

REGIMENTAL BREAKDOWN

by

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FADE IN.

INT. FORT HAMILTON - CEREMONY ROOM - DAY

Inductees from all walks of life, ranging from 18 to 25 years of age, are about to take the oath. A COMMISSIONED OFFICER, dressed in his army greens, enters the room to administer the oath of enlistment into the armed forces and calls everyone to attention.

COMMISSIONED OFFICER

ATTENTION!

The inductees snap at attention, and the commissioned officer makes his way over to the podium and stands before the United States flag and other flags, such as the State flag, military branch flag, and unit guidon.

COMMISSIONED OFFICER (CONT'D)

At ease.

The inductees exhale and remain on their feet.

COMMISSIONED OFFICER (CONT'D)

How are you guys doing today?  
Welcome to the ceremony room. A lot of people don't get to see the inside of the ceremony room, so congratulations to you all for making it this far. I want to thank you for your service. I appreciate what you guys are doing. I'm glad to have you aboard the team. It's an honor and a privilege for me to bring you into the service today. Each and everyone of you has something to be very proud of today. You're doing something that less than one percent of the United States population does, and that's volunteer to serve this country. Is anybody feeling reluctant about enlisting at this moment? Speak now because once you're sworn in, you're mine for 6 years.

The commissioned officer pauses, but none of the inductees speak up.

COMMISSIONED OFFICER (CONT'D)

Everybody's ready to go out and do great things for this country, right? That's good.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COMMISSIONED OFFICER (CONT'D)

Have you all been briefed on  
articles 83, 84, and 85?

The inductees answer in the affirmative.

COMMISSIONED OFFICER (CONT'D)

Does anyone have any questions  
about the articles?

The inductees answer negatively.

COMMISSIONED OFFICER (CONT'D)

Okay, so what I'm going to do now  
is call you at attention. I'm  
going to have you raise your right  
hand, and then you're going to  
repeat after me. Here we go.

Commissioned officer pauses and the room goes quiet.

COMMISSIONED OFFICER (CONT'D)

ATTENTION!

The inductees snap to attention.

COMMISSIONED OFFICER (CONT'D)

Raise your right hand.

The inductees raise their right hands.

COMMISSIONED OFFICER (CONT'D)

Now repeat after me. I, state your  
full name...

Each inductee states his, or her full name.

COMMISSIONED OFFICER (CONT'D)

Do solemnly swear...

The inductees repeat.

COMMISSIONED OFFICER (CONT'D)

To support and defend...

The inductees repeat.

COMMISSIONED OFFICER (CONT'D)

The constitution of the United  
States...

The inductees repeat.

COMMISSIONED OFFICER (CONT'D)

Against all enemies foreign and  
domestic...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

An inductee with doubts loses his concentration and screws up the oath. This is RUBEN DELGADO, 19.

COMMISSIONED OFFICER (CONT'D)  
And I will bare true faith and  
allegiance to the same...

The inductees repeat.

COMMISSIONED OFFICER (CONT'D)  
I take this obligation freely  
without any mental reservation...

Ruben takes this moment to wave off and interrupt the commissioned officer in the middle of the oath.

RUBEN  
I'm sorry. Can you stop? Hold it.  
Stop everything. Just wait a  
minute!

Ruben gets the attention of everyone in the room.

INT. FORT HAMILTON - M.E.P.S HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

A frustrated NAVY RECRUITER paces back and forth outside of a physical examination room. This is SGT. NEGRON.

A M.E.P.S SHRINK emerges from the physical examination room to speak with Sgt. Negrone and closes the door behind him.

SGT. NEGRON  
Well, how did it go in there?  
What did he say? Is he going to  
enlist?

M.E.P.S. SHRINK  
Sorry, Sgt. Negrone. I'm afraid  
not.

SGT. NEGRON  
Why not? What's his problem?  
What did he say?

M.E.P.S. SHRINK  
It's just nerves. Cold feet.

SGT. NEGRON  
And you let him get away with  
that? Does he even know how much  
money it is costing us just to  
process his ass?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

M.E.P.S. SHRINK

He knows. I even told him that he could be fined up to two hundred fifty thousand dollars, or spend 5 years in jail, but he's just too scared to care. What can I say? He called my bluff.

The door of the physical examination room opens halfway, and Ruben sticks his head out.

RUBEN

Am I done here? I really have to get going.

SGT. NEGRON

Ruben, come out here. You gotta talk to me, Ruben.

Ruben steps out of the physical examination room, and Sgt. Negrone puts his arms around his shoulder while he tries to get through to him.

RUBEN

Well, it's like I told the doctor. I'm just not feeling this thing.

SGT. NEGRON

Ruben, I didn't come looking for you. You came into my office and told me that you wanted to enlist into the Navy because you were sick of temping, and now you want to walk away from this?

RUBEN

I appreciate all that you've done for me, Sgt. Negrone, but I can't do this.

SGT. NEGRON

I'm your recruiter, Ruben. You're taking money out of my pocket by backing out on me, you know that?

RUBEN

I'm sorry. It's just that I walked into your office a week ago, and I'm already taking the oath. It's all happening too fast.

Sgt. Negrone realizes that there is just no talking to Ruben and saves his breath.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SGT. NEGRON

I've gone out of my way to get you ready for this day, and this is what you do? Do me a favor, alright? Stop telling people that no one's ever tried to do anything for you. That's all bullshit.

RUBEN

You're my ride. Can you at least drive me to the nearest train station?

SGT. NEGRON

Find your own damn way home.

Ruben doesn't say another word and walks out of Sgt. Negron's life forever.

M.E.P.S. SHRINK

Sorry, Sgt. Negron. Those are the brakes.

SGT. NEGRON

What the hell is it with our kids these days?

INT. POP'S WAREHOUSE - DAY

Busy. Ruben is hard at work on the cosmetics assembly line, stacking boxes on the pallet that's laid out on the floor behind him.

Ruben stops work to talk to DAWOUD, 18, his high school buddy.

RUBEN

Come on, Dawoud, you could be honest with me. It's alright. I won't get offended.

Dawoud continues to work while he answers Ruben.

DAWOUD

I am being honest with you. What more do you want from me?

RUBEN

You don't think any less of me for not going through with the enlistment?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAWOUD

Listen, if I were you, I sure as hell wouldn't leave a girl like Missy to serve a country that's doing everything in it's power to kick my people out.

RUBEN

Amen to that. I've never thought of it that way before, so why do I still feel like a wimp for backing out?

Dawoud sees the boss coming.

DAWOUD

Oh, here comes the boss, Ruben. You better not let his punk ass catch you fuckin' around.

Dawoud and Ruben get back to work.

RUBEN

It's assholes like him that sometimes makes me wish I never graduated from Beach Channel high school.

An unkept middle-aged man gets to Ruben's work station and starts in on him right away. This is RUBEN'S BOSS.

RUBEN'S BOSS

What time did you come in today, Delgado?!

RUBEN

So, I come in late for the first time since I started working here three weeks ago, and you still won't cut me some slack.

RUBEN'S BOSS

Cut you some slack?

Ruben stops work to face his boss.

RUBEN

Yeah, I told you I came in late for work that day because there was a sick passenger on the train. Call it an excuse if you want, but I got no control over that!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RUBEN'S BOSS

Yeah, yeah, yeah, can I at least count on you to work some overtime today?

Subtly, Ruben's Boss drops a wad of cash on the floor.

RUBEN

I can't today.

RUBEN'S BOSS

No excuses or anything?

RUBEN

No.

RUBEN'S BOSS

I figured that much. Alright, get back to work.

RUBEN

I would love to. Do you think I could do that in peace?

Ruben's boss leaves him to his work.

DAWOUD

I'm betting that college is starting to look real good to you right about now, huh? I'm surprised you didn't follow Missy to Bronx Community College after graduation.

RUBEN

I wasn't ready for college! I graduated from Beach Channel by the skin of my teeth.

Ruben sticks the cosmetic kit in a box and seals it with tape.

DAWOUD

When was the last time you went up to Bronx Community College to see Missy?

RUBEN

It's been awhile. I'm gonna call her on my break and tell her to expect me after I get off from work.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Ruben places the box on the palate, he then looks down at the spot where his boss was just standing and sees a thick wad of cash on the floor. Without saying a word to Dawoud, Ruben kneels down to pick up and pocket the money.

INT. BRONX COMMUNITY COLLEGE CAMPUS - CHEMISTRY CLASS - DAY

A middle-aged man dressed in a flannel suit stands in front of a classroom of about 17 students and lectures to them about hydrogen bonding. This is PROFESSOR STRATTON.

PROFESSOR STRATTON

Hydrogen bonding occurs between hydrogen atoms and oxygen or nitrogen atoms. So in this respect, hydrogen bonding plays an essential role in the life process. The coiled, double-helical structure of DNA is stabilized by thousands of hydrogen bonds formed between particular segments of linked DNA strands.

Professor Stratton pauses to scan the room for confused faces.

PROFESSOR STRATTON (CONT'D)

Is that clear to everyone? Does anyone have a question?

(pause)

Okay, moving on.

A cute, wide-eyed female seated close to the blackboard has a question for Professor Stratton. This is MISSY.

MISSY

Professor Stratton, I have a question.

PROFESSOR STRATTON

Yes, what's your question?

Missy asks her question, while a nerdy kid sitting in the seat behind her looks down the crack of her ass. This is MATTY.

MISSY

Can you go over how the density of a substance is defined one more time?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PROFESSOR STRATTON

The density of a substance is defined as its mass per unit of volume. Mass is given in grams and the unit of volume is?

MISSY

Ummm, one cubic centimeter?

PROFESSOR STRATTON

Right. So, if I asked you how much does one cubic centimeter of liquid water weigh, how would you answer?

Missy is stuck.

PROFESSOR STRATTON (CONT'D)

1 gram! One cubic centimeter of liquid water weighs 1 gram. Hello? Where are you? I just said that mass is given in grams, and that the unit of volume is one cubic centimeter.

Feeling humiliated, Missy is left speechless, and Matty sticks up for her, in an attempt to win her over.

MATTY

Hey, hey, hey, watch how you talk to her!

Matty gets a laugh from some of the other students in the classroom, and Professor Stratton decides to end class for the day.

PROFESSOR STRATTON

Okay, I think that's enough for the day. We'll get started on chapter 3 on Thursday. Have a good night.

The students pack up to leave. Missy gets out of her seat and turns around to talk to Matty.

MISSY

Thanks for that, Matty. I am so lost. I have no idea what is going on in this class.

Matty tries to reassure Missy.

MATTY

It's early in the semester. Hang in there. You'll be alright.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MATTY (CONT'D)

Fuck Professor Stratton. He's an asshole. He didn't have to come at you like that.

MISSY

I don't know. I didn't learn any of this stuff in Beach Channel high school. I'm not prepared. I think it's best if I just drop the class.

MATTY

No, don't do that. It's too early. You gotta give it some time. Why don't you go to the department and complain about him? Maybe they'll let him go.

Matty packs up his things and hangs his back pack on his shoulder.

MISSY

Matty, they're not going to let a professor go based on the complaint of one person.

MATTY

Okay, then you go to the department and complain about him, and then I'll go in ten minutes later with my own list of complaints.

Missy smiles.

MISSY

See you later, Matty.

Matty smiles back and gives up.

MATTY

Alright.

Missy and Matty step out of the classroom and into the hallway together.

INT. BRONX COMMUNITY COLLEGE CAMPUS - LOEW HALL WAITING AREA - DAY

Missy finds Ruben on a couch, passing the time by people watching.

RUBEN

Hey, sexy.

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CONTINUED:

Ruben gets out of his seat to greet Missy with a hug and light tap on the lips.

MISSY

Hey.

Missy unloads her books on Ruben for him to carry.

RUBEN

What am I? A mule?

MISSY

Come on. I gotta get to the registration office before it closes.

RUBEN

I thought you were done for today?

MISSY

I am, but I gotta get one of those withdrawal cards to drop one of my classes.

Missy and Ruben talk on the walk to the registration office.

RUBEN

You're dropping a class already? I thought you were doing fine in all of your classes?

MISSY

I lied, okay?

RUBEN

Is it your philosophy class?

MISSY

Chemistry class, not that it's all good in Philosophy class, but I'm a full time student taking four classes, and if I could only choose one class to drop without losing my financial aid, I'd rather drop Chemistry.

RUBEN

And why is that?

MISSY

My Chemistry professor is a real dick compared to my other professors.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RUBEN

What makes your Chemistry Professor such a dick?

