

BILLY (1)

12.

DENISE

No. Please. No war stories at the table.

BILLY

I--yeah, sorry, mom.

DENISE

And for God's sake, Ray--please turn down the noise.

Ray motors loudly off to the den. The TV noise goes down, but only because he's closed the door behind him and isn't coming back. To Billy's war-sensitized senses, the sound of forks scraping on plates and the muffled TV noise are excruciating.

INT. LYNN HOUSE KITCHEN NIGHT

Billy comes in on Denise at the counter, wiping away tears.

DENISE

I wanted everything to be perfect.

BILLY

It's all right. It's good--I'm happy to be home. Really, Mom, you have no idea how much I--

Billy steps forward for a hug, but Denise deflects it with her nervous bustling.

DENISE

I made grasshopper pie for dessert.

INT. LYNN HOUSE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Billy and Kathryn are sitting at the dining room table, drinking beers, talking quietly. Sounds of Denise cleaning up in kitchen, Patty singing Brian to sleep, Ray's TV news.

BILLY

Is Mom okay?

KATHRYN

It's hard on her--you know, Dad, my medical bills. You being in Iraq.

BILLY

Yeah, okay.

Billy Lynn

START

1/4

KATHRYN

So, Billy... What's your feeling, about going back?

BILLY

Doesn't matter. I mean, nobody wants to go back. But it's what you signed up for, so you go.

KATHRYN

But do you guys actually believe in the war? I mean, are we doing the right thing? Or is it all really just about the oil?

BILLY

Honestly? I don't think anybody knows what we're doing over there. It's weird. Like, a lot of these poor Iraqis are living in shit, literal shit. Their government did nothing for them all these years. So here we are, trying to get their sewer system up and running, bringing in tankers of drinking water, building schools--but they hate us, right? They want to kill us... So what it comes down to in the end is survival, I guess. You really don't know who your enemy is out there. It's just Us and Them, with like nothing in between... And that feeling, Kat, it stays with you--even when you come home.

KATHRYN

All right then, how about this: what if you don't go back?

Billy is silent, then lets out a nervous laugh.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)

(pressing)

I'm not joking. What if you said nope, no thanks, been there, done that. Think of the headlines: "Decorated Hero Staying Home, Says War Sucks." Now that would make people think twice about signing up. You've got major cred, Billy--nobody can say you're scared to go back.

BILLY

But I am scared, Kathryn.
Everybody's scared.

KATHRYN

You know what I mean, like coward
scared--like all those hawks who
chickened out of Vietnam. I've done
my research, Billy. I'm just
saying, those people want a war so
bad, they can fight it themselves.

BILLY

Kat, it just doesn't matter. They
did what they did, I'm doing what
I'm doing. I can't just go AWOL.

KATHRYN

You don't have to. There's a way to
do this, okay? I'm serious, Billy,
please, listen to me. One of my
doctors, this shrink, is like an
expert on Post Traumatic Stress--

BILLY

Unh-unh, no way. No doctors.

KATHRYN

Why not? What you've been through?

BILLY

I'm fine, Kat.

KATHRYN

Really? Even after seeing your
Sergeant get killed for no reason?
For a bunch of bullshit lies--

BILLY

He was a hero, Kat. Trying to save
people.

KATHRYN

Who shouldn't've been there in the
first place. None of you should.

BILLY

That's not for me to say. Look, for
whatever reason, we're in Iraq, and
I made a commitment. That means
something, you know--serving my
country?

KATHRYN
 You really wanna serve your
 country? Don't go back.

Billy sits there in silence, looking down, frowning.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)
 Is any of this getting through to
 you?... Okay, then what about us,
 Billy--your family? Aren't we sad
 enough already without losing you?

BILLY

Kathryn--

KATHRYN
 What?

BILLY

I have to go back.

KATHRYN
 Dammit!

BILLY

I'll be okay.

KATHRYN
 You don't know that!

Kathryn sobs.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)
 You're over there because of me,
 Billy! If anything happens to you,
 I'm gonna kill myself!

