privates duck back around the corner, look at each other and wince. Staying low, the two move off in the other direction, toward the river.

EXT. THE REMAINS OF THE MAIN BRIDGE – NIGHT

Privates Swenson and Bonner arrive at the remains of the main bridge over the Marne.

BONNER
(whispering)
That's what that big explosion was.

SWENSON
(whispering)
Now what'll we do?

They both look up the river, to the railroad trestle that still spans the waterway.

EXT. RAILROAD TRESTLE/ GERMAN SIDE – NIGHT

Privates Swenson and Bonner arrive at the railroad trestle, a thin-gauge, very narrow bridge over the Marne River. It's not that it's that perilous to walk on, it's that to be out on the trestle means you are in plain view of the Germans.

BONNER
It's now or never, buddy.

SWENSON
You said it.

BONNER
I say we make a run for it.

SWENSON
I'm with you.
(he holds up his French
Chauchat machine gun)
What about these? They weigh a ton.

They look at each other for a moment, then shake their heads.

BONNER
We'll git hollered at if we chuck 'em.
Ready . . . ?

Pvts. Swenson and Bonner nod one, two, three, then take off running, their weapons in both hands up in front of them. They turn the corner onto the trestle, stepping a lot more gingerly as they go from railroad tie to railroad tie, twenty-five feet over the water.

A third of the way across the railroad trestle the two soldiers are spotted by both sides. Bullets start to whiz over their heads, and dig chunks out of the wooden railroad ties they're stepping on. The privates try to stay as low as they can.

EXT. THE GERMAN SIDE OF THE MARNE – NIGHT

We can see the FOUR GERMAN SOLDIERS firing at the privates on the railroad trestle, two hundred yards away. The soldiers step out into the open and laugh as they fire, this is like a shooting gallery. Suddenly, four Hotchkiss guns open fire from across the river – *RAT-A-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT* – mowing down the laughing Germans.

EXT. RAILROAD TRESTLE/ AMERICAN SIDE – NIGHT

Privates Swenson and Bonner come off the railroad trestle, alive and in one piece, to the greetings of their pals of the 6th Marines, led by Daly and Cates. They all slap the privates on the back.

Suddenly, German Maxim guns open fire across the river. The Americans all hit the dirt as bullets whiz over their heads.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. THE BANKS OF THE MARNE RIVER (THE AMERICAN SIDE) – DAY

Capt. Houghton, Lt. Bissell and the men of the 7th Motorized Machine Gun Battalion and the 6th Marines still hold their positions in their dugout machine gun emplacements along the Marne River.

Meanwhile, across the river and in the town of Chateau-Thierry, it's nothing but Germans: truckloads of them, lines of troops marching up, horse-drawn wagons pulling Maxim machine guns – no tanks, interestingly, were used on either side in this battle.

EXT. BELLEAU WOOD (AERIAL VIEW) – DAY

A TITLE READS: "**BELLEAU WOOD – JUNE 1st, 7:59 A.M.**"

Belleau Wood is a hilly, scrubby, bolder-strewn, wooded area, surrounded by fields of waist-high, green wheat, speckled with red poppies. At the northern end of the wood is the old, round, stone hunting lodge.

Belleau Wood is alive with movement as the Germans move in their equipment. One Maxim machine gun after another after another. In short order the Germans turn Belleau Wood into a giant, one-mile-square machine gun nest containing literally hundreds of lethal-looking Maxim guns.

Two red German Fokker Tri-wing planes fly over going south. We follow with the planes, which begin to follow the Marne River.

EXT. THE BANKS OF THE MARNE (AMERICAN SIDE) – DAY

The German Fokkers fly over Capt. Houghton and the 7th Machine gunners and Sgt. Daly and the 6th Marines. Everyone looks up and around with increasing consternation. And meanwhile, the Germans keep arriving across the river. Capt. Houghton, fancy walking stick in hand, checks his watch – it's 8:00 A.M.

CATES

(concerned)

I don't like the way the odds are shaping up,
Captain.

HOUGHTON

Me, neither. I'd estimate the Hun has moved
in at least ten divisions so far, and they're still
(continued)

HOUGHTON (cont.)

coming. That means we're out-numbered by at least ten thousand to forty right now.

(none of the men really needed to hear this statistic at this moment)

I'm more than a little surprised they haven't attacked already. Their aerial spotters have to know what our situation *really* is.

(he lines up his walking stick like a driver and takes a practice swing)

Unless they know something we don't know . . .

CATES

Like what?

HOUGHTON

That remains to be seen, Lieutenant.

Just then, right behind them a motorcycle comes pattering down the hill. Riding the motorcycle is STAFF SERGEANT WOOD.

WOOD

Captain Houghton?

HOUGHTON

Yes, who are you?

WOOD

Staff Sgt. Wood, Brigade Headquarters. Your relief from the 7th will be here soon. We're setting up about two miles back, near a village named Lucy- something-er-other. You're to fall back. By the way, General Harbord sends his compliments on a job well done. Good work, boys.

HOUGHTON

Is there hot food?

WOOD
 (shakes his head)
 Sorry, captain, none of the field kitchens
 have made it up here yet.

HOUGHTON
 Thank you, sergeant.

Sgt. Wood salutes, turns his motorcycle around, and putters away.

Capt. Houghton turns to Lt. Cates. They look at each other for a second, then shake their heads and sigh. They all look across the river at the massing Germans, then begin to prepare to leave, and the sooner the better.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. CROSSROAD – DAY

American troops are marching in columns up to a crossroad, then being sent north or south by officers who are directing traffic. Among the officers is Captain Williams. Infantry is sent south, Marines to the north. Our guys of the 6th Marines march up. Lt. Cates salutes Capt. Williams.

CAPT. WILLIAMS
 Lt. Cates, good to see you. Look at this, I'm
 gone for a few hours and they've got me directing
 traffic. Lead the men north along this road and
 connect up with the 5th Marines, dig in, and wait
 for orders. I'll be up in a while.

LT. CATES
 Yes, sir.

Just then, in the woods behind them, a blue-coated FRENCH MAJOR and six French officers step out holding their hands in the air. The Americans all turn and look.

FRENCH MAJOR
 (French accent)
 We surrender. We surrender. Do not shoot.

Capt. Williams turns to the French Major and his men.

WILLIAMS
 We're Americans.

FRENCH MAJOR
 (confused)
Pardon?

WILLIAMS
 We're Americans. We're on *your* side.

The French Major looks at his men, then they all lower their hands. Suddenly, the French Major takes on an imperious, commanding attitude.

FRENCH MAJOR
 Do you understand the situation around here, Captain? The Boche have taken Bouresches to Chateau-Thierry. They have many, many divisions. Hundreds of machine guns. Captain, I order you to retreat immediately!

Capt. Williams looks like he just bit into a lemon and winces.

WILLIAMS
 You *what*?

FRENCH MAJOR
 I order you to retreat!

WILLIAMS
 Retreat, hell! We just got here.

Lt. Cates and his men all grin, marching off to the north.

FRENCH MAJOR
 But captain, I am a *major*. I *order* you.

Capt. Williams points at a group of American officers, which includes COLONELS CATLIN and NEVILLE.

WILLIAMS
 Major, I suggest that you go speak to those men. They're running this operation and I'm sure they'll be more than happy to hear anything you have to say.

The French Major and his men walk off to speak to the American officers. Capt.

Williams rolls his eyes in disgust.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. THE LUCY-TORCY ROAD – DAY

Sgt. Daly walks along the edge of the Lucy-Torcy road, just as it goes through a small stretch of woods, supervising his men as they entrench.

DALY

Come on, you molly-coddles, dig them holes!
Dig 'em deep! We ain't playin' games here,
this is the real thing! And if you ain't careful,
they're gonna bury you in these damn holes!

The men of the 6th, stripped down to their undershirts, dig trenches with bayonets and mess-kit lids.

MATTHEWS

Nice thought, gunny.

SWENSON

I s'pose shovels would be too much t' ask for,
huh?

DALY

You wanna shovel Swenson, join the engineers.
Right now, you'll dig with your Goddamn teeth if
I tell ya to! *Now, dig, you miserable bastards,
dig!*

And indeed they dig.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. LUCY-TORCY ROAD – NIGHT

The men are totally exhausted and lounging in their newly dug holes: sleeping, smoking cigarettes, writing letters home, talking softly. Artillery and the occasional burst of small arms fire can be heard in the distance. A wiry, tall, Marine with thick, dark eyebrows, comes walking up in a crouch to the left flank of our guys. He is PRIVATE PIETRO GIANNINI, and meets Bonner and Argaut.

GIANNINNI

Any of you guys know Private Charley Maggione?

BONNER

Sure, he's about six, eight holes up. Who're you?

GIANNINNI

Gianninni, 5th Marines, we're the next comp'ny over on your left.

Gianninni keeps moving along the line until he finds Maggione writing a letter. Maggione sees Gianninni, grins, and shakes his hand.

MAGGIONE

Pietro, *paisan*.

GIANNINNI

Charley, my old pal. Writin' home?

MAGGIONE

(nods)

Sure. Remember Mr. Langusta, the iceman?

GIANNINNI

(nods)

Sure. With the big mustache.

MAGGIONE

Right. My ma says he dropped dead on the stairs right in front of our door. Big chunka ice fell down eight flights, nearly killed some kids playin' at the bottom.

GIANNINNI

Ain't that somethin'. You heard from Theresa?

MAGGIONE

(nods)

Sure. She writes all the time. I'm writin' to her now. I don't write back as much as she writes to me, though.

GIANNINNI

She's somethin', that Theresa. Best lookin' gal on the block. Show 'em, Charley.

Maggione takes a photograph out of his wallet and hands it to Swenson, Matthews and Daly. They look at the picture, nod, then all look at Maggione with new found respect.

GIANNINNI

How'd you ever get her?

MAGGIONE

(shrugs; smiles)

I didn't stop pestering her all of senior year. She finally figured out it was easier t' fall for me than get rid of me.

