

(H)EAT OF WARTIME

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EXT. CITY - DAY

The sun burns.

Buildings in flames, amounts of rocks where once were houses, dead bodies and shattered glasses covered by blood and dust. War zone.

SUPERIMPOSE: 5TH DAY OF WARTIME.

Some rebels walk around the perimeter. Some other group of them talks and laughs out loud, while search for something valuable to pick from the cadavers.

EXT. STREET - DAY

In this particular street, some buildings stand up. Two lines of old stores, one on each side of the street. No people, no movement. Dust and broken furniture, fallen across the inside of each store make it impossible to distinguish what anyone would sell in there.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

It is dark. Nothing is where it was supposed to be. Fruits and vegetables cover the floor, some of them already smashed into juice. The front glass is covered by dust which makes it quite difficult to look outside.

A man sits against a wall. ROVEN (fifties) is all dirty. His tired eyes stare at nowhere while his mouth bites an apple.

At some point he gasps, stands up, falls a couple of steps ahead and vomits.

ROVEN

You're going to rot in here buddy,
just like all this juice-tasty
shit.

He throws the apple away and walks with difficulty to the front door. He looks outside. Some rebels joke around. He goes back to his wall, head down.

ROVEN

(beat)

Jesus, it stinks.

A bomb explodes in the underground. The floor shakes, dust and rocks fall from the roof and some boxes with food fall from the shelves.

(CONTINUED)

A scared and spaced out Roven looks for a safe spot.

ROVEN

Oh my god. Oh god. Shit.

No more shaking. Silence for a few seconds.

Whispers fill the room. Roven looks everywhere and tries to find the origin of the sounds. He is suspicious.

ROVEN

Is there anybody in here ?

Absolute silence.

ROVEN

Hello ?

INT. STEAKHOUSE - DAY

The room is a mess. Shelves on the cracked floor, and chips all over it. Barbecued chickens lay on their grills, now filled with flies.

A broken wheelchair.

The only light comes from the street, through a dirty front glass, just like in the grocery store.

ROVEN (O.S.)

If don't die of starvation,
insanity will take care of it.

(beat)

See, talkin' to the walls now.

ERIC (thirties) lies against a wall. Dehydrated skin, dried lips. His clothes are covered with dust. Some blood on his shoulder

Alongside, ANN (7), eyes closed, trembling, dirty face and ripped clothes. Some scratches. Traces of tears in her face. She is also dehydrated. Looks worse than Eric.

Eric reacts and jumps his head forward. Glances at Ann.

ERIC

Hello ? Sir ?

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

ERIC (O.S.)
Sir, are you in there ?

Roven gets up in a hurry. As he walks he smashes some more fruits and vegetables. He searches for the source of the voice.

ERIC (O.S.)
Please, talk to us.

Roven approaches a water draining grill on the floor. He approaches his ear and hears a scream of despair.

ROVEN
Who is this ? Where are you ?

INT. STEAKHOUSE - DAY

ROVEN (O.S.)
What's happening ?

Eric tries to get up but falls with a gasp of pain.

His voice is weak and rough.

ERIC
It is so good to hear you.

ROVEN (O.S.)
Where are you ? Are you OK ?

ERIC
My name is Eric Frost. I am trapped
at McHughes.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Roven gets up dizzy with a hand on his stomach.

ROVEN
Damn rabbit habit.

He passes a hand on the dirty glass and forces his eyes to see across the street. Some feet ahead lies header which reads: "McHughes - Hughe Chickens !"

ROVEN
Meat.

(CONTINUED)

ERIC (O.S.)
I can't walk. My little daughter is
dying, we need help.

ROVEN
Is the girl injured ? I'm right in
front of you, in the grocery store.

INT. STEAKHOUSE - DAY

ERIC
She's... starving. The grocery
store? God blessed. You've got to
help us, we --

Eric grabs the little girl's hand.

ROVEN (O.S.)
How long haven't you two been
eating ?

ERIC
(inhales)
Five days.

The girl spasms. Silence.

ERIC
Sir, are you in there ?

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Roven is curved, back to the front door, hands on his knees.
Vomits. Ann howls on the other side. Roven totters.
Weakness.

ROVEN
What? Five days? Why aren't you
feeding the girl? What's with the
chickens ?

FLASHBACK: INT. STEAKHOUSE - DAY (3 DAYS EARLIER)

The scenario is pretty much the same. A chicken lies on
Eric's lap. In disgust, he rips its legs off. One for her
daughter, one for him.

Ann, sad puppet eyes, pulls it away.

(CONTINUED)

ERIC

I know sweetheart, I know. But listen. This little chicken killed itself to save us. You see how brave it was ?

Ann cries. Nods.

ERIC

Now, there are some bad men out there. And they want to harm us. So we have to eat, to be strong and run away and save everybody, OK ?

The little girl accepts the chicken leg. Eats.

ERIC

You've got to be as courageous as the chicken.

Eric throws his away, discreetly.

INT. STEAKHOUSE - DAY

Eric caresses Ann's face. She trembles and sweats.

ROVEN (O.S.)

Stupid vegan guy! You're killing the girl! You and you're wife and you're family and everybody who's cooperated with such a brainwash.

ERIC

It's not like that! She just can't stand it, her body threw it all away. Sh --

ROVEN (O.S.)

Save the cows, fight the global warming and amputate the kids one of the greatest pleasures in life. Eating.

ERIC

What are you talking about? That's ju --

Eric coughs and moans. His voice gets rougher.

ERIC

It's not about saving the world. It's only about taking care of who you love.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Roven smashes a tomato against the floor, repeatedly.

ROVEN

Kids are supposed to eat candies
and hamburgers and donuts and all
the shit in the world. You're not
supposed to lock them in an
intellectual prison they won't
understand, about how unethical it
is to kill the fucking animals.

(beat)

Submit yourself to that unpleasant
life you don't believe in, but
leave kids out of this.

Nods in denial. Looks down, drops the tomato. Inhales.

ROVEN

Let them live, for Christ's sake,
let them live...

Raises his arms and puts them down as if he quits something.
Head down. His face muscles tensed.

ERIC (O.S.)

Do you... have kids, at least ?

FLASHBACK:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT (SOME YEARS EARLIER)

A bald young girl (7) lies on a bed. An older woman sits
right next to her with a comforting sad smile. They talk in
a low tone. The little girl smiles.

Roven, walks in with a tray with food. Some soup, a roast
beef with chips, a glass of juice and an apple. The girl
accommodates, smiles and grabs the tray. Roven helps her
with the cutlery and kisses her in the forehead.

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. STEAKHOUSE - DAY

Eric lolls back, eyes closed.

ERIC

You killed your daughter too.

Silence.

ERIC

Your daughter had five times more probability of dying from cancer than my daughter has. Your wife is probably going to die at seventy from a heart attack because of her cholesterol. Mine is going to live until one hundred.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Roven stares at her seven year old daughter' picture. She has hair in this one.

ROVEN

Well, I'm dying here with fifty-four and you're dying there with what, thirty? Life is too short, anyway.

Nods in denial. Turns his back to the street and looks at the food in there.

Shots outside.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Screams. A naked pregnant woman is violently thrown to the ground and shot to death.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

YOUNG GIRL (O.S.)

Daddy, am I going to die? I don't wanna die, daddy. I'll miss your roast beef in heaven.

Roven bites is lips.

(CONTINUED)

ROVEN

We're dying here, fellow Eric.
Maybe I'm responsible for Clara's
death. Maybe you'd be responsible
for your daughter's.

Gets up. Trembles. Walks slowly and picks up a box.

Grabs some fruits and vegetables, throws some of them away
and puts some of them into the box.

ROVEN

Doesn't really matter now.

INT. STEAKHOUSE - DAY

Eric listens carefully and stares at a similar grill.

ROVEN (O.S.)

I still believe there's a place in
heaven for both of us. Since this
side of heaven, here on earth, to
which some call existence, some
call life, some call hell... it
does belong to the children.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Roven has a box filled with food. Hand on his stomach.

ROVEN

I realized today some of these are
rot, but I think it'll do.

Looks outside.

ROVEN

Get her a roast beef when you get
out of here.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The grocery store's door opens. No one at sight. As fast as
five days of malnutrition allow, Roven runs towards the
steakhouse.

A couple hundred of meters away, a rebel notices.

Roven is almost there.

The rebel warns his fellows.

Some fruits fall to the ground, as the man gets to his destiny.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Eric has a blurry view of what's going on. Surprise on his face. Hugs Ann.

ERIC

Ann.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Weapons ready. Shots.

A box of fruits and vegetables falls to the ground right next to McHughes entry and some of the content rolls down the street

A line of dark red blood flows softly.