Billy takes her in his arms.

INT. LYNN HOUSE BILLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Billy tosses and turns in the darkened bedroom.

DIME (V.O.)
 Specialist Lynn, you are one sorry-
 ass delinquent!

FLASHBACK: INT. VIPER FOB (BRAVO BASE CAMP) REC ROOM - DAY

The MWR (recreation) room on the base, a large, makeshift
 tent. Billy is doing pushups--punishment, Dime's boot on his
 ass. Shroom stands nearby, looking hulking and menacing.

END -

4/4

Billy (2)

47.

BILLY

It wasn't like we had that much time to get acquainted.

Billy didn't mean to be funny, but the audience chuckles.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Look, it all happened real fast, okay? I just managed to grab his knife and, well--it's not something I'm real proud of, but I did what I had to do--

Before Billy can finish, the room erupts in thunderous applause. Flash cameras going off. Applause dies down.

REPORTER

Will you think of your friend Sergeant Breem during the playing of the national anthem?

Billy sees Faizon smiling at him, eyes shining with emotion.

BILLY

Yes, sir. Yes, I surely will.

LATER: After the press conference: Reporters wander around, seeking sound bites. Others cluster around Norm as he plugs the team franchise with folksy charm. Cheerleaders strike poses around the Bravos--three girls to each boy--for photos.

Drained from the questions, Billy stands apart near the edge of the stage. Watches Faizon with longing eyes as she poses for a picture with other cheerleaders and Mango. As soon as the photographer lowers his camera her sassy smile vanishes. Billy sees her looking around--searching. He takes a step toward her. She begins turning his way, and he loses his nerve, pulls back out of her sight.

BILLY (CONT'D)

(kicking himself)

Shit, shit, shit...

He rubs his temples, in pain and frustration.

FAISON (O.S.)

You okay?

Billy looks up: there she is right in front of him. His face lights up for a brief moment before he can control it.

BILLY

What? Oh, yeah--just a little beat.

Billy Lynn

→ Start

1/7

FAISON
Sounds like it's been a long tour.

BILLY
Iraq or America?

FAISON
(laughs)
I guess both.

Faison shifts her pom-poms and holds out her hand.

FAISON (CONT'D)
I'm Faison.

BILLY
Say again?

FAISON
(laughs)
Faison. F-a-i-s-o-n. And I know who you are, Billy Lynn from Stovall. My grandmother was Miss Stovall 1937. How about that? Everyone said she had a shot at winning Miss Texas that year.

BILLY
So how'd she do?

FAISON
Second runner-up. Everybody said she should've won, but the fix was in. You know how those pageant deals work.

BILLY
Yeah, I do... Actually--no, I don't. I have no idea how those pageant deals work.... I don't know much about anything, really.

They both laugh.

FAISON
Could've fooled me.

BILLY
I've gotten kind of used to telling people stuff they want to hear.

2/7

FAISON

Actually, you put it right out there and that's strong--I mean, grappling with the enemy up close like that? Your friend's death? And you were right there with him? It can't be easy talking to a room full of strangers about those things.

BILLY

It is sort of weird. Being honored for the worst day of your life.

FAISON

I can't imagine! A lot of people would just shut down.

BILLY

He smelled like lemons, and sweat.

FAISON

Who?

BILLY

The insurgent I--never mind... So, um, what's it like, being a cheerleader?

FAISON

You really wanna know?

BILLY

Yeah. I really do.

FAISON

Well... it's great. People see us on TV and think that's all there is to it, you know, dancing and having fun. But community service is actually the main part of our job. Visiting hospitals, working with underprivileged kids, stuff like that. To me that's been the most satisfying thing about being a cheerleader, serving others. The spiritual aspect of it...

(with a searching look)

Billy? Are you a...

As Billy watches her lips move, he knows what's coming next.

FAISON (CONT'D)

...a Christian?

3/7

BILLY

I'm, uh, searching.

FAISON

Do you pray?

BILLY

Not as much as I should... It's funny--as a kid, I never got much from going to church. But then I end up in Iraq, in the middle of all this shooting, and my friend Shroom--Sergeant Breem--gets hit.

Faison leans in as Billy struggles to express himself.

BILLY (CONT'D)

He's just, you know, lying there, bleeding out. And when I go to him-- suddenly, for the first time in my life, I feel close to something, I don't know, bigger than myself... When Shroom, um, died, I felt something passing through me. Like, his soul? Or--I don't know...

END

FAISON

Oh, Billy, that's just so...
(exhaling audibly)

A lot of the time that's how it works, life gets so dark until we think all the light's gone out of us. But it's always there. If we just open the door a crack, the light comes pouring in... You know how we kept looking at each other during the press conference? And I was thinking to myself, now why, out of all the people here--I mean, you're cute and everything, you've got gorgeous eyes...

Faison brushes her pom-pom against Billy's arm. Billy quietly reaches under the pom-pom and takes her hand. Faison continues speaking without missing a beat, but her skin flushes, her eyelids grow heavy, her breathing quickens.

FAISON (CONT'D)

But now I think I know why--I really do. I think God wanted us to meet today. We're all called to be His lights out in the world. And I truly believe that we...

Continued

4/7

Billy steps back, pulling Faison behind the stage's backdrop.

INT. STADIUM CONFERENCE ROOM BACKSTAGE - DAY

Billy and Faison are crowded into a small, dim space, hidden from view. Billy pivots around, Faison's back now against the wall. Her mouth and body are slack, yielding. Billy moves in, Faison's face filling his field of vision. Their lips touch. A spark and release. Billy pulls back.

They stare at each other from a couple of inches. Then she lifts her face, they kiss again. Melting into each other, drunk with the feeling of closeness.

FAISON

(urgent whisper)

This is crazy. I could get kicked off the squad for this!

Another spell of frantic kissing and groping.

FAISON (CONT'D)

What is it about you? What's happening to me?

When they kiss again, Billy begins grinding his pelvis into hers. Then pulls back immediately.

BILLY

Sorry.

FAISON

It's OK.

Her body signals for him to press in again, as hard as he wants to. Trembling, Faison grabs Billy's lapels and wraps her legs around his waist. He clutches her bottom, lifting and drawing her against him. They move together, in harmony.

INT. STADIUM CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Rhythmic ripples pass through the cloth backdrop of the stage-right behind Norm, smiling for a photographer.

INT. STADIUM CONFERENCE ROOM BACKSTAGE - DAY

Faison rolls and bucks her hips with increasing urgency. A half-dozen strokes culminating in a mighty, clenching heave. A small breathless cry from deep inside as she climaxes.

Faison releases her legs. She slumps against Billy.

Start

5/7

BILLY
You okay?

FAISON
My God...

She looks up at Billy, tears in her eyes.

FAISON (CONT'D)
I've never moved this quick with anybody... But it's not wrong. I know it's not.

BILLY
It's not.

FAISON
It's just something about you. Maybe it's the war. How old are you?

BILLY
...uh, twenty one.

She look into Billy's eyes. Billy trying not to look away.

FAISON
You have an old soul.

She snuggles into him. Billy looks happy and a bit guilty.

BILLY
You're incredible.

Billy buries his face in her hair, breathing her in.

FAISON
I'm not a virgin. But it's a really serious thing for me. Being intimate with somebody.

BILLY
Me too... I'd sure like to see you when I get back.

FAISON
From where--wait, you're going back to Iraq? I thought y'all were done. Oh my God. When are you leaving?

BILLY
Saturday.

6/7

FAISON

Saturday?

(kissing him)

Oh my God, if you could only stay--

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Cheerleaders! Form up in the hall!

FAISON

Oh, shoot, shoot, I've gotta go.

She kisses Billy again, cups his cheek with her hand.

BILLY

Give me your number.

FAISON

(pulling away)

Thing is, I just got a new phone...

BILLY

Wait, how are we going to--

FAISON

Look, I really gotta go. I'll be at the twenty-yard line, okay?

→ END

Faison steps out from behind the backdrop, then turns back. Their eyes meet, her smile falters. Then she's gone. Billy closes his eyes in an agony of desire and uncertainty.

INT. STADIUM CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Billy emerges, blinking. The press conference is over. The reporters are packing up, Norm is talking to a couple of associates. Josh is looking through his clipboard. Albert is talking into his phone.

ALBERT

...No Larry, you can't cherrypick this... Look Bravo's a unit--eight men, eight stories. It's a total bargain when you think about it...

Someone's arm wraps around Billy's throat, while the other hand gives Billy's nipple a ferocious twist.

BILLY

Owwwwwww!!!

7/7

BILLY (3)

15.

KATHRYN

You really wanna serve your country? Don't go back.

Billy sits there in silence, looking down, frowning.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)

Is any of this getting through to you?... Okay, then what about us, Billy--your family? Aren't we sad enough already without losing you?

BILLY

Kathryn--

KATHRYN

What?

BILLY

I have to go back.

KATHRYN

Dammit!

BILLY

I'll be okay.

KATHRYN

You don't know that!

Kathryn sobs.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)

You're over there because of me, Billy! If anything happens to you, I'm gonna kill myself!

Billy takes her in his arms.

INT. LYNN HOUSE BILLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Billy tosses and turns in the darkened bedroom.

DIME (V.O.)

Specialist Lynn, you are one sorry-ass delinquent!

FLASHBACK: INT. VIPER FOB (BRAVO BASE CAMP) REC ROOM - DAY

The MWR (recreation) room on the base, a large, makeshift tent. Billy is doing pushups--punishment, Dime's boot on his ass. Shroom stands nearby, looking hulking and menacing.

Billy Lynn

FYI

1/4

START /

SHROOM

Destroying a man's property like a
goddamn vandal!

BILLY

But what if that coop had been
sheltering insurgents, Sergeant? I
didn't mean to shoot those hens,
it's just--they jumped me.

DIME

Shut! No more poultry excuses!

SHROOM

Iragis love their chickens too.

DIME (V.O.)

Troublemaker!

FLASHBACK: EXT. VIPER FOB (BRAVO BASE CAMP) IRAQ - DAY

Billy runs around the base perimeter. Montage: every time he
passes Dime and Shroom, they rag him.

DIME & SHROOM

Vandal! Gangbanger! Truant! Texas
trash! etc.

Fed up, Billy stops right in front of them, running in place.

BILLY

(breathless)

Sergeant Dime, Sergeant Breem, I'm
not a delinquent or a punk. I'm
busting my ass, just trying to be a
credit to my platoon--

DIME

No, you are a fucking delinquent
punk.

SHROOM

Only a punk would trash another
man's car like you did.

BILLY

What are you talking about?

DIME

Brand new Saab convertible? With
graphite-alloy rims?

2/4

BILLY

Yeah... well, Sergeant, it depends on whose Saab convertible.

DIME

So, whose?

BILLY

My sister's fiancé, Sergeant. Ex-fiancé.

Shroom throws Billy a bottle of water.

SHROOM

Go on, Specialist Lynn.

BILLY

My sister Kathryn, sophomore year of college, was driving to work. Heavy rain, big Mercedes goes into a spin, broadsides her. Car's totaled. Fractured leg, pelvis. Massive internal bleeding. 170 stitches below the neck, 63 above.
(getting emotional)

Kat was this shining star--so beautiful and smart, and gentle...

DIME

Keep going.

BILLY

My sister came *this close* to death. Then her pussy-boy fiancé *dumps* her. In the hospital.

DIME

Jesus wept!

BILLY

So yeah, I whacked his car. With him inside it. DA agreed to drop the felony charges if I joined the Army. My choice. No regrets, Sergeant.

DIME

But a goddamn brand-new Saab convertible, for crying out loud-- you should've whacked the pussy fiancé...

(grudging admiration)

Specialist Lynn, you are still a fucking delinquent.

Dime walks off.

SHROOM

And how's your sister?

BILLY

Better, Sergeant. I think she's gonna be okay.

SHROOM

Glad to hear it. At ease, Billy. /END

Billy collapses. Standing over Billy, Shroom smiles--transforming from Rambo to gentle Buddha. On his face:

DIME (V.O.)

...Quietness, quietness / over this
countryside / except for
unmistakable signals on radio...

EXT. OKLAHOMA CEMETARY - DAY

A small cemetery in Oklahoma. Shroom's graveside. Coffin draped with a crisp American flag. Shroom's rifle, his boots, his helmet, and a framed portrait arranged together. The funeral is attended by RELATIVES and LOCALS, a MINISTER, a seven-man HONOR GUARD, MAJOR McLAURIN (early 30s, looks like a model soldier, deaf from an explosion), and Shroom's fellow Bravos, in full dress uniform in the front.

Dime reads a poem from a scrap of paper (Note: the lines are from "Wichita Vortex Sutra" by Allen Ginsberg).

DIME

...has anyone looked in the eyes of
the dead?

(looking up)

I'm not much for poetry, but this was one of Sergeant Breem--Shroom's favorites, so I thought I'd read a few lines... I remember he used to walk around base camp perimeter reciting this kind of stuff really loud. "Just sharing the wisdom," he said when I told him to shut the hell up. Maybe Shroom had a point. But personally, I believe he was really using his voice to help the insurgents draw a bead on us with their mortars--that's the kind of person Shroom was, always thinking of the other guy...

1/2

REPORTER
...so, what inspired Bravo to do what it did that fateful day at the Al-Ansakar Canal?

1FV1

DIME
Specialist Lynn was the first to recognize what was happening out there, and he was the first to react. I think he's the appropriate one to answer your question.

START

Thud! Billy's back in the room. Dime fixing Billy with the look. All eyes on Billy, frozen in the media headlights.

BILLY
Well, uh...

Silence. Billy sees Fatson, looking at him expectantly.

BILLY (CONT'D)

To tell you the honest truth, sir, I don't remember all that much.

It's like I saw Shroo--Sergeant

Breem, ah, basically at the mercy

of the insurgents, and there wasn't

much time to think. I guess my

training just kicked in...

People are nodding, attentive. Billy's phone vibrates. He tries to ignore it.

REPORTER (O.S.)

You engaged one of the insurgents

in hand-to-hand combat, a feat

which is in your Silver Star

citation.

BILLY

Well, yeah. It's not like I was

looking for it--I mean, the guy

just jumped me, and we, um--

REPORTER (O.S.)

What was it like?

BILLY

(stalling)

What was what like, sir?

REPORTER (O.S.)

To be so close to the enemy?

BILLY (4)

It wasn't like we had that much time to get acquainted.

BILLY

Billy didn't mean to be funny, but the audience chuckles.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Look, it all happened real fast, okay? I just managed to grab his knife and, well--it's not something I'm real proud of, but I did what I had to do--

Before BILLY can finish, the room erupts in thunderous applause. Flash cameras going off. Applause dies down.

REPORTER

Will you think of your friend Sergeant Bream during the playing

of the national anthem?

Billy sees Faison smiling at him, eyes shining with emotion.

BILLY

Yes, sir. Yes, I surely will.

END

LATER After the press conference: Reporters wander around, seeking sound bites. Others cluster around Norm as he plugs the team franchise with folksy charm. Cheerleaders strike poses around the Bravos--three girls to each boy--for photos. Drained from the questions, Billy stands apart near the edge of the stage. Fatches Faison with longing eyes as she poses for a picture with other cheerleaders and Mango. As soon as the photographer lowers his camera her sassy smile vanishes. Billy sees her looking around--searching. He takes a step toward her. She begins turning his way, and he loses his nerve, pulls back out of her sight.

BILLY (CONT'D)

(kicking himself)

Shit, shit, shit.

He rubs his temples, in pain and frustration.

FAISON (O.S.)

You okay?

Billy looks up: there she is right in front of him. His face lights up for a brief moment before he can control it.

BILLY

What? Oh, yeah--just a little beat.