They all laugh. Gianninni waves his hands.

GIANNINNI

So, we finally made it, eh?

MAGGIONE

We sure did. I can't wait till we show Fritzie what we got.

GIANNINNI

You said it, brother. I don't think we got long t' wait, either.

A VOICE in the distance calls out:

VOICE

Officer comin'!

Gianninni starts to leave.

GIANNINNI

Gotta go.

MAGGIONE

Good t' see ya, Pietro. Write and tell your ma I said hi, OK?

GIANNINNI

Yeah, sure. You write and tell Theresa I said hi.

MAGGIONE

(smiles)

See ya 'round the park, buddy.

GIANNINNI

I'll buy ya a beer next time I see ya at Palermo's.

MAGGIONE

No, *Paisan*, I'll buy.

Gianninni leaves. Maggione watches him go. The Voice gets louder.

VOICE

Officer comin'!

Further up the line, GENERAL JAMES G. HARBORD walks along with a retinue of officers, including Colonels Catlin and Neville. General Harbord wears a French army helmet, which looks like a fancy football helmet. The men are absolutely amazed at seeing such high ranking officers – a general, for God's sake! They jump to their feet, or at least try to.

HARBORD

It's all right, men, at ease. Don't get up, just checking the line.

(to the officers)

American from one end to the other, gentlemen. Exactly what we wanted.

Maggione asks offhandedly.

MAGGIONE

What's with the French helmet, general?

Gen. Harbord looks up, tipping his helmet.

HARBORD

It was a gift from General Degoutte. Like it?

MAGGIONE

(smiles)

Sure. It's a pip.

HARBORD

(nods)

Thanks.

Gastovich holds up a can of rations.

GASTOVICH

How 'bout some of this tasty French monkey
meat to go with it, general?

HARBORD

Looks good, son, maybe later.

GASTOVICH

I'll save some for ya, general.

HARBORD

You do that, private.

Harbord and his retinue continue up the line. Maggione and Gastovich grin, getting slapped on the back by their buddies.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. LUCY-TORCY ROAD - LATER THAT NIGHT

We move slowly along the protracted line of entrenched Marines. Most men are asleep, curled up in tight balls in their freshly dug holes, covered with green blankets, their Springfield rifles close at hand. As we pass Sgt. Daly we see that he's awake and smoking. Every twenty yards or so a sentry sits up with his weapon on his lap, peering intently into the dark. Distant artillery can be heard thumping. An occasional flash lights the sky. For the moment, it's all quiet on the western front. Cpl. Meyers sits awake on sentry duty. His eyes scan the horizon . . .

A TITLE READS: **JUNE 6th, 1:30 A.M.**

Cpl. Meyers sighs, shaking his head to stay awake on sentry duty. As we move along the line of our Marines, to the north, the artillery fire sounds like it's getting louder. Sentries turn and look. Yes, it's definitely getting louder and closer. The detonations can now be felt, the ground shaking, tin cups fall over, mounds of dirt slide back into the holes.

As the explosions become louder still, Marines begin waking up, rubbing their bleary

eyes, stretching their cold, stiff muscles. Explosion by explosion, the artillery fire is progressively working its way south, the line of fire reasonably consistent with the line of Marines – the Germans have the American's range.

DALY
(yelling)
In-coming mail!

Suddenly, high-explosive shells come whistling in, striking the tops of the trees to their immediate north. The treetops erupt in flaming fireballs, shrapnel raining down. The Marines crouch in their holes, their arms over their heads, their eyes tightly shut, grimacing with each explosion.

Next come high-explosive shells crashing into the ground all around them. Shrapnel, dirt, and debris fly everywhere. The whole world shakes violently as one shell after another after another whistle in and explode. Meyers lights two cigarettes and hands one to Daly. They both smoke with the cigarettes cupped in their hands, their faces in the dirt.

A shell lands in the line twenty yards north of Matthews and Daly – Wheeeeeeeee . . . BOOM! – Where there were three Marines a moment before, there is now a smoking hole. Another shell lands ten yards away – Wheeeeeeeee . . . **BOOM!** – Matthews and Daly are picked up and slammed down hard. The next shell comes sailing in – **Wheeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee** . . . This one sound like it's coming right at them and . . . **WHUMP!** Matthews and Daly both open their eyes to see . . . A 155 millimeter shell stuck in the dirt five feet away – a dud. Matthews and Daly both sigh, covering their heads against the next explosion.

This is the loudest, most intense experience these guys has ever gone through in their lives. Argaut starts singing to himself in a frightened voice.

ARGAUT
(singing)
She'll be comin' 'round the mountain when
she comes/ She'll be comin' 'round the mount-
ain when she comes/ She'll be comin' 'round
the mountain . . .

Suddenly, Pvt. Paul Bonner begins to scream hysterically, jumps to his feet, and takes off running in the opposite direction. The others see him go, but make no move to get up and go after him. The artillery barrage keeps going on and on and on, literally for hours . . .

LONG DISSOLVE:

EXT. LUCY-TORCY ROAD - DAWN

A TTILE READS: "5:45 A.M."

The artillery barrage finally stops at the crack of dawn. It's been over three hours, but it may as well have been a year. The landscape is pockmarked with smoldering holes and charred, splintered trees. Marines arise out of their holes, covered with dirt, shaken, twitching, and wide-eyed. Here and there lie the remains of dead Marines – an arm – a leg – an entire mangled body.

Not far up the line, a SOBBING MARINE has gone completely nuts.

SOBBING MARINE

Stop it! You've gotta stop it, for God's sake!

Swenson and Hebel both emerge at the same time, dazed and trembling. They both look down at the body covered in dirt between them. Hebel reaches down, grabs the shoulder and turns over Maggione – *the side of his head is blown away by shrapnel* – he's obviously dead. Hebel yanks his bloody hand back. Swenson gasps. Matthews and Daly step up, then everybody else in the company. They all look down at Maggione's corpse silently. Argaut turns away gagging.

DALY

(calling out)

Could we get a corpsman over here!

(to his guys)

All right, let's go dig out them holes! I guess I don't need to tell you why now. Let's move it!

The Marines wander away slowly, rubbing their heads, their eyes glazed. This absolutely isn't a game anymore. Still without shovels, the Marines re-dig their holes with bayonets, mess kit lids and their hands.

Finally, Bonner comes wandering up looking abashed.

BONNER

Hey, fellas.

DALY

Find what you was lookin' for?

BONNER

(pained grin)
Maybe.

DALY
Let's hope so. Come on over here and
give us a hand.

Bonner steps up and sees Maggione's corpse. Bonner covers his face, takes a deep breath, then silently joins in the digging.

We hear the voice of a MARINE down the line.

MARINE
(O.S.)
Stand to! Stand to!

The words "Stand to" are repeated up and down the line.

DALY
All right, let's stand to! Double-time, let's
go! Stand to!

The Marines get into "Stand to" position, meaning they line up at the edge of the shallow trench and take aim in front of them, toward the wheat field and the dark woods beyond, and await an attack.

We see each one of our guys, tense, ready, frightened, clutching his weapon and waiting.

Suddenly, the sun appears over the wooded horizon and in an explosion of glare it shines directly into the Marine's eyes, momentarily blinding them.

The just as suddenly there are Germans running full speed at them that seem to have materialized out of nowhere. The Germans have crawled up through the wheat field and scream in unison as they attack through the open area directly in front of them.

The Marines immediately open fire, shooting at anything that moves in front of them. Machine guns chatter, expended shells fly through the air, fingers squeeze triggers, Springfield rifle bolts slam back and forth.

Germans drop right and left and almost as quickly as the attack began, it suddenly ends.

Everybody stops firing, sits and waits anxiously for the next attack . . .

DISSOLVE:

EXT. LUCY-TORCY ROAD – DAY

We move along the Lucy-Torcy Road, the American line, where the Marines are all dug in, following two Privates carrying a big box of ammunition. They hand out 200 rounds of ammo to each man. Artillery explodes in the distance and, every sixty seconds or so, a shell comes whistling into the American line. Everyone ducks, the shell explodes, then everyone continues on with what they were doing. In most cases, what the Marines are doing is lightening their packs from 70 pounds to 20 pounds. Many Marines are cleaning their rifles, some are writing letters home. There isn't much unnecessary talk.

A TITLE READS: "2:40 P.M."

We arrive at our guys of the 6th Marines. They each take their 200 rounds of ammo and load it into their ammo belts.

Suddenly, an American artillery barrage begins. Shells start whizzing over their heads. Bonner and Hebel dive to the ground and cover their heads. Sgt. Daly shakes his head.

DALY

That's *out-going* mail, boys. That's ours.

The shells keep whizzing over at a greatly increased rate, exploding in a line a half mile east of them. The Marines watch as explosion after explosion detonates along the German line. Each of our guys has his own thoughts and a serious expression on his face. This is it – no kidding, no backing out, no nothing. Hughes turns to Bill French.

HUGHES

I hear if you jump in a shell hole, statistically the chances of another shell landing in the same spot are like a million to one against it.

FRENCH

Thanks, Hughes, that's good t' know.

HUGHES

(shrugs)

I don't know that it's true, but that's what I heard.

The American artillery barrage continues for the next three hours . . .

DISSOLVE:

EXT. LUCY-TORCY ROAD – DAY

The last fading rays of warm sunlight beam through the smoke and debris filling the sky. The American artillery barrage keeps going; thousands of shells have been pumped into the German lines. As suddenly as the artillery barrage began, it now ends. For one very brief moment there is complete silence. A bird starts to sing.

A TITLE READS: **"5:25 P.M."**

The Marines are all fully prepared, loaded, helmetted, tense, and as ready as they'll ever be. Those that were sitting now stand. Cigarettes and unfinished cans of rations are tossed. Gastovich, Hebel, Swenson, Argaut, Daly, Meyers, Matthews, Hughes, Arbuckle, Bonner, Zachio, Lt. Cates, and Captain Lloyd Williams, a steel whistle held in his hand, nearing his anxious lips. Gastovich glances back at a bedroll stenciled, "Maggione," then frowns. Sgt. Daly calls out:

DALY
Fix bayonets!

