A Woman Watches

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. VETERANS MEMORIAL COLISEUM - MADISON, WISCONSIN - DAY A banner reads: 32nd Infantry - Iraq Deployment Ceremony.

INT. COLISEUM - DAY

Thousands of friends, family and supporters cheer on the members of the 32nd Infantry. Marching bands and speeches.

A pocket of calm.

ELLIE, a woman in her fifties, won't look at his uniform. TOBY, late teens, puffs his chest out, stands at attention.

His eyes shine as she touches his cheek. She withdraws her hand. A tear wells up and spills down her aged skin.

The OTHER RECRUITS motion at him to hurry up. They laugh and rub their eyes as if crying themselves.

Toby leans away from her. She grabs his hand. His hand slips away from her finger by finger.

She buries her face in her hands and sobs.

EXT. NORTHEAST PAKISTAN - DAY

SHATHA, a woman in her thirties, won't look at his rifle. AZIZ, early teens, puffs his chest out, salutes, and stands with his rifle. It is almost as big as he is.

His eyes glow as she touches his cheek. She removes her hand. A tear wells up and falls off her cheek.

TWO MEN with rifles watch the OTHER RECRUITS. One of the men nods at Shatha as he finishes his cigarette.

Shatha grabs the boy's hand. He squeezes her hand. She smiles as he hurries off with the armed men.

Aziz blends in with the dust as she collapses and slides down the wall. She sits, hand on her breast, as she sobs. EXT. NEAR BAGHDAD, IRAQ - DAY (SIX MONTHS LATER)

The sounds of battle echo across the rocky terrain.

Aziz rolls behind cover as bullets splatter around him. He gasps for air. His eyes wide and haunted.

Across the rock, Toby aims his sniper rifle at the enemy. He waits with his finger on the trigger --

Aziz peeks out.

-- lets his breath out and squeezes.

The bullet traverses the distance, hits Aziz in the temple and explodes out the back of his skull.

Toby confirms the kill with his scope and grins.

He ducks at the incoming whistle of a mortar. The explosion rips apart his sniper's nest.

As the dust clears, Toby's body lies broken. Eyes wide shut.

EXT. NORTHEAST PAKISTAN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The narrow alley outside Shatha's home is crowded with foot traffic. The concrete walls add a drab sameness to the maze.

INT. SHATHA'S HOME - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Her home is small, clean, neat.

Shatha stops her chores and sits. Her face distorts with grief, wraps her arms around her torso, and weeps.

EXT. MADISON, WISCONSIN - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

A two story house on a narrow, fenced yard. Quiet street.

INT. ELLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Ellie sleeps in a single bed with a handmade quilt on top. The room looks pristine but cramped.

She sits up in bed holding her heart. A profound look of sadness, she lies back in bed, arches her back, and weeps.

CUT TO:

The grieving images of Ellie and Shatha split the frame in two. More images of grieving women from all races, join their images, splitting the frame into infinitely smaller images.

FADE TO BLACK.