

OVER THERE

"Embedded"

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. DESERT ROAD -- DAY

A canopied army truck bounces along a dirt road.

INT. TRUCK -- BACK -- DAY

HANDHELD CAMCORDER POV: we're tight on Smoke.

MOFFET (O.S.)
What's your name soldier?

SMOKE
Maurice Williams. But everyone
calls me Smoke.

MOFFET (O.S.)
Why do they call you that?

SMOKE
Cuz if anyone messes with me, I
smoke 'em.

NORMAL POV: Smoke is being interviewed by JOHN MOFFET (25), a
confident, ambitious, American reporter.

Dim and Tariq are trying to sleep. Scream keeps watch at the
rear. Only Angel observes Smoke in action.

Smoke shows his gun to the camera.

SMOKE (CONT'D)
This here's my boy. Me and him
smoked a whole lotta towelheads.

He grins for the camera, stands and cocks and locks the gun.
He mimes preparing to lay down a hail of gunfire --

At that moment the truck hits a big pothole. The gun flies
out of his hands as Smoke is thrown to the floor --

SMOKE (CONT'D)
Shit!

Scream turns to look. His eyes land on Moffet for a brief
moment, and in that moment they betray loathing.

Smoke picks himself up, sees Angel wearing a slight smile.
Smoke glowers at him, shouts at the truck's cab window:

SMOKE (CONT'D)
Learn how to drive, woman!

INT. TRUCK -- CAB -- SAME TIME

Mrs. B is at the wheel. Beside her, Doublewide braces her hands against the dashboard. Mrs. B shouts back at Smoke:

MRS. B
Any time you want to trade jobs!

INT. TRUCK -- BACK -- DAY

Smoke retrieves his gun and returns to his seat. Acutely aware that Moffet is watching him.

As Smoke's about to sit, Moffet indicates his camera --

MOFFET
No, wait. Do that thing with the gun again.

SMOKE
Yeah?

MOFFET
Sure. Folks back home are gonna love it.

Smoke hesitates, not sure if Moffet's making fun of him. Angel shakes his head, which only eggs Smoke on.

SMOKE
A'ight. Lights, camera, action.

Moffet aims the camera. Smoke braces himself, then he grins, cocks and locks. Mimes spraying machine-gun fire.

SMOKE (CONT'D)
Say hello to Allah for me.

When he's done, he pulls the barrel of the gun up to his lips. Blows pretend smoke off it. Grins at the camera.

Moffet turns off the camera and smiles at Smoke.

MOFFET
That was perfect.

Smoke sits down, pleased. Shoots Angel a triumphant smirk.

SMOKE
When's it gonna be on?

Before Moffet can answer, a mortar screams out of the blue sky and explodes on the roadside. Everyone is blown out of their seats. Scream grabs hold of the truck's canopy --

INT. TRUCK -- CAB -- SAME TIME

Terrified, Mrs. B struggles to maintain control. Doublewide hangs on for dear life --

A second mortar explodes outside Doublewide's window, sending up a geyser of dirt and shrapnel. Her side mirror shatters --

As Mrs. B throws the wheel hard left, Doublewide recoils and covers her face with her hands.

DOUBLEWIDE

I'm hit!

INT. TRUCK -- BACK -- SAME TIME

Scream grips the canopy tenaciously, but when Mrs. B swerves wildly, he is thrown out of the back --

EXT. DESERT ROAD -- DAY

Scream lands heavily on the road --

The truck careens off the road and keeps right on going. Over and through mud, deep sand, and boulders --

INT. TRUCK -- CAB -- DAY

Mrs. B looks over at Doublewide, writhing in agony. Blood covers her face and hands --

ANGEL

We gotta go back!

She whirls to see Angel shouting through the cab's window.

MRS. B

WHAT?!

ANGEL

Sarge is out on the road! We gotta go get him!

She keeps right on driving away from the road --

EXT. DESERT ROAD -- DAY

Scream lies on the road, bruised and battered. He lifts his head, does a 360 degree sweep of the area.

He sees the truck lurching away from him. Sees a small town in the near distance.

A mortar round explodes 10 yards in front of Scream. They're targeting him now.

INT. TRUCK -- CAB -- DAY

Angel pounds frantically on the window --

ANGEL
GO BACK!! NOW!!

EXT. DESERT ROAD -- DAY

Scream watches the truck continue to drive away. He stays where he is, looks around for cover. There isn't any.

A mortar explodes 10 yards behind him. Time to go.

He gets up and runs after the truck. He has to hobble slightly on his ankle, which slows him down --

100 yards ahead, the truck suddenly stops. Scream can see Dim and Tariq waving to him from the back:

DIM/TARIQ
Come on Sarge! Hurry!

A mortar lands between Scream and the truck. Scream goes down hard, face first --

INT. TRUCK -- BACK -- DAY -- INTERCUT

Dim goes pale.

DIM
Oh my God. They got him.

But then he sees Scream pick himself up and keep coming.

Dim and Tariq urge him on with renewed vigor --

DIM/TARIQ
Hurry Sarge! C'mon! Faster!

Moffet stands beside Dim, filming everything. Yes, he's scared. But his fear also thrills him.

INT. TRUCK -- CAB -- SAME TIME

Her foot poised on the accelerator, Mrs. B searches for Scream in her side mirror. Can't see him.

Angel watches her like a hawk. Knows she's itching to bolt.

ANGEL
Ten more seconds!

Meanwhile Doublewide whimpers beside her:

DOUBLEWIDE
I'm blind...I'm blind...

INT. TRUCK -- BACK -- SAME TIME

Moments before Scream reaches the truck, Smoke pushes Dim aside and positions himself to be in Moffet's camera frame. Then he reaches his hand out to pull Scream in --

SMOKE
Right here Sarge! I got ya!

A mortar explodes behind Scream just as Smoke and Tariq haul him into the truck. Angel pounds on the cab window --

ANGEL
GO! GO!

Mrs. B hits the gas. The truck lurches forward --

Scream gasps for air on the floor. Looks up and sees Moffet filming him. A wry grin on his face.

MOFFET
Just another day in Paradise, huh
Sarge?

CAMCORDER POV: tight on Scream, staring into the lens with utter contempt.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

EXT. DESERT ROAD -- DAY

The truck hauls ass down the road from whence it came.

INT. TRUCK -- BACK -- DAY

Doublewide lies on the floor while Tariq gently bandages her bloody face. Scream talks on the radio:

SCREAM

We have one wounded. Returning to base via Route Yankee. Copy?

Scream listens. Frowns. Protests:

SCREAM (CONT'D)

Say again, we have one wounded, in need of medical attention.

Scream listens. Turns grim.

SCREAM (CONT'D)

Yes sir. Yes sir. Copy that.

He gets off the radio. Knocks on the cab's rear window.

SCREAM (CONT'D)

Stop!

The others exchange looks. Shit. As the truck slows to a stop, Scream explains to the team:

SCREAM (CONT'D)

Lieutenant says we have to take out the mortar that shelled us.

SMOKE

Just us?

SCREAM

They're sending another team out to help.

TARIQ

(indicates Doublewide)
What about her?

SCREAM

Medic's on the way.

Doublewide groans. The team members shake their heads. Scream tries to put the best face on it.

SCREAM (CONT'D)
He'll get here faster than we could
have made it back.

SMOKE
What about him?

Meaning Moffet, who sits quietly observing them. He speaks to Scream in a respectful tone:

MOFFET
Your Lieutenant embedded me with
this unit, come what may.

Scream ignores him. Addresses the others:

SCREAM
He goes back with Doublewide.

Scream heads for the back of the truck. Hops out onto the road without ever acknowledging Moffet.

EXT. DESERT ROAD -- DAY

The truck, a Humvee and a jeep are parked on the roadside. Soldiers from a new squad keep watch. Broiling in the sun.

INT. TRUCK -- BACK -- DAY

Tariq, Angel and Dim look on while a Medic uses tweezers to remove a shard of mirror embedded in the skin just above Doublewide's right eye. As it comes out, she gasps in pain.

From the corner, Moffet unobtrusively films everything.

