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A Clean, Well-Lighted Place

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A Clean, Well-Lighted Place

Screenplay by Jennifer Pickett
Based on the story by Ernest Hemingway

Abstract

This screenplay, adapted from the Ernest Hemingway story of the same name, follows a man on his journey of self-discovery as he contemplates loneliness and the meaning of life.

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A Clean, Well-Lighted Place

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FADE IN:

EXT. - CAFÉ - NIGHT

Key West, 1970s. The café is quiet and still. It is old and worn with a bright neon sign flashing slow and steady. The lights from inside shine out on the street, and it appears that everything within is spotless. The OLD MAN is revealed in a closeup as he sits at a small round table on the café's terrace. He is drinking lazily and staring off into space. A potted tree stands behind him with the shadows from its leaves being cast on and off by the neon sign. As the shot widens, the two WAITERS are revealed inside the café, beyond the OLD MAN. They are talking to each other with occasional glances at the OLD MAN.

CUT TO:

INT. - CAFÉ - NIGHT

Medium shot of the waiters. They are tidying the café as they talk.

YOUNGER WAITER
(disinterested, but making conversation)
Last week he tried to commit suicide.

OLDER WAITER
(raises an eyebrow)
Why?

YOUNGER WAITER
He was in despair.

OLDER WAITER
What about?

YOUNGER WAITER

Nothing.

OLDER WAITER

How do you know it was nothing?

YOUNGER WAITER

He has plenty of money.

Having straightened everything up, the WAITERS have a seat at a table with a clear view of the terrace. They look in the direction of the OLD MAN. Beyond him, a SOLDIER with a GIRL on his arm comes into view, the two walking along the street. The GIRL is young and flighty, the SOLDIER cocky.

OLDER WAITER

The guard'll pick him up.

YOUNGER WAITER

What does it matter if he gets what he's after?

They watch as the SOLDIER stops the GIRL to kiss her.

OLDER WAITER

He'd better get off the street now. The guard'll get 'em. They went by a few minutes ago.

CUT TO:

Closeup of OLD MAN. He stares at the couple kissing. The expression on his face is thoughtful and empathetic.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. - BUSY STREET - NIGHT

Bright city lights illuminate the street and loud dance music is heard in the background. Crowds of people are bustling about and from them emerges a middle-age version of the OLD MAN (MAN). He is

wearing a soldier's uniform and has a pretty young WOMAN on his arm. The two prance about and laugh with each other as they head into a fancy hotel.

CUT TO:

INT. - HOTEL - NIGHT

Montage sequence with extreme closeups interspersed throughout. First shot is of the young couple stumbling down the hotel corridor, laughing and holding on to one another as they find their hotel room. The next shot shows the couple in the room frantically tearing at each other's clothes. Nearly empty glasses of liquor are scattered about. Another shot shows them plastered against the wall, kissing and groping. The MAN picks the WOMAN up and carries her to the bed where they have a wild romp. A final quiet shot shows the MAN lying in the bed staring at the ceiling while the WOMAN sleeps beside him. The MAN is troubled and restless.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. - CAFÉ - NIGHT

Closeup of OLD MAN. He gives a final look with clouded eyes as the couple scampers off, the young GIRL glancing back nervously, and then the shot widens as he bangs his glass on the table. The YOUNGER WAITER begrudgingly walks out to him. The OLD MAN is nearly deaf, so the YOUNGER WAITER must speak up, loud and clear.

YOUNGER WAITER
(impatiently)

What do you want?

OLD MAN
(glances up and points to glass)
Another brandy.

YOUNGER WAITER
(abjectly)
You'll be drunk.

The OLD MAN looks at him passively as the YOUNGER WAITER walks back in to where the OLDER WAITER is sitting.

YOUNGER WAITER
(complaining)
He'll stay all night.

The YOUNGER WAITER yawns and reaches for the bottle of brandy.

YOUNGER WAITER
I'm sleepy. I never get to bed before three.

He starts back toward the OLD MAN.

YOUNGER WAITER
(over his shoulder)
He should've killed himself last week.

The YOUNGER WAITER trudges out to the OLD MAN's table, sets down a new glass, and fills it with brandy.

YOUNGER WAITER
(mutters so the OLD MAN can't hear)
You should've killed yourself last week.

OLD MAN
(points at glass)
A little more.

The YOUNGER WAITER fills the glass until brandy slops over the edge.

OLD MAN
Thank you.

The YOUNGER WAITER takes the bottle back in and sits with the OLDER WAITER. The two converse easily.

YOUNGER WAITER
He's drunk now.
(throws his hand up)
He's drunk every night.

OLDER WAITER
(thoughtfully)
What'd he want to kill himself for?

YOUNGER WAITER
(exasperated)
How should I know?

OLDER WAITER
How'd he do it?

YOUNGER WAITER
(flatly)
Hung himself.

OLDER WAITER
Who cut him down?

YOUNGER WAITER
His niece.

OLDER WAITER
Why'd he do it?

YOUNGER WAITER
(sarcastically)
For his soul . . .
(throws up his hand again)
I don't know.

OLDER WAITER
(after a pause)
How much money does he have?

YOUNGER WAITER
He's got plenty.

OLDER WAITER

(looking out at the OLD MAN)
He must be eighty years old.
(squints at the OLD MAN and then nods)
Yeah, I'd say he's about eighty.

YOUNGER WAITER

I wish he'd go home. I never get to bed
before three in the morning. What kinda
hour is that to go to bed?

OLDER WAITER

(with a hint of a grin)
He stays up because he likes it.

YOUNGER WAITER

(pointedly)
He's lonely, I'm not. I've got a wife
waiting for me right now.

OLDER WAITER

He had a wife once.

YOUNGER WAITER

A wife wouldn't be any good to him now.

OLDER WAITER

You don't know. He might be better with
a wife.

The WAITERS are quiet for a moment, thinking to
themselves.

YOUNGER WAITER

(as if it's suddenly occurred to him)
I wouldn't want to be that old. An old
man is a nasty thing.

OLDER WAITER

Not always.

(gestures toward OLD MAN)
This old man is clean. And he drinks
without spilling . . . even drunk. Look
at 'im.

YOUNGER WAITER

(defiantly)

I don't wanna look at 'im. I wish he'd go home. He has no regard for those who have to work.

CUT TO:

EXT. - CAFÉ - NIGHT

The OLD MAN looks around vaguely and then at the WAITERS.

OLD MAN

(pointing at glass)

Another brandy.

The YOUNGER WAITER walks out to him impatiently, towel in hand.

YOUNGER WAITER

(slowly and very pronounced)

Finished. No more tonight.

The YOUNGER WAITER points at his watch.

YOUNGER WAITER

Close now.

OLD MAN

Another.

YOUNGER WAITER

(still pronounced)

No. Finished.

The YOUNGER WAITER wipes off table as he shakes his head with disdain. OLD MAN stands up slowly, dizzily counts glasses, pulls out his wallet and drops some money on the table. The YOUNGER WAITER watches as OLD MAN walks away down the street. The OLD MAN is unsteady, but he retains an air of dignity. The OLDER WAITER has come up behind the YOUNGER WAITER to help clean.

OLDER WAITER
Why didn't you let him stay? It's not
half past two.

YOUNGER WAITER
I wanna go home to bed.

The WAITERS straighten chairs on the terrace as they
talk.

OLDER WAITER
What's another hour?

YOUNGER WAITER
More to me than to him.

OLDER WAITER
An hour's the same.

YOUNGER WAITER
You sound like an old man yourself. He
can buy a bottle and drink at home.

OLDER WAITER
(quietly shakes his head)
It's not the same.

YOUNGER WAITER
(hurriedly, rolls his eyes)
I guess not.

The YOUNGER WAITER goes back inside café and the OLDER
WAITER follows, closing and locking the terrace doors
behind him.

OLDER WAITER
(poking fun)
What about you? You have no fear of going
home early?

YOUNGER WAITER
(with a backwards glance)
Are you trying to insult me?

OLDER WAITER

(chuckling)

No, hombre, just making a joke.

YOUNGER WAITER

(haughtily)

Well, no, as a matter of fact I don't.
I have confidence. I'm all confidence.

The YOUNGER WAITER wipes off a few last tables as the
OLDER WAITER does a quick sweeping of the floor.

OLDER WAITER

Yes, you have youth, confidence, and a job.

(pauses)

You have everything.

YOUNGER WAITER

And what do you lack?

OLDER WAITER

Everything but work.

YOUNGER WAITER

You have everything I have.

The YOUNGER WAITER puts up his towel and gets ready to
leave.

OLDER WAITER

No . . . I've never had confidence and
I'm not young.

YOUNGER WAITER

Come on. Stop talking nonsense and lock
up.

The OLDER WAITER puts up the broom and starts for his
jacket.

OLDER WAITER

I'm of those who like to stay late at
the café, with all those who don't want
to go to bed, with those who need a light

for the night.

YOUNGER WAITER

Well, I want to go home and go to bed.

OLDER WAITER

(wisely, as he puts on his jacket)
We are of two different kinds, you know.
It's not just youth and confidence, though
those things are beautiful. Every night
I'm reluctant to close up because someone
may need the café.

YOUNGER WAITER

(contesting)

Hombre, there are bars open all night long.

OLDER WAITER

You don't understand. This is a clean,
pleasant café. It's well-lit and just
look at the pretty shadows from the leaves.

The OLDER WAITER points at the comforting shadows
created by the potted trees.

YOUNGER WAITER

(shakes his head and walks to the door)

Good night, hombre.

OLDER WAITER

(gives up)

Good night.

The YOUNGER WAITER leaves and the OLDER WAITER lingers
for a moment before flipping the lights off, locking
the door and leaving.

CUT TO:

INT. - YOUNGER WAITER'S HOME - NIGHT

The foyer is dimly lit as the YOUNGER WAITER enters
his old shotgun-style home. He takes off his jacket

and hangs it on a coat tree in the corner. He starts through the house, peering around corners.

