

Radio Check
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EXT. CINESPACE STUDIO BUILDING CHICAGO - DAY

Joc pulls up to the curb. His pickup truck comes to a stop sporting California plates. The 'Eat Fish, Wear Grundens' sticker is displayed in the rear window.

He climbs down out of the truck, checking a sheet of paper. It seems like the parking is legit.

JOC

Oh, hey, excuse me Officer. Do you ticket here?

COP

I'm not a cop, I actually really do just play one on TV.

Joc chuckles at the cardboard and fake sets. The prop cop cars, fire trucks, ambulances and all the actors dressed up in the costumes for the various shows amuses him.

Joc digs the tin out of his pocket and jams a wad of chaw in his cheek and heads off in search of the set entrance. He spits one last time before hauling open the door.

CUT TO:

INT. CINESPACE STUDIO BUILDING - DAY

He steps inside the large set building. It's dark but as his eyes adjust, he sees what cannot possibly be real.

He's got his wad of chaw in his cheek and he nearly chokes on it when a little Pomeranian DOG dashes across set with it's diamond studded collar dragging behind.

Some frazzled young FEMALE ASSISTANT is juggling her clipboard and chasing after FOXY, the lead actress's ankle-biting Pomeranian.

No it's not a scene. Somewhere off in the distance we hear said lead actress shouting.

LEAD ACTRESS (O.S.)

Don't let Foxy get into the garbage again. He's got the worst shits thanks to your fucking caterer.

As if on cue, Foxy stops and shits like a fire hose. The diamond leash dragging right through little Foxy's rocket fuel effluence. Joc choke/gags on his chew.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The assistant screeches to a stop, wrenches then cries as she tries to scoop the liquid shit into a poop bag.

JOC

Umbrella might work better...

She sobs with rage as Foxy dances his leash all through the shitshow. Joc just stands stunned by it all.

JOC

Worse than a fucking burnpit...

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. LEAD MALE ACTOR'S TRAILER:

The PRODUCTION CREW sets up the outside shots near the lead actor's trailer.

Inside the trailer, Joc leans forward in the chair trying to explain a tactical maneuver to the LEAD MALE ACTOR who is completely distracted by his phone.

Joc slams the K-Bar down on the table HARD!

JOC

Look, you may think you look like you know what your doing, but, ah, ya' don't... you can and will maim or kill someone if ya don't pay attention. So shut 'er down, Pacino.

The actor is shocked and obeys.

JOC

The serration on the back of the blade is...

CUT TO:

EXT. AFGHANISTAN HILLSIDE - DAY

JOC (O.S.)

... to cut through trip wires... and human bone, if needed. See, Jordan, Paco, Billy, the team and I were digging in. The Afghan countryside is rough and impenetrable.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Paco scuttles the side of the hill giving a 'hand up' gesture to 'full stop'. Joc freezes in position.

Paco leans over with his knife, he plucks at one of the wires crisscrossing the hillside. It is strung from a tree to a rock. Paco flips his knife and grabs the wire in the serrated edge of his blade.

In an instance, he clips and deactivates the IED.

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

The enemy uses wires to trip IED's
and then, get a good range for the
snipers to kill the rest of us.

Joc and Jordan and the boys instantly move when Paco gives them the OK. They all turn and scatter for cover.

PACO

Heads up guys. Looks like they're
expecting us.

An almost silent WHOOSH / THUMP explodes the HEAD of Billy's battle-buddy right next to him. The infamous Pink Mist blinds Billy. Paco comes in close wiping Billy's eye clear.

PACO

(Shaking Billy back
from shock)

Billy! Billy! C'mon Man.

Stunned, Billy is shaking and drooling his battle buddy's blood and brain matter trailing from his chin.

A few second later, the echoed gunshot.

JOC (O.S.)

You never hear it and the next
thing, my buddy is on him trying
to put his brains back in his
head.

Joc yells them to get out.

JOC

(intense)

Jordan! Move, move, move!

Eerie silence and another "THWAP".

Jordan moves for cover, sniper fires, a close miss, Joc is covering Jordan, then assesses the angle of the sniper's shots.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

A hint of smoke off in the distance.

Joc rotates slowly, 180 degrees and traces the fire, he stands and shoots into the brush. The sniper's head explodes and he falls forward.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. LEAD MALE ACTOR'S TRAILER - DAY

Joc leans back in his chair. His knife still in his grasp. The actor is sipping his muscle milk. Can't seem to help himself, he's back to only half-listening.

Jake uses his knife to cut the top off the BANG energy drink can fashioning it into a spittoon for his chewing tobacco fix.

ACTOR

No shit...

JOC

You actor types, Jeeeeeeesus, ain't you some kinda special!

The actor's phone pings and the actor then outright laughs at the text he receives.

The actor is so self-absorbed, he doesn't realize that in his eagerness to reply to the phone ping text, he just knocked over the spittoon and the contents of "spooey" all over the desk, his phone, his script and sort of stalactites down onto his lap.

ACTOR

(Ewwwww, nearly
retching)

What the...

And Joc has already exited, stabbing the script to the wall of the camper.

EXT. LEAD MALE ACTOR'S TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

Joc exits the trailer door with a slam and proudly regards the K-Bar coming through the trailer siding.

Joc digs the keys out of his pocket, takes the Studio pass off his neck and tosses it on the WRONG WAY sign.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Across the lawn, the assistant is holding Foxie by the leash, eww gross. Foxie is squirt-shitting again. She looks ready to crumble.

Joc climbs up in his pick up and peels out. He's already dialing as he takes off.

JOC

(into speakerphone)

Yo Jordo-, where the hell are you man? Don't tell me you shipped out already? Pick up the phone!

Sorry, the voicemail is full and cannot accept any messages at this time... Joc dials back incessantly, each time more furious.

INTERCUT:

INT: JORDAN'S APARTMENT DAY

We settle on JORDAN, a Desert Storm Marine in a deep state of a drug induced VA prescribed coma. You can tell this hero was in his prime just a short time ago.

On the mantle are pictures of family, fellow with troops and a picture with Joc, Turk, and Billy. Memorabilia is mixed in with books on theology and acting sit on a shelf.

JORDAN moves slightly and spills the skanky bong juice across his chest. He is too fucked up to register. His phone rings. And rings. And rings.

Jordan slow-mo stoned digging for his ringing phone under a pile of junk and tossed bottles and food containers. Finally he finds his phone, fumbles and answers it. Taking an earful, he pulls the phone away like Joc's blowing his high.

JORDAN

Yo, Joc, Chill. S'all good, man.

(Pulling the phone
away again off Joc's
yelling)

Dude, you're blowin' my high...

CUT BACK TO:

INT. JOC TRUCK CONTINUING

JOC
(Yelling at Jordon)
Arghhhhhh!!

Joc hurls his phone down on his front seat and slams his steering wheel.

CUT BACK TO:

Pulling back, Jordan appears to be living in a crack house. Dank. Flies swoop over food containers.

Small gaps in the aluminum foil on the windows let streaks of sunlight across the dark room. Holes from fists dot the space.

A fly makes several annoying circles and lands on Jordan's head. Lazily, he takes a few swipes at it, but gives up and passes out.

Bottles of prescription drugs rest table-side paired with a huge BONG on the floor.

EXT. OVER CHICAGO

An aerial view zooming up from Joc's parked truck up and climbing up over Chicago, sweeping down to the lakefront.

Two MEN walk in tandem. As we move in closer, NILES, mid 50s, is a Marine Corps veteran whose Native American roots ignite the warrior creed in his DNA.

Walking with him is CHAPS, a preacher and his contemporary. They huddle against the chill off the lake in midwinter. Zeus walks in lock step with Niles his handler, his companion, his savior. Zeus is this man's best friend. His collar jangles around his neck. The familiar sound of a lone military dogtag clanging against his own ZEUS tag is a sound Niles has grown to depend on.

NILES
Invigorating or idiotic?

CHAPS
The fuck if I know, Tanto. My collar isn't keeping me particularly warm out here. I much prefer my digs in Angel Fire. You know it's sunny 278 days a year in New Mexico.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NILES

Ya don't say, Al Roker. I hear
AARP ranks New Mexico right up
there for best places to get old
and die.

