2nd Grade

ALAN NAFZGER

Pecan Street Press
LUBBOCK • AUSTIN • FORT WORTH
THE 2ND GRADE

Written by
Alan Nafzger

214-875-1305
alan.nafzger@gmail.com
FADE IN:

INT. COMMERCIAL JET AIRLINER - DAY

At the end of his military service, a triple amputee returns to his tiny “one school” Oklahoma town.

ACHAK NARCOMEY (23), who has lost both legs and an arm in the war, comes from a close-knit, lower-middle-class community. He sits in the very back of the plane in a seat by the window.

Achak is watching out the window. The plane circles over his tiny community of Medicine Park. Over the wildlife reserve, he looks down on the buffalo, elk, deer and Texas longhorn cattle. He looks at Medicine mountain (Mount Scott, OK) from above. The plane lands at the airport in Lawton.

The passengers look ready to depart. The plane is late and they might be missing their connections.

The PILOT stops the aircraft just before reaching the terminal and sets the parking brake. He pushes the public address button.

PILOT
Ladies and gentleman, this is your Captain speaking. I have stopped short of our gate to make a special announcement. We have a passenger on board who deserves our honour and respect. His Name is Private Boyle, a soldier who recently lost his life. Private Boyle is under your feet in the cargo hold. Escorting him today is Army Sergeant Cortez. Also, on board are his father, mother, wife, and daughter. Your entire flight crew is asking for all passengers to remain in their seats to allow the family to exit the aircraft first. Thank you.

Nearly, the entire plane is respectful. In the back of the plane, near Achak, a single OBNOXIOUS PASSENGER isn’t respectful.
OBNOXIOUS PASSENGER
(loudly)
Damn it!
(quietly)
They’re gonna make me miss my connection.

Several PASSENGERS turn toward Achak. They think he make the crude comments. Achak looks at the man in disbelief.

A ramp is rolled out and the GOLD STAR FAMILY gets out of their seats. When the family gathers their things, a PATRIOTIC PASSENGER slowly starts to clap his hands. Moments later more passengers joined in and soon nearly the entire aircraft is clapping. Words of ‘God Bless You’, ‘I’m sorry’, ‘thank you’, ‘you can be proud’, and other kind words are uttered to the family as they make their way down the aisle and out of the airplane.

The FLIGHT STAFF are lined up somber and respectful at the exit of the plane.

MOTHER
(whispers to the pilot)
Thank you.

Achak watches out the window as the casket is removed from the cargo hold and placed in a funeral van. The family are on the tarmac observing the transfer. The family gets into a funeral car and follows the van as it moves away.

The pilot pulls the plane next to the gate; it comes to a stop. The pilots start their shutdown procedures. People are exiting the plane.

Achak is making his way from the back of the plane, but he can hardly stand and when he does the going is slow. Achak can see the obnoxious man complaining and pointing to his watch and then his connection. Achak can’t hear but he can guess.

Once the obnoxious man exits, all the passengers except Achak are gone and the flight attendants begin crying. They’ve held their tears as long as they can. The pilot opens the cockpit door.
When the flight attendants see Achak making his way down the aisle, they manage to stop crying and try a fake smile.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
Have a good day, sir.

ACHAK
(to the pilot)
Thank you for the announcement.

PILOT
Not a problem. Do you need any help?

ACHAK
Nah, I got it. Thanks anyway.

PILOT
Have a good day.

INT. LAWTON AIRPORT TERMINAL – DAY

ACHAK’S FAMILY looks a bit worried that perhaps their son isn’t on the plane. Achak is welcomed joyfully by his parents and girlfriend, WYOME (20), but his mother shrieks and can’t hide her heartbreak over seeing his prosthetic arm and legs.

Achak maneuvers over to his mom and hugs her and then to his dad. Wyome is there next to hug. Wyome is very happy to see him, but she has a tear or two on her cheeks.

INT. ACHAK’S FAMILY – DAY

Father and Mother are in the front of the car. Wyome and Achak are in the back seat.

FATHER
You have a great girl there, son.

MOTHER
And she has a new job.

WYOME
I got on at the plant.

ACHAK
Oh, that’s great. Proud of you.
FATHER
What?

ACHAK
Proud of her!!

Wyome leans over and whispers in his ear.

WYOME
I love you.

He is about to say, “I love you too.” But she moves to put her hand on his leg... and realizes it’s plastic. She nervously pulls her hand back. She is just as nervous as he is. She realizes her mistake and quickly touches his arm and caresses it. But the damage is done. Achak is uncomfortable but he manages a smile.

INT. WYOME’S FAMILY HOME – DAY

WYOME’S PARENTS sit at the dinner table with Wyome and Achak. There is complete silence. It’s very odd when Achak needs to cut his meat. After an moment Wyome does it for him.

FATHER
So, what happened?

WYOME
Dad, I’m sure he’s told that story 100 times.

ACHAK
I got blew up.

WYOME
Dad. Really, can’t you leave us alone?

FATHER
Leave you alone? Why would I do that? You’re my flesh and blood.

ACHAK
It’s okay.
(to the father)
Sure what do you want to know?
Wyome’s father hesitates and there is a long beat.

Wyome’s mother breaks the silence.

    MOTHER
    So what are you going to do now you’re out of the army?

    ACHAK
    Well, I...

    WYOME
    Mother, it's much too soon for Achak to be thinking about a job.
    (half beat)
    He's just out of the hospital.

    ACHAK
    I don’t know yet.

    WYOME
    He’s going to be happy and productive. He’s going to be just like everybody else.

    ACHAK
    Everybody isn’t happy and productive.
    (smiling)
    What she means is that I’m going to get a job, like everyone else. So... yeah, that’s the plan. Get a job. Get married.
    (half beat)
    Maybe.

Another odd moment... more like a minute. There isn’t any reaction from Wyome’s parents.

Long beat.

    ACHAK
    Well, it was a wonderful meal. Thank you ma’am.
    (half beat)
    I appreciate you having me.
MOTHER
Thank you for coming.

ACHAK
I’m just not used to such a lavish spread. Army food and then hospital food. What a meal!
(to the father)
Thank you, sir.

There isn’t any response from the father.

ACHAK
Well, I better be off. Flying just wears me out.

WYOME
You don’t want to stay and watch a movie?

ACHAK
I need to sleep; I’m sorry. Give me a day or two and I’ll back to normal.

Achak is uncomfortable talking with Wyome and her parents about the war and about his future. The parents might be opposed to their becoming married because of something in the past. But, they look like the type that might expect a 100% whole son-in-law. They don’t say anything and it’s very subtle but they might be pressuring Wyome to find Achak a “real” job.

EXT. WYOME’S FAMILY HOME – DAY

Wyome walks out to Achak’s car with him. She is about to hug/kiss him but he uses his left hand to open the car door. He pivots his torso away from her and there is an odd moment/embrace. He pivots back around and they fully embrace.

INT. WYOME’S FAMILY HOME – DAY

When Wyome returns inside, her mother is there to meet her.

MOTHER
Oh Honey, are you sure this is what you want to do? He’ll never have a job. And
a man need a job a sense of worth, and if he can’t find any, most men will revert to alcohol or become violent.

Wyome contemplates but of course she only hesitates a second.

WYOME
No, he was my boyfriend before, and now after nothings changed.

Wyome’s in this film seems influenced by love but also (in part) by her parents that expect her to marry well.

INT. ACHAK’S FAMILY HOME – DAY

Despite Wyome’s support, Achak does resort to prescription drug abuse. Wyome visits Achak. His mother is in the front room and greets Wyome.

WYOME
He’s not answering his phone. Is he here?

MOTHER
I think he’s back in his room. (beat) Go ahead.

Wyome carefully/quietly walks back incase he’s asleep.

The curtains are pulled and windows are covered with cardboard. The light is nearly totally blocked.

However, she sees his cell phone on the night table. Achak is in a prescription drug stupor. Also on the table are several pill bottles, some have been left open and at least one bottle has spilled and the pills are loose on the table and the floor. Wyome picks one bottle up and reads it. She’s not happy about it. Achak wakes. His speech is slurred.

ACHAK
Hey, what are you doing here?

WYOME
Come on. It’s my day off.
ACHAK
Oh, baby... just lay down.
   (half beat)
My arm and legs are down there on the floor.

WYOME
You’re stoned.

ACHAK
Just a little.

WYOME
I guess I don't know what to say.

ACHAK
Now you have an idea of what it’s like. If the house catches fire and even if it took 10 mins, I wouldn’t be able to get out.

WYOME
You might get up if you stopped taking the pills.

ACHAK
I guess I’m not handling this very well.
   (half beat)
It's all right. Go on home and go to sleep.

WYOME
It’s the middle of the day.

ACHAK
Find another guy, like your family wants.

WYOME
I know what to say, Achak.
   (half beat)
I love you.
   (half beat)
And I'm never going to leave you. Never.
ACHAK
You mean, you... you didn't mind?

WYOME
Of course not.
(half beat)
I told you I loved you.

ACHAK
I love you, too.

WYOME
I always have, and... and I always will.

ACHAK
You sure you don’t want to sleep here.

WYOME
Your mom.

ACHAK
She’s asleep.

WYOME
I’m going out to the wildlife refuge.

ACHAK
I’m too stoned. And besides you said you’ll love me tomorrow.
(half beat)
I can wiggle out of these shorts.

Wyome storms out of the room. Achak shouts after her.

ACHAK
I'm lucky; I have one good arm. Some of the guys don't.

Wyome is out of the house and in tears. Achak contemplate things but he gives into addiction and just takes another pill.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT
Probably because of Wyome’s protest about the opioid drugs, Achak resorts to alcohol abuse.

Achak has smuggled a flask into the theater. As the movie progresses he drinks.

By the time the movie is over, he’s very drunk. Hardly able to get about sober, it’s a real spectacle.

EXT. MOVIE THEATER PARKING LOT – NIGHT

WYOME
You want me to stop calling you?

ACHAK
Maybe that's a good idea, Wyome.

WYOME
And if I leave you alone...

ACHAK
Maybe you'll get all me out of your system.

Wyome is speechless.

ACHAK
Maybe you ought to do that.

WYOME
Do you want to get rid of me?

Some kids are laughing at them. Achak is enraged. He picks up a beer bottle left in the parking lot and throws it at the kids. It doesn’t land anywhere near them and they run off.

ACHAK
See, you’re gonna hear people laughing at me all the time. And after a while, you’ll...

WYOME
They’re laughing at ‘us’ fighting, not you.
ACHAK
I don’t think so.

WYOME
Really? They see a couple fighting... it’s funny to them. It’s my fault for standing here arguing with you.

ACHAK
Please let’s just go.

INT. WYOME’S CAR – NIGHT
Wyome drives.

