The Veterans Play Project

Created collaboratively by

Wonderlust Productions (formerly Footprints Collective),
the talented cast and crew of the original production
and over 100 Minnesota veterans of U.S. military service

Produced by
Mixed Blood Theatre
November 2013
at Base Camp, Fort Snelling, MN

This script may be used free from royalty, but please list the following credit in any playbills associated with public performance:

The Veterans Play Project was created by Wonderlust Productions, in collaboration with over 100 Minnesota veterans of U.S. military service, and in partnership with Mixed Blood Theatre.

Original Cast and Crew

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performers:</th>
<th>Crew:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dawn Brodey</td>
<td>Leah Cooper, Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt Delaney</td>
<td>Alan Berks, Script Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roger Ezell</td>
<td>Aaron Gabriel, Composer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynn Fowler</td>
<td>Tamara Ober, Choreographer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorelei Giddings</td>
<td>Meghan Gunderson, Assistant Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Hatton</td>
<td>Laura Thaisen, Stage Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erik Hoover</td>
<td>John Bueche, Set Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Jones</td>
<td>Wu Chen Khoo, Lighting Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diane Kinney</td>
<td>Annie Cadie, Costume Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naomi Ko</td>
<td>Wendell Bell, Sound Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ariel Leaf</td>
<td>Sean McArdle, Sarah Salisbury, Props Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jay Mastrud</td>
<td>Ariel Leaf, Community Liaison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick Perlick</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joel Raney</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirsten Stephens</td>
<td>Jack Reuler, Mixed Blood Artistic Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rande Tomas</td>
<td>Jamil Jude, Producer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam Verdeja</td>
<td>Julia Gallagher, Production Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maren Ward</td>
<td>Amanda White Thietje, Managing Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam Whisner</td>
<td>Brie Jonna, Outreach &amp; Marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe Wiener</td>
<td>Jill Michaelree, Outreach &amp; Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fabiola Roman, Audience Services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Veterans Play Project, by Wonderlust Productions
in collaboration with the cast and other Minnesota veterans of military service

Characters: (original cast performer in italics)

Eric, the ghost of a homeless veteran, who occasionally wanders around the Rock: Maren Ward
Tim Haskell, 63, Navy vet (Vietnam), teacher, and director of a vet choir: Roger Ezell
Harvey Smith, 55, Hollywood producer: Nick Perlick
Joey Kramer, 40, musician and aspiring film star: Adam Whisner
Frank Olson, 43, Army vet (Desert Storm), now a teacher: Joe Wiener
Steve Westerberg, 78, Marine Corp vet (Korea), retired pastor: Mitch Lynn Fowler
Mike, 37, Steve's friend, not a vet: Joel Raney
Bobby Harris, 68, Navy vet (Vietnam): Rande Tomas
Albert (Al) Morales, 67, Marine vet (Vietnam): Sam Verdeja
Luke Sullivan, 33, Army Reserve vet (Afghanistan and Iraq), student: Charles Jones
John Rooney, 26, Air Force, now reserve (Iraq and elsewhere), student, gay: Jay Mastrud
Sarah Williams, 29, Air National Guard, reserve, student: Ariel Leaf
Kathy Olson, 48, Army vet for 20 years, now works at V.A. as social worker: Diane Kinney
Taylor Olson, 19, Frank's daughter, Kathy's niece, just finished Basic Training, Army: Naomi Ko
Robert Sorenson, 62, Marine vet (Vietnam), uses a wheelchair: William Hatton
David, served in Army with Robert, died there, a ghost: Matt Delaney
Sue, nurse who took care of Robert, a ghost: Dawn Brodey
Mayor Anderson, 55, mayor of Smedley, not a vet: Lorelei Giddings
Amy Kraus, 38, Army vet (Bosnia): Kirsten Stephens
Sgt. Peterson, a memory from Frank's service, also a sergeant on base with Taylor: Erik Hoover
Other soldiers in Frank's memory: Charles, Jay
Sgt. Jones, Taylor's drill sergeant in AIT: Kirsten Stephens
Jessica, in training with Taylor: Dawn
A soldier in training with Taylor: Ariel
Sergeant Wolf, a figment of Frank's imagination: Erik
Major Nutjob, a figment of Frank's imagination: Adam
O'Neill, on base with Taylor: Matt
Civilians (at community meeting): 1-Dawn, 2-Matt, 3-Erik
Ghosts/USO band: Adam (guitar, vocals), Matt (drums), Rande (vocals), Dawn (vocals), Nick (guitar, vocals)
About the music:
Most of the music and singing (except for "choir" performances) will be performed by ghosts, and a band, up in the balcony or near the Rock. The ghosts are played by actors who have other roles as living people, so they will need to look different when they are ghosts.

Settings:

Smedley, a small town in Minnesota with a V.A. center.

- Church choir rehearsal room.
- The Rock, a rock wall sacred site in the middle of town where many battles were fought.
- Mayor's office (desk)
- Steve's porch. Decorated with "Occupy" signs.
- Frank's classroom (we don't see the students.)

Advanced Training base

- Field where drills take place (open space)
- Bar, off base (just a bar to stand in front of)
- Officer single dorm unit (couch, chair, bedroom with bed out of site)
- Taylor's barracks
Act I, Scene 1

(As house lights go down, MAREN, MATT, ADAM perform instrumental intro of ghost theme. After music is done, lights transition to the choir room. TIM is leading a small group rehearsing an anthem, including BOBBY, MIKE, STEVE, and FRANK.

Eternal Father, strong to save,
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
Who bidd'st the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep;
Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
For those in peril on the sea!

(Lights down on the choir room and up on the Rock, early evening. Two men, not from around here, enter looking around.)

JOEY
Look at this place. Can you feel it? Do you see what I’m sayin’? It’s amazing.

HARVEY
(trailing behind JOEY struggling with a big map)
Damn. Where are we on this thing?—What? . . . OK . . . It's a big rock.

JOEY
Dude. Buddy. Take it in for a minute. Dream with me here man.

HARVEY
Right. I keep forgetting you're an artist.

JOEY
I'm a filmmaker. I make films. And you and I are gonna make you one beautiful film about soldiers. About glory. About heroes. About war. About America. Also, that way is North (he flips the map around and points HARVEY in the right direction.)

HARVEY
Look, I'm with you on this. I cleared my schedule, I've driven around Iowa or Minnesota or South Dakota or some other flat farm land that I don’t want to live on. Because you said vets. You said we’d find vets here. And I'm all about, let's scout things out, but skip over the artsy movie trailer stuff and tell me what we're doing here.

JOEY
This rock sits on top of what was a big deal fort, Man, and this town has been built up around it. Battles, lots of historic battles were fought here. There's blood in the soil. There’s glory in the rock.

HARVEY
What battles?

JOEY
Big battles. Big battles. You know. . . I don't know Harvey, why you gotta be like that? I looked it up; Wikipedia says a lot of stuff went down here. Lots of great ghost stories. Some USO band that was from here, all kinds of stuff. This is what we’ve been looking for.

HARVEY
But where are the vets? I came along because you said I had to meet real vets to make this movie authentic, not to look at a rock.

JOEY
Harvey. . .

HARVEY
Joey. . . Let’s go find some real authentic vets, Joey. Where are they?

(JOEY doesn’t have an answer. ERIC walks by. They don’t see him. They look around in silence. Lights shift back to choir rehearsal.)

TIM
Alright, let's move on. . . I thought maybe some more folks would show up, but …. Well, thanks to everyone for coming. I think we're turning into a great choir, but, the church would really like to see this choir grow so that they know its worth it, you know. . . So, um, please tell other vets, friends, family …

MIKE
Have you talked to Amy? She’s got a beautiful voice.

TIM
She told me she doesn’t sing anymore.

(Pause)

BOBBY
Tim, sorry. I left my sheet music on my piano at home.

MIKE
I got extra. What’s next, Tim?
TIM
I tried a new arrangement of the Marine's Hymn that really honors …. Because our Veterans Day program is coming up, so I want to focus on anthems. . . but, um, it would be great to get some more voices, you know. . .

MIKE
Anthems are a great idea.

FRANK
I don't know, people get tired of these same old hymns, don't you think? What about your songs Tim?

BOBBY
Or we could tell some stories. I got a good one. Now this is no shit, –

TIM
Hey, you know how you can tell a Marine is about tell a bullshit story? He starts by saying, "Now this is no shit –"

STEVE
Only half of any story is true.

MIKE
Stories would be great. I'd love to hear you guys' stories.

FRANK
Can we rehearse? I’ve got to teach early in the morning.

TIM
OK, the Marine's Hymn. From the 8th bar, and …

*(TIM leads the group in the following song)*

From the Halls of Montezuma,
To the shores of Tripoli;
We fight our country's battles
In the air, on land, and sea;
First to fight for right and freedom
And to keep our honor clean:
We are proud to claim the title
Of United States Marine.
(Lights shift back to the Rock.)

JOEY
Because Americans love war stories. They love things blowing up. But, but, but they love quiet too. They love the country and real American values. That’s why if we get this right, we can …

HARVEY
Make lots of money?

JOEY
Harvey …

(The fading sound of the choir transitions to SUE and ERIC, humming the Marine's Hymn, a capella.)

JOEY
wait. . . um. . . hey. . . Do you hear that?

HARVEY
What?

JOEY
Listen.

HARVEY
I don’t hear anything.

JOEY
I'm totally hearing music. You don't hear anything . . . ? Wow. . . This place really is…

HARVEY
What? Haunted? What?

(Suddenly, JOHN, LUKE, and SARAH are heading toward the rock, loudly, a little drunkenly, singing their own parody of the Marine's Hymn.)

JOHN, LUKE, and SARAH

From a bottle of tequila
To a can of MGD;
It is bound to smell like alcohol;
When we belch or shit or pee

HARVEY
That's what you're hearing! It ain't ghosts, don't try to scare me, it's a bunch of drunks.

JOEY
That's the Marine's Hymn! Those aren't just any drunks, those are drunk vets! We should talk to them! –Wait! What do we say? Let's hide!

HARVEY
Joey? I'm a grown man, I don't hide.

JOEY
Let's just sit over here in the dark. We're not hiding. We're just sitting. Where it’s dark.

(They go sit off to the side where they can listen but can't be seen. The vets arrive at the rock and finish their song.)

JOHN, LUKE, and SARAH
Raise your glass, slam it fast for Uncle Sam
Then a round on poor old me!
Who would ever fear an enemy
When you’re drunk like a Marine?

SARAH
That was awesome.

LUKE (to John)
You sing like shit.

JOHN
Fuck you. You sing like turd.

LUKE
Fuck you, you fuckin' wog!

JOHN
Shut up, lawn dart!

LUKE
Luggage valet!

JOHN

Asshole!

SARAH

You both suck. But you're good drinking buddies, so I overlook what fuckups you are.

LUKE

I love you, Man. You know that's what I mean when I say "Fuck you."

JOHN (meaning love)

Fuck you ya pussy.

SARAH

Awww.

