

Scorched Earth

written by

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FADE IN:

INT. CONTROL ROOM - DAY

JOSEPH COSTA, a man in his mid 40's wearing an expensive suit, leans forward. Hands resting on the console, he glares expectantly at the larger than life, high-definition screen.

INT. CAVERN - DAY

The cavern walls glisten with moisture, illuminated by lighted scones every few feet.

Running FOOTSTEPS echo. Shadows appear at one end.

CONTROL ROOM

Electronics BEEP a warning. Joseph taps a control.

JOSEPH
THEY'RE COMING!

SEBASTIAN, an expensively suited brown-haired gentleman in his late 30's, confirms.

SEBASTIAN
D.N.A. confirmed! It's them!

On the screen a WOMAN, blond, late 30's, carrying a BABY, and a CHILD, preteen, dash through the tunnel.

Joseph gestures to Sebastian.

JOSEPH
OPEN THE DOORS!

OUTSIDE

Moisture seeps down the walls. Drops fall from the ceiling. Liquid coalesces into puddles, becoming pools.

CONTROL ROOM

Fearful realization slaps Joseph in the face.

JOSEPH
NOOOOOOOO!

CAVERN

Woman and Child freeze in their tracks. Their eyes wide with fear. They huddle together.

Before them, the water becomes gelatin-like. From it rises several transparent quadrupedal forms.

CONTROL ROOM

Joseph reaches for a switch.

Sebastian grabs Joseph's wrist with a firm hand and a scowl.

Joseph snatches his arm back. He glances at the screen.

CAVERN

Woman and Child turn.

More gelatinous forms block their retreat.

The Baby CRIES.

CONTROL ROOM

Joseph dashes to the reinforced doors.

SCREAMS penetrate the room. Joseph slams his fists on the doors. Harder and harder.

The SCREAMS continue, until they don't. Joseph's resolve fails. He falls to his knees, sobbing.

Sebastian approaches. Joseph barely moves.

Sebastian speaks softly.

SEBASTIAN

They're gone sir.

Joseph moans while turning. He places his back against the doors and sobs.

SEBASTIAN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. But they're--

JOSEPH

I HEARD!

(beat)

They're dead!

Joseph's reddening, tear-filled eyes fall upon Sebastian.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Because of me.

(pause)

I did this. This is all my fault.

Sebastian sits down next to Joseph.

SEBASTIAN

No. No you didn't.

JOSEPH

I sold them the weapons.

SEBASTIAN

You sold them an experiment.

JOSEPH

But I knew--

SEBASTIAN

You didn't know it could move.

JOSEPH

Yeah. That's some high tech, sci-fi, horror movie bullshit. But...

Joseph rubs his eyes.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

...without it, the war wouldn't have started. Countries wouldn't have been wiped out. My family wouldn't have just been eaten before my very eyes.

Joseph breaks into tears and sobs his eyes out. Sebastian rises and walks away, leaving Joseph to wallow in self-pity.

CAVERN

Clothes and a blanket lay in puddles of reddened liquid. The puddles collect and pool together. A trickle rolls towards the reinforced doors.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

SUPER: "Seven years ago"

BANG! A judge's gavel hits heavily onto the bench. The Judge shouts to be heard over the court room noise.

JUDGE
ORDER! ORDER!

SPECTATORS and REPORTERS quiet down. The Judge frowns while delivering his ruling.

JUDGE (CONT'D)
Joseph Costa, due to the legal technicality argued by your lawyer, all charges against you are hereby dropped. You are free to go.

The gavel slams down once more. BANG!

The courtroom explodes into CHAOS! Cameras flash as Reporters rush forward.

Joseph rises with a grin, buttoning his jacket. He shakes his LAWYER'S hand. Reporters mob the pair. The BAILIFF and POLICE move in.

Disgust plays across the Judge's face.

EXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

Police keep the CROWD at bay as Joseph and his Lawyer exit the building. REPORTER #1 shoves a mic in Joseph's face.

REPORTER #1
Extortion, racketeering, money laundering, conspiracy, fraud...
Mr. Costa, now that you've beaten the charges. What are your plans?

Joseph pauses with a smile.

JOSEPH
The feds keep accusing me of being a criminal, so I guess I'll just have to run for office and become one for real.

Reporters laugh.

In the back, LEONARD, an evil-looking man, touches his earpiece. He speaks but is drowned out by the Crowd.

INT. JOSEPH'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Front door opens. Jocelyn, a blond in her early 30's, takes off her sweater. John, a toddler, rushes to Jocelyn. Smiling sadly, she pats him on the head.

JOCELYN

John, honey. Please go to your room. I'll be there in a minute.

John toddles off as Joseph struts in.

JOSEPH

Did you see their faces? I had them eating out of my hands.

Frowning, Jocelyn turns to Joseph.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

What's wrong with you?

JOCELYN

One day our son is going to ask what you really do for a living. Or, worse... find out on his own!

JOSEPH

What I do pays for this house and everything in it, the food we eat, the cars, the shopping, the vacations. All of it. I'll--

JOCELYN

A year ago, you were at war with another mafia! We survived but I can't go out alone.

Jocelyn tears up.

JOCELYN (CONT'D)

I know that this is what I signed up for, but that was before John. Honey, I'm afraid.

Joseph takes Jocelyn into a loving embrace.

INT. OPERATING ROOM - NIGHT

A heart monitor BEEPS rhythmically.

SURGEON (O.S.)

Vitals?

A pump marked 'Oxygen' goes up and down.

NURSE (O.S.)

