

#1 IMAM

By

TENNESSEE SPEEDE

courlo_74@hotmail.com

FADE IN:

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

A small group of school kids watch as TWO BULLIES shake down a frail petrified Middle Eastern kid, HAFEZ KHODA.

#1 BULLY
(red shirt)
Gimme it, Muhammad. C'mon, hand it over.

As he pulls at Hafez's black backpack...

#2 BULLY
(blue shirt)
Hey, be careful, you never know what he's got in that bag.

The other kids laugh with the bullies. Hafez scans the area with furtive eyes. But no one else is around...

HAFEZ
Leave me alone, okay? I just want to go home. My mother is waiting.

#1 BULLY
You can go...

Hafez starts to walk away but, #1 Bully pulls him back by his backpack...

#1 BULLY
When I say so. Now, take off the bag.

#2 BULLY
Yeah, take it off, Muhammad.

HAFEZ
No, it's mine. And, my name is not--
(yanks away)
--Muhammad, it's Hafez. And if you guys don't allow me safe passage to my home you will regret it.

Oohs and aaahs cascade from the group of kids. #1 Bully and #2 Bully exchange pseudo-surprised looks, then...

THUD

(CONTINUED)

Hafez CRASHES on his back on the dirt. His bag is now property of the two bullies. They open the bag, pull out Hafez's cool new iPad and walk away satisfied as the other kids noisily disperse.

Hafez waits until they're out of sight before he dusts himself off and limps home.

EXT. SUBURBAN BLOCK - DAY

Hafez walks up the tree lined street past nicely kept homes.

When he reaches his house he walks up the walkway to the front door and enters.

INT. HAFEZ'S HOUSE - DAY

Well maintained. Polished hardwood. Streak free windows. Expensive furniture. Family photographs adorning.

Hafez slumps into the plush couch. He flips on the flatscreen TV where cartoon characters greet him. Hafez watches with no visible emotion.

Behind Hafez, in the open living room space, RIMA KHODA, dark features, early thirties, appears. She looks over her depressed child with loving understanding. After a few moments Rima rounds the couch and sits next to him on it.

She pulls him in to her bosom to comfort him. Hafez begins to weep quietly. Rima lovingly strokes his hair and whispers encouraging words.

HAFEZ

Why don't they like me, Mother? Am I not just like them? I just want to go to school and learn to be a good man one day. That is all. Why can't they see that too?

RIMA

My son, they have eyes just like yours. But with their eyes they see something different. They see someone who is not like them, not from the same place, not of the same culture. But what they don't see is the good that is within you, my son.

Beat.

(CONTINUED)

RIMA

One day they will all see, my son.
One day they will see...

HAFEZ

Mother?

RIMA

Yes, my son.

HAFEZ

They stole my bag from me.

RIMA

Do not fret over material
possessions. You have all that you
need and more right here. I love
you.

HAFEZ

I love you too, Mother.

With that, Rima rises and looks down at her recovering son.

RIMA

Would you like some milk and
cookies, my son?

HAFEZ

Yes, Mother.

And, just as quickly as she appeared, Rima evaporates.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

A crowded round table. Four friends are seated. Chips down,
beers poured, snacks in bowls. The 50 YEAR OLD man with the
cigar clenched between his teeth is GEORGE MILLER. Around
the table we find his closest chums: RALPH FELDMAN, TERRY
DUEROD and MITCHELL MURPHY laughing boisterously.

A pretty, yet exhausted looking woman appears at the bottom
of the stairs. This is George's wife, MARTHA MILLER.

MARTHA

Will you guys keep it down some?
I'm trying to watch NCIS.

GEORGE

The butler did it. Right guys?

All agree by laughing even louder. Frustrated, Martha stomps
back up the stairs.

(CONTINUED)

TERRY

You know what I do when my woman
pops off at me?

RALPH

Yeah, you shut her up, I hope.

TERRY

Nothing. Because she already knows
better.

High five. Laughing. George reads his hand.

GEORGE

Ah, not again. Fold.

MITCHELL

Me too.

TERRY

Yup, I'm in.

RALPH

Crap.

GEORGE

Okay, ten minute smoke break.

RALPH

Man, I miss the days when we used
to just light up right here and
keep the game goin'.

TERRY

Yeah, me too.

GEORGE

Me three. Now go.

With that, everyone except George gets up to go outside and
smoke.

MITCHELL

You comin', George?

GEORGE

I quit. One week and counting.

MITCHELL

(approvingly)

I'm proud of you, George. Way to
go.

(CONTINUED)

GEORGE

Yeah, doc said it was either quit or die young. And with the way I eat and all the beer I figured he was right and I had better listen to his advice, this time.

TERRY

Good deal, George.

RALPH

Quitters never win, my friend. Remember that when I get back.

GEORGE

Sure thing, Ralph.

They climb the stairs leaving George behind.

#1 Bully excitedly skips down the basement stairs, the iPad in hand.

#1 BULLY

Hey, Dad, look what I got today at the schoolyard. Isn't it awesome?

GEORGE

What is it?

#1 BULLY

It's the new iPad and it costs six hundred bucks. Guess how much I paid for it? Nothin. Ha ha...

George walks over to #1 Bully, hugs him with one arm and takes the iPad with the other.

GEORGE

Now son, you know how I feel about this stuff, don't you?

#1 BULLY

Sure do, Dad. That's why I beat up the new kid and took it from him.

GEORGE

What new kid? Oh, you mean that weird new mother and son?

#1 BULLY

Yep, that's the one. Man, he didn't even fight back. Poor little loser.

(CONTINUED)

GEORGE

That's a boy, you're just like your old man used to be when I was your age.

#1 BULLY

I know. See ya, Dad. I'm going to watch some movies alone in my room.

#1 Bully bounds away happy with his new toy in hand. George watches him go with a wistful look in his eyes.

GEORGE

You did good, George. Real damn good.

Then George turns his attention to the bowl of chips on the table. He grabs a bunch, inserts -- CRUNCH.

At that very same moment

RIMA appears behind him wearing all black. Only her eyes are visible. George sits, pops open another beer, leans back.

GEORGE

Where are those guys.

He looks around...Then he proceeds to set the deck in his favor.

GEORGE

Little engineered luck never hurt anybody, right? Ha ha ha...

He grabs more chips, wipes his hand on his pants leg. Then

Unguhp! Just like that Rima slips an arm around his neck. Tight. George gasps for air. Rima squeezes tighter.

RIMA

Sh...You're only making it worse.

George struggles but it's futile. He can't break free.

RIMA

Do you know who I am?

George nods in the negative.

RIMA

But I know everything about you. Your name is George Miller and, you're a retired General. Your

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RIMA (cont'd)
wife's name is Martha, by the way,
she hates your guts. And your son's
name is George too. So far so good?

George nods affirmation.

RIMA
Good. I also know that when you
were a little boy you were a
schoolyard bully.

George's eyes get wider, Rima loosens her grip a bit to
allow him to breathe. He does so heavily.

RIMA
You used to beat up the other kids
and take their milk money. We never
forgave you for that. And now, I
see you have passed your terrible
genetic dysfunction on to your son.
(scoffs)
Another generation of bullying.
Sad...

She then ratchets up the pressure on his neck anew.

RIMA
But I am here to let you that this
is where it all ends. No more
stolen backpacks or lunch money. Do
you understand?

George doesn't budge.

RIMA
No longer will my son be the butt
of your son's cruel intentions. We
have had enough. Do I make myself
crystal clear?

RATCHET -- George nods yes a million times...

RIMA
I'm glad you see things my way.

With that, she lets go of his neck. George gasps violently
for his next breath...

RIMA
Now, tomorrow morning on the
playground your son is to return
that which he has stolen from my
son. No questions asked.

GEORGE

And what if he doesn't. What are you gonna do? Kill him?