LUKE

Sometimes my wife is like “Why you gotta be so vulgar?” And I'm like, once you know you could just be blown the fuck up any ol' time, being polite seems pointless as fuck.

JOHN

No time for being PC. After the shit we been through.

SARAH

Civilians do not get it. God those kids at the U, they're just clueless …

JOHN

Right, like oh, you're all scared about a test, or freaked about some girl, and I'm like, just happy to be alive, you know?

LUKE

I'm happy you're alive. Fuck you!

JOHN

Fuck you too, Man!

SARAH

Clarifies your priorities, right? You know who your friends are after that. Your brothers really.

LUKE

Sisters too.

JOHN (so Sarah)

Who got your back. . . Fuck you!
SARAH
Aww, you're getting me all choked up here. Fuckin fuckin fuck you, ya big fucking assholes!

(They laugh, collapse and sit in contemplation. In the silence, KATHY and TAYLOR, in uniform, enter in discussion.)

TAYLOR
I was so scared, but I knew I had to do it, and I'm just standing there like, (like she's about rappel down a wall) and finally Smith, he - he, just grabbed me, kissed me, and pushed me off. And then, it was awesome, and I did it, and –

KATHY
Wait. Go back to the part where some grunt kissed you without consent.

TAYLOR
No, it wasn’t like that, I’m just a grunt too and I mean it freaked me out, but I guess it was just his way of –

KATHY
That is unacceptable behavior. You can't let them treat you like that. When I was in basic –

(The drunks, suddenly, break out into song again and KATHY stops, frozen, appalled.)

SARAH, LUKE, JOHN

Who would ever fear the enemy
When you're drunk as you and me!

KATHY
Hey! Hey! What do you think you’re doing?

SARAH
Shit. We should go, guys. C'mon.

KATHY
You are not dismissed. What were you just singing? Sullivan? Luke. Is that you?

LUKE
Hey Ms. Olson, how are you?
(Giggles from the other two.)

KATHY
First of all, you missed your appointment with me at the VA, Luke. Second, what are you guys doing here, drunk, disrespecting this place, destroying that song, and dishonoring your service?

(Awkward pause. SARAH snorts. Silence. KATHY doesn't let them go, by force of will. She waits.)

LUKE
Sorry, Ma'am. We just come here to blow off some …

KATHY
You shame all of us behaving like that here. Those songs mean something, to a lot of people.

JOHN  (jumping in)
Our apologies, Ma'am, we'll be on our way.

(They shuffle off. After they get a little distance, they start giggling again.)

KATHY
Sullivan, call me at my office so we can reschedule that appointment.

LUKE (seriously)
Yes, Ma'am.

(And they're gone.)

TAYLOR
Aunt Kathy, you are a ball buster.

KATHY
And you know how I feel about that language.

TAYLOR
Sorry, just, damn, dang, you are –I am going to be just like you. I'm going all the way. I’m going to be one of the very first female Army Rangers.

KATHY
Not if you keep letting random soldiers kiss you, you're not.

TAYLOR
No, this guys' cool, it was OK.
KATHY
Listen. You're a woman. Things haven't changed that much.

TAYLOR
“You have to work three times harder than the men. You're carrying the whole reputation of women serving at all.” You always say this. “Every time you try to do something the men assume you will fail at it.” I get it. You know I promise to make you proud.

I'm already proud of you.

TAYLOR
Aw.

KATHY
Be nice to your Dad while you're home. He may not say it, but he's proud of you too.

TAYLOR
He's not proud of me. He doesn’t get it.

Taylor. He served too and —

TAYLOR
I'm really wiped, Aunt Kathy, I gotta get some sleep. Thanks for picking me up from the airport. I know what you’re saying but I gotta get to bed. Ok? I’ll try to talk to him in the morning.

KATHY
I wish more young people were like you, Taylor. You’re a credit to all of our family who have served for generations.

(Pause. ROBERT slowly rolls toward the Rock. He is carrying a radio, which is playing 1940s USO era music, perhaps our theme, pre-recorded. TAYLOR and KATHY hear the music.)

TAYLOR
Hear that?

KATHY
Yeah … the ghosts.

TAYLOR
Every time we come here, I can feel the history. You know, this place should be a memorial or something.
KATHY
You're right. It should. A veteran's memorial. That's a pretty great idea kiddo.

TAYLOR
Basic really kicked my butt. Can't wait for AIT.

KATHY

TAYLOR
I love you, Aunt Kathy.

(TAYLOR exits. ROBERT enters, surprising KATHY.)

KATHY
Oh! Geesh, you surprised me. What ya listening to?

ROBERT (turning off his radio)
Sorry. Sorry to surprise you.

KATHY
Are you drunk?

ROBERT
No, I always sound like this. Three strokes will do that to you. Sorry. I can leave.

KATHY
No. I was just daydreaming. I'm sorry. About your strokes.

ROBERT
Agent Orange. Catches up with you.

(Silence for a second. They don’t know what to say.)

KATHY
I was just thinking that someone should turn this rock into a veteran's memorial.

(Silence. ROBERT doesn’t seem pleased. He moves away.)

KATHY
Do I know you from the V.A?

ROBERT
Everyone over there knows me by now. They rated me 45% disabled from Agent Orange, 70% from PTSD, 30% from kidney, 40% from hearing loss. I've got 2 ½ peoples worth of disability. All I need is a green patina and some bird shit and you can call me a Veteran's Memorial.
KATHY

How are they taking care of you?

ROBERT

Who?

KATHY

The V.A. I can help. I work there. I’m a social worker. I can help get meds if you need them.

ROBERT

I got no shortage of meds. Thanks. You can medicate all kinds of shit, but you can't medicate loneliness.

KATHY

Do you need help getting home?

ROBERT

Did I ask for your help?

KATHY (understanding)

Right. Sorry.

ROBERT

Goodnight.

KATHY

Are you sure?

(ROBERT turns his radio back on.)

KATHY

Come talk to me at the VA some time?

(KATHY exits. ROBERT stays.)

ROBERT

Oh yeah I got all kinds o’ meds. . .

(Radio music transitions to a live band up in the balcony, doing a 1940s version of USO theme. MATT, ADAM, NICK on instruments. DAWN, KIRSTEN, LORELEI, MAREN vocals)

We answer the call. We give it our all. We fight to the grave or the glory. So please hear our cry. Don't send us to die without telling us why in the morning.
(The song ends and the band leaves, but DAVID remains, balcony.)

Hey Robert.  
DAVID

Hey, David, how's it going?  
ROBERT

Still dead.  
DAVID

I know. I miss you.  
ROBERT

How are ya?  
DAVID

The hemorrhoids are good today.  
ROBERT

You gotta take better care of yourself. What are you doin', just sitting around the house? You should have some buddies to hang out with.  
DAVID

I had buddies.  
ROBERT

Make some new friends. Join the choir. Go to the office. That business of yours, I know it runs itself, but you could drop by, see the people who work for you.  
DAVID

What do you know about it? You're dead. You're all dead.  
ROBERT

We're all dead. Bouncing betties are a real bitch. Took us all out, didn't it.  
DAVID

Except me.  
ROBERT

So yeah, what's the point of that unless you live. For all of us my friend.
(Pause. ROBERT looks out at the sky. When he looks back, DAVID is gone, but another ghost, SUE, has appeared, balcony right. ERIC is balcony left, along with ADAM on guitar. SUE sings the first verse of ghost theme.)

SUE
Where did you come from? Where are you now?

ROBERT
Oh, it's you.

SUE
Do you remember the boy with his head in the clouds?

ROBERT
Thank you, Nurse. God you're beautiful.

SUE
The boy who spent hours observing the sky?

ROBERT
What happened to you?

SUE
Counting the starts that lit up the night.

(SUE and the other ghosts disappears. ROBERT puts his hand over his face for a minute. STEVE and MIKE enter on their way home from choir practice. ROBERT exits.)

MIKE
No way! No way, no way! You've lived there your whole life.

STEVE
Yeah. And my father, and his father.

MIKE
If you inherited the house, then it’s yours. The bank can’t take it.

STEVE
I had to take out some pretty big loans to cover Lori's medical expenses after the accident.

MIKE
You served your country. You lose your job because you take time off to take care of your wife, to help her pass in peace. And how’s that for thanks? All you've already lost, and they just take everything you got left away from you. The system is messed up.

STEVE

You sound like Lori.

MIKE

You guys really inspired me. You fought for what you believed in. First the War, and then you as a pastor, and then both of you as activists, man all those crazy things you two met doing, laying down in the middle of the street with the Vets for Peace guys, protesting the military …

STEVE

Protesting war, not the military.

MIKE

Right. We should do some kind of protest thing for this. It's not right for you to lose all you got after all you’ve done. People should know.

STEVE

I have my faith. I pray.

MIKE

Let's do more than pray. Lots of people care about you.

STEVE

I don't like to ask.

MIKE

Doesn’t God help those who get help from their buddies? We should do one of those Occupy things. You know? We could Occupy your house, and keep the bank from taking it.

STEVE

I don't know whether any of our protests in the 60s did any good.

MIKE

I'm serious. Let me do this for you. You know, Lori would be totally into this idea. Let’s fight the Man! Screw the banks! Occupy Homes!

STEVE

Mike, don’t get carried away.

MIKE (and he’s off)
We'll get the guys from the choir, we'll get my friend Amy to bring some food, I love her man, she loves to cook. Listen, what is the right food for a protest? When you guys were out in the street battling the cops, what kind of food did you bring? I'll tell Amy and …

(STEVE and MIKE exit. JOEY, stunned and fascinated, looks up. TIM and FRANK enter, on their way home from choir practice. When JOEY hears people coming, he hides again but this time badly.)

TIM
You doing OK? You seem …

FRANK
I'm fine. I'm good.

TIM
You seem, something seems off, not yourself. You know you can talk to me any time.

FRANK
Thanks, I appreciate that. Just, memories, you know. Stuff just comes up. It's fine.

TIM
Isn't Taylor back from training soon?

FRANK
Kathy picked her up.

TIM
You're still not getting along.

FRANK
I don't want to talk about it.

TIM
She signed up. I know it's not what you wanted. But you've got to accept it.

FRANK
4.0 GPA. Could have gone anywhere. Succeeded at anything she set her mind to do. She had a great future in front of her.

TIM
She still does, she's doing great Frank. She needs your support, especially now. Especially since you served too –

FRANK
And that's why I wanted better for her. I was stupid when I signed up, but she could –
TIM
So she's not going to be a teacher like you, but she's –

FRANK
Look, Tim, you're a good friend, but this is family business. I don’t want to talk about it.

TIM
You don’t want to talk about anything these days.

FRANK
She's just a kid.

TIM
But she's growing up.

FRANK
It's not that. I mean, sure that's hard enough for any father. But I served – I’ve tried to forget it –
First, they put you on those yellow footprints and just yell at you until you’re not who you thought you were. The dehumanizing, the terrorizing …

TIM
It wasn't that bad. It's just instilling a sense of survival, unity, discipline.

FRANK
Remember bayonet training? Thrusting that stupid bayonet over and over, yelling, "Kill, Kill, Kill, Kill!"

TIM
I wasn't loud enough, the drill instructor made me hold that bayonet straight out in front of me, yelling "Kill" for hours, thought I'd pass out.

FRANK
See?

TIM
But I did it. I learned. We came out OK.

FRANK
Did we?

TIM
Talk to me, what's going on?

FRANK
Just old memories, stupid accidents I can’t forget. . . It's fine, I'm fine. . . I really don't want to talk about it, Tim.

(Awkward silence. Then, TIM sees JOEY.)

TIM

Can I help you?

JOEY

Sorry. Hi. We were just …

FRANK

What were you doing hiding there?

HARVEY

(coming out, dusting himself off)

No, no. We’re adults. We don’t hide. Joey, my colleague, and I were just …

JOEY

We're going to make a movie here.

HARVEY

(Overlapping with JOEY)

We're just here on vacation.

JOEY

About veterans like you. –Can we talk to you? Can we ask you some questions?—It’s going to be a movie about glory, honor, heroism –

FRANK

(starting to go, unhappy)

I teach in the morning.

TIM

(overlapping with FRANK)

I don’t understand. Where are you from? (to FRANK) Wait, Frank, I’ll walk with—

JOEY

We’re from LA, and we're scouting for film locations and—

FRANK

I got to get home.

TIM

(to JOEY)

I don’t think you should be lurking around here, making people nervous. This rock is –
HARVEY
- the perfect place for a memorial. Isn’t it? The perfect place for something special to honor those in this town who have served.

JOEY
And we're going to make a movie about it. About the making of a memorial, and everything it means. It’ll be epic. Historical. But factual. And we want you to be part of it. To be interviewed. To tell us what it was like. To, you know, go to war.

FRANK
Did you serve?

(beat, then)

HARVEY
No, I went to college.

JOEY (overlapping)
There wasn’t a war when I was younger.

(FRANK is visibly annoyed. TIM is concerned about his friend. There is an awkward pause.)

HARVEY
We’ll go. We’ll leave you two to talk. Thank you for your service gentlemen.

JOEY
Give him your card.

HARVEY
(hunts through his pockets, pulls out the crumbled map)
Um, right, yes, it’s right …

JOEY (running off)
It’s in the car. It’s in the car. I’ll get it. Thank you for your service! I’ll get it.

HARVEY
(finding and giving him his card)
I found it. You don’t have to—(calling back) Call us. We’re going to make this rock into a memorial. For you.

(he runs after JOEY)
Joey! Some great stories here, I'm starting to see it!

*(HARVEY and JOEY exit.)*

TIM

You OK?

FRANK

You bet. . . Goodnight Tim.

TIM (getting the hint)

Goodnight.

*(TIM exits. FRANK stays, looks up at the Rock and the sky. MATT, balcony left, plays a snare drum transition as RANDE, SAM and LORELEI set up the Mayor's office, center. FRANK exits.)*
Scene 2

(Lights up on the MAYOR's office. JOEY and HARVEY enter while MAYOR ANDERSON rises.)

HARVEY
(to Joey)
Let me do the talking.
(Shaking MAYOR’S hand.)
Mayor Anderson, it’s an honor to meet you. Thank you for seeing us.

JOEY
(also pumping her hand)
Yeah, an honor, thanks, we’re so excited. I’m so excited, and I think you’re going to be excited too when you hear what we have in mind for your town.

What you have in mind for our town?

MAYOR

What did I say, Joey, let me talk.

HARVEY

Welcome to Smedley, Gentlemen. Tell me—What do you have in mind for our town?

MAYOR

We’re very grateful that you’ve made the time to see us. (Pause.) We think we can help you.

HARVEY

We want to make a movie here!

JOEY

We want to help you turn your town square into a Veteran’s Memorial.

MAYOR

Which is it? A movie or a memorial?

HARVEY

Both? We want to make a movie about turning your town square into a memorial.

JOEY

An epic movie. About serving, going to war, coming home. The Iliad for a modern audience. The great myths. War and Peace. A USO band.

HARVEY
He means to say, your Rock is a potent symbol for the sacrifices that our Veterans have made. People might come from all over to visit it. It could be very good for your local economy.

MAYOR

*(not laughing)*

Where have you been all our lives?

*(pause, she doesn’t look like she’s kidding as she says)*

I’m sorry. I’m kidding. Our town square, our Rock, has a lot of meaning for us. And I care deeply about the economic health of our town. But I’m not comfortable with you coming in here and—

HARVEY

You’re right. We began on the wrong foot. Let’s start again.

Everyone loves to be in the movies!

JOEY

MAYOR

*(still not laughing)*


*(Pause.)*

HARVEY

With all due respect, Mayor, I don’t think you should dismiss us so quickly.

MAYOR

I’m not dismissing you. It’s not up to me. We have a process. You’ll have to fill out some forms.

JOEY

We can pay whatever fees you’d like us to pay.

HARVEY

Joey. Shut up.

MAYOR

O, there will be fees. But first you have to get support from the people who live here. You’re not the first people who have thought of making the Rock into an official memorial, but nothing is ever as simple as it seems.

JOEY

People don’t want to honor our veterans?

MAYOR

I just said, it’s not simple. You should talk to the people who live here.
JOEY
We want to talk to them. That’s what I’m saying.

MAYOR
Good. 500 signatures gets things started. That’s enough to call a community meeting where people will begin to discuss a referendum on possibly putting a vote on the ballot.

JOEY
We’ll do it.

HARVEY
Joey.

JOEY
I feel right about this place, Harvey. We’re going to make a movie here, about vets. And you’re going to thank us, Mayor.

(JOEY exits.)

HARVEY
We have to convince people to have a vote on whether there can be a vote?

MAYOR
Just think of it as a chance to experience the bureaucracy vets have to go through to get their benefits.

HARVEY
Fair enough. Any tips on where we can find vets to talk to?

MAYOR
They’re all around you. Vets are our friends and neighbors.

HARVEY
Huh. OK. So, should we … do you think they’re dangerous or anything?

MAYOR
You’ve got some things to learn. Good luck.

HARVEY
Thank you ma’am.

(HARVEY exits. NAOMI, ERIK, ADAM and MATT, balcony left, perform a country folk version of the USO theme. MIKE accompanies on harmonica at the porch. During the song, RANDE, LORELEI and ARIEL
strike Mayor's office, and SAM, KIRSTEN and CHARLES place Occupy
signs at the porch.)

We answer the call. We give it our all. We fight to the grave or the glory
So please hear our cry. Don't send us to die. Without telling us why in the morning
Scene 3

(Porch. STEVE, MIKE, LUKE, AL, BOBBY, and AMY sitting quietly, surrounded by handmade protest signs.)

MIKE
I saw this cartoon once. There’s a mushroom cloud in the background, right. And there’s this Marine lying in a trench, and he says, “I love how it sucks here!” And then over in some barracks this Army guy is gearing up, and he says, “Damn this sucks.”

BOBBY
I know this joke.

LUKE
The navy guy is looking through a porthole saying, “Wow, sure sucks over there.”

MIKE
And then, right—

AL
Let me finish this one, Mike. You didn’t serve, Mike. I got this one.

MIKE
It’s cool.

AL

(Everyone laughs.)

LUKE (laughing)
It’s true. My buddy, John, he's Air Force, we call it "Chair Force."

BOBBY
NAVY—Never Again Volunteer Yourself.

LUKE
ARMY – Aren’t Ready for the Marines Yet

AL
MARINES—My Ass Rides in Navy Equipment, Sir!

(They laugh.)
MIKE
You know, when the bank comes, we're gonna need more people here. Luke, what about your friends, the other vets at the U, could they join us?

LUKE
They're not big joiners. Not like you hippies.

BOBBY
We're not hippies, just helping out a brother. That's what vets do.

LUKE
Not all of us have time to sit around telling stories about the glory days.

AL
You know, Shorty, there are a few things you could learn from us old hippies. We served too.

LUKE
Long time ago.

STEVE
It would be nice to meet your friends, Luke. Vets gotta stick together.

LUKE
We do stick together. In our own way. I'll invite them OK? No promises.

(HARVEY and JOEY enter. Everyone else falls silent at the entrance of strangers. LUKE stands up, then MIKE, then the others, except STEVE.)

MIKE
You know, you should be ashamed of yourself, this guy served in the Korean War, with honor, before you were even born.

LUKE
If you're going to take this house, you're going to have to bring the sheriff, and a lot of deputies, because you're going to have to get past us.

HARVEY
What? We're –

MIKE
You may be from a big, important bank, but we're telling you exactly what you can do with your eviction notice. You can shove it right up your—
JOEY
Whoah, whoah, I think you got the wrong idea. We're not here to take anybody's house. I'm a film maker. My name is Joey. Joey Kramer. I don’t want your house. I mean, it’s a nice house but—

HARVEY
I'm Harvey. We’re from L.A. Los Angeles. We want to talk to you about—

MIKE
O, right, you’re the movie guys that Tim caught lurking around the Rock the other night.

HARVEY
What do you mean “lurk”? I don’t “lurk”.

JOEY
Harvey. . .

HARVEY
– I mean, right now what we’re interested in— What do you think about a monument to vets in your town square? To honor your service?

MIKE
You want to honor their service, save his house.

AL
Give ‘em a break, Mike. I bet they know how to get publicity. Which we need.

HARVEY
Yes. We might be able to help you there if you sign this petition so we can bring the town together for a community meeting?

BOBBY
What kind of memorial are you talking about?

HARVEY
A statue?

JOEY (at the same time)
A list of names?

AMY
I don’t want my name on anything.
LUKE
They usually do the list of names of the ones who died.

AL
A statue? It’s already a rock. What’s the point of that?

BOBBY
What about this movie? What would it be about?

JOEY
It would be authentic. I can promise you that. Did you see that movie Katie Bigelow made?

(No answer, they don't know what he's talking about.)

HARVEY
Hurt Locker. You know the one with that guy out there, all alone, dealing with the car bomb?

JOEY
And his heads not right. And, you know, he can’t cope at home. Authentic. Human. Like that.

LUKE
First off, that movie was total bull. He wouldn’t be in the field in that kind of shape. That’s bullshit. And it’s like not all Vets are crazy, OK? We didn’t all get shot at and have PTSD. Service is more than just war. Like only 5% of vets ever see combat.

AMY
My whole tour was humanitarian aid work in Bosnia. After the bombs.
We tried to help them rebuild, but everything was gone.

JOEY
Exactly! That’s exactly what we want to hear about. What it’s like, war. … So, what’s it like? War.

AL
You ever have to wait in line at the DMV?

BOBBY
For two weeks.

LUKE
It’s worse than that.

AL
Hurry up and wait. Hurry up. And wait.
EVERYONE
Hurry up and wait.

BOBBY
Serving in the military means long periods of sheer boredom followed by brief moments of sheer panic.

JOEY
Then what? What happens next?

AL
Next? Next you wait some more.

BOBBY
In line. Always in line.

LUKE
Yellow footprints. Line up on the yellow footprints.

JOEY
Yellow footprints, ok. What are yellow footprints?

HARVEY
O come on! Something has to happen. It’s war. Can we at least get a chick in the picture? A girl in a nice tight uniform, something like that?

(Silence. That landed with a thud.)

JOEY
Harvey.

HARVEY
What?

AMY (changing the subject)
You said you had a petition.

HARVEY
Excuse me, Ma'am. I didn’t mean—

LUKE
I'll sign it. Why not? The rock is kind of already a memorial.

AL
Sure. We can use the publicity.

MIKE

We need action. Not just talk.

BOBBY

I don’t know.

STEVE

Whatever you do, please don’t make a movie that glorifies war.

JOEY

Thanks. Thank you. It was great talking to you guys.

HARVEY

Thank you for your service.

(And they’re gone. A moment while the men look at each other.)

LUKE

You know what we don’t need? To hear another person say “Thank you for your service” and not do anything about it.

MIKE

You don’t like it when people thank you for serving?

LUKE

Cause you don’t even know what you’re thanking me for. Did I see combat? Did I do anything? You don’t even know my MOS or where I served. And what am I supposed to say back anyway? Do something about Steve's house if you want to thank me.

BOBBY

I don’t know. I think it’s nice when people say thanks.

MIKE

Cause I feel like I got to say something, right? We don’t know what we don’t know. . . You really don’t like it? I mean you guys are heroes, you know?

LUKE

I hate that word. I was just doing my job.

AL

Well, some of us waited a really long time to be thanked.

(Lights down on porch where actors remain in place.)
Veterans Play Project
Scene 4

(Lights up on the Rock where ROBERT is sitting. ADAM and MATT on instruments, balcony. SUE, balcony right, sings 2nd verse of ghost theme to ROBERT.)

SUE
Where did you come from? Where will you go?
Do you remember the boy who could march in a row?
The boy who spent hours cleaning latrines,
Imagining the day he'd become a marine.

(SUE and the band exit. ROBERT exits.)
Scene 5

(Sound effect of classroom, kids. Lights up on FRANK, teaching his class. We can't see the students.)

FRANK
OK, OK, let's settle down now, Class. We're going to play a little game. Allie, please sit down. Let's make a nice, uh, line, right along here. … Calvin, can you please stop …. Thank you Jennifer, that's OK, he doesn't need your help. Please everyone, please let's just make a line. A line. Starting there, ending there. (Increasingly frustrated and loud) Mark, what is the rule about snacks? No. Yes. Snacks are for snack time. Put it away! OK, let's try standing then. In a line. Caitlin, you, over there. Michael, over there. Now. Line up. Along the line. Ahmed, next to Michael. Jennifer, next to Ahmed. Carlos, please get over here. A line. Feet facing forward. Now!

(MATT, ADAM, maybe LORELEI, balcony left, play music that takes us into a flashback. They underscore the following scene. DRILL SERGEANT PETERSON enters and calls soldiers to attention. FRANK goes first, followed by TWO SOLDIERS IN FRANK'S memory - LUKE and JOHN, now in uniform.)

SGT. PETERSON

(SGT. PETERSON corrects his soldiers' stance and inspects their uniforms while elsewhere TAYLOR is now in advanced training. DRILL SERGEANT JONES is leading TAYLOR, JESSICA, JANE in formation.)

SGT. JONES
And march. Left, right, left, right, left, right …. Company halt. And dress, right. Private? Are with us? Are you in the 21st century? What's got you moving so slow?

TAYLOR
Sorry ma'am.

SGT. JONES
Ma'am? Did you just call me "Ma'am?"

(Pause. TAYLOR is unsure whether or how to answer.)

SGT. JONES
I am Sergeant Jones. I am not "Ma'am." You will never call me "Ma'am." I work for a living. Do you understand that?

Yes.

Yes what?

Yes Sergeant.

Alright. Ready front. Mark time. And left, right, left, right. Private?

Yes. Sergeant.

What are you doing?

*(TAYLOR stops marching.)*

Did I say stop marching? Do you know where you are in the ranking right now? You think you graduated basic, you've gotten somewhere. You have, in fact, arrived at the place of lower than whale shit. Do you know how far down that is? That's below sea level. Below all sea life. Below whales. You are whale shit. Understand?

*(TAYLOR, JESSICA, JANE)*

Yes Sergeant!

*(To TAYLOR)*

What are you smiling about?

Sorry Sergeant.

Sorry for what?

Sorry for smiling Sergeant.
SGT. JONES

Why don't you drop and give me 20, Private.

*(TAYLOR begins pushups, JONES instructs the others to join her. They freeze in a tableau.)*

SGT. PETERSON

At close interval. Right dress right.

*(All do it correctly but FRANK, has extended the wrong arm.)*

SGT. PETERSON

What arm are you supposed to dress right dress soldier?

FRANK

*(Switching arms.)*

Left arm drill sergeant.

SGT. PETERSON

That is correct.

SGT. PETERSON

*(Still looking at FRANK, but addressing another soldier)*

And you have it wrong. Second soldier, take a step to the back. Move!

*(FRANK and other soldier both step back.)*

SGT. PETERSON

*(To FRANK)*

Not you egghead. Second soldier. What school did you go to? Did you learn to count in that school? I was just curious. Maybe you should count right now. Ready front. Now. We are going to teach you a new facing position right now. This is a position you're going to get to know very well. This position is known as the front leaning rest position. Put your hands down on the ground. All of you. Now! Move! And get your body in a plank forward position. This is the front leaning position. You will do this until I get tired.

In cadence. Exercise!

*(They begin doing pushups.)*

SGT. PETERSON

One, two, three, and count out loud! One, two, three, I can't hear you! One, two, three, louder! Group halt!

*(FRANK keeps doing pushups.)*
SGT. PETERSON
I said Group halt! Do you want to do more pushups? I can make you do more pushups. Position of attention. Move!

(The men freeze in a tableau. Back to the women. Where the entire group is doing pushups too.)

SGT. JONES
Group attention! Move! At this point I think you should thank me Private Olson for improving your mind and body. I want you to thank me at the top of your lungs. And end with Drill Sergeant. You may commence.

TAYLOR
Thank you for helping me improve my mind and body Drill Sergeant!

SGT. JONES
I think you should all thank me for helping to improve your minds and bodies. Commence!

ALL
Thank you for helping me improve our minds and bodies Drill Sergeant!

SGT. JONES
Alright then. Company, march.

(Back to the men.)

SGT. PETERSON
Attention! Company march.

(They each begin a cadence, as they march in place. As the men and women merge, they are joined by the rest of the cast, and are led by MATT and maybe LORELEI, calling cadence, in call-and-response format. The movement evolves into a dance.

Eventually, FRANK can not keep up, he is disoriented, he moves off to the side, ending up at his original teaching position.

The companies split again, return to just the original cast members, become realistic, the cadence ends, the men march off, followed by the women, though SGT. PETERSON and SGT. JONES remain. TAYLOR is the last soldier in line.)

SGT. JONES
Private Olson!
(TAYLOR halts, her back to us.)

SGT. JONES
You're going to have to do better than that.

TAYLOR
(Very quietly)
Yes Sergeant.

SGT. JONES
I did not hear you. Face forward!

(TAYLOR faces forward, she is crying but she answers loud and strong.)

TAYLOR
Yes Sergeant!

SGT. JONES
Dismissed.

(Before she goes, TAYLOR looks at SGT. PETERSON who gives her a kind wink. After she goes, SGT. JONES and SGT. PETERSON exit in separate directions. A school bell rings.)

FRANK
Alright. Class dismissed.

(FRANK exits.)
Scene 6

(The choir group - TIM, BOBBY, MIKE, STEVE, FRANK - sing an anthem as they and LORI, AL, AMY, LUKE, JOHN, SARAH take their places on the porch. As lights rise, MIKE is fiddling with a radio. He rolls through a few recognizable songs, a different vet responding to each song – R&B, rock and roll, Hendrix, CCR, metal, rap, country.)

AL
Hey. Go back to that other song. Credence, that was a good one.

BOBBY
No. Leave it on this.

JOHN
Hendrix!

LUKE
What about metal?

STEVE
(turning off the radio)
How about some silence?

(They sit in silence for a while, it's tense.)

JOHN
So, what time’s the bank supposed to come today?

MIKE
Don't know. Today though. We've been in foreclosure for a while. The bank said yesterday was the deadline to leave the premises.

(Silence.)

STEVE
Everyone remember this is a peaceful protest.

AMY
... Hua.

(More tense silence.)

AL
Wouldn’t have pegged you for a country western guy Bobby.
BOBBY
What? Like you only listen to Mexican music and I gotta only listen to Hendrix?

LUKE
I tapped into my inner redneck after I went into the service. Before, I wouldn’t be caught dead listening to country. This other hardcore rap guy I knew, he discovered Jack Johnson.

JOHN
Surfer music. Skaters, gangsters, rednecks, we all end up best friends.

AL
Sometimes. Not always.

BOBBY
No, Man, I disagree. We all come from all over the place, but then, you deploy and you’re in it together. And you find you have a lot in common.

AL
I served with some truly racist assholes. This guy, Franklin, a real descendent of slave owners, you know. No joke. He reminded all of us all the time. And, if I had the chance, I would have killed him, and he definitely would have killed me, and everyone knew it.

BOBBY
But in combat …?

AMY
When stuff started to go down…?

AL
Yeah. All right. He saved my life. That racist asshole saved my life.

LUKE
Things are probably better these days, post civil rights and all.

STEVE
People came back from Vietnam and entered a whole second war. The war for civil rights.

SARAH (to Luke)
Sure, things are better for you, a straight white man.

JOHN
It is better. After Don't Ask Don't Tell, when I came out to my squadron, they were like “Yeah, we know, whatever.” Wasn’t a big deal at all.
What is he talking about?

BOBBY

John’s gay.

SARAH

(Silence)

BOBBY

That wasn’t cool in the old days.

STEVE

Or we just didn’t talk about it in the old days.

LUKE

I’m out there in the sand, a ruck sack on my back, a rifle in my hand, none of that shit matters. Maybe it’s not great back in garrison Black, white. Racist, homophobic, whatever, they got your back in the field and you got theirs.

AL

Sometimes. Not always.

AMY

Only sin in the military is being lazy. You don’t have to like each other, just work together.

(KATHY enters.)

SARAH (to Luke)


KATHY

It’s my most famous friends.

BOBBY

Hey Kathy.

KATHY

I just heard about you on the news. They say the bank is going to try again today.

AL

What time?

(KATHY shrugs, puts some money into the donation bucket.)
KATHY
Luke, you missed another appointment.

LUKE
Sorry, Ma’am.

BOBBY
You’ve got to make the appointments, Luke. If you don’t, you lose your benefits and you become another statistic that the politicians use to say you don’t need them.

