

"SHELL SHOCK"

Written by

Or Amit

Based on the play by

Eugene O'Neill

SHELL SHOCK

FADE IN:

EXT. CAFÉ, AL FRESCO - DAY

A pack of cigarettes is lying on a table. A man's hand picks it up. We hear him light up and take a puff. Zoom out, and we see ROBERT WAYNE, 30, a Major in the United States Army, in uniform. He sits at a table al fresco outside a quiet urban café. He picks up a paper, folds it, and begins to read, puffing leisurely and enjoying this quiet spring afternoon. The entrance to the café is adjacent to his table, and out of it comes WAITRESS, 20s, holding a cup of espresso. She has a kind face and a warm smile. She comes over to his table.

WAITRESS

Here's your usual, double
espresso.

She lays the cup on the table.

Would that be all for you,
Major?

WAYNE

Yes, thank you, Kathy.

Waitress walks over to another table and begins to wipe it. Wayne clicks the teaspoon on the cup, takes a sip and continues reading his paper. HERBERT ROYLSTON, 27, comes from the street. He has an athletic build and a slight limp. He wears Army uniforms with the insignia of a First Lieutenant. Waitress approaches him.

WAITRESS

Hi, have a seat, I'll be right
with you.

ROYLSTON

I'll just have a large iced
coffee.

Royston's voice catches the attention of Wayne, who lowers his paper and stares at Royslton's back suspiciously.

WAITRESS

Coming right up. I'll bring it
to your table.

ROYLSTON

Thanks.

WAYNE

Hey there, Lieutenant!

ROYLSTON

(blasé, without
turning)

You talking to me?

He turns around and notices Wayne's rank. Embarrassed, he
stiffens a bit.

Eh, Major, sir!

Wayne stamps his cigarette into an ashtray and walks up to
Royston.

WAYNE

Yeah, you. Don't I know you?

ROYLSTON

Eh...

Wayne stares intriguingly at Royston, who is uneasy.
Suddenly Wayne's face lights up.

WAYNE

Wait a minute, aren't you Herb
Royston?

ROYLSTON

Yeah...

WAYNE

Wayne. Robert Wayne. I was
roommates with Jack Arnold at
the ROTC.

After a moment's pause, Royston's face lights up with
delight.

ROYLSTON

Bobby!

WAYNE

That's me.

ROYLSTON

Holy shit, how ya doin', buddy?

Both beaming, they shake hands heartily and pat each other on the arm.

WAYNE

It's great to see you again,
Herb.

ROYLSTON

It's been such a long time.

Royston's hand travels from Wayne's arm to his shoulder, where he fiddles with the insignia.

Look at that oak leaf! You've
made Major already?

WAYNE

They bribe us doctors with quick
promotions, seeing as we can
make five times as much in
civilian practice.

They laugh.

WAYNE

Come, let's sit and catch up.

They settle down at Wayne's table.

ROYLSTON

So what brings you here?

WAYNE

It's my usual afternoon hangout.
I'm a neurologist at the VA
hospital. It's right there
across the street.

ROYLSTON

Ha, tell me about it! I just started doing physiotherapy there.

WAYNE

Physiotherapy? What happened?

ROYLSTON

Shrapnel. Got it in both legs. And in the chest. Hey, check this out.

Roylston bends over and pulls up his trouser cuffs. Wayne looks at Roylston's shins, which aren't visible to us, and gives a look of mild disgust.

WAYNE

Ugh, that's nasty stuff! Where did you earn that?

ROYLSTON

Fallujah.

WAYNE

Damn!

ROYLSTON

Yeah, fuckin' ali babas nearly got me.

The smile suddenly disappears from his face and he assumes a melancholy tone.

If it hadn't been for Jack, I'd be a goner!

WAYNE

(surprised)

Jack? Jack Arnold?

ROYLSTON

Yep. He ran out there, right into enemy fire, and he got me. Saved my miserable life.

A short pause as Wayne figures out what's going on.

WAYNE

Why I'll be damned! Then you
were the one he brought in! That
whole story he got the
Distinguished Service Medal for!

ROYLSTON

I'm the one he got the medal
for, but I'm not the only one he
brought in, let me tell you.
Jack's got a whole bunch of
these stunts to his credit.

WAYNE

(puzzled)

But I heard, they didn't give
the name, but I understood it
was the body of a dead officer
he risked his life to get.

ROYLSTON

I guess they did think I was
done for at the time, but I
managed to pull through. We
grunts don't go out that easy.

Waitress approaches with a large glass of iced coffee.

WAITRESS

Here's your iced coffee,
Lieutenant.

She lays glass on table and walks back inside. Roylston
stares at her behind as she walks away, then takes a sip.

ROYLSTON

This is good stuff.

WAYNE

Hey, tell me more about it, will you, Herb? The reports have been so meager, everything is clouded in secrecy. You know Jack and me as college buddies, but we've been friends since middle school.

ROYLSTON

I know, he told me.

WAYNE

But he doesn't keep in touch anymore. I email him but he doesn't respond. We haven't spoken in over a year, so it'd be great if you could tell me what happened.

Roylston sips and wipes his lips.

ROYLSTON

There isn't much to tell. We were on patrol and we got ambushed. First an IED threw the Humvee into a ditch, and then we took constant sniper fire from an abandoned building, and we were trapped.

WAYNE

Jesus Christ!

ROYLSTON

Well, that was where I got the shrapnel, in both legs. I went down and couldn't get myself up. The snipers were raining fire on us and the boys had to take cover. They thought I was dead, anyway. I remember hearing screams and fire, then the lights went out completely as far as I was concerned.

WAYNE

And they couldn't get you safe?
Couldn't get any backup?

ROYLSTON

It was freakin' chaos. All the other companies were already engaged, and half our guys were wounded by that IED blast.

He takes another sip, as if to calm himself.

Anyway, I was in kind of no man's land: the snipers couldn't get me 'cause I was shielded by what remained of the Humvee, and our guys couldn't get me because of the snipers. I was sort of out of my head with pain, or in a numb trance most of the time. I'd see dark and light, but I didn't think of anything at all, not even of death.

(beat)

Finally I came to in the dark. I heard someone screaming, screaming like a butchered calf!

Pause. His face shows disgust at that memory.

Then I realized it was me. I felt so ashamed. Anyway, I managed to get to my feet and tried to get myself back to our boys. Then I heard the rattle of a machine gun, and I felt like someone punched me in the chest, and the ground came up and hit me in the face. I looked up at the sky and it was beautiful, a shower of mortar shells and bullets that made it light as day. Then I saw a man come running through that hell straight for me.

(MORE)

ROYLSTON (cont'd)

The air was sizzling with bullets but he kept right on, and then when he came close I saw it was Jack. He hauled me up on his shoulder, but the pain of it knocked me out. When I came to I was in a field hospital. So that's all I know about it.

WAYNE

(astonished)

Jesus, man! How long were you lying there?

ROYLSTON

They tell me six hours, but I lost track of time.

Seeing the pain on Roylston's face, Wayne attempts cheerfulness that is clearly forced.

WAYNE

Well, now you got a story to tell the grandkids one day, ha?

Wayne slaps Roylston on the shoulder.

ROYLSTON

No worse than the rest of the guys. But it's lucky for me Jack saw me stand up that time.

(beat)

Well, I hope he saw and not heard me crying like a girl.

WAYNE

No shame in crying when you got shards of burning metal embedded in your bones.

Awkward silence. They both sip.

You know, it's funny you found me here today. Fate, almost.

ROYLSTON

We would have run into each other at the VA sooner or later.

WAYNE

No, not that. There's something else.

Pause. Wayne seems reluctant to continue.

ROYLSTON

Well, what is it?

WAYNE

(sighs)

You know, we've been getting a lot of cases of PTSD here lately.

ROYLSTON

PTSD?

WAYNE

Yeah, you know, Post-Traumatic Stress --

ROYLSTON

I know what it means.

(beat)

I'm not shell-shocked, Bobby.

WAYNE

I know. I'm not talking about you.

Pause. Wayne is reluctant to continue again.

ROYLSTON

Who then, you? What, you got kicked during one of them knee-jerk tests?

Wayne laughs nervously, then stiffens. He looks around him to ensure no one is listening. He leans over towards Roylston and speaks in a low voice.

