

# ASHES

by

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FADE IN:

INT. CLINIC. DAY

DAVID, 40, plump and unshaven, lies on a black couch, eyes closed. He frequently runs his tongue over his lips.

MARIA, 35, fair and slim, wearing a white coat, sits next to him on a revolving chair. She scribbles something on a notepad, puts it aside and observes her patient with concern.

MARIA  
Hello, are you there?

DAVID  
(struggling)  
Yes doctor.

MARIA  
Tell me what's happening.

DAVID  
I am having the same dream.

MARIA  
What do you see?

DAVID  
I see... a soldier.

DREAM - DAVID ON THE RUN

David rushes along a black top road, PANTING. He stops to catch his breath and glances sideways.

A huge soldier scoots towards him menacingly, sporting only a loin cloth. A visored helmet covers upper half of his face. He brandishes a large oblong shield and a curved sword.

David bumps off the road and enters a dense forest. He dashes through thick foliage, the soldier on his heels.

Exhausted, he reaches a hill top and stares down into the deep valley. He hears some FOOTSTEPS behind him. He turns.

The soldier stands at an arm's length. He gapes back into the valley. He is trapped. The soldier strolls up to a heavy, brown box lying nearby and TAPS it twice with his sword.

SOLDIER  
Open it.

David gawks at the box, his eyes full of terror.

DAVID  
(stammering)  
Wh... what's inside there?

SOLDIER  
You can see yourself.

David staggers back.

DAVID  
I know you want to kill me.

SOLDIER  
I can never kill you.

David now stands at the edge of the valley.

DAVID  
I don't trust you.

SOLDIER  
Don't move.

DAVID  
I hate you.

As he steps back further, he rolls down the yawning gap. His SHRIEKS echo. The soldier runs up to the edge and SHOUTS.

SOLDIER  
David.

BACK TO PRESENT DAY

David lies on the couch, SCREAMING. Maria holds his shoulders and shakes him vigorously.

MARIA  
David, wake up. I say wake up.

David sits up on the couch with a jerk, GASPING. Maria hands a glass of water to him. He GULPS it down in one go.

MARIA  
Feeling better?

He nods.

MARIA  
So this is the dream that rattles you every night.

DAVID  
I see that soldier every hour now. It's so scary - to see yourself die. It's such a torture.

MARIA  
Why does the soldier say he can never kill you? He chases you with a sword, doesn't he?

DAVID  
He looks all set to stab me. It's because of him that I slide into that gorge.

Maria paces up and down in the room for a while, then halts.

MARIA  
Does the soldier resemble anybody  
you know?

DAVID  
His face is half covered.

MARIA  
But you hear his voice ,don't you?

He closes his eyes, then holds his head with both his hands.

DAVID  
oh, no!

MARIA  
Come on, tell me!

David slowly rises and slithers up to the window. A dim  
sunlight illuminates his stony face.

DAVID  
It's...my father.

MARIA  
Your father! Where is he now?

DAVID  
He's no more.

MARIA  
When was that?

DAVID  
He was in army. He died fighting  
during Vietnam war. His body could  
not be traced.

MARIA  
And where did he live?

DAVID  
In his native village - quite far  
from here. My grandmother puts up  
there now.

(sighs)  
Six months back, I got a message  
from her. She wanted to meet me  
urgently but I could not go.

MARIA  
Since when are you getting this  
dream?

DAVID  
For the last six months.

David turns sharply and grabs Maria's arm.

DAVID

You mean to say all this is  
connected?

MARIA

You must visit your father's  
village immediately. There is  
something waiting for you there.

David gapes at her with his mouth half open.

EXT.VILLAGE.DAY

David works his way through the narrow lanes of a small  
village. Some passers by look at him suspiciously.

He stops in front of a two storeyed building and knocks at  
the door. An old woman, 70, opens the door and stares at him.

INT.GRANNY'S HOUSE.DRAWING ROOM.DAY

A spacious hall with wooden interiors. Young David's  
photographs with his parents adorn the walls. His father  
appears to be a well built, radiant young man.

David steps up to a photograph and covers the upper half of  
his father's face with his fingers.

QUICK FLASHBACK

The soldier chasing David, his face half covered by a helmet.

BACK TO SCENE

David bites his lips. His GRANNY approaches him.

GRANNY

I know what's troubling you.

David spins around.

GRANNY (CONT'D)

Your father comes in my dreams  
also. I need to show you something.

Slowly, she mounts the stairs. David follows her. She enters an

UNUSED BEDROOM

and opens the window. The diffused sunlight falls on a heavy,  
brown box kept on a table. She touches the box softly.

GRANNY

Open it.

David shudders.

GRANNY

Come on son,you got to do it.

She hands a heavy iron key to David.With his hands trembling, he turns the key inside the socket and lifts the lid.

He stares down at a brass urn,it's mouth sealed by a piece of bright red cloth.

GRANNY

These are your father's ashes.

David CRASHES like a log into a nearby chair.

GRANNY(CONT'D)

Six months back,two military officers came and handed over this urn to me.I could touch my son again after twenty years.

Her eyes well up with tears.

GRANNY(CONT'D)

They wanted to conduct his last rites with full military honors but your father had always been against such ceremonies.So,I refused.

A white pigeon lands on the window sill and COOES softly.

GRANNY(CONT'D)

As per our custom, his ashes have to be immersed in the river which flows next to our village.

David gets up and takes the urn out of the box.He clutches it tightly to his chest and starts CRYING uncontrollably. Granny holds his arm and leans against his shoulder.

EXT.RIVER.DAY

David sits in a wooden boat,holding the urn.An old man rows the boat to the middle of the river.David rises, uncovers the urn and releases his father's ashes into the water.

Suddenly,he notices the soldier standing near the bank.The soldier takes off his helmet and smiles.It's his father.

He waves affectionately at David, turns and disappears into the woods.

FADE OUT:

CREDITS ROLL