

HONOR

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Daniel - 50, reserved, unremarkable - sits at a table, eating from a bowl of cereal. He wears a robe and socks. His house is tidy but clearly that of a single, middle-aged man.

Daniel flicks through the local newspaper.

His eyes eventually settle on one headline: *CITY PREPARES FOR VETERAN'S DAY PARADE*. He looks away, lost in thought.

INT. BEDROOM - TEN MINUTES LATER

Now wearing trousers and a vest, Daniel stands in front of his wardrobe, checking through the shirts hanging from a rack.

His eyes drift to a green suit bag at the end of the rack. After another moment of thought, he looks away and returns his attention to the shirts.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - LATER THAT DAY

Returning from work, Daniel turns off the street onto the path that leads past his small garden to his modest house. He wears a light jacket over a cheap-looking shirt and tie. He might be a clerk or an administrator.

INT. KITCHEN, APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Daniel walks in, takes off his jacket and hangs it on a chair. Seeing the open newspaper and the headline about the parade, he swiftly folds it over and takes it through to the lounge.

He drops the paper onto a table in front of a bookshelf full of military texts, particularly those relating to the Gulf War and the Iraq War.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

All is quiet. Daniel lays in bed, eyes open, staring at the ceiling.

He reaches over to his night-stand, opens a drawer and takes out a bottle of pills.

EXT, GARDEN - DAY

Daniel weeds the flower bed where his garden meets the street. Wearing gloves, he pulls out the weeds and throws them in a bucket.

Looking up, he spies two uniformed veterans. The pair are in their seventies and walking purposefully into the city.

Daniel stops working. He thinks for a while, then removes his gloves.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

He opens the wardrobe, takes out the suit bag and lays it on the bed. After a deep breath, he unzips the bag.

EXT. CITY STREET - AN HOUR LATER

Daniel strides along the street, now wearing the uniform of a US Army captain, complete with beret. Upon his chest is a respectable array of medals. On his back is a mid-size, dark green backpack.

He passes two elderly women, who stop to admire him.

WOMAN  
(to her friend)  
Doesn't he look wonderful?

WOMAN (CONT'D)  
(to Daniel)  
You look wonderful.

DANIEL  
Thank you, ma'am.

SECOND WOMAN  
Thank you for your service.

Daniel nods graciously and continues walking.

EXT. SQUARE - TEN MINUTES LATER

Here about fifty veterans have gathered before joining the parade. Most are male and in Army or Marine uniform, aged between forty and seventy.

Daniel halts at the edge of the square, evaluating the situation.

He walks to a nearby bench and sits down. He takes a history book from a side pocket of his pack and starts to read. He places the pack on the ground beside his feet. The pack seems to be full.

About thirty feet away, a soldier aged about 45 finishes a sandwich. Upon his uniform is a name badge - LOPEZ; he's a friendly, open guy. Aiming to get rid of the sandwich wrapper, Lopez approaches the trash can near the bench. After throwing the wrapper in, he speaks to Daniel.

LOPEZ

Morning.

DANIEL

(nervous but polite)

Morning.

LOPEZ

(friendly)

Guess you'd call this a mixed unit, right? We're going to head over about twenty past.

Daniel nods, then returns his attention to his book.

Lopez hangs around, examining Daniel's uniform. He takes another step closer. Daniel instinctively puts a hand down on the backpack.

LOPEZ (CONT'D)

Gulf and Iraq, huh?

DANIEL

(shrugging)

Sucker for punishment.

LOPEZ

Least we missed Afghanistan.

Lopez nods to a nearby group of veterans using crutches and wheelchairs.

LOPEZ (CONT'D)

Got to be grateful to be all in one piece, right?

DANIEL

Right.

Though he's being polite, Daniel clearly doesn't want to engage.

LOPEZ  
I don't remember seeing you last year.

DANIEL  
(unsettled)  
Yeah, I ...er...I-

LOPEZ  
-You don't have to explain yourself to me, buddy. I know it rakes everything up. Does for me anyhow. My wife always says it takes me a couple of days to get back to normal.

Daniel forces a smile.

A younger veteran named BAKER arrives with a tray of coffees from a nearby cafe. He offers one to Lopez, who takes it.

LOPEZ (CONT'D)  
Thanks.

BAKER  
(to Daniel)  
You want one, man?

DANIEL  
No thanks.

BAKER  
It's no problem.

DANIEL  
Honestly, I'm fine.

Baker is the smooth, confident type. He looks Daniel over.

BAKER  
18th Infantry, huh?

DANIEL  
That's right.

BAKER  
Baumholder, was it?  
(grinning)  
Man, those German chicks.

Lopez grins too as he sips his coffee.

DANIEL  
That's the Second Battalion. The  
First was based at Fort Riley,  
Kansas.

BAKER  
Oh yeah?

DANIEL  
(surprised)  
You didn't know that?

BAKER  
(slightly embarrassed)  
I forget stuff.

He clearly regrets the mistake and wants to move the conversation on.

BAKER (CONT'D)  
Hey, I think there was a guy from  
the First here last year. Maybe  
he's around.

Baker turns to check the other soldiers in the square.

DANIEL  
General Custer was stationed at  
Fort Riley.

LOPEZ  
Yeah? So where were you in Iraq?

DANIEL  
Camp Falcon. Arrived October '06.

LOPEZ  
That part of the Green Zone?

DANIEL  
(shaking his head)  
Too far out of the city.

LOPEZ  
We never made it to Baghdad. Rough?

Daniel gives half a nod but doesn't reply.

Baker notices someone on the other side of the square.

BAKER  
You know that might be him.

He points at Daniel.

BAKER (CONT'D)  
 The guy from the First.  
 (thinking)  
 Watkins, was it? Wilkins?

Daniel seems slightly concerned.

He then notices a camera crew and a female reporter interviewing veterans.

He puts his book in the bag pocket and stands.

LOPEZ  
 (looking at his watch)  
 Not long to go.

DANIEL  
 (nervy)  
 Good time to hit the head.

Daniel walks across the street and into the cafe. He seems very anxious now.

The cafe is a quiet but nice place, about half full with ten customers.

Ignoring the staff, Daniel hurries through to the bathroom.

EXT. SQUARE

The veterans shake hands, look around and chat.

The reporter nods while listening to the soldier she's interviewing.

A veteran beckons to Lopez and Baker. They move towards him and talk to their friend.

INT. CAFE

Looking furtive, Daniel exits the bathroom, now wearing anonymous civilian clothes and a cap.

Moving quickly, he is almost at the door when a WOMAN reaches out and grabs his arm. Daniel stops.

She's about 35, wearing little make up and sombre clothing. Though she keeps her tone calm, there is a determined - almost angry - expression on her face.

WOMAN  
 Would you like to join me?

Shocked and embarrassed, Daniel looks down at the hand still gripping his arm.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

(firm)

I said, would you like to join me?

DANIEL

No.

She doesn't let go and beckons him closer with her other hand.

Daniel takes a step towards her table and bends over to listen.

WOMAN

(quietly)

I know what you are.

Her words hit home but he feigns confusion.

DANIEL

What do you mean?

WOMAN

I know what you are. And if you don't sit down right now, I'll go and have a little talk with those soldiers out there.

After glancing out at the square, Daniel reluctantly sits down, backpack held protectively in his lap.

The woman has already let go of him and now seems to relax a little. But she moves her chair closer.

He aims a suspicious, fearful glance at her. He pulls his cap low over his eyes.

DANIEL

(quietly)

Can't I just go?

WOMAN

(now angry)

You can talk to me-

(she points outside)

Or we can talk to them.

She glances at the backpack.



WOMAN (CONT'D)

Guess you had your clothes ready in case you had to escape? The camera crew, was it? Too many awkward questions?

Daniel says nothing.

She takes a breath and decides to change tack.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

I'm Nicole.

DANIEL

(whispered)

Daniel.

NICOLE

You do know it's a crime? You could get yourself into a lot of trouble. And for what?

A WAITRESS arrives.

WAITRESS

What can I get you, sir?

DANIEL

(without looking up)

Nothing.

WAITRESS

(to them both)

Are you together? It's just that we have a company policy on customers who don't make a purchase and-

DANIEL

-Water. Still.

WAITRESS

Coming up.

She leaves.

NICOLE

Why do you do it? That's all I want to know. Why?

Daniel shakes his head. He looks like a cornered animal.

NICOLE (CONT'D)  
 (shaking her head)  
 It's always men that do these things. I honestly don't think it would even occur to a woman.

Nicole puts her handbag on the table. She opens it, reaches inside and takes out a row of well-maintained medals.

NICOLE (CONT'D)  
 I'm ashamed to say I don't actually know what they're all for.

She points at some of the medals in turn.

NICOLE (CONT'D)  
 This one is for Vietnam and this is for Grenada. This is for being wounded - just a little shrapnel, he said. He had some of it in a jar.

Daniel seems more interested now and actually looks her in the eye.

NICOLE (CONT'D)  
 My father. I was going to come last year but it was too soon after the funeral. Dad was good friends with his gardener. Vince liked hearing his war stories. I was there one time when he showed Dad a YouTube video of people like you. What do they call it? Stolen valor?

Daniel's eyes close. The shame is too much.

Nicole seems to consider this a small victory.

NICOLE (CONT'D)  
 Will you do it again? After today?

Daniel seems on the verge of tears.

Noticing movement, they both look outside. The veterans are leaving for the parade.

DANIEL  
 (glancing at the medals)  
 Why aren't you wearing them?

NICOLE  
 I couldn't put them on at home because of my husband.  
 (MORE)

NICOLE (CONT'D)

He's ...against the government.  
Against everything.

She picks up the medals.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

I don't even know how to wear  
these. I guess I can ask someone.

DANIEL

I can show you.

She leans towards him, showing her teeth.

NICOLE

(vicious)

All I want from you is one thing.  
You tell me why.

Daniel relents under her gaze. He shrugs.

DANIEL

Be part of something ...worthwhile  
...Be noticed ...Feel proud.

NICOLE

Tens of thousands of people turn  
out for these parades. Why don't  
you join them? I can tell you for a  
fact that they appreciate it. Can't  
that be your part in it? Isn't that  
enough? Isn't that worthwhile?

Her words again hit home.

Daniel nods vaguely.

Nicole puts the medals back in her handbag. She also takes  
out some dollar bills and leaves them on the table.

Her last glance at him combines anger and pity. She stands  
and leaves.

EXT. STREET - HALF AN HOUR LATER

Daniel looks along a quiet street. At the far end, a crowd  
applauds and cheers as the parade goes by. A marching band  
plays. Uniforms and flags.

Daniel starts toward the parade but stops after ten paces.

He retraces his steps then heads home.

After twenty paces, he stops once more. He takes off his pack and dumps it in a trash can.

He gazes at it for a few seconds then walks away.

FADE OUT.