

World War

by

Byron C. Bellamy

FADE IN.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD IN FRANCE - DAY

SUPER: "June 1918".

From above, in slow rotation, the still surface of a dark pool of water reflects a beautiful, blue summer sky, with just a few puffy, white clouds.

BIRDS are SINGING, and a gentle summer breeze blows through tall grass and trees.

The surface of the water breaks into tiny ripples as we hear a deep but distant earth-trembling THUD.

Another THUD follows, and then ANOTHER, increasing in frequency and volume.

TWO MEN are floating naked in the pool, with their feet pointing towards the opposite edges, and heads separated by just a few feet.

The pool is revealed to be a shell crater, filled with rain. The two men have their eyes closed. They are JOSEPH SMITH and ABBOT HOFFMAN.

As the pounding increases, they seem perfectly tranquil.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD, WIDE VIEW - DAY

A SERGEANT pops his head up over a small, muddy rise near the crater. He is directly underneath a sagging, leafless, ruined tree.

There is a corpse on the slope between him and the two men; it is a horse, long dead, legless and blasted open, entrails exposed and teeming with flies.

SERGEANT

You're making the run! Captain  
Marck is going with you!

The two men continue to float, showing no reaction.

Once the Sergeant has disappeared back over the hill, Abbot and Joseph emerge from the pool, dry themselves with a blanket, and dress.

JOSEPH

Damn. Marck. It's going to be a  
long day.

ABBOT

He's the original one-dimensional man.

JOSEPH

If I go first on the boardwalk, I bet I can dump him at the Horselegs.

ABBOT

All right. Let's make a signal -- we'll be right before Horselegs, talking about the mud, and you'll say, "The mud smells bad today," and I'll say, "They say the last shelling brought up bits of men from 1914," and then you say suddenly, "What's that?", and that will be the signal to shift our weight over to the right and dump him.

JOSEPH

You've always been good at plans, Abbot. You should be an admiral. Admiral Hoffman.

ABBOT

My mind just won't fit inside the little iron box of command, Joseph. I am the lone wolf.

JOSEPH

You're a free-roaming beast of a man, are you?

ABBOT

Free enough for the frying pan, buddy.

JOSEPH

Oy with that.

ABBOT

Free is inside, anyway.

JOSEPH

'Tell that to the madmen then, to comfort them'.

ABBOT

'Simone, I await you'.

They are nearly dressed by now, and start to walk up the rise together. The SHELLING has grown steadily nearer and more frequent.

EXT. DEEP TRENCH - DAY

Abbot, CAPTAIN MARCK, and Joseph walking in single file along a wooden pathway built over four feet of muddy water. Mud walls rise up ten feet on either side of them.

JOSEPH

We'll be at the truck depot in less than an hour, Captain Marck.

MARCK

Speed it up, Smith. I'm not going to be late because of your lazy, incompetent ass. Move it!

JOSEPH

Yes, Captain Marck.

They walk in silence for a moment. The loudest sound is Marck's labored breathing. The boardwalk creaks and flexes beneath their feet.

Ahead of them, a grim sight emerges: off to the right of the boardwalk, barely submerged in the water, lies a DEAD HORSE.

Only his four legs can be seen, pointing straight up to the sky.

As the men get nearer to the horse, Joseph and Abbot move closer to Marck.

JOSEPH

The mud smells very bad today.

MARCK

Shut up, you idiot.

ABBOT

They say the last shelling brought up bits of men from 1914.

JOSEPH

(a moment later)  
What's that?

Abbot and Joseph both shift their weight suddenly to the right. The boardwalk twists, and Marck is thrown into the water, DIRECTLY ON TOP OF THE DEAD HORSE.

Marck immediately propels himself out of the water with a terrified scramble, which pushes his legs into the body of the putrefying horse. It POPS, and releases a grotesque EXPLOSION of yellow and green slime, mixed with the last remnants of the horse's internal organs.

MARCK  
OH MY GOD! HELP ME! JESUS! OH  
GOD!

Abbot and Joseph move quickly to help the now-slimy Marck back on to the boardwalk.

The horse's legs can be seen -- now at a different angle. Other parts are now visible, including a head with deep and profoundly lifelike eyes.

ABBOT  
(convincingly)  
Captain! Are you all right?!

JOSEPH  
Captain Marck! What happened?

Abbot and Joseph manage to get Marck upright, and then he shrugs them off.

MARCK  
God damn you!

Marck shakes himself violently with disgust, and brushes uselessly at the muck and bits of decayed horseflesh covering him.

He looks suspiciously at Abbot and Joseph, both of whom feign total concern and shock.

MARCK  
You did this!

ABBOT  
Captain, we did not! The boardwalk  
is very unstable at this juncture,  
see -

Abbot rocks the boardwalk and nearly spills Marck into the muck again.

MARCK  
Stop it! You idiot!

ABBOT  
I'm sorry, Captain Marck. I was  
just showing you-

MARCK  
 Damn you, Hoffman! Incompetent  
 swine!

JOSEPH  
 Captain, it's almost time for the  
 six twenty-two barrage. If we are  
 caught here, we will not survive.

MARCK  
 Move on, then, damn you!

The three soldiers resume traveling down the boardwalk.

MARCK  
 (to himself)  
 I hate this damned mud. No time to  
 change. Von Ludendorff himself, god  
 damn these idiot trench rats -

Abbot, walking behind Marck, shifts his weight to the right  
 edge of the boardwalk, causing Marck to stumble again.

Marck loses his temper.

MARCK  
 GOD DAMN IT! DAMN! DAMN YOU!

HOFFMAN  
 Captain, I swear -

MARCK  
 SHUT UP! GOD DAMN IT! JUST MOVE!

Captain Marck and Abbot are visible behind him. Joseph is  
 barely controlling his laughter.

Marck is consumed with irritation.

Abbot is looking up at the trench wall, his mind elsewhere  
 now.

EXT. GERMAN FIELD HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Joseph and Abbot are sharing a cigarette and talking, sitting  
 on a wall of sandbags.

The two men are watching a continual parade of officers and  
 enlisted men bustle in and out of the HEADQUARTERS TENTS.

ABBOT  
 Everyone here seems very clean.

JOSEPH

They need a relaxing stroll on the boardwalk -- some fresh air. To bring out the manliness, you know. The fighting spirit.

ABBOT GIGGLES. A passing officer glares at the two filthy enlisted men.

ABBOT

Marck heard that horse pop - and up he flew. With godlike power. A super-man.

Joseph snorts with laughter. This time, a GROUP OF YOUNG OFFICERS take notice. They march over in a tightly-packed herd, led by a large young aristocratic cutthroat named HEINZ.

Joseph and Abbot stand up and appear to almost come to attention as Heinz confronts them.

HEINZ

(to Joseph)

Do you think the war is funny? Tell me.

JOSEPH

No, Lieutenant.

HEINZ

(to Abbot)

And you, you find this all amusing, don't you?

ABBOT

Herr Lieutenant, I find no humor whatsoever in this savage struggle by the Christian heroes against the hideous Beast of France. We were simply sharing a brief memory of our childhood together in the pastoral countryside of the Fatherland, to escape for a moment from the agonizing memories of our regiment's destruction holding Hill 70 during the Battle of Loos. I apologize if we have offended you and your group of fine young officers, Lieutenant. Please forgive us.

Heinz is taken aback at this unexpected answer.

HEINZ

You - were at Loos?

ABBOT

We are two of fifteen survivors of Fifth Army, A Company.

A second officer, BERNHARD, gazes at them.

BERNHARD

I've heard of you! You're the Cannon Riders!

HEINZ

Is this true? Are you the Cannon Riders?

ABBOT

No, no. We know them, though. We just followed through the hole they made. It was great. You should have seen it - the one guy using his feet on the front wheels, to steer the carriage, and the guy holding on to the back, trying to pull the lanyard. They blew a hole through an infantry line that had been mortaring us all day. We broke out and made it back to corps before the retreat.

JOSEPH

(glaring at Abbot)  
It was a stupid idea.

ABBOT

Well, it worked.

JOSEPH

It almost didn't. And what would have happened then?

ABBOT

I heard the guys got the Iron Cross First Class for it.

JOSEPH

Well, now, it almost got sent to his wife, didn't it?

There is a short, uncomfortable silence, during which Abbot and Joseph glare at each other while the group of now-awestruck young officers stare at them.

Marck strides out of a Headquarters Tent and into view.

As soon as he approaches the group, they wrinkle their noses at his odor and quickly leave. Marck glares after them.

MARCK

What are you doing?

ABBOT

Speaking to the new officers,  
Captain. Telling them about -

MARCK

Shut up. The Field Marshal has ordered me to carry plans for a major offensive to the commanders in the field, and to then report to the Soissons front immediately. I have requested that you two escort me. I hope you're excited to be going to the front. I hear it's going to be quite the show - Green Cross gas, six thousand artillery pieces, the works. I think once we reach Soissons, I will assign you two to one of the shock troop units. That way you will be right in the front of the action.

Marck smiles.

MARCK

Doesn't that sound glorious?

ABBOT

Wonderful, Captain. I look forward to your masterful leadership of the assault - Joe and I will be right behind you every step of the way.

MARCK

I'm afraid my orders require me to return to headquarters and report. The glory will be all yours.

ABBOT

No doubt you will sing our praises in the showers at the Officer's Club.

MARCK

We leave in three hours. And you'd better look sharp.

Abbot comes to full attention, snapping a salute.

MARCK

We will see if you keep your  
laughter there. Now that you  
mention it, you'd both better be in  
full parade dress when we leave.  
I want my new recruits to look  
snappy. Understand?

JOSEPH

Yes, Captain.

Marck strides off. Joseph glares at Abbot.

ABBOT

What? He's an idiot!

Joseph shrugs in mild agreement. The two men are silent for a moment.

ABBOT

Soissons. Green Cross gas. Six  
thousand big guns.

JOSEPH

Much like the whole of our  
experience to date. Only larger.

ABBOT

They will need us.

JOSEPH

And I need to stay alive, Abbot. I  
have two children. I want to stay  
alive.

(he sighs)

I want to see Lena again, work on  
stuff in the workshop, drink beer,  
sing old songs. I want to live,  
and I want time to wash all this  
away. I'm tired of death.

ABBOT

Joseph - once Germany loses - there  
won't be peace for us. For a long  
time to come.

Joseph stands up.

JOSEPH

Then, shall we go and show them how  
it's done?

The two men begin walking through the camp.

ABBOT

You speak as if you know.

(he grins)

All you had to do was pull the damned cord. I, however, had to steer around various obstacles, fully exposed, all the while aiming for the chosen spot. And you always give me crap for it.

JOSEPH

What obstacles did you 'steer around'? You hit ever damned pothole on that hill, barely hanging on, while I had to time the firing just right!

ABBOT

(sniffs and looks down)

Still a sore point between us, apparently.

The two men glance at each other, and shuffle around a bit.

JOSEPH

It was a good idea. But only a lunatic could think of it.

ABBOT

Together we make one reasonably competent combat soldier.

JOSEPH

I want a shower.

ABBOT

I want you to have a shower, too.

JOSEPH

Parade dress. Oh, god. This will be humiliating.

ABBOT

(smiles)

But worth it.

JOSEPH

(smiling back)

Yeah, it was worth it.

INT. BUNKER BEHIND THE SOISSONS FRONT - DAY

Joseph and Abbot emerge from the bottom of a deep stairwell, dressed in filthy and ill-fitting parade uniforms.

The room is packed with soldiers and equipment.

JOSEPH

Ah -- safe like a mole in the deep warren.

ABBOT

(looks up)

Yes -- the farmer will never find us here.

JOSEPH

If he does, I believe he will surprised at what he finds.

Joseph leads the way into the interior of the bunker, threading his way through densely-packed men to try to find a place to rest.

The other troops eye the two men warily, until they reach a short, pleasant man with a heavy mustache and an Iron Cross, 2nd Class. His name is ADOLF HITLER.

Without speaking, he makes room for both men, urging others to move over for them.

JOSEPH

Thanks. That was a very nice thing to do.

ADOLF

Well. Parade dress. Someone had to.

ABBOT

Thanks.

ADOLF

You're welcome.

JOSEPH

Not long now till jump-off.

ADOLF

No -- we'll get the word soon. I'm getting ready now, anyway. Where are you from?

ABBOT

We were at Sedan, and then  
Headquarters for a day.  
(he grimaces)  
This damned thing is killing me.  
I've got to change, or die.

Joseph and Abbot throw their packs against the wall and begin to open them.

JOSEPH

And you, sir - where are you from?

ADOLF

Second Bavarian. The List  
Regiment. I see you have the Iron  
Cross, First Class. I have only  
this poor Second Class one -- but I  
wear it proudly. Were you at the  
Somme?

JOSEPH

Well, yes, but we got these at  
Loos. We usually don't wear them.

Adolf is silent for a moment.

ADOLF

You're the Cannon Riders.

JOSEPH

It was his crazy idea.

Abbot glares at him.

JOSEPH

But we're still alive. And you?

ADOLF

I pushed a new officer into a  
ditch.  
(he smiles)  
Out of the way of a machine gun.  
(he frowns)  
But he was killed soon after  
anyway.

Abbot leans forward to shake Adolf's hand.

ABBOT

Abbot Hoffman.

ADOLF

Adolf Hitler.

Joseph shakes hands with Adolf.

JOSEPH  
Joe Smith. Some bad business, the  
Somme.

ABBOT  
Like a slaughterhouse.

ADOLF  
Too many good friends.

All three men grow suddenly silent.

The SOLDIERS around them continue their preparations for battle, but occasionally glance at the trio.

Abbot and Joseph begin to change out of their parade uniforms and into combat gear.

Adolf watches Abbot closely for awhile.

ADOLF  
(to Abbot)  
You're a Jew, aren't you?

ABBOT  
I'm a German, if that's what you mean. My parents were Jewish. And German. I frankly do not care to indulge in the assorted primitive tribal superstitions, up to and including unquestioned nationalism.

Adolf seems puzzled by this.

ADOLF  
You're not a Jew?

ABBOT  
Phenotypically yes, philosophically no.

Adolf doesn't understand.

ADOLF  
I'm reading a book about your people, about the Jews. It's written by an American, named Henry Ford. He's the famous automobile maker. It's called 'The International Jew'.

Abbot stares at Adolf for a beat.

ABBOT

And do you remember the secondary title of this work?

ADOLF

(suddenly uncomfortable)

No. It's a very long book. I haven't read all of it.

ABBOT

'The International Jew: The World's Foremost Problem', by Henry Ford, is that the title of the book you're reading? And does it describe how the Jews conspire to rule the world, and how Jews ritually eat the small children of the simple folk foolishly living near them? He's still peddling the 'Protocols of Zion', for god's sake.

ADOLF

(embarrassed)

I haven't gotten to that part yet. But there's some good things. You people are very smart, and cunning in the ways of the world. And you're very rich, and you are good at politics, and -

ABBOT

Adolf, I don't wish to be unkind, you seem like a decent sort of fellow, but this book you're reading is free of any factual content, and highly offensive to any reasonable person. Me, I don't care, but you should be careful with bringing up that sort of literature in polite company - it can hurt people's feelings, and breeds division in circumstances that require cooperation above all else.

ADOLF

I'm - sorry. I have many Jewish friends, you know. Our commanding officer is a Jew, and very smart -

ABBOT

It's all right, Adolf. Let's just get ready.

Abbot and a relieved Adolf return to their preparations. Joseph speaks quietly aside to Abbot.

JOSEPH

Primitive tribal superstition, hmm?  
I remember a mission, Second Ypres  
I think it was, when we got caught  
out leeward of the release area,  
and I clearly remember you praying  
quite loudly and with great  
emotion.

ABBOT

(smiles)

There are no atheists in a phosgene  
gas cloud, Joseph.

THE LIST REGIMENT COMMANDER enters the bunker, followed by  
CAPTAIN MARS.

Every soldier in the bunker snaps to attention.

COMMANDER

It's nearly time. This will be the  
largest single military offensive  
in the history of mankind. Field  
Marshal von Ludendorff has gathered  
the most powerful army the German  
people have ever wielded - one  
million men -- and we are going all  
the way to Paris!

The troops in the bunker are silent, except for a few  
halfhearted mutterings - but Adolf jumps up and down, stomps  
his feet and clenches his fists.

ADOLF

Yes! Yes! To Paris!

Joseph and Abbot glance at him from either side, and then  
privately at each other, then resume dressing.

The Commander, followed by a dark-haired officer named  
CAPTAIN MARS, is searching through the bunker for someone -  
he finally stops in front of Joseph and Abbot, and looks at  
Captain Mars, who nods.

Joseph, Abbot, and Adolf immediately come to attention when  
they notice his presence.

COMMANDER

You're the 'Cannon Riders', aren't  
you?

