

INT. LIVING ROOM – NIGHT

A LITTLE GIRL named Mariam, aged eight or nine lies on the floor near a couch, her head peering under the sofa, her eyes darting around in search of her missing cat.

MARIAM

Fi Fi, where are you?

The sound of her family's laughter echoes from a nearby room. Her MOTHER starts calling out for her daughter.

MOTHER (O.S.)

Ya Mariam, where did you go?

Mariam is undeterred by her mother and continues searching for the cat as she looks around the room.

MOTHER

YA MARIAM!

However, the sudden distant sound of bombs startles her as flashes of red light appear through the window.

FATHER (O.S.)

Everyone get up NOW; we need to go!

MOTHER (O.S.)

Ya, Mama! Where are you? Come quickly.

MARIAM

Coming!

Mariam begins searching more frantically for the cat, not wanting to leave without it.

MARIAM

Fi Fi, please, MAMA and BABA say we need to go!

Mariam suddenly hears the quiet meow of her cat from behind a cupboard; her face lights up.

But. Unfortunately, before she can turn to retrieve her cat, a bomb strikes their home, and the screen goes black.

CUT TO:

INT. DESTROYED BUILDING – NIGHT

The little girl opens her eyes to find that she is stuck under rubble; her heart pounds as her breathing becomes frantic and shallow;

a MAN whose voice she doesn't recognise stands on top of the ruins that are trapping her and peers through, he spots her and begins digging with his bare hands, attempting to pull her out. He calls upon other people.

MAN

Help, there is someone else here; I need help!

Mariam feels her eyelids drooping, and she gives in to sleep.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL – NIGHT

Mariam wakes up on a hospital bed in a chaotic environment. Two DOCTORS are leaning over her; one is cleaning her wounds. The other is shining a light in her eyes. In the background, doctors roll a lifeless body on a stretcher.

The doctor tries to distract her by asking her questions.

DOCTOR

Ok, honey, can you tell me what your name is?

Mariam looks at the blood-covered gauze that the doctor is using to wipe a wound on her head. She lifts her head to look at the rest of her body. She sees her dirty and ripped pyjamas that are alarmingly stained with blood; she looks at her arm and notices that an IV is sticking out of it.

DOCTOR

Do you know what happened to your parents?

The little girl's eyes droop and close again.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM – EARLY MORNING

By the time Mariam opens her eyes again, she is lying in a hospital bed enclosed by curtains. A JOURNALIST in a press vest holding a microphone stands beside her bed, speaking to a camera in a foreign language she cannot understand.

JOURNALIST

Well, as you know, In light of the recent bombing campaign, the area has witnessed significant devastation, which appears to have taken a toll on the local population. Although, The precise number of casualties remains undisclosed at this time. Beside me, as you can see, this young girl appears to be the sole survivor of her family.

The CAMERAMAN pans the camera and points the lens at the little girl. She quickly moves to cover herself entirely with the thin blanket draped over her; she feels uneasy with them being around her.

JOURNALIST

(fading out)

She is one of many children who have been affected by...

CUT TO:

INT. UNICEF TENT – DAY

Mariam sits in her tent, wearing a drab expression. Her cat blanket, once vibrant, now lies next to her, dirty and discoloured. She clutches it in her hand and draws it closer to her chest. A glimmer appears in her eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNICEF TENT – DAY

Mariam's silhouette emerges through the tent fabric. She rises, pulls up the blanket hoodie, and exits the tent.

CUT TO:

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP – DAY

Mariam stands discreetly behind a UN tent, her head peering cautiously from behind its fabric. The vibrant blue tent contrasts sharply with the sombre surroundings. Her right arm is bandaged, and several stitches are visible on her forehead. She surveys her surroundings carefully, ensuring no one is watching her, and sneaks off.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESTROYED AREA – CONTINUOUS

Mariam manoeuvres with agility through the wreckage, leaping over rocks and debris scattered on the desolate streets. She diverts from the main road, slipping through a hole in a wire fence, skillfully approaching a partially standing building – her home.

Standing before the rubble, Mariam gazes at the remnants of her house. A deep frown appears on the little girl's face, and a shiver runs through her body. She anticipates the familiar sound of her family emerging, her mother calling her inside to avoid catching a cold. However, only silence surrounds her. A glimmer catches her eye – a family picture taken recently, partially sticking out from under

the rocks. As she looks down, her eyes well up with tears as she traces the faces of her family members.

Yet, the desperate cry of a CAT interrupts her sorrow. Her head swivels towards the source of the noise, and she begins to climb the rubble toward the desperate meowing.

EXT. DESTROYED AREA – CONTINUOUS

Mariam's breaths become shallow and laboured as she ascends. A slip causes a momentary stumble, but she catches herself, regaining composure. Stepping through a caved-in wall and reaching a cracked sink stained with blood, she finally spots the trapped cat under rocks and rubble next to it.

Her small hands start digging, working diligently to free the cat. It springs into her arms, and she wraps herself around it, attempting to clean off the dirt, dust, and rocks covering its fur. The cat lifts its head from the crook of the girl's neck and begins licking her face. A smile lights up the child's face, and she starts to laugh, her joyful laughter echoing through the still-standing walls.

FADE TO BLACK.: