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RECINTO DE RIO PIEDRAS

Victor Kolpacoff's

THE PRISONERS OF QUAI DONG

adapted to the stage

by

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0802801

MDVSL  
C.1

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## ACT I

The inside of a tin shed. One small light bulb illuminates the room. It is about thirty feet long and half as wide. There are no windows. The floor is dirt. To the right of back stage center is a tool rack. It stands as high as a man's head. Deeper back to SL and SR the light does not reach. Here there are dark coils of rope and wire cable. The walls of the room are of corrugated tin and in the dim light the effect is of prison bars. A little off stage center, near the corner toward SR is a work table. It is made of heavy sheet metal with strong vises at either end. Slightly to the left of back stage center is a low door. It is open a little and a shaft of light from a white hot noon day sun shines in. At CURTAIN the room is empty. Through the partly open doorway can be heard voices and the approaching sound of men marching.

Russell: (A young black soldier, a Corporal, OS) Hup, two three, step lively now. Hup two three, halt.

Staff Sergeant: (OS) Kreuger and Avery?

Russell: (OS) You got'em.

Staff Sergeant: (OS) Come this way please. Inside please.

(Two men in prisoner's uniforms, KREUGER and AVERY, enter. As Russell starts to follow them in through the doorway.) Russell, wait here.

Russell: (OS) But the sun, Sarg!

Staff Sergeant: (OS) It's no cooler in that tin box. Wait here for Lieutenant Buckley.

Avery: (Stocky, strong, very ordinary looking, around twenty-one. His eyes adjusting to the dim light) What

do you suppose they want with us?

Kreuger: (Twenty-five, medium build. There is a resigned quality about him as if he had made peace with himself and his situation) Not knowing is part of our punishment.

Avery: (Moving about) Jesus, there's not even a window in here. (Anxious) Listen Kreuger, this is our chance to escape.

Kreuger: You're crazy.

Avery: We're only four hundred yards from the main gate.

Kreuger: Crazy, crazy, crazy.

Avery: I'm not! Hey, did you notice how polite he was?  
(Answering KREUGER'S vague look) The Staff Sergeant.  
He said please.

Kreuger: (Suddenly alert) He said it twice.

Avery: Come this way please, and, wait here please.

Kreuger: He said inside please.

Avery: That's right. Inside please. Please? (Beginning to mimic the Sergeant, clowning) Come this way please.  
Please come this way. (Motioning to Kreuger) Please.

Kreuger: (Joining him for a moment) No this way. Please.  
Very please.

Avery: Please.

Kreuger: Very very please.

Avery:

Kreuger:

This here way. Very please.

This way please. Do

Pretty please. Pleaseeeeee.

come this way please.

Shit!

Kreuger: It beats a work detail. We'd just be getting to the pits about now.

Avery: Have you ever thought about escaping?

Kreuger: It can't be done.

Avery: But have you?

Kreuger: Why do you think there are so few guards here?

Escape from Quai Dong is impossible.

Avery: Have you ever just thought about it?

Kreuger: (Exploding) Jesus Avery we've been through this before. You know I've thought about it. (Pause, calmer) Where would we go? To the north and east there's only the peninsula. And the sand dunes. To the south and west nothing but the foot hills and jungles. Those hills only look five miles away. They're more than twenty.

Avery: They've been reached. Some have made it.

Kreuger: And their bodies have come back. Weren't you on a burial detail yesterday? You think if you got to the hills you'd live to reach Cambodia?

Avery: Maybe.

Kreuger: Even if you made it over the hills you'd only find army patrols, who'd arrest you. Or unfriendly villagers, who'd kill you. You can't survive in a land where you are the enemy.

Avery: We could try.

Kreuger: Avery, how long have you been in the army?

Avery: Two years.

Kreuger: Learn anything?

Avery: (For the moment, giving up on the idea of escape) I learned to keep my head down. Remember that, and you might make it out of here yet.

Kreuger: (Sarcastic) Thanks a lot.

Avery: (Smiling at him) If my own Lieutenant had remembered I wouldn't be here. And he'd still have a mouthful of teeth. (Clowning again) Here, I'll show you how I did it.

Kreuger: Come on now...

Avery: (Closing in on him) He was facing me, about to throw his mean left again...

Kreuger: Knock it off...

Avery: But I surprised him with a right, right on his jaw. Ohhh, but I couldn't hit my buddy. Even if he is a Lieutenant.

Kreuger: Ex, Lieutenant.

Avery: And we are buddies aren't we. (shaking Kreuger's hand) old gravel packing buddies, (applying pressure) aren't we?

Kreuger: Come on Avery, it's too hot to fool around...

Avery: (Pressing harder, forcing him down) Aren't we?

Kreuger: Yes!

Avery: (Releasing his hand) I knew it.

Kreuger: You get more like an ape every day.

Avery: (Making like an ape, moves toward Kreuger again)

Kreuger: Cut it out. I got a typhoid shot this morning.

Avery: Got mine yesterday. You'll have a reaction later on. The heat. Feel sick, dizzy, fever, probably throw up.

Kreuger: Will you shut up.

Avery: (Moves restlessly around the room, then sits looking at Kreuger)

Kreuger: (After a long pause) I know there are no sights to amuse you in here, but, do you have to stare?

Avery: Sorry about that. (Then looking at him again) You know something? Most everybody knows why everybody else is here, but nothing about you.

Kreuger: Good.

Avery: Nobody knows why you're here.

Kreuger: Good!

Avery: But I'm your best buddy, for what, five months now.

Not that old clamped mouth ever gives anybody a chance.

Kreuger: That's the way I like it.

Avery: Yet it was you who helped me. My first day at the pits. After filling your own pack you came over and

filled mine. And carried it all the way back. At least as far as you could without the guards seeing you.

Kreuger: (Covering a slight embarrassment) I'll tell you Avery, you were a green dumb kid, fresh from, what?, cracking teeth in a Saigon bar, and you were about to have a sun stroke. You were helpless and weak. This was in the days before the hand crushing Avery. You were very weak, very very weak, and as I said, dumb. Incredibly dumb. A very weak incredibly dumb green all over kid.

Avery: (Suddenly stops smiling) Nobody else helped me.

Kreuger: (Still covering with good natured sarcasm) Well if you'd bother to use those tiny hard eyes in that adorable face, you'd notice that as an ex-officer among you enlisted types, I am occasionally given extra duties. For instance, burial detail. (Suddenly very anguished, bitter) Four times in one week! Christ! (Recovering) It was a question of survival. Either you rested a minute so you could walk back, or I carried you and your pack, instead of just your pack, which is a little, not much, but a little lighter than you are.

Avery: What were you before the army got you?

Kreuger: A genius!

Avery: Then what are you doing here? Oh...

Kreuger: Sabbatical!

Avery: Oh I know you got your smart Lieutenant's ass busted to a PFC, but why? How come you ended up here where...

STRONG SOUNDS OF DISTANT ARTILLERY ARE HEARD  
hey man, those are big ones.

Kreuger: (Suddenly tensing) Eight inchers. Fifteen, twenty miles from here.

Avery: That's the first time we've had them that close to Quai Dong. What do you make of it?

Kreuger: Nothing.

Avery: Killing some fresh heroes. They never remember how bad the old ones smell.

Lt. Buckley: (OS) Are they here?

Russell: (OS) Yes sir. Inside.

(LT. BUCKLEY enters. He is a handsome, trim man of twenty-five. He is followed by SERGEANT MCGOWEN; a powerfully built man of twenty-seven, and Lt. NGUYEN; a precise, slightly built Vietnamese of thirty. They are followed by RUSSELL. KREUGER and AVERY stand and move away.)

Lt. Buckley: Which one is Kreuger?

Russell: (Pointing to Kreuger) That one.

Lt. Buckley: (Studies Kreuger a moment, then glancing at Avery) Then you must be Avery. Medic, and former conscientious objector.

Avery: CO first.

Buckley: (To Kreuger, ignoring Avery) This is Sergeant McGowen and Lt. Nguyen, our ARVN interpreter. I'm Lt. Buckley. Do you still remember your Vietnamese?

Kreuger: A little.

Buckley: Good. We're going to conduct a short interrogation.

Avery: (Starting to move toward the door) Not me.

Buckley: (Blocking his way) Oh no you don't. You're in this with the rest of us, like it or not.

Avery: (Moving back to his place, almost under his breath) Jesus H fucking Christ.

Buckley: The interrogation shouldn't be very difficult should it? I mean he's only a kid.

Nguyen: We shall see.

Buckley: I want the information fast.

Nguyen: (Patiently) Such things take time, Lieutenant.

Buckley: Not a long time!

Nguyen: Lieutenant Buckley, there is a Vietnamese proverb,



to the effect that...pain will deliver a part of the truth, patience will deliver the whole truth. We must begin properly.

Buckley: All right, but fast. (To Others) You all know why we're here and what we have to do.

McGowen: Let's get it started.

Buckley: No, we're going to do it properly. We're a rest camp and a military stockade. We don't have the right people to do this kind of job, but we're going to do the best we can. Lieutenant Nguyen says this may take some time. Do any of you think you can do better than that?

McGowen: Let me have him, Lieutenant.

Buckley: (Ignoring McGowen) Kreuger?

Kreuger: I don't know what you want.

Avery: (Whispering) Keep out of it!

Kreuger: Are we counted as interrogators or convicts?

(Evenly, straight in the eye to Buckley) Or witnesses?

Buckley: You're here as an officer.

McGowen: Officer? You mean ex-officer don't you Lieutenant?

Buckley: His cooperation might return him to the rank of Lieutenant, Sergeant.

Kreuger: What about Avery?

Buckley: As a former medic, his services may be needed.

(Pausing, frowning up at the light) We've had trouble from a local guerrilla outfit for over a month. We need your help. Forget the stockade.

Kreuger: I thought the district was pacified.

Buckley: It is, officially. We want to keep it that way.

Kreuger: What does the prisoner have to do with it?

- McGowen: (Slowly turning around) We took him off the Weichu road. He was trying to get through our patrols.

Buckley: Just do your job and you'll come out all right.

(Abruptly turns to Nguyen) Are you ready?

Nguyen: I am ready, Lieutenant.

Buckley: Now remember I want it fast.

Nguyen: It cannot be done fast.

Buckley: It must.

Nguyen: It cannot be.

Buckley: How long?

Nguyen: I will require at least several hours to make him talk.

Avery: (On hearing this gives a loud, cynical laugh)

Buckley: (Whirling about) This is not a joke! We've finally got a prisoner of war that can give us definite information about these guerillas and now our Vietnamese ally says he'll need quite sometime to make him talk.

