

A close-up, high-contrast photograph of a man with dark hair and a serious expression, looking down at a small toy soldier figure. He is wearing a dark blue hoodie. His hands are visible, with some green paint smudges on his fingers. He is using a fine brush to paint the figure, which is a World War II-era soldier in a green uniform and helmet, holding a rifle. The figure is on a black base. The background is dark with some bokeh light spots. The overall mood is focused and artistic.

TOY SOLDIERS

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EXT. STREET - DAY

JAKE MAXWELL (30), is walking down a dimly lit city street. He is looking down on his phone. Suddenly, a HOODED MAN steps out from behind a parked car and grabs Jake's backpack.

JAKE

Hey! Stop.

HOODED MAN

Let it go, asshole.

They grapple. The masked man pulls out a knife, stabs Jake in the abdomen. Jake pulls back in pain. The man takes Jake's backpack and runs away. Jake lays on the ground, bleeding.

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jake is jolted awake, sitting in his bed sweaty and gasping for air. The clock on his phone reads 4:00 AM.

With shaking hands he reaches for a pill bottle beside the phone. Takes out one pill and dry swallows. He raises his shirt, revealing the old scar from the stab on his abdomen.

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jake walks to a desk in the corner of the room. He switches on a desk lamp to reveal a row of perfectly painted toy soldiers, a half painted soldier at the end of the line.

From underneath the desk, Jake pulls out a container of art supplies. He picks up the last soldier and gets to work.

Jake's movements are fluid, the brush an extension of his own fingers. He works diligently in his little patch of light, a safe haven in an apartment of darkness.

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A bagel pops out of the toaster. Jake smears it with cream cheese, pours orange juice on a glass and goes back to his desk. Places the bagel next to the recently painted soldier.

Looks at the closed window blinds. Takes a moment. Picks up the bagel, takes a bite to gather courage and puts the bagel back on the plate.

Walks to the window. Slightly opens the blinds. Daylight filters through. Jake's breathing speeds up.

As he watches life outside. A sinister murmur crawls into his ears. Men and women's moans grow in volume. Car crashes, women screaming and a loud buzzer overcome Jake's will.

Jake immediately closes the blinds, takes a couple of steps back and sits on the floor. Trying to calm himself down.

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

DR. CAMERON (40s, confident), appears on the laptop screen.

DR. CAMERON

These dreams are completely normal, Jake. This is just how your brain is choosing to process the attack. I see the blinds are still closed.

Jake looks at the blinds. Turns to the laptop. Slowly turns the laptop so his camera doesn't show the blinds.

JAKE

I just can't... I can't keep going back to that.

DR. CAMERON

I understand. These things take time. Let's go back to the visualization exercises before bed. You need to prime your mind before falling asleep.

JAKE

Okay.

DR. CAMERON

How are the soldiers coming along?

Jake reaches out and shows him the soldier he just painted.

DR. CAMERON (cont'd)

Nice. You got this Jake. I believe in you. We'll get there.

JAKE

Thanks doc. Talk soon.

DR. CAMERON

Talk soon.

Dr. Cameron disappears from the screen.

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jake, wearing a headset, plays a video game on his laptop.

MR. CAMPBELL (V.O.)

And what am I supposed to do with this piece of useless crap then? I can't add filters to my daughter's birthday pictures. Your app just freezes my phone.

JAKE

Can you please delete the app and install it again Mr. Campbell?

MR. CAMPBELL

Do you think I'm an idiot? I tried that already!

JAKE

Can you please try again?

MR. CAMPBELL

Mother... (exasperated) here, I'll do it again. So, I delete the app... go into the freaking store... What's the name of your thing?

JAKE

Charming momentum.

MR. CAMPBELL

Here. Char-ming... momentum.

(beat)

OK, it's installed. So I open it and if I try to add the filter...

Mr. Campbell remains quiet.

JAKE

Is it working?

MR. CAMPBELL

Yes.

JAKE

Is there anything else I can help you with, Mr. Campbell?

