

SAVING PRIVATE SMITH

FADE IN:

EXT. BEACH - EVENING

An army bivouac on a beach in France. Soldiers are regaling with drunken revelry. As the soldiers drink (complete with sounds of singing, laughing, belching, swearing, glass breaking, people stumbling), the camera begins to tilt chaotically, making jumping motions as it spins to show the complete platoon.

SERGEANT DOBBS is shown, close-up, as he tries to make sense of the chaos around him. Like the other soldiers, he is staggering and reeling from drink. The chaotic noises continue, now interspersed with snips of dialogue such as:

Where's my goddamn beer?!

Hey Franklin! Wake up, man!

I gotta take a whiz.

C'mon, Sarge. Have another.

Christ! I think I'm gonna be sick.

Goddamned wimp. You drink like a pansy.

One soldier walks into a tree, two more collapse on the sand and another two crawl toward a beer cooler. One man is seen retching into a bush at the end of the beach. Dobbs focuses on one private urinating on the beach, swaying back and forth.

DOBBS

Kowalsky! Take it in the bush!

The private waves in a nonchalant manner then slowly heads for the bushes, urinating all the way. Dobbs shakes his head, then takes off his helmet to scratch his head. As he does, someone hits him in the temple with a spitball which, in his drunken state, sends him reeling. He staggers and falls.

The chaotic laughter that follows is suddenly deadened as if the Sarge has lost his hearing. He looks about bewildered, staring at the men in his outfit, straining to hear the muted cries. He appears dazed, then suddenly realizes one of the men has put

earmuffs on him. Quickly pulling them off, he regains his normal hearing.

A private who has pulled his left arm out of his sleeve to appear one-armed approaches Dobbs, holding a fake hand in his right hand. He leans over the Sarge and extends his offering.

PRIVATE

Need a hand, Sarge?

The private then bursts out laughing. Dobbs passes out.

CUT TO:

Outside the MAJOR's tent. Dobbs is waiting to go in (with a cold pack on his head, searching his mouth for saliva).

EXT. DAY

Dobbs cringes at the sound of a pigeon cooing.

MAJOR (from inside the tent)

Dobbs!

Dobbs enters the tent and finds the Major coloring a map of France which is sitting on an easel behind his desk. Catching his attention, Dobbs salutes.

DOBBS

You wanted to see me sir?

MAJOR

Yes, Dobbs. I've got a special... What the hell have you got on your head?

DOBBS

Cold pack, sir. We, uhm, had a rather rough night on the beach, Major.

MAJOR

Any casualties?

DOBBS

None. Just a few minor injuries.

MAJOR

Good, good. As I was saying, I've got a special assignment for you and your men. Orders straight from the top. It seems there's this senator who's got a close friend over here and he's quite concerned about him. He naturally doesn't want anything to happen to

him.

DOBBS

Nobody wants their friends to eat a bullet. Their good ones, anyway.

MAJOR

It's more than that, Dobbs. It seems this soldier lost his father when he was a young boy and the senator feels it would be a tragedy if he also lost his own life.

DOBBS

I guess it would be, sir.

MAJOR

I want you to find him and bring him back home. We don't have much to go on, unfortunately. His name's John Smith.

DOBBS

And?

MAJOR

And what?

DOBBS

What else do we know about him? Where's he from?

MAJOR (rifling through papers on his desk)
Somewhere in the Midwest. His father fought in Korea.

DOBBS

Korea? Are you sure?

MAJOR

Or Vietnam. I don't know. He died somewhere in Asia.

DOBBS

Anything else, sir?

MAJOR

No, that's it. Good luck, Dobbs.

The officers exchange salutes, then the major turns and begins randomly sticking pins the map of France.

CUT TO:

Another platoon. Amid grenades, smoke and gunfire, Dobbs and his men seek out the commanding officer. Only the sound of shooting and explosions is audible as Dobbs approaches several men and finally finds the commander, SERGEANT WILEY.

DOBBS (shaking his hand)
Tom Dobbs. I'm looking for a John Smith.

SERGEANT WILEY (wrinkling his brow)
We got quite a few John Smiths.

DOBBS (impatiently)
Well, round them up! In fact, get your whole platoon out here. I want to see all the men.

MATCH TO:

Dobbs facing a group of forty to fifty soldiers.

DOBBS
Anyone here named John Smith?

