

Checkpoint

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EXT. BRIDGE

A steel bridge stands imposing against the sky, the only connection between two desolate-looking neighbourhoods. The shadows of the bars draw harsh lines on the concrete walkway, like cages.

In the middle of the bridge is a fence, a barrier between the two sides. This is a **military checkpoint**.

A YOUNG SOLDIER walks onto the bridge towards the guard station. He exchanges place with the soldier of the previous shift, gets the rifle from him, and takes his position.

Smoke rises up from the distance. AUDIO: People arguing and shouting.

The SOLDIER looks at the smoke, then turns away, takes out a pack of cigarette, picks one, and tries to light it. The lighter clicks five, six times, but no fire.

AUDIO: People yelling turns into gunshots.

The lighter comes to life and the SOLDIER takes a deep puff of smoke. His hands are shaking.

He drops the cigarette from his hand. It falls to the ground.

The SOLDIER stoops to pick it up, but a LITTLE GIRL in shabby clothes, hand holding a PLASTIC BALL approaches and picks up the cigarette for him. She hands it to the SOLDIER.

Their eyes meet. She grins, all teeth.

The SOLDIER takes it from the GIRL, still slightly shaken. He holds out his hand to ask for the GIRL's papers.

The GIRL hugs the ball to her chest and shakes her head.

The SOLDIER puts his hand on the barrier, and motions with his hand to shoo her away.

The GIRL seems disappointed. She turns around and walks back, kicking the ball as she does so.

The ball bounces against the wall of the bridge and goes the other direction. She tries to catch it, but the ball rolls away and stops at the foot of the SOLDIER.

He looks at the ball, then at the girl who's expecting him to kick it back.

He picks it up. Toys with it, then pretends to throw the ball to the girl. The girl falls for it and jumps as if to catch, but the ball is still in the SOLDIER's hands. She pouts. He smirks.

The SOLDIER then throws the cigarette away and drops the ball to his foot, balancing it with his instep. The SOLDIER then performs several starter tricks skillfully.

He ends with the ball once again on his instep as he stands on one leg. His eyes catch the GIRL's. She is imitating his pose, clumsily, arms flailing around as she also tries to balance herself on one leg.

The SOLDIER kicks the ball to her. She catches, puts it on her instep and tries to keep the ball there. But she does it once, twice, and still, the ball falls away. She puffs, angry but cute.

The ball rolls to the SOLDIER again. He passes it back to her, and poses as if he's a goal keeper. He motions for the GIRL to take a shot.

The GIRL carefully puts the ball in place and shoots, but it's weak. The SOLDIER easily catches it. He grins, and points at the GIRL. It's her turn to catch.

The GIRL is all serious and determined, but the SOLDIER easily shoots past her. He laughs, and holds his fingers up. 1-0.

The GIRL is really agitated now. She tries to take another shot, but again, she fails to get past him.

The SOLDIER's turn. He makes a feint as if going right, but he shoots left, and she is again chasing after the ball. The SOLDIER holds his fingers up. 2-0.

The GIRL looks frustrated. She throws the ball on the ground and turns to walk away.

The SOLDIER's face falls.

But suddenly, the GIRL does a 180 degree and shoots. The SOLDIER is taken off guard, and the ball flies past him, past the barrier.

The GIRL cheers. She holds her tiny hands up. 2-1.

The SOLDIER laughs in disbelief. He turns around, lifts the barrier to pick the ball up, still laughing.

But when his back is turned, the GIRL **makes a dash** towards the lifted barrier and runs for the other side. The side he was supposed to guard.

The SOLDIER freezes in shock for a moment and just stares at her. Then drops the ball and **fumbles** for his rifle.

The ball bounces and rolls away from him, forgotten.

He takes aim and shouts for the girl to stop. The small form of the running girl is fully in view of his gun's sight.

His shaking finger is on the trigger.

AUDIO: Guards yelling. Gunfire in the distance.

BLACKOUT