JOSEPH  
We're just German soldiers,  
Commander.

COMMANDER  
Well, one could say a little bit  
more about you than that. I've  
followed your story for quite some  
time now. Captain Marck speaks  
very highly of your talents.

The Commander realizes that Adolf is staring at him, and  
addresses him with obviously mixed feelings.

COMMANDER  
Corporal.

ADOLF  
Commander. May I say I look  
forward to our inevitable entry  
into Paris.

COMMANDER  
Yes, of course.

He turns back to Joseph and Abbot.

COMMANDER  
I have few specialists. I will  
need your help. We have an  
important assignment for you.

JOSEPH  
Yes, Commander. Of course.

ADOLF  
(snapping to attention)  
I would like to volunteer for the  
assignment, Commander!

COMMANDER  
Certainly, Corporal.  
(to Captain Mars)  
Pick a few other good men, and  
report to the Transportation Shop  
immediately.  
(To Abbot and Joseph)  
Captain Mars will brief you.

The Commander salutes. Joseph, Abbot, Adolf, and the Captain  
salute in return. The Commander exits; the Captain remains.

ADOLF

This is a great honor for me, to  
serve with you gentlemen.

JOSEPH

Jewish or not, hey?

ADOLF

Of course, of course.

ABBOT

Ah, the Jews are fine people. It's  
the Prussians I'm worried about.  
Ever served with a full-blooded  
Prussian?

ADOLF

No...but...

ABBOT

They're all like these dark-hearted  
human snakes, or maybe big vicious  
dogs with the spikes, the most  
evil, demonic...

ADOLF

...I think my great-grandmother was  
Prussian.

ABBOT

...really. Good Lord. Terribly  
sorry. Never mind. Shall we go,  
gentlemen?

Joseph, Abbot, Adolf, and Captain Mars exit the bunker.

EXT. BUNKER - DAY

Captain Mars is walking next to Joseph and Abbot, with Adolf  
trailing behind.

CAPTAIN MARS

We have at our disposal one of the  
A7V tanks for penetrating the front  
line. The mission is a raid  
through the right flank lines to a  
road near Rheims. Intelligence  
places the French Premier at this  
point.

Abbot stops walking, and looks stunned.

ABBOT  
Clemenceau himself?

CAPTAIN MARS  
Indeed. In person.

Abbot is visibly disturbed by this.

ABBOT  
(quietly)  
Strange events.

Abbot stares off into the distance for a moment, then shakes himself back into focus

ABBOT  
The A7V - is it an A7V-U? The skirting removed, central steering, lower, sloped profile? Any work on the chassis? Ground clearance? I hope to hell the new guns are better than that 37 millimeter they got from Weinmetz's nephew. Damned Belgian design.

Captain Mars stops walking, and all stop with him. He stares at Abbot.

CAPTAIN MARS  
That is all extremely classified information. You cannot possibly know these things.

JOSEPH  
Captain -- Abbot and I worked in Weapons Development for awhile, and then later we captured several British Mark Ones and Fours at Cambrai. We went back to Development, deconstructed and designed a better version, and then we got fired. They never made our tank.

(he sighs)  
We know the A7V all too well. Vollmer means well, but - well, you know command. Always the politics - and the old calvary hates the idea of an armored vehicle. Makes them feel useless, which they are, but they've got all the rich guys, so on and on it goes. But the A7V almost proves them right.

ABBOT  
Unless we have a week to work on  
it.

CAPTAIN MARS  
Why were you 'fired', as you say?

JOSEPH  
The whole Falkenhayn thing.

Captain Mars nods knowingly and begins walking again, as the  
three men thread their way through crowded tent walkways.

CAPTAIN MARS  
It's been a difficult time.

ADOLF  
What are you talking about?

Captain Mars, Joseph, and Abbot glance at Adolf, as they  
continue walking.

ABBOT  
Nothing really, Adolf. Have you  
ever been inside a tank?

ADOLF  
No.

ABBOT  
Have you ever been on a special  
operation?

ADOLF  
No. But I've been a messenger.

ABBOT  
That'll do. Well, here we all go.  
Bring some wax cotton to plug up  
your ears. The two engines in the  
A7V can heterodyne and drive you  
deaf in an instant.

CAPTAIN MARS  
Is that true?

ABBOT AND JOE  
What?

CAPTAIN MARS  
That it can drive you deaf?

ABBOT AND JOE  
What?

Captain Mars half-laughs, and the four men walk out of sight through the tents.

INT. MACHINE SHOP/WAREHOUSE - DAY

Sitting in a corner of the warehouse is an A7V STURMPANZERWAGEN. It is a gigantic, poorly-designed box of a tank.

Joseph's feet extend from underneath the front of the tank, between the treads. Abbot emerges from the top of the tank, covered in grease.

ABBOT  
(enraged)  
MEPHISTO! THIS IS MEPHISTO! IT'S  
NOT EVEN AN A7V/U!

JOSEPH  
Someone wants to kill us.

ABBOT  
Vollmer threw away all the spare  
parts for Mephisto because he knew  
it was an off-unit and was DUE TO  
BE BROKEN DOWN AND USED FOR SCRAP  
AND ARMOR PLATING! THERE'S NOTHING  
I CAN DO! AAAAAAAHHHHHHH!!

He throws a wrench.

JOSEPH  
Apparently, someone wants to kill  
this Captain Mars as well.

ABBOT  
We're going to break down right in  
front of their lines. They'll pry  
us open with a can opener.

JOSEPH  
No. More like gasoline down the  
vents.

ABBOT  
I'm feeling quite grim at the  
moment.

JOSEPH  
(shrugs)  
We'll make do.

Captain Mars enters the warehouse. He walks over and stands in front of the tank, looking up at Abbot, who jumps down.

CAPTAIN MARS

Well? What do you think?

ABBOT

Captain Mars, this is the A7V Sturmpanzerwagen Mephisto. It was the fourth production tank off the line after the prototype, and was retired after starting to break down every half hour of use. Subsequent models were built without these design flaws, but this particular tank uses an array of spare parts that are no longer available. Top speed is three miles per hour, ground clearance is minimal, the drive shafts have snapped and been re-welded, the engines are full of sludge and have sat idle for a year at least. The 37 millimeter gun is inoperative.

CAPTAIN MARS

Will it run?

ABBOT

Without spare parts, no, not for more than a few minutes at a time.

CAPTAIN MARS

We have several captured British tanks. They are due to be transported back to headquarters, but with the show on, no trucks. Could you use them for spare parts?

Abbot stares at Captain Mars, then hops out, jumps down, and stands facing him.

Joseph pulls himself out from under the tank, stands up and brushes himself off, and faces the Captain as well.

Both men have intense, hopeful looks on their faces.

ABBOT

What kind of British tanks do you have?

CAPTAIN MARS

Mark Fives, I believe.

ABBOT

You have British Mark Five tanks.  
Here.

JOSEPH

Do they run?

CAPTAIN MARS

Well - I think so. They were  
captured during one of our night  
raids, when the crews were  
sleeping. So were the sentries,  
apparently.

JOSEPH

Captain Mars, who assigned us to  
the A7V?

The Captain shrugs.

CAPTAIN MARS

It was different than all this,  
once.

Abbot and Joseph both nod.

ABBOT

Captain, we have to take the  
British tank. Even with my best  
efforts, I can't resurrect this  
poor, dead, beast. This mission  
will then most certainly fail. But  
I know the British Mark Four series  
just as well, perhaps even better.  
We both spent time studying them,  
and modifying captured models. We  
might succeed if we service up one  
of the British tanks. They're a  
much better design, especially for  
crossing trenches. Not to mention  
the possibility of fire hesitation  
because they see one of their own  
vehicles.

The captain thinks awhile, then nods.

CAPTAIN MARS

Let's go look.

INT. WAREHOUSE - AFTERNOON

Captain Mars pulls a giant canvas tarpaulin off of one of the captured tanks. Three other tarp-shrouded tanks are visible in the shadows.

ABBOT

Yes. This is more like it. I can't believe it. Ernie Swinton, thank you. I love this guy -- he's thinking, you can just feel him thinking -- I can't wait to see the powerplant.

JOSEPH

This is great! Abbot -- look at the new sponson rotation angles. And they've got your treadplate joint idea - look, look, this is really improved -- we just have to stick all our stuff on.

Joseph walks up and puts his hand on the tank, and turns to speak to Captain Mars

JOSEPH

We need time.

CAPTAIN MARS

Six AM. Jump-off time.

ABBOT

Fourteen hours. We'll do what we can. Thank you, Captain.

CAPTAIN MARS

I'm grateful for your expertise in these matters. If it is true that the French Premier's whereabouts are known, then this mission could help end the war quickly.

Abbot squints at the Captain.

ABBOT

I don't think the man who stuck us with a deathtrap like old Mephisto for this mission would really know the whereabouts of the French Premier, Captain Mars.

Captain Mars stares at Abbot for a moment

ABBOT

However, Joe and I are always up for wreaking a little havoc with the quackers.

JOSEPH

We do the job.

CAPTAIN MARS

Watch out for Corporal Hitler.

ABBOT

Adolf? He's a peach! I love guys like that!

JOSEPH

Abbot picks on him.

ABBOT

What? He just needs polishing up. He's all right.

CAPTAIN MARS

(smiling)

Good night, gentleman.

Captain Mars strides out of the warehouse. Joseph and Abbot look at each other.

ABBOT

Let's drive a couple over to the shop.

JOSEPH

Race!

Joseph pulls the cover off of one of the other tanks, and both men scramble into their separate tanks.

The ENGINES ROAR, and Abbot's tank takes the early lead as the tanks race out of the warehouse.

Both men are heard SHOUTING and WHOOPING from inside their tanks.

INT. MACHINE SHOP IN WAREHOUSE - DAY

It is five A.M. Abbot pulls himself wearily out of the top of one of the Mark Five tanks.

ABBOT

It'll do. Let's get some sleep.

Joseph pulls himself out from under the tank.

JOSEPH  
I want to stud the tracks. Turn it  
into a mud-jumper.

ABBOT  
You need sleep.

JOSEPH  
We need studs.

ABBOT  
Sleep.

JOSEPH  
The smell of gasoline gurgling down  
the rear vents.

ABBOT  
Okay, studs. I have to sleep.

JOSEPH  
Sweet dreams, little prince.

Abbot climbs out of the tank and jumps down to the ground.

ABBOT  
I'm driving tomorrow. You'll fall  
asleep and run us into a swamp.

JOSEPH  
What are you going to do - gloat  
next? If you hadn't taken out the  
corner of the warehouse door, I  
would've kicked your butt.

ABBOT  
(makes several loud  
snoring sounds)  
Huh? What? G'night.

JOSEPH  
G'night, little pony.

EXT. HEAVILY FORESTED ROAD, REAR LINES - MORNING

The tank is sitting off to one side, as men and vehicles  
trudge forward to the front lines.

A distant roar of massed artillery, smoke, fields of blasted  
trees -- the evidence of war.

Adolf is sitting on top of the tank, with his legs dangling down through the hatch. He is watching the parade of men and supplies.

Adolf looks down through the hatchway.

ADOLF

Captain Mars! Jump-off time, sir!

INT. TANK - MORNING

In the dim light, we see Joseph, Abbot, Captain Mars, and eight other SOLDIERS.

CAPTAIN MARS

Hitler! Get down here!

Adolf drops into the tank

CAPTAIN MARS

(pointing to a map)

Two thousand yards past this trench line, a little northwest. Clemenceau will be traveling by motorcade along this road, heading for a conference in Amiens. I think we should roadblock here, or here. Three, possibly four vehicles to neutralize. Intelligence says no military escort.

The Captain looks at Abbot grimly.

CAPTAIN MARS

I wish we could penetrate their lines without the tank. The main thrust of the offensive should draw troops directly from this area, but they will not leave it undefended. Once we breach the lines, they'll be looking for us, even if just to figure out why we're going the wrong way. It will be hard to lose them, considering our engine noise and speed.

ABBOT

Captain, you'll find it much quieter and faster.

(MORE)

ABBOT (CONT'D)

We made muffler modifications when we installed the vents, and swapped out engines with a couple of damaged Daimler heavy trucks we found out back. Joe repacked the tracks and tightened everything up. We also insulated the engines from the armor, so no more sound-board effect. Plus, these are just great tanks. The British are thinking clearly about the flaws of the Mark Four. Except for ventilation. I don't follow the thinking there. I don't see how anybody could have hung out in one of these for more than an hour at a time. It was a lot of work to fix.

ADOLF

We still have to paint the German Cross on the side.

CAPTAIN MARS

No insignia. This mission is a deep raid, and we will only succeed if they are confused as to our identity.

Adolf doesn't like this at all.

CAPTAIN MARS

Let's get things ready, gentlemen.

Everyone in the tank immediately moves into position. Abbot and Joseph become busy with a hundred adjustments to a welter of jury-rigged equipment.

Abbot then takes the driver's seat, STARTS THE TANK'S ENGINES, and engages the clutch.

ABBOT

Tally-ho, what?!

JOSEPH

Into the breach!

Captain Mars smiles grimly in the background, as the tank begins to move forward.

EXT. COUNTRY PATH - MORNING

The path is heavily overgrown, and the tank pushes through the vegetation.

The motor and treads are remarkably silent, and the sound of tree limbs being steadily pushed back and released is the only noise to carry any distance.

INT. TANK - MORNING

Abbot is driving the tank, watching through a jury-rigged viewport. He appears relaxed, as do Joseph and Captain Mars. Adolf looks pale, and the eight soldiers look terrified.

ABBOT

I see posts!

CAPTAIN MARS

Everybody brace for crossing,  
please.

Everyone grabs for a handhold.

JOSEPH

There's the hole. Looks clear.

ABBOT

Here we go, everybody. Prepare for  
incoming.

THE TANK JERKS AND RUMBLES as it crosses the German lines into No Man's Land. Joseph is looking out a different front viewport.

JOSEPH

We're in it! Here it comes!

RIFLE AND MACHINE GUN FIRE IMMEDIATELY BEGIN TO SATURATE THE TANK. THE SOUND INSIDE IS DEAFENING. BLUE SPARKS AND LIQUEFIED METAL BITS SPRAY THROUGHOUT THE INTERIOR.

JOSEPH

FIRING SMOKE!

EXT. NO-MAN'S LAND - DAY

The tank is crossing a blasted, cratered, field of mud. The tank's two side cannons both FIRE.

Two long pipes on top and extending the length of the tank FLARE, and begin emitting a dense, grey, smoke from both front and rear.

Within moments, the tank is sheathed in a gray cloud, driving forward towards another large, gray cloud - where the smoke shells have struck the trench's barbed wire.

INT. TANK

Abbot looks out the viewport as the tank is churning its way across No Man's Land, now completely shrouded in the thick gray smoke.

The CLATTER of MACHINE-GUN FIRE against the tank's armor has lessened.

Suddenly, a tangle of barbed wire looms up out of the gray cloud.

                          ABBOT  
WIRE!  HOLD ON!

EXT. NO MAN'S LAND

THE TANK CRASHES THROUGH THREE HEAVY BARBED WIRE EMPLACEMENTS.  THE NOSE OF THE TANK THEN DIPS INTO THE TRENCH.

INT. TANK

Everyone barely holds on as THE TANK TILTS FORWARD AND DRIVES INTO THE BACK WALL OF THE TRENCH.

                          ABBOT  
GO, BABY!  GO GO GO!

                          JOSEPH  
YA-HOOO!

EXT. TRENCH

The tank is now grinding its way up the back trench wall, until the rear of the tank finally drops into the trench, and the treads dig in and pull the tank up and over the back wall of the trench.

INT. TANK

Several of the soldiers have fallen forward, but recover as the tank successfully crosses the trench, and speeds into the rear areas.

                          ABBOT  
Joe!  I'm looking for comm  
trenches!  What do you see?

JOSEPH  
 Hard port! Break in the brush!  
 That's it!

ABBOT  
 I see it, I see it --

JOSEPH  
 Thirty degrees starboard in ten  
 yards.

The tank RUMBLES across the rear trench areas, as Abbot focuses on the driving.

The interior of the tank is smoky, and Adolf and the soldiers are obviously shaken up by the experience.

Captain Mars is calmly watching Abbot drive. Abbot flips a switch above him.

ABBOT  
 Let's clear the air, boys.

JOSEPH  
 It's a path.

ABBOT  
 Let's get off this as soon as possible. I feel the need for heavy cover.

JOSEPH  
 We can do four zig-zags to the road approach, according to the map. Hopefully it's accurate.

He looks suddenly grim

JOSEPH  
 Mephisto.

ABBOT  
 Would have never made those wire belts. Ever. Gurgle, gurgle.

Joseph and Abbot glance meaningfully at each other, and then back to Captain Mars.