Everyone affixes their bayonets to the ends of their rifles, then stares intently down at their wristwatches.

CLOSE-UP: A watch face – 5:27 – the sweep second hand goes around . . .

EXT. LA LOGE FARM/HQ – DAY

This is a storybook farmhouse that has somehow not been destroyed. Standing in front of the farm house are General Harbord, Colonel Neville, and several other officers. Everyone looks down at their wristwatches.

CLOSE-UP: Watch face – 5:28 – the sweep second keeps going around . . .

EXT. HILLTOP – DAY

On a nearby hilltop overlooking the Lucy-Torcy Road, as well as the wheat fields around it, stands Colonel Albertus Catlin, the big, sad, jowly, commander of the 6th Marines. Several other officers stand nearby. With an expression of great concern Col. Catlin looks back down at his watch.

CLOSE-UP: Watch face – 5:29 – and the second hand goes around . . .

EXT. LUCY-TORCY ROAD – DAY

German shells crash into the American line. Captain Williams looks up from his watch, puts the whistle in his mouth and blows hard. There is a weird pause, then . . .

WILLIAMS

Come on, boys! Follow me!

DALY

Let's go, Marines! Move it out!

Williams points his walking stick, Daly waves his hand and the line of Marines starts moving forward at a steady, deliberate pace, their weapons ready, bayonets fixed.

EXT. WHEAT FIELD (EAST OF LUCY-TORCY ROAD) – DAY

The Marines steps over a pile of dead Germans, then enter a field of waist-high wheat sprinkled with red poppies. As our guys steps forward, five yards apart from each other, we realize that this line of Marines advancing goes on *for miles!* The line of Marines snakes over a hill, goes down, then back up the next hill, down, then back over the next hill in the far distance. German shells land in front of, behind, and occasionally in the American line. Nevertheless, the line moves forward. No one is running, no one is screaming.

Ahead of the Marines is an undulating, open, 400-yards of wheat. In the middle of the wheat is a 50-yard island of woods on a rise, all by itself. All of a sudden, there are flashes of fire and the ratchety chugging of four German Maxim guns spitting streams of hot lead from the wooded island into the line of approaching Marines. Stalks of wheat begin to drop around the Marines as though cut by a scythe.

Three bullets slam into the chest of Pvt. Knute Swenson. His helmet flies off, the rifle falls from his hands, and Swenson drops to the ground, 99% dead. All the Marines in the vicinity of the wooded island hit the dirt. On either side of Swenson are Hebel and Argaut. They watch as Swenson coughs blood, his eyes go glassy, and he mutters to himself.

SWENSON

Mama, help me. Please, mama, help me . . .

Meanwhile, bullets are whizzing right over their heads. Many other Marines have been hit up and down the line and painful moans are heard. Sgt. Daly has his face in the dirt, his rifle in hand.

DALY

(hollering)

OK boys, now we get to see if you been listening to me! Bayonet charge on three!

One, two, *three* . . .

The Marines all simultaneously stand, scream, and charge.

MARINES
AHHHHH!!!!

EXT. HILLTOP – DAWN

Colonel Catlin and his entourage of officers watch with field glasses as the Marines make their bayonet charge on the wooded island.

CATLIN
(proud)
By God! Will you look at that! It's the most beautiful sight I've ever seen in my life!

EXT. WHEAT FIELD (WEST OF WOODDED ISLAND) – DAWN

The Marines scream as they charge. Several unnamed Marines are hit and go down. Everyone else makes it to the woods, converge on the German machine gunners and skewer them with their bayonets. Two GERMAN GUNNERS jump to their feet, their hands in the air.

GERMAN GUNNERS
(together)
Kamerads!

The guys are about to stick them, too, when Lt. Cates steps in.

CATES
All right, all right. Who wants to take these prisoners back?

Argaut steps forward.

ARGAUT
I will, Lieutenant.

Gastovich turns to Zachio and whispers:

GASTOVICH
Ass-kisser.

Zachio's whole body shakes. He looks down at his rifle and bloody bayonet.

ZACHIO

I was gonna volunteer if he didn't. Jesus Christ, I stuck that guy right through the throat.

Matthews and Bonner step up to Zachio with the same expression. Captain Williams blows his whistle.

WILLIAMS

Let's keep moving, boys!

DALY

You heard the captain, *let's move!*

EXT. WHEAT FIELD (EAST OF WOODED ISLAND) – DAY

Our guys exit the cover of the wooded island, stepping back into the swaying wheat speckled with red poppies. Shells whistle in regularly, and every minute or so one comes close – or kills you.

200 yards ahead lies the foreboding darkness of Belleau Wood – a mile long strip of hilly woods with an old, round, stone hunting lodge, with its roof now blown off, at the north end – to the left. Gripping their rifles tightly, as wary as they've ever been in their lives, the Marines continue walking forward . . .

EXT. WITHIN BELLEAU WOOD – DAY

Belleau Wood is completely filled with German machine gun emplacements. There isn't a clear number to this day, but the Germans had been in possession of the wood and were digging in for an entire day, so – a couple of hundred machine guns – a thousand, possibly – let's just say a sufficient number to defend a piece of real estate this size from an infantry attack, which is what is presently occurring. The Germans wait in grim anticipation for the Americans to step into range . . .

EXT. WHEAT FIELD (WEST OF BELLEAU WOOD) – DAY

Meyers turns to Daly and mutters.

MEYERS

Ya know, hand grenades would be a nice idea about now. Why didn't they give us any?

DALY

Shit! All that bunk I been spoutin' about your
rifle bein' your best friend, I wouldn't mind havin'
a couple a tanks right now.
(to everyone)
Aim good, fellas, I smell Fritzie everywhere.

As does everyone else. This is crazy. Walking right into heavily fortified, well-concealed machine gun emplacements . . .

The Marines march steadily through the wheat, shells exploding all around them, Belleau Wood getting closer and closer.

Inevitably, the machine guns in Belleau Wood all open fire. Suddenly, thousands of bullets and tracer rounds are flying through the air. High-speed, red hot nails. The wheat is cut down in columns, many Marines along with it.

Several bullets hit Pvt. Ernest Arbuckle directly in the face and his head evaporates. Hughes and Bonner, on either side of Arbuckle, are spattered with his brains.

Everybody hits the dirt. Bullets and tracers whiz directly over everybody's heads, hitting their packs. Bullets puncture the canteen of Pvt. Bill French and he thinks he's bleeding until realizes it's just water. Bullets are thumping into the dirt everywhere. Shells are exploding. Stalks of wheat are falling over as streams of hot lead cut them down. All the Marines press their faces into the dirt. This is a tough situation.

EXT. HILLTOP – DAY

Colonel Catlin stands out in the open on a nearby hilltop and watches the action with binoculars. The other officers with him have all edged behind vehicles to avoid stray bullets.

CATLIN

Come on, boys. You can't let 'em pin you
down so soon. Get up! *Get up!*

As if to reassure the other officers of their good sense, a bullet slams into the radiator of one of the trucks. Steam hisses out. The officers look from the steam to Col. Catlin standing there in the open with his binoculars.

EXT. WHEAT FIELD (WEST OF BELLEAU WOOD) – DAY

The Marines are face down in the dirt. Bullets are crashing in, tracers streaming by,

men are moaning and hollering as bullets hit them. The situation is clearly intolerable. Everybody is frozen with fear.

Sgt. Dan Daly has a mouthful of dirt, which he spits out. He looks around and sees bullets tearing his fellow Marines to pieces. A bullet hits the ground directly in front of him pelting him in the eyes with dirt.

DALY

Fuck!

Daly tries taking deep breaths. Bullets continue to crash in all around him, his buddies scream as they are torn to pieces.

DALY

This is bullshit!!

Sgt. Daly gets up to his knees, bullets whizzing through the air all around him. He sights in on the southern-most machine gun in Belleau Wood and fires off his whole clip, then dives back on his face. He looks to his left and sees Bonner eating dirt, his Chauchat machine gun beside him.

DALY

Gimme that! Here take this!

Daly tosses Bonner his Springfield and grabs the Chauchat gun. He rises back to his knee, sights in and fires off a whole clip with the small French machine gun. Expended shells fly all over the place.

EXT. WITHIN BELLEAU WOOD – DAY

The four members of a German machine gun crew are ripped to pieces by Daly's well-aimed bullets.

EXT. WHEAT FIELD – DAY

Daly dives back on his face. He listens and realizes that the German machine gun that was firing right at him is silenced for the moment. Daly looks around and sees that this is the moment. He jumps to his feet and yells:

DALY

*All right, you sons of bitches! Do you want to live forever?!! **ATTACK!!!***

Daly begins kicking the men around him as hard as he can, getting them to stand,

which they reluctantly do.

DALY

Come on, you motherfuckers! Move it!!

With that, the Marines do as they're ordered—they all rise to their feet, scream at the top of their lungs, and attack.

MARINES

AHHHHH!!!!

SLOW MOTION:

With bayonets thrust forward, the Marines run full speed toward Belleau Wood. The German machine guns chatter incessantly, bullets and tracers sailing every which way. But the Marines are crazed, wild-eyed, screaming, dashing straight into the dark woods filled with the orange bursts of firing machine guns. Many, many Marines go down.

A bullet clangs off the top of Lt. Cates' helmet which goes sailing. He drops to the ground unconscious.

Bullets strike Pvt. Bill French in both legs and he goes down screaming.

A bullet takes off Hebel's right earlobe, although he hardly notices.

Marines are dropping everywhere, with every sort of bullet wound imaginable. As the Marines continue on toward the woods, the wheat field becomes increasingly more littered with dead, wounded and screaming Americans.

Sgt. Daly, bullets ripping the air all around him, screaming at the top of his lungs, leads the charge into the southern tip of Belleau Wood.

