

All The Way Home

by

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Based on the Life and Deployment of Matthew Haines

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INT. SMALL HUT, AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN BORDER - DAY

THE BUILDER, 60s, weathered face, grey beard, slow movements, connects thin wires to a circuit board with nimble fingers.

His hut is like RadioShack was swallowed up and regurgitated. Outdated tech, exposed wires, piles of microchips.

As delicate as a surgeon, he screws the circuit board into an old walkman, wipes the sweat from his brow.

EXT. SMALL HUT, AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN BORDER - MOMENTS LATER

TWO YOUNG BOYS, 12 & 13, hang around outside the hut. They sword-fight with sticks, draw pictures in the dirt.

The Builder emerges, the boys drop their sticks. Boy 1 darts to a MOPED SCOOTER, starts it up. Boy 2 claims the altered walkman from The Builder, hops on the back of the moped.

EXT. LONG DIRT ROAD - DAY

The boys drive through miles of valley. As the outskirts of a A VILLAGE come into view, the sun sinks west across the sky.

HAINES (V.O.)

They say that war robs you of your
innocence.

EXT. VILLAGE, AFGHANISTAN - NIGHT

They hop off the moped, enter the village on foot. Boy 2 clutches the walkman. Boy 1 walks in front of him, protector.

HAINES (V.O.)

It's a bit cliché...undeniable,
though.

Most VILLAGERS keep their heads down. CHILDREN scurry across the road. The occasional ARMED MILITANT patrols the streets.

A HOODED MAN leans against a wall. The Young Boys approach him, hand off the walkman. Hooded Man takes it, walks to the other side of the village.

EXT. ROCK WALL BARRIER OF VILLAGE - NIGHT

Hooded Man arrives at the perimeter of the village. He exits a hole in the wall, large enough for trucks to pass through one at a time. He continues on across mountainous terrain.

EXT. ROAD CARVED INTO MOUNTAINSIDE - NIGHT

THREE CLOAKED INSURGENTS with AK47s, locate a cable wire in the ground. The Hooded Man approaches.

The cloaked insurgents unspool the cable, extend it outward from the center of the road, up into the mountains. The Hooded Man attaches the altered walkman device to the cable.

HAINES (V.O.)

If I had to boil it all down, for the sake of telling a coherent story...it would probably start on the day my platoon drove over one of the largest IEDs to strike US Army ground patrol.

The Hooded Man gives a thumbs-up signal toward the mountains.

HAINES (V.O.)

We learned later, that the bomb was buried three-to-five years before detonation. So goes life in Afghanistan.

INT. LIVING ROOM OF FAMILY HOUSE, FLORIDA - FLASHBACK

10 YEAR OLD MATT HAINES, plays with toys on the floor.

HAINES (V.O.)

My apologies for starting you off in the Middle East. I know, context is key. And to understand my story, you need to know who I was when I deployed, and just how different the version of me who came back is.

Haines' PARENTS stand in front of the TV. New reports show the immediate aftermath of the first plane that hit on 9/11. Young Haines puts his toys down, peers at the TV.

HAINES (V.O.)

Shit, I went back too far. I'm not even positive I was watching that day.

INT. DINNER TABLE, HAINES' PARENTS HOUSE - NIGHT

MATT HAINES, 19, babyfaced, wide-eyed, eats dinner.

MOM, 40s, stares at Haines with a sadness in her eyes.

DAD 40s, shovels potatoes onto his plate, business as usual.

HAINES (V.O.)

The night before my drive back to base. 21 scenic hours from Florida to Kansas.

HAINES

Would ya stop lookin' at me like that, ma?

DAD

Leave the kid alone, Sherry. Let him eat.

MOM

I just-are you sure you don't want us to drive you out there?

DAD

He said he's got it handled.

INT. BATHROOM, LOPEZ'S HOUSE - NIGHT

LOPEZ, late 20s, shaves his beard with a straight razor.

LILLY, mid 20s, stands in the doorway, watches him.

LILLY

Are you nervous?

LOPEZ

You kidding? Look at these steady hands--oh crap.

He nicks himself with the razor.

Lilly moves in, plugs Lopez's cut with toilet paper.

LILLY

I'm nervous.

LOPEZ

You don't need to be.

LILLY

That's easy for you to say.

LOPEZ

It isn't.

She sticks her hand out, studies her diamond ring.

LILLY
I was hoping we'd make this official
before you left.

He wipes the remaining shaving cream off, embraces Lilly.

LOPEZ
As soon as I'm back, it's off to
Disney World.

INT. ELEVATOR, FORT RILEY ARMY BASE - NIGHT

PETERSEN, 30s, buzz cut, shaved face, blue eyes, rides the
elevator, arms full of empty boxes. The elevator stops,
opens, a FEMALE SOLDIER walks on.

FEMALE SOLDIER
Hey handsome.

The doors close, elevator continues up.

PETERSEN
How goes it?

FEMALE SOLDIER
It goes. Doing some recycling?

PETERSEN
Nah, packing my stuff. Shipping out.

FEMALE SOLDIER
No kidding? Don't know what we're
gonna do without that handsome face of
yours around here.

PETERSEN
Hah, I'm sure you'll persevere.

The elevator door opens, he gets out.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

MENDENHALL, mid 30s, broad shoulders, walks with his sons.

TOMMY, 9 years old, holds Mendenhall's left hand.

FOREST, 12 years old, holds his right.

FOREST
A year?

MENDENHALL

It's gonna fly by. And just think about all the stories you'll have for me by the time I'm back.

Tommy tears up, wipes his face.

MENDENHALL

Aww, come here.

Mendenhall kneels down, wraps them both up in a big bear hug.

HAINES (V.O.)

You could tell a lot aboutta guy based on the stories he chooses to share from his home life. And from the stuff he holds back.

EXT. HAINES' PARENTS HOUSE - NIGHT

Haines unlocks his car door. His father walks outside.

HAINES

Shit, did I wake you?

DAD

No, just thought I'd catch the sunrise, is all.

Haines checks his watch.

HAINES

Think you got another 25 minutes.

DAD

How's that new watch working out?

HAINES

It's great, Dad. Thanks.

DAD

Son, I--

HAINES

Well, I--oh. What were you gonna say?

DAD

Just...give 'em hell over there. And keep your head down.

HAINES

I will, pop.

DAD

And call home everyone once and
awhile, so your mother doesn't worry.

HAINES

Think the train's left the station on
that one.

DAD

No kidding.

HAINES

I'll see ya.

DAD

Bye son.

Haines climbs into the car, drives off. His father watches as
the car gets smaller and smaller.

EXT. OUTDOOR CAFE, BOCA RATON - DAY [FLASH FORWARD]

A beautiful, sunny day in Florida.

FUTURE MATT HAINES, hair grown out, stubbly beard, sits at a
table. The flip flops and Hawaiian shirt fit him awkwardly.

HAINES

I didn't think about it much, back
then. But dad was always the
sentimental type.

DANNY sits across from him, types notes into his laptop.

DANNY

Was it hard leaving?

HAINES

Sure...but back then I really thought
I was on this greater mission. It
wasn't a question of, *should I do
this?* It was happening, like auto-
pilot.

DANNY

Okay, so you get to base in Kansas.
Then what happens?

EXT. MARINE CORPS MOUNTAIN WARFARE TRAINING CENTER - DAY

State of the art training facility up in the mountains. Ropes courses, targets for fire arms practice, rock climbing & repelling. Helicopters, jeeps, trucks.

HAINES (V.O.)
Mountain Warfare School.

UNIFORMED MARINES peer over at the Army platoon encroaching on their territory. Haines, Lopez, Petersen, Mendenhall and TWO DOZEN OTHERS high five and mingle.

HAINES (V.O.)
After bootcamp we became the first
Army Unit ever to be shipped off to a
Marine training facility.

CAPTAIN CORNELL greets them, stands upright, hands behind his back, looks like a real-life action figure.

CAPTAIN CORNELL
Glad we're all catching up, gentlemen.

FIRST SERGEANT MCGUIRE pulls a box of straws out of his pocket, tosses it to Lopez. Lopez hands them out.

HAINES (V.O.)
The air up in the mountains of
Afghanistan would be the thinnest we'd
ever breathe. So it was time to start
getting used to it.

EXT. STEEP HILL, TRAINING CENTER - DAY

The platoon runs uphill breathing through straws in their mouths. Faces red, chests rise and fall, several soldiers stumble to their knees along the way.

FIRST SERGEANT MCGUIRE
If you can't handle the hills of
California, you may as well pack up
and head home. Cause there ain't no
way in hell you'll be able to handle
the mountains of Afghanistan. Not with
twenty pounds of gear on, not with
mortars falling out of the sky.

JENSON, late 20s, makes it to the top, leg cramps up.

He stumbles but Haines braces him.

JENSON

Thanks, man.

INT. EMPTY WAREHOUSE, TRAINING CENTER - DAY

TWO CADRES--training officers dressed in marine fatigues--demonstrate how to package each other into rescue stretchers.

CADRE 1

Most important thing is to make sure he's secure before you move him.

HAINES

Got it.

CADRE 2

Alright, get me outta here and let these Army brats give it a try.

Cadre 1 undoes the stretcher-wiring, pulls Cadre 2 up.

MILLER, late 20s, freckled face, dime-store grin.

MILLER

Shit, I'll bet you my last two cigarettes that Haines here can bundle me in faster'n you two.

The cadres smirk at each other.

CADRE 1

You're on.

Cadre 1 pulls out a second stretcher.

CADRE 2

Ready?...Go!

Miller goes limp, falls into the stretcher with utter disregard for his body. Haines fastens him in.

EXT. WOODS, TRAINING CENTER - DAY

BJORND AHL, 20s, animalistic, inches through the woods, head on a swivel, carries an M240 machine gun. Everyone else carries M4 rifles, all of which have metal caps plugging the muzzle - they're firing blanks.

FARMER, 30s, eager, adrenalized, walks on Bjorndahl's right, he's the radio man.

BAKER, 30s, witty, sarcastic, *tactical*, walks on the left.

SERGEANT FLETCHER, early 40s, carries himself like a leader, followed by Haines on the end of the line.

They traverse the wooded mountain area.

FARMER

Bout time we get a little action,
place was starting to bore me.

BJORND AHL

Please, I saw you tense up while
mixing those fertilizers yesterday.
Looked like you were ready to shit
your pants.

FARMER

That's an act, is all that was.

DIMON, 30s, eager to chime in--

DIMON

Yeah, remind me to nominate you for a
SAG award.

FARMER

I'll show you something that sags.

Farmer grabs his crotch. They approach a blind turn on the mountain. Baker throws his fist up, signals for the group to halt. He kneels down, studies a boot print in the mud, signals for BJORND AHL to proceed left, Farmer to move right.

On the other side of the blind turn, the OPPOSITION FORCE waits to make their ambush - they're a Marine unit dressed up as Afghan insurgents. Baker picks up a large stone, tosses it to the left of the boulder, it lands with a THUD.

OP FORCE 1 pops out, reveals himself - BJORND AHL aims, squeezes the trigger on his machine gun, unleashes a crackling of blanks.

CADRE 3, stationed further up the mountain, watches through binoculars.

CADRE 3

Direct hit! Enemy down.

Op Force 1 drops to the ground, pretends to die.

OP FORCE 2 leaps out from behind a rock, aims at Baker, fires off a round of blanks.

CADRE 3

Baker's been hit by a round, he's
bleeding out!

Baker drops to the ground, Haines runs over, starts to patch him up as if he's actually been shot.

Lopez and Petersen emerge from behind the Opposition Force. Lopez aims his rifle at Op Force 2, pulls the trigger.

CADRE 3

Direct hit - enemy down.

Op Force 2 falls to his pretend death.

Op Force 3 & 4 turn their attention to Lopez and Petersen.

ORTEGA, early 30s, stationed up higher on the mountain, above the Cadre, trains his sniper rifle down on the shootout.

He aims at Op Force 3, pulls the trigger, aims at Op Force 4, fires again - his rifle barks twice as it fires blanks.

CADRE 3

Direct hit, direct hit, enemies down.

Lopez looks up, smiles at Ortega, who winks back at him.

FLETCHER (INTO RADIO)

We have casualties, prepare to call up
a 9-line...

CADRE 3

Copy that, go ahead and send it.

FLETCHER (INTO RADIO)

Line one: 1-2-3-4-5 break, 6-7-8-9-10
break. Line two: 1350-2690, Delta 2-7,
break. Line 3: one alpha, break. Line
four: alpha, break. Line five: litter,
break. Line six: Echo, break. Line 7:
Charlie, break. Line 8: Alpha, break--

CADRE 3

A large insurgent militia approaches
from across the mountain. They
outnumber you and they're carrying a
mortar tube.

FLETCHER

We need air support now!

DAMICO, 20s, approaches the ledge of the mountain, aims his GPS DEVICE across the range toward Cadre's description of insurgent activity.

MATTUCCI, 20s, walks over toward Haines, who kneels by Baker.

MATTUCCI

Comfortable down there, Sergeant?

BAKER

Be more comfortable with your mom sitting on my face.

MATTUCCI

That might lead to an injury even Haines couldn't patch you up from.

DAMICO

Air assets are on the way.

EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE, TRAINING CENTER - NIGHT

Cadre 1 stands over a stretcher, in front of Haines and the platoon.

FOY, mid-20s, has his rifle flung proudly over his shoulder.

WOLFORD, mid-20s, watches as a mosquito flies through the air, lands on Foy. He swats at it, smacks Foy on the back of the neck.

FOY

What the fuck, Wolford?

WOLFORD

Mosquito.

Foy rubs his neck.

FOY

Think I'd prefer the mosquito bite.

CADRE 1

Listen up. Foy's lost his leg. Tourniquet him and get him down the mountain.

FOY

What?

GAUTHIER, mid-20s, redhead, freckles, puts a leg behind Foy.

GAUTHIER

You heard him, man.

He trips Foy to the ground.

FOY

Fuck you, Gooch.

Haines treats Foy's imaginary leg wound, secures the tourniquet high and tight.

FLETCHER

Damico, find us some even ground so we can meet the chopper.

DAMICO

I'm on it.

Haines, Gauthier and Wolford hoist Foy up, place him in the stretcher. Haines fastens him in. They lift the stretcher.

Fletcher and Damico lead the pack down the mountain, with Ortega and Bjordahl on the perimeter of the group, scanning the surrounding terrain through the scopes of their weapons.

HAINES

Hanging in there, buddy?

FOY

This is fucking bullshit, man. I'm gonna need a Dramamine.

INT. LABRATORY, MOUNTAIN TRAINING FACILITY - NIGHT

Cadre 1 & 2 demonstrate chemical tests on each others hands. Haines studies them, takes mental notes.

CADRE 2

As the Platoon's medic, you're the guy who tests possible insurgents for explosives residue.

Haines watches Cadre 1 wipe the tab on the Cadre 2's hands.

CADRE 1

See, the tab changes color...

Cadre 1 compares the color change to a little chart he holds.

CADRE 2

Based on what color appears, you can deduce which fertilizers are present.

CADRE 1

If any.

CADRE 2

Right...and at the end of the day, it's your call. There's always room for human error.

CADRE 1

Plus, everybody and their cousin over there is a fucking farmer.

Haines nods along to their demonstration.

CADRE 1

Here, give it a try.