ABBOT  
 They would never imagine us actually needing the map.

JOSEPH  
 So it's probably accurate.

A shadow seems to pass across the face of Captain Mars.

ADOLF

What do you mean? Why wouldn't the map be accurate?

ABBOT

Always question your information, Adolf. It's good practice for survival.

Adolf is mystified by this.

CAPTAIN MARS

What's our time running, gentlemen?

JOSEPH

Steady and true on target, Captain. Barring inaccurate information.

CAPTAIN MARS

Very well. Carry on. Everyone else! Tighten it up! Everybody sharp!

Adolf and the soldiers begin checking their gear.

EXT. TANK

The tank quietly speeds along a country path in the gray dawn, barely clearing the vegetation.

EXT. SOMEWHERE IN THE FOREST - LATER

The tank has been stopped underneath a canopy of trees, and its crew is smoking, and lounging around - except for Joseph and Abbot, who are busily affixing camouflage vegetation to the tank's top, front and sides with thin wire.

Captain Mars is watching them work.

CAPTAIN MARS

What is the long black wire running along the side there?

ABBOT

It's called a horizontal directional antenna. It receives radiotelephonic waves from the atmosphere and converts them into information.

CAPTAIN MARS

Really. What are we going to use it for?

ABBOT

Oh, just one of our little tricks. Marconi's new triode thermionic valve really kicks up the distance, so it makes some of our other little add-ons work now, like the remote control.

CAPTAIN MARS

All right.

ABBOT

You asked, Captain.

JOSEPH

We should move out. My guess is that the Field Marshal Ludendorff's opening of the offensive will draw out the British aerial spotters soon enough. We will probably also be filtering through British and French divisions headed for the front. Maybe even Americans.

CAPTAIN MARS

Corporal! Collect the men and let's move out!

ADOLF

Yes, Captain.

Adolf turns, and shouts.

ADOLF

Let's go, men! All of Germany is counting on us today!

The soldiers shuffle slowly back to the tank, heads down.

INT. TANK FRONT COMPARTMENT - DAY

Abbot is driving, and Joseph is navigating. Adolf enters the front compartment.

ADOLF

May I watch you drive for awhile?

ABBOT

Of course, Corporal. Would you like to take a hand at the controls?

ADOLF

No, no, no thank you.

Adolf slides forward into an uncomfortable position behind Joseph and Abbot.

ABBOT

I miss my dog, Adolf. She's named Simone. Ever had a dog?

ADOLF

Yes, I love dogs. I had a dog -- he was, uh, running around right in the middle of the battle at Ypres. I think his owner was a British soldier who was shelled that day - they were hit hard, Krupp 200 mm howitzers, you know, the big one, like you guys rode, and this dog was just looking for somewhere to go - well, he got me. I fed him, I taught some tricks, pretty soon everybody knew him, He was a great dog, very smart. I really loved him. He went everywhere with me, every front, until someone stole him.

ABBOT

Oh, no. Someone stole your dog? What kind of man would steal a dog? Someone like that should be shot. That's - god. That's just awful.

ADOLF

I can't tell you -- he could do amazing tricks, and he was -- very loyal. My one true friend. I think it was a railroad man, he had seen him doing tricks and offered to buy him, but I said no. A few hours later, he just disappeared. He would never have run away. I looked for the man - I couldn't find him, I didn't have time -- we were moving out for Ypres. Someone also stole my art case, with my supplies and some sketches, later that same day.

ABBOT

I'm terribly sorry, Adolf. It must have been an agonizing loss. And your art. Almost as bad. But -- a stolen dog. That's -- I just can't -- that's just evil.

ADOLF

I have never forgotten him. He was the best dog I ever knew.

JOSEPH

It's not surprising -- I think a lot of the social fabric of Germany is being eaten away by the blockade, and the famine. People don't feel bound by the basic social contracts at such times. My wife has written to me that former neighbors of ours were caught stealing food from a military depot. They were shot - the entire family, even the children. That's madness, like rats in a cage gnawing at each other.

Joseph's face grows suddenly serious, as he thinks of his family.

JOSEPH

Lena wrote me that everyone has resorted to eating potato peelings mixed with sawdust and baked into bread. She joked that everyone calls the cats 'roof rabbits' --

He looks completely grim now.

JOSEPH

I don't think it was funny.

Abbot glances over at Joseph, checking on him.

ADOLF

There are a lot of shirkers and cowards hiding in the homeland -- stirring up all sorts of trouble, pacifists and communists, anarchists and -

Adolf stops short, and glances at Abbot.

ABBOT

-- and Jews?

ADOLF

No, no. Sorry. Well, there are some Jews that are causing trouble, but not all of them.

ABBOT

Adolf -- really, that kind of thinking is really dangerous. The causes behind the loss of public morale are deep and complex. That kind of simplification, that improper condensation, leads to bad decision-making. Things are always much more intricate than they appear. Really, as an artist, you must understand this most basic of truths. Nothing can truly be grasped by us in scope, never the complete interconnected whole -- we're in it, but you know, one can't study something without having an effect on it. Objectivity is an illusion. Certainty is an illusion. If you just lump together any group of people, and say and think mean things about them for no other reason than one or two or even ten personal experiences, you are wrong about at least some of them -- more likely most of them -- and thereby you commit harm. And I don't think of you as someone who wants to hurt other people. You seem like a nice person to me, obviously very intelligent, and I think you mean well. So be careful with all that stuff. Please - think before just spewing it out. You're a better person than that. Aren't you?

ADOLF

I apologize. I didn't mean to offend you.

ABBOT

Well -- I thought I had offended you with that crack about the Prussians. I mean, it's pretty much true, you know, the whole 'tribes in the little valley' incest thing.

(MORE)

ABBOT (CONT'D)

They all have that weird forehead thing, and the nostrils -- well, you kind of have it, there, Adolf -- I mean, you're okay, but -- well, you know. We all know the Prussians. Wooh.

ADOLF

(hand to his head)

What is the forehead thing? What do you mean?

ABBOT

Well, you know, all sloped back. Like a Neanderthal, or something. Well, not a Neanderthal, but - you know - early. From interbreeding - that's how the recessive traits are preserved and enhanced --

Adolf feels his forehead, a disconcerted look on his face

ABBOT

Well, not you. I'm not talking about you. You're fine.

JOSEPH

Maybe everyone's just tired of having everyone they ever knew disappear. And for relatively useless reasons -- I mean, look at Verdun, for God's sake. Why not just have everybody step into a meat grinder? It's quicker, and maybe then the folks at home would get something to eat.

ABBOT

I hear it tastes just like pork.

Abbot and Joseph grin at each other. Adolf is shocked. Completely aghast.

ADOLF

You can't - you're not -

JOSEPH

Well -- I for one believe that if war is unavoidable, then fight intelligently. Attrition is a dead theory. What we need are five thousand tanks and close air support.

(MORE)

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Accurate bombsights and  
lightweight, portable machine guns.  
Body armor that weighs five pounds.

ABBOT

Now you're talking.

Abbot turns back a little to look at Adolf.

ABBOT

The reduction of fortresses is so  
sixteenth century. Even Moltke the  
Elder saw that one coming.  
Technology is the key. Fuels and  
engines. Design. Materials.  
Battlefield communications.

JOSEPH

Technology. Yes, indeed. And  
maybe some better ideologies as  
well. That would help a lot.

ADOLF

What - what ideology -

ABBOT

Case in point - the A7/V  
Sturmpanzerwagen! What a piece of  
total teutonic crap! So much for  
that ideology! They made a big  
death-box on tracks. Then take a  
look at this sweet thing (he pats  
the driving console) -- this is  
science. Clear thinking. Except  
for the ventilation problem, which  
I still don't get. And I still  
think the French have the better  
idea with a fully rotating cannon  
mounted on a drive chassis.

JOSEPH

Well, Adolf, I mean that you must  
admit, factually, that we have  
shredded most of Germany's finest  
because the Austrians wanted  
control over Serbia, right?  
Wouldn't you just rather have some  
sort of system that doesn't require  
the whole world to try to kill each  
other because some prince gets his  
sword caught in a tree?

ADOLF

You're a communist, then!

JOSEPH

Hardly. Well, maybe a little socialist. I actually prefer the American thing, you know, like John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. The real thing. Ben Franklin. You know. Liberty. Democracy. Social evolution.

ABBOT

Ben Franklin was weird. And look at the Grand Experiment lately -- did you see 'Birth of a Nation'?

JOSEPH

Well, old Ben did all right with the French ladies, now didn't he? And the North won.

ABBOT

(in a southern accent)  
South's gonna do it again.

JOSEPH

No, they're not. And for you - of all people, to be singing 'Dixie'. Adolf -- what are you? Blue or Gray?

ABBOT

Yeah - what's your stand on the whole 'I own another human being as my own personal slave' issue? What's the Prussian view on that?

ADOLF

I -- don't know. I don't -- excuse me, please --

Adolf looks flustered -- he bolts from the compartment.

ABBOT

There he goes.

JOSEPH

Adolf's an odd duck, all right. He's an orange.

ABBOT

You leave him alone. He's just suffering because someone stole his dog. Men don't get over things like that. And his art too, for god's sake.

JOSEPH

Naw, you're right about that.

Joseph sighs. The two men drive on in silence.

INT. TANK, FOUR HOURS LATER

The tank is near its objective. Everyone looks grim. Abbot and Joseph are glued to their ports. Captain Mars is at an observation port as well.

CAPTAIN MARS

We need to hide the tank well away  
from the road.

JOSEPH

We're looking for the right spot,  
Captain.

ABBOT

Found it.

JOSEPH

Let's back it in.

CAPTAIN MARS

Everybody out!

EXT. TANK

The Captain, Adolf, and the soldiers pile out of the top hatch of the tank, and reassemble under some trees.

Abbot and Joe back the tank into a snug, well-hidden thicket under some low trees.

The two men emerge moments later, not from the tank's hiding place, but from the thicket in the opposite direction, and in total silence. They seem to appear out of nowhere, startling a few of the other soldiers.

CAPTAIN MARS

Barricade party with Corporal  
Hitler. Machine-gun parties with  
me. The road is due northwest from  
here, less than three miles away.  
Let's do the job, gentlemen.

ADOLF

Let's go, men!

Five of the men follow Adolf to search for barricade materials near the road. Three stay behind, along with Joseph, Abbot and Captain Mars.

ABBOT

Request permission for reconnaissance, sir.

JOSEPH

We'll pack some ammunition crates on the way, if that's all right, sir.

CAPTAIN MARS

Please. We'll meet on the east side shortly.

Abbot and Joseph shoulder an ammunition crate apiece, and disappear into the woods.

EXT. ROAD, EAST EDGE - DAY

Abbot and Joseph reach the road, and drop their loads gently. Both are studying their surroundings with practiced eyes.

They are both carrying modified rifles, which look exactly like the standard infantry rifle, except for the large metal cylinders attached to the end of the barrel - homemade silencers.

ABBOT

This won't be Clemenceau. More likely a Mayor, or someone completely unrelated to Clemenceau, like a tourist, or a plumber and his family on holiday. We'll probably end up killing a couple of totally innocent people.

JOSEPH

Maybe it'll be advance units of the American Expeditionary Forces heading right for Ludendorff in the Chemin des Dames bulge. Maybe there's a 'make-sure' part to this whole plan to kill us off.

The two men look at each other meaningfully.

ABBOT

Ah, we can take the American Expeditionary Force.

JOSEPH

I suggest we construct a high tree  
hide with a quick exit.

ABBOT

Good point. We should stick to the  
constraints of the mission. Even  
if we're itching to break out. And  
you know what I mean.

JOSEPH

(grins)

Yes, I know what you mean.

The two men begin their preparations. Joseph pulls a large  
coil of rope from his pack.

EXT. ROAD, EAST EDGE - ONE HOUR LATER

Captain Mars emerges from the woods with his three soldiers -  
all are heavily burdened with equipment, and breathing hard.  
Abbot and Joseph are nowhere to be seen.

CAPTAIN MARS

This should be the spot. They must  
be close.

A small flower drifts down from above Captain Mars.

It catches his eye, and he looks up to see Joseph and Abbot  
descend at high speed from the treetops, suspended in  
intricate rope harnesses.

They both stop short just as their feet touch the ground.

ABBOT

Great spot, Captain. Coming up?

CAPTAIN MARS

(grins)

No thank you. I'm quite happy to  
stay earthbound. Any sign of  
Hitler and the barricade party?

JOSEPH

Yeah, they're crashing around in  
the forest about five hundred yards  
that way --

Joseph points south.

ABBOT

We're ready, Captain.

CAPTAIN MARS  
Please keep an eye out.

ABBOT  
Yessir.

Abbot and Joseph both tug on certain ropes - they immediately soar back up into the trees and out of view.

Mars watches them with some degree of amazement.

CAPTAIN MARS  
The Cannon Riders.

He bends to pick up one of the boxes.

CAPTAIN MARS  
Let's get set up.

EXT. BARRICADE - DAY

Adolf and Captain Mars are tugging on a rope, pulling the last log into place.

Abbot and Joseph are helping the other eight soldiers to roll it up onto the other logs as a crosspiece. The barricade is now finished.

CAPTAIN MARS  
All right, to your posts. Let's do this right, gentlemen.

ADOLF  
Do you have any estimate of time, Captain?

CAPTAIN MARS  
Within the hour, corporal. Perhaps longer. Everyone stay alert. We have to be careful not to kill anyone unless we absolutely have to. Our orders say the target must be taken alive. This all depends on staying calm in the moment. Does everyone understand?

ALL SOLDIERS  
Yes, Captain!

CAPTAIN MARS  
Move out.

Everyone moves briskly off the road into their positions.

## EXT. TREE PLATFORM

Joseph is watching through binoculars, scanning the road for oncoming cars. He sees one.

JOSEPH

Here we go. Three sedans. No military escort at all.

ABBOT

This isn't going to be Clemenceau.

JOSEPH

Three identical vehicles - it's some sort of government convoy.

Abbot quickly writes something on a piece of paper, and wraps it around a small rock.

He leans over the edge of their hidden platform and throws it at the Captain's position, fifty feet down and fifty feet over.

## EXT. COMMAND POSITION

Captain Mars is scanning the road with binoculars. Adolf is waiting for the message when it comes.

The rock bounces to within a few feet of him, and he picks it up. He unwraps the message and gives it to the Captain.

ADOLF

Captain Mars, sir -

The Captain takes the message from Adolf and reads it.

CAPTAIN MARS

Three sedans, exactly alike. No military escort at all. Well, it's somebody.

ADOLF

We must keep the road clear, sir.

CAPTAIN MARS

Give the order. Let's make this quick.

ADOLF

Yes, sir.

Adolf runs off to spread the word to the machine-gun positions.

The Captain waits until he's gone, then slowly shakes his head and returns to scanning the road with binoculars.

CAPTAIN MARS

Intelligence. I don't think we're going to be lucky today. I just don't believe it. Maybe a Mayor, or something. Damn.

EXT. TREE PLATFORM

Abbot is in his rope harness, poised at the edge of the platform, ready to descend. He waves to Joseph.

ABBOT

Goodbye, Little Pony.

JOSEPH

Take care of business.

ABBOT

I always do.

Abbot jumps off the edge, and disappears, ropes hissing.

JOSEPH

Yes, you always do, don't you.

EXT. BARRICADE

Three identical black motorcars come to a halt in front of the barrier.

Immediately, four of the soldiers emerge from the trees on either side of the road, and approach the vehicles from the side with rifles raised.

There is a BURST OF MACHINE GUN FIRE from two positions, which are slightly to the rear of the third vehicle.

SOLDIERS

Hands up! Hand up! Out of the car!

Not one of the people in the cars move an inch. They are mostly military officers; some are wearing civilian suits and topcoats.

Adolf comes scrambling up the side of the road and joins the soldiers in waving his rifle at the three cars, gesturing for them to come out.

ADOLF  
 (screaming)  
 GET OUT OF THE CAR! GET OUT OF THE  
 CAR! GET OUT OF THE CAR!

ADOLF SUDDENLY FIRES HIS RIFLE INTO THE CENTER VEHICLE,  
 striking an elderly Colonel in the head.

The Colonel's head EXPLODES, spewing blood and brain matter  
 over the rest of the occupants, who begin to panic.

ADOLF CONTINUES TO FIRE into the vehicles, again and again.  
 Havoc ensues as some occupants stagger free of the cars, and  
 begin to RETURN FIRE.

The GERMAN MACHINE GUNS JOIN IN, until the BELLOW of Captain  
 Mars silences them.

CAPTAIN MARS (V.O.)  
 CEASE FIRE! CEASE FIRE! CEASE  
 FIRE!

Slowly but surely most of the remaining soldiers obey and  
 cease fire, except for Adolf, who quickly reloads and  
 continues to methodically execute one occupant after another.

