

Warhead

written by

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INT. MONROE AREA HIGH SCHOOL, GEORGIA - DAY

A video recorded on a phone. At an end-of-year assembly, a SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT (17, school merch, ponytail) announces the names of senior athletes.

SENIOR

Heading east to the University of  
Georgia for Cheer is Rebecca Fritz!

The crowd APPLAUDS while REBECCA (18, University of Georgia shirt and jeans) walks onto the basketball court with her parents JEN FRITZ (48, dyed bob, modest blouse) and MARTY FRITZ (55, long gray hair, blue collar garb). Becca stands between her parents and smiles with the broad, rehearsed smile of a cheerleader.

SENIOR (CONT'D)

Becca has a 3.9 GPA and is receiving a full-ride academic scholarship. She's been doing cheer and gymnastics for ten years, and is excited to join the University cheer team. She is accompanied by her parents, Jennifer and Martin.

The crowd APPLAUDS again as Becca waves to the crowd.

SENIOR (CONT'D)

Becca's brother Alexander is currently serving as a Marine, but he's left a little message for her.

Becca and Jen's faces break into shock. Marty looks excited, but is trying to control an emotional response. Becca covers her mouth as tears begin welling in her eyes and she turns to a projected video on screen. ALEX FRITZ (24, broad-shouldered, at ease) speaks directly to the camera standing in front of a tan brick wall. The crowd CHEERS as he speaks.

ALEX

Rebecca, this is your brother Alex,. I just wanted to let you know how proud I am of your great news. You're going to make a terrific University of Georgia cheerleader, and I only wish I could see you today.

Becca and Jen dab their eyes. Marty looks wistfully at his son's face, but refuses to break into tears.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Lucky for you, I can.

The video ends. Becca's face breaks into shock again as the crowd SCREAMS in applause. Becca and her parents look around frantically. The door to the gym behind them opens and Alex enters in his blue dress uniform and white hat. He's accompanied by a TEACHER, who walks close behind him, one arm up as if to steady Alex's back. Alex walks tall but slow, limping slightly on his right leg. Jen sees him first and points.

JEN

Alex!

Becca turns and sees Alex. She runs to him and leaps into his arms. Alex almost falls over, but is braced by the teacher. Alex's parents surround him in hugs. The high school ROARS louder with applause.

INT. FRITZ RESIDENCE, GUEST ROOM - DAY

Alex sits in front of his laptop in Service "A" dress. On screen in a Zoom call is JEANNETTE ROSSI (20s, blue dress uniform). Next to Alex's desk rests a CANE. The room is his old bedroom from before he joined the Marines. Several old SKATEBOARDS hang on the walls and band POSTERS are plastered by the bed.

ALEX

I'm not really sure how this works.

JEANNETTE

It's nothing to be intimidated by. coming home is a transition. It's not bad, but it's hard.

ALEX

Okay.

JEANNETTE

Why don't you tell me a little about yourself to start. Give me an idea how you've done so far since coming home.

ALEX

Right, um. Alex Fritz. Marines 2/5. Rifleman 0311. Two tours. One in Iraq in 2016, one in Afghanistan 2020. Injured in the line of duty. Honorable discharge.

JEANNETTE

Glad to meet you, Alex. How's the first month home been?

ALEX

Fine. Good, really. I think I got in my head that it wouldn't be, but it's been good.

JEANNETTE

Has your injury set you back at all?

ALEX

Yeah. Uh...

JEANNETTE

You only have to share as much as you're comfortable, but this is meant to be a safe environment. If something's on your mind, now is a perfect opportunity to share it with someone.

ALEX

To share it with you.

JEANNETTE

That's what I'm here for.

A beat.

ALEX

It's not fun.

JEANNETTE

Okay.

ALEX

I don't know. I always imagined... I mean, I didn't ever really imagine coming home. Afghanistan felt like it took forever and it would always take forever. I don't know how to say it.

JEANNETTE

That's alright.

ALEX

On the plane coming home, I remember when America finally came in sight. I knew I had to be over Georgia and I started looking for signs of Good Hope. That's where my parents live. I don't know. It's stupid. It was kind of out of body, you know?

(MORE)

ALEX (CONT'D)

I could feel the last six months being ripped out of my body like they had never happened. Not ripped, but... I don't know. Like they passed right through me.