KATHY
Maybe you guys wouldn’t need to do this if people were reminded about how much you were willing to sacrifice for your country.

MIKE
You working with those Movie guys then?

AL
Willing to sacrifice? I got my notice the same day as my graduation certificate. No way I would have gone if I wasn’t drafted. It was basically like being enslaved.

KATHY
What movie guys?

BOBBY
I signed up. But I had a high number anyway. Kathy, you take my spot? I gotta get to work.

FRANK:
Yeah, I gotta fly too.

(Bobby and Frank exit)

LUKE
You think my generation is just the all-volunteer military like we were gung-ho, but I got recruited and they made it sound better than anything I had going. I would have done anything to get out of my house.

STEVE
I graduated on Thursday, left to serve on Monday. But I would have enlisted. My Dad served in World War II, 34th Division, Darby Rangers. I worshipped him.

JOHN
I actually wanted to help people. And protect my country. Protect our freedom.

(AL laughs.)
JOHN
What? Screw you.

AMY
It was all I ever wanted to do. Every Halloween since I wore one of my Dad’s old Air Force uniforms. Mom just keep changing the hems, every year.

KATHY
Whatever your reasons, whatever happened, your lives were changed forever in ways that people need to remember.

STEVE
Yours too, Kathy.

KATHY
I didn’t come here to talk about myself.

MIKE (to KATHY)
So you’re not going to be in the movie?

KATHY
What movie?!?

LUKE
These guys, from Hollywood. They want to make a movie here about the military. Sounds like total – (stops himself from swearing) – B.S.

JOHN
But they’re also making a memorial out of the rock.

MIKE
Or trying to. They came around with a petition.

AL
It could be really good publicity for our cause. And a memorial isn't just for remembering, it's for educating civilians. Kathy, you should get the V.A. on board with this too.

JOHN
It’ll probably be pretty lame. Some generic plaque or something.

STEVE
Even a small memorial means somebody cared enough to remember, and remind future generations.

KATHY
I promise to look into it, if Luke promises not to miss his next appointment.

(Pause. Everyone looks at LUKE.)

LUKE
I don't have PTSD. That I know of. She’s helping me find a job.

JOHN
You got a head injury though.

LUKE
Yeah. TBI, whatever. Lame. Anyway, the word “disability” is fucking stupid, right? Nothing drinking doesn’t fix.

SARAH
A soldier's best friend: drinking, drugs, and anti-depressants.

AL
Not always.

JOHN
(pulling out some beer and offering it around)
Speaking of which. . .

MIKE
No thanks. I don't drink.

AL
I think I will thanks.

(Kathy takes one and raises it to Luke... Showing she knows how to relax too.)

MIKE
It never occurred to me to sign up. No one in my family ever talked about it. I feel like I should apologize to you all.

SARAH
We were just young and stupid. The military would never work without a lot of stupid kids who think they know everything.

(As off-base bar scenery gets placed center for next scene, the band, balcony left, plays a Temptations version of USO theme. ADAM, MATT, NICK, RANDE, JOE, ROGER.)
Baby baby baby won't you answer my call. Baby baby baby, oh, I gave it my all. Baby baby you know I'll go to the grave for the glory. Glory. Baby baby baby won't you please hear my cry. Baby baby baby won't you send me to die. Baby baby baby without telling me why in the morning. Morning. In the morning. Morning.
Scene 7

(Band finishes, exits, as lights rise on TAYLOR in street clothes, standing at a bar, drinking a Coke after a tough day. Background sounds of a bar, a juke box playing. PETERSON enters with a beer, stands next to her.)

SGT. PETERSON
Waiting for someone?

TAYLOR
Oh, hi. No. I mean, yeah, my friend. Do I know you?

SGT. PETERSON
No, I saw you the other day being smoked by Sergeant Jones.

TAYLOR
Oh. Yeah it was a tough day.

SGT. PETERSON
You did alright.

TAYLOR
Embarrassing.

SGT. PETERSON
Why?

(Pause. She's mortified, a little tearful.)

TAYLOR
My sergeant saw me cry.

SGT. PETERSON
And you marched out with your back straight. What did you learn about yourself?

TAYLOR
That she can make me cry.

SGT. PETERSON
You're still here though. You didn't go home. You didn't shrivel up and crawl away.

TAYLOR
Yeah. I'm still here. And she'll just kick my ass some more tomorrow.

SGT. PETERSON
She'll kick your ass just as much as you can take it. And you can take it.

(Pause. She realizes he's right, a little stronger, elated.)

TAYLOR
Yeah. That's right.

SGT. PETERSON
I gotta visit the latrine. Will you still be here? Buy you another beer?

TAYLOR
Sure. Uh, Coke. I'm under age still.

SGT. PETERSON
What's your name?

TAYLOR
Taylor.

(PETERSON exits taking his and Taylor's empties. TAYLOR smiles, she's got a little crush. JESSICA enters, joins TAYLOR at the bar.)

JESSICA
Hey!

TAYLOR
Hey.

JESSICA
That was awesome today. Jones is hard core. I am pumped.

TAYLOR
Yeah. Oh. Uhm, this guy, one of the drill sergeants, he was here, he's coming back. Do you mind if he joins us?

JESSICA
What's that funny smile you got there? Is he cute?

TAYLOR
No. He's nice, he's just nice.

JESSICA
Alright, hangin' with a sergeant. Sure.

TAYLOR
Kinda weird, right? I mean we're not supposed to …

JESSICA
*(in a voice like big brother)* Uniform Code of Military Justice! Whatever, UCMJ is whatever it is. Everybody does whatever everybody does. People do it.

*(PETERSON returns with two beers.)*

PETERSON
For the tough girl, here ya go, a beer well earned.

TAYLOR
Oh, uh *(not sure whether to drink the beer)* … This is my friend –

JESSICA
Hi, I'm Jessica.

PETERSON
Peterson. Nice to meet you. You a tough girl too? Sorry I didn't bring you a beer too.

JESSICA
I'm covered. Besides, I was thinking of moving on to some whiskey.

PETERSON
A girl after my heart. You want a shot?

JESSICA
I think I'll finish this beer first, slow down there cowboy.

TAYLOR
You guys wanna play some darts?

PETERSON
Only if we're betting.

JESSICA
I'd probably put your eye out.

PETERSON
Ooo, a threat.

TAYLOR
See, she's tough too.

JESSICA
I'm not tough, just a lousy aim.

PETEERSON
Does your aim get better or worse with whiskey?

JESSICA
Who cares?

(O'NEILL enters, sees PETERSON, joins them at the bar.)

O'NEILL
Peterson, what's the word?

PETEERSON
Hey. Just enjoying a beer with some fellow soldiers. This is O'Neill. That's Taylor. And Jessica.

JESSICA
Hi. We were just talking about whiskey.

O'NEILL
Well then.

PETEERSON
I do happen to have a very nice bottle of whiskey back at my place.

JESSICA
Shut up.

PETEERSON
Perhaps we should move this party?

TAYLOR
OK.

PETEERSON
O'Neill? Care to join us?

O'NEILL
As long as you promise not to play that shitty music you're always playin'.

PETEERSON
You have got to broaden your horizons my friend. Ladies?
(The four of them exit. As the choir room gets changed over into Peterson's dorm, a rat-a-tat-tat on the snare drum as transition.)
Scene 8

(Lights up on the Rock. JOEY and HARVEY are there.)

JOEY
Twelve more signatures. We are so close.

HARVEY
Close to what? I’m starting to wonder whether we thought this through. This memorial thing? What were we thinking?

JOEY
The memorial thing is your thing. But the movie, I gotta say these vet stories are great. Now we got their signatures and you’re having second thoughts?

HARVEY
They all have a different idea what a memorial should be. You know there was an internment camp here for Indians?

JOEY
Native Americans, Harvey. Native Americans. What do you mean a camp?

HARVEY
The US Army kept them prisoners here. A bunch of them were killed here.

JOEY
. . . ghosts. . .

(ROBERT enters. JOEY jumps.)

Geesh, you scared me.

ROBERT
I do that I guess. I can come back.

JOEY
No, don’t go, we want to talk to you. We're going to make a movie about vets.

HARVEY
And a memorial.

ROBERT
How do you know I’m a vet?

HARVEY (referring to the disability awkwardly)
Uh, you have, um, well, you seem …

JOEY

We saw you here before.

(Pause. ROBERT doesn't know what to make of that.)

JOEY (without skepticism)

Talking to your … buddy?

(ROBERT starts to exit. TIM enters from the other direction.)

HARVEY

Wait. Wait, we didn't mean to upset you. It's just a chance to honor your service, honor your buddies.

ROBERT

Don't honor us. We do shameful things. There's nothing here to honor. Just shame.

JOEY

What did you do?

TIM

Hey, leave him alone. He doesn't want to talk to you.

ROBERT

I was just leaving.

HARVEY

It's OK, we'll go.

JOEY

Sorry, we were just … sorry.

(HARVEY and JOEY exit. TIM stands there a moment.)

ROBERT

You didn't have to … I was leaving.

TIM

You should stay. This is our place, not theirs. (Pause.) I served too. (Pause.) And I don't want to talk about it either. You mind if I sit down?

(ROBERT shrugs, indicates he doesn't care.)
TIM

Nice night. Quiet. Nice.

(TIM pulls out his auto harp and plucks a few chords. After a few moments, offstage, JOEL, LYNNE, MAREN, LORELEI, KIRSTEN, ARIEL, RANDE, NICK, JOE very softly start humming the Air Force Song, which underscores the next scene. ADAM, balcony, joins on guitar or keyboard. As the scene's tension grows, perhaps each cast member steps out into view, bearing witness. Lights up on JESSICA and PETERSON in Peterson's kitchen. There is a bottle of whiskey and two shot glasses on the table. Adjacent, TAYLOR and O'NEILL are sitting quietly in Peterson's living room, unlit.)

PETE

So you're pretty tough, huh?

JESSICA

I told you, I'm not that tough. Just one of the guys.

PETE

You are definitely not one of the guys. So now that I've got you alone …

JESSICA

So. Now that I've got you alone. I want to be a helicopter pilot. Taylor wants to be an Army Ranger. You got any advice?

PETE

(moving closer, seductive)

You seem plenty smart to me.

JESSICA

Seriously.

PETE

Seriously?

JESSICA

Seriously. What did you think was going to happen here? I'm just a trainee. No messin' around with a sergeant. I know the rules.

PETE

You gotta be kidding me.

JESSICA

No kidding.
You're not *that* kind of girl are you?

What kind of girl?

A shitty little cock tease.

*PETERSON* (menacing)

("He moves toward her, she backs up.")

I think it's time to go.

No it's not.

*PETERSON* (He moves toward her, pins her to the wall, kisses her.)

No. Uhm. Sgt, don't do this. Please.

That's enough talking.

*PETERSON* (He pushes her out of sight. Cast's humming stops abruptly. Lights up on TAYLOR and O'NEILL sitting on Peterson's couch.)

So, yeah, my Dad just didn't get it.