In a parking lot, Wyome tries to make him realize that she still loves him as much as ever, but...

WYOME
Tell me the truth.
(half beat)
Do you want me to forget about you?

ACHAK
I want you to be free, Wyome.
(half beat)
To live your own life.
(half beat)
I don't want you tied down forever just because you're a compassionate person.

WYOME
Achak, why can't you understand the way things really are?
(half beat)
The way I really feel?
(half beat)
I keep trying to tell you and you’re so stubborn.

ACHAK
But... but you don't know. You don't know what it'd be like to have to live with me, to have to... face this every day, every night.
Wyome pulls up in front of a tiny but cute mobile home.

Wyome: You can live here with me, if you'll stop drinking. Now you stopped with the pills right?

Achak: You bought your own place?

Wyome: If it turns out I'm not brave enough, well... I figure you'll just leave.

Achak: You and I have been close to each other for a long time, haven't we?

Wyome: Ever since we were kids.

Achak: That's a good thing, huh?

Wyome: I'm going inside. I'm going to undress and lay down in my brand new, high threat count, sheets.

Achak sobers up and sits up straight. Clearly he is thinking about the offer.

Wyome: Listen, you're a little drunk. But tonight is the only time you will ever
come inside that house, even a little bit drunk.

ACHAK
I understand.

WYOME
Come in and we’ll see what happens. Or sit out here all night. Take your pick.

ACHAK
Okay, you persuaded me.

WYOME
And there’s another condition. If you come on with that entire self-pity thing, you don’t get any.

ACHAK
Not even...

WYOME
No. Nothing.

Long beat. Achak stares at her and the house. It’s actually really inviting.

WYOME
And you have to paint the deck.

Achak nods slowly.

WYOME
Well, get out. I’m not opening the door for you.

Achak reaches over with his left hand and fumbles with the car door.

INT. CAFÉ - DAY

Achak visits a local FRIEND of his at a café.

FRIEND
How about your girlfriend - Wyome? You guys gonna get married?
ACHAK
I don't know.

FRIEND
Why don't you know?
(half beat)
Doesn't she want to get married?

ACHAK
I'm living with her.

FRIEND
Well, you know what that means then.

ACHAK
She's been great about it.

FRIEND
So then you're the one blocking it?

ACHAK
Yeah, I... I guess it is.

FRIEND
Will you do me a favor, Achak?

ACHAK
Sure. What is it?

FRIEND
Go marry Wyome - now. Today! Before she changes her mind.

ACHAK
Funny.

FRIEND
Sign the papers, pay the preacher and marry her.

ACHAK
I have to get a job. She treats me like a baby.

FRIEND
You 'are' baby.
ACHAK
I mean she treats me like an invalid.

FRIEND
You can get a license and then get a job. Close the deal first.

ACHAK
I don’t know.

FRIEND
You aren’t gonna do any better that that. Your arm and legs magically grow back and you won’t do any better.

A strange hippy looking ANTAGONIST guy sits at the table next to them.

ANTAGONIST
How are you?

ACHAK
I’m good.

ANTAGONIST
A soldier?

ACHAK
I was yes.

ANTAGONIST
Where at?

ACHAK
Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria.

ANTAGONIST
Excuse me.
(half beat)
Say, uh... do you mind if I ask you a personal question?

ACHAK
I know what it is. How did I get these high tech prosthetics, and how do they work?
ANTAGONIST
That's what everybody wants to know
when they start off "Mind if I ask you
a personal question?"

ACHAK
This is the 'Terminator' arm and the
world's most advanced prosthetic limb.
A prosthetic arm that connects with the
human nervous system — improving
motion, control and even feeling.

ANTAGONIST
Really?

ACHAK
No. Not a bit.

ANTAGONIST
You got plenty of guts.
   (half beat)
It's terrible when you see a guy like
you that had to sacrifice himself. For
what?

ACHAK
For what?! I don't get you, mister.

ANTAGONIST
Well... we let ourselves get sold down
the river. We were pushed into war.

ACHAK
They started it; it wasn't us.

ANTAGONIST
The weapon's manufacturers and the oil
companies control the government.
Eisenhower warned us this was coming.

ACHAK
I'm not buying that.

ANTAGONIST
The Shiites and the Sunnis have nothing
against us. They wanted to fight with
each other, not us. And, we keep poking our nose where it don’t belong.
(half beat)
They’re not that bad. They only hate us cause we prop up the Jews and the Saudis. Jews and Muslims and we’re fighting their battles.

ACHAK
What are you talking about?

ANTAGONIST
We have the wrong friends, that's all.
(half beat)
Just read the facts, my friend. Find out for yourself why you had to lose your arm.
(beat)
Shit, you lost your legs too.

ACHAK
Just doing my job.

ANTAGONIST
Sucker, you weren’t working for Uncle Sam, you were working for Halliburton and Exxon.

FRIEND
What are you selling anyway?

ANTAGONIST
I'm not selling anything but plain old-fashioned Americanism.

ACHAK
Some Americanism! Negativism.

FRIEND
You vote?

ANTAGONIST
So we're all a bunch of suckers.

ACHAK
So we should've been on the side of democracy?
ANTAGONIST
Again I say, just look at the facts.

ACHAK
I've seen all the facts I want to see.

ANTAGONIST
They tricked you. They tricked you out of three limbs.

ACHAK
(to his friend)
I’m done here. You?

All three men stand up. Achak stands to leave, but the antagonist stands to continue the debate.

ANTAGONIST
That's the unpleasant truth, and the sooner you get wise to it.

FRIEND
(to waitress)
Go get the manager.

WAITRESS
Yes, sir.

ANTAGONIST
I bet your wife was happy to see you come home.

Achak slugs the man with a hard left and the guy drops like a pair of dirty shorts. The manager arrives and gasps at the damage Achak has done – the antagonist is completely knocked out.

INT. WYOME’S CAR - DAY

Wyome is driving again. Achak has his remaining hand wrapped with a zip-lock bag full of half-melted ice.

WYOME
So what’s jail like?
ACHAK
They just put me in an office. Took a pistol out of the desk and told me to wait.

WYOME
I guess that’s good.

ACHAK
They gave me ice for my hand.

WYOME
I see that. You’re lucky they pressured the man not to press charges.

ACHAK
Military people stick together.

WYOME
But, you can’t just do what you want. Sooner or later they’ll put you in jail.

ACHAK
I don’t plan on it.

WYOME
You really knocked the guy out?

ACHAK
Cold.

Wyome chuckles but she doesn’t want to encourage him.

WYOME
You know you’re lucky to have escaped some serious legal problems.

Beat.

ACHAK
You want to get married?

WYOME
Well, yeah.
She smiles really big, pulls the car over into the parking lot and climbs over on top of him. Kissy, kissy.

INT. WYOME’S TRAILER - NIGHT

Wyome has prepared a celebratory meal. Candles followers. Either it’s the proposal/engagement or it's about the job.

WYOME
I heard something interesting today.
(half beat)
They are looking for a teacher at the school.
(half beat)
You should go talk to them.

ACHAK
Teaching what?

WYOME
Gee, I don’t know. I guess you need to call them and ask.

Wyome knows it’s the second grade, which is probably not an ideal assignment. And he will be one of the only male teachers at the school. She doesn’t want to seem too pushy about the job.

ACHAK
I didn’t like that school.

WYOME
Things have changed. You won’t be a student this time.

ACHAK
Well, I don’t know anything about kids. Never been around any.

WYOME
Well they need someone. Mrs. Dupree is like 70 something and they can’t find anyone else that wants the job.

ACHAK
I don’t want to go back to school.
WYOME
You’re a veteran, new program. You only have to take two classes. And that’s in the summer after you’ve been teaching.

ACHAK
Well, if it sounds too good to be true…

WYOME
I asked.

Nervous beat.

ACHAK
Okay I just might go check it out.

WYOME
I know your VA check isn’t that much. They owe you more.

ACHAK
I’ll call them.

WYOME
It’s a paycheck ‘and’ you get to keep your disability pay.

ACHAK
How do you know that?”

Wyome is a bit nervous about admitting she’s done so much.

WYOME
I asked about that too.

ACHAK
Okay.

Wyome is perfectly satisfied. Achak isn’t resisting too much and doesn’t seem upset at her meddling.

EXT. A RURAL SCHOOL - DAY

Achak arrives at the small rural school; all grades (K-12) are in one building. The school is not far from a 2,500 foot mountain. And it’s on the edge of a wildlife refuge.
EXT. SCHOOL OFFICE - DAY

Achak is waiting in the office, before being called into the principal’s office. The principal is in the office with three second graders. One boy is crying. SUPER-HERO kid wears a different super-hero set of clothes each days; he is angry about being caught and lectured. And one kid has a runny nose and is constantly wiping it on his sleeve.

PRINCIPAL
And you boys are in the 2nd grade? This sounds like something kindergarten students might do.
(half beat)
Let me get this straight, you boys, when everyone was eating lunch, went into the fourth grade room and released their animals? You know they were getting grades on the health of those animals?

The one kid’s crying intensifies.

PRINCIPAL
Why are you crying?

ONE KID
Cause I’m gonna get a whipping.

PRINCIPAL
Wait, I’m not going to hit you.

ONE KID
No, but when I get home. I’m gonna get it. Bad!

PRINCIPAL
Well, maybe not.
(beat)
You know some of the 4th graders are attached to those animals. Mice, snakes and... what else?

SUPER-HERO KID
Frogs.
What were these animals going to eat? I’m not sure they’ve caught them all. They could be starving right now.

Super-Hero Kid
Not the snakes. They can always eat the mice and the frogs.

Principal
Poor animals.
(beat)
After school detention for a week.

The boys cry, except Super-Hero kid.

Super-Hero Kid
Can’t. Baseball.

Principal
Son, your baseball career is over for a week. I’ve called your mother.
(beat)
So, we are clear, right? You don’t touch things that don’t belong to you.
(beat)
Go. Tell Ms. Simpson and the entire 4th grade, you’re sorry and then go back to class.

The boys leave.

The principal comes out to shake hands with Achak.

Principal
Achak? Let me take you on a tour.

The two men move out into the hall. The school principal is desperate. Instead of conducting the interview and then the tour, the principal just skips the interview.

Achak
Oh, okay.

Principal
Well, it’s a 1-12 building. Kindergarten is out in the old
teacherage. It’s about a mile down the road.

ACHAK
Same as when I was here.

PRINCIPAL
You’ve been here before?

ACHAK
I went to school here.

PRINCIPAL
Oh, then you know the high school is down that way. And middle school is here in the middle. And the elementary is at the end of the building.

ACHAK
Right.

PRINCIPAL
We have a new cafeteria.

ACHAK
And a new gym.