JEANNETTE

And what does your injury have to do with that?

ALEX

Right. Sorry.

JEANNETTE

It's okay. We can talk about anything. We don't have to talk about your injury.

ALEX

No, I just get side-tracked.

Alex eyes the cane and touches it lightly.

ALEX (CONT'D)

I didn't tell my family I was coming back. They knew I'd been injured, but I didn't tell them the plan. I kind of wanted one of those homecomings where you surprise the family. You know those videos? I wanted it like that. And I kind of got it, but... I think part of me didn't want them to be at the airport because... I don't know. We don't have to talk about it.

JEANNETTE

Okay. Has your family been supportive since you've gotten home?

ALEX

Yeah. I'm staying at my parents' place until I start school in August.

JEANNETTE

You're enrolled already?

ALEX

Yeah. Is that alright?

JEANNETTE

You don't have to clear anything with me, Alex. It's good that you're going to school. A lot of Marines have a hard time finding a purpose once they get home and they delay getting a job and going to school. It makes things harder that way, or it usually does. You're on the right path.

ALEX

Yeah. I'm taking classes with my sister Becca. I mean, one class. An intro to philosophy class.

JEANNETTE

That sounds interesting.

ALEX

Yeah, I'm excited for it. It's kind of hitting two birds with one stone, you know?

JEANNETTE

What two birds are those?

ALEX

I mean, I like philosophy. I think it can be really profound and I like to see how people think about the big things. But I'm most excited to spend time with my sister. I haven't spent any real time with her since... since I was her age. Six years ago. It'll be good to catch up with her, have an actual relationship after all this time.

JEANNETTE

That's good. Family can be a great support.

Alex nods and lays the cane across his lap.

ALEX

I've got a date.

JEANNETTE

That's good, too.

ALEX

(checking his phone)  
With the VA. Surgery is scheduled  
for September 25th. If all goes  
well I'll be rid of the cane by  
Halloween.

JEANNETTE

So you can go trick-or-treating?

ALEX

(laughing)  
Yeah. Sure.

JEANNETTE

That's good.

A beat. Alex fiddles with the cane, picking at a loose rubber  
bit on the handle.

ALEX

I'm sorry. I can let you go.

JEANNETTE

Is there anything else you wanted  
to talk about?

ALEX

No. No, I'm good. We're doing a  
barbecue, so I should probably get  
back out there.

JEANNETTE

Getting a head start on  
Independence Day?

ALEX

Yeah. We'll be doing this all  
weekend. I'll let you get to your  
Fourth, too.

JEANNETTE

Alright. Would you like to meet  
again?

ALEX

Um...

JEANNETTE

I think it would be helpful.

ALEX

I'm feeling okay right now. I don't  
know.

(MORE)

ALEX (CONT'D)

I don't know why I even set this one up. Ted's dad- Ted's my best friend. He joined the same time as me. Or I joined same time as him. Ted's dad said I should do one of these things, but... I don't know. I don't think I have anything wrong with me.

JEANNETTE

You know these meetings aren't just for people who have things wrong with them. Everyone needs to talk through things sometimes.

ALEX

I know, but I didn't even lose anybody. Nobody in my platoon or squad died. I'm the only one who even got injured, and I'm doing good considering how things could have gone. I know a lot of times you lose limbs or... I came out okay. And I'm not going to be like this forever. Physically, mentally- I'm fine.

JEANNETTE

Okay. Coming home is a big change, though.

ALEX

Yeah. Yeah, I know.

JEANNETTE

If you're heading to school you'll probably run into a lot of changes you weren't anticipating. You can use these as check-in appointments.

ALEX

Um... Sure, yeah. That would be fine. I'll set something up once I get to school.

JEANNETTE

Alright. It was good to talk to you, Alex. If you need me at all, just call in and set something up. If it's an emergency, let them know and I'll see you as soon as I can.

ALEX

Alright. Thank you.



JEANNETTE  
Anytime. Hoo-rah.

ALEX  
(chuckling)  
Hoo-rah.

Alex closes out of the Zoom call and sits quietly for a moment. He leans back and INHALES slowly. He stares out into the summer sky and grips the cane white-knuckled.