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INT. BEACH CHANNEL HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION CEREMONY - DAY

Dressed in their caps and gowns, the graduating class of 1999 waits outside of the school auditorium for the que to march down the isle and be seated. RUBEN DELGADO, 18, is running late and finally shows up to his graduation with his childhood friend, DAWOUD, 18, who dropped out of Beach Channel high school in his junior year. JAMES, 18, has been waiting in line, looking everywhere for Ruben.

JAMES

It's about time, Ruben!

RUBEN

What?! It's not like I'm late or anything! Why don't you relax for once, James?!

JAMES

I haven't seen you around in a while, Dawoud. That GED of yours must really be taking you places.

DAWOUD

It's good to see you too, James! Don't think I won't whip your ass just because you're in your cap and gown. That don't mean shit to me! Only your punk ass would make such a big deal about graduating from this shitty school. They give out diplomas in Rikers Island too, did you know that?

JAMES

No, I wouldn't know anything about that. You would know more about that than I would.

DAWOUD

Yo, Ruben, I know I promised you that I wouldn't injure this dude if he started with me, and I know that this is your graduation and everything, but try to pretend that you're me right now.

The doors to the auditorium are opened, and the entry music is being played.

RUBEN

We're about to go inside anyway. Why don't you go inside and find my mother? She's in there somewhere.

DAWOUD

Yeah, alright.

Dawoud looks for a seat in the auditorium.

RUBEN

Why do you always have to start with him, James?!

JAMES

What?! Why does he have to be so serious all the time?! I'm only fucking with him.

RUBEN

Let's just go inside and get this graduation thing out of the way.

JAMES

Okay!

In a single file, the graduating class of 1999 march down the isle of the auditorium.

A student speaker is behind the podium, addressing the graduating class from the stage.

STUDENT SPEAKER

Thank you. Thank you, everybody. Congratulations class of 1999.

The audience responds with applause.

STUDENT SPEAKER (CONT'D)

Thank you, Principal Hassan, not just for the warm introduction, but for your enthusiasm, and your incredible singing voice. Go Dolphins!

Ruben and James talk amongst themselves while the student speaker goes on with her commencement speech.

RUBEN

Did she just give a shout out to our football team?! Is she serious?!

How many games did the Dolphins actually win the whole season?

JAMES

Four.

RUBEN

Four games, and she's giving our football team props.

JAMES

Hey, give her a break. It's a brave thing for her to be on that stage, speaking to students who, for four years, referred to her as the girl who left a trail of blood from her seat in the back of history class up to the chalk board.

RUBEN

Oh, that's right.

JAMES

A lot of memories -- Are you sure you're not gonna miss this place?

RUBEN

Hell no! Why would you think that? You know I hated it here.

JAMES

Well, if I were you, I think that I would be worried about leaving high school, especially if I didn't apply to any colleges and had no idea what I was going to be doing with myself.

RUBEN

C'mon, man! I had to pick up two extra classes my senior year just so I could graduate on time. If Mike Tyson went twelve rounds with Riddick Bowe, do you think he would be ready to take on Holyfield six months later? No, he wouldn't. If I never get to crack open another book, it'll be too soon. When I get tired of working some bullshit job, then I'll start looking for a school to enroll in.

JAMES

Just don't let me down, Ruben. I'm gonna be counting on you to keep me informed with everything that goes on around here while I'm away at school in Maryland, so don't do nothing to get yourself locked up. You know what I'm saying?

CUT TO:

INT. FACTORY - DAY

Busy. Ruben is having a conversation with Dawoud while working on the assembly line.

RUBEN

Yo, Dawoud, you goin' to lunch at 12?

DAWOUD

Na, I'm goin' to lunch at 1. What about you?

RUBEN

Yeah, I'll probably go to lunch at 1, too. I think I'm gonna try that deli across the street and order the chicken parm hero. How much was that?

Ruben puts his hand in his pocket and comes up with crumpled up dollar bills.

DAWOUD

I think it was six dollars.

Ruben straightens out the bills as he counts them, dropping loose change on the floor.

RUBEN

I gotta get rid of all this loose change.

Ruben kneels down to pick up the loose change and gets back up.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

Check this out. I saw this on an episode of Happy Days.

Ruben balances the loose change on his elbow.

(CONTINUED)

RUBEN (CONT'D)

How much do you wanna bet I could catch all seven quarters without any of them hitting the floor?

Dawoud stops what he doing to watch.

DAWOUD

Bullshit, but I don't wanna bet anything either.

RUBEN

Bitch ass! Okay, here I go.

Ruben cups his hand and brings his arm down, catching all seven quarters.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

Look at that!

DAWOUD

You caught 'em all?!

RUBEN

You didn't hear anything hit the floor, did you?

DAWOUD

Here comes the boss. You better not let his punk ass catch you fuckin' around.

Dawoud and Ruben get back to work. The boss starts in on Ruben right away.

RUBEN'S BOSS

What time did you come in today, Ruben?!

RUBEN

Are you asking because of what happened yesterday? I told you the train was delayed because of a sick passenger on board. Call it an excuse, if you want, but I got no control over that!

RUBEN'S BOSS

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

RUBEN

I can't today. I got class.

RUBEN'S BOSS

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

Ruben's boss leaves him to his work.

DAWOUD

I'll bet college is starting to look real good to you right about now, huh?

RUBEN

I had to tell the guy something. I'd hate to think of what might happen if I stay and work with this guy a minute longer than I have to.

Ruben looks down on the floor and notices a thick wad of crisp dollar bills. Ruben kneels down to pocket the money.

CUT TO:

INT. DELI - DAY

Busy. Ruben is sitting at a table working on his hero. Dawoud exits the bathroom and joins Ruben at the table.

DAWOUD

Damn, son, you still ain't done with that hero?!

RUBEN

I ain't in a hurry.

DAWOUD

It's like a ten minute walk from here to the factory!

RUBEN

Then I guess you better get going, huh? I don't work there anymore.

DAWOUD

What are you talkin' about?!

RUBEN

I'm fired.

DAWOUD

What?! He fired you?! Where the fuck was I?

RUBEN

Well, I didn't get fired yet, but I'm not gonna give him the satisfaction of firing me by going back there.

DAWOUD

Just tell me what happened!

Ruben reaches in his pocket and shows Dawoud the money.

RUBEN

You wanna know what happened? Okay, this is what happened -that piece of shit we work for planted this on me.

DAWOUD

Get the fuck outta here! He planted that shit on you for real?!

RUBEN

Yep. Do you believe that?! This is the year 2000! I can't believe employers are still pulling this kind of shit on their workers. How played out is that?! So, I said fuck it! If he wants me gone so badly, that's fine with me, but I wasn't walking away empty handed.

DAWOUD

How much is that?

RUBEN

157.

DAWOUD

157?

RUBEN

Look at all the Andrew Jackasses! I gotta do something about this. Can you change these twenties for me?

DAWOUD

You know the answer to that, son.

RUBEN

I'll have to talk to the cashier then. Maybe she could take this dick head off my hands.

DAWOUD

So, what are you gonna do now? Are you goin' back to the temp agency?

RUBEN

I don't know what I'm gonna do now, but I'm definitely not goin' back to the temp agency.

DAWOUD

Why don't you just talk Nervous? You could make good money just for being a look out.

RUBEN

I would talk to Nervous, if it wasn't for that whole prison thing.

DAWOUD

Well, I would walk with you, but I need this job, son. I don't wanna fuck up my parole.

RUBEN

Don't worry about it. I'll think of something.

CUT TO:

INT. NATIONAL GUARD ARMORY - DAY

Ruben pops his head into the recruiting office and asks to speak to a recruiter.

RUBEN

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

RUBEN'S RECRUITER

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

Ruben walks in and shakes hands with the recruiter.

RUBEN'S RECRUITER (CONT'D)

I'm sergeant Graham.

RUBEN

Ruben Delgado.

RUBEN'S RECRUITER

Have a seat.

Ruben sits down.

RUBEN'S RECRUITER (CONT'D)

How old are you, Delgado?

RUBEN

18.

RUBEN'S RECRUITER

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

Ruben's recruiter sits down behind his desk.

RUBEN

Yeah.

RUBEN'S RECRUITER

What makes you so sure?

RUBEN

I don't know.

RUBEN'S RECRUITER

I'm just asking because the last kid that came in here and sat right where you are now talked my ears off about how badly he wanted to enlist, but when it came time for him to be sworn in and take the oath, he got cold feet and backed out. Do you know how much money it costs just to process you guys? We even threatened to slap him with a \$20,000 fine and a 5 year prison sentence, but the kid still wouldn't go through with it. So, either he knew that we were only fuckin' with him, or he was just that scared. Whatever his deal was, I wanna know from you just how much thought went into your decision to come here to talk to me about enlisting?

RUBEN

I thought about this a lot, and as much as I hate that I'm here talkin' to someone like you, I wanna go to college. However, I don't wanna go to just any school. I graduated from Beach Channel High School -- one of the worst shit holes in the city -- going to a community college won't be much of a step up. If I'm going to college, I wanna go to a good school, one of those expensive schools, like Columbia, or New York University, the only way I could afford to go any one of those schools is if someone else picks up the tab -- that's why I am here.

RUBEN'S RECRUITER
Okay, as long as you've given this
some thought. Have you talked
things over with your family?
What does your mother feel about
your decision?

RUBEN

I haven't told anyone. No one knows I'm here now.

RUBEN'S RECRUITER
You're not gonna tell your mother
that you're enlisting in the
National Guard?!

RUBEN

So she can tell me how stupid I am for going through with this?! I don't think so. I'm better off with her not knowing, and if there's anything else you think I should know, you better tell me now because I don't want you tipping her off by trying to reach me at home.

