

TREATMENT SAMPLE: DON'T ASK MY NAME

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In **1967**, a battered **UNRWA bus** groans through dust and heat toward Beirut in Lebanon, carrying recently displaced and exhausted Palestinian refugees towards an uncertain future.

Inside, the air is thick with diesel, sweat, and the silence of people too depleted to speak. Adults cling to the last of their belongings they've managed to save in the sudden defeat of the 6-day war. A young woman in a hijab holds a baby bundle close to her chest. An elderly man grips a cardboard suitcase tied with twine.

On a lonely seat toward the back is Zayan, a nine-year-old boy with a bandage across his forehead, a teddy bear in his arms. His stunned, scared, wide eyes have already seen too much.

A haunting narration describes Lebanon as the once-Paris of the Middle East, a bastion of Christendom hosting a fragile, harmonious space among the Druze, Sunni, and Shia. But that illusion is already collapsing.

The bus arrives at Tel al-Zaatar refugee camp. A sea of UNRWA tents stretches under the mid-summer sun. Arabic graffiti expresses divided allegiances. The camp shows visible signs of a future built on displacement, humiliation, and radicalisation.

As the breaks screech to a halt, Zayan rises to a swamp of scuffling adults. He searches their faces for a sign, a direction, a hand. Nothing.

The boy lugs his battered suitcase down the steps and onto the parched Lebanese earth, where he finally looks up to assess his surroundings. Staring back through the battered barbed-wire fence across the road are four boys of similar age. Their faces are young, but their countenance is weary, already learning to read each other through fear, identity, and need.

What he doesn't notice, resting in the shade of a dusty canvas tent, is a man in his late twenties. He sits with a predatory stillness, cleaning a small piece of machinery with a rag, a task performed with the rhythmic devotion of a prayer. He wears a faded fatigue jacket that suggests a life lived in the hills rather than the breadlines. When he looks up, his gaze doesn't settle on the adults or their bundled belongings; it locks onto Zayan.

This opening does more than establish the setting. It reveals where true brokenness is born.

The narrator explains that her people welcomed these people because they saw themselves in them. They looked the same and cried the same. When they arrived, only their Islamic last names set them apart.

From that image of arrival and rupture, the film shifts as the narration connects both scenes to Heri, in the town of Chekka, an ancient coastal Christian village in northern Lebanon. Its beauty is nuanced by the sun's rays glossing the ancient stone. Its people are thriving, communal, living within the routines of faith and family.

For us, looking back from modern times, the story seems, for a moment, to belong to another country. We forget that Lebanon was once the jewel of the Middle East. Surely, this is not the Lebanon we know, with its wealth displayed in fashion, cafés, and beach houses.

But here we are back in time. The village of Heri is preparing to welcome home Eli Daygar, a young groom, and his teenage bride, Carla.

Two little boys, Omar and Mohammed, commissioned to keep watch, scramble across the stone wall, racing to announce the arrival of the wedding car.

Women throw open shutters. Ululations ripple across the streets. The celebratory Middle Eastern sound of street music begins to echo through the valley. Christian and Muslim neighbours gather alike. They carry dishes, tease the groom, bless the bride, and treat the marriage as a celebration shared by the whole village rather than a private household event. The lines between family and strangers have blurred beyond recognition; no one can say who is family and who is not.

Inside the car sit the emotional coordinates of the film's central family: Eli, warm, handsome, and naturally steady, and Carla, shy, devout, and very young, her innocence only just having crossed into the threshold of marriage.

Tony, Eli's little brother, eager and dishevelled in borrowed formal clothes, sits dotingly between the wedded couple, swamped in lace. He looks up at his brother's breathtaking bride, full of wonder.

At the wheel, Joseph, Eli and Tony's father, whose rugged exterior masks a profound, if not guarded, love for his family, carefully maneuvers the rumbling Peugeot through the gathering crowd. Beside him sits his wife, Mama Pia, full of pride, fierce and funny as she winds down the window, calling out to the gleeful villagers. All of them are desperate for attention and a glimpse of Carla.