WAYNE

No, it's not me. You see, I probably shouldn't be telling you this, but Thompson, one of my colleagues, he told me that there's a patient that was referred to us and he, the patient, insists of seeing me. The thing is, he was referred to the psychiatric department and I'm in neurology, but they said he won't talk to a shrink, so neurology's the next best thing.

(beat)

You see, it's Jack.

ROYLSTON

(shocked)

You telling me that Jack's got PTSD?

With a hand gesture and a loud "shush", Wayne signals to Roylston to keep his voice down.

WAYNE

Seems like it.

ROYLSTON

How can that be? Jack's got balls of steel!

WAYNE

I know, but don't forget he's been in two years now. That's a long stretch.

ROYLSTON

But the last I remember of him he was fine.

WAYNE

PTSD hits you out of the blue, usually. Besides, it's by no means certain in Jack's case. I've looked in his file.

(MORE)

WAYNE (cont'd)

It says he was sent to the base hospital with a leg wound, nothing serious in itself. From there he'd been sent home and referred to the VA with what the base hospital described as a nervous breakdown. Thompson saw him first, but, knowing I was a friend of Jack's, he asked me to take a look at him. He said there was something weird about the case that he couldn't get hold of and didn't have time for. So he left it up to me.

ROYLSTON

Didn't he give you some hint about what's wrong with Jack?

WAYNE

Only a short note evidently scribbled in a hurry. It said, "Trauma appears to be associated with cigarettes".

ROYLSTON

(perplexed)

Cigarettes?

WAYNE

Weird, ha, since Jack doesn't smoke.

ROYLSTON

Oh, he did over there, a great deal. The way I remember him he had one stuck in his mouth all the time.

WAYNE

What? Back in college he wouldn't touch one on a bet.

(beat)

There's something weird about it, evidently, from that note.

ROYLSTON

Oh, that Thompson is probably one of them anti-smoking activists.

WAYNE

Quite the opposite. He's a heavy smoker himself. There must be something in it. Thompson's a keen diagnostician.

WAYNE

No matter how sharp he is, I'll bet he's all wrong about Jack. Hell, Jack's as tough as a nail. I've seen him in action. Guys like that don't get PTSD.

(beat)

But when do you expect him to get here?

WAYNE

Today, actually.

ROYLSTON

Seriously, today?

WAYNE

That's why I said, it was fate you walked in here just now.

ROYLSTON

Man, I hope I'd get to see him, to thank him again for me still being here. He's a hell of a guy. I was just a freshman when you guys were seniors, and he was kinda my idol. No offense.

WAYNE

(amused)

Nah...

ROYLSTON

And then, to find myself under his command years later, that was an honor.

WAYNE

I bet it was.

ROYLSTON

And then to cap it off he saved my life when not one man in a million would have tried it, and no blame to them, either! It was rank suicide. The chances were a thousand to one against his coming out of it alive.

(beat)

When I get started on that subject I never stop, but I gotta go to physiotherapy now.

Royston pulls pen and paper out of his pocket, scribbles something, and gives the paper to Wayne.

Here's my number. Make sure to give it to Jack, too. We three gotta go out for drinks sometime, for ol' times' sake.

WAYNE

You bet. Listen, that stuff I told you is confidential, so mum's the word or they'll demote me to Second Lieutenant, and I don't wanna take orders from the likes of you.

They laugh.

ROYLSTON

You got it. Take care, Bobby.

They rise and shake hands.

WAYNE

Good luck with physiotherapy.

ROYLSTON

Thanks. Well, so long for now.

WAYNE

So long.

Royston leaves and WAYNE sits down. He sips, looks around him wistfully, and sighs. Waitress comes over and clears Royston's iced coffee.

WAITRESS

Got yourself a little reunion there, ha, Major?

WAYNE

An old buddy of mine from the ROTC. Good guy.

WAITRESS

You know, you've been coming here every day for six months and that's the first time I see you talking to anybody.

WAYNE

Well, I come here to zone out, not to chit chat.

WAITRESS

(hurt)

Oh, well, I'll get out of your way, then.

Realizing how it sounded, he straightens his posture and stammers nervously.