YOUNGER WAITER

Hello? I'm home.

He finds his WIFE sitting at the kitchen table, thumbing through a magazine. She glances up when he comes in.

WIFE

You're early tonight.

The YOUNGER WAITER goes straight to the sink, grabs a nearby glass and fills it with water. Then he turns to a nearby cabinet.

YOUNGER WAITER

(not looking at his wife, more concerned with what he's doing)

Yeah . . . thank God. It was an awful day.

He searches through the cabinet, moving boxes around.

WIFE

Yeah, mine too. I . . .

She is cut off by the YOUNGER WAITER who has found a box of crackers and is sitting down at the table.

YOUNGER WAITER

(ranting)

That nasty old man was there again tonight, and when I finally made him go home, the other guy working starts preaching at me.

His WIFE just nods quietly and the YOUNGER WAITER pauses in thought for a few moments as he eats.

YOUNGER WAITER

(renewing the one-sided conversation)

You know, you'd think he'd want to go home
too, wouldn't ya? I mean, who wants to work
all
night long when they could be at home?

WIFE

(reasoning, but her comment
falls on deaf ears)

Maybe he doesn't have anything to go
home to . . .

YOUNGER WAITER

(losing interest)

Maybe not.

The YOUNGER WAITER gets up to return the box of
crackers to its cabinet and to put the rest of his
water back in the refrigerator. He turns back to his
WIFE, and his attitude has changed. The work
conversation has clearly left his mind as he goes to
her and pulls her up from the chair to embrace her.

YOUNGER WAITER

(slyly)

Come on, babe. Let's go to bed.

The YOUNGER WAITER kisses his WIFE lightly and then
turns to head for the doorway, holding his WIFE's hand
behind him. She follows, feigning arousal.

CUT TO:

INT. - BAR - NIGHT

Loud music is playing and a crowd of people are
sitting around drinking. The OLDER WAITER comes in
and goes to the bar. He motions for the bartender to
bring him a drink. He sits drinking for awhile,
watching the people around him. His eyes come to rest
on a couple sitting in a dark corner. They're all
over each other, and the OLDER WAITER watches in
disgust. After a few moments, he turns his attention

to a group of rowdy young men. His look of disgust remains as they show off for one another, laughing and slapping each other's backs in congratulations for being offensive. Looking away from the young men, the OLDER WAITER notices a priest sitting alone. He, too, is watching the other people in the bar. He takes a long drink with one shaking hand and holds a rosary in the other. The OLDER WAITER kind of smirks, a bit amused by the sight, and finally takes a last gulp of his own drink. Taking his time, he puts his glass down on the bar along with some money and leaves.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. - EMPTY STREET - NIGHT

The OLDER WAITER walks along a quiet, lonely street, obviously in no hurry to get where he's going.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. - OLDER WAITER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The OLDER WAITER enters his apartment. It is quiet and bare. He empties his pockets, shoving his keys and a piece of paper onto a small table. He tosses his jacket to the side. On the crumpled, partially folded paper, there is a sad sketch of the OLD MAN at the café.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. - OLDER WAITER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The OLDER WAITER lies in bed. His room is dull and empty. He tosses and turns and then gets up and walks around for awhile. He lies back down and eventually falls asleep as morning light begins to shine through his window.

CUT TO:

INT. - CAFÉ - NIGHT

It's the following night and again, the OLD MAN is the only patron left at the café. He is sitting in his same spot out on the terrace with his brandy as the two WAITERS clean the interior of the café. The

YOUNGER WAITER is wiping down tables and the OLDER WAITER is straightening chairs.

YOUNGER WAITER
(somewhat angrily)
Why does he stay so late every night?

OLDER WAITER
(tired, but tries to be patient)
He likes it here.

YOUNGER WAITER
Why? He can drink anywhere.

OLDER WAITER
It's pleasant here.

YOUNGER WAITER
Home's pleasant too.

The OLDER WAITER just nods half-heartedly, biting his tongue. He is steadily losing his patience.

YOUNGER WAITER
That's where we should all be right
now . . . home.

The OLDER WAITER forcefully pushes a chair up to a table as he turns on the YOUNGER WAITER.

OLDER WAITER
(frustrated)
Just go then. I'll close up.

YOUNGER WAITER
(taken aback)
Something wrong, hombre?

OLDER WAITER
(still frustrated)
No, nothing. Just go.

The YOUNGER WAITER hesitantly puts down his towel and slowly grabs his jacket.

YOUNGER WAITER
(a bit sheepishly)
Okay. See ya tomorrow.

The YOUNGER WAITER leaves the café. The OLDER WAITER continues pushing chairs in noisily, trying to relieve his frustration. He finishes his task, takes a deep breath, and then goes to grab the bottle of brandy and a glass. He walks out to the terrace to the OLD MAN's table.

OLDER WAITER
Mind if I join you?

The OLD MAN is staring off into the night and doesn't appear to notice him. The OLDER WAITER sits down. He pours brandy for himself and then tops off the OLD MAN's glass.

OLDER WAITER
(in a confiding tone)
He doesn't understand. People like you
and me . . . we need this café.
(looks around)
It's clean and the light's good . . . and
there's no music. It's peaceful.

The OLD MAN finally acknowledges him with a look of understanding. The shot closes in on the OLD MAN's telling eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. - BATTLEFIELD - NIGHT

The MAN (middle-aged version of OLD MAN), unshaven and dirty, crouches down low in a trench, gun in hand. The trench is lined with fellow soldiers, some crouching as he is and others darting around to prepare ammunition or help those wounded. Periodically, the MAN and other soldiers pop up from their positions to fire a few shots at the enemy. While staying low, the MAN looks to the soldier next

to him. The two look steadily at one another as they load more ammunition into their guns. On the signal of the MAN, he and the other soldier pop up and begin firing. The MAN is trying to aim carefully though it is too dark and smoky to see. At his side, the other soldier jerks back as he takes a bullet to the chest. The soldier falls back into the trench and the MAN rushes to his side.

MAN
(frantically)
Medic! Man down!

The MAN kneels over the soldier and tries to cover the wound and apply pressure as a medic rushes over.

MAN
(yelling over the gunfire)
Here! He was just shot!

The soldier's eyes are wide open but completely unresponsive. The MEDIC quickly checks for a pulse and finds none.

MEDIC
He's gone. I'll take 'im.

The MEDIC drags the soldier away and the MAN falls back on his heels. He just sits there in the trench, a look of great discouragement on his face.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. - TENT - NIGHT

The MAN, still dirty and in uniform, lies on a cot in a large tent that has been set up not far from the battlefield. Gunfire and explosions are still heard clearly along with the pained cries coming from several wounded soldiers at the other end of the tent. Medics are rushing around, trying to provide care for the soldiers. In the cots surrounding the MAN, there are a couple of other soldiers tossing and turning, hoping for just a few moments of rest before returning

to battle. The MAN lies still, taking in his surroundings.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. - BATTLEGROUND - DAY

The sky is pale and hazy from smoke and dust. Occasional gunfire is heard, but overall, there is an eerie quiet. The MAN and a handful of other soldiers are trying to creep up on the enemy. They duck behind trees and shrubs and are very alert, constantly looking all around them. One SOLDIER takes the lead and motions for the others to follow. In the distance, an enemy soldier can be seen hiding in the brush. He has his back to the soldiers coming up on him, but suddenly his head jerks up. He has heard the men and he darts off. The soldiers watch as he runs away, looking for signs of more enemy soldiers. The leading SOLDIER glances back at the other men.

SOLDIER

Be ready. Any moment . . .

The SOLDIER is cut off by loud gunfire. The enemy soldiers are hiding among the trees and firing freely at the soldiers.

SOLDIER

(yelling)

Take cover!

The soldiers rush about, looking for trees and bushes to duck behind. They get over the initial alarm of the attack and begin firing back. The leading SOLDIER takes his stance behind a tall, leafy tree, and the MAN finds a place just a few yards from him behind a large bush. The battle continues maliciously. The lead SOLDIER takes a step out from behind the tree to fire several shots, but he is hit twice. One bullet lodges high in his shoulder, the other in his stomach. Without hesitation, the MAN rushes to him and begins to drag him to safety. The MAN cries out in pain and anguish as a bullet hits him high on his leg. With

all the strength he can manage, he pulls himself and the other SOLDIER to safety behind the bush. The MAN breathes very heavily and winces in pain as he does his best to tend to the wounds of the other SOLDIER. The SOLDIER, however, is losing a lot of blood very rapidly and in just a few moments, it is clear that he has died.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. - OFFICE - DAY

The MAN stands at attention in the office of a high-ranking military OFFICER. The OFFICER stands behind his desk with a small box in hand.

OFFICER

(very formally)

You are now honorably discharged from the United States Military. Your country is grateful for the services you have provided. For your enormous courage, we present you with this medal, a symbol of honor and respect . . .

The OFFICER hands over the box to the MAN as he speaks, and his voice trails off as this shot dissolves into the next one.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. - CATHEDRAL - DAY

Shot opens on a sign in front of the cathedral. It reads: "Memorial Service in honor of our noble troops who have perished overseas." The shot widens and the MAN comes into view as he passes by the sign and walks into the cathedral.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. - CATHEDRAL - DAY

There is a somber air as the memorial service takes place. A large stained-glass window depicting Jesus

is behind the altar, as though Jesus is watching down on those in the congregation. The cathedral is filled with mourners, and the MAN is sitting in one of the front pews, listening to the PRIEST recite a prayer.