PRINCIPAL
I’m glad you were a student here; then you know the battles we’re fighting?

ACHAK
Well, you better remind me.

PRINCIPAL
I’m going to let Ms. Dupree fill you in on the details. But they’re a bit immature and they need time to get caught up.

(beat)
Listen, we really appreciate this.

(beat)
The second grade is right down here...

ACHAK
Second grade? I didn’t...
PRINCIPAL
I hope that’s not a deal breaker.

ACHAK
We have a deal?

PRINCIPAL
Well, your fiancée told me... I thought you wanted the job.

ACHAK
I do, but...

PRINCIPAL
Great, now this bull about them being unmanageable is silly.

ACHAK
Unmanageable?

PRINCIPAL
They’re little kids. You’re going to be great. They just need a little leadership. Right?

ACHAK
Probably.

PRINCIPAL
Who better than a well-trained and professional soldier to lead them in reading and math.

(beat)
Ms. Dupree is telling everyone it’s the wildest group ever to come through here.

ACHAK
Ms. Dupree? Isn’t she their teacher?

(half beat)
Well why would...

PRINCIPAL
That’s just wrong. They are just addicted to candy and I’m working with their parents to stop that.
ACHAK
I see.

PRINCIPAL
But they are really very healthy.

ACHAK
Yeah?

PRINCIPAL
They have a lot of energy.

ACHAK
How many are there?

PRINCIPAL
Twelve children. They have been without a real teacher the entire year. There is a long-term substitute but she’s over 70 and they’ve half killed the lady.

ACHAK
Are you trying to discourage me from taking the job?

PRINCIPAL
Oh, you’ve got the job.

ACHAK
She’s trying to do her best. I’m sure.

PRINCIPAL
But she’s frazzled.
(half beat)
You’re really saving us here, Achak. You’re a long sought solution.

ACHAK
There aren’t any other candidates?

PRINCIPAL
The school is isolated.

ACHAK
I heard they were pretending to see rats everywhere.
PRINCIPAL
That’s another rumour that probably isn’t true.

ACHAK
Probably?

PRINCIPAL
These days, the 2nd grade is accused of almost everything. They get the blame for incidences they aren’t even involved in.

ACHAK
They getting a bad wrap?

PRINCIPAL
Well, those boys who were in my office, they have single-moms.

ACHAK
They need a man to look up to.
(half beat)
And you can’t find a certified teacher?

PRINCIPAL
I have to be honest. We could find a certified teacher but either they’ve found a softer job or they think we’re so far from town. People just don’t want to drive out there.
(half beat)
And next year you’ll be certified.

ACHAK
We better do this one-year at a time; I don’t really have any experience.

PRINCIPAL
Can you be here tomorrow? I’ll have Ms. Dupree show you the classroom and she can introduce you. And then they’ll be yours.

Beat.
ACHAK
This is a big responsibility.

PRINCIPAL
But you’ve had responsibility before.

ACHAK
I’m not going to back out. You need me. I’ll be here. Thank you, sir.

PRINCIPAL
No, thank you.
(half beat)
Here they are; you want to look in?

ACHAK
Sure.

Achak looks in the window. Mrs. Dupree is at her desk exhausted. A couple kids are out of their chairs and she has to tell them to sit down and finish their work.

PRINCIPAL
See you in the morning?

ACHAK
Seven AM?

PRINCIPAL
Sure, that’ll be fine.

INT. 2ND GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY

Ms. Dupree lectures Achak.

MS DUPREE
There are all sorts of problems with the class. Several have learning disabilities. One is emotionally disturbed.

ACHAK
What about the boys, I saw some in the office yesterday. They’re pretty rowdy?
MS DUPREE
They would rather be outside playing. And the boys are mean. Scorpions. They have been mean to me and to the girls in the class. The boys are disrespectful of everyone and everything.

ACHAK
What about the girls?

MS DUPREE
They’re frightened to speak up and answer questions in class. You need to encourage that if you can. But basically they won’t.

ACHAK
There is a big push on reading?

MS DUPREE
Everyone is reading below pace. Math and maps are a problem. Social Studies, Science. Everything is a problem.

A bell rings for school to begin.

MS DUPREE
Well, that’s the bell. They’ll be here in a minute.
    (half beat)
You’re excited?

ACHAK
I am.

MS DUPREE
Good.

She gets up and leaves.

ACHAK
Wait. Where are you going?

MS DUPREE
I’m going home to die.
ACHAK
Oh, please don’t joke.

MS DUPREE
I’m not joking, I never plan to recover from this.

ACHAK
Can’t you stick around, just for a bit?

MS DUPREE
No.

And she continues out of the building.

Several 2nd graders enter the classroom.

Achak is nervous. His voice is even cracking. He is shaking and sweating.

ACHAK
Hello, I’m teacher.

SUPER-HERO KID
Mr. Teacher?

ACHAK
That’s right. Mr. Teacher.

SUPER-HERO KID
Where’s Bill?

They chuckle.

ACHAK
Who’s Bill?

SUPER-HERO KID
Our teacher.

ACHAK
Her name wasn’t Bill. It’s Ms. Dupree.

They’ve been calling her “Bill”.

SUPER-HERO KID
You have a bionic arm?
(half beat)
How much can you left with it?

ACHAK
Plenty.

SUPER-HERO KID
Wow.

ACHAK
Sit down and be ready to learn.

The remainder of the students enter.

The bell rings to begin class.

ACHAK
Okay, I’m your new teacher. Don’t freak out.

(pointing)
I sat right there when I was your age.

KID
You remember that?

ACHAK
I do.

SUPER-HERO KID
Was your teacher Bill?

The kids chuckle.

ACHAK
My teacher was Ms. Nunn.

SUPER-HERO KID
None ya business?

ACHAK
I can see you think you’re a comedian?

SUPER-HERO KID
What’s that?

ACHAK
You think you’re funny.
(half beat)
Listen I’m going to run next door for a minute. And I’ll be right back.
(half beat)
Please sit quietly until I come back.

Achak almost runs next door and looks in the third grade door window. The kids are gathered around a map and the teacher is pointing to the states and the kids are calling out the answers.

Achak runs back to his classroom.

ACHAK
Okay, kids gather around the map.

KID
What’s a map?

ACHAK
There isn’t a map.

(half beat)
There has to be a map.

The kids shrug.

Achak looks through a cabinet at the front?

Achak pulls out an umbrella.

KID
That’s Bill’s.

ACHAK
Okay, let’s look back here.

There is a cabinet at the back and Achak pulls out a very old map. There is a ton of dust on it. He hangs it up on the wall hooks and it unrolls.

ACHAK
Okay, what is this?

He points at Oklahoma.

There isn’t an answer.
KID
North Dakota!

ACHAK
North Dakota?
(half beat)
Why do you say that?

KID
I used to live there.

ACHAK
Show me, North Dakota.

The boy approaches the map and thinks.

ACHAK
Point to North Dakota.

The kid points to California.

ACHAK
That’s California.
(half beat)
Where’s North Dakota?

He doesn’t know, of course.

ACHAK
(pointing)
North Dakota is here.
(half beat)
This is Oklahoma.

KID
That’s not Oklahoma.

ANOTHER KID
We’re in Oklahoma.

ACHAK
It’s a map. This
(pointing at the map)
and this
(pointing at the ground)
are the same place.
(half beat)
Like if you lay it out flat it’s a representation of the land... or water.

The kids look at each other.

ACHAK
Like... okay. You don’t know what this is?

The kids look at each other.

ACHAK
Let’s make a map of this classroom on the chalkboard.

Achak draws a map of the classroom on the chalkboard.

A girl is decked out entirely in pink and wearing a Little Princess shirt, pants and shoes.

ACHAK
Little Princess, go stand by the book shelf.

LITTLE PRINCESS
What?

ACHAK
Go stand over there, please.

When she does Achak draws a stick figure girl on the chalkboard map beside the bookcase.

The class chuckles.

ACHAK
You, Batman, go stand by the door.

Achak draws a “Batman” logo at the door.

ACHAK
Okay, Batman, walk over to the window, please.

Achak erases the chalk “Batman” by the door and he redraws it by the outside windows.
ACHAK
Okay, you guys see what’s going on?

The students are silent.

ACHAK
A map tells you where you are? What? You never were lost? What about when you are in a store and your mom and dad get away from you.

SUPER-HERO KID
You just wonder around until you find them.

ACHAK
Wondering around? Isn’t that a lot of work?

The students are silent.

ACHAK
What are the directions on a map?

The students are silent.

ACHAK
North. East. South. And West. Right?

The students shrug.

ACHAK
Okay what direction is the top of the map?
  (half beat)
  The top is always North.
  (half beat)
  The bottom is always…

The students shrug.

ACHAK
South. Right?
  (half beat)
  The right side is East and the left side is West.
  (half beat)
Okay. Little Princess. Move to the North.

Little Princess doesn’t know what to do. She walks over to the East...

ACHAK
No.

She’s traumatized and doesn’t want to be wrong.

Super-Hero kid is about to malign her, but Achak preempts him.

ACHAK
Not a word!

Super-Hero kid is a bit intimidated and sits silently.

ACHAK
Okay, Princess. Move to the top of the map. That’s North.

She freezes and won’t move.

ACHAK
Batman, I need your help. The Bat signal is in the north point to it?
(half beat)
What’s at the top of the map? This map.

BATMAN KID
The chalkboard.

ACHAK
So if the ‘Bat signal’ is in the north what’s it shining on?

He points to the bookcase in the South of the classroom.

Reality has stuck Achak and this job will not be easy.

ACHAK
Okay you can sit down.

The Little Princess and the Batman kid sit.
ACHAK
The North is this way. And the South is
that way. East. West.
(half beat)
I’m going to put up signs. If you see
them everyday maybe it will sink in?

Achak writes the directions on a paper and tapes it to each
wall.

ACHAK
Okay? In a few days we’ll be back here
and you’ll know, right?

The kids don’t seem to understand and most look confused.

ACHAK
I’m going to run next door and I’ll be
right back.

Achak observes next door in the 3rd grade they’re reading.

He returns and the students are running around.

ACHAK
Sit down, please.

They sit.

ACHAK
Please take out your readers?

KID
What readers?

ACHAK
You don’t have one in your desk?

The kids look. They take out all their stuff looking.

ACHAK
Okay, but everything back in your desk.
(half beat)
I’m sure this is what we’re looking
for.
Achak goes to the bookshelf and hands out a reader to everyone.

ACHAK
Open it and let’s read.
(half beat)
Who wants to go first?

No one volunteers.

ACHAK
Well, I’m going to go first and then the most beautiful girl will go, and then the strongest boy will read second.
(half beat)
Okay?

Achak reads the first page.

ACHAK
Who is next?

Achak has made a mistake and the kids just look at him. Achak is going to make more than a few mistakes, he’s just out of the army and not accustomed to things in an elementary school.

ACHAK
What you want me to call you by name to read?

The kids just look at him.

ACHAK
Okay, I’ll read the entire thing.

The kids listen but it’s not improving their reading skills.

ACHAK
So what do you guys think?

KID
About what?
ACHAK
Well the story I just read you?

The kids shrug.

ACHAK
Okay. It’s the first day. Nothing is going to be easy.
(half beat)
What do you guys like to do?

KIDS
Color!

ACHAK
Okay, let’s color.

The kids become energetic and get out their colors? And they look at Achak expecting something.

ACHAK
What?

KID
Coloring papers.

ACHAK
Me? I have them?

KID
We don’t have them.

Achak goes through the teacher’s desk. He finds a coloring book and he tears a page out of it.

KID
Oh! Shame on you Mr. Teacher.

ACHAK
What?

KID
You don’t tear a page out of any book.

ANOTHER KID
Bill would be very angry.
The kids chuckle.

ACHAK
Ms. Dupree.

SUPER-HERO KID
Right, Bill.

ACHAK
So what do I do?

KID
You go to the workroom and make copies.

LITTLE PRINCESS
Thirteen copies.

ACHAK
Oh, you know how to count. Let me hear.

LITTLE PRINCESS
1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10 12, 13.

ACHAK
Well that’s not bad but we can work on that.

LITTLE PRINCESS
Thirteen copies. Mr. Teacher.

Achak leaves and brings back their coloring pages. They devour them and leave only one paper in his hands. They all take the papers to their desks and begin to color.

ACHAK
Why 13? I have an extra paper. (half beat)
There are 12 of you.

LITTLE PRINCESS
It’s yours Mr. Teacher.

ACHAK
Oh.

Achak takes the paper to his desk and sure enough there is a box of crayons in his desk.
Later, we see the work of the students. It’s pretty raw work. And even Achak’s picture isn’t much better.

ACHAK
Can we color between the lines?

This idea seems new to the students.

BEGIN MONTAGE OF FAILURE

Achak takes over and tries the conventional methods. Achak leaves the classroom often to see what the other teachers are doing. He returns to his classroom and tries to recreate the activity but invariably fails. But he’s trying.

- Spiders - the boys chase the girls around with the plastic spiders.
- Bees - Achak brings a couple of bees in a jar. He passes it around for the kids to look at and “someone” opens the jar. Everyone runs into the hall to escape being stung.
- Worms - A kid eats a worm. Achak takes mouthwash out of his desk and he teaches the kid to rinse. Later, Achak is shown “candy worms” by the kids. He eats it and they bring him mouthwash. They are having fun, but it’s not clear if they are learning.
- Money - Trying to teach, Achak takes out his wallet and passes around various coins and bills. Well after being passed around, the money never reaches the end of the line. One of the students has pocked the money and won’t admit to it.
- Hurricanes, Tornadoes, Volcanoes - they are terrified and Achak must stop the tape, everyone is crying except the Super-Hero kid.
- Producers and Goods - Achak has posters for the kids to match. The kids match farmers with computers and computer factories with eggs.
- All the other classes go to lunch in single file. The 2nd grade is not in a straight line. Once at the cafeteria, Achak counts only 11. He’s lost a kid. He retraces their path. After a search, involving the principal and school secretary, they find the kid out on the playground petting a stray dog.
- Test - The students take a standardized test. It’s probably not going to well. As the kids are taking their test, they look confused, panicked or they fall asleep.
- Home - Achak comes home and crashes on the couch and sleeps soundly. Wyome chuckles and thinks it’s cute. Clearly he’s investing a lot into his work.
- Wyome - Achak gets a very passionate kiss from Wyome every morning when he leaves for school. He receives support from his girlfriend, who makes cookies for the class. Clearly she’s in love with him and proud of his work.
- Surprise - Wyome texts “14 chocolate ice creams, parking lot, 5 mins.” to Achak. It’s a nice idea but the kids have it all over them. Achak uses a roll of paper towels at the water fountain cleaning them afterward.
- We see Achak becoming stronger and more capable with the prosthetics. He is physically fit chasing and managing the kids activities.
- Achak is playing soccer with the kids and he has a chance at a goal. It’s an easy shot; the goalie is running toward the bathroom. He kicks and it goes high 20 yards over the goal. It is the worst kick in the history of soccer.
- Time - Achak has three clocks drawn on the chalk board, without hour and minute hands. They are marked Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner. The kids are supposed to draw the time they eat each meal. One kid eats breakfast at 4:10. Another eats lunch at 8:30. And the last kid eats dinner at 12:30
- Greater-than and Less-than - Achak has a series of numbers on the board. And the students are supposed to make the sign > or < or =. And they can’t. Achak politely corrects their mistakes but they don’t seem to get it.

Achak uses the conventional books, maps and computers in the room and the student aren’t too interested. They are only marginally successful.

Their reading is seriously deficient. We see the students struggle with even the most simple words and sentences. Achak is pained listening and correcting almost every utterance. The kids they just don’t get it. Progress is slow, if at all.
END MONTAGE OF FAILURE

INT. 2ND GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY

Achak has two maps (floor plans) of the school. He puts an X on the cafeteria’s kitchen. He gives one map to the Super-Hero kid, who is dressed like the Green Lantern.

ACHAK
Go to this X and wait for us to come find you. Just wait right there.

The Super-Hero kid disappears with his map.

ACHAK
Okay. Let’s learn something about this globe.

The words are written on the chalkboard and Achak points to them on the globe.

ACHAK
(half beat)
When you have written them down.
(half beat)
Well, go find the Green Lantern.

They copy the words from the board into their journals.

ACHAK
(to remaining students)
Here is the map. Take it and go find him. He’s waiting there standing on the X. And the leader is Little Princess.
Go.

The students leave as a group. Little Princess mistakes the game for “hide and seek” and she basically looks everywhere. The entire map activity isn’t grasped.

Finally Achak follows the group into the kitchen. The Super-Hero kid isn’t there. Achak opens the door of the
pantry but the kid has gotten a burlap rice sack out of the trash and placed it over his head.

They look everywhere in the school.

Evidently, the Super-Hero kid also has taken the assignment as a game of “hide and seek”. The principal joins the search and finally the high school kids join the search.

It’s about to become a major problem; a sheriff’s deputy arrives just as...

They find the Super-Hero kid in the kitchen, but concealed in the pantry, hiding behind some stacks of beans and rice. He’s technically not far from the X on the map. He’s followed instructions.

Achak smiles and approves. The principal chuckles. The sheriff’s deputy isn’t amused.

INT. 2ND GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY

Achak grew up right-handed but he’s suddenly left-handed. There is an emotional scene where Achak is trying to get them to improve their handwriting.

ACHAK
Okay, time out.
(half beat)
This is just not going to fly.

OTHER KID
Show us how to do it, please.

KID
We don’t want to be called names anymore.

ACHAK
What? Who’s calling you names?

KID
The first graders.

ACHAK
What do they know?
KID
They know a lot of naughty words!

ACHAK
Like what?

KID
Can’t say them.

ACHAK
Oh, come on. I won’t tell.

KIDS
Oaf.
Jerk.
Cave man.

ACHAK
They called you “cave men”? Okay, no one is going to get one up on my class. I’m going to give you some better meaner words. But you have to learn to write them and spell them perfectly.

Achak write on the chalkboard.

ACHAK
Neanderthal and Troglodyte.

Achak pronounces them and writes them on the board. Achak’s writing is about like a second grader.

ACHAK
Now these are like 5th grade words. I’m not supposed to be teaching you these. But if you will write and read you will learn tons more.

Achak goes around critiquing their handwriting.

ACHAK
This T is two straight lines.

The students look at Achak’s shaky elementary lines on the chalkboard.
ACHAK
You guys need to make your letters smoother without the jagged lines.

The student’s study Achak’s handwriting.

They hold their work up and compare it with what is on the chalkboard.

KID
Mr. Teacher. Your handwriting isn’t all that smooth either.

ACHAK
Well, I used to write with this hand.

He gestures to his prosthetic arm.

ACHAK
But they cut it off.

KID
Why’d you let them do that?

ACHAK
I was asleep. I woke up and it, everything was gone.

KID
That’s a dirty dog trick they pulled on you.

SUPER-HERO KID
What did you do to them?

ACHAK
Nothing, I came here.

The children ponder the injustice.

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

Little Princess has two milks on her tray and some third grader runs past here and steals one of the milks. Little Princess screams!
LITTLE PRINCESS
Troglodyte!

The other teachers and the principal look on curiously and try to ponder how the little girl would know such a word.

The Little Princess puts her tray down and calmly walks to where the principal is eating.

LITTLE PRINCESS
That Neanderthal stole my milk.

The principal is awed.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

Also outside at playtime. The boys want Achak to throw them a football that has landed at his feet. Achak does but it’s a terrible throw. He’s not left-handed, of course, and the ball goes flying in error. The boys can’t understand why he can’t throw a football; they’ve never see a young man that can’t throw a football well. It’s a puzzle to them.

INT. PRINCIPAL’S OFFICE - DAY

Achak is on the verge of quitting/failure.

PRINCIPAL
These number’s aren’t the end of the world. It’s just a test. Maybe they aren’t test takers.

ACHAK
But tests are everything. Now days, their entire future, college, jobs everything is based on tests.

PRINCIPAL
I never did well on tests and I turned out okay.

ACHAK
I’m sorry. I feel I’ve let everyone down.
PRINCIPAL
Listen I’ve pretty much disposed with all expectations.
(half beat)
Can you just get through the year? Next year you’ll have all new kids, you can start fresh.
(half beat)
Listen, you can’t make chicken salad out of chicken shit.

ACHAK
What?
(half beat)
It’s not their fault. They’re trying.

PRINCIPAL
If by the end of the year, they can’t improve their test performance, I’m going to recommend to the school board that they all repeat the 2nd grade.

ACHAK
That seems a bit drastic; all of them?

PRINCIPAL
Or we can have them classified as having various IDDs.

ACHAK
What’s that?

PRINCIPAL
Intellectual developmental disorders.

Beat.

PRINCIPAL
We don’t say ‘Mental retardation” anymore.

ACHAK
I can’t believe this. No, absolutely not.
PRINCIPAL
Why? The federal government will send us tons of money. New computers and more teachers pay.

ACHAK
No.

PRINCIPAL
Why not? Look at their test scores.

ACHAK
Cause their not... ret... IDDs, whatever.

PRINCIPAL
These things happen.

ACHAK
And have them labelled that for the rest of their lives would be wrong.

PRINCIPAL
Well, it was just an idea.

INT. 2ND GRADE CLASSROOM – DAY

Achak enters the classroom. And he writes on the chalkboard.

ACHAK
Okay, let’s learn some new words. Float, flood, fold, fresh, frighten, fuel.

Achak is mono-tone and perhaps a bit exhausted/depressed about the entire situation. He sits as the kids copy the letters.

But a student raises his hand.

KID
Sir?

ACHAK
Don’t call me sir, I work for a living.
KID
I’m sorry to disturb you when you’re working, but what do we call you then?

ACHAK
Sergeant.

All the kids stop copying and...

KID
Sir, I have to go to the bathroom, sir.

They student hear an uncharacteristically loud speech about the “sir sandwich”. Achak is about at the end of his patience. He runs of the risk of alienating the kids and totally losing their trust.

ACHAK
You guys need to learn a little military etiquette. That ‘sir’ thing. I’m not a sir, never was. But if you’re going to say sir, don’t overuse it. You say it once in a sentence. Got it?

KID
My real dad says to call everyone outranking me a ‘sir’.

ACHAK
Okay, that’s not bad. Your real dad is in the service?

KID
No, he’s in the Navy.

OTHER KID
My dad calls everybody ‘sir’, but not my mom.

ACHAK
What do you call a woman, not ‘sir’?

They all know and raise their hands.

KID
Ma’am.
ACHAK
Right.

OTHER KID
He’s a Marine. They always say ‘sir’ or ‘ma’am’.

ACHAK
Over at Fort Sill?
(half beat)
How many people have military people in their family?

ACHAK
Parents?

Four kids raise their hands.

ACHAK
Brothers?

One kid raise his/her hand.

ACHAK
Uncles?

Three kids raise their hand.

Cousins?

The rest of the class raises their hand, except Little Princess. There is only one kid without family in the military.

ACHAK
What about your grand-parents?

Some raise two hands. Finally, the Little Princess raises her hand.

LITTLE PRINCESS
My great-grandpa fought Hitler. He’s buried in France.

ACHAK
Oh, I’m sorry.
LITTLE PRINCESS
It’s okay I didn’t know him.

ACHAK
Well, still it was a brave thing.

LITTLE PRINCESS
Thank you.

SUPER-HERO KID
You said to call you Sergeant.

ACHAK
You can if you want.

SUPER-HERO KID
Sergeant, I really have to go to the bathroom. Please.

ACHAK
Oh, sure. Sorry. Yes. Go.

KID
Sergeant? What exactly is a Sergeant? Is that a person that was hurt in the war?

ACHAK
No. Not exactly. Hey, you want me to teach you the ranks?

They all get out their journals and pencils and sit up straight.

Achak writes the Army ranks on the chalkboard.

KID
My uncle is an Ensign.

ACHAK
Okay, that’s in the Navy. You want to learn them too? You sure this isn’t too much?

Achak writes the Navy ranks on the chalkboard.
The kids automatically copy them down.

ACHAK
Anyone know what you are when you first join the Air Force?

One kid holds his hand up.

KID
Airman Basic

ACHAK
Wow. How do you know that?

KID
My cousin in San Antonio.

Achak writes the Air Force ranks on the chalkboard.

They are quiet and the class is instantly transfixed and transformed. Working and learning.

ACHAK
This is really a lot of information. I’m only supposed to give you 8 2nd grade words a day to learn.

SUPER-HERO KID
We won’t tell.

ACHAK
Gee, thanks.

INT. 2ND GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY

He gives them a quiz on the material and after grading their papers Achak is amazed and looks up.

You’ve learned the ranks. Very few people got confused. Almost perfect spelling. Most of you even got ‘lieutenant’. And that’s a hard one.

SUPER-HERO KID
Okay, I have a question, what exactly does a ‘lieutenant’ do?
ACHAK
Well, that’s complicated maybe you want to learn the units?

They all get out their pads and pencils again.

ACHAK
If you want to know what each job does and you need to know how the military units are organized.

He writes on the board and teaches them...

ACHAK
A Corp is giant about 10,000 men, Divisions are really big, Battalions up to about 1000 men, Companies about 150 people There are about that many people in this whole school.
(half beat)
A Platoon is about 12 soldiers, Squad about six guys.

LITTLE PRINCESS
Can girls be in the army?

ACHAK
Of course. Girls make excellent soldiers.

SUPER-HERO KID
Are we a platoon?

ACHAK
Uh, We can be. Sure. Why not!

The boys slap high fives and clearly they are into it.

The students all seem to like this... “military tone” and its also a “tone-at-the-top” power and it gives Achak the edge. The student’s aren’t the lethargic/goofball learners anymore. So long as Achak is teaching about the military, they are listening and learning.

The military didn’t work out very well for Achak, but he teaches enthusiastically and the students mirror the enthusiasm.
INT. WYOME’S TRAILER – DAY

WYOME
So, how are the kids?

ACHAK
Well, all year you know they’ve been a train wreck. Can’t spell, can’t read, can’t subtract.

WYOME
Oh, honey.

ACHAK
But this week, suddenly for no real reason, they know the ranks, Navy and Air Force too. Eighty percent of them spelled ‘lieutenant’ correctly.

WYOME
That’s great.

ACHAK
You want to know what’s weird. I have an idea I can turn the 2nd grade around and get them on the correct path.

WYOME
Oh, does that means a celebration?

Kiss.

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA – DAY

Two kids are talking while eating lunch.

2ND GRADER
What platoon are you in?

3RD GRADER
What is that?

2ND GRADER
You know ‘what grade are you in?’
3RD GRADER
Oh, I’m in the third platoon.

INT. 2ND GRADE CLASSROOM – DAY

The class is reading military etiquette that Achak has in a power point presentation.

The students reading is vastly improved. It’s even advanced. They are sounding out the difficult words.

Each student reads a screen. They read perfectly and even the difficult words are sounded out without much help from Achak.

- Never criticize your school (service) or your leaders in public.
- Never go over the heads of superiors — don’t jump the chain of command.
- Never offer excuses.
- Never “wear” on a superior’s rank by saying something like, “The Sergeant wants this done now” when in fact the Sergeant said no such thing. Speak with your own voice.
- Never turn and walk away to avoid giving the hand salute.
- Never run indoors or pretend you don’t hear instructions… (while driving, for example) to avoid participating in reveille or retreat (raising or lowering of the U.S flag).
- Never appear at school (in uniform) while under the influence of “sugar candy” (alcohol).
- People sleep peaceably in their beds at night only because rough men stand ready to do violence on their behalf.

The last quote on the PowerPoint says, “Be polite, be professional, but have a plan to kill everyone you meet.”

ACHAK
Oh, I didn’t mean to include that one.
Forget that.

LITTLE PRINCESS
What does it say?
But it’s not appropriate so Achak reads that one...

ACHAK
Be polite, be professional, but have a plan to throw rocks at any terrorist you see.

The Little Princess, who has been shy, interjects...

LITTLE PRINCESS
Wait! That doesn’t say ‘throw rocks’. What did it really say?

She’s learning to be assertive and speak up in class.

Achak turns off the projector screen quickly.

ACHAK
Okay you guys ready for PT?

Recess has been replaced with “PT”. The school’s vocabulary changes. They are distracted and fall in for playtime outside.

INT. PLAYGROUND – DAY

On the playground, the boys build a scarecrow terrorist (complete with Islamic beard) and are throwing rocks at him.

INT. 2ND GRADE CLASSROOM – DAY

POWERPOINT
If you don’t know the answer to a superior’s question, you will never go wrong with the response, “I don’t know, sir (or ma’am), but I’ll find out.”

And we see Achak asking questions, the kids don’t know and then the student’s go look up the answer. They frequently go to the bookshelf.

INT. HALLWAY – DAY

The principal stops a kid in the hall.
PRINCIPAL
Wow, look at those shoes, where’d you get them?

The kid politely answers.

KID
I don’t know, sir, but I’ll find out.

And the kid salutes and runs off. The principal can’t understand what’s going on and is perplexed. But it’s a school and strange things happen often.

The kid goes to the office and uses the phone to call his mom about the source of the shoes. The kids, on their own, are finding answers.

INT. 2ND GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY

At lunch, the kid finds the principal and reports what store his mother bought the shoes. The kid even gives the street address.

INT. 2ND GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY

The transformation even extends to the 2nd grade girls. Little Mermaid becomes G.I. Jane. There were about four Little Mermaids and they all begin to wear green, white Navy outfits and blue Air Force outfits.

One 2nd grade girl doesn’t quite fit into the new goings on and she remains The Little Princess. One 2nd grade boy still prefers the super-hero characters; he’s a different super-hero each day.

INT. IN LINE FOR THE WATER FOUNTAIN - DAY

There is a tiny bit of conflict in the class. The Super-Hero kid is pretty much the leader of the opposition and he never really conforms to green. He is the biggest, strongest and smartest boy in the class. He notices that the other boys are wearing the green. He reason’s to them that...

SUPER-HERO KID
Super-hero’s are better than army guys.
INT. 2ND GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY

The class is actually taking notes; advanced for the 2nd grade. And the lesson is "miles-per-hour". Achak has a PowerPoint for them - military vehicles.

F-35 Lightning fighter.

The Super-Hero kid speaks up...

SUPER-HERO KID
The Flash is faster than any military jet.

ACHAK
Faster than a F-35 Lightning?

SUPER-HERO KID
How fast is that?

ACHAK
Like 1,550 mph.

SUPER-HERO KID
(making it up)
The Flash is like 5,687 mph.

ACHAK
Okay you got me there. Good thing he’s on our side, huh?

SUPER-HERO KID
Don’t worry; he is.

The next PowerPoint slide is photo of the principal’s red economy car.

ACHAK
But how fast is the principal’s Volkswagen? That little red car he drives.

The kids are stumped.

ACHAK
His car will go about 60 mph and after that it begins shaking.
The class laughs hysterically.

M-1 Abrams tank.

ACHAK
The walls are about two feet thick and can stop almost any bullet.

SUPER-HERO KID
Superman can stop a bullet.

ACHAK
How fast can an M-1 go?

The kids are stumped.

ACHAK
45 mph.

The kids write that down.

SUPER-HERO KID
Superman is way faster than that.

Achak shows them a Bradley Fighting vehicle.

ACHAK
Bradley, about 35 MPH

SUPER-HERO KID
The Army hasn’t got a Batcar. Nothing even like it. Batman is a millionaire and NO BODY in the army has a million dollars.

ACHAK
There are about a million people in our armed services.

SUPER-HERO KID
So, I’d rather have a million dollars than a million people.

ACHAK
That is an interesting question. Please write an answer down in your journals.
Is it better to have a million dollars or a million people in a war? There isn’t any right or wrong answer, the only way you can get it wrong is to not answer the question.

The kids all contemplate and write the answer. And now write why your answer is best. Clearly the kids are improving and reasoning and writing.

The Little Princess is out in left field. She is coloring in her journal instead of studying MPH. But her coloring style is uniquely military, she has a pink, white and gray camouflage.

She reasons out loud...

LITTLE PRINCESS
Barbie is far too pretty to be in the Army. And she can’t get dirty.

Achak is about to respond but thinks better of it. You know, I think you’re right. So the Little Princess continues wearing pink to school.

Both the Little Princess and the Super-Hero kids are learning and participating in the classroom, but they sort of form an opposition to Achak’s military teaching. In the end, of course, they will be the child heroes and leaders when the crisis comes.

INT. 2ND GRADE CLASSROOM – AFTER SCHOOL

Achak sits at his desk and emails his friends in the service about his new job.

ACHAK
(in the email)
I’m teaching 2nd grade. They are very hooah. Any care package would be appreciated.

INT. 2ND GRADE CLASSROOM – DAY

Later, the principal brings him a package mailed to the school.
PRINCIPAL
It’s from Afghanistan.

Achak writes “Afghanistan” on the board.

ACHAK
Can you take this pin and put it on Afghanistan?

The Super-Hero kid takes the pin.

The kids write “Afghanistan” in their journals.

ACHAK
A few things books for the kids to read. During in the war, this school sent soldiers packages. Now we’re getting them.

The principal has his doubts but he’s not about to question Achak. He’s so happy they have a teacher there.

The kid places the pin correctly with only a little difficulty on the map. He can’t reach it so he uses a small step.

PRINCIPAL
I’m sure glad you are here. What do you say kids, you guys like the Sergeant?

LITTLE PRINCESS
Sure do! Can we have a corporal in here too?

PRINCIPAL
Uh, I’ll start looking for one.

The principal leaves and Achak opens the package. He pulls out various Army training manuals and a mobile Army cooking stove. The principal brings in more packages. There are rather a lot of MRIs.

INT. 2ND GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY

Soon, the class is learning to read from military equipment and tactical manuals. Achak writes the difficult words on the board and the class copies them.
- rendezvous
- egress
- decoy
- smokescreen
- deception
- keep secret
- barricade

Student’s read actually very difficult material.

KID
(reading)
Move the burner units a minimum of 50 feet from the cooking and fuel storage areas prior to...

INT. 2ND GRADE CLASSROOM – DAY

Later, the principal brings him another package mailed to the school.

PRINCIPAL
It’s from Iraq.

ACHAK
(to Super-Hero kid)
Middle East.

The Super-Hero kid automatically, without being asked, takes a pin to the map and places it in the appropriate country.

More instructional videos.

INT. 2ND GRADE CLASSROOM – DAY

Again, the principal brings him a package mailed to the school.

PRINCIPAL
It’s from South Korea.

ACHAK
(to Super-Hero kid)
Asia.
The Super-Hero kid automatically, without being asked takes a pin to the map and places it in the appropriate country.

The principal leaves.

Achak opens the package.

There are camo-blankets and a GPS unit. A combat knife in a sheath. Various posters and instructional material.

INT. 2ND GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY

Later, the principal brings him a packages mailed to the school.

PRINCIPAL
It’s from Germany.

Before Achak can give Super-Hero kid a hint...

SUPER-HERO KID
I know Europe.

The Super-Hero kid takes a pin to the map and places it in the appropriate country - Germany.

Inside the package is a Kevlar vest. That is a very curious for the kids. Achak throws it in the cabinet after the kids look at it.

INT. 2ND GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY

Later, the principal brings him still another packages mailed to the school.

PRINCIPAL
It’s from Syria.
(beat)
We don’t have troops in Syria do we?

Achak gestures with a finger to his lips.

THE KIDS
Shshsh.
PRINCIPAL
Top secret?

LITTLE PRINCESS
Something’s we don’t talk about.

The Super-Hero kid is about to put the pin to the map, but thinks differently and returns to pin to its box.

We learn that Achak has a lot of friends. These packages arrive from all over the world. South Korea, Iraq, Afghanistan, Germany, Syria.

When the packages arrive Achak teaches them geography on the map. Of course the U.S. has army bases all over the world and their collection of military equipment grows. They place a stickpin in the map from each location. The map slowly becomes full.

ACHAK
Syria? This is from my friend “Mad Dog” Jones. No telling what he sent us.

The principal re-opens the door of the classroom just when Achak discovers one of his buddies has sent him a fake training grenade. Achak must hide it quickly.

PRINCIPAL
We have soldiers in Syria?

The kids “shshsh” him.

Achak give an “ops you caught me” look.

The principal leaves.

The students want to know what the story is...

SUPER-HERO KID
Why hid it from him?

ACHAK
Because if someone sees a grenade, they’ll about poop in their pants.

Laughter.
ACHAK
Now this isn’t real; it won’t go off. See this little green lever, that means it won’t go off. It’s a dummy.

SUPER-HERO KID
Like Johnny Tomez?

ACHAK
Who’s that?

SUPER-HERO KID
That really big 5th grader. He falls down a lot.

ACHAK
You all don’t call I’m a “dummy”, the only dummy I know of is like this; it’s a toy.
(beat)
A soldier never makes fun of someone less fortunate. I mean look at me.

Long beat.

SUPER-HERO KID
Yeah, but what about the grenade?

ACHAK
It’s just so the soldiers can practice throwing it. If it were real, you’d pull this pin and throw it.

SUPER-HERO KID
Show us!

Achak is about to pull the pin and show them how to lever triggers the device, but he stops. And he won’t.

ACHAK
There’s always the possibility of a mistake. And you aren’t supposed to even play with these dummies around people, because?...
SUPER-HERO KID
They might not be dummies like they say?

ACHAK
Right. That’s very smart.

Achak puts the items (grenade and 2 smoke bombs) into a camouflage backpack. There are two smoke bombs, a large and a small.

KID
What’s that?

ACHAK
It’s a very big smoke bomb.

KID
Is it a fake too?

Achak looks at it more carefully.

ACHAK
No, it’s real.

KID
What will it do?

ACHAK
The little one will smoke up this entire room. And the big one would smoke up half this school. Let’s say you have to go to the bathroom, there would be so much smoke you couldn’t find your way there.

KID
How come the army has it?

ACHAK
Well, if you don’t want the bad guys to see you. You can throw it and move around without them seeing you.

Beat.
ACHAK
No one touches this kind of stuff. Never. It’s dangerous. Not until you are in the real military. Not our pretend army here. Okay?

The class understands.

Achak places the fake grenades and the smoke bombs in a backpack he has in his classroom on the very top of a cabinet and forgets about it. Also in this backpack is the combat knife and the small cooking stove.

He does however show the students instruction manuals, the training videos, about how to use the grenades and the smoke bombs. The kids are listening and watching while writing in their journals. Some are drawing pictures.

Afterward Achak questions the class on what they learned. Of course the pass with flying colors. They are becoming smart and articulate.

ACHAK
What did we learn?

LITTLE PRINCESS
Grenades make people poop their pants.

Of course that is funny and everyone laughs.

ACHAK
Right. What else?

SUPER-HERO KID
Smoke bombs are good for sneaking around...

ACHAK
Because?

LITTLE PRINCESS
The enemy can’t see you.

ACHAK
And...
SUPER-HERO KID
You can see it from a long way off.

ACHAK
That’s right it’s a good emergency signal.

INT. 2ND GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY

KID
(reading from a PowerPoint)
Military preparedness demands personnel, weapons, equipment, food and water in adequate quantity to accomplish assigned missions wherever and whenever directed.

ACHAK
That is excellent reading. Never has 2nd grader attacked so many words with so few mistakes.
(half beat)
We keeping the MRI and equipment in the backpacks against the wall for preparedness. Unit preparedness. Floods, Tornadoes and earthquakes.

A student questions...

SUPER-HERO KID
Wars?

ACHAK
No, not really that’s away off from here. We are in the middle of nowhere. The bad guys don’t even know where our little school is, their maps aren’t very good.

LITTLE PRINCESS
But we prepare anyway, you said.

ACHAK
I did say that. Thank you for reminding me. If anything happens, you will have your lunch and there’s water in those
backpacks as well. I promise no one is missing his or her lunch.

SUPER-HERO KID
What did you do in the war?

ACHAK
I was in Iraq.

SUPER-HERO KID
What did you do?

ACHAK
I hid out in the desert.

SUPER-HERO KID
Did they ever find you?

Beat.

Achak holds up his prosthetics for everyone to see. The class is very somber.

There is a very long beat.

SUPER-HERO KID
What happened?

ACHAK
I guess I didn’t hide very good.

LITTLE PRINCESS
What were you doing hiding?

Achak hesitates... and...

ACHAK
You guys, as brave as you are, might be too young to be exposed to actual war.

SUPER-HERO KID
I thought we’re a unit.

LITTLE PRINCESS
A team.
Another long beat. The students insist. It is an awkward moment.

Achak doesn’t want to tell them what he did, but he doesn’t want to be distant to them and ironically he doesn’t want to treat them like kids (but they are just kids). And we learn Achak was a sniper.

ACHAK
I shot terrorist.

SUPER-HERO KID
How many?

ACHAK
A few.

SUPER-HERO KID
How many is a few?

ACHAK
More than a few.

LITTLE PRINCESS
But some of them they got you?

ACHAK
Yep they sure did.

The class, while just kids, seem to understand the tragedy of war, but they don’t cry. They might be a bit teary, as Achak is near tears himself, but they maintain composure. They don’t cry and Achak says to them...

ACHAK
I’m real proud of you guys. You are the strongest kids I’ve ever known.

SUPER-HERO KID
How many kids have you known?

ACHAK
Tons!

The kids are teary eyed but confident and proud of their “tough guy” no crying status.
To keep from crying himself, Achak asks them if they want to sing a song. And slowly they form up into their little choir and they sing a patriotic song.

While they are singing, the 1st grade teacher comes in and rolls her eyes at the patriotism. She just needs to borrow some tape off Achak’s desk.

INT. 2ND GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY

Achak writes the following words on the chalkboard.

- camouflage
- concealment
- disguise
- conceal
- mimicry

The students write the words down and they read from an Army PowerPoint on camouflage.

INT. 2ND GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY

Later, we see that all of the green, brown, gray and white crayons are very worn down. The pink, purple, yellow, red and orange crayons are hardly used. All their ducks, dogs, and even Santa Clause’s are colored camouflage. They have done some relatively simple coloring.

PRINCIPAL
Two packages today.

ACHAK
Just in time. Coloring books!

PRINCIPAL
One from El Paso, Texas.

ACHAK
That’s in on the U.S. border with Mexico.

PRINCIPAL
And another from Crayon Corporation, uh... Forks Township, Northampton County, Pennsylvania.
ACHAK
That’s in the Northeast U.S., near Philadelphia.

Super-Hero kid collects two pins and heads to the map.

Inside the one package are some military theme coloring books. That is a very popular gift with the kids.

Inside the second, package are a special order of crayons.

Achak hands out a huge assortment of green and brown crayons. Now every kid has what they want — a set of Asparagus, Caribbean Green, Fern, Forest Green, Granny Smith Apple, Green, Inchworm, Jungle Green, Light Chrome Green, Maximum Green, Maximum Green Yellow, Medium Chrome Green, Middle Blue Green, Middle Green, Middle Green Yellow, Mountain Meadow, Pine Green, Sea Green, Shamrock, Tropical Rain Forest, Yellow-Green. There are also some desert colors as well.

Achak had noticed that the Little Princess has been camouflaging all her coloring books in pink — He has special ordered her a unique set — Blush, Brilliant Rose, Carmine, Carnation Pink, Cerise, Cotton Candy, Eggplant, Fuchsia, Jazzberry Jam, Lavender (II), Magenta, Mahogany, Mauvelous, Maximum Red Purple, Medium Rose, Middle Purple, Middle Red Purple, Mulberry, Orchid, Pig Pink, Pink Flamingo, Plum, Razzmatazz, Red-Violet, Salmon, Thistle, Tickle Me Pink, Violet (I), Violet-Red, Wild Strawberry, Purple Mountains’ Majesty. She is elated when she receives the colors.

EXT. WILDLIFE REFUGE — RANGER STATION — DAY

Each year the students go on a field trip to the wildlife reserve. Most of the school marches off the bus into the building to see a nature film. The 2\textsuperscript{nd} grade marches off into the wilderness.

The other students watch a film in the ranger station, but Achak has requested that he be able to take the students out on his own into the field. It’s grassland with buffalo herds roaming about.

The time comes to leave and the second grade is nowhere to be found. There is a visual search of the horizon and they
can’t be seen. The principal honks the horn on the bus. First Achak appears. And then the students appear. They have camouflaged themselves in the grass. The buffalo are frightened as the students pop up out of their concealment and the buffalo move away. Basically they’ve snuck up on a herd of wild animals, not an easy accomplishment.

The 2nd grade is VERY VERY good at what they do.

They pull grass out of their hats, and pockets and belts. They all run from the field to the bus.

One kid has forgotten some of the grass he had in his hat. The principal is driving and motions for him to take the grass out of his hat before getting on the bus.

When the kid does get on the bus... the principal questions him.

PRINCIPAL
   How did you do that, get so close to the buffalo?

   KID
   Training, sir.

EXT. MEDICINE MOUNTAIN – MOUNT SCOTT, OKLAHOMA – DAY

Along the mountain road, the bus drives to the top of the mountain and the students see the picturesque view. They eat sack lunches on top of the mountain.

The teachers and school staff are eating and visiting at picnic tables at the top of the mountain.

The second graders become bored after their lunch and begin to report. The Super-Hero kid hands Achak paper map he’s made. Super-Hero kid also has the GPS unit.

ACHAK
   Areas of potential concealment?

   SUPER-HERO KID
   We are about to do that right now.

The Super-Hero kid brings back intelligence reports to Achak, who tells them to mark the locations on the GPS.
ACHAK
And the enemy?

SUPER-HERO KID
Their only real access is from the road, here.

Pointing to a the GPS...

ACHAK
Scout for concealment positions and mark them on the GPS.

The Super-Hero kid, followed by the other 2nd graders, leave and explore the mountaintop.

Achak is sitting with the teachers, still eating. They all look at Achak, some in awe, some in disapproval.

The students take it upon themselves to hide again. When it’s time to go, the principal tells Achak to fetch his students... Achak can’t find them and they don’t reveal themselves until the principal honks the bus horn.

INT. 2ND GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY

Achak makes the mistake of teaching them to salute. The students begin to salute him inside the classroom.

Then at recess time out in the playground, Achak is embarrassed with all the attention he gets and hides as he monitors their play.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

A 3rd grade student salutes the principal and then another 4th grader does the same. The kids are sharing information and the entire school is being militarized.

1ST GRADE TEACHER
Aren’t you concerned with all this saluting?

PRINCIPAL
It’s innocent fun.
**1ST GRADE TEACHER**
He has his kids saluting everybody.

Those aren’t even his students.

**1ST GRADE TEACHER**
It’s growing to the other grades.

**PRINCIPAL**
I’m not too concerned. It is a very conservative small community, actually it is a rural school district and it’s not that big a deal.

**1ST GRADE TEACHER**
No wonder we have an imperialist foreign policy. We teach it in the second grade.

**PRINCIPAL**
Many people here have family members serving.

**1ST GRADE TEACHER**
Just wait until their parents get a whiff of this sort of indoctrination. They’ll be up here.

**PRINCIPAL**
And besides the 2nd grade is reading at an advanced level. Very advanced! (half beat)
How are your kids reading?

---

**INT. 2ND GRADE CLASSROOM – DAY**

**ACHAK**
You guys are saluting everybody.
(half beat)
You only salute when they are in uniform. And you never inside, except when giving a report.

**SUPER-HERO KID**
But if he’s outside we can, right?
ACHAK
Uh, if they’re wearing green.

The kids are a bit disappointed.

INT. 2ND GRADE CLASSROOM – DAY

Slowly over time... the class change their fashion from pink Barbie outfits and Batman shirts. They begin to wear camo.

INT. THE STUDENT’S HOMES – DAY

We see their deer hunting fathers who are delighted but soon the children’s tastes turn to desert camo.

Suddenly the children’s mothers become concerned as the kids dress for school. They only have a few “green” camp outfits. They are doing their own laundry so they can wear camo each day.

INT. 3RD GRADE CLASSROOM – AFTER SCHOOL

Questions are asked but the other teachers have witnessed the transformation and defend Achak.

A mother looks concerned and is talking to a teacher.

TEACHER
I like it. But, it’s just a temporary thing, the school year is about to end and your child will be moving on to the third grade.

INT. PRINCIPAL – AFTER SCHOOL

A different mother is visiting with the principal in his office.

PRINCIPAL
Let me be the first to point out the reading improvement and discipline. No 2nd grade student has been in my office since Achak began teaching. They’re eating their lunch, even the green beans. For some reason, we have green beans every day. Achak’s class is the only grade to clean their plates.
It’s a running joke that the cafeteria lady must like green beans, because they are served everyday.

INT. PARKING LOT - DAY

The activity level has increased and these kids are learning to listen. A single-mom approaches Achak and he thinks she might scold him. But she thanks him profusely.

MOTHER
I want to tell that before you started working here, Jr. wouldn’t sleep at night. Now, I just say ‘go to bed’ and he goes. Thank you sooo much. You have no idea how you are helping me.

ACHAK
Just doing my job, ma’am.

Only now does she realize Achak is a triple amputee. She’s been talking a mile a minute. And no one every told her about Achak’s disability.

MOTHER
How do you… No one told me you were disabled.

ACHAK
I’m not.

INT. 2ND GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY

The principal brings in a report. He smiles and hands it to Achak. Achak studies it for a beat or two.

ACHAK
Okay, I have some good news; you guys this… you’re reading “above grade level”.

KID
What does that mean?

ACHAK
It means you know just as many hard words as the 4th graders. You’re
actually better than them. Spelling and math are good too. Handwriting, not so much. Map skills excellent. Science good.

The kids are recognized and will probably work even harder at their schoolwork.

INT. 2ND GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY

The principal announces a code over the loud speaker.

    PRINCIPAL (O.S.)
    Harry Monty was both a Munchkin and a monkey.

Achak wasn’t employed at the first of the year. Achak doesn’t know what that means. But a student understands...

    SUPER-HERO KID
    It means someone is in the building and they aren’t supposed to be.

Achak steps out into the hallway to confront the strange men.

    ACHAK
    Hey, you guys aren’t supposed to be here.

And Achak takes a bullet in a prosthetic limb. He’s not injured.

He dives back into the room and locks the door. He instructs the students...

    ACHAK
    Get against that wall, out of sight from the door.
        (half beat)
    And absolutely quit. Not a word. Stealth.

A terrorist comes to the 2nd grade door and demands that he open it. Achak pretends to be dead. He’s sitting in his chair, slumped over.
The terrorist returns to the other end of the hall where they are breaking down classroom doors.

The terrorist reports to the leader and points to the second grade class.

Achak gets up and looks down the hall in the direction of the terrorists. Down the hall, the bad guys are breaking down the doors with a battering ram. Slowly the school’s lockdown procedures are failing.

The terrorists are taking the students, beginning with the high school rooms to the gym. They are working their way to the elementary and it will only be a short time until they are breaking down the 2nd grade door.

Achak remembers the few weapons they might have in the backpack on top of the cabinet and a Kevlar vest hanging in the cabinet. Achak puts on the vest and pulls down the backpack full of weapons.

ACHAK
(to super-hero kid)
Superman, our egress is through that window and out to the buses.
Understand?
(to everyone)
Everyone grab the backpacks with the MRIs. The cafeteria is closed, and we’re eating out.

CUT TO: The CAFETERIA LADY with other students being lead at gunpoint into the gym.

BACK TO: Achak instructing the students to grab the backpacks of MRIs and water.

ACHAK
Two of you on each backpack. We’re taking them to the big new bus.

ACHAK
Form up. And double time. When you get on the bus, not a word and keep down. Concealment.
The students line up. And Achak breaks the window leading to the outside. He clears the glass and unfurls a doormat through the window.

ACHAK
We move together and we don’t leave anyone behind. If someone falls we stop and pick them up. Understand?

Everyone can step out of the window and escape the building.

Achak watches his students move to one of the buses and they do make it safely.

Achak throws the weapons backpack through the window of the next door 1st grade classroom and evacuates them. The 1st grade and their teacher join them on the bus.

Running toward the bus Achak notices the strange stickers on the back of the principal’s red economy car – “National Rifle Association”, “Dictators Prefer Unarmed Citizens” and “Homeland Security Begins With the 2nd Amendment”.

Achak smashes the window of the car with his prosthetic arm and looks under the front seat. He searches the glove box and finds a semi-automatic pistol. He checks it for bullets and puts the pistol in his belt.

Achak gets in the bus. The 1st graders are screaming. The 2nd graders are all watching Achak.

ACHAK
I hope there are keys.
(beat)
Thank god!

A student shouts... and points...

KID
Sergeant, they have a RPG and he’s about to...

And sure enough a terrorist is about to shot one at the bus. Everyone down.