WAYNE

No, I... sorry, I didn't mean you. I meant patients and their problems, you know, it gets a bit old.

A man arrives and walks casually to Wayne's table. He stands behind Waitress, so Wayne doesn't see him at first. It is JACK ARNOLD, 30. He is athletic and handsome but

seems exhausted, distracted, spent. He's wearing jeans and a tee shirt and is altogether disheveled and unshaved.

WAITRESS

That's okay. Don't worry about it.

ARNOLD

Hello, Bobby.

Arnold's tone and demeanor are casual, as if he and Wayne have been meeting like that for months. Wayne, shocked, jumps to his feet and almost knocks the table over. Waitress recoils.

WAYNE

Jack! What are you doing here?

ARNOLD

I just checked in. Your secretary said I could find you here.

Wayne gives him a hearty handshake and a hug, which Arnold returns weakly, stolidly.

WAYNE

Well, sit down, you bastard! I've been expecting to hear of your arrival every day.

They sit down. Waitress looks at them, bemused.

Want something to drink?

ARNOLD

No, thanks.

WAITRESS

Alright, let me know if you change your mind.

She walks away.

WAYNE

It's good to see you alive and kicking again, buddy!

ARNOLD

(impassive)

Yeah, it's good to be back home for a while. I was a bit... whatever.

WAYNE

Yeah, Doctor Thompson wrote me.

ARNOLD

(irritated)

Oh, he wrote you, didn't he?

WAYNE

Yes, said he's sending you over for a looksee.

ARNOLD

He's a real quack, your Thompson. Always looking for imaginary symptoms.

WAYNE

He's one of the best in his line, Jack.

ARNOLD

Whatever. He got on my nerves with his incessant exams. Pure bullshit, if you ask me.

WAYNE

I gotta say, you do look a bit... messed up.

Arnold grunts in amused contempt.

ARNOLD

Four years of college, four more of med school, four more residency, and that's your diagnosis? Messed up?

WAYNE

Well, I haven't really examined you yet.

ARNOLD

Fuck that! I'm healthy as a bull.

(beat)

It's just... the silence.

WAYNE

Silence?

ARNOLD

You got a cigarette, Bobby?

Wayne rummages through his pockets, pulls out a pack of cigarettes and throws them on the table.

WAYNE

So now you're smoking too, ha?

ARNOLD

Naturally.

He lights up and takes a deep inhale, which he exhales with a sigh of relief.

WAYNE

Whaddya mean, naturally? You used to give me shit for smoking.

ARNOLD

Had to, over there.

(beat)

It's been a long time since I've seen you, Bobby.

WAYNE

Two years.

ARNOLD

(stares into space)

A lot of things can happen in that time, ha?

Arnold stamps out the cigarette and casually sticks the what's left of it in his shirt pocket. Wayne stares at him, bewildered.

WAYNE

What are you --

ARNOLD

Ha?

WAYNE

Oh, nothing. How's that leg wound?

ARNOLD

Oh, it's fine. Only a scratch. I'll cadge another cigarette, okay, Bobby?

WAYNE

Help yourself.

He picks up another cigarette, lights, puffs deeply. The smoke seems to invigorate him a bit.

ARNOLD

It's good to see you again, Bobby, damn good! I feel bucked up already.

WAYNE

Glad to hear it, Jack.

ARNOLD

What times we used to have together, eh?

WAYNE

Hell yeah!

ARNOLD

Those weekends in the city, you and me, the med student and the struggling writer.

WAYNE

Hey, did you manage to get any writing done over there?

The question seems to extinguish Arnold's smoke-induced vitality. He looks away.

ARNOLD

No. What's the use? It's not something you can write about, is it?

He stamps out the cigarette and puts the butt in his pocket. Wayne is staring at him, fascinated.

Damn it all!

He catches Wayne staring at him.

What are you staring at, Bobby?

WAYNE

Nothing, eh, sorry. It's just... that's the second time I see you put the cigarette butt in your pocket. There's an ashtray right here.

He pushes the ashtray across the table towards Arnold.

ARNOLD

Oh, I did it again, ha? You must think I'm a complete idiot, hiding cigarette butts in my pocket like some bum. I can't seem to break this stupid habit. Must have caught it in Iraq, saving up butts for an emergency when I'd be without a smoke. And now I do it mechanically
(beat)
whenever the silence comes over me.

