

C A N D L E

original screenplay by
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FADE IN:

EXT. TESUQUE NEW MEXICO - DAY

In SEPIA TONES STREAKING RAYS of GOLDEN SUNSHINE highlight the Tesuque Valley.

A TRUE STORY

CANDLE, an energetic 6-year old, runs through a field of alfalfa into a Golden Delicious apple orchard.

TESUQUE, NEW MEXICO USA

CANDLE (V.O.)

(adult voice)

My dreams often take me back to my youth. I imagine with all wishes I could be running there forever more.

Sunrays burn down on Candle hustling from one Golden Delicious apple tree to the next.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

So in my sixth year, I kept running beyond all endurance, beyond all spectrums of rainbow colors and golden sunrays.

Candle turns into the golden explosion of light and runs along side of the Tesuque River.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

In the spring, the snowmelt feeds its breath of nourishment into the sloping southwestern box canyon feeding its nourishment.

Candle hustles toward the massive mountain range, and the child grows smaller and smaller.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Then I ran some more and into the recesses of my upper Tesuque valley. Yes, my magnificent sanctuary of the American Southwest.

Gunshots begin to RING OUT LOUDER than LOUDER AGAIN to Candle appearing a small spot against the Upper Tesuque Valley.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I loved my free life because it was another day in paradise soon to become a faded memory for years to come.

INT. LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

Through liquor bottles, a shotgun blast cuts into RATTLER, 20s, Hispanic gangster.

13 YEARS LATER

The shotgun blast catapults Rattler several feet backwards. Reflectively from a .45 pistol, he fires off a round back shattering glass while dropping a paper sack full of money.

XAVIÉR FIERRO, 20, Hispanic gangster, drops his switchblade and dives to the ground next to the mortally wounded Rattler.

On the other side of the bottle rack, smoke dissipates revealing the HISPANIC STOREKEEPER, 50, mortally wounded.

As his legs wobble, Hispanic Storekeeper squeezes the trigger on his shotgun splattering a second round of double buck into the wooden floor right next to the pachuco's faces.

Xaviér grabs the .45 pistol and shoots the Hispanic Storekeeper, lifting him off the floor and catapulting him several feet backwards.

Hispanic Storekeeper swaggers and tumbles over several shelves of bottles shattering glass and splashing whisky around him.

SLOWLY, glass and amber liquid splatter across the floor as the Hispanic Storekeeper's body settles to rest.

Police sirens increasingly PENETRATE the interior of the liquor store to Xaviér's eyes opening wide. He snatches the paper bag, stuffs it in his jacket pocket, and tugs at Rattler's lifeless body.

Holding the .45 cal. Pistol, Xaviér tightens his other fist around Rattler's collar and drags him from the liquor store.

Seemingly from nowhere, a sheriff's sedan avoids hitting Xaviér and spins out of control in a cloud of dust and emergency flashing light.

From the .45 cal. Pistol, Xaviér rapidly fires off bullets into the side of the sheriff's car that skids to a stop farther down the alley.

Xaviér shoots off his last bullet. He then throws his pistol at the police car and falls backwards to the ground spilling the paper sack full of money across the dirt road.

Sheriff Deputy pushes Xaviér face down on the alley dirt road and cock their .38 pistols into the back of his head.

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - DAY

CANDLE, 20, tall, fit and lean, hustles down a dirt alley way toward the back of the South Valley Liquor Store toward an array of emergency vehicles, lights, and sirens.

CANDLE (V.O.)

In college I dreamed of the college girls I would soon meet. Soon a different reality would befall into my schema - spot news madness.

With his Nikon camera, Candle snaps off stills of the two AMBULANCE DRIVERS zipping up the Hispanic Storekeeper in a white canvass body bag.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

To earn spare change through college, I shot freelance crime scenes for the two city rags, but trust the news business, the bloodier the landscape the more money I made.

Candle turns and shoots two more AMBULANCE DRIVERS as they bag up the pachuco gangster RATTLER and lift him on the second gurney.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Some spot news scenes bled out more gruesome than others.

A CRIME SCENE CROWD gathers beyond the alley.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And this liquor store robbery with two fatalities rammed forth a big deal.

Candle turns around and notices two Sheriff Deputies leading the pachuco gangster, Xaviér Fierro in handcuffs to a sheriff's sedan.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Xaviér Fierro will be sentenced to life at the state penitentiary for the death of the liquor storekeeper.

Xaviér WILDLY REELS back and forth in attempt to break free.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And one day, as an inmate, he will escort me through the prison riot, the mother load of spot news madness.

The Sheriff Deputies struggle to place Xaviér into their squad car. The pachuco gangster stops struggling. He turns and gives a long cold stare at Candle.

EXT. UNIVERSITY OF ALBUQUERQUE, WEST MESA - DAY

Candle, early 20s, walks toward the men's dormitory carrying college textbooks.

2 YEARS LATER

Leaning against a black sedan, two Federal Marshals, SALTZ & PEPPER, mid-20s, in dark suits, stand and approach Candle.

UNIVERSITY of ALBUQUERQUE

They walk straight up to Candle, blocking him from entering the dorm.

SALTZ
Are you Mr. Candle?

CANDLE
Yes.

Saltz and Pepper both show Candle their IDs.

PEPPER
We're Federal Marshal here to apprehend you on a draft evasion charge.

Saltz and Pepper pocket their IDs.

SALTZ
You will either serve your country in the Army. Or we're ordered ...

PEPPER
To transport you to the military prison in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

In space and time, Candle suddenly freezes.

CANDLE (V.O.)
Damn! Why did I keep ignoring those draft notices?

SALTZ
Drop the books.

CANDLE
These college texts are expensive.

Saltz and Pepper show Candle their pistols.

PEPPER
We're only going to ask you once.

Candle's texts SLOWLY crash on the dirt parking lot.

EXT. FORT ORD, CALIFORNIA - NIGHT

In a pouring rain, Candle along with a COMPANY of recruits, knocks out one sit-up after the next.

DRILL SERGEANT
 YOU DUMB ASS, SNOT NOSE, SHITHEAD,
 WHORES OF A BITCH DOG! STAY DOWN AND
 GIVE ME ANOTHER TWENTY, OR I KICK MY
 BOOT SO FAR UP YOUR ASSES YOU THINK
 YOU'RE HOME WITH YOUR LOVER.

Next to Candle, DOE BOY RECRUIT struggles to do one sit-up.

DRILL SERGEANT (CONT'D)
 NOW WHAT THE FUCK DO WE HAVE HERE?
 DUMB CUNT ASS FAT BOY GOING TO GET
 HIS ENTIRE COMPANY KILLED FIRST DAY
 IN BAMBOO STICK SHIT LAND! EVER HEARD
 OF VIETNAM PORK FACE?

Doe Boy starts crying except that the rain masks all tears when the Drill Sergeant bends over Candle and spits forth.

DRILL SERGEANT (CONT'D)
 AND YOU CANDY ASS WIPE! YOU TWO ARE
 THE WORSE DUMB SHIT GOVERNMENT ISSUED
 DIPWADS IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY.

Candle's face reveals pure grit determination.

DRILL SERGEANT (CONT'D)
 WHAT THE FUCK ARE THEY SENDING US
 THESE DAYS?

EXT. FORT ORD, CALIFORNIA - DAY

Drill Sergeant stands opposite Candle as he pulls the pin on a live hand grenade.

DRILL SERGEANT
 CANDY ASS! YOU DON'T THROW THAT LIVE
 GRENADE OVER THAT WALL I'M SHOIVING
 IT UP SO FAR UP YOUR ASS IT WILL
 BLOW A WHOLE IN YOU THE SEIZE OF
 MARS! NOW TOSS THAT MOTHER FUCKER!

For all Candle's worth, he pitches the live hand grenade over the wall as both men drop to the ground to a MASSIVE EXPLOSION.

CANDLE (V.O.)
 Except for throwing a live hand
 grenade and sit-ups in the rain,
 Basic Military Training at Fort Ord,
 California was one piss ant blur.

INT. FORT GORDON MP BARRACKS, GEORGIA - AM

To REVELRY, MP DRILL SERGEANT turns on lights in a wooden barracks.

4:45 AM / MILITARY POLICE TRAINING / FORT GORDON, GEORGIA

MP DRILL SERGEANT
MP RECRUITS! YOU'VE GOT 15 MINUTES
TO SHIT, SHOWER, AND SHAVE!

In organized chaos, MP RECRUITS leap from their racks and scrambling to the latrine and get dressed to the CADENCE:
MILITARY POLICE ARE THE BEST ALL ELSE FUCK THE TEST.

EXT. FORT GORDON, GEORGIA - AM

Holding M-16 rifles, COMPANY of MPs in Army fatigues jog toward a second set of barracks.

5:00 AM

MP RECRUITS
MILITARY POLICE ARE THE BEST! ALL
ELSE FUCK THE TEST!

MP DRILL SERGEANT
SOUND OFF!

MP RECRUITS
ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR WE LOVE EATING
A PUSSY WHORE!

MP DRILL SERGEANT
SOUND OFF!

MP RECRUITS
THIS IS MY RIFLE!

Without losing a beat, the MPs grab their mid-section.

MP RECRUITS (CONT'D)
THIS IS MY GUN! IT'S FOR HAVING TOO
MUCH FUN!

EXT. FIRING RANGE FORT GORDON, GEORGIA - AM

With the MILITARY POLICE on the firing line, Candle's eyes flinch squeezing off .45 pistol shots as he expertly shoots every shot in a tight circle in the target.

CANDLE (V.O.)
The destiny of these fellow Military
Police is deployment in Vietnam,
unless one could pass the German
proficiency test.

INT. FORT GORDON MP BARRACKS, GEORGIA - DAY

Candle studies a Military German Proficiency book.

CANDLE (V.O.)

Sundays was the only day that we MPs
did not have to get up at 4:45 AM.

Virtually, every MP snores away in their rack as Candle continues to read Military Police and German texts.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

So to be sent to the land of German babes, chess tournaments, and European Culture, I crammed to learn German, a language I knew nothing about and never studied. I would need to pass the test with a 70.

EXT. HEIDELBERG WEST GERMANY - DAY

Wearing a class-A uniform, Candle sits in a M-1 US Army jeep overlooking the Neckar Valley with the Heidelberg Schloss (castle) situated in the background.

HEIDELBERG WEST GERMANY

CANDLE (V.O.)

So I did pass the German test right on that 70 mark. Now all I dream about is German babes, playing chess and guitar, and writing some poetry. I refused to be the typical GI Military Policeman.

Candle starts up the jeep and drives down into the City of Heidelberg.

INT. STUTTGART HALL, WEST GERMANY - DAY

Candle makes a rook move. CHESS OPPONENT stops the chess clock and extends his hand in resignation.

STUTTGART INVITATIONAL CHESS OPEN

INT. RAMSTEIN AIR BASE - NIGHT

Peering over a chess position, Candle's 2nd OPPONENT pause for a moment takes his thumb and middle finger and knocks over this black king.

RAMSTEIN INVITATIONAL CHESS TOURNAMENT

2nd OPPONENT looks up and extends his hand in resignation to Candle.

INT. MUNICH WEST GERMANY - DAY

Over the chessboard, Candle checkmates the 3rd OPPONENT.

MUNICH WEST GERMANY

CANDLE

Checkmate!

3rd Opponent pauses for a moment. He then knocks all of the pieces off of the chessboard and storms from the chess hall.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The three tournaments Stuttgart,
Ramstein, and Munich put me on the
chess map.

Only for a brief moment, Candle looks stunned by his opponent's poor sportsmanship.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Now how to get the United States
Military to recognize this talent I
possess?

INT. MP CO'S OFFICE - DAY

CAPTAIN HARKUS, 30s, holds up a copy of the Stars and Stripes, European Edition as Candle stands at attention.

HARKUS

Stars and Stripes say here Private
Candle that you're some kind of chess
bull shitter. Did my United States
Army give you permission to go out
and win these chess tournament?

CANDLE

Sir, I did that on my own time off.

HARKUS

The reason the United States drafted
you college-educated pukes was to
improve our Military Police image,
which I think is a load of crap.

Captain Harkus holds up a piece of paper to the sound of
BREAKING GLASS.

HARKUS (CONT'D)

A 2nd occupation to play chess for
the Army! Candle, I'll only sign off
on this if it doesn't interfere with
your military police duties. So don't
bum fuck embarrass us!

EXT./INT. HEIDELBERG GASTHAUS - NIGHT

Candle and KAZ, 20s, drive up to the Heidelberg Gasthaus and stop their vehicle outside of the establishment, when they observe Patrons fleeing from the beer hall.

KAZ

Candle, how do I get one of those Army chess gigs? I think I know how the pieces move.

CANDLE

My dad taught me when I was five, and I've played since then.

Move Patrons rush out of the Gasthaus.

KAZ

So no hope then?

CANDLE

(slightly winces)
Probably not!

Both military policemen look at the Patrons panicking out of the Gasthaus.

KAZ

It's your turn to take point on this one.

CANDLE

Right.
(VO)
And this next incident in my life gave me nightmares for decades.

Without hesitation, Candle leaves the MP jeep and from his belt harness withdraws his nightstick.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

In the two years that I was in Heidelberg, being a US Army military policeman was always the pinnacle my life.

Candle steps into the virtually black entrance of the Gasthaus.

Just as Candle crosses the threshold, DRUNK GI, with a broken bottle, slashes the MP who partially blocks the attack by raising his right arm.

With his nightstick, Candle stops the Drunk GI's second swing and with both hands and cracks the assailant in his jaw.

Drunk GI then grabs Candle and they both smash down on the floor.

Wrestling around on the deck, both men receive numerous cuts on their backs and sides from broken glass shards.

With both hands, Candle grabs Drunk GI's hands as he attempts to slice the MP's face with his broken bottle.

Seemingly from nowhere, Kaz's nightstick smashes the Drunk GI's bottle and impacts into his face, rendering him partially unconscious.

Candle rolls away from Drunk GI, grabs his nightstick, and as hard as he can smashes the assailant in one of his kneecaps, which crushes with a distinctive CRUNCH.

Then with their nightsticks, both MPs pound away at Drunk GI's knees and arms.

Kaz stops as Candle continues to smash his nightstick against Drunk GI until the weapon breaks in half.

Kaz grabs Candle and pulls him to the side.

KAZ

Candle, I think he's unconscious.

CANDLE

BASTARD TRIED TO KILL ME!

KAZ

I know, and that's the way the report will be written up.

With all of his might in anger, Candle throws his nightstick down on the nearly unconscious Drunk GI's body.

KAZ (CONT'D)

Now, you're going to have to fill out a requisition report as to why your nightstick needs to be replaced.

With an abrupt *LAUGH*, both MPs place handcuffs on the Drunk GI's wrists and legs and secure handcuffs between the two sets behind the assailants back.

CANDLE

Kaz, I think I may be in trouble.

Kaz then looks at Candle's bloody Class-A uniform.

KAZ

Candle, you're bleeding all over yourself. I'm taking you to the hospital now.

INT. US ARMY HOSPITAL - NIGHT

With a long metal pole stuck through Drunk GI's back and leg handcuffs, MPs carry in the protesting assailant into the Emergency Room, like a squealing pig.

Right behind them, Kaz sits Candle down in a wheelchair and rolls him into the ER.

KAZ

Enjoy the ride while you can. In fact here's a nurse now.

The petit female WAC Major, BOUSSARD, late 20s, and several Orderlies rush to the wounded men.

BOUSSARD

Who and what do we have here?

KAZ

The Drunk GI cut up MP Candle.

BOUSSARD

(to Candle)

I'll triage him in the first bay here. The rest of you take the assailant to the far cubical.

Kaz wheels Candle into the first ER cubical.

KAZ

Appears like you're in good hands. After I write this up, grab you some clothes and give you a ride back to the barracks.

(leans and whispers)

Candle, you got the best-looking WAC nurse in all of the United States Europe. Make the most of Major Bosoms.

When Kaz leaves, Boussard pulls the curtain close. She then gets two white pills from the cabinet.

BOUSSARD

First take these two pills. It'll help dull the pain.

CANDLE

Need my wits about me ma'am.

Boussard hands Candle the pills and he swallows them down.

BOUSSARD

Now lets get that shirt off, see how bad these cuts are, and clean them up.

CANDLE

Worse cut is on my arm.

With Boussard's help, Candle attempts to pull his Class-A jacket off.

BOUSSARD

I've seen you in here before.

CANDLE

Two months ago, you took care of me after that MP vehicle accident.

BOUSSARD

So your plan's to visit me every two months in the ER?

CANDLE

(half laughs forth)
Not by design ma'am.

With a penlight, Boussard checks Candle's eyes and head for any signs of trauma.

BOUSSARD

Your eyes look clear. Lets get that shirt off.

Boussard helps Candle's remove tie and unbuttons his blood-soaked shirt to reveal a muscular lean body with but with cuts and scratches across his entire torso.

BOUSSARD (CONT'D)

Now I remember, you said your goal was to stay alive.

CANDLE

That's still my goal, but the Drunk GI made it close this time.

Boussard deposits Candle's in a trash bin and diligently cleans two deep gashes in Candle's right forearm.

BOUSSARD

First, I'll stitch-up your forearm.

As Candle's open wound continues to bleed, Boussard applies direct pressure with gauze against his arm. She wipes it off with antiseptic and with a suture, and then the WAC major expertly sews up the two gashes on Candle's arm.

BOUSSARD (CONT'D)

This should only leave two small scars.

Then with tweezers, Boussard starts to remove glass shards from across his back, shoulders, and arms.

BOUSSARD (CONT'D)

You've got bits of glass all over your body soldier. It's important to remove these shards.

Boussard deposits the glass shards into a small metal bowl

BOUSSARD (CONT'D)

In the Starts and Stripes, I read about your exploits in winning those chess tournaments through Germany.

CANDLE

I got three out of four victories now ma'am.

Candle's eyes slightly turn to catch the beautiful features and shape of Boussard.

BOUSSARD

Lets make sure there's no tendon damage. Can you flex your fingers?

Candle's face tightens.

CANDLE

A little painful, but all feels fine.

Candle then flexes his right fingers several times, and Boussard touches his hand. She then spreads some copper-looking disinfectant over the cut wounds on his torso.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

Ma'am, this gash shouldn't affect my ability to play guitar?

Boussard's eyes light up.

BOUSSARD

Guitar? You play the guitar?

CANDLE

My father gave me a Spanish guitar when I was nine. Played ever since.

Boussard starts wrapping gauze around Candle's arm and then tapes it off.

BOUSSARD

I've always wanted to learn how to play guitar. How much do you charge for lessons?

CANDLE

(warm smile)

Don't know. Hear me play first, and then we'll come up with a price.

EXT. HEIDELBERG SUBURB - NIGHT

On the outskirts of Heidelberg, Candle, with guitar case in hand, walks up to Boussard's German housing bungalow and just as he knocks on the door, she opens it.

BOUSSARD

(beaming)

I've been looking forward to my guitar lesson this entire week.

INT. BOUSSARD'S BUNGALOW - NIGHT

Sitting opposite from Boussard holding a classical guitar, Candle instructs her to play a simple E major cord with a simple arpeggio.

CANDLE

With your left hand, you hold the E major chord like this and with your right hand you will play the arpeggio, *pa, ia, ma ...*

Boussard make a reasonable attempt to play the simple piece.

BOUSSARD

Difficult ...

CANDLE

Anything difficult will be worthwhile to practice.

BOUSSARD

Of course ...

Boussard sets down her guitar.

BOUSSARD (CONT'D)

I need a wine break. Play for me.

Candle starts to play a melodic guitar piece as Boussard leans over and pours some wine into two glasses.

Boussard lights candles all around her living room. She then moves closer to Candle and offers him a glass of wine.

BOUSSARD (CONT'D)

Try it. It's my favorite.

Candle stops playing and accepts the wine glass from Boussard.

He sets down the wine glass and starts playing again to Boussard seductively starting to dance to his song.

CANDLE (V.O.)

I never had one of my guitar students do this before.

Boussard sways her hips and breasts closer-and-closer to him as he wraps up his melodic guitar song.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Damn, she smells great. And those breasts! I can only imagine what they look like under that blouse.

BOUSSARD
Would you like to find out?

CANDLE
Are you a mind reader?

Boussard draws to within an inch of Candle and pulls off her blouse exposing the most perfect set of breasts.

BOUSSARD
Yes, I am a mind reader.

Candle stops playing as Boussard unhooks her bra and drops it on his guitar.

CANDLE (V.O.)
It had been more than a year since I'd been with a woman.

Boussard pulls off Candle's civilian shirt.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Chris, you know this violates the Uniform Code of Military Justice for an enlisted soldier to fraternize with an officer.

Boussard pulls down Candle's pants and underwear and flings them across the room.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
If they find out about this, it's 20 years hard labor.

Candle pulls down Boussard's skirt to reveal no panties.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Chris, do you really care what happens at this point in time? [Pause] No!

Candle and Boussard embrace in a mad passionate kiss.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
To hell with this! I think I hear her heart pounding through my chest.

Through candlelight, Candle goes down on Boussard, and they make mad passionate love to the sound of shoes pounding on the pavement.

EXT. STREETS OF HEIDELBERG - DAY

Candle runs hard to reveal the back of his cutoff T-shirt reads: *US MILITARY POLICE / TAKE YOUR BEST SHOT*

CANDLE (V.O.)
I've been running all of my life.

Candle's face perspires as he pounds the pavement

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Sometimes, I run to get away from
somebody, something, or everything.

From behind Candle, two MPs driving in an OD green military jeep rapidly approaching the jogger.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But mostly, I run to reach someplace.

In combat fatigues, the MPs drive right past Candle.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Today, I was running across City of
Heidelberg to see Major Boussard,
and we'd make love for another 48
hours. Ok, that's a perfect fantasy.

The MP jeep stops, blocking off Candle's run.

CANDLE (CONT'D)
What the hell guys?

RAZ
Sorry Candle! Company commander wants
you in his office. Like now!

CANDLE
Is there a reason behind this?

MP KILO, 20s, places his hand on his service .45 pistol.

KILO
CO says, *get Candle back here, even
if it's his cold dead carcass.*

Kaz approaches Candle with his handcuffs.

CANDLE
Is that necessary?

KAZ
CO's orders! Sorry, turn around
Candle.

Candle turns around and Kaz places the cuffs behind the MP's back to both MPs leading the spent runner back to the jeep.

INT. MP CO'S OFFICE - DAY

Without the cuffs on, Candle, still in his sweats, stands at attention before Captain Harkus.

CANDLE

Private Candle reporting as ordered, sir.

HARKUS

As a trained military policeman, the Uniform Code of Military Justice should have been required reading.

CANDLE

I read UCMJ for my Army Intelligence Training in Fort Gordon.

HARKUS

Why then did you forget the penalty that befalls an enlisted soldier fraternizing with an officer?

CANDLE (V.O.)

AH CRAP THERE IT IS! Am I the prize caught in Boussard's Venice Fly Trap?

Candle inhales a deep breath and carefully answers.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

It would mean ten years of hard labor.

HARKUS

Damn straight! Twenty if mitigating circumstances warrant, like rape.

Candle's face tightens.

CANDLE

Rape? I've never raped anyone. Ever!

HARKUS

So my chess playing Military Policeman didn't have sexual intercourse with Major Ruth Boussard? Private, we know the facts; so answer truthfully.

Candle reflects for a moment.

CANDLE

I think I was seduced by cheap wine and bad poetry.

HARKUS

CHEAP WINE AND BAD POETRY MY ASS!

*

From behind Candle an indistinguishable man about his seize steps to within his peripheral vision.

SALTZ

(scoffing)

Private First Class Candle! Really? You were seduced by cheap wine and bad poetry. Clue me in here GI. Do you think at your court marshal the *cheap wine and bad poetry* defense will set you free?

Candle closes his eyelids and tries to bite his lower lip to keep from laughing to Captain Harkus leaning forward.

HARKUS

Private, you think something's belongs in a comedy club here?

CANDLE

(snaps to reality)

No sir.

Then the mystery man steps from behind Candle into full view.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

WHAT THE HELL! That's Federal Marshal Saltz, one of the two who apprehended me at my college campus.

HARKUS

Agent Saltz is with the State Department, and my MP Detachment is giving his agency my full cooperation.

Captain Harkus sternly sits up and looks at Candle who attempts to avoid direct eye contact.

HARKUS (CONT'D)

To what extend to you feel responsible for your actions with the WAC officer, Major Boussard?

CANDLE

(shaky voice)

I guess I didn't fully appreciate what I was getting myself into, sir.

HARKUS

What you were getting into was Major Bosom's squeezebox.

Candle remains at attention and lowers his eyes in defeat.

CANDLE

I guess ... I admit ... I was in the wrong, sir.

INT. MP FRONT DESK - DAY

DESK SERGEANT RENSON, 30s, steps up to the front desk and points his finger at the CO's office.

RENSON

What the hell's going on in there?

RAZ

Some black suit and the CO are giving Candle the third degree.

Renson's face twists an ugly smirk.

RENSON

Good, Candle's the worst damn Military Policeman in the entire US Army.
Good riddance to that asshole.

In the negative, Raz's lightly shakes his head and with concern looks back at the CO's closed door.

INT. MP CO'S OFFICE - DAY

Candle holds his breath as Agent Saltz circles around him.

SALTZ

Private, the Cold War is about as frozen as a witch's left tit. Those commie bastards have 4,000 nuclear warheads aimed right up our ass. They think we're weak because of Vietnam and the dissension with your stinking protesting hippie fuck ups.

HARKUS

Do you think you would like to sour your military record for a long-term incarceration at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas? Would you like that?

SALTZ

However, if Private Candle was to come to the aid of his country ...

HARKUS

Or you will be charged with drug possession, narcotic trafficking, Absent Without Leave, rape of an Army officer, and espionage.

The color from Candle's face completely drains out.

CANDLE

WHAT! Those would be bogus charges.

SALTZ

Espionage would bring you the death penalty.

HARKUS

But we have a way for you to get out of this. Next month Agent Saltz, will need your special talents.

CANDLE

Special talents with Boussard?

HARKUS

Scud brain, not those kinds of talents.

SALTZ

And it's not your bad poetry, or from our intel your accomplished classical guitar playing.

Agent Saltz positions himself into a chair next Harkus.

SALTZ (CONT'D)

I understand you're the top chess player in the United States Army Europe. You've been awarded a secondary MOS as an Army chess player. You have a European Chess Master's Rating, and you've won several tournaments here in West Germany. Furthermore, you have a working knowledge of the German language.

CANDLE

That would be all correct, sir.

SALTZ

Good. In two month's time, there's an international military chess tournament in East Berlin ...

CANDLE

East Berlin is communist.

Agent Saltz pulls out a packet of cigarettes and offers one to Captain Harkus while keeping one.

HARKUS

Chess is a big deal to the Russians, Germans, all those scurvy Slavic dip wads that orgasm off on it.

Candle remains motionless as Agent Saltz lights the Captain's cigarette and then his.

SALTZ

Lately, tensions between the bad guys and us have eased through sporting and rare cultural events.

Captain Harkus slides an ashtray at the edge of his desk, and Agent Saltz flips the ash off the end of his cigarette.

HARKUS

That's where you come in private.

SALTZ

We've submitted your name. The East German's approved that your master's rating is legitimate and agreed for you to compete.

HARKUS

We know you'll represent the United States Army and your country to the best of your ability.

SALTZ

Actually, I don't even give a rat's ass if you win one stinking game.

Captain Harkus then flicks off his ash into the tray.

HARKUS

But you're not going to embarrass your country, or the United States Army Military Police Corps, are you?

CANDLE

Never, but I can go and play chess in East Berlin? You arranged that?

SALTZ

Pay attention private.

CANDLE

And that gets me out of this court marshal?

SALTZ

A bit more complicated.

CANDLE (V.O.)

Why am I not surprised? Here it comes! Whatever it is!

Inside his trench coat, Agent Saltz pulls out a notepad.

SALTZ

You use something like this for your chess notation?

Candle accepts the chess pad from Agent Saltz.

CANDLE

Yes, exactly like that.

SALTZ

You will take this pad and lay it down at your board before the first round. Excuse yourself to the bathroom. When you come back, a different score pad will be switched. Record in it and bring it back. You can do that, can't you PFC?

CANDLE

I would be risking my life. Won't I be carrying something illegal in and something dangerous out? It will put my life in jeopardy. I must know what the risk is.

Coolly, Captain Harkus and Agent Saltz both inhale a deep drag and release the smoke across the room.

SALTZ

Need to know basis private.

CANDLE

Need to know basis? I won't do it unless I get an assurance.

HARKUS

Assurance! How about hard time waiting for you in Fort Leavenworth?

SALTZ

For America's national defense, we need you to do this.

CANDLE

I imagine I carry in money to payoff the East German asset. Coming out I would be carrying a strip of microfilm in its cardboard cover.

SALTZ

(eyes Harkus)

You picked a smart one.

CANDLE

If they find the money or film on my person, what will happen to me?

SALTZ

Oh, you'll probably be severely tortured for two to eight weeks, driving you to the brink of insanity.

Candle negatively shakes his head.

SALTZ (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Then the East Germans convict you in court and sentence you to death than commute your sorry ass to life.

Into resignation, Candle's entire body slouches while still remaining at attention.

SALTZ (O.S.) (CONT'D)

But here's the bright spot. After spending a year or more of hard labor in a communist prison, you'll be swapped out for any number of communist agents we have.

HARKUS

Son, our country asks different sacrifices of each one of us. This is your shinning moment.

Candle sets his jaw.

CANDLE

I'll play in the East Berlin chess tournament, but under two stipulations. This is my last shot spy crap deal, and I'll need some start up money when I get out. \$5,000!

HARKUS

Fucking soldier! I process your charges now.

SALTZ

Tell you what! Say \$2,500 in two weeks? Take it or leave it.

HARKUS

And I give you a direct order not to disclosure this meeting with anyone plus no Boussard contact.

SALTZ

Do you believe what's happening with our military?

As Candle shuts the door, he hears Captain Harkus blurt out.

HARKUS (O.S.)

Cheap wine and bad poetry! Those bastard draftees are ruining my Army.

INT. MP FRONT DESK - DAY

Candle steps out of the CO's office and closes the door to Raz greeting him.

RAZ

So Candle, what went on in there?

CANDLE

I just negotiated a four-figure bonus cash deal on top of my salary.

RAZ

A thousand dollars?

CANDLE

More.

RAZ

Schizer on a stick! A bonus on top of your pay, you did that? You're going to have to teach me that trick.

INT. GOVERNMENT SEDAN - LATE AFTERNOON

In the back seat of a US Government sedan, Agent Saltz hands Candle an official looking document.

WEST BERLIN

SALTZ

Here's your travel documents and visa to visit East Berlin for no more than five days. Don't lose it, or your schizer's in the wind.

Saltz hands Candle a new chess notepad.

SALTZ (CONT'D)

Before your first, game place this next to your chess set and go to the bathroom. During the tournament mark all of your games in this and bring that back to me. Remember five days.

Saltz grabs Candle by his jacket.

SALTZ (CONT'D)

You're about to meet a hot East German babe. Don't get caught with your hotdog in her muffin, or it's your last lovin'. Verstehen?

CANDLE (V.O.)

Oh, I understand all right. I understand I'm a CIA patsy.

INT. BERLIN SOCIALIST HALL - AFTERNOON

FRAULEIN OLYMPIA SCHONHEIT, early 20s, stands right at five feet tall and sports a perfect athlete's body. In escorting Candle into the Berlin Socialist Hall, the MP cannot but notice she displays a petit figure with a beautiful face.

OLYMPIA

(refined German accent)

Mr. Candle, this is where you'll be playing your chess games.

CANDLE

Danke Fraulein Olympia Schonheit.

OLYMPIA

Chris is easier. You please to call me, Olympia.

CANDLE

Nice.

OLYMPIA

Your table is there, and the facilities are down the hall.

On the far chess table sports a placard with the name PFC CANDLE, UNITED STATES ARMY, and a miniature stars and stripes flag sitting on its little podium.

CANDLE (V.O.)

I pray I don't make an idiot of myself, with my play or with Olympia.

On the other side of the board sits the Ukrainian flag with the placard, KORPRAL MARTEN ROMANISHCU.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I've seen Romanishcu's name in several European Chess Books, and remember that his attacks are sharp and precise.

Candle sets down his duffel bag and walks over to a window, with view of the east side of Berlin. In the distant west, he views the waning sun.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

(under-breath)

What are you doing her desert boy?

Olympia steps to the front of the playing hall and addresses the players.

OLYMPIA

Welcome to all military chess players
from both the East and the West.
That man Comrade Gurzinsky will be
your escort bodyguard while you are
in East Berlin.

The brute of a man, COMRADE GURZINSKY, 40S, stands ominously
close to Candle.

CANDLE (V.O.)

I need a bodyguard? That's a first.

Candle removes the chess notation pad, places it next to his
playing board, and heads to the bathroom with Gurzinsky in
tow.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

When I entered East Germany, the
Soviet Police assigned one of their
agents to follow me everywhere. I
pray he doesn't go into the toilet
stall with me.

Upon returning to the table, Candle opens his chess pad,
which appears to be identical to the one he left on the table.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I'm not even going to cognitive
distort that my Ukrainian opponent,
Matron Romanishcu ...

Candle scans his sight to view twenty or so people.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Or a dozen others in the room carried
out the switch.

With white, Candle pushes a pawn forward, presses his side
of the chess clock, and notes the move in his chess pad.

QUICK DISSOLVE TO:

Playing black and a new OPPONENT with a Romania flag, Candle
studies a rather complex middle game, again writes down his
chess move and presses his clock.

QUICK DISSOLVE TO

In rapid-fire moves, Candle and his WEST GERMAN OPPONENT,
with that flag next to his board, blitz out a series of moves.
The MP points out that his Opponent's flag has fallen.

QUICK DISSOLVE TO:

In an endgame, Candle's OPPONENT, sporting a Czechoslovakian flag, takes his king and gentlemanly lays it over on its side.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

So after four rounds, I stand atop the tournament ladder with three wins and a draw.

Both men extend their hand in a cordial handshake to Gurzinsky uncomfortably staring at Candle.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I'm sure almost everyone is pissed off with the American GI who kicked East Block commie ass.

With a hug crowd looking on, Candle barely breaks a nod in recognition of his win and then sets his sights on Olympia.

INT. EAST GERMAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

In an East German restaurant, Candle and Olympia eat a lean dinner with Comrade Gurzinsky standing by the front door talking to an INDISTINGUISHABLE MAN.

OLYMPIA

If you win your games tomorrow, the trophy is yours.

Candle studies Olympia's beautiful green eyes.

CANDLE

No one remembers the second place loser? Why doesn't Gurzinsky join us?

(VO)

Olympia's green eyes certainly could seal-the-deal for me to just defect.

OLYMPIA

Gurzinsky is what you in the West call Soviet KGB, and he will torture you into death if the American GI attempts illegal business.

Candle tightens his expression.

CANDLE

No illegal business here.

OLYMPIA

Of course, and certainly, leave all your tactics on the chessboard.

In Olympia's presence, Candle barely breathes.

INT. BERLIN SOCIALIST HALL - MORNING

Candle makes a cautious move against his EAST GERMAN OPPONENT and presses his clock.

CANDLE (V.O.)

To point in time and this space in
life, my goals seem simple.

Candle's East German Opponent aggressively makes a strong move, which the MP ponders for a moment.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

As a teenager, I wanted to escape
the abuse of my mother, older brother,
and stepfather, thinking I wasn't
going to live to the age of sixteen.

Candle's East German Opponent slides his queen to check the MP's king.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And I was certain that I was not
going to reach the ripe old age of
twenty.

With graciousness, Candle lifts up his white king and sets it down on the side of the board to muted applause from the crowd.

DISSOLVE TO:

Candle sits opposite from his Russian opponent, TIBERIUS TAIMINOV with the miniature Soviet hammer and sickle flag nest to his side of the board.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Now my goal is to make it through
this tournament, not be caught as a
Western spy, tortured, and sentenced
to death. Damn! Those are all really
good goals Chris!

Candle, as black, replies with initiating the Sicilian Defense.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Now I want to live to make it to my
twenty-second birthday, less than a
month from today.

Taiminov's eyes appear darker-and-darker.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Let me be clear about this, I was
not meant to exist in espionage crap!

Taiminov sacrifices his bishop against Candle's kingside placing the MP's monarch in check.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Yet, here I cross chess swords with
the best military player in the world.

From the strain of Taiminov's attack, Candle takes his black king and hands it to his opponent.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Taiminov most likely grew up with a
silver chess pawn in his mouth.

Candle looks over to see Olympia who lightly smiles and then shrugs her shoulders in an *Oh Well* gesture.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I guess oh well is right.