The students duck even further down.
The terrorist misses with the rocket but shrapnel cracks the windshield and punctures the radiator.

The bus will run but the engine will burn up after a short distance. Achak starts the engine and we hear bullets hitting the side of the bus.

ACHAK
Need some smoke.
(beat)
Superman, get a smoke bomb out of here and pull the pin. Throw it out the window.

SUPER-HERO KID
Which one?

ACHAK
The big one.

Superman can hardly pick it up, it’s heavy for a little kid. It’s the large type... 10 lbs.

ACHAK
Get some help.

The Little Princes jumps into the fray.

ACHAK
The two of you push it up and out the window. Pull the pin.

They pull the pin and there is a delay... it starts to smoke up the bus... but instead of dropping it they manage to lift it up and push it out the window.

Achak drives them away from the school toward the wildlife refuge. Their escape is obscured by the smoke.

The terrorist leader dispatches two groups of men to chase and hunt down the bus.

EXT. HIGHWAY DRIVING NORTH - DAY

It’s a car chase... Two vehicles occupied with terrorists are chasing the bus. The students are told to occupy the front
of the bus and to keep their heads down. Bullets penetrate the seats at the rear of the bus but are stopped by the backrests before they reach the front. It’s a large long bus.

The 1st graders are balling like babies and their teacher is saying over and over.

1ST GRADE TEACHERS
It’s okay, it’s okay.

The 2nd graders are relatively resolute.

Sheriff’s deputies pass in the opposite direction driving South; they are racing to the school. Achak can’t stop; he has armed terrorists chasing him.

Achak turns to the 1st grade teacher.

ACHAK
Here drive.

1ST GRADE TEACHER
I don’t have a bus driver’s license.

ACHAK
I don’t either. Just do it for a second.

1ST GRADE TEACHER
I can’t. I have to take care of my babies.

ACHAK
You can best take care of them by freeing me up to kill the guys shooting at your babies.

The 1st grade teacher reluctantly takes the wheel. Achak slides out of the seat and runs to be rear.

1ST GRADE TEACHER
Please hurry.

A terrorist vehicle is racing up to the side and are almost in a killing position.
Achak empties the clip into the terrorist vehicle. It’s not clear if they’re hit, but they swerve, almost wreck and they back off. Later, we’ll learn the vehicle is disabled.

A bullet hits Achak in the chest and knock him down out of sight. However it hits is vest and he pulls himself up. He returns to driving the bus.

EXT. HALF WAY UP THE MEDICINE MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

Half way up the mountain, the bus craps out on them. It smokes and the engine seize up.

Achak hands leadership over to the 1st grade teacher but she is about the least able to lead the students up the mountain into hiding.

ACHAK
Okay, I’m going to back this thing down the mountain and give them a headache.

1ST GRADE TEACHER
No, go up the mountain.

ACHAK
The bus is ruined. It won’t go anywhere but down.
(half beat)
You need to take these kids up in those rock to top.
(half beat)
Okay?

1ST GRADE TEACHER
No. Drive the bus up there.

Achak hands the Super-Hero kid the GPS from the backpack.

ACHAK
Take this...

He hands the backpack with all the weapons (small smoke bomb, fake grenade, and knife) over to the kids.

ACHAK
Superman, you are the sergeant now.
Little Princess you’re the corporal.
(half beat)
Take everybody up to the top and hide.

SUPER-HERO KID
Where?

ACHAK
Your choice. Put them the last place the enemy will look. And I’ll be up there in a minute.

LITTLE PRINCESS
Rendezvous?

Achak instructs his students to conceal themselves in the rocks at a “rendezvous” on top of the mountain. They don’t want to leave Achak, but they understand “rendezvous” means they will meet up again. He taught them a number of military words.

ACHAK
(to Super-Hero)
Take the first grade with you.
(to the teacher)
You go with them.
(to Super-Hero kid)
Up the side of the mountain to the top and hide. The road is easy but they might drive up the road.
(to Little Princess)
Make sure everyone drinks water.

Super-Hero kid looks at the GPS.

Down at the bottom of the mountain. One of the vehicles has a burned up engine. Achak had shot up their radiator. The terrorists seem to be regrouping.

The students unload from the bus.

ACHAK
Little Princess. I need you to help.

LITTLE PRINCESS
Yes, Sergeant.
The 1st grade teacher appears that she wants to persuade Achak of something different.

ACHAK
Get your left wing socialist ass up that mountain.

EXT. UP THE SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN - DAY

It’s not easy going. The 2nd graders adopt and care for the 1st graders. They help them up the mountain and also the 1st grade teacher, she is assisted.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

When all the terrorist get in the second vehicle, they begin up the mountain road.

Achak releases the brake. He guides the bus backwards down the mountain road. The bus with Achak runs over the perusing vehicle but plunges off the road into a ravine. The second vehicle in pursuit is flattened.

The terrorists are left without a vehicle, but they begin walking up the mountain on the road.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

The sheriff’s deputies surround the school. All the students are in the gym and the terrorist are threatening to kill all the students. A SWAT team, more than enough arrive, and the sheriff’s deputies are told they aren’t needed.

But the Sheriff examines the broken windows at the 1st and 2nd grade classrooms and he suspects they may have escaped. He looks at the buses and one seems to be missing. He finds leaking radiator fluid on the pavement and the scared concrete where the RPG exploded. He remembers passing a bus headed toward the wildlife refuge.

EXT. HIGHWAY HEADING NORTH - DAY

The sheriff’s deputies leave the school toward the wildlife refuge. They are looking for the missing school bus and the 1st and 2nd grades.
EXT. BASE OF THE MOUNTAIN - DAY

Achak climbs from the bus wreck. He is bloody and battered. But he manages to crawl up and out the wreck. And now he must climb the mountain to rejoin his unit - find his students.

He could go up the road, but it appears the terrorists are now walking up the road with their weapons.

EXT. TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN - DAY

The students and the 1st grade teacher are eating the MRIs. They have read the instructions and have heated the water on the stove.

1ST GRADE TEACHER
These are pretty good. Can I have another one?
(halve beat)
I mean do we have enough?

The 2nd graders bring her a second MRI.

EXT. SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN - DAY

Achak is humping it to the top of the mountain. Handicapped as he is, it doesn’t hold him back. He climbs hard and fast. In the far distance, Achak can hear gunfire at the school. The SWAT team is rescuing the students from the gym.

Achak continues climbing the mountain. The terrorists are racing him; they are on the road spiraling around to the top. Achak is climbing up the side. Achak is also taking gunfire from the terrorist.

EXT. TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN - DAY

Achak reaches the small parking lot and observation point on top of the mountain, but so do the terrorists. They have weapons and he only has nothing. Exhausted, Achak gives up and surrenders.

The terrorists put him down on his knees and have a debate about whether to tie Achak up or not. They reason he is an amputee so they don’t restrain him. Also inherent in not
tying him up is the fact that they are probably about to execute Achak.

Achak notices... a stuffed animal in clear sight to the East. And a plastic toy truck visible to the South. And a book resting on a rock to the North. There are clues in three of the four directions.

Just as Achak is about to executed, out of nowhere comes a flying Barbie doll. It hits a terrorist in the head. The Little Princess has broken cover for just a second and has thrown her doll into the mix. The terrorists hesitate with the execution. They look around and can’t see where the doll came from. The Little Princess is hidden again.

It takes them a second or two to process the flying doll, but soon they again look like they are going to kill Achak. But a knife flies out of the rocks and sticks about a half inch in a terrorists chest. He’s hurt and cries out a bit, but obviously is not seriously injured. Again the terrorists hesitate killing Achak.

The Super-Hero kid pops up, runs at them and throws a fake grenade and the terrorist run and dive for cover. It doesn’t go off of course. And the terrorists are about to get up.

Another 2nd grader throws the small smoke bomb, it goes off and the visibility is seriously reduced.

EXT. BASE OF THE MOUNTAIN - DAY

The park rangers are assisting the sheriff’s deputies looking for the kids. They are at the base of the mountain looking through the crashed bus. They expect to find a lot of dead kids but they find the bus empty. And they begin to look around.

They find the flattened vehicle of the terrorist at the base of the mountain.

They see the smoke coming from the top of the mountain. They get in their vehicles and race to the top.

EXT. TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN - DAY
Achak uses the smoke to make his escape; a student runs out into the parking lot (though the smoke) and he grabs Achak by the hand and leads him to the hidden group. The group, of course, is concealed in the rocks, bushes and grass. In the smoke and confusion about 20 rocks come flying out of nowhere, striking the terrorists.

Achak joins his hiding students and everyone is unharmed. “Cease fire. Silence.” The smoke eventually clears and there is a tense moment. Perhaps the children will be discovered.

The terrorist have automatic weapons and they suspect that the kids are hiding out to the East, in the direction of the school. So they spray that direction with bullets. They spray 3/4ths of the mountain top, but not the West side. They are about to spray the West but the terrorists exhaust their ammunition. Three side of the mountain is decimated.

The sheriff’s deputies arrive at the top of the mountain and surround the terrorists. The terrorists drop their empty weapons and surrender.

Suspense, long beat. Are all the kids dead on the side of the mountain? The stuffed animal, the plastic toy truck and the books have been shredded by bullets. Anyone hiding in those directions will probably be dead.

Achak tells the Sheriff to honk his car horn. The Sheriff blows the horn.

No one is dead or injured, they are hiding on the West side of the mountain - a completely different direction from where the terrorist fired their weapons - and the last place the terrorists would have looked.

The kids (safe and sound) pop up from their hiding places.

Achak looks the shot up trees and rocks to the North, East and South. He looks at the Super-Hero leader who hid the students in the right place.

Also, The Sheriff studies the situation and knows how lucky they’ve been. The puzzled Sheriff looks at Achak. Achak gestures to the Super-Hero kid, for him to get the credit.
The Sheriff reaches out to shake the hand of the Super-Hero kid.

The kid’s response is...

SUPER-HERO KID
I put them on the back of the mountain. The enemy came up here on the road... so I put them there, the last place for them to look.

SHERIFF
You left decoys for them. I’ll be damned. What grade are you in?

SUPER-HERO KID
2nd Platoon, sir.

Achak of course is very pleased and gives the Super-Hero kid the thumbs up.

The movie ends with...

ACHAK
(shouting)
Okay, who threw their dolly at the terrorist?

The Little Princes shyly hold her hand up.

ACHAK
Come here! Let me give you a hug. That is the most brave thing I’ve ever seen.

Lots of cheering and celebration.

Various parent’s arrive in cars.

The principal arrives which means good news from the school; it means the hostages have been freed. Achak hands the principal back his pistol.

The principal examines the empty clip and chuckles.


FADE OUT