And on that note...

CHAPS

Gotta Light?

NILES

(Humored)

As a Godly man, you always
reminded me more of the
antichrist. Pretty sure that's the
only way I tolerated you for so
long.

Chaps chuckles.

Niles shakes his head at his old pal. Chaps grabs Niles
and uses him to block the wind as he cups his hand
against the wind to light his smoke. His winter coat
opens slightly revealing a hint of his white priest
collar. Niles rolls his eyes and laughs as his friend the
priest curses the wind.

NILES

(Flipping Chaps
collar)

Maybe a scarf or a (elaborating on
this weird word) muffler... the
fuck is a muffler anyway... next
time you come to Chicago in
January? Better suited than that
flimsy thing you're sporting.

(he flicks Chaps's
priest collar)

And don't start in with your "God
as my protector" words cuz words
don't win over our Windy City. No
disrespect...

CHAPS

(Exaggeratedly)

None taken, Tanto...

Niles gives a hearty laugh. Chaps picks up a stone and
skims it out over the lake. Zeus scampers to the water's
edge and is about to go in, but stops instinctively
waiting for Niles to give him the ok command.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Niles nods, Zeus heads into the cold water unfazed. Niles breathes deep and steady imperceptibly bracing for something to come over him. With a deep breath, Niles tries in vain to fight off the whiplash fast flashback.

CUT TO:

EXT. JUNGLE RIVER - DAY

WATER CHARGING AND HURTLING A BODY DOWNSTREAM DRAGGING HIM UNDER. EVERYTHING IS DIZZYING AND CHAOTIC. BODIES OF NILES'S MEN ARE TUGGED AT BY THE RAGING RIVER. UNDERWATER SCREAMS. TWISTING BODIES. FLAILING. THEN DARKNESS.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. BEACH - CONTINUOUS

Chaps shoots him a side glance to make sure Niles is good. Niles stares straight on to Zeus in complete outward composure to mask the complete chaos of his mind.

NILES

I'm fine. You don't need to hold
your raspy breath every time.

CHAPS

Me? I wasn't. Believe it or not,
my left nut just froze... in
fact... still a little numb... bit
unpleasant, really, but don't
worry 'bout me. God as my
protector and all that.

Chaps has learned one thing. Pick your fights because the ghosts usually win. These oldest, best battle buddies fall into their sarcastic quips, their lingo thrusts and parries just like brothers who haven't lost a beat even after years apart.

As they walk on, Chaps tugs his cigarette and the wind rips the smoke away.

CHAPS

I knew when I first met you Tanto,
you were gonna be...
(pondering the right
word)
... memorable.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Niles guffaws at his own memory of first time he saw Chaps.

NILES

And you all 'gillied up' in your
sappy plates, kevlar, and Gerber
set to head outside the wire
served up like some sitting *dick*
on a silver platter.

CHAPS

Funny, I don't recall it was me
who got roasted that night.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE:

EXT. MILITARY BASE RIMADI IRAQ 2004 - NIGHT

There he is the Chaplain trying to keep up with all his
gear on, headed outside the wire that night to minister
to the Marines.

He witnesses a bomb going off in the village just outside
the main gate and a MAN ON FIRE. He runs to put out the
burning man.

CHAPS (V.O.)

(Reminiscing)

... Like I said memorable. I
s'pose you come through something
like that, it's hard not to become
lifelong friends... even if life
in Rimadi only lasts a few
minutes, hours, or days.

Niles rolls over on the blanket and Chaplain's collar is
sticking out and covered in soot. Niles smiles up at him,
sarcastically.

NILES

Ah Jesus Christ, ain't much of a
praying man. And I have no use for
priests, especially the ones who
bend over alter boys. But I'm
guessing you're not one of them
types now are ya, Chaps?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And with that, the Chaplain dead eyes Niles. And at that moment, The Chaplain became "Chaps" and their friendship is cemented.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAKEFRONT BEACH - DAY

Niles and Chaps turn to walk back.

CHAPS

How in God's name was I supposed to minister to that Charlie Company?

NILES

(shakes his head no idea)

How many times have I told you Chaps, if eeeeevery time we speak you're gonna invoke the God guy, we're gonna have ourselves a situation. You got yours and I got mine.

(beat)

Growing up on the Rez, God's holy rolling choo-choo train clearly blew by our stop.

Chaps rolls his eyes, crosses himself as if forgiving Niles's blasphemy.

CHAPS

Oh blasphemous one. I will pray for you, Tanto.

NILES

(Deadpan sarcasm)

Phew.

Chaps throws an arm over Niles's shoulder.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BAR - SAN DIEGO - NIGHT

Joc and Turk and the guys are outside at some beach bar, a prime watering hole for military guys coming out of Coronado.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A mix of OLDER SERVICEMEN, higher ranks and the current GUYS. And wherever they go so follow all the girls who chase them, bangin' bodies and lots of long hair and skin against skin. The bar, bodies and sounds spill right out onto the beach. LIVE MUSIC plays something like contemporary county rock.

A real feel-good celebratory mood. Joc and Turk cheer the others, they are all wrapped up in stories of their past months of pure survival. Lots of hand angles and gestures, describing scenarios and tactics the way guys who know what they are talking about can do. Laughter and holy shits. All shared. And another shot.

Following Joc as he heads through the wave of people inside to the men's room. We veer off and over to the far end corner of the bar. Different mood down here.

INT. SAN DIEGO BAR - NIGHT

Down by the waitressing refill station, there's a special place set aside for the traditions known to those who serve.

The Bartender, DUSTY, clearly ex-military, his USMC tattoo reveals his division. He comes to the bruiser BILLY, late 20s and lines up the shot glasses.

Joc and Turk fall in behind Billy. They slap him on the back. Billy is distraught.

DUSTY

For our fallen brothers...

He pours out FOUR shot glasses all perfectly lined up on the bar then drags the Marine signature drink, Jamison, over the tops to sloppily fill them all. Dusty leaves the bottle and Billy is well into another one of his nights of drinking alone.

Overhead the live band (KALEO "Broken Bones") fills the moment for the fallen soldiers.

CLOSE ON: Written on a napkin:

For my brothers-

LCPL: Steven Manitz - USMC, LCPL Rodger B. Manning - USMC,

*LCPL Juan Rodregues - USMC Chad R. Childress (USMC).
"Semper Fidelis" - Until we meet again.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILLY

For my brothers.

BILLY / JOC / TURK

(In unison)

'Till Valhalla!

BILLY

Steven, Juan, Rodger, Chad. God damn, all you guys were the real deal. Honor, dignity and trust.

Billy is choking up as he deeply stare at the shot glasses that are left full for the lost men. Billy, Joc, Turk, and Dusty throw back a toast.

DUSTY

(off the shots)

These 4 remain full all night. Our tribute.

INT. SAN DIEGO BAR - CONTINUOUS

Down the other end of the bar, LARISSA, RANDY and some of the TRAINERS from Sea World are set up with drinks all around. Randy has brought a seriously good looking guy, PAUL, along for their fellow Sea World Trainer, MACE, to meet. Good vibe going. Larissa checks the time.

LARISSA

Where the hell is she?

RANDY

(Jokingly off Paul)

I mean I know he's hard to look at, but I wouldn't think Mace spooks that easily.

INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

A) MACE, a real stunner, long 'n lean, dirty blond, kissed by that SoCal sun, comes through the door, strips off her motorcycle jacket and slings her helmet on the crook of her arm. She spots Larissa and Randy. With an easy wave, and an impossibly beautiful smile, she heads over. Then it all happens so fast.

B) Joc is coming out of the men's room when he spots her. No time to even stop and ogle her. He watches the scene unfold.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

C) Up behind Mace, someone shoves her. Mace is rammed hard. Her head cracks the edge of a table as she goes down.

D) The wiry, hopped-up, wild-eyed white GUY seems to be revving at top speed, he shoves past and steps on Mace whose knocked out. He comes up to the bar and downs one of the shots in front of Billy.

