

**THE DIRT ROAD**

written by

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**EXT. FIELD - DAY**

A BROILING HOT sun beats down on a parched, yellowed patch of grass. It's the middle of nowhere. Nothing around but dirt and trees.

In the center of the field, lying flat on his back, is a man wearing MILITARY FATIGUES. Roughly 40, his features are caked with dried mud.

This is BEN.

Slowly, Ben awakens. His eyes ease open, immediately squinting in the harsh sunlight.

Ben moves to a sitting position. He looks around, confused as to how he got here.

With some effort, Ben gets to his feet. Swaying slightly on the spot. He puts a hand on his forehead, rubbing his temple. Trying to recall something-- anything.

Ben scans the area, spotting a small path between the trees. With nowhere else to go, he meanders forward.

**EXT. DIRT ROAD NEAR FIELD - DAY**

Ben emerges from the tree line, stepping out onto a LONG DIRT ROAD THAT SEEMS TO STRETCH ON FOR MILES.

Ben looks left, then right. Taking in the sight--

DOZENS OF PEOPLE IN GROUPS, some men, some women, even a few children, march along the road. All are focused straight ahead, their eyes locked on what lies ahead. A few talk in hushed conversations.

None of them seem to notice Ben. Either they don't see him, or they don't care.

Ben extends a hand, trying to get the attention of a MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN as she passes.

BEN  
Excuse me.

Nothing.

The Woman keeps walking.

Ben lowers his hand. Not sure what to make of the encounter.

A MAN passes, talking quietly with a CHILD to his left.

Ben follows them, matching their pace. He tries to get the Man's attention.

BEN

Excuse me, sir, do you know what's going on here? I'm having trouble remembering how I got here. I woke up in the field over there and--

The Man cocks his head in Ben's general direction, looking almost offended to be interrupted.

MAN

If you don't know what's going on, how should I?

The Man puts an arm over the Child's shoulder and ushers him forward QUICKLY. Trying to leave Ben behind.

Ben stops, watching them go. Not sure what the hell is going on.

NEIL (O.S.)

Don't take it personally, most of them are like that.

Ben turns--

NEIL, 70s, wearing pajamas, a robe, and slippers, makes his way toward Ben. He seems calm, with the casual gait of someone out for a morning stroll.

Ben's eyes widen as he takes in Neil's appearance. Nevertheless, he's glad someone is speaking to him.

Neil continues past Ben with a slight nod in his direction. Ben walks with Neil, easily keeping up with him.

BEN

Do you know what's going on here--?

(beat)

--I didn't get your name.

NEIL

Neil.

BEN

Do you know what's going on, Neil?

Neil eyes Ben cautiously.

BEN  
(volunteering)  
My name's Ben... I think. It's all  
I can remember.

NEIL  
You woke up in the field?

BEN  
Yes. How'd you know?

NEIL  
I did the same thing...

Neil gestures at the people in front of them, then jabs his  
thumb over his shoulder at the people in their wake.

NEIL  
...so did they. We all did.

Ben frowns. Not completely satisfied with this information.

BEN  
Did you have trouble remembering  
how you got here, too? I can't  
remember anything, just my name.

NEIL  
At first. The only thing I could  
remember was my name. A few of us  
don't even get that. Slowly, bits  
and pieces start to come back to  
you. Like you're walking through a  
dark hallway and all you have is a  
flashlight to light the way ahead  
of you. All you can see if however  
much the light can illuminate.

Ben looks ahead of them at the assembly line of people marching  
to an underdetermined goal.

BEN  
Where's everyone going?

Neil shrugs.

NEIL  
I don't know. None of us do,  
really. We've been doing this for  
what feels like forever. We follow  
the sun, every day, all day. It  
never ends.

BEN  
You guys never get farther away?  
You never go anywhere?

NEIL  
That's what we're all trying to  
figure out. Why we're here and  
where we're going.

Ben tries to mask his frustration.

BEN  
How much do you remember?

NEIL  
A bit. Last thing I remember, I  
was eating dinner with my wife,  
Janet. I wasn't feeling well, so I  
told her I was going upstairs to  
take a nap. I went to bed at home  
and woke up in this place.

BEN  
Do you remember anything else?

Neil shakes his head.

NEIL  
It's all I can remember. I was  
walking along and it jumped into  
my memory... but I haven't been  
able to gather anything else.

Neil pauses, looking Ben over. Taking in his fatigues.

NEIL  
What about you? Were you in the  
army or something?

Ben looks down. Runs a hand along his fatigues. He closes his  
eyes, flooded with images and memories--

A NO MAN'S LAND. A SHELL-TORN LANDSCAPE.

GUNFIRE. SOLDIER'S SCREAMING. BOMBS EXPLODING. HELICOPTERS.  
TANKS.

Ben opens his eyes. Looks sideways at Neil.

BEN  
I think so.  
(thinking hard)  
My unit was trying to move the  
line forward.

NEIL  
Did you succeed?

Ben shakes his head-- the details too fuzzy to make out.  
Everything coming in fragmented imagery.

BEN  
I don't know. When I close my  
eyes, it's just noise... images  
with no context. I feel like  
someone's put together a movie out  
of order.

NEIL  
You'll get use to it. I did... I  
think. My details are scrambled,  
too.

Neil takes a deep breath. Then an idea strikes him--

NEIL  
Check your pockets.

Ben stares at him.

BEN  
What?

NEIL  
Some people have found things in  
their pockets. It's worth a try.

Ben shrugs this off-- *why not?*

He digs through his shirt pockets. First the left pocket--  
nothing-- then the right...

Ben's eyes widen. He pulls a POLAROID PHOTO from his pocket.  
Looks down at it, the photo's back facing him.

Neil points at it, pleased with himself.

NEIL  
See? Told ya.

Ben flips the photo over--

REVEAL:

BEN AT AN AIRPORT, HUGGING A WOMAN AND CHILD.

They look happy, smiling. But there's also a twinge of sadness  
to their faces.

Neil leans over, looking at the photo.

NEIL  
Your family?

Tears begin to well up in Ben's eyes. He closes them tightly, trying to fight it. It's to no avail-- the tears stream down his cheeks.

BEN  
I... I think so...

NEIL  
You all look very happy.

BEN  
I think we were.

NEIL  
Tell them I said hello whenever we  
get out of this mess.

Ben tightens his grip on the photo as more tears flow.

BEN  
I don't think I'll get a chance...

Ben closes his eyes. More MEMORY FLASHES--

BEN CHARGING TOWARDS THE ENEMY FOXHOLE. SHELLS EXPLODING ALL  
AROUND HIM, LAUNCHING SHRAPNEL OVER BEN AND HIS FELLOW  
SOLDIERS.

BEN  
I think we're all dead...

Neil looks at Ben, then at their surrounded, and then, finally, the people all around them.

For what seems like the first time, Neil takes in everyone's appearances. Some of them are wearing Victorian era clothing. A few others wearing fatigues, pilot outfits, suits and ties.

Neil hangs his head. The reality of Ben's words working their way into his mind.

NEIL  
I think you're right...

Ben reverently places the photo back into his pocket. Patting it gently.

He looks up, trying to keep his head held high.

BEN

So, what now? Are we going to walk  
this road for eternity?

NEIL

It's funny, I always thought when  
I died I'd crawl into bed, close  
my eyes, and, when I opened them,  
be looking at some angels or  
something.

(re: their surroundings)

Never expected this. I always  
thought I was a good person.

(beat)

How about you? Can you remember if  
you were a good person or not?

BEN

I think I was... I hope I was.

NEIL

You gave your life for your  
country. Every day you charge out  
there, never knowing if you're  
coming back. You're a hell of a  
lot braver than I was... I think  
so, anyway...

Ben looks lost in thought. Trying to piece together whatever  
pieces remain.

BEN

You think they miss us?

NEIL

I think they do. Guess we'll never  
really know...

Ben and Neil fall silent. As they walk, a young man in a  
VARSITY JACKET, ELLIOT, steps out of the tree line and onto the  
dirt road.

Elliot looks relieved at the sight of them.

ELLIOT

Thank god! Listen, I don't know  
where I am... I don't know how I  
got here...

Ben and Neil look at each other, their faces suddenly blank. As  
if none of their previous conversation happened.

NEIL

I'm Neil.



BEN

I'm Ben.

Elliot points a finger at himself--

ELLIOT

Elliot. I can't remember anything.  
Just my name. I just remember a  
bright light and--

BEN

You woke up in the field?

ELLIOT

Yes!

NEIL

So did we.

ELLIOT

Do you know what's going on?

Ben and Neil shake their heads. They turn and continue along  
the dirt road.

Elliot looks around, scanning the area. Seeing the people. He  
weighs his options, then turns and follows Ben and Neil as they  
continue to walk into the unknown...

FADE TO BLACK.