

FADE IN:

EXT. ARLINGTON CEMETARY - DAY

An endless field of white tombstones stretches a path that ultimately leads to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

BILLY (V.O.)

Some people think a war ends when an armistice is signed, when the last shot is fired, or when the soldiers return home. For me, the Vietnam War never ended. In fact, it began on September 16th, 1968. That was the day my brother was killed.

EXT. GROVE NEAR TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER - DAY

In a grove near the The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier a small ceremony is taking place. A group of smartly dressed Vietnam Veterans and a Marine honor guard stand side by side in a line, surrounded by spectators. ANNA ROBLE, a woman in her mid-seventies showing great strength, stands between the crowd and the men. MIKE WORTH, BILL GRIFFITH, LARRY MCCARTNEY and JOHN LANCASTER, offer kind words.

WORTH

(Southern accent)

He made us all laugh under some horrible conditions.

GRIFFITH

Joe was a Marine's Marine.

MCCARTNEY

Joe was one of the best.

LANCASTER

My name is John Lancaster and I teach ROTC to high school students. Joe Roble was one of those heroes. Thank you for allowing us to honor your son Mrs. Roble.

EXT. VIETNAM MEMORIAL WALL - DAY

Gliding over a black granite landscape, a blurred sea of names eventually reveals that it is the Vietnam Memorial Wall.

BILLY (V.O.)

For many, the Vietnam Memorial Wall is just a sea of names, but each name has a story, each story was a life, and each life touched other lives.

Focus is placed on just one name amidst this sea of names:
JOSEPH EDWARD ROBLE

BILLY (V.O.)

My name is Bill Roble and this is the story of just one name on the Wall and the lives it touched.

EXT. GROVE NEAR TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER – DAY

JOHN CREGAN, a catholic priest, now stands before the crowd.

CREGAN

My name is John Cregan and before I put on my present uniform, I was a Marine company commander in Vietnam. A lot of people ask if my experiences there were a part of my decision to become a priest. I tell them yes it was. After leaving half of my company at a place called LZ Margo, I had to write many letters to parents. I remember sitting in a field reading a letter I received from Mrs. Roble.

Anna, fighting tears, smiles at Cregan.

CREGAN

In it was a copy of a letter Joe had written. This letter epitomized giving of yourself, and I shared that letter with others for many years. Over time, I lost the letter. When Billy...

Cregan directs attention to BILLY ROBLE standing among the line of veterans.

CREGAN

...contacted me regarding this ceremony, I asked him if he would fax me a copy

of that letter. I would now like to share a portion of that letter with all of you.

Cregan begins reading the letter. As he does, many veterans with their families, as well as Anna's children and relatives among the crowd appear strong while others are in tears. The letter speaks for many of them.

CREGAN (O.C.)

"When I came over here in November, it was because I wanted to play John Wayne for awhile and also to get some first hand knowledge of how the war was going for us. That seems like a long time ago; I have grown up quite a bit since then. I kept wondering if we were doing any good by being here and are we the ones that should be doing this job. I say yes to both questions. Why shouldn't we do the job? We're the best equipped to do it. And it is a job that has to be done. If we quit now, the only ones who will gain anything are the communists. About two weeks ago, I picked up a personal reason for fighting. I was on a convoy going back to my outfit and I saw this little boy standing alongside the road. For some reason he reminded me a lot of Billy."

INT. ROBLE HOUSE - MOTHER'S BEDROOM - DAY

A boy about nine years old is laying on his stomach on the bed reading from a pile of letters spread out in front of him.

BILLY (V.O.)

"For a while, I just sat and stared. Then I said to myself, why shouldn't he have the same rights and privileges that Billy has? I am prepared to give my life to get him these rights. If anything happens to me here, I don't want a lot of blaming someone for my being here, I want to be here! I would much rather you be proud that I died

for a worthwhile cause that I understood and firmly believed in."

Billy's middle-aged mother walks in the room and begins caressing her young son's shoulders. She speaks in a soothing voice.

ANNA

Whatcha reading Bumper?

BILLY

Hi mom. I'm reading Joe's letters. He talked about me in this one.

ANNA

Well he was very proud of you.

BILLY

Really! What was he like mom?

ANNA

Ha! He was a character, but he was always there for you. You read what people said about him.

BILLY

Do you miss him?

ANNA

Sure I miss him, but you have to go on.

A knock at the door interrupts the conversation. Billy dashes for the door.

BILLY

I'll get it!

Billy races to the door. Anna follows behind.

INT. ROBLE HOUSE - KITCHEN ENTRANCE

SHAWN MORLEY, a boy about Billy's age is waiting at the door.