Candle starts putting away his belongings in his duffel bag including the chess notepad.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Now in finishing the tournament, I
lost my second game in a row and
came in not second but a respectable
third out of twelve players.

Olympia steps up to Candle.

OLYMPIA
I think you earned a lot of respect
here in East Berlin, but you must be
anxious to go home.

Candle longingly looks at Olympia.

CANDLE
Home? My true home is in the American
Southwest on the other side of the
planet. I just go back to Patton
Barracks in Heidelberg.

OLYMPIA
I will miss Chris's blue eyes. Would
you be with me like husband and wife
if you stay here in East Berlin?

Olympia steps to within a breath's length of Candle.

CANDLE
Yes, I would be yours, and you mine,
but then I would be considered a
traitor. I will not betray my country.

INT. SEDAN WEST BERLIN - NIGHT

Candle steps into the back seat a government sedan and sits next to Saltz.

SALTZ

The chess notepad!

Candle reaches into the duffel bag and hands Saltz the chess notepad who tears apart the front cardboard cover to retrieve a piece of microfilm.

CANDLE

Is Olympia your asset in East Berlin?

Saltz withdraws his 9mm pistol, ejects a shell out of it, catches it in mid-air, and then hands it to Candle.

SALTZ

Look at the etching on the lead.

Candle spots his engraved name on the tip of the bullet.

SALTZ (CONT'D)

That's right, it's your name on my bullet. In this business, People's lives in Soviet hell depend on your silence; so as long as the Berlin Wall remains standing, you will never speak of what you did here.

Candle remains mute.

SALTZ (CONT'D)

Draftee, I need to hear your answer, or I will just end your misery.

With disdain, Candle face draws a shallow pallor.

CANDLE

Yes, it's clear while the Berlin Wall still exists, I will never relay what I did here.

(VO)

Nor do I ever desire to see your mad dogface, ever again.

Saltz places his 9mm pistol back into its holster.

SALTZ

WUNDERBAR! Keep the 9mm bullet as a souvenir. Now lets get Private Candle back to carrying out his little Military Police duties.

EXT. OFTERSHEIM GASTHAUS - NIGHT

In the parking lot of the Oftersheim Gasthaus, Candle, from the trunk of his car, pulls out a dozen boxes of cigarettes and hands them to GERMAN NATIONALS.

OFTERSHEIM GASTHAUS

CANDLE (V.O.)

Where are they breeding monsters
like Saltz and Gurzinsky, who would
kill me without hesitation?

Candle then hands more German Nationals 5th of whisky bottles.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Don't think anyone is immune to being
murdered without any provocation.
Trust me, the evil never stops.

From the back seat of his car, Candle pulls out several rugs.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

So the US government wanted to hang
my life out there to rot, either in
a US military prison, or God only
knows in a Soviet gulag.

From the passenger's seat, Candle pulls out an authentic German Coo Coo Clock and hands it to SCHRIENER, 40s, a German national, who then hands the MP a wad of Deutsche Marks.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

So because the US government was so
cavalier with my life, I decided to
go *all in* with my black market gig.

Candle locks up his vehicle and walks toward the Oftersheim Gasthaus with Schriener.

SCHRIENER

I can sell five times as much as
this.

CANDLE

I'm cutting a deal with the PX manager
for more whisky, cigarettes, dry
goods, and cameras.

(VO)

When my military service was over
and I would leave Germany, my net
worth would be over \$20,000.00 from
my black market gig.

Candle and Schriener step into the beer hall and close the door behind them to GUNFIRE zinging back-and-forth.

INT. PX BASEMENT - DAY

In a massive display of gunfire, Candle and Raz pin down four TURKS (Turkish Nationals) in the basement of the PX in Heidelberg.

CANDLE (V.O.)

I can't let us get out of my Military Police days without mention the time that I was shot by Turkish Nationals, who were attempting to rob the PX.

In a constant barrage of firing live rounds back-and-forth against each other, the two MPs and the four Turks crouch behind metal lockers.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Now this gross firefight would produce over a 1,000 rounds of ammo discharged by both sides.

Above the basement, a dozen MP fire M-16s through the narrow windows over Candle and Raz toward the back of the basement.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I know for a fact that when the rest of our Military Police joined us we would have unlimited firepower.

The basement lights up from hundreds of rounds being discharged by both the Military Police and the Turks.

A Turk bullet ricochets off a metal locker and hits Candle in his lower left side.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

RAZ! I'VE BEEN SHOT!

Candle pulls up his dress green shirt, and Raz inspects the MP's lower right abdomen, which slightly bleeds.

RAZ

WHAT? LETS SEE! Candle! You'll be dead in an hour.

CANDLE

Seriously?

RAZ

Of course not! You'll live.

CANDLE (V.O.)

After the Turks ran out of ammunition, I was the only one wounded with a lower right broken rib. Now I can add - *shot in the line of duty* - to my resume.

INT. MP FRONT DESK - DAY

NEWBIE MPs stand at attention with another ten MPs as the MP Desk Sergeant, Candle, types away.

NEWBIE MP 1
(half whispers)
I heard the desk sergeant was a draftee?

CANDLE
(stern)
QUIET DOWN THERE!

Sporting sergeant stripes, Candle stops typing. He ascends from the MP desk and squares off to his MP platoon as he snaps his fingers pointing to NEWBIE MP 1.

CANDLE (CONT'D)
You, Newbie! Front and center!

Newbie MP 1 steps out of the ranks and snaps to attention as Candle inspects his appearance.

CANDLE (CONT'D)
You're a disgrace. I want to see my reflection off of your shoes, and your brass has smudges in it. Get back to the barracks and make yourself presentable. Than see me back here in twenty. Ten demerits in your jacket! One hundred, you're out of here. Any MP on my watch screws up by sleeping or smoking schizer, I will see your ass incarcerated in the brig. PLATOON DISMISSED!

As the MPs break off to hustle out of the MP station, Candle remains steadfast as the sound of a SIREN blasts forth.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
The MPs ran out of desk sergeants, and I'd been given the assignment; so now I'm part of the establishment.

INT. MP SEDAN - MORNING

As the rain falls on the MP sedan, Candle, in a class A uniform, pushes his face against the wet pain in the rear seat as the sedan's siren BLASTS full force to the sound of RIFLE SHOTS.

CANDLE (V.O.)
Thus ended my military tour in Heidelberg as it was the tradition to give us the royal sendoff with emergency lights and sirens.

EXT. SOUTH VALLEY - NIGHT

Holding a DR-16 film camera, bullets pop through car windows as Candle, 25, wearing kakis, crouches low hustling between parked vehicles with their windows shattering out from rifle shots.

2 YEARS LATER / CANDLE'S BROADCAST JOURNALIST DAYS

CANDLE (V.O.)

So in surviving my military police gig to make it home, I knew I could also make some good money in news, and my very first TV story played out as spot news madness.

Candle peeks his head over the driver's side hood as three bullets INSTANTLY PIERCE through the windshield with the driver's window glass ZINGING just inches from his head.

SOUTH VALLEY, ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Some news junkies were thrill seekers for the adrenaline rush, but my goal was to get paid for the extremes.

To the next bullet ZIPPING through, Candle's face grimaces.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I exist to cross that crime scene line. My mainline is the spot news headline! Becoming a TV photog played into my burning passion.

Shouldering his camera, Candle braces himself and films the ALBUQUERQUE POLICE and Bernalillo SHERIFF DEPUTIES shoot FLASH BANGS and MULTIPLE ROUNDS into a house as the HISPANO SUBJECT returns gun fire against them.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The Spot News Stories I cover are the usual crop of someone's inhumanity to man, women, children, beast, and the increasingly the environment.

In a fierce firefight, Albuquerque Police fire in rapid succession multiple rounds against the HISPANO SUBJECT.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I call the criminals, a *Parade of Scumbags*. This evil enjoys killing loved ones spreading their poison to everyone crossing their path.

In front of Candle's eyes, windows POP OUT and INSTANTLY FREEZE in mid-air.

Candle hoists his CP-16 on his right shoulder and begins to film the crazed shoot-out scene.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Señor Smato murdered his wife with a
butcher's knife sticking out of her
chest, and on the front driveway.

In the firefight lull, Candle spies the front dirt driveway and sees DEAD WIFE, 50s, lying face up with a butcher's knife imbedded in her chest.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But I see she didn't make it too far
out of the house, did she?

Instantly, a dozen Police Officers go from firing tear gas to full automatic rifle and sidearm fire.

Through the viewfinder, Candle sees sprays of weapons fire as the bullets zing back and forth between the police officers, himself, and Señor Smato.

After more tear gas and missile rounds, every glass in the house and police sedans shatters splintering the scene with a kaleidoscope of a surreal, *FIREFIGHT*.

After massive hails of bullets, Señor Smato pushes out a flag on a stick and waves it at the police in resignation.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
For my first news firefight story,
this drama played out radical.

In Señor Smato's other hand, he holds a bottle of Thunderbird wine, gulps down a hearty swig, and stumbles out of his house.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Look he's still getting drunk on
Thunderbird wine.

The Police charge him and throw him to the ground face down, knocking out his Thunderbird wine breaking the bottle on the driveway next to his dead wife.

The Police then handcuff Señor Smato, lift him to his feet, and hustle him over to a squad car.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Years later, Señor Smato was killed
in maximum security south of Santa
Fe. I guess some murderers have no
luck in marriage and prison riots.

INT. NEWSROOM - DAY

Candle stands in front of the NEWS DIRECTOR in his office, BARKING OUT his disingenuous mood.

NEWS DIRECTOR

Candle, why the hell didn't you get an interview with Señor Smato?

Candle remains standing without an answer.

NEWS DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Doesn't matter. Next time get sound on tape even if they don't say anything. Remember, you're only as good as your last news story. Around here spot news is god.

Candle walks out of the news director's office.

CANDLE (V.O.)

Never did a news director say, great job on putting your life in danger.

In the Newsroom, the drop-dead beauty news anchor, ANN CHOIR, 20s, natural blond, flicks her head at Candle.

ANN CHOIR

Hey Candle, great job on that South Valley firefight. Pretty intense!

CANDLE

For about five minutes, than he gave up like a spoiled brat needing a Popsicle stick!

ANN CHOIR

Spoiled brat needing a Popsicle stick!
I'll use that in my anchor lead-in.

Candle steps to within an arm's length of Ann Choir.

CANDLE (V.O.)

Ann Choir, what a babe! I'll take her critique over any news director. Go ahead Chris ask her out.

(almost timidly)

Ann, I was wondering if you'd like ...

The News Director hustles out of his office to the growling DIN of a plane's TURBO PROP ENGINES.

NEWS DIRECTOR

Candle, you up for an airplane ride?

EXT. SANTA FE NATIONAL FOREST - DAY

An Air Force cargo plane flies directly into a massive forest fire over the Santa Fe National Forest.

SANTA FE NATIONAL FOREST

CANDLE (V.O.)

To date, the most dangerous spot news madness story that I covered was parachuting into a forest fire along with the smoke jumpers.

Deep within the forest fire, trees explode in massive fireballs.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Generally, before the desert monsoons erupt in July and August, forest fires in the Southwest mountains ignite into critical mass.

Wild forest animals flee in its destructive wake.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

God, help all the poor little fauna and flora in this monster's path.

INT. CARGO PLANE - DAY

Radically rocking back-and-forth, Candle sits in the back of the converted Air Force cargo plane.

Along the fuselage sit a dozen SMOKE JUMPERS geared out in their orange work clothes.

Engines rattle the interior of the cargo plane as the craft flies 10-thousand feet above the massive forest fire.

CANDLE (V.O.)

So the word from the Jump Master is that this is a major forest fire already spreading over 37-thousand acres. Here we go.

Within the interior of the cargo plane, a solid red light turns to a flashing yellow light.

JUMP MASTER, 40s, stands and YELLS FORTH ...

JUMP MASTER

SMOKE JUMPERS! FIVE MINUTES! HARNESSSES
YOUR HOOKS TO YOUR SHOOTS!

(looks at Candle)

YOU TOO PHOTOG BOY!

All the Smoke Jumpers and Candle stand and hook their tether line to a cable and JUMP MASTER steps up to Candle.

JUMP MASTER (CONT'D)
 (eyes Candle)
 YOU READY TO BAIL OUT OF THIS BITCH?

CANDLE
 WHY I SIGNED UP!

Candle glances out of the back open hatch with an occasional whiff of smoke filtering through the plane's fuselage.

Jump Master looks across his charges.

JUMP MASTER
 STAND BY! SNAP UP SMOKE LOVERS!

Candle stands and snaps on his parachute line with the other twenty Smoke Jumpers to the metal fuselage cable. Jump Master eyes Candle.

JUMP MASTER (CONT'D)
 HEY PHOTOG BOY! YOU KNOW WHAT'S MORE
 DANGEROUS THAN DOING THIS SMOKE
 JUMPING GIG?

Candle shakes his head.

CANDLE
 SOMETHING'S MORE DANGEROUS THAN THIS?

JUMP MASTER
 COACHING HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL!

Candle half smiles.

CANDLE
 IT'S MORE DANGEROUS TO BE A HIGH
 SCHOOL FOOTBALL COACH?

JUMP MASTER
 NO, BUT I WANT PHOTOG BOY TO FEEL
 SECURE! JUST IN CASE THIS IS SCRAPPY
 CANDLE'S FINAL ACT ON, ABOVE, OR
 BELOW PLANET EARTH!

CANDLE (V.O.)
 It seemed to me that the Smoke Jumpers
 enjoy a good chuckle at my expense.

Then the light starts flashing green to all twenty Smoke Jumpers leaping out of the plane.

JUMP MASTER
 GO! GO! GO! GO! GO! GO! GO! GO! GO!

EXT. SANTA FE NATIONAL FOREST - DAY

With their equipment and parachutes firmly strapped to their bodies, every Smoke Jumper leaps out of the plane into the day's haze of the forest fire.

JUMP MASTER
(echoes forth)
GO! GO! GO!

Candle tightens the tether line of his DR 16mm film camera tightly to his orange flack-jacket. He checks for spare film canisters in his equipment bag tightly secured to the front of his body.

CANDLE (V.O.)
There is never a time to not be
prepared in the news world.

JUMP MASTER
GO ...
(echoes out)

CANDLE (V.O.)
Being the last one to jump out of
the plane, I start my camera rolling
for posterity, and then all I could
come up with was ... OH CRAP!

The last to exit the plane, Candle jumps as his tether line pulls taught. With a hard yank, his shoot deploys.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I remember falling through inner
space, than SNAP!

After several swings back-and-forth, Candle vertically stabilizes.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
My life-saving harness jerks me
backwards and my parachute deploys.

Candle lifts his camera and films the Smoke Jumpers parachuting toward the ground with the raging forest fire licking its chops as their backdrop.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Forest fires actually create their
own weather system. Oh yeah, this is
some good footage.

Candle floats toward Mother Earth and gazes off to the northeast.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
They also envelop an awesome beauty
solely unto themselves.

In the distance, Candle observes trees explode from the
intense forest fire.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I respect the raw power of a fire's
nature, the way the golden flames
curl into to tight spherical circles
surrounding each treetop. It's freaky,
yet poetically devilish.

Candle turns his camera's lens to the inferno and continues
to shoot the incendiary derangement.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Well so far it's peaceful up here.

Candle notices that the forest line near a meadow draws forth
his landing zone.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Then the strangest feeling crossed
my thoughts. Did I forget to feed my
cat?

A gust of wind catches Candle's parachute drawing him closer
toward the forest fire.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Wait, I don't have a cat, but maybe
I need a cat plan to stop doing this
spot news insanity? Look forward to
something real depending on me.

Candle looks down to see the other Smoke Jumpers softly
landing and collecting their gear.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
There's the edge of the meadow. Here
come pine trees. I hope the forest
fire doesn't catch up with me.

The last to land, Candle balls into a semi-tucked position.

BANG!

RIP!

CRASH!

OUCH!

ARGGGGGGGGGH!

Candle lies perfectly still between two ponderosa pines, when the CHIEF SMOKE JUMPER hustles up to him.

CHIEF SMOKE JUMPER
Photog Boy, what kind of damn pictures
can you take from down there?

Candle unfastens his harness, checks to see if the equipment survived, and hustles off with the other Smoke Jumpers.

CANDLE (V.O.)
Great! Now, I'm living the Spot New
Madness Dream.

Fire explodes enveloping a massive Ponderosa pine.

With an axe, a Smoke Jumper chops down a small tree with the forest fire as his backdrop.

Candle shoots a line of Smoke Jumpers lighting a backfire.

Two more Smoke Jumpers sweat away wielding their pick axes on a clump of scrub oak brush.

Ash swirls around another gang of Smoke Jumpers using a chainsaw to clear out burning dead-and-down.

A wind shear lifts a fiery counter-clockwise vortex hundreds of feet into the sky completely sucking all oxygen from the air.

With shovels, several Smoke Jumpers shovel dirt upon dried out grasses.

Through soot filled eye sockets, Candle maintains his intensity of shooting the Smoke Jumpers exhaustingly labor at their firefighting task.

CHIEF SMOKE JUMPER
We're hiking down there to the
rendezvous point.

Candle looks down the mountain tail to see the massive forest fire consume one side of the mountain.

CHIEF SMOKE JUMPER (CONT'D)
And we need to get there before that
bastard reaches us.

Candle hears the DRONE of a PLANE engine. He looks up to see the sun completely covered in the forest fire's smoke, when a C-30 tanker flies overhead and within several hundred yards dumps its load of red retardant on the edge of fire line.

INT. NEWSROOM - DAY

In a cloud of smoke, soot, and ashes, Candle hustles through the newsroom.

Other REPORTERS, COPY EDITORS, PHOTOGRAPHERS, and FILM EDITORS virtually ignore Candle's presence as he passes through.

Candle steps into the developing room and hands five film canisters to DEVELOPER, 40s, pale gray complexion.

DEVELOPER

Five cans? Damn Candle, shot your ass off did you.

CANDLE

Director expects film for the 6 o'clock news.

DEVELOPER

On it ...

Candle looks up at a monitor as Ann Choir pitches the forest fire lead.

ANN CHOIR

And in tonight's lead story, the massive forest fire in the northern part of the state now rages out of control going into its second week.

Candle's forest fire footage rages through the TV screen.

ANN CHOIR (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Reportedly, from the US Forest Official over 100,000 acres have been destroyed in the fire.

The News Director approaches Candle.

