

What Won't Go Away

A Screenplay by Joseph R. Granato



"We used to wonder where war lived, what it was that made it so vile.
And now we realize that we know where it lives...inside ourselves."

~Albert Camus

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FADE IN:

BOBBY, a twenty-three year old soldier, is a die-hard supporter of the war effort.

MONTAGE

- Proud soldiers celebrating in a ticker tape parade.
- Welcome home signs waving.
- Soldiers kissing wives and hugging children.

BOBBY (VO)

It's not about why we're here, or how we got here, or what the fuck it is we're fighting for.

- Footage of a missile-parade in Red Square.
- Paratroopers dropping from a plane in WWII.
- Richard Nixon waiving his arms in the air giving the "peace sign".

BOBBY (VO) (con't)

(enthusiastic and arrogant)

This war here is our war! It's our chance to make history.

- Photos of charging armies.
- Soldiers in hand-to-hand combat.

BOBBY (VO) (con't)

And twenty, thirty years from now, I'm gonna tell my grandkids about this war, believe me.

- A dead legless soldier.
- Another soldier getting shot in the chest.
- Close up of a charred dead face beneath a helmet.

BOBBY (VO) (con't)

I hear all these people talking about why they don't want to be here.

- Photos of a group of young soldiers, smiling, happy.
- Dissolve into a photo of several young dead soldiers.

BOBBY (VO) (con't)

(sarcastic)

I don't believe in the cause, we need peace, I'm too young to die.

- Photos of anti-war protesters carrying peace signs, sit-ins, burning draft cards.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAND PIT - DUSK

JOHN, a young man, barely twenty, is frustrated with the war. He, like many of his colleagues, hates the war and has no desire to be participating in it.

Huddled low and beside him is Bobby.

They sit crouched in a dug-out dirt pit protected by a sandbags formed in the shape of a U.

The sounds of crickets and wildlife fill the background.

BOBBY

Do you ever here them bitchin'
and complainin'?

Bobby moves his head in the direction of the Square Pit.

CUT TO:

EXT. SQUARE PIT - DUSK

THREE U.S. SOLDIERS are smoking cigarettes and talking casually amongst themselves, their weapons beside them and one on his lap.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAND PIT - DAY

JOHN

Yeah, sometimes.

BOBBY

Fuck that! They're supposed to be soldiers right. But they don't get what it's about!

JOHN

And what's that?

Bobby leans forward stressing his point.

BOBBY

It's about service. About being loyal and dedicated, ready to die, *to die* for the freedom of the country and the world!

JOHN
You want to know why I'm here?

Bobby nods politely.

JOHN (con't)
Well I can tell you it's not for the cause.
It's not for freedom and democracy.
(disgusted)
It's only because I didn't have a choice in the
matter. And being a soldier,
(sarcastic)
a defender of freedom, gave me just one
option...

WILDERNESS sounds fade out here.

JOHN (con't)
...I was going to war.

Suddenly a bullet flies directly over their heads. The sounds of incoming bullets overpower the wildlife. John and Bobby whip around with their weapons at the ready and return fire. A bomb explodes near them.

CUT TO:

EXT. KILLER - DAY

KILLER, an enthusiastic soldier, who was standing guard beside a tree, immediately opens fire screaming.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAK - DAY

DAK, a young soldier who is resting, quickly opens his eyes in response to the commotion around him. Just as he turns around, gun in hand, he is riddled with bullets, and falls forward, choking on his blood.

BOBBY (OS)
Pick up your fucking weapons!

CUT TO:

EXT. RYAN - DAY

RYAN, a cautious soldier, sitting against the walls of a pit, ducks down as bullets race over his head.

CUT TO:

EXT. ENEMY - DAY

A low-angle long shot reveals a fleet of incoming enemy troops, SHADOWS, who are scattered over a small area with their weapons drawn and firing.

CUT TO:

EXT. LT. ARMS - DAY

LT. ARMS, an angry, short-tempered man, visibly older than the rest of his platoon, stands alone barking orders.

LT. ARMS
Here they come! Hold your positions!

