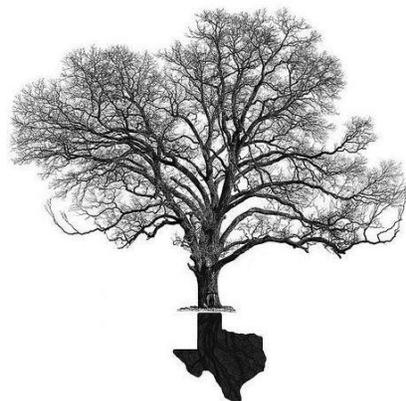


# 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade

ALAN NAFZGER



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THE 2<sup>ND</sup> GRADE

Written by  
Alan Nafzger

214-875-1305  
[alan.nafzger@gmail.com](mailto: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 NARCOMY (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 be 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 contemplates 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

But I can only find out by trying.

(long beat)

You can move in with me.

ACHAK

(chuckles)

And your parents?

WYOME

No. I bought this.

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 follow. Either it's the proposal/engagement or its 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> graders are attached to those animals. Mice, snakes and... what else?

SUPER-HERO KID

Frogs.

PRINCIPAL

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 4<sup>th</sup>  
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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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. 2<sup>ND</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 Batsignal 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 pocketed 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. 2<sup>ND</sup> 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

North Pole. South Pole and Ocean.  
Continents. North America, South America.

(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. 2<sup>ND</sup> 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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 seen 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 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.

ACHAK

That seems a bit drastic; all of them?

PRINCIPAL

Or we can have them classified as having various IDD's.

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... IDD's, 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. 2<sup>ND</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup>  
grade words a day to learn.

SUPER-HERO KID

We won't tell.

ACHAK

Gee, thanks.

INT. 2<sup>ND</sup> 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.

2<sup>ND</sup> GRADER

What platoon are you in?

3<sup>RD</sup> GRADER

What is that?

2<sup>ND</sup> GRADER

You know 'what grade are you in?'

3<sup>RD</sup> GRADER

Oh, I'm in the third platoon.

INT. 2<sup>ND</sup> 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. 2<sup>ND</sup> 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. 2<sup>ND</sup> 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. 2<sup>ND</sup> 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. 2<sup>ND</sup> 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 outloud...

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. 2<sup>ND</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. They are very  
hooah. Any care package would be  
appreciated.

INT. 2<sup>ND</sup> 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. 2<sup>ND</sup> 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. 2<sup>ND</sup> 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. 2<sup>ND</sup> 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. 2<sup>ND</sup> 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. 2<sup>ND</sup> 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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. 2<sup>ND</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup>  
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. 2<sup>ND</sup> 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. 2<sup>ND</sup> 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<sup>nd</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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. 2<sup>ND</sup> 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.

1<sup>ST</sup> GRADE TEACHER  
Aren't you concerned with all this  
saluting?

PRINCIPAL  
It's innocent fun.

1<sup>ST</sup> GRADE TEACHER

He has his kids saluting everybody.

Those aren't even his students.

1<sup>ST</sup> 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.

1<sup>ST</sup> 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.

1<sup>ST</sup> GRADE TEACHER

Just wait until their parents get a whiff of this sort of indoctrination. They'll be up here.

PRINCIPAL

And besides the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade is reading at an advanced level. Very advanced!

(half beat)

How are your kids reading?

INT. 2<sup>ND</sup> 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. 2<sup>ND</sup> 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. 3<sup>RD</sup> 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. 2<sup>ND</sup> 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. 2<sup>ND</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> graders are screaming. The 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.

1<sup>ST</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> grade teacher.

ACHAK

Here drive.

1<sup>ST</sup> GRADE TEACHER

I don't have a bus driver's license.

ACHAK

I don't either. Just do it for a second.

1<sup>ST</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> grade teacher reluctantly takes the wheel. Achak slides out of the seat and runs to the rear.

1<sup>ST</sup> 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 his 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 seizes 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.

1<sup>ST</sup> 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 rocks to the top.

(half beat)

Okay?

1<sup>ST</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> grade teacher are eating the MRIs. They have read the instructions and have heated the water on the stove.

1<sup>ST</sup> GRADE TEACHER

These are pretty good. Can I have another one?

(halve beat)

I mean do we have enough?

The 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 be 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 terrorist's 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 runs and dives for cover. It doesn't go off of course. And the terrorists are about to get up.

Another 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 (through 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 terrorists 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 sides 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

2<sup>nd</sup> 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.

Wyome arrives in her car. Hugs. Kisses.

FADE OUT

