

## **ECHOES OF COURAGE**

by Daryl Henry

Fade In:

### **EXT. L.A. VETERAN'S CEMETERY - DAY**

Under a crisp January sun, a funeral procession winds slowly behind a HEARSE toward a waiting grave.

The mourners debark. At the forefront is a tall, young African-American WOMAN, aloof. Scrutinizing her from the fringes of the crowd is an expensively-dressed older WOMAN. There is no sound, until, gradually:

The BEAT of a approaching HELICOPTER.

First to look up are the men of an HONOR GUARD, waiting dutifully beside the grave. They squint to see:

### **EXT. CLOUDLESS SKY - DAY**

A Jolly Green Giant HH-3 RESCUE HELICOPTER banking into a tight, desperate circle. Hanging out the side door, a grim CREWMAN stares down.

BELOW THE HELICOPTER

Is the triple-canopy jungle of Vietnam.

### **EXT. HH-3 HELICOPTER - DAY**

The crewman is career Sergeant BILLY SHERIDAN, big, black, pushing 45, a gentle but indomitable Californian. Counting Korea, this is his second war.

### **EXT. JUNGLE CLEARING - DAY**

From SHERIDAN'S POV: a MAN in a tiger-striped flight suit is sprawled on the ground, using a SIGNAL MIRROR to flash a message.

SHERIDAN (V.O.)

(over intercom)

It's not a trap, skipper. I can  
make out two words: "Hurry" and  
"Damnit."

### **INT. HELICOPTER COCKPIT - DAY**

The PILOT and CO-PILOT exchange tight grins.

**EXT. HH-3 HELICOPTER - DAY**

SHERIDAN  
(over intercom)  
He doesn't look too mobile. I'm  
goin' down.

Assisted by the CREW CHIEF, Sheridan climbs onto the PENETRATOR, a weighted anchor on a cable suspended from a winch above the door.

The helicopter settles into a hover over the clearing.

**EXT. JUNGLE CLEARING - DAY**

Marine Lieutenant CHRIS TURELL waits impatiently, his feet bare and burnt, his face bruised. In his late 20s, six-foot-one, skinny, Turell is an F-4 Phantom pilot who stayed on for another tour flying Bird Dogs, the low-tech reconnaissance aircraft he just bailed out of.

LOOKING UP - TURELL'S POV

As Sheridan descends on the Penetrator, an arc of green TRACERS soars out of the jungle to slither beneath the tail of the chopper, followed immediately by the SOUND of a nearby machine gun.

THE PENETRATOR

Sheridan, helpless, ducks as another BURST of fire loops past him. He gestures up to the CREW CHIEF to hurry with the lowering.

Too late. The Sergeant is hit a glancing blow. His body goes limp. He loses his grip on the Penetrator.

ON THE GROUND

Turell watches as Sheridan drops away, plunges to earth, lands hard. The FIRING continues at the helicopter.

HELICOPTER - FROM TURELL'S POV

Another stream of tracers climbs into the sky. This one connects. The Jolly Green takes a hit and is forced to turn away, trailing black smoke.

ON THE GROUND

Turell, yelling at the retreating chopper:

TURELL  
Hey! Hey, Goddamnit!

(CONTINUED)

Sheridan, more philosophical, turns his attention to his left ankle, bent sideways.

Now the sound of the disappearing Jolly Green is replaced by converging BLASTS of WHISTLES from the surrounding jungle. The Marine looks off.

TURELL (CONT'D)

Great. Just fucking great.

Turell turns to his would-be rescuer.

TURELL (CONT'D)

Thanks anyhow, old buddy, but if you don't mind, I think I'll hat out.

The Marine struggles to his feet, unsteady.

TURELL (CONT'D)

You, uh, wouldn't consider lending me your boots?

The black man looks up, says nothing. The WHISTLES are coming closer.

TURELL (CONT'D)

You're not goin' anywhere on that busted ankle, pal.

Expressionless, Sheridan pulls off one boot, hands it over. He tries to remove the other boot but can't. His ankle is too swollen.

Turell groans-- one boot is no good to him. He shrugs and hobbles barefoot into the trees.

TURELL (CONT'D)

(over his shoulder)

You take care, okay.

SHERIDAN

Yeah, see you around, hotshot.

The WHISTLES stop. Sheridan pulls his other boot back on while he waits.

Three Viet Cong SOLDIERS materialize. They wear black cotton uniforms, camouflaged jungle hats, web belts hung with grenades and spare magazines for the AK-47's they carry and now point at Sheridan.