MISSY

Take today, for instance, all I did was ask my Chemistry Professor a question, and he made me look so stupid. Matty, a classmate of mine, felt so bad for me that he actually stood up for me and told the professor off. It was so sweet.

Ruben gets jealous.

RUBEN

Show me Matty! Where is he? I wanna see him.

MISSY

Calm down, Ruben.

RUBEN

I'm calm. I just wanna thank the guy who stood up for you in class today.

MISSY

Yeah right.

RUBEN

You're not going to take me to him?

MISSY

I don't know where he is! It's not like I've been following him around, keeping tabs on him, like some stalker!

RUBEN

Well, I think you're doing the right thing by dropping this class. It doesn't sound like you're having any fun. Let's get this class dropped.

MISSY

Whatever.

RUBEN

You wanna go to the Olive Garden afterwards?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MISSY

The Olive Garden? Did you get paid today? I thought you didn't get paid until Friday?

RUBEN

I don't. I'll tell you all about it over pasta.

Missy rolls her eyes at Ruben and smiles.

INT. POP'S WAREHOUSE - DAY

With his boss breathing down his neck, Ruben loads a cosmetic kit into a box, seals it up with duck tape in record time, and tries to find a place for it on a palate.

RUBEN'S BOSS

Ruben, I'd like to have a word with you.

Ruben stops what he's doing to talk to his boss.

RUBEN

What's up?

RUBEN'S BOSS

I'm gonna get right to it. You're not working out here. You're gonna have to go back to the temp agency.

RUBEN

Are you serious? Is this because I was late that day? Man, give me a break. That was like three weeks ago. I haven't been late since.

RUBEN'S BOSS

It's not just that.

RUBEN

It can't be because of my job performance. I've been busting my ass at this shitty job!

Ruben mentions the money that he found.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

Oh, I know what this is about. It's about that money that you planted on me.

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CONTINUED:

Ruben's boss plays dumb.

RUBEN'S BOSS

What money?

Ruben points to the spot on the floor where he found the money.

RUBEN

You left over a hundred dollars right there on the floor for me to pick up. You think I don't know you left that money there for me? I knew that taking the money was going to cost me my shitty job!

RUBEN'S BOSS

So, now you're going to accuse me of setting you up? Why would I do that? That's enough out of you, Delgado. I want you out of here now.

Ruben waves off his boss.

RUBEN

Man, you could deny it all you want. I'm not stupid. I'm glad I took that money! I'm outta here.

Ruben walks off the work station.

RUBEN'S BOSS

Give me a minute, Dawoud. I'll get someone to help you out. Bare with me.

The boss leaves Dawoud to find Ruben's replacement.

INT. BRONX COMMUNITY COLLEGE CAMPUS - LOEW HALL - DAY

Missy shows up to her chemistry class as the students are let out and runs into Matty.

MATTY

Hey, Missy!

MISSY

Hi, Matty.

Matty is caught off guard by Missy's friendly hello kiss on the cheek and rubs the side of his face.

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CONTINUED:

MATTY

I missed you in class today. What happened to you?

Matty notices the withdrawal card in Missy's hand.

MATTY (CONT'D)

Is that a withdrawal card I see in your hand?

MISSY

Yep.

MATTY

So, you're going through with it? You're dropping the course? There's nothing I could say that will change your mind?

MISSY

Nope.

MATTY

Well, I tried. Can I at least get your phone number, or something? We don't have to become strangers.

MISSY

I don't think my boyfriend would be okay with that, Matty, sorry. But I'll see you around the campus.

MATTY

Yeah, okay.

MISSY

Take care, Matty.

Matty sticks around to watch Missy speak with Professor Stratton about getting his signature to drop the course.

MISSY (CONT'D)

Professor Stratton, can you sign this for me? I can't drop the course without your signature.

PROFESSOR STRATTON

I was wondering why you didn't show up to class today.

Professor Stratton sets his brief case down on the desk to sign the card.

INT. DELGADO HOUSEHOLD - RUBEN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Ruben is still in bed fast asleep. A milf with a thick Spanish accent enters and wakes him up. This is RUBEN'S MOTHER.

RUBEN'S MOTHER

RUBEN! What are you doing in bed?  
Why aren't you at work?

Ruben is startled and sits up in his bed.

RUBEN

You scared me! I thought you  
barged in here to tell me that the  
house was on fire, or something!

Ruben goes back to sleep.

RUBEN'S MOTHER

Answer me, Ruben! What are you  
still doing in bed?! Did you walk  
out on another job? Your third  
job in two months? You did,  
didn't you?

RUBEN

Yeah, I don't know what I did to  
get on the boss man's bad side,  
but I sure as hell wasn't going to  
let him disrespect me.

RUBEN'S MOTHER

But you do have another job lined  
up, right?

RUBEN

No, not yet, but I'm working it.

RUBEN'S MOTHER

No, Ruben! Get up! Out of bed!  
I don't care what your boss said  
to you. You need to go back there  
and apologize.

RUBEN

You would like that, wouldn't you?  
Well, you could forget it! It's  
not going to happen.

Ruben's mother pulls the covers off him.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

What are you doing? What if I was  
naked under here?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUBEN'S MOTHER

Let's go!

RUBEN

I'm not ready get up yet!

RUBEN'S MOTHER

If you think you're just going to stay here, and not do anything, you got another coming!

RUBEN

You're putting me out?!

RUBEN'S MOTHER

What did you expect? I put your no good father out two years ago for trying to pull the same crap, remember?

RUBEN

I was planning on going to school in the Spring. I'm still trying to decide which school to go to.

RUBEN'S MOTHER

That's not good enough, Ruben. You're not in school, and you don't want to work, so out you go.

Ruben gets out of bed and puts on his wrinkled up street clothes.

RUBEN

That's all good! I'll crash with Nervous, and go to work for him.

Ruben leaves his bedroom with his mother in tow.

RUBEN'S MOTHER

If you're thinking about selling drugs on the streets, you could forget about ever setting foot in here again!

RUBEN

You're putting me out! I'm not your concern anymore! I gotta do something. I'm not gonna be homeless.

RUBEN'S MOTHER

Why don't you just get a regular job?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RUBEN'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

Get a regular job, and keep it!  
Keep it! Why can't you do that?!

RUBEN

Fuck a job!

Ruben walks out of his mother's house, and she stops herself from going after him.

EXT. CORNER OF EAST 110TH STREET - DAY

Ruben is skittish about making his first sale to a pot head looking to score.

RUBEN

What do you need?

Ruben keeps looking around for the cops.

POT HEAD

You got some hemp?

RUBEN

You a cop?

POT HEAD

Am I a cop?

RUBEN

Are you?

POT HEAD

No! You got some hemp, or don't you?

RUBEN

Let me see the money.

The pot head shows Ruben the ten in his hand.

POT HEAD

Are you new, or something? You're kind of bad at this.

A runner runs by and gets Ruben all jumpy.

RUBEN

Who is this? Who is this?

POT HEAD

He's nobody! He's just a runner gettin' his jog on!

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CONTINUED:

Ruben goes in his pocket and comes up with a dime bag but is too paranoid and uneasy about making the transaction.

RUBEN

Do me a favor... get lost.

Pot head is confused.

POT HEAD

What?

RUBEN

Get lost. I don't like the looks of you. Go try the guys on the next block.

Frustrated, the pot head puts the money away.

POT HEAD

Unbelievable! You better try something else. These streets are gonna eat you up alive.

The pot head walks away. Ruben pockets the dime bag and takes a deep breath.

INT. HOUSING TENEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Ruben comes to an apartment at the end of the hall, knocks, and an old friend of his from the neighborhood comes to the door. This is NERVOUS, 24.

NERVOUS

Ruben, what's good, kid?

RUBEN

It's all good.

Ruben and Nervous shake hands the way kids do on the streets.

NERVOUS

Come in.

Ruben enters the apartment, and Nervous locks the door behind him.

INT. NERVOUS'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ruben takes a seat on the couch.

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NERVOUS

You want a beer? Oh, that's right... you don't like the taste of beer. How 'bout a soda?

RUBEN

Na, that's alright.

NERVOUS

So, how did it go -- your first day of hustling?

RUBEN

Not so good.

Nervous jumps to conclusion.

NERVOUS

You didn't fuck my money up, did you?

RUBEN

Relax, Nervous! I got your shit right here.

Ruben goes in his pocket and puts five dime bags on the coffee table.

NERVOUS

Oh, well, as long as you got my shit, you're good. So, what happened?

Nervous takes the bags off the table and pockets them.

RUBEN

I just couldn't go through with it. I don't know how you guys do it. I enjoy my freedom too much.

Ruben sees Nervous smiling and takes it as an insult.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

What are you smiling about? It's almost as if you were expecting me to come back to you with my tail between my legs, or something.

NERVOUS

No, it's not like that at all. I just knew you weren't gonna sell anything. You're not that guy. I didn't say anything before because I knew you'd take it the wrong way.

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CONTINUED: (2)

Ruben gets defensive.

RUBEN

Well, you couldn't be more wrong. I could hustle the streets with the best of them -- it's just that the whole prison thing rattles me a bit.

NERVOUS

Okay, I get it. Not everybody could do this kind of shit. That's nothing to be ashamed of.

RUBEN

I suppose you're gonna want me out of here now, right? Don't worry. I'll be out of here in the morning. I'll crash at my girl's crib. Her mother set her up with her own apartment. I should've gone there in the first place.

NERVOUS

Dude, don't even sweat it. You could crash for as long as it takes you to get on your feet.

RUBEN

Thanks. That's cool. There was no way my girl was going to let me crash at her crib without a job anyway.

NERVOUS

You got that right.

RUBEN

I know I'm gonna have to get a job at some point. The trick is to get one that's gonna keep me from walking out on it, no matter what.

There's a knock on the door.

NERVOUS

Who the fuck is that?

RUBEN

Are you expecting anyone?

NERVOUS

Hell no.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Nervous goes to the door, looks through the peephole, and sees an Army recruiter dressed in his class A's on the other side of the door.

RUBEN

Who is it?

Nervous turns to Ruben and puts his index finger to his lips to shut him up.

The recruiter then slips a business card under the door and leaves, and Nervous looks through the peephole to see that he is gone.

NERVOUS

Man, the army must be getting desperate, sending recruiters to the projects to look for a few good men.

Nervous picks up the business card.

RUBEN

What is that? A business card?

NERVOUS

Yeah.

Ruben stops Nervous from tearing it.

RUBEN

No, don't rip it up. Let me see it.

Nervous walks over to the couch to give Ruben the business card.

NERVOUS

What do you want with that? You're not thinking about enlisting, are you?

Ruben looks the card over.

NERVOUS (CONT'D)

Ruben?

Ruben looks up at Nervous and smiles.

INT. NATIONAL GUARD ARMORY - DAY

Ruben pops his head into the recruiting office and asks to speak to a recruiter. SGT. GRAHAM is the only one in the tiny office for him to speak with.

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CONTINUED:

RUBEN

Excuse me? I'm looking to enlist in the National Guard. Is this the right place?

SGT. GRAHAM

It is. Get in here, son. Let me take a look at you.

Ruben walks in and shakes hands with Sgt. Graham.

SGT. GRAHAM (CONT'D)

I'm sergeant Graham.

RUBEN

Ruben Delgado.

SGT. GRAHAM

Have a seat.

Ruben sits down.

SGT. GRAHAM (CONT'D)

How old are you, Delgado?

RUBEN

18.

SGT. GRAHAM

And you're sure that you're ready to make this move, huh?

Sgt. Graham sits down behind his desk.

RUBEN

Yeah, I don't know why I didn't think of coming here in the first place -- I could've done without the tongue lashing I got from that Navy recruiter.

SGT. GRAHAM

Navy recruiter? What do you mean?

RUBEN

I was this close to joining the Navy, but I backed out at the last minute. I think it was the thought of spending all that time on a ship that changed my mind.

SGT. GRAHAM

Oh, I see. It's no wonder that your recruiter was so upset.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SGT. GRAHAM (CONT'D)

But it's a good thing you found out that the Navy was not your calling before it was too late.

RUBEN

Yeah, I suppose.

SGT. GRAHAM

However, I'm still going to need a few things from you before we continue. We just can't let you enlist.

RUBEN

High school diploma, driver's license, and social security card, right?

SGT. GRAHAM

That's right.

RUBEN

I don't have my high school diploma with me. Can I show that to you at a latter time?

SGT. GRAHAM

Not a problem. We'll work with what you have now for the time being.

