

HEALING RAJIV

FADE IN:

Scene 1

INT, CATHEDRAL IN GRENADA-EARLY AFTERNOON

Funeral service of Darlington Roosevelt Smith. RAJIV, HOLLIS, and ASSAD, among congregation. STEPHEN chairing proceedings.

STEPHEN

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is said that you get the measure of a man by taking a good look at the people who show up to mourn his passing. And today, as I scan the pews of the church, I see an entire country in mourning. Here lies a man who has touched the lives of many, as an educator and a role model, and for me personally, as the father I never had.

Darlington Roosevelt Smith made men out of boys. And there are four men here today who have come to bow in humility to this giant of a man, men who were mentored by his teaching and by his example, four apostles of Darlington, if you will, sent out in the world to fight the good fight.

Hollis Kramer fights crime

(Hollis stands, acknowledges)

Professor Omar Assad stands on the battlefield of historical research as a soldier for truth

(Assad stands, acknowledges)

Dr. Rajiv Mohandas fights to rid the world of poverty through science and technology

(Rajiv stands, acknowledges)

And I am Stephen, the least of the apostles, I fight diseases

Ladies and gentlemen, it is an honour for me to invite to the podium the individual who embodies the best that D.R Smith represented; ambition, hard work, achievement, recognized globally for his outstanding philanthropy, Dr. Rajiv Mohandas, CEO of Mohandas Technologies

(Rajiv goes to the podium)

RAJIV

There are vivid images of D R Smith that linger. For many he was a stern old gentleman who stepped straight out of the pages of the Old Testament with his rod of correction in hand, waiting at the school gate. But this unforgiving man with the whip in hand became a kind, gentle soul whenever he stepped into the classroom to teach literature.

He taught us Literature and he us taught life.

He was a maestro of language, enchanting us with his story telling, whether unravelling the mystery in the Shakespearean tragedy or breaking down the formidable wall of words in the narratives of Geoffrey Chaucer. Through studying the lives of the heroes and villains, victors and victims in the pages before us, Mr. Smith took us onto excursions within ourselves. He helped us to better understand who we were, and to appreciate that people in all times and places have faced the same fundamental challenges and dilemmas, indeed the same vulnerabilities. We all need to live in an environment of peace, love and security.

He taught us self-belief and how to treasure and respect the gift of life. He elevated himself above the affliction a physical handicap and in this way showed us how to confront adversity with a positive spirit.

He instilled ambition into us and made us see the good fortune we were enjoying in being educated and socialized in a Caribbean civilization.

Many will call him great and deservedly so. But labels sometimes mask the true nature of things. He was flesh and blood, he had fears and aspirations, hopes and dreams, as any imperfect being would. If D.R Smith could talk today he would say to you that he was no saint. He was a mortal man with thorns in his flesh like any mortal man. Let us all remember that as we commend his soul to the great beyond

May he rest in peace.

(STEPHEN, HOLLIS, and ASSAD join RAJIV at podium for a group embrace)

(Cut to recession, the four friends among the six pall bearers, RAJIV wiping his eyes with white handkerchief)

Scene 2

EXT, THE SLOPES OF MOUNT FEDON

The four men in hiking gear, climbing the mountain, ASSAD leading, RAJIV occasionally slipping and being helped by the others

Scene 3

EXT, TOP OF MOUNT FEDON

ASSAD peeling orange with Bowie knife, gives one half to STEPHEN. HOLLIS standing, surveying the valley. RAJIV leaning against a boulder, winded.

RAJIV

OK guys, this was absolute torture, you must now regret refusing my offer of roti and beer on the beach

STEPHEN

We can always do that when we get down

(Breathing heavily)

Must admit that it was easier when we used to follow Old D.R up these hills

HOLLIS

We were younger then

RAJIV

And more foolish

(Laughter)

ASSAD

Its hard to believe that the old D.R used to practically sprint up these slopes

STEPHEN

Not bad for a man who only had one good leg

RAJIV

Makes one wonder what he would do if he had two

HOLLIS

I almost forgot how wonderful this view is

STEPHEN

In 1795 a French mulatto planter pitched camp here and ruled most of the island for two years

HOLLIS

He must have felt like a God on Mount Olympus

ASSAD

Seems like a good place from which to exercise power

STEPHEN

That is if one enjoys looking down on his subjects. Great speech you delivered yesterday, Raj

RAJIV

It was an easy story to tell

STEPHEN

It was an important story to tell

HOLLIS

We owe him a lot

STEPHEN

It felt as if the entire nation turned up to say farewell

RAJIV

He deserved no less, still it would have been better to thank him while he was still alive

Breeze rushing through the hillside causing the trees to bend in unison as if swept by a giant comb

(CONT'D)

Did you see that? Its like looking down on Paradise, not much has changed in Paradise

(extended silence)

So gentlemen, why did we climb this hill?

STEPHEN

They say height improves perspective, we may see things

RAJIV

And what might these things be?

STEPHEN

We were Smithy's boys, charged with the mission to walk the path of justice and straddle the world. Its twenty years, I guess we have been to places. Tell us a story, maybe a happy story

HOLLIS

I will tell you a story. There was once a man who walked the path of justice

RAJIV

But did he straddle the world?

HOLLIS

No, but he walked the path of justice

(He holds up his police badge)

FLASHBACK

Scene 4

INT, AUDITORIUM, MISSOURI-20 YEARS AGO

HOLLIS in police uniform, is holding up and admiring his newly received badge at Police Academy passing out parade.

HOLLIS (V.O)

My father devoted his life to security, he secured souls. I understood early enough that I couldn't fill his giant spiritual shoes, so I secured bodies and property instead. I foiled robberies and safeguarded the peace. I even helped old ladies cross the street.

MONTAGE

EXT, STREET INTER SECTION IN FERGUSON-MIDDAY

A) HOLLIS leading elderly woman across a Pedestrian crossing

HOLLIS (V.O CONT'D)

Then came Susan

B) EXT, BEACH FRONT IN TROPICAL ISLAND-EVENING

HOLLIS and his new wife, Susan, are at their beach front wedding ceremony. They are walking, holding hands, along a path strewn with flowers, then through an arch of bouganvillea, then towards the sunset, finally standing silhouettes facing the sunset.

C) INT, APARTMENT OF HOLLIS AND SUSAN-LATE NIGHT

HOLLIS is entering with blood on his uniform. Susan is waiting, petrified.

D) EXT, WIDE CITY STREET, FERGUSON-NIGHT

HOLLIS and his officer colleague are in a squad car travelling at speed, sirens blaring in pursuit of a suspect.

E) EXT, CITY SIDE WALK, FERGUSON-NIGHT

HOLLIS and other law enforcement officers in riot gear are standing over the prone body of a black youth, a crowd of angry demonstrators in the background

END OF MONTAGE

BACK TO PRESENT

HOLLIS

(continuing narration).

There were other shootings and other arguments. She said she couldn't bear the smell of blood on my uniform. In the end she walked away. Sorry I couldn't tell you a happy tale. But it was a true tale

ASSAD

The truth is often sad. I will tell you a story. Once upon a time I sat in a garden.

FLASH BACK

Scene 5

EXT, OUTSKIRTS OF CAIRO, 20 YEARS AGO-MID-MORNING

ASSAD and very pregnant wife, Najme, sitting on the porch of a villa in the middle of a garden of beautiful flowers. He is lovingly stroking her hair, massaging her feet, then with closed eyes he is gently pressing his ear against her round tummy

ASSAD

We will call him Abdel after a great man who once ruled Egypt, and we will fly him across the ocean

NAJME

Why?

ASSAD

To bring joy to an old man who sells cloth in a little shop

NAJME

(amused)

And if the baby boy is a girl, will you still fly her across the ocean?

ASSAD

Boy or girl, we will be blessed and thankful, but.....he is a boy

She points to something down in the garden. Its a flower and he walks down to fetch it for her. He is smelling the flower when a loud explosion shatters the air. Assad is sent flying. When he is on his feet again he looks back to see that both Najme and the villa have been obliterated. He raises his hands to the heavens and bawls in anguish.

EXT, DESERT, 10 YEARS LATER-BLAZING MIDDAY SUN

A bearded Assad is in military desert fatigues, standing besides a black-clad hooded figure with a bowie knife in hand. A blind folded individual is kneeling next to the hooded figure

BACK TO PRESENT

ASSAD

You see, my friends a war has been started and there are no frontiers

STEPHEN

I fought in a war in which there are no frontiers. In fact, I enlisted in an outfit called medicin sans frontiers. I straddled the world in my own special way and made every village my family. Not altogether strange for an orphan boy. I was playing my part in saving the world. Then came the plague.

FLASH BACK

Scene 6

INT, MAKE SHIFT MEDICAL FACILITY IN SIERRA LEONE-EVENING

Stephen, in Ebola suit, is examining and vaccinating children. He then sheds the suit observing the safety protocol. He picks up the phone, pleading.

STEPHEN

People are being wiped out like flies here! We need help! medication, protective clothing, resources, somebody wake up the world!

(He throws his hands up in the air and storms off to stop in front of a window and looks out intently towards yard)

EXT, YARD OF MEDICAL FACILITY IN SIERRA LEONE-EVENING

Sealed body bags are being loaded onto a truck in the yard by men in anti-Ebola suits.

