

THE DRAFT

A play

by

Peter Snoad

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CHARACTERS

(Minimum of 8M, 3F actors)

All the actors must appear to be of Vietnam War era draft age (19-26)

The Soldiers:

GEORGE WILLIAMS, African-American

AL MILLER

JOHN BISBEE, white

Those Who Beat The Draft:

ROGER WALLACE, African-American

FRANK MAROTTA

The Refuser:

RANDY KEHLER

The Conscientious Objector:

TOM GARDNER

The Exile:

JAY HOLTZMAN

Those Who Provided Treatment, Care and Support:

PENNY ROCK

DIANE CLANCY

TRINH NGUYEN, female, Vietnamese-American college student

Other Characters

College Students (5)

Medical Orderly

Bus Driver

Young Black Men (2)

CORE office volunteers

Parents of John Bisbee

Max Sandin, a pacifist

Army Recruits

Drill Sergeant

Friends of Color (2)

White Student Protesters (2)

Army Doctor

Family Doctor

Young Black Girl

Adjutant General

Veteran Army Nurse

Non-Cooperators

Judge

Federal Marshal

Jay Holtzman's Parents

Departing GIs (2)

Trauma Unit Nurse

Other Characters (cont.)

FBI Agents (2)
Friends of Randy Kehler (3)
Randy Kehler's Father
Anti-Castro Cubans
Appalachian State Students (2)
Gruff White Woman
Ray, Kevin and Dennis, friends of Frank Marotta
Paxton Resident
Retired Serviceman
GI Mother
Police Officer
Daniel, a GI
Army Sergeant
North Vietnamese Officer
Papa San
David and Terry, draft resisters
Yu Thi Hao, a schoolteacher
U.S. Navy Officer
Captain Gardner
Vietnamese Bar Girls
Partying GIs (2)
Publisher
Okie
Pimp
Bus Driver
U.S. Air Force General
John Bisbee's Wife
Veteran With the Hat
Max, a Vietnam Vet

TIME

The action shifts in time between the period 1963-75 and the present.

PLACE

The U.S. and Vietnam

SET

None; a bare stage

"The Draft" is based primarily on real-life stories that appear in "Called to Serve: Stories of Men and Women Confronted by the Vietnam War Draft" by Tom Weiner; supplemented by additional personal interviews conducted by the playwright. Mr. Weiner has been a close collaborator on this project.

ACT ONE

The sidewalk outside a public university. Present day. LIGHTS up on a cluster of COLLEGE STUDENTS in contemporary dress. Beside them are backpacks, video camera cases etc. They're about to embark on a study tour trip to Vietnam, and they're waiting for the bus to take them to the airport. SOUND: contemporary rap MUSIC under dialogue.

FIRST STUDENT

(Calling off)
Trinh! TRINH!

SECOND STUDENT

I think she went to the bathroom.

FIRST STUDENT

(Pulling out her/his cell phone and dialing)
She's going to miss the bus.

THIRD STUDENT

(Panicked, rummaging in her/his backpack)
Oh no. No!

FOURTH STUDENT

What?

THIRD STUDENT

My passport. Shit. I don't believe this...

FIRST STUDENT

(Muttering aloud, frustrated that TRINH isn't picking up)
Where are you?

FOURTH STUDENT

Maybe you left it—

THIRD STUDENT

(Locating her/his passport)
Got it! God.

FIFTH STUDENT

(Absently, while listening to music on headphones)

Will we get like Asian food on the plane?

TRINH NGUYEN enters. She addresses the audience.

TRINH

This is it. We're going to Vietnam. The land of my ancestors. I am so excited! But also like anxious, right, I mean, I've never been there – none of us have – and for me, it's like...I mean, my parents were born in Vietnam. They were refugees. They came here as kids with their families at the end of the war. The Vietnam War, that is. Or the American War as the Vietnamese call it. Anyway, this study tour, when I first heard about it, I was like, yeah, that would be so cool! And my parents were supportive. But not my grandmother, she was like no way, "You are not going there while the communists are still in charge." But then she met Professor Gardner who's leading the trip, and he was charming, and when he promised to arrange for me to visit my family village, that kind of sealed the deal. I just wish I felt more prepared, you know? Mind you, compared these other kids, I'm a walking encyclopedia. I mean, when we started this course, none of them could even find Vietnam on a map.

FIRST STUDENT

I could.

FIRST STUDENT points.

OTHER STUDENTS

That's Korea!

TRINH

At least you got the right continent. Okay, so we studied the history of the country and the culture and all of that, but then we did this class project together?

SECOND STUDENT

We had to interview people who faced the military draft during the Vietnam War.

TRINH

Find out what they did, what their experience was. Because that was the thing, right, these guys had to make this incredible decision. They had to make a choice.

THIRD STUDENT

Do I go fight and kill people?

FOURTH STUDENT

And maybe get killed.

FIFTH STUDENT

Do I refuse and go to prison?

SIXTH STUDENT

Or just disappear, go underground?

SECOND STUDENT

Or get the hell out of Dodge and go to Canada.

FIRST STUDENT

Knowing I could end up in jail if I ever came back.

TRINH

And suddenly it was like, wow—

ALL STUDENTS

This is us.

TRINH

They were our age. They didn't know anything about Vietnam, they probably couldn't find it on a map either.

FIRST STUDENT

Some people didn't want to talk to us.

SECOND STUDENT

It was like too painful or whatever.

TRINH

But those who did agree to be interviewed? I mean, the stories...wow.

The STUDENTS gather to watch TV. SOUND: The theme music of a TV news program.

CBS ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

The Draft Lottery. A live report of the picking of the birthdates for the draft. Here at Selective Service headquarters in Washington is CBS News correspondent Roger Mudd.

The SOUND of the CBS ANNOUNCER's voice fades. One of the STUDENTS in the watching group stands up. He is now ROGER WALLACE. SHIFT. Note: "SHIFT" indicates a transition to a new focus or scene.

ROGER

December first, nineteen sixty-nine.

ALL STUDENTS

Roger Wallace from Springfield, Massachusetts.

ROGER

I'm in my dorm room at Clark. Clark University. We're listening to it on the radio.

Another STUDENT rises and becomes DIANE CLANCY.

DIANE

The college cafeteria is packed. We're all watching this one black and white TV.

ALL STUDENTS

Diane Clancy from Westwood, Massachusetts.

ROGER

There's about fifteen of us, black and white, mostly basketball players. I was on the team. And there's Dave who's legally blind and isn't going anywhere, but he's included, we wanted him with us, and he says:

DAVE

Guys, we're adults now. That means two things. Number one, I don't want you to go. And number two, you may have to go."

ALL OTHER STUDENTS

We all just get quiet.

SOUND: Snippets of TV correspondent ROGER MUDD's live commentary are heard underneath the following dialogue, as indicated. Another STUDENT gets to his feet. He is now GEORGE WILLIAMS.

GEORGE

It's like any lottery. Luck of the draw.

ALL STUDENTS

George Williams from Brooklyn, New York.

GEORGE

There's a guy picking capsules out of a big glass bowl. Each capsule has a piece of paper inside with a birth date on it.

DIANE

The first one out is number one, the second number two and so on.

MUDD (V.O.)

And the famous first pick tonight is September fourteenth...

GEORGE

You just pray you don't get a low number. Anything below one twenty, you'll get the call for sure.

ROGER

(Having just heard his own number)

Sixty-nine. Man.

GEORGE

One twenty to two forty is a toss-up, can go either way.

MUDD (V.O.)

.....beginning in January, local draft boards, will induct those men born on...