RUBEN

I have my social security card, and my driver's license, but like I told the navy recruiter, I'm not an experienced driver. I've only been driving here and there since I got my license.

SGT. GRAHAM

That's fine.

Ruben shows Sgt. Graham his license and social security card.

RUBEN

Am I gonna have to take the ASVAB test over again, as well?

SGT. GRAHAM

Yes, you will, but that shouldn't be a problem for you.

INT. FREDERICK DOUGLASS HOUSES - DAY

Ruben and Missy take the stairs up to his mother's apartment on the second floor.

RUBEN

Wait a minute.

Ruben has Missy wait for him at the top of the steps, while he runs back down to the bottom of the steps.

MISSY

Where are you going? Doesn't your mother live on the second floor?

RUBEN

Yeah, but I need to get my legs in better shape for boot camp.

Ruben gets to the bottom of the steps and runs back up to Missy.

MISSY

Are you good?

RUBEN

One more set.

Ruben makes his way back down the steps.

MISSY

Ruben, you're stalling.

RUBEN

Just one more set! I'm telling you my legs really need this.

Missy humors Ruben and waits on him.

INT. FREDERICK DOUGLASS HOUSES - HALLWAY - DAY

Ruben knocks on his mother's door, and she answers it.

RUBEN'S MOTHER

What do you want?

Ruben's mother acknowledges Missy.

RUBEN'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

Hello, Missy.

MISSY

Hi, Mrs. Delgado.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ruben's mother keeps him standing at the door.

RUBEN'S MOTHER  
(back to Ruben)  
Well, what do you want?

RUBEN  
(panting)  
I need to get something. Can I  
come in?

RUBEN'S MOTHER  
Are you going to start pulling  
your own weight around here?

RUBEN  
Actually, I'm enlisting in the  
National Guard, and I need to get  
a couple of things out of my room.

Ruben's mother laughs in his face.

RUBEN'S MOTHER  
Yeah right. You're not joining  
the Army. Missy, is he joining  
the army?

MISSY  
It's true, Mrs. Delgado.

RUBEN  
Now can I come in?

Ruben's mother steps aside and lets Ruben and Missy come  
in.

INT. DELGADO HOUSEHOLD - RUBEN'S BEDROOM - DAY

With a cup of tea in her hand, Ruben's mother follows him  
into his room. Once inside, Ruben takes down the diploma  
hanging on his wall and sticks it in his backpack.

RUBEN'S MOTHER  
What do you want with your high  
school diploma?

RUBEN  
I told you they won't let me  
enlist without it.

RUBEN'S MOTHER  
I don't get it. Last time you  
thought that the military wasn't  
for you and backed out.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUBEN'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

So why are you enlisting again?  
What am I missing?

RUBEN

Last time I was going in full-time, but this time I'm signing up to go in part-time, which means I'll be able to start college sooner than later.

RUBEN'S MOTHER

And all this time I thought it was your girlfriend that was keeping you here.

Ruben looks through his dresser and can't find his official transcript.

RUBEN'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

Now what are you looking for?

RUBEN

Where's my high school transcript?  
I need it! It was right here!  
Did you move it?

Ruben frantically looks through his drawers, tossing everything in it on the floor.

RUBEN'S MOTHER

Oh yeah, I did.

Ruben's mother remembers where she put his transcript and looks under his mattress to get it.

RUBEN'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

Here it is.

Ruben takes it from his mother and sticks it in his bag along with his high school diploma.

RUBEN

Why can't you leave things where I put them? Were you snooping through my things again? If only you had snooped around like this and found out what kind of man dad was before you said I do to him -- I could've turned out to be more of a well rounded person.

Ruben cleans up after himself and puts everything back in his dresser.

INT. SERGEANT GRAHAM'S CAR - DAY

Sgt. Graham drives Ruben to Fort Hamilton in Brooklyn for processing.

SGT. GRAHAM

I hope you got plenty of rest last night. You've got a long day at Fort Hamilton ahead of you.

Ruben sits quietly in the passenger seat.

SGT. GRAHAM(CONT'D)

You nervous?

RUBEN

A little. I'm not gonna lie.

SGT. GRAHAM

You're not thinking of backing out, are you? It'll hurt my feelings, if you back out.

RUBEN

No, I'm not going to back out.

SGT. GRAHAM

Glad to hear it. Don't worry. Did you get a chance to go over the ASVAB practice test I gave you?

RUBEN

Yeah, I did.

SGT. GRAHAM

Then you should be fine. Just sit back and relax. We'll be there soon.

Sgt. Graham drives across the Verrazono Narrows Bridge.

INT. SUBWAY RESTAURANT - MOMENTS LATER

Patrons enjoy their food while Ruben sits at a table alone and waits on Sgt. Graham to bring him his sandwich.

SGT. GRAHAM

Here you go, Delgado -- one foot long sub.

Ruben takes his sandwich.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUBEN

Thanks.

Sgt. Graham takes a seat.

SGT. GRAHAM

You don't have to thank me. It's my treat. You kicked ass today.

Ruben is deep in thought.

SGT. GRAHAM (CONT'D)

You alright? You're kind of quiet.

RUBEN

Couldn't you get me an MOS that didn't entail any driving?

SGT. GRAHAM

Come on! Give me a break! I know you don't have much driving experience, but you're only looking at 6 weeks of training at AIT school.

Ruben takes a bite out of his sandwich.

SGT. GRAHAM (CONT'D)

13 weeks of boot camp, and 6 weeks of driving trucks around at AIT School. And even if you suck at it, they can't fire you.

RUBEN

You're right. I know you're right. I don't know what I'm worrying about.

SGT. GRAHAM

That's more like it. Now, eat up. Stop worrying so much.

Sgt. Graham remembers another small detail as he bites into his own sandwich.

SGT. GRAHAM (CONT'D)

And remember, if you know of anyone who might be interested in enlisting, bring him to me, and that will move you up the ranks a lot quicker.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RUBEN

No, I can't think of anyone, but  
I'll keep my eyes and ears open.

Ruben takes another bite of his sandwich.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FORT BENNING - MESS HALL - EARLY MORNING

Ruben, dressed in his battle dress uniform, sits down to  
eat his breakfast. BAKER, 18, one of Ruben's battle  
buddies, joins him.

RUBEN

Yo, Baker, can I see your National  
Guard Almanac when we get back to  
the barracks?

Baker ignores Ruben.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

Baker, did you hear me?! Can I  
see your National Guard Almanac,  
when we get back to the barracks?

Baker continues to ignore Ruben.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

You're not talking to me?! What  
did I do to you?!

BAKER

(thick southern  
accent)

Nothing. I just don't wanna get  
bounced from the mess hall for  
talking during chow, okay?!

RUBEN

What are you worried about?!  
You're an E2! Drill Sergeants  
don't fuck with E2s like they do  
E1s.

BAKER

What are you talking about?! In  
the eyes of a Drill Sergeant, an  
E2 is just as chewed up as an E1.  
Make no mistake about that.

Baker's thick southern accent makes it hard for Ruben to  
understand him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUBEN  
You from New Orleans?

BAKER  
No, I'm from Alabama. Why?

RUBEN  
That's a mighty thick accent you got there. I didn't understand a word you just said.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES, an intimidating figure, makes his rounds, catches Ruben in the middle of a conversation, and bounces him from the mess hall.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES  
What's the matter, Delgado? Is the food not to your liking?

RUBEN  
I like my food just fine, especially the corn bread, Drill Sergeant!

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES  
You could've fooled me! You got more shit coming out of your mouth than you got goin' in! That must mean you're done! Clear the table!

RUBEN  
Yes, Drill Sergeant!

Ruben clears the table and dumps his food in the dumpster.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES  
Wait a minute, Delgado.

Drill Sergeant Wilkes notices some hairy dirt above Ruben's upper lip.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)  
Come over here.

Ruben walks over to Drill Sergeant Wilkes.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)  
Did you shave this morning?

Ruben is too afraid to look Drill Sergeant Wilkes in the eyes and looks down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RUBEN

I did, Drill Sergeant!

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

Look me in the eyes, Private.

Drill Sergeant Wilkes turns Ruben's head from side to side.

RUBEN

Yes, Drill Sergeant!

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

Your razor must be getting dull on you. You're just in luck. I happen to have a razor right here.

Drill Sergeant Wilkes puts his hand in his pocket and comes up with a razor.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)

And I'm gonna dry shave your ass myself.

(pause)

Now, hold still.

Ruben stands very still while Drill Sergeant Wilkes proceeds to dry shave him in front of everyone.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)

That's more like it. Now, what are you going to buy yourself the next time your at the PX?

RUBEN

A new razor.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

Good. Now, you can go.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE MESS HALL - EVENING

Frustrated, Ruben storms out of the mess hall, bleeding from the razor nicks on his face. On his way back to the barracks, he fails to salute an officer.

OFFICER

Hey, private, are you going to salute me anytime soon?

Ruben doesn't wait to be told to drop and do push ups.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

What are you doing?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUBEN

(sighs)  
How many do you want?

OFFICER

No, I don't want any push ups from you.

RUBEN

You don't?!

OFFICER

No, get back on your feet! All I want from you is a salute. I'm an officer. I think I deserve that respect.

Ruben gets back to his feet and gives the officer his salute.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

Okay, now you can go about your business, and the next time you come across someone you're not sure is an officer, salute him, just to be safe. Carry on.

The officer has just one more question to ask Ruben before letting him go.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

Hey, private!

Ruben stops in his tracks and turns around to face the officer.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

Who is your Drill Sergeant?

RUBEN

Drill Sergeant Wilkes.

OFFICER

Ah, Wilkes. I know him well.

(pause)

Okay, carry on.

Ruben walks off and makes his way back to the barracks.

INT. FORT BENNING BARRACKS - MOMENTS LATER

Ruben enters and nearly gets run over by recruits in a hurry to get out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUBEN

Yo, slow down! Where's the fire?

Ruben makes his way to his bunk and comes across a recruit struggling to apply hospital corners to the bunk next to his. This is COTTO.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

Cotto, what's going on? Why is everyone in a hurry to get out of here?

COTTO

We got thirty minutes to use the phones.

RUBEN

Oh yeah? Shit, then I better hurry up and get down there.

COTTO

Delgado, before you go, help me with my bunk?

RUBEN

Help you with your bunk? I gotta get on the phone before the lines get too long.

COTTO

Come on, man? Be a good battle buddy, and help me out? I can't use the phone until my bed is made.

Ruben reluctantly agrees to help Cotto make his bed.

RUBEN

You're killing me, Cotto. I mean, there are things I need to get squared away myself, but at least I know how to make my own bed.

Ruben gets to work on Cotto's bunk.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

Are you watching?

Cotto watches Ruben closely.

COTTO

I'm watching.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RUBEN

I hope so. Christmas leave is right around the corner, and I'm not coming back after the break. What are you going to do then? None of the guys here are gonna have your back.

COTTO

You're not coming back to finish boot camp?

RUBEN

I can't take this shit anymore!

COTTO

Why not?

Ruben continues to work while he runs down the list of things he hates about military living.

RUBEN

This place is not for me. I can't conform to the ways of military living. It's like they're trying to turn us into robots, not that I hate robots. I like robots and shit, but come on, man.

COTTO

Yeah, I know, but I don't think you've got a strong enough case. I don't think the military is going to grant you a discharge if that's all you've got.

RUBEN

Well, then I'm just gonna have to come up with a better story, but one way or another, I'm outta here. So what if I don't get the GI BILL -- I'll still have my signing bonus.

Ruben completes the task of making Cotto's bunk.

INT. MISSY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Hot and bothered, Missy plugs in her vibrating dildo into an outlet and switches it on before stripping down to her underwear. The cordless phone rings and Missy gets off the couch to answer it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MISSY

Hello?

EXT. FORT BENNING - NIGHT

Ruben is on a pay phone outside of the barracks, his face spotless.

RUBEN

Hey, what's up? It's me.

INTERCUT AS NEEDED.

MISSY

Hey, baby! I haven't heard from you in so long. I miss you.

RUBEN

You do?

MISSY

Of course, I miss you. I miss hearing your voice.

RUBEN

I'm sorry, but I told you the last time we spoke that it's not so easy to get to a phone.

MISSY

So, how's it going over there?

RUBEN

Don't ask. Nothing has changed since the last time we spoke. That's all you need to know right now.

MISSY

You're only a few weeks away from coming home, so just hang in there.

RUBEN

Anyway, what were you doing when I called?

MISSY

Just chilling on the couch with my vibrator.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUBEN

Do you want me to let you get back to it?

