

Haunted Images

By

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INT. PHOTOGRAPHY GALLERY - NIGHT

A clean exhibit of photos depicting war zones line the walls. Upper-class socialites gawk at the photos.

WAYNE STATIC, early 30s, nice suit entertains some guests. MARY, early 60s, sips from a champagne glass. Her husband RICHARD, late 60s, stands by her side.

RICHARD

So you saw a lot of action then?

WAYNE

(Disgruntled)

Well, yeah.

MARY

Oh, it's just terrible isn't it.

RICHARD

It's just what happens in those countries. Nothing to be done about it.

WAYNE

That's not really the-

Wayne's agent JOHNATHAN, mid 40s, steps into the conversation, welcoming smile.

JOHNATHAN

Evening folks, how are you finding the exhibits?

RICHARD

Masterfully taken, did you see the paintings by Daniel Ash?

JOHNATHAN

I did, I did. Many talented artists all under one roof, let's hope some of that rubs off on us, eh?

The three chuckle, Wayne's sheepish grin alludes them.

JOHNATHAN (CONT'D)

Anyway, please come over we are about to toast to Wayne's star piece. He won a Robert Capa award for it earlier this year.

Johnathan whisks Wayne away from the couple. Leans in close.

JOHNATHAN (CONT'D)

Remember I told you to entertain them.

WAYNE

They were missing the point of the pictures.

JOHNATHAN

There are a lot of artists here tonight and a lot of paying guests. So we let art be subjective. Let them be how they are.

They reach a large photograph of a dead child. His lifeless body dressed in a dirtied, blood soaked football shirt with the number 16 on it, he is no older than 8 years old.

Johnathan gestures for people to gather.

JOHNATHAN (CONT'D)

Can I have everybody's attention?

The people gather round and incircle Wayne, Johnathan, and the picture.

JOHNATHAN (CONT'D)

Thank you all for coming tonight and celebrating the work of Wayne Static here. I won't take up much of your time, rather I will pass you onto Wayne who can tell you a bit more about his time in Kandahar, and his award winning photograph "Number 16."

Johnathan steps down, the audience applaud. Wayne steps to the centre of the encompass, uncomfortable and sweating.

WAYNE

Hi... good evening everyone. Any of you who are familiar with my work would know that I was previously a soldier, before becoming a wartime photographer.

He avoids eye contact with any one member of the crowd, waving his glass with each syllable.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

This photo was taken whilst passing
(MORE)

WAYNE (CONT'D)

through a village in the east of Kandahar, the platoon had received word the Taliban had some high ranking members hiding in the area. When we got there we found out the intel was correct, but did not include the large number of civilians.

BRIGHT STAGE LIGHT ON WAYNE

The light goes, Wayne is flustered. He looks amongst the crowd, in the front row, shorter than everyone else is LITTLE BOY, 8, the same boy from the photograph. He wears the same blood stained clothing.

The boy looks up at Wayne, he looks down on him. The audience stare at Wayne.

The boy lifts a camera, aims at Wayne.

FLASH

Wayne shields his eyes and gyrates to the photograph. It's a picture of him. Confusion wears his face, swings back and he is somewhere else.

EXT. WAR TORN VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

Wayne and the boy still stand in a face off. The boy's grimace meets Wayne's horror. The face of a man that is back in the fire after being pulled from it.

Wayne's fancy suit is gone, replaced by his bullet-resistant vest and the word "PRESS" badged on the front and back. His camera in hand.

YOUNG BOY

(Spoken in Pashto, extreme worry
in voice)

Sir, you must tell them to leave! Take
them all and leave!

Wayne steps closer to the boy.

WAYNE

I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I don't
understand you. I don't know what you
are saying. I can't

He looks around for someone that can help, nobody close

enough to help but figures of soldiers fighting in the distance, as if it were a distorted dream.

YOUNG BOY

(In Pashto)

My mother cannot leave, she will be killed. You all must go from us!

WAYNE

Kid, you gotta run away from here!

He points to a direction where there is no fighting and no soldiers present.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

Go that way. Just keep running.

CAMERA SHUTTER FLASH

On Wayne's right another war photographer, JAMES, 30s has snapped a photo of him and the boy. Back to the young boy, bullet holes have filled him but he still stands, haunting Wayne's gaze.

The photographer approaches Wayne.

JAMES

You want the pic? Technically you got here first but I'll shoot it if you don't.

WAYNE

What?

James points to the ground. The boy's lifeless body lays there.

JAMES

You getting it?

Wayne points his camera to the ground and clicks.

CAMERA SHUTTER FLASH

INT. PHOTOGRAPHY GALLERY - NIGHT

Wayne is absent. The audience look to him but he is just staring into nothing.

Jonathan hurries over and leans into Wayne's ear.

JOHNATHAN

Wayne? Are you ok?

Wayne comes around, turns and looks at the photo.

WAYNE

No, not really. I'm not ok.

He turns back to the crowd.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

I spoke to the child before he was killed. I couldn't understand what he was saying but he was scared. So scared. I thought we were going to places like this to save innocent people but to him we were the threat. I don't feel like being here anymore, goodnight everyone.

He brushes through the crowd whilst being watched by every pair of eyes in the room.

Johnathan chases after him.

The crowd goes back to their conversations and sipping their champagne.

JOHNATHAN

What the hell was that?

WAYNE

I don't know man something happened and I just couldn't.

JOHNATHAN

Couldn't what? Do a single speech at a gallery that you're the star for? Try and make back some of the money we have spent on you?

WAYNE

But it's not just a single speech is it? And I don't care about the money or the awards. You never get that.

Wayne walks towards the door. Johnathan grabs his arm.

JOHNATHAN

You leave the gallery right now and all of this goes away, I won't

(MORE)

JOHNATHAN (CONT'D)
represent you anymore.

Wayne pulls away and exits.

Johnathan straightens his jacket, turns around and smiles at some guests before heading over to them.

EXT. GALLERY BUILDING - NIGHT

Wayne walks down the street, reaches into his pocket and pulls out the original film cell of his photographs.

His eyes tear up, scrunches it up and drops it to the floor.

Wayne walks into the night.

FADE OUT:

THE END