It sounds like he cares about you. If I had a daughter your age, I don't know …

What about a son? He just keeps saying I could "do better than the Army." I mean, like this was some kind of loser track. They need smart people like me. I can do good here. I can learn a lot. And help a lot.

What does he do?

He's a teacher. Little kids. I think Desert Storm screwed him up.
That happens.

O'NEILL

TAYLOR

He can't have the TV loud. He gets kinda frozen sometimes when he hears a loud noise. Or even just when we're driving sometimes. Hates deserts.

O'NEILL

Who doesn't hate the fucking desert?

TAYLOR

He doesn't talk about anything that happened over there.

You ever asked him?

O'NEILL

He wouldn't talk to me about it.

TAYLOR

Maybe now that you're here. And grown up.

O'NEILL

He doesn’t see me grown up. We can’t talk.

Family is the only one who's got your back when you get home. I wish my old man –

(JESSICA enters, disheveled, upset in a stoic way.)

We gotta go.

JESSICA

What's going on? You sick?

TAYLOR

We're leaving.

JESSICA

OK. Goodnight, O'Neill, it was nice talking with you.

TAYLOR

Goodnight kid.
(As TAYLOR and JESSICA exit, O'NEIL stares in the direction of Peterson's kitchen. After a moment, he crosses to the kitchen, then offstage, behind the Rock. Lights transition to the Rock.)

TIM

You OK?

ROBERT

I'm trying to forget.

TIM

Forget what?

ROBERT

All of it. Shameful things.

(Pause.)

TIM

My first day in Vietnam, riding in the back of a truck, 24 hours after my first drink. One of the GI's said "watch" and threw part of a ration bar into triple strands of barbed wire just to watch kids jump for it and get cut up by the wires. I didn't even know what we were doing there.

(SUE appears balcony right. ROBERT sees her, but TIM does not. SUE sings, with MAREN, ADAM, NICK underscoring.)

SUE (singing)

Where did you come from? What will you find?

(DAVID appears, balcony left.)

DAVID

You can't blame yourself for all of it, Robert.

SUE (singing)

When you finally discover you're losing your mind.

ROBERT

What do you know? You're still dead.

SUE (singing)

When the waiting is over and the innocence is gone,

TIM

What are ya gonna do? You can't blame yourself for all of it.
SUE (singing)
All swept away by a roadside bomb.

(The band fades out. SUE is now JESSICA. TAYLOR stands at her side.)

TAYLOR
You OK? Look, whatever happened, it's going to be OK. I got your back. It's going to be OK.

(At the Rock, TIM plays his auto harp and begins singing. Gradually, he is joined by the entire cast.)

Off we go into the wild blue yonder,
Climbing high into the sun;
Here they come zooming to meet our thunder,
At 'em boys, Give 'er the gun! (Give 'er the gun now!)
Down we dive, spouting our flame from under,
Off with one helluva roar!
We live in fame or go down in flame. Hey!
Nothing'll stop the U.S. Air Force!"

Act II, Scene I

(The band – JAY, CHARLES, DAWN, ARIEL, MAREN, KIRSTEN, ADAM, NICK, MATT - play a metal/rock version of USO theme.

We answer the call. We gave it our all. We fight to the grave or the glory
Please hear our cry. Don't send us to die. Without telling us why
In the morning. In the morning! Kill!

(As the band finishes and exits, lights transition to down center, KATHY and MAYOR in her office.)

MAYOR
Kathy, they have the right to start a conversation, to ask people to sign petitions.

KATHY
But these movie guys are outsiders.

MAYOR
I honestly thought you of all people would be happy to hear talk about a memorial to veterans in the center of town. You’re always talking about how we need to honor our soldiers better.

KATHY
But they haven’t served. They don’t know this town.

MAYOR
Which is why I made them go around town getting signatures. Bureaucracy can be your friend sometimes. You know I just made that rule up.

KATHY
I just don’t think people understand what these Hollywood guys are trying to do.

MAYOR
(holding up papers and letters)
I think they do. You seen these? People are sending me headshots.

(reading from the letters)
“I’ve been waiting my whole life to be a movie star.” “Will they want children in the film? My daughter Cindy is very photogenic. . .” I honestly don’t know why they’re sending them to me.

(Other letters)
“Tear down the rock and build a cemetery.” “Turn the rock into a statue of Ronald Reagan because he won the Cold War.” “Make a statue of my uncle.” That was written in crayon. It’s my favorite so far. –O, here’s another one, “Can we just have a new dog park?”

KATHY
I’m not joking, Beth.

MAYOR
You never joke, Kathy. I know. I’m not joking either. I have a lot of constituents other than vets. And even the vets, I can't figure out what they want, they don't talk to the rest of us much.

KATHY
Because people talk about us all the time, but not to us. Like you’re afraid of us. Sometimes it feels like everyone just wishes we would go away and stop reminding them of their duty.

MAYOR
Maybe people are just unsure what to say. I mean I don't know what to say. When I visit the VA or the VFW. I ask them to talk to me about their service, but they don’t.

KATHY
Soldiers are taught not to talk about themselves. It’s about the whole team; it’s not about you.

MAYOR
Will they at least talk about how we should honor their fellow soldiers? We can make time at the next City Council meeting.

KATHY
People only come to City Hall when there’s trouble. Most vets are done with government and bureaucracy.

MAYOR
In politics, Kathy, “decisions are made by those who show up.” It’s a cliche but it’s true.

KATHY
I don’t speak for all vets, but I think I can get some of them to come to the Rock.

The Rock?

MAYOR

KATHY
It’s an important place for them.

MAYOR
If you can get them to show up, I guess we could do it there, like a town hall meeting.

KATHY
I'll set my mind to it.

MAYOR
Otherwise, your memorial might turn out to be a war movie, or a rock surrounded by dog poo.
Scene 2

FRANK
So the wolf says, “Little pig, Little pig, let me in.” And the little pig says, “Not by the hair on my chinny chin chin.”

(Pause for a question.)
Why does the wolf want to get into their house? Um, I don’t want to scare you, Lily. He has his reasons. He really needs to get into their house. Well, ok, if you must know, so he can EAT them!

(Laughing. The kids were laugh/screaming. It’s fun. Pause for a comment.)
Yes, yes, you’re right, David. Like bacon. Pigs are bacon—Caitlin—Caitlin, raise your hand.

(Then he points at her to call on her. He really does enjoy these kids.)
Yes, you are right too, Caitlin. Straw is not a very strong building material. I guess straw is just what they had available. . . No, no, don’t be scared, Caitlin. This story has a happy ending.

(Pause for a question.)
No, we are not going to sing this story. It’s a telling story. Yes, Ahmed, you can go to the bathroom. . . OK, we won’t tell the story without you. Well, everyone is going to take out their pads and markers and draw a picture of what a straw house might look like. OK?

(SERGEANT WOLF enters, a figment of FRANK'S imagination. The following dialogue is done in a melodramatic, operatic style. MATT, balcony, punctuates on drum or keyboard.)

SGT. WOLF
Private Piggy!

FRANK (Rushing to attention)
Yes sir!

SGT. WOLF
(Crossing over to FRANK, very close, then marching off to the side to demonstrate where to get the straw, with FRANK following.)
You will build a house made of straw. The straw should come in lengths no shorter than a foot and a half and no longer than two feet. Not that straw, that straw! That one! Now bring it over there and connect straw A to straw B, and likewise straw B to straw C.

(MAJOR NUTJOB enters, stands off to side. FRANK continues, crossing back and forth, carrying "sticks" and building a house.)

MAJ. NUTJOB
Sergeant Wolf!

Yes, Sir!

What is the status of the straw?

The straw is being slowly built into a house that is not structurally sound.

Blow that house to the ground, Sgt. Wolf.

Yes, Major Nutjob, Sir! Yessir!

(WOLF pulls out a grenade, pulls the ring, and tosses the grenade onto the "house.")

Fire in the hole!

(WOLF makes a cartoonish sound of a whistle, then an explosion. FRANK reels back. RANDE, JOEL, NICK, SAM, DAWN, NAOMI, KIRSTEN, ARIEL all scramble, like little pigs, out on stage, as though startled out into the street by an explosion.)

Mission complete sir.

Sergeant Wolf.

Major Nutjob!

It's time to move on to the sticks.

(Crossing to FRANK) Private Piggy, I want you to build me a bridge out of sticks. The sticks should be no longer than two feet, and no shorter than a foot and a half. Not that stick, that stick. Do you understand the concept of a foot and a half? That's 18 inches. Where did you learn your measurements?
NUTJOB
Sergeant Wolf! What is the status of the sticks?

WOLF
The sticks are being assembled at a very slow pace into a structure that is not very sound.

NUTJOB
I want you to blow the bridge to the ground.

WOLF
Yes sir. Grenade out!

*Another grenade, FRANK and all the others go reeling.*

WOLF
Mission complete sir.

NUTJOB
Sergeant Wolf.

WOLF
Major Nutjob.

FRANK
Sgt Wolf, why are we—

WOLF
Was I speaking to you, Soldier!! Are you questioning your orders? Soldier??!

*FRANK is silenced. Turning to NUTJOB.*

Sorry, Sir! Yessir!

NUTJOB
I've got a new plan that's going to get me a promotion. We are going to build something worth blowing up. Build me a village out of stone.

WOLF
Yes sir. Private Piggy. There are new orders. We are building a village out of stone. The stones must be no larger than two feet by two feet by two feet, and no heavier than two pounds per stone.

NUTJOB
Make that one foot by one foot by one foot.
WOLF
That's what I said, one foot by one foot by one foot! Do you understand? You will mortar these stones with your own spittle.

FRANK
Are we building the village for people to live in, Sergeant Wolf?

WOLF
If that is what villages do, then that is what we are building, Private. Why are you talking!?!?

NUTJOB
Sergeant Wolf, what is the status of the stone?

WOLF
It is being built, Sir, but it is not very structurally pretty.

NUTJOB
I want you to blow the village to the ground.

WOLF
Sir, are you sure, sir?

NUTJOB
I said blow it to the ground.

WOLF
Yes sir.

NUTJOB
No! No, no, NO!

(Another grenade, much louder explosion. The piggies reel into prone positions on the ground.)

WOLF
The village has been destroyed, Sir.

FRANK
There were people in there! There were kids. I told you not to call the airstrike.

WOLF
Bombs need to drop, Private Piggy. Now—

NUTJOB
Sergeant Wolf.
Yessir!

To what is Private Piggy referring?

Kids. Kids. *There were kids in there, Sir.

Pigs. There were pigs, just pigs, in there, Major Nutjob, Sir.

Damn it. What about my promotion?

May I speak freely sir?

Go ahead.

If you were able to give me a medal and promote me to Lieutenant, I could write you a letter of recommendation and you could be bumped to Colonel. And no one would ever know about the village, least of all Private Piggy, who really does not know what just happened because the reason for your commands is beyond his pay grade, Sir.

I like it. Proceed, Lieutenant!