MR. CAMPBELL

No, it's fixed. Thank you.

JAKE
Thank you for calling the support
line Mr. Campbell. Have a great day.

Jake hangs up the call and takes the headphones off.

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

TOM (40), Jake's brother, places a groceries bag on the
kitchen counter. Takes out a puzzle book. Hands it to Jake.

TOM
Look what I found.

JAKE
(smiling)
Thanks.

TOM
The lady said she could make it here
by eight.

JAKE
Why didn't you just interview her
yourself?

TOM
You don't want to know the person
that is gonna take care of mom?

JAKE
But you don't have to bring them
here.

TOM
Are you coming to mom's then?

Jake doesn't answer.

TOM (cont'd)
You need to talk to other people.
It's not good to be alone all the
time.

JAKE
I talk to others.

TOM
In person, Jake. Not through a
computer screen.

JAKE
Easy for you to say.

TOM
Jake. It's been two years...

Door knocks. Tom looks at the clock.

TOM (cont'd)
She's early. I like that.

Tom goes to the door and opens it for LUCY (30), confident and soothing.

LUCY
Hi. I'm Lucy.

TOM
Tom. Nice to finally meet you.

LUCY
Nice to meet you too. I'm terribly sorry, but... do you mind if I use your bathroom real quick?

TOM
Of course. It's right here.

Tom signals to the bathroom.

LUCY
Thank you.

Lucy walks into the bathroom and Tom goes back to Jake.

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Lucy exits the bathroom and goes through the hallway into the living room.

TOM
Lucy, this is my brother: Jake.

Lucy shakes Jake's hand. Jake is enchanted by Lucy.

LUCY
Hi Jake. Nice to meet you.

JAKE
Jake. Oh. Sorry. Tom said that.

They giggle.

TOM
Have a seat, please.

LUCY

Thanks.

Lucy discovers the soldiers on Jake's desk as she takes a seat.

LUCY (cont'd)

Oh. Wow. Those are nice!

JAKE

Thank you.

LUCY

Do you paint them yourself?

JAKE

Yeah. Just a little hobby of mine.

LUCY

You're very talented!

JAKE

That's very kind. Thank you.

They smile. Beat.

TOM

So... Lucy. Can you tell us a little about yourself?

LUCY

Sure! Well... I went to Timbault for nursing in Vancouver. Got my undergrad and then moved here by the end of 2019, just before the pandemic. I then worked at the nursing home in The Big Oak for two years...

Her words fade away as Jake is enchanted by Lucy's personality.

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lucy steps out of the apartment.

TOM

Thank you very much for coming. I will be in touch by the end of the week.

LUCY

Thank you so much for having me. Have
a good night.

TOM

You too.

Lucy walks away. Tom shuts the door.

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Tom walks to the living room. Jake puts the groceries away.

TOM

What do you think?

JAKE

Yeah. She's great. I mean... I think
mom will like her.

TOM

Me too. I'll have her come see mom
next week and we'll see how they get
along.

JAKE

Good.

TOM

Jake. Are you okay, buddy?

JAKE

Yeah. I'm just tired.

TOM

I'll get going then. Call me if you
need anything, okay?

JAKE

I will. Thanks.

Tom and Jake fist bump and Tom leaves. The deadbolt locks.

Jake walks to the door and puts the door stopper underneath.
Turns off the hallway light and goes back to the kitchen.

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Daylight shines through the closed blinds. Jake wakes up.
Groggily sits up in his bed. He walks outside his bedroom
and sees the blinds. Thinks for a moment and then walks to
the blinds. Takes a deep breath and slowly opens them.

Light shines through the window, blinding him. After a moment, his eyes adjust to the light. He sees the lake, cars on the highway, the buildings around him. The morning is peaceful. He smiles, turns around and freezes.

The masked man is standing right behind him. Jake looks down and sees the masked man is holding a knife.

JAKE
(softly)

No.

The masked man stabs Jake.

