

# *The Monkey*

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TITLE CARD

Georgia, 1992.

Following the collapse of the  
Soviet Union, Georgians and  
Abkhazians who were once  
countrymen find themselves on  
opposite sides of a civil war.

Based on a true story.

FADE IN:

THROUGH RIFLE SCOPE --

Panning over a SMALL TOWN decimated by war. Searching for something...

Rubble everywhere. Burned husks of cars. We pan across a pockmarked STREET, to a bombed-out APARTMENT BUILDING...

Our view settles on THREE ABKHAZIAN SOLDIERS holed up in the building, partially hidden behind a collapsed wall.

NIKA (O.S.)  
They still there?

As the scope lowers, we find ourselves in --

EXT. SCHOOL RUINS - SUNSET

TIGHT ON -- a man named LEVAN (40s) lowering his rifle.

LEVAN  
Yeah.

CUT OUT to reveal Levan and TWO GEORGIAN SOLDIERS who are dug in on the second floor of the destroyed school.

The other soldiers are NIKA (20s) and GRIGOR (40s, medic). They are dirty, unshaven.

NIKA  
Three days and they haven't moved.  
What are they up to?

LEVAN  
Protecting the front line. Just  
like us.

GRIGOR  
Here.

Grigor hands Levan a simple meal of hard bread and warm stew. Levan takes it and crosses himself before digging in.

The Georgians eat their meal in grim silence.

ANGLE ON -- ruined swings in the playground. They cast long shadows, which disappear with the last rays of light.

EXT. SCHOOL RUINS - TWILIGHT

It's almost dark by the time the Georgians finish supper.

Just then, from the across the street, a RADIO begins playing PATRIOTIC RUSSIAN MUSIC.

Levan growls.

LEVAN

Not again...  
(calling out)  
Turn that shit off!

At this, a VOICE across the street responds:

VOICE (O.S.)

(calling out)  
Okay! For a pack of cigarettes!

LEVAN

(calling out)  
Fuck you! We ran out days ago!

In response, the Abkhazians TURN THE RADIO UP. We hear them cackle. Levan grimaces.

But after a moment, the batteries in the radio die. The song whirrs to a stop. Now it's the Georgians' turn to laugh. We hear the Abkhazians CURSE and SMACK the radio, to no avail.

Grigor rises and collects the bowls.

NIKA

I'll take first watch.

Levan nods. He goes to his makeshift bed beneath a broken window and lies down. He wraps his coat around him and closes his eyes.

FADE TO BLACK:

NIKA (PRE-LAP) (CONT'D)

Levan... Levan!

EXT. SCHOOL RUINS - NIGHT

Levan jolts awake. Nika is beside him.

NIKA

I saw something. In the street.

Levan leaps into action, grabbing his rifle and looking out the window.

THROUGH RIFLE SCOPE -- it's so dark he can barely see, but SOMETHING is indeed moving.

LEVAN (O.S.)

Fuck.

The thing is fast, darting from cover to cover. Levan tries to track it but loses it behind a car.

Levan looks up from his scope, freaked out.

LEVAN (CONT'D)

(calling out)

Get back!

(no response)

Get back or we'll shoot!

STIRRING from across the street. Then, the voice from before:

VOICE (O.S.)

(calling back, groggy)

Shut up!

Levan looks back through his scope.

THROUGH RIFLE SCOPE -- the thing pokes its head out from behind the car.

Levan steadies his breath, squeezes the trigger and -- BANG!

THROUGH RIFLE SCOPE -- the thing takes off into the darkness.

Levan pulls back from the scope. Exhales. We hear SCRAMBLING from the Abkhazian side.

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(calling out)

Motherfucker! What are you doing?

LEVAN

(calling out)

That was a warning! Get back on your side of the street!

RUSTLING and movement from the other side. Then:

THE ABKHAZIAN (O.S.)

The fuck is that? / Shoot it!

POP! POP! POP! The Abkhazians OPEN FIRE.

The Georgians duck behind cover, but realize the Abkhazians aren't shooting at them. They're shooting toward the street.

Eventually, the gunfire dies down.

LEVAN  
(calling out)  
What the fuck are you shooting at?!

VOICE (O.S.)  
(calling out)  
One of your men is in the street!

Nika gives Levan a confused look.

LEVAN  
(calling out)  
All my men are --  
(realizing)  
Wait, where's Grigor? GRIGOR!

At this, Grigor comes running, still zipping his pants.

GRIGOR  
What the fuck? I'm tryna take a  
shit!

Levan is puzzled.

LEVAN  
(calling out)  
All my men are here.

VOICE (O.S.)  
(calling out)  
Mine are too.

The Georgians are confused. *What the hell were they shooting at then?*

Levan looks through his scope.

THROUGH RIFLE SCOPE -- panning back and forth as he tries to locate the thing. But there's no movement.

Just then, we hear a SCREAM. Almost human, but not quite.

ON THE GEORGIANS -- freaked out. They listen close. Then, another SCREAM.

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
(calling out)  
You asked for it! You crossed the  
line!

LEVAN  
(calling out)  
That's not us you fucking idiot!

The SCREAMING continues intermittently.

NIKA  
What the fuck is that?

LEVAN  
I don't know.

Across the street, the Abkhazians are wondering the same thing.

THE ABKHAZIANS (O.S.)  
Where is that coming from?! / Do  
you see anything?

A tense, uneasy beat. No one knows what's going on.

The SCREAMS continue sporadically. They are unnerving, but don't seem to be aggressive.

Gradually, the group manages to relax.

LEVAN  
You two get some rest. I'll take  
watch.

Nika and Grigor nod. They settle into their bedding. Levan grips his gun close.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOL RUINS - DAWN

ANGLE ON -- ivy clinging to ruined brick. The first light of dawn appears. The screams have become more of a MOANING.

Levan leans against the wall, asleep. A hand grabs his shoulder and he wakes with a start. But it's just Grigor.

LEVAN  
Shit.

Realizing he's fallen asleep, Levan grabs his gun and looks out at the street.

THROUGH RIFLE SCOPE -- Levan searches for the source of the moaning. He tracks the noise to a tree. Up in the branches, he spots -- A CAPUCHIN MONKEY.

Levan lowers his rifle, confused. *A monkey?*

GRIGOR  
What is it?

Levan moves aside so Gregor can look through the scope.

GRIGOR (CONT'D)  
(seeing it)  
Fuck.

A beat. Levan considers what to do. Then:

LEVAN  
(calling out)  
Hey!

Nika wakes up. But there's no answer from the other side.

LEVAN (CONT'D)  
(calling out)  
HEY!

STIRRING from across the street.

VOICE (O.S.)  
(calling out)  
What the fuck do you want?

LEVAN  
(calling out)  
You shot a monkey.

VOICE (O.S.)  
(calling out)  
What?

LEVAN  
(calling out)  
A monkey. In the tree.

RUSTLING, movement from across the street. After a beat:

VOICE (O.S.)  
(calling out)  
What do you want to do?

LEVAN  
(calling out)  
We have to help it.

VOICE (O.S.)  
(calling out)  
How?



LEVAN  
(calling out)  
What's your name?

VOICE (O.S.)  
(calling out)  
Temur.

LEVAN  
(calling out)  
Temur. Promise not to shoot.

A beat. Then:

TEMUR (O.S.)  
(calling out)  
Okay.

Levan gets up and is about to walk out into the open --  
-- when his men grab him.

NIKA AND GRIGOR  
Are you crazy?! / They'll kill you!

But Levan's made up his mind.

THROUGH RIFLE SCOPE FROM ACROSS THE STREET -- we see Levan  
jut his hand out from cover and set his gun down. Then, he  
emerges with his hands in the air.

WITH LEVAN -- as he walks into the street. He is tense. He  
knows they're watching. They could shoot at any moment.

He stops in the middle of the street, on his side of the  
double yellows. A tense beat passes.

He hears SCUFFLING from across the street.

THE ABKHAZIANS (O.S.)  
Sir, don't do it! / You can't trust  
them!

Then, an Abkhazian walks out into the open with his hands up.  
This is TEMUR (40s), the voice Levan's been talking to.

Temur approaches Levan carefully. He stops when the men are a  
few feet apart, on opposite sides of the double yellows.

Levan nods. Then he turns back to his men and waves for them  
to come down.

The Georgians shake their heads vigorously. Levan gestures more forcefully. Chastened, Grigor sets his rifle down and starts walking as Nika covers him.

ANGLE ON TEMUR -- watching Grigor walk into the open. Seeing this act of faith, Temur signals for his men to do the same. One man comes down while the other covers him.

ANGLE ON LEVAN -- watching the ABKHAZIAN SOLDIER walk down to the street.

Levan turns back to Nika, who still won't come down. Levan glares at him. Nika shakes his head. Levan glares more intensely. Nika sets his rifle down, despite his misgivings.

As Nika makes his way down, the ABKHAZIAN MEDIC does the same.

WIDE SHOT -- as the two groups of three men assemble opposite each other like a game of Red Rover.

A moment passes as they eye each other. *Can we trust them?*

Finally, Levan and Temur begin walking toward the tree. Their men follow.