McGowen: They might be attacking us right now!

Buckley: I know that! (Earnestly to Kreuger) They've hit us everywhere. Last week they mined the road to Doc Thieu. We lost a jeep and three men. (As if a personal affront to him) We haven't killed one of them yet, or if we have, they carry their dead with them.

McGowen: It's a little peasant outfit. They don't take on combat units. Only isolated patrols or a single vehicle.

Buckley: They like to win. And so far they've had it all their way. And he's one of them. He's a Victor Charlie. (Looking down to Kreuger as if to gauge the effect of his words)

Kreuger: (None of it any longer having meaning to him, does not try to hide it, or reply)

Buckley: (Frowning with disapproval) Show the Lieutenant what the prisoner was carrying.

McGowen: (Holding a string of grenades up to the light) They were rolled inside the little bastard's blanket.

Buckley: Recognize them? They're Chinese, in a North

Vietnamese Army sling.

Kreuger: I can see.

Buckley: It's clear that he was running supplies for the guerrillas.

McGowen: The patrol that took him off the road found drugs on him as well as grenades.

Buckley: All we have to do is make him tell us where he was meeting his contact and our job is over. (Casting one last official look around the room) Saigon says that this is a military backwater. According to the brass, we have nothing to do out here but sit on our ass and play cards...

McGowen: We're a joke in Saigon bars! I've heard it.

Buckley: Well now, we've got a little operation of our own. A tough little guerrilla outfit that just asks to be cut up.

McGowen: This kid is our first break. He can lead us to their base and supplies.

Buckley: And by God he's going to do just that. (To Russell) Bring him in.

(Russell quickly exits and brings THE BOY in, unties his hands and gives the rope to Nguyen. He then exits, closing the door behind himself. THE BOY is a Vietnamese youth of seven-teen. He wears cotton briefs. There is a smear of blood on his face.)

Buckley: All right, Lieutenant, he's yours.

(As NGUYEN begins, BUCKLEY almost immediately starts moving back and forth across the room as if he cannot control himself, now that his ignorance of the language has forced him to surrender the proceedings to Nguyen)

Nguyen: (Examines THE BOY'S hands, then suddenly begins questioning him in a quiet, controlled voice, but with

a razor's edge to it. He speaks in Vietnamese) Where did you get the grenades?

The Boy: (Answering in Vietnamese, in a humble, low voice at first, then gradually becoming stronger) From the dead soldier.

Nguyen: Was he American?

The Boy: North Vietnamese.

Nguyen: Where was he?

The Boy: On the road to Weichu.

Nguyen: There are no dead soldiers there.

The Boy: He was in a ditch.

Nguyen: Why did you take the grenades?

The Boy: To protect myself.

Nguyen: Where did you get the medicine?

The Boy: From the dead soldier.

Nguyen: Soldiers of the Democratic Republic of North Vietnam do not carry penicillin and morphine!

The Boy: This one did, sir.

Nguyen: Where were you taking your supplies?

The Boy: I was going to Saigon, to my sister.

Nguyen: The Weichu road does not go to Saigon.

The Boy: There was fighting on the other side of the hills. I was afraid to go that way.

Nguyen: Where were you told to meet your comrades?

The Boy: I am alone, sir. I was only going to my sister. Our parents are dead.

Nguyen: (Without a break in the rhythm of his questions) Where did you get the grenades?

The Boy: From the dead soldier.

Nguyen: Was he American?

The Boy: North Vietnamese.

Nguyen: Where was he?

The Boy: On the road to Weichu.

Nguyen: There are no dead soldiers there.

The Boy: He was in a ditch.

Nguyen: Why did you take the grenades?

The Boy: To protect myself.

Nguyen: Where did you get the medicine?

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Nguyen: Soldiers of the Democratic Republic of North Vietnam do not carry penicillin and morphine!

The Boy: This one did, sir.

Nguyen: Where were you taking your supplies?

The Boy: I was going to Saigon. To my sister.

Nguyen: The Weichu road does not go to Saigon.

The Boy: There was fighting on the other side of the hills.  
I was afraid to go that way.

Nguyen: Where were you told to meet your comrades?

The Boy: I am alone, sir. I was only going to my sister.  
Our parents are dead.

Nguyen: Where did you get the grenades?

The Boy: (Firmer on this last cycle) From the dead soldier.

Nguyen: Was he American?

The Boy: North Vietnamese.

Nguyen: Where was he?

The Boy: On the road to Weichu.

Nguyen: There are no dead soldiers there.

The Boy: He was in a ditch.

Nguyen: Why did you take the grenades?

The Boy: To protect myself.

Nguyen: Where did you get the medicine?

The Boy: From the dead soldier.

Nguyen: Soldiers of the Democratic Republic of North Vietnam do not carry penicillin and morphine!

The Boy: This one did, sir.

Nguyen: Where were you taking your supplies?

The Boy: I was going to Saigon, to my sister.

Nguyen: The Weichu road does not go to Saigon.

The Boy: There was fighting on the other side of the hills.  
I was afraid to go that way.

Nguyen: You will tell me now, where were you told to meet  
your comrades?

The Boy: I am alone, sir. I was only going to my sister.  
Our parents are dead.

Nguyen: (Turning to Buckley) You see, he is obstinate.

McGowen: (With a determined expression starts to move  
toward the Boy)

Buckley: (Waving McGowen back) Keep after him.

Nguyen: Where did you get the grenades?

The Boy: From the dead soldier.

(NGUYEN and THE BOY continue the cycle of questions  
during the following dialogue. Their voices are lower,  
hardly audible. From time to time NGUYEN quietly menaces  
THE BOY if he varies in the slightest way from the  
answers he gave at first)

Kreuger: (As BUCKLEY stops pacing hear him) There's no  
way of knowing for sure whether he's a guerrilla or not.

Avery: (Nudging him hard) Keep quiet...

Buckley: (Snapping, not knowing what KREUGER has heard  
and understands from The Boy) What do you mean by that?

McGowen: (Moving toward them) You can't tell one Viet-  
namese from another until he shoots you. But we caught  
this little bastard red handed, and we ain't gonna let  
him off!

Kreuger: You may be right.

McGowen: Throw the Chinaman out of here, Lieutenant.  
Let's do it our way. He's wasting time!

The Boy: (Involuntary stiffens his arms on hearing  
MCGOWEN raise his voice)

McGowen: (Sees the motion too and moves to a threatening  
position behind THE BOY, not quite touching him) I can

make him squeal like a monkey.

Buckley: (Ignores him, continues pacing around, nervously smoking)

Avery: So that's how he got the blood on his mouth. (Softer to Kreuger) Do you really think he's a VC?

Kreuger: He could be. Yet there are uses a peasant might have for grenades, and especially medicine. The black market in Saigon for one. But it's none of my business.

Avery: You better believe it isn't. And quit talking to Buckley.

Buckley: (To Nguyen, as he stops near him) Hurry up. We're wasting time.

McGowen: He's afraid to hurt him.

Nguyen: (Stopping where ever he happens to be in the cycle of questions) Not true! Lieutenant that is not...

Buckley: Continue in whatever way you think best. Only be quick. We don't know when they'll attack again. (Looking down at Kreuger) Every minute we lose may cost an American his life.

Nguyen: It will require patience. He is very strong.

McGowen: Like hell he is. God damn prissy...

Nguyen: (Contemptuously) I do not mean physical strength. I mean a stubborn spirit, which is much stronger. That is why you must not injure him again. Pain will not break his spirit. It will only kill his body.

McGowen: If I...

Nguyen: We must exhaust him, then he will be willing to betray his comrades.

McGowen: If I hit him he'll talk.

Nguyen: No, he will only die, and thus escape us.

McGowen: (Threatening motion to Nguyen) Youuuu...

Buckley: Keep away! (Turning to Nguyen) How much longer do you think it will take?

Nguyen: (Studying the Boy's face intently) It is impossible

to say.

Buckley: But you said before...

Nguyen: (Straightening up and facing him) I did not know then how strong he was.

Buckley: Well we can't wait forever. The Major will never stand for it.

McGowen: Let me have him, Lieutenant.

Nguyen: You must not...

Buckley: (Ignores him, turns to Kreuger) What do you think?

Kreuger: It's none of my business.

Buckley: I'm only asking your opinion.

Kreuger: I don't have one.

Buckley: (Looks at the Boy, then back to Kreuger, shrugs) Do what you can Nguyen.

Nguyen: (Turning again to the Boy) Where did you get the grenades?

The Boy: From the dead soldier.

Nguyen: Was he American?

The Boy: North Vietnamese.

Nguyen: Where was he?

The Boy: On the road to Weichu.

Nguyen: There are no dead soldiers there.

The Boy: He was in a ditch.

Nguyen: Why did you take the grenades?

The Boy: To protect myself.

Nguyen: Where did you get the medicine?

The Boy: From the dead soldier.

Nguyen: Soldiers of the Democratic Republic of North Vietnam do not carry penicillin and morphine!

The Boy: This one did.

Nguyen: (Stops speaking, his hand slowly coming up)

The Boy: This one did, sir.

Nguyen: Where were you taking your supplies?



The Boy: I was going to Saigon, to my sister.

(The NGUYEN-BOY cycle continues quietly then begins again as before, during the following dialogue)

Avery: What's he saying?

Kreuger: It's meaningless, he's just asking him questions.

Avery: It sounds like he's saying the same thing over and over again.

Kreuger: He is.

Avery: The same questions over and over again? Why's he doing that?

Kreuger: To wear him down. But it sounds like the end is a long way off.

Avery: And you speak Vietnamese. You can do that?

Kreuger: (Realizing, instantly crosses the room to Buckley) Am I supposed to be Nguyen's replacement? Am I supposed to interrogate the boy?

Buckley: Not entirely.

Kreuger: I won't do it. I warn you, I'll go back to the stockade first.

Buckley: (Friendly) Here, sit down. Can you understand what they're saying to each other?

Kreuger: (Listening a moment) Yes, I can understand them.

Buckley: Good. All I want you to do for the present is listen to what they say. Don't let a word slip by, not one word. We'd be fools to trust Nguyen.

Kreuger: He's only repeating the same thing. It's meaningless.

Buckley: I don't care. We'll let him do it his way for now. But they're both Vietnamese and they'll try to stick together.

Kreuger: I doubt it.

Buckley: You can't be sure.

Kreuger: I've never seen an interrogation before.

Buckley: If Nguyen doesn't break him soon, we'll have to do it ourselves.

Kreuger: (Gets up and crosses to Avery)

Avery: Buckley thinks you're his man.

Kreuger: Let him think it.

Avery: Are you? Look out!

(MCGOWEN suddenly lashes out, throws NGUYEN aside and knocks THE BOY down)

Nguyen: You are a fool.

McGowen: He'll talk now by God.

Nguyen: A fool Sergeant McGowen! A barbarian!

McGowen: You're chicken-livered and I...

Nguyen: (With wounded dignity) Chicken-livered what?

McGowen: Chicken-livered, Sir. And I swear to God I'll kill him if you don't get it over with.

Nguyen: And do you think you can command him to speak then?

Buckley: (To McGowen, calmly) Get over there. If you attack the prisoner again I'll have you put in detention.

McGowen: (Moves to a far corner, SL, without a word)

Buckley: Avery, see if the prisoner is all right. Stand him up.

Nguyen: It is no use if he cannot speak.

Buckley: Avery, revive him. Give him a shot.

Avery: I don't have any shots. They're all down in the infirmary.

Buckley: Then get some up here.

Avery: (Looking knowing at Kreuger) It's outside the gate.

Buckley: Damn it I don't care where it is! I gave you an order! I want some shots up here and I want 'em fast. See Dr. Mason.

(AVERY starts to exit without a word. KREUGER moves after him)

Kreuger: Don't. Avery don't try it!

(AVERY pauses at the door, gives KREUGER a quick look then dashes out)

Kreuger: (At door looking out, frantic) Russell, go with him.

Russell: (OS, as if sorry to have to say it) You can't give me an order.

Kreuger: (To Buckley) For God's sake tell Russell to go with him. (As BUCKLEY hesitates) Now!

Buckley: (Irritable, annoyed at the interruption and not understanding) Russell, go after him.

Russell: (OS) Yes sir.

Kreuger: And stay with him.

Buckley: What in hell was that all about?

Kreuger: Nothing, nothing.

Buckley: Well for nothing it sure got your ass up tight.

(After a long pause) Avery is surely not thinking about trying to escape from the compound is he?

Kreuger: Oh Buckley, don't you know that everyone at Quai Dong thinks about escaping at least twenty times a day. Don't you?

Buckley: I don't have to escape Kreuger. I'm not a prisoner. I can get away from here any time I want to.

Kreuger: Can you?

Buckley: All I have to do is request a R and R pass. Or have you forgotten the privileges accorded an officer.

Kreuger: Privileges at this price?

Buckley: I don't like this any better than you do.

Kreuger: You're being unreasonable.

Buckley: It will end as soon as he talks.

Kreuger: Do you want the truth or a confession?

Buckley: You know what I want. And that's all I want.

(Turns away to Nguyen) Are you sure he's not faking?

Nguyen: (Who has been bending over the Boy) He is not conscious, Lieutenant.

Buckley: (Moving about, almost to himself) Where the hell is that Avery. (After a long moment of silence) McGowen see what's keeping them.

(As MCGOWEN starts toward the door, AVERY enters, followed by RUSSELL. AVERY carries a first-aid kit)

Buckley: Do you have the shots?

Avery: I got 'em.

Buckley: Good. Revive him.

Russell: Jesus, what's this.

Buckley: You keep quiet.

(AVERY gives THE BOY a shot and cleans the blood from his face. RUSSELL starts to move to the door)

Buckley: Wait. Stay here. All right. Can he stand up?

Avery: I guess so.

Buckley: Help stand him up, Russell. (To NGUYEN as RUSSELL and AVERY stand the BOY on his feet) You may find the prisoner more willing to talk now.

Nguyen: (Begins again, with a new sense of urgency in his voice. He produces a knife and holds it straight up in front of The Boy) Where did you get the grenades?  
Where did you get the grenades?

The Boy: From the soldier.

Nguyen: (His hand threatening) Where did you get the grenades?

The Boy: From the dead soldier.

Nguyen: Was he American?

The Boy: North Vietnamese.

Nguyen: Where was he?

The Boy: The road...on the road.

Nguyen: (Threatening) Where was he?

The Boy: On the road to Weichu.

Nguyen: There are no dead soldiers there.

The Boy: He was in a ditch.

Nguyen: Why did you take the grenades?

The Boy: To protect myself.

(NGUYEN and THE BOY cycle continues in rhythm again during the following dialogue)

Russell: (Sitting next to KREUGER and AVERY, SR) Is he really a guerrilla?

Kreuger: Most likely.

Russell: I mean, I've never seen a guerrilla before. How come Dr. Mason doesn't know about this?

Kreuger: I suppose he does.

Avery: No, I don't think so.

Russell: (Stares fascinated at Nguyen and The Boy as their cycle of questions continues. Then straining forward to see) He's going to use a knife on him. The tip of a knife! (Horrorified, rushes to Nguyen) You're torturing him!

Buckley: Sit down!

(KREUGER protectingly takes RUSSELL back to where they were sitting, SR)

Russell: He's torturing him.

Avery: (To Russell and Kreuger as they sit by him) We're convicts. We're being used because we're convicts. We have no choice.

Kreuger: (Stares silently at Avery a moment, then abruptly crosses to Buckley) Release me. Let me go back to the stockade.

Buckley: To the stockade?

Kreuger: I want to leave.

Buckley: Of course you can leave, Kreuger, but let me warn you, you'll do penal march for the rest of your time at Quai Dong. You've seen the sand dunes, right?

Kreuger: I've seen them.

Buckley: Then how well you must know, that they're a place where a man can do nothing but die.

Kreuger: Then we're in detention here.

Buckley: Call it what you like. The fact remains that the Major has ordered me to seal this room off. No one leaves unless he's under special orders. We've got a prisoner, Lieutenant, and the word isn't getting out. Not through anyone.

Avery: (As KREUGER sits by him again) It's no use is it.

Kreuger: We are here to be used.

Avery: Especially you. Buckley's going to really come down on you when he decides he needs you.

Kreuger: I'm ready for him.

Avery: Are you sure?

Buckley: (Stops pacing near Nguyen and The Boy) You're taking too long.

Russell: (To Kreuger) When are we going to get out of here?

Nguyen: Where were you taking your supplies?

The Boy: Saigon...

Nguyen: Where were you taking your supplies?

(THE BOY does not answer. Silence fills the room.

BUCKLEY rushes forward only to hear THE BOY begin again)

The Boy: In Saigon...Saigon...I was going to Saigon.

Buckley: What's he saying?

Nguyen: Nothing of importance. He is only talking about Saigon. His mind is wandering. (In Vietnamese again)

Where were you taking your supplies?

The Boy: I was going to Saigon...to my sister.

Nguyen: You will confess now.

Buckley: Kreuger, come here.

Nguyen: Was he American? Was he Americal?

Buckley: (As KREUGER joins him by Nguyen and The Boy)  
Translate.

The Boy: North Vietnamese.

Nguyen: Where was he?

Kreuger: He's asking him where the dead soldier was.

The Boy: On the road to Weichu.

Nguyen: There are no dead soldiers there.

The Boy: He was in a ditch.

Buckley: Go on.

Kreuger: He said he found him in a ditch.

Nguyen: Why did you take the grenades?

Kreuger: He's asking him why he took the grenades.

The Boy: To protect myself.

Buckley: And?

Kreuger: He said he took them to protect himself.

Buckley: To protect himself eh. Now Listen! I don't want to hear "he said, he said." I want to hear every word translated as Nguyen says it. Word for word for word for word! Is that clear?

Kreuger: It's clear.

Buckley: All right. Begin. And from the beginning.

(NGUYEN and THE BOY in Vietnamese and KREUGER, in English, begin the cycle. BUCKLEY listens intensely, as it is his first time, and the audience's first time to actually hear and understand the cycle of questions.)

Nguyen: Where did you get the grenades?

Kreuger: Where did you get the grenades?

The Boy: From the dead soldier.

Kreuger: From the dead soldier.

Nguyen: Was he American?

Kreuger: Was he American?

The Boy: North Vietnamese.

Kreuger: North Vietnamese.

Nguyen: Where was he?

Kreuger: Where was he?

The Boy: On the road to Weichu.

Kreuger: On the road to Weichu.

Nguyen: There are no dead soldiers there.

Kreuger: There are no dead soldiers there.

The Boy: He was in a ditch.

Kreuger: He was in a ditch.

Nguyen: The Weichu road does not go to Saigon.

Kreuger: The Weichu road does not go to Saigon.

The Boy: There was fighting on the other side of the hills. I was afraid to go that way.

Kreuger: There was fighting on the other side of the hills. I was afraid to go that way.

Nguyen: Where were you told to meet your comrades?

Kreuger: Where were you told to meet your comrades?

The Boy: I am alone, sir. I was only going to my sister. Our parents are dead.

Kreuger: I am alone, sir. I was only going to my sister. Our parents are dead.

Nguyen: Where did you get the grenades?

Kreuger: Where did you get the grenades?

The Boy: From the dead soldier.

Kreuger: From the dead soldier.

Nguyen: Was he American?

Kreuger: Was he American?

The Boy: North Vietnamese.

Kreuger: North Vietnamese.

Nguyen: Where was he?

Kreuger: Where was he?

The Boy: On the road to Weichu.

Kreuger: On the road to Weichu.

- Buckley: Lieutenant Nguyen what is the point of this senseless line of questioning. It's useless. It's getting us no where!

Nguyen: (Calmly, patiently) Lieutenant, I gained much experience in Saigon before the war. I myself studied



for a time in your country and I have dealt with many prisoners, even of this boy's age. They are very strong-willed, but they lack endurance.

Buckley: You mean they can't hold out?

Nguyen: Precisely. One only has to be careful and prevent their escaping through death. In the end they will beg you to permit them to confess.

Buckley: Then why isn't it working?

Nguyen: It will. If we change the questions and try to trap him, he will be able to use his imagination and remain alert. But if we are patient, he will answer any question you put to him, as if he remembers nothing else.

Buckley: (Skeptical) You don't give him a chance to confess.

Nguyen: Ah, I do. Each time he refuses to confess, I start from the beginning.

Buckley: So?

Nguyen: It is very hard to bear. In time, he will come to blame himself. He will see that everything is his fault, and that we are his benefactors.

Buckley: I hope he realizes it's all his fault.

Nguyen: He will. And then he will accuse himself to us and it will be over.

Buckley: All right, go on. But be quick. Be quick about it.

Nguyen: (Turning his attention again to The Boy) Where did you get the grenades?

The Boy: From the dead soldier.

- Nguyen: Was he American? Was he American?

The Boy: North Vietnamese.

Nguyen: Where was he?

The Boy: On the road to Weichu.

(The NGUYEN-BOY cycle continues. BUCKLEY and KREUGER

remain standing by watching)

Buckley: It's such a slow process.