WAYNE

Don't worry about it. It's natural enough.

ARNOLD

There's something in my head I can't get at, something that drives me to do it.

He laughs nervously, forcedly.

Here I've got a full box in each pocket but I've been cadging yours as if there wasn't one for sale in the whole world. It's a disgusting obsession. I've got to break myself of it or people will think I've a loose screw somewhere. It's up to you, Bobby, to call me on it every time you catch me. That'll do the trick.

He looks towards the entrance.

Hey, waitress!

WAITRESS (O.S.)

Coming.

She comes over.

Yes?

ARNOLD

Can I get a pack of cigarettes, please?

WAITRESS

(confused)

Sorry, we don't serve cigarettes.

Arnold stares vaguely into space, as if her answer threw him off completely.

ARNOLD

No cigarettes?

WAYNE

(to Waitress)

Just forget it, Kathy.

She shrugs and returns inside.

WAYNE

Jack, you have a pack lying on the table.

ARNOLD

Yes, so I have, I was forgetting. Sorry about that, waitress.

He looks to where she stood and realizes she's gone, then stares down at the table.

It's the silence. That does it.

WAYNE

That's the third time you've mentioned the silence, Jack. What do you mean, exactly? What silence?

ARNOLD

Just that, the silence. It hits you when you're home after you've been in the lines for a long time.

He sighs. We zoom in on his face as he tells the story.

SFX: all background noises crossfade into the faint, distant din of the battlefield. Machine guns rattle, soldiers scream, shells explode, bullets whistle, planes whirr. We hear Arnold's voice over these sounds.

(MORE)

ARNOLD (cont'd)

You're hearing the rumble and crash of the mortars, the rat-a-pet riveting of machine guns, the crack of rifles, bullets whistling, the roar of bursting shells. Everything whirls around you; the earth feels like it's made of jelly; even the darkness isn't really dark, with the brilliance of the shells and all. It's like the night has insomnia because of all the fireworks. Nothing is fixed or certain. It's like there's no link between one moment and the next. The moments just pass through you like bullets, and then they're gone.

SFX: The battlefield din suddenly cuts back to the normal backgrounds sounds.

And then you come out into the old peaceful world you once knew, coming up for air, but all you get is oxygen poisoning. And the silence, like a Chinese water torture, drips drop by drop on your brain, and then you have to think about the things you wanna forget.

We zoom out and see both of them again.

WAYNE

You'll get used to the quiet after a bit. You're letting your imagination run away with you.

He attempts a cheerful tone.

(MORE)

WAYNE (cont'd)

You know, it's a curious coincidence, I was just talking about you with a friend of ours. Speak of the devil, you know. Guess who it was?

ARNOLD

I dunno. Who?

WAYNE

Roylston. It's funny you didn't run into him.

ARNOLD

I saw someone in uniform going crossing the street, didn't get a look at his face. Who did you say it was?

WAYNE

Roylston, Herb Roylston, the man you dragged out of No Man's Land in Fallujah and earned yourself a Distinguished Service Medal, you chump!

Roylston's name seems to arouse something in him.

ARNOLD

You don't mean... Herb?

WAYNE

That's exactly who I mean.

ARNOLD

Here, in this coffee shop, Herb? I didn't think I'll ever see him again.

WAYNE

You would have, if you came in five minutes earlier. He wants to see you and thank you for --

ARNOLD

(anguished)

Oh God!

WAYNE

Jack! What's the matter?

ARNOLD

Nothing—only it brings it all
back.

(beat)

Got a cigarette, Bobby?

WAYNE

They're right there on the
table.

ARNOLD

Thanks.

He lights a cigarette and takes a deep inhale.

I'm damn glad to hear about
Herb. It seems incredible he's
still alive. He was swimming in
his own blood. I carried him
over my shoulder. I was soaked
with it. Ugh! I'll be damn glad
to see him again. damn glad.
Herb's an awesome guy, one of
the best. He and I were buddies
over there. Yes, Herb's a good
officer. That was an awful
mess, the worst ever, that
ambush business. I'll have to
tell you about it. We ran out
of cigarettes you know, not a
damn one in the whole company.
Not a smoke of any description.
It was hell. Speaking of
smokes, you've got another one,
Bobby?