E) Before anyone even knows what's happening, Billy snaps, spins and kills. A single stroke to the crackhead's larynx, he goes down choking, seizure, death.

F) The rest of the shots are spilled, slow motion. Disrupting this sacred tradition comes on like a bad omen. Billy stands there. Chaos swirling around him.

G) Joc falls in to attend to Mace, hand and pressure on the gash to her head.

H) Dusty grabs a bar towel for Mace's bleeding head.

I) Larissa and Randy and team all as well. The scene is chaos.

J) Joc looks up and immediately assessing situation. Turk and his other Seal guys are now inside.

Joc studies Mace, brushes the matted hair back off the gash.

Larissa gasps. Mace is out cold.

DUSTY
(quick to Joc)
We gotta get Billy out of here.

K) Joc motions to Turk to help the mess ensuing over at the bar. Turk shoves through the crowd. Billy is skittish and unpredictable. Dusty tries to keep Billy calm. Turk is blocked.

Sirens closing in.

DUSTY (CONT'D)
(gesturing to Turk)
Now!

LARISSA
(to Joc)
Go, we got her.

L) Joc jumps up and meets Turk. They swiftly come up along Billy and ease him down and outside.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The Seal guys move in and around Billy out through the beach side as the COPS barge through the front door.

EXT. BAR - SAN DIEGO - MORNING

Dusty is hosing the deck off. Joc pulls up.

DUSTY

Hey, Joc.

Joc jumps down from his truck. A handshake.

DUSTY

Thanks for helping with the cops and Billy last night. I figured you guys being there would help. He'd have gotten himself killed right then and there if he was alone and threatened.

JOC

Yea, course. Billy, Turk and I were together over in Afghanistan... some messed up shit, he saw.

DUSTY

Yea, wicked PTS. He stays out by the pier. Says he can't... won't live indoors so he just keeps goin' back out.

(Beat)

He's redeployed something like 5 times back to back. Way too many tours to begin and zero turnaround if ya' ask me.

(Beat)

...but nobody in the war rooms seem to be askin' me and they still can't figure out that it's all too much.

JOC

Looks like he's gonna have to live inside now.

DUSTY

They got him down at Donovan Correctional.

JOC

Killed the guy in one shot.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DUSTY

Spec Ops. You guys do that shit well. Doesn't translate so well after you come back home.

JOC

Not saying he did the right thing.

(beat)

Fuck it, yea, I am. That guy was a meth head.

DUSTY

With a Tec-9.

JOC

(wow)

No shit.

DUSTY

Yea, the cops found it on him.

JOC

And the girl, she ok?

DUSTY

Yea, poor kid. Jesus, that was a bad header she took.

Mace's bike is still parked across the lot. Joc nods to it.

JOC

Her bike?

DUSTY

Yea, still got her helmet and gear inside.

Joc unlatches the tail gate and slides the plank out. A milk crate and his bike chock is all there.

JOC

My bike's still in a few parts in my garage, I've finally got some down time to work on it.

DUSTY

Congrats, you just through Coronado's toughest?

Joc smiles allows himself a slight nod. He is humble and dismissive. Trained to do the tough stuff and never talk about it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOC

(Off Mace's bike)

I'll get this. I can deliver it to her.

DUSTY

Don't think there's any rush on that. Her head must feel like your bike in parts and all over the garage floor. If it's no problem to hold onto it for her?

JOC

Not a problem at all.

Dusty thumbs up and walks inside to get Mace's gear. Joc walks over to Mace's bike, squeezes clutch and wheels it towards his truck.

Dusty comes out with Mace's helmet, gloves and the key. Joc looks at the helmet.

JOC

Yea, she could've used this last night.

Dusty winces clearly replaying the head crack to the table.

Joc slips the key into the ignition and fires up the bike. Jumps on and ramps up into the back of the truck.

He leans over, checking the MOMO brakes and the super fitted out bike. Seriously nice ride.

He stares off lost in a daydream then shakes his head imagining that girl on this ride.

JOC

That's it... that loop's definitely gonna be keepin' me up at nights...

Oops. It's already out of his mouth before he can contain it. Dusty laughs and Joc, well, oops, he's just tripped on the truth.

Joc immediately moving on from that OMG moment, locks the handlebars and secures the bike. Jumps down from the truck bed.

Joc turns back and reaches onto the front seat of his truck for a scrap of paper.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

He grabs a contractor's pencil jammed in his visor. He jots down his number for Dusty.

DUSTY

(Taking the paper)

Thanks for taking care of this.
I'm supposed to hear from her friend when she knows more. She was still out when the ambulance hauled her out of here. I have no idea how long they'll hold her for observation.

JOC

Yea, sure. You can reach me on that.

(Beat)

I'll go by and check on Billy.

DUSTY

That'd be real decent of you.

(A little grin)

I'll make sure to shoot you her deets when I hear from her friend.

With a handshake, Joc sucks at concealing the blush as he jumps up and pulls off.

INT. MACE'S BUNGALOW - DAY

Mace is corked on the couch, head bandage. Larissa is talking to her, Mace is loopy on the pain meds. Larissa calls to her.

Mace is bleary-eyed and trying to make sense but her nose seems to be getting in the way and distracting her. Larissa tries to ask her a question. She comes in real close talking almost with sign language, slow and exaggeratedly.

LARISSA

Do you want a sandwich with those pain meds?

Mace blinks at her, eyes sliding shut.

LARISSA (CONT'D)

(Continuing to mime
as she speaks real
slowwww)

Nah, why bother. I'll just grind the vicodin into the peanut butter so you can spoon it down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mace blinks trying to keep her eyes open. Drowsy, drugged. Smiling like this is good shit.

Larissa adjusts the ice bag on Mace's head. Her eyes swoop open then drag shut again.

MACE

peanut ppputter... putt... nut...
butt

Mace's entertaining herself until suddenly she is just lights out.

LARISSA

Look who's all Lucy in the Sky...

FADE OUT.

EXT. MACE'S BUNGALOW - NIGHT

Joc rolls up in his truck. He jumps down toting a gift bag under his arm.

Larissa greets him at the door with a hearty hello and a gesture back to Mace who is just as we left her on the couch.

Joc hands Larissa the gift bag.

CUT TO:

EXT. MACE'S BUNGALOW - NIGHT

Joc bounds down Mace's steps back to his truck. Larissa smiles from the front porch. Behind her, the front door is swung wide revealing Mace still in same position: splayed out on the sofa and snoring.

Now crowning Mace's head and secured under her chin is a pink wrestling helmet, with a big bow on front. With each exhale, the ribbon flops into Mace's face / mouth. Still sound asleep, she instinctively swipes at the bow bonking the helmet.

Larissa comes over to Mace's aid and kinda' adjusts the big bow.

LARISSA

She...so... pretty...

INT. RICHARD DONOVAN CORRECTIONAL FACILITY CELL - DAY

Billy isn't doing well. CHAPS (younger here) with his strong jawline and kind eyes, sits patiently ministering to Billy. Chaps is there as minister for the prison, but he is also a veteran, whose volition in life is to help others after all the bad he has seen.

He leans in closer to Billy, speaking low and calmly. Chaps will do whatever he can to help Billy.

Billy looks up into his eyes. Billy is a man who could never be afraid in combat. Fear has come to him now. He looks pleadingly to Chaps.

BILLY

Sir, may as well kill me if I have to stay inside here.

Chaps scrawls a number on a scrap of paper.

CHAPS

If you can't reach me, you call this number. Our brother Niles will always answer you on this number. Always. He's my brother. He's your brother. You call Niles.
(Beat)

You hear me? They will let you have this call. They have given me their word.

Billy squeezes the paper then his eyes shut, hangs his head, weeping silently. Chaps pats his back and bows his head against Billy's.

CUT TO:

RAPID MONTAGE:

INT. JAIL OUTER HOLDING PEN

Billy trying to make a call to the number on the scrap of paper, pleading with the skinny jittery GUARD who by the looks of it has his own healthy addiction going on in the back room. The Guard taunts and turns the big man down.