MISSY

No, that's okay. You could listen to me moan while I pleasure myself over the phone, unless you have to go...

The sound of Missy's toilet flushing can be heard in the background. Matty exits Missy's bathroom in his underwear.

MATTY

(to Missy)

Are you ready for me?

Missy gestures at Matty to keep his mouth shut and hangs up on Ruben in a panic.

RUBEN

Missy, are you there?

Ruben gestures to the recruits waiting on him that he'll be on the phone for a few minutes longer.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

Missy, are you there?

Ruben hears the dial tone and hangs up.

EXT. FORT BENNING FIELD - DAY

Drill Sergeant Wilkes gives his recruits a crash course in hand to hand combat and demonstrates how to apply a triangle choke hold.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

So, if you're struggling with your enemy, and your enemy somehow manages to get you on your back and mount you, what do you? How do you get out of this? Well, you guys all know Drill Sergeant Estevez, right? Drill Sergeant Estevez is going to help me demonstrate to you how to choke someone out with a triangle choke hold.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DRILL SERGEANT ESTEVEZ, with the body of an offensive lineman, and Drill Sergeant Wilkes want to make the demonstration theatrical for the recruits.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)

(to the recruits)

So, I'm outside my own neighborhood, minding my own business, and this guy, who I don't know, walks towards me and bumps me.

Drill Sergeant Estevez bumps Drill Sergeant Wilkes hard and keeps moving.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)

(to Estevez)

Yo, the word is excuse me!

Drill Sergeant Estevez turns around to face Drill Sergeant Wilkes.

DRILL SERGEANT ESTEVEZ

No, you bumped me, but I wanted to let it go! That's why I didn't say anything. You're not even from this neighborhood. What are you doing around here?

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

I'm a grown ass man. I'll go wherever the fuck I wanna go.

Drill Sergeant Estevez aggressively approaches Drill Sergeant Wilkes.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)

So, you're a grown ass man, huh?  
Well, Mr. Grown ass man, let's go!

Drill Sergeant Wilkes and Drill Sergeant Estevez wrestle each other to the ground.

RUBEN

(cheering)

Whip his ass, Drill Sergeant Estevez!

Drill sergeant Estevez manages to get Drill Sergeant Wilkes on his back and mounts him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES  
 (to the recruits)  
 Okay, now I'm on my back, and my  
 enemy mounts me, so what do I do  
 from here? I do this.

Drill Sergeant Wilkes swings his legs over Drill Sergeant  
 Estevez's shoulders and applies pressure.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)  
 Did you guys see that?

Ruben watches closely and doesn't like how close Drill  
 Sergeant Estevez is to kissing Drill Sergeant Wilkes in  
 the nuts.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)  
 That's how it's done.

Drill Sergeant Estevez taps out, and Drill Sergeant  
 Wilkes releases him.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)  
 Thank you, Estevez.

DRILL SERGEANT ESTEVEZ  
 No worries.

Both Drill Sergeants get up off the ground.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES  
 (to his recruits)  
 Okay, now I want you guys to  
 partner up and practice this move.

Ruben and Cotto partner up together.

COTTO  
 Okay, Delgado, do you wanna go  
 first, or do you want me to get on  
 my back?

RUBEN  
 You know what? Let's go over the  
 omoplata again. I like that move  
 better.

COTTO  
 We already went over the omoplata.  
 We gotta practice the triangle  
 choke hold now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

RUBEN

No, I don't really care for that move. Let's go over the omoplata one more time.

COTTO

What don't you like about the triangle choke hold?

RUBEN

Drill Sergeant Estevez was this close to kissing Drill Sergeant Wilkes in the nuts? Thanks, but I think I'll pass on that shit.

Cotto laughs.

COTTO

You're funny, Delgado. Alright, the omoplata it is then.

RUBEN

Good, then let's get to it.

Ruben and Cotto get into position.

EXT. FORT BENNING - PARKING LOT - DAY

The recruits line up to board a school bus taking them to the obstacle course. Drill Sergeant Wilkes pulls Ruben out of line to have a word with him.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

Delgado, an officer came to me to talk about you specifically, and do you wanna know what he said?

RUBEN

I think I know what he said, Drill Sergeant.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

So, what is it? You don't think that an officer is worthy of a salute?

RUBEN

I plead the fifth out of fear that whatever I say will incriminate me, Drill Sergeant!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES  
You're chewed up, private, but  
I'll fix you yet! Get in the  
front lean and rest position!

RUBEN  
Yes, Drill Sergeant!

Ruben drops to the ground.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES  
Give me twenty push ups!

RUBEN  
Yes, Drill Sergeant!

Ruben counts off twenty push ups for Drill Sergeant  
Wilkes.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES  
Now, get on the bus!

RUBEN  
Yes, Drill Sergeant!

Ruben gets up off the ground and gets on the bus.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES  
You better get squared away real  
fast, Private!

Drill Sergeant Wilkes boards the bus after Ruben.

EXT. OBSTACLE COURSE - MOMENTS LATER

Drill Sergeant Wilkes approaches an NBC specialist and  
has a conversation with him.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES  
How's it going?

NBC SPECIALIST  
Not too bad. I'm lookin' forward  
to pulling the pins out of my  
canisters and choking these  
motherfuckers out.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES  
Then you're just the guy I want to  
talk to.

NBC SPECIALIST  
Yeah?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

Do you see that recruit over there?

Drill Sergeant Wilkes points Ruben out for the specialist.

NBC SPECIALIST

Yeah, what about him?

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

I want you to do me a favor.

INT. OBSTACLE COURSE - THE GAS CHAMBER - MOMENTS LATER

Ruben, and about 50 other recruits, wait for instructions from the NBC specialist.

NBC SPECIALIST

Do not put your masks on until I pull the pin out of these canisters. Try to answer our questions as quickly as possible so that you can get the hell outta here! Put your masks on now!

The NBC specialist pulls the pin out of two canisters. Ruben rushes to put his mask on and reacts immediately to the nerve gas as it seeps through. Ruben tries to make it to the exit doors.

NBC SPECIALIST (CONT'D)

Not so fast, Private! Who is your commander in chief?

Ruben can't answer.

RUBEN

Just let me out, man!

NBC SPECIALIST

What did you call me?!

RUBEN

Who knows who the commander in chief is?! They're still recounting the votes, no?!

NBC SPECIALIST

Try George W. Bush!

RUBEN

Okay, George W. Bush!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NBC SPECIALIST  
Now, recite the infantryman's  
creed!

Ruben has his hands around his throat.

RUBEN  
I don't know the whole thing!

NBC SPECIALIST  
Then recite what you do know!

RUBEN  
I am infantry...

NBC SPECIALIST  
I didn't catch that! Sound off  
like you got a pair!

Ruben tries again.

RUBEN  
I am infantry! I am my country's  
strength in war, her deterrent in  
peace! That's it! That's all I  
know!

NBC SPECIALIST  
Are you sure that's all you know?!

RUBEN  
Yes, let me out! I'm gonna die!

The NBC specialist steps aside and lets Ruben out of the chamber. With his face covered in mucus, Ruben removes his mask and throws up. Ruben then looks up and sees Drill Sergeant Wilkes laughing in the distance.

EXT. OBSTACLE COURSE - MOMENTS LATER

During field chow, Ruben, Baker, and Cotto talk about their experience in the gas chamber over MRE rations.

RUBEN  
I don't know about you guys, but,  
to me, it felt like I was choking  
on dry grains of rice.

BAKER  
How long were you in there for,  
Delgado?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUBEN

I was in there for at least ten minutes, and the whole thing reeked of Drill Sergeant Wilkes -- that ugly bastard!

COTTO

Here comes Drill Sergeant Wilkes now.

Drill Sergeant Wilkes and his buddy, Drill Sergeant Estevez, find Ruben and give him a hard time.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

There you go, Delgado. I was looking all over for you. How did you like it in there?

Ruben fires back at Drill Sergeant Wilkes in a demonic voice.

RUBEN

That was much too vulgar display of power, Drill Sergeant.

Drill Sergeant Wilkes smiles and turns to Estevez.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

What say you, Estevez? Do you have any recruits like this one under your charge?

Drill Sergeant Estevez scoffs at Wilkes.

DRILL SERGEANT ESTEVEZ

Do I?!

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

No hard feelings -- right, Delgado?

DRILL SERGEANT ESTEVEZ

(to Ruben)

I'll tell you what -- your Drill Sergeant will get off your back, if you do a spot on impression of him. Your Drill Sergeant likes impressions. It's got to be spot on, though.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

Yeah, Delgado, it's got to be spot on. If you don't make us laugh, the whole thing is off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Ruben's buddies egg him on.

COTTO

Yeah, Delgado. Do it.

BAKER

This is your moment, Delgado.

Ruben is talked into it.

DRILL SERGEANT ESTEVEZ

Here we go.

Ruben paces back and forth to warm up and jumps right into it.

RUBEN

Delgado, you're chewed up! You gotta get squared away and fast! Or do you wanna be in the front lean and rest position your whole life? You do, don't you? Why? What's so special about that position anyway?

Ruben cracks his buddies up.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

Never mind, Private, I like you better with your face in the dirt. I can't stand the sight of you. Did you even shave this morning? Looks like your razor's getting dull on you. I'm gonna dry shave your ass myself. Hold still now.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

(smiling)

Stand down, Delgado! That's good enough.

Ruben gets back to his chow.

COTTO

(laughing)

You're crazy, Delgado.

Ruben gets a pat on his back from his buddies.

INT. FORT BENNING BARRACKS - NIGHT

It's lights out. Ruben is on fire watch duty and shines his flashlight on Cotto in tears.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUBEN

You alright, Cotto? What are you crying about?

Cotto wipes the tears from his eyes.

COTTO

I was just reading a letter I got from my family today. My little girl's upset because her parakeet is close to death, and I'm not there for her.

RUBEN

How old is she?

COTTO

She's 4.

RUBEN

Well, just think that in a few days we'll all be going home for the holidays.

COTTO

Yeah, you're right. What am I doing? Forget that you ever saw me like this, okay?

Ruben helps himself to a bunch of photos on Cotto's bed.

RUBEN

Do you mind?

COTTO

Go ahead.

RUBEN

When were these taken?

COTTO

They were taken a week before I shipped out.

Ruben goes through the photos one by one.

RUBEN

Is this you?

Cotto looks at the photo.

COTTO

Yeah, that's me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RUBEN

Even if my hair could grow all the way down to my ass, I would never let my hair grow that long. Lucky for me, my hair grows up and out into a Puerto Rican afro.

Ruben continues to look through the pictures.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

Why did you pose as a gangster in this picture when you're flashing nothing but a bunch of ones?

COTTO

(defensive)

What?! Let me see that!

Cotto snatches the picture out of Ruben's hand.

COTTO (CONT'D)

No, I got 4 tens, 3 twenties, and 17 ones.

RUBEN

Yo, what time is it?

Cotto checks his watch.

COTTO

Oh, I almost forgot you don't like being told military time. It's 12:14.

RUBEN

Where the hell is Petrie?! He's supposed to relieve me! I should be in bed by now! I gotta get some sleep.

COTTO

Yeah, I didn't want to say anything, but you're really starting to look like shit.

Ruben walks away from Cotto to find his shift replacement fast asleep in his bunk. This is PETRIE.

RUBEN

Let's go, Petrie! It's your shift for fire watch!

Ruben tries to wake Petrie up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

RUBEN (CONT'D)

C'mon, Petrie! You were supposed to relieve me 20 minutes ago!

Petrie rolls over on his side to ignore Ruben.

PETRIE

Get out of here, Delgado!

RUBEN

Get out of here?! You gotta get up! I'm not gonna leave you alone until you do!

PETRIE

You're gonna get hurt if you don't get away from me, Delgado!

RUBEN

You don't scare me! Get your ass up!

Petrie sits up in his bed and snaps at Ruben.

PETRIE

Get the fuck out of my face!  
Fucking illegals, man! I swear to God!

PRIVATE LAWERANCE, Petrie's battle buddy, decides to play peace maker and volunteers to relieve Ruben.

PRIVATE LAWERANCE

I'll relieve you, Delgado. I'll take over Petrie's shift. I'm supposed to relieve him anyway.

RUBEN

No, fuck that! You don't have to do that, Lawerance.

PRIVATE LAWERANCE

No, it's alright. If Drill Sergeant Wilkes walks in here and catches the two of you going at it, he'll smoke all of our asses. So, I'll take Petrie's shift, and that way no one has to get smoked.

RUBEN

(to Petrie)

You should thank your buddy here for stepping in and saving your ass, bitch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

PETRIE

Whatever you say, Delgado.

RUBEN

I'll remember this shit, bitch.

Ruben returns to his bunk to turn in, and Lawerance is left to get the rest of the recruits to do the same.

PRIVATE LAWERANCE

(to the recruits)

Alright, show's over! Nothing to see here! Everybody, back in your bunks!

The situation defused, the rest of the recruits return to their bunks.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LIVERY CAB - BACK SEAT - NIGHT

Ruben, dressed in his Class A's, is on his way to his mother's apartment. The driver pulls over to the curb and lets Ruben out in front of his mother's building.

INT. DELGADO HOUSEHOLD - NIGHT

Ruben enters the apartment. His mother hears him come in from her bedroom and comes out to greet him at the door.

RUBEN'S MOTHER

Is that my son at the door?

RUBEN

Yeah, it's me.

Ruben's mother gives him a big hug.

RUBEN'S MOTHER

My goodness! I thought you said your Drill Sergeant was a monster?! He can't be that bad, if he let you come home to be with me for the holidays. Let me take a look at you.

Ruben's mother checks him out from head to toe.

RUBEN'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

My God, Ruben, you look like shit! What have they been putting you through over there?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUBEN

I'll tell you all about it later.

Ruben heads to his room with his baggage.

RUBEN'S MOTHER

I'm only kidding, dear. You look good. What do you think of the Christmas lights in the window? Did you notice them from outside?

RUBEN

Yeah, you put up the same Christmas lights every year.

RUBEN'S MOTHER

Are you hungry? I'll fix you something to eat, and then you'll tell me everything. I wanna know all about it.

INT. RUBEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ruben enters and drops his duffle bag on the floor, before falling face down on his bed to go to sleep.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Ruben eats the meal that was prepared for him, with his mother sitting across from him at the dinner table.

RUBEN'S MOTHER

So, tell me again what happened? What do you mean you can't go back? What did you do to piss the Drill Sergeant off?

RUBEN

I didn't do anything! Why does it always have to be me?! What's up with you? And you wonder why I never tell you anything.

RUBEN'S MOTHER

Your Drill Sergeant wouldn't tell you to stay home for no reason, would he?

RUBEN

I don't know what you want me to tell you! The guy is demented.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUBEN'S MOTHER

Well, you'll talk to your recruiter tomorrow, and see what he tells you. I've never heard of such a thing. You can't sign a contract with these people, and not follow through without getting in trouble.

RUBEN

I know.

RUBEN'S MOTHER

I'm going to bed. We'll talk more in the morning. Good night.

RUBEN

Good night.

INT. NATIONAL GUARD ARMORY - SGT. GRAHAM'S OFFICE - DAY

Ruben, dressed in his street clothes, stops by to pay Sgt. Graham a visit.

RUBEN

Sgt. Graham.

Ruben catches Sgt. Graham at a bad time.

SGT. GRAHAM

(pleasantly  
surprised)

Hey, Delgado! How's it going?

Sgt. Graham shakes Ruben's hand, and then he throws on a coat.

SGT. GRAHAM (CONT'D)

You look good. Are you here on leave?

RUBEN

Yeah. I just stopped by to ask you how do I go about getting discharged.

Sgt. Graham laughs.

SGT. GRAHAM

You looking to get discharged?  
You hate it that much, huh?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUBEN

Well, no, it's not that. My mother's very sick. She has no one here to look after her, and I'm the only family, she's got.

SGT. GRAHAM

Oh, wow, I'm sorry to hear that. That's too bad.

Ruben keeps a straight face.

RUBEN

Yeah, it is.

SGT. GRAHAM

Okay, so you want out? Yeah, sure, I could definitely help you with that. Unfortunately, I don't have time right now. I have to pick up a recruit and drive him over to Fort Hamilton. Sorry.

RUBEN

That's alright. I'll come back later this week.

SGT. GRAHAM

Yeah, come back Thursday. I'll be here all day. Unless, you don't mind sitting down with my partner and going over everything with him? He's good people.

Ruben sees Sgt. Graham's co-worker sitting behind a desk doing paper work.

RUBEN

I'm sure he's a good dude, but I feel like I know you already, so I'd rather just deal with you directly.

SGT. GRAHAM

Okay, then come back Thursday.

RUBEN

I'll do that.

SGT. GRAHAM

I gotta get going. Come on. I'll walk you out.

RUBEN

Alright.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Sgt. Graham and Ruben walk out of the office together.

INT. MANNY'S BARBERSHOP - DAY

With Ruben in the barber's chair, MANNY, 21, a friend from the neighborhood, takes a hair clipper to his head and proceeds to fix his hair line.

RUBEN

No matter what I did, the guy would not get out of bed, so I finally shine my flashlight in his face, and that's when he sits up and says "Get the fuck out of my face... fucking illegals... I swear to God."

MANNY

He said that?

RUBEN

He did.

MANNY

What a dumb ass -- what's wrong with that guy? You're not a Mexican.

RUBEN

That's not the point, Manny. He shouldn't have said it.

MANNY

Man, I say let the White folks hate on us Latinos. That will only make their hot and horny daughters want to jump in bed with us all the more.

RUBEN

Yeah, I like that. I never thought of it that way before.

Patiently waiting for his turn in the barber's chair, Dawoud joins in the conversation.

DAWOUD

Speaking of which, does Missy have any hot and horny friends for me to hook up with?

RUBEN

I'll look into it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAWOUD

Alright, but when I say "HOT," be sure to use Sanaa Lathan as a template.

Ruben looks in the mirror in front of him and sees Dawoud in a chair behind him making air quote gestures.

RUBEN

You couldn't say "Hot" without using air quotes? Please stop with the air quotes, alright? They irk me.

Manny laughs.

MANNY

So, where are you guys heading after this?

RUBEN

Well, I don't know about him, but I'm going to see my girl.

MANNY

And what do you have planned for New Years?

RUBEN

What do you think? I'm gonna be with Missy, ringing in 2001 the right way.

MANNY

I hear that.

RUBEN

What about you, Manny? What do you have planned?

MANNY

I haven't put anything together yet. I have to get on it.

RUBEN

Yeah, New Years Eve is only four days away.

Manny douses a paper towel with alcohol and wipes Ruben's head.

MANNY

You're good to go, Ruben.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Manny stands behind Ruben and holds a mirror up. Ruben uses the large mirror in front of him to check out the back of his head.

RUBEN

Nice.

Manny removes the apron and lets Ruben out of the chair.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

Okay. And if I don't see you before hand, happy New Year.

Ruben pays Manny.

MANNY

Yeah, happy new year to you.

DAWOUD

Later, Manny.

MANNY

Later. Happy New Year.

DAWOUD

Happy New Year.

Ruben and Dawoud walk out and hit the streets.

INT. MISSY'S APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Matty knocks on Missy's door three times and waits for her to answer.

MISSY

Matty?

Missy comes to the door.

MATTY

Yeah, hey Missy?

MISSY

What are you doing here?

MATTY

Can I come in? I'm sorry for dropping by unannounced, but I wanted to see you. I was in the neighborhood.

MISSY

Matty, what are you doing? We talked about this.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MISSY (CONT'D)

I already told you that my boyfriend was going to be back from boot camp on leave, and that things would never work out between you and me.

MATTY

Yeah, I know, but after what we did that night, I figured you'd tell that guy to take a hike and start going out with me.

Matty leans forward and tries to steal a kiss from Missy. Missy puts her hand out in front of her to stop him.

MISSY

What we almost did, you mean! Thank goodness I came to my senses. I'm sorry, Matty, I am not going to leave my boyfriend for you. I never should have let things get this far, but I really do care about my boyfriend, so you can't be here right now. You need to leave.

Matty tries again to steal a kiss from Missy.

MISSY (CONT'D)

What's the matter with you?! You need to stop, Matty! I mean it!

RUBEN (O.S.)

What the fuck is this?!

Missy and Matty look down the hall and see Ruben by the elevator.

MISSY

Oh my God, Ruben.

MATTY

It's okay. Let me talk to him.

MISSY

(to Matty)  
No, I'll talk to him! You stay out of this!

MATTY

What? I'm not afraid of this guy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MISSY

If you know what's good for you,  
you'll let me handle this, so just  
shut up!

Missy tries to stop Ruben from getting to Matty.

MISSY (CONT'D)

Ruben, I know this looks bad, but  
I can explain. Let me talk to  
you. Please, don't do anything?!

RUBEN

Who the fuck is this dude?!

Ruben tries to push Missy aside to get to Matty.

MATTY

Be cool, dude. Let's not do this!  
I don't want any trouble.

RUBEN

You don't want any trouble?!

Ruben is confused and tries to get answers from Missy.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

What's he doing here, Missy? Why  
is this guy trying to kiss you?!  
Don't say that he wasn't because I  
saw him.

MISSY

Ruben, I care about you too much  
to lie to you. I fucked up,  
Ruben. But it was a mistake, and  
it's all over now. That's what I  
was just telling him. You gotta  
believe me!

RUBEN

You couldn't wait a couple weeks  
for me to get back from Fort  
Benning?! You had to cheat on me  
with this clown?! What's the  
matter, you're too good for  
vibrators now?!

MATTY

Is that any kind of way to talk to  
your girl, guy?!

MISSY

Matty, you're not helping! Shut  
up!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

RUBEN

Yeah, Matty!

Ruben kicks the shit out of Matty's ankle with the bottom of his boot. Matty is in so much pain that he lifts his foot up to grab it, and Ruben puts him in a head and arm clinch, where he knees him in the stomach over and over again. Ruben backs up against the door of MISSY'S NEXT DOOR NEIGHBOR.

MISSY'S NEXT DOOR NEIGHBOR

Hey, you guys are gonna have to take that somewhere else! I'm getting ready to call the cops.

Missy tries to reason with her neighbor.

MISSY

I'm sorry about this, Mrs. Hu. They won't bang on your door again.

Missy's next door neighbor goes back inside her apartment.

MISSY (CONT'D)

Did you hear that?! She's getting ready to call the cops! Come on, guys, that's enough.

Ruben continues to beat Matty up and down the hallway.

INT. FORT BENNING - BARRACKS - DAY

Ruben, dressed in his Class A's, walks through the door, surprising Cotto, who is the first one to greet him.

COTTO

Oh, look who's back! What happened, Delgado? I thought you said you weren't coming back?

Cotto walks over to Ruben to welcome him back.

RUBEN

Yeah, I know. That's what thought, too.

COTTO

Well, it's good to see you. I'm glad you're back.

Cotto announces Ruben to Lawerance.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COTTO (CONT'D)

Hey, Lawerance, look who's here.

LAWERANCE

Yo, Delgado, what are you doing here?

RUBEN

Well, hello to you, too. What the hell kind of greeting is that? Was I that unbearable to live with?

Lawerance laughs.

LAWERANCE

No, it's not that. I'm just a little confused. Cotto said something about you getting discharged.

Lawerance and Ruben shake hands.

RUBEN

Yeah, I did tell him that.

LAWERANCE

So, what happened?

RUBEN

I don't know. I guess it wasn't as easy as I thought it was going to be.

LAWERANCE

Well, welcome back.

RUBEN

Thanks.

Lawerance pats Ruben on the shoulder and walks away.

COTTO

And just to give you the heads up, there's going to be a PT test tomorrow.

RUBEN

A PT test already? What the hell? We're just getting back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

COTTO

I know. I think that's the point.  
I think the Drill Sergeants are  
looking to see who fell off during  
the break.

Ruben and Cotto go to their foot lockers to settle in.

EXT. PHYSICAL TRAINING TESTING SITE - EARLY MORNING

It's 4:30 a.m. Ruben is in his physical training sweat  
clothes, standing in line, waiting for his turn to be  
tested on the number of sit ups he can do.

PHYSICAL TRAINING TESTER

(to Cotto)

You have got to be kidding me!  
Let's go, Private! 17 sit ups  
won't cut it! Give me 10 more!  
Let's go, Cotto! Push yourself.

With Lawerance holding his feet down, Cotto struggles to  
sit up and quits.

PHYSICAL TRAINING TESTER (CONT'D)

I could see someone's had one too  
many donuts over the break. Did  
you forget that you had a few more  
weeks of basic training left?!

Cotto gets up off the mat and walks away.

PHYSICAL TRAINING TESTER (CONT'D)

Whoa, where are you going?!  
You've got to hold the next  
person's feet down.

Ruben hands the tester his folder and lays down on the  
mat. Private Cotto holds Ruben's feet down.

PHYSICAL TRAINING TESTER (CONT'D)

Begin.

Ruben does a sit up and accidently cuts the cheese in  
Cotto's face.

COTTO

Damn, Delgado! Right in my face!

PHYSICAL TRAINING TESTER

Let's try to control our bodily  
functions, Private.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUBEN  
Sorry about that, Cotto.

PHYSICAL TRAINING TESTER  
Alright, that's enough! Get back  
to it!

Ruben continues to do his sit ups.

INT. BARRACKS - MOMENTS LATER

Drill Sergeant Wilkes posts the results of the physical  
training test on the wall.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES  
Baker, front and center!

Baker stands at attention before Drill Sergeant Wilkes.

BAKER  
Yes, Drill Sergeant!

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES  
Baker, you're the squad leader,  
are you not?

BAKER  
Yes, Drill Sergeant!

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES  
Not anymore. Delgado, front and  
center!

Ruben appears before Drill Sergeant Wilkes and stands at  
attention.

RUBEN  
Yes, Drill Sergeant!

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES  
You, on the other hand, performed  
quite well on your test. I'm glad  
to see you decided to spend your  
time away wisely. So, as of right  
now, you're the new squad leader.

Ruben isn't happy with the bump up, and Drill Sergeant  
Wilkes can see it on his face.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)  
What's the matter, Delgado? Don't  
you want to be squad leader?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUBEN

There are guys here who want it more than I do. Why don't you make one of them squad leader?

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

For the past nine weeks, you've done nothing but try to tell me how to run my own show, and now you're telling me that you don't want to be squad leader?!

RUBEN

That's what I'm telling you, Drill Sergeant.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

Get in the front lean position and execute! Don't bother counting off. I'll tell you when I think you've done enough push ups.

RUBEN

Yes, Drill Sergeant!

Ruben gets down on the floor to do push ups.

INT. MESS HALL - DAY

Ruben, dressed in his battle dress uniform, sits down to eat breakfast. Lawerance joins Ruben at the table.

LAWERANCE

Yo, what's up with you, Delgado? Why don't you want to be squad leader? That was probably your one chance to get under Drill Sergeant Wilkes's good graces.

RUBEN

Good graces, huh? I didn't know that about you, Lawerance.

LAWERANCE

Stop playing, Delgado! You know what I'm talking about!

RUBEN

Look, I know what I'm doing. Fuck his good graces.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUBEN (CONT'D)

It's hard enough as it is, trying to get through the day without that asshole getting in my face every 10 minutes. Imagine what he would be like if I was squad leader.

LAWERANCE

Yeah, I guess you're right about that.

RUBEN

I just want to get through the next two weeks without any hassles from anyone.

Drill Sergeant Wilkes catches Ruben talking to Lawerance.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

Delgado!

RUBEN

(sighs)  
I know, I know -- clear the table.  
Yes, Drill Sergeant.

Ruben gets up to clear the table.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

No, it's not that!

Ruben sets his tray back down on the table.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)

I wanna know the name of the person you're going to take on when we go out on the field today?

RUBEN

Oh, if it's all the same to you, I think I'm gonna sit this one out.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

I don't think so, Delgado! You either pick one of your buddies to go up against, or you go up against me. Take your pick. And the opponent you pick better be formidable, too.

EXT. FORT BENNING FIELD - MOMENTS LATER

Drill Sergeant Wilkes referees a pugil stick match between Ruben and Petrie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Both Ruben and Petrie supporters cheer their man on. Petrie swings his pugil stick at Ruben like a crazy person. Ruben blocks and ducks every swing. Exhausted, Petrie lowers his defenses and leaves himself open for a counter attack by Ruben. Ruben sticks Petrie in the face with one end of the pugil stick, snapping his head back. Ruben then leaps in with a couple of body shots and a blow to the face, knocking Petrie down hard to the ground. Drill Sergeant Wilkes blows his whistle.

RUBEN

(talking trash)

Anything else you wanna say to me, Petrie?! I told you I wasn't going to forget! Get your ass up!

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

No trash talking, Delgado! Go to your corner!

Ruben returns to his corner. Petrie's supporters urge him to get back in the fight. Drill Sergeant Wilkes checks to see if Petrie is in any condition to continue with the match.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)

Are you feeling strong enough to go on, Petrie?!

PETRIE

Yeah.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

Sound off like you got a pair!

PETRIE

I wanna go on!

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

Okay!

Drill Sergeant Wilkes lets the match continue. Drill Sergeant Wilkes blows his whistle, and the fight fans sound off as Ruben and Petrie come out of their corners. Still winded, Petrie isn't fast enough to protect himself as Ruben is able to connect with his pugil stick at will. Petrie stumbles backwards and goes down hard. Drill Sergeant Wilkes blows his whistle and steps in.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)

In your corner, Delgado!

Ruben returns to his corner. Drill Sergeant Wilkes checks on Petrie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)

How do you feel, Petrie? Do you  
feel strong enough to continue?

Petrie is slow to answer, and Drill Sergeant Wilkes calls  
off the fight.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)

That's it! Delgado's the winner!

Ruben raises his pugil stick in the air and celebrates  
with his supporters.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Their faces covered with war paint, the recruits take a  
break from their 16 mile road march. Ruben, drenched in  
sweat, removes his soaked undershirt and gets a dry shirt  
out of his back pack.

RUBEN

Man, I pray we won't have to go on  
any of these road marches at AIT  
school.

LAWERANCE

Don't worry. AIT school is smooth  
sailing compared to this. I hear  
that the weekend passes could be  
like Spring Break in Panama City.

Lawerance takes a swig from his canteen.

RUBEN

Jennifer Love Hewitt doesn't  
automatically come to mind when I  
think of a chick who's in school  
to learn how to operate a big rig.

LAWERANCE

Yo, you'll be surprised. I'm sure  
there will be at least one chick  
at Fort Leonard Wood that will get  
your attention.

Ruben takes a swig from his canteen.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

Alright, I want everyone on their  
feet! Let's go!

The recruits get up to continue their march back to the  
barracks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)  
Your left, your left, your left,  
right, left, your left, your left,  
your military left.

Drill Sergeant Wilkes starts a cadence.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)  
Momma, momma don't you see...

The recruits repeat.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)  
What the Army's done to me?!

The recruits repeat.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)  
They took away my faded jeans...

The recruits repeat.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)  
Now I'm wearing Army greens.

The recruits repeat.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FORT LEONARD WOOD, MO - BARRACKS - NIGHT

Ruben, and the other soldiers in his squad are about to be released from formation by the new Drill Sergeant, DRILL SERGEANT CHAPMAN, intimidating figure.

DRILL SERGEANT CHAPMAN  
So, now that you all know where  
and how I want you when you get  
into formation, there's only one  
more thing left for me to do  
before I dismiss you, and that's  
to assign a squad leader.

Drill Sergeant Chapman looks directly at Ruben and makes him nervous.

DRILL SERGEANT CHAPMAN (CONT'D)  
Delgado, You're squad leader.

Annoyed, Ruben closes his eyes and sighs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DRILL SERGEANT CHAPMAN (CONT'D)

Okay, now that we've got all the bureaucratic stuff out of the way, I want everyone, except for the squad leader, to get upstairs and get ready for lights out. Dismissed!

Cotto tries to comfort Ruben.

COTTO

Face it, Ruben, you're a natural born leader.

Cotto pats Ruben on the shoulder.

RUBEN

Do I have squad leader written across my forehead or something? Why can't these damn drill sergeants leave me the fuck alone?

COTTO

I'm surprised you didn't turn the job down.

RUBEN

Well, I just got here. I didn't want to get on Drill Sergeant Chapman's bad side on the first day.

COTTO

Well, I'll see you upstairs.

RUBEN

Yeah, I'll see you.

Cotto walks away from Ruben.

INT. BARRACKS - MOMENTS LATER

PRIVATE VARGAS, 19, and PRIVATE ERICKSON, 20, are at their lockers, arranging them to military standard.

VARGAS

So, what's the deal with that chick I saw you rappin' to, Erickson?

ERICKSON

I am so in there. We're hangin' out this weekend. Her name is Belinda.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ERICKSON (CONT'D)

She's from Virginia, and she completed her basic training at Fort Hood.

VARGAS

Fort Hood? Where's that?

ERICKSON

That's in Texas.

VARGAS

Texas, huh? The gun laws in Texas couldn't be sweeter. If an intruder breaks in while you're home, you could still blast him even if he turns his back on you to take off running.

ERICKSON

That is sweet.

VARGAS

So, does this Belinda have any friends you could hook me up with?

ERICKSON

I don't know. We didn't get into all that. I'll find out for you, though.

VARGAS

So, I take it that you and foster are officially through?

ERICKSON

Yeah, I guess.

VARGAS

Do you mind if I go for her?

ERICKSON

I didn't know you had a thing for Foster.

VARGAS

Only a small one.

ERICKSON

Let me talk to Belinda. I'm sure she has a friend for you to hook up with.

Ruben enters the room with a pen and paper in hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RUBEN

Alright, can I have everyone's attention? This will only take a few minutes. Who here is in the fourth rank? Drill Sergeant Chapman wants me to get the names of every soldier in my rank.

Ruben gets no cooperation from the Fort Jackson soldiers in the room.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

Excuse me, people?! Who here is in the fourth rank?!

Ruben sounds off.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

Yo, if you guys would just work with me, I could hurry up and get the hell out of here!

VARGAS

Don't be coming in here acting you're all that just because Drill Sergeant Chapman made you squad leader!

RUBEN

I don't think I'm all that, alright?!

ERICKSON

Where are you from, Ese?

RUBEN

Ese?

ERICKSON

Where are you from -- you sound like you're from New York?

RUBEN

Don't worry about where I'm from!

ERICKSON

Yeah, you're from New York -- that's why you think you're all that, right?!

RUBEN

Yo, if you think you could make a better squad leader, we can go to the Drill Sergeant right now!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

RUBEN (CONT'D)

I have no problem with stepping down. Otherwise, you need to back up off me, and let me do my thing.

VARGAS

That's enough out of you, homie! Why don't you leave now before we throw you out!

Ruben finds himself surrounded by Fort Jackson soldiers.

RUBEN

Is that how you really talk? Alright, we're gonna see about this shit! The Drill Sergeant gave me a job to do, and I'm gonna do it!

Ruben steps out into the hallway and calls for back up from his Fort Benning buddies.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

(sounds off)

Yo, Fort Benning! Fort Benning soldiers!

Lawerance goes from room to room, letting every Fort Benning soldier know that Ruben is in trouble.

LAWERANCE

Yo, Fort Benning! Delgado got beef with some Fort Jackson bitches!

Baker, and Cotto go out into the hallway to see what the problem is.

BAKER

We're here, Delgado! What's goin' on?!

Ruben gets in Vargas's face.

RUBEN

I don't know what's going on. Let me ask Vargas.

(to Vargas)

What's it gonna be, Vargas? Are you gonna let me do my job, or are we gonna get into it?

Vargas takes a cheap shot and catches Ruben with an elbow to the jaw. Lawerance takes a swing at Erickson, and a vicious brawl breaks out between the two camps.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Drill Sergeant Chapman, shows up on the floor to break up the fight.

DRILL SERGEANT CHAPMAN  
(hollering)  
Do my eyes deceive me?! What in  
God's name is goin' on in my  
house?!

A Fort Jackson Private with his back turned to Drill Sergeant Chapman slugs a Fort Benning Private right in front of him. Drill Sergeant Chapman gets a hold of the Fort Jackson soldier to turn him around and gets punched in the face.

FORT JACKSON SLUGGER  
(apologetic)  
Oh, Drill Sergeant! I didn't  
know!

Drill Sergeant Chapman knees the Fort Jackson Private in the stomach and bounces him off the wall.

DRILL SERGEANT CHAPMAN  
(hollering)  
I want everyone outside and in  
formation right now! Move it out!

The soldiers haul ass down the stairs and exit the building.

EXT. JUST OUTSIDE THE BARRACKS - NIGHT

The soldiers run out the building, line up in formation, and wait for Drill Sergeant Chapman.

DRILL SERGEANT CHAPMAN  
Spread out! Give yourselves room.

The soldiers get within arms length of each other.

DRILL SERGEANT CHAPMAN (CONT'D)  
Alright, let's hit it!

The soldiers drop to do push ups.

DRILL SERGEANT CHAPMAN (CONT'D)  
Did I tell you to stop, Private?!  
I'll keep you out here until the  
break of dawn -- don't play me!