CANDLE (V.O.)

Here it comes. Hey Candle great job. News Emmy winning footage!

News Director's expression remains unwavering.

NEWS DIRECTOR

One of those air tankers just crashed flying back from the forest fire. We have a helicopter waiting. You know the area. Is my Photog Boy up for some more overtime?

Behind soot covered eye sockets, Candle lightly nods.

EXT. SANTA FE NATIONAL FOREST - DAWN

At the edge of the Spot News Madness scene, the news helicopter lands.

CANDLE (V.O.)
Tragic byproducts of spot news stories
are plane crashes.

With a TK-76 and a Sony BVU-110 [massive video camera and recording deck], Candle steps out of the Bell Jet Ranger helicopter and hustles up to the shell of the C-30.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
This plane fatality was relatively
light on human tragedies.

Candle starts video taping EMERGENCY TECHS removing three black body bags from the wreckage.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Only three people died, the pilot,
copilot, and navigator.

Chief Smoke Jumper stands off to one side of the wreckage.

CANDLE (CONT'D)
Interview?

CHIEF SMOKE JUMPER
Of course, that's part of my job.

Candle hoists the camera up on his shoulder and starts shooting Chief Smoke Jumper's S.O.T. [sound on tape].

CANDLE
Do you have names of the flight crew
and did you know them?

CHIEF SMOKE JUMPER
No. They were flying out of
California.

Candle looks off at the charred remains of the plane with the burnt pine trees and the smoldering landscape of the forest fire as a backdrop to their voices fading away.

CANDLE
And is there any indication as to
the cause this crash?

CHIEF SMOKE JUMPER
(voice trails off)
Not yet. The FAA's official report
won't be out for some ...

INT. CANDLE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Under a constant stream of shower water, the naked Candle stands with black and gray ash pouring from his body.

CANDLE (V.O.)
 Since my military police gig, I've
 always been a shower addict.

Candle pours on copious amounts of shampoo over his head to where the suds completely cover his face.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Cleaning off a forest fire took a
 week of showers to wash the mountain
 disaster out of my skin, fingernails,
 hair follicles, and eyes.

Intermittently, Candle hacks out the ash from his lungs.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 I want no one to say that Candle
 wasn't fully committed and engage to
 the Spot News Madness scene. But the
 footage I brought back from the forest
 fire - Rocky Mountain Emmy™ time!

When Candle raises his head, his eyes still only appear partially clean to the swelling sound of a MASSIVE TRAIN'S HORN growing deafeningly loud.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Spot New Madness is unforgiving,
 especially when it's trains versus
 people in cars.

EXT. RURAL RAILROAD TRACKS - NIGHT

Head-on, a freight train T-bones a vehicle full of teenagers sending the obliterated sedan flying through the night sky.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - DAY

A second sedan rotates through the air landing on its top totally pancaking its roof and then rolling end-over-end.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - LATE AFTERNOON

A massive SUV collides with a WV Beetle Bug to where both vehicle careen off of the mountain road falling hundreds of feet into an abyss.

INT. INTERSTATE - EARLY MORNING

Driving at the wheel, a YOUNG LADY falls asleep with her BROTHER sitting as a passenger and the vehicle SMASHES into a sand truck ripping it in half.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

A police sedan with its emergency lights flashing and its siren whaling pursues a suspect car fleeing at a high rate of speed.

The suspect car just clears a busy intersection and the police car crashes full on into a SENIOR CITIZENS' van.

EXT. CITY CROSS STREET - DAY

With tall buildings overshadowing a city cross street, a MAN and his FEMALE PASSENGER enter the intersection with the green light. INSTANTLY, a garbage dump truck flattens them.

CANDLE (V.O.)

Just because you have the green light
does not mean you're going to survive
the intersection.

EXT. RURAL RAILROAD TRACKS - DAY

With his TK-76 camera on a tripod, Candle videotapes the virtually unrecognizable mangled vehicle.

CANDLE (V.O.)

Vehicle fatalities! People and their
toys have tons of fun until ...

Like stacking a chord of wood, EMTs deposit six black body bags next to the railroad tracks.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

So where's all this going? Lessons
learned, lessons forgotten, homework
lessons never completed, and street
lessons never learned because victims
and perpetrators are killed in an
instant.

A tow truck pulls the mangle teenager's vehicle away from the front of the train engine that exposes little to no damage.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Here come family members planting
desconsos, those crosses we all see
along the highways and the byways.

Several OLDER MAN and WOMAN hammer in white wooden crosses where the train first destroyed the vehicle to the sound of RIVER RAPIDS crashing forth.

EXT. RIO GRANDE - DAY

In Category 3 rapids, Candle and TRACI, late teens, red hair, freckles, mega-cute, buck the river in a two-person raft shooting down the Rio Grande's narrow gorge.

CANDLE (V.O.)

In one magical summer, my current
infatuated love is Traci.

With the yellow raft arcing high, Candle and Traci hold on for dear life.

FREEZE FRAME / DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MADRID DINNER THEATER - NIGHT

At the Madrid Dinner Theater, Candle and Traci enjoy the live entertainment over a lobster and steak dinner.

CANDLE (V.O.)

I make the funds to entertain Traci
with about anything we want to do.

Traci leans over to Candle and whispers something private.

EXT. SANGRE DE CRISTO MOUNTAINS - NIGHT

Next to a small campfire, Candle and Traci snuggle together with a blanket wrapped around them.

TRACI

Chris, I'm worried. Why do you take
the horrible risks that you take?

Under the Milky Way Galaxy, Candle looks back at Traci.

CANDLE

Bagging TV news footage, is like a
narcotic. The more I get of it; the
more I want to go out and score it.

Traci sadly looks at Candle drawing a degree of hopelessness.

TRACI

So you love TV news, more than me?

CANDLE

Traci, I want you, but I have to be
honest. I can't stop covering this
Spot News Madness merry-go-round.

(VO)

But until this next story I didn't
truly understand how Spot New Madness
would castrate my psyche.

INT. CANDLE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A phone rings next to Candle's waterbed. He elongates his naked body and picks up the receiver perched on his ear listening a male's VOICE IN URGENCY speak on the other side.

CANDLE

Oh man, display a little mercy.

ANITA, early 20's, Hispanic, lies naked next to him also in a state of semi-consciousness. Candle glances over to see the black hair beauty open one of her eyes.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

Especially since it was an all niter,
and today's my day off.

Candle listens through the phone as the voice MUMBLES through the receiver in mentioning the words *PRISON RIOT* and *KILLING*.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

A-huh. What? A-huh. Man, I've been
pulling tons of overtime. Biggest
story of the decade! Okay. Biggest
prison riot in American history! All
right, I'll be in.

(a beat)

When? Say within the hour.

As the receiver goes dead, Anita gazes at him through half-closed eyes and weakly smiles.

ANITA

(spoiled like)

Thought you had Saturday off. You
said you'd take me to the zoo.

CANDLE

My life is a zoo.

Candle rolls from the waterbed, and naked he stumbles to the bathroom as Anita rolls back under some covers.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

But the prison is burning, and inmates
are dying. Traci, fix some breakfast
and lock the door behind you.

ANITA

I told you last night in the throws
of passion. My name's not Traci.
It's Anita. ANITA! Damn newspaperman!

Anita pulls the covers over herself and turns away as the sound of a TOILET flushes and SHOWER WATER sprays forth.

INT. CELLBLOCK 4 - DAY

INMATE SNITCHES frantically yell, pound, and bang against their individual cell doors.

SUPER: CELLBLOCK 4 / AREA OF MOST INMATE MURDERS

INMATE SNITCHES
(distorted)
GOD SAVE ME! NO KILL ME! NO KILL ME!

With an acetylene torch, WOLFGANG and CHEESE HEAD, 30s, cut the metal lock of Cellblock Four, while PREDATOR CONVICTS yell for revenge throughout the prison interior.

PREDATOR CONVICTS
(more distorted)
KILL SNITCHES! KILL SNITCHES!

Wolfgang, Cheese Head, and the Predator Convicts file into CELLBLOCK FOUR to the Inmate Snitches in lockdown growing more crazed by the moment.

INMATE SNITCHES
(distortedly crazed)
GOD HELP US! GOD HELP US! HELP US!

Snitch Inmates scream at the top of their lungs with pleas for MERCY growing increasingly DISTORTED.

Predator Inmates place their acetylene torches against three different locks cutting into the Snitches' cells.

Predator Convicts throw clear liquid from rubbing alcohol bottles into several metal cubicles and light a match exploding the interior into flames.

Across the second story balcony, a different set of Predator Inmates wrestle an Inmate Snitch to the ground, lift him up, and throw him over the top to the first floor.

Xaviér, late 20s, and BRUTIPO BACA, 30, lift another Snitch Inmate, turn him over, and ram his head against a porcelain toilet.

Wolfgang stands over the last Snitch Inmate with a lit torch as the victim's eyes widen in sheer terror with the flame drawing closer than reflecting off of his eyeballs.

INT. PENITENTIARY GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

Undefined Predator Inmates stack up dozens of bodies in a pile, pour gasoline over the corpses, and light the evidence on fire.

Solemnly, Wolfgang and Cheese Head stand in the entrance to the gymnasium while smoke surrounds them.

EXT. NEW MEXICO STATE PRISON - NIGHT

In a massive meltdown of smoke, ash, and flames, Candle stands before the New Mexico State Prison with his video camera.

As the facility billows in smoke, the News Media congregates in the small front gate before the administration area.

Candle accepts the pen and signs his name. He then moves to the front of the line.

The radio reporter, STAN, steps next to Candle and checks the tape recorder strapped around his shoulder.

STAN

Candle, you like venturing into the jaws of Black Death Holes?

CANDLE

How do you think I pay for my next girlfriend?

Candle hoists up his RCA TK-76 video camera on his right shoulder as he secures the recorder's strap on his left one, and the TV REPORTER finishes signing his name on a list.

TV REPORTER

This should be interesting. The beat-to-crap guards come out, and we go in as replacements. Great!

Candle looks at the front of the burning complex to view a news photographer being escorted to the front of the prison by several masked inmates.

TV REPORTER (CONT'D)

Damn it Candle, get your ass in there and get visuals, or you're fired.

Candle turns back to the front of the prison. In a plaid shirt and black bandanna covering their faces, Xaviér and BRUTIPO BACA, emerge from the prison block.

XAVIÉR

¡UN FOTÓGRAFO MÁS!

With his camera equipment, Candle steps through the front gate and hustles into the smoke filled complex.

CANDLE (V.O.)

And as I hustled into the burning prison, I thought to myself, *Chris, this isn't the brightest thing you've ever done.*

INT. NEW MEXICO STATE PRISON - NIGHT

Trudging through water laced with blood, Candle steadies his video camera on his shoulder to MEN SCREAMING filters through the penitentiary.

1980 NEW MEXICO PRISON RIOT

CANDLE (V.O.)

The 1980 New Mexico Prison riot
slaughters into the mother load of
Spot News Madness.

Two Hispanic prisoners, Xaviér Fierro and Brutipo Baca, 30s, wearing bandannas guide Candle through the burnt out shell of the penitentiary.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

33 dead! Perhaps as many as 70 more
brutally slaughtered, and my inmate
escorts probably killed half of them.

Xaviér and Brutipo escort Candle through the blackened smoke filled prison to the SICK SCREAMING ECHOES of tortured men.

XAVIÉR

TV vato, you should have been here a
few hours ago when every snitch rat
had his head exploded from a
blowtorch.

CANDLE

(cautiously)

Can't really put that on TV news.

Candle shoots two PREDATOR CONVICTS towing a dead body by two ropes tied to the victim's feet, and they quickly disappear down the soot filled concrete hallway.

BRUTIPO

So news bitch, what brought you to
this mayhem and murderous chaos?

With their dead victim in tow, the two Predator Convicts move father into the prison's monster of the blood and guts.

CANDLE

Simple, my philosophy *I wanted no
two days to be alike*, and the pay's
become increasingly better.

BRUTIPO

¡Vato! How much you get paid for
shooting this shit? When I get out
can you get me one of your jobs?

INT. PENITENTIARY COMMAND TRAILER - NIGHT

With the backdrop of the penitentiary burning down, GOVERNOR SAM taps a pencil on a Formica top of the trailer's fold out eating table as the WARDEN stands before him.

GOVERNOR SAM

(SW Texas accent)

Warden, what in tarnation you telling me? That three, only three news folks went inside? Eleven names for eleven hostage inmates! That was the gall, gall darn deal.

WARDEN BONAZOS

Governor, I doubt if much will go right from here on out.

Governor Sam sets his jaw.

GOVERNOR SAM

I'm sending in the National Guard. Locked, locked and loaded. Shoot every damn inmate looks threatening.

WARDEN BONAZOS

Governor, we've got eleven known Officers and two more unaccounted for plus the three TV journalists in there. If you send in your troops blazing with rifles, fifteen innocent men's lives will be on your conscience and in your political nightmares for the rest of your career.

Governor Sam clenches his teeth and tightens his fist.

GOVERNOR SAM

COW PIES! I TELL YOU GALL DARN COW PIES!

INT. CELLBLOCK 4 - NIGHT

As the echoes of MEN SCREAMING sustains a sick intensity, Brutipo, Xaviér, and Candle trudge through bloody water and debris of Cellblock 4.

BOUSSARD

Weto, what's your name?

CANDLE

Candle.

BRUTIPO

Candle? You look like some Gringo salou! We hope you got a strong stomach esé.

Candle attempts to act nonchalant as he stands in the upper tier of the ghoulish devastation of Cellblock Four, looks at the sea of red liquid below him, and then mumbles under his breath.

CANDLE

Oh my God! It's a river of blood.

BRUTIPO

I always knew this bitch was a pussy.

Xaviér curls his upper lip in Candle's direction.

XAVIÉR

You will get through this, TV newsman.

In the front of Cellblock Four, Candle pivots to see Wolfgang, Cheese Head, and a half dozen Anglo Convicts step up behind them. Holding an acetylene torch, the leader lights it.

WOLFGANG

TV man dies!

Candle's eyes widen.

XAVIÉR

Adolf assholes! Never happen!

WOLFGANG

We have unfinished business.

XAVIÉR

And you think you have numbers?

WOLFGANG

Do the math brown bitch.

XAVIÉR

I already have.
(snaps his fingers)

From out of the cells behind Xaviér, the back of the steps behind Wolfgang, and across the entire first floor tier several dozen Hispanic inmates appear.

WOLFGANG

I always planned on dying in here.

XAVIÉR

Now you get your wish.

Candle remains FROZEN as from behind Xaviér when HISPANIC INMATE hands him a lit acetylene torch.

XAVIÉR (CONT'D)

Mano y mano ...

In a SLOW MOTION DANCE, Xaviér and Wolfgang rush each other with raised acetylene torches. As they crash into one another the lit torches come within a hairs length of each other's face.

Each combatant wildly swings their flaming weapon at one another as the whole cellblock erupts in a MAD CRAZE of CHEERS and JEERS.

As Wolfgang seems to be getting the upper hand, Xaviér slashes his torch across the Anglo's upper arm that singes the leader of the Predator Convicts.

Each fighter wildly flails a torch weapon at the opponent coming within a breath's length of killing the other one.

From a window above Cellblock 4, a bullet ricochet off the concrete walls of the cellblock and punctures Wolfgang's acetylene torch that immediately spews forth propane fuel.

Wolfgang and Xaviér throw their torch at each other. Both bounce off crashing to the floor with every inmate seeking the protection of the cells.

Wolfgang, Cheese Head, and their gang of Anglo Inmates bolt from cellblock 4.

Candle pulls his camera down to his chest and braces himself behind the safety of a broken porcelain toilet.

In a massive fireball, the acetylene canisters explode shooting shrapnel across the cellblock.

As the flames and smoke dissipate, Candle looks on the opposite side of the cell to see jagged pieces of metal imbedded into the concrete wall inches from where the photojournalist took refuge.

When the smoke dissipates, Brutipo steps into the cellblock.

BRUTIPO

Vato, you want more pictures? Ready
to finish your little prison tour?

Candle half smirks, stands, and brushes himself off.

Xaviér calmly steps into the cell and see that Candle appears unscathed.

XAVIÉR

Candle, you stay close to me; so no
neo-Nazi butt rammer sticks his prick
up your asshole and splatters your
brains into a toilet.

Candle's face appears blank loosing all his color.

EXT. PENITENTIARY - NIGHT

Again wearing black bandannas, Xaviér and Brutipo lead Candle to the front of the administration exit.

CANDLE (V.O.)

I spent just shy of 2 hours inside of the Death Hole, but this experience was to alter the rest of my life.

Xaviér flicks his head at Candle.

XAVIÉR

(through bandanna)

Go tell the world what you see in here.

CANDLE

I just have one last question. Why?

XAVIÉR

Besides the overcrowding, the snitch system, the tortures in the hellhole, and the rotten food. Cuaté, somebody had to burn this bitch down.

Candle videotapes where the gymnasium burns to the ground.

CANDLE (V.O.)

In the gymnasium, the extensive mutilation and incineration of bodies were never identified.

Outside of the fence, the Army NATIONAL GUARD stands locked and loaded with near naked INMATES nearly freezing to death.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Some trials were held but no inmate served hard time for the death and destruction of the 1980 riot.

Candle reaches the gate and turns to videotape Xaviér standing before the administration entrance.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But miraculously, and true to Xaviér's word, not one guard taken hostage lost his life.

National Guard Med Techs remove the wound GUARDS and INMATES to a MELODIC CLASSICAL GUITAR SONG.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And every inmate that the medical people treated and transported to the Santa Fe hospital also survived.

INT. CANDLE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

With several dozen candles lit, Candle softly plays one of his Spanish nylon string guitar pieces quietly to himself.

CANDLE (V.O.)

The carnage I witnessed in the prison riot. Well let me just say that would travel through my nightmares for years and years to come.

Naked, Boussard SLOWLY walks from one end of the apartment to the other end than briefly glances back at Candle. She raises a glass of wine before disappearing into thin air.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

One of my great escapes would be to lose myself in my brand of classical guitar playing.

With a wet towel wrapped around her body, Olympia emerges from the bathroom and stands before Candle than SLOWLY vanishes.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Years later I will make some spare money playing guitar concerts. Now, it's just music therapy.

In sheer underwear and a see-through bra, Traci wavers back-and-forth, holding out her hands for Candle to approach her.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

Tracy, I want you to be real, but you're only a dream.

TRACI

Chris, I'm only as real as you want me to be.