END SLOW MOTION:

EXT. HILLTOP – DAY

Colonel Catlin smiles as he watches the bayonet charge.

CATLIN

That's it, boys. Now you've got it. Show 'em what you're made of.

More stray bullets hit the side of the vehicle the other officers are crouched behind. A CAPTAIN speaks up.

CAPTAIN

Excuse me, Colonel Catlin, but perhaps you ought to step behind one of these vehicles with the rest of us?

CATLIN

Don't be ridiculous, we're no where near the action.

As if to point out the inaccuracy of Col. Catlin's statement, a bullet slams directly into his chest, spinning him around, and dropping him to the ground. The captain and several other officers crawl quickly out to the Colonel.

EXT. WITHIN BELLEAU WOOD (SOUTHERN TIP) – DAY

Sgt. Daly and his men come screaming into the southern tip of Belleau Wood, their weapons upraised, their bayonets out in front. They take on the four southern-most machine gun emplacements, with four Germans manning each. Daly runs up to the first machine gun emplacement spraying wildly with the Chauchat machine gun and takes out all four Germans himself.

Meyers, Bonner and Gastovich converge on the second machine gun emplacement. Bonner shoots a German point blank as he begins to raise his weapon, Gastovich and a German both fire and miss, then go at it hand to hand. Meyers goes to stick a German with his bayonet, only the German grabs it and with both hands stops the point from going into his face. Meyers pushes him onto his back and presses down on the rifle as hard as he can . . .

Williams and Matthews converge on the second machine gun emplacement and each shoot one of the Germans, then each bayonets the other German. The timing is perfect.

Hughes and Hebel rush the third emplacement, but these Germans are ready for them. These guys have pistols and rifles raised and all fire and all miss as the Marines dive madly on top of them. It's a hand to hand melee.

The point of Meyer's bayonet is touching the German's nose when it suddenly occurs to Meyers to pull his trigger, which he does, putting a big hole right through the German's face.

Sgt. Daly makes a quick tour of his men, many of whom are in the middle of hand to hand fights. Daly steps up and point-blank shoots the German each of his guys is struggling with the Chauchat machine gun. In every case his fellow Marines are very

thankful for the assistance.

The next German machine gun emplacement just north of them, swings its Maxim gun around and begins firing at our Marines, starting the battle *within* Belleau Wood.

Daly and his men take cover behind giant boulders, scrubby brush, and blackened, splintered trees. Bullets slam in all around them, ricocheting off rocks and pelting trees and the ground. Daly raises the sights on his Springfield rifle.

DALY

(calling out)

All right, boys, now let's see if you were paying any attention in target practice. You see the muzzle flash of that machine gun pinning us down? That's your target. Don't be shy.

All the Marines raise the sights on their rifles as well, aiming in on the muzzle flash. *BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!* – Springfield, bolt-action, .30 caliber rifles speak their piece. Bolts slam back and forth, expended shells sail into the air, dropping into piles in the dirt. Daly fires off another whole clip and the French Chauchat gun promptly falls to pieces.

There is a groan from behind the German machine gun, which begins spraying wildly through the treetops, then the shooting abruptly ceases. The gun has been silenced by the excellent marksmanship of the Marines. There are many more Germans and machine guns in the wood still firing at the Marines to the west, but for this moment the immediate vicinity is now quiet. Sgt. Daly stands up and looks around.

DALY

We got any officers here?

Captain Williams hesitantly stands up.

WILLIAMS

Yeah. Good work, sergeant. All right, let's form a line. You, private . . .

He points at Bonner who stands up.

BONNER

Yes, sir?

Capt. Williams pulls out a map and looks at it.

WILLIAMS

Report back to Colonel Neville's HQ. Tell 'em we've taken the southern most tip of these woods – uh . . .

(reads map)

. . . "*Bois de Belleau.*" That's Belleau Wood, I believe. Tell them it's heavily fortified, so we'll need plenty of ammo, food, grenades, and trench mortars if we can get them.

BONNER

(salutes)

Yes, sir.

Bonner takes off running. Daly waves his hand and yells.

DALY

You heard the captain, let's form a line. Every five yards, come on, let's go!

One by one the Marines step out in the open: Meyers, Matthews, Hughes, Hebel, and Gastovich. Daly looks around.

DALY

Who're we missing.

HUGHES

Arbuckle and Swenson.

GASTOVICH

And French.

MATTHEWS

Let's not forget Maggione.

MEYERS

Lt. Cates, Argaut, Zachio.

DALY

Yeah, yeah, let's form a line. Right now!

They form a line and begin cautiously moving north through the woods. Daly tosses the

Chauachat gun and picks up a Mauser rifle and some ammo off a dead German.

EXT. WHEAT FIELD (WEST OF BELLEAU WOOD) – DAY

Lt. Cates awakens in the wheat field with a trickle of blood running into his eyes from an enormous lump on his head. Cates touches the lump, quickly recoiling from the pain. He picks up his helmet and finds a big dent in it from the bullet hit. Putting on his helmet, which now sits crookedly, Cates stands and drunkenly staggers toward Belleau Wood. There are dead and wounded Marines everywhere. Machine guns continue to chatter from within the wood and bullets and tracers zip past Lt. Cates on both sides.

As Cates staggers past a shell hole, a hand reaches up, grabs him by the ankle and yanks him down. Cates falls into the shell hole to find PFC Argaut and two other guys crouched there. Cates blinks his eyes hard recognizing Argaut.

CATES

Argaut?

(Argaut nods)

Where are we?

ARGAUT

In hell, lieutenant.

Argaut removes Cates' helmet, pulls out his canteen and begins pouring some kind of red liquid on Cates' head. When it gets to Cates' mouth he sticks out his tongue and tastes it.

CATES

Is that wine?

ARGAUT

Yeah.

CATES

Goddamnit, don't pour it all over my head,
gimme a drink.

Cates grabs the canteen, takes a mighty swig, sticks out his tongue and pants for air.

CATES

(revived)

There.

Lt. Cates grabs the rifle and ammunition belt from a dead Frenchman.

CATES
Come on, let's get to the woods.

Argaut looks at the other guys, then at Cates skeptically.

ARGAUT
Are you sure, lieutenant?

CATES
Of course I'm *not* sure, it feels like someone just dropped a piano on my head. But we can't stay in this hole, can we? Now come on!

Lt. Cates jumps out of the shell hole and firing from the hip, dashes toward the wood. The other three guys shrug and follow along. Miraculously, Cates and Argaut make it into Belleau Wood. The other two Marines do not.

EXT. WITHIN BELLEAU WOOD – DAY

Lt. Cates and PFC Argaut enter the wood, quickly taking cover behind a big boulder. German machine guns are firing all around, bullets and tracers whipping through the underbrush. Argaut whispers into Cates' ear.

ARGAUT
Now what, lieutenant?

CATES
Hell, expect me to know just 'cause I'm an officer?

ARGAUT
(nods)
Yeah.

CATES
(shrugs)
Sorry. I don't.

EXT. WITHIN BELLEAU WOOD/ ANOTHER PART – DAY

Zachio crawls through the wood all alone, bullets and tracers zipping over his head,

tearing through the leaves, thumping into the undergrowth. It seems to be coming from everywhere. Zachio is about to cry he's so scared. He suddenly comes upon a rabbit hole in the dirt next to a rock. Zachio scuttles into the hole like a small animal. Once inside, we can see his frightened eyes peering out.

EXT. WITHIN BELLEAU WOOD – DAY

Williams, Daly and the men move stealthily through the underbrush. A German machine gun crew firing west hears them coming, swings around and begins firing at them. They all hit the dirt. Daly turns to the guys beside him.

DALY

Let's flank this bastard. Meyers, Hebel,
sneak around to the right.

(Meyers and Hebel nod
and take off. Daly looks
at Capt. Williams)

Sorry, Captain. Is that all right?

WILLIAMS

I think it's a fine idea, sergeant. I'll let you
know if I don't like what you're saying, you
can be sure.

DALY

(nods)

All right. Good.

Sgt. Daly reaches into his pocket and takes out a cigar in a metal tube. He breaks off a hunk, clamps it in his teeth, and puts the rest away for later.

Meyers and Hebel crawl through the thick, thorny, undergrowth, bullets whipping by. They top a little rise and see . . .

A German machine gun aiming right at them! It begins firing. Bullets zing off both of their helmets and come through the dirt on either side of them. Meyers and Hebel both scramble away, bullets just missing their butts.

Meanwhile, Daly, Williams and the others attack, firing from the hip, screaming at the top of their lungs. At the last moment, the Germans jump to their feet and raise their hands, but it's too damn late. Daly, Gastovich, Williams, and Matthews have too much momentum coming in, and end up both sticking *and* shooting them. Meyers and Hebel crawl up. For another brief moment bullets are *not* flying everywhere.

MEYERS

Where's everybody else?

WILLIAMS
(looks around)
Who knows? Where the hell's Bonner?

DALY
How we doin' on ammo?

Everybody checks their ammo belts.

GASTOVICH
Twenty rounds.

MEYERS
Twenty-five.

WILLIAMS
I've got ten rounds.

DALY
Five. But, we've got a German machine gun.
Let's hold up for a minute and see who shows
up? Maybe we're not even supposed to be in
this Goddamn place.

Everybody crowds around the machine gun, facing in all directions, lighting cigarettes.

EXT. WHEAT FIELD/ ANOTHER PART – DAY

Amongst the dead, dying, and wounded lying in the wheat, here comes "Wild" Bill French, crawling with only the use of his hands, dragging his useless, bloody legs. A WOUNDED MARINE reaches out to him.

WOUNDED MARINE
Help me!

French glances at the wounded Marine as he claws his way past.

FRENCH
(through clenched teeth)
Jump in a lake! I got my own problems.

EXT. WITHIN BELLEAU WOOD/ ANOTHER PART – DAY

In Belleau Wood, two Germans scamper up a hill holding a Maxim gun and a box of ammo. They set up on a little knoll next to a big rock. One German smokes while he loads in a belt of bullets. He drops his smoldering cigarette butt into a hole in the ground behind him.