The Medic drops the shard into a bowl. He cleans the wound with alcohol. Takes out a penlight. Clicks it on.

MEDIC
Open your eyes.

She's afraid to. She's had them shut tight since the attack. Dim reaches out, touches her shoulder.

DIM
Hang in there Big D.

She clutches his hand tightly. Slowly opens her eyes.

The Medic shines the penlight into her left eye. Up, down and all around. It seems to look okay.

However, when he repeats the process with the right eye, he frowns, concerned. He clicks off the penlight.

MEDIC

Let's get you back to base.

OFF Doublewide's rising tide of fear --

INT. TRUCK -- CAB -- DAY

Scream sits with Mad Cow. They study a map and some aerial photos of the small Iraqi village on the seat between them.

MAD COW

Aerial recon can't fix the mortar's position. Best guess is it's hidden in the village marketplace.

SCREAM

Surrounded by women and children.

MAD COW

You expected different?

Scream says nothing.

MAD COW (CONT'D)

Orders are to approach with stealth, then strike hard and fast.

He shows Scream one of the photos.

MAD COW (CONT'D)

Sergeant Holland's team will infiltrate the town via this irrigation ditch. Your team'll sneak through this alley here and hit them from behind.

Scream doesn't like it one bit. Finally he says,

SCREAM

What about the women and children?

MAD COW

(tight smile)

They won't be there. Guess why.

He waits for Scream's guess, but Scream's not playing.

MAD COW (CONT'D)
 Because you're going to attack
 during evening prayers.

That does nothing to improve Scream's mood.

SCREAM
 Don't you think they'll be ready
 for that?

Mad Cow waves that away like an annoying insect.

MAD COW
 Soon as you hear them start
 chanting, you go.

He exits the cab and slams the door behind him.

EXT. DESERT ROAD -- DAY -- LATER

The team piles out of the truck. Angel leads Doublewide --
 who has a bandage over her right eye -- toward the jeep.

Mrs. B climbs into the truck cab and starts the engine.
 Smoke watches Mad Cow get behind the wheel of the jeep.

SMOKE
 He ain't going in with us?

TARIQ
 Guess not.

Angel helps Doublewide into the jeep. Mad Cow starts the
 engine. The Medic stays behind with the two teams.

SCREAM
 Lieutenant!

Mad Cow turns to look at Scream.

SCREAM (CONT'D)
 Aren't you forgetting something?
 Sir?

Scream points to Moffet, standing by the Humvee, chatting
 amiably with members of Sergeant Holland's fire team.

MAD COW
 No.

He puts the jeep in gear. Scream hustles over to stop him.

SCREAM

Sir!

Mad Cow listens blandly as Scream tries to keep his temper.

SCREAM (CONT'D)

I can't baby-sit this guy. We're going into combat.

MAD COW

Sorry. You're stuck with him.

Mad Cow doesn't look the least bit sorry.

SCREAM

You're the one put him in sir. You can take him out.

MAD COW

His father's a big hitter in Washington, so the army's giving him whatever he wants.

Something clicks for Scream. His eyes narrow.

SCREAM

And what's in it for you? Junior gonna do a profile on you for the voters back home? Maybe introduce you to Daddy?

Mad Cow's eyes go hard. He revs the engine, the jeep rolls forward. Scream jumps back out of the way.

And then the jeep stalls. Furious, Mad Cow tries to restart the engine. Fails. Scream never even cracks a smile.

On the second try, the engine catches. As Mad Cow drives off, Scream glances over at Moffet. Finds that Moffet is already looking at him. As their eyes meet, we --

EXT. DESERT ROAD -- LATE AFTERNOON

CAMCORDER POV: A cigarette dangles from Smoke's mouth as he straps on his body armor in preparation for combat.

SMOKE

This is some shit man. Why can't they just send in a tank? I mean, this is what they for, right?

NORMAL POV: Moffet films as he interviews. {INTERCUT between POVs as desired.} Smoke looks him over, sizing him up.

SMOKE (CONT'D)
Ever been in action before?

MOFFET
I spent six months in Afghanistan.

Smoke emits a low whistle.

SMOKE
And now you here? You must got a death wish or something.

MOFFET
This war's the biggest event of our lifetime. History's being made every day. I can't just stay home and watch it on TV.

Smoke takes a deep drag, shakes his head.

MOFFET (CONT'D)
If it makes you feel any better, I'm probably more scared than you.

SMOKE
Man, I ain't afraid a shit. I grew up in Compton, understand? When I was ten this crackhead stuck a gun in my face. Told me to get on my knees and beg for my life.

MOFFET
Jesus. Why?

SMOKE
Why? Cuz he was a goddamn crackhead, that's why.

MOFFET
What did you do?

SMOKE
Got down on my knees. But I wouldn't beg. I knew he wanted to see me cry like a little bitch.

Smoke pauses. His eyes vacant, reliving the moment.

SMOKE (CONT'D)
I wasn't gonna give him that. I'd rather be dead than give him that. So I said go ahead. Shoot me.

Beat. At length Smoke comes back to the present. He picks up his gun and loads a fresh clip into it.

SMOKE (CONT'D)

After that, ain't nothing these sand niggers can do to scare me.

ANGLE ON Dim and Tariq, prepping nearby. Eavesdropping.

TARIQ

Ever seen anyone so full of shit?

DIM

The philosopher George Santayana said, "A young man who has not wept is a savage."

TARIQ

Huh. So what's that make us?

He gives Dim a wry look.

DIM

Don't look at me, dog. When I watched Bambi with my stepson Eddy, I cried more than he did.

INT. TRACT HOUSE -- DAY

Eddy, looking nervous and uncertain, stands at the front door with Vanessa. She's pale and haggard and impatient.

EDDY

Where we going?

VANESSA

For a drive. Where's your book?

EDDY

I can't read in the car. It makes me throw up.

VANESSA

Then don't read til we get there.

EDDY

Where?

She sighs, exasperated. Her abdomen hurts.

VANESSA

Get your book and get in the goddamn car.

Eddy slinks away to get the book.

INT. VANESSA'S CAR -- DAY

Vanessa drives past mini-malls and fast food joints. Eyes front, jaw set. Miserable.

Eddy's in back staring out the window. Clutching his book.

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT -- DAY

Eddy sits on a bench in the hall, reads his book. PRELAP:

VANESSA (O.S.)
I'm Vanessa.

INT. CHURCH -- MEETING ROOM -- DAY

Vanessa stands shakily in front of about 15 people of all ages, shapes and sizes.

ALL
Hi Vanessa.

VANESSA
I'm, I'm here because Frank -- my husband -- he's in Iraq. I have no idea when he's coming back. A year at least. Ever since he left my life's gone to hell. Not that it was so great before or anything. Y'know?

Sympathetic nods. They do know.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
We live in army housing. There's nothing to do and nobody to talk to. My son Eddy, he worships Frank. Doesn't matter that he's not his real father. He's all Eddy talks about.

She pauses. Shakes her head.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
I got pregnant. That's the only reason Frank married me. Then he up and left me to deal with it. Truth is I think he was glad to go.

Her lips starts trembling.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

What did he think was gonna happen?
Did he really think I could handle
everything by myself?

Tears of anger and shame spill down her cheeks.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

Didn't he know me better? Didn't
he know I'd ruin everything?

She sobs. Puts her hands on her abdomen. A woman in the front row gets up and puts her arms around her.

As Vanessa weeps, FADE UP the sounds of gunfire --

EXT. IRAQI TOWN -- SUNSET

We're plunged right into the midst of a firefight in the midst of the village square. Bullets fly out of every doorway and window in the area toward:

Dim and the rest of our team, huddled behind the corner of a building. Angel is up front. He peers around the corner.

SCREAM

Can you see the mortar?!

ANGEL

No! I think it might be hidden
behind that fruit stand!

SCREAM

Goddammit! Where the hell is
Sergeant Holland's team?!

ANGEL

I don't know!

Scream chews on his options. Then he taps Dim and Tariq.

SCREAM

You two with me!
(to Angel and Smoke)
Cover us!