RUBEN'S RECRUITER
Okay, if that's what you want,
I'll have to respect that, but you
know what mothers are like. They
always think they know what's best
for their babies.

RUBEN

Yeah, I know what mothers are like. Carrie White's mother was the same way, and look at how her relationship with her daughter turned out.

RUBEN'S RECRUITER

Who's Carrie White?

RUBEN

You never saw the movie "Carrie?" You should check it out. I think you'd like it.

RUBEN'S RECRUITER Okay, I'll do that. Now, let's get on with the paperwork. What documents did you bring with you?

Ruben looks in his back pack for his documents.

RUBEN

I got my drivers license, my social security card, and my high school diploma.

Ruben hands his documents over to the recruiter.

RUBEN'S RECRUITER

What about your official high school transcript?

RUBEN

I don't know where it is. I looked around for it, but I couldn't find it.

RUBEN'S RECRUITER

Well, then you're going to have to make a trip to your old high school a get another one.

RUBEN

I gotta do what?!

CUT TO:

INT. BEACH CHANNEL HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

A student is being removed from the building in hand cuffs by a police officer. Ruben enters the building and approaches a female police officer behind a desk.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER

May I help you?

RUBEN

I'm here to pick up my high school transcript.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER

Do you have ID?

Ruben shows the officer his ID and sees students in the hallway being chased by security on the monitor.

RUBEN

They got 'em, they got 'em!

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER

Excuse me?

RUBEN

Oh, I was just watching the monitor.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER

Oh, sign in here.

The officer has Ruben sign his name in a binder.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)

Right this way.

The officer walks Ruben over to the metal detector and has him empty his pockets of all metals.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)

Remove all metals you may have in your pockets and place them in this plastic bowl.

Ruben places his keys, loose change, and his belt in the plastic bowl.

CUT TO:

EXT. BROAD CHANNEL - SUBWAY PLATFORM - DAY

A shuttle train pulls into the station. The train doors open, and Ruben steps out with an envelope in hand to wait for the next train. The doors close, and the train pulls out of the station. A train pulls into the station on the opposite side of the tracks. A group of thugs are on board and see Ruben waiting for his train to arrive on the opposite platform. The thugs decide to get off the train. Ruben sees the thugs making their way to his side of the platform, and jumps down into the tracks to run to the next station.

CUT TO:

EXT. FORT BENNING - MORNING

It's 7:00 a.m. Soldiers are outside running laps around the tracks singing cadence.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES is alone in the barracks, cleaning out every unsecured locker and tossing the bunks of every recruit whose bed hasn't been made to military standard.

CUT TO:

INT. MESS HALL - MORNING

Ruben, dressed in his BDU's, is sitting at a table eating his breakfast. BAKER, 18, one of Ruben's battle buddies, sets his tray down on the table and joins him.

RUBEN

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

Baker doesn't want to get caught talking during chow and 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. Drill Sergeant Wilkes just walked in, and I 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 as chewed up as an E1. There's no mistake about that.

Ruben is having trouble understanding Baker with his accent.

RUBEN

You from New Orleans?

BAKER

No, I'm from Alabama.

RUBEN

That's a mighty thick accent you got there. I didn't understand a word you just said. That's funny coming from a brown dude without a Spanish accent, huh?

Drill Sergeant Wilkes catches Ruben talking and bounces him from the mess hall.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

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

RUBEN

On the contrary, Drill Sergeant. The sausages are a bit under cooked for my taste, but I can't get enough of the hash browns.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

You love the hash browns, do you? You could've fooled me -- you got more stuff coming out of your mouth than you got goin' in.

That must mean you're done. Clear the table.

RUBEN

I'm not done, Drill Sergeant.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

I'm not asking you if you're done - I'm telling you that you're
done. Let's go.

Ruben clears the table and exits the mess hall. On his way back to the barracks, he fails to salute an officer walking by.

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?!

RUBEN

(sighs)

How many do you want?

OFFICER

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

RUBEN

You don't?!

OFFICER

No. 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 about, salute him, just to be safe. You know, when in doubt, whip it out.

Ruben and the officer go their separate ways.

RUBEN

Hang in there, Ruben -- you only got eight more weeks of this shit to go. Pins and needles, needles and pins.

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACKS - MOMENTS LATER

Ruben and the rest of his squad are back in the barracks getting things in order. Ruben is having trouble making his bed.

RUBEN

Cotto, I'm having trouble making my bed. Can you help me out?

COTTO, 18, is in a hurry to leave the barracks.

COTTO

Sorry, Delgado, but the Drill Sergeant only gave us 30 minutes to use the phones. I got to hurry and get down there before the line gets too long.

Cotto leaves Ruben hanging and exits the barracks. WHEELER, a gay recruit, offers to help Ruben make his bed.

WHEELER

I'll help you, Delgado.

RUBEN

Get away from me, you! That's not an Adam's apple! That's a damn ankle bone you got sticking out of your throat!

LAWERANCE, 19, Ruben's battle buddy, walks by.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

Lawerance, help me make this bed?

LAWERANCE

Not right now, Delgado. I gotta make a quick phone call.

Lawerance leaves Ruben hanging.

RUBEN

C'mon, son! Don't leave your battle buddy hanging!

WHEELER

Well, good luck with your bed, Delgado.

Ruben calls Wheeler back.

RUBEN

Alright, man, but no funny business!

WHEELER

I'll try to control myself, Delgado.

Wheeler proceeds to help Ruben with his bed.

CUT TO:

INT. DELGADO HOUSEHOLD - NIGHT

RUBEN'S MOTHER is in her tiny apartment, sitting under a hair dryer with rollers in her hair, while watching a segment on CNN regarding the scandal rocking the 2000 Presidential Election. The phone rings, and Ruben's mother gets up in a hurry to answer it.

RUBEN'S MOTHER

Hello Baby!

EXT. PAY PHONE - NIGHT

Ruben is on a pay phone outside of the barracks.

RUBEN

(annoyed)

What did I tell you about answering the phone like that?!

INTERCUT AS NEEDED.

RUBEN'S MOTHER

Like what?! What are you talking

about?!

RUBEN

What if I was somebody else?

RUBEN'S MOTHER

I had a feeling it was you, and it is, okay?! What's the big deal?

RUBEN

(sighs)

Nothing. Never mind.

RUBEN'S MOTHER

Okay, so, how are you? Do you like it there? I wanna know everything.

RUBEN

Well, there's a long line of people waiting to use the phone, so I can't stay on too long.

RUBEN'S MOTHER

It sounds like you're coming down with something. Are you coming down with something?

RUBEN

Yeah, I'm coming down with something. I don't know what, though. It's cold down here! I thought it was always hot as piss in the south.

RUBEN'S MOTHER

Well, you're just gonna have to hang in there, Ruben. You signed a contract, you know?! You just can't quit and walk out on those guys because you don't like it there. This isn't like any of the jobs you walked out on in the past, and don't you go telling your Drill Sergeant to go fuck himself either!

Ruben can't wait to get off the phone with his mother.

RUBEN

I gotta go. I just called to let you know how I was doing.

RUBEN'S MOTHER

Wait, Ruben! I have something to tell you before you go.

RUBEN

What?

RUBEN'S MOTHER

I spoke with Missy, and she's pissed at you for not saying good bye before shipping out, so I'm just giving you the heads up.

RUBEN

C'mon, Ma! What did I tell you about that?! If you expect to keep hearing from me, you can't be mentioning that girl's name!

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

Ruben is red in the face from struggling to complete a set of hand stand push ups in an isolated corner of the barracks and quits.

COTTO

You're done with your work out already, Delgado? That was quick.

RUBEN

Yeah, I know. I wasn't feeling up to it. I've been feeling this way for the last few days now.

COTTO

You should go to the infirmary and yourself checked out.

RUBEN

You heard me ask the Drill Sergeant a bunch of times. He won't let me go.

Ruben gets a towel, a wash cloth, and a bar of soap out of his locker.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

I'm gonna take a shower. Maybe a hot shower will do the trick.

Ruben makes his way to the latrine and changes his mind about taking a shower when Wheeler beats him there.

COTTO

What happened?! I thought you were gonna take a shower?!

RUBEN

Wheeler's in there now.

COTTO

So?!

RUBEN

So, I'm not going in there while he's in there. I don't know about you, but where I come from, people don't do shit for other people without expecting something in return.

COTTO

So, because Wheeler helped you make your bed...

Ruben finishes the sentence.

RUBEN

He's gonna think that I owe him something, yes, that's right!

Cotto laughs.

COTTO

Oh, I get it. Delgado's a homophobe, huh?

RUBEN

Homophobe nothing! I ain't afraid of no fagot!

COTTO

You're funny, Delgado.

RUBEN

What?! You're not one of those people who actually believe that there's nothing wrong with being gay, are you?

COTTO

Yeah, I am. I don't think there's anything wrong with it.

RUBEN

Of course, there is! Think about it -- if there's nothing wrong with being gay, then what's with all the gay skits on Saturday Night Live?

Cotto laughs.

COTTO

I don't know. I don't think the skits are that gay.

RUBEN

Are you shittin' me?! It's one gay skit after another on that show, and then gay people expect to be taken seriously by society -- talk about being confused.

COTTO

I see what you're saying, but I just don't have any bad feelings for Wheeler, and you shouldn't either, Delgado. I mean, Wheeler helped you with your bed today, but if we ever get called up to go to war, I don't think you're gonna resent it, if he ends up saving your ass in a fire fight, are you?

RUBEN

You wanna bet?! Hey, I'm sorry if you think that I'm coming off as a dick, but where I come from, I don't make up the rules.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD - MORNING

Lawerance, dressed in his P.T. Uniform, is standing in formation and realizes that he forgot to fill his canteen with water. Lawerance steps out of formation and heads back to the barracks. On the way back to the barracks, Lawerance runs into Cotto.

COTTO

What's up, Lawerance?

LAWERANCE

What's up?

COTTO

I'm not late to formation, am I?

LAWERANCE

Na, Drill Sergeant Wilkes isn't here yet.

COTTO

Cool. Where are you going?

LAWERANCE

Back to the barracks. I gotta fill up my canteen with water.

COTTO

Hurry up.

LAWERANCE

Yeah, I know.

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACKS - MORNING

Empty. Lawerance enters the barracks and walks over to the water fountain by the latrine to fill up his canteen. After he fills up his canteen, Lawerance checks himself out in the mirror in the latrine and busts Ruben sitting down while urinating in one of the bathroom stalls.

LAWERANCE

Yo, Delgado, is that you in there?

RUBEN

Yeah.

LAWERANCE

I thought that was you -- I recognized your sneakers under the door. Are you taking a piss sitting down?

RUBEN

I think you've seen too much, kid! You need to walk away.

LAWERANCE

What kind of dude takes a piss sitting down?

RUBEN

(defensive)

Yo, I came in here with the intention of taking a shit, then, all of a sudden, I felt like I had to pee, so I went. What the fuck was I supposed to do?! Hold it in until I got through shitting?! Do you know how hard that is to do?!

Lawerance leaves Ruben to his business and walks out of the latrine.

LAWERANCE

Well, you better hurry up! You're gonna be late to formation.

Ruben flushes the toilet and comes out of the stall to wash his hands.

RUBEN

No, I'm not because I'm staying in today.

LAWERANCE

What are you thinking now, Delgado?!

Ruben follows Lawerance out of the Latrine.

RUBEN

Until Drill Sergeant Wilkes decides to let me go to the infirmary and get myself checked out, I'm not going to formation.

LAWERANCE

I'm sick too, Delgado! You still see me making it to formation!

RUBEN

You're not gonna talk to me about your fucking running nose again, are you, Lawerance?!

LAWERANCE

All I know is that you're gonna end with an article 15, if you're not careful, Delgado.

RUBEN

What's an article 15?

LAWERANCE

That's like the military term for docked pay. You get an article 15, and you'll pretty much be going through all this shit for free. So, as your battle buddy, I'm asking you to get your ass out there.

RUBEN

Look, don't worry about it! It's not like Drill Sergeant Wilkes checks the roster to make sure that everyone is accounted for. Just keep your mouth shut, and he'll never now I'm missing.

CUT TO:

EXT. ON THE ROAD - MORNING

It's dark out. Drill Sergeant Wilkes is leading his trainees in a cadence while jogging down a deserted road during physical training.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

(singing)

Momma, momma, don't you see...

The trainees repeat after Drill Sergeant Wilkes

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)

What the Army's done to me?

The trainees repeat.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)

They took away my faded jeans...

The trainees repeat.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)

And now I'm wearing Army greens.

The trainees repeat.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)

They took away my Cadillac...

The trainees repeat.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)

Now I'm humping with a pack.

The trainees repeat.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)

I used to date a high school queen...

The trainees repeat.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)

Now I'm marching lean and mean.

The trainees repeat.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)

Ain't no use in looking down...

The trainees repeat.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)

Ain't no discharge on the ground.

The trainees repeat.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)

Momma, momma, don't you cry...

The trainees repeat.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)

Your little boy ain't gonna die.

The trainees repeat, and Drill Sergeant Wilkes ends the cadence there.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)

Okay, for this next cadence, all you guys have to do is respond with "I love Delta Company."

Drill Sergeant Wilkes starts another cadence.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)

(singing)

Taylor loves Delta Company!

TAYLOR, 19, sounds off.

TAYLOR

I love Delta Company!

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

Baker loves Delta Company!

BAKER

I love Delta Company!

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

Cotto loves Delta Company!

COTTO

I love Delta Company!

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

Delgado loves Delta Company.

Drill Sergeant Wilkes waits for a response.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)

Delgado loves Delta Company!

Still no response.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)

(still jogging)

It behooves you to get with the program, Delgado!

Drill Sergeant Wilkes stops everything and discovers that Ruben is nowhere to be found.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)

Where the hell is Delgado?!

No one but Lawerance knows where Ruben is.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)

No one knows where Delgado is?! Who is Delgado's battle buddy?!

LAWERANCE

(sounds off)

I am, Drill Sergeant!

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

What say you, Private Lawerance?! do you know where Delgado is?!

LAWERANCE

No, Drill Sergeant!

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

You're Delgado's battle buddy, and you don't know where he is?! Get in a front lean position and execute! Give me 30!

LAWERANCE

Yes, Drill Sergeant!

Lawerance steps out of formation to do 30 push ups.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

Somebody who knows something better tell me where Delgado is right now!

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACKS - MORNING

Ruben is fast asleep in his locker and straightens up when he hears an angry Drill Sergeant Wilkes returning early from physical training with the rest of the squad.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

If someone doesn't produce Delgado in the next five minutes, the whole squad is going to pay!
Where is Delgado?! No one goes
AWOL on my watch!

Ruben comes out of his locker.

RUBEN

Here I am, Drill Sergeant.

Drill Sergeant Wilkes gets in Ruben's face.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

Where were you, Private?!

RUBEN

I know what I got coming to me, Drill Sergeant. All I ask is that you spare the rest of the squad, because you know how you get.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

Okay, Delgado, you wanna play games?! I can play games, too. As of right now, you are a suicide watch priority!

RUBEN

(protests)

Suicide watch?! I don't want people taking shifts to follow me around!

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

Camaraderie, Delgado, ever heard of it?!

That's exactly how it's going to be, until the time comes for you guys to go back to whatever rock you crawled from under.

RUBEN

I wasn't trying to make a run for it! I just wanna get back to being 100 percent, but you won't even let me go to the infirmary so I could get checked out! What's up with that?!

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES Okay, Delgado, you win. I did just about everything I could to get you squared away, but you're too chewed up to let me do my job and turn that "I don't give a fuck" attitude that you got goin' into something the military could've used on a battle field. I don't want you coming back to boot camp after the Christmas break. You're finished here. Do you understand me, Delgado?!

RUBEN

Yes, Drill Sergeant.

Drill Sergeant Wilkes notices the shadow over Ruben's upper lip and turns his head from side to side.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES You were here the whole the time, and yet you couldn't take time out to shave.

RUBEN

I need a new razor.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

Private Petrie!

PETRIE, 18, stands before Drill Sergeant Wilkes.

PETRIE

Yes, Drill Sergeant!

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

Go get your razor.

PETRIE

Yes, Drill Sergeant!

Petrie rushes to his locker to retrieve his razor.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

I want the rest you to get into your BDU's. I'm gonna be introducing you boys to the ole gas chamber today, so be sure to pack your gas masks.

Petrie returns with his razor.

PETRIE

Here you go, Drill Sergeant.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

Hold on to it. I want you to take the first shift at being Delgado's shadow. While you're at it, I want you to teach this boy how to shave.

PETRIE

Yes, Drill Sergeant!

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

In second thought, give it to me.

Drill Sergeant Wilkes takes the razor from Petrie.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)

I'm gonna shave your ass myself. Hold still now.

Drill Sergeant Wilkes moves in closer to Ruben and proceeds to shave him.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE ROAD - DAY

There's a fleet of school buses on the road. Ruben, with pieces of tissue paper blotting the blood from the nicks on his face, is sitting next to Baker in the second to first row of the bus and asks him for help with his gas mask.

RUBEN

Baker, what part of the mask does this piece belong to?

Drill Sergeant Wilkes overhears Ruben and turns around in his seat to face the two of them.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES Don't you dare adjust his mask for

him, Baker! Give it back to him!

Baker hands the mask over to Ruben.

BAKER

Sorry, Delgado.

Drill Sergeant Wilkes turns back around in his seat, and Ruben flips him the finger.

CUT TO:

EXT. OBSTACLE COURSE - DAY

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?

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.

CUT TO:

INT. GAS CHAMBER - DAY

The chamber is an empty room big enough to fit about 50 people. Ruben is in the gas chamber with a bunch of other recruits, waiting for instructions from the NBC specialist.

NBC SPECIALIST

Do not put your masks on until I pull the pin out of these canisters. You're going to be asked a series of questions. Try to answer them 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 his canister. Ruben rushes to put to his mask on and reacts immediately to the nerve gas seeping through. Ruben can't stand it anymore and tries to make it to the exit doors.

NBC SPECIALIST (CONT'D)

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

Ruben is too choked up to answer.

RUBEN

Just let me out, man!

NBC SPECIALIST

(offended)

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!

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!

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.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD - DAY

The recruits are taking a break from their training exercises for field chow. Ruben is sitting Indian style against a tree, eating MRE rations with some of his battle buddies.

RUBEN

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

BAKER

Well, you would know better than me. I wasn't in there long enough to know what it was like. How long were you in there for, Delgado?!

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 isn't too happy with Drill Sergeant Wilkes and gives him a dirty look.

DRILL SERGEANT ESTEVEZ

(laughs)

I think he's mad at you, Wilkes.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

(smiling)

I think so, too. You mad at me, Delgado?

Ruben ignores Drill Sergeant Wilkes.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)

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

DRILL SERGEANT ESTEVEZ

Do I?!

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

No hard feelings -- right, Delgado?

DRILL SERGEANT ESTEVEZ

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.

Ruben's buddies egg him on.

LAWERANCE

Go ahead, Delgado!

COTTO

Yeah, Delgado!

Ruben is finally talked into it.

DRILL SERGEANT ESTEVEZ

Here we go.

Ruben paces back and forth, before jumping into it.

RUBEN

What say you, Delgado?! What do I have to do to get you squared away? You're chewed up! I want you in the front lean position forever.

Ruben cracks his buddies up.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

It behooves you to learn something from being in that position! Don't just execute push ups! Ever hear of a little word called camaraderie?! If you keep going the way you're going, you'll always be a suicide watch priority!

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

Stand down, Delgado! That's good

enough.

Ruben puts a smile on Drill Sergeant Wilkes's face, and Drill Sergeant Wilkes puts an end to Ruben's routine.

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

It's time for lights out. All the trainees are in there bunks, except Ruben, who landed fire watch duty.

Ruben shines a flashlight on Cotto's face as he walks by his bunk and finds him crying over a letter he got from his family back home.

RUBEN

You alright, Cotto? What are you talking 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 3.

RUBEN

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

COTTO

Yeah, you're right.

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 is going through the photos one by one and stops to ask Cotto about one in particular.

RUBEN

Is this you?

Cotto looks at the photo.

COTTO

Yeah, that's me.

RUBEN

I would never let my hair grow that long.

Ruben continues to look through the pictures.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

I like the way you're posing as gangster in this picture with nothing but a bunch of ones in your hand.

COTTO

(offended)

What?! Let me see that!

Cotto snatches the picture out of Ruben's hand.

COTTO (CONT'D)

No, I got 3 twenties, 4 fifties, and 23 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 11:14.

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 Petrie, who is sound asleep in his bunk.

RUBEN

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

Ruben tries to wake Petrie up.

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, Ruben!

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, son! 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!

Ruben flips the mattress over and puts Petrie on the floor.

PETRIE (CONT'D)

That's your ass, Delgado!

Petrie gets back on his feet and charges at Ruben. Ruben cracks him on the head with his flashlight. Petrie goes down hard, and Ruben gets on top of him to pummel him some more.

RUBEN

You were saying?!

Finally, Ruben gets pulled off by the rest of the recruits.

CUT TO:

INT. STREET - NIGHT

Ruben, dressed in his Class A's is sitting in the back of a livery cab. The livery cab pulls over to the curb and let's Ruben out in front of his apartment building.

Ruben gets out of the cab with a green duffle bag and enters the apartment building.

CUT TO:

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 takes a step back and doesn't like what she sees.

RUBEN'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

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

RUBEN

I told you I was coming down with something.

RUBEN'S MOTHER

Don't they have medical doctors over there?

RUBEN

Yeah, but my Drill Sergeant wouldn't let me see one.

RUBEN'S MOTHER

That makes no sense.

RUBEN

I'll go to the veteran hospital first thing tomorrow morning.

RUBEN'S MOTHER

Well, in the mean time, go to your room and settle in. I'll fix you a cup of theraflu. That's probably all it is. You don't look like you've been eating either. Are they feeding you over there, or what?!

RUBEN

I'll tell you about it later.

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

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Ruben is eating hot soup with his mother sitting across from him at the dinner table.

RUBEN'S MOTHER

Don't tell me that you're thinking about going AWOL just so you can keep an eye on her -- is that what this is all about, Ruben?!

RUBEN

No, Missy's got nothing to do with it! My Drill Sergeant told me not to come back! What do you want from me?!

RUBEN'S MOTHER

So, that's it?! You're gonna walk away just like that?

RUBEN

I don't know what you want me to do about it!

RUBEN'S MOTHER

I know that going without television for a long time is hard for you, but I really don't think you gave the Army a chance.

RUBEN

What do you know about it?! You weren't there!

RUBEN'S MOTHER
I don't get you, Ruben. What is
it about the projects that you
think you're going to miss so

much? Why are you so afraid of hard work?

RUBEN

Again with that?! Don't start with that again! Remember, Dad used to always bring his work home with him and get drunk to forget about the kind of day that he had, and I don't get how you didn't know that growing up around that kind of stuff would influence me in some way. What did you think was gonna happen? Did you think I was gonna turn out like the kids who couldn't wait to grow up and face the world? I was the one who used to tell you that Dad hated directing traffic, and that his job was gonna be the death of him, but as long as he was bringing home a paycheck, you didn't care, remember that?!

RUBEN'S MOTHER
Sometimes you sound so much like
Larry David that it makes me want
to beat the crap out of you!

RUBEN

You know, you never did answer my question. What has Missy been up to these days? Has she been behaving herself, since I've been gone?

RUBEN'S MOTHER

(sighs)

I just think you need to get your priorities straight, and, to answer your question, I haven't seen her around lately, so I really don't know what she's been up to. You should call her to let her know that you're home now?

RUBEN

I want to figure out what I'm gonna say to her, first.

RUBEN'S MOTHER

By the way, why did you ship out without saying good bye to Missy?

RUBEN

I didn't say good bye to her because seeing her would've made it that much harder for me to leave.

RUBEN'S MOTHER

That's smooth. You should tell her that. I'm going to bed now. We'll talk more in the morning. Good night.

RUBEN

Good night.

CUT TO:

INT. VA HOSPITAL - DAY

Ruben is sitting in a chair in the doctor's office, waiting for the doctor to return with his X-rays.

VA DOCTOR

Well, I'm back with your X-rays. It looks like you've got a touch of pneumonia.

RUBEN

Pneumonia!

The doctor holds up the X-ray to have Ruben take a look at it.

VA DOCTOR

You see that? That's fluid building up in chest. Mystery solved.

RUBEN

Can't people die from that shit?!

VA DOCTOR

You'll be alright, but why did you wait so long to get yourself checked out?

RUBEN

What can I say? My Drill Sergeant is a dick head. I had to have a fever of 101, or better.

VA DOCTOR

Ah, I see. Well, not to worry, I'm going to prescribe some antibiotics for you that should clear your chest within 5 to 15 days.

The doctor writes up the prescription.

RUBEN

Can you also write a letter for me to take back to my Drill Sergeant?

VA DOCTOR

What am I supposed to write in this letter?

RUBEN

Anything to get him off my dick! That asshole thinks I'm just over there goofin' off and shit.

VA DOCTOR

I don't think that writing a note is going to be necessary.

RUBEN

Why not?

VA DOCTOR

Because your Drill Sergeant will probably just roll it up nice and tight and cram it right up your ass.

RUBEN

Doesn't that just piss you off -the way people go around disobeying doctor's orders after all those years of medical school?

VA DOCTOR

Never mind about me. You just focus on getting healthy again, alright? Now, go and get 'em.

INT. DELGADO HOUSEHOLD - DAY

There's a knock on the door. Ruben's mother comes to the door and looks through the peep hole before answering it.

RUBEN'S MOTHER

Hi, Dawoud.

DAWOUD

Hi, Ma.

Ruben's mother lets Dawoud and his rottweiler, BEAST, in.

RUBEN'S MOTHER

Hi, Beastie.

Ruben's mother pets Beast, while Dawoud gives her a kiss on the cheek.

DAWOUD

Is your boy here?

RUBEN'S MOTHER

Yeah, he's in his room.

CUT TO:

INT. RUBEN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Ruben is red in the face from being upside down, doing handstand push ups. Ruben loses his balance and comes down off the wall when Dawoud knocks on his door.

RUBEN

Come in.

Dawoud and Beast enter the room. Beast welcomes Ruben back by licking his face and jumping all over him.

DAWOUD

What's good, soldier boy?

Ruben wrestles around with Beast.

RUBEN

Beast, calm down! Dawoud, call off your dog!

DAWOUD

Beast, chill!

Beast leaves Ruben alone.

(CONTINUED)

DAWOUD (CONT'D)

So, welcome home, son!

RUBEN

Thanks.

DAWOUD

Why is your face all red?

RUBEN

I was upside down, doing handstand push ups.

DAWOUD

Oh, okay. I just came from the barber shop. Manny told me you stopped by a couple of days ago to get your head fixed.

RUBEN

Yeah, the Army don't give a fuck. They just shaved my head and didn't even bother to shape it up for me.

DAWOUD

He also bitched about how you still won't tip him, not even with all that money you're getting from the Army.

Ruben laughs.

RUBEN

I'm gonna get back to my work out. You wanna work out with me?

DAWOUD

Na, I'm good. Go ahead.

RUBEN

Keep talking. I'm listening.

Ruben resumes his handstand push ups.

DAWOUD

Yo, why do you have the shades pulled down, son?!

Ruben stops Dawoud before he could pull the shades up.

RUBEN

Leave the shades alone!

DAWOUD

Why?!

The blood rushing to Ruben's head is making him dizzy and forces him to quit in the middle of his set.

RUBEN

(in Spanish)

Okay, I'm starting to get dizzy.

DAWOUD

What did you say?!

RUBEN

The blood rushing to my head was making me dizzy.

DAWOUD

Why didn't you say that?! You know I don't understand you when you speak that Puerto Rican shit!

RUBEN

(smiling)

Puerto Rican shit, huh?! What did I tell you about that shit?! At least I got a damn language to speak of, bitch ass! Don't hate on me just because thieving white people robbed you and your people of your language and identity, you confused motherfucker!

Dawoud laughs.

DAWOUD

Whatever, son! I don't give a fuck what you say -- I'm pulling the shades up!

Dawoud pulls the shades up.

RUBEN

I'm really glad you stopped by today, Dawoud. I had no idea that I was going to get a chance to show you some of the things I picked up at boot camp so soon.

Dawoud looks out the window and notices an attractive woman sitting on a bench by herself.

DAWOUD

Wait a minute! Who's that chick sitting on the bench?

RUBEN

I never seen her around here before.

DAWOUD

I'm gonna holler at her.

Dawoud raises the window.

DAWOUD (CONT'D)

Does your mother still baby sit for tenants in the building?

RUBEN

No, she gave that up a while ago.

DAWOUD

Then why don't you take the window guards down?!

RUBEN

I don't know.

Dawoud wants to take the window guard down.