Billy panicking and pleading.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GUARD
(with a snake of a
smile)
Not such a tough guy after all.

Billy turns and you can visibly see the "fuck it all"
come over him.

INT. JAIL CELL - NIGHT

Lying on the cot, a slice of moonlight bathes his face.
Billy stares up at this final friend, closes his eye and
tear traces down to the pillow.

FADE TO:

EXT. CONFLICT ZONE - NIGHT

Hell on earth, munitions shake the soul but from above
the moonbeam sweeps down its light. There below, a single
scared young SOLDIER is pinned and alone. Tracer rounds
fire and flash, a younger Billy in the gully in this
distant conflict zone.

There the moon is his savior, companion, and solace. He
visibly holds his focus on nothing else but the friend
above in the sky.

FADE BACK TO:

Billy's last breath, deep and clean, relief and it's
done. His eyes fixed lifeless on the moon above.

The makeshift blade of plastic melted to a sharp shank he
has used to slice his own jugular falls, each pump of the
heart seers under pressure from his wound and makes his
departure from this earth quick and slick. In his hand,
the scrap of paper Chaps has given him, blood covered.

INT. BILLY'S JAIL CELL - DAY

Joc rams past the same guard who had taunted Billy, a
smirk on his mealy-mouthed face. Joc shoves into Billy's
jail cell. Chaps sits with his head down, on Billy's
blood-drenched bed.

JOC
No, no...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Joc slows at the sight. Chaps no longer sporting his military gear, now a civilian chaplain with his rather nonconformist "Gruntstyle" shirt with a big rugged cross on it. On the sleeve the assaulting flag. He has a cross around his neck.

Chaps just looks up at Joc. In his hand, the scrap of paper he had given Billy.

From behind the Guard leans against the cell door with a leer as he slides and spins away.

GUARD

Get used to it, hot shot.

Joc flexes to go at him.

FADE TO BLACK.

ANGLE ON:

EXT. LAKEFRONT BEACH - DAY

Zooming out from Niles and Chaps and Zeus, mere specks on the beach, past the Chicago skyline down to the bowels of the Windy City. Gucci and Prada, Brooks Brothers and Harry Winston all parade up on Michigan Avenue. While directly below this wealthiest stretch of Chicago's Gold Coast is the homeless encampments down in the tunnels of Lower Wacker Drive.

EXT. UNDERPASS LOWER WACKER - CHICAGO

MAGNUS, a homeless young man, is crouched by the road trying to stay warm down along Lower Wacker Drive. He has military looking gear. His backpack is military grade is leaning up against his sparse belongings. There's something handwritten on a piece of cardboard, but it's obscured by his backpack.

Mace rolls up on her motorcycle just behind the uber Mercedes S Class ahead. The DRIVER scapes some change from the coffee cup holder that's all spilled and messy in the \$173,000 car.

The driver's leather-gloved hand powers down the blackened window, hand cupped with the smattering of change. The homeless young man gets up and limps over to the window.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

With the window down, the gloved hand is out, careful to avoid touching the homeless hand. The driver drops the change in the homeless man's military style cup.

The homeless man looks at the change then back up at the driver. With lightening speed, Magnus hurls the change back in the driver's face before the driver can even raise the window.

ANGLE ON:

Mace physically flinches on her idling bike as she watches this from her bike directly behind the incident.

The driver flips the homeless guy off and peels out. Magnus hurls expletives at the driver and limps back to his post.

ANGLE ON:

Across Lower Wacker Drive, a black Ford F150 truck seems to catch sight of the altercation and slows at the red light then ducks into the emergency pull off as the light turns green. Windows blackened out. We can't see who it is, but it is watching on.

CUT BACK TO:

Magnus passes right alongside Mace. Her mirror visor is down so she appears faceless. Her breath and heartbeat are so loud.

He turns and yells at Mace, inches from her, then flexes menacingly at her.

MAGNUS

Honk, I don't give a shit!

Mace is steady now. She doesn't flinch, but instead of honking at him or taking off, she flips her visor up so the guy can see her.

She isn't backing down. He shakes his head and laughs sardonically then whips his begging cup hard at his pile of gear. It hits his backpack which tips over revealing the cardboard sign:

Veteran. Homeless. Hungry. Help
me. Please.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

In a manic pace, he limps and storms back to Mace, rifling through the range of emotions, at first pleading, tearful, then once again belligerent, aggressive.

MAGNUS
(pointing to his
sign)
So, who the fuck are you?

Then, yelling indecipherable epitaphs, Magnus regains his pride and continues limping right through traffic. He spins offering a healthy middle finger to the entire intersection.

CUT TO:

EXT/EXT. MACE'S MOTORCYCLE STOPPED - LOWER WACKER DRIVE -
CONTINUOUS

The light has turned green, but Mace is just stunned. Cars honk at her, she fumbles her gears, watching the homeless man and the cars swerving around him and honking.

MACE
Watch out!

Across the street the black pickup truck is idling. The driver flicks at the black wrist bands etched with "Billy" and "Turk" barely visible. They dangle off the rear view mirror as he watches vigilantly across the street.

The driver's a good samaritan, he tries to get his door open. He manages one leg out, but a car honks dangerously close forcing him back inside. Door slams back shut... he waits for a break in the traffic.

Back across the street, horns continue honking at Magnus, at Mace, but she flips them off.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Mace revs and slowly moves along Lower Wacker scanning for the man.

She idles up to the next red light looking out for him. He has vanished.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Just then -- BAM! He slams his hand and appears from behind one of the concrete pilings. Mace flinches again. And the homeless man now has her undivided attention.

MAGNUS

You lookin' for me? What you want!?

Shocked and unable to speak Mace stares in fear from her motorcycle - scouting out her exit as the crazed homeless man comes closer.

MAGNUS

C'mon! What?! Wanna give me money?
But you 'fraid I'm gonna cop
somethin' with it? Just another
fuckin' junkie? Fuck you!

He storms off, offering a middle finger again.

For a moment, Mace is in shock, but gathers herself and mustering courage, she slowly trails him.

MACE

HEY! Wait! You fucking scared me,
that's all...

He stops and turns and actually smiles.

MAGNUS

(Defensive)
Irony, ain't it!
(Beat)
I used to serve this country, try
to keep it safe. Look at me now,
scaring the shit out of folks and
freaking 'em out.
(angry)
It's just I don't particularly
like begging for scraps. It hurts
on so many fucking levels.

Mace holds her bike steady. She flips up her visor.

MACE

Yeah... well, I can see that.
That's a bad limp you got...

Magnus smiles and moves towards Mace, she straddles her bike and holds her ground.

MAGNUS

It don't matter, that's the least
of it. I'm a fucking soldier!
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MAGNUS (CONT'D)

I have...

(Beat)

...no **had**, my pride... dignity, ya know.

He dissolves into grief and shame.

MAGNUS

(Just looking at her
looking at him)

I know right?! How can I be
homeless?! How does that happen to
a guy who served his country.

Tears visible in his eyes. Mace is stunned at the precise words he is putting to her. She tries to shake her head no, but it is either lost on the young man, or it doesn't matter anymore.

He throws his arms up at her dismissing her like he has the whole human race. Mace watches him storm off, his limp so pronounced she knows he needs help and medical attention.

MACE

(yelling)

What's your name? HEY!!

Around a corner and he's gone. She takes a deep breath, slaps her visor back down. She is shaken and as she takes off on her bike, she sobs behind her visor not even sure why this has affected her so deeply.

ANGLE ON:

The traffic is all seized up keeping the driver from being able to exit and come lend a hand, finally the tractor trailer that has blocked the driver has cleared.

The black truck across the way moves into the lane and pumps the brakes a few times, clearly checking where the motorcycle rider has gone.

Seeing the homeless man and motorcycle are gone, the black truck pulls away, there are two stickers on the rear cab window, too far off to read, but somehow familiar.

FADE TO:

EXT. JORDAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Joc is hammering at the door: Bang! Bang! Bang!

JOC (O.C.)
Hey Jordo! Sorry man, I didn't
mean to be a prick about the work
you got me.

His banging grows more intense. Something's wrong.

JOC
Yo! Jordo! Get up or I'm bustin'
this lock again. I'll do it -- I
swear.

Joc tries the key again and it's obvious the only way in
is by force. Joc has his ear pressed to the door
listening for life.

JOC
I warned ya --

He steps back and puts a hard kick into the door, flying
the door jam to pieces.

INT. JORDAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

An unresponsive Jordan sits on the couch, Joc goes into
action. Slow motion as Jordan's life is over.

JOC
But why'd you say you were
shipping out? Why?

Joc is wailing and trying to make sense of it.

FADE TO BLACK.

A shot: the black wristbands are hung on the rear view
mirror in Joc's truck. Now there are three. Billy. Turk.
Jordo.

EXT. LONG ABANDONED ROAD - LATER

Dark, rainy, cold, nasty early evening. Joc sits slumped
in his truck. He leans back in the seat and looks at
himself in the rearview mirror past the wristbands. He
hangs his head and squeezes back the pain. His eyes,
those piercing vibrant blue eyes are rimmed red and
weeping.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He closes his eyes and winces as he sucks down a long tug of Jamison. He flicks the black wrist bands again, with the barrel of his gun. He knows his anger, despair, pain, and sadness are about to erupt into something frightening and final.

He suddenly starts to frantically search for something in his truck.

Glove compartment. Center console. Underneath the seats. He pulls the bar up under his seat to slam his seat all the way back and leans back and yells.

JOC

Fuhuhuhuhck!

He takes a moment to think. Wait, one more place. He reaches behind the seat and retrieves a fist full of stuff.

In his hand is a double AA battery, a crumpled yellow post-it note and a full clip to a Desert Eagle 357.

He reaches over to his console and slowly loads the clip into the gun.

Joc pulls open the crumpled post-it note and stares at it blinking back the thick tears.

FADE TO:

I/E. VETERAN OUTREACH FACILITY - DUSK

A lone light is on. The office is straight out of thrift shop odds and ends: a magic eight ball toy (shaken so many times looking for the answers) is on the desk and memorabilia, some old posters on the wall and Cubbies paraphernalia, lots of Cubbies gear. Nile's most prized token is a Native American carving out of Iron wood, something his grandmother gave him from "The Rez".

Bertha, the powder blue rotary phone circa 1950s is old and heavy like a weapon, but it doesn't matter as long as she rings and the hand is there to answer when a veteran calls in for help.

Bertha sits on the edge of Nile's beat up old desk. Nile has his feet up and is kicked back. Nile looks up to greet his pal, Miguelito. Zeus perks up as his nose picks up on the delish smells coming off Miguel's delivery.

Nile turns down the Cubbies Baseball game play-by-play coming off his old AM radio.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Miguelito, the food vendor whose food truck is parked out on the street corner has grown into quite a Chicago "foodie" hotspot.

Miguelito pushes through the Veteran Outreach front door. He walks with a crutch and a distinct limp, but it doesn't ever slow him down. He delivers a bag of something scrumptious.

MIGUELITO

(Dropping it on the
desk in front of
Niles)

Here's your dinner and some treats
for Zeus. And here, I brought your
mail in for you.

NILES

Thanks brother! Ah, tonight Zeus
and I will be dining in style!

Zeus lies down by Nile's chair and lifts his **very** heavy head off Nile's thigh and sniffs the bag of food. Niles pets him and balances a treat on his thigh. Zeus looks up at Niles dutifully until Niles gives him an imperceptible nod. Zeus gently licks the treat and poof it's gone.

Miguelito is about to say something when off the AM radio in the background, turned down low, suddenly reverberates as the Cubbies just hit a home run. Niles turns it up and the cheer seems to engulf us. All is well.

Niles and Miguel cheer. Miguel scrapes a chair over and they just sit there lost in the game. Perfectly old school.

MIGUELITO

Boss, you gonna owe me that
dollar. All bets double if our
Cubbies go the distance and reach
the playoffs.

Niles peels off a dollar and exaggeratedly slides it over to Miguel.

NILES

Gamblin' man, you've got to know
when to hold them... know when to
fold them....

(Beat)

It's all fun 'n games til your
loan shark takes you off below the
knee.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Miguelito chuckles as he raises his walking stick and his gimp leg.

FADE TO:

INT. JOC'S BEDROOM - DAWN

Joc wakes from a nightmare. Alone in a bedroom, he scans the room, then finally, falls back in exhaustion. The horrific dream rockets him back into the horrors of war almost every night.

Joc writes in a journal: "Another nightmare, dead in my arms...".

His MEDAL for bravery dangles on the lamp. He glances briefly at his service revolver and his gear always at the ready.

There on the floor, buried under his mess, is the scrap of paper sprayed in Billy's blood. On it the 800 number in Chaps's chicken scratch: Niles. Use this number!

He picks it up studies it, trying to make out the numbers hidden by Billy's dry blood. He caresses the stiff dry blood on the paper.

He's opens his military grade knife, flicks at Billy's dried blood on the post it. Then starts buffing his knife incessantly like he can't get the blood off the blade.

Joc hesitates, dials, hesitates. It rings once. He hangs up, nervous and angry.

INT. VETERAN OUTREACH CENTER - DAWN

Niles stares off wondering how it is he senses things he knows others just don't. On the bookshelf behind him, books of military and history.

He reaches across his desk and opens the envelope that Miguel had brought in with the day's mail. He rips open the brown butcher paper. "Ghosts of the Valley" a book by Sean Tobias Ambriz, Native American Veteran.

Niles looks at it with interest. The note falls out on his desk. It reads:

"Niles, thank you for helping me
work through the demons that kept
me up all those nights.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NILES (CONT'D)

To my Native American Brother, not
all ghosts die..."

Sean Tobias Ambriz

Niles reads the words. They resonate with him. Niles smiles and kicks back in his chair, slides his cheaters down and peruses the book.

The familiar voice of Steve Cochran's 5 am early morning WGN radio show coming off the old AM radio brings a smile to Niles. It vanishes the moment Niles takes the call.

Bertha rings, Niles leans in, bones seem to creak as he scoops up the phone and turns down the radio.

With the ringing of the phone, something comes over Niles as he grabs his left ear. The tinnitus is revving up again making the static off his old AM radio sound like a deafening squelch.

Things seem to go all sepia then colors and hues morph. Niles feels it coming on like a migraine.

It always does when he gets a call of distress. It doesn't worry or upset him, it's just the way things are. Doctor calls it some symptom with a name too long to pronounce: Synesthesia with a shot of hyperthymesia... What does that mean? Total recall in technicolor.

The line goes dead. He sees it on the caller ID. Clearly hang ups happen often to him.

INTERCUT

INT. JOC'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The phone rings, Joc picks up, answers not really paying much attention as he stares at his knife, the post-it, Billy's dried blood.

JOC

Yea...

NILES (O.S.)

You called me. I don't let calls
drop... bad for business.

Joc hangs his head and squeezes back the pain. His eyes, those piercing vibrant blue eyes are rimmed red and weeping.

Heard over his actions:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

NILES (O.S.)

These nightmares... every night?

JOC (O.S.)

Only way to shake 'em is to go
back out... into it.

(Beat)

I just can't do it anymore...

NILES (O.S.)

Son, what's your name?

(Beat)

What was your M.O.S.?

JOC (O.S.)

Joc Prescott, US Navy, Petty
Officer 3, second battalion Seal
Team 8...

NILES (O.S.)

Nice to be speaking with you,
Petty Officer Prescott, glad you
called...

(Beat)

You gotta do somethin' for me...
and do somethin' for you.

Silence.

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

First, lemme ask you, if I may,
how long were you in and how long
you been out?

JOC (O.S.)

7 years, 5 tours... pretty much
back to back... Out, 9 months.

NILES

You got any family back home, Joc?

(Choking on it)

Nahh, no family... no home... Been
fucking couch-surfing since I got
back this time. Was in San Diego,
don't really know why really. Not
from there, just where I shipped
out of...