Scream glances briefly at Moffet, who hangs back with the Medic, feeling the full effect of the adrenaline rush.

Angel and Smoke lay down covering fire. Smoke aims for muzzle flashes, while Smoke sprays high and low --

Scream scuttles in a crouch along the front of the building. The other two right behind. They race to the far end and duck behind the corner --

Scream peeks out, searching for the mortar behind the fruit stand. It's not there. Fuck.

He gestures that he's going to run to the fruit stand. Dim and Tariq get into position to provide covering fire --

That's when Tariq sees a soldier from Holland's team racing to the fruit stand from the opposite end of the square.

TARIQ

Sarge!

Scream sees the soldier as he takes cover at the stand. The soldier sees him. They exchange a couple of hand signals.

Suddenly the fruit stand explodes in a ball of fire. The soldier is blown to smithereens.

A severed, smoking hand -- the one that was just signaling to Scream -- lands a few feet away.

Our team reacts with utter shock. The square falls silent, save for the sounds of the burning fruit stand.

And then the team hears a noise coming from the doorways and windows: it's the Iraqis. They're cheering.

Scream looks around the square. His eyes land on the various stands and carts in the market. Each a potential booby-trap.

SCREAM

We're leaving.

He shouts blindly toward Angel and Smoke:

SCREAM (CONT'D)

Covering fire!

Smoke and Angel open up with a vengeance. The Iraqis fire back. Scream and Tariq and Dim start scuttling back --

An Iraqi boy runs out of a doorway. Bullets from Smoke's gun fly all around him. He picks up a rock --

The boy's mother runs out of the doorway, screaming:

IRAQI MOTHER

Walid! Waliid!!

Smoke fires wildly, keeps his head tucked behind the corner. Angel is too focused on his sniping to notice --

The Iraqi boy throws the rock at the burning fruit stand. His mother grabs him and yanks him back toward the doorway --

She gets hit in the chest. Her hands fly off the boy and she crumples to the ground. Dead.

Just as Scream, Tariq and Dim make it back. Angel and Smoke cease firing. Another hush descends on the square.

Which is broken by a cry of animal agony from the boy. Clutching his dead mother in the street.

ANGEL

Oh, sweet Jesus.

The others peek out and only now discover what's happened.

They all look at Smoke. He glares back defensively.

SMOKE

Why you lookin' at me?!

The moment is broken by another hail of gunfire. Each man ducks out of the way --

Scream finds himself face to face with Moffet, crouched nearby. In an excellent position to have seen everything.

His camcorder is on.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. IRAQI TOWN -- SUNSET

The fruit stand continues to burn. The Iraqi boy continues to cry over his mother.

Moffet's camcorder continues to film. Scream snarls at him:

SCREAM

Turn that off!

Moffet blinks. Turns it off.

Just as an Iraqi runs out of a doorway with his AK-47. At the same time his pals open up from every door and window.

The Iraqi sprints across the square. Makes it to cover. He now has a line of sight to shoot right at our guys.

Angel fires at him to keep him down. Scream gestures back down the alley --

SCREAM (CONT'D)

Move! Let's go!

TARIQ

What about Holland's team?

SCREAM

They gotta get out on their own!
Now move!

Dim takes the lead, then Tariq. Angel and Scream fire into the square to cover the retreat --

Next is Smoke. Then the Medic. Then Moffet. Angel and Scream continue firing into the square --

Down the alley, Dim reaches the edge of town. He peeks out, checks left and right --

DIM'S POV: Nobody's in sight. But there's a mud shack down the way. Someone could be hiding in it. Or behind it.

Scream and Angel hustle up to join them.

SCREAM (CONT'D)

What do we got?

DIM

Possible hot spot 50 yards to the left. Otherwise it's clear.

Scream surveys the terrain, points Tariq toward a berm 30 long yards away across open desert.

SCREAM

Take a position behind there.
Provide supporting fire.

As Tariq gets ready to run, Smoke prepares to provide covering fire. Scream pulls him back, shakes his head.

SCREAM (CONT'D)

Dim! Angel! Cover him!

As they comply, Smoke glares at Scream: "What the fuck?" But Scream has no time for him --

Dim, Angel and Scream open up on the building. Tariq races for the berm. No shots come from the building.

Tariq takes cover behind the berm. Gasps for air as he searches for any signs of a booby-trap.

In the alley, Scream points at Moffet.

SCREAM (CONT'D)

Your turn!

Moffet adjusts his grip on the camcorder, gets ready to run. That fear/thrill expression stamped on his face.

Scream and Dim look back down the alley, toward the square. There's no more gunfire, and no sign that anyone is coming.

DIM

Why aren't they coming after us?

BACK IN THE MARKETPLACE

Two insurgents come out of a doorway and pick up the woman's body and carry it back inside.

CAMERA PANS DOWN to the charred, smoking hand on the ground.

INT. GERMAN HOSPITAL -- DAY

CLOSE ON Bo's leg. Gone below the knee.

REVEAL Bo lying in bed, eager anticipation on his face.

BO

All right Doc. Let's get this show on the road.

Doctor Muecke and nurse Krista attach a prosthesis to Bo's leg. He watches closely, memorizing the process.

MUECKE

How's that? Nice and snug?

BO

Yeah yeah. It's good.

Bo tries to move to the edge of the bed, but the prosthesis makes it difficult. Muecke and Krista have to help.

Once they get his legs dangling over the edge, Muecke and Krista each take an arm to support him.

MUECKE

Try to balance your weight evenly on both legs.

Bo eases himself off the bed. First his left foot touches the floor, then the plastic one. Then he pushes himself up to standing. Grins at Krista.

BO

This place looks a lot better from up here.

KRISTA

Ready to try a few steps?

BO

Steps? How about 50 jumping jacks?

Muecke keeps Bo focused on the task at hand.

MUECKE

Start with your left leg.

Bo takes a step forward with his left leg. His balance is iffy, so Krista holds his arm lightly.

He struggles to bring his right leg forward. On this first step, the best he can do is bring it alongside the left.

MUECKE (CONT'D)

Good.

As Bo takes a second difficult step:

MUECKE (CONT'D)

This leg's just a temporary. When you return to California they'll fit you for the permanent one.

BO

Tell 'em I want the same kind those
guys who run marathons have.

A third step. A little easier this time.

BO (CONT'D)

Gotta do three fast miles to get
cleared for active duty.

Muecke reacts with surprise, but Krista has heard this before
and hates it more each time.

MUECKE

Active duty?

BO

I'm going back to my unit, Doc.
Gonna finish the mission.

Off Muecke's frown, Bo defiantly takes a fourth step.

MUECKE

It's good to have a goal. As long
as it's realistic. And worthy.

Bo ignores him, concentrates on executing a fifth step.

MUECKE (CONT'D)

It's going to take months for you
to learn how to walk.

Bo finishes the fifth step. Starts a sixth. Muecke moves in
front of him and forces him to stop.

MUECKE (CONT'D)

That's enough for today.

BO

Due respect Doc, but --

MUECKE

I'm a *Captain*. And I just gave you
an order. Soldier.

Bo fumes. But Muecke isn't going to give in.

Bo turns around with difficulty. Shrugs off help from Krista
as he begins the retreat back to his bed.

EXT. DESERT -- NIGHT

The team is huddled in defensive positions along a hillside. The desert night is cold.

Moffet sits apart from the team. His face is illuminated by the light coming from the monitor on his camcorder.

He's watching what he filmed earlier today. He glances up briefly to make sure no one sees what he's doing.

Scream talks quietly into the radio. Tariq and Dim keep watch a few feet away. Trying and failing to eavesdrop.

Further down the line, Smoke and Angel also keep watch.

SMOKE

They was waiting for us, brother.
They knew we was coming.

Angel stares out at the darkness.

SMOKE (CONT'D)

Bet your ass they sending the tanks
now.

Angel continues staring.

SMOKE (CONT'D)

Or calling everyone's best friend.
Mister F-16.

Angel says quietly:

ANGEL

That's the last thing they'll do.

SMOKE

What? Why not?