Suddenly, ABBOT'S VOICE thunders commandingly from behind the  
 barricade. The silencer of Abbot's rifle can be seen emerging  
 from between the logs. It is aimed directly at Adolf.

ABBOT (V.O.)  
 ADOLF! YOUR COMMANDER HAS GIVEN  
 YOU A DIRECT ORDER! CEASE FIRE OR  
 I WILL DROP YOU! NOW!

Adolf looks toward the barricade, and stops firing.

He staggers back from the vehicles, obviously struggling to  
 control himself. He eventually succeeds.

The other four soldiers lower their rifles, breathing  
 heavily, stunned by the carnage of the firefight.

ABBOT  
 Well done, Corporal. Take a deep  
 breath. Lower your weapon. Back  
 away from the vehicle.

Adolf slowly complies. His eyes appear glassy - he looks  
 almost like an elated drunk.

ADOLF  
 They were -- he was --

One of the car doors SWINGS OPEN. An ELDERLY CIVIL SERVANT staggers out of the car, and raises a handgun - pointing at Adolf, who has no time to react in his state.

There is a MUFFLED POP, and the Civil Servant grabs his necks and drops immediately to the ground.

Abbot jumps down from the barricade, rifle at ready and covering Adolf. Captain Mars has already reached the scene of the slaughter.

CAPTAIN MARS  
GODDAMMIT! HITLER! WHAT HAPPENED!

Abbot walks over to the Civil Servant, bends down, and plucks something from the prostrate man's neck. It is a SMALL METAL DART.

Adolf is now completely out of it -- he walks around in little circles, muttering in gibberish to himself.

ABBOT  
Adolf had a breakdown. We need to secure his weapon.

Captain Mars strides over, takes Adolf's rifle from him, and hands it to one of the four soldiers.

CAPTAIN MARS  
Take this to Krupke. Tell him to cover us, and watch the observation post for signals. Tell everyone else we need to clear this road, right now. Move!

Adolf barely notices the Captain - he is having a deeply personal conversation with himself

CAPTAIN MARS  
My god, he's gone insane.

Abbot lays down his rifle, and begins to inspect the cars for survivors.

ABBOT  
The old gentleman there - he'll be out for about twenty-four hours.

CAPTAIN MARS  
What do you mean? He isn't dead?

Abbot turns back from his inspection, and holds up the strange little dart.

ABBOT

One of my darts. I don't kill people, so I made up these little neuroanesthetic darts- they fit in any standard infantry rifle. Work great. Less than one-tenth of a second.

Abbot nods his head at the unconscious man.

ABBOT

I also put in something else , an amine-based compound - well, the chemistry's pretty thick, but he'll wake up singing. Happy as a lark. And he won't be good for any combat for awhile. Strangest thing. The amine groups and their effect on human brain chemistry are startling, and quite unstudied. The effects fade eventually.

Abbot returns to the search for life inside the cars.

CAPTAIN MARS

I'm afraid I still don't understand. You've never actually killed anyone in battle?

Abbot finds something of interest in the front car, but he continues the conversation as he explores.

ABBOT

I just don't do that, captain - so before I signed up, I designed these darts. Just as accurate as a regular bullet. The cylinder at the end of the rifle is a silencer. It's a great weapon for close-up work, and for that's mostly what we've been doing since Loos. Hit a guy anywhere, even just nick the skin, and he's down for at least a full day. He'll wake up singing.

Abbot has found something

ABBOT

Captain. I need help. One is alive.

Captain Mars rushes over and helps Abbot pull an unconscious body from the lead vehicle.

CAPTAIN MARS

It's a young woman!

ABBOT

Superficial head wound. She's just knocked out.

Abbot glances at Adolf, who is still in his own world, mumbling to himself.

ABBOT

Thirteen dead. Nobody else made it. It looks like the old soldier next to her threw his body over her as a shield. The corporal was otherwise quite efficient in his execution.

CAPTAIN MARS

Let's get her off the road. We don't know what's coming.

ABBOT

Will do, Captain. I'd suggest keeping an eye on Adolf there, sir -  
- he's an unknown quantity. I didn't see that one coming.

Abbot pulls the woman up, and then lifts her over his shoulder. He stands up and heads for the observation post as the other soldiers arrive to help clear the road.

CAPTAIN MARS

Schultz! Baumberg! Let's push the rear car off first. Shuster, you and Drescher take the old man over there off the road, out of sight.

As the soldiers comply, Captain Mars looks at Adolf, who is sitting down watching the other men.

He has recovered somewhat, but now looks bewildered, as if he has returned to his own body at last.

EXT. UNDERNEATH TREE PLATFORM

Abbot gently lowers the woman to the ground, and removes his pack. He pulls out a medical kit, and begins to treat her wound. A voice calls out from above.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

Abbot! That was a total mess! I can't believe Adolf cracked up like that! How's the woman?

ABBOT  
 (calls back up)  
 She'll be all right. Just creased.  
 Anything?

JOSEPH  
 Nothing. Clear so far.

Abbot cleans the wound, and then breaks open a vial of smelling salts.

As he waves them underneath the young woman's nose, her eyelids flutter, and then her eyes open wide.

She becomes startled, and tries to sit up.

YOUNG WOMAN  
 (in French, subtitled)  
 What? What are you doing?

ABBOT  
 (replies in French)  
 You've sustained a slight head wound. Please stay calm. Everything is all right now. Do you speak German?

YOUNG WOMAN  
 (replies in English)  
 Yes. Where is my Uncle?

ABBOT  
 I'm afraid all but one other of your party is dead. I'm sorry. Our orders were to capture the French Premier, alive. One of our soldiers went mad, and started shooting without provocation. One elderly gentleman has been hit with an anesthetic dart, and will be fine - I don't know if he is your uncle. I'm very sorry that this happened. Please lie still.

YOUNG WOMAN  
 My father - is following us - we had a fight. I went ahead with the staff - he will be here soon.

ABBOT  
 Your father is Georges Clemenceau.

YOUNG WOMAN  
 Yes. How did you know this?

Abbot smiles at her. He calls up to Joseph.

ABBOT  
Joe! Incoming!

With a HISSING OF ROPES, Joseph drops to the ground and steps out of his harness.

JOSEPH  
Indeed. They have just topped the ridge. With two armored cars, moving slow. We have less than half an hour.

Joseph looks at Madeleine.

JOE  
Hello.

ABBOT  
Joseph Smith, meet Madeleine Clemenceau -- the daughter of the Premier of France.

JOSEPH  
Terrible circumstances under which to meet. I'm sorry - it wasn't supposed to be this way.  
(pauses)  
Abbot, I've got to warn Mars. At least two armored cars, and a line of infantry trucks.

ABBOT  
That's it for us, then. Get Mars out of there.

Joseph nods, and disappears into the bushes, headed for the road. Abbot continues to tend to Madeleine's wounds.

MADELEINE  
You don't act like a German soldier.

ABBOT  
Well, after all, I lived in Paris for several years.

MADELEINE  
(confused)  
Why were you in Paris?

ABBOT  
 (in French)  
 I received my degree in medicine  
 from the Sorbonne. Aren't you  
 glad?  
 (switching back to  
 English)  
 Now please be quiet, and lie still.  
 You will be reunited with your  
 father soon.

EXT. BARRICADE - DAY

The cars have been removed from the road. Captain Mars is directing his men to resume their positions as Joseph arrives.

JOSEPH  
 Captain! Convoy approaching. Two  
 armored cars, and at least a  
 company in trucks.

CAPTAIN MARS  
 Damn! We can't deal with that!

JOSEPH  
 Captain - the girl is Clemenceau's  
 daughter. Clemenceau is in the  
 convoy. Our information was  
 correct - except for the escort.  
 We have perhaps twenty to thirty  
 minutes before they arrive.

CAPTAIN MARS  
 His daughter?

Joseph nods. Captain Mars thinks furiously. Neither of them see that Adolf, now sitting cross-legged on the roadside, has overheard.

CAPTAIN MARS  
 INCOMING! CLEAR THE BARRICADE!  
 KRUPKE, GUARD THE CORPORAL!  
 EVERYONE ELSE, CLEAR THE BARRICADE!  
 NOW!

Everyone springs into action.

EXT. BENEATH TREE PLATFORM

Abbot continues to tend to Madeleine, who is now sitting up and fully alert.

MADELEINE

What's going to happen to me?

ABBOT

I suspect Captain Mars will clear the barricade, detain you until your father has passed, and then release you.

MADELEINE

But you killed all those men.

ABBOT

A corporal named Adolf Hitler killed those men. He suffered a psychotic episode and executed everyone in the vehicles. I was able to prevent him from killing you, and one other. I am truly sorry. Captain Mars will deal with him. We were ordered to kidnap your father. That's all. I'm sorry.

MADELEINE

My God, I can't believe it! Herzl, and Mr. Lavant, Colonel Tristan - they are like my family. When the shooting started, Colonel Tristan threw himself on top of me. Then something hit me in the head -

ABBOT

The Colonel saved your life - he deflected the bullet just enough.

Madeleine is overcome with grief for a moment. Abbot begins to pack his medical gear away.

ABBOT

The other elderly gentleman is near the road, and won't be conscious until tomorrow. He will need your attention once you are released -- I will leave you with medication for him and supplies for several days for both of you.

MADELEINE

What is wrong with him? You shot him with a dart?

ABBOT

Yes -- he'll be unconscious for twenty-four hours, and then he'll wake up quite happy and refreshed. He may also sing. It's a common effect of the drug.

MADELEINE

What is it?

ABBOT

A ketamine/diethylamide compound mixed into a very quick-acting neuroanesthetic. He'll be fine, I assure you.

MADELEINE

You don't kill people?

ABBOT

Oh, no. Well, I probably could, being a primate and all, but I choose not to. So far.

MADELEINE

Yet you are a German soldier.

ABBOT

Joe needed looking after. Not to mention the wonderful food, and the big parties, and all the beautiful young American women.

He gestures somewhat at her.

MADELEINE

How do you know I'm American?

ABBOT

Well, I can hear a little Connecticut mixed with the Parisian elite in your German.

MADELEINE

My mother is American.

ABBOT

I know the story of Mary Plummer and the French Professor very well. Very romantic. And you -- the brash young tomboy, the daughter who became the great writer. You are as beautiful close up as you are from far away.

Madeleine stares at him for a moment. Abbot suddenly realizes what he has said.

ABBOT

I apologize for seeming forward.

MADELEINE

You're very odd.

ABBOT

I know. I'm sorry - I have to get ready.

He stands up and begins quickly preparing to move out. She watches him.

MADELEINE

Perhaps we'll meet again.

ABBOT

Hopefully not as a prisoner of war next time.

MADELEINE

Perhaps next time, you will be my prisoner.

ABBOT

I would really love that.

There is an awkward pause. Joseph emerges from the brush, back from removing the barricade.

JOSEPH

(salutes mockingly)

Admiral Hoffman, sir -- Captain Mars says we go in the following fashion -- everyone but myself and the Captain - and the Illustrious Prisoner, beg your pardon --

(he nods to Madeleine, who nods back)

-- heads back for the base. I'll man the platform, and once the convoy is past, the Captain will release the young lady, who will need to attend to the older gentleman for a bit.

He turns to address Madeleine directly.

JOSEPH

We'll leave you food and water for a few days -- and St. Benoit is a few miles down the road. I'm terribly sorry, but we must abandon you here. This mission has become a disaster, and we have to get out now.

ABBOT

How's Adolf, Joe?

JOSEPH

(grimaces)

Gone. Apparently, he recovered while we were clearing the barricade - he cracked Krupke on the head, and disappeared into the brush, damn it. He's got a pistol from the old guy you pegged. They're looking for him now. We don't have any time, though. I think he woke up and figured out what's waiting for him back home. He just went crazy. I'm so sorry, Miss Clemenceau. No one had a clue he was going to do anything like that. Thank god you're alive.

MADELEINE

Private Abbot has repaired me.

JOSEPH

Well, as long as he doesn't shoot you with one of his darts, you'll be all right. Otherwise, you'll wake up as a singing philosopher. I've seen it -- it's rather amazing. Kind of tempting, actually.

ABBOT

Well -- you're begging for it now --

JOSEPH

(laughs)

Not today. I better get up top.

Joseph walks over and steps into his harness. With a small wave and a tug on one of the ropes, he vaults into the treetop.

MADELEINE

Both of you are odd.

ABBOT

Ah. You have no idea.

Abbot returns to packing. Captain Mars and the other soldiers enter, out of breath from clearing the barricade and searching for Adolf.

CAPTAIN MARS

How's the patient?

ABBOT

She's fine. A small crease -- no scar, I think.

CAPTAIN MARS

Madame Clemenceau, I am honored to meet you -- I am deeply sorry for today's events. I swear to you that Corporal Hitler's actions were those of a madman. My orders were to avoid bloodshed.

MADELEINE

And now he is loose in the woods?

CAPTAIN MARS

He will face a court-martial for his actions if we can find him. He fled up the hill on the west side of the road.

(he pauses)

But we are out of time. Your father's convoy is approaching, and we must leave. Two of us will stay behind - we'll release you as soon as they are safely past.

ABBOT

We'll meet you at the tank, sir.  
Goodbye, Miss Clemenceau.  
Wonderful to meet you.

MADELEINE

Goodbye, Abbot. Thank you.

CAPTAIN MARS

Everyone move out!  
(shouting up at the tree)  
Private Smith! We're on!

JOSEPH (V.O.)

Yes, sir!

Abbot and the other soldiers leave, headed for the tank.  
 Captain Mars nods at Madeleine.

CAPTAIN MARS

If you'll just rest there awhile,  
 I'll let you know when the road is  
 clear, and you can go. The old  
 gentleman is hidden under some low  
 trees in a gully on the west side  
 of the road. We're leaving you  
 food and water.

He unlimbers a pack and drops it on the ground next to her.

CAPTAIN MARS

There's a village down the road.  
 Abbot said that the gentleman would  
 be ready to travel tomorrow.  
 Again, I am sorry for all this.

MADELEINE

I understand that things happen in  
 war, Captain. Thank you for  
 releasing me.

Captain Mars nods.

EXT. PATH THROUGH WOODS - DAY

Abbot and the soldiers are on their way to the tank's hiding  
 place. Abbot is leading, quickly moving from tree to tree,  
 alert and silent. The other men follow him closely. Private  
 Krupke is rubbing his head.

ABBOT

(whispers)

Hard to believe Adolf lost it like  
 that -- he seemed like a regular  
 guy. Every man a hidden world,  
 huh? I should have just dropped  
 him. More people would be alive.

KRUPKE

(whispers back)

And my head wouldn't hurt.

ABBOT

I'll fix you up when we get to the  
 tank.

KRUPKE

What, you brought beer?

ABBOT

No, but some brandy. For the wounded. And some other excellent medications. I'll set you right up.

KRUPKE

Sounds good to me.

A PISTOL SHOUT RINGS OUT FROM THE DIRECTION OF THE ROAD. Everyone crouches.

ABBOT

Damn! What the hell was that! The convoy's not even close yet!

KRUPKE

That's from the road.

ANOTHER PISTOL SHOT RINGS OUT.

ABBOT

Joe's in trouble.

(pauses)

Krupke, I have to go. Get back to the tank. Take up a defensive position. Wait for me.

KRUPKE

You'll need help.

ABBOT

Thank you, but no. Get to the tank, take up positions, and stay out of sight. Now go!

Krupke leads the other men on. Abbot immediately turns around and begins sprinting for the road.

He moves fast, but stays low and quiet, darting quickly through the brush.

EXT. TREE WITH PLATFORM

Abbot is now close to the tree platform's location. He slows down and stays even lower, with a professional stealth.

Abbot watches the small glade underneath the tree platform. Nothing moves for a moment -- then a shadow of an arm reaches up into the air, and falls back.

Abbot circles the tree, looking up to the platform - he utters a quiet bird call. There is no answer. He circles some more, until he can see the edge of the road.

Nothing is moving on the road. There are no sounds of vehicles, only a deathly quiet.

Abbot moves in to the glade underneath the tree with extreme caution.

He penetrates into the gloom.

A moment later, Abbot is kneeling over a prostrate form. It is Joseph.

ABBOT

Joe! Joe! Joe! What the hell?  
What happened?

Joseph is GASPING FOR BREATH. He has been shot through the lung, and can barely speak.

JOSEPH

Adolf shot Mars. I came down -  
shot me. From behind, the  
shithead. Grabbed Madeleine. He's  
acting like a demon, Abbot. You  
have to go get her.

ABBOT

Joe, where's Mars?

JOSEPH

(tries to gesture)  
Over there, in the bushes. Check  
him first.

Abbot finds Mars in the bushes and quickly checks the unconscious man over.