Drill Sergeant Chapman changes things up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DRILL SERGEANT CHAPMAN (CONT'D)

Get on your backs -- flutter  
kicks! Let's go!

The soldiers get on their backs and kick their feet in the air with their heavy boots on.

INT. FORT LEONARD WOOD - BARRACKS - GIRLS ROOM - NIGHT

The boys get smoked by the Drill Sergeant, while the female soldiers watch from their windows. JENNA BURNETT, 19, calls LISA CHANNING, 19, over to check the boys out with her.

BURNETT

If those guys have done anything to get our weekend pass cancelled, I'm gonna cut their dicks off!

CHANNING

You better smile when you say that, Burnett! I've gone too long without getting some, so don't you dare joke about cutting off dicks, especially Baker's.

BURNETT

(laughs)  
Baker, huh, Channing?

CHANNING

What?! You don't think Baker's hot?!

BURNETT

He's okay, but I just can't get over the lips on Delgado. I could suck on them for hours.

CHANNING

Which one is he?

BURNETT

The one on Baker's left.

CHANNING

Oh, Delgado, yeah, I see what you mean.

SHELBY FOSTER, 19, well endowed, and her BFF, MELISSA SIMMS, 19, can't help but overhear Lisa and Jenna.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHELBY

Do you hear these bitches talking about my future husband like I'm not in the room?

SIMMS

Easy, Foster, you don't want to be out there getting smoked with all the swinging dicks, do you?

SHELBY

I guess not. Okay, I'll be cool. What am I worried about?! These girls are no threat to me anyway.

SIMMS

At least it's good to know that you're finally over Erickson. It took you long enough.

SHELBY

What do you think about Delgado?

SIMMS

Did you see the look on his face when Drill Sergeant Chapman picked him to be the squad leader?

SHELBY

Yeah, I did.

SIMMS

That was funny. He was not happy about that at all.

Shelby and Simms laugh.

SIMMS (CONT'D)

Anyway, I wouldn't be so quick to start something with this guy if I were you. He could be just another Erickson.

INT. MESS HALL - DAY

Ruben and Shelby sit at the same table and have breakfast together.

SHELBY

I was just finishing up my freshman year at Rutgers, and I was so sick of studying.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHELBY (CONT'D)

So, on the day of the asvab test, I did not do well at all, and that's why I'm driving trucks for the Army.

RUBEN

Yeah.

Ruben yawns and stretches.

SHELBY

Tired, Delgado?

RUBEN

Call me Ruben.

Ruben takes a swig out of his orange juice container.

SHELBY

Tired, Ruben?

RUBEN

Well, Drill Sergeant Chapman did keep us up kind of late last night, but you already know all about that, don't you, Foster?

SHELBY

Did you see me at the window?

RUBEN

Yeah, I saw you. You were laughing at us. What's up with that, Foster?!

SHELBY

Call me Shelby.

RUBEN

I'm glad you girls had a real good time, Shelby.

SHELBY

Oh, by the way, tell your buddy, Baker, that he's got himself a couple of admirers.

RUBEN

Alright, I'll tell him.

SHELBY

So, what do you plan on doing this weekend?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RUBEN

I don't know yet.

SHELBY

Simms and I are booking a room at the motel six. Why don't you stop by so we can get to know each other better? What do you say?

RUBEN

I say that sounds good.

Shelby looks over Ruben's shoulder and sees Drill Sergeant Chapman coming up behind him.

DRILL SERGEANT CHAPMAN

Okay, Delgado, you're done. Clear this table.

Ruben clears the table without making a fuss.

RUBEN

Yes, Drill Sergeant.

Ruben gets up from the table to throw his food away.

SHELBY

(to Ruben)

Sorry.

Drill Sergeant Chapman leans over the table and gets in Shelby's face.

DRILL SERGEANT CHAPMAN

As for you, Darling, don't be getting yourself into trouble with these knuckle heads! I am in the business of training soldiers, not running some damn maternity ward! Do we understand each other?!

SHELBY

Yes, Drill Sergeant!

DRILL SERGEANT CHAPMAN

You're done here, too! Clear the table!

SHELBY

Yes, Drill Sergeant!

Shelby leaves the table.

EXT. FORT LEONARD WOOD - STREET - DAY

Ruben and Cotto purchase food items from a truck vendor, not far from the barracks.

COTTO

I'm telling you, Delgado, if my weekend pass gets striped on account of you, I'm not gonna be too happy with you.

RUBEN

Yeah, I know, and I appreciate you making this trip with me, but I have got to get something to eat. Have a chocolate donut for your troubles.

COTTO

I don't want a damn chocolate donut! Let's just hurry up and get back to the barracks before Drill Sergeant Chapman catches us.

RUBEN

Okay, okay, we're going! I don't know why Drill Sergeant Chapman had to bounce me from the mess hall in the first place. So what if I was talking during chow!

A pick up truck pulls up, and a second lieutenant reprimands Ruben from the passenger seat.

SECOND LIEUTENANT

Hey, you, come here!

RUBEN

Me?!

SECOND LIEUTENANT

You know I'm talking to you! Spit that contraband out, Private!

RUBEN

(confused)  
What?!

SECOND LIEUTENANT

You heard what I said! You're chewing tobacco! Spit it out!

RUBEN

Chewing tobacco?! I'm not chewing tobacco!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SECOND LIEUTENANT

That is tobacco!

RUBEN

It's a donut, a chocolate donut!

SECOND LIEUTENANT

Hog wash!

RUBEN

I'm telling you I got a chocolate donut in my mouth! You wanna see?!

Ruben reaches into the brown paper bag and takes out the pack of donuts to show the second lieutenant.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

You see that?! Chocolate donuts! I don't chew tobacco! Do you know what happens if word gets out that I'm here chewing tobacco?! I'll be the laughing stock of my projects!

With egg on his face, the second lieutenant tells the driver to drive on.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

I'm glad you were here to witness this shit, Cotto. We're in Screw Loose Valley, and I think I just got chewed out by the Mayor over a doughnut.

COTTO

Are you crazy, Delgado?! Why did you have to talk to him like that?!

RUBEN

Yo, some nut starts sounding off to me because of a chocolate donut, and I'm the one who's out of order?! You're barking up the wrong tree, son!

COTTO

That guy was a second lieutenant, highly decorated! Did you not see the bar on his sleeve?!

RUBEN

Man, that dude was way out of line -- that's all there is to it.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RUBEN (CONT'D)

So, I don't give fuck about his ornaments! I'm really surprised at you, Cotto. You should know me better than that by now!

COTTO

Look, let's just get back to the barracks, okay?!

RUBEN

Boy, do I hate people!

Ruben and Cotto cross the street.

EXT. MOTOR POOL - DAY

Ruben is behind the wheel of a truck with Lawerance next to him in the passenger seat.

LAWERANCE

You awake there, Delgado?!

Ruben dozes off, and Lawerance reaches for the steering wheel to keep the truck steady.

RUBEN

Yeah, I'm good.

LAWERANCE

You landed fire watch duty last night, right?

RUBEN

Yep.

LAWERANCE

How many hours of sleep did you get?

RUBEN

Three.

LAWERANCE

That's it?

RUBEN

And this is my first time driving, since getting my license. That was two years ago.

LAWERANCE

Then why did you choose this MOS?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUBEN

I didn't! My recruiter chose it for me. But I did ask him to hook me up with an MOS that required the least amount of training so I could hurry up and get back to the civilian world.

LAWERANCE

Well, with all the public transportation New York's got to offer, I guess there's no point in owning a car.

Ruben dozes off again and loses control of the truck.

LAWERANCE (CONT'D)

Delgado!

Lawerance grabs the steering wheel and tries to get control of the truck, but the truck rolls off the track and turns over on its side.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Lawerance and Cotto talk over a beer in one of the rooms at the motel 6.

LAWERANCE

Yo, Cotto, who do you think would win in a fight between Drill Sergeant Wilkes and Chapman?

COTTO

Well, they both got sticks up their asses, but Drill Sergeant Wilkes has the better reach, so he would be able to get to his quicker and beat Drill Sergeant Chapman to death with it.

LAWERANCE

I like that. You thought about this a lot, haven't you?

Ruben shows up at the party and looks around for Shelby.

COTTO

What's up, Ruben?

RUBEN

Hey, have you guys seen Shelby anywhere?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LAWERANCE

Shelby?! Who's Shelby?

RUBEN

Foster. She asked me to call her  
Shelby.

COTTO

You're on a first name basis with  
Foster already? That's my man.

RUBEN

Have you guys seen her?

LAWERANCE

Yeah, she said for you to go to  
the room next door.

RUBEN

Thanks.

INT. SHELBY'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Ruben knocks on Shelby's door, and Simms answers it.

RUBEN

Hey, Simms, is Shelby in there?

SIMMS

You got company, Foster!

SHELBY (O.S.)

Okay.

SIMMS

She's all yours, Delgado.

Simms leaves the room. Ruben enters the room and locks  
the door behind him.

SHELBY

Hi, Ruben. I was starting to  
wonder if you were going to show  
up.

RUBEN

Are you kidding? I wouldn't miss  
this for the world.

Ruben makes himself comfortable on the bed next to  
Shelby.

SHELBY

Oh, here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Shelby hands Ruben a piece of paper with her contact information on it.

RUBEN

What's this?

SHELBY

I figured that now would be a good time to exchange contact information.

RUBEN

Good thinking.

Ruben looks it over and pockets the number.

SHELBY

Make sure you don't lose it.

RUBEN

I won't lose it. You got a pen? I'll give you mine right now.

Shelby gives Ruben a pen and a piece of paper to write on.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

Here you go.

Shelby takes Ruben's contact information.

SHELBY

Now that we got that out of the way, what's next? Hey, do you want to see a picture of me with long hair?

RUBEN

Yeah.

Shelby shows Ruben the picture.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

Wow! That's you?!

SHELBY

Do you like it?

RUBEN

Yeah, not that you don't look good now, but you look really good with long hair. Is it yours?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SHELBY

Yeah, it's all mine. I don't do weaves.

RUBEN

Good for you.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Erickson sits on the bed with a beer in his hand to watch a dirty movie. Vargas invites Erickson to go on a beer run with him.

VARGAS

Erickson, are you coming?

ERICKSON

Where are you going?

VARGAS

We're out of beer. I'm going to the store to get some more.

ERICKSON

Yeah, alright, let me take a piss first.

The bathroom door is locked.

ERICKSON (CONT'D)

(knocking)

Open up! I gotta go!

The bathroom door opens and Simms comes out.

SIMMS

Hey, Erickson.

ERICKSON

Simms, I didn't know you were here.

SIMMS

How would you know? You were too busy watching your porno flick. It's too bad that Belinda chick stood you up.

ERICKSON

I thought you were hanging out with Foster in the next room?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SIMMS

I was, but then Delgado showed up.  
I knew that Foster wanted to be  
alone with him, so I came here.

Erickson is upset.

ERICKSON

Wait a minute. Delgado is in the  
next room with Foster right now?!

SIMMS

Oh, if you guys are goin' on a  
beer run, be sure to bring back a  
Red Bull for me, alright? Atta  
boy.

Simms pats Erickson on the shoulder as she walks away.

INT. SHELBY'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Shelby comes out of the bathroom half dressed.

SHELBY

Are you ready for me?

Shelby is disappointed to find Ruben fast asleep in bed.

SHELBY (CONT'D)

Damn it, Ruben! Don't do this to  
me! Wake up!

Curious, Shelby unzips Ruben to take a quick peek at his  
package, but 3 loud knocks on the door wakes him up.

RUBEN

What are you doing?

Shelby takes her hand out of the cookie jar.

SHELBY

Me? Nothing.

RUBEN

Who's at the door?

SHELBY

It's probably Simms.

Shelby puts her shirt back on to answer the door.

SHELBY (CONT'D)

What do you want, Erickson?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ERICKSON

I need to talk to you, Foster.  
Can you come out here?

SHELBY

I can't right now. I'm busy.

ERICKSON

Is Delgado in there with you?

SHELBY

Yes, he is. Good bye.

Erickson has a pocket knife behind his back.

ERICKSON

What are you two doing in there,  
huh?

SHELBY

I'm closing the door on you now.

Erickson pushes Shelby out of the way and makes his way inside.

SHELBY (CONT'D)

Ruben, he has a knife!

Ruben jumps out of bed to defend himself, and Shelby runs out of the room to get help from the party next door.

ERICKSON

(to Ruben)

You just blocked your last cock,  
you motherfucker!