WAYNE

(nodding towards
table)

On the table, Jack.

Arnold looks at the cigarettes as if seeing them for the first time.

ARNOLD

Oh, Thanks.

He reaches for the pack with his left hand while holding the burning cigarette with his right. Realizing he's not yet done with the other cigarette, he lets the pack go.

You can't realize what a smoke comes to mean to you on patrol in Al Qaeda Land. You'd have to have been there, Bobby. You wondered at my smoking now when I never had in the old days. I didn't at first—then I had to—had to, I tell you! You know—the things you see, the things you gotta do. A smoke takes your mind off them, somehow.

WAYNE

It's the nicotine. It's soothing.

ARNOLD

On that patrol where we got ambushed we were down to just a few smokes between us all. We were cut off from supplies, so no chance of getting some, either! Some of the guys complained about the field rations, said they'd kill for a Coke or some ice cream, but all I wanted was a smoke, and there were almost none left!

He puffs furiously.

WAYNE

That must have been hard.

(beat)

Tell me, Jack, can you remember
the first time you had a
cigarette over there?

ARNOLD

The first cigarette? Sure, sure
I do.

We're closing up on his face again.

SFX: the street sounds fade out. Silence. Arnold's voice
assumes a faint echo, as if he's speaking to himself in an
empty room.

We were on patrol, trying to
keep the passage safe for
supplies to go through. There
was a car coming towards us,
this beat-up old Subaru. We
signaled it to stop. They know
the drill, the locals, but it
didn't stop. It kept on coming.
Could have been just civilians.
Could have been the car was
loaded with explosives and in
ten seconds we're all pasted on
the road like vegetables that
fell from a truck.

(beat)

So I gave the order.

(beat)

We went to inspect the vehicle
and there's this kid in the back
seat, he's like three, and he's
holding his teddy bear against
his chest. Old, dirty teddy
bear, like it's made of filthy
rags, and it's got this big,
stupid teddy bear smile on its
face. And right above the smile
there's the entry wound.

(MORE)

ARNOLD (cont'd)

But the teddy bear, it's still smiling at me, and I'm thinking, poor teddy bear. We shot the teddy bear. Why is it still smiling?

He puffs ferociously.

I could smell the cigarette smoke from the sergeant standing next to me. It smelled good, for the first time in my life. So I grabbed it from his mouth and took a puff. I felt the smoke filling my lungs, warm, soothing, smooth smoke. Damn, it felt good!

SFX: Wayne is saying something, but all we hear is a faint, unintelligible murmur, as if his voice is underwater. The street sounds fade in and Arnold's voice sounds normal again.

Arnold puffs, and we're zooming out.

ARNOLD

(snaps out of it)

Ha? Did you say something?

WAYNE

I said, you gotta try to forget that stuff, Jack. It's war. These things happen in war.

ARNOLD

(excited)

No, people ought to know all about it. They gotta know that what we need on the front is not more body armor or Kevlar or fuckin' letters of support but more cigarettes.

(MORE)

ARNOLD (cont'd)

You gotta be able to reach into your pocket and have one of those to get you settled when you're all hyped up and you can't even function. People gotta know that.

WAYNE

But you did function. You even saved Roylston's life later on.

ARNOLD

No, Roylston was dead. I saw him fall flat on his face. Then after that for six hours I didn't see or hear him, so he must have been dead. I thought I'd go mad. There was no place to go, sniper fire everywhere, and we have two guys with bullets in them, and groans and shrieks of pain on all sides, and not a thing to smoke! We were all out! God, not a single cigarette, do you understand? Not one! You feel sick down to the soles of your feet. You'd kill for a smoke.

He clenches his hands into fists and his face assumes a menacing grin. Wayne notices this.

Kill for a smoke.

WAYNE

For chrissake, Jack, cut it out!

ARNOLD

A cigarette would have been heaven. To fill your lungs with clean smoke, to cleanse the stench out of your nostrils! But no! Not the tiniest butt!

(MORE)

ARNOLD (cont'd)

Not a damn thing! It's
unbelievable!

