

YESTERDAY'S HERO

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

Ten CHEERLEADERS practice routines while football TEAM does passing drills nearby. MICHAEL DAVIS, late teens, tall, muscular, quarterback hurls passes to MARK ROBERTS, late teens, a short heavysset receiver.

MICHAEL
Wanna another one?

MARK
Yeah.

He tosses the ball back to Michael and points to cheerleader KIM RICHARDS who is late teens, tan, and blonde.

MICHAEL
Kim is hot today.

He pauses holding the ball.

MARK
Miss her?

Mike nods with sadness.

MICHAEL
I cheated once so we're over.

Mark hurls ball back. She waves Mike over. Mark joins him.

MARK
(whispers)
Apologize and she'll forgive you.

MICHAEL
We'll see.

He sprints up to her. She circles around him and stops.

KIM
Say something...like I'm sorry.

MICHAEL
I'm sorry. I shoulda...

She SLAPS him. He rubs his right cheek.

KIM
You deserved that!

Mark watches few yards away and laughs. She glares at him.

MICHAEL
Ouch! What the...

KIM
Apologize and don't screw around
anymore!

MICHAEL
I won't do it again. I'm sorry.

KIM
Be a man and grow up.

MICHAEL
Lunch later?

KIM
Text me. Bye.

She hugs him and rejoins her squad. Mark comes up.

MARK
Back together?

MICHAEL
Yup. We'll make out and it'll be
good again.

COACH THOMAS BLOWS his whistle. He is early 40s, built like
an oak tree. TEAM stops drills.

COACH THOMAS
Hit the showers!

TEAM runs toward open gym doors.

I/E PICKUP TRUCK - NIGHT (MOVING)

Mike races along narrow two lane road while Mark adjusts the
radio dial.

MARK
Thanks for the ride.

MICHAEL
Find something?

Mark jabs him with his elbow. ROCK MUSIC fills the cab.

MARK
We're seniors. Got any plans for
your future?

MICHAEL

I'm gonna join the Army and learn a trade. College is out unless I get an athletic scholarship.

MARK

I'm going to computer school. Takes two years, I can get a great job and leave here.

MICHAEL

If I enlist, I do four years, then I'm out. I can marry Kim and we'll start a life together.

MARK

You tell her this? They might send you to fight in that Iraq war.

MICHAEL

Nah...I ain't worried. It's gonna be over soon.

MARK

Don't be too sure. Recruiters can promise you anything.

MICHAEL

I ain't told anyone yet except you.

MARK

Tell your parents. They need to know.

MICHAEL

After I see the recruiter, I'll handle it.

White house APPEARS in the headlights on the right. Mike STOPS at the mailbox.

MARK

Lemme know if you enlist. We can still have fun before you leave.

He gets out.

MICHAEL

Later.

INT. DAVIS HOUSE - NIGHT

THE DINING ROOM -

MR. DAVIS 50s, with huge hands and sunburned face eats quickly. Michael picks at his food. MRS. DAVIS is petite, early 50s.

MRS. DAVIS
Aren't you hungry?

MICHAEL
Not really.

MRS. DAVIS
Graduation is coming up.

MICHAEL
Kim took me back.

MRS. DAVIS
She is a sweet girl. Treat her right ya hear?

MICHAEL
I will.

Mr. Davis tosses an Army recruiting brochure on the table.

MR. DAVIS
It came in the mail. You gonna enlist son? I wanna know now.

Michael nods as he sips ice tea.

MICHAEL
It's a backup plan if I don't get a football scholarship.

MR. DAVIS
Why enlist? You can get hurt or killed.

MICHAEL
They'll teach me a trade. I'll be set then.

MR. DAVIS
I'm a truck mechanic. Worked with my hands all my life. I want you to do better.

Mrs. Davis clears the table and leaves.

MICHAEL
You made a good living at it.

MR. DAVIS
I'm good with mechanical things.
See a recruiter yet?

MICHAEL
I'm gonna talk to one soon.

MR. DAVIS
Don't sign anything until I see it
okay?

MICHAEL
If I learn a trade, I won't be
fighting. Don't worry.

MR. DAVIS
They'll tell you anything. They're
salespeople. You never know where
you'll go.

MICHAEL
Graduation is close, so I gotta
make a choice.

MR. DAVIS
Get the ASVAB book, study, then
take the test.

MICHAEL
Already got it.

Mrs. Davis returns and sits beside Michael looking
distressed.

MRS. DAVIS
You're my only child. I didn't
raise you to die in a war.

MICHAEL
I won't mom...it'll work out fine.

She cries softly.

MRS. DAVIS
Don't go honey...just don't.

MICHAEL
I'm eighteen. It's my life...my
choice mom.

He hugs her and dabs her tears with a napkin.

MR. DAVIS

He is a man now. We can't decide
for him. A parent has to let go.

MICHAEL

Thanks Dad.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

THE CAFETERIA -

Kim and Michael sit at a table. STUDENTS walk by ignoring
them.

MICHAEL

Accepted to any colleges yet?

KIM

UT Austin said yes, so I'm going
there.

MICHAEL

Watcha gonna study?

KIM

I dunno know yet.

MICHAEL

After college we can get married
then.

Kim squeezes his hand.

KIM

Honey I don't know the future will
be yet.

MICHAEL

You wanna stay here in Katy?

KIM

No. We gotta leave and find
ourselves.

MICHAEL

I wanna see the world out there.

He holds up the ASVAB guide.

KIM

Don't enlist please. Do something
else.

She rests her head against his shoulder.

MICHAEL

I get guaranteed training if I
score high on this test.

KIM

What about the war? My daddy is a
Vietnam vet. He still has problems.

MICHAEL

I won't be fighting. The war won't
last forever.

She whispers.

KIM

You might go overseas, get hurt,
or...worse.

MICHAEL

I can handle anything. I'm tough.

KIM

Once we leave here, we'll probably
break up.

MICHAEL

You won't find a better guy than
me.

Bell RINGS.

KIM

Call me later.

MICHAEL

Okay.

INT. COACH'S OFFICE - DAY

Michael fidgets in a chair while Coach Thomas talks on the
phone. Thomas is 40s, rugged, and tan.

Walls are lined with plaques and school pennants.

COACH THOMAS

(on phone)

Okay... I see...thanks. Bye.

He hangs up.

MICHAEL
Anyone interested in me?

COACH THOMAS
Nope...they all passed. Sorry
Michael.

MICHAEL
I knew college wasn't for me
anyway.

COACH THOMAS
Got other plans?

MICHAEL
Joining the Army and learn a trade.

COACH THOMAS
Careful son...we got a war on.
Don't go in now.

MICHAEL
I won't be in the infantry.

COACH THOMAS
Once you enlist, they own you.

MICHAEL
I don't have any other choices.

COACH THOMAS
Get a job, try community college,
anything else. You can join later
if you still want it.

MICHAEL
I'm ready now.

COACH THOMAS
You're a great athlete and a fine
person. Wish you well.

MICHAEL
Thanks coach.

INT. DAVIS HOUSE - NIGHT

THE KITCHEN -

MR. DAVIS
I called the recruiter. We see him
this Saturday.

MICHAEL

I didn't get any scholarship offers. No college for me.

MR. DAVIS

I know. Coach Thomas called me.

MICHAEL

I played varsity three years, but I wasn't good enough for 'em.

MR. DAVIS

They pick the best son. Sorry.

Michael points to the clock.

MICHAEL

I wanna see Mark tonight. We're going to Katy mall.

MR. DAVIS

Get in early.

MICHAEL

I need time alone with Mark.

MR. DAVIS

Have fun. We'll leave the front door unlocked.

MICHAEL

Thanks.

INT. RECRUITING CENTER - DAY

THE ARMY OFFICE -

Michael, Mr. Davis, and the recruiter SGT. GRIFFIN meet to discuss Michael's plans. Griffin is 30s, fit, and highly decorated.

MR. DAVIS

If he enlists, what are his options.

SGT. GRIFFIN

If he passes the medical exam, scores high on the ASVAB, he can select almost any specialty if it's open.

MICHAEL

Will I see combat or be sent to Iraq?

SGT. GRIFFIN

The needs of the Army come first. I can't make any promises.

MICHAEL

I wanna learn a trade. What is open now?

Griffin checks his computer quickly and hands several forms to Michael.

MR. DAVIS

The contract?

SGT. GRIFFIN

Yes, read it before signing. If you have any questions, ask me.

Michael gives the forms to his father.

MR. DAVIS

What did you find so far?

Griffin prints out a page and hands it to Michael.

SGT. GRIFFIN

We have carpenter, electrician, heavy machinery operator open.

MR. DAVIS

Take your time son. We'll study these at home.

SGT. GRIFFIN

You can schedule your medical exam and ASVAB test now if you want.

MICHAEL

All right.

Griffin types into his computer, pauses, and looks up.

SGT. GRIFFIN

You can take the ASVAB in two weeks from today and the medical a week later.

MICHAEL

Sign me up.

SGT. GRIFFIN
Here are the instructions for both.
They screen for drugs so be clean.
Got it?

Griffin hands him two sheets. He nods.

MICHAEL
Will do. Are we done?

SGT. GRIFFIN
Yes. You won't regret this.

MICHAEL
Thanks.

MR. DAVIS
Bye. Appreciate your help.

SGT. GRIFFIN
We also have delayed entry if you
wanna enter later.

Michael pauses.

MICHAEL
No, I'm ready to go. I wanna leave
here once I graduate.

SGT. GRIFFIN
If things work out, you will be on
your way soon.

INT. COACH'S OFFICE - DAY

WEEK LATER

Michael sits beside the coach's desk.

MICHAEL
You wanted to see me Coach?

COACH THOMAS hands him local paper "KATY TIMES".

COACH THOMAS
Look at the front page.

Michael scans it and looks up.

MICHAEL
Oh my God!

COACH THOMAS

Yeah...TREY WILLIS, great
quarterback at Cinco Ranch a few
years ago. He died in Iraq last
week.

MICHAEL

Helluva nice guy. Met him once.

COACH THOMAS

He was recruited by UT, but he
didn't go. Never found out why.

MICHAEL

But, he was a Marine. They fight. I
won't hafta do that.

COACH THOMAS

Hate to depress you. The funeral is
next week in Houston.

Michael hands the paper back.

MICHAEL

Just twenty...he was so young.

COACH THOMAS

I just don't want to see you hurt
or dead. Don't go.

MICHAEL

I'll be fine. Don't worry.

COACH THOMAS

You got your whole life ahead,
don't risk it.

MICHAEL

It's the Army or nothing now.

COACH THOMAS

Bet on yourself. Don't trust the
government with your life.

Michael stands to go.

MICHAEL

It's my decision. Let me live with
it.

COACH THOMAS

Okay son...later on.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY

Afternoon and school is out. Mark and Michael wait in Michael's pickup.

MICHAEL
I promised Kim I'd take her home
okay?

MARK
Sure no problem. Hear about Trey
Willis?

MICHAEL
Really sad, he had so much ahead of
him.

MARK
You don't have to go.

MICHAEL
Guess it was his time. Marines
fight, and some die early.

Mark spots Kim running toward them.

MARK
Here she comes.

Michael gets out and watches her long blonde hair swaying in the breeze looking radiant. She rushes up, and they embrace.

MICHAEL
You look so hot babe.

KIM
I do it for you.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK - DAY (MOVING)

Michael drives fast on two lane road past green fields and wire fences. Kim sits between them. Mark smokes a cigarette.

MICHAEL
Ready for prom?

KIM
Got a new dress and shoes. Rent a
tux and we're set.

MICHAEL
We'll go in my truck not a limo.

KIM
Fine...just wash it okay?

MICHAEL
Yeah. You going Mark?

Mark tosses butt out the window.

MARK
Yes, but I gotta find a date.

MICHAEL
Can you help him Kim?

KIM
I'll talk to girls in the squad.

MARK
Sounds like a mercy date.

KIM
They're all nice girls. Don't get snotty.

Mark frowns.

MARK
I'm used to leftovers.

Kim jabs him on the shoulder.

KIM
(to Michael)
My dad wants to talk to you soon.

MICHAEL
About what?

KIM
Our future...what your plans are.

MICHAEL
Okay, when?

KIM
Can you come over for dinner tonight?

MICHAEL
Yeah, I gotta clean up though.

KIM
Change your shirt and don't wear jeans and boots.

MICHAEL

Okay.

He pulls up to a red light. Mark taps on the dash.

MARK

Drop me off here. I'll walk home.

Mark exits the truck.

MICHAEL

See ya.

KIM

Bye.

Light turns green and Michael drives on.

MICHAEL

Does your dad know I wanna marry you?

KIM

Yes, but things happen and people change.

MICHAEL

Your future is always a mirage.

He slows down and pulls into a large driveway in front of a two story house. Truck STOPS. Kim exits and pauses.

KIM

See you at seven.

MICHAEL

Okay.

INT. RICHARD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

THE DEN -

Michael and Mr. Richards discuss his plans before dinner. Mr. Richards is late 50s, white haired, and intimidating.

MICHAEL

Kim said you want to talk with me.

MR. RICHARDS

You're enlisting in the Army?

MICHAEL

Yes sir.

MR. RICHARDS
I'm a Vietnam vet. Don't go.

MICHAEL
I got no options here. I can learn
a trade there.

MR. RICHARDS
After your tour, then what?

MICHAEL
Come home and marry Kim.

MR. RICHARDS
It won't happen. She'll be with
someone else by then.

MICHAEL
We love each other. She'll wait.

MR. RICHARDS
Love at your age doesn't last long
son.

He paces the room staring at Michael.

MICHAEL
We all have our dreams sir.

MR. RICHARDS
Break up with her before you leave
here. You'll grow apart.

MICHAEL
Why?

MR. RICHARDS
You're only a jock looking for a
lay. Don't break her heart.

MICHAEL
We never even had sex.

MR. RICHARDS
I found condoms in her car.
Somebody is lying.

MICHAEL
They're not mine.

MR. RICHARDS
She can do better than you. You
won't go far in life.

MICHAEL
Maybe I should leave.

MR. RICHARDS
Dinner was an excuse to size you
up. If you're still hungry, join us
or leave. Your choice.

MICHAEL
I'm hungry. Let's eat.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY

NEXT DAY

Michael and Mark review latest events.

MICHAEL
Her dad wants me to break up with
her.

MARK
Why?

Michael kicks at the ground.

MICHAEL
He thinks I'm a worthless jock
trying to screw her.

MARK
Have fun while you can.

MICHAEL
I don't wanna hurt her.

MARK
When is your test?

MICHAEL
Tomorrow. I'm ready.

MARK
Lemme know how you do.

Michael sees Kim talking to other GIRLS in the distance.

MICHAEL
Soon I'll be a memory probably.

MARK
It happens. You will survive.

MICHAEL
I know, but it still hurts.

INT. DAVIS HOUSE - NIGHT

THE BEDROOM -

MICHAEL
(on phone)
Hey Mark...I got a high score. I
can pick what I want.

MARK (V.O.)
I got accepted to computer school.
I start this summer.

MICHAEL
(on phone)
I gotta call Kim now.

MARK (V.O.)
Send her a text.

MICHAEL
(on phone)
Yeah...it's late.

MARK (V.O.)
We'll celebrate later.

MICHAEL
(on phone)
Thanks.

He texts Kim and puts the phone beside his bed.

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

Kim and Michael sit together at a table in a corner. Lunch
period is almost over. STUDENTS walk by quietly.

MICHAEL
Can we still go to prom?

KIM
Yes, of course.

MICHAEL
I was sure your dad wouldn't let me
take you.

KIM
He said it's okay.

MICHAEL
He is a hard man for a lawyer.

KIM
He wants to protect me.

Michael drops a condom on the table.

MICHAEL
From this right?

Kim scoops it up with a napkin.

KIM
Try running to things and not away
from them.

MICHAEL
In a year our lives will be totally
different.

KIM
They will. We going in new
directions.

Bell RINGS. They follow other STUDENTS into the hallway.

INT. RECRUITING CENTER - DAY

THE ARMY OFFICE -

Michael enlists with his father present.

SGT. GRIFFIN
Ready to sign up?

MICHAEL
I'm all set.

SGT. GRIFFIN
Just one suggestion...think this
over.

MR. DAVIS
What is it?

SGT. GRIFFIN
Our trade schools have a waiting
list. He can go now, but he'll be
in a long line.

(MORE)

SGT. GRIFFIN (CONT'D)
If he chooses the infantry which is
a priority, he can take a bonus.

MR. DAVIS
Why do that?

SGT. GRIFFIN
It's a bonus of five grand. I still
guarantee the trade school. It'll
just be delayed.

MR. DAVIS
What if he is deployed and gets
hurt?

SGT. GRIFFIN
The war is winding down. He
probably won't be deployed now.

MR. DAVIS
Michael...wanna make the switch?

MICHAEL
The money would help, and if I
still get my choice later...why
not?

SGT. GRIFFIN
I changed your contract, just sign
it and cash in now. The offer is
only good for a few months.

He hands Michael the contract. Michael sits down, signs it,
and hands it back.

MR. DAVIS
I just hope he doesn't regret it.

SGT. GRIFFIN
He won't. He'll come home a better
man. You'll see.

Griffin shakes his hand.

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM - NIGHT

It's prom night. COUPLES dance. EVERYONE is dressed up in
formal wear.

Michael and Kim dance slowly to a waltz tune. MARK glides
over with short brunette girl named CINDY.

MICHAEL
You look so cute together.

MARK
She is a junior. I got lucky.

KIM
I see.

CINDY
This is wonderful.

Music STOPS. COUPLES return to their tables. Mark and Michael get in line for refreshments.

MARK
It's our last party. Enjoy it.

MICHAEL
I'll defend these folks pretty soon. Is it worth it?

MARK
You asked for it. You can't get out now.

MICHAEL
Just look out for Kim for me will ya?

Mark nods.

MARK
I will. When do you leave?

MICHAEL
As soon as they call me.

Both of them return to table where Cindy and Kim are waiting.

They resume dancing in the room.

EXT. RICHARD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Kim and Michael say good night sitting in his truck.

KIM
I'll miss you so much. Write to me okay?

MICHAEL
I will. Have fun in college and learn something okay?

They kiss passionately.

KIM
Call me before you leave town.

MICHAEL
I will. Call Mark if you need anything.

She starts crying softly. Michael pulls her close.

KIM
Goodbyes are never easy.

MICHAEL
It's all gonna be good. Trust me.

She brushes her tears away with her hand.

KIM
It's our turn to go away.

MICHAEL
If you don't leave, you'll never arrive. We hafta go into the world and create our future.

KIM
Childhood is over.

They exit the truck. He walks her to the front door. They hug a final time. She goes inside.

SUPER IN/OUT

ONE YEAR LATER - IRAQ

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Six SOLDIERS trudge slowly in the desert. MICHAEL is the point man. He SIGNALS to halt. SGT. ANDERSON, age 26, squad leader joins him to confer.

SGT. ANDERSON
See something?

Michael points to the horizon.

MICHAEL
Too quiet...got a bad feeling is all.

SGT. ANDERSON
 You're new and jumpy. Relax. Ain't
 nothing happening.

WHISTLING SOUND is heard.

---BOOM --- BOOM.

Mortar shells EXPLODE nearby. EVERYONE hits the ground and
 freezes.

MICHAEL
 They got us! We're dead!

Fragments TEAR into his side. He GROANS.

SGT. ANDERSON
 Medic up!

MEDIC, TOM, 20s, moves to Michael. Barrage STOPS. Dust cloud
 envelopes them.

MICHAEL
 I'm bleeding.

He touches his left leg. Pant leg is blood soaked.

SGT. GRIFFIN
 DAVEY call for medevac at grid
 224623.

DAVEY, 20s, has the radio. He keys handset quickly.

DAVEY
 RED LEADER this is RED DOG. Need
 medevac at grid 224623. You copy?

RADIO VOICE (O.S.)
 Copy that RED DOG. Sending chopper
 over.

DAVEY
 Copy that RED LEADER.

Other SQUAD MEMBERS remain prone and hold weapons ready. Tom
 works on Michael. He opens his aid bag and gets bandages out.

TOM
 Turn over slow.

Michael turns on his back. Tom bandages the wounds and starts
 an IV.

MICHAEL
Gimme a pain shot will ya.

TOM
Hold still.

He shoves small needle into Michael's arm. Michael gasps then settles down.

SGT. GRIFFIN
Watch for the chopper. Stay low men.

RADIO crackles.

RADIO VOICE
We are one minute out. Use green smoke when we arrive.

DAVEY
We copy over.

CHOPPER arrives. Squad looks up as it circles above. Anderson tosses smoke grenade. Green smoke RISES.

TOM
Gimme a hand guys.

SQUAD rushes over and moves Michael onto a tarp. CHOPPER lands blowing dust over them. They lift Michael up and carry him to the CHOPPER's open door and slide him inside.

Door SHUTS and CHOPPER rises and flies away.

INT. FIELD HOSPITAL - DAY

THE SURGERY WARD -

DOCTORS and NURSES treat CASUALTIES. Michael lies on a bed as NURSE checks his vitals. Her badge reads KAREN HUGHES. She is blonde, mid 20s, and stressed.

MICHAEL
Am I okay?

KAREN
Yes, relax for me. Your surgeon, DR. CLARK is here.

Dr. Clark holds a chart. He is 30s, tall, and wears blood stained green scrubs. He checks Michael's legs and puts the chart aside.

DR. CLARK
I removed shrapnel from both legs.

MICHAEL
Gimme a pain shot please.

DR. CLARK
Yes, I'll order it.

MICHAEL
Can I walk?

DR. CLARK
Yes, but you need physical therapy
before you leave here.

MICHAEL
I'm lucky...I still got my legs.

DR. CLARK
Yes you are. Karen, give him a
morphine shot every six hours.

KAREN
Yes doctor.

DR. CLARK
Change dressings daily and watch
for infection.

Karen nods as she draws up a syringe.

MICHAEL
How long will I be here?

DR. CLARK
Two maybe three weeks. We'll get
you up on crutches and then send
you home.

MICHAEL
Okay...I'm getting sleepy.

KAREN
It's the morphine...just rest.

DR. CLARK
I'll see you later Michael.

MICHAEL
Thanks doc.

INT. FIELD HOSPITAL - DAY

THE RECOVERY WARD -

Karen checks Michael's vitals. He stares at the wall in silence.

KAREN

You start PT today. You ready?

MICHAEL

Yeah, I wanna go home soon as I can.

He tries lifting his legs. He can barely raise them up.

KAREN

Where is that?

MICHAEL

Katy Texas...just west of Houston.

KAREN

Got family there? Anyone else?

MICHAEL

A girlfriend, but she went to college. Haven't heard from her in months.

KAREN

I'm sorry.

MICHAEL

We'll reconnect once I'm home.

KAREN

I'm sure it'll be fine.

MICHAEL

I planned to marry her someday. Now I'm all busted up. Hope she won't change her mind.

KAREN

PT folks will take you in a wheelchair.

MICHAEL

The first steps are always the hardest.

INT. PHYSICAL THERAPY ROOM -

PATIENTS use mats and parallel bar for exercises.

Michael watches them in his wheelchair as he waits to begin.

RON, a PT therapist, 30s comes to Michael and introduces himself.

RON

Hi Michael, I'm Ron. Ready to start?

MICHAEL

Help me up please.