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Jake is startled awake. Breathing heavily. Sweating. Shaking. He reaches for the pill bottle on his nightstand. Takes two pills. Dry swallows. Tries to calm down.

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jake, in a button up shirt and shorts, sits at his desk. His boss, MR. SMITH (50), in business attire, on his laptop screen.

MR. SMITH
It's not just you Jake, we're having everyone gradually come back. We can definitely use your stats to motivate the new recruits.

JAKE
With all due respect, Mr. Smith. You know my condition. I need this position to be remote. I believe I'm more productive this way.

MR. SMITH
This is a special case, so I will talk to HR. Unfortunately we don't have much wiggle room. So I can't guarantee you can stay remote.

JAKE
Thank you, Mr. Smith.

MR. SMITH
Don't thank me, Jake. I'm not promising anything. That will be all for now. Have a good weekend.

JAKE
You too, Mr. Smith.

Mr. Smith hangs up the call and his face disappears. Jake takes off his headphones.

JAKE (cont'd)
Fuck.

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jake is solving a word puzzle book on his desk. Door KNOCKS.

Jake goes to the door. Looks through the keyhole. Sees RAMON (50), his landlord.

JAKE
Shit.

Jake removes the door stopper. Opens the door.

JAKE (cont'd)
Hey Ramon.

Ramon's face is a canvas of regret.

RAMON
Hi Jake. Please tell me you're all packed up.

Jake looks at him. Doesn't respond.

RAMON (cont'd)
Jake, You've known this for five months. I gave you more than enough time to figure something out.

JAKE
Please Ramon, you know my situation--

Ramon extends an envelope. Jake takes it.

RAMON
Sorry Jake. I really am. You have 72 hours to leave.

JAKE
Ramon, please.

Ramon walks away. Jake closes the door. Walks back to--

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jake sits at his desk and reads the letter Ramon gave him.

On the letter: EVICTION NOTICE.

Jake puts the letter on the desk and tries to concentrate on his puzzle book. After a moment, he grabs the book and throws it across the room, screaming.

Enraged, he stands up, rushes to the door. Opens it. Takes a deep breath and takes one step outside.

The hallway warps in front of his eyes and he loses his balance. He tries to push through, but the world is upside down. He slowly crouches and sits down. He drags himself back into his apartment. Closes the door. Falls back to the floor and curls into a ball.

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Door knocks. Jake, estranged, gathers the strength to get up. Looks through the peephole.

Jake opens the door.

JAKE

Lucy?

LUCY

Hi Jake! I lost my ring yesterday and I think I left it in your bathroom last night. Is it okay if I take a look?

JAKE

Sure. Come in.

Lucy walks inside and finds her ring next to the sink.

LUCY

Found it! I knew it was here.

Jake forces a smile.

LUCY (cont'd)

Are you alright?

JAKE

Yeah.

LUCY

You don't look well.

JAKE
I've had better days.

LUCY
Oh. Come, sit down.

Lucy grabs Jake's hand and takes him to the living room.

LUCY (cont'd)
Do you have tea or something?

JAKE
Yeah. On that shelf. Cups are on the right.

Jake sits on the couch.

Lucy grabs a pot from the drying rack, fills it with water and puts it on the stove. Lucy looks back to Jake and smiles. Turns to the soldiers.

LUCY
I really like those.

JAKE
What? Oh. Thanks.

LUCY
Can you teach me how to paint one?

JAKE
Uh-mm... I guess so.

Lucy walks to the desk. Leans over the soldiers box. Grabs one.

LUCY
This one.

JAKE
Now?

LUCY
Yeah. I mean... I can leave if you want to be miserable by yourself.

Jake smiles.

LUCY (cont'd)
But first, let's open the blinds.
It's a beautiful day out there.

Lucy goes to the blinds and opens them.

JAKE

No. No. No!

Jake rushes towards Lucy. The blinding sun enters the room. Everything turns white. A loud tinnitus sound takes over.

LUCY (V.O.)

Jake. Jake. Open your eyes, Jake.

Jake slowly opens his eyes. He is standing in front of the window. Blinds are open.