He's growing more and more excited.

I was wild. I suddenly
remembered Roylston. He'd given
me one just before the IED took
out our Humvee. I remembered he
had a whole packet and I knew he
must be lying next to what was
left of the Humvee. After that,
I forget. It's all a blank. I
must have gone over the top and
brought him back.

Wayne stares at Arnold in disgust.

WAYNE

So that's why you saved
Roylston, for his cigarettes?!
Christ!

Arnold is avoiding eye contact and stamping out the
cigarette. A few moments later Wayne shakes his head
defiantly.

No, it couldn't have been that.
No way. The stress got to you,
that's all.

Wayne puts his hand on Arnold's.

Come on, let's go to the clinic,
get you checked in.

Arnold snaps out of it and appears confused, disoriented.

ARNOLD

What have I been saying? I've never talked about it before, but that's the thought that's been eating into my brain, Bobby, what you just said. That's why I'm going mad, thinking about it day and night!

Pause. He shakes his head defiantly.

No, it couldn't have been that! I must have gone out for him, for Herb! I must have suddenly realized that he was out there, still alive, suffering!

Pause. He seems confused again.

But how could I have known that? I thought he was dead. How? I can't remember.

WAYNE

You saw him when he stood up, when he tried to get back to our lines.

ARNOLD

(in despair)

No, no, I saw no one, nothing!

WAYNE

Then you heard him screaming out there—screaming with pain in his delirium. Think!

Arnold appears to recollect something.

ARNOLD

Screaming? Yes, there was
screaming, anguished screaming,
drove you mad.

(beat)

Yes, Herb was screaming,
screaming in pain. Screaming,
screaming, like this.

Arnold screams as if in horrible pain. Wayne is terrified.

WAYNE

Jack! Stop it!

Arnold stops screaming. His tone changes to that of
frenzied joy.

ARNOLD

I remember it all now. It was
his voice, Herb's, screaming in
pain! Then I knew he was out
there alive. I couldn't bear
it! That's why I went over, to
save him, to save Herb! Not the
damned cigarettes! That's why
I've been off my nut, Bobby!
They've all been telling me what
a hero I was, and I thought I'd
done it all for... I couldn't
remember why I'd gone for him...
except the cigarettes... and
they gave me medals for bravery,
and all the time I've been going
crazy inside, slowly, thinking I
was a fuckin' traitor, going to
get cigarettes from my friend's
dead body! But now I know,
Bobby. I remember every bit
that happened. I heard him
scream and...

He looks imploringly at Wayne, as if seeking reassurance.

... and I did go over to save
Herb, didn't I?

WAYNE

(soothingly)

Sure you did. It's only the shock that got that other stupid notion into your head. You'll be fine. Hell, you're half cured already. I'm some doctor, eh?

He laughs self-satisfyingly. He pulls out cigarette and offers it to Arnold.

Come on, buddy, have a cigarette, no guilt this time, ha?

There's a pause as Arnold stares at the cigarette, then at Wayne's face, then at the cigarette again. He is disgusted, distraught. Something in him snaps.

ARNOLD

(loud, excited)

Cigarette? Cigarette?? No, not on your life, Bobby! Never another! Only cigars from now on!

He laughs loudly.

WAYNE

Jack, what are you --

ARNOLD

(screaming)

Hey, waitress! Get me a couple of Montecristos here, and a gallon of scotch! Camouflage it in a teapot if you have to!

Continues to laugh uncontrollably.

WAYNE

Jack, take it easy.

Arnold jumps to his feet violently, knocking the chair over and banging on the table. His face is ferocious, his voice unhinged.

ARNOLD

We'll get ol' Herb over here and we'll have a little celebration, for old times' sake! Whadya, say, ha? Celebrate the good ol' times! Celebrate the good ol' times!

Clearly out of his mind, Arnold stares into space and utters a long, loud, unhinged wail of laughter--or is it a cry? Wayne gets up and tries to restrain Arnold. Waitress runs over, terrified. Arnold drops to his knees and continues to laugh-cry. Waitress attempts to comfort Arnold but recoils in fear. Frantically, Wayne reaches into his pocket, pulls out a cellphone, and dials.

FADE OUT.

THE END