Kreuger: It's founded on hopelessness. By being made to repeat his first words in an endless cycle, he's being deprived of his very thoughts.

Buckley: How much punishment can he take?

Kreuger: It's not punishment. It's the killing of a mind. We've never killed more than a man's body, and that in combat, at more or less long range.

(BUCKLEY abruptly turns away. KREUGER moves back near Avery. ALL listen a moment as the cycle continues. BUCKLEY continues to pace around nervously, as if caught up in a maddening dance)

McGowen: (Leaping to his feet) I can't take any more monkey talk. I can't.

(No one pays him any attention. After a moment he sits down again)

Avery: (To KREUGER, who is beginning to breath heavily) What's the matter?

Kreuger: Nothing...it's the shot I guess.

Avery: Take it easy. Buckley's beginning to crack. Look at him. He made this box, but he's wearing out in it.

Russell: It's even worse when I close my eyes. When's he going to let us go? When are we going to get out of here?

Kreuger: How do I know! (Suddenly stands up and moves away)

Buckley: (Coming up to him) Where are the questions now Kreuger?

Kreuger: He's telling Nguyen that he was going to his sister in Saigon.

Buckley: I didn't think Nguyen was making any progress.

Kreuger: That depends on how you look at it. The boy's obviously weaker and (accusingly) remember McGowen knocked

him cold.

Buckley: I don't like this any more than you do. Anyway, it's no harder for him than it is for us.

Kreuger: (Moving away) We don't face the knife.

Buckley: (Following him) Listen, I'll put a stop to this as soon as he talks.

Kreuger: Maybe he told Nguyen everything he has to tell.

Buckley: No. The kid's lying. What's happening is his fault. None of us wanted this.

Kreuger: And I'm having none of it, Buckley. None of it.

Buckley: You know as well as I do that we have a moral duty to perform.

Kreuger: (Sick and disgusted) A moral duty?

Buckley: We have to sacrifice our good will toward this boy, no matter how painful it might be for us to see.

Kreuger: You seem very eager to sacrifice yourself.

Buckley: For Christ's sake, the kid's a communist!

Kreuger: I draw no conclusions.

Buckley: There's no other way. We'll have the blood of a hundred men on our hands if we don't see this through. If you can tell me a way to both spare this boy and save our men, I'll listen! If you can't, you have no right to keep your hands clean while the rest of us do a dirty job that has to be done. You see, Kreuger, it's a simple question of loyalty.

Kreuger: That's contemptible!

Buckley: You're going to have to choose. Either you're with the kid or with us. There's no middle ground left.

Kreuger: I'll translate for you but that's all. And I wouldn't go too far with the Boy.

Buckley: (Intently watching Nguyen) No, no further than we have to. Except I don't trust Nguyen. He's trying to ruin the kid the way the Reds brainwashed our boys in Korea. All I want is information. So help me God

that's all I want!

McGowen: (Crossing over to KREUGER and BUCKLEY) You're still letting him off, Lieutenant.

Buckley: We're simply letting Lieutenant Nguyen have his way.

McGowen: Give the kid a forty five and he'll kill every man in this room. This is a terrorist, Lieutenant. This is the enemy!

Kreuger: (Hating him, but keeping his eyes on Nguyen) You don't know that. He may be only what he says he is. A boy who picked up the grenades to protect himself, until he could sell them in Saigon.

McGowen: (Sneering) He was going to give the money to his sister.

Kreuger: It's possible.

McGowen: You know what the girls are in Saigon. If she's there, she's a whore.

Buckley: Oh that's beside the point.

Kreuger: We have no way of knowing why the boy was carrying the grenades or where he was going. It's no use acting as though we do.

McGowen: Hell man, he was caught red-handed on his way to the guerrillas.

Kreuger: That's a reasonable suspicion. Nothing more.

McGowen: Listen, I've been in this war since the day it started. I learned about my Vietnamese the hard way, and you can't tell me this slant-eye is not a guerrilla.

Kreuger: Once, in my platoon, I had a man like you. The Army was his license to kill without reason.

McGowen: (Grabbing KREUGER'S shirt at the collar) You... (KREUGER starts to resist, then stops) That's right, don't even try. I'm a Sergeant, you're a convict.

Buckley: (As AVERY moves up to help KREUGER) Let him go. Are you all right?

Kreuger: I'm okay.

Buckley: Don't put your hands on him again.

McGowen: (Grunting an apology) I came in at Danang before anybody else get into this stinkin' mess. I've seen our guys knocked to pieces by Malaysian gates and stuck through the chest in punji pits. Believe me, Kreuger, this little devil knows every trick in their book. You let him go and he'll make a point of killing you inside a week. You think about that when you start feeling sorry for him.

Kreuger: The kid is helpless.

Buckley: Not behind a AK-37.

McGowen: You don't seem to understand. They've been ambushing us and getting away with it. Even the villagers help them. No one's on our side out here.

Kreuger: Then what are we doing here if...

Buckley: We have to help each other or we're lost. And if you aren't going to help us, at least you have no right to stand in our way.

Kreuger: (Slowly realizing) My God, you want my consent don't you. The more of us who share responsibility for this, the less you can be held accountable later on, eh. There can be no talk of guilt if everyone is an accomplice. Leave me out of it.

Buckley: (Softer, confidentially) Kreuger, if we get the information out of the kid, you won't go back to the stockade. Do you remember how good it was when you were an officer? Do you remember?

Kreuger: I remember.

Buckley: Well you'll have it again. Believe me it can be done.

Kreuger: Get away from me.

Buckley: They'll billet you with the officers here, very quietly, until it goes through.

Kreuger: Get away. (Starts to move away, speaks almost to himself.) The typhoid, the typhoid.

(BUCKLEY and MCGOWEN stand a moment looking after him then whisper, ad lib, to each other so softly no one hears)

Avery: What's happening? What did you do?

Kreuger: Nothing. I agreed to nothing.

(BUCKLEY and MCGOWEN slowly move to either side of the table. MCGOWEN takes NGUYEN by the arm and draws him to one side. There is a sudden silence in the room. RUSSELL covers his ears as though it is unbearable. MCGOWEN now reaches out his big hand and takes THE BOY by the throat, while he slowly draws his other hand, clenched in a massive fist, under THE BOY'S face. HE turns his fist this way and that in the light, forcing THE BOY to look at it.)

Avery: (Seeing the above) So you gave in.

Kreuger: (Also seeing now) No, that's not what I meant. That's not what I wanted.

Nguyen: (Slightly afraid) Please, you must not do this.

(MCGOWEN ignores NGUYEN and draws his fist a few inches away from THE BOY'S head, then brings it back against his skull, knocking THE BOY to the ground.)

Buckley: Avery, fix the prisoner.

Nguyen: (Coming to life, screaming) If you had not let go of his neck you would have killed him!

Buckley: Fix him! (When Avery does not move) Avery, give him a shot.

(AVERY looks to KREUGER for help, then goes slowly to THE BOY and gives him another shot)

Nguyen: I told you what would happen if you hurt him! You see, already he has escaped. Sergeant McGowen knows nothing.

Buckley: Your method is not working.

Nguyen: Lieutenant it is.

Buckley: Then why doesn't he confess.

Nguyen: He will. Already he is growing weak.

Buckley: Not weak enough.

Nguyen: Do not ruin everything now. There is no reason for this.

Buckley: Stand him on his feet.

Nguyen: (Quickly, afraid that McGowen will hit him again) Wait. If you are going to do this, you must do it properly. I also have much experience in physical compulsion. Above all we must not damage the head.

Buckley: All right, good. Where do you want him?

Nguyen: (Looking about) Put him on the table.

Buckley: Russell, McGowen!

(RUSSELL and MCGOWEN put THE BOY on the table)

Buckley: Now we'll finish this.

Nguyen: I will require more light.

Buckley: McGowen, put a bulb in.

(MCGOWEN takes a bulb from the tool rack where he left them when he first entered and screws it in the hanging light above the work table)

Buckley: (To Nguyen) Tell him that the talking is over. Make him understand what will happen to him now if he doesn't confess.

Nguyen: (Having tied The Boy's hands behind his back, suddenly screams the warning in his face) You will confess everything or we will torture you. You will confess now! There will be no second chance!

McGowen: (Seeing THE BOY'S frightened reaction) He heard. Look at the little bastard, he's not brave. He is just obstinate.

Buckley: (To Nguyen) Go on.

Nguyen: (Turning the full length of the blade in front of

The Boy's eyes, making it flash in the light) I will cut you if you do not speak. (THE BOY'S face remains rigid and expressionless) Very well. (Swiftly and with great precision he sticks the tip of the blade into The Boy's groin, then turns the handle clock-wise and withdraws it with an upward flip of the point)

The Boy: (Opens his houth but no sound comes out)

Buckley: My God, you didn't give him a chance!

Nguyen: I am doing only what you wanted. The ultimate application of your own logic, Lieutenant.

Buckley: I didn't tell you to stab him! I wanted you to give him enough time to realize that we mean business.

Nguyen: It will do no good to threaten him if he does not have a reason to believe us. Perhaps you wish to use the knife?

Buckley: (Ignoring his question) Ask him if he's ready to talk now.

Nguyen: Will you tell us now? Or do you want me to use the knife again?

Buckley: Kreuger, come here and translate.

(Kreuger moves up to the table and stands next to Buckley)

Buckley: (To Nguyen) Go on.

Nguyen: Will you tell us now?

Kreuger: Will you tell us now?

Nguyen: Or do you want me to use the knife again?

Kreuger: Or do you want me to use the knife again?

Nguyen: I will stick you in the same place each time.

Kreuger: I will stick you in the same place each time.

Nguyen: Only deeper, until I am inside your belly.

Kreuger: Only deeper, until I am inside your belly.

Nguyen: Where were you told to meet your comrades?

Kreuger: Where were you told to meet your comrades?

Nguyen: (Holds the knife up, looks at Buckley)

Buckley: Go ahead, but be careful.



Kreuger: (Refusing to be a part of it, silently walks back to Avery)

Nguyen: (Acidly, as he delicately applies the knife in the same wound with the same twisting motion) I know what to do, Lieutenant. Confess! Where were you told to meet your comrades? Where were you told to meet your comrades?

Avery: (To KREUGER, who has begun to moan) Hold on, it's just that damn serum. It'll pass in a minute.

Kreuger: The face...they want me to look at the Boy's face and see the face of the enemy.

Avery: What?

Kreuger: I've seen it before...we were ready to open fire on an outfit we had trapped on the floor of a valley.

Russell: (Coming up to Kreuger and Avery, whispering) They're crazy. They've gone crazy, Lieutenant.

Avery: (Motioning him to be quiet) Shuuus.