DAWOUD

Is it screwed in?!

RUBEN

No, I don't think so.

DAWOUD

What's up with you, Ruben?!

Dawoud takes the window guard down and sticks his head out to get the woman's attention.

DAWOUD (CONT'D)

What's up, gorgeous?! Are you new to the neighborhood?!

Dawoud gets peed on by someone on an upper floor.

DAWOUD (CONT'D)

What the fuck, man?! What kind of sick animal pees out the window?! Go in the sink, if you can't get into the bathroom for whatever reason!

RUBEN

You got peed on?!

Ruben cracks up.

DAWOUD

What are you laughing at?! Get me something to dry myself off with!

Ruben can't stop laughing and drops to the floor.

CUT TO:

INT. TATTOO PARLOR - DAY

Busy. Ruben is sitting in a tattoo parlor, flipping through a tattoo book. Dawoud is looking through the book with Ruben, advising him on which tattoo to get.

DAWOUD

You should get a big ass middle finger to take up your entire back. The next time your Drill Sergeant gets in your face, just show him your back.

RUBEN

Na, I don't wanna get anything too big. Besides, that sounds expensive. I'm not gonna break the bank to get a tattoo.

Ruben continues to flip through the book.

DAWOUD

How much is the Army paying you for serving anyway? You never told me.

RUBEN

\$900 a month -- that's while I'm on active duty, but if I were to get you to sit down with my recruiter and enlist, I could get a bump up in pay.

DAWOUD

After everything you told me about your Drill Sergeant depriving you of your hash browns, why should I enlist?

RUBEN

Patriotism.

DAWOUD

What about it? Is that why you enlisted?

Ruben can't keep a straight face.

RUBEN

Hell no.

DAWOUD

I didn't think so. We're from the projects, son. People from the projects don't join the military to be patriotic.

RUBEN

I know that. I was just fucking with you.

DAWOUD

Don't get me wrong -- the money sounds good and all, but you know me, son. I don't have the wherewithal to put up with any Drill Sergeant who gets in my face. When have you ever known me to let someone get away with something like that?

RUBEN

I don't even know why I'm talking to you about this anyway. My Drill Sergeant already said that he didn't want me going back there, so it doesn't matter.

DAWOUD

Exactly. It's settled then.

RUBEN

Man, I can't find a single tattoo that I like in this book. Maybe I should come back when I have a definitive idea of what I want. Let's get out of here. We still got preparations to make before the ball drops.

DAWOUD

Oh, I got in touch with James before I left my house this morning.

RUBEN

Is he hanging out with us tonight?

DAWOUD

Yeah, he also invited some guy named Tobey, a co-worker of his, to tag along with us.

Ruben and Dawoud get out of their seats and exit the parlor.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY

A small group of protester have gathered to protest against a controversial illegal immigration reform bill in downtown Manhattan. Ruben and Dawoud walk out of a McDonald's restaurant with James and TOBEY, 20, and step right into the middle of the demonstration.

DAWOUD

Not a very cool welcome home, is it, Ruben?

RUBEN

What I wanna know is why do these protesters insist on protesting in Spanish?! These blanquitos can't understand a word they're saying. How do they expect to get anywhere by protesting in Spanish?

JAMES

What do you care, Ruben? You're Puerto Rican, you're a citizen of this country, you're good.

RUBEN

No, it ain't all good, James. You know how many times I was mistaken for a Mexican by White dudes in boot camp? Believe me -- it's only a matter of time before we're all in this together.

A protester overhears Ruben and confronts him.

ANGRY PROTESTER

Hey, you!

Ruben faces the protester.

RUBEN

Me?

ANGRY PROTESTER

Yeah, you! I didn't catch that! What was it that you said?

RUBEN

Get outta my face, man!

ANGRY PROTESTER

Don't tell me to get out of your face! What was that about White dudes?

RUBEN

Yo, why don't we get right down to it?! You wanna do something?!

ANGRY PROTESTER

Are you gonna keep your friends out of this?!

RUBEN

Don't worry about them! Just bring your ass on!

The angry protester approaches Ruben. Ruben gets into a fighting stance and starts to bounce on his toes.

DAWOUD

Oh, your ass is in trouble now! See what you did? You got my man bouncing on his toes!

Ruben catches the protester with a front kick to the gut. The protester gets a hold of Ruben's foot. Ruben then leaps in the air and brings his other leg around, knocking the protester out.

DAWOUD (CONT'D)

Shit, I almost forgot -- I'm on parole! I can't be here right now! Let's be out, Ruben!

Ruben rolls around on the street and gets back on his feet, leaving the scene before the cops show.

INT. SUBWAY - NIGHT

Ruben and his friends are on a crowded train, talking about the moves he put on the protester.

DAWOUD

I like the way you handled yourself, Ruben! You gotta show me that move, son! What the fuck was that -- Taekwondo?!

RUBEN

Na, it wasn't Taekwondo.

DAWOUD

Well, whatever the fuck it was -you gotta teach me! The whole thing went down so fast!

Dawoud notices a couple of straphangers looking in his direction and decides to have a little fun with them.

DAWOUD (CONT'D)

What the fuck are you staring at?

The two straphangers quickly look away to avoid an altercation.

DAWOUD (CONT'D)

That's right! Look away before I sic my boy here on your asses!

TOBEY

So, what's the deal? Are we gonna ride the train back and forth all night, or are actually gonna do something?

JAMES

Oh, I just remembered that my boy Tito is throwing a toke party in the Bronx. You wanna check it out?

RUBEN

Man, I can't go to some fucking toke party! I'm in the service.

DAWOUD

Yo, I thought we already talked about that?! You're through with them. We're goin' to that party.

The train pulls into the station and comes to a complete stop.

DAWOUD (CONT'D)

Let's get off here to catch the 4 train.

The train doors open. Dawoud, Tobey, and James get off the train. Ruben follows behind them and then decides to ditch them by staying on the train at the last minute. The train doors close, and Ruben takes a seat as the train pulls out of the station.

DAWOUD (CONT'D)

Where the fuck is Ruben, Tobey?

TOBEY

I don't know! I thought he was
right behind me!

Dawoud, Tobey, and James stand around to wonder what happened.

DAWOUD

What the fuck, Ruben?!

CUT TO:

INT. PIZZERIA - NIGHT

Ruben enters a late night pizza shop in his neighborhood and finds Missy, 18, sitting at a table with her new male companion.

MAN BEHIND THE COUNTER

What are you having?!

RUBEN

Let me get a slice. You don't have to heat it up. I'll take a cold one.

MAN BEHIND THE COUNTER

Okay.

Ruben keeps looking over at Missy, while he waits for his order.

MAN BEHIND THE COUNTER (CONT'D)

That will be \$2.25.

Ruben digs in his pocket for the money.

RUBEN

Here you go.

Ruben pays for the pizza and walks away from counter without the slice.

MAN BEHIND THE COUNTER

Hey, aren't you gonna take your slice with you?!

Ruben goes back to the counter for his slice and takes one last look at Missy before walking out of the pizza shop.

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACKS - DAY

Ruben, dressed in his Class A's, shows up at the barracks.

COTTO

Oh, look who's back!

Cotto walks over to Ruben to welcome him back.

RUBEN

What's up, Cotto?

COTTO

I didn't think I was going to see you again. You look much better now. You really needed this break.

LAWERANCE

Yo, Delgado, has Drill Sergeant Wilkes seen your ass yet?

RUBEN

No, not yet.

LAWERANCE

(smiles)

Oh, I can't wait to see this shit!

COTTO

What do you think is gonna happen, Delgado?

RUBEN

Man, whatever happens, Drill Sergeant Wilkes is just going to have to deal with me.

Cotto wants to show Ruben photos of his wedding.

COTTO

Do you want to see my wedding pictures, Delgado? Check them out.

Ruben takes the pictures from Cotto.

RUBEN

Ah, you went to Jarred, numb nuts? What a dick!

COTTO

Yup.

RUBEN

My condolences. No, not that one. I meant the other one. What's the other one? Oh, congratulations! That's it. I'm always getting those two confused. I don't know why.

COTTO

Yeah right, Delgado! Give me back my damn pictures!

Drill Sergeant Wilkes enters the barracks and spots Ruben right away.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

Is that you, Delgado?! Didn't I tell you to keep your sorry ass at home?!

RUBEN

You mean to tell me that I could've stayed at home, and no MPs would've shown up at my door to take me away for going AWOL?! Shit, if I had known that, I would've kept my ass home!

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES Get in the front lean position and execute, God Damn it!

Ruben drops to the floor.

RUBEN

How many do you want?!

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

Just start pushing! I'll tell you when to stop!

RUBEN

Yes, Drill Sergeant!

Ruben starts counting off push ups.

COTTO

Welcome back, Delgado.

CUT TO:

EXT. PHYSICAL TRAINING TESTING SITE - MORNING

It's 4:30 a.m. It's physical training test day for the trainees at Fort Benning. 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 could 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 completely and gives up. The tester records the number of sit ups Cotto completed successfully in his folder.

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. The tester calls Cotto back to hold Ruben's feet down.

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 the mat. Private Cotto gets down on his knees to hold Ruben's feet down.

PHYSICAL TRAINING TESTER (CONT'D)

Begin.

Ruben starts doing his sit ups 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.

RUBEN

Sorry about that, Cotto.

PHYSICAL TRAINING TESTER

Alright, that's enough! Get back to it!

Ruben continues to do his sit ups.

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

Drill Sergeant Wilkes is posting 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!

(CONTINUED)

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

You, on the other hand, performed quite well on your test. You did 83 push ups and 91 sit ups. That's not bad. 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?

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 seven 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?! Get in the front lean position and execute!

Ruben gets down on the floor to do push ups and counts off.