PRIEST

Our father, who art in heaven; hallowed
be Thy name; Thy kingdom come, Thy will
be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Before the PRIEST has even finished the prayer, the MAN stands up, looks hard at Jesus in the window, and leaves the service.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Unable to settle down, the MAN paces the bedroom. He's anxious and doesn't know what to do with himself.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. - BAR - NIGHT

The atmosphere is loud and bustling. The MAN wanders into the bar and buys a drink. He is anxious and fidgety as he sips his drink. He eventually can't stand it and leaves.

CUT TO:

EXT. - STREET - NIGHT

The MAN walks aimlessly from the bar. As he wanders around, he glances up, and the café stands in front of him. He stares at it for a moment, then finally heads for the door.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. - CAFÉ - NIGHT

Shot returns to closeup of OLD MAN's eyes and then widens to reveal the OLD MAN and OLDER WAITER still sitting on the terrace. They are drinking and staring out into the night.

CUT TO:

INT. - CAFÉ - EVENING

It's the following evening and the two WAITERS are working. The café is relatively busy and they are waiting on customers. They cross paths in the kitchen.

YOUNGER WAITER

Sorry about last night, hombre.

OLDER WAITER

Forget it.

They leave the kitchen with trays and the OLDER WAITER glances out at the terrace. The OLD MAN's table is empty.

CUT TO:

INT. - CAFÉ - NIGHT

It's late that same evening and all the customers have gone. The two WAITERS are wiping down tables. The OLDER WAITER appears a bit melancholy, but the YOUNGER WAITER is in a light-hearted mood and doesn't even notice the sadness of his colleague.

YOUNGER WAITER

(happily)

It's the first time in weeks that old man hasn't been here.

He puts his towel down and starts to straighten chairs.

YOUNGER WAITER

We can go home at a decent hour for once.

The OLDER WAITER is vexed.

OLDER WAITER
(concerned)
Where do you think he is?

YOUNGER WAITER
How should I know?
(pauses)
Maybe he finally started drinking at home.

OLDER WAITER
(unconvinced)
Maybe.

The OLDER WAITER puts his towel down and begins sweeping. A few moments pass quietly as the WAITERS clean the café. The YOUNGER WAITER finishes straightening the chairs and starts toward his jacket.

YOUNGER WAITER
Well, hombre, I'm gonna head out.

He puts his jacket on.

OLDER WAITER
(barely glancing up)
Okay. See you tomorrow.

YOUNGER WAITER
Bye.

The YOUNGER WAITER leaves the café. The OLDER WAITER finishes sweeping and then puts the broom away. He looks out at the terrace as if expecting the OLD MAN to have appeared, but no one is there. He grabs the bottle of brandy and a glass, and he walks out to the terrace. He takes a seat in the same place where he had sat the previous night to talk to the OLD MAN. He fills his glass with brandy and just sits there drinking.

CUT TO:

INT. - CAFÉ - LATE AFTERNOON

The OLDER WAITER has just started waiting on tables as the YOUNGER WAITER comes in to begin his shift. He has a newspaper in his hand, and he catches the OLDER WAITER on his way back to the kitchen.

YOUNGER WAITER
Seen this yet?

He holds up the rolled paper.

OLDER WAITER
Seen what?

YOUNGER WAITER
Article in the paper.

OLDER WAITER
No. Why?

YOUNGER WAITER
Here.

He hands the paper over to the OLDER WAITER who unrolls it and starts reading. A headline toward the bottom of the page reads: "Man found dead in his home." The OLDER WAITER's eyes grow dark as he reads the article. Unnoticed by the WAITERS, there is another headline at the top corner of the page that reads: "Lottery to decide draftees."

YOUNGER WAITER
(insensitively)
Guess he found a way to kill himself
after all, huh?

The OLDER WAITER continues to read and ignores the YOUNGER WAITER.

YOUNGER WAITER
I don't guess we'll have to spend our
nights waiting for him to go home anymore.

OLDER WAITER
(trailing off)
No, guess not.

He gives the paper back to the YOUNGER WAITER and goes back to working, but he is very distracted. The YOUNGER WAITER settles in to start working, but unlike the OLDER WAITER, he seems pleased.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE UP TO:

INT. - OLDER WAITER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The shot opens suddenly on a closeup of the OLDER WAITER'S eyes. As the shot widens, the OLDER WAITER is revealed to be lying flat on his back in bed. He is staring blankly at the ceiling. A clock on his night stand reads "3:47." After a few moments, the OLDER WAITER gets up resolutely, never looking at the clock, and leaves his bedroom. In his small apartment, he walks only a short distance before coming to the kitchen. He pours himself a drink and moves on to the next room, a cramped living area, where he sits down heavily on the couch. The OLDER WAITER takes a long gulp of his drink and then reaches to open a small drawer in the end-table standing next to the couch. He reaches deep into the drawer and when his hand comes out, he is holding a tattered old photograph. The OLDER WAITER holds the photo in his lap and stares at it as he takes another long gulp. The picture is of a YOUNG WOMAN, and she smiles happily up at him. From over the OLDER WAITER'S shoulder, the shot slowly zooms in to a closeup of the YOUNG WOMAN'S face.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. - PARK - DAY

Shot begins as a closeup of the YOUNG WOMAN and then widens to reveal her sitting on a park bench,

engrossed in a book. The sun shines brightly on her face, giving her a beautiful glow. A YOUNG MAN (younger version of the OLDER WAITER) comes into the frame with a white carnation in one hand, a brown paper sack in the other, and a large rolled up paper under his arm. He walks straight over to the YOUNG WOMAN. She doesn't look up or seem to notice him as he is approaching, but when he reaches her, he holds the carnation down in front of her book. She looks up at him slowly and a smile spreads across her face.

YOUNG WOMAN
(affectionately)
Well hello, stranger.

She takes the flower and holds it up to her nose to smell it as the YOUNG MAN sits down beside her on the bench and kisses her on the cheek.

YOUNG MAN
You look just like an angel sitting here.

The YOUNG WOMAN lowers the flower to her lap and looks directly into the YOUNG MAN'S eyes.

YOUNG WOMAN
(wittily)
Well, of course I do. I am an angel . . . sent here just for you.

She puts her arm around his neck and kisses him on the cheek as he beams at her.

YOUNG WOMAN
(nodding at the sack and paper)
So what have you got there?

YOUNG MAN
(holding up the paper sack)
I brought lunch.

She tries to peek into the bag, but the YOUNG MAN

holds it back.

YOUNG WOMAN
(curiously)

What is it?

The YOUNG MAN scoots to the other side of the bench to make room between the two of them and then reaches into the bag.

YOUNG MAN
(with a sly look)

Just a minute . . .

The YOUNG MAN pulls a small cloth out of the bag and spreads it out across the bench. Then he pulls out two sandwiches and places one in front of the YOUNG WOMAN and the other in front of himself. Next he pulls out two milk boxes and sets them next to the sandwiches. As he reaches back into the bag for something else, the YOUNG WOMAN reaches for her milk.

YOUNG WOMAN
(looking at the paper)

So what's that thing?

YOUNG MAN

A picture I drew for you. See for yourself.

Excitedly, the YOUNG WOMAN puts down her milk and takes the roll of paper. She slips a rubber band off the end and spreads out the paper across her lap to reveal a blueprint for a house. The YOUNG WOMAN gasps.

YOUNG WOMAN
(looking at the plans)

Oh, it's beautiful.

YOUNG MAN

Yeah? How 'bout this?

The YOUNG MAN has pulled a dainty ring from the bag

and he holds it out to the YOUNG WOMAN. She looks up at him and sees the ring and her eyes well up with happy tears.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. - CHURCH - DAY

The YOUNG MAN and YOUNG WOMAN stand together in front of a small congregation. They quietly recite their vows as friends and family watch on happily.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. - KITCHEN - DAY

The YOUNG WOMAN sits anxiously at her kitchen table. She is fidgeting, obviously excited about something. We hear a key turning in a lock and then a door opening. The YOUNG WOMAN jumps up and rushes to greet her husband. He sets down his briefcase inside the doorway and embraces his wife. After kissing her, he holds her back at arm's length.

YOUNG MAN

You're looking especially gorgeous today.

She beams at him and squeezes his hands.

YOUNG WOMAN

(barely able to contain herself)
I have something to tell you.

The YOUNG MAN'S eyes begin to sparkle with excitement.

YOUNG MAN

What is it?

YOUNG WOMAN

(as if it's bursting from her)
We're going to have a baby!

YOUNG MAN

(excited)

Really?! That's fantastic!

He pulls the YOUNG WOMAN close and hugs her tightly. Then he holds her back at arm's length again, his face glowing with pleasure.

YOUNG MAN

I hope it's a boy!

YOUNG WOMAN

(squealing in delight)

Oh, me too!

As the two hold each other tightly, the telephone rings in the background. The YOUNG MAN eventually breaks away from the embrace, still all smiles, to answer the phone in an adjoining room.

YOUNG MAN

(brightly)

Hello?

He listens for just a moment, and then recognition passes across his face.

YOUNG MAN

Oh, hi! How're you doing?

He listens again with a smile on his face, but his expression quickly changes to confusion.

YOUNG MAN

No, why?

He listens for awhile now and his face gradually darkens and comes to show concern. Noticing the look on his face, the YOUNG WOMAN takes a step toward him, her smile fading.

YOUNG MAN

(dismally)

Oh wow. Okay, thanks for calling.

He pauses for a moment as the caller replies.

YOUNG MAN

Yeah, I'll give you a call later . . .
okay, bye.

He hangs up the phone slowly, his back to the YOUNG WOMAN. She moves over to him and touches his arm.

YOUNG WOMAN

(worried)

What is it?

He turns to face her and his eyes are dark, his expression blank.

YOUNG MAN

The Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. - DAMAGED BUILDING - SUNSET

The YOUNG MAN sits in the tower of a building that has been almost completely demolished. He keeps watch as the sun sets and he scrawls out a letter to his wife.

YOUNG MAN (V-O)

My dearest love . . . I finished my
training just last month and now I'm ready
to see the world.

The Voice-Over continues as the YOUNG MAN looks up with a start when he notices a tank approaching from the distance. He quickly signs the bottom of his letter and as he is stuffing his paper and pencil into an inside pocket by his chest, a beautiful sketch of the landscape minus the damage is revealed on the back. He jumps to his feet to alert his COMMANDING OFFICER down below.

YOUNG MAN (V-O, CONTINUOUS)

I was deployed to the beautiful country in

which I am now sitting, though I must admit,
I'm not entirely sure what country it is . .
. I've traveled so much these past few days.

The YOUNG MAN and the other troops in his company jump into their positions quickly to await the tank and the infantry now revealed to be following it.

YOUNG MAN (V-O, CONTINUOUS)
Anyhow, it's lovely, and I only wish you
could see how beautiful the sunset is here.

The sun continues to set as an ominous backdrop for the approaching army.

YOUNG MAN (V-O, CONTINUOUS)
(after a brief pause)
I've made some new friends already. Most
of the men in my company are pretty
respectable.

The camera pans across the site where the American troops lie in wait. There are closeups of several SOLDIERS whom the YOUNG MAN is referring to in his letter. They have varied expressions: some determined, some afraid, some indifferent.

YOUNG MAN (V-O, CONTINUOUS)
They've all just arrived as I have, and
like me, they hope to return home to their
families soon. I love you, I miss you,
and I'll write again soon.

CUT TO:

EXT. - FIELD - DAY

A couple of days have passed and the small company (no more than two dozen men) is hiking across a vast field. The field is dry and desolate, the grass brown and crunchy. There is some conversation among the troops as they walk. The YOUNG MAN walks alongside a SOLDIER who appears to be only slightly older than he is.

SOLDIER
(amiably)
So where are you from?

YOUNG MAN
Connecticut. How 'bout yourself?

SOLDIER
Georgia.

YOUNG MAN
Really? What'd you do there?

SOLDIER
Minister. Actually, just started my own
church about two years ago. What do you do?

YOUNG MAN
I'm an architect. Broke ground on a new
house for my family right before I came.

SOLDIER
(impressed)
That's great! How many kids do you have?

YOUNG MAN
(showing his excitement)
Actually, my wife just gave birth to our
first son about three weeks ago, while I
was finishing up boot camp. I can't wait
to see him!

SOLDIER
(nodding)
I've got two little girls myself. Twins.
(with a broad smile)
They're just as funny as can be, always
putting on shows and skits for their
mother and I.

YOUNG MAN
(smiling)
Actresses in the making, huh?

SOLDIER

Sure looks that way.

(after a pause)

I just hope I can still tell them apart
by the time I make it back home.

The YOUNG MAN nods thoughtfully as the shot pulls out
and the company continues its journey.

CUT TO:

INT. - NONDESCRIBT BUILDING - NIGHT

The YOUNG MAN sits among the other troops, most of
whom are sleeping. It's the dead of night and they
are crammed together in a tiny place lit by dim
candles. Periodic explosions and constant gunfire can
be heard from outside. A shot over the YOUNG MAN's
shoulder reveals that he is writing another letter to
his wife.

YOUNG MAN (V-O)

I wrote last time that I had made some
friends, but there is one man in
particular whom I've really bonded with.

The shot passes across the many sleeping troops and
comes to rest on the SOLDIER whom the YOUNG MAN has
befriended. The SOLDIER wears a small cross that lies
on his chest with his army tags.

YOUNG MAN (V-O, CONTINUOUS)

He's a man of the church and I admire him
very much. He's only a little older than
I, and he told me wonderful stories about
his twin daughters.

The shot returns to the YOUNG MAN who is now sketching
on the back of the letter. It is a picture of the
field they'd crossed earlier that day, but instead of
being brown and dry, it is green and lush with
vegetation, complete with colorful flowers and a
cheerful sky.

YOUNG MAN (V-O, CONTINUOUS)

It makes me excited to see our own little boy, and to see what joys he will bring our way. As always, I love you ever so much, and I pray to see your glorious face in my dreams.

The YOUNG MAN finishes his drawing and drifts off to sleep.

CUT TO:

INT. - SAME BUILDING - EARLY MORNING

A huge explosion very close by awakens the YOUNG MAN with a start. The rest of the company has also been stirred to life by the commotion and they all scramble to get their gear on and get their weapons ready. The COMMANDING OFFICER is yelling orders that are barely audible over the noise outside. He points to a group of men.

COMMANDING OFFICER

(loud and controlled)

You all go out to the right!

He turns to the rest of the men, including the YOUNG MAN and the SOLDIER.

COMMANDING OFFICER

The rest of you to the left! Let's move!

The troops run out of the building, completely alert now. The scene awaiting them is one of utter chaos. Surrounding buildings are in ruins and are being used as hiding places for both Allied and German soldiers. Explosions are occurring everywhere and men from both armies are dropping all over. The YOUNG MAN, the SOLDIER, and several of their fellow troops post up in a line behind a short stone wall. The shot comes to focus on the YOUNG MAN as he takes careful aim.

YOUNG MAN

(under his breath as he stares
straight ahead)

God, give me strength and please forgive
me my sins.

He then steels himself and fires over and over again, taking out several enemy soldiers. The battle wages on as the German soldiers try to advance and overcome the Allied troops, but the Allied men succeed in holding them back. Air reinforcements eventually come to their aid and end the battle quickly and effectively.

CUT TO:

EXT. - SAME BATTLE SITE - EVENING

The company remains at the same camp site, though it is in shambles, and they await the next onslaught of enemy soldiers. The YOUNG MAN and the SOLDIER sit up against the same stone wall that had earlier been used as a barricade. They look tired and sullen, defeated despite the fact that they won the battle. The YOUNG MAN watches birds in the sky and the SOLDIER is reading a small, tattered Bible with yellowed pages.

YOUNG MAN

(glumly)

You know, I wonder sometimes why we're
here.

The SOLDIER just nods in acknowledgment.

YOUNG MAN

(ranting)

I know we're supposed to be angry at the
Germans and all, but why us?

(pointing to the SOLDIER and himself)

Me and you right here, what did we do to
deserve this? And we don't even know these
men we're killing. What if they have wives
and families? They don't deserve to be here
either.

The SOLDIER, who has been nodding along, is thoughtful, but has only a half-hearted response.

SOLDIER

(glancing up from his Bible)

I guess we just have to understand that it's not about us as individuals . . . we're fighting for a bigger cause . . . for freedom and justice . . . and for a better world for our children.

YOUNG MAN

But what do we tell our children, huh?

The SOLDIER closes his Bible and gives the YOUNG MAN his full attention.

YOUNG MAN

Hell, what do I say to my wife when I get home? She could never understand the things we see and do here.

SOLDIER

You've just got to keep on being a man and protect her. Tell her you fought the good fight, but don't give any details. Same for your children.

YOUNG MAN

(calming some)

I try to see the good in being here. I tell my wife that it's beautiful and that I'm meeting new people. But that's bullshit. Everything here is destroyed and the men I just met are being killed. I just don't know if I can go home and lie to her forever about the beauty of a place where such horrible things are happening.

(after several moments)

Why are you so sure that things will be fine?

SOLDIER

(with conviction)

Because I have God in my heart and I know
He will lead me home safely to my family.
And when I get there, He'll tell me what
words to say.

The YOUNG MAN nods with respect and his face lightens
with hope. He moves as if to stand up but stops a
moment and looks the SOLDIER in the eye.

YOUNG MAN

(earnestly)

You're a good man . . . best I've ever met.

SOLDIER

(shaking his head and gesturing
with the Bible)

Nah, I just have faith.

The YOUNG MAN nods and stands up. The shot fades to
black as he walks away.

FADE UP TO:

MONTAGE SEQUENCE

The montage shows the passing of several months
through the changing of seasons. The company is
involved in many battles, and through the sequence,
the group progressively shrinks and looks increasingly
tired and ragged. The YOUNG MAN and SOLDIER are
always close by one another, much like brothers. A
couple of the YOUNG MAN's drawings also pass through
during the montage, showing optimistic renderings of
the decimated battle-sites that the company has passed
through. Toward the end of the montage, as it becomes
winter, there is a voice-over of the YOUNG MAN's most
recent letter.

YOUNG MAN (V-O)

(methodically, without much feeling)

My dearest, I apologize for my letters

being so infrequent. We've been very busy here, traveling nearly everyday. Hope all is well with the baby. All my love.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. - OUTSKIRTS OF VILLAGE - DUSK

The company slowly comes up on a peaceful, snow-covered village. As they draw nearer, they are greeted by French women who welcome them in for what little food they can offer.

CUT TO:

INT. - SMALL ROOM - DUSK

The men crowd around a large table and ravenously devour the meager amount of bread and wine that has been laid out before them. When the food is gone, many of the men turn their attention to the women, eyeing them as though they still have a hunger to be fulfilled. The YOUNG MAN and SOLDIER are situated in a position that separates them from the other men and they witness the behavior of their fellow troops with disgust. One by one, the men leave the table and the room with nervous women in tow. When the room has emptied of everyone but the YOUNG MAN and the SOLDIER, the tense silence is momentarily broken.

YOUNG MAN

(disgusted and hopeless as
he stares straight ahead)

These men have families.

(pauses)

Doesn't that matter to them?

The SOLDIER also stares straight ahead and offers no response.

CUT TO:

EXT. - BATTLE SITE IN RUINS - DUSK

The company has moved on from the village and now approaches a new battle area. The ground is covered in blood-stained snow and it crunches under their feet. The men scope out the area, noting several small buildings and one larger building with a tower, all of which have sustained much damage. The buildings seem to be empty, but the company still approaches cautiously. When they have reached the center of the area, buildings surrounding them, they are ambushed. Enemy soldiers flock from the buildings, immediately encompassing the Americans. Without hesitation, fighting begins, the American troops quick to recover from their initial surprise. The YOUNG MAN and the SOLDIER are, as usual, side by side. They defend themselves skillfully as they are approached by one German after another. The company breaks up and spreads out, but the YOUNG MAN and SOLDIER remain close to one another. As they fight, we catch sight of a sniper, lurking in the high tower above. He bides his time, watching carefully. Slowly, he begins to take aim in the direction of the YOUNG MAN and SOLDIER. All at once, he fires and a moment later, the SOLDIER screams out in pain. He falls to the ground, having been hit directly in the chest. Seeing this, the YOUNG MAN immediately turns to the tower and, spotting the sniper, fires shot after shot. The sniper falls back, dead on the spot. The YOUNG MAN then rushes over to the SOLDIER, trying to help him.

YOUNG MAN

(frantically)

Oh, God! Please don't let him die!

(as he tries to stop the wound's
bleeding)

He's your man! You can't let him die here!

But the SOLDIER has already died, the front of his uniform completely saturated with his blood that is now also on the hands of the YOUNG MAN.

CUT TO:

INT. - SHELTER - NIGHT

The company has found shelter in one of the decrepit buildings for the night. The YOUNG MAN sits huddled in a corner, a thick blanket held tightly around him. There is a small makeshift fire and several of the men are gathered around it, but the YOUNG MAN remains alone in the corner. After a few moments, he takes some paper that has been lying beside him, and a pencil, and he begins to write.

YOUNG MAN (V-O)
(forced)

We've come to a new town today.

The shot moves over his shoulder to take in the words as he writes them.

YOUNG MAN (V-O, CONTINUOUS)
It is lovely and quaint . . .

He pauses for a moment, his hand hovering over the page. With a burst of frustration, he continues in anger.

YOUNG MAN (V-O, CONTINUOUS)
(sarcastically)
. . . despite the fact that it's been
utterly
destroyed and now lies in ruins.

He finishes writing the sentence as though getting the thought out might make him feel better. He then crumples the sheet of paper and drops it beside him. With a fresh sheet in hand, he decides to try again.

YOUNG MAN (V-O)
My love, the winter is pretty here, fresh
snow falling everyday. We're on our way to
a peaceful village where we will be allowed
to spend the Christmas holiday.

He hesitates as though he knows he's about to drift to a dangerous topic.

YOUNG MAN (V-O, CONTINUOUS)

(hesitantly)

The friend I told you about . . . he's going to spend Christmas with me, playing cards, and eating and drinking . . .

Here, the YOUNG MAN breaks down. Tears and sounds of grief escape from him as he violently crumples the paper and lets his head fall to his lap. After a few desperate moments, he stands up, doing what he can to pull himself together. He gathers the wadded paper from the floor and drops it over the heads of the other men (who are talking quietly to one another) into the fire, where it crumbles and burns.

CUT TO:

EXT. - GRAVEL ROAD - DAY

The company, even smaller than before, hikes along a weathered gravel road. The ground is covered with snow, but there are tracks in the much-traveled road. The men are tired and worn as they trudge along, all wearing grim expressions. The YOUNG MAN has a vacant expression and it is clear that he is not the same man he once was. At the road's end, the men come to the little town that the YOUNG MAN had spoken of in his failed letter. It is quiet and seems untouched by the war which surrounds it. The men liven up a bit as they enter a small dining hall (in a damaged, but still standing, village inn) that has been prepared for them by the villagers who welcome them graciously. The majority of the villagers can speak decent English with thick accents.

CUT TO:

INT. - DINING HALL - DAY

The troops sit down at the long table as women scurry about, bringing soup, bread, and water. The YOUNG MAN sits with a couple of his FELLOW MEN and, moments later, a young VILLAGE WOMAN comes to the table.

VILLAGE WOMAN
(sweetly, as she sets down a
plate of bread)
Here is some bread for you.

The men look up at her thankfully.

VILLAGE WOMAN
(turning away)
I'll be back with soup.

The men turn their attention to the bread and break pieces off for themselves.

FELLOW MAN ONE
(stretching)
Ah, doesn't it feel good to sit down in a warm place with warm food?

FELLOW MAN TWO
Sure does. Can't remember the last time I got to really sit down and enjoy a meal.

The YOUNG MAN sits back and listens attentively, though he contributes little to their conversation.

FELLOW MAN ONE
You know, this is the first time I've ever spent the holidays away from my family.

FELLOW MAN TWO
Yeah, same here. It's lousy.

FELLOW MAN ONE
(looking at the YOUNG MAN)
How 'bout you?

YOUNG MAN
Yeah, it's my first time away, too.

FELLOW MAN TWO
What d'you think our families are doing right now? Do you think Christmas is going

on just the same as if we were there?

FELLOW MAN ONE

Well, I'm sure it has to be different.

(pauses)

But I do hope they're keeping the same traditions and keeping their spirits up.

FELLOW MAN TWO

(looking at FELLOW MAN ONE)

What traditions does your family have?

FELLOW MAN ONE

Well, on Christmas Eve, my wife helps my little girl make cookies for Santa.

(with a chuckle)

But then, she always gets upset because there's nothing for the reindeer. So last year, she left them carrots. You should just see my wife and I trying to eat it all while she sleeps.

(after a pause)

But then the morning comes, and it's all worth it when we see the excitement on her face.

The YOUNG MAN has little expression to give away his thoughts, but FELLOW MAN TWO smiles.

FELLOW MAN TWO

With our Christmas, we always get the whole family together. On Christmas Day, my wife and I go to my mother's house with our three boys. My brother and two sisters are there with their families, and we're all cramped together in this tiny house.

(he gestures as though to show the smallness of the house)

My mom always makes a huge dinner . . . enough for an army, and she's always sure to include everyone's favorite dessert . . . pecan pie for me, pumpkin for my oldest sister, peach for my baby sister, and a red velvet cake for my brother. We always

have a ton of leftovers, but she wouldn't dream of making any less.

FELLOW MAN ONE and FELLOW MAN TWO are all smiles with their warm memories and they look to the YOUNG MAN.

FELLOW MAN ONE
What does your family do?

YOUNG MAN
(in an obvious attempt to avoid talking)
My son's only a few months old . . . we don't have any traditions.

FELLOW MAN ONE and FELLOW MAN TWO are taken aback by his response, but they are saved from having to say anything by the VILLAGE WOMAN, who comes back with bowls of soup.

She places the bowls in front of the men and they dig in gratefully.

FELLOW MAN ONE
(with his mouth full)
This is the best meal I've had in months.

FELLOW MAN TWO nods in agreement, but the YOUNG MAN eats silently and the FELLOW MEN decide to give up on trying to cheer him.

CUT TO:

INT. - DINING HALL - EVENING

As night falls, the company's spirits are continually lifted. More villagers have come to the hall, some bringing liquor that they have had stashed away. Some of the men play cards, while others simply enjoy conversation. In the dark corners of the room, some men and women have coupled off, with the couples occasionally disappearing to unseen rooms. After having had a few drinks, the YOUNG MAN has even

started to lighten up a bit. He is still sad, but less brooding as he watches a nearby poker game. From the side, out of the YOUNG MAN's line of vision, a GIRL comes up to him. She is young, slender, and beautiful, but the YOUNG MAN doesn't notice this right away.

GIRL

(in broken English)

Are you sad?

The YOUNG MAN is caught off guard by her directness, but he is also prideful and doesn't want to admit his troubles to her.

YOUNG MAN

No . . . No, I'm not sad.

GIRL

(puzzled)

Oh . . . I thought you were, and I was going to tell you, "Don't be sad . . . it's the holidays."

(after a pause)

No one should ever be sad this time of year.

The YOUNG MAN has now noticed her beauty and he is intrigued by her naive gaiety.

YOUNG MAN

Why shouldn't people be sad during the holidays?

The GIRL looks as if she had never thought of this before, but quickly comes up with a response.

GIRL

(naively)

Well, how could they be? It's such a beautiful time of year . . . there's snow and festivals and . . . I don't know, just magic in the air.

The YOUNG MAN chuckles at her answer and decides to go along with her happiness despite his own troubled mind. He takes the girl by the waist and pulls her toward him.

YOUNG MAN
(suggestively)

Yes . . . I suppose there is magic.

After a moment of awkward tension, the YOUNG MAN suddenly takes the GIRL'S hand and pulls her behind him as he leaves the hall.

CUT TO:

INT. - SMALL INN ROOM - NIGHT

The YOUNG MAN and GIRL waste no time in removing their clothing. They are immediately on top of one another, groping and kissing and tumbling about. There is no conversation or even feeling between them. Their sex is a simple exchange, both of them using and being used by the other to fulfill an animal-like hunger.

CUT TO:

INT. - SMALL INN ROOM - NEXT MORNING

The YOUNG MAN lies flat on his stomach in the bed and slowly wakes. He is startled at first, not remembering where he is. He jumps up to a sitting position and looks frantically around. As he realizes where he is, he starts to calm and he takes note of the fact that the GIRL has left. There isn't a trace of her anywhere in the room, like she'd never been there. The YOUNG MAN takes a walk through the room looking around and finds nothing but his own things piled in the corner. An urge comes to him and he goes to the pile, rifling through it until he finds what he's looking for. He goes over to a small table in the opposite corner of the room and he sits down heavily. The paper he has taken from his pack is creased and wadded. He rubs over it impatiently, trying to smooth it out, and he begins to write.

YOUNG MAN (V-O)
(slow and measured)
I have a confession to make . . . I'm not
ever coming home.

The shot pauses for a moment, looking into the deep,
disturbed eyes of the YOUNG MAN.

YOUNG MAN (V-O, CONTINUOUS)
I don't have a home now. I'm a man of the
world and I've seen things and done things
that I could never bring back to you.

The shot roams behind the YOUNG MAN to explore the
scene out the window to his back.

YOUNG MAN (V-O, CONTINUOUS)
You may never get one of those telegrams
that wives dread so much, but one thing
is certain . . . I have died here . . . I
am a victim, a casualty of the war, and
nothing will ever be the same again.

The shot continues roaming out the window over the
beautiful landscape. There are rolling hills covered
in snow with tiny, happy homes scattered around,
flaunting the life that the YOUNG MAN has given up
hope of having.

YOUNG MAN (V-O, CONTINUOUS)
I know you'll move on . . . you'll find
someone else to make a home with. And me,
I'll be the fool . . . I'll be the stupid
man stumbling through a life I can't
grasp . . . and maybe one day, I'll find
something, something that makes sense.

With closure, the shot returns to the YOUNG MAN who is
finishing a sketch on the bottom of the letter. It is
the exact scene of rolling hills and snowy homes from
outside his window. He folds the letter and puts it
into an envelope. He licks the flap and presses it
down very deliberately. He turns the letter over,

sets it on the table, and stares at it for a moment. Then, in a quick motion, he picks it back up, rips it in two, and throws it in the trash.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. - OLDER WAITER'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Returning to the present, the shot opens on a closeup of the YOUNG WOMAN'S face in the old photograph. The shot slowly zooms out to reveal that the OLDER WAITER has fallen asleep on the couch with his arm hanging over the edge of the couch. He still holds the photograph loosely in his outstretched hand.

CUT TO:

INT. - CAFÉ - EVENING

The café is moderately busy and the OLDER WAITER and YOUNGER WAITER are back and forth between the kitchen and tables. They have a conversation between waiting on customers, the YOUNGER WAITER upbeat and talkative, and the OLDER WAITER distracted and only half paying attention.

YOUNGER WAITER

(curiously)

So what d'you think happened to all his money?

OLDER WAITER

Maybe he left it to his niece.

YOUNGER WAITER

You think?

OLDER WAITER

I dunno.

YOUNGER WAITER

It just doesn't seem right. He wanted to die and she tried to keep him from it.

Do you think he really even liked her that much?

OLDER WAITER
I guess so. She was family.

YOUNGER WAITER
So? Plenty of people don't like their families.

OLDER WAITER
But she was all he had.
(less distracted, as if on second thought)
Unless you count us.

YOUNGER WAITER
(laughing as if it's a joke)
Hah! Us? No, I think he just wanted to torture us with his late nights and all.

The OLDER WAITER, now fully attentive, stops what he's doing to look directly at the YOUNGER WAITER.

OLDER WAITER
I think you're wrong. I think he was grateful to have a place where he could come and sit in peace.

CUT TO:

EXT. - CAFÉ - LATER THAT NIGHT

The YOUNGER WAITER has left for the night, but the OLDER WAITER remains, sitting out on the terrace where he had with the OLD MAN before. He holds a nearly full bottle of brandy in his hand and drinks directly from it. The shot slowly pushes in to a closeup of the bottle.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. - BATTLEGROUND - NIGHT

The shot opens up on a closeup of a flask and pulls out to show the YOUNG MAN drinking from it. He is sitting on lookout duty, his gun held across his body with his free hand. His appearance has changed drastically. He looks dirty, tired, and unkempt. He is joined on lookout duty by a PRIVATE, who to this point has been a mere background figure. The PRIVATE slumps down next to him and without even glancing at him, the YOUNG MAN passes the flask to him. The PRIVATE takes a long gulp and passes it back.

PRIVATE

That's some good shit.

YOUNG MAN

Yup. Turns everything into nothing.

CUT TO:

EXT. - DIRT PATH - DAY

The weary troops walk along a beaten path that is surrounded on both sides by dry brown grass. The sun is high in the sky and the men are dripping with sweat. The land is dotted with burnt and demolished homes and shops. The houses and buildings get closer together as the men come into the town. The men begin to spread out, looking through the rubble for traps or signs of the enemy. The YOUNG MAN looks around, finding little more than dead bodies and ruined possessions. He pokes around in what used to be a home and finds what would have been a nursery. A crib lies in big broken pieces and a charred rocking chair sits nearby. In the middle of the mess there is a teddy bear. It's dirty, but remains in one piece. The YOUNG MAN picks up the bear and looks at it for a moment before tossing it aside with a grunt. He continues through and finds himself standing in front of the only building in the town that is left intact. It's a sprawling cathedral with a high cross-topped tower and heavy wooden doors with bronze handles. The YOUNG MAN walks up the steps slowly, as though intimidated by the building, and pulls open one of the heavy doors to slip inside.

CUT TO:

INT. - CATHEDRAL - DAY

Inside the cathedral, the YOUNG MAN slowly walks down the center aisle past rows and rows of pews. He looks around as he goes and notes the stained glass windows lining the walls. They are massive windows that depict the typical images of the life of Christ (Mary holding the baby Jesus, the Last Supper, etc.). The YOUNG MAN eventually comes to the altar at the front of the cathedral. Behind it is a stained glass window twice the size of the others that portrays Jesus nailed to a cross. The YOUNG MAN stares up at the window for a long time with dark, contemplative eyes. In the meantime, a DEACON comes up behind the YOUNG MAN and lays a hand on his shoulder.

DEACON

Is there something I can help you with, son?

YOUNG MAN

(quietly, looking down)

Who does he think he is?

(looking up getting louder as he finds his confidence)

Huh? Who the hell does he think he is?

(angrily)

He makes us hope and believe, and for what?

To follow him, live for him so we can just

die here like suckers?

The DEACON, who has been listening intently, takes a moment to think before speaking.

DEACON

The Lord has a plan for us all. Everything will work out as he intends it.

YOUNG MAN

And in the mean time? Are we just

supposed to stand and watch as mothers

and their babies are dying?

(shaking his head)

The world will never be innocent again.

How could it be?

(not allowing the DEACON to get a word in)

We'll go back home and innocence won't even matter anymore. And home. What is home? It doesn't matter either. Nothing does. We'll just go through the motions until we die.

(looking directly at the DEACON)

Nothing matters. Not a goddamn thing.

Here the YOUNG MAN turns away from the DEACON and looks hard into the eyes of the painted Jesus.

YOUNG MAN

(harshly)

You. You're nothing.

With that, the YOUNG MAN turns on his heel and walks back down the aisle with his shoulders rigid and his head held high.

CUT TO:

EXT. - CAMPSITE - THAT NIGHT

The troops have moved beyond the town and into a small wood. They have set up camp in a clearing and the men sit around a meager fire. The YOUNG MAN sits close to the fire, using the light to sketch on a dirty scrap of paper. Where his drawings had been bright and optimistic before, they are exactly the opposite now. His picture gives an accurate portrayal of the disgruntled town. He shows every bit of destruction and disgrace in his depressing drawing. When he finishes the sketch, he holds it up to look at it. Then he tosses it into the fire without a second thought. Having seen this, the PRIVATE speaks up.

PRIVATE

(lazily)

Ya know, you ought to cheer up. The war's

gonna be over here in a few weeks. We're gonna get outta here.

YOUNG MAN

(glaring at the PRIVATE)

No, this war will never be over for us. We might get outta here, but we still have to live with ourselves.

CUT TO:

INT. - BUS STATION - DAY

Back in the states, hundreds of troops fill the bus station to wait for their rides home. The YOUNG MAN is among the crowd with a few familiar faces including that of the PRIVATE. Most of the men are anxious, but the YOUNG MAN seems content to wait there. The PRIVATE nudges his way past a few people to come talk to the YOUNG MAN.

PRIVATE

How's it goin'? Your bus comin' soon?

YOUNG MAN

No, I don't think so. Yours?

PRIVATE

(excitedly)

Just a couple more hours and then I'll be on my way to see my girl. She's back home in Colorado.

YOUNG MAN

Oh yeah?

PRIVATE

Sure enough. Where are you headed to?

YOUNG MAN

I don't know really.

PRIVATE

(shocked)

Whatcha mean you don't know? Aren't
ya goin' home?

YOUNG MAN

Nope. Don't have one anymore.

PRIVATE

(scrunching his eyebrows together)

Oh . . . well . . .

The PRIVATE thinks for a moment and then smiles,
pleased with his new idea.

PRIVATE

(getting excited again)

Well . . . that's great. You can go
anywhere! You could travel around and
visit all kinds of places! Or you can
just pick somewhere . . . anywhere you
want, the best place in the whole
country, and you can just start a new
life. You can do anything!

The YOUNG MAN watches this little outburst and is much
less enthused than the PRIVATE.

PRIVATE

How 'bout it? What d'you wanna see?
Where d'you wanna go?

The YOUNG MAN just shrugs and listens as the PRIVATE
goes on to start naming places.

PRIVATE

What about New York? Or Philadelphia?
Ooh, Chicago. Or Seattle . . . or San
Francisco.

The YOUNG MAN responds to none of these so the PRIVATE
keeps on going, speaking very quickly and excitedly.

PRIVATE

You could come to Colorado with me, or
you could go see the Grand Canyon, or
the mountains and the ocean in
California . . .

The YOUNG MAN still has no response.

PRIVATE

Or what about New Orleans? Or maybe
you could go down to Alabama or
Georgia . . .

At the mention of Georgia the YOUNG MAN perks up, but
this goes unnoticed by the PRIVATE who continues on a
roll.

PRIVATE

You could go to Myrtle Beach . . . or
Miami. Ooh, lots of pretty girls in
Miami for sure . . .

YOUNG MAN

(cutting him off)

Georgia. I'll start with Georgia.

CUT TO:

EXT. - BUS STOP - DAY

A large bus pulls away, leaving the YOUNG MAN to stand
alone in the rain with all his belongings in a big
pack over his shoulder. Shielding his eyes from the
water, he ducks into a nearby phone booth. A big
phone book dangles on a chain and he pulls it up to
look at it. On the bottom of the front cover it
reads, "Savannah, GA." He flips through the book,
dragging his finger down each page until finally he
stops, having found what he's looking for.