(Beat)

Got my best buddy Turk, he's from
Chicago, but he...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JOC (O.S.)
(his train of
consciousness
derailing)
Hey... Sir...
(Silence)
It's all messed up. I just keep
burying brothers.

Silence. Niles continues probing.

NILES (O.S.)
(Draws a deep
measured breath)
Where are you now, son?

JOC
Umm, in Chicago, I'm fucking tired
of cemeteries and folded flags.

NILES (O.S.)
(Calmly)
I'm sorry, Son.
(Beat)
You wanna tell me what happened?

JOC
They aren't dying over there!
Nobody's shooting at them. Nobody
blowing them up! They're dying
here.

NILES
Your calling me is the right thing
to do. I thank you for that.

He sobs silently.

NILES (O.S.)
I'm here in Chicago too.
(beat)
I do believe there is a reason for
everything.

NILES (O.S.)
(Sensing Joc's
agitation)
Let me be blunt, son. Less you get
connected, you will end up
twistin' off and... a statistic.

Silence and a jagged breath on the line.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Joc has slid down the edge of the bed and leans against his bed. He hurls his k-bar into the wall. It pierces the sheetrock all the way to the butt of the knife's handle.

INT. NILE'S VETERAN OUTREACH FACILITY - NIGHT

Niles flicks open the lid of the ammo can on the edge of his desk. Inside are photos and tokens of what makes his life matter. He pulls out a ripcord and rubs it like a worry bead. Clearly has meaning. But that's for another time. He draws a steady breath.

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

Only way I get by?

(Beat)

You got to put the focus on someone else's hardship. It outta make you little more right in the head.

JOC (O.S.)

With all due respect, Sir, I got my own nightmares, why the hell do I want in on anyone else's?

NILES (O.S.)

Because sailor, you know full well that there is **always** someone who's got it worse. And it is entirely up to you, how you choose to be.

CUT TO:

INT. HUMVEE - STOPPED - DAY

On the dusty outskirts of a small Iraq town of Fallujah, a small recon mission is under way.

The radio crackles alive:

RADIO (O.C.)

Corpsman, you're needed. Sat-comm has you in the vicinity, where's your twenty?

TURK

We are near the target, over.

RADIO (O.C.)

Copy, three doors down, East of your position.

EXT. IRAQ CITY STREET - DAY

Out from the stopped HUMVEE, Turk, now an active Medic, dismounts and grabs his weapon, helmet, case, all emblazoned with the medic's cross symbol on the side.

Joc falls in quick with helmet, a pack and his weapon.

They're on the move quickly.

Rounding a bullet ridden wall, Joc speaks coordinates into his radio hand-piece. Turk adjusts his medical kit. They are on the move.

JOC

Approaching 487. Recon team Sally to designated point. All seems clear. Over.

His radio squawks.

RADIO (O.C.)

Roger that.

A young boy appears out of an alley and approaches the team. Joc with his lightning fast reflexes secures his gun off of the boy and quickly checks him for any explosives.

The boy is frantically speaking in Farsi and pointing. After a brisk and thorough pat-down, all clear. The boy tugs desperately on Turk's arm to follow him. Joc scouts and covers from the rear.

They are on high alert with guns at the ready. They scan the streets, rooftops - even the garbage along the streets, everything could shoot at you or explode.

They enter a building cautiously and by the back.

INT. IRAQ CITY STREET - FAMILY APARTMENT - DAY

A YOUNG MUSLIM WOMAN is in a fetal position, she is young, deathly ill and too weak even to moan.

The distraught boy runs to his mother's side. Eyes swimming in fear, the boy kneels by her bedside, close to her face whispering little prayers to his mother.

Turk nods to the boy assuredly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The sick woman's OLD MOTHER and her YOUNG HUSBAND is apprehensive, eyeing to the street protectively and scared of these Americans.

Turk kneels quickly to her side. She looks at him weakly as he inspects her, but hesitates with a calming, respectful gesture to the husband. Turk calmly rolls back the sheet.

Tensions swell as the husband moves to protect his wife.

Turk diffuses the situation knowing only a few words of calming Arabic dialect and gestures that he must remove the covers and discovers she is pregnant.

Turk gently takes the husband's hand and places it on his wife's. Joc sets in to work.

Concern now for her and the baby, he places his head on the distended belly, his stethoscope searches for signs of life in the swollen belly.

Joc comes in - on the ready.

TURK

(re: woman's belly)

Joc, I got nothing. The baby is literally killing her, septic, we have to get the baby out now.

Joc calmly scans the room and all the occupants.

JOC

(in Farsi to the husband)

To save your wife, we need your help.

BOY

(in Farsi)

Papa? What is happening?

JOC

Do your thing, Turk. Work the problem. Save who you can, I'll monitor from out here.

Joc gently kneels to the boy's height. Deeply focused, he holds the boy's arms and shows him a water bottle.

JOC (CONT'D)

(in Farsi to the young boy)

Water, hot water.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOC (CONT'D)

(Gesturing to the
boy's grandmother)

Tell your grandmother we need to
find sheets, towels...

From the medical kit, Turk runs a quick I.V. into her as
the husband looks on in shock.

TURK

Antibiotic, saline drip, morphine.

All set to work to prepare the area. Turk douses the
woman's belly in the amber of a Beta-dyne scrub. No time
at all, he slices the belly.

Joc must look away - tough stuff to watch, he resorts to
scanning the surroundings outside the door. Activity and
ominous growing tension.

Turk plucks the blue baby from the dying woman. A single
tear slips from the edge of her eye sliding down her
temple

The husband is startled by the baby, he pulls his son
against him to shield his eyes.

Turk lays the dead baby on the sheet gently, then, moves
quickly and efficiently to save the young mother.

He is busy, but in his periphery he sees the husband's
expression, he calls back to Joc.

TURK

Joc...

Joc pulls his eyes off the street and immediately
understands the pain of loss in this room.

Joc comes over and gently covers the baby in the sheet.
The husband and the young boy watch the American soldier
tenderly cover their dead baby.

Turk has finished dressing the mother's C-section and
notices the young woman's head garment has come unseated.
Turk is struggling. Joc perceptively comes close and
gently re-adjusts it. Her dignity, her life restored.

Turk sweeps her hair back of her sweating brow. He
studies her reflectively of his own wife and his own
child back home.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

As Turk turns to leave, the young boy comes forward dutifully and takes Turk by the hand to lead him back outside. The young husband nods a deep thanks as he places his hand on Joc's shoulder.

EXT. IRAQ CITY STREET - DAY

Joc heads out to the Humvee, his gun safety is 'off'. Always prepared, always ready.

Turk and the young boy walk out of the house. Along the streets, the wind kicks up dust, paper and trash skipping and float along it among the hot breeze.

The young boy and Turk walk along the edge of the street, Turk kneels to the boy and smiles.

TURK

(In Farsi)

God will take care of you and your family.

Joc takes the medic case from Turk and puts it into the Humvee. He grabs two water bottles and pitches them to Turk.

Turk catches the first as Joc pretends to be throwing it like a football pass. The boy smiles and runs, ready to catch it. The water bottle soars, Turk gives chase, but lets the little boy catch it instead. The little boy shuffles around Turk runs to swoop it.

He jumps and catches the water bottle. He lands, smiles all around! A moment of laughter, then...

The mound of garbage clicks and --

BLAM!

An explosion from an IED. The little boy is all but vaporized.

Turk goes down, almost sliced in half.

Joc takes shrapnel in the face. He is blown back and knocked hard against the Humvee.

The horrifying sound of a grown man wailing against chaos is a deafening, echoing sound.

A similar rhythmic clicking is overheard while we...

CUT TO:

EXT. PAM'S HOUSE - SUBURBS OF CHICAGO - DAY

A playing card slaps a hum against the spokes of a bike wheel. GUSSY now (6) jumps off his bike and lets it fall on the yard not far away from and his mom PAM, 30's.

PAM
How many times do I have to tell
you not to launch your bike?

Gussy plops down near mom and helps with the dirt.

GUSSY
When's Gramma coming?

PAM
You hear a word I said? Go wash
your hands.