Inside the hole is Zachio. The red-hot butt lands in his lap. Zachio picks it up, takes a puff, then quietly puts it out in the dirt. Zachio listens to the two Germans talking softly. Suddenly, both of them go silent, one telling the other to, "Shhh!" Zachio furrows his brow, then he hears Gastovich's voice.

GASTOVICH

(O.S.)

Goddamnit anyway, those are pickers!

DALY

(O.S.)

Shut up, Gastovich!

Zachio hears the bolt on the machine gun slide back quietly.

Daly, Gastovich, and the remaining guys are creeping through the underbrush. They don't see any German machine guns, like the one aiming right at them.

Zachio bursts out of the hole with a wild war cry. The Germans turn just in time to see the dirt-covered Marine shoot them both point-blank.

Daly and the guys hit the dirt.

DALY

(calling out)

Who's that?

Zachio stands there with a smoking rifle and two dead Germans.

ZACHIO

It's me, gunny.

DALY

Zachio, where you been?

ZACHIO

Waitin' to save your worthless behind.

Daly and the guys step up and look around.

DALY

You come outta that hole, Zachio?

ZACHIO

Yeah, I did. I was lost. I couldn't find nobody.
It seemed like a good hiding place.

MATTHEWS

(laughs)

'Til the Germans set up a machine gun on top
of your head.

ZACHIO

(nods)

Yeah. Is this all that's left?

Daly, Williams, Gastovich, Matthews, and Meyers all shrug. Just then there is movement from two different directions. Everyone, once again, hits the dirt. Someone comes stumbling through the foliage. Williams calls out:

WILLIAMS

Who goes there?

ARGAUT

(O.S.)

Fellas, don't shoot.

Argaut and Cates walk up.

MEYERS

Where have you guys been?

CATES

Who knows?

Cates steps over to Daly and speaks to him.

CATES

How are you doin', sergeant?

DALY

OK.

CATES

For a guy that's not fighting anymore, that was one helluva nice charge you just lead.

DALY

Thanks.

CATES

What happened?

DALY

I got mad. I tried not to, but I got mad anyway.

CATES

Well, thank God you did.

Just then Bonner comes crawling up.

BONNER

(sounds like his nose
is stuffed)

Marines! Don' shoot!

DALY

Where the hell have you been?

Bonner stands up and his face is covered with blood.

BONNER

I got shot.

Daly takes some bandages and cotton out of his pack.

DALY

Where?

BONNER

True the doze.

Everyone can't help it, they start laughing. Daly wipes Bonner's face.

BONNER
(laughing)
It's dot fuddy.

WILLIAMS
Did you get back to command?

BONNER
(nods)
Colonel Neville says, "Continue to advance,
Goddabit!"

GASTOVICH
What do we do about ammo?

DALY
Take it off the dead, and anything else that
looks usable.

HEBEL
(shocked)
Our own guys?

DALY
That's right, they sure as hell don't need it
no more. 'Sides, German ammo's the wrong
caliber. But check the dead Hun, too. They
might have some food on 'em.

They all begin picking through the pockets of the dead. Matthews is going through a dead German's pockets when suddenly the German's eyes open and he grabs Matthews' throat in a vice-like, death-grip. Matthews gags, panicking, no idea what to do. Sgt. Daly steps up and bayonets the German in the chest. With a twist of the bayonet, the German's hand drops from around Matthews' throat, allowing him to take a breath of fresh air.

MATTHEWS
Thanks.

DALY
Don't mention it.

Daly yanks out the bloody bayonet. Matthews rubs his sore throat.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. HILLTOP – DUSK

This is the same hilltop where Colonel Catlin got hit. The sun is just setting, throwing golden light on Belleau Wood. It would be hard to tell from here that a battle is raging within. Shells still explode occasionally in the wheat field, and moaning can be heard in the distance.

A bloody hand comes over the lip of the hill, then another. It's "Wild" Bill French, clawing his way to safety. Each crab-like movement is a nightmare, but Wild Bill grits his teeth, snarls, and keeps going.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. HILLTOP – NIGHT

From on top of the hill we see Belleau Wood at night. There are muzzle flashes within the wood, then the distant reports of the weapons. There is a constant stream of flares fired into the air. They float down on their little parachutes lighting up everything in a weird, white, wavering, sodium glare.

Our view tilts down to the hilltop. We find "Wild" Bill French about four feet further then when we last saw him. He is lying on his face, dead, his fingers still clawing into the dirt.

EXT. WITHIN BELLEAU WOOD – NIGHT

Hebel and Argaut dash through the foliage carrying a wooden ammunition crate between them. As they make their way through the darkened woods, weird, twisting shadows creep all around as flares float down. Bullets and tracers still whip through the undergrowth in every direction. Hebel and Argaut make it to their buddies. They pry open the crate revealing loaded ammo belts, hand grenades, a flare gun, and flares.

DALY

Now we're talkin' business.

Everybody buckles on a new ammo belt, clipping grenades onto the straps of their gas mask cases. Suddenly, it gets kind of quiet. There are still shells exploding here and there, and the crackle of distant gunfire, but no bullets sailing over their heads. They all turn and look at each other. Between the moving shadows and the unnatural quiet, it's very eerie.

And then there is the loud, war-cry of the Germans attacking.

GERMANS

(yelling)

AHHHHH!!!!

Daly swings around the German Maxim gun while everyone else aims in and starts firing their rifles. Argaut feeds the belt of bullets into the machine gun. Germans are streaming at them, dropping left and right as the Marines expertly take them down. And now they have grenades to throw, too. Daly's eyes are wide as he fires the big machine gun. Then the ammo belt gets hung up and the Maxim gun stops firing.

DALY

Argaut, what the hell's wrong wi –

Daly sees that Argaut has been shot through the throat, lying on the ground gasping for air, blood bubbling from his mouth. Gastovich drops his rifle, jumps over to the machine gun and begins feeding the bullets for Daly with one hand while holding Argaut's head up with the other.

GASTOVICH

Don't choke, buddy, just keep breathin'.

Argaut does keep breathing for the moment. Lt. Cates, Cpl. Meyers, and Pvts. Matthews, Hebel, Bonner, Hughes, and Zachio all have crazed expressions of their faces – almost monster-like with the light of the flares – as they fire their weapons, kill Germans, and reload . . .

DISSOLVE:

EXT. WITHIN BELLEAU WOOD – DAWN

The Germans have stopped attacking for the moment, so the Americans have stopped killing them. They are unshaven, bleary-eyed and ready to kill any Goddamn thing that moves. Argaut is dead. They all pilfer rations off the dead Germans – in many instances, hardtack covered with the blood of the dead Germans. The Marines hungrily eat it and anything else edible they can find.

A TITLE READS: **“SIX DAYS LATER – JUNE 12th”**

Capt. Williams steps up to Lt. Cates, who in turn walks up to Sgt. Daly. All three look crazy, wild-eyed, dirty and mean.

CATES

Get 'em together, sergeant, we're moving north.

Daly waves his hand.

DALY
(calling out)
OK gyrenes! Look lively! We're movin' out!

Everyone grumbles and starts moving. Gastovich walks past Daly.

GASTOVICH
Are you crazy, gunny? Look *lively*? We ain't had more'n hour's sleep a night for over a week. I didn't think human beings could live with this little sleep –

ZACHIO
— Or food –

HUGHES
(scratches his ass)
— Or a Goddamn bath.

DALY
(grins)
Aww, that's too bad. What did ya think you was gonna get when you joined the Marines? A massage and a footbath?

Hebel looks off into the distance.

HEBEL
(wistfully)
I don't even remember joining the Marines. That happened to somebody else in a different life. Some guy named Hebel I met once. Sort of a quiet guy, didn't talk much. The other guys thought he was an odd-duck. That's 'cause he was. Then he got to this Goddamn hell-hole called Belleau Wood and suddenly none of that other horseshit mattered one little bit anymore.

Everyone chuckles. This is the most they've ever heard him speak. Meyers gives Hebel a friendly punch on the arm.

MEYERS

Hebel, you're a peach, ya know that? Where you from?

HEBEL

You mean the old Hebel?
(Meyers nods)
From Baltimore.

MEYERS

What's Baltimore like?

HEBEL

(thinks)
Uh . . . It's like Baltimore.

GASTOVICH

When you get back, Hebel, you can get a job as a tour guide.

(imitating a tour guide)

Over there is a place where somethin' important happened, but I can't remember what or when.

(changing subjects)

Shit, I forget everything in my whole life but my Goddamned feet.

ZACHIO

Feet, ha! I didn't think a human being could go a whole Goddamn week without shittin'. It ain't right! It's against God.

Everyone starts to grumble simultaneously.

Lt. Cates comes dashing up to Capt. Williams.

CATES

They're trying to flank us, captain. I heard a lot of movement out there.

WILLIAMS

We got any grenades left?

Hughes, Meyers, and Hebel each hold out a grenade.

MEYERS

I was savin' this.

DALY

For what? My birthday? It ain't until December.

(turns to Cates)

Where are they?

Lt. Cates puts his finger to his lips for quiet. Everybody looks warily around them. There doesn't seem to be anything, not a sound, nothing. And then there is the familiar, shrill, whistle of approaching shells.

MEYERS

In-coming!

Everybody hits the dirt and covers their heads.

Wheeeeeeeee . . . A shell comes whistling in, and . . . *Fump!* It sounds like a dud. Then another, *Wheeeeeeeee . . . Fump!* Another dud?

Everybody looks up with quizzical expressions.

DALY

(realizes)

Gas!!! Put on your masks!!

The guys all fumble with their awkward gas masks, trying to get them out of their cases and on the heads.