CUT TO:

INT. MESS HALL - DAY

Ruben, dressed in his BDU's, is sitting at a table eating breakfast. Lawerance sets his tray down and 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, fuck his good graces, alright?! It's hard enough for me as a trainee to get through the day without that asshole getting in my face every 10 minutes. I trust that things would only get worse with me as a squad leader, so thanks, but no thanks.

LAWERANCE

Yeah, I guess your right about that.

RUBEN

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

Drill Sergeant Wilkes catches Ruben talking to Lawerance.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

Alright, clear the table, Delgado!

RUBEN

(sighs)

Request permission to clean my plate, Drill Sergeant?!

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

Request denied!

Ruben leaves the table with his tray and walks over to the dumpster. Ruben wraps his hash browns in a napkin and stuffs it in his pocket, before dumping the rest of his food.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD - DAY

It's a bright sunny day. Recruits are in the field enjoying a competitive pugil stick match taking place between Taylor and Lawerance.

Meanwhile, Ruben is off somewhere in a porta-potty eating the hash browns out of a napkin. Ruben finishes the hash browns and wipes his mouth before exiting the porta potty, with Drill Sergeant Wilkes waiting outside to greet him.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES What were you doing in there, Delgado?!

RUBEN

I'm sorry, Drill Sergeant, but every time I pushed my shit would break apart on me. Has that ever happened to you? No, not you, right? You probably eat Navy Seals for breakfast and shit super soldiers.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES That's very funny, Delgado. Who are you going up against?

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 your opponent better be formidable too.

Recruits on the field can't wait for a bout between Ruben and Baker to get underway. Both Ruben and Baker are standing in neutral corners, wearing protective gear and armed with pugil sticks. Drill Sergeant Wilkes stands between them to make the introductions.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)

Alright, this is the moment we've all been waiting for!

Drill Sergeant Wilkes introduces Ruben first.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)

In this corner, weighing in at 157 pounds, representing Harlem, NY, we have Delgado!

Ruben supporters cheer him on from the sidelines.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)

And in this corner, also weighing in at 157 pounds, representing Mobile, Alabama, we have Baker!

Baker supporters cheer him on from the sidelines.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D) Delgado, Baker front and center.

Ruben and Baker come out of their neutral corners for further instructions from Drill Sergeant Wilkes.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D) Okay, you two, let's have a good clean fight. Obey my commands at all times. Come out fighting as soon as you hear the whistle. Are there any questions?

Ruben and Baker are clear with the instructions.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D) Back to your corners.

Ruben and Baker return to their neutral corners and wait for Drill Sergeant Wilkes to blow his whistle. Drill Sergeant Wilkes finally blows the whistle, and Ruben and Baker come out of their neutral corners. Both Ruben and Baker supporters get really loud, cheering their man on. Baker comes out swinging his pugil stick at Ruben like a crazy person. Ruben blocks and ducks every swing. Exhausted, Baker lowers his defenses and leaves himself open for a counter attack by Ruben. Ruben sticks Baker 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 Baker down hard to the ground. Drill Sergeant Wilkes blows his whistle.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D) Go to your corner, Delgado!

Ruben returns to his corner. Baker's supporters are urging him to get back in the fight. Drill Sergeant Wilkes checks to see if Baker is in any condition to continue with the bout.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)

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

BAKER

Yeah.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

Sound off like you got a pair!

BAKER

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 Baker come out of their corners. Still winded, Baker isn't fast enough to protect himself as Ruben is able to connect with his pugil stick easily. Baker stumbles backwards and goes down hard. Drill Sergeant Wilkes blows his whistle.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D) In your corner, Delgado!

Ruben returns to his corner. Drill Sergeant Wilkes checks on Baker, who is having trouble getting back to his feet.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D) How do you feel, Baker? Do you feel strong enough to continue?

Baker 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.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D) Good match, you two.

Ruben and Baker shake hands.

BAKER

Good match, Delgado.

RUBEN

I hope I didn't hurt you too badly, but you got Don Rickles to thank for that beat down. I heard one too many cracks about brown people from your boy.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE ROAD - DAY

The recruits all have their faces covered with war paint. After reaching the end of an 8 mile march, Ruben and the rest of the squad take a rest on the side of a road.

(CONTINUED)

Drenched in sweat, Ruben removes his soaked undershirt and gets a dry shirt out of his back pack.

RUBEN

Man, I pray we don't have to go through any more of these road marches at AIT school.

LAWERANCE

Don't worry. AIT school is smooth sailing compared to this. I mean, you'll still have to put up with Drill Sergeants getting in your face every now and then, but I hear that the weekend passes could be like Spring Break in Panama City.

Lawerance takes a swig from his canteen.

RUBEN

I wanna believe that, but we're both going to the same school to learn how to operate big rigs. I don't know about you, but Jennifer Love Hewitt doesn't come to mind, when I think of a chick who goes to school to learn how to operate a big rig.

LAWERANCE

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

RUBEN

Well, I'm not gonna get my hopes up.

Ruben takes a swig from his canteen.

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES

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

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

DRILL SERGEANT WILKES (CONT'D)

Your left, your left, your left, right, 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:

INT. FORT LEONARD WOOD, MO - BARRACKS - NIGHT

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 on our first weekend pass. Her name is Belinda. 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? I heard Texas is actually a pretty cool place. I'm thinking about buying a house there with my bonus money as soon as my service is up. The gun laws in Texas couldn't be sweeter.

VARGAS (CONT'D)

CONTINUED:

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's got much better friends for to hook up with.

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

RUBEN

Alright, can I have everyone's attention? This will only take a couple of 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

Did you just call me 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, shut up with that already!
It's not like I asked to be a
fucking squad leader! If you had
spoken up and told the Drill
Sergeant that I wasn't all that,
then maybe you would be the squad
leader right now, instead of me!

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

Alright, we're gonna see about this shit!

CONTINUED: (3)

RUBEN(CONT'D)

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 is going 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!

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

TAYLOR

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

Ruben gets in Erickson's face.

RUBEN

Talk some more of that shit now, chump!

Erickson 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. DRILL SERGEANT CHAPMAN, intimidating figure, shows up on the floor to break up the fight.

DRILL SERGEANT CHAPMAN

Do my eyes deceive me?! What in God's name is goin' on in my house?! I want everyone outside and in formation right now! Move it out!

The soldiers run down the stairs and out the building.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE THE BARRACKS - NIGHT

The soldiers are in formation, waiting to see what Drill Sergeant Chapman has in store for them.

DRILL SERGEANT CHAPMAN

Spread out! Give yourselves room.

The soldiers give each other room.

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.

DRILL SERGEANT CHAPMAN (CONT'D)

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

The soldiers get on their backs and start kicking their feet in the air with their heavy boots on, entertaining the female soldiers watching from their windows. JENNA BURNETT, 19, calls LISA CHANNING, 19, over to the window 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 me 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 MELISSA SIMMS, 19, prude type, can't help but overhear Lisa and Jenna talking.

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 in his rank?

SHELBY

Yeah, I did.

SIMMS

That was funny. He was not happy about that.

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 might turn out to be another Erickson.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE THE BARRACKS - MORNING

Ruben, dressed in his BDU's, is in formation, looking up at the flock of geese flying over his head in V shaped formation. Shelby walks up to Ruben and strikes up a conversation with him.

SHELBY

Hey, Delgado.

RUBEN

What's up, Foster? Look up there.

Shelby looks up at the geese.

SHELBY

Wow. That's awesome.

RUBEN

That is awesome -- the way they're flying in formation like that to minimize wind resistance and regulate turbulence -- You don't get to see stuff like this every day in New York.

SHELBY

It's the same with Jersey, where I'm from.

RUBEN

Oh, that makes us neighbors!

SHELBY

That's right.

RUBEN

Cool.

SHELBY

You know, you're standing in the wrong place?

RUBEN

What do you mean? Where should I be standing?

SHELBY

You're a squad leader, remember? You get to carry the flag and lead your rank to the mess hall for chow.

RUBEN

Oh, I forgot about that flag carrying shit! I know I'm gonna fuck this up.

SHELBY

No, you won't. You'll be fine.

RUBEN

There goes my job. Maybe it's better this way -- I never wanted to be a squad leader in the first place.

SHELBY

If you want me to, I'll stand behind you and walk you through everything.

RUBEN

But you're not in my rank, though.

SHELBY

That's okay. I'll just trade places with somebody in your rank.

RUBEN

That'll work.

Cotto shows up to formation.

COTTO

What's up, Delgado?

RUBEN

What's up, Cotto? Hey, Cotto, switch ranks with Foster just for today.

COTTO

Alright.

RUBEN

Thanks.

Shelby and Cotto switch ranks.

SHELBY

Here comes Drill sergeant Chapman now. Let's get you to where you're supposed to be.

Shelby shows Ruben where his place is in line and stands next to him.

DRILL SERGEANT CHAPMAN

Attention!

The soldiers stand at attention. Ruben is standing at attention holding a flagstaff.

DRILL SERGEANT CHAPMAN (CONT'D)

Right face!

The soldiers turn to their right.

DRILL SERGEANT CHAPMAN (CONT'D)

Forward march!

Ruben raises the flagstaff and marches forward to Drill Sergeant Chapman's cadence.

DRILL SERGEANT CHAPMAN (CONT'D)

Left, left, left, right, left, left, left, left, right, left...

Shelby is marching behind Ruben, shifting him on every turn he is supposed to make, when he is supposed to make them.

DRILL SERGEANT CHAPMAN (CONT'D)

(singing)

Got a letter in the mail...

The soldiers repeat.

DRILL SERGEANT CHAPMAN (CONT'D)

Go to war, or go to jail...

The soldiers repeat.

DRILL SERGEANT CHAPMAN (CONT'D)

And it won't be long...