ANGEL

They can't risk killing any more
civilians.

SMOKE

Man, didn't you notice they got
that shithole wired?

ANGEL

Yeah. I noticed.

Now he turns, levels his gaze at Smoke.

SMOKE

Did you notice that woman in the street?

Smoke goes still. Considers Angel. Finally he says,

SMOKE (CONT'D)

Yeah. Saw her out the corner my eye.

ANGEL

What was she doing out there?

SMOKE

How should I know? Why you give a shit anyway?

Angel shakes his head. Turns to look out at the desert.

ANGEL

You don't get it, man. This is gonna be a thing.

SMOKE

What do you mean, a thing?

ANGEL

People are gonna be asking how that woman got killed.

SMOKE

Bitch walked into a shitstorm. That's how.

But Angel's got him thinking now. Beat.

SMOKE (CONT'D)

All I know is, wasn't me. I was busy shooting at one of them windows.

ANGEL

Which one?

SMOKE

Second building on the right. Where was you shooting at?

ANGEL

First building.

SMOKE

So you didn't see nothin'.

ANGEL

No.

SMOKE

Then you can suck my dick.

Angel looks at him again.

ANGEL

But he did.

He gestures to Moffet. Smoke peers up at him, sees the monitor's glow on his face. Frowns.

SMOKE

Yeah? Well he can suck it too.

Scream appears beside them.

SCREAM

Shut your pie holes. We're moving out.

Hearing the team get in motion, Moffet glances up, sees one soldier standing still, staring at him. He quickly turns off the monitor and slips the camcorder into his pocket.

As Moffet rejoins the group, he notices the soldier is still staring at him. It's Smoke.

EXT. ARMY BASE -- NIGHT

To establish. More than just tents and latrines. There are buildings, facilities, infrastructure.

INT. ARMY BUILDING -- EXAM ROOM

CLOSE ON Doublewide's eyes. The left looks pretty much okay. The right is pink and swollen.

Both eyes are filled with fear.

DOCTOR ADAIR (O.S.)

Put your chin on the bar, please.

REVEAL she is seated in front of a slit lamp. Doctor Adair sits on the other side of the lamp.

She rests her chin on the thin metal bar and faces into the light. Adair looks at her right eye.

DOCTOR ADAIR (CONT'D)

Open wider.

But she can't open any wider. She has to use her finger to keep the lid out of the way. She waits...

DOCTOR ADAIR (CONT'D)
Hm. You have an abrasion on your cornea.

Doublewide's heart leaps up into her throat.

DOCTOR ADAIR (CONT'D)
However, there's no blood in the anterior chamber of the eye.

He pulls away from the slit lamp. He sees her face, realizes she doesn't understand what all this means.

DOCTOR ADAIR (CONT'D)
You're going to be fine.

Doublewide sags with relief. But she's still shook up.

DOUBLEWIDE
Can I call my husband? Please?

OFF Doublewide's pleading eyes --

INT. COFFEE SHOP -- MORNING

In California, the breakfast crowd is being served. Sergio sits in a booth, Spooky asleep in a stroller. Sergio taps his fingers on the table. A little nervous.

At length he sees Anna enter the place, pushing her baby in a stroller. She sees him and waves, comes on over --

ANNA
Sorry I'm late. El nino was very fussy this morning. Took me forever to get him dressed.

SERGIO
I know how that goes.

As she sits down, she flashes that great smile of hers.

ANNA
You do? Because every time I see you he's dead to the world.

SERGIO
Only in the daytime. At night it's a different story.

ANNA

I've got a great book on sleep training if you want to borrow it.

SERGIO

Thanks, but that's not...he just -- he misses his mom.

He looks at Spooky sadly. Anna reaches over, touches his sleeve. His arm jumps slightly at her touch.

ANNA

Sergio, if it's a bad time, we can do this some other day.

SERGIO

No, no. It's fine. I've been -- I mean, I was looking forward to it.

ANNA

Me too. I rarely get to eat with someone who won't spit up on me.

Sergio laughs. Then Anna's baby lets out a piercing wail.

ANNA (CONT'D)

There he goes again.

(to the baby)

What's the matter, sweetie? You want your binkie? Hmm?

She fishes around in the stroller. Can't find the binkie.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Don't tell me I didn't pack it...

As she searches in vain, Sergio digs into Spooky's stroller and brings out a new, shrink-wrapped pacifier.

SERGIO

Here you go, Anna.

She accepts it with gratitude. She moistens it with her lips, then pops it in the baby's mouth. The wailing stops.

Anna gives Sergio another dynamite smile.

ANNA

You're good to have around.

EXT. DESERT -- NIGHT

The fire team trudges over open desert terrain under a brilliant blanket of stars.

Moffet trails behind, alone with his thoughts. He's slow to realize that Smoke has drifted back for a friendly chat.

SMOKE

Hey. Forgot to ask before. Which of them news channels you work at?

MOFFET

I'm freelance.

SMOKE

Yeah? What's that?

MOFFET

It means I work for myself.

SMOKE

So you ain't even getting paid?

MOFFET

I send the networks my footage, and if they use it they pay me.

Smoke chews on that a beat.

SMOKE

You plan on sending 'em any of that stuff we done today?

Moffet eyes Smoke's gun. Smoke carries it loosely, casually. And yet the barrel is pointed at Moffet's chest.

MOFFET

I don't know.

SMOKE

Cuz I been thinking. Decided I don't wanna be on TV after all.

He subtly tilts the gun up. It's pointed at Moffet's head.

SMOKE (CONT'D)

Okay?

Moffet nods. Smoke lowers the gun, smiles. His teeth shine in the dark.

SMOKE (CONT'D)

Good.

Smoke saunters ahead. Moffet slows down to let him go. Smoke turns, walks backward as he offers this parting advice:

SMOKE (CONT'D)

Don't fall behind, man. Get lost out here, nobody ever gonna find you.

EXT. DESERT ROAD -- NIGHT -- LATER

Two Humvees are parked on the road. Our team and Holland's team are on the ground, eating MREs or catching some sleep.

Scream and Mad Cow confer next to Mad Cow's jeep.

MAD COW

Regiment is mounting an operation to pacify the town. Our orders are to set up a perimeter and bottle them up.

Mad Cow takes out a map, shines a flashlight on it.

MAD COW (CONT'D)

Your team will observe from this vantage point, here. Anything moves, call it in.

MOFFET (O.S.)

Lieutenant.

They look up to find Moffet standing there.

MOFFET (CONT'D)

Any chance I can hitch a ride back to the base with you?

Mad Cow reads the disquiet on his face.

MAD COW

You okay?

MOFFET

Yeah. Just had enough for one day.

MAD COW

All right. Hop in.

As Moffet gets in the jeep, he makes eye contact with Smoke lounging nearby. Mad Cow observes this interplay. Frowns.

He turns to Scream, discovers he is also looking at Moffet.

MAD COW (CONT'D)
Something wrong, Sergeant?

Caught off-guard, Scream snaps his attention back to Mad Cow.

SCREAM
Sir?

MAD COW
Is there a problem?

Scream hasn't had time to think it all through, so hesitates slightly before answering.

SCREAM
No sir. No problem.

Mad Cow eyes Scream a beat.

MAD COW
Carry on then.

Mad Cow gets in the jeep. He and Moffet drive away.

EXT. ARMY BASE -- DAWN

The sun is just peeking above the horizon.

INT. ARMY BUILDING -- REC ROOM -- DAWN

Two ping-pong tables and a foosball game take up half the space. A large TV and some chairs fill the rest. A lone soldier dozes in front of the TV, which is tuned to Fox News.

NEWS ANCHOR
The bear pawed through the campers' tent, apparently looking for food. What he found was a case of beer.

REVEAL the dozing soldier is Doublewide.

NEWS ANCHOR (CONT'D)
The bear guzzled all 24 cans of suds, then passed out in the tent.

Mrs. B enters with her breakfast on a tray.

NEWS ANCHOR (CONT'D)
Park rangers relocated the bear, and no one was hurt.
(chuckles)
(MORE)

NEWS ANCHOR (CONT'D)
 Though someone may be nursing a
 heck of a hangover today.

Mrs. B spots Doublewide, stops. Doesn't want to be around
 her. She's about to go when Doublewide wakes up.

MRS. B
 Hey. Whatcha doing?

DOUBLEWIDE
 Waiting to make a phone call home.

MRS. B
 (jealous)
 How'd you swing that? You blow one
 of the sat-com guys?

Doublewide shakes her head, indicates her bandaged eye.

MRS. B (CONT'D)
 Oh. Right.

NEWS ANCHOR (O.S.)
 Recapping our top story, disturbing
 images from Iraq are igniting furor
 across the Arab world.

Doublewide closes her eyes to go back to sleep...

NEWS ANCHOR (CONT'D)
 A journalist embedded with an army
 unit in al-Ansar province shot this
 footage using a digital camera.

ON TV: It's Moffet's footage. Taken in the alley of the
 Iraqi village. First we see a shot of Scream barking orders:

SCREAM
 You two with me!
 (to Angel and Smoke)
 Cover us!

Mrs. B's jaw drops. She shakes Doublewide --

MRS. B
 Hey. Hey. Look at this.

ON TV: Angel and Smoke lay down covering fire. Smoke fires
 blindly, his head tucked behind the building's corner --

Doublewide and Mrs. B stare in rapt attention.

ON TV: They cut out the part where the fruit stand blows up. All they show is some footage of it burning. In the background we can hear the Iraqis cheering.

Angel and Smoke resume laying down fire. The camera focuses on Smoke's angry face as he sprays bullets high and low --

IRAQI MOTHER (O.S.)
Walid! Waliid!!

The camera whip-pans to film the Iraqi woman running after her boy. The boy picks up a rock --

Then suddenly the footage cuts to another shot of Smoke firing away, his face an angry mask --

Then the footage of the woman resumes where it left off. As she grabs her son, we hear Smoke's voice DUBBED OVER:

SMOKE (V.O.)
Say hello to Allah for me.

The woman is struck in the chest. She drops to the ground.

The footage suddenly cuts from the battle to Smoke clowning in the truck. He blows on the barrel, grins at the camera.

ON DOUBLEWIDE AND MRS. B: Doublewide looks sick.

DOUBLEWIDE
Oh, no.

MRS. B
Jesus. What an asshole.

NEWS ANCHOR (O.S.)
The callous shooting of a Muslim woman has sparked angry protests from Pakistan to Paris. In Riyadh Saudi Arabia, a mob is gathering outside the U.S. embassy...

DOUBLEWIDE
You poor, stupid boy.

She shakes her head, deeply sad.

DOUBLEWIDE (CONT'D)
Look what you've done now.

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. IRAQI TOWN -- DAY

Deserted. The sun is hot enough to melt dust.

EXT. DESERT -- DAY

The team is dug into the same hillside as last night. Tariq and Dim gaze through binoculars at the town, while everyone else watches everywhere else.

Smoke is bored and pissed and spoiling for a fight.

SMOKE

Wasn't this attack supposed to happen by now?

The team tries to ignore him. But he won't be ignored.

SMOKE (CONT'D)

What are they waiting for? These A-rabs to roll out one of them rugs?

ANGEL

Shut up.

SMOKE

Shut up?

ANGEL

I don't want to hear your voice.

SMOKE

How's about you feel my boot in your ass?

SCREAM

Shut up Smoke. Don't say another goddamn word.

Smoke glowers. Scream stares him down.

SCREAM (CONT'D)

Angel, take over for Dim.

As they switch positions, Scream rubs his tired eyes.

SCREAM (CONT'D)

Next guy who opens his mouth is gonna be in a world of shit.

Silence descends. Dim takes a package of Babywipes out of his pack. Gives his face and hands a much-needed bath.

He becomes aware that Scream is watching him. Waiting. Dim finally gets the message and hands one over.

TARIQ

I've got movement.

Scream stops in mid-wipe, grabs his binoculars and moves into position to look for himself.

TARIQ (CONT'D)

A man's walking out of one of the buildings.

ANGEL

I see him. He's wearing western clothes.

SCREAM

Armed?

TARIQ

He's carrying something in his right arm.

Scream peers through his binoculars. Dim and Smoke don't have any, but they squint toward the town anyway.

SCREAM

Can you see what it is? He's blocking my view.

Angel sees it first. He's stunned.

ANGEL

It's a video camera. Pretty sophisticated one.

Tariq is quietly outraged.

TARIQ

Bastard's gonna film our guy's body parts.

SCREAM

I'm calling it in.

Scream moves to the radio. As he calls it in --

ANGEL

Sarge! More people coming out!

TARIQ
Yeah. The whole damn town.

Angel sees something. Sucks in his breath sharply.

ANGEL
Oh shit.

Tariq sees it too.

TARIQ
Oh shit is right.

DIM
What? What is it?

Angel lowers his binoculars, looks at Dim.

ANGEL
It's a funeral.

Angel looks at Smoke.

ANGEL (CONT'D)
They're burying the woman.

Dim and Tariq turn to look at Smoke. Smoke stares back, half-smiling, as if this simply confirms what he's always known: that they all got it in for him.

Scream returns. A disturbed expression on his face.

SCREAM
Pack your gear. Attack's off.

This is welcome news to the team. So why's Sarge so unhappy?

SCREAM (CONT'D)
We've been ordered back to HQ.

Still sounds good to them. So he adds the kicker.

SCREAM (CONT'D)
Nobody else. Just us.

One by one, the guys realize what this must be about.

And suddenly nobody can look at Smoke.

INT. ARMY BUILDING -- WAITING ROOM -- DAY

The team sits on benches in a holding room of some kind. They're still dirty and worn from the field.

Nobody says a word.

Captain Baron enters with Mad Cow. Mad Cow is angry. Baron is merely world-weary. He says to Mad Cow:

BARON
Separate these men. They're not to
speak to each other, understand?

MAD COW
Yes sir.

Baron looks to Scream.

BARON
Sergeant, come with me.

Baron exits. As Scream follows, Mad Cow levels the evil eye at him. Scream pretends not to notice.

Once he's gone, Mad Cow turns and levels it at Smoke.

Smoke stares into space. Stone-faced.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM -- NIGHT

Baron sits across a card table from Scream.

SCREAM
It took me and Dim and Tariq maybe
ten seconds to haul ass back to the
alley.

BARON
Did you fire your weapon during
those ten seconds?

SCREAM
No sir.

BARON
Did either of the men with you fire
his weapon?

SCREAM
Maybe. But I doubt it.

BARON
Why's that?

SCREAM
Shooting slows you down, sir.

Baron nods. Makes sense. Then he sighs.

BARON
Sergeant, why didn't you inform
Lieutenant Taylor that a civilian
had been killed?

Scream takes a moment to decide how to answer.

SCREAM
I had no reason to think we were
responsible.

Baron frowns skeptically.

BARON
Surely you knew the incident had
been filmed.

SCREAM
No sir. I did not.

Scream holds Baron's gaze a beat.

SCREAM (CONT'D)
That reporter was the last thing on
my mind.

Baron sits back in his chair. Resigned.

BARON
Very well Sergeant. Let's talk
about Private Williams. A.K.A.
"Smoke."

INT. SAT-COM BOOTH -- NIGHT

Doublewide is on the phone in a private booth. She listens
to it ring and ring at the other end of the line.

As tears slide out from beneath her gauze bandage, we --

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER MEETING ROOM -- MORNING

Sergio sits with the women of the spousal support group.
Spooky gurgles quietly in his stroller.

Jan, the group leader, listens to SUE (20), whose two
children are with her today.

SUE
I think it's just awful they put
that stuff on TV.
(MORE)

SUE (CONT'D)

And they're such hypocrites! They pretend to be all sad and say how upsetting it is, then they turn right around and show it again and again!

Big agreement all the way around. Jan is bitter and mocking:

JAN

Didn't you know? It's their "duty" to show it.

Angry, derisive reactions around the room. Except for Sergio. It's more complicated for him.