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

A high angle long shot reveals the U.S. side of the battlefield, as ten to fifteen U.S. SOLDIERS ready themselves in their various makeshift barriers under a hail of bullets and explosions.

CUT TO:

EXT. UPLIFTED GRASS BARRIER - DAY

JIM, MIKE, TIM, and JACK, all young white men with baby-like faces, are running to a section of uplifted grass that will serve as a barrier. Jim is leading, and so forth in a straight line. Jim leaps for cover and quickly places his weapon in the grass firing at the enemy. Mike and Terry follow. Just as Jack is about to take his place, he is blasted with bullets, pushing him sideways. He crunches his body up, bleeding and screaming from the pain. As explosions erupt around the four, Terry reaches over to lend whatever assistance he can to Jack.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAND PIT - DAY

John and Bobby continue firing, exasperated.

JOHN
I don't even know if I'm hitting anything!

BOBBY
Just don't stop shooting!

CUT TO:

EXT. ENEMY - DAY

The enemy Shadows seem relentless in their pursuit forward - despite some of them getting killed and wounded; SHADOW FOUR - SHOT IN HEAD, SHADOW FIVE - SHOT IN CHEST, SHADOW SIX - SHOT IN LEGS AND CHEST: throwing him backward.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAX - DAY

MAX, a young scruffy-looking soldier is running straight past two explosions that erupt on each side of him.

CUT TO:

EXT. ENEMY - DAY

Five incoming Shadows, a low angle of their feet.

CUT TO:

EXT. COMMAND PIT - DAY

Behind some thick cut trees, we see SGT. MAYD, pissed-off, sitting with his shoulder against the wall, firing away. Next to him is COMM, the communications life-force of the platoon. Comm is also very young. He kneels beside the Sgt. anticipating an order. On one side of them is GOLDIE, a young, scared soldier who is shooting away, tears in his eyes. JERRY, a tattoo-covered soldier also fires away at the enemy. He is the only one of the four who appears content in this situation. Bullets riddle over their heads.

CUT TO:

EXT. MURDOCK - DAY

MURDOCK, a young soldier who is huddled behind a tree, holds a photo of his WIFE and TWO KIDS. He cringes in desperation and overwhelming sadness.

CUT TO:

EXT. MANCHO - DAY

MANCHO, a young African-American soldier, rushing into the line of fire, steps right in front of a grenade that has just landed. His body flies into the air, blowing off one of his legs.

CUT TO:

EXT. TONY - DAY

TONY, a young Hispanic soldier, is resting, legs to chest behind a tree. He makes the sign-of-the-cross, and then stands, rushing into battle.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAND PIT - DAY

Bobby and John are still firing, but bullets fly all around them.

BOBBY

We're getting shit on over here!
I'm movin' in!

Bobby begins to rise, but John pushes him back down with his free hand.

JOHN

Wait! You don't even know how many there are!

BOBBY

Get off me!

Bobby pushes John back, waits a moment and then looks at him.

BOBBY (con't)

(sincere)

I'm goin', so cover me.

John nods OK. Bobby stands and rushes into the open field low and firing.

CUT TO:

EXT. MURDOCK - DAY

MURDOCK is lying on the ground, face bloody and scorched. Blown up grass and dirt surrounds him.

CUT TO:

EXT. ENEMY - DAY

Shadows still approaching.

CUT TO:

EXT. COMMAND PIT - DAY

We rejoin Sgt. Mayd, Goldie, and Comm. Comm is on the phone trying to get air support. Sgt. Mayd, Goldie, and Jerry continue firing, killing several of the approaching Shadows.

JERRY
(excited)

Get some!

Goldie turns completely around gripping his gun nervously as the others blast away. LT. ARMS suddenly jumps into the pit with them. In his late thirties, this battle-hardened veteran is the no-nonsense, take-no-prisoners leader of this platoon. In the far distance, Bobby can be seen rushing into the battle.

LT. ARMS
Who is that dumb bastard rushin'
in like that?!

Comm turns and looks, as does Goldie.

COMM
I can't tell sir!

Lt. Arms turns to the soldiers around him.

LT. ARMS
That's how you get yourself killed!

Lt. Arms rises, shouting to Bobby.

LT. ARMS (con't)
Get back here soldier you idiot!

Bobby keeps running and then drops to the ground ducking the incoming gunfire.

Goldie sits there still, crying.

Lt. Arms turns to him disoriented.

LT. ARMS
What the hell do you think you're doing soldier!

Goldie is holding onto the side of his own face, shaking back and forth.

GOLDIE
I can't take it anymore!

Lt. Arms leans over and gets into Goldie's face.

LT. ARMS
Pick up your weapon now! And you better
fight till you die!

Goldie hesitates. Lt. Arms pulls out his pistol and places it to Goldie's temple.

LT. ARMS
Don't be a fucking coward!
Now pick it up!

Goldie grabs his gun, turns around, and starts firing.

CUT TO:

EXT. MURDOCK - DAY

Murdock is leaping over a handful of DEAD U.S. SOLDIERS. On one of the mid-air leaps, he takes a number of bullets in the chest, causing him to fall forward to the ground. Once there, he begins to shake and wince from the pain. As he looks around him, he sees no one at all to help.

CUT TO:

EXT. UPLIFTED GRASS BARRIER - DAY

Mike and Tim, guns blazing, form a barrier around Jim and Jack. Jack is squeezing Jim's hand tightly as he dies slowly, his hand releasing.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAND PIT - DAY

Returning to Bobby again who is still rushing towards the enemy, firing away.

CUT TO:

EXT. ENEMY - DAY

The enemy Shadows are in position, scattered throughout the depths of the trees. Some of them are kneeling beside a tree, patient, providing cover for the others. One of them launches a grenade into the battlefield.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOBBY - DAY

Bobby now passes through a large section of trees blasting SHADOWS ONE and TWO in the head. Bobby scans the area for a moment looking for more enemy

soldiers. SHADOW THREE sneaks up from behind pulling out his blade. He then quickly grabs Bobby from behind by his forehead and slices his throat. As Bobby's body falls to the ground, SHADOW THREE begins to stab him repeatedly.

CUT TO:

EXT. COMMAND PIT - DAY

Goldie, Sgt. Mayd, Comm and Jerry. By now, Jerry has been killed, shots punctured through his helmet. His head is covered in blood. Goldie rests slightly over him, still firing, but nonetheless exhausted. Comm is calling for air support. Sgt. Mayd lays stretched backwards facing the enemy side, acting as a shield for the other three. Lt. Arms is still shooting.

Suddenly a bullet strikes directly in front of Goldie. He turns around pulling his weapon down with him. He grips it tightly and pulls his legs to his chest. Lt. Arms keeps shooting, his eyes scanning the area.

CUT TO:

EXT. ENEMY - DAY

Quick flash of enemy SHADOW SIX, falling to the ground after getting blasted in the head. SHADOW SEVEN gets it in the legs, swiping his feet from under him.

CUT TO:

EXT. COMMAND PIT - DAY

Lt. Arms is the only one still fighting and Comm is holding onto the phone.

COMM

I can't get through to them sir! I don't know how long it will take before we'll get air support!

GOLDIE

(hysterical)

Lieutenant, let's get the fuck out of here!

LT. ARMS

You shut up and keep fighting!

A bullet then strikes Comm straight in the face, shattering his bones. His dead body simply hunches over and onto Sgt. Mayd. Lt. Arms ducks. A split moment later, Goldie is struck in the arm from behind by two bullets. He leans over, blurting out a loud cry, grabbing his arm.

GOLDIE
I'm hit, I'm fucking hit!

In the background, behind Lt. Arms and Goldie, U.S. SOLDIER EIGHT is getting shot in the legs and then blasted in the chest.

LT. ARMS
Grab your weapon now!

GOLDIE
Fuck you!

Lt. Arms pushes him to the ground by his face.

LT. ARMS
I've been carrying your sorry ass for three months
in this shithole! Now grab that fucking weapon and...

At that moment a bullet strikes Lt. Arms in his back, pushing him forward and to the ground. He reaches for Goldie's shirt, dragging him down with him.

CUT TO:

EXT. ENEMY - DAY

A small platoon of Shadows rushing quickly.

CUT TO:

EXT. COMMAND PIT - DAY

Lt. Arms is still gripping Goldie's shirt.

LT. ARMS
Look what you did to me!

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

A panoramic angle of the U.S. side. There are at least a dozen dead soldiers scattered around in the foreground, center, and background. John, Tim, and Jim can be seen together in the deep background, retreating.

CUT TO:

EXT. COMMAND PIT - DAY

GOLDIE
Let go of me!

Goldie punches Lt. Arms three times in the face, reaches for his own weapon, and begins to stand.

LT. ARMS
Where are you going!

Goldie starts running off into the woods.

LT. ARMS
Don't you leave me! Bastard!

CUT TO:

EXT. ENEMY - DAY

QUICK CUTS of Shadows leaping DEAD U.S. SOLDIERS.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - DAY

We see Goldie again, running at top speed through the tall trees. He sees no sign of fighting. Dead U.S. SOLDIERS surround him. Behind him is a haze of blurred commotion.

CUT TO:

EXT. COMMAND PIT - DAY

FOUR SHADOWS are seen standing over Lt. Arms, who is now bleeding from more bullet wounds. We see through the Lt.'s POV staring up at the SILHOUTTED SHADOWS.

LT. ARMS
What the fuck do you want! Go ahead, kill me!
Kill me, you miserable bastards!

SHADOW ONE belts him with the butt of his gun just above his eye, the Lt.'s head thrusting backwards. He is still reasonably conscious, as the OTHER SHADOWS reach down, grab his legs, and begin to drag him in the other direction.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - DAY

We see John, Jim, and Tim rushing over mutilated bodies.

We see the Shadows chasing them, and their POV's, while they throw grenades ahead at THREE U.S. SOLDIERS.

The grenade explosions land all around Jim, Tim, and John.

Goldie stares ahead and sees the three just a few hundred feet away from him.

GOLDIE

Wait! Wait!

CUT TO:

EXT. TONY - DAY

A quick cut shows Tony dead on the ground.

CUT TO:

EXT. KILLER - DAY

Another cut reveals a burnt Killer, also lifeless.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - DAY

John, Jim and Tim keep running, unable to hear Goldie over the grenades and bullets landing all around them.

GOLDIE

Please! Wait for me!

Tim tries to dodge an explosion and ends up stepping into the path of several bullets. They rip his back open and he trips to the ground. Jim and John glance back, and then slow down a little, looking to see if they can help him. Tim slowly looks up and sees that John is in fact starting to run towards him.

TIM

No! Keep going!

John stops, shocked at Tim's request. Staring at Tim, he sees that Tim is concealing a grenade without a clip.

TIM
Keep going!

Goldie sees the wounded Tim on the ground just ahead of him.

John stares for a brief moment, the sadness overwhelming him in his simple, mortified stare. John turns to the direction of the enemy closing faster every moment, and takes off.

Just ahead of him, Jim is weaving in and out, trying to avoid bullets.

CUT TO:

EXT. ENEMY BATTLEFIELD - DAY

A panoramic shot of the enemy Shadows reveals a sea of racing feet.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Suddenly Goldie catches up to John, and runs right beside him, his face is horrified, John's is solemn.

Long shot of John and Goldie running into a vast section of forest as explosions erupt all around them.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

A middle-aged MAN is crouched up into a ball, in between the seat of the truck and the dashboard. He is shaking uncontrollably. We cannot see his face, for his hands are covering and gripping it tightly.

EXT. TRUCK - NIGHT

Suddenly, a WOMAN of similar age walks up to the truck and looks in the window. She is dressed in pajamas; her hair messed up as if she just awoke.

She tries to open the door, but it is locked. She begins to bang on the window with her fist.

WOMAN
John! John, honey, are you all right?

She peers nervously inside the truck.

WOMAN (con't)

John please, what's wrong! John, John, answer
me please!

John does not respond. He only continues to shake in the same repetitious movement as if in a trance that he cannot break free from. The woman's voice quickly fades out, as we watch him tremble.

FADE OUT.

THE END