LUCY

It's okay, Jake. I'm here.

Jake is inexplicably calm. He looks down. Lucy is holding his hand.

LUCY (cont'd)

Can you show me how to paint the soldiers now?

Jake turns to Lucy, smiles and nods.

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Lucy sits at the desk. Jake puts the container with his art supplies on the desk. Pours some green paint on a small container, picks up a brush, and hands it to Lucy.

LUCY

Oh, no. You paint it, I'm probably gonna screw up.

JAKE

If you screw up, we'll do it again.

Beat. They exchange looks.

JAKE (cont'd)

Try and paint the uniform.

Lucy dips the brush in paint and paints the soldier's shirt.

LUCY

I don't know what I'm doing.

JAKE

You're doing great.

A moment. Sparkles fly in their eyes.

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jake holds the door open for Lucy.

LUCY
Thank you for today.

JAKE
No. Thank you. For dropping by. I'm
glad you found your ring.

LUCY
I found more than that. You have my
number. Call me whenever, OK?

Lucy kisses Jake on the cheek. Turns around and leaves. Jake
closes the door and smiles.

Jake walks back to the living room, sees the blinds open.
Shuts them. Turns off the living room light.

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Tom places some moving boxes on the floor.

TOM
I wish you would've told me earlier.
I'm sure we could have found a lawyer
to help us.

JAKE
Yeah.

TOM
So... how are you planning on... you
know..?

Jake's phone RINGS. Jake takes it out of his pocket. On the
screen: LUCY

JAKE
One second.

Jake picks up. Tom looks at his brother. Confused.

JAKE (cont'd)
Hi. How are you?

LUCY (V.O.)
Hey Jake. I was wondering if I could
drop by later today. I'm thinking
pizza and a movie?

JAKE

Sounds good. We can do that.

LUCY (V.O.)

It's okay if you can't. We can do it some other time.

JAKE

No, no. We can do it. What time are you thinking?

LUCY (V.O.)

I don't know. Maybe eight?

A mumbled voice speaks to Lucy.

LUCY (V.O.) (cont'd)

What? No. Get away!

JAKE

Lucy? What's up?

Tom looks at his brother.

LUCY (V.O.)

Some guy is following me.

JAKE

Where are you?

LUCY

I'm at Front and Rushmore-- Hey! Stop! Leave me alone!

The voice violently yells and the call ends.

JAKE

Lucy! Lucy!

LUCY

Jake.

JAKE

Tom. I gotta go.

TOM

You gotta go?

JAKE

Lucy is in trouble. I have to help her!

TOM

Lucy? The nurse?

JAKE

Yes.

Jake rushes out of the apartment. Tom is shocked.

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - DAY

Jake rushes to the elevator. Completely unaffected by the fact he's exiting his safe haven. He's on a mission.

He repeatedly presses the button to go down. Tom catches up.

JAKE

Come on!

The elevator DINGS. Jake gets in the elevator. Tom follows him. The elevator door closes.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Jake desperately looks for Lucy. They get to an alleyway.

TOM

Jake... Jake!

JAKE

She's gotta be here, somewhere.

TOM

Jake--

JAKE

Lucy is in trouble! Don't you get it?

TOM

Lucy is not in the city!

JAKE

What do you mean? She came over yesterday!

TOM

She called me last night from Vancouver. She's gonna be there for a month because her uncle passed away.

JAKE

She was with me yesterday! Maybe she didn't want you to know she was dating me.

TOM
Right. She lied to me in order to
date my brother.

Jake looks at Tom. He has a point.

TOM (cont'd)
Your phone never rang.

JAKE
What?

TOM
Back in the apartment. When "Lucy"
called. Your phone never rang. You
were talking to no one.

JAKE
That doesn't make sense.

TOM
Do you see where we are?

Jake looks around. Turns to his brother. In awe.

TOM (cont'd)
Jake. You found a way out.

Jake's expression changes. He's happy. He laughs. Tom laughs
with him.

The brothers hug.

THE END.