Fourteen of the men step forward.

DOBBS (shaking his head)
Great. Just great.

He paces up and down then returns to face the soldiers.

DOBBS
Any of you from the Midwest?

Eleven of the fourteen step forward.

DOBBS (sighing)
Alright. Any of you lose your father in Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Japan, Laos, the Philippines or any other godforsaken place in Asia?

Six of the remaining eleven come forward.

DOBBS
Well, this is marvellous. Maybe I'll just take half the goddamn army back with me.

SERGEANT WILEY
What else do you know about this John Smith?

DOBBS
Christ, it's hopeless. The only other thing I know is

that he's good friends with a senator back in the States.

There are general murmurs among the remaining John Smiths of:

It sure as hell ain't me.

I'm out man.

A senator? Fuck me!

You gotta be kidding.

All six men shake their heads and step back. Dobbs, frustrated with his mission, turns away and mechanically shakes the sergeant's hand.

DOBBS

Sorry to have troubled you.

Rounding up his men, Dobbs heads into the jungle to continue his search.

CUT TO:

Another platoon, with Dobbs speaking to the commander, SERGEANT JOHNSON.

DOBBS

How many John Smiths do you have in your outfit.

JOHNSON

We had four, I think, but I'm afraid they're all K.I.A..

DOBBS (confused)

Kidnapped, imprisoned and assaulted?

JOHNSON (staring at Dobbs in disbelief)

Killed in action.

DOBBS

Oh, right.

JOHNSON

We sustained a lot of casualties taking the beachhead last week. You're welcome to go through the dog tags, if you want to.

DOBBS (frowning, then turning to his men)

DAWSON, FITZGERALD. Go through the tags. See if he's

CUT TO:

Another unit in the jungle with gunfire in the background. Dobbs is facing a young private.

DOBBS
Private Smith? John Smith?

SMITH (nervous from the distant gunfire)
Yes, sir.

DOBBS
From the Midwest? Father killed in Asia? Friend of a senator?

SMITH (jumping from sound of a bomb far away)
Uhh, yes, sir.

DOBBS
I got orders to take you home.

SMITH
Hot dog! Let's go.

DOBBS
I know you're in the middle of an operation here and you're expecting the Germans in the next day or two but I can't be responsible for that.

SMITH
No problem. Come on. Time's a wastin'.

DOBBS
I realize you got your duties, but these orders are from higher up and they supersede any other orders you might have been given.

SMITH (stepping toward his tent)
I understand. I'll get my stuff.

Smith hurriedly slinks away to collect his possessions. Dobbs turns to the commander, SERGEANT CONNORS.

DOBBS
Sorry to leave you in the lurch like this, with this impending attack, but orders are orders.

CONNORS (shrugging his shoulders)
We'll manage.

CUT TO:

INT. ASSEMBLY HALL - DAY

A military base back in the U.S.. A room filled with military V.I.P.s including various senators and the President of the United States. Dobbs and Smith are marching together toward the head table.

DOBBS (in a whisper)

Smith, this senator's probably got other friends fighting in the war. What's so special about you? Why would he commission a special outfit to search hell's half acre for your sorry butt?

SMITH

Well, I owe him \$500.

DOBBS

That must be it.

Reaching the table, the two men face the senator and salute.

SENATOR

Dobbs! Frankly, I'm surprised to see you alive.

DOBBS

Yeah. I never did like Spielberg's ending.

SENATOR

Me neither.

The military officials nearby step forward to offer their congratulations, then the President addresses the sergeant.

PRESIDENT

Sergeant Dobbs. Saving Private Smith was a difficult mission with a number of tough choices that had to be made. I realize it wasn't easy but I want you to know that all your efforts are greatly appreciated. The mission did, unfortunately, result in a number of serious setbacks for the American war effort but I'm pleased to say that you -

DOBBS

Mr. President. Exactly how bad was it?

PRESIDENT

Well, Dobbs. Without you and your platoon and Private Smith, Connors and his men lost that post in France. The Germans ran roughshod over them, advanced on Britain and took it over, then crossed the Atlantic and

wiped out New York and Boston before we were able to push them back. But you, Sergeant, you brought back Private Smith safe and sound and for that we are proud to award you the Congressional Medal of Honor.

DOBBS

Thank you, sir.

CUT TO:

A view of the charred remains of New York City as the American national anthem plays.

THE END