Russell: You've got to stop them.

Kreuger: I was to give the order for my men to move in.

Avery: Can't you see he's delirious.

Russell: (Stands quietly, looking and listening to Kreuger)

Kreuger: Machine guns, grenades, flame throwers and finally bayonets. There were to be no survivors.

Avery: (Whispering) It's okay...

Kreuger: Through my field glasses I watched them digging in and then, maybe because the sun was hot on my back! or because I was tired! I don't know!

Avery: (Nervous, as he sees BUCKLEY looking over at them with great annoyance) Be quiet...

- Kreuger: I don't know but I began to see not the enemy but faces, human faces like my own. And they were young like I am, some of them looked like kids.

Avery: (Whispering, as BUCKLEY looks at them again) Kreuger please.

Kreuger: Through my glasses I could see their faces, tense, expectant, certain of death. I took the receiver and heard the order to attack.

Avery: (Whispering) Kreuger...

Kreuger: My company waited, I waited too, gazing at the small figures of the men we were about to kill...and then I pulled my company back.

Avery: (As BUCKLEY starts to come over to them) Shut up.

Kreuger: (Anguished) They want me to see the face of the enemy but it's my own face!

Avery: (Slaps KREUGER hard in the face. It stuns him, but snaps him out of his delirium) Shut up.

Buckley: What's the matter with Kreuger?

Avery: Nothing. He was just having a reaction to his shot.

Buckley: Christ!

Avery: He's okay. He'll be alright in a minute.

(BUCKLEY abruptly turns and moves back to the table)

Russell: (Handing AVERY his canteen) Give him some water.

Avery: Here, drink this.

Kreuger: I'm soaking wet.

Avery: It's all over.

Russell: You've been doing a lot of talking.

Kreuger: What?...what did I say?

Avery: Just a lot of words. Mostly about how much you love the Army.

Nguyen: (Shouting loudly) Now. You will confess to me now! (He stops and steps back from the table. A strange silence follows)

Buckley: Why are you stopping? Did he say something?

Nguyen: It is necessary to keep from puncturing the wall of the gut. We must cause him the most pain without allowing him to die.

Buckley: What are you going to do?

Nguyen: For the moment the groin is worn out. It is numb.

We must turn him over and use the back.

McGowen: More God damn time wasted.

Nguyen: I will require an assistant.

Buckley: Russell, come over here. Russell! (RUSSELL moves reluctantly up to the table) You're going to help him.

McGowen: You're still letting him off. You can't make him talk with that little knife.

Nguyen: You will see.

McGowen: Hurt. Really hurt him once for Christ sake and he'll talk! You're cutting him for the fun of it.

Nguyen: (To Russell, ignoring McGowen) We will begin on the small of the back. If he does not confess, we will work our way up the sides, along the ribs. After that the insides of the arms, the fat of the thighs, the armpits and the scrotum. There is enough for what we need.

Russell: Will he last that long?

McGowen: Goddamnit why don't you get it over with?

Nguyen: (To Buckley) Do not allow him to touch the prisoner again.

Buckley: Keep away!

McGowen: I don't trust all this talk! What's it gotten us?

Buckley: Get out of the way. Lieutenant Nguyen is going to show us what he can do. (To Nguyen) Only let me warn you that if you can't make him talk, you'll be replaced, and I won't be responsible for what will happen then.

Nguyen: We are wasting time. (To Russell) You will hold his wrists across the table please.

(NGUYEN cuts the cord that binds The Boy's wrists. His hands instantly cup themselves over his groin, where the

flesh is torn. THE BOY'S hands begin to move across it. RUSSELL stands still, looking at The Boy.)

Buckley: Do what you're told soldier!

(RUSSELL grips The Boy's arms. NOTE: This torture scene, as the one before, is not clearly seen by the audience. The work table is deep in the corner, SR, where the light barely reaches. It is more reported on than experienced.)

Nguyen: That is good. Draw the arms forward a little more please. (Then beginning to slowly cut The Boy on the surface of his back, with slow, twisting motions of the blade) You will tell me now. Where were you told to meet your comrades? You will tell me. Now. Where were you told to meet them? Where? Confess to me.

(NGUYEN continues working on THE BOY on his back and repeating the cycle of question during the following exchange)

Avery: Jesus. We've got to get out of here.

Kreuger: What good would it do. We're all in it now.

Avery: Not me.

Kreuger: All of us. We've been watching too long to remain innocent.

Russell: (Suddenly letting go of THE BOY'S wrists and rushing to a corner of the room where it is dark) I'm gonna vomit. (RUSSELL is heard vomiting. MCGOWEN moves up and holds the BOY'S wrists)

Buckley: Goddamit to hell! Avery help him.

Avery: (Without a word, grabs a rag and moves to help RUSSELL)

Kreuger: (Grabbing BUCKLEY by the elbow) You've got to stop this. Can't you see what's happening?

(Before BUCKLEY can reply, the room is filled with an unearthly wail, as THE BOY throws his head violently

to one side and makes his first cry of pain; a sustained scream that contains all that he has held back for hours. EVERYONE freezes. The knife is suspended in mid-air.

Nguyen: (Instantly recovering) Confess. You will tell me now.

Buckley: (Jerking his arm free from KREUGER) We are not going to stop. We're going through with it no matter how long it takes. (Almost a plea) We have to.

Nguyen: Where were you told to meet your comrades?

Kreuger: (Through Nguyen) You've achieved nothing, except to show us we are more vicious than we had known.

Buckley: By Kreuger we're going to make him talk.

Kreuger: (Pursuing him around the table) You're only going to kill him.

Nguyen: You will tell me now. Where? Where? Where?...

Buckley: (Through Nguyen. Again, almost a plea to

Kreuger: We've gone too far to stop now. Besides it's Nguyen's method. Not ours.

Kreuger: I don't care whose method it is, you can't go on with it!

Buckley: Do you think we can go back to the questioning after this? Be reasonable.

Kreuger: (Becoming weak again, exhausted) Then let McGowen have him. Get it over with if this is what you wanted.

Buckley: (Defensive) You wanted it too, Kreuger. You didn't say a word to stop it.

Kreuger: I didn't want this.

Buckley: What then? What did you think it was going to be? You knew the kid wasn't going to talk.

Kreuger: (Weakly) I thought it would be over quicker than this.

(BUCKLEY helps KREUGER move away from the table,  
toward SR)

Buckley: It will be. We won't let this go on a minute longer than we have to. Come on, rest for a while. Go outside and get some air if you need to. You'll feel better. And you'll see that we're right.

Kreuger: I won't agree to any more of it.

Buckley: (A desperate, final plea/threat for Kreuger's help and understanding) Don't buck me, Kreuger. There are worse things than the sand dunes, and the Major is backing me. You're going to have to do your part, whether you like it or not. So be ready.

Nguyen: (After a long moment of silence, looking directly at Kreuger, and speaking slowly as if to tell him something: that he wants to stop this also, help him) The ribs are still unmarked and free of pain. Lieutenant Kreuger?

(The eyes of everyone fix upon Kreuger: BUCKLEY'S with a cold look of warning; MCGOWEN'S smoldering and RUSSELL and AVERY'S with fatigue. NGUYEN stands with the knife poised, a silent question in his dark eyes. KREUGER stares helplessly back at NGUYEN. Silent.)

Nguyen: (Slowly bringing the knife down to The Boy's ribs) Very well.

CURTAIN

ACT II

Later in the night, near dawn. Four cots have been brought in and placed around the room. NGUYEN is bending over THE BOY, who now is face-up on the table, staring into the light. NGUYEN is speaking to THE BOY in a softer voice, telling him to confess then sleep, confess then sleep, over and over again. RUSSELL is lying huddled on the floor, SR. BUCKLEY is asleep on his cot, SL, with his back and shoulders hunched against the wall. MCGOWEN is snoring fitfully on a cot far SL. KREUGER, on his cot SR, is slowly waking up. AVERY, who has been watching KREUGER, sees him waking now, and as though he has been waiting for such an opportunity, stealthily moves toward him and sits next to him on the cot.

Avery: I don't see how the hell you could sleep. (Leaning closer, whispering) Listen to me, we've got to get out of this.

Kreuger: (Still drowsy) What?

Avery: You and I have to escape before they wake up. Don't worry I can handle the sentries. It's still dark outside. Kreuger! Did you hear me?

Kreuger: I heard you.

Avery: Are you with me or not?

Kreuger: No.

Avery: You're letting me down eh. I was counting on you to help me.

Kreuger: They'll shoot you down before you get out of the maintenance yard.

Avery: (Standing up, moving away) You've let me down, Kreuger.

Kreuger: Avery I...

Avery: I'll look out for myself from now on.

(KREUGER moves to the door, opens it, looks out a moment, then closes it.)

Nguyen: Is it dawn?

Kreuger: Almost.

Nguyen: Confess. Then sleep.

The Boy: (Tries painfully to answer, but sounds like he is mumbling)

Kreuger: (Moving to the table) Did he rest?

Nguyen: (Speaking low, as does Kreuger) It would not be a kindness to allow him to regain his strength.

Kreuger: What's he saying?

Nguyen: He is trying to finish a phrase that is beyond his reach. It does no harm to let him talk now. It may quicken his collapse. Where? Tell me where. Then sleep.

Kreuger: Has he said anything about the guerrillas?

Nguyen: Not yet.

Kreuger: He must have said something. (Pause) Nothing?

Nguyen: (Reluctantly) Mostly he has been talking of his father and mother.

Kreuger: What else?

Nguyen: He also speaks of his sister, who is alone in Saigon, waiting for him.

Kreuger: (Still low) Then he's been telling the truth!

Nguyen: You do not understand. His parents were killed by American planes. He and his sister were in the rice fields when their village was bombed. They saw everything, but they could not help.

Kreuger: So he became a guerrilla.

Nguyen: Why does that matter to you?

Kreuger: Buckley won't stop until he has what he wants.

Nguyen: (Warily, after a long silent moment) Are you ready to help me save his life? We do not have much



time left.

Kreuger: I'm ready if there's a way.

Nguyen: (Bending toward KREUGER, across the table) Only you and I understand the prisoner's words. If you are on their side he will surely die.

Kreuger: You think I'm on their side?

Nguyen: You are an American.

Kreuger: I'm a convict under military sentence. Nothing more.

Nguyen: The Boy is weak. The information he has held back for so long is rising to the top of his mind. He is afraid he will give in to us.

Kreuger: What will happen to him if he tells Buckley where the guerrillas were going to meet?

Nguyen: They will send him to a camp for rehabilitation.

Kreuger: But he'll live.

Nguyen: Yes.

