

SCENE I

EXT. SUPERMARKET PARKING LOT - DAY

Just like Jared, the Veteran stands still amidst the animated crowd in his GREEN, ARMY JACKET. Jared holds up the wallet to compare their faces.

VETERAN
Hey, that's my wallet.

JARED
I know. You dropped it.

The Veteran takes his wallet; revealing a SCAR on his arm.

VETERAN
Thank you.

JARED
What happened to your arm?

The Veteran puts his wallet away.

VETERAN
I got shot.

JARED
In the line of duty?

VETERAN
In the line of fire.

JARED
Wrong place; wrong time?

VETERAN
No, right place; right time.

JARED
Personally, I'd rather be right
than happy.

The Veteran takes a LONG DRAG.

VETERAN
You can't put a price on freedom.

JARED
No, you cannot. Unless you've been
"sold" into slavery.

VETERAN

We are forever enamored by the blessings of freedom, no more than we are forever enslaved to the laws of the universe.

JARED

Sounds like you're quite the poet.

VETERAN

I was drafted in sixty-six. I thought the experience would make me tough. It ended up making me smart.

JARED

It looks like you made it out okay.

VETERAN

It feels like I never left. Welcome to the jungle baby. Every day, I was prepared to die, but in the face of death... I never felt more alive. It was liberating.

The Veteran hits his cigarette again.

JARED

People who never take chances create their own prisons.

VETERAN

A few months into my tour I received a letter. My newborn daughter was killed in a car accident. I thought to myself... of all the places for someone to die, shouldn't it be in a place of war?

The Veteran flicks his ashes.

VETERAN

It was at that very moment I learned the world as it is. Nothing in life is sacred. It's just a balance of order in chaos.

JARED

The condition of society is absolute. And here we are. It's such a nice day.

VETERAN

I picked up my gun and started shooting.

SUPERIMPOSE: The sounds of BOMBS BLASTING, GUNS SHOOTING, and SOLDIERS YELLING. They gradually become louder.

Jared slowly makes his way to the front of the Assembly.

VETERAN (V.O.)

The only thing worse than living a lie is living in fear. You know what I realized about war? Death is an eye opener... let me tell ya.

The sounds of war intensify.

VETERAN (V.O.)

You see the forest through the trees. A sea full of strangers. Born alone. Die alone. There's no crime in consequence without consciousness. You don't get it son, do you?

The explosions grow louder.

VETERAN (V.O.)

Mustard gas. You know what that smells like? Some things can only end in violence. I knew the path boy, but I did not know the way. All you can do is keep moving forward.