ABBOT

He's bad. You're both going to  
need immediate surgery. I don't  
have everything I'll need. I have  
to get you back to the tank.

Joseph looks at Abbot with emotional desperation.

JOSEPH

Madeleine!

Abbot freezes for a moment, caught in decision - then nods slightly, and picks up his rifle.

Before he can leave the glade, Madeleine quietly pushes her way out of the bushes and into view.

MADELEINE

Abbot!

(she looks at Joseph)

Joseph! Are you alive? Are you all right?

JOSEPH

Oh, yeah.

ABBOT

Madeleine, where's Adolf?

MADELEINE

Oh, we stopped, and he became -- ungentlemanly, so I kicked him in the privates and he ran away. Really, what a little coward. He shot the Captain from the bushes over there, then he hit me, and then he shot Joe right in the back when he came down. Not to mention all the sick things he said out in the woods. I should have grabbed the gun and just shot him, the ass.

ABBOT

That makes two of us, now. You're all right?

MADELEINE

I can take care of myself. What about these two? They look bad. What are you going to do?

Abbot walks over and tugs on one of the ropes. The rope releases itself and falls to the ground in a coil. He picks it up.

ABBOT

I need to take them back to our - base. I have all the supplies I'll need for the surgery. The field pack is limited. The Captain has the more serious wound. It will be very difficult.

MADELEINE

Let me help.

Abbot roots around, looking for long sturdy branches to make a sled with.

ABBOT

No, I'm sorry. You must go. I can't take you near the base - it's dangerous. But thank you - for the offer. Kindness to the kidnapper - a reaction to the trauma, no doubt.

MADELEINE

Maybe I just like you. You did kind of sweet-talk to me, you know.

ABBOT

I did apologize.

JOSEPH

I'm still alive, you know. This is embarrassing! Come on!

Abbot and Madeleine fall silent. They exchange glances while Abbot works swiftly on the sled.

EXT. UNDERNEATH TREE PLATFORM - LATER

Both Captain Mars and Joseph have been treated and placed on to a compact, well-designed two-man sled. Joseph is now unconscious.

Abbot is preparing to shoulder the sling and move out. Madeleine is helping him adjust the load.

MADELEINE

You'll never make it.

ABBOT

It's not far. If I get stuck, I'll get some of the men to help.

A DULL, DISTANT ROAR begins to be heard from the direction of the road - it is the convoy.

ABBOT

It's the convoy. Madeleine -

MADELEINE

Don't worry, I'll stick to the plan. Get them back home, Abbot.

ABBOT

What a thrill to finally meet you in person. I'll never forget this.

Madeleine pauses - then leans swiftly forward and kisses Abbot. He kisses her back - they pull themselves away with difficulty.

With a last look, Abbot strikes out for the tank. Madeleine watches him go.

EXT. PATH THROUGH WOODS - DAY

Abbot is working hard to pull both men -- the sled design makes it less of a struggle. He is traveling as fast as he can.

As he crests a small hill, SOUNDS OF A FURIOUS FIREFIGHT ERUPT FROM SOMEWHERE AHEAD OF HIM.

ABBOT

Ahh, crap. Krupke. What's that rifle? What's that rifle?

JOSEPH

(very weakly)  
American. Lee-Enfield.

ABBOT

God damn it, you were right, Joe. It's the AEF, headed right for us. I think Krupke and Shultz and Baumberg and those guys are in it right now.

THE FIREFIGHT STOPS. The woods are silent once more.

ABBOT

Or were. Joe, I've got to stash you two until I check on Krupke and clear the tank. I can make the run, grab the packs, and pick up anybody left alive on the way back.

JOSEPH

Lots of singing in the woods tomorrow.

Abbot smiles grimly, but doesn't reply. He reshoulders the sled, and drags it over and down the hill and out of sight.

EXT. SMALL GROVE OF DENSE PINES - DAY

Abbot is completing the camouflage from the outside a hiding place under the low pines. Neither Joseph and Captain Mars can be seen through the brush.

ABBOT

I won't be long, Joe. Take care of our pal here.

JOSEPH

Dancing all day. Don't hurt 'em, Abbie. They're Americans. You know how I feel about them.

ABBOT

Just a little transcendence, Joe. It'll be good for 'em.

JOSEPH

Shoot me, then. I feel like shit.

ABBOT

I'm bringing back the good stuff for you, Joe. See you in a squidge.

Abbot turns and disappears into the brush.

JOSEPH

I wish I could get shot. Hey Marsy! Wake up! Talk to me!

There is no answer.

JOSEPH

Damn.

EXT. PATH THROUGH THE WOODS - DAY

FOUR AMERICAN SOLDIERS are strolling up the path, as if on a picnic.

FIRST SOLDIER

Do you see that? Did you see that?

SECOND SOLDIER

Yeah, I saw it.

FIRST SOLDIER

Three down before they even saw us.

SECOND SOLDIER

Yeah, I saw it.

THIRD SOLDIER

You guys, we should be quiet.

## FOURTH SOLDIER

If that's all they got, then we're  
home in two weeks, boys. Turkey  
shoot.

A DART is suddenly growing from the Fourth Soldier's neck.  
He drops to the ground.

The Third Soldier turns around questioningly -- and then  
drops as well.

The First and Second Soldiers whirl around and raise their  
rifles -- but one after the other, both drop to the ground,  
darts in their shoulders.

There is a slight rustle from the brush.

## EXT. PATH THROUGH THE WOODS - DAY

Abbot is threading his way along the side of the path - he is  
only barely glimpsed, at moments.

In a series of images, we watch him drop one soldier, then  
another, and another.

Here is a Captain, there a Lieutenant, another group of  
soldiers, and then another larger group, all falling to the  
silent whisp of the darts.

An even larger group begins to realize they are under attack,  
and start to take positions - but are inexorably left  
unconscious, one by one.

## EXT. CLEARING IN THE WOODS - DAY

TEN AMERICAN SOLDIERS are examining the laid-out corpses of  
eight German Soldiers.

Krupke, Schultz, Baumberg, and the others - all are dead.  
The SOLDIER closest to the bodies kicks at the dead men's  
boots.

## SOLDIER

Well, the mamas gonna be missin'  
these boys, hey?

Soldiers at the back of the group suddenly begin to collapse,  
one by one.

SOLDIER

That one there - he tried to run,  
but Sparky cut him right down, and  
then the fellow behind him -

Only three soldiers remain standing.

SOLDIER

-- but I think I got this one here.  
Wonder if he's got anything on him?  
I ought to --

The soldier swats at the back of his shoulder, and then quietly folds to the ground.

After a moment, Abbot emerges and grimly looks over the row of dead German soldiers.

He kneels down and closes their eyes, one by one, then pats Krupke on the shoulder.

Abbot then disappears into the brush, again moving toward the tank.

EXT. PINE GROVE - DAY

Abbot has pulled away the camouflage from the two men's hiding place and is treating Joseph, who is unconscious again. Several large packs are next to them.

ABBOT

Joe, there's a cave entrance hidden over this hill, about half a kilometer. It looks like a good place to do the surgery. I've got food - the tank's fine, still hidden. I think we can break out once these columns pass through. I've never seen so many brand new soldiers, not since 1914. It's a little disconcerting.

Joseph does not reply. Abbot finishes his treatment, and begins to pack the sled once more.

ABBOT

You both have to hold on. This is going to be rough. They're everywhere. Just hold on.

As Abbot prepares the sled, we look at Joseph and Captain Mars - they both look like dead men. It seems hopeless.

EXT. DEEP WOODS - AFTERNOON

Nothing but endless trees and brush -- then FOUR AMERICAN SOLDIERS creep stealthily into view.

They are obviously highly-skilled commandos of the era, sent to solve a serious problem.

FIRST SOLDIER

(whispers)

I think he's circling to the right.

As they all turn and bear to the right, a dart suddenly appears in the neck of the soldier to the rear.

Within ten seconds, all four have fallen prey to Abbot's silent rifle.

There is a RUSTLE from where the left of the soldiers would have been, now behind them - a crouching figure heaves into view, towing a heavy sled through the underbrush.

EXT. MULTIPLE LOCATIONS, DEEP WOODS - AFTERNOON

A rhythmic series of images, as Abbot chemically disables a succession of sentries, groups, patrols, an officer about to talk to his men and his assistant, then the men, then another patrol.

EXT. CAVE ENTRANCE - LATER

As THREE SOLDIERS ON PATROL pass by, there is a slight movement in the bushes to their right- it is Abbot, now in the cave, pulling the last bits of cover over the entrance.

The soldiers do not see him, and walk on by.

INT. CAVE

Abbot watches the soldiers go by through the thick leaves of the branches that he has pulled over the small cave entrance.

INT. CAVE

Joseph is looking up at the solid rock roof of the cave. Abbot's face appears as through a mist.

ABBOT

Go to sleep, Joe. We're safe.  
I'll work on you in just little  
bit, after the Captain. Don't  
worry, I've got you. Have a good  
dream.

As Abbot's face disappears, the roof of the cave seems to glisten, and break out into a PANORAMA OF STARS AND GALAXIES.

At first they start to SPIN, but then he moves forward into them with enormous speed.

Hundreds of light-years pass by - suddenly a SMALL GREEN-BLUE PLANET appears before Joseph, and he approaches it far too quickly, entering the atmosphere at light-speed to LAND LIGHTLY ON THE SURFACE OF A PLAYGROUND.

Jungle-gym bars and merry-go-rounds glisten in a strange purple-and-teal light.

CLOSEUP OF  
JOSEPH:

He is framed against a strangely colored sky. He turns -

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

An odd swingset comes into view as he turns. Two children, a boy and girl, are sitting on the seats smiling at him. They are CHARLES, nine, and ELIZABETH, five.

A quick succession of close images reveals their personality, obvious health, and love for Joseph. They are happy to see their father, but do not move towards him. They are looking at something to Joseph's right - he turns to see what it is --

A bench is facing away from Joseph. Sitting on the bench is a FIGURE that looks at first like an elephant, then a humanoid elephant - then an alien, with four short trunks and multiple eyes.

The ALIEN has a quite inhuman face, but somehow it seems friendly, almost smiling.

ALIEN

Hello, Joe. Thanks for coming. I  
was hoping we could play some music  
together while the children have  
fun.

Joseph glances at the children. They are playing and talking with two elephantine ALIEN CHILDREN.

JOSEPH  
Sure. All right.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

Joseph and the Alien are sitting next to each other on the bench. The Alien is playing a strange stringed instrument and tapping his trunk while Joseph sings and keeps the beat on an unrecognizable percussion thing.

Joseph is singing easily and happily in the Alien's language. Children's laughter fills the background.

The music fades. The Alien's elephantine shape and face seem to smile at Joseph.

The face becomes a dark gray fog, out of which Abbot's face materializes.

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

ABBOT  
You should be feeling better soon.  
Rest.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

INT. CAVE - DAY

Joseph regains consciousness slowly - he opens his crusty eyes and looks around the cave for the first time. It is lit by a single gas lantern.

Abbot has his back to Joseph as he tends to Captain Mars. Joseph tries to speak, but can only utter a croak of sorts.

Abbot hears him, and walks over to check on him.

ABBOT  
Joe. How do you feel? Drink.

Abbot helps Joseph take a drink of water.

JOSEPH  
I had the most real dream I have  
ever had. It was real. I know it  
was real. He was real.

ABBOT

Who was he?

JOSEPH

Nothing from this planet. Sort of like an elephant, but upright, with more eyes, and four short trunks. Our children played together. He and I were playing music and I was singing.

ABBOT

The anesthetic compound I used for your surgery has a hallucinogenic component, inducing a disassociative state - very effective for combat surgery.

JOSEPH

I want to go back, Abbot. My kids were there. I haven't seen my kids for a year and a half now.

ABBOT

But I need you here, my friend. And by 'back', I think you likely mean the back of the brain, which contains both very pleasant as well as terrifying sub-images. To visit, fine. To live -- no.

JOSEPH

He was real.

ABBOT

I accept that such a thing is possible.

JOSEPH

How's the Captain?

ABBOT

I've done everything I can. He'll live, but I don't know if he'll walk again. Adolf shot him near the spine. The trauma was extensive.

JOSEPH

You saved our lives, Abbot.

ABBOT

Well, I'm no star elephant, Joe. I just read the manuals, that's all.

(MORE)

ABBOT (CONT'D)  
It's all systems, you know.  
Stacked systems. That's it.

JOSEPH  
When I woke up, I thought I was  
back home in the Rule Mine.

Abbot and Joseph manage to smile at each other.

ABBOT  
I was waiting for you to wake up so  
I could explore the rest of the  
cave system we're in. It appears  
to be quite extensive, and I'm  
hoping for another way out.

Abbot gestures towards the now very-well-hidden cave  
entrance.

ABBOT  
This way is the American First  
Army, who is unfortunately somewhat  
angry at us and patrolling a great  
deal near this area.

JOSEPH  
How many did you dart?

ABBOT  
Enough to get us here.

JOSEPH  
Damn, Abbot. You just have the  
skills. Have they been singing?

ABBOT  
Ah, the woods are alive with the  
sound of music.

JOSEPH  
I always thought the second part  
was better, the whole awakening  
thing. Really spooky to watch.

ABBOT  
But it finishes well, at least.

JOSEPH  
Indeed it does, Doctor. Indeed it  
does.

Abbot prepares to explore the cave. He lights a small candle  
lantern and slings a light pack over his shoulder.

ABBOT

Mars will most likely be all right for now - if he wakes up, tell him he's doing fine and that I'll be back soon. Keep him quiet if you can - I've built up the entrance pretty well, but there's an entire division walking by us.

JOSEPH

Damned Adolf and his breakdown. I wish we'd kept looking for him when he ran.

ABBOT

I wish I'd darted him. He needs it more than most.

Abbot checks Joseph and Mars over quickly one last time.

ABBOT

I'll be back soon, Joe.

JOSEPH

Watch out for the cave monsters, Abbot.

Abbot smiles grimly and exits through the back part of the cave.

Joseph shifts around to look at Captain Mars on the floor near him, and winces with the effort.

JOSPEH

Me and you, Captain Mars. No problem.

INT. DEEPER INTO THE CAVE

Abbot is descending at a steep angle. He reaches a branching, chooses one, and makes a directional mark on the wall with a piece of chalk.

INT. EVEN DEEPER INTO THE CAVE

Abbot is crawling through a small tunnel, holding the lantern in front of him.

He turns a tight corner and surprises a BAT. The bat screeches, and flies at Abbot's face, who ducks his head and waits.

The bat tries to escape over Abbot, but can't. Frustrated, it flies the other way.

Abbot grimly pushes forward.

INT. GROTTTO

Abbot emerges from a difficult passage into a vast underground room. Most of it is partially filled with water, forming a huge UNDERGROUND LAKE.

He holds up the candle lantern to reveal --

INT. GROTTTO

The ceiling sparkles, as if there was no ceiling at all, but instead a view of the stars seen from space. Galaxies glisten. Superclusters seem to stretch out for billions of light years.

Abbot lowers the candle lantern, partially shielding it behind his body -- and the effect disappears, except for a small glow at the far end of the cavern.

ABBOT

Very nice. And light.

He sets out to find a way around the water.

INT. GROTTTO - LATER

Abbot has worked his way along the rocky edge of the water to come closer to the light, which has resolved into a dim shaft still some distance away. It appears to come down from the ceiling of the grotto.

INT. GROTTTO - TWENTY MINUTES LATER

Abbot jumps down from a high shelf along the grotto's edge to land on a rocky beach. The dim shaft of light from the ceiling has become almost enough to see by.

The light falls mostly on the water, but the edge touches the beach forty or fifty yards away, and he walks toward it, looking up at the ceiling some sixty to seventy feet above him.

INT. GROTTTO, NEAR THE EDGE OF THE LIGHT

Abbot is strolling towards the light along the beach, still looking upward. When he reaches the edge, he peers up at the shaft and whistles.

ABBOT

Untenable. A balloon, maybe.  
Damn.

He looks out over the water, and walks closer to it, holding up his lantern.

INT. GROTTTO

As he walks forward, we can see strange grey islands in the water, lumpy and mossy. He looks up to see SOMETHING FALLING FROM THE CEILING - it looks like wet garbage, large chunks and liquid.

Some SPLASHES on to the top of one of the piles, and as the liquid drains away, ONE CHUNK BOUNCES AND TEETERS, then manages to stay perched on the top of the pile.

It is a HUMAN HEAD, with most of the flesh ripped away. As we move closer, we see that it still has eyes - and that they are looking at us as if they are still alive.

ABBOT

My god.

The islands are piles of rotting human remains.

As Abbot scans the grisly scene, we can see that there are thousands of human carcasses, all with most of the flesh ripped away and in pieces, as if they had been eaten by a giant and thrown down the shaft.

Between the islands, the water is filled to within several feet below the surface with more human remains, mostly bones with bits of rotting flesh still attached.

The water elsewhere looks deep - implying that the islands took a great deal of building to breach the surface.

Pieces also litter the part of the beach, but lightly. Most of the bodies are in the water.

Abbot's face is ashen.

ABBOT

What in the hell is going on here?

Abbot stumbles back from the scene, trying to come to grips with the carnage it represents.

After a moment, he steadies himself, and then explores the beach a little further, climbing another ridge of rock extending into the water from the wall.

He holds up the lantern and peers into the dark recesses of the grotto that lies beyond the shaft. He sniffs the air, and nods.

ABBOT

That's it.

He gives a final glare at the shaft in the ceiling above the dumping ground, and turns back to scramble down the rocks, continuing his search into the grotto.

INT. ENTRANCE CAVE - DAY

Abbot is out of breath as he turns the corner into the entrance cave. He stops and stands perfectly still as he realizes the cave is completely empty. Joseph, Captain Mars, and all the equipment are gone.

INT. ENTRANCE CAVE

Abbot is examining his cover of the entrance. He runs his fingers over it, testing the edges, and then gives it a shake. It appears undisturbed.

INT. ENTRANCE CAVE

Abbot is kneeling on the ground, reading the footprints and marks in the dirt of the cave floor.

He moves his eyes over the floor, picking out the scene -- we can see him think. He suddenly stands up and follows a trail.

INT. CAVE TUNNEL

Abbot and his candle-lantern are plunging down a different tunnel this time, often stopping to inspect the floor.

He's moving as fast as he can. Something has him momentarily panicked.

INT. DRY UNDERGROUND RIVERBED

Abbot emerges onto a large subterranean highway, a smooth and sinuous tunnel with a sand floor almost fifty feet across.

He checks the tracks, looks up to his left, and follows the tracks as they lead up the riverbed.

INT. UNDERGROUND RIVERBED - FURTHER ON

Abbot is padding silently up the riverbed, following the tracks, but also hugging the wall and keeping a forward focus. Something is close.

INT. UNDERGROUND RIVERBED - EVEN FURTHER ON

Abbot is crouched low by the wall, watching something ahead.

THERE IS AN AUDIBLE COCKING OF A RIFLE FROM BEHIND ABBOT.

He doesn't move for a moment, then turns around slowly to see two strange-looking young men, LUCAS and JEAN. They are French cave-dwellers, but they have modern rifles trained directly on Abbot.

LUCAS  
(in French)  
I told you.

JEAN  
(also in French)  
He's good at this, I can tell.  
Wonder where he was?

LUCAS  
(in French)  
I've never gone beyond that exit.  
It gets too tight.

ABBOT  
(in French)  
I'm looking for my two friends.

JEAN  
(in English)  
Shut up, meat!

With a savage look his face, Jean jabs the butt of his rifle directly into Abbot's face.

DISSOLVE TO  
STARS.

INT. CAVE CELL - DAY

Abbot is looking up at a dark and mottled cave ceiling, with some evidence of an old fire.

A head and shoulders move into view from the side - it is LEON BENOIT, the father of Lucas and Jean.

LEON

Well. You're still alive after all.

Leon has a damp cloth in his hand - he has been cleaning Abbot's facial wounds.

As he moves to continue -- Abbot's hand shoots up and grips Leon's wrist, who tries to pull free, but fails.

Lucas steps into view, ready to butt Abbot with his rifle once more - but Leon restrains him with a gesture.

LEON

Wait, wait. Just let go now.

Abbot slowly releases his grip on Leon's arm.

ABBOT

My two friends. From the entrance. One unconscious.

LEON

Still alive. They are in a different room.

ABBOT

Who are you?

LEON

My name is Leon Benoit. I am the mayor of the village above us.

He gestures upward.

LEON

I am also the local butcher.

Abbot looks at Leon. A shadow passes across his face.

ABBOT

I take it we are bound for the  
block.

Leon is taken by surprise, but quickly recovers himself.

LEON

You made it to the grotto.  
Impressive. It is a very tight  
squeeze.

ABBOT

A family of cannibalistic  
troglodytes. Fascinating.

This comment stings Leon, who reacts with rage.

LEON

You think you're so special, Doctor  
Hoffman? The Benoit family goes  
back twenty generations in this  
village. Do you think I care what  
you think? Soon you'll be frying  
in a pan, getting ready for British  
soldiers to eat you. You'll be  
delicately seasoned and enjoyed.  
Do you think I care what the meat  
thinks?

Leon stands up and motions to Lucas.

LEON

The other two get stripped in the  
line -- but he stays for now. He's  
got some great little toys I can  
sell to the army in those packs -  
and if he won't tell me what they  
are how they work --  
(he raises his voice) )  
-- I'll cut LITTLE PIECES OFF OF  
HIM, LITTLE BLOODY BITS, AND MAKE  
HIM EAT THEM UNTIL HE DOES!

Leon stands over Abbot, shaking with rage.

LEON

I'LL CAUTERIZE YOU EVERY TIME, WITH  
EVERY CUT! YOU'LL LIVE FOR WEEKS,  
DOCTOR HOFFMAN, YOU STUPID LITTLE  
JEW BASTARD! YOU FOUL LITTLE PILE  
OF STEW CHUNKS!

ABBOT  
 (in a mildly mocking  
 British accent)  
 Wonderful display, Mr. Mayor.  
 Twenty generations, you say? Such  
 a rich history.

LEON SCREAMS IN ABBOT'S FACE. Abbot does not react. Leon and Lucas exit the cell, slamming shut and locking the barred door.

Abbot groans to himself and begins to pull himself together.

The rifle butt has broken his nose - he gingerly probes for a moment, and then leans back and breathes.

ABBOT  
 Eaten by the Limeys. That's just  
 Gothic. That's great. Meet the  
 Benoits. 'I'm the mayor,' he says.

Abbot scans his surroundings, slowly and painfully stands up -- and begins to look for a way to escape.

He examines the cell methodically - the bars, the door, the walls, the ceiling.

INT. CAVE CELL - DAY

Abbot is sitting against the wall, thinking. Suddenly, he stands up and strides over to the bars. He begins to run his fingers over the side and ceiling corner joints, where the iron meets the stone.

As he does, something catches his eye - he turns to see a girl, about eight or nine, standing perfectly still in the shadows outside the cell and watching him. Her name is RENE BENOIT.

ABBOT  
 Hello.

RENE  
 Hello. The others all try that  
 too.

ABBOT  
 I'm sure they do. What is your  
 name?

RENE  
 Rene.

ABBOT

Very nice to meet you, Rene. I wish it did not have to be under such circumstances. Does your father and mother know you are talking to the prisoners?

RENE

No.

ABBOT

Do they know where you are?

RENE

No.

(pauses)

I try to help, but it never works. Grandfather is very smart. They don't leave the keys out anymore. I'm sorry. I would help you if I could. I'm sorry about my family.

ABBOT

Rene - this must be very hard for you. A little girl shouldn't have to live such a life. Perhaps there is something you can do to help me, and in return perhaps I can help you.

RENE

What can I do?

ABBOT

I have a pack, it's a large, grey one with two long stripes running along each side. Your father has it. There are many things in it he wants to know about, but there is one thing he will not understand, and it could help me and my friends.

RENE

Your friends are very sick. I heard Grandfather say they were going to the stripping room. You don't have long.

ABBOT

Then we have to hurry. In the pack, there is a little wooden box.

(MORE)

ABBOT (CONT'D)

If you can, take the box to the room at the entrance where they found my friends. Do you know the place?

RENE

Yes.

ABBOT

When you get there, open the cover of the box, and you'll see a big, brown button. All you need to do is push down on the button, put down the box, and leave.

RENE

Just push down?

ABBOT

Yes.

RENE

Then what?

ABBOT

Then just leave it and come back.

RENE

Does it explode?

ABBOT

No. It sends out a radio signal.

RENE

All right. I'll try.

ABBOT

You're very brave. Do you want to come with us?

RENE

No, I have to stay to try to help the others.

ABBOT

There are others? Soldiers?

RENE

Yes, all kinds. In other cells. I can't just leave them. Once somebody got away, but they never came back.

ABBOT

I will not let your Grandfather  
keep doing this. If I can get  
away, I'll make sure that all this  
is stopped. I promise.

Without another word, Rene whirls around and disappears down  
a tunnel.

INT. CAVE CELL, ONE HOUR LATER

Jean holds up a rifle while Lucas unlocks the door; they  
enter the cell.

LUCAS

Mister, you made the wrong man mad.

JEAN

Papa Leon thought up something  
really good for you.

Jean laughs darkly. Lucas swings the door wide and lets Jean  
pass through, his rifle pointed directly at Abbot.

ABBOT

Remarkable, the deep, dark holes  
that creativity leads to in the  
hands of cave-cannibals.

LUCAS

Oh, we don't eat 'em -- we just  
sell 'em.

Both brothers laugh - it is an old family joke. Jean circles  
around Abbot and gestures with the rifle.

JEAN

Move out, meat.

The two men hustle Abbot out the door.

INT. CAVE CORRIDOR

The two men escort their prisoner down a semi-finished, well-  
lit corridor. Abbot absorbs his surroundings as he walks.

They turn a corner and push through a swinging door.

## INT. CAVE SLAUGHTERHOUSE

It is a large, well-lit, finished room. Human bodies in various stages of mutilation lie in rows on rolling steel tables, arranged in a large semicircle throughout the room.

Various blood-draining equipment, tables, large meat grinders, and other unknown equipment fill the rest of the room.

At the center of the semicircle of tables is a low wall surrounding a twenty-foot-wide hole in the floor - it is the top of the shaft Abbot saw from the grotto.

Fifteen women and men are busy carving large strips of flesh from the legs, arms, chests, and torsos of the corpses. One woman rolls a table filled with the stripped remains to the grotto.

The low wall stops the wheels of the table -- and then the woman tips the hinged tabletop forward, so that the shredded corpse slides neatly into the shaft and down into the grotto.

Leon is waiting patiently between two tables holding bodies covered with canvas.

There are eight other younger men behind him, some with rifles, arranged in a semicircle.

The women and men working on bodies look up as Abbot is dragged forward and thrown to the ground in front of Leon. The Benoit family crew then returns to their grisly task.

## LEON

As you can see, we are a modern operation. Directly above us is the village St. Benoit, where I have my butcher shop and other businesses. We retrieve bodies from various local battlefields not far from here, and then bring them down to this room for processing. We make them an excellent seasoned sausage and a single-serving pork cutlet which is very popular with the British, the French, the Germans, the Americans -- everybody loves these meat products. And the margin is fantastic.

## ABBOT

Well, aside from the spiritual depreciation expense.

LEON

They are dead on the battlefield.  
They are just bodies, like a cow,  
like a pig. They are husks.  
Nothing more. I would have thought  
that you, as a scientist, as an  
inventor -- I imagined that you  
would appreciate the conservation  
of resources, the pragmatic service  
we provide.

Abbot makes several LOW SOUNDS in his throat. Everyone in the group is shocked to hear APE-LIKE SOUNDS coming from him - he suddenly SHRIEKS, A PRIMITIVE GORILLA-SCREAM SOUND, and bares his teeth at Leon, who flinches.

Abbot then relaxes into a calm and steady stare - having made his point.

Leon is stung by this display, which frightened him - as well as the rest of the family. He regains control of himself -- and smiles.

LEON

Well. To business, then.

Leon dramatically pulls the canvas from the two bodies on the tables. The tables hold Joseph and Captain Mars, both nude, both unconscious - or dead.

LEON

Your friends --are they alive? I  
don't know.

(to Lucas)

Bring me the box.

Lucas retrieves a small wooden box from a nearby table covered with strange equipment. Abbot's rifle and darts lie on the table next to his backpack. Lucas hands the box to Leon.

LEON

You recognize this? I found it in  
the possession of one of my  
daughters, Rene? Have you met?

Abbot is silent.

LEON

Well. I had to beat her for some time before she would tell me -- she's always trying to help prisoners escape, you know, she's the black sheep, her heart bleeds for every little living thing, down to the tiny snails --

The young men in the semicircle all chuckle quietly. Another family joke.

LEON

-- but she finally told me, through her broken little teeth, that you had told her to fetch this box, push the button, and leave it near the entrance where we found you. Is this true?

Abbot is still silent.

LEON

Well. At this point, I wish to come to an agreement. You agree to tell me what this box is, and what it does, and then you will tell me about every single item on that table over there. In exchange, I agree not to process your friends in front of your horrified eyes -- and they will scream, I assure you, they are just lightly sedated -- and then I let you go your way, back to the German lines, and home. What do you say? Is it a deal?

ABBOT

Let me examine them. If they are unharmed, I will agree. If either of them are dead, or have been harmed in any way, I will tell you nothing.

LEON

By all means. Examine them.

Lucas, Jean, and the eight other young men shift backwards as Leon gestures at them to move.

Abbot slowly advances to stand between the two tables. He begins to examine his two friends with a physician's detachment.

Suddenly, without warning, ABBOT REACHES OUT AND SMOOTHLY GRABS HIS TWO FRIENDS BY THE HAIR OF THEIR HEADS, AND PULLS FORWARD - the tables begin to roll, and before anyone can move to stop him, he drags Joseph and Captain Mars towards the large circular hole in the floor.

Leon SHOUTS - all the young men chase Abbot and the tables - but Abbot reaches the low wall surrounding the hole and LEAPS OVER IT, DRAGGING HIS FRIENDS OFF THEIR TABLETOPS as the two tables strike the low wall and come to an abrupt halt.

Abbot disappears down the shaft that leads to the grotto, with the bodies of Joseph and Captain Mars trailing behind him.

LEON

He's over! He's gone over!

INT. GROTTTO - CEILING SHAFT

IN SLOW MOTION, Abbot emerges headfirst from the bottom of the shaft in the ceiling of the grotto, dragging the bodies of Captain Mars and Joseph behind him by their hair. His face is set in a determined expression.

INT. GROTTTO

As he plunges towards the water now some forty feet below, Abbot sees the bodies in the water -- they seem to come alive for a moment, a sea of ghosts --

INT. GROTTTO, MIDAIR

Abbot is turning his body and drawing the two men close to him in preparation for a rough landing.

SPLASH! The three men crash into the water -- but there is also the sound of wet popping, similar to the bloated horse Captain Marck fell into.

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE ABOVE

Lucas, Jean, and the others ring the shaft wall, and aim their rifles down through the shaft. They begin FIRING.

INT. GROTTTO, WATER LEVEL

BULLETS STRIKE THE BODY PILES and the water between them in the area lit by the shaft of light from above.

ABBOT EMERGES FROM THE WATER WITH A ROAR, and still dragging the two bodies behind him, seems to take GIANT STEPS ACROSS THE SUBMERGED CARCASSES until he is out of the light and hidden by the darkness of the grotto.

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE - DAY

Leon pushes in between two of the young men firing down into the shaft.

LEON  
STOP! STOP! HOLD YOUR FIRE!

The young men stop firing.

LEON  
We'll just wait for him at the little tunnel. The south end has been blocked for a hundred years - he's got one way out, and it's going to take him hours.

Leon looks down the shaft.

LEON  
Two of you go after him.

All of the young men immediately back away from the shaft, muttering refusals.

LEON  
You damned cowards! If your mothers could see you right now - cowards.

Leon looks down the shaft again.

LEON  
Well, damn it! Then get going down to the tunnel! MOVE!

The young men need no further urging as they turn and start for the door.

They all stop, however, as they hear a GROWING RUMBLE FROM ABOVE THEM. THE CEILING OF THE SLAUGHTERHOUSE BEGINS TO TREMBLE -- Leon, still clutching the wooden box, looks up in a panic as --

THE TANK FALLS THROUGH THE ROOF OF THE CAVE! The thirty-three ton Mark V Tank rides the rubble down to SMASH INTO THE FLOOR OF THE SLAUGHTERHOUSE, killing the people underneath it, and -

HALF THE FLOOR OF THE SLAUGHTERHOUSE COLLAPSES INTO THE GROTTO, carrying the tank, Leon, Lucas, Jean and the surviving men down into the darkness.

THE SOUND IS DEAFENING -- ROCKS FALLING, THE TANKS ENGINE'S ROARING, PEOPLE SCREAMING --

INT. GROTTO

Abbot, wet, exhausted, and covered with slime, turns toward the light of the shaft from the safety of the beach.

The entire ceiling of the grotto falls into the water, topped by rubble, people, the tank, and all the equipment, with a TREMENDOUS CRASH.

The water seems to swallow it all in a BOILING PLUME, and a now a vast beam of sunlight strikes the Grotto through the haze, blinding Abbot.

A BIG WAVE strikes the beach, and the air is full of dust.