Kreuger: Do you think he'll talk?

Nguyen: He will tell us everything. (As KREUGER glances at BUCKLEY and MCGOWEN to see if they are awake) Do not worry about them now. We must protect the prisoner from himself.

Kreuger: What do you mean?

Nguyen: Twice during the night he reached for the knife. Not to hurt me, but to kill himself

Kreuger: (Looks for a long moment down at THE BOY, whose lips are still moving, although no sound is coming out of his mouth.) What do you want me to do?

Nguyen: Be patient. And wait.

Kreuger: (exasperated, raises his voice) Can't you...  
(NGUYEN quickly claps his hand over KREUGER'S mouth)  
(Lower again) Warn the boy. Make him understand.

Nguyen: It is you who do not understand. Sergeant McGowen

is the prisoner's only hope now, for he knows that he will kill him. It is we, who want him to live by confessing, who are his enemies. I have told you he is afraid of nothing except that he will betray his comrades.

Kreuger: (Glancing down at the knife)

Nguyen: Not even the knife will help us now.

Kreuger: What do you want me to do?

Nguyen: The Lieutenant will listen to you. Keep him from losing patience. That is all I ask. I will do the rest.

Kreuger: All right. I'll try.

(KREUGER looks down at THE BOY, then looks over to BUCKLEY, WHO is now awake and staring at them. He begins to move toward them. MCGOWEN is also awake and is standing up stretching, yawning)

Buckley: (Picking up the knife and seeing the dried blood stains on it) Why hasn't it been used?

Nguyen: He no longer feels it.

Buckley: (His answer is to suddenly jab THE BOY hard in the ribs with the dull point of the knife) He felt that.

Get on with it! See that he doesn't rest. (Turning away) Christ I need some coffee. (Softener, pleasantly) Kreuger, how would you like to go to the mess and tell them to send some coffee down here?

McGowen: (Moving up to him, remembering Kreuger's earlier words about Avery) What's to keep him from trying to make a break for it. He's a jailbird too.

Buckley: Kreuger will come back.

McGowen: It's no good letting him go alone.

Buckley: (Snapping) Then go yourself! And make sure it's hot. Wait, send one of the sentries posted outside.

McGowen: (Exits without a word. Then, OS, through the

following dialogue) Private, get some coffee up here.  
And make sure it's hot.

Buckley: (Turning back to the table, business at hand again)  
All right. Let's start again. (As NGUYEN bends over  
The Boy) No. Sit him up. Russell, sit the prisoner up.  
(As THE BOY falls over again after RUSSELL helps NGUYEN  
SIT HIM UP) Hold him. (To MCGOWEN, as he re-enters)  
Shut the door!

(S uddenly THE BOY, with RUSSELL STILL holding him up,  
begins gasping out inarticulate sounds)

The Boy: (Mumbling, ad lib)

Buckley: What's he saying? (Moving toward KREUGER) What's  
he saying? (As KREUGER quickly looks to NGUYEN) No. I  
want it from you. Quietly. Just quietly tell me what  
he's saying.

Kreuger: He's asking you to let him rest.

Buckley: (Picing up the knife and turning the point of it  
toward NGUYEN) What did the boy say to me?

Nguyen: (Glancing at KREUGER, then stepping back, his eyes  
on the knife) He has said nothing of importance.

Buckley: Answer me or I'll use this!

Nguyen: The prisoner is calling for his family to help him.  
He is Buddhist and he thinks you will kill him now. His  
ancestors are sacred to him.

Buckley: Goddamnit to hell I can't trust either one of you.  
Get away from the table. I'll interrogate the prisoner  
myself.

Nguyen: You must let me do it.

Buckley: I'll put you under arrest if you don't stand aside.

Nguyen: (Drawing himself up, shouting) I am a Vietnamese!  
An officer of my Country's Army.

Buckley: As long as you're at Quai Dong you'll do what  
we tell you.

Nguyen: (Controlling himself with immense effort) Please give me the knife.

Buckley: (Signaling to McGowen) I'll give you ten seconds to get away from that table.

Nguyen: (Losing control for a second, shrieking) I am his interrogator!

Buckley: You're nothing but what I say you are. I'll interrogate him now.

(NGUYEN suddenly starts for the door, then stops, realizing he has to stay, goes to a stool, SL, and sits down; a look of complete exhaustion masking his face)

McGowen: (Expectantly, as if his time had come) Lieutenant?

Buckley: Sit down. I'm only going to question him.

Kreuger: (Seeing the way BUCKLEY is holding the knife, suddenly jumps up) I'll translate for you.

Buckley: I don't need you for this. He knows well enough what I want out of him. (To The Boy) Where were you instructed to meet the guerrillas? Where were you to meet your friends? Where? Where were you going? (To KREUGER) Get away! (Keeps his eyes on KREUGER until he returns to his cot, then back to THE BOY) Where were you going to meet your friends? What village! Give me the name of the village. Or the rice field. In what rice field are you hiding your arms? Now tell me!

(BUCKLEY, SOFTER, CONTINUES the above questions - in no particular order - during the following dialogue. THE BOY never answers him)

Sentry: (OS, knocks on the door) Coffee!

(RUSSELL goes to the door and takes the coffee from the Sentry. He offers some to BUCKLEY, who motions him away. NGUYEN takes a coffee as does MCGOWEN. No one else does, except RUSSELL, as he puts down the card-board box they were brought up in.)

Russell: (To Nguyen) How old is he?

Nguyen: Who?

Russell: (Nodding toward The Boy) When I looked at his face...before I got sick, I couldn't tell how old he was. I've never seen anything like it before.

Nguyen: He's fifteen, sixteen. Seventeen at the most.

Russell: But man his face! He looks so old.

Nguyen: He was in pain.

Russell: (Shaking his head, as if unable to believe it) I don't see how you could do that to someone who looks like you. He's one of your own people.

Kreuger: Shut up!

Nguyen: (Without anger) Have you killed a man yet?

Russell: No sir.

Nguyen: Then you do not know enough to ask me such a question. In my village every man over eighteen was shot.

The Boy: (Suddenly crying out at Buckley) Despiseeee, despiseeee.

Russell: Listen!

Buckley: (To NGUYEN, who has jumped up and moved to the table) What is it?

The Boy: Despiseeee...despiseeee!

Buckley: What is it? What's he saying?

Nguyen: (Turning away) It is of no importance.

Buckley: (Bringing the knife up under NGUYEN'S chin) Tell me exactly what he is saying. Don't change a word.

Nguyen: The prisoner said he despises you.

Buckley: He said more than that.

Nguyen: That is the only way I can translate it.

Buckley: Kreuger!

Kreuger: That's all the boy said.

(BUCKLEY, furious, turns despairingly back to the Boy and rises over him as if he will use the knife.)

Nguyen: You see. He wants you to kill him. He is trying to trick you.

Buckley: (Stares down at The Boy a moment then puts the knife down on the table.) Pick up the knife. Pick it up! (Softer, calmly) Now go back to work, Lieutenant. Use the knife on his stomach.

Nguyen: It will be best not to use it anymore.

Buckley: I have not surrendered my authority, only the knife. I'm giving you an order. Work on his groin again. Exactly as you did before. Russell. Sit him up.

(RUSSELL reluctantly obeys his order. BUCKLEY crosses to KREUGER after NGUYEN starts questioning THE BOY)

Nguyen: (Suddenly jabbing The Boy) You will confess to me. Where did you get the grenades?

The Boy: Soldier...from the soldier.

Nguyen: Where did you get the grenades?

The Boy: From the dead soldier.

Nguyen: Was he American? Was he American?

The Boy: North Vietnamese.

Nguyen: Where was he? Where was the dead soldier?

The Boy: On the Weichu road.

Nguyen: There are no dead soldiers there.

The Boy: He was there.

Nguyen: There are no dead soldiers there.

The Boy: He was in a ditch.

(THE NGUYEN-BOY cycle continues as before during the following dialogue)

Buckley: Let's get this straight between the two of us.

Nguyen has been lying from the beginning.

Kreuger: You're mistaken.

Buckley: The boy must have told him something in all this time. You've been lying to me too.

Kreuger: I don't know...

Buckley: I'm not going to come down on you for that because

I'm only interested in information. But now it has to stop.

Kreuger: I don't know what the boy might have told Nguyen during the night. If he told him anything I didn't hear it. I slept.

Buckley: Listen Kreuger. You hate the sight of me. All right, to me you're a stinking convict who isn't worth a bullet. But now that we're in this together we don't have any choice but to help each other. (Pauses, then almost shouts) I know that the boy has told Nguyen everything. (Now pleading) Tell me what you know Kreuger. For the love of God, tell me so I can put a stop to this. It's the kid who's suffering now.

Kreuger: As far as I know, the prisoner hasn't told Nguyen a thing.

Buckley: (Under his breath) God damn it to hell. (Quietly, intently) You've got to help me. You have the Major's word for it. There's a full reinstatement waiting for you when we leave this room with the information he needs.

Kreuger: The boy said exactly what Nguyen told you. Most of all, he despises you.

Buckley: (Insisting, frowning with disbelief) Yes, but he must have said more than that.

Kreuger: You're incapable of understanding, but the language is like that.

Buckley: A full reinstatement. The Major's own word, a full reinstatement to rank. Clean sheets again. A clean uniform. Kreuger! You'll be an officer again, looked up to, respected...

(There is a loud clang of metal as NGUYEN throws the knife on the table. KREUGER and BUCKLEY jump off the cot)

Nguyen: (Raging as he looks down at THE BOY who has fainted)

It is no good to use the groin! You see that he cannot stand it! This is not the proper way.

Buckley: (To RUSSELL, who is trying to hold THE BOY up) Let him down.

Russell: (Holding his blood stained hands out in front of him, tears running down his face) Let me out of here. Please let me out of here.

(BUCKLEY ignores him. KREUGER leads RUSSELL to his cot)

Kreuger: (Pouring cold coffee over his hands) Wipe them.

Russell: (Wipes his hands, then lies down on the cot as if in a daze)

Buckley: (Now having noticed AVERY and speaking to him while RUSSELL is wiping his hands and lying down on cot) Examine the prisoner. Give him a shot. (AVERY reluctantly gives him a shot. When THE BOY does not revive) Give him another one.

Avery: It might kill him.

Buckley: Damn it do what I tell you! I'm in command here.

Nguyen: (While Avery is giving the shot) Do you think this is wise.

Buckley: (Ignores him)

Avery: (After giving him the other shot) His pulse is a hundred and forty.

Buckley: Sit him up.