Ron stands in front of him. ORDERLY brings pair of crutches over.

RON

Grab my arms and stand when I count three.

MICHAEL

Okay.

RON

Ready? One, two, three, stand.

Michael stands holding onto Ron. ORDERLY puts crutches under Michael's armpits. He grips them.

MICHAEL

I got 'em.

RON

Stay balanced while I move over here.

Ron pivots and stands on Michael's left side.

MICHAEL

Now what?

RON

Move your right foot, then your left slowly. I got ya.

Michael struggles moving his feet.

MICHAEL

I'm stiff.

RON
Small steps now, bigger ones come
later.

Other PATIENTS CHEER him on as they watch. He moves several feet and stops.

MICHAEL
Getting tired Ron.

RON
Okay, we'll stop now.

ORDERLY brings wheelchair back. He sits down.

MICHAEL
Every step brings me closer to
home.

RON
It does. You did great.

INT. FIELD HOSPITAL - DAY

WEEKS LATER

Michael sits in a wheelchair in uniform. Duffle bag and crutches lay on the floor beside him.

Karen and Dr. Clark give him final instructions.

KAREN
I emailed your friend, Mark, with
your flight info. He'll pick you up
at the Houston airport.

MICHAEL
Thanks.

DR. CLARK
You're doing well. You need more PT
at home. You can set that up with
any VA hospital

MICHAEL
I still feel broken inside. I'm
just not who I was.

DR. CLARK
This is normal with trauma injury.
You can get counseling with the VA
too. Ask for it okay?

MICHAEL

Okay.

DR. CLARK

Your body heals before your mind
does. Don't bury your feelings.

MICHAEL

All right. Do I get any pain meds?

DR. CLARK

You have a prescription in your
travel papers.

MICHAEL

Thanks. I hate for mom to see me
like this.

KAREN

Mamas don't like seeing their
babies get hurt.

He nods grimacing.

MICHAEL

I'm alive, going home, and not in a
box.

ORDERLY pushes his wheelchair to waiting bus outside.

INT. AIRPORT - DAY

THE TERMINAL CONCOURSE -

Mark wears cowboy boots, jeans, and a flannel shirt. He
watches the flight monitor overhead. He sees a number and
walks toward GATE TEN.

INT. GATE TEN - DAY

THE LOUNGE -

Michael sits in his wheelchair. He holds his crutches
upright. Duffle bag is on the floor beside him.

Mark spots him and rushes over.

MICHAEL

Thanks for coming Mark.

MARK

Welcome home hero.

MICHAEL
I'm no hero just a survivor.

Mark sees ribbons on Michael's uniform. He leans over to examine them.

MARK
Wow...you got lots of awards man.

MICHAEL
Imagine dying for some colored ribbons? Got time for a beer?

MARK
Sure. There is a bar close by.

MICHAEL
Nothing beats a cold beer in the morning.

Mark turns the wheelchair toward the concourse. They leave.

PEOPLE stare at them as they go by.

INT. BAR - DAY

CUSTOMERS sit at the bar drinking. Mark and Michael share a booth and sit opposite each other.

Michael scans the room avoiding eye contact.

THE BOOTH -

WAITRESS, 20s, petite with blonde hair waits on them.

WAITRESS
We doing okay?

Michael nods.

MARK
Get us two longnecks please.

WAITRESS
Coming up.

MICHAEL
I'll pay.

MARK
It's on me. Enjoy.

WAITRESS returns with two beers. Mark takes them off her tray. He hands her a ten.

WAITRESS
Lemme know if you need anything.

MARK
Thanks. Keep the change ma'am.

WAITRESS
Thank you.

Michael opens his bottle and takes a long sip.

MARK
You been gone eighteen months. Time went fast.

MICHAEL
Watcha been doing since graduation?

Mark tosses his company ID card on the table.

MARK
After computer school I got hired by Shell. I'm making 60K.

MICHAEL
How about Kim? Seen her lately?

MARK
She quit college. Did one year and took a job in Houston with a law firm.

MICHAEL
No wonder she stopped writing. She'll marry a lawyer probably.

MARK
Don't see her anymore.

MICHAEL
Wonder if she is dating now. She is still gonna be mine someday.

MARK
Well Katy has changed. Looks like a Houston suburb...more traffic, new houses, more people.

MICHAEL
Lemme call my folks.

Mark hands him a cell phone. Michael punches number in and waits.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

(on phone)

Hi Mom...I'm at the airport. Mark is bringing me home. I'm good.

MRS. DAVIS

(over phone)

We knew you were coming, but I wish you'd called us sooner.

MICHAEL

I'm sorry...it's a long plane ride. Be home soon.

MRS. DAVIS

(over phone)

You're alive...I'm so thankful. Drive safe.

MICHAEL

(on phone)

We will. See you soon.

He hands the phone back to Mark.

MARK

Don't push too hard on Kim. You might could lose her.

MICHAEL

I just want my old life back. I wanna be myself again.

Mark nods and finishes his beer.

MARK

Yesterday is gone. You can come back, but ya can't go back. We've all changed man.

MICHAEL

I know but, change ain't always good.

MARK

We gotta go so we can beat the traffic.

MICHAEL

Get my crutches and help me up. Grab my bag too.

Mark hands him his crutches. Michael stands and goes first. Mark follows holding his duffle bag.

I/E CAR - DAY (MOVING)

Mark dodges cars on the freeway. Michael rolls the window down. Wind tousles his hair.

MARK
Turn on the radio.

MICHAEL
Country music okay?

MARK
Sure. Just pick a good song.

RADIO CRACKLES as music plays.

MICHAEL
Country music is three chords and
the truth. To me it means home.

MARK
(checking his mirror)
It's thirty miles to home. Long
enough to smoke a doobie.

He accelerates and moves one lane over.

MICHAEL
You got one?

MARK
Nope. We'll smoke later. Getting
high is normal in Katy now.

MICHAEL
Things changed that much?

MARK
The rednecks discovered dope and
rock-n-roll and got hooked on both.

MICHAEL
Makes 'em question authority.

Both laugh. Mark exits right and slows down.

EXT. KATY - DAY

THE DOWNTOWN -

Mark STOPS at red light. Michael looks around.

MICHAEL
Still the same here.

He points to the rice elevator and railroad tracks.

Light changes to green.

I/E CAR - DAY (MOVING)

MARK
We have a huge new Katy Mills mall.
It's got everything.

They leave downtown and drive along the feeder road. Mark points to his left. Michael sees buildings and a lot full of cars.

MICHAEL
That was a huge rice field long ago.

MARK
Everything changes...even Katy.

MICHAEL
The town grew up, but did I?

MARK
Folks here either stay or move on after high school. You got out...try to stay out.

Mark turns left onto narrow two lane road.

MICHAEL
I got medals, but I can't wear 'em.

MARK
Why?

MICHAEL
People act weird when they see 'em.
Don't want their attention.

MARK
Wanna call Kim?

MICHAEL
Sure.

He picks up Mark's phone and scrolls through messages. He taps Mark on the shoulder.

MARK
Something wrong?

MICHAEL
Pull over.

Mark eases over and STOPS.

MARK
Phone works.

MICHAEL
Your sure called her a lot.
Something going on?

MARK
Relax. She is your girl not mine.

MICHAEL
Okay...sorry...forget it.

MARK
Houston is a lonely place. She
needed a friend.

Michael puts the phone down.

MICHAEL
I'll call her later.

Mark pulls back onto the road and drives on in silence.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

House is small and neat. Front door OPENS. Mrs. Davis RUNS up to the car.

Mark exits the car taking the duffle bag.

MARK
He has crutches.

MRS. DAVIS
You're home son...thank God.

Michael opens his door, pulls his crutches out, and stands up. His mother hugs him.

MICHAEL
Mom just open the front door.

MRS. DAVIS
Okay.

She holds the front door open as they enter the house.

INT. DAVIS HOUSE - DAY

THE LIVING ROOM -

Mark puts the duffle bag beside the sofa. Michael sits down slowly in a chair.

MICHAEL
Thanks Mark.

Mrs. Davis offers Mark a twenty.

MRS. DAVIS
Take this for gas.

He pushes it away.

MARK
I'm fine. Glad I could bring him home.

MRS. DAVIS
Wanna sandwich?

He points to the wall clock.

MARK
I gotta head back so I can beat the traffic.

MRS. DAVIS
Drive safe. You want anything Michael?

MICHAEL
Just sleep...it was a long flight.

Mark pauses at the front door.

MARK
Call me if you need anything?

MICHAEL
I will.

Mark exits. Michael begins undressing. He strips down to his underwear.

Mrs. Davis rushes over and scolds him.

MRS. DAVIS

What are you doing? Go undress in your room.

MICHAEL

Can't stand this uniform! Burn it!
War sucks!

He kicks his clothes into a pile. She gathers everything up and glares at him.

MRS. DAVIS

I'll wash these later. Go wash up and change for supper.

MICHAEL

I'm going to bed. I'm not hungry now.

MRS. DAVIS

I'll put something aside for later.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Mr. Davis eats while Mrs. Davis complains to him.

MRS. DAVIS

He ain't right. Can't he eat dinner with us?

MR. DAVIS

Give him time to adjust...he can't switch back to normal life real fast.

MRS. DAVIS

He ain't the boy we raised.

MR. DAVIS

Wars change everyone. Vietnam messed up many guys I knew.

MRS. DAVIS

I hate seeing him suffer. We can't fix this either.

MR. DAVIS

No, and our kids are getting killed for nothing but oil. Damn corporations caused this.

Michael shuffles in to a chair silently. His mother hands him a plate of food. He eats slowly before speaking.

MICHAEL
My first hot meal without dust and
flies in it.

MR. DAVIS
War ain't pretty.

MRS. DAVIS
Didn't you forget something?

MICHAEL
Saying grace?

MRS. DAVIS
I'll do it. Lord thank you for this
food and all our blessings. Amen.

MICHAEL
Amen.

MR. DAVIS
Amen.

MRS. DAVIS
Did you call Kim yet?

MICHAEL
No...I'm not ready yet.

MR. DAVIS
Never let a woman surprise ya son.

MRS. DAVIS
She has a great legal job in
Houston.

MICHAEL
I know. She quit writing months
ago. Don't know why.

MRS. DAVIS
She is busy now. You'll reconnect.

MICHAEL
Love doesn't die. I'll have to win
her back.

MR. DAVIS
Girls change. They don't wait
anymore. Her feelings for you have
faded.

Michael DROPS his fork. It CLATTERS on his plate.

MICHAEL
I'm gonna have a smoke outside.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

INSECTS buzz around porch lights. Michael sits in a lawn chair smoking quietly.

Screen door OPENS. Mr. Davis sits in a chair beside him.

MR. DAVIS
You missed dessert. You never do that.

MICHAEL
Don't need it. I wasn't real hungry.

Michael finishes one cigarette and lights another one.

MR. DAVIS
(points to sky)
Look at them stars.

Michael exhales slowly. Big cloud of blue smoke surrounds him.

MICHAEL
This sure beats the war I just left.

MR. DAVIS
Don't give your mother any trouble ya hear? Settle down...you're home now.

MICHAEL
Yes sir.

Train whistle SOUNDS in the distance.

MR. DAVIS
Young women get lonely, and waiting is hard for 'em.

MICHAEL
Kim knows better. She better not be fooling around.

MR. DAVIS
You weren't married or engaged. She is free to do what she wants.

MICHAEL
I know, but it don't feel right.

MR. DAVIS
Eventually things will settle into
place for ya.

MICHAEL
Hear that train whistle? It means
someone is leaving. I left, but I
never wanna leave here again.

MR. DAVIS
Normal is gonna be different from
now on. Ask any vet.

Michael stands and leans against porch railing.

MICHAEL
I wish I never went. I got sounds
in my head that won't quit.

MR. DAVIS
Every combat vet does. You gotta
erase those bad thoughts.

MICHAEL
Ya don't forget gunfire,
explosions, people screaming, or
watching 'em die. I sleep with all
that every night.

MR. DAVIS
Sometimes war follows you home.
Don't let nightmares ruin your
life.

MICHAEL
C'mon I'm taking a walk.

MR. DAVIS
Right behind ya.

They walk to his father's pickup truck in the driveway.

EXT. PICKUP TRUCK - NIGHT

Michael leans against front fender. His father stands beside
him.

MR. DAVIS
Your war is done, so let it be.

MICHAEL

I killed lotsa people and saw my buddies die. For what...Katy, Kim, you, who? Who wins?

MR. DAVIS

You signed up. It was your choice.

MICHAEL

Yes I know. But, what is right in war? I was gonna learn a trade. They made me a killer, and I hate myself now.

MR. DAVIS

You can start over. Waddya want to do next?

MICHAEL

Marry Kim and settle down here.

Mr. Davis shakes him gently. Michael flinches.

MR. DAVIS

That may not happen. Better have a plan B.

MICHAEL

Waddya mean?

MR. DAVIS

Part of you died over there. The rest of you got older.

Michael kicks a front tire and pounds on the hood.

MICHAEL

Will folks here will still accept me? I got hurt for nothing. It don't mean crap around here I bet.

MR. DAVIS

No it won't. Most folks never go to war. They can't relate to it.

MICHAEL

I'm hoping Kim will love me the way I am now. We shared a lot.

He lights another cigarette.

MR. DAVIS

Wars are never good. You can't wash 'em off in the shower either.

MICHAEL

If she rejects me then what?

MR. DAVIS

Everyone changes...even people you love. You're both young enough to move on.

MICHAEL

I'm still the same guy she fell in love with. He didn't disappear.

MR. DAVIS

Y'all will either work it out or split up.

MICHAEL

Time for bed. Get the door for me?

Mr. Davis helps him back inside.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Next morning Michael and his father sip coffee. Breakfast is over. Mrs. Davis clears the table.

Michael wears jeans, denim shirt, and boots.

MR. DAVIS

Going somewhere?

MICHAEL

I'm going into town. Can I have some gas money?

Mr. Davis drops a twenty on the table. Michael snatches it.

MR. DAVIS

Go open a bank account. They can do direct deposit on your Army checks.

MICHAEL

Thanks. I'll take the pickup.

He stands, grabs his crutches, and exits. Mrs. Davis sits beside her husband. He pulls a key from his pocket.

MR. DAVIS

Take this.

He hands her a small key.

MRS. DAVIS
What is it?

MR. DAVIS
It's for the gun cabinet. Get the
ammo and put it in our bedroom
closet.

MRS. DAVIS
You worried he'll do something?

MR. DAVIS
I don't want him hurting himself or
someone else. He ain't stable yet.

MRS. DAVIS
I see.

He kisses her and leaves.

EXT. BANK - DAY

THE LOBBY -

CUSTOMERS wait in line for the next teller. Michael joins
them on crutches. His turn comes and he moves to an available
TELLER. Her tag reads JESSICA. She is 20s, petite blonde with
a great smile.

JESSICA
How may I help you sir?

MICHAEL
I gotta open a checking account.

She hands him a form and pen.

JESSICA
If you fill that out, we'll do it
for you.

MICHAEL
Thanks.

He moves to nearby counter and fills the form out. He rejoins
the line and sees Jessica again. He hands her the form.

JESSICA
Do you live in Katy now?

MICHAEL
Yes.

JESSICA
I need a photo ID with your current
address please.

Michael hands her his Army ID card and a driver's license.

MICHAEL
Will these work?

She scans them and hands them back.

JESSICA
I'm sorry. We don't use military ID
cards and your license is expired.

Michael frowns as he puts them into his wallet.

MICHAEL
I just got back from Iraq.

JESSICA
I'm sorry, but I can't change the
rules.

MICHAEL
I need this account for direct
deposit of my Army pay checks.

JESSICA
Get your license renewed and come
back. We can open your account
then.

MICHAEL
All right...thanks anyway.

I/E PICKUP TRUCK - DAY

Michael is parked on a side street with the driver's door
open. He takes a cellphone from the console and makes a call.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
(on phone)
Hi Mrs. Richards...yes it's
Michael. Can you give me Kim's
number please?

He takes a pen and writes on his hand as she speaks.

MRS. RICHARDS
(over phone)
It's a work number.

MICHAEL
(on phone)
Got it. Thanks a lot.

MRS. RICHARDS
(over phone)
You okay?

MICHAEL
(on phone)
Got leg wounds, but I'm healing up.

MRS. RICHARDS
(over phone)
Take care. See you soon. Bye.

MICHAEL
(on phone)
Thanks. Bye.

He hangs up and drives off.

I/E PICKUP TRUCK - DAY (MOVING)

Cell phone RINGS. Michael pulls over and STOPS.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
(on phone)
Yeah Mom...something wrong?

MRS. DAVIS
(over phone)
Coach Thomas wants to see you. Go
see him now.

MICHAEL
(on phone)
Okay. Bye.

He hangs up and resumes driving. He pulls into the school parking lot. He walks slowly to the entrance on crutches and enters.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL OFFICE - DAY

Michael enters and waits for help.

SECRETARY with dark hair, 30s, smiles and looks up from her desk. She comes over to him.

SECRETARY
How may I help you sir?

MICHAEL

Coach Thomas called my mom. He wants to see me. I'm one of his old players.

SECRETARY

I'll see if he is in.

She returns to her desk and makes a call. Michael fidgets as he waits. She nods and hangs up.

MICHAEL

Do I need a hall pass?

SECRETARY

Yes. He is in. Take this.

She hands him a blue slip of paper.

MICHAEL

Thanks.

He exits and enters the main hallway.

INT. COACH'S OFFICE - DAY

Door is OPEN. Michael enters and sits down. Thomas is on the phone. He hangs up.

COACH THOMAS

Hi Michael. Ya got hurt over there?

MICHAEL

Some shrapnel in my legs. It'll heal. How did ya know I was back?

COACH THOMAS

Mark called me. Do you regret going now?

MICHAEL

No, I chose it. I switched over to infantry to get a bonus. Not a good idea.

COACH THOMAS

You sold out then?

MICHAEL

They promised trade school later, but I got hurt. I'll probably get discharged now.

COACH THOMAS
Your recruiter lied. They needed
men for the infantry, so they
bribed you.

Michael sighs.

MICHAEL
Maybe, but I got home alive anyway.

COACH THOMAS
Waddya gonna do next?

MICHAEL
Dunno yet.

COACH THOMAS
I'm going to Cinco Ranch for a new
coaching job.

MICHAEL
Someone has to shape up those rich
kids.

COACH THOMAS
My job is getting kids to play
sports and get ready for life. That
won't change.

MICHAEL
I hoped to marry Kim after I got
out. Those plans are gone.

COACH THOMAS
What if she doesn't want you
anymore? Can you handle that?

MICHAEL
She has to take me back...we're a
team.

COACH THOMAS
You can't control anybody. She
isn't your high school girlfriend
anymore. She grew up.

MICHAEL
I survived combat. I can survive
what happens with us next.

He looks down trying to focus on what he just heard.

COACH THOMAS

If she loves you, she'll come back.
If not, move on.

MICHAEL

I just wanna feel special to
somebody in this world.

COACH THOMAS

We all do.

They hug. Michael limps out.

INT. DAVIS HOUSE - NIGHT

Dinner is quiet. Conversation is awkward.

MR. DAVIS

Did ya do anything today?

MICHAEL

Tried to open a checking account. I
couldn't. I need a current ID.

MR. DAVIS

What about your driver's license?

MICHAEL

Gotta renew it next.

MR. DAVIS

Did you call Kim yet?

MICHAEL

No. I called her mom. She gave me
Kim's work number.

MR. DAVIS

Find out where she stands and do
what you gotta do.

MRS. DAVIS

She might not want marriage
anymore.

Michael tosses his fork on the floor.

MR. DAVIS

No tantrums son...okay?

MICHAEL

Let Kim tell me we're over okay?

He stands and hobbles out on crutches.

INT. DAVIS HOUSE - NIGHT

THE BEDROOM -

Michael lies in bed naked rubbing his legs and winces at the pain.

Phone on nightstand RINGS. He picks up.

MICHAEL

(on phone)

Hello...hi Kim. Thanks for calling.

KIM

(over phone)

Mom told me you called her today.
Sorry I didn't call sooner.

MICHAEL

(on phone)

Can I see you tomorrow at work? I
won't be long.

KIM

(over phone)

Sure, come before noon. Got the
address?

MICHAEL

(on phone)

Your mom gave it to me. Good night.

KIM

(over phone)

Bye babe.

Michael pulls covers up and falls asleep.

INT. KIM'S OFFICE - DAY

Michael KNOCKS on the door. Kim opens it. They embrace and kiss. He limps over to a chair and sits down.

MICHAEL

You look great. I'm kinda broken
up.

Kim returns to her desk and dabs her eyes with tissues.

She avoids making eye contact then turns to face him.

KIM
Sorry, didn't think I'd cry. You're finally home, but you're hurt.

Michael pulls up pant legs.

MICHAEL
Just shrapnel wounds. It'll heal.

Kim winces seeing his bandages.

KIM
Time went so fast since graduation. College, a new job, moving from Katy...new plans.

MICHAEL
Why did you quit writing? I really needed your support.

Kim looks pale and takes a deep breath.

KIM
Things have changed. I'm seeing someone else now.

MICHAEL
I'm at war, you find a new guy, and this is your Dear John speech?

She nods as tears roll down her cheeks.

KIM
I...just...fell...out of love with you. How do I explain it?

He leans forward rubbing his legs.

MICHAEL
Can't we start over? Don't I deserve another chance to win you over?

KIM
We can't start over. I'm getting...married soon. It's all set.

MICHAEL
What? Seriously? Are you pregnant? Don't rush into it.

KIM
No...not yet. It's what I want now.

MICHAEL
Lemme take you out tonight to catch
up as friends.

She sighs.

KIM
All right...just a homecoming date.
Nothing more.

MICHAEL
Maybe we can build a future outta
this. Gimme a chance.

KIM
There is no future for us.

MICHAEL
I knew someone here would wreck our
plans. I'll find him later.

KIM
Relax Michael. Pick me up at my
parents house at seven, okay?

MICHAEL
All right.

He stands up ready to leave.

KIM
I didn't mean to hurt you. I'll
always love you.

Michael jabs the air with one crutch.

MICHAEL
Why do lovers change? I thought
about you every minute I was over
there.

KIM
Please, go, and let me suffer alone
here.

MICHAEL
See ya tonight.

INT. RICHARD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

THE LIVING ROOM -

Mr. Richards holds a drink and greets Michael coldly.

MR. RICHARDS
Glad you're home Michael. You're
lucky. Kim is almost ready.

MICHAEL
Thanks.

He sits down on the couch.

Mrs. Richards enters smiling with a drink. She is 50s,
tanned, and petite.

MRS. RICHARDS
Wanna a drink Michael?

MICHAEL
No, I'm driving.

She sits in a recliner near him sipping her drink.

MRS. RICHARDS
Kim has grown up. Ya need to move
on.

MICHAEL
I just want to talk things over
tonight.

MRS. RICHARDS
You're not in her future. Deal with
it.

Mr. Richards intervenes.

MR. RICHARDS
How do you feel now after serving?

MICHAEL
I left the war behind, but it
hasn't left me yet.

He taps his legs.

MR. RICHARDS
Kim is getting married. Did she
tell you yet?

MICHAEL
She did, but she can still back
out.

MR. RICHARDS
It's over son. She is starting a
new life. You best do likewise.

Kim enters wearing a blue dress, heels, and a necklace. She glows.

Michael stands slowly while looking at her.

MICHAEL
We'll be back in a few hours.

MR. RICHARDS
Front door will be unlocked.

MICHAEL
Thanks.

Kim opens the front door as Michael moves by on crutches.

I/E PICKUP TRUCK - NIGHT (MOVING)

Michael drives fast on the dark two lane road.

KIM
Where we going?

MICHAEL
Lone Star Cafe on Clay Road. Ever been there?

KIM
Yeah, long ago.

MICHAEL
It's not too late to cancel your wedding.

KIM
Don't bring that up okay?

MICHAEL
Sorry.

Black CAR races up tailgating them. DRIVER HONKS his horn at Michael.

Michael checks his rear mirror. CAR FLASHES its headlights.

KIM
What's going on?

MICHAEL
I dunno...lean down and hold on.

Kim crouches forward as he ACCELERATES. CAR behind them stays in close pursuit.

KIM
This is crazy!

CAR ACCELERATES and PASSES Michael on the left. DRIVER is young Man in his 20s. He gives Michael the finger as he goes by.

MICHAEL
Damn prick!

He slows down and retrieves a pistol beneath his seat. He aims out the window at the car ahead. Kim sees this and panics.

KIM
Don't shoot!

She pushes the gun down. Michael wiggles it free of her grip.

MICHAEL
Don't do that!

Kim holds the barrel. Michael pulls gun loose.

KIM
Put it away now!

MICHAEL
Okay...okay.

He puts it back under the seat.

KIM
Thanks honey.

MICHAEL
Next time...no mercy.

KIM
I just want a quiet evening.

MICHAEL
Rednecks here never change. My friends died for white trash like that.

Kim points out the window.

KIM
I see the cafe up ahead.

MICHAEL
You'll like it.

He hits the turn signal and turns right into a gravel parking lot and STOPS. Both exit the truck and enter cafe.

INT. CAFE - NIGHT

Cafe is full. Michael and Kim read the wall menu.

MICHAEL
Try the fried catfish.

KIM
I want shrimp gumbo and a salad.

Michael shrugs. They walk to the CASHIER, male, 20s, who is eager to please.

Michael checks his wallet and pulls out a twenty.

CASHIER
Ready to order?

KIM
I'll have a bowl of shrimp gumbo,
ice tea, and a salad.

CASHIER
Okay. You sir?

MICHAEL
I'll have the catfish platter and
ice tea.

CASHIER
Your order is fifteen dollars sir.

Michael hands him a twenty. He enters the amount in the register. He hands Michael a receipt.

MICHAEL
What is our order number?

CASHIER
You're number ten. I'll call it
when your food is ready.

MICHAEL
Thanks.

Michael and Kim take a table outside on the patio.

They want seek some privacy and can talk freely here.

EXT. CAFE - NIGHT

THE PATIO - SERVER wipes tables down. Another SERVER brings them ice tea.

Kim pulls a sheet of paper from her purse and studies it closely.

MICHAEL

Watcha reading? This is a date remember?

Kim looks up at him.

KIM

It's the invitation list for the reception.

MICHAEL

Put it away. You ain't married yet.

She frowns putting it back into her purse.

KIM

It's gonna happen...face it.

MICHAEL

You can't hurry love, but you can give it a push.

KIM

The love between us is gone.

CASHIER (V.O.)

Number ten, your order is ready.

MICHAEL

Could you get it?

KIM

Sure be right back.

He hands her the receipt. She returns with a tray of food and sets it on the table. Michael takes his items.

MICHAEL

You mad?

KIM

No, but I don't want to hurt you.

MICHAEL

You already did...that damn list.

KIM
Don't ask too much of me now okay?

MICHAEL
We had three years together, and
now it doesn't matter anymore?

Kim stops eating.

KIM
We were kids, but now we're adults.

MICHAEL
I'm not giving up without a fight.

KIM
I fell for someone else...I
couldn't help it.

MICHAEL
What an excuse.

KIM
Take me home now.

She stands up and grabs her purse.

MICHAEL
Sit down!

KIM
I'll be in the truck.

She walks away. Michael grabs her empty glass and BREAKS it
on the table's edge. He limps after her and catches up.

MICHAEL
You're not dumping me here. Stop!

He presses the jagged edge of the glass against her throat.

Kim SCREAMS and pushes the glass away and runs away/

MANAGER runs up and pulls the glass from Michael's hand. It
drops on the floor.

MANAGER
Leave mister, or I'll call the
police.

Michael nods panting.

MICHAEL
Okay...okay...I'm leaving.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Kim sits beside the truck on the ground crying. Michael opens her door. She gets in and leans on the dash. Michael starts the engine.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK - NIGHT

MICHAEL
Still wanna argue?

KIM
(raises head)
I'm human. You were gone until
whenever. You were a future maybe.
My fiance was here now.

MICHAEL
You just want life on your terms. I
had to go away. They sent me.

KIM
You're not a victim. You enlisted.
Our relationship had to end.

MICHAEL
Do you still love me?

Kim wipes her eyes with a tissue.

KIM
Not enough for a marriage.

She taps her stomach.

MICHAEL
Are you...?

KIM
Yeah pregnant. I'm two months
along.

Michael gasps and hits the steering wheel.

MICHAEL
No shame in your game huh?.

KIM
It's my time. All my friends are
married and starting families. It's
what girls here do.

MICHAEL
Some wait, but you jumped the line.

KIM
It just felt right for us.

MICHAEL
Feelings don't make it right.
You're pregnant so now you gotta
marry him.

KIM
This ain't about right! It's about
my life now.

MICHAEL
We still gotta talk.

He pulls out of the parking lot and turns onto the highway.

I/E PICKUP TRUCK - NIGHT (MOVING)

KIM
Where ya going?

MICHAEL
A place you know well.

KIM
Tell me where.

MICHAEL
City park where we made out.

KIM
We're not doing that.

MICHAEL
Please listen to me.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Michael and Kim sit at a table under a tall light pole.
INSECTS swarm overhead in the light. Park is empty.

MICHAEL
We came here a lot as kids.

KIM
We're not kids anymore.

He puts his arm around her pulling her closer.

MICHAEL

We had big dreams and plans then.

Kim pulls away.

KIM

I hate Katy. I wanna leave and explore the world.

MICHAEL

(tugs at her arm)

I left, now I'm back. It ain't pretty out there.

KIM

You left, and I'm still waiting. College didn't work. Now marriage is my exit plan.

MICHAEL

You dump me, get pregnant, plan a wedding, and think it's fair to me?

KIM

He has money and a future. You're crippled and struggling.

MICHAEL

I'll make it. Gimme time.

KIM

There is no time. I don't wanna be trapped here.

Kim gets up and paces slowly.

MICHAEL

Everyone gets trapped eventually. Look how many classmates are still here.

KIM

I want a new life. I'm tired of putting my life on hold.

Michael lights a cigarette and inhales deeply.

MICHAEL

You'll still be you wherever you go.

Kim sits beside him.

KIM

If I stay on, I'll miss out on so much. I don't wanna get old here. I'm tired of commuting to Houston.

MICHAEL

Why does everyone hate their hometown?

KIM

After you grow up, it doesn't fit you anymore.

MICHAEL

You really like Houston?

KIM

I met new people and faced fresh challenges. I grew.

MICHAEL

I killed people in my job, and now all my dreams of you are gone.

KIM

Don't guilt trip me.

MICHAEL

Why not start over?

KIM

We can't return to yesterday. Leaving here forced us to change. We can't go back.

MICHAEL

After serving I appreciate everything more.

KIM

We're both on different paths now. We're not in the same place.

Michael takes her hands and squeezes them slowly.

MICHAEL

Marry me, and we'll go anywhere you want.

KIM

I can't. I'm committed to a new man.

MICHAEL

I just wanna be loved.

KIM

I gotta do this for myself. Women today have choices today our mothers didn't.

MICHAEL

Guess that covers it.

KIM

Take me home and find someone else.

They both walk back to the truck in silence.

INT. DAVIS HOUSE - NIGHT

THE LIVING ROOM -

Michael enters. His mother is knitting on the couch.

MRS. DAVIS

How did it go?

MICHAEL

It's over.

He kicks his shoes off and lays his crutches down.

MRS. DAVIS

Some things aren't meant to be.

MICHAEL

She is pregnant and wants to leave. Marriage is her escape.

MRS. DAVIS

All you can do is find someone else.

MICHAEL

I expected too much. The fire has gone out for us.

MRS. DAVIS

You can't put love in storage. It's a living thing.

MICHAEL

I'm a faded memory now.

MRS. DAVIS
Everything for her is now.

MICHAEL
I'm a crippled vet not her
boyfriend from high school.

MRS. DAVIS
Tomorrow will be better.

MICHAEL
Why couldn't she wait?

MRS. DAVIS
She is following her dream. Just do
the same.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Michael undresses quickly. He pulls a large knife from his
night stand. A photo of Kim hangs on the wall

He cuts her photo up and tosses it into a trashcan.

MICHAEL
You'll pay for this.

He turns off the lights and lies in bed crying.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Michael and his father sip coffee after breakfast.

MR. DAVIS
What are you going to do today?

MICHAEL
I'll look for a job...whatever I
can get.

MR. DAVIS
You ain't healed up yet. You can't
do much.

MICHAEL
I might get an office job for now.

MR. DAVIS
Wanna come to Houston with me?

MICHAEL
No big cities for me. Too noisy.

MR. DAVIS

That never bothered you before. You gotta rejoin the world son.

Mrs. Davis clears the table quietly.

MICHAEL

I can't take BS anymore just for a paycheck.

MR. DAVIS

We all gotta do our time.

Mr. Davis grabs his lunch box. He kisses his wife and pauses at the back door.

MICHAEL

See ya tonight.

Mr. Davis puts a twenty on the table.

MR. DAVIS

Gas money...take it.

MICHAEL

Thanks.

Michael kisses his mother and leaves.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - DAY

Michael exits his truck. He walks slowly on crutches to an office building and enters.

INT. RECRUITING CENTER - DAY

THE ARMY OFFICE -

Michael enters. RECRUITER looks up from his desk. Name tag reads GRIFFIN.

MICHAEL

Remember me sir?

SGT. GRIFFIN

Refresh my memory son.

MICHAEL

I'm Michael Davis. I enlisted here over a year ago.

SGT. GRIFFIN
Yeah, yeah I do. How did things go?

MICHAEL
I went to Iraq and got wounded with
shrapnel.

He taps his left leg.

SGT. GRIFFIN
How bad?

MICHAEL
It'll heal, but I'll lose some
mobility.

Griffin sighs shaking his head.

SGT. GRIFFIN
Been discharged yet?

MICHAEL
I'll find out later.

SGT. GRIFFIN
What can I do for you?

Michael lays his crutches on the floor and sits.

MICHAEL
I need a job. Can I enter the Guard
or Reserves later?

SGT. GRIFFIN
Not unless you're cleared
medically.

MICHAEL
How about a waiver?

SGT. GRIFFIN
The military wants a whole man for
the dollar. You're not an asset
anymore.

MICHAEL
Any advice?

SGT. GRIFFIN
Apply for your VA benefits once
you're out.

He opens a drawer and hands Michael a packet.

MICHAEL

Thanks. Nobody understands me here.

SGT. GRIFFIN

They don't unless they served.
You're yesterday's hero. Don't
expect any thanks either.

MICHAEL

I don't.

Griffin points to a wall clock.

SGT. GRIFFIN

Wanna take a smoke break?

MICHAEL

Sure.

SGT. GRIFFIN

Follow me.

Both of them go outside into a landscaped courtyard.

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

Both men sit on a bench smoking quietly.

SGT. GRIFFIN

Your benefits are a hand up not a
handout.

MICHAEL

It still feels like welfare.

SGT. GRIFFIN

You earned 'em, so use 'em.

MICHAEL

I left a war, now I gotta fight to
get my old life back.

SGT. GRIFFIN

Forget it...you've seen too much to
go back there.

MICHAEL

It seems like I aged twenty years.

SGT. GRIFFIN

You did. You left here as a teen
and jumped into middle age. Your
old friends gotta catch up.

MICHAEL

You made it sound great with the bonus. I got hurt before I transferred to a trade school. What now?

SGT. GRIFFIN

I sell the Army to guys with no future.

MICHAEL

Did you con me?

Griffin leans forward frowning.

SGT. GRIFFIN

No, you knew what you signed up for. You came to us remember?

MICHAEL

What choices do guys like me have in Katy after high school?

SGT. GRIFFIN

Not much. Small towns are dead ends.

MICHAEL

I wasn't ready for war.

SGT. GRIFFIN

No one ever is. It's part of you forever now.

MICHAEL

All I got now are bad memories, few medals, and shrapnel for souvenirs.

SGT. GRIFFIN

You left home, but you outgrew it in the service. You'll never fit in here again. Be glad you're alive okay?

MICHAEL

Wonder if I'll ever be somebody again.

SGT. GRIFFIN

Go to school, leave town, and start over. You can't live in your yesterdays.

They shake hands.

MICHAEL
Thanks...appreciate your advice.

SGT. GRIFFIN
Good luck Michael.

I/E PICKUP - DAY (MOVING)

Michael spots a warehouse on the right. Sign reads "ROY'S
LANDSCAPING" "HELP WANTED". He pulls in the lot and parks.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Bald heavysset MAN, 50s sits behind desk reading the
newspaper. Sign on desk reads "ROY SMALL". Michael enters and
waits to speak. Small looks up disgusted.

MR. SMALL
Watcha need boy?

MICHAEL
Y'all hiring?

He sizes Michael up.

MR. SMALL
What can you do? You're crippled.

MICHAEL
Answer the phone and office work

MR. SMALL
I need men loading trucks with
sacks of topsoil. They weigh forty
pounds. You can't do that.

MICHAEL
Not yet, maybe later.

MR. SMALL
Sorry can't use ya.

MICHAEL
Not even in the office?

MR. SMALL
I run a landscaping bidness. Don't
need no faggot secretary.

MICHAEL
You calling me, a vet, a faggot?

MR. SMALL
Ya ain't a real man if you're on
crutches. Ya gettin any?

Michael raises one crutch like a club.

MICHAEL
You son of a....

MR. SMALL
Just testing ya. Y'all vets ain't
normal.

MICHAEL
I'm fine. You ain't normal.

MR. SMALL
Being a vet don't mean crap to me.

MICHAEL
You rednecks don't respect
anything.

MR. SMALL
Boy, your attitude ain't right. My
Mexicans can outwork losers like
you anytime.

MICHAEL
Bet you're proud of that.

Small stands and Michael swings his crutch knocking him down.
he lies dazed on the floor cowering.

MR. SMALL
You'll pay for that! Now git!

MICHAEL
Don't let your mouth overload your
ass.

Small sits up and pulls phone off his desk and makes a call.

MR. SMALL
(on phone)
Katy police? I need...

Michael hits him with his crutch knocking him out. He pulls
the phone cord from the wall and leaves.

He enters his truck watching for police to arrive. He drives
away slowly hoping to slip away.

INT. DAVIS HOUSE - DAY

THE KITCHEN -

Michael munches on a sandwich. Mrs. Davis washes dishes.

MICHAEL
Got any beer in the fridge?

MRS. DAVIS
No, your father needs to buy some.

Michael looks at the wall. Clock reads "four o'clock".

MICHAEL
It's happy hour. I need a drink.

MRS. DAVIS
That won't solve anything.

Michael finishes and gets up.

MICHAEL
I'm going to Rusty's for a few
beers. Be back later.

EXT. RUSTY'S BAR - DAY

Pickup trucks fill the parking lot. CUSTOMERS sit outside at picnic tables with pitchers of beer.

Country music "PLAYS" over speakers nailed to poles. Michael limps up to front door unnoticed.

INT. RUSTY'S BAR - DAY

THE MAIN ROOM -

PATRONS nurse drinks sitting at the bar. Cigarette smoke fills the room. Overhead fans HUM as they turn.

Michael takes a seat at the bar. RUSTY, owner, 50s, bald and muscled approaches him.

RUSTY
Waddy have mister?

Michael hands him a twenty.

MICHAEL
Bring me all the longnecks this
will buy.

Rusty nods and rings up the sale. He pulls four bottles from the cooler and sets them in front of Michael.

RUSTY

Enjoy.

MICHAEL

I will. Thanks.

Rusty wipes the bar down as Michael chugs his beers fast.

RUSTY

Easy son. Something bothering ya?

Michael belches then laughs.

MICHAEL

Just got back from Iraq. Great to be home.

RUSTY

Welcome home son.

They shake hands.

MICHAEL

I'm home, but it still feels strange. Home isn't home anymore.

RUSTY

I'm a Vietnam vet. Nothing is the same anymore. Kinda like the world left you behind.

MICHAEL

My girlfriend left me, can't get work...what am I gonna do now?

RUSTY

Life is change. You're on your own now.

MICHAEL

What I saw, things I did...damn it.

RUSTY

When I got back, no one cared. Ain't no noble wars, just noble warriors someone told me.

Michael puts a ten dollar bill on the bar.

MICHAEL

Gimme another round.

RUSTY
Drink it slow.

He puts two longnecks on the bar. Michael sips each one slowly.

MICHAEL
Nobody cares if you fight for
America. I don't understand the
world here. It doesn't understand
me either.

Rusty nods counting money in the cash register.

RUSTY
No they don't. Homecoming is your
problem. Don't crawl into a bottle.
Ain't no answers there.

MICHAEL
One more for the road?

RUSTY
Nope last call son. Gimme your
keys. I'll call a ride for ya.

Michael pulls his keys from his pocket and drops them. He slips off the bar stool trying to retrieve them.

MICHAEL
That hurt! Damn!

Rusty helps him to a booth.

RUSTY
Sit still and relax.

MICHAEL
I can drive...the truck knows the
way.

RUSTY
Lemme know if you're gonna puke.

MICHAEL
Call my folks. Their number is in
my wallet.

He hands Rusty his wallet. Rusty opens it and writes it down.

RUSTY
Got it. Thanks.

New CUSTOMERS enter the bar. Rusty serves them as he makes the call.

EXT. CAR - NIGHT

Michael sits in front seat of his dad's car. Rusty and his dad confer.

MR. DAVIS
Hope he didn't cause you no trouble.

RUSTY
It's okay. Park his truck behind the building and lock it.

Mr. Davis hands him a ten.

MR. DAVIS
We'll get it tomorrow.

RUSTY
He ain't home yet. Go easy on him.

MR. DAVIS
Drinking don't fix nothing.

RUSTY
Been there and done it. Y'all take care. Night.

I/E CAR - NIGHT (MOVING)

Michael is nauseated and rests his head against the dash.

MICHAEL
Thanks for coming.

MR. DAVIS
How could you do this?

MICHAEL
I feel sick...I gotta puke! Stop the car.

He rolls down the window and leans out.

MR. DAVIS
Lemme pull over. Don't vomit on the seat.

He pulls off the road and STOPS. Michael heaves and stops.

MICHAEL

I'm done.

Mr. Davis gives him a handkerchief. He wipes his chin and sits up.

MR. DAVIS

Better?

MICHAEL

I'll make it.

Mr. Davis pulls back onto the road.

MR. DAVIS

Get help son. Next time you might hurt yourself.

MICHAEL

I will later...I promise.

MR. DAVIS

Later means never. Kill your own snakes now!

MICHAEL

I see tail lights not headlights now. I'm lost on the way.

Car turns into the driveway and STOPS.

MR. DAVIS

We'll talk this over tomorrow.

INT. DAVIS HOUSE - NIGHT

THE LIVING ROOM -

His mother confronts Michael.

MRS. DAVIS

Didn't I tell you not to go drinking?

MICHAEL

I'm sorry. It was a stupid thing to do.

MRS. DAVIS

Grow up! You're home now and your war is over!

Michael sits on the couch rubbing his stomach.

MICHAEL
Something is coming up!

MRS. DAVIS
Don't puke in here!

She hands him a dish towel. He covers his mouth.

MICHAEL
I'm okay...lemme rest here.

He slumps over and falls asleep.

Parents retreat to the kitchen.

THE KITCHEN -

MRS. DAVIS
He needs lotsa help.

MR. DAVIS
If he don't get fixed, he'll die on
us here.

MRS. DAVIS
Soon the whole town will be talking
about our crazy son.

MR. DAVIS
They don't understand what war does
to men.

MRS. DAVIS
Kim left. He took it hard.

MRS. DAVIS (CONT'D)
You're only as sick as the secrets
you keep.

MR. DAVIS
He served, got hurt, and gets home
to what? Nothing. How much can he
take?

MRS. DAVIS
Coming back doesn't mean going
back. People move on while you're
away.

MR. DAVIS
I don't know how to help him.

MRS. DAVIS
We can't. He must do this himself.

MR. DAVIS
It's gonna be hell for awhile round
here.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Next morning Michael shuffles in yawning. He sits beside his father. His parents are done.

MICHAEL
I need aspirin and coffee.

MRS. DAVIS
I'll get it.

MR. DAVIS
You gotta settle down son.

MICHAEL
Sorry bout last night. Won't do it
again.

Mrs. Davis returns with two pills and cup of coffee. Michael takes them.

MRS. DAVIS
You need a bath...I can smell you.

Mr. Davis stands and grips Michael's right shoulder.

MR. DAVIS
Don't ever pull a stunt like last
night again. If you do, you're
gone.

MICHAEL
Yes sir.

MR. DAVIS
I'm heading out. See ya tonight.

MRS. DAVIS
Once you wash up, I'll get you some
breakfast.

MICHAEL
Gonna wash that pain outta my soul.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mrs. Davis is watching television. Michael enters holding a large kitchen knife. He takes a combat stance ready to jab. She is terrified.

MRS. DAVIS
Stop it! Put that away!

She stands ready to run. Michael slices the air and advances on her.

MICHAEL
Weeks ago I killed people after
breakfast. It was our life...now...

MRS. DAVIS
Put it down and back away please.

Michael drops the knife on the floor.

MICHAEL
What is normal anymore? Life is
strange here. I don't belong
anywhere.

MRS. DAVIS
Honey...you're readjusting...it
takes time maybe you need therapy.

MICHAEL
When do the nightmares end? I still
hear men screaming in my dreams.

MRS. DAVIS
Time to get help.

MICHAEL
I'm a shadow now...nothing else.

INT. RICHARD'S HOUSE - DAY

THE BEDROOM -

Kim stands in front of a mirror in her wedding dress. Her mother makes fitting changes with pins.

KIM
I have to do these alterations.

MRS. RICHARDS
You'll look perfect at your
wedding.

She steps back as Kim turns around slowly.

KIM

It's finally time for my wedding.

MRS. RICHARDS

You grew up so fast. Soon you'll be a wife not just my daughter.

KIM

Should I invite Michael to the reception?

MRS. RICHARDS

Oh no! He might ruin it. It's your day. You two are over forever.

KIM

We can still be friends.

MRS. RICHARDS

I heard he got drunk at Rusty's. His dad had to pick him up.

KIM

Coming home was hard on him. Losing me hurt him a lot.

MRS. RICHARDS

He'll survive. This wedding cost a lot. I don't want any problems.

KIM

I should have done it sooner.

MRS. RICHARDS

Marriage isn't a contest. You do it when you're ready.

KIM

I want a great marriage.

Mrs. Richards pins a few more seams.

MRS. RICHARDS

It can be great, but you gotta train your husband. Keep him on a short leash.

Both of them laugh.

KIM

I think we're done.

MRS. RICHARDS
I'll take it to the bridal shop for
the alterations.

INT. DAVIS HOUSE - DAY

THE LIVING ROOM -

Michael is lying on the couch watching television. Phone
RINGS. He sits up and answers it.

MICHAEL
(on phone)
Hello...Coach Thomas. Yes, I'm
fine.

COACH THOMAS
(over phone)
Can you meet me at the Katy train
museum now?

MICHAEL
(on phone)
Be right over.

COACH THOMAS
(over phone)
Come alone.

MICHAEL
(on phone)
Okay. Bye.

He hangs up and leaves.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Park has train museum with red caboose parked on tracks
outside. Michael sees Coach Thomas on a bench and joins him.

MICHAEL
Something wrong?

COACH THOMAS
Heard about your stunt at Rusty's.
You got any plans for your future?

MICHAEL
What future? You told me you were
gonna play for the Astros. But,
you're a coach here. What happened?

COACH THOMAS

Drunk driver hit me. He died, I lived, but he took my dream with him. I couldn't make the tryout.

MICHAEL

Oh...I see now.

COACH THOMAS

I got a phys ed degree and turned to coaching. I love it.

MICHAEL

I'd be so angry...

COACH THOMAS

If you lose one dream, you find another one. Marrying Kim was your dream, but it's gone.

MICHAEL

Just like that huh?

COACH THOMAS

Life usually isn't what you want, it's what works out.

MICHAEL

Got any suggestions?

COACH THOMAS

Move away and start fresh.

Michael sweeps his hand across the horizon.

MICHAEL

I already left, came home, and my life is here.

COACH THOMAS

Either stay here in pain or leave. Make a choice.

MICHAEL

Okay, I gotta move and put the war behind me. Which comes first?

COACH THOMAS

Whichever one causes you the most pain.

MICHAEL

I need to walk...I'm stiff.

EXT. CABOOSE - DAY

They walk around it slowly still talking. Michael points to it.

MICHAEL
My train stopped here.

COACH THOMAS
This caboose went all over like you, but it ain't moving anymore. Both of you are at the end of the line.

MICHAEL
Someone I loved left me behind.

COACH THOMAS
It happens every day to someone. Don't demand any fairness from life.

MICHAEL
Will I ever be normal again?

COACH THOMAS
Yes, but you can't recapture your youth anymore.

MICHAEL
Being young is a short season huh?

They walk to the coach's car.

EXT. CAR - DAY

MICHAEL
Thanks for talking to me. I learned something.

COACH THOMAS
Stay outta trouble and work on your problems.

MICHAEL
I'm going to the mall and buy some clothes.

COACH THOMAS
Bye.

Michael waves as he drives off.

INT. MALL - DAY

SHOPPERS walk past Michael. He stares at a window display. He spots Mark leaving a tux rental shop. He calls out to him.

MICHAEL
Where ya going?

They shake hands. Mark holds a garment bag.

MARK
Sorry I haven't called ya lately.
Been real busy.

MICHAEL
You're good. Buying a tux?

MARK
No, just picking one up for a
friend.

Michael points to the garment bag.

MICHAEL
Who wears a tux in Katy?

MARK
It's for his wedding.

MICHAEL
Uh...I see.

MARK
You and Kim work things out?

MICHAEL
No, we're over. She is getting
married.

MARK
(points to a clock)
I gotta deliver this tonight. Good
seeing ya.

MICHAEL
Take off. We'll get together later.

MARK
You bet.

Mark walks rapidly to the nearest exit. Michael disappears into the crowd.

INT. DAVIS HOUSE - NIGHT

THE DINING ROOM -

MICHAEL

I saw Mark at the mall. He was picking up a tux for someone.

MRS. DAVIS

Who is it?

MICHAEL

A friend of his.

MRS. DAVIS

He lives in Houston. You don't come here for a tux you can get in Houston.

Michael looks surprised. His father shakes his head.

MR. DAVIS

Something ain't right son.

MICHAEL

It's for an upcoming wedding.

MR. DAVIS

I'd ask him about it.

MICHAEL

It's hard to hide anything around here.

MR. DAVIS

People closest to us often hurt us the most.

Michael stands.

MICHAEL

I need to take a drive. Be home later.

EXT. RICHARD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Michael drives by slowly. He sees Mark's car in the driveway. He parks in the street and limps over to driver's window. He sees a garment bag on the seat.

MICHAEL

Damn him! My best friend and my girlfriend...getting hitched.

He limps back to his truck.

INT. RICHARD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

THE LIVING ROOM -

Mark and Kim review list of names for their wedding.

MARK

Michael isn't on the list. Why?

KIM

He might cause a scene and ruin everything.

MARK

He won't do that. He respects you too much.

KIM

No, it's too risky.

Mr. Davis enters with a drink.

MR. DAVIS

He can't come. It's all settled.

He puts his drink on a coffee table and opens the hall closet and pulls a shotgun out.

KIM

Oh my God! What are you going to do?

MR. DAVIS

Just checking if it's loaded. Might hafta shoot somebody soon.

He puts the gun back and closes the door.

MARK

He won't cause us no trouble.

MR. DAVIS

Vets can go crazy sometimes. Heard he got drunk at Rusty's already.

Kim puts the list down.

MARK

You told him about us right?

KIM
No. You gotta do it.

MARK
Why me? I can't hurt him this way.

KIM
It's gonna hurt no matter how he
finds out.

MR. RICHARDS
He can read it in the paper.

MARK
We gotta do the right thing here.

MR. RICHARDS
That means doing what your wife
asks. Time to man up.

Mark sighs.

MARK
Guess it's on me then.

MR. RICHARDS
Better you than me.

INT. KIM'S OFFICE - DAY

Next morning Kim and KAREN, her secretary, 30s, discuss Kim's wedding.

KAREN
Hope you have a lovely wedding day.

KIM
Thanks. Why is love so hard to
keep? Michael and I just grew apart
after he left here.

KAREN
I was lucky. Met my husband in high
school. We married after
graduation. Worked for us.

KIM
I wanted more so I left town. You
are so blessed.

KAREN
I had no other plans, so it felt
right and we did it. No regrets.

KIM

In Katy, you're born, grow up,
marry, raise a family, retire, then
die. It's the plan. It wasn't for
me.

Karen hands Kim stack of folders.

KAREN

We'll have kids eventually.

KIM

I got what my mom never got. Some
college and now a great job.
Marriage was on hold.

KAREN

I made an early decision, and it
worked.

KIM

When is the right time to marry
today? Woman have many choices now.

KAREN

You only marry when it feels right.

KIM

It's so hard to balance a career
with marriage as a woman.

KAREN

You learn as you go. No marriage is
perfect trust me.

INT. DAVIS HOUSE - DAY

THE LIVING ROOM -

Michael wants to show his mother something. He holds a small
box.

MICHAEL

I went by Kim's parents house last
night. Mark's car was parked in the
driveway.

MRS. DAVIS

Are they dating?

MICHAEL

I dunno. It's not a good sign. I
think he lied to me.

MRS. DAVIS
God I hope not. You've been friends
for years.

MICHAEL
I'll deal with him later.

MRS. DAVIS
Watcha got in the box?

He opens the lid slowly. A row of shiny medals rests on a blue velvet background.

MICHAEL
My medals...the souvenirs of war.

He hands her the box. She fingers them lightly.

MRS. DAVIS
You earned these?

MICHAEL
Yep, one battle at a time. Now I'm
invisible.

She embraces him.

MRS. DAVIS
You're our hero son. Medals don't
matter to us.

MICHAEL
It hurts to see 'em. Good men died
beside me. I came back, but they
didn't.

MRS. DAVIS
You came home for a reason.

MICHAEL
I'm a survivor not a hero.

She hands him the box. He closes it.

MRS. DAVIS
Your dad retires soon. We're moving
to Florida.

MICHAEL
Why now?

MRS. DAVIS
Our life here is done.

MICHAEL
What happens to me?

MRS. DAVIS
Find a new home...you're a man now.

MICHAEL
I started life here, and now it's
disappeared.

MRS. DAVIS
You grew up, and that world is
gone.

Michael fidgets.

MICHAEL
Once you kill people, you're never
the same.

MRS. DAVIS
You have to get strong in the
broken places.

MICHAEL
I'm confused...still trying to find
myself back home.

MRS. DAVIS
It's time to heal and forgive.

MICHAEL
Don't tell Dad about these yet.

MRS. DAVIS
All right.

MICHAEL
I'm going for a drive. Be back
later.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Michael pulls around back and parks. He enters a back door.

EXT. COACH'S OFFICE - DAY

Michael KNOCKS on the door.

COACH THOMAS (O.S.)
Come in.

Michael enters.

INT. COACH'S OFFICE - DAY

MICHAEL
Got a minute?

COACH THOMAS
Sure. Take a seat.

MICHAEL
I'm sure Mark is gonna marry Kim soon. He is my best friend and...

He pauses before speaking more.

COACH THOMAS
Who told you?

MICHAEL
I saw his car parked in her parent's driveway last night.

COACH THOMAS
Anything else?

MICHAEL
I met him at the mall. He was picking up a tux for someone.

COACH THOMAS
If he lives in Houston, why would he come here for it?

MICHAEL
Exactly. Something ain't right.

COACH THOMAS
Call him and get the truth. He owes you that.

Michael holds his head in his hands.

MICHAEL
My best friend marrying my girl...it just ain't fair.

COACH THOMAS
No one needs your permission to live their life.

Michael sits up.

MICHAEL

Wish I could trade my medals in for
a lover. Soldiering don't count
back home.

COACH THOMAS

It sure doesn't.

MICHAEL

I struggle and get nowhere.

COACH THOMAS

You changed, and Katy stayed the
same. Nobody stopped living after
you left here.

MICHAEL

They moved on. I gotta do that too.

COACH THOMAS

Focus on your future.

MICHAEL

I just can't see it.

COACH THOMAS

Do something even if it's wrong.
Don't be a walking tombstone.

MICHAEL

I want my old life back.

COACH THOMAS

You can come back, but you can't go
back.

MICHAEL

I wanna be normal again. Is that
possible now?

Thomas stands pointing to the door.

COACH THOMAS

Lemme walk you to your truck.

MICHAEL

Okay.

INT. DAVIS HOUSE - NIGHT

Everyone is eating dinner.

MR. DAVIS
I'm retiring next month.

MRS. DAVIS
Want me to call a realtor?

MR. DAVIS
Yes, get the house on the market.

MICHAEL
What do I do?

MR. DAVIS
Pack up and look for an apartment.
Take anything you want.

MICHAEL
I want some tools and clothes.

MR. DAVIS
Who is Kim going to marry?

MICHAEL
Mark I think. I gotta ask him.

MR. DAVIS
Some best friend, but they're
adults. Can't stop 'em now.

MICHAEL
He was a friend. Some folks got no
shame.

MR. DAVIS
He might regret this.

MICHAEL
Kim wanted marriage...he was ready
and boom it's on.

MR. DAVIS
You're young. You can still find
someone else.

MICHAEL
Lemme show you something.

MR. DAVIS
Is it a surprise?

MICHAEL
Sorta...be right back.

Michael exits.

MRS. DAVIS
Brace yourself.

Michael returns with his box of medals. He opens it and hands it to his father.

MR. DAVIS
Wow! You're a real hero son.

He fingers them carefully.

MICHAEL
I was till I came home.

His father sets the box on the table.

MR. DAVIS
You don't need medals to prove anything.

MICHAEL
Where do I cash 'em in?

MR. DAVIS
You don't. They're in the past. Put 'em away.

MICHAEL
Why do good men hafta die for 'em?