Jan adopts a gentler tone, makes eye contact with each person in the room as she says:

JAN (CONT'D)

They don't know a thing about duty. But we do, don't we? All of us here. We understand.

Everyone nods, finding comfort in that.

Anna enters, pushing her stroller. They all look at her. Jan is annoyed at the interruption.

ANNA

Sorry.

As Anna sits beside Sergio, Katie, another wife, pipes up:

KATIE

You know what I felt when I watched that tape? Betrayed.

Anna leans over and whispers to Sergio:

ANNA

Are we talking about the story on the news?

(Sergio nods)

Rumor is that soldier's based here.

Sergio's eyes widen.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Oh, before I forget. I brought something for you.

Across the way Jan half-listens to Katie. But she's watching Anna and Sergio. Her annoyance growing.

KATIE

Our husbands are heroes. But these news people want to make them look like the bad guys!

Jan watches Anna pull a brand new pacifier from her bag. She slips it to Sergio. She smiles. Sergio smiles.

Jan frowns.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM -- NIGHT

Now it's Dim's turn to sit across from Baron.

DIM

By the time I saw her she was already dead.

BARON

So you don't know what happened?

DIM

No sir.

BARON

What do you *think* happened?

Dim looks down at the floor.

DIM

I wouldn't want to speculate, sir.

BARON

Son, look at me.

(Dim complies)

I'm not out to hang anyone. But I have to know what really happened. Otherwise I can't prevent it from happening again.

Dim swallows nervously. Torn.

BARON (CONT'D)

Tell you what. If you help me, I'll make it worth your while.

INT. TRACT HOUSE -- DAY

Dark and gloomy even in the daytime. Vanessa is asleep on the couch. Physically and emotionally wrung out.

The phone begins to ring. Vanessa doesn't stir. Eddy creeps into the room. Watches his mother, debating what to do.

The phone keeps ringing. Insistent. Eddy answers it.

EDDY
Hello?

INT. SAT-COM TRUCK -- NIGHT -- INTERCUT

Dim talks on the phone.

DIM
Hey buddy. It's me. Frank.

Eddy's heart soars.

EDDY
Frank?! Mommy! It's Frank!

Vanessa opens her eyes. Her problem isn't that she's drunk. It's that she's sober.

VANESSA
What now?

Eddy holds up the phone.

EDDY
It's Frank! It's Frank!

While Vanessa tries to catch up to that surprise, Eddy grabs his chance to talk with Dim. Filled with hope, he asks:

EDDY (CONT'D)
Are you coming home?

DIM
Not for a while yet.

Dim can hear the disappointment from 10,000 miles away.

DIM (CONT'D)
But I'm coming, okay? I'm coming
just as soon as I can.

EDDY
Okay.

Dim knows Eddy's trying to be brave. It kills him.

DIM
How's your Mom?

EDDY
She's sleeping.

Dim doesn't like the sound of that.

VANESSA
I'm awake, I'm awake.

Said as she comes to get the phone. Eddy offers it up to her and backs off to observe. Vanessa says to Dim,

VANESSA (CONT'D)
I'm awake. Just resting my eyes.

DIM
You okay?

VANESSA
Okay? Yeah. Considering.

Dim doesn't like the sound of that either.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
What's wrong? Are you wounded?

DIM
No. I'm fine. They said I could make one call, so here I am.

Pause. Neither seems to know what to say.

DIM (CONT'D)
How's the baby? Feel him kicking yet?

She reflexively puts her hand on her belly. The thought of what's no longer there is heartbreaking.

VANESSA
Not -- not yet.

DIM
Vanessa? What is it?

Guilt and self-loathing wash over her.

VANESSA
I just -- I miss you.

Dim didn't expect to hear that. Tentatively, he ventures:

DIM
I miss you too.

INT. ARMY BUILDING -- REC ROOM -- NIGHT

It's late. The room is empty save for two enlisted men playing ping-pong and one soldier watching Fox News.

The soldier is Scream. He's watching the Moffet tape with the sound muted. For the 50th time. His eyes hooded.

Footsteps approach from behind Scream. Someone sits down near him, but he doesn't take his eyes off the screen.

MOFFET (O.S.)

Sergeant.

Scream looks over to find Moffet sitting a few chairs away. He's the last person Scream expected -- or wanted -- to see.

SCREAM

The hell are you doing here?

As they talk, the glow from the TV reflects off their faces.

MOFFET

The army wants me to tell its side of the story.

SCREAM

You? Un-friggin-believable.

MOFFET

I never intended the piece to look like this. The network edited the footage without my permission.

Scream doesn't believe a word. He stands to leave --

MOFFET (CONT'D)

I'm sorry about that. I am. But I'm not going to apologize for trying to show America what happened out there.

Scream looks down at him. Pure ice.

SCREAM

You don't have a clue what happened, rich boy.

He turns and walks away. Moffet goes after him --

MOFFET

Then tell me Sergeant. Tell me what I'm missing.

Scream stops. Looms over him menacingly.

SCREAM

A soldier got blown to bits. His family won't have anything to bury. But you don't give a shit.

Moffet takes the accusation and throws it back.

MOFFET

His name was Daniel Weeks. He was from Nashville Tennessee.

Their eyes meet and hold. Beat.

SCREAM

All right. Here's what you're missing -- only you didn't get it from me.

Moffet nods. Scream checks to make sure the ping-pong players aren't paying attention. Then he says quietly:

SCREAM (CONT'D)

The army'll never admit this, even to itself: we got played.

MOFFET

Played? How?

SCREAM

They lured us in with the mortar. Then they ambushed us. And right in the middle of everything, a kid and his mom happen to run out in the street?

MOFFET

You mean they were deliberately sacrificed? Why?

Scream gestures the TV, which shows the boy crying over his mother.

SCREAM

For the evening news.

Moffet doesn't buy it.

MOFFET

How could they know I was there filming it?

SCREAM

Maybe that was just lucky, you
doing their job for them.

Moffet isn't following, so Scream helps him out.

SCREAM (CONT'D)

They showed that woman's funeral on
al-Jazeera today, right?

MOFFET

Yeah. So?

SCREAM

How'd they manage to get a camera
and satellite hook-up into that
town when we had it surrounded?

Moffet starts to catch on.

MOFFET

Unless it was already there.

SCREAM

Pretty convenient, don't you think?
And how come they're only showing
the funeral and not the rest of it?
They hiding something?

Moffet thinks it through. Can't bring himself to believe it.

MOFFET

You're giving them too much credit.

SCREAM

Am I? They killed one of our guys.
Plus they still got the mortar.
But thanks to that woman, the whole
town gets a pass.

Which frustrates Scream to no end. He sighs wearily.

SCREAM (CONT'D)

I been here over a year, and I'm
real clear on one thing: these
people are in this to win.

OFF Moffet, chewing on that --

INT. GERMAN HOSPITAL -- NIGHT

The ward is quiet. As WE PAN past the sleeping wounded, we
hear the shallow breathing of a man exerting himself.

FIND BO walking with his prosthetic leg. He's sweating profusely, concentrating on each step.

He reaches the wall. Taps it with the prosthesis. Murmurs:

BO

Four.

He turns around and starts the other way. Destination: the opposite end of the ward. Step-step, step-step --

Suddenly the prosthesis goes out from under him and he falls face first to the floor.

He grabs his right knee and writhes in agony. He bites down on a scream so the nurses won't hear.

He looks down the row of beds toward his own. It seems like it's a mile away. He has no choice but to crawl back.

He crawls the only way he knows how: on his belly, like a soldier in the field. His prosthesis makes odd squeaks as he drags it along the hospital floor.

By the time he reaches his bed, he's exhausted. He fumbles to remove his prosthesis, but every move hurts like hell.

Once he gets it off, he grabs the bed frame and commences a Herculean effort to haul himself up into it...

EXT. IRAQI TOWN -- DAWN

A crappy compact car parks at the edge of town. The doors open and Moffet and his Driver/Translator step out. Moffet wears a "Press" credential around his neck.

Moffet gazes down the street toward the square. It's empty and eerily quiet. His eyes scan the windows and doorways. And linger on the charred remains of the fruit stand.

Moffet is afraid. Which only spurs him to start walking toward the square. The Driver reluctantly follows.

He enters the square. He sees crude letters scrawled on a wall: "Daeth to America." (sic)

An Iraqi wearing a keffiyeh steps out of a doorway. He holds an AK-47. He shouts at them in angry Arabic. Quaking, the Driver translates haltingly:

IRAQI DRIVER

He says who are you. What do you want?

The man comes closer. Moffet holds up his press credential --

MOFFET

Tell him I'm the reporter who
filmed the battle here. Explain
that I want to tell America about
the woman who was martyred.

The Driver translates. Mr. Keffiyeh stops short. He's not
sure what to do now.

He turns to look back at the doorway from which he emerged.
Asks for instructions.

The three men wait in tense silence. Then a short, sharp
burst of Arabic comes from inside the door.

Moffet's Driver practically shits his pants. He turns and
runs for his car.

He only takes three steps before Mr. Keffiyeh fires a short,
sharp burst into his back.

Before Moffet can react, the AK-47 is in his face and he's
being screamed at in Arabic.

Moffet puts his hands up and sinks to his knees. The thrill
is gone. Only the terror remains.

Two more insurgents run out of the doorway. One carries a
length of rope. The other holds a black hood.

MOFFET'S POV: The men grab Moffet and flatten him to the
ground. As they slip the hood over his head, we:

GO TO BLACK.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT. ARMY BASE -- MORNING

Another day in Paradise.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM -- SAME

Smoke waits alone. Sleep-deprived, sullen and scared.

The door opens and Baron enters. He waits for Smoke to stand up and salute. Then doesn't return the salute.

BARON

Sit.

As Smoke sits, Baron crosses to a TV/VCR set up in the corner. Turns the TV on and pushes play on the VCR.

Smoke watches the himself firing wildly. Angrily. Sees the woman run into the street. Listens to himself say:

SMOKE (O.S.)

Say hello to Allah for me.

Smoke licks his lips. His mouth completely dry.

He watches the woman fall to the ground. He watches the boy crying over her body. Sees himself blow on the end of the gun barrel and grin at the camera.

SMOKE (CONT'D)

That's a frame job! Wasn't me who capped her!

Baron silences him with a look. Shuts the TV/VCR off.

BARON

Private, there's two ways we can go from here. You can either bullshit me, or you can help me.

He lets Smoke think that over. Then:

BARON (CONT'D)

You help me, I'll make it worth your while.

OFF Smoke, wondering what that means --

EXT. COMPTON CALIFORNIA -- NIGHT

A cozy little house in an otherwise iffy neighborhood.

INT. COMPTON HOUSE -- NIGHT

Smoke's mother Shirley (36) helps her daughter Monique (14) do her homework. A cross decorates one wall, while a painting of Jesus as a Black man dominates another.

The phone rings. Shirley moves to answer it, her body and spirit worn down by 36 years of disappointment.

SHIRLEY

Hello?

SMOKE (O.S.)

(filtered, thru phone)

Momma?

Shirley is thunderstruck. And instantly worried.

SHIRLEY

Maurice?

INT. SAT-COM BOOTH -- DAY -- INTERCUT

Smoke sits at the phone. Spent.

SMOKE

Yeah. It's me.

They're both deeply ambivalent. She loves him, but he's also her biggest disappointment. And Smoke knows it.

SHIRLEY

You okay baby? Where are you?

SMOKE

Iraq. Where else would I be?

SHIRLEY

I don't know. I was worried you was in the hospital or something.

SMOKE

Huh-uh.

SHIRLEY

Well thank God.

She heaves a sigh of relief. Then there's a pause as each hopes the other will speak next. Smoke wins.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)

So you just calling for no reason?
That's nice.

Smoke frowns, surprised.

SMOKE
Ain't you been watching the news?

SHIRLEY
Baby, I'm working two jobs. I
ain't got time for any of that.

Smoke lets his head droop against the wall. Sighs.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)
Why? What happened?

SMOKE
'Sides the damn war? Nothing.

But her antennae are up now.

SHIRLEY
Something bad happened, didn't it.

SMOKE
Don't you listen? I just said no.

SHIRLEY
You in some kind of trouble?

That question is the age-old flashpoint in their
relationship. Smoke reacts bitterly:

SMOKE
Why you got to be like that? Huh?
Why you always got to go there?

SHIRLEY
Cuz you only call me when you're in
trouble!

SMOKE
I'm in Iraq Momma! Gettin' shot
at! That's my trouble!

She feels guilty. She wants to believe him, but experience
has taught her otherwise.

SHIRLEY
I worry about you. I pray to Jesus
every day for you.

SMOKE
I don't want hear about Jesus right
now.

SHIRLEY
Well you should. Who do you
think's making sure none of them
bullets hit you?

SMOKE
Me. That's who.

SHIRLEY
Nobody makes it alone, Maurice. We
all need help.

SMOKE
They're saying I gotta hang up now.
There's no indication that he's out of time.

SHIRLEY
Okay. Be safe baby.

SMOKE
Yeah. Bye.

Stay with Smoke as he hangs up. He sits still a beat, hating
his life.

INT. TRACT HOUSE -- NIGHT

Vanessa lies on the sofa, watching bad late night television
with the sound off. Trying to stay sober.

Eddy emerges from his bedroom in his pj's. He's spooked.

EDDY
Mommy? I had a bad dream.

VANESSA
Join the club.

EDDY
My foot was stuck to the bottom of
the pool. I couldn't breathe.

VANESSA
It was just a dream. Go back to
sleep.

He looks back to his room. Trembles. Vanessa realizes how
upsetting the dream was. Her heart goes out to him.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
Come here, honey.

He comes to her tentatively. She makes room for him, and he slips into the space provided.

They lie there a beat. It's soothing to both of them.

Eddy closes his eyes. Vanessa turns off the TV, curls herself around him.

INT. TENT -- DAY

Dim and Angel sit on their cots polishing their boots.

DIM

Something's not right at home, dog.
I just know it.

ANGEL

You're thinking too much, Dim. You
know the distance makes it hard to
communicate.

Dim shakes his head, smiles grimly.

DIM

We couldn't even communicate in
person. Anyway, I know what I
heard.

ANGEL

Don't try to find some hidden
meaning from how her voice sounded.
You'll drive yourself crazy.

DIM

It wasn't her voice, Angel. It was
the silence.

Angel becomes aware that Smoke is standing at the tent's
entrance. Listening. Dim turns around and sees him as well.

SMOKE

(to Dim)

Got to call home, huh? Guess you
musta "cooperated."

Awkward beat. Smoke saunters to his cot and sits down. Dim
puts his boots down and picks up a magazine.

DIM

Gonna go take a dump.

Smoke stares at Dim as he goes by. Once he's gone, Smoke
turns his attention to Angel. Watches him polish his boot.

SMOKE

You call your old lady too?

Angel doesn't answer. Moves on to the other boot.

SMOKE (CONT'D)

I forgot, you don't have a old lady, do you. How come that is, huh? You a homo Angel?

Angel continues to ignore him.

SMOKE (CONT'D)

Yeah, you a homo. Angel a homo name. You got a homo voice too. Always singing 'bout Jesus like a little faggot.

He gets up and moves toward Angel --

SMOKE (CONT'D)

Don't you know Jesus hates fags? 'Specially sellouts like you.

As Angel puts his boot down and stands to face him --

SMOKE (CONT'D)

Least Judas made hisself some money. You sold me out for a goddamn phone call --

TARIQ (O.S.)

Angel! Angel!

Tariq and Dim rush into the tent --

DIM

You're not gonna believe this shit. That reporter got snatched!

TARIQ

They already got a video of him on al-Jazeera!

Both Angel and Smoke are floored. Angel looks at Smoke. Smoke meets his gaze. Cracks a smile.

SMOKE

Lord works in mysterious ways, don't he?

Angel shakes his head. In pity, not disgust.

ANGEL

You're a lost soul, brother.