Meanwhile, mustard gas shells keep thumping in and popping – *Fump! Fump! Fump!* – followed by a thick, mustard yellow gas blowing out, engulfing the area like ground fog. It also clings to the trees, swirling up the trunks. The gas travels right over big rocks, through crevices, and fills ravines. The yellow creeping nightmare finds our guys, all in their gas masks, seeps right over and engulfs them, causing them to disappear from view. We can hear one single muffled cry coming from within the gaseous cloud, although there's no way to tell who it is.

The yellow gas silently swirls around Belleau Wood. The silence is broken by the aggravated snarls of the Marines as they begin scratching themselves all over their bodies – the gas combined with the wool uniforms and sweat is its own particular torture. Next comes the distant sound of people yelling.

The Marines all look at each other through steamed-up gas mask goggles – what's that? They cock their weapons and find prone firing positions behind cover. Yes, sir, a German attack. The Marines sight in, the gas masks really getting in the way. Daly tries to speak, but is totally distorted through the mask. He yanks it off.

DALY

Hold on. Let 'em get into range. And . . .
fire!

The Marines open up with their rifles, once again showing great skill in marksmanship. Germans in gas masks drop everywhere. One by one the Marines shed their gas masks – there's Bonner, Zachio, Hughes, Meyers, Hebel, Cates, Williams – sighting in, firing, working the bolt, expended shells flying. The last three hand grenades are thrown – BOOM!! BOOM!! BOOM!! Just as Gastovich pull off his gas mask, several bullets hit him at the same time tearing him to pieces. He drops to the gas-covered ground, dead.

The Germans are repelled; their attack fails. Our guys sigh, quickly tearing off their shirts, savagely scratching at their chests and armpits. Then they all stop, turn and see . . .

Matthews is still curled up in a ball on the ground wearing his gas mask. Hughes hesitantly steps up, takes Matthews' shoulder and turns him over – he flops onto his back, the gas mask falls off, yellow smoke swirls out – Matthews has asphyxiated; he's dead.

Hughes picks up the mask, shaking the gas out of it. He puts it up to his face, tries to breathe, then removes it.

HUGHES

Doesn't work.

Hughes tosses the gas mask next to Matthews' corpse, which is right beside Gastovich's corpse. Everyone else turns back to their scratching.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. WITHIN BELLEAU WOOD - DAWN

A can of the French rations fondly called Monkey Meat is opened like a sardine can with a key. All our guys, the ones that remain – Williams, Cates, Daly, Meyers, Zachio, Bonner, and Hughes – all wait eagerly for their portion. How to cut one can seven ways is a problem, but each guy gets a bite.

A TITLE READS: **“FOUR DAYS LATER – JUNE 16th”**

They are carefully chewing their one bite of the greasy, meat-like substance when they hear a sound in front of them and freeze.

A smiling Marine comes walking up.

SMILING MARINE

Hi, fellas.

DALY

Who're you?

SMILING MARINE

A fellow Marine. The Coro-nel says we should skedaddle back that way. Fast!

DALY

The "Coro-nel" says we should "skedaddle," eh?

SMILING MARINE

(smiles)

Precisely.

Daly raises his .45 pistol and shoots the smiling Marine in the head, killing him. Everyone is both startled and shocked.

DALY

"Coro-nel" my ass!

WILLIAMS

Gunny, what did you do?

DALY

I just shot a German, that's what I did.

WILLIAMS

How could you be so sure he was a German?
What if he wasn't?

DALY

Go ahead. Check.

They check. He has parts of a German uniform under the American uniform. They

also find a piece of hardtack in his pocket and split it up. Meyers shakes his head in disbelief, breathing hard.

MEYERS

This has all gone too far. What's the point?
What's the Goddamn point?

DALY

Marines don't ask that, Meyers. Not the long-haulers.

MEYERS

(realizes)

No, probably not. Guess I'm not a long-hauler then.

A VOICE comes out of the south. Everybody raises their weapons and turns.

VOICE

Marines! Don't shoot!

WILLIAMS

Who goes there?

VOICE

Staff Sergeant Wood, Brigade Headquarters.

WILLIAMS

Show yourself.

Staff Sgt. Wood, whom we have met before, steps out into the open with his hands up. Williams points down at the dead smiling German.

WILLIAMS

We just killed us a German spy, what makes me think you're not one?

WOOD

(flatly)

'Cause I'm not. I'm on General Harbord's staff. We're clearing Belleau Wood. All Marines are being evacuated out the south end.

(points over his shoulder)

On the double.

HEBEL

Is there hot food?

WOOD

I didn't see any field kitchens.

HEBEL

He's on our side. The Boche would at least say there was hot food to trick us.

WOOD

How long you boys been in here?

They all look at each other's bleary, unshaven faces, and shrug.

DALY

Since it started, whenever that was?

WOOD

June sixth. Today's the sixteenth.

DALY

Ten days.

BONNER

Plus five days waiting . . .

ZACHIO

Plus another day on the truck . . .

HUGHES

(scratching)

I gotta get this uniform off and take a Goddamn bath – I'm goin' crazy!

They look around and see Marines as bad off and ragged-looking as they are streaming south through the wood.

WOOD

And by the way, the General sends his compliments, to you men. Good work.

WILLIAMS

(shrugs)

I don't care if he is a German, let's go, boys.

Let's get out while the gettin's good.

Everybody grunts, hoists their stuff and starts walking. Hughes turns to Daly.

HUGHES

You think the battle's over, gunny?

DALY

Probably.

HUGHES

Did we win?

ZACHIO

Maybe we lost.

CATES

Maybe we're dead.

Everybody nods; that would explain it. Hughes turns to a battered, NAMELESS MARINE walking south.

HUGHES

Hey, buddy? Did we win or lose?

NAMELESS MARINE

What? The war?

HUGHES

No, the battle.

NAMELESS MARINE

And if you knew, what then?

HUGHES

(shakes his head)

I don't know.

Everybody trudges south through the wood, past the dead bodies and pools of yellow gas.

EXT. WHEAT FIELD (SOUTH OF BELLEAU WOOD)/ ROAD TO LUCY – DAY

Battered Marines come streaming out the south end of Belleau Wood – it's been as bad for all of them as for our guys. They form a ragged column of the grittiest, grimmest,

filthiest, toughest, ripped-up, bloody, sons of bitches that God ever did the favor of smiling on and not killing. They march through the wheat and sit down on the edge of the road.

The Marines stare at the ground or off into the distance. And then, one by one, they hear something down the road which causes them to look up. What the hell is that? Singing?

It's the doughboys – the Army – clean, young, inexperienced boys marching eagerly into war singing *Yankee Doodle Dandy*.

DOUGHBOYS

(singing)

I'm a Yankee Doodle dandy/ Yankee Doodle do
or die/ The real live nephew of my Uncle Sam/
Born on the Fourth of July/ I've a Yankee Doodle
sweetheart/ She's my Yankee Doodle joy/ Yankee
Doodle went to London, just to ride the ponies/ I
am that Yankee Doodle boy.

The Marines look at the doughboys like they're Martians. The Army boys stop singing and look at the beat-up Marines as though they were portents of hell, which in fact they are. They all exchange long glances. There's nothing the Marines can tell the doughboys that will help them. There's nothing the doughboys can ask that won't sound trivial. So they pass in a strange, defiant silence. Finally, Zachio breaks the pall.

ZACHIO

Hey, doughboy, gotta smoke?

A young, clean-faced DOUGHBOY pulls out a pack of Sweet Caporals.

DOUGHBOY

Sure thing, Marine.

Suddenly, all the doughboys are offering cigarettes to the Marines, who all gratefully accept. The doughboys light the Marines' cigarettes.

DOUGHBOY

I s'pose you haven't heard what the Hun named
you Marines?

sZACHIO

What?

DOUGHBOY

Teufel hunden.

ZACHIO

What's zat?

DOUGHBOY

Devil dogs.

The Marines all look at each other and nod – they like it. The doughboys hustle back into line. The Marines are now puffing away on smokes, with extras behind their ears.

At the very end of the line of doughboys is their First Sergeant – TOP KICK – whom we met earlier in the Le Chat Noir Club. He and Daly exchange a smile and a salute.

The Marines all sit there for a minute puffing on their smokes. This is followed by an uncomfortable silence.

BONNER

(sadly)

Swenson . . .

MEYERS

. . . And Matthews . . .

ZACHIO

. . . And Maggione, and Gastovich . . .

HUGHES

. . . And Argaut, and Arbuckle –

DALY

— And my grandma and grandpa, God bless their souls. Now let's just knock that horseshit off, OK!

Just up the road a little bit, the trucks of the 7th Motorized Machine Gun Battalion drive up and stop. Capt. Houghton, Lt. Bissell, and the others get out of the trucks. They too look like they've had the shit kicked out of them.

HOUGHTON

Leave the machine guns behind, gentlemen.

BISSELL

And the trucks?

HOUGHTON
Yes, Lieutenant. We're leaving them, too.

BISSELL
But we're a motorized machine gun battalion,
Captain, not infantry.

Capt. Houghton lines up his fancy stick for a drive.

HOUGHTON
Oh, then it must be a mistake. I suppose we don't
have to go then.
(looks into a truck)
By the way, is there a rifle in there for me?

BISSELL
Sure thing, Captain. Look, it's brand new.

HOUGHTON
Would you mind carrying it for me?

BISSELL
Don't'cha wanna fight?

HOUGHTON
(pulls his .32 Colt pistol)
Of course, but I have this pistol. And I used
to be quite good with one of these. I was on
Yale's pistol team, you know?

BISSELL
No, I didn't. I didn't go to Yale. I did go to jail,
once, though.

HOUGHTON
Actually, I found them to be very much the
same thing.

Bissell nods, slinging the Captain's rifle.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. LA LOGE FARM/ HQ – NIGHT

This is a storybook farm with a multitude of military vehicles parked in front. A

motorcycle drives up in front of the farmhouse. Sgt. Wood dismounts and goes inside.

INT. FARMHOUSE – NIGHT

Sgt. Wood steps up to Gen. Harbord and Col. Neville and salutes.