(AVERY raises THE BOY slowly, but when he lets him go, HE falls back)

Buckley: Again. He's faking. (As THE BOY falls again) Again! He's faking I tell you. (AVERY remains beside THE BOY, refusing to life him and looking defiantly at BUCKLEY) All right. Sergeant McGowen, sit the prisoner up so the interrogation can go on.

(Before MCGOWEN can lay a hand on The Boy, NGUYEN steps forward and raises him up with his arm around the waist



to keep THE BOY from falling. Neither of them makes a sound)

Buckley: (Looking at them for a moment) That's very good of you, Nguyen, but it's too late.

(BUCKLEY motions MCGOWEN forward. MCGOWEN shoves NGUYEN to one side and takes THE BOY by the throat and puts his fist in front of his face. A sudden cry from THE BOY startles MCGOWEN and he lets THE BOY go. THE BOY holds himself up, shouting a cry of defiance.)

The Boy: Despiseeee...despisee. I will defeat you. I will defeat youuuuu. (He still speaks in Vietnamese as he has throughout)

Buckley: What's he saying?

The Boy: (Weaker now) I will defeat you...I will defeat you.

Buckley: Kreuger, for Christ sake this is our last chance! What's he saying?

Kreuger: It's only another cry of hate. (Pause, softly) He's saying he will defeat you.

Buckley: (Frantic now, walking around and around the table) He's confessing! McGowen's fist frightened him into confessing!

The Boy: (Very weak now) I will defeat you...I will defeat you.

Buckley: You're a bunch of murderous bastards! Why won't you tell me the truth? You want this to happen! (Grabs the edge of the table and glares at NGUYEN and KREUGER, then slowly to MCGOWEN) All right, go ahead. (MCGOWEN moves toward THE BOY. BUCKLEY stops him) Wait. (To KREUGER and NGUYEN) You want to see him killed? (BUCKLEY waits a moment as KREUGER and NGUYEN remain silent, then signals savagely to MCGOWEN, who instantly strikes THE BOY'S head, knocking him flat on the table.

The blow was powerful and for a moment there is total silence. KREUGER starts to lunge toward MCGOWEN, but before he can, NGUYEN attacks MCGOWEN with the knife. MCGOWEN easily disarms him and slaps him violetly across the face, again and again, knocking him to the floor. The knife falls to the floor near the table and remains there un-noticed)

Buckley: (To Nguyen) You're under military arrest.

Nguyen: (Hearing this, suddenly snaps to) Lieutenant I protest.

Buckley: (Quickly opens the door. Calls out to the SENTRY, who appears at the door.) Takes this man to the stockade.

Nguyen: Lieutenant I...(Stops. Stands looking at Buckley)

Buckley: (Returning NGUYEN'S stare) Put him under maxium detention.

(Nguyen, continues staring at BUCKLEY, then realizing it's hopeless, draws himself up with as much dignity as he can muster and walks silently out the door, spitting at BUCKLEY'S feet as he passes him. BUCKLEY closes the door)

Buckley: (To McGowen) We're going to finish this now. Avery, examine him. (As Avery hesitates) Just examine him.

Avery: (After trying to find his pulse) I think he's dying.

Buckley: What?

(KREUGER moves up to the table and looks down at the BOY)

Avery: (Looking at Kreuger) I think...I think he's dying.

Buckley: McGowen, go and find Dr. Mason. Tell him we need him here. Be fast about it, Sergeant, fast! (MCGOWEN exits)

Buckley: (Peering over Avery's shoulders and looking down at the Boy) It's your job to keep him alive.

Avery: He's in shock. Cover him with blankets...that's

all I know.

(BUCKLEY, frightened now, quickly pulls the blankets off the cots and wraps them around THE BOY. KREUGER helps him)

Buckley: (To Russell, who has been lying on a cot staring at the wall, as he tries to pull the blanket out from under him) Move damn you!

Kreuger: I'll get it.

(BUCKLEY and KREUGER gather all the blankets and wrap them around the BOY. There is a long pause, as THEY stand back and look at THE BOY)

Buckley: What's his pulse?

Avery: I can't find it.

Buckley: (Under his breath) God damn it to hell.

DR. MASON, a pleasant man in his thirties, enters with MCGOWEN. He starts to move toward THE BOY, then glances at RUSSELL and moves toward him.)

Buckley: This is the one we want you to look at.

Dr. Mason: (Passing his hand in front of RUSSELL'S eyes, which do not blink) What happened to this man?

Buckley: He was sick last night.

Mason: Take him to the infirmary.

Buckley: (To McGowen) Get a stretcher.

Mason: He can walk. Just help him. I'll be along when I can.

Buckley: (To Avery and Kreuger) You heard him!

(AVERY and KREUGER help RUSSELL as he exits out the door)

Mason: (Starts examining THE BOY) He's alive at least. We'll take him to the infirmary too. He can't be kept here in this condition.

Buckley: There's an interrogation going on here, and it isn't finished yet.

Mason: It's finished. I'm the medical officer of this

god forsaken command and the health of the inmates is my responsibility, not yours.

Buckley: This isn't one of your inmates, this is a guerrilla. A prisoner of war.

Mason: I don't care what he is. He's going to die if he isn't properly cared for. Or do we execute prisoners now?

Buckley: He's not being executed, only interrogated.

Mason: It wasn't interrogation that put him in this condition.

Buckley: That was Nguyen's fault.

Mason: (To McGowen) Get a cot. We'll use it for a stretcher. (To AVERY, when MCGOWEN doesn't move) You do it.

McGowen: (Exiting) I'm not looking at an Army doctor treat a guerrilla any longer.

Buckley: (As AVERY lifts one end of a cot) Put it down.

Mason: You exceed your authority, Lieutenant! As a doctor I have the rank of Captain, and I'm telling you to stand aside and stop interfering.

Buckley: It isn't my authority. I'm acting under the Major's special orders. You can remove the prisoner if you're willing to answer for it to the Major, personally.

Mason: (Not willing to risk it; a confrontation with the Major) Very well, if that's what the Major wants. We'll do what we can for him here. (Meaning it, but also to save face in front of the others) But I warn you, Buckley, he can't take any more punishment. You'll kill him. You think about answering for that.

(AVERY puts down the cot and retreats to far SR)

Buckley: All we want is information. Can he talk?

Mason: No.

Buckley: He has to talk before we can let him go.

Mason: All I can say is that he can't be touched again,  
not in any way.

(MCGOWEN enters carrying a hand generator. He looks  
contemptuously at MASON working on THE BOY)

Buckley: Kreuger, you'll have to carry on.

Kreuger: What do you want?

Buckley: Interrogate him.

Kreuger: I told you I won't do that.

McGowen: Why wait! I can crank up this generator and get  
over a hundred volts out of it. Put ~~one~~ of these wire  
leads around his balls and he'll talk. He'll talk all  
day!

Buckley: Kreuger?

McGowen: Lieutenant I know this works. I've made them  
talk before.

Kreuger: All right, I'll do what I can.

McGowen: He's only going to waste more time if...

Buckley: Shut up. Lieutenant Kreuger is going to interrogate  
the prisoner for us.

(BUCKLEY and MCGOWEN move to a cot, SL, where they wait  
and talk quietly - ad lib - between themselves)

Mason: Avery, there's a bottle of dextrose in my bag. Avery?  
Bring that ladder over here. We'll use it for a stand.

(AVERY moves the ladder by the table. MASON attaches  
the bottle of dextrose on top of it)

Kreuger: (Turning his full attention to THE BOY, begins  
questioning him in Vietnamese, which is in caps. He is  
awkward at first, then gradually becomes assured. From  
time to time however, he forgets and slips into English)  
ANH CO MUON TU THU KHONG? THU DI THI ANH DUOC NGU?  
ANH CO MUON TU THU KHONG? THU DI THI ANH DUOC NGU? Are  
you sure he can hear me?

Mason: (Sponging off the BOY'S face) Yes, he can hear you.

His pulse is stronger now. What are you saying to him?

Kreuger: I'm just asking him some questions.

Mason: He can hear every word you say.

Kreuger: MAY NGAY ROI ANH CHUA DUOC NGU? Look, I'm not going to hurt you. I don't care whether you confess or not, but you must say something so the others can see you understand me. If you don't, they'll use the electric generator on you.

The Boy: (Slowly rises up a little off the table and speaks in VIETNAMESE)

Buckley: (Rushing over) What was it?

Kreuger: Nothing.

Buckley: He said something! We all heard it. What was it?

Kreuger: He's complaining of pain in his abdomen.

Buckley: (Glaring at Mason) Well?

Mason: It's possible. But if I give him another pain killer he'll pass out.

Buckley: (Nods and returns to his cot) Get on with it.

Mason: (Softly) Is that what he really said?

Kreuger: (After a pause, equally soft. He said I was a fool. (Slowly) That he will speak not another word until he dies. (To THE BOY) I saw how you looked at him. I'd like to defeat him too. And the only way is for you to live. DI GAP DONG O DAU. THU DI. You'll be free. We'll all be free.

Mason: (Turning THE BOY slightly on his side) Good hold christ. Avery, why didn't you tell me about the wounds on his back. Never mind, I'll take care of them myself.

Kreuger: ANH DI DUONG NAU? CHI ANH TEN GI? Don't you want to see your parents again? I'm sorry. Your parents were killed in a raid on your village weren't they. Don't you want to see your sister again. Please speak.

( A LOUD KNOCK on the door is heard. BUCKLEY opens it)

Staff Sargeant: (OS) Lieutenant Buckley, the Major wants to see you.

Buckley: Now?

Staff Sargeant: (OS) Immediately sir.

Buckley: All right. Stay with him Kreuger. (Slams the door as he exits)

Mason: Stay out of it. You know better than this.

Kreuger: All I want is to give the boy time.

Mason: Use your head, Kreuger. You know what this camp is. Nobody gets killed so nobody gets promoted. The Major probably offered Buckley a recommendation for captain if he gets those guerrillas for him.

Kreuger: So that's what he's after.

Mason: All the more reason to keep out of it.

Kreuger: If I keep out of it McGowen will take over. Then we'll watch an execution. I haven't hurt him, maybe he'll talk to me.

Mason: (Turning away, getting more sponges out of his bag) All right, don't listen.

Kreuger: ANH DI DUONG NAU. ANH DI DUONG NAU. ( Glancing down he sees the knife on the floor where it fell out of Nguyen's hand. He stops and stares at it a moment, then slowly reaches down and picks it up and holds it in front of THE BOY'S face) Do you want me to use the knife on you? I will. I'll use it before I'm made to stand by and watch while they kill you. THU DI ANH MUON TU THU KHONG. KHAI DI! O DAU! O DAU!

Avery: (Now seeing KREUGER holding the knife) You bastard!