(WOLF mimes cutting his throat at FRANK and "blows" him away, he reels back to his classroom. Other cast members "blow" offstage. WOLF and NUTJOB march off. FRANK smiles weakly.)

... That's a beautiful picture, Caitlin. Let's tell a different story now.

(As barracks are setup center, snare drum transition.)
Scene 3

(TAYLOR and JESSICA in their barracks. The messy clothes on JESSICA’s bed covers the duffel bag that is almost full and ready to go.)

TAYLOR
Sergeant Jones is gonna kick your ass, she sees your bed like that.

JESSICA
Who cares.

TAYLOR
You want me to make it for you?

JESSICA
Don’t touch anything.

TAYLOR
Sorry. You OK? There anything I can do?

JESSICA
No. You can’t do anything.

TAYLOR
... ok.

JESSICA
I don't know what I thought I was doing here. I'm too stupid, it’s too hard, and everything is fucked anyway.

TAYLOR
I have that same feeling sometimes—

JESSICA
You don't know how I feel, Taylor. Shut up. I can kick your ass. I can kick anyone’s ass. Women. Men. When Peterson had his hand down my pants I could have actually killed him. I could have actually beaten the hell out of him. But you assault an officer, you go to Leavenworth. So I just …. Damn it.

TAYLOR
We need to report him, Jess.

JESSICA
No way. You know how that ends. It gets a whole lot worse than this. No, it's not your problem. I'm dropping out anyway.
TAYLOR
What? You can’t do that. You love it here. You told me, this is all you ever wanted to do.

JESSICA
I can't, Taylor. Even if I could finish training,

TAYLOR
You could. Don’t let him win.

JESSICA
Suck it up, right? It's not like I've never been kissed by a guy I didn't want to kiss, right?

TAYLOR
Except he did more than kiss you.

JESSICA
It's just once we get out there, in the field, facing the enemy, how am I supposed to believe the men in this army got my back?

TAYLOR
They're not all like that.

JESSICA
Sure, right, but how do you know when you're safe and who you can trust? That tool didn’t take my courage. I’m not afraid of guns and bombs. He took my ability to trust the people I’m fighting for. Fuck.

TAYLOR
We can't let him get away with it, or let him do it to someone else.

JESSICA
Leave it alone. The army doesn’t care about this stuff. You've got a future, don't screw it up. I'm done... I’m done... done.

(TAYLOR hugs JESSICA.)

TAYLOR
I hate this.

JESSICA
I'll write you letters. With all my new spare time—God, what the hell do people do with their lives? This was going to be my life. I was in it forever, you know.

(SGT. JONES enters.)
JONES
Private Williams. We've got paperwork for you to fill out.

JESSICA
I'm on my way.

(JESSICA shoves the last clothes in her bag, zips it and exits with JONES.)

JONES
You all packed?

JESSICA
Yes, Sergeant.

(JESSICA and JONES exit. TAYLOR sits alone for a moment, maybe she fixes JESSICA's bed. After a few moments, SGT. PETERSON enters.)

PETERSON
Private Olson.

TAYLOR (coming to attention)
Yes Sir.

PETERSON
Relax, just dropping by to say hi. At ease. How's it going?

TAYLOR
Fine Sir.

PETERSON
What's up, you OK? Is Jones riding you again?

TAYLOR
Jessica's leaving.

PETERSON
I don't follow.

TAYLOR
She quit, sir.

PETERSON
Well, that's a shame. I liked her. Seemed like a fine soldier in training. Bright future.
(TAYLOR looks away.)

PETERSON
She'll land on her feet. I'm sure you'll miss your friend, but if she can't hack it, she can't hack it. You don't give up so easy, right?

TAYLOR
Right. I'm not afraid of you.

(Pause.)

PETERSON
I think you may have misread a situation that you don't understand. This is the Army, Soldier. If we were at war, do you think anyone would give a shit that your friend got a little irrational and emotional? Shit happens. If you can't deal with that, maybe you need to re-evaluate your status too. Am I understood?

TAYLOR
I understand perfectly sir.

PETERSON
Look, you're different than her. I told you, I think you’ve got what it takes. You’re upset now. I’m going to talk to your Sergeant and get you a little time off to reboot.

TAYLOR
I'm not asking for leave, Sir. I don't need to go anywhere.

PETERSON (commanding again)
Am I asking your opinion, Private?

TAYLOR
No Sir.

PETERSON
You're welcome. We're here to help you get through your training successfully, Private. I'll talk to Sergeant Jones, I'm sure she'll understand. So that when you come back—if you come back—you know what’s right.

(He exits quickly and formally. TAYLOR sits down, confused and defeated. ROBERT enters at the Rock. SUE appears balcony right and sings to him.)

SUE
Where did you come from? Where are you now?
Do you remember your buddies under the ground?
Will you ever forget? Will you ever forgive?
Will life be something you can finally live?

(ROBERT and SUE exit.)
Scene 4

(As lights cross fade to porch, AL, STEVE, MIKE, BOBBY, FRANK, AND TIM enter from behind the audience. They settle on to the porch with sleeping bags and blankets.)

MIKE
That was amazing! What a rally! All those people? There were like a hundred –

BOBBY
Man, I thought I was an optimistic guy, but, Mike, you just keep beating the drum.

TIM
Gave that sheriff something to think about.

FRANK
He'll be back.

MIKE
Maybe, but that was a victory! And all those people showing up. Did you even know all of them?

STEVE
Some, haven't seen them in a long time.

AL
Didn't matter whether we knew them. They're vets too. You know, any time I meet another vet, there's that connection.

STEVE
Cold tonight. You guys OK camping out here again? We’re sorry we don’t have enough mattresses. If you want to go home—

BOBBY
It’s a beautiful night. Look at those stars.

(They start settling in for the night. Mike passes out letters to read from the stacks that have been coming in.)

AL
Guard duty. We won't leave our post.

MIKE
More letters came in, we can read these to stay warm. (Reading a letter aloud) "You took care of us and protected our freedoms. I’m ashamed that we can’t take care of you."

Veterans Play Project
BOBBY (reading)
"My brother died in Afghanistan. I’m sure his spirit is with you now."

TIM (reading)
"Keep up the good fight!"

(AL crumples one up angrily and throws it off.)

What’s that?

FRANK

AL

Never mind.

FRANK
(Picking it up to read it)
Dear Baby Killers, This is what Karma looks like.

(Long painful pause.)

BOBBY
What ever happened to those Hollywood guys?

TIM
There’s gonna be a meeting at the Rock tomorrow night to decide on the memorial.

AL
We should go. We could mention Steve's house. Maybe there will be more press there.

FRANK
You think that will help? We can’t keep this up forever.

BOBBY
Couldn’t hurt.

(They all look at him and smile in agreement. They get ready for bed. In silence. MIKE pulls out his harmonica and plays “Taps.”

On the porch, as everyone tries to sleep. FRANK gets a call, steps off to side quietly.

Lights up on TAYLOR’s barracks. TAYLOR talking into her cell phone. She seems younger and less sure of herself than she did before.)
TAYLOR
Dad. . . I’ll explain when I get home. No, I’m not quitting. I don’t know. I just need a ride from the airport tomorrow. Can you pick me up or not? I’m fine. Thank you.

(TAYLOR crawls into her bunk and lies down to sleep. Lights down on porch and barracks as Taps ends. CHARLES places a podium up center as the TAYLOR exits and the porch characters take their sleeping bags and exit stage right and stage left. Lights transition to community meeting center stage.)
Scene 5

(Lights up at the Rock where a crowd is assembling. MAYOR is up at a podium. KATHY is off to one side, HARVEY and JOEY off to the others side. Eventually, everyone is there, TAYLOR and FRANK coming last.)

MAYOR (at the podium)
Thank you all for coming. I want to thank Kathy Olson for suggesting this meeting.

I am so happy to see many veterans here today and friends and neighbors who have come to hear what they have to say. We live in a democracy, a democracy that we have sometimes defended by sending our citizens off to war, and through democracy I have to believe that we can come to an understanding of how best this town can move forward.

Let me introduce Joey Kramer and Harvey Smith to explain to you why they’ve taken a week out of their busy schedules to get to know our town.

(JOEY and HARVEY go to the podium, HARVEY pushing past JOEY to get to the microphone.)

HARVEY (to JOEY)
I'll do the talking.

(out to audience.)

The Iliad. Troy. Pearl Harbor. Gettysburg. Paul Revere. They’re not just stories of war; they’re stories about something larger than ourselves. These stories, and your stories that are connected to this Rock, the people in this town who have served, they should be memorialized. Here. We want to honor you. And we want to share that honor with all of America through a movie.

MIKE
Is this going to be a documentary or fiction?

JOHN
Yeah. Cause Pearl Harbor happened, but I don’t know anyone who’s been to Troy.

HARVEY
OK. OK.—Are we just yelling out things now? Mayor, is that how this works?—We hope to base the script on history, but fictionalized to make the movie more universal.

JOEY
Plus great music. You know, like the USO band that came from here.

JOHN
What USO band? Who cares about a band? What about the vets?
JOEY
It will be about vets too. We'll experience your story through the history here. Music is a part of that, and that will really help civilians relate to it.

HARVEY
Plus, let me remind you, this will definitely be good for your local economy. Film crews. Media attention. This could really put Smedley on the map.

FRANK
With all due respect, our town already appears on maps.

HARVEY
Listen, I really admire that here in the Midwest the chance for fame doesn’t make you jump. But you can’t turn down economic development. We’re already in discussion at the State Capital where they would love to see us *bring our business to your small town.

(*These lines overlap.)

MIKE
I'll tell you what needs economic development, my friend's house –

STEVE
I'd rather we lost our home than have it be a site for something that glorifies war.

SARAH
We just don't want you making up lies –

AL
It's not about money. It's about brotherhood between those who serve –

TAYLOR
Brotherhood is a lie, what about –

HARVEY (trying to regain control)
Look look look. Please. Everyone, please.

MAYOR (helping out)
Everyone please. We’re not going to get anywhere if everyone talks at once.

JOEY (overlapping, not helping)
If you would trust me, please, I know I could make you proud—

HARVEY (finally getting people quiet)
We haven’t come here to bulldoze you. We’re not throwing money around. We’re here to listen to your concerns. Haven’t we been following the rules? Doesn’t that count for something?
(No answer. But a certain restlessness in the audience.)

MAYOR
Yes, ok. Let’s pass the microphone around for comments then.

CIVILIAN 1
I’d like to know what movie stars will be in it.

HARVEY
We’re not close to casting yet.

SARAH
Is this going to be a hippie-dippie peace is the answer thing or a rah-rah America love it or leave it thing?

JOEY
Well. I think complexity.

SARAH
Don’t tell me you don’t have a message.

CIVILIAN2
Will we be in the movie?

JOEY
We will definitely hold local auditions.

HARVEY
But we’re here to talk now about the memorial. The movie will be about the making of the memorial.

CIVILIAN 1 (starting to talk over each other again)
A movie about a list of dead people? Is that like The Sixth Sense?

CIVILIAN 2
Which ones? World War II or Vietnam?

JOHN
Not another fucking Vietnam movie. What about Desert Storm, Iraq, Afghanistan?

LUKE
I thought it was going to be a statue?

CIVILIAN 1
What about the Indians they killed here?

(The crowd is all beginning to speak to each other noisily.)

MAYOR

Alright, let's all settle down.

CIVILIAN 3

I didn’t think I was going to say anything cause, you know, I didn’t want to sound like a big jerk, but everyone is talking so here goes. Do we really want to be the Vet town? I mean, they have memorials in Washington, don’t they? I mean thank you for your service and everything but come on, I mean, vets are a small part of the whole population here. That’s not all this town is about...

(Silence.)

AL

Well, you are right about one thing. . . You definitely do sound like a big jerk.

(And the place erupts in total chaos. People shouting at each other. HARVEY gets louder.)

HARVEY

We can’t do this forever, people. We need your commitment here. Now. We need to get a commitment from you or we’ll have to find another town!

(And the crowd breaks out in more noise. KATHY goes to the podium.)

KATHY

Look, I don't care about a movie, really I don't. I suppose we can’t stop them I guess if that’s what they want to do. I do think a memorial is a good idea. Because no matter how much we think we’re talking about it, we’re not talking about it enough. The unemployment rate for vets, the sub-standard medical care? You’ve all heard me say this a million times. I’m sorry. I mean to say. . .What am I trying to say?

Um.

Do any of you remember Eric? He used to hang out here. At this rock. Shy, quiet guy, he was homeless.

(ERIC wanders out from behind the Rock, leans against the wall, watching.)

I didn't know who he was until I read about his body being found one winter. And he was a vet. How come we didn’t reach him? Why did he die, here, at home, where he was supposed to be safe? Think about it. He was willing to die to protect you overseas but we don’t care what happens to him when he comes home? Can't we, as a community, do better than that?
(Suddenly, ERIC sings, a capella, a Joan Baez version of USO theme. The crowd is suspended in time and emotion for a moment.)

ERIC
We answered the call. We gave it our all. We fought to the grave not the glory
You shut out our cries. You sent us to die. Without telling us why in the morning

JOEY
Listen, we never wanted to upset people or force anything on you. We just wanted to tell your stories.

MIKE (up to the podium)
You want a story? I'll tell you a story. I'm not a veteran, but I know my friends won't talk about themselves, so I'm going to do it for them. My friend Steve, served in the Korean War as a chaplain's assistant. Which means he heard about every horrible thing that happened to every person in his unit. He came back, and became a pastor. Now he's a widower. I didn't know anything half as horrible as him in my life, but I almost threw it all away. I didn't deserve anyone's help, but Steve helped me anyway. And now he's about to lose his house.

We ask a lot of people like my friend Steve. Maybe you don't think you have personally, you're just trying to get your slice of American Dream pie, right. I want it too, but sometimes our government decides it's worth fighting overseas for. And these people, our veterans, they serve, they don't ask about the exact why's and how's, they just serve. I don't think we can ask them to do that, then not take care of them when they come home.

(STEVE comes forward)

STEVE
Thanks Mike. I don't want to make this about my troubles. Lots of people serve, and lots of people have troubles. I just want to say that if you make a memorial, I wish you could honor the living as much as the dead. I've lost friends, and I miss them terribly, and yes, it was the greatest sacrifice they gave. Granted, some gave all, we all gave some. We should also honor the living who serve, the ones who come home, and just quietly go back to being Americans. My friend Tim — A lot of people don't know he served.

TIM
I didn't do much, Steve. I didn't really see combat.

STEVE
He left his life behind and when he came back he went back to work. He goes to Church. He just lives his life and people don't notice him, but he's working hard to put together a Veterans Choir. He served, and he continues to serve. And I'm very thankful to him.

JOHN
I don't want any memorial, or "thank you for your service" or whatever. I did what I did for my reasons, and I'm proud of my work. I think it’s obvious to anyone who isn’t brain-dead that we got to fight war sometimes. But I was lucky, I didn't get hurt. Some of us do. My friend (he looks at LUKE, decides not to say his name), his truck got hit by a roadside bomb, twice. But you know what? He's not broken. He's stronger than anyone I know. You should all want my friend to work for you. He's loyal, smart, skilled, and he needs a job. Hoorah.

AL
Hi. I'm Al. Not a lot of vets of color here. And I just want to say this: Some of these people don’t think they’re welcome at things like this. When people like me went to the VA after we served, I got told to go get help from "my own community.” I want to tell you about one friend, Khao, who served in the C.I.A.'s secret guerilla unit in Laos. Over 250,000 members of the Royal Lao Armed Forces fought side by side with Americans. Over 50,000 of them gave their lives. They destroyed enemy tanks, disrupted supply lines, and without question, saved the lives of thousands of American troops. When we left Southeast Asia, we left Khao and his family to spend the next fifteen years in prisoner of war camps. Khao finally lives in America and has American citizenship after 40 years of not giving up, and his people need to be recognized too. I'm happy we’re here now. Hoorah.

SARAH
My grandfather is a Native American. Some of his ancestors died here, but he still served in Vietnam. Boot camp was no big deal for him, he said, cause ain’t nothing was worse than the boarding school that White people forced him into. He said, he served cause he hoped that it would prove that he was a loyal American. He said that he wanted to be accepted that much back then that he went to war for it. I just thought you should know.

OTHER VET (quietly)
Hoorah

LUKE
I want to honor my friend John. He acts all tough and vulgar, like nothing bothers him, but I seen him cry a lot. In Iraq, you understand, it's all just endless brown, washed out, sand, bricks, the sky's so pale, it's barely blue. The horizon goes on forever, no lines, no color, so when we came home, the green made him cry. The color you all take for granted everywhere. He looks up at trees now still, and I catch him balling his eyes out.

Also, I just want to say thanks to you Vietnam guys. What you guys went through to get support when you came home. I know it was hard. And now, it's better for us. Probably because of you. OK, thank you for your service. Hoorah!

OTHER VETS

Hoorah!

CIVILIAN 2
My grandpa is out at the Veterans Home with a lot of other guys who are sitting around watching MASH episodes all day. He worked commo, communications, in Korea. If people want to go honor them, the place welcomes visitors. They could use the company.

AMY
Hi, I was in Bosnia. It was a mess. I remember this woman showed me her farm, pet sheep, chickens, dog, flowers. Bombed out house. “Would you like to come in?” I thought about it. Nobody knows I'm here. Is it safe? A little house, living room, old tube TV with some variety show on it. She made us some tea. She didn’t speak English. I didn't speak her language. But we sat together for about an hour. I have no idea whether we left her country better than we found it.

BOBBY
Other people are always making greater sacrifices than you. Vets know that maybe as much as anyone. I came home to a wife and an inability to cope at all. For six months, I woke up screaming that the room was on fire. I couldn’t go out in public, and then I started carrying bigger and bigger knives with me just so I could feel as safe as I felt carrying an M16. And I drank. My only moods were angry, hopeless, and depressed. But my wife, my wife. Cynthia, she’s a real hero. She was living with me still in a combat zone, but she kept it cool. She held the line. She brought me back. How do we honor war heroes like Cynthia?

ROBERT
I'm not a public speaker. And I'm not proud of my service. One day on patrol, we wandered into a mine field. I wasn't on point, like I usually was. I watched my entire squad explode like a popcorn popper. I don't know why I survived. I woke up in a chopper. This nurse Sue was holding my hand and with her other arm she was trying to keep my buddy David inside the copter. We're flying by the light of flares, yanking and banking. I remember, he said to me, could you just hold my hand? I held his hand, and she held my hand, and she kept talking to us and made us feel like everything might be all right. I don’t know what happened to her.

FRANK
I was in Desert Storm. None of us talk about that, right, like it was so easy it doesn’t even count as war. I was a spotter. I called down air strikes. OK... I teach kids now. I see these little tiny bodies, and I can't stop thinking about...

(FRANK is too emotional to finish. TAYLOR joins him at the podium)

TAYLOR
My Dad's a really good teacher, and his service doesn’t define him. What defines him is that he knows how to fight for what’s right and against what’s wrong. And he raised me to do that. And that’s what I’m going to do. No matter what.

(Pause)
I think the best way to honor people is this way, what you're all doing. To tell your stories, truthfully, and for people to listen. To be truthful. Really listen. Dad, please talk to me. And I'll talk to you. We can help each other. I love you.

(Silence. TAYLOR goes and hugs FRANK. JOEY goes to the podium, hanging up his cell phone.)

JOEY

Hey, we got a line on another town that's already building a vets' memorial. So we're moving on. But I, uh, we learned a lot here from you guys and your friends. Thank you. For your service. For your sacrifice.

(JOEY exits. HARVEY goes to the podium.)

HARVEY

Yeah, thanks everyone, listen before I go. I'd like to make a donation toward a couple loan payments on Steve's house.

MIKE

Look, we don't know about your movie …

HARVEY

No, I get it, it's just a donation. Look, I know this check isn’t enough. You might save Steve’s house, but there will be other vets whose houses you can’t save. You guys served in the military. I bet if you figured out who the real enemy was, you wouldn’t always be fighting a losing battle.

MIKE

Who’s the enemy?

HARVEY

I don’t know. Me probably. A little bit. Selfishness. A country that only sees what we can get from each other and not what we should give to each other? People who don’t understand sacrifice. What do I know? You keep telling your stories. Maybe eventually I’ll learn something.

(HARVEY exits.)

MIKE

Good luck to you.

ROBERT

Look, I don't, uhm, I don't get out much so we haven’t met, but I've been pretty successful in business here, and I, hell, I've never given anyone anything. I got to thinking about memorials and honoring people's service. I want to buy your house, in the name of my friend, David. He died over there in Vietnam. Anyway, you can keep living here, I got my own house. I just want to pay your loan off.
(Ghost music begins.)

STEVE
Are you sure?

ROBERT
I'm sure. I don't want to even talk about it. Consider it a memorial.

MIKE
That's really generous.

SUE (singing)
Where are you going? What can I say?

(TIM goes to the podium)

SUE (singing)
The boy is gone, but the man remains.

TIM
I know it's not as impressive as a statue or as big as a movie, but maybe the choir can come up here and sing a song? That’s what we have here now. . .

SUE (singing)
Always watching and waiting and counting the days.

TIM
I really think it would help if all of us sang together, vets and civilians, together.

SUE (singing)
Until he can join his comrades again.

(Everyone on stage moves into position for Eternal Father. TIM comes downstage of everyone, faces them, conducts.)

Eternal Father, strong to save,
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
Who bidd'st the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep;
Keep us in your steadfast hand
Until, in peace, we meet again.

(Lights fade. End of play. Curtain call. After the bow ... )
MAYOR
Thank you. We'd like to ask the veterans here with us today to stand and be recognized for your service. Thank you.

(Cast applauds. Actors shout hoorah, then exit.)