CUT TO:

EXT. - SMALL HOUSE - DAY

The YOUNG MAN stands in front of a little white house with green shutters and a perfectly manicured lawn. A light rain still falls, making flower petals dance in a small pot by the door. The YOUNG MAN gets up his nerve and goes to the door and knocks. A moment later, a blonde little girl comes to the door, shortly followed by a second, identical girl. The YOUNG MAN just stares down at the twins, unable to speak, and they look back at him curiously.

YOUNG MAN
(finding his voice)
Is your mother h . . .

He stops short when the MOTHER comes to the door. She is a pleasant woman with a warm smile.

MOTHER
Hello.
(looking down at the twins)
Girls, you go on and play.
(looking back at the YOUNG MAN)
Can I help you?

YOUNG MAN
(finding it difficult to get his words out)
Yes ma'am . . . I came to pay my respects.
I . . . I knew your husband.

MOTHER
(still sweetly)
Oh, please come in.

She holds the door open for him and he steps inside.

CUT TO:

INT. - SMALL HOUSE - DAY

Inside, the MOTHER ushers the YOUNG MAN into a seat and she sits opposite him. The YOUNG MAN seems uncomfortable and awkward.

YOUNG MAN

Thank you, ma'am.

MOTHER

Not at all, make yourself at home.

YOUNG MAN

You're very kind. And your husband . . .
he was a wonderful man. I'm terribly
sorry for your loss.

MOTHER

Yes, the girls and I miss him very much.
He was such a good father.

YOUNG MAN

(allowing his feelings to escape him)
He shouldn't have died over there, he
should have been the one to come home
safely. He was more deserving of that
than any of us.

The MOTHER's demeanor changes slightly as she is
forced to think of her late husband.

MOTHER

(struggling)

Perhaps he was. But it makes no
difference . . . what's done is done.

The YOUNG MAN looks at her in puzzlement. He cannot
understand how she can explain away her husband's
death so simply.

YOUNG MAN

Doesn't it make you angry that it was
him instead of someone else?

MOTHER

Of course. I lost my husband and my
girls lost their father. Everyday I
have to ask why, but then I have to
believe that it was meant to be so . . .

that it is all part of God's plan.

Seeing the sadness he has evoked, the YOUNG MAN feels he shouldn't have come.

YOUNG MAN

I'm sorry to have upset you ma'am.
I'll go.

CUT TO:

EXT. - BUS STOP - NIGHT

The YOUNG MAN is back in the phone booth to stay out of the rain when his bus pulls up. He hoists his bag over his shoulder and boards the bus where he meets the DRIVER.

DRIVER

Where ya headed?

YOUNG MAN

As far as I can go.

The DRIVER nods as the YOUNG MAN passes by him to find a seat.

CUT TO:

INT. - BUS - NIGHT

The YOUNG MAN sits toward the back of the bus. A montage begins with him sleeping through the night as the bus travels. He wakes up with the morning light and spends the trip staring out the window. As the montage continues, the only thing to see out the window is the thousands of trees that gradually change from strong, stable oak trees to light and breezy palm trees. As dusk sets in, the montage ends when the bus comes to stop. The YOUNG MAN looks out the window and sees a beach. He figures this must be the farthest he can go, so he gathers his things to get off the bus. He steps down from the bus's platform and turns to watch it drive away. When the bus goes by, he can

look across the street where the first thing he sees is the café, well-lit, crisp and clean. As the sun sets, he walks in to the little establishment.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. - CAFÉ - NIGHT

Returning to the present, the OLDER WAITER is still on the terrace with his bottle of brandy that is now considerably less than full. Drunk, the OLDER WAITER stands up very slowly. He is only slightly off balance as he goes back through the café. He sets down the brandy and takes a moment to pull his jacket on. He then grabs the bottle up along with his keys and heads out the door. He forgets to turn the lights and sign off and he fumbles to lock the door, though he finally does.

CUT TO:

EXT. - BEACH - NIGHT

The OLDER WAITER stumbles along the beach, his bottle now nearly empty. There is no one else anywhere around and the sound of the waves can be heard lapping at his feet. As he goes along, he lifts his bottle to the sky and begins a drunken speech. He is loud and bitter, and he slurs his speech.

OLDER WAITER

Our nada who art in nada, nada be thy name . . .

(he takes another drink)

. . . thy kingdom nada thy will be nada in nada as it is in nada. Give us this nada our daily nada and nada us our nada as we nada our nadas . . .

(he takes another drink)

. . . and nada us not into nada, but deliver us from nada, pues nada . . .

(he half sits, half falls to the sand)

. . . y nada y pues nada y nada y pues nada y nada y pues nada . . .

The OLDER WAITER drones on with his repetition, getting more indistinguishable as he goes. He takes a final drink to empty the bottle of brandy and passes out on the beach. The waves lap up around his body, the water coming, then going, then coming again to engulf his body.

CUT TO:

INT. - CAFÉ - NIGHT

It's the next night at the café. It is relatively busy and the YOUNGER WAITER works alongside the HEAD WAITER who has stayed longer than what he would for his usual shift to cover for the absence of the OLDER WAITER. Catching a short lull, the YOUNGER WAITER and HEAD WAITER stand by the kitchen and talk.

YOUNGER WAITER

(curiously)

Has anyone heard from him at all?

HEAD WAITER

No, he didn't even call.

(after a pause)

It's not like him.

YOUNGER WAITER

Guess not. But hey, thanks for picking up his shift. I'd hate to be facing this crowd alone.

HEAD WAITER

(with a change in his tone)

It's fine. Looks like I'll be needing the money now. My number was drawn.

YOUNGER WAITER

(not understanding)

What do you mean?

HEAD WAITER

The lottery. They drew my number.

The YOUNGER WAITER looks even more confused, not catching on to what the HEAD WAITER is talking about at all.

HEAD WAITER

(taking note of the YOUNGER WAITER'S
expression)

Haven't you seen the news? So far they've
picked about forty men from around here.

YOUNGER WAITER

(wide-eyed)

What?

HEAD WAITER

(simply)

I've been drafted. Don't you pay attention
to anything that's going on?

YOUNGER WAITER

(ignoring the question)

Do you think they drew my number?

HEAD WAITER

(as he walks off to return to his customers)

Dunno. Guess you better find out.

YOUNGER WAITER

(now standing alone)

Oh.

CUT TO:

INT. - YOUNGER WAITER'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

The YOUNGER WAITER and his WIFE stand on opposite
sides of the bedroom, each getting ready for bed. Mad
at the world and wanting to vent, the YOUNGER WAITER
starts in on his WIFE.

YOUNGER WAITER

(accusingly)

So did you already know about all this?

WIFE

(taken aback by his tone)

Well, I've heard some things in the news here and there, but I . . .

YOUNGER WAITER

(cutting her off)

You knew and you never said anything to me! I've been drafted and you never said a word!

WIFE

I really didn't know you'd have to leave. Like I said, I just heard bits and pieces. I never thought they'd pick your number. If I'd known the situation was so serious, of course I would have talked to you about it.

YOUNGER WAITER

(breaking down)

What am I going to do?

The YOUNGER WAITER is now sitting on the bed. His WIFE is irritated by his usual selfishness, but hides it well as she sits down beside the YOUNGER WAITER to console him.

YOUNGER WAITER

(looking at his WIFE and speaking with ridiculous seriousness)

They'll make me sleep on the ground and . . . and eat stale rations.

The WIFE hops up, letting her irritation finally show through.

WIFE
(incredulously)
That's what you're worried about?!
Sleeping in the dirt? It's a war, not
a goddamn camping trip!

The YOUNGER WAITER is shocked by his WIFE'S outburst
but she doesn't give him a chance to speak.

WIFE
And I guess it didn't even occur to you
how this would affect me, did it? What
am I supposed to do?

The YOUNGER WAITER gets over his initial shock and is
outraged that his WIFE has turned against him.

YOUNGER WAITER
(yelling)
I don't give a shit what you do! When
I die over there you can do whatever the
hell you want!

The YOUNGER WAITER storms out of the bedroom and slams
the door behind him.

CUT TO:

INT. - CAFÉ - FOLLOWING NIGHT

The café is calm with just a few customers scattered
around. The YOUNGER WAITER is again working with the
HEAD WAITER and the two fill salt and pepper shakers
as they talk.

YOUNGER WAITER
So he still didn't call today?

HEAD WAITER
No. Manager's gettin' a little worried.

YOUNGER WAITER
(brushing it off)
Oh, he's fine. Probably just quit and

didn't tell anybody.

HEAD WAITER

Nah, he wouldn't do that. He's a good man.

YOUNGER WAITER

(shrugs)

Yeah, I guess.

A customer motions to the WAITERS for more water. The HEAD WAITER nods and takes a pitcher to fill his glass while the YOUNGER WAITER continues with the salt and pepper. When the HEAD WAITER returns, the YOUNGER WAITER looks up at him with a concerned face.

YOUNGER WAITER

Are you nervous about going overseas?

HEAD WAITER

Well, yes, but at least I'll be doing something for my country.

The YOUNGER WAITER looks at him in disbelief.

YOUNGER WAITER

(cynically)

Really? That's how you look at it?

HEAD WAITER

Don't you?

YOUNGER WAITER

Hell no! What did my country ever do for me?

The HEAD WAITER gives a little chuckle and shakes his head, deciding not to answer the YOUNGER WAITER'S question.

YOUNGER WAITER

You know, my wife's giving me a hard time about all this, too.

The HEAD WAITER glances up with vague interest.

YOUNGER WAITER

(getting a little worked up)

She wants to know what *she's* supposed to do while I'm gone. She doesn't even care what happens to me!

The HEAD WAITER knows of the YOUNGER WAITER'S selfish personality and speaks to him with subtle patronization.

HEAD WAITER

Maybe you should give her a break. She's probably just scared that she might lose you.

The YOUNGER WAITER thinks about this for a minute and finally nods.

YOUNGER WAITER

Yeah, maybe you're right.

HEAD WAITER

Tell you what, I'll finish up here tonight and you go on home. Tell your wife you're sorry and that you want to spend as much time with her as you can before you leave.

The YOUNGER WAITER, who has been nodding along, perks up a bit and resolves to set things right.

YOUNGER WAITER

Okay, I think I will.

He leaves his chore undone, grabs his belongings, and heads out the door.

YOUNGER WAITER
(turning back)
Thanks, I'll see you tomorrow.

The YOUNGER WAITER leaves the café and walks briskly through the neighborhood.

CUT TO:

EXT. - YOUNGER WAITER'S HOME - NIGHT

The YOUNGER WAITER arrives home and stops at the door for a moment. He takes a deep breath and then lets himself in. He is about to call out to his WIFE, but stops short when he hears muffled voices. Now fully alert, he creeps through the house quietly until he is just outside his bedroom door and he can hear the voices of his WIFE and ANOTHER MAN more clearly.

WIFE
He's gotten even worse. He's intolerable. Like last night, he goes blaming me for him having to go to the war.

ANOTHER MAN
(consolingly)
Oh, honey, don't even worry about that.

CUT TO:

INT. - INSIDE YOUNGER WAITER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The WIFE and ANOTHER MAN are sitting up in bed.

WIFE
(leaning over to kiss him)
I'm so glad I have you.

ANOTHER MAN holds the WIFE and the two begin kissing and undressing one another.

CUT TO:

INT. - OUTSIDE YOUNGER WAITER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The YOUNGER WAITER, who has been leaning against the wall, slumps down to the floor. He accidentally bumps a hall table and a picture frame falls to the floor and breaks.

CUT TO:

INT. - INSIDE YOUNGER WAITER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Having heard the glass break, the WIFE is startled.

WIFE

Did you hear that?

She climbs out of the bed, quickly throwing her clothes back on as she goes. She reaches the bedroom door in time to see the YOUNGER WAITER rushing down the hallway. He turns a corner and moments later she hears the front door slam.

CUT TO:

EXT. - SIDEWALK - NIGHT

The YOUNGER WAITER runs through the neighborhood, both angered and hurt. He is running in no particular direction and finally stops at a street corner, out of breath. He is bending over, hands on knees, and when he catches his breath he looks up to see a bar across the street. He straightens up and walks into the bar very deliberately. It's very loud and busy inside and the YOUNGER WAITER goes directly up to the bar.

YOUNGER WAITER
(to a bartender)

Brandy.

The bartender brings the drink and the YOUNGER WAITER gulps about half of it down immediately. He just sits there, head in his hands, taking a drink every now and then. At first he can distinguish meaningless bits of conversation, but as he continues drinking, with the bartender continually filling his glass, the

conversations begin to run together. The voices of the other patrons get louder and more jumbled until it becomes a deafening drone that the YOUNGER WAITER can no longer stand. He throws some money down on the bar and leaves the place in a hurry. The YOUNGER WAITER drunkenly wanders the silent streets until he finally comes to the beach. He looks out at the black water and eventually comes to the place where the OLDER WAITER had passed out just days before. He sits down there and continues to watch the dark water.

CUT TO:

INT. - CAFÉ - FOLLOWING NIGHT

The YOUNGER WAITER solemnly serves customers, devastation in his eyes. He carries a tray back to the kitchen and is stopped by the HEAD WAITER who is also solemn.

HEAD WAITER

His body was found this morning. Less than a mile down the beach.

The YOUNGER WAITER looks at him in surprise, having just learned of the OLDER WAITER'S death.

HEAD WAITER

It's a shame. He was such a good man.

YOUNGER WAITER

(earnestly)

Yeah. He really was.

The HEAD WAITER walks off as the YOUNGER WAITER is left standing there dumbly.

CUT TO:

INT. - CAFÉ - LATER THAT NIGHT

The café is quiet now as a final lingering customer heads out the door. The HEAD WAITER is close behind him.

HEAD WAITER

Sure you don't mind finishing up?

YOUNGER WAITER

Nah. You go ahead. I'll see you later.

With a nod, the HEAD WAITER leaves the café. The YOUNGER WAITER tidies the café, moving slower than usual. When he finishes, he puts his jacket on and goes to the door. He flips a couple of switches, turning off the café lights and the lighted sign outside. He steps out of the café and locks the door behind him. He walks about half a block, taking a look at everything that's familiar to him. Suddenly he stops walking, a new light coming over him. He turns and walks back to the café. He opens the door and turns the lights and the sign back on. He pours a brandy and walks directly to the terrace to the OLD MAN'S spot. He sits and the shot widens as he takes a drink of the brandy.

FADE TO BLACK

Thesis Reflection

As I near the completion of my thesis, I can look back with a new appreciation and understanding of the process that's gotten me here. It all began with a simple notion for a project, and here it ends, four semesters later, with a theatrical screenplay.

When choosing a project to pursue for my thesis, I wanted to do something that would be intellectually stimulating and also something that would serve as a stepping stone for my future career path. I have aspirations of becoming a screenwriter in the film or television industry, so it seemed natural that I should write a screenplay. Such a project would give me a chance to try my hand at screenwriting to see if I truly have the aptitude and desire to make a career of it. Additionally, it would give me the opportunity to learn the craft of screenwriting. With that, I chose to write a screenplay based on Ernest Hemingway's short story, "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place."

Before settling on Hemingway's story as a basis for my project, I faced the choice of writing an original screenplay or an adaptation. Because I felt that the scope of the project was already pretty big, I chose to go with

an adaptation, figuring that it would be easier to start with a preexisting story. This was a misconception on my part. Original and adapted screenplays each have their own respective difficulties. With an original screenplay, you start from scratch. You have to create your own story and characters, and develop both to produce an interesting and functional finished script. With an adaptation, on the other hand, the story and characters are provided for you. The difficulty here is that you must deal with built-in expectations. Adaptations are accompanied by an audience that is familiar with the original material, and they have undefined, or even subconscious, expectations. My adaptation of Hemingway's story is based on my interpretation of it, but in all likelihood, my interpretation is a little different from your interpretation, which is a little different from someone else's interpretation, which is a little different from what Hemingway may have intended. There is no way of really knowing the best direction to go with an adaptation. Regardless of what you do, someone will be disappointed. The hardest part of writing an adaptation, in my opinion, is coming to the realization that you cannot please everyone. You have to make creative decisions and stand by them.

Additionally, in writing an adaptation, there is the challenge of making words cinematic. How do you show what a character is feeling? How do you make long conversations visually stimulating? In the opening scenes of my screenplay, for example, it was very difficult to make the dialogue-driven setup cinematically appealing. I think this is a potential issue in all adaptations because there is often a need to include specific passages or conversations which, while crucial to the story, do not necessarily lend themselves to cinematic representation.

Another decision I had to make was what to adapt. I had my choices narrowed down to Hemingway's short story and a contemporary mystery novel, but there was much to consider before going ahead with either one. To adapt a short story, a lot of new, original material must be added and it must be consistent with the original story. For a novel, there is the opposite task of cutting material while still maintaining the important elements of the story. The reason I chose to adapt Hemingway's story over the novel was to allow myself the creative freedom to take his story and make it my own. It is important for adaptations to separate themselves from their sources (to a degree), and to stand alone on their own artistic merit. "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place" is a story that resonates with me as a

provocative comment on our place in the world. The story forces us to ask what our purpose is and it suggests that we are small and insignificant. If it's true that our lives are inconsequential, what is there to console us? There is peace, quiet, and the serene atmosphere offered by the café in Hemingway's story. In writing my screenplay, this is the notion that I wanted to bring to light.

Moving on to the actual process of writing, I had a great deal to learn because screenwriting is very different from any other kind of writing I have encountered. To even get read in Hollywood, a script is expected to look a certain way and contain certain elements. It took me a while to pick up on the basic formatting rules used in screenwriting. Everything is supposed to be spaced and indented according to exact specifications, and it makes it very difficult to get into the flow of the writing. Structure is also of paramount importance. Nearly all Hollywood scripts are written based on a three-act structure. The first act is the setup, the second act is conflict, and the third act is the resolution. At the end of acts one and two, there are major plot points that serve as turning points to send the action in another direction. My first plot point, for example, is when the old man dies at the end of the first act. I found the structure of the

screenplay to be a little stifling until I got used to it. A screenplay is so different from any kind of short story or novel in the way it is written. With a short story or novel, the writer has freedom to take the story in any direction and to take as long as he or she wants in doing it. Screenplays, however, have a limited time span, so it is important that every single scene has a purpose and moves the story forward. This also makes it a necessity to know how the story will end before you even begin writing. You have to know the ending so that, from the very beginning, your scenes are progressing toward it. There were several pitfalls throughout the course of my writing, but I learned from them and I have gained confidence in my ability to write a screenplay that "follows the rules."

At this point in time, I have a complete draft of my screenplay (it is actually probably a third or fourth draft). I still call it a draft because the idea in Hollywood is that you don't have a finished product until you've done about twelve drafts. There are definitely some improvements that could be made, but for the purposes of my thesis, I am proud of the job I have done. If I were to continue with this project beyond college, my primary concern would be to further develop my characters. I like my characters, but I think they would have a more powerful

presence if I could find a way to make them deeper. That being said, I still consider my screenplay to be a great achievement as it is. This has been the largest undertaking of my academic career and it has certainly seemed like an impossible task at times. Now though, I can sit back and say that I've done it. I have written a screenplay, I've learned the ins and outs of the process, I've learned what not to do and I feel confident that I can do it again and do it better. With my thesis now completed, I am one step closer in my screenwriting aspirations.