MR. DAVIS
You did your duty. It's done son.

Mrs. Davis clears the table. Mr. Davis stands and grabs his coat.

MR. DAVIS (CONT'D)
We're going out for dessert. Wanna come along?

MICHAEL
No, I don't feel like it. Thanks anyway.

INT. DAVIS HOUSE - NIGHT

THE LIVING ROOM -

MICHAEL
(on phone)
Hey Mark. Can you stop by tonight?

MARK
(over phone)
Yeah, what time?

MICHAEL
(on phone)
How about eight?

MARK
(over phone)
Good enough. See ya then.

MICHAEL
(on phone)
Thanks. Bye.

He hangs up.

INT. DAVIS HOUSE - NIGHT

THE BEDROOM -

Michael changes clothes. He opens his dresser and takes out a pistol. He checks the magazine and rolls it up in a towel. He puts a switchblade in his pocket.

INT. DAVIS HOUSE - NIGHT

THE LIVING ROOM -

Michael hears KNOCKING at the front door. He OPENS it. Mark enters. They sit on the couch.

MARK
You don't look happy. Something wrong?

Michael puts the rolled towel beside him.

MICHAEL
I gotta ask you something.

MARK
Go ahead.

MICHAEL
Are you marrying Kim?

Mark fidgets and looks away. Michael squeezes the towel feeling the pistol inside.

MARK

Yes...but, lemme explain. We started dating six months ago and...this is hard.

MICHAEL

Go on.

MARK

We had sex, but she got pregnant...it was an accident.

MICHAEL

A mistake huh? Ever heard of condoms?

MARK

She told me she was on the pill. I thought it was okay, now I'm a dad.

MICHAEL

Were you ever gonna tell me?

MARK

Yes, but I couldn't find the right time.

Michael GRABS Mark's right arm and twists it backwards.

MICHAEL

Bullshit! You betrayed me and couldn't face me!

He keeps twisting as Mark SCREAMS in pain.

MARK

Lemme go man!

Michael releases him and hits him with hard punch to the gut. Mark rolls onto the floor gasping.

MICHAEL

I ain't done yet.

He pulls out the switchblade and presses the blade against Mark's throat.

MARK

Don't kill me please!

MICHAEL

You deserve it and more!

MARK

I failed...I'm sorry.

Michael draws the knife blade slowly across Mark's throat. Small trickle of blood appears. He STOPS.

MICHAEL

I coulda gone deeper friend.

Mark squirms as Michael presses his knee into Mark's side holding him down.

MARK

Just finish this...

MICHAEL

You're beyond forgiveness. Stealing my girl, my dreams...

MARK

I'm sorry...I'm so sorry.

MICHAEL

Sit up and stop crying.

Mark holds his throat and sits up against the couch catching his breath.

MARK

Now watcha gonna do?

MICHAEL

We're done. Gonna let you live in shame.

MARK

Shame is pain.

MICHAEL

We used to be best friends. War changed us all.

MARK

Help me up. I gotta get patched up.

He holds his hand smeared with blood as Michael lifts him up.

MICHAEL

I fought for nothing and came home to nothing. I almost killed a friend. Am I crazy?

MARK

I forgive you.

They embrace.

MICHAEL
We're done brother.

INT. DAVIS HOUSE - NIGHT

THE LIVING ROOM -

Michael scrubs blood stains from the carpet as his father watches.

MR. DAVIS
What happened in here?

MICHAEL
I had a fight with Mark.

MR. DAVIS
Why?

MICHAEL
He stole Kim and got her pregnant.

MR. DAVIS
You finally got the truth outta
him.

Michael pauses and looks up.

MICHAEL
Both of 'em betrayed me. Why? They
knew I was coming home.

He stops and sits on the couch. His father sits beside him.

MR. DAVIS
You're all at different places in
life. No one is above anything. You
fell off their radar.

MICHAEL
How can I ever be happy again?

MR. DAVIS
You'll work it out son.

Mrs. Davis joins them. She hugs Michael

MRS. DAVIS
Things will look better in the
morning.

MICHAEL

I hope so.

INT. DAVIS HOUSE - NEXT MORNING

THE KITCHEN -

Mr. Davis signs forms as Michael watches.

MICHAEL

Watcha doing?

MR. DAVIS

Signing a contract to sell the house.

MICHAEL

Got a letter from the Army yesterday. I just read it today.

He holds up an envelope.

MR. DAVIS

What does it say.

MICHAEL

Gotta report to Houston VA hospital and face a board for medical discharge.

MR. DAVIS

Good news for you.

MICHAEL

I served my time.

MR. DAVIS

Maybe in a month or so, we'll be in Florida.

MICHAEL

I gotta a hole in my heart now. Nothing can fill it.

Mr. Davis puts forms aside.

MR. DAVIS

You're facing the unknown. Most folks never leave the ruts they were born into. You can.

MICHAEL

All I wanted was a normal life once
I got back. I got chaos instead.

MR. DAVIS

Try Austin...it's a town where
young people are trying to find
themselves.

MICHAEL

I can't relate to college kids.

MR. DAVIS

You're the same age.

MICHAEL

I'm older now. I've seen too much.

MR. DAVIS

You can always leave if you don't
like it. You'll find the right path
eventually.

MICHAEL

I'll pack my stuff today.

MR. DAVIS

Lemme know if need help.

MICHAEL

I don't have much. I'm good.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

Michael loads boxes into the back of the pickup. His mother
watches from the front porch.

MICHAEL

All loaded up.

MRS. DAVIS

Say good-bye to your friends here.

MICHAEL

We're all done. They're all in my
yesterdays.

MRS. DAVIS

Lemme make you lunch.

MICHAEL

Thanks. I'll be in the garage
making a project.

MRS. DAVIS
Come in when you're done.

She goes inside.

INT. THE GARAGE - DAY

Michael marks several pieces of lumber on the floor.

KNOCK on wall interrupts him. He looks up. Mark approaches him quietly.

MICHAEL
Waddya want man?

Mark gets closer speaking softly.

MARK
Just wanna apologize...for
everything I did. I'm really sorry.
Forgive me.

Michael shrugs and resumes working.

MICHAEL
Thanks, but it's kinda late.

MARK
Waddya making there?

MICHAEL
Hold this tape measure for me.

Mark holds end of the tape as Michael marks the wood.

MARK
Got it?

MICHAEL
Yeah. Let go.

He uses a saw cutting quickly and arranges the wood into a pattern.

MARK
Now what?

Michael picks up a nail gun.

MICHAEL
Hold the wood in place while I nail
it together.

Mark pushes the wood together as Michael moves fast. Mark recognizes the final shape.

MARK

A peace symbol? Why this?

MICHAEL

It's my statement about war.

MARK

Politicians talk about war, but folks like us die in 'em for nothing usually.

Michael opens a can of white paint and brushes the wood quickly.

MICHAEL

Look good to you?

MARK

Hell yeah. Let it dry.

Michael pulls cigarette from his pocket. Mark pulls a joint from his pocket.

MICHAEL

Time to pass the peace pipe brother. We better do this out back.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

They walk into grassy field few yards from the house and sit in the weeds. Both men light up.

MICHAEL

Everything changed once I left. I was stupid to enlist. It wrecked me.

MARK

You got sold on a fantasy. Ain't no glory in any war.

MICHAEL

All I got left are medals and a ton of bad memories. It's tough to sleep with 'em.

MARK

Nothing ever happens the way we think it should.

Michael exhales.

MICHAEL

Is the universe just? Good people died there, and I'm still here. Why them and not me? Everyone should come home.

MARK

I think the universe is neutral. None of us matters to it. You can't polish the stars.

MICHAEL

Guys like us come from towns nobody ever heard of. Then we go back to places nobody thinks about. I'm home, but home isn't home anymore. I'm lost with no direction.

MARK

You're here for a purpose. Don't overthink it.

MICHAEL

I'll never feel right about what I did. Where can I lose my regrets?

MARK

You can't. It's part of your life story.

MICHAEL

Drugs won't end the pain.

MARK

No, but they give you a time out to think.

Michael tosses his cigarette butt aside.

MICHAEL

The military teaches you how to kill, but they don't teach you how to become normal again. It's on you.

MARK

You belong somewhere else now.

MICHAEL

I look in the mirror and see someone else. It's not me.

MARK
You can't ever be that guy again.

MICHAEL
Ready for lunch?

MARK
Yes...lead on brother.

INT. DAVIS HOUSE - NEXT MORNING

THE KITCHEN -

Mr. Davis has .22 rifle on the table checking it out.

MR. DAVIS
You wanna go hunting before you
leave?

Michael recoils.

MICHAEL
No. I'm done killing anything. I
seen enough of it.

Mr. Davis nods and puts the rifle back into a case.

Mrs. Davis pours coffee for everyone and sits down.

MRS. DAVIS
Need anything else?

MICHAEL
No. I'm traveling light.

MRS. DAVIS
Where ya going honey?

MICHAEL
Austin for now. It's close and not
too big.

MRS. DAVIS
It will renew you.

MICHAEL
I might finally put roots down
there.

MR. DAVIS
Roots mean ruts, and most folks
never get out of those. Be careful.

MRS. DAVIS
It's time to stretch your wings.

MICHAEL
Sell the house yet?

MR. DAVIS
Yes, and we close in thirty days. I
sold to an investor.

MICHAEL
I hope I find the guy I once was
before I put on a uniform.

MR. DAVIS
He is still there inside. He just
got older and wiser son.

Mr. Davis hands an envelope to him.

MICHAEL
What is this?

MR. DAVIS
It's the title and keys to the
pickup. It's our gift to you.

Michael wipes small tears with back of his hand.

MICHAEL
Thanks...thanks so much.

MR. DAVIS
Check your load and then get going.
If you don't leave, you'll never
arrive. Get your license okay?

Michael puts the keys in his pocket.

MICHAEL
I'll be outside finishing up.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

Michael puts wooden peace sign beside boxes in the truck. He
puts box of medals and uniform beside it covering them with a
tarp.

He paints a sign on white foam board with black paint. It
dries fast in the sun. He puts that on the front seat.

EXT. PICKUP TRUCK - DAY

THE DRIVEWAY-

Michael idles the engine. His parents stand by driver's window.

MR. DAVIS
Good luck and drive on.

Michael gives him a thumbs up.

MRS. DAVIS
We'll be in Tampa soon. We'll call you once we get settled.

MICHAEL
I left here a kid, came back a lost man, now I'm a nobody.

MRS. DAVIS
You're our son...that is somebody enough.

MICHAEL
I'm done chasing rainbows. My future begins now.

MRS. DAVIS
A new life is ahead...just do it.

MICHAEL
I played God and killed to survive. Now I gotta fight to live again.

Michael kisses his mother. He shakes hands with his father. He releases the brake and backs out of the driveway waving to both.

EXT. KATY - DAY

THE MAIN ROAD -

He drives past Katy high school. KIDS play touch football on the field. He slows down and tosses his football helmet and jersey out the window. KIDS run up and grab the items.

EXT. I - 10 RAMP - DAY

CARS race by going up the ramp. Michael is parked beside I-10 sign. He goes to back of the truck gets peace sign, medals, his uniform, and the foam board sign.

He walks up to highway sign, puts peace sign up, drapes his uniform jacket over it, and pins the medals on the jacket.

The foam board sign reads : WAR TURNS YOU INTO WHAT YOUR MOTHER WISHES YOU WOULD NEVER BE.

He steps back, salutes it, and returns to his truck. CARS HONK as they watch him.

I/E PICKUP TRUCK - DAY

He waves to passing cars.

MICHAEL

Bye Katy! I'm leaving my war here.
Peace y'all.

He revs up his engine, enters the ramp and merges with traffic. He enters the freeway joining other vehicles heading into the sun.

FADE OUT.

THE END

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