EXT. TREE - CONTINUOUS

MONKEY'S POV -- looking down at the soldiers as they gather at the base of the tree.

Levan looks up at the monkey. It's hugging the trunk, scared for its life.

TEMUR  
Where'd it come from?

LEVAN  
They bombed the zoo a few days ago.

TEMUR  
How do we get it down?

No one has any idea.

Then, Levan begins ACTING LIKE A MONKEY, making MONKEY NOISES and prancing around.

Seeing this, the Abkhazians begin doing the same, trying to coax the monkey down. Not to be outdone, the Georgians begin calling and waving to the monkey.

MONKEY'S POV -- watching the absurd humans hoot and holler.

The monkey doesn't budge.

At this, Temur strips off his armor and begins CLIMBING THE TREE. Near the top, he takes out a bit of bread and coaxes the monkey toward him. The monkey climbs toward Temur, who grabs it.

TEMUR (CONT'D)

Gotcha.

He lowers the monkey down to his men, who accept it gently. Then he climbs down.

The Abkhazians are about to lay the monkey on the ground --

GRIGOR

Wait, wait.

Grigor takes out a clean strip of cloth. The Abkhazians lay the monkey on top of it. We now see its fur is bloody. Its leg has been GRAZED BY A BULLET.

The monkey is clearly scared and SHRIEKS. The soldiers are moved to pity.

ON LEVAN -- feeling bad for shooting at it.

ABKHAZIAN SOLDIER

Look what you did.

NIKA

Us? You all were shooting like idiots.

ABKHAZIAN SOLDIER

We only shot because --

TEMUR

Shut up.

(to Abkhazian medic)

Fix the damned thing up.

The medic nods, then takes out his medkit.

ABKHAZIAN MEDIC

Help me hold it down.

Nika, Grigor and the Abkhazian soldier do so.

The medic pours alcohol over the wound. The monkey HOWLS in pain. The soldiers wince, feeling the monkey's pain. The medic begins cleaning the wound, wiping the blood away.

NIKA  
Hey, be careful.

GRIGOR  
You're hurting it.

ABKHAZIAN MEDIC  
What are you, a fucking vet?

GRIGOR  
I was, you dipshit.

LEVAN  
Shut up. All of you.

Grigor strokes the monkey's head.

GRIGOR  
Shh... it'll be okay.

The medic takes out a needle to suture the wound. Temur gets queasy at the sight and walks off. Levan follows him.

As the medic brings the needle to the wound, we see that his hand is shaking.

GRIGOR (CONT'D)  
Let me.

Begrudgingly, the medic hands over the suture.

ANGLE ON LEVAN AND TEMUR -- off to the side.

LEVAN  
You look familiar.

TEMUR  
Yeah?

LEVAN  
Where did your family live?

TEMUR  
Marukh Street. By the butcher shop.

LEVAN  
I know it. My mother lived there.

Temur nods. A beat.

TEMUR  
Is she safe?

LEVAN

Yeah. She fled south with my sisters.

(beat)

What about your family?

TEMUR

They went west.

LEVAN

Good. Good.

ANGLE ON -- Grigor and the medic finishing up with the monkey. Grigor ties off the last stitch.

GRIGOR

Easy now... easy.

(to medic)

You got any painkillers?

The medic takes out a pill, breaks it in half, and feeds it to the monkey. Nika takes out his canteen and pours some water into the monkey's hands. The monkey drinks.

The medic wraps the monkey's leg in gauze. It has stopped screaming.

Levan and Temur rejoin the group.

Without a word, the soldiers release the monkey. It rises haltingly. It regards the soldiers curiously, then scampers off. The soldiers soften a bit, their hearts warmed.

HOLD ON THE SOLDIERS -- as they watch the monkey hobble away. Part of them wishes they could go with it.

Soon, the men realize that their detente is over. They nod at each other, rueful, then split into Georgians and Abkhazians.

As Temur turns to leave --

LEVAN

Hey.

Temur turns back around. Levan takes out a pair of AAA BATTERIES and hands them to him.

Temur is speechless. He rummages through his pockets and finds a HALF-EMPTY PACK OF CIGARETTES. He gives them to Levan.

Then, without another word, the soldiers head back to their respective positions.

WIDE SHOT -- as the two groups go their separate ways.

WITH LEVAN AND THE GEORGIANS -- as they trudge back to the --

SCHOOL RUINS

-- where they pick up their guns and settle back into their positions.

Levan hands Nika and Grigor a cigarette and lights up.

ON LEVAN -- smoking and thinking about what he's done. An imperceptible smile appears on his face.

CUT TO BLACK:

THE END