GEORGE

(Overlapping)

But two forty to three sixty-six?

MUDD (V.O.)

.....September fourteenth, barring deferment....

GEORGE

Bingo, you're safe!

DIANE

I feel like a fraud.

TRINH

Why?

DIANE

Because my neck isn't on the line.

ROGER

So I'm sixty-nine in sixty-nine. And I'm saying to myself, this is good, this is a good thing. My Mom is the first to call, and she's real, you know, and I say: "Mom, back up, okay, I'm just eighteen, they can't send me until I'm nineteen, and *if* I go..." She stops me, and she says:

ROGER'S MOTHER (V.O.)

"When are you coming home?"

DIANE

I'm sitting there, and one by one, the men I care about are divided into these different groups – enormous risk, mid-risk, low-risk – and I end up feeling very isolated, very alone. It's like before we were all in this together and now we're just individuals.

SHIFT. SOUND: the chorus of Arlo Guthrie's "Alice's Restaurant", which continues softly underneath the following dialogue. GEORGE WILLIAMS holds a letter from Selective Service.

GEORGE

They tell me to report to the induction center in Whitehall Street. In Manhattan. There's even a subway token taped to the top of the letter.

SHIFT. MALE INDUCTEES stand in a row and drop their pants. A MEDICAL ORDERLY moves brusquely from one to the other. When he says "Next!", that inductee pulls up his pants.

FRANK

Guys are doing all kinds of shit to fail their physical. You fake an illness, starve yourself.

ALL STUDENTS

Frank Marotta from Medford, Massachusetts.

MEDICAL ORDERLY

NEXT!

FRANK

Take drugs to flunk the urine test.

MEDICAL ORDERLY

NEXT!

GEORGE

A couple of guys are bouncing off the walls. Probably popped LSD or something.

MEDICAL ORDERLY

NEXT!

FRANK

Pretend you're crazy.

MEDICAL ORDERLY

NEXT!

FRANK

Pretend you're gay.

SOUND: A whispered chorus of "PUSSY!" is heard offstage.

GEORGE

For me, it's more like a reunion. Guys from my old high school. We're all going in together.

*GEORGE and FRANK prepare to board a bus.
FRANK'S GIRLFRIEND appears.*

FRANK'S GIRLFRIEND

(To FRANK)

Resist. Don't do what they want.

They kiss. He boards the bus as they wave goodbye to each other. GEORGE also boards the bus.

FRANK

I mean, I know what I want to do. I want to stand up and say, "Hey, look around you! Two old ladies and some fat guy driving the bus are controlling us, and we can't take matters into our own hands? Do you *want* to go fight in some war? Do you want to be herded like cows to the slaughter?"

BUS DRIVER

NEXT!

FRANK

"We can not only disable this bus, we can totally destroy the draft center! And there'll be no records, nothing, they won't even know our names!"

GEORGE

It's just the way it was. You went along.

FRANK

But I can't, I can't do it, I just....I can't.

GEORGE

Sure, you have options. You can get a phony ID and go underground, or go to Canada, or refuse and go to jail, but that isn't...I mean...My family, we have a history. My father served in World War Two, my older brother was in the Air Force, now it's me, it's my turn.

SHIFT. SOUND: Excerpt of a speech by President Lyndon Johnson on September 29, 1967.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Tf2xGb5Nsg> 1:41 to 1:59. *STUDENTS are in a classroom with TOM GARDNER and JOHN BISBEE who address them.*

PRESIDENT JOHNSON

Vietnam is also the scene of a powerful aggression that is spurred by an appetite for conquest. It is the arena where Communist expansionism is most aggressively at work in the world today.

JOHN

This is our line in the sand.

ALL

John Bisbee from Chesterfield, Massachusetts.

JOHN

Stop 'em in Vietnam before we have to fight 'em in California.

TOM

It's the standard Cold War line. The Communists want to take over the world. America is defending freedom and democracy.

ALL

Tom Gardner, from Bardwell, Kentucky.

TRINH

(Walking through the classroom, holding a book of Vietnamese poetry)

Our professor. We interviewed him, too.

JOHN

It's like dominoes. If Vietnam falls, all them other countries will go communist, too. Boom, boom, boom, like a row of dominoes.

TOM

It's simplistic and it's wrong. Most Vietnamese are nationalists above everything else. They want independence, and we're just another foreign occupier. It's their history over hundreds of years. First it was the Chinese, then the French, then the Japanese, then the French again, and now it's us, the Americans.

As TOM speaks, TRINH reads sotto voce from "Return to Thai Nguyen", a poem by the Vietnamese poet Y Nhi.

TRINH

Toi thuc noi voi trinh trong dem
ta da tro ve, da tro ve
oi con duong nho ven doi lau xam

SHIFT. Her voice fades into the SOUND of chattering helicopters, which morphs into the SOUND of Malcolm X speaking in Detroit in 1964: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7oVW3HfzXkg> 37:58. A CROWD that includes RANDY KEHLER listens.

MALCOLM X (V.O.)

This is why I say it's the ballot or the bullet. It's liberty or it's death. It's freedom for everybody or freedom for nobody.

SOUND: the Malcolm X speech continues under RANDY's dialogue.

RANDY

So here I am, walking down 125th Street in Harlem, on my way to an outdoor jazz concert.

ALL

Randy Kehler from Scarsdale, New York.

RANDY

Suddenly there's a big crowd in front of me, a street rally, hundreds of people, and they're all listening to this African-American guy who's clearly a very skilled orator, powerful. And I recognize his voice. It's Malcolm X. I've heard some recordings of his speeches, and I'm fascinated by him, and kind of scared, too, to be honest.

JOHN

Doubt? Are you kidding me?

RANDY

And what happens after that totally changes my life.

JOHN

Oh sure, we joke around in high school about being rice-paddy bait, and we are. But I always wanted to go.

TOM

For me, it's more a process of discovery – learning about things I don't know, things I haven't been told.

JOHN

Every Memorial Day, when I was a kid, we'd all go up there to the church, and there'd be ceremonies and we'd sing songs, patriotic songs, all the grades. And my family, my uncles, my Dad, they'd all march in and sit down, and I'd think, "Someday I want to do that."

AL MILLER appears. TRINH is interviewing him. He tries to speak but he can't. He's in distress. He's having a flashback about Vietnam.

TRINH

Mister Miller?

(Beat.)

Mister Miller? Are you okay?

TOM

Okay, so I'm in this civil rights group at the University of Virginia – a student group – and we're arguing about Vietnam, and I'm saying, "Look, we can't be against the war because it might hurt the fight for civil rights here. And anyway we have to stop the communist threat." But I'm losing the argument, and that bothers me because I was a pretty successful debater in high school.

RANDY

I'm standing at the edge of the crowd, listening to his speech—

TOM

So I go to the library and I read every book I can find on Vietnam.

Two YOUNG BLACK MEN appear and grasp RANDY's shoulders from behind.

RANDY

And suddenly I feel these hands on my shoulders.

FIRST YOUNG BLACK MAN

Listen, man, you really don't want to be here.

SECOND YOUNG BLACK MAN

This is a dangerous place for a white man.

They lead RANDY away.

TOM

And that's when I find out. U.S. policy is wrong. We're on the wrong side. We saw to it that national elections in Vietnam were cancelled and we installed our own dictators in South Vietnam.

SHIFT. RANDY is escorted by the two YOUNG BLACK MEN into the Harlem office of CORE. OTHER PEOPLE are there folding flyers and stuffing them in envelopes.