The soldiers repeat.

DRILL SERGEANT CHAPMAN (CONT'D)

Til we get on back home...

The soldiers repeat.

DRILL SERGEANT CHAPMAN (CONT'D)

(switches cadence)

Hey soldier...

The soldiers repeat.

DRILL SERGEANT CHAPMAN (CONT'D)

Bad ass soldier...

The soldiers repeat.

DRILL SERGEANT CHAPMAN (CONT'D)

Pick up your gun and follow me...

The soldiers repeat.

DRILL SERGEANT CHAPMAN (CONT'D)

Follow me to victory...

The soldiers repeat.

SHELBY

You're doing good, Delgado. I think you can take it from here.

DRILL SERGEANT CHAPMAN

Left, left, left, right, left, left, left, left, right, left.

The soldiers finally reach the mess hall.

CUT TO:

INT. MESS HALL - DAY

Ruben and Shelby are sitting at the same table having breakfast together.

SHELBY

I suppose I could've scored much higher on the asvab test and gotten myself a better job, other than driving trucks for the Army, but I had just finished up my Freshman year at Rutgers, and by that time, I was in no mood to study for another exam, so I decided to go in there and wing the asvab test.

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 smoke us last night til 1 in the morning, but I guess you already know that, because I saw you at your window laughing at us, 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

Yeah, I'll tell him.

SHELBY

So, what do you plan on doing with your weekend pass?

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

Yes, Drill Sergeant.

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

SHELBY

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

Just for that you get to starve too! Clear the table!

SHELBY

Yes, Drill Sergeant!

Shelby leaves the table.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRUCK VENDOR - DAY

Ruben and Cotto are purchasing 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 that.

RUBEN

Yeah, I know, and I appreciate you making this trip with me, but I have got to get something to eat. I don't even know why the Drill Sergeant's crazy ass had to bounce me from the mess hall in the first place. That whole business about not being allowed to talk during chow is a bunch of garbage, man! Here's 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!

Ruben sticks the donut he offered Cotto in his mouth. Ruben and Cotto wait for the passing cars to go by before crossing the street. A second lieutenant riding shot gun in the passenger side of a pick up truck stops to have a word with Ruben.

SECOND LIEUTENANT

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!

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 the whole pack of donuts out 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'd be the laughing stock of my projects!

The second lieutenant signals the driver to step on the gas and drive on.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

I'm glad you were here to witness this shit, Cotto. You never would've believed what just happened to me based on my word alone.

COTTO

Are you crazy, Delgado?! What are you talking to him like that for?

RUBEN

Yo, you're supposed to be on my side! Some nut starts sounding off to me because of a chocolate donut, and I'm the one who's crazy? 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, so I don't give fuck about his ornaments! I'm really surprised by you Cotto -- you should know me better than that by now!

COTTO

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

Ruben and Cotto cross the street.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOTOR POOL - DAY

Ruben is having a hard time keeping his eyes open while driving a military truck during a convoy exercise. Taylor, riding shoot gun, grabs the steering wheel when he catches Ruben dozing off and keeps the truck steady.

TAYLOR

You awake there, Delgado?!

RUBEN

Yeah, I'm good.

TAYLOR

You landed fire watch duty last night, right?

RUBEN

Yup.

TAYLOR

How many hours of sleep did you get?

RUBEN

Three.

TAYLOR

That's it?

RUBEN

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

TAYLOR

Then why did you choose this MOS?

RUBEN

I didn't! My recruiter hooked me up with this MOS. But, in all fairness, I did tell 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.

TAYLOR

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

Ruben falls asleep behind the wheel and loses control of the truck.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

Delgado!

Taylor grabs the steering wheel and tries to get control of the truck, but the truck rolls off the track and flips over.

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Lawerance and Cotto are in one of the rooms at the motel 6 drinking beer.

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.

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

COTTO

What's up, Ruben?

RUBEN

Hey, have you guys seen Foster anywhere?

LAWERANCE

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

RUBEN

Alright, I wanna make a quick phone call first. Where's the phone?

LAWERANCE

It's over there. Do you need a calling card?

RUBEN

Na, I got one.

Ruben gets on the phone and calls Dawoud back home.

CUT TO:

INT. SUBWAY STATION - NIGHT

Quiet. Dawoud and James are in a subway station peddling for cash. Dawoud sees a man getting ready to put money into the metro card vending machine and tries to wheel him and deal him before it's too late.

DAWOUD

Excuse me, but are you about to get a single ride metro card?

METRO CARD GUY

What's it to you?

DAWOUD

If you're looking to get a single ride metro card, I could get you through.

METRO CARD GUY

How much are you asking?

DAWOUD

Two dollars.

METRO CARD GUY

Two dollars? I might as well get it from the machine!

DAWOUD

What's the difference?! It's gonna cost you two dollars at the machine!

METRO CARD GUY

Yes, but that's what these machines are here for.

What you're doing can get you into trouble with police. If you're going to compete with these machines, then you've got to lower your price. I get that you're trying to make money, but at the same time, I'm trying to save money.

DAWOUD

Okay, \$1.50.

METRO CARD GUY

I shouldn't be contributing to this, but I'm going to help you out.

Metro card guy digs in his pocket and gives Dawoud the money.

DAWOUD

Right this way, sir.

Dawoud walks the metro card guy over to the turnstile and swipes his metro card, letting the man walk through.

JAMES

That guy does have point, though. If we're gonna compete with the vending machines, we gotta ask people to pay less.

Dawoud hears the ring tone on his cell phone and checks the number but doesn't recognize it.

DAWOUD

Yo, what area code is 314?

JAMES

I don't know.

DAWOUD

Well, I'm not familiar with the number, so fuck 'em.

Dawoud puts his phone away.

CUT TO:

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.

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 pockets the number after looking it over.

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

So, now that we got that out of the way, what's next?

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Erickson is sitting on the bed with a beer in his hand watching 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.

SIMMS(CONT'D)

CONTINUED:

It's too bad that Belinda chick stood you up.

ERICKSON

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

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.

CUT TO:

INT. SHELBY'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Ruben and Shelby are in bed, making out. Shelby unfastens Ruben's belt buckle and unbuttons his pants.

RUBEN

Shelby, hold on.

Ruben stops Shelby from going any further.

SHELBY

What? What's wrong?

RUBEN

I'm too tired, and if we go through with this now, it's only gonna reflect negatively on me. I don't want that. Do you understand? You're not mad at me, are you?

SHELBY

No, I'm not mad, Ruben. I get it.

RUBEN

Are we cool?

SHELBY

Maybe we could go down on each other, or are you too tired for that as well?

RUBEN

Do you want me to suck you off first?

SHELBY

No, I'm already on top. I'll do you first.

There's a knock on the door.

SHELBY (CONT'D)

That's probably Simms. Let me see what she wants.

Shelby puts on a shirt to answer the door.

SHELBY (CONT'D)

What do you want, Erickson?

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 is hiding 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.

ERICKSON

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 a 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, follows it up with a left hook, and knocks him out cold. Ruben then picks the knife up off the floor and holds to Erickson's throat.

SHELBY

Ruben, no! Don't do that!

Ruben looks at Shelby and drops the knife.

SHELBY (CONT'D)

Are you alright?

RUBEN

(wincing)

I think I broke my hand.

SHELBY

Man, you really clocked him one, Ruben! Is that a tooth I see on the floor?

Ruben sees a tooth on the floor next to Erickson and picks it up.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RUBEN'S NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

A black livery cab pulls over to the curb and lets Ruben, dressed in his Class A's, out in front of his apartment building. There are Police in front of Ruben's apartment building getting a statement from a pizza delivery man. Dawoud is sitting on a bench smoking a cigarette and calls Ruben over to fill him in.

DAWOUD

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

Dawoud holds on to Beast's leash as Ruben approaches the bench.

RUBEN

Yeah, I'm here to stay.

Ruben kneels down to say hello to Beast.

DAWOUD

Good. For a minute there, I thought I was going to have to miss out on the Puerto Rican Day Parade this year. You know I have much better luck hooking up with Spanish chicks when you're around.

RUBEN

What the fuck happen 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.

RUBEN

See, that bullshit attitude right there is why decent motherfuckers like me have to be vigilant all the time around here.

DAWOUD

Hey, that's the hood for you.

RUBEN

So, this is why you couldn't pick me up from the airport?

DAWOUD

Shit, I forgot about that! My fault, son! 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, son.

Dawoud and Ruben do the secret hand shake.

CUT TO:

INT. MANNY'S BARBER SHOP - DAY

Empty. Ruben enters the neighborhood barber shop. MANNY, 24, an old friend, takes Ruben on as a customer.

MANNY

What's good, Ruben?! Get in here, man! Let me get a look at you! You look good.

RUBEN

Thanks. How have you been? How's business?

MANNY

Everything is all good here. What's goin' on with you?

RUBEN

Nothing much. I just stop by for you to do what you did for me the last time I was in here.

MANNY

Well, sit down. I'll hook you up.

Ruben takes a seat in the barber's chair.

MANNY (CONT'D)

So, how does it feel to be back?

Manny covers Ruben up with an apron.

RUBEN

Yo, I'm as happy as a white dude who was just accepted into the black community.

MANNY

Are you back for good?

RUBEN

Yeah, I'm back for good. I mean, I still got drills I have to attend one weekend a month, but that's nothing. I'll be doing until my three year contract expires.

Manny looks for the right clipper to shape Ruben's hair line with.

MANNY

So, how did you like the Army? Was it anything like the commercial?

Manny stands in front of Ruben to straighten out his hair line.

RUBEN

I think I should've joined the Navy. I probably would've hated it just the same, only not as much as the Army. However, the one thing I am going to miss about Fort Benning is the hash browns they used to serve every morning. I only wish I knew their secret.