HARBORD

Yes, sergeant?

WOOD

Belleau Wood is clear of U.S. troops, sir.

HARBORD

Completely?

WOOD

Completely, sir.

Picks up the handset of the field telephone and turns the crank.

HARBORD

Outstanding. Get me Captain McCloskey,
12th Field Artillery, please.

(pause)

Captain McCloskey? You're on.

STOCK SHOTS: The big guns begin firing – BAM!! BAM!! BAM!! – soldiers in undershirts and helmets hoist 155mm shells, hand them off to the next guy, until an artilleryman slams the shell home into a hulking artillery piece, then – BAM!! This is repeated over and over . . .

EXT. WHEAT FIELD/ ROAD TO LUCY – NIGHT

The Marines and the soldiers turn and watch as shells begin cascading in on Belleau Wood. The faces of all the men light up as the wood is wracked with one explosion after the next after the next . . .

The VOICE-OVER NARRATOR is heard again.

V.O. NARRATOR

Although these were very short-lived records in 1918, the Americans now laid on the largest, most brutal artillery barrage in history – for fourteen hours Belleau Wood is mercilessly pounded with over a

million and a half shells!

EXT. BELLEAU WOOD – NIGHT

We now view the most spectacular concentration of artillery fire ever seen. Gigantic explosions tear Belleau Wood to smithereens. It is an awesome sight to behold. Man decimating nature, and doing a darn good job of it.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. WHEAT FIELD/ ROAD TO LUCY – DAWN

As dawn arrives, our guys are still sitting watching the artillery barrage. There isn't an entire tree left standing in Belleau Wood. Out in front of the troops stands Colonel Neville, wearing a helmet, holding a rifle and looking down at his watch. As abruptly as the artillery barrage began, it now ceases. It quickly becomes unnaturally quiet. Birds, the eternal optimists, begin to sing.

A TITLE READS: “**JUNE 25th – 5:00 A.M.**”

Sgt. Daly stands before his men.

DALY

Fix bayonets.

The men do as they're told. Bayonets snap into place.

Colonel Neville puts his whistle in his mouth and blows. All the Captains, including Capt. Williams and Capt. Houghton, blow their whistles, too. The Marines, as well as the doughboys, step off the road and into the wheat. For a change of pace, no one is shooting at them. It's only a short way into the remains of Belleau Wood . . .

EXT. BELLEAU WOOD (WITHIN) – DAY

Belleau Wood looks like the bottom of a barbecue: black, twisted, and charred. The men make their way through wreckage and, miraculously, there are still living Germans that pop up and begin shooting at them.

The Marines first, then the doughboys following after, scream holy terror and attack. Firing from the hip and jabbing with their bayonets they run at top speed through the smoldering obstacle course. The Germans, though, put up a strong defense and before you know it the Americans are stopped. Daly takes a bullet through his arm and goes down, then crawls to cover.

Everyone else crouches down in the blackened soot and takes cover as the Germans attack. Bullets rip through the air over their heads. The battle's on again . . .

Daly grits his teeth and holds tightly on to his wounded arm.

DALY
Shit, shit, shit!!

Lt. Cates crawls up beside Daly. He too looks like hell.

CATES
How's it going, Gunny?

DALY
Lordy, did I pick the wrong month to find inner peace.

CATES
Well, at least you had it for a minute.

DALY
(shrugs)
Did I?

Cates shrugs, too, then helps Daly bind his wound.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. BELLEAU WOOD (WITHIN) – NIGHT

A sodium flare explodes in the night sky illuminating Belleau Wood. Everybody is now blackened with soot, streaked, smeared and grimy. Bullets continue to whiz all over the place. Weird shadows move and twist as the flares come down.

A TITLE READS: **“THREE DAYS LATER – JUNE 28TH”**

Daly's arm doesn't look very good, the battle dressing is soaked through with blood and filthy. Daly pokes at it and winces in pain.

DALY
What's with these Goddamn Germans?
We're supposed to be the Devil Dogs,
not *them*.

Cates has one of his boots off and savagely scratches his foot.

CATES

It looked like we dropped every Goddamn bomb we had on them. These sons of bitches just won't get the idea.

Hebel looks crazy.

HEBEL

I say we sneak up on the sons of bitches, see. Dig a tunnel and pop up behind 'em.

Everybody looks at Hebel and shakes their head.

DALY

You just keep thinkin', Hebel. You're bound to come up with a good idea sooner or later.

Hebel looks straight at Daly.

HEBEL

Oh really? So what're we gonna do? Just stay here in this stinkin' shit-hole and fight the Germans forever? Is that the plan? Huh?

MEYERS

Calm down, Hebel. Jesus!
(turns to Bonner)

Remember when this guy wouldn't talk at all? Now he won't shut up.

Zachio is clearly sick, his nose red and running. He is busily packing and unpacking his pack. Hughes is busily cleaning his rifle, while alternately scratching his crotch, where bad things are obviously occurring.

ZACHIO

So is it like this now forever?

HUGHES

Like what?

ZACHIO

Like *this!* We attack, they stop us; they

attack, we stop them, on and on and on,
until hell freezes over?

MEYERS

What do you think, Zachio, we got some
extra information you didn't get? We're
all sittin' here in the same stinkin' hole.

DALY

Oh, shut up already, will ya! You's guys
is drivin' me crazy!

Capt. Williams comes limping up.

WILLIAMS

We attack at 0530. Pass the word.

DALY

Yes, sir.

WILLIAMS

How're you doing, Gunny?

DALY

Couldn't be better. You?

WILLIAMS

How'd I manage to get Trench Foot, we're
not even in a trench.

DALY

'Cause you're lucky.

(he turns to his guys)

All right, we attack at 0530. Pass the
word.

ZACHIO

Oh, ain't that just peachy. Here we go
again.

Daly moves down the line, spreading the word. Once again, everyone prepares to go into battle: bayonets are affixed to the ends of rifles, clips of bullets are loaded into the rifles, extra clips are shoved into ammo pouches, half-eaten cans of rations are tossed aside.

Col. Neville, looking as grimy and sooty as everyone else, moves along the line, with a few filthy-looking officers in tow, making sure everybody is ready to fight. Neville and his people stop beside Williams and Cates. Everyone looks down at their watches.

The first thin rays of daylight filter through the charred limbs of the trees.

Col. Neville puts a whistle in his mouth as he looks intently down at his wrist watch. Finally, he blows the whistle loud.

NEVILLE

Move it out!

DALY

You heard the man, *let's move it!!*

The Americans cautiously start forward through the charred, twisted trees. Suddenly, German's pop up from all over the place and begin firing a lot of bullets at the approaching Marines. The Americans begin to holler crazed war cries as they attack through the hail of fire. It is now a mad rush through Belleau Wood.

Once again, the German's put up a strong defense and the Americans are stopped. A thousand hand-to-hand battles begin.

Daly finds himself with his hands around the throat of a big German soldier who also has his hands around Daly's throat. They tussle around and when they roll onto Daly's wounded arm the German sees Daly obviously wince and moves him back over onto his injured arm. Daly winces again as he is strangled . . .

Capt. Williams finds himself in a fencing match with rifles and bayonets. The two soldiers circle each other while thrusting, parrying, and jabbing . . .

Zachio crawls through the cinders, popping up every now and then, firing, then dropping back down and out of sight . . .

Hughes moves in a low crouch. A German pops up directly in front of him. They look right into each other's faces, raise their weapons, and Hughes simply fires quicker, blowing the German's head off . . .

Hebel is running and screaming like a complete crazy man. He suddenly takes a bullet right through the face and goes down, lost in the melee.

Captain Lloyd Williams is shot through the heart, falls to the ground, and dies.

Daly and the big German, meanwhile, are still trying to strangle each other. The German has Daly on his side of his wounded arm and is pounding him down on the

ground, causing Daly to wince each time. Daly suddenly lets go of the German's throat with one hand, reaches to the holster on his belt, removes the .45, swings the barrel right up under the German's throat and fires—brains and the helmet go sailing out the back of the German's head. Daly tosses the dead German aside, turns and he has a truly fucked-up crazy look on his face. He looks like he might spit or scream or just blow up.

DALY
Sons of bitches!!!

Daly pushes through some brush and finds a whole nest of Germans. Daly plugs each and everyone of them—five in a row—with his .45. He raises the pistol over his head, pushes the release button and the expended clip drops out. He has another clip out of the pouch on his belt and jams it into the bottom of the pistol. He looks around and sees another nest of Germans just up ahead.

Daly cocks his .45, screams like a maniac and runs right at the Germans. They all turn and see him as he arrives with his .45 blazing. Daly shoots all six of these guys, goes crashing into some foliage and comes out . . .

EXT. WHEAT FIELD/ NORTH END OF BELLEAU WOOD – DAY

. . . At the north end of Belleau Wood and into a huge wheat field. The old, round, stone, hunting lodge with its roof blown off, is to his left, Belleau Wood is behind him. Daly stands there out in the open looking completely insane—he's wincing at the brightness, blocking the sunlight with his smoking pistol.

A moment later other American Marines begin popping out into the wheat field from Belleau Wood's north end. They all look as dazed, befuddled and messed-up as Daly.

Colonel Neville appears, too, with an assistant holding a field telephone. He speaks into the handset.

NEVILLE
Hello, General Harbord? Yes, sir, Belleau
Wood is now *exclusively* U.S. Marine Corps.

Everybody lets out a big cheer. Daly lights his cigar, picks some tobacco off his teeth, flicks it and spits. Meyers lets his rifle drop from his hands. Cates smiles, rubbing the lump on his head. Hughes drops to his knees, lets his head fall back, and starts to laugh. Zachio grins and pushes Bonner who also starts to chuckle, then grabs his bandaged nose in pain.

Capt, Houghton, Lt. Bissell, and the other men of the 7th Motorized Machine Gun Battalion, all begin to appear out of the woods looking like they've been through hell.

And just then the doughboys begin to appear, stepping wearily out of Belleau Wood. They look nearly as beat-up as the Marines – and, of course, there are now a lot less of them. They stumble through the wheat, up to the road where the Marines stand watching.

Daly looks around for someone. He sees the wiry Army Corporal from the Le Chat Noir Club.

DALY
Where's your big Top Kick?

The Corporal shakes his head.

Daly rubs his chin, looking saddened.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. CROSSROAD – DAY

The Marines march up to the waiting line of trucks at the crossroads. Sgt. Wood comes pattering up on his motorcycle.

WOOD
For those of you being pulled back, you will
return with the same groups you arrived in.
Let's move it, boys, there's hot food and
showers waiting for us back there.

The Marines begin climbing into the trucks, the Vietnamese drivers are hanging around smoking cigarettes.

INT. TRUCK – DAY

Our guys climb aboard one by one. They help each other get in, then sit quietly on the wooden benches and look around. There are quite a few empty seats. Everybody can't help but notice. The Vietnamese driver appears at the back of the truck.

VIETNAMESE DRIVER
No more?

Daly shakes his head.

DALY
No more.

The driver nods sadly, leaving their view to get into the cab. The truck shudders as the engine turns over. Everybody is quiet and contemplative, the empty seats speaking volumes.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. THE CHEVAL BLANC CLUB – NIGHT

A cigarette butt drops into a pile of five others on the pavement. Yvonne, the attractive, thirty year old waitress, appears out the back door of the Cheval Blanc Club. As she passes an old wagon, Yvonne glances into the shadows and there crouches Zachio, grinning and waiting for her. He jumps to his feet, walking along beside her.

ZACHIO

Bon jour, Yvonne.

YVONNE

(smiles)

Bon soir, Provet. It's nighttime. So, you have been fighting?

(Zachio nods)

*You will come home and tell *maman* and me all about it?*

(Zachio nods again)

Bon!

Yvonne takes Zachio's arm and the two disappear around the corner.

DISSOLVE:

INT. APARTMENT ABOVE THE BAKERY – NIGHT

M. LaFollette sits morosely in his chair. The chessmen repose on the chessboard in their starting positions. M. LaFollette looks grimly down at the chessboard, then drinks his glass of wine. He pours himself another glass, closing his eyes and hanging his head.

The front doorbell rings. M. LaFollette's head jerks up, his eyes popping open, a mild look of hope on his face.

INT. BAKERY – NIGHT

M. LaFollette comes down the stairs, steps up to the front door and opens it. There stands Hughes, smiling.

HUGHES
Bon jour, Monsieur LaFollette.

M. LaFollette puts his hand to his heart, sighs, then smiles happily.

LAFOLLETTE
 Ah, *Monsieur* Hughes. You are alive.

HUGHES
 (nods)
 Yes, I am.

M. LaFollette welcomes Hughes inside.

LAFOLLETTE
Entrez, s'il vous plait.

HUGHES
Merci.

Hughes enters the bakery. M. LaFollette shuts the door.

INT. NATALIE 'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

Natalie, the very cute, dark-haired, seventeen year old girl, lies in her bed, asleep. She hears the branch of the tree outside scraping at her window. Her eyes open and a smile appears on her face.

NATALIE
 (happily)
 Ah, Matthews, *mon amour*.

She jumps out of bed in her white nightgown, dashes to the window and looks out . . .

EXT. NATALIE'S HOUSE – NIGHT

. . . We see Natalie at the upstairs window looking out – there's no one there; it's just the wind blowing the branches of the tree. Natalie lowers her head sadly, slowly turning away from the window.

DISSOLVE:

INT. YMCA KITCHEN – NIGHT

Mary McBrian, the forty-year old woman in a Salvation Army uniform, washes coffee mugs in the kitchen of the YMCA. As she scrubs the mugs and sets them aside, we can see that her eyes are red. Finally, Mary sits down, dries her hands and lights a cigarette. As she takes a puff, she glances down at the floor – there is the pile of butts she and Hebel smoked together. Mary kicks them aside, dropping her face into her hands and sobbing.

The back door to the kitchen opens with a creak. Mary glances up quickly.

MARY
(hopefully)
Frank?

The dark figure in the doorway steps forward and, in fact, it is Private Franklin Hebel, a bandage around the entire lower half of his face. Mary can't believe it. She's so happy that she jumps to her feet and hugs Hebel tightly.

MARY
Oh, Frank, Frank, what happened? Are you all right?

Hebel makes muffled, mumbling sounds, then takes out a pad of paper and a pencil. He writes, "I got shot through the mouth. I can't talk."

Mary hugs Hebel again, even tighter than before.

MARY
That's OK, Frank, you don't have to talk. I can do all the talking for both of us.

Hebel raises his hands and hugs Mary back.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. LE CHAT NOIR CLUB – NIGHT

Sgt. Daly steps outside the Le Chat Noir Club, wearing a clean uniform with one of his arms in a sling. He flicks his cigarette butt and goes inside.

INT. LE CHAT NOIR CLUB – NIGHT

Daly steps inside and looks around. No one familiar sitting at the bar; no familiar anywhere. He frowns, scratches his chin, turns around and exits the club.

EXT. STREET – NIGHT

Daly comes walking up in front of the butcher shop and the bright yellow door. Just as he's about to knock, Brigitte opens the door and comes out, dressed up and looking good.

BRIGITTE

(smiles)

Ah! The great Sergeant Daly, who doesn't get angry or fight.

DALY

(grins)

That's me.

BRIGITTE

It looks like you've been fighting anyway.

DALY

Me? Naw! I told ya, I don't go in for that sort of thing.

BRIGITTE

So how did you hurt your arm?

DALY

A fella hit me with his pillow. But he's a really nice guy and didn't mean it. So, where are you off to this fine evening?

BRIGITTE

I was thinking of perhaps getting a drink.

DALY

Ah! What a novel idea. May I join you?

BRIGITTE

Please.

She takes hold of Daly's good arm and they go walking off together.

DISSOLVE:

INT. TRUCK – DAY

We're back in the idling truck with our guys: Daly, Meyers, Hughes, Bonner, Zachio, and Cates. They all sit quietly, still thinking about the empty seats all around them. We see a quick smiling, laughing moment in the truck on the way to Belleau Wood of each of the missing guys: Arbuckle, Argaut, French, Gastovich, (Hebel), Maggione, Matthews, Swenson, and Williams.

EXT. CROSSROAD – DAY

The long line of trucks begins pulling away from the crossroad heading back west, from whence they came.

EXT. HILLTOP – DAY

We are on the familiar hilltop looking down on Belleau Wood and the surrounding wheat fields. Belleau Wood is blackened, charred, and utterly destroyed.

EXT. WOODED ISLAND – DAY

In the wooded island in the middle of the wheat field, we see several dead German soldiers beside a Maxim gun.

V.O. NARRATOR

The allies would finally win the war after five more months of very brutal fighting. However, the German soldiers that were killed on the west side of Belleau Wood were the ones that made it further west than any other Germans during the entire war. Belleau Wood is where the German advance on Paris was stopped dead. By the Americans.

EXT. WHEAT FIELD (WEST OF BELLEAU WOOD) – DAY

The wheat field west of Belleau Wood is strewn with dead Marines. The remains of Belleau Wood loom beyond.

V.O. NARRATOR

27,000 Americans fought at Belleau Wood; 10,000 were wounded; 2000 died. On June 6th 1918, the United States Marine Corps lost more men on a single day than ever before—

one thousand and fifty-seven. Belleau Wood was renamed by the French, "*Bois de la Brigade de Marine*," or, "The Wood of the Marine Brigade."

INT. TRUCK – DAY

Lt. Cates continues to rub the huge lump on his head, checking his hand to make sure there's no blood.

V.O. NARRATOR

Lieutenant Clifton B. Cates eventually became a General and was one of the highest-ranked Marines during World War Two.

Daly pulls a chewed-up stub of a cigar from his pocket, inspects it, picks off the fuzzballs, puts it in his mouth, then searches for a match.

V.O. NARRATOR

Gunnery Sergeant Daniel J. "Fighting Dan" Daly, the only enlisted Marine to ever win two Medals of Honor for separate actions, also won both the Army and Navy Distinguished Service Crosses and the Croix de Guerre for his actions at Belleau Wood. Sgt. Daly was wounded again three months later at the Battle of the Somme. Daly moved back to Brooklyn, New York and lived to be 64 years old. Marine Corps Commandant John A. Lejeune called Sgt. Daly "the outstanding Marine of all time."

Lt. Cates lights Daly's cigar for him. Daly puffs several times to get it going, blows out the match and nods in thanks.

CATES

So, Gunny, you still going to try for that early discharge?

DALY

Naw. I'll just stay and fight. Besides, four more months until I've pulled my 20, what was I thinkin'?

CATES

You were saying that you didn't want to

fight anymore.

DALY

(nods)

Yeah. Inner peace. I suppose I'll just have to wait until the war's over, just like everybody else.

Cates nods in agreement.

Bonner turns to Meyers.

BONNER

Let me see that pitcher of your sister, will ya, Sam?

Meyers hands Bonner the picture, then turns to Daly.

MEYERS

When in December, Gunny?

Daly rubs his weary eyes.

DALY

(confused)

What?

MEYERS

Your birthday.

DALY

Oh. The twenty-fifth.

ZACHIO

Hey, that's Christmas. That's great.

DALY

(waves his hand in disgust)

Nah! I'd only get one present for both. It stunk!

Everybody sees the injustice in this and nods.

Hughes begins whistling the song *Over There*. In a second everyone joins in singing:

MARINES

(singing)

Over there/ Say a prayer/ But beware/
Cause the Yanks are comin'/ Yes, the
Yanks are comin'/ And it won't be over
'til it's over over there.

Meyers turns to Daly and sees that he's dozed off. Meyers smiles and starts to sing.

EXT. ROAD – DAY

Against the flaming background of the setting sun, the long line of American trucks leave Belleau Wood behind.

FADE OUT:

THE END