GUSSY
Is Uncle Joc coming too? Can I
come to the airport? Daddy's gonna
be surprised.

PAM
Yes, he will be.

Pam looks back to the garden. Pointing her trowel to a patch in the sun.

PAM
What color ya want to plant for
him?

ANGLE ON:

The picture window where inside the darkened room sits a chair modified with extra padding, towels, and support.

INT. PAM'S HOUSE - SUBURBS OF CHICAGO - LIVING ROOM -
SAME

From inside the house we watch Gussy and Mom plant flowers.

GUSSY
Bright yellow! Like the ribbons
with Daddy and the purple medal.

Pam smiles bravely for her son and gives a stare towards the dark window.

EXT. PAM'S HOUSE - SUBURBS OF CHICAGO - DAY

A car HORN sounds from a modest station wagon.

PAM

OK, off you go.

Gussy barrels into GRAMMA (70) for a big hug.

GRAMMA

C'mon! Let's go! We have a lot of things to do.

She leans in to Gussy.

GRAMMA

Give your Mom a big kiss first.

Gussy runs back for a big hug and kiss goodbye to his Mom. Then he turns and calls to the dark picture window.

GUSSY

Bye Daddy!

PAM

Have fun.

Pam's smile fades as the car pulls away. Pam drops her tired head. She looks up to the sun, a deep breath and a prayer for strength.

INT. PAM'S HOUSE - SUBURBS OF CHICAGO - HALLWAY - SAME

From his wheelchair, Turk's a witness to all. He watches as his Gussy and his favorite Gramma pull away in the car.

His chair slowly rolls along the hardwood floors as he looks out the picture window, the towels, the pain, the meds.

He studies the lines of his beautiful wife standing stark in the light, her shoulders sag with fatigue.

He shakes his head angrily. His body is ravaged by that IED blast he took that day.

Turk stares at his wife.

TURK

(low voice, hushed)
You deserve better... better...
better...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The note is left on the edge of a night stand.

EXT. PAM'S HOUSE - SUBURBS OF CHICAGO - DAY

Pam watches as they drive off.

Then... and echoing BAM!

A gunshot from inside the house --

PAM
No! No! No!!! Turk!

FADE OUT.

INT. JOC'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joc weeps silently at the crushing memory. His phone has slid down his chest and he sobs. The phone is drenched.

Slowly Joc lifts his eyes to the knife puncturing the sheetrock wall.

Pulling back, we see the wall is peppered with hundreds of the same knife throws from all the nights Joc has woken this way.

EXT. CHICAGO BEACH - DAWN

From a distance, the lake is ominous and the sky big and bundled with heavy grey clouds.

Mace is down by the water's edge. She's on her motorcycle just taking in the view down the beachfront all the way to the big Ferris Wheel that marks her new digs, CHICAGO.

She's reclined on her bike, feet up on the handlebars, her helmet rests on her lap as takes a deep breath in, pops her earbuds out, sighs, shrugs and smiles as she takes it in.

There's an OLDish GUY, mid 50s, training a young german shepherd down on the beach. She smiles watching him use the exact same tricks she uses to train the seals and dolphins at the Shedd Aquarium. She climbs off the bike, ambles down to get a closer look.

Mace, Niles and a dog named Zeus.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

From a distance, we see them shake hands, she steps back to watch the old man train. The old man's coat is classic military grade and an insignia tells the rest.

NILES

I'm Niles and this is Zeus. We're done now, you can say hello.

Mace kneels and surprises the man with a trick or two of her own. Zeus obeys instinctively.

NILES (CONT'D)

Now, how on earth do you know that?

MACE

My Zeus has fins that's all.

NILES

No kidding!

MACE

(Looking out over the
really vast lake)

Yea, I train the sea dogs, ya know, seals. The really funny thing is where I come from fresh water is for drinking and...

(She kinda mumbles
the rest)

I hate to say it, but we all think your lake is a puddle compared to our Pacific.

Niles looks at her kinda sideways then just busts a gut!

NILES

Oh we'll have you cheering for our Cubbies before long.

MACE

(Feigning yey and a
fist pump)

Go Cubbies!

NILES

So you're new to town and you working down at the Shedd Aquarium?

MACE

(Looking at his
military greens)

Yessir I am.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

NILES

Ha, at ease soldier. Those years
are long gone.

MACE

Well, I just lost my gramps. A
Purple Heart Marine. Iwo Jima.
Fifth Marine Division. Even though
he served all those years ago, **he**
served so, like Gramps, I thank
you just the same.

Niles nods with a slight semper fi.

MACE (CONT'D)

So, you're training Zeus to... fix
you dinner... or maybe do a little
laundry? or is he a chic magnet?

NILES

Ha! I like that!

(Beat)

No, our Zeus didn't make the cut,
ya see, if you're a bomb squad dog
ya kinda want to go light around
the decoy and if you're a drug
sniffing dog, ya need to be
ripping right into it. Can't be
mixing those two up... And Zeus,
he's a special kind of dyslexic...

MACE

(Talking idiotic like
people do to dogs,
AND why do they do
that anyway)

Awww is Zeusy *lisdexus*?

NILES

But, I'm of the opinion that what
he lacks in skill, he makes up
with in good looks and
personality...

CUT TO:

A very poised Zeus lifts his leg on the rocks.
Indignation as Zeus deadeyes them with a "ya mind, a
little privacy here".

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

NILES (CONT'D)

Uhhh, I've got my work cut out for me, I am attempting to train him for companionship and support, a new-ish veteran outreach program through the Jessie Brown.

MACE

(A wha's that look)
Jessie Brown...?

NILES

Local VA. I do some work with the veterans there.

MACE

Outstanding idea. I bet I could help train.

NILES

Surely we could use the seals to... ferry our folks across our little puddle.

Mace picks up a perfect skimming stone and lets it fly. Counting off the skips, she whoops at 15.. She's so focused she doesn't catch Nile's reaction right away.

Watching the stone, he zones out when the stone launches across the water.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE:

EXT. PHILIPPINE JUNGLE - DAY

It's 2003, Rainy Season in The Philippines: Niles and his 4 man Special Forces unit hump through the jungle, chasing the Abu Sayyaf Guerrillas. They're well into the hot zone when they traverse a small creek.

NILES

Quick extraction. Abu Sayyaf takes our most prized Colonel Nick Rowe?! The fucking man himself developed the SERE program... That just will not do. We gotta get him back!

FADE TO:

EXT. PHILIPPINE JUNGLE RIVER - DAY

By the time they retrace their tracks back to the creek, it is fully engorged by the torrential monsoon rains and now a raging river.

Niles leads his men. Swimming with the line, Niles goes ahead to swim the line across to wrap around the tree and string back to his men.

When Niles goes back to help his men across, he clutches radio and his rifle.

The others make it across, but for the last of his men, Ruiz, who Niles himself will never know has drowned after letting go.

Niles loses consciousness under the pounding river, but somehow does not let go of the line, nor radio, nor rifle. He is in and out of a dream state - greeted by spirits and ghosts some dead, some not.

They haul him out and he is not breathing. CPR and some sharp blows to the sternum, Niles is resuscitated. The rest of that day fades like a fog bank creeping over the edges of his memory...

FADE BACK TO:

EXT. CHICAGO BEACH - DAY

Mace stands shoulder to shoulder to Niles who has grown deathly still as he stares out at nothing in particular.

MACE

You back?

NILES

(Isn't she
perceptive)

Huh? Yea, just a little walkabout.

Zeus is grass scratching after he finishes "doing his business".

Mace offers Niles a poop bag and a smile with a slight shoulder bump quickly changing the subject back to better times like the here and now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MACE

Well alright...
(with a nod to Zeus
finishing up his
business)
And at least my sea-dogs don't do
that.

NILES

Fall in soldier, you're hired.

The conversation is replaced with a wide angle capture of
the grey and wind-whipped lake.

NILES (CONT'D)

(cementing this new
friendship)
Well, what'd I say? Zeus has a
magnetic personality. Look who he
brought me on this cold and grey
Chicago day.