Smoke attacks him --

SMOKE

You ain't my brother.

They wrestle to the ground. Smoke's fists fly but don't land. Angel keeps him at bay until Dim and Tariq pull Smoke off and shove him back to his own cot.

Smoke and Angel glare at each other, panting. At length Dim motions to Angel --

DIM

Come on. Sarge wants us.

"Us" clearly doesn't include Smoke. Dim, Tariq and Angel exit the tent. OFF Smoke, watching them go --

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM -- DAY

Baron, Mad Cow, and the fire team watch the TV/VCR.

ON TV: Moffet kneels before two hooded kidnappers. One holds a gun, the other a sword. Moffet does a decent job of trying to appear calm, but we know he's scared shitless.

BARON

I know this clown isn't your favorite guy, but we've been ordered to rescue him.

The team receives this news with decidedly mixed feelings.

SCREAM

Yes sir.

BARON

Problem is, the dumbshit didn't tell anyone where he was going. Sergeant, he interviewed you last night, correct?

Screams stiffens. Surprised he knows.

SCREAM

Yes sir.

BARON

He give you any indication?

Scream considers a moment. Notices Mad Cow looking at him, eyes narrowed. Then he says,

SCREAM

If I had to guess, I'd say he went
back to that town, sir.

Baron shakes his head. In disgust, not pity.

BARON

How could he be so goddamn stupid?

Scream shrugs helplessly: I have no idea.

INT. GERMAN HOSPITAL -- DAY

Bo lies in bed, in physical and emotional misery. His knee has turned a reddish-purple color, and it has shrunk in size.

MUECKE (O.S.)

You've set yourself back weeks.

Dr. Muecke and Krista stand bedside. Krista hurts for Bo, but Muecke is unsympathetic.

MUECKE (CONT'D)

You may have done permanent damage
to the ligaments.

Bo refuses to look at him. Stares off at nothing.

MUECKE (CONT'D)

At any rate, it's the end of that
nonsense about active duty.

He waits for a response. Doesn't get one.

Muecke sighs. Moves off. Krista watches Bo for a moment, then she also leaves.

OFF Bo, alone and bereft --

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM -- DAY

Smoke stands at his version of attention in front of Baron, who is seated. Mad Cow and Scream stand nearby.

BARON

The army has decided not to bring
charges against you.

Smoke tries to stay impassive, but he's enormously relieved.

BARON (CONT'D)
However, you are ordered to undergo
cultural sensitivity training for
the next six weeks.

Baron stands and turns to Scream.

BARON (CONT'D)
Carry on, Sergeant.

Baron and Mad Cow exit. Once they're gone, Smoke relaxes --

SCREAM
Stand at attention!

Taken aback, Smoke snaps to attention. Scream moves slowly
to him and gets right up in his face. Seethes:

SCREAM (CONT'D)
There's only one reason that woman
is dead: because you're a coward.

Smoke's nostrils flare. The only muscle he dares to move.

SCREAM (CONT'D)
Now on, you stop hiding behind a
spray of gunfire. Understand?
Next time there won't be another
bullshit investigation.

If it's possible, Scream gets even closer.

SCREAM (CONT'D)
Next time I'll just get rid of you.

Smoke takes a deep drag of that.

INT. COMPTON HOUSE -- DAWN

Shirley is dressed for her job as a TSA security screener at
LAX. She gathers up her purse and searches for her keys, but
her mind is clearly preoccupied with other worries.

Specifically, she's preoccupied with the television set.
She's debating with herself over whether to turn it on.

Ultimately she can't help herself. She has to know.

She turns on the TV. Channel-surfs until she finds Fox News.

ON TV: the video of Moffet kneeling before his captors plays.

FOX NEWS ANCHOR

-- kidnappers are demanding that US forces hand over the soldier responsible for the death of an Iraqi woman on Tuesday.

Shirley listens attentively, trying to follow along --

FOX NEWS ANCHOR (CONT'D)

They say if the soldier is not turned over within 72 hours, John Moffet will be executed.

ON TV: they switch to the video Moffet shot during the battle. Scream barks orders --

FOX NEWS ANCHOR (CONT'D)

It's a bizarre twist to a story that began when Moffet shot this disturbing footage during a firefight in al-Ansar province.

Now Shirley recognizes Smoke. And in that one instant, she knows. She cries out in shock and horror:

SHIRLEY

Oh God!

She sees Smoke fire blindly into the square. Sees the woman run into the street. Shirley sinks to her knees --

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)

Oh God...Oh God...

SMOKE (O.S.)

Say hello to Allah for me.

She sees the woman get shot and fall dead. She sees Smoke blow on the barrel of his gun and grin.

SHIRLEY

OH GOD!!

FOX NEWS ANCHOR

The Pentagon has refused to release the name of the soldier...

Monique hurries out of her bedroom. Finds Shirley rocking back and forth, lips moving in silent prayer --

MONIQUE

Momma? What's wrong?

She crosses to Shirley and touches her, but Shirley just rocks herself faster. Prays fervently --

MONIQUE (CONT'D)

Momma?!

Shirley's face suddenly grimaces with intense pain. She puts her hand up to her head, then collapses on the floor.

MONIQUE (CONT'D)

MOMMA!

Monique shakes her. Shirley doesn't respond.

MONIQUE (CONT'D)

MOMMA! MOMMA!

As Monique rushes to the phone --

EXT. BASE -- NIGHT

Smoke stands apart from the rest of the team as they prepare to head out in a Humvee. Baron gives them a final briefing:

BARON

Intel's picked up some chatter indicating they've moved Moffet to another location.

Scream is not happy, but not surprised.

BARON (CONT'D)

Someone in that town knows where they took him. You go house to house until you get an answer.

SCREAM

Yes sir.

Mad Cow appears out of the darkness and motions to Smoke.

MAD COW

Private.

Smoke heads over to him, expecting another lecture.

MAD COW (CONT'D)

We just got word from California. Your mother's in the hospital.

That hits Smoke like a hammer blow. He's struck dumb.

MAD COW (CONT'D)
Looks like she had a stroke. She's
in intensive care.

Nearby, Tariq has heard everything. He moves to Dim,
whispers in his ear --

MAD COW (CONT'D)
If you want to sit out this
mission, I'll understand.

Smoke gives no indication of having heard that.

MAD COW (CONT'D)
Private?

Smoke's eyes come back. The hard facade goes up.

SMOKE
Huh-uh. I'll go.

Mad Cow studies Smoke, wondering if he should order him to
stay. Opts not to.

MAD COW
Very well. Carry on.

Mad Cow moves off. Smoke looks over at the team. They're
all looking at him. He knows immediately that they've heard.

Without a word, he saunters past them and climbs into the
Humvee.

INT. HUMVEE -- NIGHT -- CONTINUOUS

Smoke takes a spot as far from the door as possible. One by
one, the others climb in after him.

Angel sits directly across from Smoke. Compassion on his
face. Smoke stares past him as if he isn't there.

Scream is the last one in. He bangs on the side of the
Humvee. The engine starts and they get in motion.

They roll in silence a few seconds. Then Angel says:

ANGEL
What's your mother's name?

SMOKE
Kiss my ass.

Angel's eyes never waver from Smoke. And they don't lose any of their compassion.

SMOKE (CONT'D)
Quit eyeballin' me.

Angel closes his eyes.

ANGEL
Lord, tonight we ask you to hear
our prayer for Maurice's mother.

SMOKE
Aw, man. Shut up.

ANGEL
Bless her, watch over her, and
protect her --

SMOKE
I said SHUT UP!

Smoke is about to reach over and stop him, when he notices that Dim and Tariq have closed their eyes as well.

ANGEL
-- and help her body and spirit
achieve a full recovery...

Smoke slumps back and pulls his helmet down over his eyes.

ANGEL (CONT'D)
And bless Maurice, and guide him
through this time of pain and
sadness, and restore his faith in
you, Lord. Amen.

Smoke stays hidden behind his helmet. The team can't see it but we can: his eyes are glistening.

As the Humvee rumbles along into the desert night, we:

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF EPISODE