CANDLE

I'm sorry I didn't do more to stay with you.

TRACI

I had to go off to college, and you had to go off and photograph fires, bank robbers, and prison riots.

CANDLE

And what do I have to show for that?

TRACI

Certainly not me ...

In a whisper, Traci etherealizes into thin air to Candle pulling in a deep breath and resuming with his classical guitar piece to the GROWING DIN of a helicopter's engine.

INT. BELL JET RANGER - NIGHT

In a raging snowstorm, Candle sits in the back seat of a Bell Jet Ranger helicopter while CHOPPER CHUCK flies the bird.

WOLF CREEK COLORADO

CANDLE (V.O.)

Now, I'm here to tell you just how thoroughly insane the broadcast TV news business is.

The Bell Jet Ranger violently rocks back-and-forth as if caught up on the agitation cycle of a breaking down machine.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Here I am flying to a plane crash in the same snowstorm where there were no survivors from a family of seven.

Candle looks out of helicopter's window to see darkness and a hurricane of white snow crashing against his the outside.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Phenomenally whacked out, no? But perhaps really more stupid, yes?

POW!

BANG!

BOOM!

SNAP!

CANDLE (CONT'D)

(thru comm)

WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?

CHOPPER CHUCK

(calmly)

We lost a compressor in the engine.
Brace for auto rotation.

CANDLE (V.O.)

AUTO ROTATION! Maybe the last thought before death, calm your mind Chris.

Candle pulls the straps securely on his video equipment and then cinches his belt straps as tightly as he can.

EXT. COLORADO MOUNTAIN - NIGHT

With a smoke trail leading out of the engine, the Bell Jet Ranger helicopter auto rotates down through the mountainside and spins around-and-around into several snow-laden pines.

CANDLE (V.O.)

Is this what the end of my world
feels like? I'm being cheated out of
a last flashback.

INT. BELL JET RANGER - NIGHT

In a whirlwind of snow, pine needles, and smoke, the Bell Jet Ranger twists into the side of the mountain and crashes with a HARD THUMP.

In coming to a complete stop, Candle briefly checks out his extremities for any damage. He then clicks on the comm.

CANDLE

(thru comm)
Are we alive?

CHOPPER CHUCK

(back thru comm)
Yep! How about that?

CANDLE

I guess those helicopter auto rotation
classes paid off.

CHOPPER CHUCK

Yes, they did. I'm sending out a
distress call, but I doubt if anybody
will help us out before morning due
to this storm. There's a thermal
blanket back there. Wrap it around
you and keep your feet off the deck.

Candle pulls thermal blank out and tightens into a ball.

CANDLE (V.O.)

I guess keeping my feet off the
helicopter's floor is to prevent
them from getting FROST BITE!

Through a slit in the blanket, Candle's breath condenses from the frozen air to see that the snowstorm rages forth.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

When freezing to death becomes a
reality, thinking is reduced to just
surviving the next breath. BUT
HALLELUJAH! I JUST SURVIVED MY FIRST
AIRBORNE CRASH!

EXT. COLORADO MOUNTAIN - MORNING

SLOWLY, first rays of light filter though the pine needles of the trees where the Bell Jet Ranger crashed through.

While Candle shoots video of the downed Bell Jet Ranger against the mountainside FOREST RANGERS drive two snow mobiles toward Chopper Chuck.

1st Ranger picks up Candle and, in the snow mobile, whisks him down the mountainside.

CANDLE (V.O.)

As fortune appears to form on the new day, the Rangers that gave us a lift were helping out with the down plane crash, less than a mile down the mountainside.

Not too far down the mountainside, Candle sees a dozens of MOUNTAIN RESCUERS and a handful of NEWS MEDIA REPORTERS working on the burnt out shell of the crashed site.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And there's the object of why I risked my life, the down twin-engine plane.

Seven body bags rests next to the plane with MEDICAL EXAMINER snapping off still pictures.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And there's the Medical Examiner making an assessment of the casualties, including four children that did not see the sunrise we saw.

Candle concentrates shooting video of the burnt out fuselage.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

These people never stood a chance.
POW! INSTANT DEATH AND DESTRUCTION!

Candle notices one TV news crew with the female photog, LAUREL, 20s, dark hair, tall, athletic, ends shooting a stand-up of a MALE REPORTER.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

There's the news crew from our Colorado Sister TV station. They'll give me a ride into town.

LAUREL

I hear you survived a down helicopter.

CANDLE

Imagine the odds? Share them for a ride into town?

INT. PAGOSA HOT SPRINGS HOTEL - NIGHT

CRASHING THROUGH a partially open hotel room door, Laurel and Candle, in an enrapturing embrace, kick the door closed.

CANDLE (V.O.)

There are perks to the news biz.

IN A FRENZY, jackets, boots, socks, and underclothes fly across the motel room followed by Candle and Laurel, naked, crashing onto the bed.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Right after I survived my near death experience, life moments became radical and intense.

In a flurry of INTENSE PASSION, Laurel and Candle, in every physical angle possible, make love in every possible section of the motel room.

On the bed!

On the floor!

In the tub!

On each room chair!

Against the wall!

In the shower!

And finally back on the bed!

Laurel and Candle finally break apart and lay on their backs.

LAUREL

Gosh darn to heck and gone Chris.
That was great.

CANDLE

I didn't know if I was ever going to do this again.

LAUREL

Really? Why, because you're transforming from a news junky to a Buddhist or worse Franciscan monk?

CANDLE

(half laugh)
Yeah, like that'll ever happen

Candle and Laurel full press lip lock, roll across the bed, and drop off its edge.

EXT. PAGOSA HOT SPRINGS HOTEL - NIGHT

With steam rolling around Laurel and Candle, they sit in a Pagosa Springs hot mineral bath, completely unto themselves.

LAUREL

What a whirlwind of three days!

CANDLE

Crashing into the side of a mountain
and then crashing into your arms.
Surprised the stuffing out of me!

LAUREL

We both return back to our crazy
news business tomorrow. Chris, what
keeps you in the game? Money? Fame?
Certainly not the ugly politics of
the newsroom!

CANDLE

I want no two days to be alike. You?

LAUREL

To tell people's stories! Everybody
has a right to tell one's story.

CANDLE

That's more noble than my - *no two
days alike.*

LAUREL

Are we going to see each other again?

CANDLE

Laurel, I have a really crazy idea.
Lets get dressed, march ourselves
down to city hall, fill out a marriage
certificate, and have the justice of
the peace legally marry us.

Laurel's jaw drops open and then playfully splashes Candle.

LAUREL

What? That's crazy. I can't marry
you. I'm here. You're there. We're
every, everywhere. We'd never work.

CANDLE

The sex is off the charts.

LAUREL

True, but I can't base a marriage by
the sex is off the charts. We're
already orgasmic with our work, and
you said you're off to shoot a civil
war in Central America.

EXT. GUATEMALA MOUNTAINS - DAY

A Guatemalan Army convoy climbs from the hills toward a mountainous terrain with the jungle floor dropping far below them.

GUATEMALA, CENTRAL AMERICA

CANDLE (V.O.)

Laurel was right. We're too much alike and in all reality *orgasmic* with broadcast TV journalism.

INT. HALF-TRACK - DAY

Candle rides in the back of a half-track behind the lead jeep and attempts to look out the front windshield at the increasingly mountainous road.

CANDLE (V.O.)

O Laurel, at least the scent of your memory still freshens my thoughts.

EXT. GUATEMALA MOUNTAINS - DAY

The Guatemalan military convoy ascends higher and higher into the mountain sky with a jeep leading the way.

CANDLE (V.O.)

I should have been in the lead jeep, but a still photographer leaped in front of me and took my spot.

INT. HALF-TRACK - DAY

Candle turns his back from the front and situates himself into the back of the half-track.

CANDLE (V.O.)

Damn! I hate getting beaten out of ...

BRIGHT FLASH!

HEAT BLAST!

SEARING NUMBNESS!

Candle gets blown to one far backside of the half-track.

RINGS!

STINGS!

CHOKING SMOKE!

EVERYTHING BLURS!

Candle lies perfectly still.

Inside the half-track an envelope of smoke covers Candle's entire frame.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Five, ten, fifteen, twenty seconds
 later, I sense something reeks
 terribly foul. GOT TO MOVE OR BURN!
 BURN ALIVE! OKAY, LETS MOVE!

Candle forces open its metal door, stumbles out, and collapses onto the dirt road on his hand and knees.

A second wave of smoke engulfs his frame.

Wobbly, the photog rises on his feet, and for support braces himself against the backside of the half-track.

SLOWLY, Candle looks up, tilts his head to one side, and through the haze sees a massive crater in the road where the J-5 Jeep should be.

CANDLE (CONT'D)
 WHAT THE HELL!

*

On his hands and knees, Candle attempts to dry heave but nothing comes out.

CANDLE (CONT'D)
 WORST HEADACHE OF LIFE! 9.9 ON RICHTER
 SCALE! 10 YOU DIE!

Candle again attempts to dry heave without success.

CANDLE (CONT'D)
 NAUSEA! SUPREME NAUSEA! I FEEL sick!

On his knees, Candle tries to straighten up wavering back-and-forth.

CANDLE (CONT'D)
 Chris, you must relax. This'll pass.
 No it won't. Yes it will, just relax.
 Relax? Where do you want me to relax?

Candle collapses against one of the flattened front tires on the half-track. Then he dry heaves multiple times.

CANDLE (CONT'D)
 STOP THIS, OR YOU CHOKE TO DEATH!
 Calm yourself. That's better. I think
 you're okay now.

Candle spots Guatemalan soldiers rushing past him, than sliding to a stop at the edge of the crater in the road.

Dazed, Candle stumbles to the front of the half-track and catches his reflection in its partially shattered mirror. The bomb survivor studies a blood trail emanating from the center of each ear and blood coming out of his left nostril and his right eye.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 This can't be good. I think you have
 a concussion. I hate concussions.
 Sit back down buddy. Who said that?

Candle looks over to see Guatemalan troops surround the massive hole in the mountain road.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Not the print news photog, Where
 Cruces? Cleanup Guys will be lucky
 to find any tiny little body parts.

After a few moments, Candle shakily stands up, removes his camera, and starts shooting video.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Was I meant to be in that Jeep? Who
 could live through that?

Candle stops shooting and returns back to the half-track, places his equipment in its steel frame, and collapses inside.

Soon a steady downpour begins to soak everything in site.

In the far distance Candle sees emergency lights and then hears the sound of an ambulance. Then GUATEMALAN OFFICER steps up to Candle.

GUATEMALAN OFFICER
 Ambulance comes here to give you the
 ride to hospital in Guatemala City.

INT. GUATEMALA CITY HOSPITAL - NIGHT

HISPANO DOCTOR shines a penlight into Candle's eyes.

HISPANO DOCTOR
 No internal bleeding is detected. I
 want to check you into our hospital
 for two days.

Candle sits up and fumbles with his shirt.

CANDLE
 (blood-blistered eyes)
 No, must get my tapes to my field
 producer.

INT. GUATEMALA CITY MOTEL - NIGHT

From a motel room, Candle hands SEÑOR NETWORK COURIER several videotapes. He closes the door, strips down naked and collapses onto the bed.

CANDLE (V.O.)

Then I slept for two days.

DISSOLVE TO:

Candle hears a knock on the door, ties a towel around his waist, and opens it up to see 2nd GUATEMALAN OFFICER stands before Candle

2ND GUATEMALAN OFFICER

An American transport plane is on route to take you and your journalist friends back to the United States.

CANDLE

Friends? Yes, of course.

2ND GUATEMALAN OFFICER

There were two body bags brought from the Guatemala Morgue to airport.

CANDLE

I was to be on that jeep.

2ND GUATEMALAN OFFICER

God has other plans for you, Mr. Photojournalist.

EXT. AIR FORCE BASE, SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS - DAY

From the military transport plane, United States Air Force SOLDIERS unload two body bags.

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

The US Air Force turns over Cruces's remains to his family.

CANDLE (V.O.)

I few back to San Antonio with the two American journalist's bodies.

Candle approaches them to the distant sounds of FIREWORKS.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

My sorrow is your sorrow.

(VO)

Really Chris? *My sorrow is your sorrow?* Is that the best you could relay? Congratulations; so far your combat news gig plays out to be what? A partial shoot of nothing!

EXT. FIESTA DE LA SANTA FE - NIGHT

An array of fireworks lights the night sky.

FIESTA de la SANTA FE

With the CROWD, PATRICIA and Candle walk toward the plaza to Old Man Gloom reduced to a pile of ash.

CANDLE (V.O.)

Santa Fe Fiesta was always a big deal for me.

Patricia and Candle amble to the Santa Fe Plaza, and PARTY GOERS become crazed by setting off Black Cats.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I thought that Patricia is most likely, most probably, most definitely the one. But where are the fireworks? Perhaps that will come later.

INT. LA FONDA HOTEL, SANTA FE - NIGHT

Over sangria drinks, Patricia and Candle enjoy the Flamenco Troupe as they rip out a sizzling Buleria canta.

CANDLE (V.O.)

In our early dating days, no couple enjoyed cultural events more than Patricia and me.

The Flamenco Troupe abruptly stops their Buleria canta, and Candle raises his wine to Patricia.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

To us ...

PATRICIA

So Chris, where are you off to next?

CANDLE

No sure. I'm staying in the states for a while.

PATRICIA

Be careful out there.

The Flamenco Troupe heats up a bolero as Candle gazes into Patricia's warm brown eyes.

CANDLE (V.O.)

Patricia and I were never mad passionate in love, but I think she was after financial security, and if I didn't start a family and soon, perhaps this would be my last shot.

EXT. ABIQUIU GHOST RANCH MUSEUM - DAY

The news reporter, KARINA, and Candle enter the Ghost Ranch Museum north of the Abiquiu to see dozens of animals in cages.

Abiquiu GHOST RANCH MUSEUM

CANDLE (V.O.)

The Abiquiu Ghost Ranch Museum is a living sanctuary for the injured animals found in the wild.

Unable to fly, a Golden Eagle flops around a metal cage.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

An arrow pieced a Golden Eagle in her wing, and she will never fly.

Adjoining cages house a Blue Jay, two Hawks, three Falcons, a Roadrunner, three Bald Eagles, and two Hoot Owls. They also flop about unable to gain flight.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And more wild raptors were rescued that need our protection.

A few cages down Red Tail fox limps along on three legs.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Today, this news story centers on closing down Wild Animal infirmary for lack of Federal and State funding. Our story will make a difference to open another similar animal rescue.

In a larger pen, a bull elk stumble along missing a front hoof.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

These are the images people don't see in a regular zoo. Herein the Ghost Ranch Museum hides the Spot News Madness of the animal kingdom.

Candle spots an angry looking bear in a large steel cage when Señor Vigilante steps up to the photojournalist.

SEÑOR VIGILANTE

The big guy was bitten in the eye by a rattlesnake. Makes him a little cranky. Like to get a closer look?

With his one good eye, Scary Beara looks pretty menacing.

SEÑOR VIGILANTE (CONT'D)

You shoot inside the cage. Better footage in there.

CANDLE

That doesn't appear safe.

SEÑOR VIGILANTE

I'll have the garden hose standing
by for you. Scary Beara hates water.

CANDLE

(hesitantly)

Okay ...

(VO)

I guess now my goal is to be on the
inside shooting in.

Candle steps up to where the metal door opens, and Señor Vigilante shows Scary Beara the hose. Immediately, the brown bear backs all the way to the far side of his cage.

SEÑOR VIGILANTE

See I told you, Scary Beara no likes
la agua fria.

Señor Vigilante opens the door, and Candle steps over a slight metal bar raised about two inches. He then cautiously enters the cage and begins shooting Scary Beara.

Scary Beara instantly charges Candle, who backs out of the cage. Except, the photog trips over that two-inch metal bar and crashes on his backside outside of the cage.

Señor Vigilante hits Scary Beara with the water from the hose, but the bear keeps charging at Candle.

Señor Vigilante tries to slam the door shut, but Candle's left foot blocks its closure.

As the bear starts to snack on Candle's left foot, his tennis shoe slips off, and Señor Vigilante slams the door shut.

SEÑOR VIGILANTE (CONT'D)

Man, I didn't think my Scary Beara
could move that fast!

CANDLE

Seriously, you didn't?

(VO)

I think Señor Vigilante pulls this
little prank on all of the media
shooters, but he almost lost control
of this situation.

Señor Vigilante intermittently sprays Scary Beara with water. The large furry one retreats to the far corner of his cage with Candle's shoe between his jaws ripping it to shreds.

On the top of Candle's foot, claw scratches discloses this close encounter with the bear.

Candle stands up, shakes the dust and mud from him, and resumes shooting Mr. Cyclops ripping the heel off his shoe.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

He must like shoes a lot.

SEÑOR VIGILANTE

You bet. I give him one or two a week.

Then Scary Beara takes one last angry look at Candle and swallows the heel of the shoe, whole.

SEÑOR VIGILANTE (CONT'D)

He's always hungry. But you're lucky; the last photographer lost both shoes.

Scary Beara then proceeds to eat Candle's entire shoe right down to the laces. The Photog removes his right tennis shoe and pitches it into an outside garbage can when Karina steps up to him.

KARINA

Yo Candle, your mother forget to dress you today?

CANDLE

Your time will soon be afoot.

Inside the news vehicle from a duffel bag, Candle extracts a set of hiking boots and slips into them.

With the video cam on a tripod, Candle shoots Karina conducting a stand-up with an orphaned baby raccoon. He climbs up Karina's front side, rotates down into her back, swings behind her Angora sweater, and squirms his little way around her front blouse finding his way to her bosoms.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

Sweater's not too expensive, is it?

KARINA

A month's worth of your salary!

CANDLE

Impressive Karina. I see you can show a baby raccoon a good time.

KARINA

In your wet dreams Candle.

With his mussel, the baby raccoon rips the sweater to shreds.

CANDLE (V.O.)

That winter we won the Most Hilarious Christmas video, and the animals were relocated to a new facility.

INT. HOUSTON AIRPORT - DAY

Candle stands in front of private airplane hangers as a lone man approaches from a pained desert camouflage Learjet.

HOUSTON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

CANDLE (V.O.)

My Algerian trip becomes truly one
of the pivotal panics of my life.

The Field Producer, FIDEL KARPOV, 30s, approaches Candle.

FIDEL KARPOV

I'm Fidel Karpov.

CANDLE

Where are we headed?

FIDEL KARPOV

Algeria.