RIMA

Not him.

The weight of her threat hits George like a brick.

GEORGE

What are you, some sort of ninja or something?

RIMA

No. I am but a concerned mother doing what any mother in my position would do to protect her only son.

And with that, she evaporates into the shadows...

The guys return down the stairs into the basement. When they notice George's state they begin to inquire. But he rebuffs them.

GEORGE

I swallowed a chip down the wrong pipe. Don't worry about it, let's just play. Ralphie, why don't you deal 'em, eh?

Ralphie looks around the table puzzled...

RALPH

...Sure thing, George. Hey, you sure you're all right?

TERRY

(chuckles)

Yeah, man, you look like you just saw a ghost or something.

GEORGE

(rubbing his neck)

I'm fine. Everything is just friggin' perfect.

The game continues into the night. Quietly.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

#1 Bully and #2 Bully are at it again. When it's over, the other disperse at the sound of the first bell. The two bullies are left.

APPROACHING on the sidewalk are Rima and Hafez. Rima spots the two bullies.

RIMA

Are those the boys who took your belongings, my son?

HAFEZ

Yes, Mother. But, last night I decided they could keep it. I-I have to go inside now. Bye.

He begins to walk ahead of Rima but, she calls him back.

RIMA

Hafez...?

HAFEZ

(stops, turns around to face her)

Yes, Mother, I know. I have to stand up to those boys.

Rima nods affirmatively. Hafez nervously eyeballs the two bullies who are counting their haul.

RIMA

Go on, Hafez. I will be right here.

HAFEZ

But I am very afraid, Mother. Can't they just keep it this one time?

RIMA

No. Now you must go before you are late to class.

Hafez timidly approaches the two bullies. They don't notice him for their attention is distracted.

HAFEZ

Guys...

They don't notice. Hafez turns to Rima, she stands silent. Hafez then taps #1 Bully on the shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

HAFEZ

Uh, sorry. Hi, I'm Ha--

#1 BULLY

Hey there, Hafez, what's up?

HAFEZ

(slowly, confused)

...Nothing much...How about you?

#2 BULLY

Just uh, doing our thing. Wanna join us?

HAFEZ

Not really.

#1 BULLY

Cool. Oh, here's your bag back, Hafez. And everything's still in there just like you left it.

HAFEZ

I didn't leave it, you stole it.

#1 BULLY

I know. But my Dad talked to me last night. He told me about the time he got bullied when he was a grown up.

In the bg, Rima smiles.

#1 BULLY

He said it changed his life. So, he made me promise to give you your stuff back.

He hands over the bag to Hafez.

#1 BULLY

I do whatever my Dad tells me too. He's awesome. Where's your Dad, Hafez?

HAFEZ

He, uh, he's...not around right now.

#2 BULLY

Well, that's okay. My old man flew the coop years ago. Now I have a stepdad. He's cool.

(CONTINUED)

HAFEZ

Thank you.

He then begins to walk away.

#1 BULLY

Hey, Hafez.

He stops, turns around.

HAFEZ

Yes?

#1 BULLY

You're welcome to hang out with us
anytime, okay?

#2 Bully agrees verbally. Hafez pauses to allow this offer
sink in. Then he walks back to them and they each shake
hands.

HAFEZ

One day. Maybe.

#1 BULLY

Cool, well, we gotta get to class.

#2 BULLY

See ya around.

They take off. Hafez walks over to Rima.

HAFEZ

Mom, did you that? He returned my
belongings and I didn't even have
to fight him.

RIMA

You are a very fortunate little
boy, my son.

HAFEZ

I know, Mom.

RIMA

Now, you had better get inside to
class. I will see you when you get
home.

HAFEZ

Yes, Mom.

With that, Hafez starts towards the school. But he stops and
turns back...

(CONTINUED)

RIMA

Yes, my son.

HAFEZ

You're the best mom in the world.

Rima closes the distance between them and hugs him tightly.