INT, CONFERENCE ROOM, WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
HEADQUARTERS, GENEVA-DAY

STEPHEN (to crowded room)

In this war there are no frontiers because we cannot build walls and fences. It will not be enough to sacrifice a lamb and smear the blood over our doors. That will not save us from the plague. We have to act now and act together. In this we are all our brothers keepers

BACK TO PRESENT

They focus on Rajiv who walks away, turns and faces them uncomfortably

RAJIV

These are sad stories my friends, and I feel your pain

STEPHEN

So do you have a happy story to tell us?

RAJIV

Indeed I have, but this not the time for me to speak

ASSAD

Then we should go back down the mountain

RAJIV

Tomorrow at noon, before I fly back to India, I am putting flowers on Smithy's grave

HOLLIS

Get him orchids and anthuriums, they seemed to grow out of the corners of his office

(They laugh)

RAJIV

So does anyone wish to join me?

ASSAD

I hate flowers....but I will be there

STEPHEN

We will all be there, you owe us a story, Raj

RAJIV

In good time, friends

ASSAD (Picking up back pack)

Come on, I'll lead the way, the journey back is not always the easy part

(They move off sluggishly)

Scene scene 7

EXT, GRAVESIDE - NOON

STEPHEN, HOLLIS and ASSAD waiting. STEPHEN and HOLLIS holding wreaths, ASSAD empty handed. STEPHEN fidgets with his watch.

STEPHEN

This is not like Raj, he is a man of his word

ASSAD

Maybe he has changed

HOLLIS

I don't think so

(They lay the wreaths. STEPHEN produces a bottle and pours liquid on the grave)

ASSAD

Is this some pagan ritual?

STEPHEN

Something the local Shango Baptists do, its an African tradition

ASSAD

How does it help the dead then?

STEPHEN

Not sure, but maybe it helps the living

HOLLIS

I don't think he is coming

(throws a handful of dust on grave)

ASSAD

Then lets go find him

(They leave slowly, STEPHEN trailing)

Scene 8

INT, CORRIDOR OUTSIDE RAJIV'S HOTEL ROOM DOOR-AFTERNOON

STEPHEN, HOLLIS AND ASSAD in doorway. They knock, then pound, then shout

STEPHEN

Raj! Raj! Raj! Open up

HOLLIS

For all we know he may not even be in there

STEPHEN

The receptionist said he has not left the room since he came in last evening, she said he ordered a large bottle of pain killers

HOLLIS

Why would he need pain killers, he seemed pretty OK when he left us

STEPHEN

Let's ask her to open the door

ASSAD

We may not have time for that, Stand Back!

(ASSAD smashes the door with his boot. They find Rajiv lying unconscious on the floor clutching a bottle of pills. ASSAD places a hand in front of RAJIV'S nostrils)

ASSAD (CONT'D)

He is still breathing, let's get him out of here

(He hoists RAJIV on his shoulder and makes for the door. The others follow)

Scene 9

INT, ENTRANCE TO ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY ROOM OF HOSPITAL-EARLY MORNING

The three doing an anxious vigil outside the Accident and Emergency section. ASSAD pacing, HOLLIS sipping coffee, STEPHEN praying. Doctor appears and beckons them to follow him.

Scene 10

INT, HOSPITAL ROOM, BEDSIDE - EARLY MORNING

RAJIV is sitting up, his back slightly inclined. HOLLIS and ASSAD standing at foot of

bed, STEPHEN at RAJIV'S right shoulder.

STEPHEN

You gave us a scare, Raj

RAJIV

Sorry for the inconvenience

HOLLIS

Why RAJ, what happened?

RAJIV

I may not have a happy story to tell you guys afterall

HOLLIS

But you are having a good life

RAJIV

I was having a good life

STEPHEN

You did well, you embraced your opportunities

RAJIV

I embraced my opportunities like Old Smithy said we should...I rose to the top of a major Indian high tech corporation, I guess in some ways I was straddling the world

(laughs mirthlessly)

Yes, Old Smithy would have been proud

FLASHBACK

RAJIV (V.O)

What did he ask of us, his good apostles? Work hard, achieve, share the wealth!

EXT, STREET IN NEW DELHI 10 YEARS AGO -BRIGHT SUNNY DAY

Image of RAJIV dressed in expensive business suit giving alms to the poor and indigent

RAJIV (V.O cont'd)

'Let your lives be testimonies of love, build families, dare to be happy!' He said

INT, RAJIV'S MANSION IN NEW DELHI

He is dancing with his two daughters, Sonya and Riva. Then he is sitting, garlanded, at the head table of a family banquet, the occasion filled with laughter.