CANDLE

Correct me if I'm wrong, but there's
no United States consulate in Algiers.

From a briefcase, Fidel Karpov extracts a wad of \$100.00 bills.

FIDEL KARPOV

I'm authorized to pay you double ...

CANDLE

(reticent)
Triple for Algeria!

FIDEL KARPOV

Sold, two day shoot for \$7,200.00.

Candle hoist his equipment as Fidel picks up the photog's tripod, and they both walk to the Learjet.

FIDEL KARPOV (CONT'D)

I hear you're the only chess master
in the entire TV video photography
pool in the United State.

Candle briefly glances at Fidel Karpov.

CANDLE

I've been known to swing from a queen
or two.

(VO)

But why bringing up chess now is
important, since I've never used
that as a journalist.

INT. LEARJET - DARK

Candle sits in the back of the Learjet going over a game on his pocket chess set.

CANDLE (V.O.)

Algeria is one of the 'unheralded hot spots' on planet Earth. In hindsight, I should have refused, but triple the pay! \$7,200.00 for a couple of days work will be my best payday ever. Damn! I'm feeling lucky.

Candle looks to the front of the Learjet where Fidel seems to be nodding off.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But I'm just the hired shooter and best not to ask too many questions.

INT. MIAMI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - AFTERNOON

Outside of the Learjet, Fidel Karpov conferences with two unrecognizable black suits.

MIAMI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

CANDLE (V.O.)

Who are these suits?

From inside the Learjet, Candle squints his eyes.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Are those guys Saltz and Pepper?
Chris, you must be hallucinating.

EXT. ALGIERS AIRPORT - NIGHT

The camouflaged Learjet lands on a deserted runway.

CANDLE (V.O.)

We then fly to Dutch St. Maarten.
From there Fidel and I are jetted to
Las Palmas de Gran Canaria.

Candle's face displays a degree of indetermination.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Than we do a straight shot to the
capitol Algiers.

The Learjet taxis to an abandoned hanger.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Algeria? Who the hell goes to Algeria?
I guess I'm here in Algeria.

EXT. ALGIERS HANGER - NIGHT

Candle and Fidel exit the jet, and place the photo equipment on the Tarmac.

ALGERIAN AIRPORT

An old Peugeot yellow cab sedan screeches around a hanger and pulls to a stop next to the Learjet.

Standing in the heat of the Saharan Steppe, Candle flicks his head to the field producer.

CANDLE

Don't we need our pass ...

FIDEL KARPOV

Ports stamped. Not this time, I've taken care of everything.

CANDLE (V.O.)

Why do I not trusting this?

Fidel and Candle load up the broadcast equipment, with the Photog sitting in the rear of the cab.

INT. ALGERIAN TAXI - NIGHT

Mr. Algerian Taxi Driver steers the journalist toward the capitol.

On the far perimeters, their audio senses detect the sound of FAINT CANNON FIRE and SPORADIC RIFLE SHOTS.

Candle sees the flashing of cannon fire.

FIDEL KARPOV

This is why we're here, to expose Algeria's little Third-World Toilet Bowl civil war.

As the two media men are driven to the city, Candle rearranges the half dozen news IDs hanging around his neck.

CANDLE (V.O.)

Yeah, right Chris. Like these news IDs are a bulletproof vest that will make you safe from a bullet.

So Candle injects his first tape into the camera's recorder and starts shooting out of the back window. On the outskirts of Algiers, the photog documents burned out cars.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

That looks like a charred body, but I can't tell if it's human or not.

EXT. ALGERIAN ROAD - NIGHT

A charred body smokes as the taxi SLOWLY passes it by.

CANDLE (V.O.)

I guess somebody's got to document
this to tell the rest of the world
the pain and suffering here.

A convoy of Algerian Army quickly passes the journalist in
the cab with Candle video taping them.

FIDEL KARPOV

No matter what, keep shooting.

CANDLE

Always.

INT. ALGERIAN TAXI - NIGHT

From the taxi cab, fire and smoke thicken alongside of the
road.

Around a bend our cab driver approaches a squad of Algerian
soldiers and stops.

On the side of the road and with no warning, they level their
weapons and shred down a column of CIVILIANS.

CANDLE

MY GOD, I THINK A WOMAN WAS HOLDING
HER BABY!

FIDEL KARPOV

Stead Candle.

ALGAE COMMANDO turns and marches up to Mr. Algerian Taxi
Driver.

Candle sets down his camera on the floorboard. Fidel glances
over to his photog.

FIDEL KARPOV (CONT'D)

DAMMIT! Be cool Candle.

Algerian Taxi Driver babbles away in a foreign language.

CANDLE

Cool I don't think Algae Commando
received out travel itinerary.

Algae Commando waves for the three men to exit the cab, and
they instantly reply.

FIDEL KARPOV

Candle, shut up. Don't say one word.

EXT. ALGERIAN ROAD - NIGHT

Algae Commando motions Mr. Algerian Taxi Driver, Fidel, and Candle to drop to their knees and place their hands on top of their heads.

Algae Commando cocks his pistol and shoots the cab driver right in the side of his head collapsing him lifeless to the ground.

CANDLE (V.O.)
O MY GOD! I'D VOMIT EVERYTHING IF
I'D EATEN - ANYTHING!

A few feet from Candle, the cab driver spasms on the ground, and lies perfectly still.

Candle starts to uncontrollably shiver.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Please don't let me die in this third
word sewer!

In a calm and cool collected voice, Fidel mumbles.

FIDEL KARPOV
I swear I'll get us out of this.

Algae Commando aggressively steps up to the network field producer, and points his gun at Fidel's temple.

ALGAE COMMANDO
Who you?

FIDEL KARPOV
I'm a field producer with the US TV
network, and this is Mr. Candala ...
(points to Candle)
Here.

ALGAE COMMANDO
Name is Candala?

Fidel nods his head.

FIDEL KARPOV
Yes sir. I'm pretty sure.

Candle looks totally numb.

CANDLE (V.O.)
Candala? That's not my name! At least
let me have my name right before I'm
killed.

Algae Commando sheathes his pistol, steps up to the photog, lifts the news IDs from around Candle's neck than snaps one off.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 I'm petrified! Mortified! Stupefied!
 Speechless! I think I'm going to
 mess in my pants! Don't do that Chris.
 Don't look at the cab driver!

Then Algae Commando awkwardly tries to read it the news I.D.

ALGAE COMMANDO
 Can-de-ar-ah?

With deadly snake black eyes, Algae Commando looks down at Candle's shivering mass.

ALGAE COMMANDO (CONT'D)
 Maybe lucky morning!

CANDLE (V.O.)
Maybe lucky morning! W.T.F. does
 that mean? He'll wait till noon to
 shoot me?

Algae Commando orders his troops to take Candle's news equipment and every news I.D. they then take Candle's and Fidel's belts, shoes, socks, and jackets and duffel bags.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 BASTARDS! At least Scary Beara left
 me with one shoe!

Algae Commando removes Candle's passport and flips through it and then shakes his finger at the photog.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Right, Fidel didn't have us our
 passports stamped.

The Algerian military handcuff the American's hands and feet and then tightens gags around the prisoner's mouths.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 When the bad guys confiscate my
 passport. That's never a good start.

Candle sees Subordinates pour gasoline over Mr. Algerian Taxi Driver's body and ignite it into a ball of fire.

Two huge Algerian military thugs force two burlap sacks over Fidel's and Candle's heads and securely tighten them.

The military driver of the half-track turns the vehicle around, and drives Candle and Fidel back toward the airport.

INT. MILITARY HALF TRACK - MORNING

When entering the airport, Algerian Military drives the two journalists to a smaller bleached white building adjacent to the main terminal.

CANDLE (V.O.)

They'll dump our bodies in the desert;
so hyenas rip us to shreds. Then
vultures pick the meat off our bone.
Scorpions and cannibalistic red ants
finally clean up all evidence.

Four large Algerian Military Thugs jostle Candle and Fidel out of the back of the half-track and hustle them into a bleached white building.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

CRAP! Smells like someone died with
this head cover on! Please God get
me get out of this shit storm!

The Four large Algerian Military Thugs stiff-arm the two American journalists across a side entrance of a bleach white building with their feet dragging the ground.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I promise no more stringing along
any more women. I'll get married to
my very next love interest. You mean
love victim.

Inside of this sterile looking whitewashed walls, the Algerian Military thugs split Fidel and Candle up.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

If I have kids, I'll be the best dad
ever. I'll do community service.

INT. 10 X 10 ALGERIAN CELL - LIGHT

Several brutish looking Algerian Thugs escort the still hogtied photog into a 10 by 10 foot cell.

CANDLE (V.O.)

I'll write down some of those guitar
songs I've composed.

The Algerian Thugs then dump Candle into the corner of the square cell. One leans over and removes Candle's hood over his face to see Algae Commando stepping into the room.

ALGAE COMMANDO

Try escape! Shoot you or die thirsty
to Miss Sahara! You choose!

CANDLE (V.O.)

Let's debate this, to be shot or to die of thirst in the desert? So it's okay to hang out here for a while?

The Algae Commando motions the Algerian Thugs to remove Candle's handcuff, at which the Photog removes the gag.

ALGAE COMMANDO

Mr. Kandalah, enjoy your stay with us at Hotel Torture.

Algae Commando exits the room first followed by The Algerian Thugs locking the door behind them.

CANDLE (V.O.)

My room's decorations sport nothing more than white walls, a white ceiling, and a bleached out white floor. No furniture or even a cot.

After about a quarter of an hour, Candle sits up as best he can and tilts his head against the wall.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

What kind of torture is this going to be? I've had sleep deprivation, but color deprivation?

Supported by both walls of the corner, Candle props himself to a half sitting position and leans against the wall.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It's been a long day, and emotionally, I'm warped out.

SLOWLY, Candle starts to drift off.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Maybe I'll wake up and be home. Home? That's a joke. You haven't live in a home since you were fifteen, more than sixteen years ago.

SCREAMS!

Candle snaps back to being fully aware of his surroundings.

MORE SCREAMS!

SCREAMS FROM THE NEXT ROOM!

SCREAMS FROM DOWN THE HALL!

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I DEMAND TO KNOW! IS THIS BUILDING BEING TORTURED?

INT. HOTEL TORTURE - LIGHT TO DARK

Like a haunted house, screams emanate from different sections of the bleached out building.

CANDLE (V.O.)
 ASSHOLES! WHO THE HELL DO THEY THINK
 THEY ARE? MONSTERS?

Outside of one cell door, Fidel appears to *CRY OUT*.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Oh, that's right. They're your
 jailers.

Then Hotel Torture falls into dead silence until moments later Candle hears footsteps approaching outside his door.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Here it comes. God help me! But first
 I need the bathroom! Badly!

Candle tries to straighten up and whispers to himself.

CANDLE (CONT'D)
 Whatever happens Chris accept your
 fate like a man. There is an ounce
 of solace in not hearing anyone being
 tortured anymore. Perhaps that's
 because you're next.

The Photog looks at the door *SLOWLY* open.

CANDLE (CONT'D)
 And so the second half of my Algerian
 trip begins.

The tall, lean leathery burnt man, Algerian Secret Policeman KALIF KANDALAH, 30s, with a paper-thin mustache, enters the room.

KANDALAH
 Good morning, my name is Kalif
 Kandalah. I will be your tour guide
 while you visit our beautiful country.

CANDLE (V.O.)
 Kalif Kandalah? Really? Tour guide?
 What's the book on this retro-1970's
 asshole? Dressed in a dark business
 suit with an ultra thin tie that
 illuminates with a 3D maroon effect.

Kandalah motions the two Algerian thugs OMAR and OMIR to lift Candle to his feet.

KANDALAH

Excuse us if you have not been treated well. May I inquire upon you but a few questions?

Omar and Omir stiff-arm Candle even closer to Kandalah.

KANDALAH (CONT'D)

Are you sent by the Central Intelligent Agency? Are you C.I.A.?

CANDLE (V.O.)

You know Chris you're getting a beating. Maybe just do the opposite of what they expect.

(meekly answers)

Yes sir, I'm a free-lance photojournalist who I guess the C.I.A. hired without my knowledge.

Kandalah holds up Candle's passport.

KANDALAH

I do not see our Algerian stamp on your passport. It appears you are in our country without permission.

Omar and Omir force Candle to within a breaths length of Kandalah who holds up the photog's new IDs.

KANDALAH (CONT'D)

You have a lot of IDs here: Canadian News Service, British Broadcast communications, German TV news, Spanish TV news, Mexico's National News Service, and Australian News.

Kandalah drops them on the floor.

KANDALAH (CONT'D)

But none of these impress me. They are all fake I.Ds.

A bead of sweat drips down Candle's left temple.

CANDLE

Fidel Karpov told me not to worry about that. He'd take care of it.

Kandalah snake-eyes Candle.

KANDALAH

Do you know that we shoot spies on the spot here?

Candle weakly smiles.

CANDLE

Okay.

(VO)

Idiot! Why did you just give Mr. Evil the okay to shoot you? But if they shot me in this room that would be a red bloody mess.

KANDALAH

Two things draw my curiosity. With the photographers in the CIA pool of shooters, what special gift must you possess? The universal language!

Candle shakes so uncontrollably his teeth start to rattle.

CANDLE (V.O.)

What universal language?

Kandalah holds up a small rectangle gold laminated card.

KANDALAH

So what are you doing with this card?

CANDLE

That's my United States Chess Federation I.D. I bought a life membership last year.

(VO)

Then the most bizarre thing happens.

Paper Thin Mustache GROSSLY LAUGHS louder and louder.

KANDALAH

I am city chess champion of Algiers, five years running.

CANDLE (V.O.)

Unbelievable! Were his chess opponents threatened with execution if they didn't let him win the title?

(weakly speaks forth)

Nice. Your name is Kandalah?

KANDALAH

Perhaps you hear of Kalif Kandalah?

CANDLE (V.O.)

Fidel said something like that to the field commander right after he wasted our cab driver. He called me Kandalah.

With his interest peeking up, Candle straightens up.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

Say your name is Kandalah?

KANDALAH

Is your family from Spain?

CANDLE

My father, John, tells me Castilian.

KANDALAH

Do you know what the surname Candela means? And this may be most important answer of your life.

For a moment, Candle contemplates.

CANDLE

My father said it means, *Candle Stick Maker*.

KANDALAH

Very good, that is also what Kandalah means. You give correct answer, and not candle maker.

CANDLE (V.O.)

So what's going on here, a family reunion?

(shaky voice)

Uncanny, maybe somehow we're ...

KANDALAH

Related? No. If you are who you say you are and play a good game of chess, I put you safely on plane to Spain.

CANDLE

Plane to Spain, great! Would it be possible to get the field producer?

KANDALAH

Fidel Karpov, the bastard of a Cuban whore, claiming his father was a Russian Submarine captain who had the disrespect to finish my sentences.

CANDLE

Sounds like he's the one.

KANDALAH

Tell you what, win a second game, and you both may leave.

SERIES OF QUICK DISSOLVES:

Omar and Omir set a table with two chairs.

A chessboard with pieces quickly appears atop of the table.

Candle and Kandalah sit opposite from each other.

Candle and Kandalah rapid-fire a series of quick moves.

Kandalah becomes more and more agitated.

Candle filters into absolute concentration.

CANDLE (V.O.)

Before my last checkmate of the second game, Kandalah seems really annoyed. But I could never throw a game; so for good or bad, life or death ...

KANDALAH

You seem knowledgeable. Have you ever been married or currently married? Engaged to a young woman? Possess a serious girlfriend?

Candle looks perplexed at Kandalah's inquiries.

CANDLE (V.O.)

What the hell? Where's this going?

With a barely an audible *no*, Candle negatively shakes his head.

KANDALAH

You are not a homosexual are you?

Candle's face tightens.

CANDLE

No!

KANDALAH

Good, but sure you are not C.I.A.?

CANDLE

(flustered)

Yes, I mean no, I mean ...

(VO)

I'm a dead man.

With a maniacal leer, Kandalah sardonically laughs.

KANDALAH

Trick question. Simply, my little prank played on Mr. Photojournalist.

CANDLE (V.O.)

Clever!

In all seriousness, Kandalah straightens up and sits forward.

KANDALAH

I have the offer for you.

(MORE)

KANDALAH (CONT'D)

I want you to move to Algeria, and
play for our national chess team?

Candle twirls a black queen between his fingers.

KANDALAH (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Everything you need will be taken
care from this day until you retire.
Plus gets exciting.

From his wallet, Kandalah extracts a picture of Fallaphia
and hands it to Candle.

CANDLE

(eyes widen)

She's a very good looking girl.

KANDALAH

My sister has a beautiful 16-year-
old daughter who is the talk of
Algiers. I am the head of the family.

In his mind's eye, Candle envisions himself kissing Fallaphia.

KANDALAH (O.S.) (CONT'D)

You two will make a beautiful couple.
Have smart children. I arrange the
marriage.

Then in his mind's eye, Candle and Fallaphia hold a boy and
a girl.

KANDALAH (O.S.) (CONT'D)

All you must do is play chess, teach
chess, and make babies with Fallaphia.

CANDLE (V.O.)

No! Really? Babies with Fallaphia!
Several hours ago, Omar and Omir
were going to torture me, take my
body out to the desert, and shoot me
for a hyena treat!

With his eyes squinting, Candle snaps back to reality.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

Lots think about it. May I go home
and tell my father? John's health
isn't the best.

KANDALAH

John? Who is John?

Candle cautiously answers.

CANDLE

I've only called my father by his first name, John.

Kandalah lights a thin stogie and snaps his fingers at Omar and Omir who place Candle's belt, socks, and shoes in the doorway than abruptly leave.

KANDALAH

I'll be waiting for you at the Tarmac.

Candle hurriedly cautiously steps into the hallway to see Omar and Omir dragging Fidel down the hall. He appears beat to crap with one eye swollen shut.

CANDLE (V.O.)

Horrors! They did a number on Fidel. His face looks like hamburger meat.

Omar and Omir drag Fidel from the building followed by Candle to a waiting prop passenger plane.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The DC-3 looks like it will crash outside of Algiers, right into the Saharan Desert, killing all on board. Maybe that's Kandalah's grand plan.

Candle's duffel bag and broadcast equipment sits on the Tarmac.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Bastards took my videotapes. Now where is my evidence?

From behind him, Kandalah steps up to the photog.

KANDALAH

You decide not to take my chess position and leave Fallaphia to wed another man?