When Abbot recovers, he sees several men struggling in the water, shouting -- one of them is Leon, injured and bleeding but still clutching the little wooden box, now moving purposefully towards the beach.

After a moment, Leon sees Abbot.

LEON  
GOD DAMN YOU!

LEON turns to the other survivors.

LEON  
GET HIM! GET HIM!

Five or six men recover at the sound of Leon's voice, and begin to move towards the beach.

From behind them, THE TANK ROARS AND BREAKS OUT OF THE WATER, towering over the men. It smashes down and buries most of them underneath it. Leon looks back in a panic --

THE TANK'S TREADS ARE ROLLING -- they catch Leon, and another man, and CRUSH THEM BOTH INTO THE WATER.

THE TANK'S TREADS SUDDENLY STOP -- and the tank sits in the water, bottom treads about three feet below the surface, engine idling -- it has reached the radio box, as ordered.

Abbot looks across the short span of water to the waiting tank.

ABBOT

Good baby. That's my little tank.

He walks toward the tank with a smile on his face.

He looks up at the now much-larger hole above the grotto -- nearly the entire ceiling has fallen into the grotto lake.

Along the edges, a few scattered heads peek over --

INT. TANK - DAY

Abbot has Joseph and Captain Mars stowed behind the driver's seat, in an empty ammunition compartment. Medical supplies are strewn about -- Abbot has been hard at work.

He kneels over Joseph, having finished changing his bandage. Joe's eyes open slowly.

JOSEPH

Abbot.

ABBOT

Joseph.

JOSEPH

Oh, my god. What have you been rolling in?

ABBOT

Not just me, buddy.

JOSEPH

Oh god, save me from your smell.

ABBOT

You'll get used to it. Sixty seconds to roll, my friend. We're off this planet.

JOSEPH

Tankie found us all right?

ABBOT

With perfect timing. Your thing worked perfectly, two-and-a-half miles away, over broken ground and hills. I have to comment however, that the tank fell through the floor into an underground lake, and therefore would have been irretrievably lost and we would be all be dead but for one thing.

JOSEPH

Your goop.

ABBOT

My simulated rubber compound converted this tank into a functioning submersible in exchange for one hour's work. And you gave me such a load of crap about it.

JOSEPH

Your goop stank. You stink!  
Everything stinks! Can we just go?  
Oh, my god! Kill me!

Abbot smiles and moves toward the driver's seat.

ABBOT

(in a cowboy twang)  
You just better hold on, there,  
now, fella. We're going for a  
little ride. Hee-haw.

Abbot slides into the driver's seat and moves several controls, adjusts levers -- and then pushes a little button.

The TANK ENGINES START, and Abbot warms them up slowly as he adjusts all sorts of add-on equipment.

ABBOT

Mark Five.

JOSEPH

(weakly)  
Mark Five!

ABBOT

God save the queen!

JOSEPH

What's for tea, mum?

ABBOT

There are no walls.

JOSEPH

Be the wall.

Abbot GUNS THE TANK'S ENGINES WITH A POWERFUL ROAR, and the vehicle surges forward.

JOSEPH

What's this wall thing you're  
talking about?

ABBOT

I reconnoitered it yesterday -  
there's a weak spot, a cave-in.  
We're headed for it.

JOSEPH

Oh. Oh, shit.

Abbot suddenly stands up and runs for the side passage to the tank's cannons.

ABBOT

She's tracking, Joe. I've got to  
get some heavy on it.

JOSEPH

I'll mind the store. Hey, hold on,  
Marsy!

Abbot disappears down the corridor. Joseph pats Captain Mars weakly.

Momentarily, the tank's CANNONS START FIRING - FIRST ONE,  
THEN ANOTHER. The FIRING CONTINUES with increasing rapidity.

JOSEPH

C'mon Tankie. No walls.

INT. GROTTO

The tank is plunging through shallow water toward a narrowing shaft with a dry beach leading up to it.

The tank is FIRING ITS SIDE CANNONS at a crumbling mass of rock and dirt blocking the very end of the shaft. The shells are high-explosive, and are digging a considerable hole.

The tank approaches the end of the shaft and PLOWS AT FULL SPEED INTO THE WALL, FRONT TREADS TEARING INTO THE LOOSE ROCK.

EXT. BURIED CAVE ENTRANCE

The mass of dirt and rubble blocking the entrance to the grotto trembles, and then parts as the tank SMASHES THROUGH the cave-in debris and seems to leap out of the cave entrance.

INT. TANK

Everything in the tank is SHAKING AND GROANING. There is a SCREAM OF TORTURED METAL, and the ROAR OF THE ENGINES. Abbot runs forward and resumes the driver's seat.

ABBOT

I unshipped the sponsons and pulled 'em in!

THE NOISE INTENSIFIES -- and then suddenly lowers as the tank lurches forward.

ABBOT

We're through! We're through! We popped out like a cork in the bottle!

JOSEPH

What a ride! Let's do it again!

Abbot leans forward and looks through the viewing port.

ABBOT

Oh, no.

JOSEPH

What?

A THUNDEROUS EXPLOSION ROCKS THE TANK -- THEN ANOTHER, AND ANOTHER. Shells are pelting the tank from all sides.

ABBOT

Damn! There's like fifty Renaults out there!

JOSEPH

That's thirty seven millimeter. I bet that's the Americans.

THE SHELLING INTENSIFIES. SPARKS BEGIN TO FLY INSIDE THE TANK.

ABBOT

I wish we'd had time to stick a screen on!

JOSEPH

White flag it, Abbot!

ABBOT

Sure?

JOSEPH  
I need a beer! White flag!

ABBOT  
What do we have? Undershirt!

Abbot rips open his shirt, pulls it off, and then pulls off his undershirt.

He grabs a rifle from a rack, and ties the T-shirt on to the barrel.

He reaches up to a top hatch -- as he opens it, the DIN OF THE SHELLING BECOMES UNBEARABLE.

Abbot thrusts the T-shirt into the air, and waves it around.

Within seconds, the SHELLING DIES DOWN. Within ten seconds, THE SHELLING STOPS.

Abbot sits down next to Joseph with an exhausted smile.

ABBOT  
Free men.

JOSEPH  
Speak for yourself. I'm married.

There is a KNOCK ON THE SIDE OF THE TANK.

ABBOT  
Do come in! We shan't fire! We're unarmed! Do you have any tea?

JOSEPH  
Any biscuits? Really, we're quite friendly, I assure you! Please do come right in!

Abbot and Joseph smile at each other.

FADE OUT.

FADE UP ON:

EXT. BRITISH PRISONER-OF-WAR CAMP, NEAR THE WIRE - DAY

Joseph is inside the wire, leaning against a post, quietly watching the barracks and rows of tents in the camp.

Abbot is beside him, talking quietly with five American SOLDIERS through the wire.

FIRST SOLDIER

Why are they still keeping you here? Why haven't they let you out?

SECOND SOLDIER

There's over a hundred guys that have had the same dream.

ABBOT

My friend Joseph has had a similar dream - I haven't seen anything like this before. The singing, the philosophical awakening -- but never shared hallucinations. I'd like to study it.

THIRD SOLDIER

I'm having trouble sleeping.

ABBOT

Do the exercises. You'll feel better in a few days.

The third soldier nods and begins to breathe deeply.

THIRD SOLDIER

Okay, I will. This is just all so -- I feel -- I can't --

FOURTH SOLDIER

We're -- not --

FIFTH SOLDIER

I can't kill anybody. I can't kill anything on purpose ever again.

FIRST SOLDIER

Won't do it. Won't touch it.

SECOND SOLDIER

I love everything.

FIRST SOLDIER

Love.

THIRD SOLDIER

Totally.

FOURTH SOLDIER

Love.

They all smile and look expectantly at Abbot, who smiles back at them.

ABBOT

Love. I know. It's true. But the chemical part will wear off eventually, so do the thinking part now, do the work, while the window is open.

THIRD SOLDIER

The window.

FIRST SOLDIER

Love the window.

The soldiers all seem to bliss out together. Abbot smiles.

Joseph grunts quietly to Abbot -- a grim-faced British Lieutenant is approaching from Abbot and Joseph's side of the wire fence.

ABBOT

I have to take off, guys. We'll talk soon.

Abbot turns as the soldiers begin to shuffle away, talking to each other, to confront the Lieutenant and two soldiers.

LIEUTENANT

I have heard much about your vast fan club. I don't think this kind of behavior is permissible by regulation, however.

ABBOT

I'm sorry, lieutenant.

LIEUTENANT

Well, apparently you also have friends in high places. You and your associate have been invited to a dinner. I have been ordered to get you ready, and to procure clothing for you.

JOSEPH

Food? We'll get food?

LIEUTENANT

The best, I'm sure.

ABBOT

Will you come with us, lieutenant?

LIEUTENANT

I regret, Doctor, that my orders are clear in this matter. You are to be unaccompanied once you are dropped off at the entrance.

ABBOT

Sorry, old man.

JOSEPH

I bet they'll have beer!  
(he reconsiders)  
Probably warm, though, huh.

LIEUTENANT

One can only hope. Well, let's go get you cleaned up then, gentlemen.

The Lieutenant turns to leave, followed by the two soldiers and Abbot and Joseph.

ABBOT

Hot showers.

JOSEPH

Beer.

ABBOT

It's a great life, Joseph.

JOSEPH

We should check on Marsy before we leave.

ABBOT

Yes. Brag a little on this. I agree.

INT. FOYER AND LIVING ROOM, LARGE MANSION - NIGHT

Chandeliers are everywhere - a showpiece home, palatial and full of servants.

Eight or nine guests are waiting in the living room for dinner. A butler opens the door to Abbot and Joseph, both a little nervous, dressed in the finest European evening-wear.

He confers with them for a moment, and then announces them to the guests assembled in the living room.

BUTLER

Doctor Abbot Hoffman and Mr. Joseph Smith.

Conversation in the living room comes to a halt.

Three guests immediately rise and move to greet Abbot and Joseph - the others rise more slowly.

The first to reach them is a slender young American Major named GEORGE PATTON. He shakes hands with Abbot, then with Joseph.

PATTON

My name is Patton, Major George Patton. Dr. Hoffman, I have to confess -- I've been just dying to get to meet you in person. And your illustrious cohort Mister Smith. You guys --  
 (he shakes his head)  
 -- I don't believe half of it!

ABBOT

I don't believe any of it. You're George Patton, the architect of the American Tank Corps?

PATTON

I'm quite flattered that you would have heard of me.

ABBOT

I read your excellent manual.

George is speechless - he staggers back slightly, mouth hung open.

Another guest pushes by him -- a British captain named WINSTON CHURCHILL.

CHURCHILL

Doctor. Captain Winston Churchill, Grenadier Guards. I was fascinated by your modifications to our new tank. I look forward to speaking with you at length concerning them.

PATTON

How the hell did you read my manual! That was a Top-Secret American Military document! God Damn!

ABBOT

I am sorry, Major. I found it quite a thrill. Your attention to detail was outstanding. Amazing.  
 (MORE)

ABBOT (CONT'D)

I consider you one of the least-recognized military minds of the century.

PATTON

(taken aback)

Well, thank you.

Abbot turns to Winston and shakes his hand firmly.

ABBOT

And to meet the First Lord of the Admiralty himself! You are the man who set Ernest Swinton free, and I must confess, the Mark Five is a magnificent machine!

JOSEPH

It just roars! The trenchability! The truth of it! What a great tank!

CHURCHILL

Well, you may tell him yourself. He's standing right here.

Winston turns to reveal a thin, dark-haired British Captain standing next to him -- it is ERNEST SWINTON, the tank designer.

ERNEST

I'm Ernest Swinton.

Without a word, JOSEPH AND ABBOT SWARM ERNEST, and hug him tightly, completely overwhelming him. Ernest is bewildered, but seems to accept the emotional wave from the two men with an odd grace.

JOSEPH

Beautiful.

ABBOT

Positively your finest work.

JOSEPH

You need the new undercut chevrons on the treadplates. The French have 'em on some of the St. Chamonds. No studs needed.

ABBOT

And what happened with the ventilation? It took me five hours to get it livable.

(MORE)

ABBOT (CONT'D)

What sector tossed that parameter out of the stew?

ERNEST

Well, Powerplant. You see, once we upgraded to the Hispano-Suiza, we --

ABBOT

I swapped back some Daimlers. And ran a sealed system. Filtered.

ERNEST

I saw, and I must say, I totally agree, it was an extremely advanced solution --

CHURCHILL

Gentleman, may I introduce the other guests to you?

ABBOT

I'm sorry, you're absolutely right. Please do.

CHURCHILL

Sir Douglas Haig, Sir John French, Marshal Ferdinand Foch, Colonel Estienne, and Commander Joseph Joffre. Doctor Abbot Hoffman and Joseph Smith.

ABBOT

I'm honored to be in such esteemed company, gentlemen.

The five men nod in return. DOUGLAS HAIG regards Abbot with lizard-like eyes.

HAIG

You led the Americans on quite a merry chase, Doctor. And after an attempt to kidnap our host.

ABBOT

I followed my orders, sir. As do we all. And I killed no one.

FRENCH

Apparently, you turned them all into pacifists.

ABBOT

Only a temporary condition.

JOFFRE

Perhaps they were just revealed as such.

Haig, JOHN FRENCH, and COMMANDER JOFFRE all chuckle nastily.

PATTON

Excuse me, sir, but I know those boys personally, served with them on several occasions, and you're talking about the toughest outfit in the American Army.

HAIG

Such as it is.

FRENCH

An undisciplined bunch of hooligans, defeated by a single man.

Patton, although outranked, takes offense at this, and bristles.

FOCH

I find the Americans to be quite effective after short training. Quite cunning and determined.

JOFFRE

They are cowards.

CHURCHILL

Gentlemen, gentlemen --

The argument is cut short by the RING OF THE DINNER BELL.

Abbot looks up to see that Madeleine Clemenceau has entered the living room --

INT. LIVING ROOM, ABBOT'S P.O.V. - NIGHT

His vision telescopes - she looks radiantly beautiful. Abbot is in love. She looks directly at Abbot, and smiles.

MADELEINE

Dinner is ready, gentlemen. My father is waiting for you in the dining room.

HAIG

Why, Madeleine -- you look absolutely ravishing this evening!

Madeleine tosses her slightly, wheels around, and heads for the dining room.

MADELEINE

All the more to get you to listen to my father's observations on seventy-five millimeter shell distribution along the Amiens front, Douglas.

Haig darkens; then harrumphs. The group enters the dining room, led by Madeleine.

JOFFRE

Dr. Hoffman -- witness the utter majesty of the American Woman. Do you acknowledge their supremacy, their clear ascendancy? We are but mere dust motes beside them.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Abbot has not been listening.

JOFFRE

Dr. Hoffman?

ABBOT

Hmm? Oh, sorry - what?

JOFFRE

I see that you agree completely.

ABBOT

(looking back to Madeleine)

Yes, I do.

JOFFRE

She is half-French, you know. That is the important ingredient. And look there -- the chef!

Joffre gestures to the end of the long wooden table in the center of the dining room.

At the head of the table is GEORGES CLEMENCEAU, Madeleine's father, and the Premier of France. He is looking directly at Abbot, with a dark glare on his face.

Everyone moves to be seated. A host of servants begins to silently serve dinner around everyone.

MADELEINE

Father, these are the two men I described to you. Doctor Abbot Hoffman, Joseph Smith -- this is my father, Georges Clemenceau.

ABBOT

Sir, I am honored.

Clemenceau grunts.

JOSEPH

We are deeply sorry for the events of the day we met your daughter. We did not intend them.

CLEMENCEAU

You intended to kidnap me, instead. Did you really think you could carry out the kidnapping of the French Premier in broad daylight, during wartime, without bloodshed?

ABBOT

We were following orders, sir. Neither of us volunteered for that assignment.

CLEMENCEAU

Oh, yes, the simple soldiers. The two privates, wandering across enemy lines in a modified British tank, assassinating thirteen French civil servants, kidnapping my daughter, and then laying waste to more than a company of American soldiers.

JOSEPH

It sounds bad, but truly, we were ordered to avoid casualties at all costs. A corporal named Hitler, a front-liner, very damaged, went berserk. Abbot stopped him from killing your daughter.

CLEMENCEAU

Yes, and my brother Henri as well. A former General Staff Member. A great soldier. Now speaks to me of nothing but love, all you need is love, he says.

(MORE)

CLEMENCEAU (CONT'D)

He wanted too much to be present at this dinner, but frankly, I have never met this man, whom I have known all my life.

(he shakes his head)

Simple soldiers you are not.

PATTON

(to Abbot)

I have heard, Doctor -- that over one hundred and twenty American soldiers woke up about the same time on a Tuesday morning in France, all singing the same strange song. They were stumbling around, unarmed, hugging each other, hugging the trees, hugging the ground. All of these men claimed the song, which no one has ever heard before -- no one -- was taught to them by a strange elephant not of this world. In fact, every single man you shot swears to this. In detail.

Abbot and Joseph both clear their throats and shift nervously.

PATTON

Now that is one hell of a story. I know those boys -- those boys are rough-and-ready American soldiers. How did you do that? Dragging two seriously wounded men along with you? Do you know that not one of those boys you shot will pick up a rifle? They won't touch 'em. You have effectively removed a company of the finest infantry on the Western Front, single-handedly, with a dart gun. God damn. You didn't kill a single man, but they're done for fighting.

ABBOT

Only for awhile, unfortunately. The effect wears off.

George Patton shakes his head.

PATTON

Not yet, it hasn't.

CLEMENCEAU

I agreed to invite you this evening because I have seen your tank.

ERNEST

A sealed hull, a completely redesigned power train, an air-circulation system that makes the vehicle gas-proof and submersible, and a remote-control and auto-navigation system which we have yet to figure out. Marvelous. I've never even imagined it.

PATTON

It was my outfit that captured you outside the caverns. Do you know - - your tank ran right smack through the middle of a headquarters convoy? Now we find out that no one was driving it at all. That's a damned revelation, Doctor.

CLEMENCEAU

Everyone here has a deep interest in the subject.

HAIG

I, for one, think the tanks are over-rated. They break down, they become mired in the mud -- there is no substitute for the raw courage and spirit of the infantry soldier.

CHURCHILL

I believe them to be an inevitable addition to modern warfare. The days of stagnant trenches, a product themselves of the machine-gun, will be a thing of the past.

HAIG

And honor as well, apparently.

JOFFRE

I remember, dear General, when you pronounced the machine-gun a temporary fad.

Haig glares at Joffre.

FRENCH

I was there. I heard it as well.

MADELEINE

Me, too.

FOCH

And I.

CLEMENCEAU

And that turned out rather wrong,  
didn't it, Douglas?

HAIG

I am being maligned.

PATTON

General, the tank and the airplane,  
operating together as a team, will  
decide wars for the next hundred  
years.

HAIG

Nonsense. The advances at Aisne  
and on the Somme were accomplished  
by men, not machines. The tanks  
broke down constantly.

CHURCHILL

They were mostly prototypes. You  
ordered them into battle  
prematurely.

JOSEPH

We were at the Somme.

The dinner table grows deathly quiet. Everyone seems to draw  
inside themselves for a moment of uncomfortable silence. A  
great sadness seems to fill the room.

CLEMENCEAU

Let us eat.

Everyone at the table solemnly and silently begins to eat.  
After a moment, Douglas tries to make conversation.

HAIG

This is delicious pork.

Abbot and Joseph look at each other, and with disturbed looks  
on their faces, put down their forks.

Abbot tries desperately to attract Madeleine's attention  
before she can eat a bite. She doesn't understand.

EXT. COVERED REAR PORCH - NIGHT

Most of the guests are lounging, smoking cigars and drinking brandy as they watch Abbot and George Patton having a saber duel in the back yard of the mansion.

Joseph and Madeleine are sitting on the stone wall of the veranda.

Abbot and Patton move back and forth in an astonishing display of swordsmanship.

PATTON

After I was named Master Swordsman of the United States Army, I designed a new saber.

ABBOT

Indeed, the M1913. An impressive weapon. I have practiced with one.

PATTON

(attacking)

You have not, damn it! How the hell could you possibly know about my saber! You're a damned liar!

ABBOT

(riposting)

Come now, George. You seek fame and glory so openly, then blush in its gaze? Your brilliant performance at the 1912 Olympics -- and then to design such a beautiful weapon! Although I have heard suggestions that the half-basket hilt was stolen from the M1907 Puerto-Seguro, I do not personally believe them. Such things may be developed independently. You did, however, anger the young Prussian military cadre with your saberian presumption. They immediately copied your design. Especially the tang-to-hilt notch. That was great thinking.

PATTON

Good God! Not the Prussians!

ABBOT

Indeed, the most bloodthirsty of human sharks --

PATTON

The grimmest desolation of the  
human soul --

ABBOT

And their woman are worse --

PATTON

All Prussian feet are in Sparta --

ABBOT

And their Bismark in some hole in  
the dirt!

THEIR BLADES FLICK OUT, and pause in perfect stillness an  
inch from each other's cheek.

After a moment, the two men draw themselves up, and salute  
each other with their sabers.

ABBOT AND PATTON

Sparta!

They laugh and slap each other's backs as they retire to the  
porch with the other guests.

Joseph and Madeleine view them with some amusement.

JOSEPH

A wonderful display, gentlemen.

FOCH

Hear, hear!

ESTIENNE

I believe the Doctor had the edge,  
Major.

CHURCHILL

I disagree. Major Patton exhibited  
the more viscerally aggressive  
style. I believe he would have  
prevailed.

HAIG

I prefer the art of pistol-dueling,  
myself.

MADELEINE

Surely a passing fad, Douglas.

Everyone chuckles at this remark, but Haig is not amused.

PATTON

I just have to say, Doctor Hoffman, that I now believe every damned story I've ever heard about you. You have the stuff. That parry/thrust combination -- I've never seen anything like it.

ABBOT

I got that one off a Prussian duelist. I'm afraid he got the scar.

Abbot draws his finger across his cheek.

ABBOT

He actually thanked me for it, later. They like their men mutilated in that culture.

Patton smiles, and tugs Abbot by the shoulder.

PATTON

I'd be honored to buy you a drink, sir.

ABBOT

Lead on, Major.

Patton leads Abbot into the house.

The other guests follow them except for Joseph and Madeleine, who stay seated on the wall, looking out over the fields and woods.

JOSEPH

This is a beautiful place. Thanks for getting us out for an evening.

MADELEINE

I'm amazed to see you two alive. And your Captain Mars -- I'd like to hear the whole story.

JOSEPH

You'll have to get that story from Abbot. I was hanging out with an elephant from space most of the time.

MADELEINE

What do you mean?

JOSEPH

Oh, Abbot and his chemistry.  
Always with the chemistry.

MADELEINE

How long have you two known each  
other?

JOSEPH

Our mothers were best friends. We  
grew up like brothers.

Joseph looks at the now-rising moon on the horizon.

JOSEPH

You know, it's very strange that we  
should meet you the way we did.  
Abbot has always had a big crush on  
you since medical school.  
Apparently you were once in a play -  
- and he went to every  
performance.

MADELEINE

In Paris? What, 'Antigone'?

JOSEPH

That's it. He almost failed a  
class because of it.

MADELEINE

But that show ran almost four  
months! He went every night?

JOSEPH

Like I said, strange that he should  
finally meet you in this way. His  
letters were filled with nothing  
but you, whole passages of flowery  
descriptions of your every  
movement. It's as thick as a book.

MADELEINE

Oh, my.

Haig emerges from the doors leading into the house.

HAIG

Madeleine? Dessert is being  
served.

MADELEINE

We'll be right in, Douglas!  
 (to Joe)  
 That was a very nice story, Joseph.

JOSEPH

Well, I got kids, you know. You  
 have to be good at it.

Joseph and Madeleine walk back into the house.

INT. CLEMENCEAU MANSION, DINING ROOM

Everyone chatters as a flaming dessert of some kind is  
 served. Everyone seems to have had more to drink.

CHURCHILL

What an amazing coincidence.

PATTON

I was standing less than twenty  
 yards away from where that shell  
 struck. I was with a forward  
 observation team -- we had to  
 evacuate, got the hell out of  
 there. You guys came right through  
 the line like crap through a goose.  
 Pardon me, Madeleine.

MADELEINE

Not at all, George.

ABBOT

We were highly motivated. Like  
 Clausewitz said, the attacker may  
 lose vitality after the initial  
 success -- but the defender becomes  
 more focused with every moment.

PATTON

(raising his glass)  
 Clausewitz! Hell! Now there's a  
 good German!

Patton and Abbot clink glasses. Churchill and the others  
 gesture with theirs, and drink.

HAIG

Good lord. Now we are to believe  
 that you two are also the famed  
 Cannon Riders? I find that  
 unlikely.

JOSEPH

It was a Krupp two hundred millimeter howitzer assigned to C Company. We were in A company, holding the hill to the north. We were surrounded and needed a way out -- everyone else had retreated. You were bringing up your heavies -- we would have been dead within another fifteen minutes. Abbot got this crazy idea, and I just went along for the ride, so to speak.

FRENCH

Everyone knows this story. It's a battlefield legend.

CHURCHILL

Apparently less legend than determination and quick thinking.

HAIG

Hmmph.

MADELEINE

Really, Douglas. You're acting rather badly.

CLEMENCEAU

It is a good thing for us all that there are few like you -- and that you are here, having dessert, instead of being still out there, killing our soldiers on the battlefield.

ABBOT

I have killed no one, Monsieur Clemenceau.

CLEMENCEAU

Yes, of course. That is right. The darts.

PATTON

Turns a good fighting man into some sort of flower-sniffing do-gooder. Takes the blood right out of 'em.

CHURCHILL

But leaves them with their lives.

PATTON

Well, if it can be called that. To me, that sort of philosophical mushiness is catastrophic. Out there, a man's either a killer, or he's a body.

Abbot stands up.

ABBOT

Or in my case, a prisoner-of-war who needs to use the bathroom rather badly. I shall presumably require an escort.

MADELEINE

Come with me -- I will show you.

HAIG

Do you think that's proper, Madeleine? He is a Boche, after all.

CLEMENCEAU

Madeleine is more than a match for any Boche, General. Or any other man, I assure you.

HAIG

Yes. You're quite right about that.

MADELEINE

(quietly, to Haig)  
Still hurts, does it, Douglas?

Haig looks suddenly uncomfortable. Madeleine leads Abbot out of the room.

INT. CLEMENCEAU MANSION, HALLWAY

Madeleine is leading Abbot to the bathroom. As she reaches the end of the hallway, they turn a corner.

She suddenly turns on Abbot, presses him up against a wall, and kisses him passionately.

He is surprised - and then responds with equal passion. Madeleine breaks the kiss.

MADELEINE

Come with me.

ABBOT  
 Madeleine --

But his protests grow faint as Madeline leads him by the hand down the adjacent corridor.

EXT. CLEMENCEAU MANSION, FRONT ENTRANCE - MIDNIGHT

Abbot and Joseph are getting into a car driven by the British Lieutenant.

Abbot pauses and looks back -- Madeleine is a figure standing in a second-story bedroom window, watching Abbot leave.

Abbot gets in the back of the car with Joseph.

JOSEPH  
 Well, finally. You two disappeared after dinner and were never seen again. General Haig thought it quite 'wude of you'. Then George Patton started in on him about some failure in command at Arras, and everyone forgot about you. Clemenceau didn't say a word. I got the strong impression that Madeleine is her own woman.

ABBOT  
 Oh yes. She's that.

JOSEPH  
 I see. And - what did you two talk about for so long?

ABBOT  
 Rene.

JOSEPH  
 Rene - the little girl from the cave you told me about?

ABBOT  
 Madeleine is going to adopt her.

JOSEPH  
 Wow. All right. Maybe it was a platonic chat.

ABBOT  
 Until we can be married.

JOSEPH

You're kidding! That's the most beautiful thing I've ever heard. She's been your dream since you went to Paris.

ABBOT

I know, Joe -- I'm -- I've never felt like this.

JOSEPH

I have. You were there.

They smile at each other.

JOSEPH

George Patton said he wants to sponsor both of us for American citizenship when the war is over. Wants us to work with him on tank design.

ABBOT

Are you going?

JOSEPH

Yes. Are you?

ABBOT

Maybe a visit.

JOSEPH

I'll always be a German inside, Abbot, but my Elizabeth is going to be American.

He hesitates.

JOSEPH

It's not so hard to leave Germany after what's happened. I feel somehow like the hard part is yet to come, and I don't want my family in the middle of it.

(pauses)

It'll be hard to leave you, Abbot.

ABBOT

I'll come and visit.

JOSEPH

You and Madeleine and Rene. And the rest of your children and grandchildren.

ABBOT

All right. We will. I love you,  
Joe.

JOSEPH

I love you too, Abbot.

ABBOT

Damn your sentimentality.

Joseph turns forward and gestures grandly to the British Lieutenant.

ABBOT

Please take us home, James.

BRITISH LIEUTENANT

It won't be long, I'm sure, sir.

The car drives off into the darkness.

FADE TO:

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET IN BOCHUM, GERMANY - DAY

The city is caught in a THUNDEROUS RAINSTORM.

SUPER: "1919".

Joseph is standing at a corner, looking down a small, cobblestoned street. He pauses, then starts to walk forward.

MUSIC STARTS.

CLOSEUP on Joseph's boots as they stride down the flooded way.

CLOSEUP on Joseph's face as he approaches one of the closely-set front doors -- he knocks --

The door swings partly open - his wife LENA'S face looks out - she looks at the bedraggled Joseph for a moment.

Tears fill her eyes and she reaches out to him --

A series of wonderful homecoming images -- two bright-eyed children sitting at the table, laughing at Joseph's jokes as he cooks a giant meal in the kitchen -- Joseph and Lena lying in bed talking -- Joseph and Lena in the dark, making love -- a bright morning through a kitchen window -- the whole family, sitting on a couch, talking and laughing -- more lovemaking - cleaning and repairs -- Lena looks very happy.

Everyone seems to breath a deep sigh of relief -- the family is together again. MUSIC FINISHES.

INT. KITCHEN OF JOSEPH AND LENA'S HOUSE - DAY

Joseph is sitting at the kitchen table, reading a newspaper. Lena is cooking him breakfast. The children can be heard playing outside.

Lena hears the postman, and steps out the front door to retrieve a letter. She reads the address and hands it to Joseph.

LENA

Darling -- it's from Abbot!

JOSEPH

Really?

He examines the letter, opens it, and begins reading.

JOSPEH

He and Madeleine are getting married.

INT. WAITING ROOM OF PHYSICIAN'S OFFICE, MUNICH - DAY

The room is packed with working-class people and their children.

A door leading to the examining room opens -- Abbot pokes his head out and looks startled.

ABBOT

Oh my. Who's first?

An elderly woman rises and walks unsteadily toward Abbot.

ABBOT (V.O.)

Madeleine is writing a series of articles for the American press in Munich, so I've started up a practice there. We both like the city, and so does Rene, so we'll probably stay awhile. We haven't set a date for the wedding yet, but I assume we can count on you to be the best man. I hope you can bring Lena and the children.

EXT. MUNICH STREET - DAY

Abbot is walking past a wide plaza. A crowd has gathered and is listening to a strident voice.

Abbot stops, and peers at the crowd -- the voice belongs to Adolf Hitler.

ABBOT (V.O.)

I ran across a familiar face the other day -- Corporal Hitler. He was haranguing a street crowd about the evils of Bolshevism.

INT. KITCHEN

Joseph's eyes have taken on a strange cast -- a dark memory.

JOSEPH

Good lord. The mad little corporal.

LENA

Who is that?

JOSEPH

He's the man who shot me in the back, dear. Abbot's seen him in Munich.

LENA

Oh! What are you going to do?

JOSEPH

Well, if Abbot would've just shot him when he had the chance, I wouldn't have to do anything. That whole ethical hesitation thing stops working in certain situations, I think.

LENA

Joe, it's what you love about him.

JOSEPH

He's getting married to Madeleine. We're invited.

LENA

Really! That's perfect. In Munich?

JOSEPH

He's started a practice there. And Madeleine's writing articles for the American press. He says to bring the children.

Joseph lowers the letter, and looks at Lena, standing near the kitchen stove.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

You'll be the most beautiful woman there, Lena.

(pauses)

I adore you.

LENA'S CLOTHES MORPH TO FORMAL WEAR -- THE KITCHEN BACKGROUND DISSOLVES TO:

INT. GRAND BALLROOM - NIGHT

MUSIC SWELLS. Lena is in a stunning black dress - hundreds of people are dancing behind her -- it is the reception for the wedding of Abbot and Madeleine.

Joseph strides into view -- he hands Lena a glass of champagne -- they toast, and kiss.

A slow look around the Grand Ballroom reveals Abbot and Madeleine, with a radiant Rene beside them -- then Georges Clemenceau, Ferdinand Foch, and Joseph Joffre -- George Patton, Winston Churchill, Ernest Swinton, and Colonel Estienne -- and then a grim-looking Douglas Haig.

Hundreds of soldiers, foreign dignitaries and their wives and children fill the background.

John French is raising his glass to the ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-THREE AMERICAN SOLDIERS that were shot by Abbot in the woods.

They are all smiling brilliantly and toasting the bride and groom.

FADE OUT.