Kreuger: it's to save him you fool

Avery: You really believe that don't you. (Quickly grabs a hammer from the tool chest) Get out of my way!

McGowen: (Moving toward him) Put it down!

Avery: (Swinging the hammer above his head and forcing McGowen back) Get away from the door!

Kreuger: Avery...

Mason: Are you out of your mind? Sit down!...

Avery: Get out of my way. I'm getting out of this! (Opens door, rushes out)

McGowen: (Following him off) Guard!

(MASON and KREUGER move quickly to doorway and stand there looking out)

McGowen: (OS) Stop him!

Kreuger: Wait!

(TWO SHOTS ring out. MASON and KREUGER rush out the door.)

Mason: (OS) Hurry, get him inside. Sentry, get a stretcher up here. (Now entering with MCGOWEN and KREUGER, as they carry AVERY) Careful, don't bend his legs. (Examining and cutting away his pants) They hit him in the back of the legs. His knees are shattered.

Avery: (To Kreuger) I told you I'd get away.

Mason: (To McGowen) Hand me my bag. I'll give him some morphine.

McGowen: You're in for it now soldier.

Avery: I don't give a damn. I wasn't going to see it start again...not for anything.

Buckley: (Entering, breathless) The guerrillas ambushed a convoy ten miles from here. The Major just got word. What happened?

McGowen: He tried to make a break and we shot him.

Buckley: (Intently to KREUGER who is helping MASON) Kreuger!

McGowen: Where did they hit us?

Buckley: On the main road outside Tri Quang. All we have to know is where they're hiding their equipment. That's all we have to know! We have a flight of copters



coming in.

McGowen: They can move fast.

Buckley: No. They have too much with them this time.

Mason: Did you say there are helicopters coming in?

Buckley: If we're fast, we have a chance to get them.

Mason: Are their copters!?

Buckley: A flight of six cobras is on its way from Bien Hao.

Mason: Then we'll fly him out of here. He needs to get to a hospital as soon as possible.

Sentry: (OS) Stretcher!

(MASON and MCGOWEN take the stretcher at the door and go about placing AVERY on it)

Buckley: (Still intent to Kreuger) We have to have the information now. No more waiting.

Kreuger: There's nothing to be done, unless you want to start the interrogation over.

Buckley: Kreuger!

Kreuger: He won't talk and he's had a rest now...

Buckley: Don't you understand what I'm saying to you?

Kreuger: It will take a long time to wear him down again.

Buckley: We'll get you out of this! For Christ sake you'll be a Lieutenant again!!

(There is a long moment of silence. MASON rises and looks accusingly at KREUGER, who stands defenseless and silent)

Avery: (Pulling himself up on an elbow) You stuck the kid for a leusy chance to be a Lieutenant again?

Kreuger: (Dum-founded at their mis-understanding) No. No... I...

Buckley: Damn it Kreuger he must have told you something in all this time!

Kreuger: (With controlled hate to Buckley, and a distinctly

different tone to his voice) Once, when Nguyen was questioning the prisoner, I heard him say that he was from the village of Bien Thieu.

Buckley: Are the supplies stored there?

Kreuger: I don't know. All that he told Nguyen was that it was where his uncle lived. When Nguyen asked him if the guerrillas were from the village, he wouldn't answer.

Buckley: Wait here. (To McGowen, as they hurriedly exit)  
Come on.

Avery: (As MASON and KREUGER hand the stretcher through the doorway to the waiting sentries) You filthy stinking son of a bitch!

Kreuger: (Softly) Would you believe me if I told you I'm not?

Avery: No, I wouldn't believe you, Lieutenant. (Exits, as the sentries carry him away)

Mason: (Calling out to sentries) Take him to the infirmary. Put him on the first chopper.

Kreuger: (As Mason turns back from the doorway) Will he lose his legs?

Mason: (Glancing at the Boy on the table) Probably. (Then quickly moving to the Boy, examining him) Kreuger get my bag.

Kreuger: What is it?

Mason: Get it quickly!

Kreuger: What happened?

Mason: He used the knife. The wrist of his left hand is cut to the bone. He knew exactly where to find the artery.

Kreuger: Is he dead?

Mason: There's no pulse. (Pause) There's no pulse.

Kreuger: I can't understand how he could have done it without us hearing.

Mason: A knife doesn't make much noise.

Kreuger: There's still no pulse?

Mason: His arteries have collapsed. See where the plasma is draining off into his tissue. There's no circulation left to carry it.

Kreuger: Are you sure he's dead?

Mason: He's been dead for five minutes. He was over here bleeding to death while we were helping Avery.

Kreuger: Can I cover him?

Mason: (Starting to put things back into his bag) Go ahead, if you think it matters.

Kreuger: (Gently covers the boy with a blanket, then crosses to the door, opens it and looks out a moment, then turns back to Mason) It's cooler outside now.

Mason: (Pausing, looking over at Kreuger) Are you satisfied. You'll get what you wanted. You'll be reinstated to rank.

Kreuger: Desperate) That's not what I wanted! I wish he were alive, if that's what you mean. (Pause, softer) Do you have a cigarette?

Mason: No. You gave Buckley his promotion you know. I wish you hadn't done that.

Kreuger: I didn't give Buckley a thing.

Mason: Hell man, we all heard you tell him what the boy said.

Kreuger: The boy didn't say a damn thing and he never was going to. All I did was get them out of here to buy time for the rest of us.

Mason: What about Bien Thieu?

Kreuger: As far as I know there's nothing there.

Mason: Well I'll be damned.

Kreuger: All the patrols will find will be the woman and children. Some huts with a few chickens, or if Bien Thieu happens to be a rich village, some pigs.

They'll tell the story in Saigon bars tonight, swearing and chuckling about Quai Dong. And the Major will have no one to come down on but Buckley.

Mason: So Buckley's finished.

Kreuger: He missed his chance at the guerrillas, and now the kid has escaped. There's nothing more he can do.

Mason: He's going to come down on you.

Kreuger: I don't give a damn what Buckley does.

Mason: Do you want a cigarette?

Kreuger: Thank you.

THE SOUND OF HELICOPTERS IS HEARD

Mason: There's the flight from Bien Hoa.

Kreuger: Sounds like they're landing behind the CO's.

Mason: (After a pause) You're a fool, you know. Only I know you lied to Buckley, and I'm not about to tell him anything I don't have to.

Kreuger: I am.

Mason: Why, for Christ's sake?

Kreuger: It's something between me and Buckley: I want him to know.

Mason: You're only making trouble for yourself.

Kreuger: Okay, it's none of your business, so keep out of it.

Mason: You'll make trouble for the others too.

Kreuger: God damnit Mason, that boy was killed in here.

If I keep my mouth shut, Buckley gets what he wanted.

Mason: Take my advice. The boy is dead. Nothing matters to him now. You play along with Buckley and nothing will happen. You're sticking your neck way out.

Kreuger: I know what I'm doing.

THE SOUND OF A HELICOPTER IS HEARD

Kreuger: One of the copters is taking off again.

Mason: That'll be Avery.

Kreuger: What will happen to him?

Mason: He'll wind up in a State side hospital. They don't have any use for a cripple out here. And you, you'll be up for aiding the enemy again, only this time they'll throw the book at you.

McGowen: (Entering) Lieutenant, you're to wait here for Lieutenant Buckley. He'll take you to the Major.

I've got to get a work detail and secure this hut?

Mason: Did he seem upset?

McGowen: Who?

Mason: Lieutenant Buckley.

McGowen: No. Why should he be upset? Are you ready for me to escort the prisoner to the infirmary?

Mason: The prisoner is dead.

McGowen: How'd it happen?

Mason: He bled to death.

McGowen: Then we can clear everything out of here. I'll get a burial detail to remove the body.

Mason: (Suddenly suspicious) Wait a minute. What happened at Bien Thieu?

McGowen: Nobody's sure. We only heard it on the radio.

Mason: What'd it say?

McGowen: All I know is that our patrols drew fire when they got near the village...

Kreuger: (Dumbfounded) But there isn't anything...

McGowen: And the cobras came in. Anyway, Lieutenant Buckley said it's the outfit we were after. He'll be along in a minute. (Exits)

Mason: So Buckley's got his guerrillas.

Kreuger: But there's nothing there. The kid never mentioned Bien Thieu!

Mason: Kreuger, you knew this would happen.

Kreuger: (Desperately) I didn't! It was nothing but a name! A guess!

Mason: A column of G.I's would draw fire from any village in the district. Of course you knew.

Kreuger: I didn't!

Mason: It was the only way to get yourself out of this.

Kreuger: (Near the breaking point) I didn't know.

Mason: (After a long pause, finally believing him and sensing his innate decency) What are you going to do?

Kreuger: Exactly what I told you. Nothing has changed.

Mason: (Now genuinely concerned about Kreuger and what could happen to him) Don't you understand you can't get at Buckley now. He's won! (Then gently) Go back to the stockade.

Kreuger: They'll send me back when I tell them what happened in here.

Mason: You're determined to do that.

Kreuger: Yes.

Mason: (Picks up his bag and moves to door, where he pauses, looking at Kreuger) Good luck. (Exits)

(KREUGER nods to Mason as he exits. Alone, KREUGER stands for a long moment looking down at the dead Boy on the table. Now broken, HE gestures helplessly toward the Boy)

Kreuger: This is not what I wanted...I...(now weeping silently)...I wanted...I wanted to save you.

Buckley: (Entering) Are you all right?

Kreuger: (Straightening up, turning to face him) Yes.

Buckley: The Major wants to see you. Then I'll show you to your quarters. They'll only be temporary. You'll be getting mine in the officers billet.

-Kreuger: Yours?

Buckley: I'm being transferred to Saigon.

Kreuger: You got your promotion?

Buckley: That's right.

Kreuger: Captain?

Buckley: (Nodding yes) And nothing can stop it now.

The Major's started the wheels turning. It's funny, but in this man's army once the wheels start turning, they can't stop. Ready?

Kreuger: (Looking at the Boy again, as the futility and hopelessness of it all sinks in) What does it matter... what does it matter.

Buckley: What?

Kreuger: (Turning back from the Boy, almost to himself) I'll never escape.

Buckley: What'd you say?

Kreuger: Mason...I'll see Mason three times a day in the officers' mess.

Buckley: Of course. He's not a bad type really. Come on, let's go. Is there anything I can get for you?

Kreuger: (Turns and takes one long, last look at the Boy, then turns back and follows Buckley out the door, speaking wearily, drained) First of all, I'd like a clean uniform.

(The stage is empty a moment, then slowly the lights begin to dim off to the Boy on the table.)

CURTAIN

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