Ruben sees the knife in Erickson's hand and uses his belt as a weapon. Erickson gets hit in the face with the belt buckle and drops the knife on the floor. Erickson puts a hand over his left eye, where the belt buckle hit him, and Ruben leaps in with a knee to the face, follows it up with a left hook, and knocks him out cold. His hand hurt, Ruben drops to the floor from the pain, and Shelby returns with the party from next door only to find that they've missed all the action.

SHELBY

Ruben, are you stabbed?

Ruben is on the floor holding his hand in pain.

RUBEN

(wincing)

No, but I think my hand is broke,  
though.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Shelby gets down on the floor to tend to Ruben, and the others move in closer to check on Erickson.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RUBEN'S NEIGHBORHOOD - STREET - NIGHT

Ruben, dressed in his Class A's, steps out of a livery cab and finds two cops with a pizza delivery man in front of his apartment building. Dawoud calls Ruben over from a bench in front of the building to fill him in.

DAWOUD

Well, look who's back! You back for good this time?

RUBEN

Yeah, I'm here to stay.

DAWOUD

Good. For a minute there, I thought I was going to have to miss out on the Puerto Rican Day Parade this year.

Dawoud lights up a cigarette.

DAWOUD (CONT'D)

You know I have much better luck hooking up with Spanish chicks when you're around.

Ruben wants to know why the cops are in front of his building.

RUBEN

What the fuck happened here?!

DAWOUD

Ghetto shit. You just missed it. Some of the little homies knocked that pizza delivery dude off his bike and ran off with a pie.

Ruben waves the cigarette smoke out of his face.

RUBEN

So, why don't you tell the cops what you know?!

DAWOUD

You want me to rat motherfuckers out?! Get the fuck outta here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUBEN

And how are you going to feel when I turn out to be the next motherfucker around here to get robbed by the same knuckle heads you're protecting?

DAWOUD

Yo, everyone around here knows you. Who's gonna rob you? No one! So, stop talkin' like a punk.

RUBEN

So, this is why you couldn't pick me up from the airport? You know, if I was Mayor of this city, my first order of business would be to remove all these benches from the projects.

DAWOUD

I'm sorry I forgot about picking you up from the airport, alright? I fucked up, but you know how forgetful I can be when I got weed in me.

RUBEN

Anyway, I'm going upstairs. I'll check you out later.

DAWOUD

Later.

Dawoud and Ruben shake hands the way kids do on the streets.

INT. MANNY'S BARBER SHOP - DAY

Empty. Ruben walks in on Manny reading a newspaper on his break.

MANNY

(pleasantly  
surprised)

Ruben! What's up?

RUBEN

What's up?

They shake hands.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MANNY

When did you get back?

RUBEN

About three weeks ago.

MANNY

About three weeks ago, and you're just now coming in to see me?

RUBEN

Don't hold it against me. I enrolled in the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University, and there were some things I needed to get done before classes start.

MANNY

Long Island University isn't a real college. Why do you want to go to school there? Don't you know that all those schools you see being advertised on television suck big hamster balls? Get in the chair.

Ruben gets in the barber's chair and tells Manny what he wants done.

RUBEN

Just a shape up, like the last time.

MANNY

When do classes start?

Manny covers Ruben up with an apron.

RUBEN

Well, school starts on September 8th, but I don't have to show up to my first class until September 11th.

Manny takes a hair clipper and starts from the front and works his way to the back of Ruben's head.

MANNY

Well, you couldn't have come back at a better time. I'm throwing a party on Labor Day weekend. You should come through. It'll be the last bash before school starts.

Manny has a flier for Ruben to look over.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MANNY (CONT'D)

Check it out.

Ruben takes the flier and looks it over.

RUBEN

DJ Ozzie? I've never heard of him. Is he any good?

MANNY

What kind of question is that? Would I let a DJ, who isn't any good, spin at my party?

RUBEN

Does Dawoud know about it?

Manny gets back to work.

MANNY

Yeah, he was the one passing out the fliers all over the city. He'll be there.

RUBEN

Okay, I'll stop by.

MANNY

Stop by. It's going to be epic.

Ruben takes this moment to do his Arnold Schwarzenegger impression.

RUBEN

See you at the party, Victor!

Manny doesn't get it.

MANNY

What's that?

RUBEN

Arnold Schwarzenegger -- Total Recall.

Manny tries the accent.

MANNY

Oh yeah, see you at the party, Victor.

Manny and Ruben laugh.

EXT. THE WILLIAMSBURG BRIDGE - DAY

Ruben is on board the Q train on his way to school. The train crosses the Williamsburg bridge, and Ruben gets out of his seat when he sees that one of the twin towers is on fire.

INT. LONG ISLAND UNIVERSITY BROOKLYN CAMPUS - DAY

Ruben walks through the halls of the Metcalf building. There's a large gathering of students and faculty members in front of a television that has been put out. Ruben squeezes through the crowd to see what is so captivating.

RUBEN

What's goin' on?

STUDENT

A plane crashed into one of the twin towers.

RUBEN

So, that's what happened. I saw the smoke going across the Williamsburg bridge on the Q train.

Ruben continues to watch the news.

EXT. FRONT OF THE METCALF BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Ruben steps out of the building and stands around as students and faculty members set up tables and chairs to hand out water bottles to people as they march past the campus in droves.

INT. NATIONAL GUARD ARMORY - CHANGING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Ruben shows up to his unit with his gear and looks for an empty locker. HUESSEY, 28, Introduces himself to Ruben.

HUESSEY

Hey, if you're looking for an empty locker, there's one over here.

RUBEN

Thanks.

Ruben makes his way over to Huessey and puts his things away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUBEN (CONT'D)

So, what do you think we're going to be doing down there?

HUESSEY

Who knows? It must be pretty messy down there. They'll probably want us to lock the streets down and help out with search and rescue.

Ruben gets out of his street clothes and gets into his BDU's.

RUBEN

I'm Ruben, by the way.

HUESSEY

Huessey. Welcome to the fighting 69th.

Ruben and Huessey shake hands.

RUBEN

Thanks.

HUESSEY

There are a lot of assholes here at the fighting 69th. Stick with me, and I'll show you who to look out for.

RUBEN

Okay.

HUESSEY

I better get going. See you downstairs for formation.

RUBEN

Where is formation?

HUESSEY

Haven't you been to any of your weekend drills?

RUBEN

Nope.

HUESSEY

It's downstairs in the auditorium. You better move it. These guys can't stand tardiness.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RUBEN

Got it. I'll be down in a minute.

Huessey leaves Ruben in the changing room.

EXT. GROUND ZERO - EVENING

Ruben is with his National Guard unit in full gear and armed with an M-16 riffle.

Sick of sneezing and coughing from all the dust in the air, Ruben covers his nose and mouth with a bandana to keep from breathing it in. Looking too much like an outlaw, Ruben is reprimanded by his COMMANDING OFFICER.

RUBEN'S COMMANDING OFFICER

Private, that bandana isn't standard issue. Take it off!

Ruben removes the bandana.

RUBEN

It's pretty dusty down here. I'm just trying not to breathe any of this stuff in.

RUBEN'S COMMANDING OFFICER

It won't kill you to breathe this stuff in for a few hours. Suck it up, private.

RUBEN

(under his breath)  
Suck this up, you fuck.

Ruben is intimidated by a news team he sees coming at him and leaves his post to avoid them.

Ruben throws up when a search and rescue team pulls a mangled body from the rubble.

EXT. RUBEN'S HOUSING COMPLEX - PROJECT BENCHES - MOMENTS LATER

Missy sits and waits for Ruben to return home from his shift at ground zero. When Ruben finally shows up, he walks over to where she is to talk to her.

RUBEN

(surprised)  
Missy! What are you doing here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MISSY

I came here to talk to you, but your mother told me that you had to report to your unit. I was getting kind of restless waiting around in your mother's apartment, so I thought I'd wait for you out here. How bad is it down there?

RUBEN

It's bad. How long have you been waiting?

MISSY

Not long.

RUBEN

So, what do you want to talk to me about?

MISSY

Well, with everything that is going on in the world right now, I thought I would come down here to ask for your forgiveness. I can really use a shoulder to cry on, Ruben.

Ruben makes his way up to Missy and gives her a hug.

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - DAY

The stores are open, but the streets are uncharacteristically desolate for mid-town Manhattan. Ruben and Missy try to acquire some sense of normalcy and decide to take in a movie.

MISSY

Where is everyone? That's what I wanna know. This is so eerie. Don't you think this is eerie? It's like the whole city had to evacuate because of some kind of outbreak, and we're the only assholes sticking it out.

RUBEN

People wanna stay in. They're too afraid to leave their homes and go out. I wouldn't be surprised if we turn out to be the only ones in the movie theatre.

Ruben has a thought.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUBEN (CONT'D)

Hey, I just had a thought -- let's fuck in the movie theatre.

MISSY

What?!

RUBEN

If we're the only ones in there -- let's fuck.

MISSY

No, you horndog! We're just going to sit there and watch the movie, you got it?

RUBEN

Fine. If that's how you feel about it, we'll just watch the movie, and let the terrorists win.

MISSY

Don't even try it.

Ruben and Missy reach the movie theatre.

MISSY (CONT'D)

Here we are.

Ruben goes to the window to get the movie tickets.

INT. KIPS BAY MOVIE THEATRE - DAY

Ruben and Missy have the theatre all to themselves. Ruben puts the moves on Missy, but she rejects his advances.

MISSY

Ruben, come on! Stop.

Ruben is frustrated.

RUBEN

What's up with you, Missy?! Why are you acting like this?

MISSY

I told you, Ruben! I'm not in the mood.

Ruben is confused.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUBEN

How can that be? We just came from Arby's -- it's good mood food!

Missy snaps at Ruben.

MISSY

There's something on my mind, okay?

RUBEN

Like what?

MISSY

I think I'm going to enlist.

RUBEN

What are you crazy? Missy, we already talked about this. What about school?

MISSY

What about school? I'll never be able to get any studying done now, not with all of this going on. Besides, school will still be there for me when I get back.

RUBEN

Missy, you should finish school while you still have a chance. There's a war coming, and Bush is a war president. There's no telling how long he's going to drag this thing out. I might have to wait five years before I could go back to school.

MISSY

I really feel like I need this in my life right now.

RUBEN

Missy, it's going to be stressful enough just worrying about myself, but if you enlist, that's going to be too much worrying for me to handle.

MISSY

I wasn't asking for your permission, Ruben. It's my decision. This is what I want to do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RUBEN

I suppose everybody in the world ought to put their lives on hold to go and fight in this war.

MISSY

My mind is made up. I'm going to do this with or without you, so why don't you just get me in touch with your recruiter and get your pay grade bumped up in the process?

RUBEN

So, that's it, huh? Your mind is all made up? There's nothing I could say to change your mind about this?

MISSY

Are you worried that my decision is going to change me in some way, or break us up?

RUBEN

It's possible. It's not unheard of.

MISSY

Ruben, we're going to be fine. You'll see. Now, will you help me?

RUBEN

Yeah, I'll help you. I still say you're making a mistake. I just know you're gonna hate the military. If you think the drill sergeants are gonna go easy on you just because you're a woman, you are in for a rude awakening.

MISSY

Thank you, babe.

Missy kisses Ruben on the cheek.

EXT. OUTSIDE MISSY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Sgt. Graham is in his car waiting on Missy and Ruben. Missy and Ruben step out of the apartment and walk over to Sgt. Graham. Ruben takes the back seat, letting Missy sit up front.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SGT. GRAHAM  
Morning, Kiddies.

MISSY  
Morning.

RUBEN  
Morning.

SGT. GRAHAM  
So, how are feeling, Missy? Are  
you ready for this?

MISSY  
Yeah, I think so. Ruben still  
thinks I'm out of my mind for  
doing this, but he's been there  
for me every step of the way, so I  
should do well for you today.

RUBEN  
Yeah, she's ready.

SGT. GRAHAM  
Okay, then let's get this over  
with.

MISSY  
Yeah, get me there quick before I  
change my mind.

Sgt. Graham puts the car in drive, pulls away from the  
curb, and drives down the street.

EXT. GROUND ZERO - DAY

The site is active and busy with crews there to clean up  
the debris. Ruben is at his post in full gear.  
President George W. Bush arrives to the site and makes a  
speech through a bullhorn. By the end of the speech, the  
crowd is riled up and breaks into a chant of "USA."  
Ruben is not as moved by the speech as the rest of the  
crowd and says...

RUBEN  
(sighs)  
Here we go.

Ruben shakes his head in frustration.

FADE OUT.