As Joseph pulls over to the curb, Eli excitedly climbs out of the car into the welcoming embrace of his closest friend, Nicolas. But it doesn't take long for the formidable grandmother, known as "Teta," to make her Matriarchy known as she firmly checks whether Eli has forgotten something.

But how could he forget? Even now, as he looks across the way, villagers crowd around the wedding car, waving and tapping on the windows while Carla sits alone inside, wrapped in silk and lace, gazing back at them, uncertain and overwhelmed.

The sequence is full of detail, texture, and human warmth. Carla is not merely marrying Eli; she is being absorbed into a whole social fabric, one defined by food, prayer, teasing, blessing, and the overwhelming intimacy of village life.

That sense of belonging is deepened when Carla is formally welcomed into the Daygar household. Teta hands her the khamiret el-'rous, the blessed dough of the bride, instructing her to sanctify the threshold by pressing it above the lintel.

The air falls silent as Carla, nervous but reverent, performs the ritual and offers a prayer over the doorway. Around her, gather family and as many neighbours as can fit inside the courtyard, even the local Muslim boys, Omar and Mohammed, pressing in beside the family as though they, too, belong to this domestic blessing. Mama Pia pulls them close like sons, a crucial image in retrospect.

The film confirms early on that coexistence is real, embodied, and emotional before it fractures. These people are not abstract representatives of sect or ideology; they are neighbours folded into one another's daily lives.

At the same time, the script introduces the first hints of rupture. Joseph and Father Michael debate the arrival of Palestinian refugees, the role of UNRWA, and whether offering help is simply a Christian duty or an opening through which militancy may one day enter their world. Father Michael believes that fear makes cruelty easier than mercy. Joseph believes that boys shaped by humiliation will eventually be used by darker forces. The film refuses to mock either position. Both men speak from lived moral intuition, and the tragedy of the story is that each will prove right in different ways.

A decade passes.

By 1976, Lebanon as it once was had hardened into a landscape of checkpoints, militia zones, rumours, and divided loyalties. The film shifts to the church grounds at Nourai, now occupied by an SSNP stronghold, a Syrian-backed military presence intended to protect the Christian villages below, including Heri. Sandbags and barbed wire have replaced the open calm of earlier years.

The tone of the film shifts from one of harmony and communal welcoming to suspicion of even those held dear. The village, once a bustling tapestry of shared meals and celebrated weddings, is now drained of colour, a landscape where poverty reigns, and unpainted Syrian tanks sit static along the curbs. Unchecked weeds push through the pavement. The hollow silence of shuttered shop windows marks the slow degradation of a town left in limbo.

Eli, now in his early thirties, works earnestly toward one day stepping into his father's shoes as a husband, father, and village grocer. The death of Mama Pia shortly after the wedding left a gaping hole in the family, but with the steady, aging support of Teta, Carla has become the new emotional anchor of the Daygar household. Together, she and Eli are raising their children: two daughters, Pia, named after her grandmother, and Elise, as well as Tony, now seventeen, who has grown into a charming young man and remains the heart of the home.

Ordinary life persists, but only precariously. Eli and Tony are secretly sheltering a Muslim boy, Abdul, who has been drawn into the machinery of war, a wanted figure at thirteen after attempting to carry food to those starving in the Tel al-Zaatar refugee camp. Eli hides him out of principle. He cannot turn away someone in need. Carla supports the decision instinctively, though she understands the risk it brings to their door. Joseph, however, recognizes the danger immediately. Abdul is not a threat in himself, but he is marked; his presence exposes the entire household to reprisal if discovered. What began as a moral question in 1967 has become immediate and operational. Mercy remains a choice, but it now carries consequences that may be fatal.

The external world confirms that the village sits on a knife's edge. Eli is stopped and humiliated by his ex-best friend, Nicolas, now armed and hardened by militia logic. Nicolas accuses him of harbouring Palestinian sympathisers and helping the very people who may destroy Chekka.

