

1 INT. - BARBERSHOP - PRESENT

We are in a barbershop. CARTER, the shop owner, swipes the hair off the barber chair as Ned sits in it. Both men are in their late 50's.

NED

Now don't cut it too short like last time.

CARTER

(Looking at Ned's balding head)
Trying to hang on to the little you got left?

NED

I'm serious Carter. I need to look hip for this reunion.

CARTER

Hip? You about twenty years too late for hip.

Through the window, they see WARREN outside but approaching the shop.

CARTER

Oh, here he come again.

Warren, in his early 20's enters.

NED

(to Warren)
Ain't got time today.

WARREN

Colonel?

NED

Can't do it today. Try me tomorrow.

WARREN

You said that yesterday and the day before. Tomorrow never comes and I need to turn in a story I haven't even started.

CARTER

Why you want to dig up the past. Ain't safe talking about that stuff.

WARREN

Members of the Emperor's Old Guard are reuniting this week. Members who were there on December 12th. No one has spoke the truth on what happened that day. This is your chance to do so.

CARTER

Mr. Warren, you're not from here, got no ties, right. So you can write your news story and float right outta here. But for the rest of us, it ain't safe to talk about those things.

WARREN

You'll have my protection.

CARTER

It's not about your word!!!

WARREN

And compensation.

Carter perks up.

CARTER

Well...how much?

NED

Look! You want to write the truth, then you write the whole truth. Not some half-baked bullshit to sell a few papers. You want to know about December 12th, then you can't start at December 12th. You have to go back to when he came home.

WARREN

When Aiden came home?

NED

(grimly)

We don't say his name.

2 INT - PALACE - NIGHT

BLACK SCREEN

SUPER: YEARS EARLIER...

We are in the Emperor's Royal Palace. Hundreds of people fill

the foyer. There is music and laughter except from the Emperor's primary counsel the, ADVISOR, who is being followed and pestered by a short and fat Palace dignitary, SIRSAY, who is in his late 60's.

ADVISOR

Sirsay, the Emperor's time is limited today.

SIRSAY

But if I could get just a minute with him.

ADVISOR

Is this about the southern province?

SIRSAY

Yes.

ADVISOR

And the migrants flowing in?

SIRSAY

Flowing? There is an avalanche of migrants and with the war...

ADVISOR

(interrupting)

And with the war coming to an end, they will begin to return to their own country.

SIRSAY

But in the meantime..

ADVISOR

In the meantime, the Palace will send someone down to fix the problem. But none of that now. Today is a celebration. General Kassa...join us.

Advisor motions over to GENERAL KASSA, a man in his late 40's who is gruff in his voice and his manners.

KASSA

Who's making the drinks around here. I asked for a margarita and got yellow water.

SIRSAY

Kassa, I just read your write up in

the paper. They called you a war hero.

KASSA

Can the war hero get a drink?

ADVISOR

Let us get you something better.

Advisor motions to a waiter.

KASSA

Don't bother. I'm not staying. Just here to see Aiden.

ADVISOR

I'm sure Aiden will be here shortly.

SIRSAY

So what will you do...now that the war is over?

KASSA

My friend, if you learn nothing from a war hero, learn this: the war never ends.

3 INT. - PALACE - DAY

Aiden and Nadia walk into the Palace and are quickly greeted with a crowd and cheers.

KASSA

(playfully)

Aiden you son of a bitch you!

AIDEN

Kassa!

KASSA

Was there a food shortage in the UK? Look how skinny you got.

ADVISOR

(to Aiden)

Sirsay, this is Aiden Nuway. He has just come home from Europe after receiving a degree from Cambridge.

SIRSAY

Oh impressive. This is a homecoming for everyone it seems.

PRINCE NAVEEN
Is he here? Aiden!!!!

Prince Naveen comes down an ornate staircase and rushes to embrace Aiden.

AIDENN
Naveen!!!

Naveen is the Emperor's only son and in his early 20s.

PRINCE
Look at you! They don't eat in the UK?

AIDENN
I ate a lot.

PRINCE
Look at you. It doesn't feel like four years. We have to talk. I want to know everything about Europe. The clothes, the cars, people, nightlife. Especially the nightlife!

A trumpet blows and a recorded national anthem comes from the Palace speakers as the EMPEROR enters from the top of the stairs. He is a tall but frail figure in his mid 70's.

EMPEROR
After many years of long war, our nation can finally rest. For we have once again defended our land from foreign tyranny.

Applause

EMPEROR
As we welcome home our soldiers from foreign soil, let us also welcome home our son, Aiden Nuway.

If the pressures of Aiden being married to my niece were not heavy enough...

Laughs

EMPEROR
Now we will add the weight of working for me and for his country. Welcome home Aiden.

Music begins. The Emperor walks down the steps meeting Aiden at the bottom. Aiden kisses the Emperor's hand.

EMPEROR

Aiden, they weren't feeding you in Europe?

AIDEN

They fed me well.

EMPEROR

If your parents were alive to see this, the room would flood with joyful tears.

AIDEN

I owe a tremendous debt to them and you.

EMPEROR

And we have no doubt you will repay it. The assignment the Palace has for you is an important one.

ADVISOR

We want to make you governor of the southern province. Sirsay who you met tonight will be your deputy.

EMPEROR

Explain to him the problem.

ADVISOR

There have been a number of migrants settling into that province, escaping the war. This has been causing problems with the local inhabitants...ethnic conflicts...

EMPEROR

We want you to go down there to record their complaints.

AIDEN

Record?

EMPEROR

Yes, make a record of their troubles and suggestions to the Palace. Now that the war is over we must make steps toward stabilizing things.

AIDEN
When do I deploy?

EMPEROR
Take a few weeks. Get settled in.

AIDEN
I can leave this week.

EMPEROR
(impressed)
This week it is.

4 INT. SLUM APARTMENTS - NIGHT

We are in a small tenement apartment in the slums. O.S. we hear a tv in the background, children playing and a baby crying. FREDDIE, 20 years old, grabs his jacket and heads for the door. CANTARA, a woman in her 20's blocks him.

CANTARA
Freddie!

FREDDIE
(irritated)
What!

CANTARA
Where you going?

FREDDIE
Work.

CANTARA
Work? What work?

FREDDIE
What you want Cantara?

CANTARA
I want the groceries you were supposed to buy.

FREDDIE
What?

CANTARA
Freddie! I left you a list this morning of food to buy. I come home and the cabinets are empty!!! What these kids supposed to eat? The air?

FREDDIE
The air? How you eat the air?

CANTARA
Where's the food?

FREDDIE
I ain't got no money right now.

CANTARA
(angered)
How you going to work all the time but
got no money? How that work?

FREDDIE
Because...

CANTARA
How that work!!

FREDDIE
Cantara I ain't got time for this now!

There's a knock at the door. Freddie opens it and REMY, 20
years old, pops his head in.

FREDDIE
Where you been?

REMY
It's seven.

FREDDIE
You was supposed to be here at six.

REMY
Six?

FREDDIE
Six.

REMY
Six?

FREDDIE
Six muthafucka six!!! It's the number
before seven!!! Six!!!

CANTARA
Freddie stop cussing around these
kids, damn it!

FREDDIE
 (to Cantara)
 Well I'll go outside then!

Freddie opens the door and steps out with Remy.

CANTARA (O.S.)
 When you getting the groceries!!

FREDDIE
 When I come back.

Freddie slams the door close.

5 INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

FREDDIE
 (to Remy)
 Man, I ain't never coming back. I swear, I'm gonna just disappear from earth. Stress...she ain't nothing but stress.

REMY
 What we doing today?

FREDDIE
 Sirsay want us to go to some bars to collect money. That's what we doing. Now where's Saveh?

REMY
 I told him to come at seven.

FREDDIE
 Great. His backward ass probably get here at nine. Damn y'all dumb.

6 EXT. PALACE COURTYARD - DUSK

Aiden walks down the steps of the Palace. Naveen appears at the window.

PRINCE NAVEEN
 Aiden! Where are you going this time of night?

AIDEN
 I am walking to Guard headquarters.

PRINCE NAVEEN

You're going to see your brother? You don't want to take a car?

AIDEN

I wish to walk.

PRINCE NAVEEN

Hold on. I'll walk with you.

Naveen descends the steps as Emperor appears at the window.

EMPEROR

Naveen, where are you going?

PRINCE NAVEEN

I'm walking Aiden to the Guard.

EMPEROR

Walking? Take the car.

PRINCE NAVEEN

We want to walk. People still walk father.

(Under his breath)

You'd know that if you ever left these walls.

EMPEROR

What was that?

PRINCE NAVEEN

Nothing!

(to Aiden)

Ready?

AIDEN

The prince can walk the streets of the country?

PRINCE NAVEEN

Please, half of the country doesn't know they have a prince and the other half doesn't care. But let's take a car. Just don't let the old man know. I like to piss him off.

7 INT. ROLLS ROYCE - NIGHT

Aiden and the Prince sit in the back of a car as it drives through the city.

PRINCE NAVEEN

We never finished talking last night...about life in Europe.

AIDEN

So why is the heir to the throne so anxious to leave his nation?

PRINCE NAVEEN

My father is as eager to hand me that crown as I am to wear it...and I'm not eager to wear it. Can you picture me...Emperor Naveen...ruling the nation?! I can't picture me ruling anything. I don't belong here.

AIDEN

Europe, America. Those places aren't some paradise where problems disappear.

PRINCE NAVEEN

I don't need to disappear. I just need something new. You know these narrow minded Palace people like that snake Sirsay. He plays the frail old man role but he's as dirty as they come. Watch him. Nothing is what it seems. We're a backward bunch and need something to change.

(to the driver)

Stop the car.

The car stops along a road of bars and nightclubs.

AIDEN

Where are you going?

PRINCE NAVEEN

To live.

Naveen gets out of the car.

AIDEN

So I guess I was just your excuse to get out the Palace.

PRINCE NAVEEN

As I said, nothing is what it seems.

Naveen begins to make his way toward the nightclubs.

AIDEN
Naveen. Be careful.

PRINCE NAVEEN
I'll be.

Naveen disappears into a crowd.

8 EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Freddie and Remy walk along a street of bars and nightclubs.

FREDDIE
(pointing to a Nightclub)
This is it.

REMY
Here? I'm not going in here.

FREDDIE
Man, we gotta collect from here so you
going in here.

REMY
That's a gay club.

FREDDIE
Man this is a private club.

REMY
It's a private gay club. I'm not going
in there.

FREDDIE
You don't want to go in then don't go
in. But you don't get your cut of the
money either.

REMY
Alright. Let's just hurry up.

9 INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Freddie and Remy walk through a crowded gay nightclub toward
the bartender.

FREDDIE
(to the Bartender)
Sirsay sent us. What you got?

The Bartender immediately understands and nods.

The bartender climbs from behind the bar and disappears into a back room while Freddie and Remy wait at the bar. Remy looks around at the bar.

REMY

I don't want none of these people touching me. This is some nasty shit. Wait. Isn't that the Prince?

Freddie and Remy peer toward a group of men where Prince Naveen sits in the middle.

REMY

That's the fucking Prince!

10 INT. BARBERSHOP - PRESENT

NED

That never happened! Why you telling this man that rumor.

CARTER

No rumor. Everybody knew Naveen was gay.

NED

If everybody knew he would've been dead.

CARTER

He was the Prince.

NED

And he would've been a dead prince.

WARREN

It's not important.

CARTER

Sirsay wrote everything down. Everything in his book of secrets and when Sirsay died that was in there.

NED

You've seen this book.

CARTER

I know somebody that...

NED

So you haven't seen the book yourself?

CARTER

(annoyed)

Look Naveen was what people say he was and everybody knew! Except his father, who didn't know nothin!

WARREN

(calming things down)

Fellas! It doesn't matter. Alright, it doesn't matter. I want to know about Aiden. What about his brother. Ned you served with him.

NED

I served under him. I served under General Leon. I wasn't there so I can't say for sure what happened. But I knew Leon so I can imagine.

11 INT. GUARD HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

The door opens as Leon grabs Aiden.

LEÓN

Get in here you bastard. Look at you? You're thin.

AIDEN

The Emperor said the same thing.

LEÓN

Yeah. What assignment did he give you?

AIDEN

Governor of the southern province.

LEÓN

The migrant problem?

AIDEN

Yeah.

LEÓN

When do you deploy?

AIDEN

Saturday.

LEÓN

Saturday? You just got here. Now you're leaving again?

AIDEN

I'm two hours away. Besides there's work to be done, Brigadier General. How come you never mentioned that in your letters?

LEÓN

Mentioned?

AIDEN

You never mention your promotion as head of the Guard.

LEÓN

Ah...it's not Cambridge. Wish I had the mind for Cambridge.

Leon is an obvious military man. Tall and built like a tank, those around him are aware of both his thick charm and ability to break someone's neck at a moments notice. Leon pulls out a box of cigars.

LEÓN

Have one with me.

AIDEN

Cubans? They used to be illegal here.

LEÓN

(smiling)

They still are. But I'll tell you...you're gonna wish you stayed in Europe. The Emperor went and got himself in a helluva fix if he can't pay for these wars. You been around the city.

Aiden shakes his head.

LEÓN

A disaster.

AIDEN

I'm dreaming of doing something. Making some significant changes with this post.

LEÓN

Like what?

AIDEN

I'm not sure. But not spending years building a shopping center where no one can afford to shop. I want to do something with purpose.

LEÓN

Well before you go south with fancies of bringing heaven to earth, remember this...you're not in Cambridge anymore. Here is some backward shit. I'm not wanting to squash your heart, but be careful of pounding your head against the pavement. 'Cause your head'll crack first.

Aiden leans back in his chair, putting his feet on León's desk. Aiden is confident, even arrogant and fully aware he's about to shake things up. He puffs out smoke.

LEÓN

You hearing me?

AIDEN

(smiling)

This is a good cigar.