In the affirmative, Candle nods his head, than Kandalah flicks his stogie onto the Tarmac.

KANDALAH (CONT'D)

Mr. Candle, I cannot guarantee your safety if you come back to Algeria.

CANDLE (V.O.)

And Kandalah's - *I cannot guarantee your safety* - is the warning that if I ever returned back to Algeria, I will be put to death.

INT. DC-3 PROP PLANE - LIGHT

With the DC-3 flying westward, the two Americans sit alone in the back of the aircraft. Candle glances at Fidel who appears either passed out or dead.

CANDLE (V.O.)

Fidel had a tough couple of days.
Should I go over and shake him to
see if he's still alive? Maybe not!

Candle sits back and looks out of the window onto an endless Mediterranean Sea.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Just what the hell happened back
there? And what happened to our pilot
with the private jet plane? Either
he's dead or fled! A hero or coward!

Candle's face remains fixated on the endless sea.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

My last name being similar to Kandalah
and his mother from Spain! That's
conveniently too coincidental.

Candle glances at a near unconscious Fidel.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

Hey Fidel buddy, was this a Central
Intelligence Agency operation? So
you are with the CIA. I'm impressed!

Candle leans back and takes a deep breath.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The U.S. government wields enough
power to change the course of nations
and history. So in these modern times,
who's really in charge? The Oil Mafia!

Candle's eyes droop, and he starts to drift off. After a brief nod off, the photog snaps to reality and starts shaking.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Torture's the pits! Physical torture
lasts a lifetime! But Psychological
torture travels into the afterlife!

Exhausted, Candle slumps back into his airplane seat.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But Fallaphia sure looks cute from
her picture. FUCK IT CANDLE! CROSSING
THE LINE ALMOST GOT YOU KILLED!

EXT. COLLEGE OF SANTA FE - DAY

Candle walks across the campus of the College of Santa Fe.

CANDLE (V.O.)

The next spring, I'm taking a Spanish course at the College of Santa Fe, and then *BANG* it happens. No, not more of that gritty spot news madness!

Candle stops and looks at the college exchange student, SUMIKO TAGAMURA, late teens, just 5-feet tall, mega-cute, walking across campus.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Look Chris, she's in your Spanish class! My legs feel weak! My tongue dry! My vision starts to blur! What if I faint? I haven't fainted since I was seven years old.

Candle approaches Sumiko Tagamura.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

Hi, my name's Chris. I'm taking a Spanish course with you.

SUMIKO

(broken Asian English)

Yes, we are in the same class. My English not correct but study to be translator. My name is Sumiko.

CANDLE (V.O.)

You just got season tickets to the Santa Fe Opera. Here's your opportunity ...

(smiles)

Sumiko, I like that name. Would it be too forward to ask you to dinner, and then we attend the Santa Fe Opera?

SUMIKO

I do not know who you are.

CANDLE

How about this? I'll be video taping a TV news story here on campus. You could come and watch me at work.

(VO)

Now, I'm going to have to manufacture a news story on campus this weekend.

SUMIKO

News photographer? Dangerous business, yes?

EXT. SANTA FE OPERA - DUSK TO NIGHT

On Santa Fe Opera Hill on a sultry Saturday sunset, Sumiko and Candle tailgate on the parking lot of the opera.

SANTA FE OPERA TAILGATING

CANDLE (V.O.)

Tailgating at the opera is a different dynamic than the football menu of beer, bratwurst, and chicken wings, which I also enjoy.

Candle wears a white dress shirt with a Monet Water Lilies pattern tie, blue Seersucker suit, and white slacks.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It's more like champagne, caviar, Brie cheese, and smoked pheasant.

Sumiko wears a Japanese fashion sheer-silk outfit with a flower pattern woven into its fabric.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Every hot-blooded male who sets eyes upon my stunning Asian date must be falling on their sword and dragging their tongues across the pavement.

Candle and Sumiko appear lost in their own little world amongst the other OPERA TAILGATERS who check out the couple.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I did a news video essay on the College of Santa Fe's International program and even interviewed and aired a sound bite from Sumiko.

Somewhat out of place, four MALES SLOWLY stroll toward the entrance of the Santa Fe Opera. A disapproving expression crosses their face when they pause to spy on Candle and Sumiko submerged into their private tailgate party.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Sumiko now knows what I do for a living. In her delicate voice inquires what my world must be like?

Smukio's delicate face chooses her words carefully.

SUMIKO

Chris, you say everyday different?

Candle's eyes focus on Sumiko's delicate features.

CANDLE (O.S.)

Everyone relays something important.
Every news story for me becomes a
discovery, a human story.

SUMIKO

How does that leave time for a
personal life if you not know where
you are tomorrow?

Candle readily takes in a deep breath.

CANDLE

See, that's its beauty, it's a
mystery. Every news day unfolds a
fresh set of challenges, and I love
the mysteries of life.

(VO)

Then I thought of this insight. You
want to know what the purest form of
blue is?

Candle's love interest looked directly into his face, and
Sumiko innocently flirts.

SUMIKO

Not your eyes?

Candle cracks a half-laugh.

CANDLE

No, not even close.

SUMIKO

The 'purest form of blue is a
Southwestern sky.

CANDLE

That's a great answer, but the purest
form of blue that I've seen is the
aquamarine intensity into the base
core of a nuclear reactor.

Sumiko face instantly frowns.

SUMIKO

Where see that?

Candle point his thumb over his shoulder.

CANDLE

Right behind us! If Los Alamos nuclear
goes nuclear, it will vaporize a ten-
mile radius. Crazy, no?

Sumiko carefully sets down her champagne glass.

SUMIKO
My country Japan knows about that.

CANDLE (V.O.)
IDIOT! IDIOT! WHAT WERE YOU THINKING?

With embarrassment, Candle face turns red.

CANDLE (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry. The word on the street
is official; I'm an idiot.

SUMIKO
It is for us to make peace and love.

CANDLE (V.O.)
Peace and love ... Sumiko's so pretty,
smart, and wise! What a bonus!
(with caution)
Sumiko, how can I make the rest of
the evening up to you?

SUMIKO
You already have. Let us enjoy opera.

With its lyrical gorgeous arias, Candle and Sumiko thoroughly
enjoy Mozart's Magic Flute in the open opera theater.

CANDLE (V.O.)
I'm starting to care deeply about
more than having another sexual
liaison only producing an empty bed
and fading memories the next day.

INT. SANTA FE CAFE SHOP - NIGHT

Candle and Sumiko cap off the date with a late night French
snack in a Santa Fe Cafe Shop, laughing a private moment
until the establishment shuts down.

CANDLE (V.O.)
I even imagine if we had children
how smart and talented they'd be.

EXT. RIO GRANDE RAPIDS - DAY

Candle and Sumiko go rafting down the Rio Grande.

CANDLE (V.O.)
We start talking about her staying
another year in Santa Fe and getting
a place together.

EXT. SANGRE DE CRISTOS - NIGHT

In a pup tent, Candle and Sumiko flip the front flap up to witness the grandeur of the Milky Way Galaxy set high in the Rocky Mountains.

SUMIKO

Tonight the stars shine because their luster falls upon our divine dreams.

CANDLE

Ah Sumiko! I just knew you possessed a poet ready to spring forth.

Candle and Sumiko roll back into the tent with their naked form becoming intertwined.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Unabashed, unbridled, unconditional love! Nothing for me feels greater!

EXT. SANTA FE PLAZA - AFTERNOON

Arm-in-arm, Candle and Sumiko enjoy a lazy stroll across the Santa Fe Plaza.

SUMIKO

Chris, do you think it would be difficult for me to stay over here and get a translator's job?

CANDLE

I'm sure you can, especially if we were ... well you know.

When reaching the center of the plaza, Sumiko stops Candle.

SUMIKO

If we were permanently together! I worry about the dangers of your work.

CANDLE

Sometimes it's very challenging, but I don't take the risks I use to take.

Right in the center of the plaza, Candle and Sumiko share an impassioned kiss when she gently pulls away.

SUMIKO

Promise, you'll always return to me as soon as you can.

CANDLE

Yes, a promise I will always keep.

EXT. NAVAJO NATION - DAY

Candle and FEMALE REPORTER drive across the Navajo Nation as off in the distance a NAVAJO FAMILY herds a flock of sheep.

CANDLE (V.O.)

The next day, a reporter and I pack up to shoot a TV news documentary about the controversial Joint Use Area between the Navajos and the Hopis Pueblans.

Candle and Female Reporter interview a RESERVATION OFFICIAL in front of a traditional Navajo hogan.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The Bureau of Indian Affairs dictates hundreds of Navajos and a handful of Hopis to move from their lands.

Candle videotapes an OLD NAVAJO WOMAN weaving her traditional Navajo rug inside of her traditional hogan.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Yet another U.S. government forced relocation perpetrated on American natives. Disgraceful!

Candle stands atop of the Old Oraibi Mesa shooting a stand-up with the Female Reporter.

FEMALE REPORTER

Hopi and Navajo land is an immensely large area, six times size than the State of Connecticut. Many places in this vast area have no running water, no sewage system, and no phone service.

INT. TV EDITING BOOTH - NIGHT

Inside of a TV editing booth, Female Reporter shows Candle a shot that she wants edited into the news documentary of two NAVAJO CHILDREN playing in the mud near with massive EARTH MOVING TRACTORS in the distance stripe mining coal.

CANDLE (V.O.)

Our TV news doc will take us nine days to produce, shoot, and edit.

Candle deftly edits one shot after the next on the Joint Use Area news documentary.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

My ever-lingering thought is Sumiko and continuing our new life together.

INT. STUDENT HOUSING - DAY

In the student housing, Candle approaches Sumiko's dorm room with crime scene taped across the threshold, when a FEMALE STUDENT, 20s, Hispanic, approaches him from down the hall.

FEMALE STUDENT
Sumiko's gone.

CANDLE
Excuse me. Gone? Gone where?

FEMALE STUDENT
I think back to Japan?

CANDLE
That can't be. Japan? Not possible.

FEMALE STUDENT
I think the police called it a hate crime incident.

Candle looks aghast.

CANDLE
A hate crime incident and in this day and age!

INT. SUMIKO'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Four UNDEFINED ASSAILANTS toss Sumiko around like a rag doll to her MUFFLED pleas of mercy.

Against the Japanese flag, one of the Assailants takes a black can and sprays a circle with a line through it.

INT. ADMINISTRATION COLLEGE OF SANTA FE - DAY

Candle sits before the DEAN of STUDENTS.

CANDLE (V.O.)
I go to the Dean of Students, and he can give me no information whatsoever.

Candle's face GRADUALLY hardens.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But I did learn that Sumiko spent three days in the hospital. My God!

Candle walks out of the Dean of Student's office.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
An empty feeling suddenly sweeps over me. Why didn't I ever get Sumiko's address back in Japan?

INT. SANTA FE POLICE STATION - DAY

Candle sits opposite a Santa Fe POLICE DETECTIVE.

POLICE DETECTIVE

A District Judge sealed Miss Tagamura's assault report; so I cannot help you further.

CANDLE

(tightly drawn face)

What? That doesn't sound like *Standard Operating Procedure*. Why would a judge do that? Were the assailants juveniles? That's unacceptable.

INT. STUDENT HOUSING - DAY

Candle stands before Sumiko's taped up dorm room.

CANDLE (V.O.)

I'm enraged! I want revenge! I want to take the assailant's ugly faces, ram them through a meat grinder, and leave their remains for the maggots.

Candle's eyes reveal a deep sadness.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I call-in all of my police and investigation contacts, but no one knows anything.

Opposite the dorm room, Candle slumps against the wall with a long sad expression crossing his face.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I finally got Sumiko's address in Japan. I write to her an impassioned letter of how desperately I want to visit and take her pain away.

Candle looks over to the Female Student who steps up to him.

FEMALE STUDENT

I see you really care about her.

Candle briefly glances up at the Female Student.

FEMALE STUDENT (CONT'D)

Sorry. We all liked her. She was a sweet girl. I know they call you Candle. My name's Simona.

Candle remains frozen in place as the Female Student continues to shuffle down the hall.

CANDLE (V.O.)
 Desolation! Devastation! Frustration!
 Hate crimes! Isn't every crime in
 reality a hate crime?

Candle's eyes well up to the sound of a twin-engine plane
 WHINING DOWN for a crash landing.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Ah Sumiko, will I ever learn of your
 fate? Will I ever see you again? No!
 Chris, it seems you are not destined
 find happiness in the arena of love?

EXT. CANJILON MOUNTAIN - DAY

In a blinding snowstorm, a twin-engine plane skims across
 the tops of mountain pines.

CANJILON MOUNTAIN

The aircraft then takes a direct dive between large Ponderosa
 pines and crashes upon a heavily laden snow ridge coming to
 rest against several massive trees.

With snow and severed pine needles, the crash's vortex cloud
 blasts against its fuselage.

In the windswept white blizzard, the driven snow begins to
 pound the wreckage, blanketing it in a white frozen torrent.

INT. SANTA FE AIRPORT - DAY

In a flurry of STATE POLICE, CIVIL PATROL, and NEWS MEDIA,
 the AIR COMMANDER addresses everyone.

AIR COMMANDER
 In the middle of the night, we had a
 distress call that a twin-engine
 aircraft was going down with three
 on board. This plane was never picked
 up on radar nor was there a flight
 plan filed out of Florida.

The helicopter pilot, Chopper Chuck, steps up to Candle.

CHOPPER CHUCK
 Out of Florida! No flight plan! Icicle
 Rat was flying under the radar. What
 does that tell?

CANDLE
 Mister Icicle Rat was flying drugs.

EXT. CANJILON MOUNTAIN - DAY

In a manmade whiteout, Candle slides onto the rung of the helicopter as it hovers a foot above the snow.

CANDLE (V.O.)

Let's reexamine about how fucked up the news gathering business can be.

CHOPPER CHUCK

(yells out)

PLACE THE TWO WOODEN BEAMS PARALLEL IN THE OPEN SPACE. I'VE GOT TO GO FOR MORE JET FUEL! I SHOULD BE BACK IN A COUPLE OF HOURS, THREE TOPS.

CANDLE

THREE HOURS? IN FOUR, IT'LL BE DARK!

CHOPPER CHUCK

FLY BACK WITH ME OR SHOOT YOUR NEWS STORY!

The whirling blades engulf Candle in a blinding snowstorm.

CANDLE (V.O.)

Chuckles can't land the helicopter in the snow because it's 60 inches deep. He instructs that I must make a landing site with two wood beams.

Candle then drops into the snow, and with his equipment he sinks up to his crouch.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Blizzard! Sight gone! Blistering snow crystals! DAMN THIS IS FUN!

Candle struggles to trudge through the snow toward a beam of wood as Chopper Chuck flies off down the mountain. With all of his might, the news photog lifts the railroad tie and places it parallel to the other wooden beam in an open space.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Sure, why not, or I don't get off this frozen witch tit of a mountain.

With his equipment, Candle plows his way through the snow pack toward a small burn scar against the tree line.

Candle then unburdens his equipment and turns around to see the snow-laden forest stretch out to a valley thousands of feet below his position.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

Ah Sumiko, I pray she finds peace of mind and happiness.

Beyond the tree line, Candle spots the plane crash. It is a total wreck, but not entirely open to the elements, coming to rest into the tree line.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

Snap to it Chris! Got work to do!

Candle commences shooting video of everything and anything where he points his camera.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Because of the extreme cold, 25-
minutes into the shoot my batteries
freeze up, and my equipment dies.

Candle pulls out a new battery from his equipment bag, and clips on the back of his mini-cam. It barely lights up the viewfinder.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

You know what you've got to do to
finish shooting. You do realize the
situation, don't you? FROZEN CRAPOLA!

Candle's face begins to pale even more as he looks at the winter's sun waning the afternoon light.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

Seriously, is that what you're
thinking about? That's a pretty
radical solution.

Candle unzips his parka, unbuttons the two top buttons of his flannel shirt, and pulls out his undershirt.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

I can't believe you're going to
actually do this.

With each hand, Candle takes two batteries and shoves them under his armpit. Like a bucking bronco, Candle jerks around, rocks back-and-forth, and jumps up-and-down.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

BASTARD BITCH INTO HELL! MOTHER FUCKER
THAT'S COLD! SCHIZER HEAD! ;STÚPIDO!
DAMN! ARE YOU BATTERIES WARMING UP?

Candle then surveys the frozen snow-laden wasteland.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

Chris quit yelling! You'll attract a
bear. Wait! Shouldn't bears be
hibernating right now? Don't count
on that. Is the eating tennis shoe
bear hiding out there somewhere?

Candle spots a rustling in the forest with some snow falling off a fir tree.

CANDLE (CONT'D)
 STOP THE PRESSES! Cougars aren't hibernating. When I signed up for this gig
 (yells forth)
 I DIDN'T CALCULATE ON BEING EATEN BY A HUNGRY MOUNTAIN LION!

Standing still, Candle shivers from head to heel.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 You've got to keep moving. Okay, you're a TV photojournalist with a shooting assignment. Get busy.

Candle trudges over to the burnt out shell of the twin turbo prop plane. From under his armpit, he removes one of the batteries and starts shooting the wreckage.

CANDLE (CONT'D)
 Battery works now. I'll keep switching them out. Icicle Rat lived through this disaster, you can.

Candle scans beyond the edge of the mountaintop.

CANDLE (CONT'D)
 Lets do what the authorities haven't been able to do. Find the drugs.

With his equipment, Candle trudges through the snow beyond the wreckage.

CANDLE (CONT'D)
 Okay, so now that you're a mature 29 year old what's your legacy? You have no wife, no children, no Sumiko.

Candle rises to his feet and starts trekking out a narrow half-circle perimeter sweep of the area while keeping eyes on the wreckage.

CANDLE (CONT'D)
 If you get lost out here, Death City dude! Perhaps the authorities found the drugs and kept it for themselves.

Candle makes a wider sweep and reaches the southern edge of the mountain buttress.

CANDLE (CONT'D)
 Nothing here. Lets get back to the crash site. Wait! What the hell?

Candle's eye catches a slight glimmer down the ravine. He steps up to the ledge and leans as far as he can over a rock face and spot several canvass bags.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

And there it is! Icicle Rat's stash!
Son of a bitch tossed his drugs into
a thousand foot ravine!

Candle notices that every bag he spots appears broken open and scatter amongst the snow. He then shots video of it.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

So Icicle Rat was transporting
cocaine. I've got to phone this into
the State Police, that if I survive
getting off this frozen mountain.