RANDY

They take me up these stairs to an office. It's the Harlem office of CORE. The Congress of Racial Equality, one of the major civil rights organizations. They're putting out a big mailing about the upcoming March on Washington, which I've never heard of.

FIRST YOUNG BLACK MAN

You wanna help?

RANDY

Sure.

SHIFT. JOHN BISBEE confronts his MOTHER and FATHER. He's brandishing a letter from Selective Service.

JOHN

What the hell is this?

JOHN'S MOTHER

It's for the best.

JOHN

You went to the draft board behind my back?

JOHN'S FATHER

Forestry school, John, you've gotten into forestry school, you're entitled—

JOHN

It's none of your goddam business!

JOHN'S MOTHER

John—

JOHN

Mom, I don't want a deferment, I want to go to Vietnam, I want to defend my country. Jesus! Who do you think I am?

JOHN'S FATHER

Don't do it, boy. Go to school.

JOHN

Oh yeah? Who signed up two weeks after Pearl Harbor?

RANDY

Over the next month, I help raise money to pay for buses to take people from Harlem for Washington for the march. And I go on one of those buses myself. That's when I meet my first pacifist.

SHIFT. RANDY sits beside the pacifist, MAX SANDIN, on a bus.

His name is Max Sandin.

MAX

(With a thick Russian accent)

The czar has big army, and all young men in Russia must fight. Not me. My mother say killing is wrong.

RANDY

So you left and came to America?

MAX

America want me to fight, too. World War One. Crazy. I refuse. They put me in prison. When I get out, I say: I will not pay your new income tax.

RANDY

You refused to pay taxes?

MAX

It pays for war.

RANDY

What happened?

MAX

They take everything, money, furniture, everything. World War Two, same thing, because I refuse to register.

RANDY

But weren't you too old to fight by then?

MAX

To fight *against* war? Never.

RANDY

This is going to sound really, er...I mean, what would you do if someone was about to stab your mother with a knife and you had a gun? Wouldn't you just ...shoot him?

MAX

Young man, I cannot tell you what I *would* do. All I can tell you is what I have done.

SHIFT. SOUND – very loud – of a reveille horn. AL, GEORGE and JOHN and OTHER RECRUITS appear and march around chanting the following song. They are scrutinized by a uniformed DRILL SERGEANT. They complete the song and snap to attention.

ALL RECRUITS

(Chanting loudly)

I wanna go to Vietnam
I wanna be a ranger
I wanna go to Vietnam
I wanna be an airborne ranger
I wanna kill Charlie
With a knife or with a gun
Either way will be great fun!

DRILL SERGEANT

Oh, I am scared. I'm so scared I think I'll run away into the jungle and hide. Now listen up, ladies. *If* you ladies leave here, *if* you survive recruit training, you will be a weapon, you will be a minister of death, praying for war. And proud. Until that day you are pus, you are pond scum, you are the lowest form of life on this planet. You are nothing but little pieces of amphibian shit.

(Beat.)

Any of you ass-wipes been to college, step forward.

AL does so.

ALL RECRUITS

Al Miller from southern Missouri.

The DRILL SERGEANT gets in AL's face.

DRILL SERGEANT

So, faggot, how many years did you waste?

AL

Sir, the private spent three years in college.

DRILL SERGEANT

Spent?

AL

Sir, the private wasted three years in college.

DRILL SERGEANT

I don't fucking believe it! How could anyone with balls waste *three years* in college? You pathetic ignorant little candy-ass. Your education has just begun.

SHIFT. SOUND: MUSIC: a female opera singer performing Vissi D'Arte, Vissi D'Amore from Tosca by Puccini. PENNY ROCK appears with TRINH who is interviewing her. The music continues softly under the following dialogue.

ALL RECRUITS

Penny Rock from Minneapolis, Minnesota.

PENNY

Puccini. Tosca. Vissi D'Arte, Vissi D'Amore.

TRINH

I live for art, I live for love.

PENNY

Yes. I've always loved music. I decided by the ripe old age of thirteen that I was going to be an opera singer. But none of that starving artist stuff for me, oh no, I was going to have a career to support myself while I followed my dream. And nursing was perfect. Well paid, portable, I could work anywhere in the world.

SHIFT. THE DRILL SERGEANT grabs a paperback book concealed in AL's jacket.

Protruding from the book is a family snapshot, serving as a bookmark.

DRILL SERGEANT

(To AL, holding up the book)

What the fuck is this?

AL

It's a book. Sir.

DRILL SERGEANT

Is that right? My, my, my, who woulda guessed. You college kids are so fucking smart. I'm talking about THIS, moron!

He pulls the photo from the book, tosses the book away, and holds up the photo.

PENNY

Why the Army? Well, it seemed like a smart choice: they offered me a generous package and it was only a two-year commitment. And of course I asked to be assigned to Germany.

TRINH

Germany?

PENNY

The hotbed of opera, all those glorious voices!

TRINH

What about Vietnam?

PENNY

My recruiter never mentions Vietnam.

AL

It's a photograph, sir.

DRILL SERGEANT

Very good, Einstein, very good. And who's in the photograph?

AL

My family, sir.

The DRILL SERGEANT slowly tears up the photo into small pieces and lets the pieces flutter to the ground. The DRILL SERGEANT points to the

ground: Pick up the pieces. AL does so. SHIFT. TRINH is reading another verse of the poem. SOUND: Underneath her words we hear some traditional Vietnamese MUSIC.

TRINH

Trong long tay da chai, toi con giu qua bong mau u ha nh phuc
mot nga y kia no se anh len ma u sac khac
co le.....
nhung gio day cho toi duoc cam on
vi khong co anh nhin ai ngai
khong co tieng cuoi on ao.

TRINH continues to recite the poem underneath the following lines spoken by AL MILLER.

AL

Gooks. That's what we learn to call the Vietnamese. Gooks. We're not talking about human beings. We're not talking about another country. We're not talking about mothers, fathers, children, grandparents, friends – we're talking about gooks.

SHIFT. ROGER WALLACE appears, flanked by TWO FRIENDS OF COLOR. FRANK MAROTTA appears with TWO WHITE STUDENT PROTESTERS. SOUND: MUHAMMAD ALI is being interviewed on TV.

MUHAMMAD ALI (V.O.)

I just don't think I should go ten thousand miles from here and shoot some black people who never called me nigger, never lynched me, never put dogs on me, never raped my Mama, enslaved me and deprived me of freedom, justice and equality, and he's black too, I just can't shoot him.

ROGER

Muhammad Ali resisted the draft as a conscientious objector.

FRANK

Bias? In the draft? It wasn't called Selective Service for nothing!

ROGER

There's a lot of talk about the impact of the war on the African American community. How many of our soldiers in Vietnam are black. Whether the war is a methodology of genocide against blacks, like the Black Panthers say.

FRANK

It was all about race and class. Of course, they said the lottery would level the playing field.

ROGER

But what really matters to me is the plight of the African American in this country. I know I have a future, and I'm willing to use my student exemption because I'm doing something, I'm getting myself an education.

FRANK

But it was still mostly white middle-class college kids who beat the draft.

WHITE STUDENT PROTESTERS

HELL NO, WE WON'T GO!

FIRST WHITE STUDENT PROTESTER

Automatic deferment. As long as you're enrolled full-time and keep your grades up.

WHITE STUDENT PROTESTERS

DRAFT BEER, NOT BOYS!

FRANK

There's this culture of resistance on campus. You have information, you have friends supporting you, draft counseling, legal advice....

WHITE STUDENT PROTESTERS

ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR, WE DON'T WANT YOUR FUCKING WAR!

SECOND WHITE STUDENT PROTESTER

Of course, that's not the only way to get deferred.

THIRD WHITE STUDENT PROTESTER

You can get married and have kids.

DIANE CLANCY

Join the National Guard.

SECOND WHITE STUDENT PROTESTER

The Peace Corps. The Peace Corps is another option.

FRANK

Or you can do what I did and game the system.

SHIFT. JAY HOLTZMAN appears.

JAY

I think I'm set.

ALL

Jay Holtzman from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

JAY

I'm in my senior year at medical school following one of the Big Three choices scripted for me by my conservative Jewish family – doctor, dentist or lawyer – and I sign up for something called the Berry Plan. The deal is you receive a deferment until you finish your residency, and then you go into the military as a specialist. Oh God, this is, er...this is going to sound crazy, okay? The fact is I don't realize – I don't acknowledge – that this Berry Plan thing actually involves joining the Air Force. I mean, I take the oath, I'm sworn in!

SHIFT. An ARMY DOCTOR appears. He reads from a form that FRANK has filled out.

ARMY DOCTOR

"I slept with my mother, and I peed in my bed every night."

FRANK

Yes.

ARMY DOCTOR

When you say you slept with your mother—

FRANK

Oh, I love my mother, sir. Passionately.

JAY

But somehow I don't internalize it, I'm in total denial. I'm doing my internship, living in the Bay area away from my family, having a wonderful time, and paying zero attention to politics. But at some point, of course, it's going to catch up with me.

ARMY DOCTOR

Is there anything else we should know about you?

FRANK

I broke my knee two years ago.

ARMY DOCTOR

Really?

FRANK

In a ski-ing accident. My left knee.

The ARMY DOCTOR scribbles on the form and hands it to FRANK.

ARMY DOCTOR

NEXT!

SHIFT.

ROGER

And the atrocities. You read about them in the newspapers, you see them on TV. You gotta remember, Vietnam was the first television war, it was there every night on the six o'clock news, night after night after night. And I am not doing it, I am not going to be part of it in any way, shape or form.

FRANK

Actually, I'd only twisted my knee, but it gets me another appointment. And that's when I go see my family doctor who I know is sympathetic.

FRANK's FAMILY DOCTOR appears.

FAMILY DOCTOR

(Handing him an oversized manila envelope)

Frank. Good to see you, how are you?

FRANK

What's this?

FAMILY DOCTOR

Your X-ray.

FRANK

X-ray?

FAMILY DOCTOR

Of your left knee.

FRANK

But I never—

FAMILY DOCTOR

It clearly shows acute structural damage.

FRANK

Right.

FAMILY DOCTOR

Good luck.

FRANK

Thank you.

ROGER

If I'm inducted, I'm going to run.

FRANK

It works. I'm classified 1-Y. I'm out.

ROGER

Do I make plans? No. This is a man who's read every Harriet Tubman story. I know where the North Star is. If I want to run, I will run, and I won't tell anyone until I get where I'm going.

FRANK

Do I feel guilty? No. I haven't committed a crime. The crime is the war.

SHIFT.

DIANE

It becomes clear to me that it's all connected, all of it – racism, sexism, war. At the time, I'm one of the few female students at Trinity – Trinity College in Hartford – and there's this vacuum in women's leadership, and I become this radical woman on campus. With a vengeance!

ROGER

My wife knows that I'm willing to leave the country if it comes to that.

DIANE

Oh, the anti-war organizing was huge. We had an SDS chapter at Trinity – Students for a Democratic Society. There was this national action called "Ten Days of Resistance". The last day was a student strike and we boycotted classes. A million of us! A million students all across the country.

ROGER

But we don't talk about it much. I mean, it would be hard. I'm a family guy, I don't give up connections well.

DIANE

I'm doing all this other stuff off-campus, too. Like community organizing with this Latino group in Hartford.

ROGER

But I get lucky. By the time I finish college and my student deferment ends, they've stopped calling people.

DIANE

And all the while I'm worrying like hell about the guys in my life who are considered old enough to be sent to war, but not old enough to vote.

ROGER

Sixty-nine in sixty-nine wasn't so bad after all.

SHIFT. RANDY KEHLER appears.

RANDY

I've been feeling pretty alienated from Harvard and the whole elite Ivy League scene, and I decide to take a year off and go teach in a refugee camp in East Africa. Talk about an education. Seeing how people lived in a Third World country, realizing that most people in the world don't live like Americans, it's incredible, I mean, for a nineteen-year-old Scarsdale/Harvard kid?

TOM GARDNER appears.

TOM

It was during my second year at UVA. I just...I couldn't do it any longer. I had to drop out of school. I had to go work full-time for civil rights and against the war.

RANDY

After I get back, I'm living in Roxbury, the heart of the African-American community in Boston, and I've started an after-school program there. A lot of young black men from the neighborhood are going off to war. One day I'm sitting on my stoop.

A YOUNG BLACK GIRL appears.

YOUNG BLACK GIRL

Hey Randy.

RANDY

Hey Rashida, how's it going?

YOUNG BLACK GIRL

Good. Randy?

RANDY

Yeah?

YOUNG BLACK GIRL

How come you're not in Vietnam?

RANDY

It's like a dagger in my chest.

TOM

Of course, quitting school means losing my student deferment. And if I get drafted, I'm going to refuse, which means either prison or Canada and not being able to do the work I want to do. So it's really, you know...I mean, part of it is adolescent rebellion. "I'm not going to let those old bastards tell me what to do." And part of it is calculated risk – I mean, I know people who have dropped out and somehow managed to elude the draft. But it's also about moral choice. Wanting to do the right thing.

SHIFT. JAY HOLTZMAN appears.

JAY

This is 1967 in San Francisco, the Summer of Love. The peace movement is growing, and it all starts to make sense to me.

PENNY ROCK appears.

PENNY

Basic training is in Texas. San Antonio. When I get there, there's no more "if I'm going to Vietnam", it's "when". It's like the earth opens up and swallows me.

JAY

What am I going to do?

PENNY

And the training. We're nurses, and we're learning how to march and use weapons. One time we're doing target practice. I've never held a gun before, and the casing comes out and hits me in the helmet, and I think, oh my God, have I shot myself? Am I dying?

JAY

I don't want to apply for conscientious objector status on religious grounds as a Jew because everything I know about Judaism is pro-war, especially Zionism, and many of my family are rabid Zionists. My only real alternative is to make it a matter of conscience – I'm just fundamentally opposed to war. It's a long process,

JAY (CONT.)

of course, it's the military. First, I have to meet with a chaplain, then a psychiatrist, and finally with an adjutant general – essentially a military lawyer.

SHIFT. THE ADJUTANT GENERAL appears. His interview with JAY is in progress.

ADJUTANT GENERAL

What about Hitler?

JAY

You mean—?

ADJUTANT GENERAL

Would you have participated in the fight against Hitler?

JAY

I don't know.

ADJUTANT GENERAL

You don't know?

JAY

No.

(Beat.)

I mean, the First World War didn't solve anything because there was a Second World War. And the Second World War didn't solve anything, because then we had the Korean War.

(Beat.)

I don't know how you deal with dictators, okay? I mean, that's...But war doesn't change anything, it never has. War just kills people.

ADJUTANT GENERAL

This is what you think?

JAY

Yes.

ADJUTANT GENERAL

This is what I think. I think that your request for a discharge as a conscientious objector is totally a matter of expediency. I think you want to become a psychiatrist and make a lot of money and lead a nice comfortable life.

SHIFT. JAY sees and contemplates a wheelchair. He sits in it.

PENNY

While I'm waiting for my orders, I'm working at Walter Reed, the army medical center outside of DC. Cardio-vascular and thoracic surgery. I'm not treating anyone from Vietnam, but it's like entering the war through the back door. Too many young men in wheelchairs and missing body parts.

RANDY

(Holding up his draft card)

My draft card is burning a hole in my pocket.

PENNY

One of the nurses on my ward has been in Vietnam. She comes to stay with me for a while.

SHIFT. A VETERAN ARMY NURSE appears.

PENNY

So what's it like over there?

(Beat.)

It's just that I want to be prepared. As best I can. What about wounds? What kind of wounds do you typically see?

(Beat.)

Look, I know—

VETERAN ARMY NURSE

Shake out your boots.

PENNY

Excuse me?

VETERAN ARMY NURSE

Every morning. All kinds of things crawl in there.

PENNY

Okay. And...?

VETERAN ARMY NURSE

Duck and move fast.

The VETERAN ARMY NURSE exits.

RANDY

I'm complicit.

PENNY

Next thing I know she's dead. Jumped out of a window of an apartment building across the street from the hospital.

RANDY

My first week of graduate school at Stanford I finally do it. I send it back. I'm holding it over the mailbox, and I'm thinking, "As soon as I let this go, an arm is going to reach out and grab me by the back of the neck, and that will be the end."

He drops the card and it flutters to the floor. TOM GARDNER appears.

TOM

Non-compliance and non-cooperation.

RANDY

It makes total sense to me.

TOM

That's where I've gotten to at this point.

SHIFT. A group of NON-COOPERATORS appear.

TOM

And I decide to go to this conference of non-cooperators in New York.

The NON-COOPERATORS face the audience and speak as one.

NON-COOPERATORS

We, the undersigned men of draft age, believe that all war is immoral and ultimately self-defeating.

TOM

It's hosted by A.J. Muste, a long-time pacifist leader.

NON-COOPERATORS

We believe that military conscription is evil and unjust.

TOM

All these people taking this morally pure position. It's really inspiring.

NON-COOPERATORS

Therefore, we will not cooperate in any way with the Selective Service System.

TOM

We develop the first “We Won’t Go” statement.

NON-COOPERATORS

We will not register for the draft.

TOM

Other versions sprouted up later, mostly on college campuses.

NON-COOPERATORS

We will not accept any deferment or exemption. We will refuse induction in the armed forces. We urge and advocate that other young men join us in non-cooperating with the Selective Service System. We are in full knowledge that these actions are violations of the Selective Service laws punishable by up to five years imprisonment and/or a fine of ten thousand dollars.

TOM

And I sign on to it.

RANDY

I’ve weighed my options. I know I’ll never get CO – conscientious objector status. I don’t belong to a traditional peace church like the Quakers or the Mennonites, which makes you eligible for CO.

TOM

The basic premise is simple: If enough people refuse to go, the war will end.

RANDY

And anyway CO is compromising with the system. It’s a pressure relief valve to get all these moral, ethical young men out of the way.

TOM

So I write to my draft board and I tell them I won’t cooperate.

RANDY

There’s Canada, of course. Or Sweden – you can get asylum there, too. That’s a form of non-cooperation, but much harder. I mean, never coming back to my country and my family? I say to myself: “Goddammit, this is my country, too. Who are they to chase me out of my country? They’re the ones wrecking it!”

TOM

At the same time, I’m thinking, God, can I really do this?

SHIFT. A courtroom. A JUDGE presides.

JUDGE
What is your name?

TOM
Tom Gardner.

JUDGE
Mister Gardner, will you rise?

TOM
No.

JUDGE
Marshal, bring that man here.

A FEDERAL MARSHAL brings TOM before the JUDGE.

Young man, I don't know who you think you are, but you are disrupting the order of my court and obstructing the administration of justice. I don't take kindly to that, and neither does the law. You are guilty of criminal contempt. Thirty days.

(He bangs his gavel.)

Get him out of my sight.

The FEDERAL MARSHAL hustles TOM away.

TOM
Can I at least tell you why I refused to stand....

SHIFT.

RANDY
For me, the emphasis isn't, "I just want to go to jail". The emphasis is, "I will not cooperate."

TOM
I feel pretty stupid. I mean, in the movement you do things for strategic reasons, and you certainly don't do them alone. And here I am, alone, in Greensboro, North Carolina. I've been doing some research on racism in the draft, and I'm helping this guy challenge his induction order on grounds of racial bias, and I just, I don't know...I got mad.

RANDY
I've been reading Gandhi and his concept of non-violence.

TOM

A friend persuades me to explain to the judge that I'm not aware of the consequences of what I've done, and he reduces my sentence. I end up serving eighteen days in the county jail with a bunch of very friendly bootleggers.

RANDY

How it's based on not cooperating and the notion that people in power only hold power as long as others are cooperative and submissive.

TOM

But being confined is a powerful teacher. And I do not want to repeat that experience.

RANDY

It won't stop until people stop cooperating.

TOM

Prison would be a waste anyway. I'd be stuck behind bars while innocent people were being slaughtered in Vietnam and murdered in Mississippi. And I have useful skills – I've become a pretty good writer and organizer and speaker by this time. So I decide to try and change my draft status to CO – conscientious objector. That way I can keep doing what I feel is most important.

RANDY

Not everyone in the movement agreed with that.

TOM

Oh God, yeah, we argued for hours!

RANDY

There was this whole debate.

TOM

Do you refuse to cooperate to the point of going to prison? Or is the real moral imperative to be out there organizing to stop the war and stop the killing? And how do you stop the war machine anyway? Do you throw your own individual body against it or do you organize a thousand bodies to do that collectively?

*SHIFT. ROGER WALLACE and FRANK
MAROTTA appear.*

ROGER

When I know I'm not going, I ask myself: "What the heck are you going to do now?"

FRANK

The whole experience of being drafted and undergoing the physical... I mean, it really affects my psyche. I feel the same way I did years later about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Rage. Sheer rage.

ROGER

The only thing I can think of is helping people. I want to make a difference in people's lives.

FRANK

And that's what leads me to draft resistance.

SHIFT. JAY HOLTZMAN appears.

JAY

My application for CO is denied. Big surprise. Then I'm told I have to go to federal court because the Air Force keeps sending me these orders which I refuse to obey. Months go by, and I hear nothing. We're in this limbo, my wife and I, and all the legal bills – we are really up against it financially. Finally, I call my father. I hate to do it, but it seems like we have no other choice. My parents already think I'm crazy to be doing what I'm doing. I ask him to lend me two thousand dollars.

JAY'S FATHER appears.

JAY'S FATHER

Two thousand dollars?

JAY

Yes.

JAY'S FATHER

What for?

JAY

Well, things are real tight right now—

JAY'S FATHER

I will give you two thousand dollars to do anything you want, as long as it has nothing to do with going to Canada or not going into the military.

JAY

I can't promise you that.

JAY'S FATHER

Then the answer is no.

JAY

Which is meaningless in my family because my mother gets on the phone.

JAY'S MOTHER appears.

JAY'S MOTHER

What are we going to do, let you starve? We will send you the money.

JAY

Thank you.

JAY'S MOTHER

But you go to Canada, you'll break my heart and your father's, too.

JAY

Mom—

JAY'S MOTHER

Of course, it's your choice.

JAY

It's November of 1971. Richard Nixon seems like a shoo-in for re-election, and Libby and I ask ourselves, "Do we want to raise a family in a country under a president like Nixon?" No. Whatever happens with the legal stuff, we're moving to Canada.

SHIFT. PENNY ROCK appears.

PENNY

Your orders are delivered to your ward. Posted on a board like a casting call. I go home for a visit before I ship out. My mother and my sister don't understand what I'm about to face. They are wrapped up in their own worlds. If you put the blinders on, you don't have to look at it, you don't have to deal with it.

SHIFT. TRINH NGUYEN sits in an airplane en route to Vietnam. She's wearing headphones, nodding her head to the music, and reading "The Vietnam Wars 1945-90" by Marilyn Young. GEORGE WILLIAMS and PENNY ROCK are also seated on the plane but separately from TRINH.

CREW MEMBER (V.O.)

Ladies and gentlemen, may I have your attention please. In a few minutes, we will be landing...

SOUNDS: The sudden boom of a mortar explosion; then the full-throttle roar of a plane in evasive action mode. TRINH disappears.

GEORGE

Jesus!

PENNY

Oh my Lord –

GEORGE

(Overlapping)
Are we hit? Did we get hit?

PENNY

I don't think so, I think it's okay.

GEORGE

What the hell is going on?

PENNY

They're doing a corkscrew landing.

GEORGE

What?

PENNY

A corkscrew landing! To avoid the gunfire!

SOUND: Another explosion.

GEORGE

Holy shit! That's when it hits home. I'm in Vietnam. I could die.

GEORGE and PENNY exit the plane.

PENNY

When the doors open, there's this blast of hot air —

GEORGE

It feels like a hundred degrees—

PENNY

And the stench. Rotting flesh, charcoal fires, garbage, mountains of garbage...

GEORGE

As we're walking along the runway, the guys who are flying out are passing us.

Two DEPARTING GIs appear.

FIRST DEPARTING GI

Hey, buddy, you'll be going home with fewer guys than you got now.

SECOND DEPARTING GI

Only three hundred and sixty four days to go!

As they exit, the FIRST DEPARTING GI wolf-whistles at PENNY.

PENNY

We're rushed onto these buses with wire mesh screens over the windows.

GEORGE

Pitiful. Like something from a shop class.

PENNY

They're there to keep the grenades out.

GEORGE

I mean, here you are, you've just arrived, you're on a major American military base, but you're not safe. You're never safe. That's what you learn real fast, that you're never safe anywhere in Vietnam because the enemy, Charlie, is everywhere, every hamlet, every village, every town. They're in among the people. Lot of times they are the people. You just never know.

JOHN BISBEE appears.

JOHN

I'm assigned to the Fourth Division, Twenty-Second Infantry.

GEORGE

When we get to the station, they basically number us off. "All the one's are going there, all the two's are going there" and so on.

JOHN

A recon squad – long-range reconnaissance.

GEORGE

I wind up with the First Infantry Division.

JOHN

Five guys, and you're on patrol for ten days at a time. Your job is to find Charlie and call in the artillery.

GEORGE

They fly us out into the jungles and we try to spot any enemy going through the boonies.

AL MILLER appears.

AL

The mission is simple: kill.

JOHN

Kill as many Communists as possible.

GEORGE

Oh, the body count is everything. There's all this pressure to keep the numbers up. What's the count, what's the count? So civilians are counted as VC – Viet Cong, that's what we call the guerrillas.

AL

The rule of thumb in the bush is: "If it's dead and Vietnamese, it's VC."

SHIFT. A military field hospital.

PENNY

I'm assigned to a hospital. An intensive care trauma unit. When I go through the doors of my ward for the first time, I look around – the stench in that room – I can't take in what I'm seeing.

A TRAUMA UNIT NURSE appears.

What on earth is this?

TRAUMA UNIT NURSE

Welcome to the hell hole.

PENNY

What do I do? Where do I go?

TRAUMA UNIT NURSE

Start out with those patients over there.

PENNY
Which patients?

TRAUMA UNIT NURSE
All of them.

PENNY
They're just young kids – that's the thing. I'm only twenty-one myself. But after three weeks, I feel ancient. Part of the ancient earth.

SHIFT. An anti-war rally in San Francisco. RANDY KEHLER is reading a list of U.S. soldiers killed in Vietnam through a bullhorn.

RANDY
Alfonso Reyes, aged nineteen, Watsonville, California. Alan Templeton, aged twenty-one, Decatur, Illinois, Thaddeus B. Turner, aged twenty, Clarence, Louisiana. Michael Vicente, aged twenty, Flatbush, New York, Frank Washington, aged twenty-two of Little Rock, Arkansas. Andrew Wright, aged nineteen of Ames, Iowa. Thank you.

Two FBI AGENTS appear.

FIRST FBI AGENT
Hi, we're from the press. Can we interview you?

RANDY
What paper?

SECOND FBI AGENT
It's kind of noisy here. Can we step around the corner?

RANDY
Sure.

They do so.

FIRST FBI AGENT
FBI. You're under arrest.

RANDY
What for?

FIRST FBI AGENT
You know.

RANDY

I am not going anywhere until you tell me.

Three FRIENDS OF RANDY appear. They shield RANDY with their bodies, and the FBI AGENTS try to pull them away. The FRIENDS resist this effort non-violently.

FIRST FRIEND

Leave him alone, he's done nothing wrong,

FIRST FBI AGENT

(Overlapping)

Get the fuck away from him!

SECOND FRIEND

(Overlapping)

He hasn't killed anybody.

FIRST FBI AGENT

(Overlapping)

You wanna go to jail, too?

THIRD FRIEND

(Overlapping)

Please, you're hurting him.

SECOND FBI AGENT

(Overlapping)

MOVE! MOVE!

FIRST FRIEND

(Overlapping)

You don't need to do this—

RANDY

(Topping them all)

STOP! I'll go with you, okay?! Just stop! Please! Stop. I was reading a list of the war dead at a demonstration on the steps of the San Francisco Courthouse when they finally came for me.

TOM GARDNER appears.

TOM

We call them “peace tours”. There are three of us – me and two other organizers. The plan is to go to Southern colleges and talk to the students about Vietnam, about the war, the myths and misinformation, the flaws in U.S. foreign policy – the kind of stuff they’ve never been exposed to.

RANDY

Initially, there are five charges. Not carrying a draft card, not giving my current address, not showing up for the physical, not showing up for the induction, and one other – I forget. Each charge carries a maximum of five years.

TOM

We’ll show films, provide draft counseling, help organize marches....

RANDY

My trial takes place in Wyoming. I was there when I turned eighteen and had to register there for the draft, I was working on a cattle ranch at the time.

TOM

We start out at the University of Florida in Gainesville. The students there have found this covered wagon and they’ve written “Florida Peace Caravan” on the side. Well, we brave pioneers are going to sleep in it overnight. We’re kind of excited, we’d got our sleeping bags and everything. But there’s a party in someone’s apartment and we’ve had a few beers and we think, hey, we’ll just crash here instead.

RANDY

I’m representing myself, and I put my father on the stand as a character witness.

TOM

Smart choice, because that night someone burns the wagon to the ground.

RANDY

My Dad is seventy years old, a retired businessman, wearing a suit and tie. He says to the judge:

RANDY’S FATHER appears.

RANDY’S FATHER

My wife and I taught our son certain values, like not killing. He’s just trying to take those values seriously. If you want to put somebody in prison, put me in prison.

TOM

I mean, we know we won’t exactly be welcomed with open arms. This is 1967, early days. Only about thirty percent of Americans are against the war at this

TOM (CONT.)

point, and in the South it's probably what? – five percent? The dean at Miami-Dade Junior College won't allow us to speak, but we do anyway – out on the sidewalk between classes– and they arrest us and put us in jail. Then we get attacked by a bunch of anti-Communist Cubans.

Rowdy and belligerent ANTI-CASTRO CUBANS appear.

ANTI-CASTRO CUBANS

RED! COMMIE! RED! COMMIE! RED! RED! RED!

The ANTI-CASTRO CUBANS exit.

TOM

Then the peace center in Miami is bombed – after Larry King interviews us on the radio and just happens to mention we're staying there. No one is hurt fortunately. And Appalachian State University, as it's now called, in North Carolina, the students there basically riot and drive us off campus. The next day the state legislature passes a resolution praising them for what they did. Of course, being a glutton for punishment, I go back there – to the student union snack bar – to see if I can engage some of them in a civilized conversation.

SHIFT. Student union snack bar. Two APPALACHIAN STATE STUDENTS appear.

TOM

Hi, how you doing?

FIRST AS STUDENT

You're that guy. You're the commie.

TOM

I think we kind of got off on the wrong foot—

FIRST AS STUDENT

Hey, Chuck, look what the cat dragged in. Again.

TOM

(To the SECOND AS STUDENT)

How's it going?

SECOND AS STUDENT

I'm doing just fine.

TOM

Maybe we can just, you know, sit down and talk. You want a Coke?

FIRST AS STUDENT

You want to buy me a Coke?

SECOND AS STUDENT

He wants to buy you a Coke.

TOM

I do. Both of you.

FIRST AS STUDENT

We want to string you up.

SECOND AS STUDENT

Both of us.

FIRST AS STUDENT

And I got a rope in my truck.

TOM

You're going to lynch me because I disagree with you?

FIRST AS STUDENT

You're a fucking commie faggot.

TOM

What are we fighting for in Vietnam?

SECOND AS STUDENT

Freedom, asshole, what do you think.

TOM

Like the freedom to speak, to say what you think?

SECOND AS STUDENT

Yeah.

TOM

Like in the Constitution?

SECOND AS STUDENT

Yeah. Look, I got a brother over there.

TOM

So wouldn't hanging me for having a different opinion from you kind of undermine what your brother is risking his life for?

SHIFT. SOUND: MUSIC: Country Joe and the Fish's "I-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-To-Die Rag."
FRANK MAROTTA appears.

FRANK

My girlfriend's minister gives us a room in the church house to use as a draft counseling center. There are three other guys and me, with the minister kind of in the background. Okay, let me be real clear about something, okay? I don't become a draft counselor because I have an informed political position. There's nothing intellectual about it. I don't even know where Vietnam is or why we're there. I don't know why communism is bad or democracy is good. I don't give a damn. What I do know is that many people are being taken from their lives against their will. They are being sent into battle and they are being maimed and they are being killed. That's it.

SHIFT. Outside a house in Paxton, MA. ROGER WALLACE appears. He is carrying flyers. He is confronted by a GRUFF WHITE WOMAN.

GRUFF WHITE WOMAN

Don't be putting that stuff on my porch!

ROGER

It's just some information that you may want to—

GRUFF WHITE WOMAN

Boy! You better leave out of here.

ROGER backs off. He turns to the audience.

ROGER

Meaning, "Nigger, you better be getting off my steps." But it's okay because every now and then I make a good connection.

FRANK

I have friends who are saying, "I'm going to war and it's great."

ROGER

I've joined this anti-war group at Clark, and I'm going door-to-door with these flyers.

FRANK

Kevin's signed up with the Marines. Ray and Dennis, the Army. I ask them why.

RAY, KEVIN and DENNIS appear.

RAY

To kill gooks.

FRANK

Jesus, Ray—

RAY

Blow the bastards away. Fucking commies.

FRANK

This is not a game, okay?

RAY

Who said it was?

ROGER

Mostly I'm in these small rural towns. Like Paxton.

A local RESIDENT appears. ROGER tries to engage her/him and offer a leaflet.

Hi, can I talk to you for a moment—?

The RESIDENT exits.

I'm probably the first black person she's seen in Paxton – the first passing out leaflets anyway.

(He holds up a sample flyer)

They're well done.

(Reading from the flyer)

“Think about what this war means.” “Are we saving the world?” “Should our boys be dying?” “Will Communism in Vietnam affect you?”

A second resident, a RETIRED SERVICEMAN, appears.

ROGER

‘Mornin! How's it going?

THE RETIRED SERVICEMAN takes one of the flyers.

ROGER

(To the audience)

Oh man, I get tongue-lashings like you wouldn't believe. Especially from retired servicemen.

FRANK

We don't just wait for people to come to us, we're going out and setting up draft meetings. Whatever we can do to persuade people *not* to go, *not* to do this!

ROGER

But I do something that I didn't think I could do. I sit and I listen.

FRANK

And the more friends I lose.....

ROGER

They talk about World War Two.

FRANK

I mean, we've grown up together. Smoked together, listened to music together, got big guys to buy beer for us, trashed our parents, talked about the future. We feel like we understand each other like no one else can.

RETIRED SERVICEMAN

Pacific Fleet. I was on the Oklahoma.

ROGER

Where were you stationed?

RETIRED SERVICEMAN

Pearl Harbor.

ROGER

Were you there when—?

RETIRED SERVICEMAN

We couldn't believe it was happening. The bastards. I hate Japs. Hate 'em.

ROGER

Well—

RETIRED SERVICEMAN

Not just Pearl Harbor, all of it. Bataan. Ever heard of Bataan? The death marches? People talk about the Nazi concentration camps. The Japs were just as bad.

ROGER

We had camps here, too.

RETIRED SERVICEMAN

What do you mean?

ROGER

Internment camps. For Japanese-Americans. One hundred thousand of them. They hadn't done anything, they owned shops, they were—

RETIRED SERVICEMAN

They were the enemy.

ROGER

Most of them were American citizens.

RETIRED SERVICEMAN

That's not, I mean....

SHIFT. SOUND: MUSIC: "O! Canada". JAY HOLTZMAN appears.

JAY

Canada is wonderful to me. At this point, any American can get into Canada. There are about fifty thousand of us there. Half of them are guys like me seeking refuge from the draft, the other half are mostly their wives and girlfriends.

ROGER

Sometimes the light goes on. Know what I'm saying?

JAY

You can have a life in Canada, full legal status as a landed immigrant, citizenship eventually if you want it. And going AWOL is not a criminal offense there. You can't be extradited back to the United States.

ROGER

What's hardest, though, is when you come to a house where someone is serving.

A GI MOTHER appears.

GI MOTHER

My son is over there.

ROGER

That must be real hard.

GI MOTHER

I'm glad my husband isn't home. He would hurt you.

ROGER

It might help to talk about it.

She accepts his gesture of comfort.

That moment I realized. Whatever I do in my life, it has to be something along those lines. Something where I can stop at any time and hear someone's real story.

JAY

My lawyer calls. A federal judge has ruled against me. The Air Force will be calling me to active duty. We can appeal to the Supreme Court, and he's willing to do that, but I've had it, I'm done. I tell him, "I like it here. I will never go back to the United States". My parents call from time to time.

JAY'S MOTHER appears.

JAY'S MOTHER

Hi honey, how are you? Listen, a couple of men from the Defense Department dropped by yesterday.

JAY

Which office?

JAY'S MOTHER

I'm not sure, Internal Security, something like that. Anyway, they were very nice, very polite, and they really want to talk to you.

JAY

Mom—

JAY'S MOTHER

Will you listen to your mother for a moment, please? They were absolutely clear. If you come back to this country, you won't have any problems whatsoever.

JAY

And you believe them?

JAY'S MOTHER

Think about it is all I'm saying. Will you do that? Will you think about it? This is killing your father and me, we are dying here.

JAY

Six months later my father gets slammed with a tax audit. It's one of the worst experiences of his life. And they don't connect it to what's going on with me.

SHIFT.

FRANK

It's unreal. I mean, I'm now part of this vast network of draft counselors and lawyers and whatnot all across the country. Me! Oh, and the training to be a draft counselor is scary, let me tell you. We have these guys from the American Friends Service Committee. Quakers? God, are they a bunch of militant folks! I'm just this working-class kid from Medford doing shifts at GE. And the kids we counsel are just like me, only more scared. They don't know. They don't have this larger framework of knowledge – what their resources are, what kind of recourse they have. And they sure as hell aren't talking to their friends and family about it because they're terrified of being exposed. Of being thought of as selfish and cowardly – if you don't go, they'll take one of your buddies instead, that kind of thing, right? All they have is fear, that's all they have. They have, holy shit, what is this? I don't understand it but I don't want it to happen.

DIANE CLANCY appears. She is in a car with a draft resister friend.

DIANE

Some of the resisters I work with are underground. They have false identities, false names.

FRANK

Because the other thing that's going on is that more and more guys are coming home in body bags. Or totally messed up like my friend Jimmy.

A POLICE OFFICER appears and shines a flashlight into the car.

DIANE

One time I'm giving this guy a ride, and the police stop us because the tires on my car are worn. I'm terrified they're going to ask to see my friend's draft card or ID. I keep practicing the name I'm supposed to call him – the name on his fake documents. But what if they catch him? What will I do? What should I do?

FRANK

Jimmy and his desolation.

DIANE

Fortunately, they don't check.

FRANK

He's in a wheelchair, paralyzed from the waist down. He's so drugged up, he barely recognizes us most of the time. One day, when he's clear, he kills himself.

SHIFT. A beautiful location in Vietnam. GEORGE WILLIAMS is writing a letter to his mother.

GEORGE

Dear Ma, how are things back in the World? I hope all is well! Things are pretty much the same here. Vietnam has my feelings on a seesaw. This country is so beautiful: The sun shining on the mountains, farmers in their rice paddies with their water buffalo. Palm trees, monkeys, birds, even the strange insects. For a fleeting moment I'm not in a war zone at all, just on vacation, but still missing you and the family. Letter to my mother.

(He continues writing)

There are a few kids who hang around, some with no parents. I feel sorry for them. I do things to make them laugh, and they call me "dinky dow." Crazy, but it makes me feel good. I hope that's one reason why we're here, to secure a future for them.

SHIFT. JOHN BISBEE, AL MILLER and DANIEL, another soldier, descend from a helicopter.

JOHN

We come down by ropes, rappel down. You want to make it sound like the chopper hasn't stopped, so you don't fuck around, you just jump.

GEORGE

"It's the only justification I can think of for the things that I have done."

JOHN

This time we don't get two hundred yards and we're hit. I roll to the right and we flank 'em. 'Skee, my sergeant, is hurt bad. Severed his spinal cord. We call in the medevac, and this other guy says, "Where's your goddam boot?" I say, "What the hell are you talking about?" You know, the adrenaline factor. I look down, and it's just blood from the knee down. The bullet has gone through my leg and taken a chunk out of my shin. It's cut all the boot laces.

GEORGE

It's crazy. We take over certain areas and leave, and then they regain them, and then we go back and have to take them all over again. It doesn't make sense strategically, militarily. It feels like we could be there forever. And the Zippo raids. Man. We use these Zippo lighters to torch the buildings. But even if the Vietcong are around the area, why burn a whole village?

AL

I quit learning people's names after a while. It's a way of numbing out.

GEORGE

And the kids. The kids who have nothing to do with the war.

AL

People talk about the “fucking new guy” syndrome – FNG. They're not going to learn your name until you've been here three months. It's just FNG. I get to know this fellow Daniel from Indiana. We spend part of a day off together under a poncho liner in the rain, talking about girlfriends and wives and lives back in The World. We've given Daniel an M60 machine gun for his birthday. Weighs about twenty-five pounds. That day, he's behind me in the formation. We're passing this hole beside the trail that had spooked the shit out of me, but I haven't said anything to anyone about it, because I'm a new NCO, and my role is precarious enough as it is, and if I go round saying, “I'm afraid of this place, stay away from it,” my squad's gonna say, “Who's this guy?” Well, I make eye contact with Daniel for the first time that morning, and right at that moment the hole blows up. The kid in front of him and the kid behind him are hit, too. Daniel's lying on the ground but I don't acknowledge him. I go to work on the kid behind him who has a sucking chest wound and I put plastic over him and tie him off with a bandage. The other man has a little bitty pin prick, blood running down his back, and he's really acting in pain so I try to do what I can to knock that down.

The SERGEANT appears.

SERGEANT

(Gesturing)

There's someone else here—

AL

There's no-one else, sergeant.

SERGEANT

It's the FNG—

AL

HEY, ASSHOLE, THERE'S NO-ONE ELSE, OKAY? GET THE FUCK OUT OF HERE!

Pause.

It's my fault. I knew this was a bad place.

SERGEANT

You can't do that to yourself. You're not God. You're not responsible.

A NORTH VIETNAMESE OFFICER appears. He is asleep.

AL

Six weeks later, I walk into a hooch and there's this North Vietnamese Army lieutenant asleep. I wake him up and I try to get him to come out. I assume he has a side arm but I don't check, and he moves, and I think he's going for his weapon so I fire.

AL shoots the man.

I shoot him and I kill him and I say, "This is for Daniel". But deep inside me I know Daniel wouldn't give a shit. It's just revenge, an attempt to...to vindicate something.

GEORGE

The longer I'm here, the more I understand the Viet Cong. I mean, I feel like they're doing a better job than we are, and I'm not the only one. Guys next to me get blown up, but I can't feel angry.

PENNY ROCK appears.

PENNY

There's a man working on our ward who is Vietcong. It's no secret. These people are just trying to survive so they take money from wherever they can get it. There are mama sans and papa sans, and they do the washing and the ironing and the cleaning, they clean the bedpans, they sweep the floor.

PAPA SAN appears.

GEORGE

I understand why they're fighting us. They're fighting for their homeland and we're fighting to prevent them from winning it back.

PAPA SAN

I go now lady.

PENNY

Okay.

PAPA SAN

I want you know, I no kill you tonight.

PENNY

Thank you.

PAPA SAN

You good lady. You do good things my people. I don't know my friends, but I no kill you.

PAPA SAN exits.

GEORGE

But, see, we're trained not to see the Vietnamese as human – even though the South Vietnamese are our allies. Our officers push that all the time, so we'll be more likely to follow orders. I mean, you can be brutal, man. You can do whatever you want and there are no consequences. None.

PENNY

It's a lovely generous act. Maybe it sounds strange to say that, but here is a man who according to my country is my enemy, and according to his country their hero. In the daytime he does what he can to help us do what we need to do to help our people. At night he belongs to his people.

PENNY sings "I'll Be Seeing you", interspersed with the following.

I always had music. I sang in my room. Sometimes I would go and play the organ in the hospital chapel. I'd brought sheet music with me, and other things that were artistically nurturing. Shakespeare. Tennessee Williams.

She completes the song. LIGHTS fade.

END of ACT ONE.