INT, RAJIV'S MANSION IN DELHI (ANOTHER SECTION)

He is with the two girls as they proudly display their acceptance letters to the Indian Austro Physics academy

BACK TO PRESENT

RAJIV

Fate has a cruel way of snatching from you the thing you treasure most. Sonya and Riva were the twin wonders of my world. They were going to break the glass ceiling in the Indian space programme. They promised so much. But dark and primitive forces conspired to rob them of their dream, forces who still see the pursuit of education and careers by girls as a desecration of their traditions and culture. They were raped and murdered.

(breaks into tears)

So now you know why I have lost my will to live....and I will soon find a way to end my miserable existence

STEPHEN

We can't let you do that, Rajiv

RAJIV

This is not a committee decision, its my life

HOLLIS

You still have a wife, not all of us can say that

RAJIV

She will be fine, I will leave her a large inheritance

ASSAD

Do you love her?

RAJIV

Yes, but I am not in love with her

STEPHEN

Is there a difference?

RAJIV

I love the sun, but I do not wake up in the morning with the desperate feeling that I would die if the sun does not rise

HOLLIS

We need you, Rajiv

STEPHEN

You are the one who straddled the world

(to Assad)

Talk to him, Assad

ASSAD

It is a personal matter

(He leaves)

RAJIV

Don't worry guys, I'll be alright

(They are walking out)

STEPHEN

Don't do anything foolish, Raj

RAJIV

Sometimes it's better to just let the universe unfold, go get some rest guys

Scene 11

INT, AREA OUTSIDE RAJIV'S HOSPITAL ROOM

STEPHEN and HOLLIS in conversation, STEPHEN with hand on head as if in great pain. Orderly pushes a wagon with a body wrapped in a sheet past them. They watch the wagon disappearing down the corridor.

STEPHEN

We have to watch him

HOLLIS

I am not sure how that's possible

STEPHEN

I don't have anything better to do right now, do you?

Scene 12

INT, HOTEL ROOM - DAY

STEPHEN and HOLLIS are struggling to wrest a knife from RAJIV. They eventually overpower him

STEPHEN

I think I'll hold on to this

RAJIV

In which case you may wish to hold on to every knife in this hotel

STEPHEN

If I have to I will

Scene 13

EXT, ROOF OF THE HOTEL - NIGHT

STEPHEN AND HOLLIS are attempting to dissuade RAJIV from jumping. He is standing on the ledge.

STEPHEN

You are choosing a coward and selfish way out, Raj

HOLLIS

We can see this through together

RAJIV

You should respect my choice like Assad does, its a personal matter

STEPHEN

There are consequences, even in personal matters

RAJIV

What consequences? My children are dead

HOLLIS

But they would have lived if they had a choice

STEPHEN

They would have lived, Rajiv!

(Extended pause)

Maybe you have forgotten why we came home. We came to bury the man who taught us to believe in ourselves. Where is that special Caribbean resilience of spirit that he made us believe we possessed? Yes, we dared to believe and we have suffered, but we still have life, our most sacred and precious possession, how could we forget that, how could you

forget that?

ASSAD enters with gun in hand. He walks towards RAJIV and hands him the gun

ASSAD

Too much talk, you want to end your life, use this!

HOLLIS (to ASSAD)

What are you doing, man?

STEPHEN

Leave him

HOLLIS (surprised)

What do you mean, leave him?

STEPHEN

Assad is right. We are wasting our time. He is not worth it. Come on guys, let's go

He walks away. The others follow, HOLLIS last to leave

RAJIV stands on the ledge, his body rocking in the wind. He climbs down, contemplates, then puts the gun to his head, closes his eyes for an extended period but does not pull the trigger.

MONTAGE

EXT, OPEN GREEN PASTURE IN INDIA - SUNSET

The voices of Sonja and Riva come up in playful laughter, as he is gleefully running through the field and romping with them.

END OF MONTAGE

He grimaces as he struggles to pull the trigger

STEPHEN (V.O)

They would have lived, if they had a choice they would have lived

D.R SMITH (V.O)

Is that the way you deal with adversity? Is this the way I taught you to live?

RAJIV

You taught me to live, but you did not teach me how to die!

D.R SMITH (V.O)

We live with thorns in our flesh. We heal, even while we are wounded. Suicide is the remedy of cowards

(Extended period of contemplation, his body convulses, he brings the hand with the gun down to hang limply at his side, slumps into a sitting position and breaks down into tears, head bowed. He raises his head to see three pairs of legs immediately in front of him. His colleagues are back. STEPHEN gently eases the weapon from his hand and stands him up. All four embrace)

STEPHEN

How about your offer of roti and beer on the beach, RAJIV, is it still good?

RAJIV (disoriented)

I guess so

STEPHEN

Let's go guys

(They walk off)

End