B.P. Seventy over seventy and dropping. Heart rate eighty-five beats per second.

A small flashlight illuminates a pupil.

NURSE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
No dilation. Patient is
unresponsive.

SMITH, a large brutish, scarred man, lies on the operating table. Bloody sheets and towels cover his right side. His left arm has an I.V. and a blood drip inserted.

SURGEON (O.S.)
Remove the towels.

A NURSE, in scrubs and mask, removes the blood-soaked towels. Shredded flesh and bone are exposed.

NURSE
Doctor?

The SURGEON, in scrubs and mask, probes with a scalpel.

SURGEON
There's a mess of embedded
shrapnel. I'll have to remove it
before we can amputate.

The Surgeon probes even deeper.

NURSE
Can you save the arm?

SURGEON
No. It's practically gone. Necrosis
has already set in.

The nurse glances at a nearby screen.

NURSE
Doctor! Vitals are dropping. He'll
die if you can't stop the bleeding.

Setting down the knife, the Surgeon steps back.

SURGEON
He's dead already. Looks like the
corp' gets its guinea pig.
(beat)
Prep and administer one thousand
CC's of Emendotal-Hydrochloricide.

The Nurse's eyes widen.

NURSE

Doctor! That drug is months...
maybe even years away from being
considered ready for human trials.
What about the legal--

SURGEON

That's the military's problem.
They've been working with the corp'
to develop this new bio tech. And I
was given strict orders to test it
on our next critical patient.

NURSE

If he dies--

SURGEON

Just administer the compound!

The Nurse winces.

NURSE

Yes, Doctor.

Nurse goes to a cabinet marked 'Hazardous Materials'. She
pulls out a small bottle and needle. Filling the syringe, she
checks it with a frown. She glances back at Smith.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Sunlight touches Smith's face. He awakens in a hospital bed.
Sitting up quickly, the sheet falls away as he glances around
in shock.

SMITH

Where am I? What happened? How'd I
get here?

Smith's ribs are taped up and bandages cover the stump of his
missing right arm. He notices and touches it.

Spotting a nearby call button, Smith struggles but manages to
press it. He surveys his surroundings more carefully.

The door opens and the Nurse enters.

SMITH (CONT'D)

WHERE AM I?

NURSE

Please calm down.

Smith takes a breath.

SMITH
Okay. Where am I?

NURSE
Nucleosis Medical Corp.

The Nurse approaches. She takes Smith's wrist, watching her watch as she checks his pulse.

NURSE (CONT'D)
You died, for about ten minutes. We were about to give up, but the company's newest experimental bio-compound saved your life.

The Nurse examines Smith's eyes.

SMITH
You experimented on me? How long was I out?

NURSE
About sixteen hours. And yes. But it saved your life. I'm shocked you're even awake. You should be still in a coma. Are you in pain?

SMITH
No. None.

The Nurse pauses in confusion.

NURSE
What? None? Your arm and ribs should be killing you.

The Nurse presses on Smith's ribs. Smith shrugs.

The Nurse touches Smith's stump.

NURSE (CONT'D)
You should be screaming like a banshee right now.

The Nurse unwraps Smith's stump. Bandages fall away. The tissue beneath is fully healed. The Nurse's mouth drops.

NURSE (CONT'D)
Amazing! Not even a scar! It's not even pink! I have to make a call!

The Nurse turns excitedly.

SMITH

Wait! What about me? My arm?!?!

NURSE

If there are no side effects,
you'll be fine! Minus the arm!

The Nurse dashes from the room.

INT. BOARDROOM - DAY

SUPER: "Nucleosis Medical Corporation Headquarters"

Several EXECUTIVES sit at the table. Each one wearing a look of despair. EDWARDS, an overweight businessman, early 60's, sits at the head. He frowns at the group.

EDWARDS

Profits are down for the third quarter, R and D is eating the financials, and the passing of universal health care has stagnated sales. We need a way to increase profits. Nucleosis needs money.

EXEC #1

But sir, with the recent budget cuts and the loss of several of our larger government contracts, we continue to bleed cash.

EDWARDS

We need a breakthrough. Something that will put coins in the company coffers. A medical miracle.

A BUZZING causes Edwards to pause. He pulls out a cell phone and scans the screen. He puts away the phone. Edwards grabs a tablet from the table. He taps on it.

The Execs look at each other in confusion.

On the tablet, a video feed of Smith with text appear. Edwards scans the text and checks the video. He smiles.

EDWARDS (CONT'D)

Gentlemen. It appears that we have our miracle.

Edwards turns the device towards the board with a grin.

INT. MEETING ROOM - NIGHT

In a large meeting room, several suited SUBORDINATES sit around a table. A powerful looking gray-haired man, the DON, frowns at the group from the table's head.

DON
Bring him in.

The door opens. Joseph enters, followed by Leonard.

DON (CONT'D)
I believe in America. It's energy,
it's values, it's place in the
world. But the world changes and we
have to learn to adapt. Don't you
agree Joseph?

A single bead of sweat forms on Joseph's forehead.

JOSEPH
Yes, sir.

Don leans forward, placing his hands on the table.

DON
Joseph, we have a problem.

Leonard grins.

JOSEPH
Sir?

DON
Several organizations on foreign
soil have been watching us. They
are looking to forge a new business
alliance.

Don glares at Joseph.

DON (CONT'D)
The problem is that the F.B.I. has
been particularly interested in our
organization, ever since that
incident last year when you said
that you would run for office--

JOSEPH
Sir, I was joking.