Eli rejects the logic of collective guilt. To him, Abdul is a child caught in the violence around him, not a future enemy. Their confrontation carries the weight of a friendship fractured by war. Nicolas insists that neutrality is no longer possible; Eli insists that love and faith lose their meaning if they vanish the moment politics demands obedience. "How can religion be true anywhere when love is gone?" he asks. In that single line, the film crystallizes Eli's moral and spiritual dilemma: he is trying to remain human in a world that increasingly treats humaneness as treason.

Parallel to the Daygar family's story unfolds a more explicitly political thread involving Commander Saliba, his wife Margdaline, the wealthy French contact Pierre, and the negotiations over military control and a safe escape.

In mansions and compounds far removed from the Daygars' kitchen, decisions are made that will determine whether villages like Heri endure or burn. Saliba is courted, flattered, and maneuvered. Intelligence passes through polished rooms and over drinks, while the threat of coordinated assaults, overrun checkpoints, and advancing guerrilla units becomes just one variable in a larger equation of money, access, and survival.

This thread gives the film its historical scale. The coming massacre is not a spontaneous eruption of ancient hatred. It is enabled by betrayal, cowardice,

patronage, and by those with enough privilege to flee before the consequences of their decisions arrive.

Yet the script never allows politics to eclipse intimacy. The Daygar house remains a place of meals, prayer, and fragile love. Omar and Mohammed, now seventeen and eighteen, born into a Sunni Islamic family, still pass through, their presence a quiet continuity from another time. Carla, warm and maternal, welcomes them with a feast of mezze, grilled meats, hummus, and baba ghanoush. Tony still jokes with them, while the girls fill the house with laughter and innocence.

In one of the screenplay's most tender and devastating domestic passages, Eli kneels with his daughters at bedtime while distant violence hums beyond the walls. Little Pia, named after her grandmother, tells him he can ask Jesus for peace. Later, in private, Carla reveals to Eli that she is pregnant again, after several miscarriages that have already marked her body and spirit. Yet even under the shadow of war, the promise of a new child briefly transforms the room. In that bed lie a husband and wife, two young girls, a hidden unborn child, and a future no one yet understands is about to be tested almost beyond endurance.

This sequence matters because it gives the audience something whole and deeply innocent to lose. This is not a family defined by suffering, but by tenderness, by care, by a quiet insistence on doing what is right. They move through the world trying, in small and meaningful ways, to make it better. That is why the violence to come will cut so deeply.

When the attack finally arrives, it does not unfold like a battle. It arrives like desecration.

Armed jihadists pour into Heri. Gunfire rips through the village. Cars explode. Neighbours are dragged into the street. People who had lived their lives by house names, church bells, and bread routes are suddenly reduced to targets. Eli's car explodes outside. Across the road, a teenage boy is butchered in public view. The Daygar family scrambles into defence mode.

Eli arms himself and tries to think tactically, suppressing panic. Carla hides the girls with Miriam, Eli's grandmother, and tends to the wounded. She moves through her fear because motherhood leaves her no other choice. Tony, still young enough to be soft, is forced within minutes into an irreversible adulthood.

Meanwhile, Joseph is miles away at Nouri Church, where a Christian defensive stronghold has been established to protect Heri. There, he encounters the horrific aftermath of Jundallah's first massacre. The attack was carried out by a militia faction aligned with the Palestinian Authority, the same group that had earlier conspired with Captain Saliba in Pierre's mansion.

After witnessing Father Michael's final moments and finding the bodies of the slaughtered soldiers, among them his son's best friend Nicolas, Joseph begins a desperate, solitary trek back toward his family. He eventually abandons his car to avoid detection and becomes a man on the ground, moving on foot through backyards and scrambling over fences as his village dissolves into a war zone.

We briefly meet a family: Marc, Adrienne, and their terrified children caught in the suffocating gridlock of the Chekka Tunnel. Dozens of cars are crammed bumper-to-bumper, all trying to funnel into the "dark maw" that will lead them to safety, the Christian city, Batroun, waiting on the other side.

Inside their pressure cooker sedan, Marc grips the steering wheel, knuckles blanched, his eyes locked on the taillights ahead. Adrienne clutches her swaddled newborn tightly to her chest. As she turns to steady her other children, she glances through the hazy rear window and sees the angry flicker of flames spreading across the rooftops of the life they are leaving behind. Outside, silhouetted figures with rifles move through the chaos. Friend or foe is anyone's guess.

Joseph witnesses the catastrophic destruction of this escape route from a distance. As he navigates a random backyard, a "guttural roar" rips through the air with such force that it shakes the earth beneath his feet. Joseph watches in horror as the tunnel explodes, a sickening orange glow pulsing at its heart before being swallowed by a torrent of black smoke.

Joseph's return from the church marks the end of the old world. Having witnessed the slaughter at the SSNP stronghold and felt the life drain from Father Michael, he brings the catastrophe home with him. There are no soldiers left to call, no church to seek refuge in; the line between the family and the massacre has dissolved. Joseph steps into a role of grim necessity. The house that Carla once kept open in welcome is now a cold fortress under siege.

Then comes the most emotionally devastating turn in the script: Omar and Mohammed enter that house, revealing themselves, not as rescuers but as enemies.

They are no longer boys peeking in from the edges of a wedding. They are armed, radicalized, and speaking in the language of accusation, hostage-taking, and sectarian logic. Tony cannot fully comprehend what he is seeing. Carla is struck by a deeper horror than physical danger: the realization that the boys she once fed and embraced have returned not as sons of the village, but as enemies.

Eli recognises the truth fastest: the old social world is over. Joseph responds without hesitation and shoots to kill both intruders. Omar, mortally hit and playing dead, fires back hitting Carla's jaw and injuring Joseph as well.

The assault on the house intensifies. Tony is shot in the chest, the force of the bullet tearing through him and blasting out his back. The room collapses into blood, smoke,

screaming, and impossible choices. In this moment, the film reaches the core of its tragedy: love and friendship have not simply failed; they have been weaponised, turned against those they were meant to protect.

From here, the script enters a sustained siege passage of extraordinary emotional force. Carla, bleeding and barely holding herself together, finds Tony lying on the kitchen floor. She searches his body for the wound and discovers the fatal exit in his back. The look on her face is enough for Tony to understand what is coming. His young face settles into a quiet, unexpected calm as he gently reassures her. He does not plead for himself. Instead, he tells her the girls need her more. He reminds her that his mother would have loved them, and he gives her permission to leave and protect them. It is one of the script's most heartbreaking moments, because even as he dies, Tony's innocence remains intact. He is, to the end, a loving child.

Watching through the slats of the pantry door where she has been hiding all along, Teta courageously makes a move to help her grandson, but out of nowhere is killed instantly by a grenade.

In that explosion, Carla throws herself over her daughters, hiding in the laundry, while an almost surreal display of plaster and glass rains down around them. She cries out, begging God to let "not a single drop of blood come out of her children". Underneath her body, the girls peer through their mother's arms, watching the plaster fall like snow - and through the settling debris and blasted-open door, they see Tony staring back.

Eventually, Eli understands that holding the house means dying in it. He makes the terrible choice to flee, but fails to convince his father, who is determined to stay behind, protect his fortress and remain by the side of his dead son.

Crucially, Eli leaves his rifle behind. He knows that carrying a weapon will mark him as a threat to anyone they encounter on the road. He, Carla, and the children step over bodies, over the dead in their doorway, past the remains of neighbours who, hours earlier, shared their world. Outside lies a village transformed into a geography of murder and architectural devastation.

A brief refuge appears at the beach house of Hassan and Aleena, a Muslim family who shelter them despite the risk. This section is essential because it prevents the film from collapsing into collective blame. Even amid a massacre, the script insists that moral courage endures across communal lines.

Hassan's sons explain the truth plainly: the roads are watched, every route is compromised, and Eli's name is dangerous. He cannot simply leave. He is marked. The answer is not to escape by car, but by sea. Eli tells Carla they must cross the shoreline under sniper threat and make for the Mazraat Hannoûch tunnel, moving six kilometres in the Mediterranean Sea by night.

Carla can hardly comprehend it. Eli, exhausted and furious at God, tells her that if her God is real, He will have to prove it tonight.

The sea crossing is the film's physical climax. Eli carries his youngest daughter, Elise, on his back while both Eli and Carla grip Pia's hands. Bullets crack from nearby lookouts as they step onto the beach and then into the black water. They move hunched, silent, and terrified, a broken family inching through darkness while death remains only meters away. The sea becomes an ordeal, a potential grave, and a passage all at once.

When they finally reach the abandoned train tunnel, it offers no refuge. Inside there is only darkness, filth, exhaustion, and a kind of fear that turns every sound into a threat. The flutter of bat wings, insects scuttling across the slimy brick walls. A scorpion drops onto one of the children. Carla wants to turn back.

Then the family sees something impossible: a light. A two-metre-tall, humanlike presence moving in the dark gradually comes into view. Calm befalls Pia instantly. Carla sees in it the confirmation of everything she has long believed. Eli resists the interpretation even as he admits he sees it too. He cannot yet speak faith fluently, but something in him begins to break open. The figure leads them toward the tunnel mouth and dawn. Here, the film allows a miracle without sentimentality. The light does not erase horror. It accompanies them through it.

Emerging from the tunnel, the family encounters armed militia loitering above the tunnel exit; their affiliations are unclear. Christian or not, it no longer matters when the family has no identity papers, and everyone looks the same. But in the form of another miracle, the family, covered head to toe in soot and dirt, sneak past unseen.

Soon they come upon a van marked with a red cross, but then Eli remembers the earlier warning from the Hassan family: "Enemies are moving under borrowed flags. Trust no one".

As the fighter from the ambulance beats him with a weapon, demanding identity papers, Eli begs him not to ask his name because a name has become a verdict. That line finally opens the title. In this war, names are not introductions; they are now sectarian coordinates. They determine who can pass and who can be shot on sight. Yet when Eli notices a rosary wrapped around the wrist of one man, he takes the risk and declares his Christian name. And it's from here that he turns identity from a death sentence into being hailed as a hero.

The hospital filled with nuns does not offer immediate relief, though, and another fight for survival must ensue. Carla's facial wounds are severe, and the family finds itself in under-resourced institutions where compassion is nonexistent.

The war has fundamentally altered Eli's reflexes, birthing a version of him that is frightening. He no longer asks for help; he demands it with the cold efficiency of a

man who has looked at death and refused to blink. When doctors fail to appear, he doesn't plead; he threatens violence, forcing treatment for Carla with a terrifying, escalating force. He fights bureaucratic indifference with the same desperate lethality he used against armed men, because the world has taught him a final, bitter lesson: gentleness is a luxury that no longer commands attention. In Eli, love has been stripped of its softness and forged into a weapon.

Back at Heri, the following dawn finds the Dayger home in absolute ruins. The Jundallah leader, responsible for the wave of violence that levelled the neighbourhood, enters the skeletal remains of the house. He moves with the casual arrogance of a conqueror, stepping over rubble and charred furniture, convinced that the sheer force used on the building has left no survivors.

He is wrong.

From the blackened shadows of his own pantry, Joseph emerges. With a deep, ancient northern drawl, he takes a final, personal vengeance, gunning the man down from head to toe in a relentless arc of fire.

Left alone in the soot and wreckage, the adrenaline of the fight fades into a cold, hollow reality. Joseph finds Tony, and in the heavy silence of the ruined house, he sits with his dead son. In this moment, the weight of his transformation is complete. He realises he is no longer just a protector or a father; he has become the "Keeper of the Dead." He sits as a solitary sentinel among the ghosts of his life, a man who stayed behind to witness the end so that the living could have a future.

When he finally reaches the hospital, the warrior is at rest but not diminished. Joseph sits in the reception area, a ghost covered in the dust of his fallen home. When he locks eyes with Eli, no words are exchanged. In that silent gaze, there is a profound passing of the torch, an acknowledgment of the horrors survived, the son's newfound hardness, and the father's fierce, silent pride that, despite the collapse of an entire nation, his bloodline remains.

The family relocates to the mountains to live with family while Carla remains for several months recovering in the hospital. But Eli's spirit is splintered. Sitting around the family dining table, he erupts against religion itself, insisting bullets do not distinguish between Muslim and Christian, that all talk of divine order is obscene after Tony's death. Joseph, unexpectedly, becomes the one to defend Christ against the crimes committed in His name. Jesus never taught hatred, he tells Eli; men choose bitterness and keep war alive even after the shooting stops, only to reignite it.

Carla's private reckoning is perhaps the most painful of all. After a few months in the hospital, she learns that the opium used to manage her wounds may certainly have

harmed her unborn child. For a woman who has endured so much, this news opens a final emotional abyss. For the first time, we see her own reckoning with faith.

In the early hours of the morning, inside the rain-slicked courtyard where the Daygar family now reside, the past and present collide with haunting precision. Eli, hardened by loss after the massacre, is presented with a trophy. A fighter from the Jundallah militia who participated in the attack on their hometown, is brought together with his wife and small child.

Pulling sacking from the man's head, Eli locks eyes with someone barely older than himself. The prisoner stares back with terror disguised as defiance. The audience recognises him as possibly Zayan, the abandoned child from the prologue. A scar engraved deeply across his forehead. It's clear he has become part of the cycle of violence that took away Tony and shattered Carla. Now, here in the pelting rain of autumn, Eli has every opportunity to complete that cycle.

As the Kateab fighters demand blood, back in the hospital, Carla walks in a daze through a hospital filled with mutilated children. She passes a room where parents lie across their son's bed, wailing. A single cross hangs on the wall behind them.

Back in the courtyard, as Eli watches the family kneeling on the ground, Zayan's wife clutches her small son desperately, begging for mercy, but, contrary to his own family's stance on mercy, Eli issues a chilling, sudden command.

To the horror of his family, he orders the Kataeb to place the captives into his car, his voice carrying a new, dangerous edge that disturbs his sister Marie.

Meanwhile, pacing the hospital ward, Carla slowly enters a chapel.

Inside the sedan's damp interior, the rhythmic grating of the windshield wipers underscores a crushing atmosphere of fear. Radiating not only from the victims, but from the cold vacuum of Eli's expression. As dawn breaks over the coastal road, the car pulls onto a muddy shoulder in the shadow of a silent, watchful mosque near Tripoli.

In the open field, the cycle of vengeance reaches its breaking point. With the mosque rising like a silent judge in the rain, Eli yanks the sacks from the heads of Zayan and his wife, gesturing toward the empty expanse with his rifle.

It is here, in the grey light of daybreak, that the "Keeper of the Dead" legacy is challenged by a living choice: whether to add more bodies to the soot and wreckage of Lebanon, or to finally put the rifle down and choose mercy.

As she walks to the altar, looking up at the cross of her Saviour, Carla falls to her knees, keening from a broken heart. She asks Jesus for mercy but vows that even if she is not delivered from this new storm, she will still praise Him in its midst. As her

heart bleeds from loss and the prospect of even more, she will choose to stay and serve Him always.

As the young family are forced to their knees, Eli takes in the young child, who looks back at him, his large dark eyes curious and afraid. He remembers Tony's dying vision of Yesou (Jesus), his mother's words from his wedding day, "People look at the dirt because they are afraid to look at the sky."

And there in the mud and the rain, he too falls to his knees. He lowers his head, then, pausing for a moment, gently declares, "I am not your judge. How can I be?"

Eli unties Zayan, his wife, and his child, and orders them to run.

In that act, Eli neither denies his grief nor excuses the horror. He simply refuses to become its continuation. The film's title is transformed one final time. A name that once marked a target now becomes irrelevant before a harder truth in a religious war: "We are all His creation. How can I decide who lives? If He made us both, then God is the judge."

The End