EXT. SIDE OF A CLIFF, MOUNTAIN RANGE, TRAINING CENTER - DAY

Ortega leans over a rock, peers through the scope of his sniper rifle, aims at a target on the opposite side of the mountain, 600 meters away.

CADRE 4 and CADRE 5 stand on either side of him, look through binoculars. Ortega pulls the trigger - direct hit.

ORTEGA

Someone must be feeding me bad information.

CADRE 4

What's that?

ORTEGA

I was told you were gonna make this challenging.

Ortega smirks. Cadres 4 & 5 exchange an eye roll.

CADRE 5

Do it again.

Ortega peers through his scope again. This time, right before he pulls the trigger, Cadres 4 & 5 raise their rifles and shoot off several rounds of blanks right by Ortega's ears.

He misses the target all together.

ORTEGA

Shit! What the hell are you assholes doing?

CADRE 4

Not so confident with rifle fire going off in your face?

ORTEGA

You could'a blew out my damn ear drum.

CADRE 5

How do you think it works over there? You think every time you line up a target, he's gonna be off in the distance sittin' pretty for you?

CADRE 4

You'll probably be shooting someone who's try'na shoot back. While bullets wiz passed your dome and mortars fall from the sky all around you.

Ortega gets back into his crouch.

ORTEGA

Again.

Cadre 4 and Cadre 5 fire off blanks from their rifles, Ortega peers through his scope, pulls the trigger - direct hit.

Cadre 4 looks through his binoculars.

CADRE 4

Now, that's more like it.

EXT. OBSTACLE COURSE, TRAINING FACILITY - DAY

The Platoon participates in a soul-crushing drill, where they run up hill for several miles with heavy backpacks on.

At the top of the hill, they drop to their bellies, proceed to crawl under a maze of barbed wire, 50 meters long.

At the end of the maze, they're spat out into a pit, with thick mud up to their wastes, which they navigate for another mile, before reaching a wooden climbing wall twenty feet high.

Each recruit climbs the wall, repels down the other side, finishes the obstacle course with a two-mile run up a mountain side.

SHOUSE, in worse shape than all other participants, is in dead last position throughout the entire obstacle course.

Haines hangs back, keeps an eye on Shouse throughout.

Haines reaches the top of the twenty-foot climbing wall, instead of repelling down to keep up with the rest of the unit, he pauses. He waits at the top for Shouse.

HAINES

C'mon, Shouse. You got this. Let's go.

Shouse, more than half way up the wall, starts to whimper.

SHOUSE

I'm not fucking infantry! Why am I participating in this?

HAINES

You've got this, c'mon!

SHOUSE

I don't, I don't, I can't.

Shouse is full on crying now.

HAINES

No one's done til the last of us crosses that finish line. You can't give up on us now.

SHOUSE

Yes I can, Haines. I can.

Shouse's arms go limp, he's moments from letting go of the rope, falling to the mud below.

Haines raps the top of the rope around his left arm, drops down toward Shouse, stick his right hand out.

HAINES

Reach up, grab for me. C'mon, man!

Shouse reaches out, Haines pulls him up.

Shouse sits at the top of the wall, cries like a wounded seal.

HAINES

Sorry, man.

Haines shoves Shouse off the wall, the big man crashes down into the mud below. Haines repels down the wall, picks Shouse up, the two march on. The final stretch of the obstacle course: a two mile run up a steep, sloping mountain side.

EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE, NEAR END OF OBSTACLE COURSE - SAME TIME

After realizing Haines and Shouse are missing, the rest of the Platoon and HQ guys come to a halt.

DAMICO

There they are, look.

BJORND AHL

It's Shouse - Haines hung back with him. He would've crushed this course.

In the distance, they see Shouse collapse.

EXT. OBSTACLE COURSE, TRAINING FACILITY - SAME TIME

Haines stands over Shouse, who looks like a dead fish. He drops to one knee, takes his pack off, removes the IV kit.

HAINES

You're dehydrated, buddy.

SHOUSE

J-j-j-just go...

HAINES

Nah, you know the drill, no man left behind and all that?

Haines ties the tourniquet around Shouse's right arm, can't find a vein, tries the left arm...

HAINES

Oh shit - looks like your veins have collapsed.

SHOUSE

L-l-l-leave me--

HAINES

I leave you now, you're as good as dead.

Haines uses all his might to flip Shouse over onto his belly.

HAINES

Hope you cleaned your ass, pal.

Shouse realizes what's about to happen, tries to summon every last bit of energy to crawl away - it's fruitless.

Haines yanks Shouse's pants down, the big man's bare ass sticks up in the air.

EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE, END OF OBSTACLE COURSE - SAME TIME

The rest of the Platoon look on, half in horror, half in uncontrollable laughter.

ORTEGA

What the fuck's he doing?

MATTUCCI

Oh my God, he's giving him Ranger IV.

EXT. OBSTACLE COURSE, TRAINING FACILITY - SAME TIME

Haines shoves a long tube into Shouse' ass, connects the other end to A BAG OF SALINE. He puts the saline on the ground, stomps on it. The liquid solution rushes through the tube, into Shouse's ass.

INT. MESS HALL, TRAINING FACILITY - NIGHT

The whole gang eats grub, drinks juice, laughs their asses off. Haines smiles, proud.

LOPEZ

I can't believe it, I can't believe you did that.

BJORND AHL

You're a mad man, a true mad man.

HAINES

Hey, it was that or...leave him there to die, I guess.

WEAR

You really handled that man-ass, Doc.

Haines takes a big bite out of an apple. Everyone chuckles.

JENSON

One thing's for sure, Doc. I'm glad you'll be the one patching us up over there.

Gauthier lifts his glass of juice.

GAUTHIER

To Doc.

MATTUCCI

To Doc.

BAKER

To Doc.

BJORND AHL

To Doc.

MENDENHALL

To Doc!

They cheers.

EXT. OUTDOOR CAFE, BOCA RATON - DAY [FLASH FORWARD]

Future Haines stirs his glass of ice water with a straw.

DANNY

Doc? That's what they called you?

HAINES

Ya know, had you asked me outright before we started talking, I'm not sure I would've been able to tell you how I got my nickname.

DANNY

So, that was Mountain Warfare School.

HAINES

We had broken so many records previously held by the Marines, we woke up one morning, jarheads had stolen our flag.

DANNY

What'd you guys do?

EXT. ON-SITE BARRACKS, MT. WARFARE SCHOOL - NIGHT

On the ground level, near the entrance, a PVC flag pole flies the D Company 128 banner with a tribal-style picture of a Pit Bull's face on it.

JUMP CUT

EXT. ON-SITE BARRACKS, MT. WARFARE SCHOOL - DAY

On the ground level, near the entrance, the PVC flag pole is now missing its banner...

HAINES (V.O.)

We made our own.

INT. ON-SITE BARRACKS, MT. WARFARE SCHOOL - DAY

Sunshine pokes through the windows of the barracks.

AVILES, 20s, wiry, comes running into the barracks.

AVILES

Our banner. They stole it. They stole our fucking banner.

LOPEZ

Who did?

BJORND AHL

Fucking Marines, who else?

AVILES

What are we gonna do?

BJORND AHL

I don't know about the rest of you, but I'm gonna fuck 'em up. That's what I'm gonna do.

Fletcher hops off his bed, tosses his blanket to the floor and pulls the sheet off.

FLETCHER

Fuck that.

Fletcher tears at his bed sheet.

FOY

So what? You just want to do nothing, then?

FLETCHER

Doc, help me. Take this end.

Haines grabs the far end of the bed sheet. Fletcher continues to tear at it.

FLETCHER

A flag don't make this company what it is. The soldiers do. Who's got a marker?

EXT. ON-SITE BARRACKS, MT. WARFARE SCHOOL - DAY

The stolen flag has been replaced by a bed sheet with crude drawing of a Pit Bull.

HAINES (V.O.)

I was 19 years old when my First Sergeant told me to have my last will and testament prepared before deployment.

EXT. ARMY BASE, AFGHANISTAN - DAY

TWO HELICOPTERS touch down, Haines' platoon files out. Nervous energy - it's all stiff necks, heavy breathing.

HAINES (V.O.)

At the time, I didn't really understand the gravity of what he was saying.

LIEUTENANT LAMBKA, late 20s, there to greet them, yells over the sounds of the choppers.

LT. LAMBKA

Welcome to RC East, gentlemen. Let's get you situated.

INT. ARMY BASE, AFGHANISTAN - DAY

Haines follows Lambka through the base.

LT. LAMBKA

What's your name, Doc?

HAINES

Haines, sir. What happened to Lieutenant Parton?

LT. LAMBKA

Made Captain. He's at HQ now. Don't worry, I know you all had a rapport with him. I'm not here to shake any trees, or whatever the fuck the saying is. Here's your hooch. Take some time to get settled, unpack. We'll do a walkthrough at oh two hundred.

INT. HAINES' ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Concrete room, no drywall, just cinderblocks, dirty, stained mattress on the floor. No bed frame, no sheets or blankets.

HAINES (V.O.)

We prepped for over a month to land in the middle of a shit storm. To take enemy fire, and to dole it out.

The room's about six feet by eight feet, a three foot long hallway leads to the next room.

HAINES (V.O.)

What no one could have prepared us for was all the down time.

Haines drops his bag, starts to unpack, stops.

INT. LOPEZ'S ROOM - SAME TIME

Aviles and Lopez play cards on the bed. Haines enters, stands in the doorway.

AVILES

Sup Doc?

HAINES

What'chu smiling about, Aviles?

AVILES

Shit, am I? Guess that happens when I'm nervous.

LOPEZ

Nothing to be nervous about, I spoke to one of the guys from the platoon that's cycling out. Apparently, we won't get assigned a mission for at least a month.

AVILES

Sounds boring.

LOPEZ

Should we deal you in, Doc?

INT. TACTICAL OPERATIONS CENTER, ARMY BASE - DAY

The TOC - a room with an elaborate radio setup, a whiteboard, computers and GPS equipment. Various old war collectibles are hung on the wall - and old Russian Army helmet from their failed invasion, a prehistoric looking AK47.

First Sergeant McGuire sits at a center table.

Next to him is LIEUTENANT SIOK, 30s, hunched over a computer.

LT. COLONEL BARTON, 40, the bland face of a company man, talks with Captain Cornell.

CAPTAIN CORNELL

Intel suggests they've been monitoring our movements. I don't like the timing.

A wrong turn lands Haines in the TOC.

HAINES

Oh, uh--

Shouse reveals himself, sitting in the corner by the radio.

SHOUSE

Hey, Doc.

HAINES

Shouse. Good to see you, man.

They shake hands.

SHOUSE

Getting settled alright?

HAINES

Can't complain.

SHOUSE

Give it a few days, you'll find something to complain about.

INT. MESS HALL, ARMY BASE - DAY

Lopez, Foy, Bjorndahl, and Ortega sit at a table eating sausages. Haines joins them.

FOY

What's a ride along entail, huh?

ORTEGA

They're gonna show us some of our operating area.

BJORND AHL

Routes to take, streets to go down--

LOPEZ

And not to go down. Lay of the land, you know. You guys meet any of the ASF guys? What do we think?

HAINES

Met one guy, couldn't get a read on him, was quiet.

LOPEZ

My father always said it's the quiet ones you gotta watch out for.

BJORND AHL

I don't know about that - Doc's pretty quiet, and he checks out.

LOPEZ

Yeah, just wait til you got some shrapnel in your leg, and he's the only thing standing between you and the afterlife. Ay, Doc?

HAINES

Yeah, just call me Jack Kevorkian.

He snags a piece of sausage off Bjorndahl's plate.

INT. DAMICO'S HOOCH, ARMY BASE - NIGHT

Damico fiddles with a handheld radio. Haines stands over his shoulder.

HAINES

What'chu got there?

DAMICO

One of the guys heading home told me I can have it.

HAINES

Looks like an old piece of crap.

DAMICO

It is, but I might be able to get it working properly.

HAINES

You good with this kinda shit?

DAMICO

Eh, my old man was. I didn't exactly inherit his technological intuition.

HAINES

What was he like?

DAMICO

Hard to please. He was an RTO in the Gulf War.

HAINES

No kidding?

DAMICO

Never - wasn't his style. Think I only saw him laugh once his whole life.

HAINES

What happened to him?

DAMICO

What is this? Twenty questions?

Miller enters.

MILLER

What's going on boys?

HAINES

Damico's fixing a walkman.

MILLER

Either of y'all have any pre-workout supplement? We gotta pushup competition in the gym going, Wolford won't participate til he gets some.

DAMICO
Now isn't that some high maintenance
crap?

MILLER
Yeah well, you know Wolford.

HAINES
I might know where to find some. I'll
meet you in there in ten minutes.

MILLER
Sounds good.

Miller leaves.

HAINES
You have some pre-workout powder?

DAMICO
None that I wanna share with Wolford.
Why?

HAINES
I've got an idea.

INT. MEDICAL CLINIC, ARMY BASE - NIGHT

Bland room, white walls, baby blue cabinets.

MEDIC JOHNSON references a clipboard as he stocks shelves.

HAINES
How goes it, Johnson?

JOHNSON
It goes and goes. You finding things
alright? Settling in?

HAINES
Ya know I am, although I'm a tad
backed up.

Haines pats his belly.

JOHNSON
Travel will do that to a guy. For me,
it usually goes the other way.

Haines opens some cabinets, studies the contents.

HAINES

Ya know, I'd prefer it that way.
Nothin' like a little travelers
diarrhea to cleanse the old gut, eh?

Johnson lets out a chuckle.

JOHNSON

Diuretics are in this one, if that's
what you're looking for.

He points to a cabinet.

Haines opens it, takes out a package of tablets.

HAINES

You're a saint.

JOHNSON

Just don't forget to log 'em--

Haines is already out the door.

INT. DAMICO'S HOOCH, ARMY BASE - MOMENTS LATER

Damico mixes pre-workout powder into a bottle of water.

Haines crushes the diuretics with a mug, scoops the remnants
in with the pre-workout. Damico closes the bottle, shakes it
up.

INT. GYM, ARMY BASE - NIGHT

Haines hands the tainted drink to Wolford.

WOLFORD

Thanks, Doc.

Wolford chugs it.

HAINES

Don't mention it.

Bjorndahl finishes a set of squats, puts the bar on the rack.
He flexes, smacking the muscles on each arm.

WOLFORD

Lemme show you how it's done, BJ.

Wolford steps up, gets into a set of squats...halfway through
the set, he rips a loud, nasty fart.

Haines and Damico exchange a smile, barely contain themselves. Wolford shakes it off, does a couple more reps--

WOLFORD

Uh oh.

As he lifts the bar to put it back up on the rack, another nasty far squeaks out - Wolford drops the bar, it crashes to the floor, he grabs his ass, b-lines for the nearest door.

Haines, Damico, Bjorndahl, Lopez and Mattucci file out after him, laugh their faces off.

EXT. PORT-O-POTTY, ARMY BASE - DAY

Wolford gallops into the port-o-potty, clenches his ass cheeks as long as he can.

An explosion of gas and liquids erupt.

EXT. ARMY BASE, AFGHANISTAN - DAY

RANGO, PASTOR, DEBICKY lean back against a heavily armored truck with four-foot tires and a mounted machine gun on the back. These three battle-worn soldiers are visibly jaded, like long time prisoners getting a look at the fresh meat. They study Haines and his platoon.

RANGO

Replacements got that deer in the headlights look, don't they?

DEBICKY

Couple months a baking out here, they'll be hard as rock. Just how it goes.

RANGO

I don't know. Is that what we looked like when we got here?

Pastor spits out a thick brown lugee.

PASTOR

It's cyclical. Come in soft. Leave hard. In comes a new batch of softies. Cyclical.

RANGO

Well, shit. Hope it's better for them than it was for us.

A hundred yards away, Haines, Fletcher, Jenson and Mendenhall gather. They make a slow walk toward Rango's truck.

JENSON

That your teeth I hear chattering,
Mendenhall?

MENDENHALL

Just my adrenaline.

JENSON

Sounds more like *nerves*, ya ask me.

FLETCHER

No need to be nervous boys. Look at
those fucking trucks, indestructible.

MENDENHALL

This is just a ride-along, though.
Right? Nothing crazy?

JENSON

Don't think it works that way. Whole
thing about crazy is, it ain't exactly
predictable.

HAINES

C'mon, what are we worrying about?
This is it man, this the beginning.

They reach Rango's team.

RANGO

Morning boys. Hope everyone took a
piss already. Won't be any rest stops
on today's tour.

INT. RANGO'S ARMORED TRUCK - DAY

Rango drives, Pastor's in the front passenger seat. Debicky's
sitting up top with the mounted machine gun.

They talk into radio headsets to communicate with Haines'
truck.

RANGO

When you're going in and out of the
village, make sure you don't take this
road.

INT. HAINES' ARMORED TRUCK - SAME TIME

Jenson drives. Fletcher is in the shotgun seat. Haines is behind Fletcher in the back right seat, Mendenhall in the back left. They all wear radio headsets.

JENSON

How come?

RANGO (O.S.)

This area's surrounded by nothing but woods. It's easy to pop off shots and cause chaos when they know we can't chase them.

DEBICKY (O.S.)

Others paths will take longer, but patience is something you'll want to develop on the quicker side out here.

MENDENHALL

Can't we call in air support, have them light up the wooded area?

INT. RANGO'S ARMORED TRUCK - SAME TIME

Rango and Debicky exchange a glance.

DEBICKY

Another thing you'll wanna learn on the quicker side - pick your battles.

RANGO

Avoid heading into areas with only one exit. These insurgents, despite what you may think, they ain't dumb.

DEBICKY

They'll block your only exit, and while you're reversing back out the way you came in, rain down machine gun fire on you from up above.

RANGO

So yea, stay off that road.

DEBICKY

The other thing they do is, they're good at laying in wait. Might throw a few shots at you one night you're out on patrol, just to see how you react.

RANGO

They study us. Come up with strategies to combat our evasive-maneuvers. You never wanna do the same thing twice.

DEBICKY

Hold up, hold up. North-East corner there.

RANGO

What, what do you see?

SEVERAL ROBED MEN stand in a group by a hole in a wall. Some of the men disappear into the hole, a few more emerge, study the armored truck, disappear back into the hole.

RANGO

You seein' this Pastor.

EXT. GUNNER'S NEST, RANGO'S ARMORED TRUCK - SAME TIME

Pastor studies the scene.

PASTOR

I'm seeing it.

INT. HAINES' ARMORED TRUCK - SAME TIME

Mendenhall studies the scene.

MENDENHALL

What exactly are we seeing?

DEBICKY (O.S.)

Might be nothing.

RANGO (O.S.)

Probably nothing.

DEBICKY (O.S.)

Could be something, though.

Mendenhall wipes the sweat from his brow, tries to readjust himself in his seat, can't get comfortable. He and Haines exchange a nervous glare.

The two trucks pass by the hole in the wall, slow as a R.V. in bumper-to-bumper traffic.

INT. RANGO'S ARMORED TRUCK - SAME TIME

By the time the hole in the wall is out of view, Rango and Debicky relax in their seats, continue on, back to business.

RANGO

Sometimes, what you don't see is just as important as what you do see.

DEBICKY

And you've gotta watch everybody. Clothes are the same, everyone has an AK, even the kids. Some will shoot at you, some will feed you. Keep your head on a swivel.

RANGO

And go with your gut.

INT. HAINES' ARMORED TRUCK - SAME TIME

Mendenhall mouths to Haines: WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

Haines just shakes his head.

FLETCHER

So uh, what kinda name is Pastor, anyway?

DEBICKY (O.S.)

Y'all have learned a thing or two about IEDs, I'm sure?

FLETCHER

Of course.

INT. RANGO'S ARMORED TRUCK - SAME TIME

They drive on.

DEBICKY

Well, there's different kinds, obviously.

RANGO

You've got the pressure plates that detonate on contact.

DEBICKY

But you also got those landmine-types, won't go off til you lift your foot.

RANGO

Now, when you're up in the mountains in an area you can't drive through, what these demented Hadji fuckers like to do, is they like to design these littler IED-types. Ones that won't kill you on impact.

DEBICKY

They'll just shred your legs and organs to bits, but you won't die from the explosion.

RANGO

And forget about your medic, here. Best he's gonna be able to do is maybe try and take some a the pain away.

DEBICKY

Goodluck.

RANGO

Anyway, we were in one of these areas, on a clusterfuck of a mission--

DEBICKY

On foot.

RANGO

That's right, on foot. And Pastor here steps on one of these little IED fuckers. Next thing we realize, we're surrounded by 'em. Walked right into a trap, IEDs everywhere. All around us.

DEBICKY

So everyone stops, we take stock of the situation, one-by-one we back our way out. Except for Pastor, of course. We're thinking, maybe he stepped on a pressure plate and it's a dud--

RANGO

But maybe that little fucker's just waiting for him to lift his foot up--

RANGO

Then bang!

MENDENHALL (O.S.)

So, what'd you do?

RANGO

We couldn't do nothing for him, we couldn't even get to him without risking stepping on more of 'em.

DEBICKY

So everyone backs out, we get out from this trap we walked blindly into.

RANGO

Except Ol' Pastor up there.

DEBICKY

He waited, waited for the rest of us to back out into a safer clearing. And he stayed there, said his goodbyes...

MENDENHALL (O.S.)

And then???

RANGO

Then he lifted his foot, walked right on outta there. IED never went off.

DEBICKY

He had stepped on a dud.

JENSON (O.S.)

Jesus Christ.

RANGO

That's what *I* said. Motherfucker walked with God. Now he's the Pastor.

INT. GYM, ARMY BASE - DAY

Foy and Bjorndahl compete in a bench press competition, each pushes over 200 pounds, faces turning purpler by the second. Aviles spots Foy, Mendenhall spots Bjorndahl.

Wolford, Mattucci, Miller, Baker, Farmer, Ortega and Jenson cheer them on.

Lopez, Wear and Petersen work out at various gym machines.

MILLER

I got two smokes say Foy craps out first.

FARMER

I'll take that bet, Sarg.

They shake on it. Haines strolls into the gym.

HAINES
What's cracking?

JENSON
Just the latest dick measuring contest
between these two love bugs.

HAINES
Classic. I got next, who wants a
piece? Sarg, you wanna go?

MILLER
Nah, count me out Doc.

HAINES
What about you Wolford? You ready to
lose?

WOLFORD
Alright, I'll bite. But I ain't doing
a shitty bench press competition.

HAINES
Then what?

WOLFORD
Let's see if you can do an Impossible
Sit Up.

HAINES
The hell's an impossible sit up?

WOLFORD
It's basically like - you do a sit up,
while one guy holds your head down
with a handkerchief.

HAINES
That's dumb, that's not even
challenging.

WOLFORD
I'm telling you, Doc. They're
impossible.

HAINES
I don't buy it.

WOLFORD
You'll go first then...

HAINES
Fine.

Haines takes a seat on the gym mat, lays back in pre-sit up position. Wolford drapes a towel over Haines' face.

WOLFORD
Alright Doc, now I'm gonna hold your head back with this towel, while you try and do a sit up.

Wolford drops his pants, stands over Haines, bare ass out.

HAINES
Piece of cake.

Haines starts his sit up motion, the towel falls, he plants his face right into Wolford's ass. Everyone laughs.

WOLFORD
How you like this man-ass, Doc?

HAINES
Oh, you motherfucker!

Wolford bolts out the gym. Haines chases after him.

INT. HAINES' ARMORED TRUCK - DAY

Haines' truck is the second-to-last in the convoy of 7.

Jenson drives. Sergeant Fletcher is in the front passenger seat. Mendenhall is the back left, Haines in the back right. They cruise through a local village.

Haines cracks open peanuts, drops the shells into his lap.

FLETCHER
You gotta chew so fucking loud, Doc?

HAINES
How else am I gonna make sure Mendenhall stays awake?

JENSON
You better not be getting peanut shells all over the floor of my truck.

MENDENHALL

Your truck?

JENSON

Hey, if either one of you wants to clean this baby--*even one time*--I'm willing to call it shared custody.

FLETCHER

I'd say that sounds pretty reasonable.

MENDENHALL

Eh, I've already got one custody agreement too many.

Haines opens his door, wipes the shells from his lap, shuts the door.

JENSON

Ay! Don't be slamming my back door.

MENDENHALL

Shit, Jenson. I could'a swore you like getting your back door slammed.

JENSON

Only when your wife's got the strap-on.

The convoy comes to a halt.

HAINES

What are we stopping for?

FLETCHER

Looks like some goats up ahead in the road or something.

Haines studies a GROUP OF VILLAGE CHILDREN playing soccer outside.

He pulls a handful of starbursts from his pocket, opens the door--

HAINES

Hey kid.

A VILLAGE KID looks at him, Haines tosses him the starbursts, shuts his door.

EXT. OUTSIDE ARMORED TRUCK, VILLAGE - SAME TIME

The other children swarm the kid with the starbursts. At first they're innocently reaching for a share, but it quickly spirals into violence.

INT. HAINES' ARMORED TRUCK - SAME TIME

Haines opens his door.

MENDENHALL

What are you doing?

HAINES

Fuck does it look like?

MENDENHALL

You know how often they see candy?
What are you gonna do about it? You
wanna get shot over this?

The convoy starts moving, Haines reluctantly closes his door, Jenson hits the gas, speeds off.

JENSON

Christ, hope that was worth it, Doc.

HAINES

Just wanted to give them some candy.

INT. PAY PHONE ROOM, ARMY BASE - NIGHT

Haines sits, phone to ear, stares up at the ceiling. Lopez in the corner of the room, speaks quietly into the phone.

HAINES (ON PHONE)

I miss you, ma...nah, we're mostly
just working out...Yeah, I'm eating
good ma...Dad there?...Alright well,
tell him I'm doing good.

Mendenhall enters the phone room.

HAINES (ON PHONE)

Alright, alright...I gotta go...love
you too...will do, bye.

He hangs up.

MENDENHALL

Called home?

HAINES

Yeah man, you gonna make a call?

Mendenhall stares at the phone a moment.

MENDENHALL

Ehh, better not.

HAINES

You sure?

MENDENHALL

Kids are in bed, no one else to call.

HAINES

You wanna get a game a spades going?

They leave. It's only Lopez now.

LOPEZ (ON PHONE)

What's the matter, baby?

LILLY (O.S.)

I just miss you. Mom's not helping, giving me a hard time about moping around without you.

LOPEZ (ON PHONE)

Your mother's always on about something or other.

LILLY (O.S.)

Well, it'd be different if we were married. You know?

LOPEZ (ON PHONE)

Soon as I'm back, baby. Off to Disney World, and we'll make this permanent. I promise. As soon as I'm back.

INT. FIRST ARMORED TRUCK OF THE CONVOY - DAY

Ortega drives, Mattucci's in the front passenger seat, Miller in the back left, Bjorndahl up in the gunner's nest.

LIEUTENANT LAMBKA (O.S.)

Hold steady a beat. Then it's a sharp turn East.

Ortega and Mattucci exchange a worried glance.

EXT. MOUNTAINOUS ROAD - SAME TIME

The convoy of U.S. Army Trucks approaches the very road Haines' team was warned off of during their ride along. Ominous shadows dance across the darkness.

INT. SECOND ARMORED TRUCK OF THE CONVOY - SAME TIME

Lopez drives, Lt. Lambka in the front passenger, Wear in the back right, Petersen up in the gunner spot.

Interpreter HABIB is in the back left.

MATTUCCI (O.S.)

Lieutenant, I was warned off this road. Our trucks can't operate in those woods.

LIEUTENANT LAMBKA (INTO RADIO)

Yeah well, today we're shaking trees and shit. Order came down from Lt. Colonel Barton, himself. Wants this area flushed out.

INT. FIRST ARMORED TRUCK OF THE CONVOY - SAME TIME

Mattucci shrugs. Ortega takes a deep breath, turns the steering wheel with dramatic purpose.

MATTUCCI

Roger that.

ORTEGA

Shake the trees, he says.

INT. HAINES' ARMORED TRUCK - SAME TIME

The convoy turns.

HAINES

Fuckin' A.

MENDENHALL

What is it?

HAINES

Just a bad feeling. Look alive.

Trees from the surrounding woods shake, shadows dance.

INT. FIRST ARMORED TRUCK OF THE CONVOY - SAME TIME

Ortega tightens his grip on the steering wheel.

MATTUCCI

Alright, childhood crush.

MILLER

Huh?

MATTUCCI

Mine was Lucy Lawless.

BJORND AHL

The chick from Xena?

MATTUCCI

The *warrior princess* from Xena. Shit, I used to crank one out to the thought of her putting me in a headlock.

MILLER

You like it rough Mattucci?
Wouldn't've guessed.

BJORND AHL

'Course he likes it rough.

Ortega lets out a chuckle, eases up on the steering wheel.

ORTEGA

You guys are demented.

MATTUCCI

What about you, 'Tega? Who's your childhood crush?

ORTEGA

Shit, Misses Geller. My fourth grade teacher. She was the first gal I beat my meat to.

BJORND AHL

There it is.

ORTEGA

She had this long blonde hair, really pretty face--Oh, shit!

EXT. MOUNTAINOUS ROAD - SAME TIME

THREE TALIBAN INSURGENTS with AK47s pop out of the shadows. The convoy slams to a halt, one-by-one. The insurgents fire-off several rounds.

Bullets bounce off the heavily armored trucks.

INT. FIRST ARMORED TRUCK OF THE CONVOY - SAME TIME

Ortega flinches.

MILLER

Contact, six o'clock!

BJORND AHL (O.S.)

Let's give them a peak at what six billion dollars in military funding looks like!

EXT. GUNNER'S NEST, FIRST ARMORED TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Bjorndahl raises his eye brows, squeezes the trigger on the mark 191 automatic grenade launcher.

MATTUCCI (O.S.)

Let it rip, BJ!

MILLER (O.S.)

Hooah!

EXT. MOUNTAINOUS ROAD - SAME TIME

The mounted grenade launcher comes to life, explosive shells rocket out at one thousand rounds per minute. Fire and lead shreds through the darkness, incinerates the shadows, kicks up dust and dirt, causes a sandstorm-like effect.

INT. HAINES' ARMORED TRUCK - SAME TIME

Adrenaline floods the truck. Jenson throttles the steering wheel, like he's trying to rip it the fuck off. Fletcher pounds his fist up into the roof, over and over, bruises his knuckles against the reinforced metal. Haines pounds his hands into the window.

MENDENHALL

Hooah!

HAINES

Get that fucking C.I.B.!

EXT. OUTDOOR CAFE, BOCA RATON - DAY [FLASH FORWARD]

Danny interrupts the story--

DANNY
What's a CIB?

HAINES
Combat Infantryman Badge. It's a
military award given to soldiers who
engage in active ground combat.

Danny jots that down.

DANNY
So, what happened next? You go back to
base?

HAINES
Hell no. We finished our patrol.
Command sent a team out to analyze the
area. Allegedly.

DANNY
How'd it feel? First taste of combat?

HAINES
It felt...energizing.

DANNY
You mentioned a 'Habib,' can you tell
me more about him?

EXT. VILLAGE, AFGHANISTAN - DAY

Habib walks around the village with Haines.

They approach VILLAGERS, young and old, make conversation.

HAINES (V.O.)
Translators - the unsung heroes of
international warfare. Believe it or
not, the Florida public school system
didn't exactly turn me into a skilled
linguist.

Haines and Habib approach a YOUNG MOTHER and her DAUGHTER.
Habib converses with them, turns to Haines to explain the
situation.

HAINES (V.O.)

And c'mon, even if it did - at least ten different languages are spoken in Afghanistan. According to the government, Dari is the official tongue, even though most of the local politicians are Pashtuns.

Haines studies a wound on the back of the daughter's neck.

HAINES (V.O.)

Did I lose you, there? My point exactly. Translators...unsung heroes.

HAINES

She needs this wound cleaned, and then a round of antibiotics or it'll get worse.

Haines kneels down, face-to-face with the daughter.

HAINES

Do you like candy?

Haines sticks an open palm out, after some hesitation, the daughter grabs the skittles from him and scurries off, the Young Mother chasing after her.

HAINES

You tell her we'd be back tomorrow?

HABIB

I did.

INT. HAINES' ARMORED TRUCK - DAY

The convoy exits the village.

JENSON

They should be flying us in and out of this fucking village.

FLETCHER

That just ain't practical.

JENSON

One way in, one way out. *That's* what's not practical.

HAINES (V.O.)

As if on cue...

A bullet bounces off Fletcher's window. He flinches.

MENDENHALL

Could'a swore--

More shots fired, bullets ricochet off the armored truck.

HAINES

I don't see them. Anyone see them?

JENSON

Can't see shit in these fucking mountains.

MENDENHALL

Fuck was that?

HAINES (V.O.)

They were testing us.

INT. OFFICE, DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, THE PENTAGON - DAY

SECRETARY OF THE ARMY, WILLIAM STEVENS lines up a putt on his roll-out putting green. He's focused so hard, the vein over his left eye brow pulsates. This bureaucratic douche bag spends more time lining the shot up than he does reading briefs or nailing his mistress. Just when he draws the putter back--A KNOCK AT THE DOOR.

He biffs the shot.

SECRETARY STEVENS

Mother-fuck, Goddamnit!

ANOTHER KNOCK. The door creaks open, just wide enough for UNDER SECRETARY BILL SMILEY to pop his head in.

SMILEY

Mr. Secretary, may I interrupt?

SECRETARY STEVENS

Not much point in asking after you've already interrupted.

Smiley lets himself in, closes the door behind him.

SMILEY

Sir...my apologies.

Secretary Stevens waves it away with a limp wrist, takes a seat behind his desk.

SECRETARY STEVENS

Well, what is it?

SMILEY

It's that Times reporter I mentioned a couple weeks ago.

SECRETARY STEVENS

You'll have to jog my memory.

SMILEY

She's writing a story--

SECRETARY STEVENS

The short of it?

SMILEY

She's painting our intervention in Afghanistan...a failure.

SECRETARY STEVENS

She a painter, or a writer?

SMILEY

Sir--

SECRETARY STEVENS

Squash it. Apply pressure. Do whatever it is you're being paid to do, make it go away.

SMILEY

I've tried that sir. Took it over her head to her bosses. No go.

SECRETARY STEVENS

I think I know someone with the Sulzbergers--

SMILEY

Robert Santos. Already gave him a call. Said his hands were tied.

SECRETARY STEVENS

He did not.

SMILEY

He did, sir.

SECRETARY STEVENS

What'd you tell the reporter?

SMILEY

Told her we have no comment at this time. I have a team preparing a statistical report, but it's...

SECRETARY STEVENS

What?

SMILEY

Inconclusive at best, sir.

SECRETARY STEVENS

So get us something conclusive, Smiley. Or I swear to God, your run as Under Secretary will break records for the shortest held. Have I made myself clear?

SMILEY

Yes sir.

Smiley turns, lets himself out.

Secretary Stevens rises, grabs his putter, steps onto his roll-out grass, lines the shot up, takes a dramatic deep breath in...shanks it.

SECRETARY STEVENS

Motherfuck--

INT. TACTICAL OPERATIONS CENTER, ARMY BASE - DAY

BRIGADE SERGEANT MAJOR JENKINS, mid 40s, bent over in his chair, ties up the lace on his combat boots, sits back up, studies both boots. Unsatisfied with the aesthetic, he bends back over, unties then reties the same boot. Shit, he just can't make it look *right*.

As he bends over once more, a satellite phone RINGS on the desk. He straightens up, checks his collar, his tuck, picks some lint from his pants, answers the phone.

SERGEANT MAJOR JENKINS (INTO PHONE)

This is Jenkins.

SMILEY (O.S.)

Sergeant Major, this is Under Secretary Smiley.

SERGEANT MAJOR JENKINS (INTO PHONE)

Good afternoon, Mr. Under Secretary.

SMILEY (O.S.)
I'm going to cut to it, this is a time
sensitive issue--

SERGEANT MAJOR JENKINS (INTO PHONE)
Issue?

SMILEY (O.S.)
We need hard proof that our efforts in
Afghanistan haven't been in vain.

SERGEANT MAJOR JENKINS (INTO PHONE)
Sir--

SMILEY (O.S.)
Secretary Stevens will consider this a
personal favor.

SERGEANT MAJOR JENKINS (INTO PHONE)
What exactly does he need, sir?

SMILEY (O.S.)
I've transferred a new photographer to
your battalion. I need Grade-A
pictures of medics helping children,
Enlisted Men smiling on patrol,
villages being protected...you know,
the war being won.

SERGEANT MAJOR JENKINS (INTO PHONE)
Mr. Under Secretary, this area is hot
with insurgent activity--

SMILEY (O.S.)
Your name's come up recently over
here, Sergeant Major. There's been
talk of a promotion.

SERGEANT MAJOR JENKINS (INTO PHONE)
A promotion, sir?

SMILEY (O.S.)
Get this done for Secretary Stevens,
and I'll see to it that your ascent up
the ranks is a swift one. Have I made
myself clear?

SERGEANT MAJOR JENKINS (INTO PHONE)
Yes sir.

EXT. ARMY BASE, AFGHANISTAN - DAY

Brigade Sergeant Major Jenkins lights two cigars up.

Lt. Colonel Barton approaches, eager as ever.

LT. COLONEL BARTON

You wanted to see me, Sergeant Major?

Jenkins hands one of the cigars to Barton.

SERGEANT MAJOR JENKINS

Some calls were made.

LT. COLONEL BARTON

Calls?

SERGEANT MAJOR JENKINS

I hope you don't end all your sentences with question marks when you speak to your subordinates, Colonel.

LT. COLONEL BARTON

I do not, Sergeant Major.

SERGEANT MAJOR JENKINS

I'm adding a photographer to your battalion.

LT. COLONEL BARTON

We've already got a few.

SERGEANT MAJOR JENKINS

This one's under special assignment. The specifics of your mission have been...altered.

LT. COLONEL BARTON

Altered?--I mean--

SERGEANT MAJOR JENKINS

This new photographer should report directly to you. I need visual proof that we're succeeding in our efforts over here. Have I made myself clear?

LT. COLONEL BARTON

Yes sir.

EXT. ARMY BASE, AFGHANISTAN - DAY

The platoon files out of their trucks. Lt. Barton approaches Captain Cornell.

Lambka and Ortega observe from a distance.

LT. COLONEL BARTON
How'd it go, Captain?

CAPTAIN CORNELL
Took some contact on our way out.

LT. COLONEL BARTON
Nothing you can't handle, I'm sure.

CAPTAIN CORNELL
Yes Colonel.

LT. COLONEL BARTON
Good. Make sure your boys rest up tonight, you're heading back out tomorrow at oh six hundred.

CAPTAIN CORNELL
They'll be expecting us if we move out at the same time.

LT. COLONEL BARTON
And we'll be expecting them, Captain.

CAPTAIN CORNELL
Colonel - we'll be marching head-on into a firefight...for the sake of appeasing Command?

LT. COLONEL BARTON
Perhaps I didn't make myself clear. I just gave you an order, Captain.

CAPTAIN CORNELL
I urge you to reconsider, Colonel.

LT. COLONEL BARTON
You will follow orders and conduct this mission as instructed, or I will find this Company a Captain who can. Have I made myself clear?

Captain Cornell stiffens up.

CAPTAIN CORNELL

Yes sir.

Lt. Colonel Barton ambles off.

LT. LAMBKA

Captain--

CAPTAIN CORNELL

Don't worry, I'll handle it. There ain't no way in hell they're sending us back in at the same time tomorrow.

EXT. OUTDOOR CAFE, BOCA RATON - DAY [FLASH FORWARD]

Future Haines fiddles with the straw in his ice water.

HAINES

Of course, at the very same time on the very next day, we were sent back in.

DANNY

In the corporate world, that's what they call *shit rolling down hill*.

INT. THIRD ARMORED TRUCK OF THE CONVOY - SAME TIME

Foy drives, Baker in the front passenger, Wolford up in the gunner's nest, Damico in the back right.

PHOTOGRAPHER is in the back left seat, camera slung around his neck, fish out of water, a civilian playing dress up.

DAMICO

How uninformed do they gotta be to send us back here, two days in a row, same exact time?

BAKER

They're not uninformed. They just don't care.

FOY

Tell us, Camera Man, what exactly is it you're here to shoot?

PHOTOGRAPHER

I'm supposed to get pics of y'all interacting with the villagers...peacefully.

FOY

I'm guessing nobody told you we got
shot at coming out of this village?

Photographer opens his mouth to speak - can't find the words.

FOY

Ain't that some shit, then?

PHOTOGRAPHER

Well...somebody's gotta do it.

DAMICO

See that, I'm not so sure of.

INT. HAINES' ARMORED TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Haines cracks open peanuts as the convoy approaches the
village entrance, drops the shells onto his lap.

FLETCHER

You gotta chew so fucking loud, Doc?

HAINES

How else you gonna know I'm still
alive?

JENSON

Just don't be getting peanut shells
all under the seats.

Haines opens his door of the truck, wipes the shells off of
his lap, WHEN SOMETHING SLAMS THE DOOR SHUT FROM THE OUTSIDE.

JENSON

What I say about slamming my doors?

HAINES (V.O.)

It was an RPG.

HAINES

Was that an RPG--

A tempest of fire and lead rain down on the convoy.

LT. LAMBKA

We're going to RTB, the whole point of
this mission is to provide aid to this
village, not bring a gunfight to their
doorsteps. Kill these assholes and get
us back to base.

INT. THIRD ARMORED TRUCK OF THE CONVOY - SAME TIME

As violence unfolds all around them, Damico and Baker tighten their grips on their weapons. The Photographer snaps pictures through the windows.

FOY

How's this for peaceful interactions?

INT. FIRST ARMORED TRUCK OF THE CONVOY - SAME TIME

Mattucci barks into his com-system.

MATTUCCI (INTO RADIO)

Lieutenant, we rolled right into an ambush.

LIEUTENANT LAMBKA (O.S.)

Turn us around. Take us home.

ORTEGA

Shit.

Ortega manipulates the steering wheel like the captain of a sea ship - leads the convoy into an audacious U-turn.

MILLER

Fuckin' A. If these assholes waited two more minutes to hit us, we'd be stuck reversing outta here blind.

INT. DAMICO'S HOOCH, ARMY BASE - NIGHT

Lopez races Ortega in a round of Mario Kart. The platoon crowds around, watches.

LOPEZ

No, no, no, no - fuck! How are you so good at this?

ORTEGA

What can I say? It's pure will power.

Lopez hands his controller off to Mattucci.

LOPEZ

Doc, you wanna go get a few reps in? I'm still pretty amped from today.

HAINES

Sure, I'll spot you.

INT. HALLWAY, OUTSIDE THE T.O.C. - NIGHT

As they walk past the Tactical Operations Center, they hear Lt. Colonel Barton giving Captain Cornell an earful.

Haines signals for Lopez to stop. They eaves drop.

INT. TACTICAL OPERATIONS CENTER, ARMY BASE - SAME TIME

Captain Cornell stands upright, hands behind his back. Seated, Lt. Colonel Barton squeezes a stress ball.

CAPTAIN CORNELL

Enemy insurgents were anticipating us.

LT. COLONEL BARTON

Of course they were. That's what happens when you maintain a presence in a foreign land.

CAPTAIN CORNELL

With all due respect, Lieutenant Colonel, we've come to understand that the enemy is far smarter than--

LT. COLONEL BARTON

The U.S. Military? If you can't outsmart a few cave-dwelling extremist, than perhaps I ought to install a Captain who can.

CAPTAIN CORNELL

If we'd just continue the mission at a different time--

LT. COLONEL BARTON

You'll continue the mission tomorrow at oh-six-hundred, because *those are the orders you've been given*. Have I made myself clear?

CAPTAIN CORNELL

Sir--

LT. COLONEL BARTON

That was a rhetorical question, you're dismissed.

Lt. Colonel Barton tosses the stress ball to Cornell, spins around in his chair, shows the Captain his back.

INT. HAINES' ARMORED TRUCK - DAY

Haines stares at Jenson's back.

JENSON

Drew Brees or Tom Brady?

MENDENHALL

C'mon, that ain't even a question.
Brady's the GOAT.

FLETCHER

I know a certain gun-slinger from New
York, might have something to say
about that.

MENDENHALL

Oh, please. Don't even say it, don't
get me started--

FLETCHER

Eli Manning. Two Super Bowls in *four*
years. You're talking Brees or Brady?

MENDENHALL

Je-esus, Haines - would'ya say
something? Help me out here.

HAINES

Sorry, what? I wasn't listening.

HAINES (V.O.)

I didn't tell anyone about what Lopez
and I had heard the night before. Word
had spread about the calculated timing
of our new photographer, morale was
shaky enough already.

JENSON

Alright - Djokovic or Nadal?

MENDENHALL

Neither.

FLETCHER

Roger Federer is the greatest tennis
player to grace God's green Earth.

MENDENHALL

Amen.

EXT. VILLAGE, AFGHANISTAN - DAY

Baker, Damico, Fletcher and Wear unload care packages from their trucks, lug them into the village apothecary. Saline, antibiotics, bandages, first aide. The Photographer snaps pictures of their efforts.

Lopez, Lt. Lambka, Petersen and Gauthier stand nearby, clutch their rifles, heads swivel like guard dogs. Haines and Habib make the rounds, check in on villagers, treat wounds and infections.

Bjorndahl blows his nose - he's a mucusy, sick mess.

LIEUTENANT LAMBKA

Shit, BJ. Make sure you get some antibiotics when we get back to base.

BJORNDAHL

I'm fine, sir. You didn't need to pull me from my gunner seat--

LIEUTENANT LAMBKA

You have a sinus infection, you need to take it easy. Get checked out.

THREE ADULT MALE VILLAGERS gather nearby, dressed in traditional knee-length dresses with baggy trousers.

They chat amongst each other, cover their mouths as they do so, deliver cold stares to the platoon. Lopez eyes them. The barrel of his rifle, pointed toward the ground, moves their way, ever so slightly.

One of the male villagers turns his back toward Lopez. Lopez caresses the trigger of his rifle.

The three men disperse without incident, Lopez relaxes.

INT. SECOND ARMORED TRUCK OF THE CONVOY - DAY

Lopez fingers the steering wheel.

LIEUTENANT LAMBKA

You alright there, Lopez?...Lopez?

LOPEZ

Fine, Sir.

Wear and Petersen exchange a worried glance.

EXT. ROAD, MOUNTAIN - DAY

The convoy of armored trucks follow a road carved through the mountain side. The lead truck makes a sharp right turn.

INT. HAINES' ARMORED TRUCK - SAME TIME

From the backseat, Haines' eyes are glued to the windshield. He watches as the second truck in the convoy makes the right turn, disappears behind the bend--BOOM!

A cloud of black smoke rises up over the mountain.

JENSON

Oh, fuck.

The convoy halts.

MATTUCCI (O.S.)

We gotta truck down, some kind of explosion! Possible IED.

Haines jumps out.

EXT. ROAD, MOUNTAIN - MOMENTS LATER

The right side of the narrow road slopes up, into the mountains. The left side slopes down toward a river.

TRUCK 2 HAS BEEN CUT IN HALF AND FLIPPED OVER.

Haines gathers himself - all he hears is his own HEAVY BREATHING and his BEATING HEART. He navigates clouds of smoke and dust, B lines for Truck 2, stumbles into the crater, can't find his way inside the truck, can't see any of his injured comrades through thick smoke.

His breathing gets heavier by the second, his heart pounds harder, harder, harder--

BJORND AHL

Motherfuckers!

Bjorndahl sprays machine gun fire up into the mountains.

Reality crashes down on Haines - screams from inside the truck. His platoon mates secure the scene on the road.

BAKER

Damico, Gooch, Ortega - get cover, scan the mountains, we got company!

Haines stumbles around the cratered, incinerated truck, navigates the smoke, finds Lopez, pulls him out from the scrap and debris.

HAINES (V.O.)

Lopez's face was crushed by the blast...unrecognizable. His name tag was covered in blood. I had no idea who I had just pulled from that truck.

SCREAMS, GUN SHOTS, EXPLOSIONS overpower the silence.

HAINES

I have a body that needs to get packaged, I'm going to start triage!

Haines tries to find the man's dog tags - they're all torn up from the blast.

HAINES

Ah, fuck!

He turns back to the flipped truck. Wear is inside, pinned down by a metal bar that's skewered through his leg.

Dimon attempts to pull the metal bar out, it won't budge.

DIMON

Need some help over here!

Haines runs over, they pull on the metal bar until it gives - Farmer pulls Wear out from the other side of the wreck.

Bjorndahl reaches inside, grabs a hold of Lt. Lambka's arm.

BJORND AHL

I got you, Sir!

He drags Lambka out from the truck.

BJORND AHL

I got you, I got you.

He looks down at Lt. Lambka whose skull is split in half.

BJORND AHL

Oh shit, medic! I need Doc! Doc, where you at? Doc!

Haines runs over to Bjorndahl who tries to hold Lambka's head together.

FARMER

Need some help over here!

Haines runs over - he and Farmer latch onto Petersen's body armer, drag him out from the truck debris.

Petersen is unconscious and HIS LEFT EYE BALL HANGS OUT OF THE SOCKET, dangles down at his mouth, barely attached by the optic nerve. Haines moves to treat him - but Petersen wakes up, kicks out, thrusts, belligerent, resists treatment.

HAINES

Hold 'em Farmer, hold 'em!

Farmer tries to pin Petersen down, but he's too strong. Aviles and Bjordahl come over, help pin down Petersen while Haines grabs the loose eye ball, douses it in saline, wraps it up in a package of gauze.

Haines turns back to the truck wreckage, finds Habib in the debris.

HAINES

I got you, buddy. I'm here.

Habib's entire body has been crushed.

HAINES

You're gonna be fine, you're gonna be just fine. I'm gonna make you all better, Habib. I got you, buddy.

EXT. OUTDOOR CAFE, BOCA RATON - DAY [FLASH FORWARD]

Future Haines looks off into the distance.

HAINES

I lied to a dying man that day. It's strange...the things that stay with you. I would hear of Habib's passing later that day over the radio.

DANNY

What happens after you secure the area?

HAINES

We load the injured and dead into helicopters.

EXT. RIVER/VALLEY - SAME TIME

Gauthier and Aviles navigate the sloping mountain into the shallow river. They stumble upon a wire chord - the very same wire chord from the opening of the film.

GAUTHIER

We got a live wire down here, likely a triggerman in the area!

INT. HELICOPTER, UP IN THE AIR - DAY

The chopper takes off, flies over the QUICK RELIEF FORCE (QRF) trucks as they arrive, escort Truck 1 from Haines platoon, down into the valley.

HAINES (V.O.)

QRF arrived. They're a unit of emergency responders.

EXT. ROAD, MOUNTAIN - DAY

Haines takes a swig of water from his canteen.

FLETCHER

Alright, we need'a back these trucks up the road, find a good turning point to get down into the valley, reconnect with QRF.

BAKER

Shit, what a clusterfuck.

FLETCHER

You, Damico and the cameraman each walk along the outside of your truck, direct Foy. Make sure he doesn't steer backwards off the road.

BAKER

Copy.

FLETCHER

Doc, you take the east side, I'll take west. Watch our ass up there Mendenhall.

MENDENHALL

Always.

EXT. INSURGENT NEST, UP IN THE MOUNTAINS - SAME TIME

THREE MEMBERS OF THE TALIBAN study Haines platoon.

They watch as helicopters flies off.

TALIBAN MEMBER 1
(in Pashto)
Prepare phase 2.

EXT. ROAD, MOUNTAIN - DAY

The battered convoy reverses up the road. Drivers and mounted gunners in the trucks, the rest of the platoon walk outside, direct the drivers, stand guard. Haines walks along the truck, clutches his rifle. His eyes dart around the surrounding mountains.

HAINES (V.O.)
It took 20 years to become the man I
was before that morning. And 14
minutes to reshape the rest of my
life.

EXT. RIVER/VALLEY - DAY

The convoy finds enough space for the trucks to turn around.

Gauthier, Farmer, Bjorndahl and Aviles aim rifles at a FISHERMAN.

Haines approaches.

HAINES
What's going on?

GAUTHIER
Fucker hasn't said anything.

AVILES
Let's tie his ass up, leave him here.

GAUTHIER
He might know something.

FARMER
I bet I can make him talk.

Farmer steps up to the fisherman, Aviles stops him.

AVILES
Relax, Farmer.

FARMER
Just give me a few minutes with him.

AVILES
We ain't SEALs, man. What if he's just
here to fish?

GAUTHIER
To fish what? Nothing in this river
but shit and runoff.

Haines pops up between them, swabs the fisherman's fingers
with a fertilizer test, waits a beat.

HAINES
Everybody relax.

GAUTHIER
How quick does that work?

HAINES
It'll work a lot quicker if you stop
rushing me, Gooch.

The swab changes colors, he compares it to a small chart.

HAINES
Shit.

AVILES
What's it say, Doc?

HAINES
It says either this guys been digging
through several different types of
shit this morning, or--

FARMER
He's been cooking up explosives.

GAUTHIER
Let's tie his ass up.

Baker comes over with zip ties, restrains the fisherman's
hands, pats down their new prisoner.

BAKER
Load 'em up. Nice work, Doc.

INT. HAINES' ARMORED TRUCK - SAME TIME

Sergeant Fletcher's left leg shakes rapidly. Jenson tries to pay it no mind, can't help but look over out of the corner of his eye.

Mendenhall, head on a swivel, knows there's more to come.

FLETCHER

Got any fucking peannuts, Doc?

HAINES

Fresh out.

JENSON

Y'allright, Sarg?

FLETCHER

Ain't that a loaded question--

BOOM!

EXT. DOWN THE RIVER - SAME TIME

An explosion goes off underwater, in front of the QRF truck. The blast creates a hole in the floor of the river, the front of the truck falls into the hole. The truck is tall enough so that it's not submerged in water - but it's definitely stuck.

INT. HAINES' ARMORED TRUCK - SAME TIME

River water shoots up in the air in front of the convoy.

HAINES

Shit.

HAINES LEAPS OUT OF THE TRUCK.

EXT. RIVER/VALLEY - SAME TIME

MACHINE GUN FIRE ERUPTS from the surrounding mountains. RPGs are launched at the river. A fire-fight unfolds.

FLETCHER (FROM TRUCK)

Doc, get back here - air support is on the way!

Haines dodges lead and flames, runs through the shallow mucky river up to the trapped QRF truck.

INT. QRF TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

The QUICK RELIEF FORCE TEAM bugs the fuck out.

QRF 1

Oh Christ, oh Christ, oh Christ.

QRF 2

We're stuck, we're fucking stuck!

QRF 3

Shit, man. Someone get us outa here--

QRF4

Someone'll come for us, they have to come for us. Right?

Haines pulls the door open, jumps inside.

QRF1

Oh, thank God.

HAINES

Everyone alright in here? Any injuries?

QRF 2

No injuries, but we're fucking stuck.

HAINES

Alright, hang tight.

QRF4

Wait, don't fucking leave us--

Haines hops out.

EXT. RIVER/VALLEY - SAME TIME

Haines runs back toward his truck.

Bullets wiz passed, rockets fly by, water explodes all around him as lead rips through the river.

EXT. INSURGENT SNIPER'S NEST - SAME TIME

An INSURGENT SNIPER sits on a flattened rock, watches Hell play out on the river.

He takes a deep breath, peers through the scope of his rifle, hones in on Haines.

He adjusts the rifle, ever so slightly--BOOM!

The Insurgent Sniper evaporates into a cloud of smoke and dust.

AIR SUPPORT HAS ARRIVED.

A U.S. A-10 WARTHOG flies over head, rains hellfire missiles down on both sides of the river.

INT. HAINES' ARMORED TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Haines climbs back into his truck.

JENSON

Fuckin' A, Doc. That was some cowboy shit.

FLETCHER

They alright up there?

HAINES

They're fine, just stuck.

They watch the surrounding area go up in flames and smoke.

MENDENHALL

That'll get her done.

FLETCHER

Chopper's are gonna escort us home.

Haines leans back, shuts his eyes.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. HAINES' ARMORED TRUCK - NIGHT

Jenson slams on the breaks, just before they rear-end the truck in front of them. Haines' eyes pop open.

FLETCHER

What in the fuck is it now?

MATTUCCI (O.S.)

Truck's dead, not sure what happened.

MENDENHALL

Shit.

JENSON
What's it look like under the hood?

MATTUCCI (O.S.)
I'm lookin, I'm lookin...shit, think
the radiator's overheated.

JENSON
Damn. How bad is it?

MATTUCCI (O.S.)
Depends.

JENSON
On what?

MATTUCCI (O.S.)
On whether or not anyone's got a full
bladder.

HAINES
I could take a piss.

EXT. FURTHER DOWN THE RIVER - NIGHT

The hood of the truck is popped, Mattucci examines the
engine.

MATTUCCI
Alright good. Hey, someone grab us a
roll a duct tape.

Miller arrives with the duct tape, hands it off to Mattucci,
who patches up the radiator. Haines steps up onto the front
of the truck, unbuttons his pants.

MATTUCCI
Right in there, aim there.

HAINES
Alright, stand back. My aim ain't as
good as Ortega's.

Haines pees into the radiator, his stream is short and quick.

MATTUCCI
Shit Doc, that all you got?

HAINES
Guess I'm dehydrated.

MILLER
I got about a half a tank.

HAINES
By all means, Sarg.

Miller steps up, pees into the radiator.

MATTUCCI
Alright, giver her a try.

INT. FIRST ARMORED TRUCK OF THE CONVOY - SAME TIME

Foy starts the truck up...nothing. He tries again...still nothing.

One more go of it...third times a charm, it starts.

FOY
There we go.

EXT. THE RIVER - SAME TIME

Mattucci lets out a fist pump.

MATTUCCI
Now, how about we get the fuck back to base?

MILLER
What time is it anyway?

Haines checks his wrist watch - it's broken, shattered.

INT. ARMY BASE, AFGHANISTAN - NIGHT

The platoon floods the base, heads down, morale shot. Farmer kisses his fingers, touches the wall.

FARMER
Never thought I'd be so happy to see this shit hole.

Lt. Colonel Barton stands there, a one-man welcome committee.

LT. COLONEL BARTON
Way to stand tall out there, boys. I woke the cooks, there's hot chow waiting for you in the mess hall.

Baker and Damico exchange an eye roll.

INT. MESS HALL, ARMY BASE - NIGHT

Everyone lines up to grab a tray of hot food, no one speaks.

Bjorndahl takes his tray, looks out at the tables, down at the food, grimaces. He walks out, toward the hooches.

The rest of the platoon follows suit.

INT. HAINES' ROOM - NIGHT

Haines puts his tray of food down on his desk. He looks at his room, runs his hand through his short hair.

HAINES

Shit, Lopez think I'm ready for a
buzz--

His hand runs down the top of his head, to his mouth, stays there. He inches through the hallway into Lopez's room.

INT. LOPEZ'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Reality sets in. Haines picks up the pictures of Lopez and his fiancé, studies them. He runs his fingers over Lopez's clippers, doesn't notice the Photographer pop up behind him.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Oh, sorry. I didn't mean to intrude.

HAINES

What do you want camera man?

PHOTOGRAPHER

I have to go see the Lt. Colonel.

HAINES

So?

PHOTOGRAPHER

So, he's gonna want to study the
pictures I got today.

HAINES

And he's not gonna like 'em very much.

PHOTOGRAPHER

They don't exactly fit his narrative.

HAINES

What you telling me for?

The Photographer removes the memory card from his camera, hands it to Haines.

PHOTOGRAPHER
So he can't delete them.

INT. HAINES' ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Haines stumbles back into his hooch, puts Lopez's clippers and pictures on his desk.

He opens his drawer, pulls out a package of Benadryl, pops three tablets, falls onto his bed.

INT. PAY PHONE ROOM, ARMY BASE - DAY

Haines peaks into the phone room - the coast is clear, no one else around. He picks up a phone, dials, puts it to his ear.

HAINES (ON PHONE)
Hey mom, it's me.

MOM (O.S.)
Oh my gosh, Matt. I was getting ready to sit down and write you a letter. Are you okay?

HAINES (V.O.)
Loaded question.

Lopez's scorched, mutilated body appears in front of him.

MOM (O.S.)
Matt?

Haines turns his back to the horrid hallucination.

HAINES (ON PHONE)
Yeah mom, I'm good.

MOM (O.S.)
Are you sure?

HAINES (ON PHONE)
I'm sure, mom.

MOM (O.S.)
You sound-I don't know, you sound like something's the matter.

Haines looks down at the floor, clenches his eyes shut.

HAINES (ON PHONE)

No, I'm good. Just a little tired. Everything's alright over here. How's dad doing?

MOM (O.S.)

Your father's good, but something did happen I've been meaning to tell you about. The garage flooded, all of your old stuff - it's ruined.

HAINES (ON PHONE)

No big deal, ma. I don't need that crap anyway. Hey, tell dad I'm doing alright. Would ya?

MOM (O.S.)

Of course. I love you.

HAINES (ON PHONE)

Love you, ma.

He hangs up.

HAINES (V.O.)

The curse of a soldier. Together we carry the weight of our dead, and the lies we tell to our family.

INT. REC ROOM, ARMY BASE - NIGHT

Ortega and Miller stand on one side of a pool table, Foy and Damico on the other.

MILLER

Damico, gimme a shot to win my smokes back from yesterday?

DAMICO

What'd you have in mind?

MILLER

A little two-on-two. Me and Ortega, verse you two.

FOY

Sergeant Miller might be the worst pool player in the platoon. I'm in if you are.

DAMICO

Alright, I'm game. What are you thinking, two smokes a head?

ORTEGA

That's pussy shit, make it a pack.

MILLER

Woh woh--

FOY

A pack each, let's do it.

MILLER

Fine, a pack each. Mind if I break?

FOY

Alright then, just try and keep the cue ball on the table.

MILLER

That's the white one, right?

Miller lines up the break - shanks it, barely spreads the table out.

MILLER

Damn, that wasn't so good. Was it?

Ortega rolls his eyes. Damico takes his turn, knocks in the solid purple ball. He takes another turn - misses.

ORTEGA

Stripes it is, then.

Ortega lines up a shot, knocks in two striped balls with one hit. He smirks.

FOY

Ah, shit.

DAMICO

Fuck, Ortega's a crack shot.

ORTEGA

'Course I am.

He maneuvers his way around the pool table, knocks in the rest of the striped balls one-by-one, calls the right corner pocket, sinks the 8-ball.

MILLER

And that's game, mothafuckas. Pay up.

Miller sticks his hand out, Foy swats it away.

FOY

Fuck that. I ain't paying you shit.
You fucking set us up.

DAMICO

They hustled us.

MILLER

Hustled-shmustled, fork over the
cigarettes.

FOY

Yeah, I'll hand 'em over when you pry
them outta my cold dead hands you
scheister motherfucker.

MILLER

Watch your fucking mouth, Foy.

ORTEGA

Yeah - that's Sergeant Scheister to
you!

Miller scoops the 8-ball out of the corner pocket, tosses it
up lightly in the air. Foy reaches up, catches it with both
hands - Miller punches him in the gut.

Damico jumps on top of Miller, Ortega rips him off his
billiards partner, drops him on the pool table. Damico kicks
Ortega in the stomach. Miller and Foy roll around the floor,
wrestling. Farmer, Haines and Mattucci rush in, try to break
up the ruckus - it escalates.

INT. HALLWAY, ARMY BASE - DAY

LIEUTENANT DEZZER, blond buzz cut, weak jawline, hollow eyes,
follows Lt. Colonel Barton down the hall, toward the TOC.

LT. COLONEL BARTON

Our last mission was a failure, and
this next village is even more of a
cluster fuck.

LIEUTENANT DEZZER

Sir, I was told the medical supply
hand off was a success.

LT. COLONEL BARTON
That's correct, Lieutenant. But that was only half the mission - not to mention, we lost your predecessor and a few other good men.

Captain Cornell addresses them from the end of the hall.

CAPTAIN CORNELL
Sir, may I have a word?

LT. COLONEL BARTON
You may. But make it fast. Gives us a minute, Dezzer.

Captain Cornell follows Lt. Colonel into the TOC.

INT. TACTICAL OPERATIONS CENTER, ARMY BASE - MOMENTS LATER

Shouse sits behind a desk, focuses on the radio.

LT. COLONEL BARTON
We need the room, Shouse.

SHOUSE
Sir, the radio--

LT. COLONEL BARTON
Take a bathroom break, I'll man the radio until you've returned.

SHOUSE
Yes sir.

Cornell waits for Shouse to get up and leave.

CAPTAIN CORNELL
Sir, with all due respect, this KLE we're prepping for...Naka?

LT. COLONEL BARTON
Is there a question you're attempting to articulate?

CAPTAIN CORNELL
Sir, that's one of the most hostile villages in Afghanistan. There's nothign productive that could come from going in there.

LT. COLONEL BARTON
Your concern is noted, soldier. I'll
make sure to run it up the flag pole.

CAPTAIN CORNELL
Fuck the flag pole. We need to nix
this mission, right here and now.

LT. COLONEL BARTON
The only thing fucking the flag pole
is gonna be your ass, if you don't
learn your place, soldier. Dismissed.

Captain Cornell walks out, shoulders hunched, fists clenched.

GENERAL TABACK, 40s, silver fox, impossibly broad shoulders,
enters the TOC.

He's followed by the runtier COLONEL PETERS, 30s, brown-
noser.

Dezzer enters after them.

LT. COLONEL BARTON
Sir, where did--

GENERAL TABACK
General Moseby's been reassigned.
D.O.D. thought this battalion could
use a little more oversight.

LT. COLONEL BARTON
Understood, sir.

GENERAL TABACK
Very good.

LT. COLONEL BARTON
Dezzer, would you give us a moment--

GENERAL TABACK
No, that's alright. He should hear
this too. Colonel Peters and I have
made a name for ourselves the last
several years. We're the guys who get
shit done. That's how you wind up on
the Under Secretary's speed dial.
That's how you rise up the ranks.

LT. COLONEL BARTON
Yes sir.

LIEUTENANT DEZZER

Yes sir.

GENERAL TABACK

Tell them about *rank*, Colonel.

COLONEL PETERS

People misunderstand hierarchy all the time. They think, there's only one direction you can move. Up...

Dezzer glances over at Barton, who stares straight ahead, doesn't break eye contact with the Colonel.

COLONEL PETERS (CONTINUED)

But in reality, there are two directions.

GENERAL TABACK

Get your people to fall in line. Or we'll stick you in an S shop, have you doing paperwork for the rest of your career. Have I made myself clear?

EXT. ARMY BASE - DAY

Damico, Wolford, Haines and Miller play cards at a table.

THREE AFGHAN SECURITY FORCE SOLDIERS (ASF) sit with them.

HAINES (V.O.)

Ya see, the mission that the United States Military was undertaking in Afghanistan, wasn't just to combat the Taliban. We were *supposed* to train the Afghan army. Help 'em build a reliable police force, so when we left, they might be able to maintain some modicum of peace. It wasn't going well.

MILLER

I'm surprised y'all agreed to join us. Doesn't the Quran have something to say about gambling bein' a sin?

ASF 1

You are a good Christian, Sergeant Miller?

MILLER

I'd say I'm an adequate one, I guess.

ASF 1
So you abstain from watching
pornography?

Damico and Wolford let out a chuckle.

MILLER
Well, no--

ASF 1
But your bible says it is a sin to
spill the seed?

MILLER
Point taken.

WOLFORD
Doc, what's the Bible say about your
addiction to man-ass?

Haines punches Wolford in the shoulder. The cards continue.

HAINES (V.O.)
Their military was rife with
corruption, their soldiers mostly
unreliable. But they were terrible
card players and pretty decent
company.

INT. BRIEFING ROOM, ARMY BASE - DAWN

Lt. Dezzler and Captain Cornell stand before the platoon.

CAPTAIN CORNELL
I've always shot straight with you, I'm
not gonna stop now. I do not approve
of this mission. I said as much to my
superiors. They told me--good to know,
better get going.

FOY
Well, fuck them then.

CAPTAIN CORNELL
That's right, fuck 'em. Out there, all
you have is your rifle, the guy to
your right, and the guy to your left.

Everyone looks right, left.

LIEUTENANT DEZZER

The goal of this mission is to conduct a KLE. Element 1 - Overwatch - will take the high ground, while Element 2 - led by me, engages village leadership. Any questions?

HAINES (V.O.)

We all had questions...like why the fuck we're attempting to conduct key leadership engagement in one of the most violent, anti-American villages in Afghanistan? The answer was simple, of course...Because those were our orders.

INT. STAGING AREA, ARMY BASE - DAWN

Tin roof, dirt floors, just off the air field. Rain drops fall, thunder crackles, lightning scorches the sky.

The platoon sits on the floor, illuminated in the red glow of a nearby bulb.

HAINES (V.O.)

When that light turns from red to green, it's go time. Every single one of us is thinking the same thing. Hoping it stays red until the sun comes up, and the mission gets called.

BAKER

You see who's joining us?

FARMER

New translator?

BAKER

Nah - I mean, yeah. But I meant the camera man.

MILLER

No surprise.

BAKER

This is bullshit. KLE's are supposed to be with village leaders who want to get out from Taliban control. Naka does not fit that profile.

EXT. OUTDOOR CAFE, BOCA RATON - DAY [FLASH FORWARD]

Future Haines fiddles with the memory card of a digital camera.

HAINES

Okay, maybe he didn't say that. Baker didn't exactly speak in exposition. But he was calculated. And he knew, like the rest of us, that the situation was royally fucked.

EXT. NAKA VILLAGE, AFGHANISTAN - NIGHT

TWO HELICOPTERS FLY OVER a bowl-shaped mountain range, with a village located at the low center.

HAINES (V.O.)

In a chopper, it's too loud to hear anything but your own thoughts. That can be a lot on your way into the shit.

EXT. WOODED FLATLAND OFF THE MOUNTAIN - NIGHT

The platoon funnels off, file into a circle around the helicopters, stand guard until the choppers fly away.

They begin the trek toward the village of Naka.

EXT. STAGING AREA, OUTSIDE VILLAGE - NIGHT

Mendenhall peers through a pair of binoculars, studies the village down below, the surrounding mountains.

ORTEGA

How's it look?

MENDENHALL

Like an ambush waiting to happen. Gonna need you on your A-game.

ORTEGA

Aren't I always?

He hands the binoculars off, Ortega looks through.

ORTEGA

Shit, village center has zero concealment.

MENDENHALL

That's what I'm saying. A-game.

FLETCHER

Alright, team. Let's get mov--

LIEUTENANT DEZZER

Let's get moving boys. Split up into your groups. Ground Team with me.

EXT. MOUNTAIN OVERLOOKING NAKA VILLAGE - NIGHT

The Overwatch Team consists of Haines, Ortega, Damico, Foy, Bjorndahl, Miller, Farmer, Baker, Sergeant Fletcher and First Sergeant McGuire.

Ortega, Miller and Foy set up their rifles, aimed down toward the village. Ortega looks through his scope, studies the Ground Team.

EXT. NAKA VILLAGE, AFGHANISTAN - DAY

Sun rise over the village. GROUND TEAM consists of Captain Cornell, Gauthier, Jenson, Mendenhall, Mattucci, Wolford, Lieutenant Dezzar, and the Photographer. They're accompanied by three ASF soldiers, plus ABDUL, the new translator.

Captain Cornell and Abdul approach one of the VILLAGE LEADERS at a slow, respectful pace. The Village Leader is a towering man, early 60s, long grey beard, baggy robe.

CAPTAIN CORNELL

Tell him, good morning. And thanks for agreeing to meet with us--

Captain Cornell sticks his hand out to shake. Village Leader looks down at his hand, doesn't accept it.

EXT. MOUNTAIN OVERLOOKING NAKA VILLAGE - SAME TIME

Ortega studies the interaction through his scope.

ORTEGA

Jesus.

HAINES

What's going on?

ORTEGA

Let's just say, they don't seem too happy to see us.

Haines, Bjorndahl, and Foy grab binoculars.

HAINES

Sarge. We gotta guy with a radio,
hiding out.

BJORND AHL

Looks like he might be planning
something.

FOY

He's definitely planning something.

Haines hands the binoculars off to Fletcher.

FLETCHER

Shit. Damico, get over here.

Damico hands Fletcher the radio.

ORTEGA

Got him in my sights. Should I engage?

FLETCHER (INTO RADIO)

Black Lion 6, this is Dog 2-7, over.

HQ (O.S.)

Dog 2-7, this is Black Lion 6. What's
your sit-rep?

FLETCHER (INTO RADIO)

Young male with radio making hand
signals, plus chatter about a possible
ambush.

HAINES

Possible my ass.

MILLER

The rest of my snuff says we get a,
"Do Not Engage."

Ortega fingers the trigger.

ORTEGA

KLE's gonna be finishing up any
minute--

FLETCHER

Do not engage. Do not engage.

Ortega drops his trigger finger.

FARMER

These asshole's are gonna get us all
killed.

Fletcher's radio sings--

MATTUCCI (O.S.)

Overwatch, this is Ground Team. We're
gettin' ready to put the kibosh on
this KLE. How's the weather up top
looking?

FLETCHER

We can't sit still and let this
asshole study us. Let's move.

The Overwatch team pops up, prepares to relocate--ENEMY FIRE
RAINS DOWN ON THEM. Bullets rip through Haines's backpack, he
drops to the ground.

Bjorndahl, Ortega and Foy fire off rounds into the
surrounding mountains - bullets come torpedoing back at them.

Everyone hits the deck - so much MACHINE GUN FIRE, the noise
is constant, nonstop, like the air is exploding around them.

THREE ENEMY INSURGENTS pop up from a hiding spot nearby,
Haines is right in their sights--as good as dead.

HAINES

Oh shit!

Bjorndahl obliterates them with his M240.

The gun fire stops. Overwatch team darts for cover.

EXT. NAKA VILLAGE, AFGHANISTAN - SAME TIME

The Ground Team leaves the community center - instantly takes
on enemy fire. Mendenhall dives on a VILLAGE CHILD, just
before a parade of bullets rip through his body. They hit the
ground, take cover behind a beat up old car.

HAINES (V.O.)

These guys were so intent on killing
us, children from their own villages
were seen as little more than
necessary collateral damage.

Gauthier and Jenson take cover behind rubble, trade rounds with INSURGENTS firing at them from a distance. The Photographer snaps pictures of it all, as if he's unaware his camera won't protect him from bullets and RPGs.

Wolford, Captain Cornell and Abdul round up as many CHILDREN as they can get their hands on, throw them behind cover.

The ASF soldiers fire their weapons toward the insurgents, but ASF 3's gun jams - he panics, drops it, leaps out from behind cover and tries to run away.

MATTUCCI

Wait, no-stop!

ASF 3 is gunned down before he make it ten yards.

EXT. MOUNTAIN OVERLOOKING NAKA VILLAGE - SAME TIME

The Overwatch Team is split in two. Fletcher, First Sergeant McGuire, Gauthier, Damico and Farmer take cover behind some rocks. Fletcher gets on the radio.

FLETCHER

We need air support, now!

Damico crawls out onto a ledge, points his coordinating tech toward the insurgents across the mountain.

EXT. FURTHER EAST, MOUNTAIN OVER NAKA VILLAGE - SAME TIME

Haines, Baker, Foy, Bjorndahl, Miller and Ortega continue to trade fire with insurgents.

ORTEGA

I don't see 'em! I don't see 'em!

FARMER

Left side, left side, left side.

Frantic, Ortega fires off rounds in every direction.

EXT. MOUNTAIN OVERLOOKING NAKA VILLAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Bullets kick up dirt all around Damico as he crawls back for cover.

DAMICO

Air assets are on the way, Sarg.

EXT. FURTHER EAST, MOUNTAIN OVER NAKA VILLAGE - SAME TIME

Bjorndahl sprays his M240 until it clicks empty. He stands there, pounds his chest like a gorilla.

THE AIR STRIKE ARRIVES - an A10 Wart Hog vaporizes a whole section of mountain range with missiles. HUGE EXPLOSIONS. Followed by silence.

The two halves of Overwatch reconnect.

FLETCHER

Any casualties?

HAINES

Everyone's accounted for - you?

FLETCHER

Good on this side.

ORTEGA

Those missiles connect?

BAKER

Air went red, pilots couldn't stick around to find out.

EXT. TALIBAN SNIPER NEST, OVERLOOKING NAKA VILLAGE - DAY

A TALIBAN SNIPER sets his rifle up on a boulder. He peers through the scope, down into the village. He's got Mattucci in his sights, as the Ground Team prepares to leap out from their cover area, make haste for high grounds.

BULLETS SPRAY ALL AROUND THE TALIBAN SNIPER, bounce off the boulder. He ducks for cover.

EXT. NAKA VILLAGE, AFGHANISTAN - SAME TIME

The Ground Team pops up out of their cover spot.

BJORND AHL (O.S.)

Now!

CAPTAIN CORNELL

We're on - go, go, go, go, go!

A mad dash, several hundred yards across the village. Wolford sets his rifle up on the rock wall, aims up toward the mountains, trains his scope on the Taliban Sniper's nest.

EXT. TALIBAN NEST, OVERLOOKING NAKA VILLAGE - DAY

The Taliban Sniper readjusts on the boulder, looks through his scope, scans the mountains, hones in on Foy.

The Sniper breathes deep, moves his finger to the trigger--

MORE BULLETS FIRED HIS WAY, BOUNCE OFF THE BOULDER, KICK UP DIRT IN FRONT OF HIM. He ducks for cover.

EXT. MOUNTAIN OVERLOOKING NAKA VILLAGE - SAME TIME

Bjorndahl listens for Captain Cornell's signal--

CAPTAIN CORNELL (O.S.)

You're on!

BJORND AHL

Let's move.

The Overwatch team jumps up. They make haste as a unit, navigate the mountain, tear ass up and over, head toward higher ground. They move several hundred yards through the mountains, leap behind some rocks and fallen trees for cover.

Ortega finds the Taliban Sniper's nest through his scope.

EXT. TALIBAN NEST, OVERLOOKING NAKA VILLAGE - SAME TIME

Taliban Sniper traces the Ground Team as they navigate the village, a few yards from the perimeter of the mountains.

The Photographer is last of the pack, only keeps up due to Damico, who drags him along by the collar. The Sniper hones in on the back of Damico's head. He's moving, it'll be a tough shot--not impossible.

Just before the Taliban Sniper pulls the trigger, a bullet careens off the boulder he hides behind, grazes his shoulder. He hits the ground, crawls away from the nest.

EXT. MOUNTAIN OVERLOOKING NAKA VILLAGE - SAME TIME

The barrel of Ortega's rifle smokes. He tries to find the enemy sniper in his scope, sees only trees and nature.

HAINES

You get 'em?

ORTEGA

I don't think so.

The Ground Team arrives at Overwatch's hiding spot.

HAINES

Everyone accounted for, injuries?

CAPTAIN CORNELL

We're all good on this side.

GAUTHIER

Hey, nice shooting fellas.

ORTEGA

Not good enough, he's still out there.

FIRST SERGEANT MCGUIRE

Those are some serious storm clouds.
We ain't getting a ride outta here
anytime soon.

MATTUCCI

Fuck. So, what's our outlook?

FLETCHER

We're gonna have to sit tight. Wait
for nightfall, navigate our way down
the mountain.

JENSON

That's in...twelve hours.

EXT. OUTDOOR CAFE, BOCA RATON - DAY [FLASH FORWARD]

Future Haines ties the plastic straw from his ice water into knots.

HAINES

Gauthier and our translator
intercepted radio chatter. Insurgents
had planted IEDs all over the
mountain. They were confident we
wouldn't make it down.

DANNY

So you're sent to hold peace talks, it
turns into a nasty fire fight, and
there's no way to fly you back to base
safely?

HAINES

That's the gist.

DANNY
So what'd you do?

EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE - NIGHT

The whole platoon wears night vision goggles. In a single-file line, they navigate the downward slope of the mountain.

No one speaks. Each and every step they take is laborious. Lt. Dezzler steps on a rock, turns his ankle, falls over.

LIEUTENANT DEZZER
Ahh, fuck.

He rubs his ankle, waits for someone to come help him up.

First Sergeant McGuire looks at him, puts his pointer finger to his lips to signal - *shut the fuck up*. Lt. Dezzler finally gets himself up, they continue on down the mountain.

EXT. BASE OF THE MOUNTAIN - DAY

The platoon reaches even ground.

Within a few moments, a helicopter is in sight.

Fist pumps from the platoon - even a few smiles.

INT. LT. COLONEL BARTON'S OFFICE, ARMY BASE - DAY

Captain Cornell, First Sergeant McGuire, Lt. Colonel Barton and Brigade Sergeant Major Jenkins are gathered. Captain Cornell paces back and forth. He gesticulates wildly.

CAPTAIN CORNELL
That whole mission was fucked. You know that, and I know that.

LT. COLONEL BARTON
That may be the case, Captain. But--

CAPTAIN CORNELL
But nothing. My job is to keep this platoon alive. That job becomes impossible when--

SERGEANT MAJOR JENKINS
Your job is to complete your missions. Which, far as I can tell, you haven't exactly done a stellar job of.

Captain Cornell's face darkens.

SERGEANT MAJOR JENKINS (CONTINUED)

That said, I agree. We went in there
half-cocked. I'll run it up the
flagpole, get things straightened out.

Captain Cornell storms out.

INT. HAINES' ROOM - NIGHT

Shiny with sweat, Haines wrestles his mattress as he sleeps. He tosses and turns, rolls over, arm falls off the mattress into the murky, bloody water that fills his hooch. The water rises, almost covers his face--moments from drowning.

He wakes up. No water, everything's normal. Just a dream. Except he's on the floor, beside his mattress.

Damico peeks his head into the room.

DAMICO

You alright, Doc?

Haines shoots up, embarrassed.

HAINES

Must'a fallen off the bed, weird
dreams.

Damico offers a hand, helps him up.

DAMICO

My old man, used to have weird dreams.

HAINES

Yeah?

DAMICO

Yeah, never really understood it til
recently. Wear's been talking to me.

HAINES

What? Like, on the phone?

DAMICO

Nah, like, in my dreams.

HAINES

What's he saying?

DAMICO

I don't know, can't ever remember. I just know that I wake up feeling like, nothing's gonna be the same.

HAINES

He might walk again, eventually. If that's what you mean.

DAMICO

When my old man got back from Kuwait, my mom would talk about scars you can't see. She said, sometimes those are the worst ones.

EXT. COMBAT OUTPOST MARGAH, AFGHANISTAN - DAY

The convoy of trucks approach a base. The sandbag walls and barbed wire fences are being taken down.

HAINES (V.O.)

COP Margah. An outpost being dismantled. U.S. Military pulling out, handing the reins over to ASF.

The convoy circles the outpost, forms a perimeter of trucks.

EXT. PERIMETER OF MARGAH BASE - DAY

Haines, Gauthier, Aviles, Wolford, Damico, and Mattucci use long shovels to dig into the rocky ground beneath them.

HAINES (V.O.)

Our mission was straight-forward. Guard the perimeter while the base is deconstructed. You'd think they'd take the walls down last so that we'd all have cover...but what do a bunch of fucking grunts know?

Haines decides he's dug deep enough. He drops a cardboard box of food and a 24 pack of bottled water into the hole, shovels dirt back on top of it.

HAINES (V.O.)

We were told the mission would take 48 hours. It was Army policy never to leave behind food or water that may be claimed by insurgent forces, so we were instructed to bury the excess supplies.

EXT. WITHIN THE PERIMETER OF TRUCKS - NIGHT

Bjorndahl, Farmer, Miller, Mendenhall and Haines sit in a circle, play cards.

HAINES (V.O.)

Of all the cartoonish nonsense pop-culture has led audiences to believe about war, the one thing that's actually been portrayed semi-accurately is the sound a mortar makes when it's falling overhead.

The sky makes a HIGH-PITCHED WHISTLE. All members of the card game dive to the side, hit the deck, cover their ears.

Somewhere in the distance, an EXPLOSION. No hesitation--they reclaim their seats, continue the card game.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE PERIMETER OF TRUCKS - NIGHT

Ortega and Foy on Overwatch. They each sit in a gunner's nest of one the armored trucks, chat through radio headsets.

FOY

Yo, I was talking to the new translator. He was telling me about these guys, they're like Taliban Snipers, but they sort of freelance.

ORTEGA

As opposed to the rest of the salaried Taliban workers.

FOY

You know what I mean--

ORTEGA

Per usual, Foy, I got no fucking clue what you mean.

FOY

They call them *Vultures*.

ORTEGA

Who?

FOY

The snipers. Apparently they stalk U.S. Battalions, wait til we're weakened or fractured, pick us off.

ORTEGA
That's fascinating, Foy.

FOY
You think we ran into one?

ORTEGA
One what?

FOY
A vulture? In Naka.

ORTEGA
Sounds like a myth.

FOY
Maybe. But he was quite the marksman.
Could be watching us right now.

Ortega tries to ignore Foy, but suddenly he sees shapes in the surrounding mountains.

EXT. WITHIN THE PERIMETER OF TRUCKS - DAY

The entire platoon is in need of a shave and shower.

HAINES (V.O.)
48 hours my ass.

Haines, Gauthier, Aviles, Wolford, Damico, and Mattucci use long shovels to dig up the previously buried food and water.

HAINES (V.O.)
Ten days in, I started to feel like
Tom Hanks, yapping at the Goddamn
volley ball.

HIGH-PITCHED WHISTLE from the sky. Everyone ducks down into the holes they dig. An EXPLOSION goes off somewhere in the distance. Everyone pops back up, continues digging.

SOUNDS OF A CHOPPER NEARING...A helicopter hovers overhead.

INT. HELICOPTER, UP IN THE AIR - SAME TIME

Brigade Sergeant Major Jenkins peers through binoculars.

SERGEANT MAJOR JENKINS
Are these bino's faulty, or do we have
a bunch of fucking hobos operating
this base?

EXT. ARMORED TRUCK - DAY

Haines, Gauthier, Aviles, Wolford, Damico, and Mattucci sneak up to the truck, duck down so they won't be seen by Captain Cornell inside.

They can hear Cornell argue with Brigade Sergeant Major Jenkins through the radio.

Ortega approaches.

ORTEGA

What's going on?

MATTUCCI

Shhhh.

He places a pointer finger to his lips.

CAPTAIN CORNELL (O.S.)

THIS IS FUCKING RIDICULOUS!

Captain Cornell bursts out of the truck - everyone tries to play it off like they weren't eavesdropping.

CAPTAIN CORNELL

Gentlemen, there is a good chance I am going to be relieved of duty, but I want you to know that this deployment has been the greatest achievement of my military career. Thank you for serving with me.

He walks off like a man who's just given his last shit.

EXT. WITHIN THE PERIMETER OF TRUCKS - DAY

Bjorndahl, Farmer, Miller, Mendenhall and Haines sit in a circle, play cards.

HAINES (V.O.)

Brigade Sergeant Major demanded we dig up more buried water to shave with. Said we can't have soldiers of the US Army looking like a bunch of homeless delinquents. Cornell wasn't having it.

FARMER

Can't believe Cornell was bounced like that. He's just gone. Poof.

MENDENHALL

I'm dying to know what he said to Sergeant Major to be relieved mid-mission. That just doesn't happen. Was something scathing, I'm sure.

FARMER

Does. Not. Happen.

MILLER

Bet you the rest of the smokes in my pack this Bailey guy ain't gonna shield us from Command like Captain Cornell did.

HAINES

Your pack's about to be empty, Sergeant Miller. So I'm not sure that's worth anything.

MILLER

Fuck makes you say that, Doc?

Haines throws down the rest of the cards in his hand.

HAINES

This.

FARMER

Ah, shit.

MENDENHALL

Fuck that.

BJORND AHL

Damn, Doc finally won one.

FARMER

He was due.

MILLER

oh, shit. Double or nothing?

HAINES

Pay up motherfuckers.

Haines collects various tobacco products from everyone.

MILLER

No way Doc, no way. Let's run it back.

HAINES
Hell no, Sarge. I'm retiring.

MILLER
You can't retire, let's do another.

HAINES
Hell yes I can. Pay up, let's go.

Miller gets loud, animated.

MILLER
You can't fucking quit playing after
one game--double or nothing! C'mon--

His yelling covers the faint WHISTLE of the sky.

MILLER
This ain't the fucking kid's table.
Run it back, double or nothing--

BOOM! Everyone covers their ears and hits the deck as an explosion goes off nearby. Miller--the only one who didn't drop to the ground--is covered in a layer of dust.

BJORND AHL
Jesus.

MENDENHALL
That one was close.

SCREAMS FROM THE DISTANCE.

FARMER
Oh, shit.

Haines is up on his feet, sprints off toward the screams.

EXT. MARGAH BASE - MOMENTS LATER

A bulldozer ENGINEER screams bloody murder. He's on the ground, shrapnel buried into his left shin.

ENGINEER
Jesus fucking Christ, oh Christ! Oh,
shit! Oh, Christ!

MARY, a medic, kneels beside the Engineer.

ENGINEER
Holy fuck--oh, help me! Fucking help!

Haines, Baker, and Foy arrive on scene.

BAKER

Oh shit, it's an engineer.

HAINES (V.O.)

It *had* to hit a fucking engineer.

FOY

As if this mission wasn't overextended already.

Mary panics, can't figure out what to do or how to help.

ENGINEER

What are you just fucking sitting there for? Fucking Christ, help me!

MARY

Oh my God, oh my God, oh my...

Haines bends over, whispers into Mary's ear.

HAINES

This your first time seeing combat?

Mary nods.

HAINES

Assess the situation.

Mary fumbles about, her instincts have abandoned her.

HAINES

What's your name?

MARY

My name--

HAINES

Your name soldier! What's your name?

MARY

M-m-mary--Mary.

HAINES

Well, Mary Mary. Asses the situation. Are his injuries life-threatening?

MARY

N-n-no...

HAINES

That's right. So what are you gonna do?

MARY

I...I don't--

HAINES

You're gonna remember your training, your gonna patch this dude up, and we're gonna finish our mission with one less bulldozer operator.

Mary regains her composure, patches up the Engineer.

Miller stumbles around covered in dust from the explosion, eyes wider than a fucking owl.

HAINES (V.O.)

Cornell was replaced with Captain Bailey, who got along okay. And we even warmed up to him after he too refused the Brigade Sergeant's demand that we dig up bottled water to shave.

INT. DAMICO'S HOOCH, ARMY BASE - DAY

Damico and Haines play Mario Kart, Bjordahl watches. Miller sits against the wall, stares off into space.

BJORND AHL

Katie Holmes--I'd drink her bathwater.

DAMICO

You're a sicko--and how you gonna do that to the Maverick, man?

BJORND AHL

Please. I'd shoot him out the sky ten times over to spend five minutes with Katie Holmes.

DAMICO

Doc, talk to this guy for me, please.

HAINES

Think I'm siding with Bjordahl on this one--shit, shit, shit! Damn it.

Haines sulks, hands the game controller over to Bjordahl.

BJORND AHL
You suck at this, Doc.

HAINES
Fuck it, gonna get some grub.

DAMICO
Sergeant Miller, why don't you take
over for me. I need to go get a lift
in...Sarg?

MILLER
Huh, what? Oh, nah. Don't feel like
playing much.

Bjorndahl takes the controller from Damico, tries to hand it
to Miller, who refuses.

BJORND AHL
C'mon, Sarg. Don't make me play alone.

MILLER
Nah, I don't wanna.

BJORND AHL
We can bet on it. Fresh pack a smokes
says I wipe the floor with you.

MILLER
Not right now--

Bjorndahl presses the controller into Miller's chest.

BJORND AHL
Fine, two fresh packs, c'mon Sarg.

Miller rises to his feet, the controller falls to the floor.

MILLER
I said, I don't feel like it.

He storms out.

BJORND AHL
Play me, Doc?

HAINES
Let's grab some food first.

INT. HALLWAY, OUTSIDE FIRST SERGEANT'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Haines and Bjorndahl enter.

Platoon-mates pass around a satellite phone.

HAINES
What's going on?

ORTEGA (FROM OTHER ROOM)
Petersen's on the line!

Haines shimmies through his platoon, reaches for the phone.

MATTUCCI (INTO PHONE)
Doc's here. He wants to talk to ya.

INT. HOSPITAL BED, GERMAN FACILITY - SAME TIME

Petersen is in a white gown, talks into a rotary phone.

He wears an eye patch over his left eye.

HAINES (V.O.)
Petersen and Wear were getting
treatment at a facility in Germany.

PETERSEN (INTO PHONE)
Hey Doc...good to hear your
voice...Yeah, Wear's stable...they
brought in this old school phone for
me, you know the rotary ones?

INT. HALLWAY, OUTSIDE FIRST SERGEANT'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Haines smiles.

PETERSEN (O.S.)
I told 'em, fuck all I don't know how
to use this thing! There's this one
nurse here, she sneaks me up to the
roof for cigarettes.

HAINES (ON PHONE)
Great to hear from you, Petersen.
Here's Gooch.

Haines hands the phone off, leaves.

INT. GYM, ARMY BASE - MOMENTS LATER

Haines enters the gym. Damico's the only other guy in there.

DAMICO

You good, Doc? You look flush.

Haines lays on the bench, pumps the press without checking the weight. His breathing strains, his reps slow...

HAINES

Oh fuck, oh shit--

He's losing it...the weight is too much...Damico appears over him, hoists the bench up onto the rack.

DAMICO

Jesus, Doc. Think you're pushing it?

HAINES

Thanks, man. Yeah.

DAMICO

What's up? You talk to Petersen?

HAINES

I did. He seems...alright.

DAMICO

So what's the issue?

HAINES

Shit...they're all fucked up, man!

DAMICO

Could be worse.

HAINES

Could it?

DAMICO

Could be like Lopez.

Haines cries, grabs Damico by the collar.

HAINES

Don't fucking say that, Damico. Don't you fucking say that.

HAINES (V.O.)

He wasn't wrong, though.

EXT. COMBAT OUTPOST, TILLMAN AFGHANISTAN - DAY

Multiple helicopters fly toward a U.S. Army base. The base is surrounded on all sides by mountain peaks.

HAINES (V.O.)

Our last mission: Tillman.

Up on a small mountain top, with a surface area of four thousand square feet, a small operations hut.

INT. OPERATIONS HUT, MOUNTAIN PEEK - DAY

The hut is a small building, walls made of sandbags, with a tarp thrown over the top for shade. Not much inside. Cots by the east wall, machine guns by the west.

HAINES (V.O.)

The base's namesake: Patrick Tillman, former NFL safety, enlisted after 9/11, shot and killed in Afghanistan serving his country.

Haines unbuttons his pants, heads outside.

EXT. OPERATIONS HUT, MOUNTAIN PEEK - MOMENTS LATER

Haines walks to the side of the peak, locates the top of a PVC pipe, pees into it.

HAINES (V.O.)

It came out later, Tillman was killed by friendly fire. A fact which was covered up by senior Army Officials.

On the other side of the peak, Bjorndahl sits on an empty ammo crate, shits into a plastic bag.

Abdul leads a donkey up the mountain, water and food supplies hang from its satchel. When it reaches the peak, Ortega claims the food and water.

ORTEGA

Thanks Abdul.

Bjorndahl ties off his bag of poop, pulls it out from the empty ammo box. He opens up a body bag, reveals that it's filled with tied-off poop bags. He adds his latest movement to the collection, closes it up, carries it over to the donkey. Abdul leads the donkey back down the mountain.

EXT. COMBAT OUTPOST, TILLMAN AFGHANISTAN - DAY

On the low ground, CAPTAIN BAILEY, hard-jawed with broad shoulders, chats with Abdul and a COOK. Cook wears an apron over his uniform, proudly holds a bag of scrambled egg mix.

COOK

Made a special request for these--

The bag of scrambled egg mix EXPLODES as a bullet rips through it. Captain Bailey dives on Abdul, ducks for cover.

COOK

You got to be kidding me! Took three weeks to get these eggs!

EXT. SNIPER'S NEST, SURROUNDING MOUNTAINS - SAME TIME

It's the Taliban Sniper who tormented them in Naka. His nest is in a pocket of the mountain, surrounded on all sides by rock walls. He peers through the scope of his rifle, studies the U.S. soldiers below as they run for cover.

EXT. OPERATIONS HUT, MOUNTAIN PEEK - SAME TIME

Haines, Bjorndahl, Damico and Ortega play cards.

DAMICO

Shit, you hear that?

They jump up. Damico grabs binoculars, studies the base.

EXT. COMBAT OUTPOST, TILLMAN AFGHANISTAN - MOMENTS LATER

Lieutenant Dezzzer trembles behind a sandbag wall.

Next to him, SOLDIER 1 uses binoculars to try to see where the shooting comes from. His crouch gets a little too high-- BANG! The sniper's bullet pierces the binos, kills Soldier 1.

LIEUTENANT DEZZER

Fuck!

EXT. OPERATIONS HUT, MOUNTAIN PEEK - MOMENTS LATER

Damico and Ortega have their rifles set up. They look through scopes, try to find the Taliban Sniper's nest.

DAMICO

I don't see shit.

ORTEGA

I found the son of a bitch.

HAINES

You gotta shot?

ORTEGA

Nah, the end of his rifle's just barely poking outta those rocks. He's up pretty high, maybe two clicks east.

DAMICO

Shit, I see him. He's covered up good. No way we nail him from here. We're gonna have to flush him out.

EXT. MOUNTAINS SURROUNDING THE TILLMAN BASE - DAY

Hustling up a mountain single-file, the HUNT TEAM: Lt. Dezzler, Fletcher, Baker, Foy, Bjorndahl, Mendenhall, Ortega, Haines, Gauthier and Damico. They travel light, just weapons and canteens--except for Haines and Gauthier.

HAINES (V.O.)

We were sent up the mountain, facing enemy sniper fire, so we had to move fast and light. This wasn't so easy for me and Gooch, seeing as our gear is imperative.

Haines has his heavy bag of medical equipment. Gauthier has a backpack with a large radio attachment. They huff and puff.

EXT. SNIPER'S NEST, SURROUNDING MOUNTAINS - SAME TIME

The Taliban Sniper watches from his nest as the Hunt Team closes in on his location. He peers through the scope, squeezes off several shots.

EXT. MOUNTAINS SURROUNDING THE TILLMAN BASE - SAME TIME

Dirt and rocks kick up around the Hunt Team as sniper fire rains down from above. They disperse and take cover. Gauthier, weighed down by his heavy fucking radio bag, is too slow to find cover. Haines drops his pack, grabs Gauthier, yanks him down in the nick of time.

GAUTHIER

Jesus fucking-thanks, man.

He wipes the sweat from his forehead.

FLETCHER

Bjorndahl, Foy. Lay down some cover
fire for us. Home-stretch.

Foy and Bjorndahl comply. Fletcher leads the rest of the HUNT
team up the mountain.

EXT. SNIPER'S NEST, SURROUNDING MOUNTAINS - MOMENTS LATER

Hunt Team makes it to the Sniper's nest--he's gone.

HAINES (V.O.)

At this point, we're a stones-throw
away from the boarder of Pakistan.

Mendenhall picks up a shell casing, drops it.

MENDENHALL

Still hot. He's close.

HAINES (V.O.)

If the sniper makes it to the boarder,
he's as good as gone.

ORTEGA

Movement!

In the distance, The Taliban Sniper takes cover in a cave.

EXT. CAVE - MOMENTS LATER

Bjorndahl and Foy catch up. Fletcher signals the team to a
halt a hundred feet back from the cave's entrance.

FOY

He's cornered. Let's just finish this.

ORTEGA

Nah, can't go in there. He'll pick us
off one by one. Let's toss in a
grenade.

FLETCHER

I was thinking something bigger.
Damico, call in the ordinance for air
support. Let them know, danger close.

Damico gets on his radio.

EXT. FARM, PAKISTAN - DAY

A PAKISTANI FARMER herds his flock of goats. One goat has fallen behind. The farmer whistles at it, but it ignores him.

The farmer signals to his SON, who walks back to the lost goat, pushes it in the direction of the rest of the herd--

BOOM! A nearby explosion annihilates the farmer and the goats. The farmer's son barely escapes the fiery blast.

EXT. OUTDOOR CAFE, BOCA RATON - DAY [FLASH FORWARD]

Future Haines uses his fingers to demonstrate a triangle falling onto the cafe table.

HAINES

It's called the triangle of death.
Three missiles fall in a triangular
formation, incinerate everything.

DANNY

Goodbye enemy sniper?

HAINES

And then some. In a matter of minutes
we had two Pakistani helicopters
hovering over us. Apparently, a farmer
shepherding his heard got caught in
the blast. His son survived the
explosion, went and found a radio.

DANNY

What happened? Did they open fire?

HAINES

Believe it or not, Pakistan wasn't
exactly interested in starting World
War 3. We found ourselves hanging out
in the open, caught between a fleet of
US choppers and a fleet of Pakistani.

DANNY

A Mexican standoff on the Afghanistan-
Pakistan boarder.

HAINES

The irony wasn't lost on us.

EXT. ARMY BASE, AFGHANISTAN - DAY

Haines, Gauthier and Jenson watch the NEW SOLDIERS.

HAINES (V.O.)

The standoff only lasted 30 minutes.
Our Government agreed to pay Pakistan
for the mistake. World War 3, narrowly
avoided.

GAUTHIER

Hope their deployment goes smoother
than ours did.

JENSON

Those are some fresh faces. Is that
what we looked like, when we got here?

FIVE NEW SOLDIERS head toward them.

INT. ARMORED TRUCK - DAY

Mid ride-along. Jenson drives, Haines rides shotgun. They
chat with the new soldiers through ear pieces.

SOLDIER 1 (O.S.)

What do you mean, they study us?

HAINES

To learn our evasive maneuvers--

JENSON

And figure how to counter them.

HAINES

You never wanna do the same thing
twice.

SOLDIER 3 (O.S.)

How do we tell the difference between
an insurgent and a villager? How do we
know who wants us dead?

Jenson and Haines exchange a skeptical glance.

HAINES (V.O.)

Loaded question.

JENSON

Insurgents will be the ones shooting
at you.

EXT. ARMY BASE, AFGHANISTAN - DAY

Haines daps up Damico and Fletcher, approaches a helicopter.

HAINES (V.O.)

Flew to Germany before coming home.

He turns, SEES HIMSELF in combat attire. Boards the chopper.

EXT. TARMAC, FORT RILEY ARMY BASE, KANSAS - DAY

Haines, Ortega, Mendenhall, Gauthier and Baker climb down the steps of the plane. Petersen stands next to Wear, who's in a wheelchair, waits to welcome home their platoon-mates.

HAINES (V.O.)

Wear was in the middle of his treatment at Fort San Houston, but he flew into Riley to welcome us home.

INT. BARBER SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

Haines sits in the barber chair, smock slung over him, as the BARBER cuts his hair with a pair of scissors.

HAINES (V.O.)

None of us realized how bad we smelled over there. In the height of it, I went forty straight days without showering or changing my clothes.

He looks ahead at the mirror - sees himself in his fatigues, with Lopez behind him, clippers in hand, buzzing his hair.

INT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT

Haines and Baker sit at the bar-top, sip beer.

HAINES

What's that smell?

Haines' nostrils flare, he looks around the bar.

BAKER

That's perfume, Doc.

HAINES

No kidding.

Haines spots the WOMAN whose smell has attracted his attention. He gets up slowly, approaches her.

EXT. OUTDOOR CAFE, BOCA RATON - DAY

Danny sits across from Haines, types notes into his laptop.

DANNY

What'd you do after you got home?

HAINES

Lopez's family met us at Fort Riley. I finished off my contract with the Army...thing of it is, I tried my hardest to leave that part of me behind. Doesn't quite work that way.

DANNY

Ever think about the Command level guys--who did your platoon wrong?

EXT. QUAIN T HOUSE IN THE COUNTRY - NIGHT

A minivan parked in the driveway. The driver's side window has been shattered. The window wipers have been activated. The car alarm BLARES.

HAINES (V.O.)

Think about them?

General Taback, with his pristine silver hair and impossibly broad shoulders hustles out to quell the car alarm. Shocked by the site of his busted minivan, he has no idea that he's walked right into the site-line of a sniper rifle's scope.

EXT. WINE VINEYARD - DAY

Lieutenant Colonel Barton's bland face crinkles and contorts as he smells the white wine in his glass, gives it a swirl. He studies the color of the wine up against the sunlight, clueless to the fact he is being lined up perfectly within the scope of a sniper rifle.

HAINES (V.O.)

Oh, I think about them.

EXT. PUTTING GREEN, GOLF COURSE - DAY

Secretary of the Army William Stevens takes his sweet time lining up a putt.

Under Secretary Bill Smiley caddies for his boss, completely unaware that he stands directly in the center of the scope of a sniper rifle.

EXT. HIGHWAY - SAME TIME

Haines has pulled his pick up truck over onto the shoulder of the highway. He lays in the back, mostly covered by a tarp, aiming his sniper rifle at the golf course.

He looks up from the scope of his rifle.

HAINES

But what am I gonna do? Bump them off one at a time? The army will have replacements lined up before their corpses hit the cold steel of the corners office.

EXT. OUTDOOR CAFE, BOCA RATON - DAY

Haines hands the memory card over to Danny.

HAINES

Think you're up for the challenge?

DANNY

I hope so. Any final thoughts you'd like to leave me with?

HAINES

Just that...getting used to living with your own mortality...the mortality of your friends. You can't just flip a switch, turn it off. In a sense, I feel like I'll never be all the way home.

DANNY

Damn.

HAINES

Anyway--thanks for helping me tell my story, man.

DANNY

Thanks for sharing it with me.

They shake hands. Haines rises, walks over to his WIFE - the woman from the bar - and YOUNG SON, embraces them both.

Danny closes his laptop.

THE END.