MANNY

Well, what do you plan to do now that you're back?

Manny stands behind Ruben to get the back of his head.

RUBEN

I got the GI BIll in the mail today. So, there's a whole bunch of stuff I gotta do before the start of the Fall semester at NYU.

MANNY

In that case, let me hurry up so you can get outta here and do what you gotta do.

Manny takes a hand held mirror and stands behind the chair to show Ruben the back of his head.

RUBEN

Nice job.

Manny takes the apron off of Ruben and lets him out of the chair. Ruben then reaches in his pocket to pay Manny for a job well done.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

Here you go.

Manny takes the money from Ruben and counts it.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

Is everything cool?

MANNY

Yeah, it's cool.

Manny opens the register and puts the money away.

RUBEN

Well, it's just that Dawoud told me that you've been complaining to him about how I keep coming in here without leaving you a tip.

Manny plays dumb.

MANNY

He did?!

RUBEN

It's not that I'm cheap. I don't know how people can arrive to that conclusion so quickly. I just never believed in it, especially in today's economic climate. So don't take it personally. I wouldn't keep coming here if you weren't any good at what you do, okay?

MANNY

It's cool, man. Don't even worry about it.

Ruben and Manny do the secret hand shake and embrace.

RUBEN

Okay, have a good one.

Ruben exits the barber shop.

CUT TO:

INT. RUBEN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Ruben is in his bedroom packing up some of his things to take back with him to his dorm room. Ruben's mother stands at the doorway of his bedroom.

RUBEN'S MOTHER

Are you sure you don't want anything to eat before you go back to your dorm room?

RUBEN

Okay, I'll have scrambled eggs and cheese with sausage. I want the sausage patties, though, not the links.

RUBEN'S MOTHER

I don't have sausage patties. You're gonna have to settle for links, not that I see the difference.

RUBEN

Okay, give me the links then. Thank you.

Ruben's mother leaves him alone to make his breakfast. The phone rings.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

I got it!

Ruben stops what he is doing to answer the phone.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

Hello?

INT. FORT DIX - MESS HALL - DAY

Shelby, dressed in her Army fatigues, is taking time out of her weekend drill at Fort Dix to talk to Ruben.

SHELBY

Hello, may I speak to Ruben?

INTERCUT AS NEEDED.

RUBEN

This is Ruben.

SHELBY

Hey, do you know who this is?

RUBEN

Shelby?

SHELBY

Is that a question?

RUBEN

No, this is definitely Shelby.

SHELBY

Very good.

RUBEN

Did you think I was gonna forget about you? I did not forget about you.

SHELBY

Well, then why haven't you called?

RUBEN

I was going to -- believe me. I just got caught up with getting ready for the Fall semester at NYU. I'm actually packing some of things to take with me to my dorm room as we speak.

SHELBY

Well, maybe we could get together and hang out soon.

RUBEN

Yeah, that sounds like a plan. What day is good for you?

CUT TO:

EXT. THE WILLIAMSBURG BRIDGE - DAY

The Q train is going across the Williamsburg bridge. One of the twin towers is on fire and catches the attention of the straphangers on board. Ruben, who is sitting with his back to the towers, finally turns around in his seat and doesn't know what to make of the horrific scene.

CUT TO:

INT. NEW YORK UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - WOOLWORTH BUILDING - DAY

Ruben is walking through the halls of Woolworth building carrying a box. There's a large gathering of students and faculty members standing in front of a television that has been put out. Ruben squeezes through the crowd to see what is being reported in the news.

RUBEN

What's goin' on?

STUDENT

A plane crashed into one of the twin towers.

Ruben looks on.

RUBEN

Damn!

Ruben continues to watch repeated images of the jet plane crashing into the tower.

CUT TO:

INT. RUBEN'S DORM ROOM - DAY

Ruben makes it to his Dorm room and finds his roommate glued to the television set.

RUBEN'S ROOMMATE

Another plane?! What the hell?!

Ruben joins his roommate in front of the television.

RUBEN'S ROOMMATE (CONT'D)

What's up, Ruben? Have you been watching this?! How fucked up is this, right?! We're being attacked! This country's under attack!

Ruben is at a loss for words.

RUBEN'S ROOMMATE (CONT'D)

Do you remember me telling you how much I admired you for serving in the armed forces?

RUBEN

Yeah.

RUBEN'S ROOMMATE

Forget it.

RUBEN

Nice.

Ruben and his roommate continue to listen to what the anchors are reporting on the news.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Students are walking in and taking their seats. Ruben is sitting in the back of the classroom, going over some of his notes while waiting for his professor to show up and start the class. One of Ruben's classmates enters the classroom out of breath and grabs an empty seat next to Ruben.

RUBEN'S CLASSMATE Good, Professor Haythe isn't here yet. I am running so late. What's up, Ruben?

RUBEN

What's up?

right?

RUBEN'S CLASSMATE We get our tests back today,

RUBEN

We're supposed to.

RUBEN'S CLASSMATE Do you think you passed it?

RUBEN

I don't know. I wanna say yes, but I thought I did well on the last one, and it didn't turn out that way at all.

PROFESSOR HAYTHE enters the classroom with a brief case in hand and walks over to his desk in a hurry.

PROFESSOR HAYTHE

Morning class. Sorry I'm late. Your tests papers have been graded. You're gonna get them back now so we can get on with today's lecture. We've got a lot to cover today.

Professor Haythe gets the test papers out of his brief case and gives them back to his students.

PROFESSOR HAYTHE (CONT'D)

Jason Acevedo?

A student sitting in the front of the class raises his hand.

PROFESSOR HAYTHE (CONT'D)

Clara Addeo?

A student sitting in the back of the class raises her hand.

PROFESSOR HAYTHE (CONT'D)

David Bader?

A student sitting in the front of the class raises his hand.

PROFESSOR HAYTHE (CONT'D)

Ruben?

Ruben raises his hand and notices Professor Haythe folding his test paper in half as he makes his way over to him.

RUBEN

That bad, huh?

Ruben takes his paper and looks at his score. Ruben is disappointed at the big 57 written in red ink on the top of the page.

PROFESSOR HAYTHE

Kevin Depalo?

A student sitting in the front of the class raises his hand.

CUT TO:

INT. MOVIE THEATRE - NIGHT

Empty theatre, dimly lit. Shelby is sitting in the isle seats section of the movie theatre, waiting for Ruben to return from the concession stand.

SHELBY

It looks like people are still afraid to come out. We're like the only ones here.

Ruben gives Shelby the box of popcorn to hold before taking his seat.

SHELBY (CONT'D)

You didn't go crazy with the butter, did you?

RUBEN

I don't think I did.

Shelby helps herself to some popcorn.

SHELBY

Okay, good. Thank you, Ruben.

RUBEN

I'm just glad you had the wherewithal to ask me to get you something from the concession stand before hand. Do you know that I was once jilted by some chick in a movie theatre because I refused to get up during the movie and get her popcorn?

SHELBY

She actually got up and left you alone in the movie theatre?! You must have felt like a real dick.

RUBEN

I wasn't too upset about it. I mean, what chick does that? Why can't more girls be like you? I didn't spend twenty bucks to see a movie in a theatre just to wait for it to come out on DVD and catch the parts that I missed, you know what I'm saying?

SHELBY

Yeah, that's a valid point.

RUBEN

Anyway, the hell with her.

SHELBY

So, how's school? How are your classes going?

RUBEN

Not too good. I'm thinking about withdrawing.

SHELBY

You are?! Why?!

RUBEN

How am I supposed to focus on my studies with everything that's goin' on right now?

SHELBY

My unit got called up. I'll be shipping out to Iraq as early as next month.

Ruben laughs.

SHELBY (CONT'D)

What are you laughing at?

RUBEN

I'm just thinking about something my father used to always say.

SHELBY

What's that?

RUBEN

Man plans and God laughs.

The theatre finally goes dark. Ruben and Shelby stop talking during the previews.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Professor Haythe dismisses his class for the day. Ruben enters the classroom with a withdrawal card for Professor Haythe to sign.

PROFESSOR HAYTHE

Well, hello Ruben. I haven't seen you in a while. Where have you been?

RUBEN

I'm sorry, Professor Haythe, but my unit was called up. I've been busy preparing for my deployment. I ship out in two weeks.

PROFESSOR HAYTHE

Oh, that's right. I remember you telling me that you are in the National Guard.

RUBEN

I just need you to sign this withdrawal card.

Professor Haythe grabs a pen to sign the card.

PROFESSOR HAYTHE

Sure. Do you know what part of Iraq you're going to be stationed?

RUBEN

Not exactly.

PROFESSOR HAYTHE

That's a damn shame, especially since they still haven't found any weapons of mass destruction.

Professor Haythe hands the card back to Ruben after signing it.

PROFESSOR HAYTHE (CONT'D)

Here you go.

RUBEN

Thanks, Professor Haythe.

PROFESSOR HAYTHE

Good luck over there, Ruben.
Watch yourself, okay? Whatever
you do, don't try to be a hero.
Just bring yourself back home in
one piece. Say you come under
enemy fire and you see one of your
buddies go down, don't go back for
him if you see no sign of life
coming from him. There's no sense
in getting killed while trying to
save a goner. Don't be fooled.
There's nothing heroic about that
at all.

RUBEN

I'll remember that, Professor Haythe.

PROFESSOR HAYTHE

You're going to be just fine, Ruben.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY

Shelby is parked in front of Woolworth building, waiting for Ruben. Ruben finally walks out of the building and gets in the car.

SHELBY

Are we done here?

RUBEN

Yeah, we're done here.

Shelby starts the car, pulls away from the curb, and drives down the street. $\ensuremath{\mathsf{S}}$

(MORE)

FADE OUT.