MACE

Yea, and about your weather...

NILES

(Expecting the
Chicago /nasty
weather comment)
Here it comes...

MACE

What?! It's true! When I told my
gramps I was thinking about moving
up here, pretty much the last
thing he said to me... It's going
to hurt.

Niles roars.

NILES

Well then I'm going to make you a
seal fur coat. I know someone...

She does it, she playfully shoulder / hip checks him.

MACE

That's it I'm haulin' yer ass
in... ASPCA Community service for
you ... Sarah McLachlan playing on
an 8 hour loop.

(Beat)

Seal fur coat. Agh! In poor taste
Mr. Niles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Niles, clearly not a man who takes on friends easily, is openly delighted over this new friendship.

NILES

Welcome to Chicago, Macey!

And with demure formality, they links arm and he escorts her down the beach like "they were off to see the Wizard".

They stand a moment and watch three Chinook helicopters thrum by. It is dramatic.

Pulling back on the big wide shot of the beach, the lake, and Chicago beyond that, filling in down the beach SOME HOMELESS FOLKS gather around, bending over to rinse their gear in the lake, another digs through the trash for whatever they can scrounge.

CUT TO:

EXT. FREEWAY OVERPASS - ESTABLISHING - DAY

INT/EXT TORRI'S CAR - FREEWAY UNDERPASS - SAME

In the front seat of the '87 Impala, TORRI, 35, makes peanut butter sandwiches for her two children, DANNY (4) and HENRY (6).

TORRI

-- and then, we will go exploring!

HENRY

Can we slay the Dragon? Save the Princess?

TORRI

And build a fort too!

DANNY AND HENRY

YEA!

Sadness is not lost on Torri's face as she takes a bite of the sandwich. Out the window, her demise.

Her POV --

EXT. UNDERPASS - HOMELESS CAMP - SAME

Several homeless tarps dot the underpass. A beat up round grill with twigs and sticks blaze to warm a few homeless people milling about.

DANNY (O.C.)

Mommy? Can we go camping next weekend too?

Unable to take her eyes away from the fire, Torri exhales.

TORRI

Yes Baby, every weekend. Every weekend.

The homeless man we saw earlier tries to get Torri's attention, asking for permission to approach.

INT/EXT TORRI'S CAR - FREEWAY UNDERPASS - CONTINUED

Torri rolls down the window just enough to safely talk.

HOMELESS MAN /MAGNUS

Hi there, um... I'm Magnus, I just wanted to see if you needed anything. Blankets, water?

TORRI

No, we OK. Thank you.

MAGNUS

Here --

Magnus reaches into the pocket of his Fatigues and pulls out the few bills, moves to give however much he has to Torri.

TORRI

Oh no, I can't --

MAGNUS

I insist. (looking in) You have two young-ens and I don't. This is hard enough just by yourself. Miss --

TORRI

Torri.

HENRY

You GI Joe? You look like GI Joe!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAGNUS

Yes little man, I am GI Joe!
What's your name?

HENRY

Henry, this is Danny. We campin',
gonna build us a fort! You can
help!

MAGNUS

Thank you! I'd like that.

TORRI

I'm sorry, they're --

MAGNUS

Kids.

Torri spots a Marine Tattoo on his forearm.

TORRI

You serve? I was on the U.S.S.
Ramage destroyer....the Persian
Gulf.

(Beat)

Not much need for a gunner in
Chicago.

The brotherhood bond.

MAGNUS

Iraq. Three tours but some
shrapnel to the leg, and a bum
drop off the heli, I guess I got
no more marathons in me.

Torri looks him up n' down, shakes her head. He's a sorry
sight.

TORRI

Ain't we a scene, huh?

A little laughter is shared.

MAGNUS

Well, I should be off, here (hands
her the money) I have a lot more
where that came from, plus I need
the write off.

They clasp hands in genuine respect for each other as
Magnus turns to leave.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The generosity displayed by someone who has nothing to give leaves Torri in awe, drifting off to:

FLASHBACK:

INT. USS RAMAGE NAVY DESTROYER WEAPONS STATION - NIGHT

The room is buzzing with sailors darting about past blinking lights, scopes and screens.

The Naval Fire Controlman, TORRI, at 25, with focused eyes on the targeting instruments, she confirms the coordinates. Her confidence and intensity is a stark contrast to that of her in the car.

At the scopes, she relays the coordinates for the gunner strike. Stopping her transmission, she rechecks the coordinates.

TORRI

Sir, are these coordinates accurate?

COMMANDER

Yes. Fire on my command.

Turning back from the commander, concern on Torri's face is not lost on her engineer.

ENGINEER

What is it?

TORRI

(hushed to engineer)
Oh God...

Nothing she can do as the tension mounts. The command calls out various targeting and firing commands -- then, awaits orders to launch.

Torri's closes her eyes, saying a silent prayer for her brothers safety -- and for bad targeting.

EXT. SYRIAN BATTLEFIELD - NIGHT - SAME

A gun-fight underway in close quarters. Soldiers take down a few enemies with precise 'double taps' - one to the heart, one to the head. Textbook and efficient.

They round a corner to a protected outcropping.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Sargent on the radio confirms the coordinates, but there is no confirmation returned.

RADIO SARGENT

Bravo One, Bravo One, coordinates confirmed. Over. (radio static)

ANGLE THROUGH:

Night goggles outline the huts while they drag a soldier wounded from the attack area. Confusion from some soldiers are met with calls for retreat.

CAM, Torri's brother is on high alert.

CAM

Get out, retreat! Take cover, here it comes! God hope they got it right.

Cam listens to the pitch black sky. The guns have stopped except for the cries of soldiers with injuries. Like throwing a boomerang in the dark, it could come at any moment to slice the head off of you.

Backs against the walls, hunkered down, they listen and wait.

INT. USS RAMAGE NAVY DESTROYER - WEAPONS STATION -
CONTINUOUS

ANGLE ON:

The trigger/firing mechanism of the massive guns at the ready. Torri, still silently praying.

INT. USS RAMAGE NAVY DESTROYER - COMMANDERS BRIDGE -
CONTINUOUS

Several officers poised to watch the arsenal fly in the night sky.

COMMANDER

Fire. Reload. Reset, await my command.

INT. USS RAMAGE NAVY DESTROYER - WEAPONS STATION

The weapons are fired as the sound from the guns rock the room. Torri quickly refers a survey map to double check her brothers location -- too close to call.

EXT. SYRIAN BATTLEFIELD

Distant booms - follow many eerie whistles - followed closely by massive SOUNDS and FLASHES from explosions that pummel the area close to Cam's platoon.

Debris flies on a perfect strikes as the soldiers amass to take the ground of the area laid waste.

INT. USS RAMAGE NAVY DESTROYER - WEAPONS STATION

An unbearable wait for confirmation of hits and adjustments to the guns. Torri does her best to hide her concern as the minutes drag.

Torri's eyes well hoping for a good strike confirmation.

The bad radio STATIC confirms nothing.

BACK TO:

PRESENT DAY

INT. NILE'S OUTREACH CENTER - DAY

Niles grabs his left ear, the tinnitus again fighting like squelch off Nile's old AM radio.

The Cubbies are still going strong headed to the World Series. Torri is lock-stocked, silently upset.

Niles stares off and speaks from that hazy place he goes... Colors appear and he knows it's happening to him again...

NILES

So Torri, someone near and dear
was out there?

Torri abruptly turns, nearly gasps, at Niles.

TORRI

What?!

(confused)

Wait, how did you know?

(Beat)

How could you know that?

Niles dismisses her gently guiding her on. Niles looks at her as if he is reading her soul.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NILES

Sshhh, not now, just go on... tell
me about it. Tell me whatever you
feel ok talking about, Torri.

Torri shakes her head, a tear, then she settles in calmed
and somehow relieved to unload her burden on someone who
clearly understands.

TORRI

That was the worst part of it. Not
knowing if I killed my brother
under orders.

NILES (O.C.)

And?

TORRI

Do you know how many times I
pressed that button?

Torri can only stare. Niles eases back off. She stares
on.