In the far distance, Candle hears the blades of a helicopter.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

This better damn well be Santa Claus
Chuck in his whirlybird sleigh.

With his equipment, Candle hustles back to the landing zone, and spots a helicopter-orbiting overhead.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

DAMN IT TO HELL AND GONE! THAT'S
ANOTHER NEWS CREW. I DIDN'T GIVE YOU
PERMISSION TO USE MY LANDING LOGS.
I'M THE KING OF THIS LAND ZONE! DON'T
EVEN THINK ABOUT TRYING TO LAND HERE!

As they fly over Candle's head they flash him the international sign of *SCREW YOU* with a middle finger.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

BASTARDS! NO LANDING ON MY LOGS!

Candle then hears another whirling sound as Chopper Chuck zips overhead, orbits back, and approaches the landing zone.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Finally, Woodchuck the Chopper Jox!

Creating a near blinding blizzard, Chopper Chuck sets down the helicopter on the wooden beams.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Over the next week, heavy snows engulf
the northern state with near hurricane
winds, and all flights are suspended.

In a blinding white rage, Candle struggles to place his video equipment into the back seat of the helicopter where the blades abruptly MUTE to the sound of MORTAR EXPLOSIONS.

EXT. VULCANIMOS EL SALVADOR - DAY TO NIGHT

Mortar rounds explode near a WV bus marked with the universal symbol of a white 'X' noting PERIODISTAS - Journalists.

VULCANIMOS, EL SALVADOR

CANDLE (V.O.)

Intel leads us to a burned out village known as Los Vulcanimos where the fighting in the El Salvador Civil War becomes ferocious.

From the small bus, Candle and soundman, BARRIO and South American news crew, JACQUE and FERRER, leap out with equipment and run as fast as they can toward a Mestizo village.

As they reach the outer perimeter, mortar rounds systematically blanket near the journalist's position.

More mortar rounds envelop the vehicle and pirouetted it length ways into a double gainer resting next to the jungle.

Small arm's round start zipping back and forth, both from the outside and inside of the village. The journalists appear caught in the crossfire out in the open.

A short distance, the Journalist make their way toward a stonewall.

Hundreds of small arms CRACK FORTH from beyond the wall.

Jacque and Ferrer stop dead in their tracks and level their camera and boom mic at the Salvador National Guard.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

(distorted)

DON'T STOP! RUN! RUN! RUN!

From a tank, the machine gun fire instantly cuts Jacque and Ferrer to shreds.

Just as Candle and Barrio reach the wall, a nearby explosion vaults the journalists over the stone barrier.

SLOWLY, the dust, stones, and debris settle over Candle and Barrio's bodies rendering them initially immobile.

Candle hears ringing of his ears and takes his hand to wipe the side of his bloody face. He refocuses and starts shooting the intense battle scene.

Hundreds of SALVA REBELS on either side of Candle and Barrio blaze away with small arms fire.

Then from the far side of the dirt road an equally large Salva Rebel force assaults the SALVADOR NATIONAL GUARD.

Caught in the deadly crossfire, the Salvador National Guard jerk forwards, backwards, sideways, up, down and around in an agonizing death dance.

The Salva Rebels hoist Russian rocket propelled grenades to their shoulders, and fire at the two tanks.

With darkness descending upon the firefight, THOUSANDS of ROUNDS of MACHINE GUN FIRE!

EXPLOSIONS to the left, right, front, and rear!

BLOOD! GUTS! LIMBS! HUNDREDS SCREAM DEATH CRIES!

In a massive flash of light, Candle and Barrio again get flattened in an all-encompassing explosion with debris of stone rock shards and dirt raining down upon their bodies.

Dirt and rock shards silhouette Candle's barely lit face.

Reflectively, Candle hoists up his camera over a rock wall and shoots the firefight between two opposing FORCES.

Candle's face tightens to the BATTLE VOICES muting while the beat of his heart POUNDS LOUDER, LOUDER, than LOUDER again.

From highlighted explosions, Candle peeks over the left side of the wall and views Jacque and Ferrer lying in a heap of bloody mass.

With the sun arising over the blood and guts scene, the BATTLE CACOPHONY fall EERILY QUIET as the grey pallor gunpowder mist settles across the landscape.

Barrio lifts up the white flag of surrender.

EVER SO SLOWLY, Barrio and Candle stand to view a total killing field of Salva Rebels and Salvador National Guard bodies.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
El Salvador's Civil War is now the
Mecca of Spot News Madness.

With a degree of pain, Candle raises his camera, clicks on the tally button, and pans the battlefield.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Man killing man! Now there's the
most disgusting profession, ever.

Halfway through the pan, Candle stops video taping the battle scene to the sound of a melodic classical guitar instrumental.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
When shooting spot news, I never
remembered any joy, whatsoever.

EXT./INT. SAN SALVADOR MOTEL - NIGHT

[BACK TIME GUITAR PLAYING] SERIES of DISSOLVES: to the sound of the melodic classical guitar instrumental, Candle stands on the motel balcony overlooking the city of San Salvador.

CITY OF SAN SALVADOR

At the far edge of the city, he hears a series of automatic gunfire and then spots a distant explosion to the guitar instrumental building in strength.

He turns away from the balcony and enters his room.

He pours a bottle beer into a glass. He then sets it on a table without drinking it.

He sits down on a chair and studies the bubbles rising in the beer to view a classical guitar on the bed.

He rest on the bed lightly finger picking out a melodic instrumental on the classical nylon string guitar.

RAPIDLY, his fingers glide through a particularly complicated classical guitar passage.

GRADUALLY, his face begins to display more and more agitation while he plays.

STEADILY, his eyes well up expressing a deep seeded pain.

He stops playing and leans back his head on the pillows that displays multiple cuts a bruises.

He then stares off into the nothingness of the room

CANDLE

Man, what have you signed up to do?
Is this becoming too insane for you?

Candle takes in a deep breath and then starts playing his form of classical guitar when a LIGHT KNOCK on the door disrupts his song.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

¿Que pasa?

Barrio pokes in his head into the room.

BARRIO

Candle, you want to shoot the Spot
News Story of the century?

CANDLE

Sure, let just go do that.

EXT. MEXICO CITY - DAY

Candle and Barrio arrive in downtown Mexico City to witness building after building lays flattened.

SEPTEMBER 1985 MEXICO CITY EARTHQUAKE

As QUIETLY as possible, Canadian, English, German, South American, and Japanese RESCUE CREWS feverishly work in rescue attempts with hardly a word being spoken.

CANDLE (V.O.)

Everyone must work in near total silence to hear the cries of the earthquake victims.

Two United States K-9 RESCUE TEAMS fearlessly work a flattened out high rise building area.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The K-9s will overwork themselves; so their handlers must be careful they get enough water, healthy doggie food, and rest.

A brief aftershock rocks around Candle and Barrio's position.

QUICKLY, everybody scrambles to the center of the street.

When the RUMBLING and CREAKING subsides, Candle and Barrio give each other a disbelieving glance. They then return to shooting the massive spot new story.

As quietly as possible the Rescue Crews go back to their recovery efforts.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The K-9 Rescue Teams and their dogs dart right back between the massive building slabs of concrete sniffing out any survivors or perished victims.

From a block away, extreme rescue activity breaks the calm.

Candle and Barrio rush over to the Rescue Crew activity and soon pull out a live CHILD VICTIM to CHEERS and APPLAUSE.

The Rescue Crew hands the Child Victim to an AMBULANCE TEAM. They place him in the back of a pickup truck. Then in near quiet, they back to the recovery scene.

Candle and Barrio return to shooting the K-9 Rescue Teams and the dogs attempting to seek out more victims.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Everyone loves the Labrador and Golden Retrievers with some German shepherds.

At the edge of the rescue area, the K-9 handlers hand out little stuffed animals, like Teddy Bears, little Lab, and Golden Retriever puppy dogs to the children

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The Rescue Dogs also substitute as therapy animals. They are unbelievably wonderful with the victims, especially with the children.

One of the Rescue Crew members hands a YOUNG GIRL a little stuffed dog that she holds onto tightly.

Her MESTIZO MOTHER takes the child by the hand with Candle shooting the touching moment as they pass dead bodies lying along with sewage and refuge.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

After the first day in Mexico City, something horrible starts to happen.

Just before they disappear into the city, Candle shoots video of the child holding the stuffed dog even more tightly.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

What we start breathing down here is the death of an entire metropolis.

Then another signal by another Rescue Crew draws everyone's attention.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

After a week of shooting in Mexico City all believe they are strictly on a recovery of the dead.

A Rescue Crew extracts a TINNY TODDLER GIRL alive from remains of a massive flattened high-rise structure. Like a rag doll, they delicately hand her from one Rescue Worker to the next.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But this little girl becomes the miracle of the 1985 Mexico Earthquake. Remarkable! Fantastic! Thanks God!

Barrio steps up to Candle.

BARRIO

Cholera is reported in the southern slums of the City.

CANDLE

(hallow eyes)

After today's shoot, it's time for me to go home and see my father.

INT./EXT. '76 THUNDERBIRD 2-DOOR SEDAN - NIGHT

Late one night, the stately 70-year old man, JOHN, drives himself and Candle in a '76 Thunderbird 2-door sedan.

1987 / ALBUQUERQUE NEW MEXICO

CANDLE (V.O.)

My father is a supremely talented man. He's my hero and roll model for his dedicated work ethic.

At the wheel, John passes out, roller coasters over a sidewalk, and skids to a stop in an empty parking lot.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

DAMN!

John collapses to his right on Candle's shoulder. The son pulls him over to his side, props John up, and gently closes the passenger door.

Candle hustles around to the driver side but cannot open the locked door. He sees his father again slump forward and again fall on his right shoulder.

Candle runs over to the passenger side and opens the door to where John falls out. He catches him just before his father hits his head.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

YOU'RE NOT DYING ON MY WATCH!

Candle squeezes past John pulling him back into the vehicle and slams the passenger's door.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

HEAR ME? I REFUSE TO LET YOU DIE!

Candle slides into the driver's side, guns the vehicle, pulls it into drive, and races on down the road.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

JOHN, YOU STAY WITH ME!

As John continues to act unresponsive, Candle, with his right hand, grabs his father's shirt. He twists it around making a fist and starts giving him heart message.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

YOU DON'T DIE ON MY WATCH!

Candle races on down the street running the next red light.

CANDLE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

HEAR ME? YOU'RE NOT DYING ON MY WATCH!

EXT. VETERANS HOSPITAL ALBUQUERQUE - DAY

Candle wheels John to a pretty shady spot on the Veteran's Hospital lawn - right next to the cafeteria, a small rose garden, and a little Sundial Statue.

2 YEARS LATER

CANDLE (V.O.)

My father is not only my best friend
in life, but has steadfastly been my
mentor.

Candle stops John's wheelchair and locks its brakes into place.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I know my time with him grows short.

Candle sits down next to his father and holds John's frail hands, letting the old man do most of the talking.

JOHN

Son, I want you to promise me
something.

Outside of the food court, a beautiful fall day shines forth in early October. The cotton wood leaves shimmer a lustrous gold.

CANDLE

(nods his head)

Okay.

JOHN

No Chris, this is serious. Something
I've thought about for a long time.

CANDLE

Sure dad anything.

(VO)

After all these years, this is the
first time I recall calling John,
dad.

JOHN

Chris, I want you to quit that crazy
TV news. Go write some movie scripts.
And what about your guitar? You play
such beautiful guitar music. Go write
and record some music.

Candle looks pale and sad.

CANDLE

Yes, I am kind of burned out.

EXT. NAMBE FALLS - DAY

Atop the first Nambe Fall, John, 40s, hands 16-year old Candle a 4 X 5 Linhof camera that he carefully places on top of a granite shelf above the swirling pool.

NAMBE FALLS / 25 YEARS AGO

JOHN (V.O.)

Remember Nambe Falls, when we shot
photography up there?

Candle then transfers a tripod across the swirling pool and places it next to the Linhof.

JOHN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Chris, you saved my life, twice now.

Candle then helps John slide down into the swirling pool.

CANDLE (V.O.)

Yes, in the middle of the falls.

Candle then turns to shimmy up the granite shelf to the next pool. He glances behind him to see John slip and fall head backwards down the fall.

Candle leaps back into the pool, and with his left hand, he grabs John's collar just as he starts to plummet over the fall forty feet to a rocky river bed.

With his right hand, Candle grabs a rock crevasse and with all of his might, he pulls John back to the safety of the pool.

EXT. VETERANS HOSPITAL ALBUQUERQUE - DAY

With John's blue eyes, he gives Candle a reassuring nod.

JOHN

Decades ago the Nambe Falls accident
would have been the end of me. Promise
me Chris; you go take care of
yourself.

CANDLE

Okay, I promise.
(VO)

The next day while I was editing
some news story, my father passes
into the happy hunting grounds of
still photographers.

Chris's face draws a hallowed look to where all color except for his blue eyes drains to black and white.

ALL FOLLOWING SCENES in BLACK AND WHITE PLUS: [one spot of color in each shot]

The child, Candle, runs through the glorious Sangre de Cristo mountain range spotted with a single golden aspen.

SLOWLY Saltz and Pepper, show Candle their pistols to his textbooks SLOWLY CRASHING on the dirt parking lot.

In the Heidelberg Gasthaus, Drunk GI slashes Candle's forearm.

Candle and Boussard entwine in a mad passionate sex.

Candle blitzes out a series of chess moves.

Candle fixates on Olympia's beautiful green eyes.

Candle presses his head against the MP sedan raindrop window.

In the South Valley, bullets pierce through a car windshield an inch from Candle's face.

As Candle floats downward toward the Santa Fe Forest fire, he observes trees explode from the intense inferno.

In the burning state penitentiary, Candle videotapes two Unidentified Convicts towing a dead body.

Candle experiences the helicopter crash into the snow.

In a mirror, Candle's sees blood from his right eye.

Scary Beara rips off Candle's left tennis shoe.

Kandalah snake-eyes Candle.

KANDALAH
, are you C.I.A.?

Opera tailgating, Candle and Sumiko enjoy campaign and caviar.

In a blinding snowstorm, Candle then drops into the snow with his equipment sinking up to his crouch.

In Vulcanimos, El Salvador, dust, stones, and debris settle over Candle's body.

In Mexico City, Candle sees sea of black body bags except for one pink one.

Candle's worn eyes look over to his ailing father.

EXT. FAIR VIEW CEMETERY - DAY

From Candle's blue eyes, he stands before John's headstone at the Fair View Cemetery.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

FULL COLOR: with the same cuts and bruises from Vulcanimos, Candle taps on an apartment door, and Patricia abruptly swings it open.

CANDLE (V.O.)

I'm here for ...

PATRICIA

(harsh)

I know what you're here for. You missed the last visitation. My God Chris, look at you. What judge in the right mind is going to ever give you more than a weekend's visit?

The 5-year old child, SARA, steps into the doorway, and her face begins to tighten.

SARA

Daddy, what happened to your face?

Sara lightly takes her hand and touches one of Candle's face wounds.

CANDLE

Honey, Daddy's okay.

Candle lifts up Sara who buries her head in his shoulder, and she starts to SOFTLY cry.

PATRICIA

Chris, the children and I are going to move to Seattle.

The toddler SEBASTIAN shyly appears behind Patricia.

CANDLE

The children don't know about Seattle! When will I get to see my children if you live in Seattle? You want to permanently remove my children from my life? My children are everything to me, but then you know that.

Sara briefly stops crying.

SARA

Daddy stop hurt you.

Sara again hugs her father tightly.

CANDLE (V.O.)

So after a lifetime of stress and distress, it was bound to happen.

INT. VETERANS HOSPITAL, NEW MEXICO - DAY

A wheel chair glides down a hospital corridor.

CANDLE (V.O.)

After a lifetime of bullets flying
in my direction and bombs exploding
around me, the insanity of spot news
madness has led me down this path.

Two ORDERLIES guide Candle in the wheel chair strapped in a
straight jacket.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

So why am I wrapped tightly like a
little Pueblo newborn?

Candle appears totally drugged out as the GREEN FLORESCENT
LIGHTS of the corridor flow into a Daliesque surrealist
twisted painting.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

My cell in Algeria was not padded,
but it was all white. Not this green
florescent crap!

The Orderlies wheel Candle into a padded room.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

WAIT! HELP! PLEASE HELP ME! FOR GOD'S
SAKE SOMEONE HELP ME! NO ONE HELPS?

The Orderlies lock the wheelchair breaks and set Candle on
the padded floor where he sits in a near catatonic state.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

CHRIS! NO ONE'S EVER HEARD YOUR
SCREAMS!

The Orderlies step over to the doorway

1ST ORDERLY

This guy was a newspaper reporter?

2ND ORDERLY

No. I think television. Heard he
tried to commit suicide.

Candle's face grows taught with a total sense of hopelessness.

CANDLE (V.O.)

The bullets and bomb explosion won't
go away. How do I make them go away?
STOP IT! STOP IT! STOP ...

FREEZE FRAME / DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TESUQUE NEW MEXICO - DAY

STREAKING RAYS of YELLOW SUNSHINE highlight the Sangre de Cristos with their magnificent GOLDEN FALL ASPENS.

The child, Candle, runs through the glorious Sangre de Cristo mountain range spotted with golden aspens.

Candle stops running and spreads his arms outward toward the mountain range completely soaking in the sunrays.

[CHILD] CANDLE
(steadily fades)
I'M FREE! I'M FREE! I'M FREE!

EXT. KILAUEA CLIFFS - DAY

Candle's arms spread against the backdrop of the Pacific ocean.

KILAUEA CLIFFS / KAUAI HAWAII

CANDLE (V.O.)
YES I'M FREE! I'M FREE! I'M FREE!
THANKS ALL - GOOD AND BAD - FOR GIVING
ME MY FREEDOM!

Monster ocean waves crash 50 feet against the Kilauea cliffs against the island of Kauai Hawaii.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And within a decade and a second
marriage, we would move to the Garden
Island of Kauai.

A particularly high wave FREEZES in mid-air into Candle's contented face.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I was a throwaway child, a grossly
abused teenager, an idealistic college
student, a used military pawn, a
kick-ass journalist, an itinerant
lover, then the good son, and a
nurturing father.

UNFREEZE to the wave recedes down the Kilauea cliff.

CANDLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And now? Now to have survived, I'm
just feeling alive.

Candle lowers his arms and studies the edge of the Pacific Ocean's horizon as a rogue wave crashes against cliffs three stories high against his silhouette.

FADE OUT: