

# **ACE IN THE HOLE**

Screenplay by

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Based on  
*Mission: Black List #1*  
by  
Eric Maddox  
with Davin Seay

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**PREFERREDCONTENT**

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**FADE IN**

**A PERSIAN GULF CITY**

glistens in the crisp pre-dawn darkness to the VO SOUND OF RUNNING SHOWER WATER...

**SUPER: 0446 14DEC2003, DOHA, QATAR**

And the CAMERA TILTS DOWN to REVEAL that our view is through the WINDOW of

**INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT**

A compact man, dressed in nothing but his skivvies, is lying on the bed. He is Army Staff Sergeant **ERIC MADDOX** (31) - unshaven, wide awake and staring at the ceiling.

ERIC (VO)  
Dear Debbie.  
(Pause)  
Dear...Debbie...

Suddenly, THE *FAJR* - the first of the five daily Muslim prayers - can be heard, broadcast through distant loudspeakers from some nearby minaret.

Maddox turns his head to look at the bathroom door. It's slightly ajar. We PUSH IN...through the opening...

**INT. HOTEL ROOM BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS**

The room is filled with steam from the running hot water shower. A short-sleeved, BABY-BLUE OXFORD SHIRT is hanging from the shower rod.

ERIC (VO)  
Dear Debbie...

*BANG-BANG-BANG!* - sudden *POUNDING* on the hotel room door takes us back to:

**INT. HOTEL ROOM - SAME**

An URGENT VOICE on the other side of the door shouts:

VOICE (OC)  
*STAFF SERGEANT MADDOX!*

And Maddox rolls out of bed and yanks open the door.

Gunny Sergeant **LEE TREVINO** (33) - a tough-looking southerner dressed in TAC 5.11 gear - is standing in the doorway alongside Sergeant **PETERS** (20s) - a chipper soldier in desert BDUs. Lee's GOOFY GRIN belies any real urgency.

ERIC

Lee?

LEE

Your debriefing with General Custer's been cancelled.

Eric cocks his head and squints at Lee's face, trying to detect reason or meaning...

ERIC

Why?

LEE

Really? You're in this man's Army and you're askin' *why*?

(To Peters)

Sergeant Peters, tell Maddox here what you told me.

PETERS

Uh...nothin'...they...did a recon with your detainee last night.

ERIC

*What?*

PETERS

I went back to CENTCOM after I dropped you guys off...and watched some of it on the satellite feed.

ERIC

What happened?

PETERS

I dunno. It was getting late, I went to bed around 1800.

Eric stares incredulously at Peters...then looks to Lee.

LEE

You wanna...oh, I dunno...put some pants on?

CUT TO:

**INT. CENTCOM - DAY**

As a door is pushed open and Peters, Lee and Eric (dressed in Tech 5.11 pants and that baby-blue Oxford shirt) purposefully stride down a gray-walled hallway lined with SOLDIERS.

We are ON ERIC clocking every Soldier's face - searching for something - some clue as to what might have happened.

They turn left down another hallway and Peters KNOCKS on a closed door. After a moment, it cracks open and a stocky, gruff **ARMY MAJOR** pokes his head out.

PETERS

Hey. What's up, sir?

The Major regards the trio with something like suspicion.

MAJOR

Nothing.

PETERS

Sir, did anything happen last night?

MAJOR

What do you mean?

PETERS

Did they get anyone? On the raid last night?

Pause. The Major looks again at Lee and Eric...looks up and down the hallway, then whispers:

MAJOR

Yeah. We got him.

And we LOCK IN ON ERIC'S FACE as it clouds over with incomprehension...

ERIC

Sir?

And the Major lifts something from his desk and hands it to Eric -

# **A GRAINY PHOTO PRINTOUT**

of a bearded & wild-looking **SADDAM HUSSEIN** pinned to the dirt by a **DELTA FORCE "OPERATOR"** beside a **SQUARE HOLE IN THE GROUND** surrounded by **4TH INFANTRY DIVISION SOLDIERS**.

Eric stares at the photo, blinks a couple of times as though trying to understand exactly what he is seeing.

Lee says something. So does the Major. So does Peters...but all we HEAR is a confusion of POORLY RECORDED SOUND: A *SHI'A* PRAYER...the *SHAHADA*...SHOUTS of *MUQTADA!* *MUQTADA!* *MUQTADA!* and 'ALLAHU AKBAR which PRE-LAP our

CUT TO:

# **BBC NEWS BROADCAST - MOBILE PHONE VIDEO OF SADDAM HUSSEIN'S EXECUTION**

Grainy, hand-held video of the hanging - the source of the confusion of SOUND.

Saddam Hussein - his beard trimmed and wrists bound behind him - is positioned on a platform...a thick noose is placed around his neck...the trapdoor releases...the body falls.

VOICE (OC)

Warm beer...

We are:

# **INT. LONDON HEATHROW AIRPORT - TERMINAL PUB - DAY**

The BBC NEWS BROADCAST is on a TV hanging above a well-stocked BAR and Eric Maddox is sitting on a bar stool beside his DUFFEL BAG, and staring at the TV.

# **SUPER: 1300 31DEC2006. LONDON HEATHROW AIRPORT**

Eric looks to his left where a **GRAY MAN** (60) with a grizzled crewcut and a deep drawling voice is staring down at his own pint of bitters.

GRAY MAN (CONT'D)

You know, the Brits say that it ain't warm. It's "room temperature" - or "cask temperature." I say it's like a glass of piss someone farted in.

Eric smiles, awkwardly.

GRAY MAN (CONT'D)  
Where you from?

ERIC  
Uh...Oklahoma.

GRAY MAN  
Never been. Drove past it a coupla  
times...

Ill-at-ease with idle chit-chat, Eric turns his attention back to the TV where a **BBC NEWS ANCHOR** is continuing his report on the execution of Saddam Hussein with:

**2003 FOOTAGE OF THE "SPIDER HOLE"...2005 FOOTAGE OF THE TRIAL OF SADDAM HUSSEIN**

The Gray Man nods toward the TV.

GRAY MAN  
You know...there's those who say we  
had him all the time. And findin'  
him in that spider hole was  
bullshit - staged on account of  
Bush's re-election campaign.  
(Pause)  
What do you think?

Eric looks into the Gray Man's eyes and says simply:

ERIC  
Personally...I don't believe it.

The Gray Man cocks his head back and gives Eric a quizzical look...and a grin...then:

GRAY MAN (CONT'D)  
Where you headed?

Eric checks his watch.

ERIC  
Nowhere if I miss my flight.

He stands, picks up a duffel bag, pays for his drink, nods to the Gray Man -

ERIC (CONT'D)  
Happy New Year.

GRAY MAN  
You too...

- and walks away down the terminal. The Gray Man watches him go as the TV AUDIO fills in:

BBC NEWS ANCHOR

*Within hours of Saddam Hussein's execution, bombings killed at least 68 people in Iraq on Saturday, including one in a fish market in a mostly Shiite town south of Baghdad...*

The AMBIENT SOUND of an in-flight AIRBUS PRE-LAPS:

#### **INT. EMIRATES AIRBUS - ECONOMY - LATER**

The CAMERA MOVES down the aisle where several **PASSENGERS** are already sleeping. And we discover Eric in the pool of light from the overhead, sitting in a window seat, alone in his aisle. His LAPTOP is open on the tray table in front of him, yet he is staring out the window - into a BLACK VOID.

He looks to the

#### **LAPTOP SCREEN**

A WORD DOCUMENT is open. But the page is blank. The CURSOR slowly FLASHING...marking time...

He takes a deep breath, then lets it go...places his fingers on the keyboard and types:

**To all of those who have served, fought, and sacrificed,**

He pauses...thinks for a moment...then adds:

**and to all those who yearn for a seat at the bar**

He inserts a PAGE BREAK, then types the easiest words any first-time writer will ever write:

#### **CHAPTER ONE**

He hits return, then:

**We came in low, a hundred feet over the desert under the cover of night.**

He stops, cracks his knuckles, stares at the BLINKING CURSOR...and the SOUND of HELICOPTER ROTORS PRE-LAPS our

SMASH CUT TO:

**EXT. BAGHDAD - NIGHT**

A 2-MAN OH-58 HELICOPTER lifts off from a dark AIRFIELD.

ERIC (VO)  
Dear Lee. Sorry I couldn't tell  
you to your face, ol' buddy...

The chopper swerves around a series of antennas and out over the war-torn, post-apocalyptic ruin of Baghdad.

ERIC (VO CONT'D)  
...but you were sound asleep when  
some guys came into the detention  
area'n said they needed someone to  
interrogate a coupla drunk  
detainees in Tikrit.

Tethered and wedged into the space behind the **PILOT**, Eric (wearing that same baby-blue Oxford shirt) hangs on for dear life. On the ground, BURNT AUTOMOBILES glow like smouldering embers in the desert.

ERIC (VO CONT'D)  
I know you're top dog around here,  
and you had first dibs, but hell,  
man, it's one night. In *Tikrit*.

**INT. CAMP CROPPER - BUNKHOUSE - NIGHT****SUPER: CAMP CROPPER. BAGHDAD INTERNATIONAL  
AIRPORT (BIAP)**

Lee Trevino lies sound asleep on a lower bunk - a small piece of paper on his chest.

ERIC (VO)  
If there was any *real* interrogatin'  
goin' on at BIAP, I'd've stayed.  
Least I'll be puttin' my training  
to work.

**EXT. SKIES OVER TIKRIT - NIGHT**

The chopper veers around a couple of BURNING OIL WELLS.

ERIC (VO)  
You snooze, you lose! Wish me  
luck. See you in a day or two.  
Your pal, Eric.



**INT. CAMP CROPPER - BUNKHOUSE - NIGHT**

Lee wakes up...discovers the paper on his chest...  
unfolds it and reads the *actual* content of the note:

*HAD TO RUN. NEXT BEER'S ON ME. E.M.*

Lee scrambles to his feet and checks the bunk above his.

LEE  
Aw, shit...

**EXT. HELIPAD - TIKRIT - NIGHT**

**SUPER: 2315 28JUL2003. CAMP IRON HORSE. TIKRIT**

The chopper sets down in its own cloud of dust and Eric fumbles awkwardly with his tethers. **A DELTA FORCE BRUISER** - more biker than soldier - emerges from the dust, unfastens the tether, and *lifts* Eric from the cockpit.

BRUISER  
YOU THE INTERROGATOR?

ERIC  
WHAT?

BRUISER  
*ARE YOU THE INTERROGATOR?*

ERIC  
OH! YEAH!

BRUISER  
*YEAH? ARE YOU SURE?*

Eric smiles at the Bruiser...and nods.

**INT. MANSION - MOMENTS LATER**

Eric, led by the Bruiser, walks through a palatial MARBLE ENTRYWAY...through a LIVING ROOM...DINING ROOM...

Everywhere, stocks of ARTILLERY and AMMUNITION are piled along the walls beneath portraits of Saddam Hussein. Eric pauses to gaze at one of the paintings.

BRUISER  
Yeah, the house was his.

ERIC

His?

BRUISER

Yeah. His. C'mon.

TRACKING 360 DEGREES up a spiral staircase, we follow Eric up to a second floor SHOOTER'S QUARTERS with rows of BUNK BEDS, COUCHES and a TV...then down a hallway into

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - OPS ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

**DELTA FORCE "OPERATORS"** and a **CIA CASE OFFICER** stand around a MAP TABLE and monitor COMPUTERS. They sense a newcomer in the room and turn to look at the compact man in the blue Oxford shirt.

BRUISER

Major, this is Staff Sergeant Eric Maddox, the interrogator they sent up from Baghdad.

The **MAJOR** nods. A **GRUNT** - 6'2, 220 - pipes up:

GRUNT

Where you from, Staff Sergeant?

ERIC

Sapulpa. Oklahoma.

GRUNT

Riiight.

The CIA Case Officer (**ROD**, 35) lifts his eyes from the map. He's handsome, prematurely gray.

ROD

We've got a coupla drunk detainees might be High Value Targets.

ERIC

I can do whatever you need me to.

MAJOR

That's good. Very good.

The Major cocks his head and grins.

MAJOR (CONT'D)

Tell you what, Maddox...

SMASH CUT TO:

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - DOWNSTAIRS - MINUTES LATER**

Eric looks up from rummaging through his duffel -

ERIC

*A raid?*

- as Rod jogs down the stairs with a young IRAQI-AMERICAN SOLDIER (**JARED**).

ROD

Yeah.

ERIC

Should I, uh, take my rifle?

ROD

Yeah. Rifle's a *hella*-good idea.

ERIC

Helmet?

ROD

Wow. Yeah. Helmet's good, too.  
Very useful. You know what else?

ERIC

What?

ROD

(Introducing)  
Jared. Your interpreter. He's  
*real fuckin' handy.*

Rod heads back upstairs. Eric sticks out his hand;  
Jared looks at it, then slaps a BOTTLE OF WATER into it.

JARED

Stay hydrated. Gear up.

ERIC

Right! So, what's our objective?

JARED

(Flatly)  
Find the Ace of Spades. End the war.

Eric pauses and looks directly at Jared. But there is no irony in the Iraqi-American's face, only weariness. In Eric, Jared sees a bright-eyed, nervous idealist.

JARED (CONT'D)

I'm shipping out tomorrow. I'm  
done. This is my last hit.

ERIC  
It's my first.

JARED  
*Ever?*

Eric nods. Jared considers this newbie and takes pity.

JARED (CONT'D)  
Okay. Alright. So...the 4th  
Infantry Division owns the  
battlefield.

ERIC  
The battlefield?

JARED  
Tikrit. This region.

Eric nods.

JARED (CONT'D)  
Rod - the guy who was just here -  
he's the Case Officer. CIA. He's  
developed some informants here. He  
gets the leads, this task force  
makes the hits.

ERIC  
Special Forces?

JARED  
What? No. Dude. *Didn't you get  
debriefed?* These guys are what  
Special Forces want to be.

(Pause)  
JSOC.  
(Off Eric's blank expression)  
*Joint Special Operations Command.*  
These guys are Delta Force.

ERIC  
Wow. Okay.

JARED  
Right. And the most important  
thing to understand...is that *they  
don't exist.* Got it?

ERIC  
Got it. Uh...why?

Jared takes a deep breath, then lets it go and grins  
sardonically.

JARED

If the U.S. government doesn't  
officially recognize them...then  
the U.S. government doesn't have to  
disclose their operations.

And before Eric can respond to this, the Grunt is coming  
down the stairs - along with 6 GEARED-UP DELTA FORCE  
**OPERATORS**. And he's singing:

GRUNT

*OOOHHH...OKLAHOMA, WHERE THE WIND  
COMES SWEEPIN' DOWN THE PLAAAIN!*

He grins with good-natured derision at Eric, then heads  
out the door.

CUT TO:

**EXT. SADDAM'S MANSION - MOMENTS LATER**

as Eric & Jared follow the Team toward two BLACK  
MERCEDES SEDANS and Jared continues:

JARED

The point of this whole operation  
is to hunt down HVTs.

ERIC

(Understanding; eagerly)  
High Value Targets.

JARED

Right. Case in point, Al-Duri -  
King of Clubs. Top military  
adviser to Saddam and prime  
terrorist suspect around Tikrit.  
Find the King of Clubs...he might  
lead us to the Ace of Spades.

ERIC

War's over; we go home.

Jared can't tell if Eric's serious or not. Jared grins.

JARED

Right.

**INT. MERCEDES SEDAN - CONTINUOUS**

Eric & Jared squeeze into the back seat behind the  
Bruiser at the wheel.

JARED

Tonight's target is Nezham Hasan.  
Rod's source says Nezham's leaving  
for Syria tomorrow a.m. to meet  
with Al Duri - maybe Saddam  
himself. Your job is to find out  
when and where that meeting's  
taking place. What...

Eric seems distracted - looking around the leather  
interior as though he's never seen one.

ERIC

Was this...

JARED

No. It belonged to his nieces.

BRUISER

*Je-sus...*

And the Bruiser starts the car as the Grunt climbs into  
the passenger seat.

ERIC

Just...never pictured goin' on a  
raid in Iraq in a Mercedes 560 -

JARED

We'll be switching to a Humvee up  
at Beiji - few minutes up the road.

ERIC

Oh. Okay. Fine!

GRUNT

Glad you approve.

And the Bruiser guns the engine and the sedan kicks up  
sand and stone as it peels away down the road.

#### **EXT. IRAQI DESERT - NIGHT**

The stark IRAQI LANDSCAPE is barely visible, illuminated  
only by the headlights of the two black Benzes racing  
across the desert at over 100 mph.

GRUNT (VO PRE-LAP)

Listen. This ain't Baghdad. Any  
time you're outside the compound or  
the camp at Beiji you're likely to  
catch an IED, RPG or a sniper  
round, so you gotta stay frosty.

**INT. MERCEDES SEDAN - NIGHT**

In the second car - eating the dust of the lead Benz - Eric nods. Frosty. Right. Eric takes a pull from his bottled water.

JARED

We'll link up with 4th Infantry Division at Beijs then proceed to the hit. Our role is strictly backup and SSE.

(Clarifying)

Sensitive Site Exploitation.

BRUISER

*Je-sus...*

The Bruiser turns down a dirt road and guns the engine.

ERIC

So...you think Saddam is in Syria?

JARED

He could be.

GRUNT

Or Baghdad -

ERIC

Or here?

GRUNT

In Tikrit? *Fuck* no. He's more likely in my ass cavity.

(Pause; to Eric)

How long you been in country?

ERIC

Four days.

*Four days?* The Bruiser - although driving - turns half around to look at Eric.

GRUNT

You're shittin' me.

Eric shakes his head and takes another pull from his water bottle.

BRUISER

*Je-sus!*

The Bruiser turns back to stare at the taillights of the Benz racing through the dust ahead of them.

BRUISER (CONT'D)  
 Listen up, noob, tonight you stay  
 back 'til target's secure. And you  
 don't take a leak without  
 permission, you got that?

But, before Eric can respond - *BLAM! BLAM-BLAM-BLAM!*

The Bruiser jerks the wheel, sending the Benz into a  
 skid through desert darkness.

BRUISER (CONT'D)  
*OH, FUCK!*

DUST SWIRLS as the Grunt launches himself out of the car  
*YELLING* -

GRUNT  
*SECURE THE VEHICLE!*

- and running into a darkness lit by FLASHES of 50-  
*CALIBER MACHINE GUN FIRE.*

GRUNT (CONT'D)  
*USA, ASSHOLES! USA!*

And THREE ROUNDS impact the Benz - *CHUNK-CHUNK-CHUNK* -

BRUISER  
*FUCK ME!*

- as Eric and Jared try to make themselves small in the  
 backseat - and then the FIRING STOPS.

BRUISER (CONT'D)  
 Anybody hit?

JARED  
 No...okay...okay...

And in the headlights and swirling dust a silhouette  
 appears. It's the Grunt.

BRUISER  
 The fuck happened?

GRUNT  
 4th ID didn't get the word we were  
 comin' through.

The Grunt climbs into the passenger seat and grins.

GRUNT (CONT'D)  
 He said we fired first.



JARED

Fuck me.

GRUNT

Yeah, well, I guess that's standard  
when you light up your own guys.

The Bruiser puts the Benz in gear and peels out as the  
Grunt twists around to look at Eric & Jared:

GRUNT (CONT'D)

Y'alright back there?

ERIC

No problem!

The Grunt looks down at Eric's crotch.

GRUNT

Well...one problem...

BRUISER

What's that?

GRUNT

The noob took a leak without your  
permission.

Eric looks down at his own lap and tries to explain:

ERIC

No! It's - *no* -

He holds up his water bottle. In spite of the fact that  
he's telling the truth, he can't help but sound lame:

ERIC (CONT'D)

I...I *spilled*.

CUT TO:

**EXT. IRAQI FARMHOUSE - NIGHT - LATER**

ON ERIC as we HEAR the unmistakable OFFSCREEN SOUNDS of  
a DOOR BEING BROKEN DOWN...the *CRACK-CRACK-CRACK* of M-16  
FIRE...then the *CHATTER* of an AK-47 dumping a 30-round  
clip. *YELLING*...a *PIERCING SCREAM*...then...SILENCE.

Eric looks wide-eyed to Jared - standing by a HUMVEE  
parked on the security perimeter set up around the mud-  
brick-and-cinderblock farmhouse.

Jared shrugs as the Bruiser ambles up to Eric:

BRUISER  
You know the good thing about  
pissin' your pants in Iraq?

ERIC  
I didn't piss my -

BRUISER  
120 degrees Fahrenheit...20%  
humidity...they dry. Just like -  
(Snapping his fingers)  
- that.

A 4th ID SOLDIER (**SUPERFLY**) ambles up to them.

BRUISER (CONT'D)  
We good?  
(Off Superfly's nod; to Eric)  
This is Superfly. He'll walk you  
in.

SUPERFLY  
'Sup, 'gator?

**EXT. / INT. IRAQI FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER**

Superfly leads Eric and Jared through a front door hanging from its hinges and into this modest farmhouse crowded with **SOLDIERS**...and into a low-ceilinged room where a bloody, blindfolded **DETAINEE** sits hand-cuffed and cross-legged on the floor. A couple of **4TH ID GUARDS** stand over him; a **PLATOON SERGEANT** and **LIEUTENANT** lean against a wall decorated with photographs.

PLATOON SERGEANT  
Here's your guy.

His shirt is drenched with blood that is still running down his jaw and neck.

ERIC  
Is he shot?

GUARD #1  
No, we just butt-stroked him.

The MP proudly shows Eric the butt of his M-16.

GUARD #2  
Fucker opened up on us.

ERIC  
Can you take his blindfold off?

A Guard removes the blindfold to reveal what's left of a 50-year-old grizzled farmer's face. His left socket is an eyeless bleeding pulp. Eric grimaces, takes a knee.

**NOTE:** *Arabic speakers will be subtitled, allowing Eric and his subject to converse economically while the Jared's audible simultaneous translation will fade to underlie the audio track.*

ERIC

Are you Nezham Hasan?

The Detainee shakes head.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Who are you?

DETAINEE

Faheed Kawal.

ERIC

Do you know Nezham Hasan?

(Pause)

*Do you know Nezham Hasan?*

DETAINEE

He is the owner. I only farm the land for him. I thought I was being robbed, that is why I fired at these men.

ERIC

When was the last time you saw him?

DETAINEE

Four hours ago.

ERIC

Where is he now?

DETAINEE

I don't know.

ERIC

Faheed, I need to find Nezham. If you can't help me, we'll just keep arresting people until someone can. We will arrest your sons. Both of them.

DETAINEE

You...know my sons?

ERIC

Yes.

The Detainee stares at Eric for a long moment with his one good eye, and Eric has a hard time holding down the bile rising from his stomach...

DETAINEE

I remember now where Nezham is.

ERIC

Will you take me?

DETAINEE

I do not have to take you. It is a famous house. It is the only one in Beiji with a big TV antenna on the roof.

Eric smiles. Victory! He turns to the Platoon Sergeant, but the soldier is unenthusiastic.

PLATOON SERGEANT

Yeah. We know the place...

4TH ID LIEUTENANT

(To Jared)

Tell this old man to sit here until we're gone and that he's lucky to be alive. And let's go to Beiji.

Eric turns to find himself face-to-face with the Grunt.

GRUNT

(Sardonically)

Yeah. Let's go to Beiji -

(Aside to Bruiser)

- and watch these phenoms chase down *another* dry hole...

CUT TO:

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - SHOOTER'S QUARTERS - NIGHT**

Eric, Jared, the Bruiser and the Grunt enter (followed by the other 2 Operators), dump their gear and crack open beers. The Major and Rod are boots-up at the center table. Two other **OPERATORS** are playing RAINBOW SIX on a Playstation.

GRUNT

Another day, another 500 million tax dollars!

ROD

*Well?*

GRUNT

Another "ex-wife."

JARED

(Translating for Eric)

Another "dry hole."

GRUNT

No target. Just a bunch of ornery teenage nephews -

ROD

Entire fucking *country* of nephews -

BRUISER

Hey, who's the genius didn't notify 4th ID we was comin'?

MAJOR

Anybody get hurt?

BRUISER

We sustained a little 50-cal cosmetic damage...

ROD

(To Grunt; Re. Eric)

How'd *he* do?

GRUNT

Real good. For a cherry popper. Didn't puke. Went right at the guy.

Eric relishes the compliment. He turns to Jared:

ERIC

You were great with those kids - I was gettin' a little lost with all the shoutin' -

JARED

Pissed-off teenagers...

BRUISER

Aw...will you look at this! Shame you're leavin', J-Dog. You two make such a happy couple.

ERIC

I'm just sayin' - there aren't a lot of 'terps who can interrogate -

JARED  
These hotshots do their own  
interrogating. I just translate...

ERIC  
What was that piece of paper you  
pulled out?

An Operator playing Rainbow Six shouts over his shoulder:

OPERATOR  
THE LIST!

BRUISER  
(Imitating Jared)  
"Do you know Babaganoushi?"

JARED  
*Al-Haddoushi. Muhammad Al-*  
*Haddoushi.*

LAUGHTER. Eric is trying to understand...

GRUNT  
Yeah, we're gonna miss the list -

ERIC  
What list?

Jared just shakes his head, raises his hand in an *good-night-I-surrender* salute, and heads down the stairs.

ROD  
So you like it up here in the shit,  
Maddox?

ERIC  
I like gettin' to do my job.

Simple. No one can make a crack at that.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
So...why don't you have a full-time  
interrogator up here?

MAJOR  
No need. We bag an HVT, tie 'em  
off and send 'em down to BIAP for  
the real deal.

ERIC  
The real deal? Down there?  
(LAUGH)  
Then why send for me?

MAJOR

Because some 4th ID lieutenant convinced me that the two inebriated *hajjis* we've got in detention are some bad-ass HVTs sitting at God's right hand.

ERIC

So...you want to know if they're worth sendin' to Baghdad for..."the real deal"?

ROD

What's funny, Staff Sergeant?

ERIC

Nothin' sir. It's...I've just come from down there and I can tell you - from what I've seen - that your HVTs aren't gettin' interrogated. They're just held. And hollered at.

PAUSE. It this noob for real?

GRUNT

And he's speakin' from experience, sir. *Four fuckin' days of it.*

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - DOWNSTAIRS - MOMENTS LATER**

The Bruiser leads Eric down a hallway of open doors... past Jared's room...and stops at an empty one.

BRUISER

Make a nest.

The Bruiser turns to go...pauses...then imparts the fact:

BRUISER (CONT'D)

It sucks up here, Maddox.

(Grin)

Nightie-night.

And the Bruiser heads back up the hall. Eric stares at the bare mattress on the bunk...

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - JARED'S QUARTERS - MOMENTS LATER**

Jared is packing his bag as Eric taps on the doorjamb.

ERIC

What "list"?

The Iraqi-American interpreter cocks his head at Eric.

JARED

How did you know about Faheed's sons?  
At the farmhouse. You threatened to  
arrest *both* his sons...

ERIC

(Remembering)  
Oh, yeah. There were pictures on  
the wall. Family. Big as life.

JARED

(Impressed)  
That was good.

ERIC

Simple. So, what list?

JARED

What's the point? You're one and  
done. You'll interrogate a couple  
of drunks, and be back in Baghdad  
before I'm halfway home.

ERIC

But...what if I...y'know...talk my  
way into stayin'?

Jared considers Eric...reaches into his bag and pulls  
out several crumpled pages of names. Eric reaches for  
them, but before Jared hands them over:

JARED

Do you know how intel transfer  
works up here?

Eric shakes his head.

JARED (CONT'D)

It doesn't. Delta Force teams are  
on 90-day rotations. Any intel  
that the outgoing team has gathered  
is completely ignored by the  
incoming team on the basis that if  
it was *good* intel, then we would've  
rounded up a bus-load of HVTs...  
defeated the insurgency...found the  
fucking Ace of Spades himself. Won  
the war.

ERIC

Okay...



JARED

Then it takes the new team another three months to run-down Rod's dogshit leads and conclude that there are no HVTs in Tikrit. Got it?

Eric nods. Jared hands him the pages.

JARED (CONT'D)

There's nothing but *hamaya*.

ERIC

*Hamaya.*

JARED

Arabic for "bodyguard."

ERIC

Whose?

JARED

*His.* Tikrit families loosely associated with Saddam's former bodyguards.

Eric regards at the list.

ERIC

Families...

JARED

Right. Organized by tribe. Like the Al-Haddoushis -

He points to a section of the pages.

#### **A LIST OF AL-HADDOUSHIS**

*lifts off the page and positions itself vertically between Eric and Jared...*

JARED (CONT'D)

My theory is that it's *hamaya* who's coordinating the insurgency - IEDs, RPGs, ambushes.

*The handwritten names glow...and morph into a standard COURIER FONT...*

Jared zips up his bag and hefts it.

ERIC

Then...why were they all makin' fun of the list -

JARED  
 (Re. the list)  
 Because not one of *these* guys has  
 his face in a deck of playing cards.

Eric nods.

ERIC  
 Any advice?

Jared thinks for a moment...nods...and says, simply:

JARED  
 No.

Eric and Jared shake hands *through* the list glowing and hovering in the space between them...

And Jared leaves. Eric looks down at:

### **THE PAGES**

covered with horribly scribbled names and attempts at diagrams.

*And the SCRIBBLED NAMES and DIAGRAMS lift off the pages and - like the list of Al-Muslits - morph into COURIER ...glow...and reorganize themselves into:*

### **A 3-D DIGITAL LINK DIAGRAM**

*of HUNDREDS OF BLINKING DATA FIELDS, each filled with a NAME and either KILLED, CAPTURED or UNKNOWN.*

CUT TO:

### **INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - ERIC'S QUARTERS - NIGHT**

Eric is lying on his cot and "studying" the DIGITAL LINK DIAGRAM that floats above him.

We'll get used to seeing this image - a visual representation of Eric's thought process and evolving understanding.

Slowly, we PUSH IN - *through* the diagram - toward ERIC.

ERIC (VO)  
 Dear Debbie.

*...and the DIGITAL LINK DIAGRAM BRIGHTENS and NARROWS. The NUMBER 29 appears...then the word JULY...and we're looking at:*

**A DIGITAL CALENDAR PAGE OF THE MONTH OF JULY 2003**

*- containing the entire diagram - SUPERIMPOSED over the SLOW-PUSH IN ON ERIC.*

ERIC (VO CONT'D)

So, I guess there's no better way to kick-off a relationship than by gettin' to know a little bit about one another. I enlisted in the army two days after I graduated from OU. Everybody wanted me to use my degree - to be an officer - but I just... wanted to be a regular soldier, I guess. So I got into Ranger School in '95, eventually became a squad leader with the 82nd Airborne, and started prayin' for war.

*A NAME slides into the SQUARE FOR 29 JULY and*

**THE TRANSLUCENT IMAGE OF AN IRAQI DETAINEE**

*appears, talking into the CAMERA. And, as other NAMES begin to link to his face...*

ERIC (VO CONT'D)

I studied Chinese at the Defense Language Institute, specialized in interrogation, and worked at the Embassy in Beijing for a couple years.

*31 JULY slides into view. **ANOTHER DETAINEE...** then it's **AUGUST** - another day, **ANOTHER DETAINEE**. The DIGITAL LINK DIAGRAM is A PYRAMID of NAMES becoming FACES through all the DAYS OF AUGUST... SEPTEMBER...*

*And still, we CONTINUE to PUSH-IN ON ERIC...*

ERIC (VO CONT'D)

Then came 9/11. And the war I'd been waitin' for. I guess I should've studied Farsi.

*The DAYS & **DETAINEES** OF OCTOBER are mounting on top of one another...*

ERIC (VO CONT'D)

Right now I am workin' as an interrogator in Tikrit, Iraq. It's been 2 1/2 months now, and I'm just tryin' to keep myself useful out here...

*We PUSH-IN to the PUPIL OF ERIC'S EYE...*

ERIC (VO CONT'D)  
 ...like every other regular soldier  
 in this country who prayed for war  
 and are now doin' everything they  
 can to end it.

*The PYRAMID OF NAMES & FACES BEGINS TO SPIN, INTENSIFY...*

ERIC (VO CONT'D)  
 A new team flies in tomorrow - more  
 Delta Force guys - and I'm hopin' I  
 can convince 'em to let me stay on.  
 There're no guarantees.

The SOUND OF HELICOPTER ROTORS...

ERIC (VO CONT'D)  
 But I guess there never are.

CUT TO:

**EXT. SADDAM'S MANSION - MORNING**

WHIRLING TANDEM ROTORS as a CHINOOK HELICOPTER descends.

**SUPER: 0800 11OCT2003**

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - SHOOTER'S QUARTERS - SAME**

Eric is watching an OKLAHOMA SOONERS FOOTBALL GAME on TV  
 when suddenly, from downstairs -

OPERATOR (OC)  
*THE TIP OF THE SPEAR IS IN THE  
 BUILDING, LADIES!*

ERIC  
*Shit.*

He flicks off the television and walks out.

**EXT. SADDAM'S MANSION - MOMENTS LATER**

Eric gets in line with the Major, Rod, Bruiser, Grunt  
 and the rest of the Team just as the CHINOOK sets down  
 and a new hardcore cadre of **DELTA FORCE OPERATORS** and  
**SPECIALISTS** - exit the chopper.

The departing Team exchanges salutes with the new Team as they pass - following Rod into the Mansion. The Grunt - last to climb aboard the chopper - pauses, turns to Eric and *SHOUTS* over the *ROAR* of the CHINOOK'S ENGINE:

GRUNT

THINK OF IT THIS WAY, MADDOX.  
YOU'RE A GUY WITH NO EXPERIENCE, IN  
A COUNTRY WHERE EVERY MAN, WOMAN  
AND CHILD IS TAUGHT SINCE BIRTH TO  
LIE TO AMERICANS, AND YOUR  
OBJECTIVE IS TO FIND THE MOST  
WANTED CRIMINAL ON THE FACE OF THE  
FUCKIN' EARTH BY GETTIN' ANSWERS IN  
A LANGUAGE YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND.

He smiles broadly and claps Eric on the shoulder.

GRUNT (CONT'D)

ENJOY!

And the chopper which lifts off in a whirlwind of sand and dust, leaving Eric standing alone and squinting against the rotor wash.

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - OPS ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

7 PAIRS OF BOOTS stand around the operations table.

CRANE UP TO REVEAL DELTA FORCE TEAM LEADER **BAM BAM** (36) - handle-bar mustache, all business - standing next to Rod at the head of the table.

ERIC (OC)

Nice to meet you guys.

ALL look up to see Eric - blue oxford shirt untucked, covered in dust and smiling in the doorway.

ERIC

I'm...uh...

BAM BAM

Confused? Why aren't you on that chopper?

ERIC

I'm Staff Sergeant Eric Maddox.  
I'm the...well, I'm the lead  
interrogator up here.

BAM BAM

That would be Sergeant McCary.

WHIP PAN to **MCCARY** (28) - a complete asshole eating an apple.

MCCARY

Hell, you only overstayed your overnight by a coupla months, bro. Word is, your pal Lee misses his bunk buddy, and he wants you back at BI-AP A-SAP.

BAM BAM

You can sit-in on Sergeant McCary's sessions until we ship you out. Might do you some good to see how it's done.

Eric nods. McCary frowns, annoyed.

BAM BAM (CONT'D)

(To Rod)

I want leads...

(To Eric & McCary)

*And I want targets. Pronto.*

And as Eric and McCary appraise each other, we

CUT TO:

**EXT. SADDAM'S MANSION - GUEST HOUSE - DAY**

McCary, holding a thin clipboard, strides purposefully toward a low building behind the mansion. Behind him are Eric and **ADAM** (27) - the slight, soft-spoken new interpreter. Without looking at him, McCary introduces:

MCCARY

This is Adam, my 'terp.

Eric and Adam exchange nods.

MCCARY (CONT'D)

Just sit in the corner and keep your mouth shut, 'kay?

ERIC

You bet.

MCCARY

If there's one thing I hate it's someone fucking up my flow.

McCary throws an *I-know-I'm-an-asshole* grin Eric's way. Eric nods, playing along with this jerk-off.

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - GUEST HOUSE - DAY**

The three men enter the makeshift detainee compound. The master bedroom serves as the interrogation room, while the other rooms are holding-cells.

There is a long table - plywood mounted on sawhorses - at the end of which sits a HOODED PRISONER. Eric takes a seat against the wall. Adam sits halfway up the table. McCary nods to a **4th ID GUARD** to remove the hood to reveal **AHMED** (30) - pudgy, sweaty, disoriented.

MCCARY  
(Reading from his clipboard)  
Ahmed Yasin Al-Muslit.

Eric registers the name *Al-Muslit*, but settles back in his chair as McCary begins walking a long, slow lap around the table and Adam simultaneously translates:

MCCARY (CONT'D)  
I know a lot about you, Ahmed.  
About a *llllot* of bad shit you and  
your brothers have done.

The door opens and McCary wheels around - from zero-to-pissed off in less than a second - to see **KELLY** (35) - brown hair & Clark Kent glasses - enter. We might recognize him as one of the new Team from the previous scene. He nods to Eric and offers his hand:

KELLY  
Kelly. Senior Intelligence  
Analyst. Sorry to interrupt.

He leans against the wall as McCary swallows his annoyance and resumes:

MCCARY  
But you have an opportunity here,  
Ahmed. For today. For today only.  
An opportunity to help yourself,  
your family, and the proud country  
of Iraq.

McCary flips a piece of paper on his clipboard.

MCCARY  
How many years did your brother  
Nasir work for Saddam?

Eric winces. That's not how to start an interrogation.

AHMED

Nasir is just a farmer.

MCCARY

You saying you didn't *know* he worked for Saddam?

AHMED

Yes, I do not know that. He is a farmer.

MCCARY

Well, I do, Ahmed. I *already know* he worked for fucking Saddam. Now for how long was it?

AHMED

He grows the best dates in Iraq.

MCCARY

(Clenching his jaw)  
What about Farris? How long did he work for Saddam?

AHMED

I do not know.

TIME LAPSE:

Question and answer, question and answer as the IMAGE and AUDIO *SPEED UP* and McCary circles Ahmed faster and faster over the course of *HOURS*. It's exhausting. Then, as we *SLOW* to *NORMAL*, McCary *SLAMS* down his clipboard -

MCCARY

*You're a fucking liar, Ahmed! You do know!*

Ahmed shrugs. McCary steals a glance at Kelly - frowning. Eric is slouched in his chair; he appears to be napping. McCary wipes the sweat from his brow.

MCCARY (CONT'D)

Where is Farris now?

AHMED

I haven't seen him since four months before the war.

MCCARY

You're fucking lying! You both have houses in New Oja, Ahmed! How could you not see him?



Ahmed tries to respond, but McCary grabs him and PUNCHES him - not too hard, but hard enough for Ahmed to start play-acting. He starts to cry - his head swaying.

MCCARY (CONT'D)

Where the fuck is he? You're gonna go to prison, Ahmed, you understand? You're a liar, and that's what we do to liars! We drown them in their own fucking piss! Is that what you want?

AHMED

I swear I have told you everything I know. You have checked all my answers and already know everything I have said is the truth.

McCary hauls back to hit him again, but Kelly interrupts.

KELLY

That's enough for now. Might be time for a breather.

McCary collects himself...straightens his shirt...grabs his clipboard and storms out.

Kelly turns to Eric, cocks his head - wanna take a shot? Eric grins appreciatively and, while Kelly eyes this eager blue Oxford button-down youngster, Eric places his chair next to Ahmed, sits and leans in, confidentially.

ERIC

Ahmed. I'm sorry for my friend. He...hasn't had enough sleep.

Adam translates, Ahmed looks at Eric, warily, leery of the lame "good cop" routine.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Just be honest, and we won't have any problems. Okay?

AHMED

I swear I will tell you everything.

ERIC

We'll see. What's your name?

AHMED

Ahmed Yasin.

Suddenly, Eric's tone shifts from almost affable to cold steel:

ERIC

Ahmed Yasin what? I want your full name. The name you were given, your father's name and your grandfather's name. I want your tribe and your sub-tribe. Every question I ask you, Ahmed, I want the full answer - the honest answer - *because you promised to tell the truth, and if I catch you in a lie, you will go to prison for the rest of your life. Do you understand?*

Ahmed nods slowly, suddenly self-conscious and ill-at-ease with this new tone.

ERIC (CONT'D)

What is your name?

AHMED

Ahmed Yasin Ibrahim Al-Hasan Al-Muslit.

#### THE DIGITAL LINK DIAGRAM

*Forms itself around Eric's head. A LIST OF **AL-MUSLITS** - many of the DATA FIELDS containing information ...connected to other DATA FIELDS...*

ERIC

What is your date of birth?

AHMED

One July, 1973.

ERIC

Are you sure?

AHMED

Yes, sir.

ERIC

Were you there? *Do you remember being born, Ahmed?*

Ahmed is utterly confused and alarmed.

AHMED

No, sir.

ERIC

Then how do you know it was that day, Ahmed? How? *How do you know?*

AHMED

My...family. My mother, my father,  
my brothers...they tell me.

ERIC

Family. You know your date of birth  
because your family told you. You  
don't remember. You didn't see it.  
Listen, Ahmed, whenever you answer a  
question of mine, you will tell me  
how you know your answer. Where you  
were. Who told you. Who told them.  
Do you understand me, Ahmed?

AHMED

Yes. Yes, sir.

ERIC

Good. Now where were you born?

AHMED

I was born in Tikrit, at my  
parents' house...two streets north  
of the main mosque. I was born in  
my parents' room...according to my  
mother, my father and my older  
brother, Farris, who I don't know  
if we should believe him, since he  
was only four years old.

*The **FARRIS AL-MUSLIT** DATA FIELD glows and **D.O.B. 1969** is  
added...*

**A SERIES OF TIME-LAPSE DISSOLVES:**

Eric looks confused, shakes his head, asks something,  
scribbles notes on a pad; Ahmed is off-balance...as:

*More **AL-MUSLIT** DATA FIELDS fill in...form links...while  
others DISAPPEAR in a fluid visual dynamic of pure  
information...until we:*

SNAP BACK TO THE PRESENT as Bam Bam enters:

BAM BAM

Three hours! Wrap it up and gimme  
a target, or -

But Bam Bam stops as Kelly holds up his hand and draws  
his attention to Eric's interrogation:

ERIC

Ahmed, I think you're goin' to  
prison...

Pause. Ahmed is stunned. Kelly gives Bam Bam a silent signal to pay attention to what Eric's doing -

AHMED

But...I have told you the truth!  
Sir, if I have told you one lie,  
you can kill me!

ERIC

I'm not allowed to do that, Ahmed.  
But if you *haven't* lied to me yet,  
*I will let you walk out that door.*

AHMED

I swear to you...

Bam Bam shoots Kelly a *what-the-fuck*-look...

ERIC

Ahmed, I know you lied to me. And  
I'm gonna tell you *how* I know. If  
you deny it, you're goin' to prison  
for the rest of your life.

AHMED

But again, I swear -

ERIC

You told me that, in 1996, your  
older brother, Farris, attended  
your sister's husband's younger  
sister's wedding. But he didn't.  
He wasn't there. He wasn't even in  
Tikrit. Your brother was not at  
your sister's husband's younger  
sister's wedding was he?

The blood runs out of Ahmed's face. Kelly is trying to follow along - mouthing the words, "sister's husband's sister..."

ERIC (CONT'D)

Last chance. Think carefully  
before the next sound comes out of  
your mouth, Ahmed...

Ahmed stammers, sifting through the long interrogation to figure where he slipped...then:

AHMED

I...uh...no. My brother, Farris, was  
not at the wedding in 1996. He was  
working for Saddam. I was afraid to  
tell you.

Eric nods.

AHMED (CONT'D)  
My brother, Nasir. He was at the wedding. But Farris was not.

ERIC  
Right. That's right.

*And the **FARRIS** and **NASIR AL-MUSLIT** DATA FIELDS glow.*

ERIC (CONT'D)  
Your brothers, Farris and Nasir, have killed many Americans and innocent Iraqis, Ahmed, and you've been working with them from the beginning.

Ahmed is utterly undone - mystified and scared shitless by Eric's knowledge. He unravels.

AHMED  
I didn't want to be involved. *They made me join.* They told me I had to when Nasir was arrested. *They made me deliver weapons in his place.*

ERIC  
Who was Nasir deliverin' weapons to?

Ahmed hesitates...

*In the LIST OF **AL-MUSLITS** there is only ONE NAME whose DATA FIELD is empty and unconnected from any other - **RADMAN IBRAHIM...***

ERIC (CONT'D)  
Was Radman involved?

Eric watches as Ahmed's Adam's apple moves up and down. A hard swallow. Eric smiles.

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - ERIC'S QUARTERS - NIGHT**

Eric is sitting on the floor. The DECK OF CARDS is spread out before him, face up and in the shape of a pyramid. He picks up the KING OF CLUBS, AL-DURI - looks at it...then he flicks it - like a blackjack dealer - under his cot.

He writes a name on his pad:

## RADMAN IBRAHIM

He tears off the name, and places it where Al-Duri's card used to be as Kelly enters.

KELLY

Eric.

ERIC

Kelly.

Kelly sits on the edge of Eric's bunk.

KELLY

You hear what happened to McCary?

ERIC

No.

KELLY

He...uh...he went out with the crew on a raid this afternoon.

SMASH CUT TO:

**EXT. STREETS OF TIKRIT - DAY**

A hellish, chaotic scene as the Tip of the Spear round up several **FAMILIES** in front of their homes.

Standing guard over the **WOMEN & CHILDREN** is McCary - geared up and bad ass. A **WAILING WOMAN** approaches him.

KELLY (VO)

Some old woman wanted to talk to him, and he uh -

McCary reaches out with his left hand, grabs the woman by the shoulder, and *BLAM!* leaps off the ground -

MCCARY

*OH, SHIT!*

The Woman, terrified, backs away as McCary frantically checks his weapon's safety...and looks up to see Bam Bam staring back at him as though he's not wearing pants...

KELLY (VO)

- well, he had himself a bonafide A.D.

BACK TO:

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - ERIC'S QUARTERS - SAME**

Eric stares, mouth-agape at Kelly, who explains:

KELLY

An Accidental Discharge.

ERIC

You're kiddin'.

KELLY

Nope. And you know what an A.D. means, right?

Eric shakes his head, uncomprehending.

KELLY (CONT'D)

A one-way, non-redeemable, non-transferable ticket back to Baghdad.

(Pause)

That's one. Two is, Rod's goin' back with him. Baghdad's decided that Tikrit's just not worth an A-1 case officer running paid informants for dogshit targets.

ERIC

Okay. Is there a three?

KELLY

Yeah. You're overdue back at BIAP.

ERIC

Kelly, please don't send me back.  
*I can get you targets!*

But Kelly holds up his hand.

KELLY

Sorry, Eric. It's not my decision to make. Just one thing - Ahmed's brother...the wedding...how'd you ...do that?

ERIC

Will you let me stick around awhile if I tell you?

KELLY

Like I said, it's not my -

And Eric just blurts it all out:

ERIC

Every time Ahmed talked about his older brother, Farris, Farris was drivin' him somewhere. If Farris wasn't around, Ahmed would drive. Always. And because Ahmed wanted to minimize Farris's involvement with Saddam's regime, he claimed that Farris didn't join *hamaya* until 2001.

(Pause)

But Farris was married in February of '96. And since I've been interrogatin' here for 2 1/2 months, I know that Farris married the daughter of Abid Mahmood - Saddam's secretary. And I know that Ahmed joined *hamaya* in '98 *because his brother Farris got him in*. But Ahmed's and Farris's sister's husband's sister was married two months after Farris - in April of '96. *And Ahmed told me that Farris was at that wedding.*

KELLY

So...

ERIC

So, a coupla hours into the interrogation, I circled back to that wedding and he told me that he drove his wife and Farris's wife that day.

KELLY

So...

ERIC

So Farris *wasn't* there. If he was, he'd've done the drivin', but Ahmed couldn't keep track of the lie he'd told two hours before.

KELLY

And you...did this on *purpose*?

ERIC

I don't know...yeah, I guess. I just...pay attention.

Kelly coughs out a *LAUGH* and looks up - over Eric's shoulder...and Eric turns to see...



Bam Bam - leaning against the doorjamb and listening to the whole thing. He strokes his handlebar moustache, grins at Eric, and says, simply:

BAM BAM  
 Okay. You can stick around.  
 Just...get me targets...

And we are ON ERIC, grinning back at Bam Bam as:

ERIC (VO PRE-LAP)  
 Dear...Debbie...

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - ERIC'S QUARTERS - NIGHT**

Eric is lying on his bunk, a pen in his hand and pad of paper before him with the newly written words:

Dear Debbie,

From inside the pad, he pulls a strip of

**B&W PHOTOBOOTH PICS OF A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN**

ERIC (VO)  
 I had a best friend, named Casey.

CUT TO:

**EXT. PARK - OKLAHOMA - DAY**

Eric, wearing his ODs, walks along a grassy verge...past trees and foliage busting with spring bloom...

ERIC (VO)  
 We grew up together. And he was always a step ahead of me. But I wasn't jealous. I always looked up to him. I went to basic; he went to Ranger School. I went to Ranger School; he became a jumpmaster. I became a jumpmaster; he became Special Forces. I went to Chinese School; he went to Bosnia and saved a whole lot of lives.  
 (Pause)  
 He died in April.

The CAMERA CRANES UP...to reveal that the park is actually...

**EXT. MILITARY CEMETERY - DAY**

Eric is standing in the midst of THOUSANDS of indistinguishable white HEADSTONES...

ERIC (VO)

My adopted parents...both had fathers in WWII - in Europe and the Pacific.

He turns and slowly walks away...

ERIC (VO CONT'D)

Debbie, I know it's kinda nuts... but I think of those men...and Casey... sittin' at a bar - a big damn bar filled with servicemen who proved themselves...*distinguished* themselves...helped end whatever war that *they'd* prayed for...and all I want is to earn myself a place at that bar.

...and as he walks OUT OF FRAME we are

BACK TO:

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - ERIC'S QUARTERS - NIGHT**

PUSHING IN on the now empty cot and the PEN and PHOTOBOOTH PICTURES left there...

ERIC (VO)

And now...I feel like I might have a chance...

CUT TO:

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - GUEST HOUSE - DAY (MOS)**

as the pad is slapped down on the table in front of a **DETAINEE** dressed in black, head bowed. Eric and Adam flank the prisoner, fire-off questions, receive one-syllable responses.

ERIC (VO)

...startin' from scratch...figurin' out the culture one detainee at a time.

*The DIGITAL LINK DIAGRAM superimposes its DATA FIELDS which shift and connect to one another with each question and response...*

ERIC (VO CONT'D)  
I talk to whoever they bring me.

**SERIES OF DISSOLVES**

of a **SUCCESSION OF DETAINEES**. While Adam remains virtually motionless, Eric's position changes and his facial expressions switch from anger, to sympathy, to casual interest...

ERIC (VO CONT'D)  
I get to know them - to know what  
it's like to be an Iraqi at war.  
Ask random questions to get them  
talkin'...collect random answers  
like they're state secrets...

Finally, Eric, the stubble of his beard beginning to resemble the beards of his subjects, is face to face with a KID (**TASHIN**) - scrawny and scared.

ERIC  
So, Tashin, since you were Saddam's  
personal servant...what was his  
favorite food?

Tashin *LAUGHS* - suddenly relieved by this harmless question. Adam simultaneously translates:

TASHIN  
*Mazgouf!* He would eat it every day!

ERIC  
*Mazgouf?* What the hell is *mazgouf*?

ADAM  
It's a way to prepare fish.

ERIC  
(Indicating Tashin)  
Ask *him*.

TASHIN  
It is the best way to cook fish!  
His favorite of all!

Eric writes this down on his pad and a **FISH APPEARS** in the *DIGITAL LINK DIAGRAM* as Adam commences a rare personal conversation with Tashin - an enthusiastic Arabic conversation regarding the merits of mazgouf.

ERIC (VO)  
Mostly, they lie. But when enough  
lies overlap...a pattern emerges.

*The DIGITAL LINK DIAGRAM is connecting DATA FIELDS in 3 DIMENSIONS...*

ERIC (VO CONT'D)

There *is* an insurgency, and it has leaders. But they're not any of the guys we're *supposed* to be after.

**EXT. CAMP IRON HORSE CHECKPOINT - TIME LAPSE - DAY**

The mid-morning hustle and bustle of Tikrit flows by the GUARDHOUSE/ENTRANCE to Saddam's mansion...

ERIC (VO)

They're nowhere in the deck of cards. They could walk straight by a thousand US soldiers because none of us know who they are.

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - QUARTERS - DAY**

PUSH IN ON ERIC, asleep in his clothes. The PAD, PEN and PHOTOBOOTH PICTURES lie beside him...

ERIC (VO)

That's all for now. I know none of this makes much sense. I'll try to write more often.

...and on the pad are only two words:

**Dear Debbie,**

ERIC (VO CONT'D)

Yours, Eric.

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - OPS ROOM - NIGHT**

Eric SLAPS piece of paper on the table in front of Bam Bam & Kelly - A SCRIBBLED CHAOS vaguely resembling the digital link diagram. Behind them, a couple of OPERATORS watch an AFN BROADCAST on the TV.

ERIC

When I got here, a 'terp gave me a list of 200 names. Family members related to *hamaya* - bodyguards.

KELLY

Yeah? Tikrit's filled with 'em -

ERIC

Right. And when we get 'em we use 'em to get leads on High Value Targets - like Al-Duri - on account of an HVT might be runnin' the insurgency.

KELLY

Correct.

ERIC

Wrong.

BAM BAM

Come again?

ERIC

Wrong. What if the bodyguards are the HVTs?

KELLY

*What?* Baghdad doesn't even know who these guys are -

ERIC

*That's the whole point!* Forget the black list. Fuck the deck of cards! If Saddam trusted his bodyguards more than anyone else before the war, wouldn't they be who he trusts now?

BAM BAM

To do what?

ERIC

To run the insurgency. *By takin' direct orders from their old boss.*

KELLY

Uh...

ERIC

If Saddam's alive - and I don't think there'd be an insurgency if he wasn't - *he knows Al-Duri and those guys've been targeted.* It stands to reason that the guys we *really* want aren't in that deck of cards.

Bam Bam looks at Kelly...cocks his head at Eric and grins.

BAM BAM

Bodyguards...

KELLY

(Regarding the paper)

Yeah. All right. But...which ones?

ERIC

Well, Saddam had 32 inner circle bodyguards. 5're dead; 7've been captured; 14've fled to Baghdad or left the country. That leaves 6. 2're insignificant. That leaves 4. All are Al-Muslits. 3 brothers and a cousin.

BAM BAM

This...is all from interrogations?

ERIC

Yeah. About two a day for the last three months. And guess what?

BAM BAM

I wouldn't even try -

ERIC

Of all the low-level insurgent teenage punks I've talked to... well, they're all in groups, and each group has a leader, and nearly half the leaders *think* they're working for the Al-Muslits.

BAM BAM

So...we take out the Al-Muslits, we end the insurgency in Tikrit?

ERIC

Maybe. I'd start with this guy - Radman Ibrahim.

KELLY

And we find him how?

ERIC

We start at the bottom of his social network. Family, friends, drinkin' buddies. We target them - not because of who they are - but because of what they *know*.

BAM BAM

So...all of a sudden we're not goin' after criminals?

KELLY

Innocent people. Folks just...  
sitting at home...in their pajamas?

Bam Bam grins sardonically and looks to Kelly:

BAM BAM

Well, the good news is, we'd be  
jackpot on target every time.

ERIC

What's the bad news?

And Bam Bam fixes Eric with a solemn gaze:

BAM BAM

There's no way to get Baghdad to  
authorize this without putting my  
team's ass on the line.

Kelly explains:

KELLY

Eight of the most expensive  
soldiers on the planet targeting  
Iraqi citizens because they happen  
to know a guy who knows a guy...

OPERATOR (OC)

Son...of...a...bitch...

ALL look to the

#### **AFN TV BROADCAST**

A HUMVEE in flames - scattered bits of burning debris  
and metal. An Operator turns up the VOLUME:

AFN REPORTER

*- of an IED set off 200 feet from a  
US supply convoy took the lives of  
four more US soldiers in Tikrit.*

Bam Bam lifts Eric's rough diagram...and stares long and  
hard at the interrogator in the blue Oxford shirt. Eric  
holds his gaze. Then:

BAM BAM

Okay. Fuck it. Radman Ibrahim.  
Gimme a short list of targets. I  
know how to authorize it...but we  
can't get away with this forever...

Dull percussive *THUDS* growing in intensity PRE-LAP:

**A SERIES OF SHOTS**

*THUD* - a HUMVEE TIRE, gaining speed as it wheels toward a bullet-riddled wall on a dark Tikrit street...

*THUD* - Eric and Adam at the front GUARDHOUSE/GATE, talking to **TWO KURDS** who point and negotiate...

*THUD* - The HUMVEE *CRASHES* through the wall, and Bam Bam and the Team swarm the exposed COURTYARD.

*THUD* - Eric and Adam interrogate an **OLD MAN**...who becomes a **CRIPPLE**...who becomes a **YOUNG MAN**...

*THUD* as Bam Bam KICKS IN a door. *SCREAMS* from within.

**INT. HADITHA HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT**

The **IRAQI TARGET** is half out of bed, his **WIFE** cringing under the covers. Bam Bam lifts the Target's chin and compares his flashlighted face - bearded, with a long, ugly scar along one cheek - to a photograph.

BAM BAM

Jackpot.

The Team flex cuff the Target and move out.

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - OPS ROOM - NIGHT**

Eric walks in as Kelly lowers the radio.

KELLY

Jackpot. Got Radman. And his son.

ERIC

(Quietly, through clenched teeth)  
Yes! When will they be back?

KELLY

Well, now...that's sort of an issue...

SMASH CUT TO:

**EXT. HADITHA HOME - MOMENTS LATER**

THREE HELICOPTERS are grounded, rotors spinning, outside this small urban home as Bam Bam and the Team lead **TWO HOODED MEN** into the street and A BLACK CHINOOK descends, kicking up sand and dirt.



KELLY (VO)  
Baghdad scooped the hit. Flew in,  
put on a big show ...

The chopper touches down and a **TASK FORCE** pours out...

BAM BAM  
LITTLE LATE TO THE PARTY, BOYS!

TASK FORCE LEADER  
WE'LL BE TAKING THESE TWO.

BAM BAM  
ON WHOSE FUCKIN' AUTHORITY?

TASK FORCE LEADER  
COLONEL CULTRIP. IS THAT A PROBLEM?

BAM BAM  
I GOT A 'GATOR BACK IN TIKRIT'S  
GONNA CRY LIKE A LITTLE GIRL!

TASK FORCE LEADER  
IN TIKRIT? *WHO GIVES A SHIT?*

BACK TO:

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - OPS ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Eric's incredulous expression.

ERIC  
*But they don't even know who he is!*

KELLY  
Doesn't matter. Baghdad's gotta nab  
a bad guy every once in a while, just  
to show they're making progress.

ERIC  
I don't want Radman because he's a  
*bad guy*, I want him because of what  
he'll tell me -

BAM BAM (RADIO)  
*Lima 2-1 to Bravo Sierra -*

KELLY  
(To Eric)  
That's you.

ERIC  
Me?

KELLY  
(Explaining)  
*Bravo Sierra. Blue Shirt.*

ERIC  
*This...is...Bravo Sierra, over.*

BAM BAM (RADIO)  
*Bravo Sierra, you're gonna hate this...*

CUT TO:

**EXT. SADDAM'S MANSION - MOMENTS LATER**

as Eric meets Bam Bam and the Team, piling out a just-landed HELICOPTER. They *SHOUT* over the *ROTOR NOISE*.

ERIC  
*THEY DON'T WHO RADMAN IS! THEY  
DON'T EVEN KNOW WHY WE ARRESTED HIM -*

BAM BAM  
*I TOLD YOU! YOU CAN GO TO BAGHDAD  
AND INTERROGATE HIM THERE!*

ERIC  
*BUT IF I GO TO BAGHDAD, I'LL NEVER  
SEE TIKRIT AGAIN!*

And Bam Bam - a Delta Force alpha male stops in his tracks and turns to Eric:

BAM BAM  
*NO. YOU WORK FOR ME NOW, ERIC. IF  
I HAD TO GO GET YOU MYSELF, I  
WOULD. UNDERSTOOD?*

And Eric understands. Bam Bam is going to back Eric's play - at least for the time being. Eric holds Bam Bam's gaze for a moment, then nods. And Bam Bam peers into Eric's eyes, points at them and orders him to:

BAM BAM  
*AND GET SOME SLEEP.*

ERIC  
*I CAN'T! I THOUGHT I'D BE WORKIN'!  
I TOOK FOUR NODOZ!*

Bam Bam heads toward the mansion, and we

CUT TO:

**INT. CAMP CROPPER - NIGHT**

We FOLLOW **TWO GUARDS** down a filthy hallway in BIAP's notorious CAMP CROPPER - central booking for Iraqi prisoners in Baghdad. The Guards pass several blocks of narrow, merciless cells. At the end of the hallway, the guards open a door to REVEAL:

**RADMAN IBRAHIM**

beat to shit. Motionless. His son, **HAKIM**, sits knees-drawn-up in a corner, rocking back and forth and *CRYING*.

GUARD #1

Whoa...

GUARD #2

Bag him. And get this kid outta here.

KELLY (VO PRE-LAP)

So who won?

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - DINING AREA - MORNING**

Eric - not having slept - staggers in and sits next to Kelly, eating breakfast.

ERIC

Hunh?

KELLY

Oklahoma win?

ERIC

(Nodding)

Uh huh. Undefeated.

KELLY

Radman's dead.

Kelly takes a big bite of reconstituted eggs and chews.

ERIC

He's what?

KELLY

Had a "heart attack" last night.

Kelly looks at Eric, who holds his gaze...then, quietly:

ERIC

The "real deal."

KELLY

What?

ERIC

Nothin'. Interrogation...Baghdad-style. What about his son?

KELLY

He's still down there. But they want to release him ASAP. Wipe their hands.

ERIC

Get him for me, Kelly -

Kelly shakes his head.

KELLY

He's a fuckin' kid. Apparently traumatized as hell.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Please...

Kelly takes a long sip of coffee...and we

CUT TO:

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - GUEST HOUSE - DAY (MOS)**

**SUPER: 1700 10NOV2003**

We are ON ERIC - his mouth moving, the DIGITAL LINK DIAGRAM FLASHING and MOVING around his head while Hakim tries to respond. He's trembling...crying...

We PUSH IN ON ERIC'S FACE...to a MACRO-LENS ECU of his CHIN and CHEEK as BEARD HAIR forms a five o'clock shadow in TIME LAPSE...

Then the AUDIO RETURNS and we are 20 HOURS into the interrogation. Adam is simultaneously translating and Hakim is terrified. His knees are drawn up on his chair.

ERIC

What...are you doin'? What's wrong? Tell me...what you and your father were hidin' from -

HAKIM

*Rats. Please, mister, the rats...*

ERIC

The what?

ADAM

The rats. Over there.

Adam points to the corner Hakim is indicating - nothing but a blank wall.

ERIC

Oh...right...forget them. They're not gonna hurt you. Tell me why you and your father were hidin'. You don't hide if you're innocent.

And Hakim suddenly jumps to his feet and retreats - away from the dreaded corner - talking a mile a minute:

HAKIM

*My father is gone. I held him in my arms and watched him die!*

ERIC

Tell him to sit down -

HAKIM

*And with him went everything you want to know. All that is left is a family that I have to provide for. Me alone. You do not understand - you do not understand what it is like to lose your father. You cannot...*

Weeping, Hakim sinks to his knees.

ERIC

I'll be right back. Get him back in the chair.

Eric stands and walks out.

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

Hot water running into a sink. Eric is shaving. Kelly walks up behind him.

KELLY

Twenty hours. Non-stop. Tell me you're done.

ERIC

Nope.

KELLY

So, you figured it was a good time for personal hygiene? Per Baghdad, we've got four more hours with that kid before we have to release him.

ERIC

He's about to break.

KELLY

How do you know?

ERIC

He's hallucinatin'.

KELLY

What do you mean?

ERIC

He's seein' rats on the walls.

KELLY

Uh...and...that's a good thing?

ERIC

Yeah. There's just one problem. *I see 'em, too.*

Eric towels off and walks out.

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - GUEST HOUSE - LATER**

Hakim is on the edge of total exhaustion, Adam beside him. The CAMERA DISCOVERS Eric, trying to rub wakefulness into his face. Kelly leans against the wall. Finally:

ERIC

Translate this carefully, Adam.

(To Hakim)

When I was about your age, I tried to find my mother. I was adopted, and...my *family* - the good people who raised me - told me I'd never be able to find my...well...my *blood* parents, because the records had all been sealed up.

And as Adam's translation FADES OUT, we

DISSOLVE TO:

**EXT. LIBRARY - ENID, OKLAHOMA - DAY**

The red brick front portico of a small-town library.

ERIC (VO)  
So durin' the Labor Day break - a  
holiday - before my junior year of  
college, I went back to Enid,  
Oklahoma, the place where they told  
me I was born.

A **YOUNG ERIC MADDOX** (20) wearing a backpack, climbs the  
steps and enters.

ERIC (VO)  
I started at the library, searched  
newspapers around my birth date.  
*Nothin'.*

**INT. LIBRARY - LATER**

An **OLD LIBRARIAN** leads Eric to the back of the library.

ERIC (VO)  
A librarian steered me toward the  
records section, where I looked  
through phone books, yearbooks...

**INT. LIBRARY - BACK ROOM - LATER**

Eric, wades through reams of paper -

ERIC (VO)  
Finally, in the court records of  
adoption cases I found it.

CLOSER, on one page, the name: *Webster*.

ERIC (VO CONT'D)  
The judge accidentally mentioned my  
mother's name. I checked the  
yearbooks, lookin' for all the  
female Websters until I came across  
a picture of a teenage girl who had  
a familiar look.

Eric holds up a yearbook to the Librarian; her eyes brim  
with tears -

ERIC (VO CONT'D)  
When the librarian saw it, she said,  
"Oh my God. That has to be her."

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - GUEST HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

Hakim stares as Eric continues as Adam translates:

ERIC

I looked up the name in an old  
phone book and discovered that  
she'd lived at the home of Thelma  
Webster in 1972 - the year I was  
born.

**EXT. ENID STREET - DAY**

Young Eric walks up the tree-lined street, comparing  
addresses with the paper in his hand. He looks up at -

ERIC (VO)

And you know what I found?

**AN EMPTY LOT**

Overgrown and filled with weeds.

ERIC (VO)

Nothin'. An empty lot.

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - GUEST HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

As Adam finishes the translation:

ERIC

The house had burned down in 1973.  
She'd died in the fire.

A LONG PAUSE. Kelly is perfectly still, his hands in  
his pockets. Hakim looks at Adam, then speaks:

HAKIM

Why do you tell me this? Because  
...because you have had a parent  
die, too? *This has NOTHING to do  
with watching your father beaten to  
death!*

ERIC

Hakim...

HAKIM

*You have insulted me, and my  
father, and my family, with your  
stupid comparison!*



ERIC

No. Hakim...you're right. It's...  
it's apples and oranges. They're  
completely different things. But  
...it's all I've got...to tell you  
...that I *understand* how important  
*family* is. Blood...family...

Hakim stares at this earnest man in the blue shirt.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Hakim, I'm sorry that your father  
is dead. I really am. But he has  
left a family behind. And you are  
responsible for them. I can help  
you. Do exactly as I say and I  
swear I will let you out of here  
and you can go home and take care  
of them. But only if you answer my  
questions can I make sure that you  
don't get buried next to him.

HAKIM

*But, I don't know anything -*

ERIC

*You don't know what I want to know.*

Hakim stares back at Eric expectantly.

ERIC (CONT'D)

*Which one of your father's brothers  
or cousins did he last see?*

Hakim is silent. He takes a long moment to consider  
Eric through a fog of total exhaustion...

ERIC (CONT'D)

Tell me, Hakim. Then go home...and  
take care of your family *like the  
man you now are.*

HAKIM

Muhammad. He has not seen Sulwan  
or Birham since before the war.

It's so sudden - after 22 hours - that it almost takes  
Eric by surprise.

Eric stares at Hakim...then lifts his eyes to "look" at  
the DIGITAL LINK DIAGRAM.

*In the **AL-MUSLIT** SECTION the **SULWAN IBRAHIM** and **BIRHAM  
IBRAHIM** DATA FIELDS already bear the word: UNKNOWN.*

ERIC  
 Sulwan...Birham...right...but...  
 Muhammad? I've never...*Muhammad*  
*Ibrahim?*

Hakim nods. *And a NEW DATA FIELD creates itself.*  
**MUHAMMAD IBRAHIM.** *It BLINKS expectantly.*

ERIC (CONT'D)  
 Where...did your dad see Muhammad  
 most often?

HAKIM  
 They would...play dominoes at a  
 cement store owned by one of their  
 business partners.

ERIC  
 What's *his* name?

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - DINING AREA - LATER**

Eric, red-eyed, addresses Bam Bam & Kelly, seated at the  
 mess table:

ERIC  
 In all these months - all these  
 detainees - *not one of them has*  
*mentioned Muhammad Ibrahim Al-*  
*Muslit.* We need to find him. And  
 we know *two* of his associates -

KELLY  
 His dominoes pal and his...what?

ERIC  
 His driver. Basim Latif.

BAM BAM  
 Eric...I sold the Radman hit to  
 Baghdad on the basis that he was a  
 suspect in the IED attack on that  
 convoy. How'm I gonna sell  
 grabbin' a fuckin' domino-playing  
 cement mixer?

ERIC  
 I don't know, but friends and  
 employees - *they aren't tied by*  
*blood.* Muhammad Ibrahim's domino  
 partner'll give up *anybody* to protect  
 his own family. So will his driver -

BAM BAM

Okay.

ERIC

- and if we could get the one Al-Muslit that no one has mentioned - wait, *what'd you just say?*

BAM BAM

I'm with you.

Eric looks at Kelly - were they just fucking with him?

KELLY

Just gotta know how confident you are.

Eric takes a deep breath.

ERIC

The reason...I am one hundred and ten percent confident about this intel is because it just took me 22 hours to get Hakim to tell me the name of an *uncle*. He didn't want to tell me. But he did.

KELLY

So you think we should go after the cement store owner, or the driver?

ERIC

The driver is the one I really want. Basim Latif.

**EXT. SADDAM'S MANSION - GUARDHOUSE/ENTRANCE - DAY**

A HUMVEE pulls up in front of the mansion. Two **SOLDIERS** get out, walk around to the back...open the hatch...remove TWO LARGE ALUMINUM CASES and *SLAM* the hatch shut.

**INT. 4TH ID HEADQUARTERS - DAY**

Bam Bam & Kelly stand before a **4th ID LIEUTENANT** (38).

LIEUTENANT

Basim Latif? Seriously?

BAM BAM

Seriously.

LIEUTENANT

I just had to go get that fucker  
released.

KELLY

Wait a minute. Released?

**INT. MAYOR'S MANSION - TIKRIT - EVENING**

PUSHING IN - down a HALLWAY toward an OFFICE, where the  
**MAYOR'S CHIEF OF SECURITY** - tall, well-built, confident -  
and his cousin, **BASIM LATIF** (45) - overweight, jolly -  
are sharing a *LAUGH* together...

LIEUTENANT (VO)

He's the nephew of the Chief of  
Security for the Mayor of Tikrit -  
the fucking Governor of the  
Province.

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - STAIRWELL**

The two Soldiers carrying the aluminum cases walk up the  
spiral staircase...

**INT. MAYOR'S MANSION - EVENING**

Still MOVING DOWN the HALLWAY, toward the open door to  
the office containing the laughing Iraqis...

LIEUTENANT (VO)

Got himself arrested by local Iraqi  
police, and I had to get him  
released. The fucker's  
untouchable.

And the open door *SLAMS* in our face before we can enter.

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - DINING AREA - DAY**

The aluminum cases are dropped on the mess table.  
Members of the Team gather around as they are opened.  
Inside of one: A golden brown TURKEY. Inside the  
other: MASHED POTATOES, DRESSING and GRAVY.

OPERATOR

Happy Thanksgiving, boys!

CUT TO:

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - DINING AREA - LATER (MOS)**

Team Members eat...

ERIC (VO)

Dear Debbie, Thanksgiving, 2003,  
and I'm tryin' to figure out  
exactly what I'm thankful for...

...read letters.....

ERIC (VO CONT'D)

I'm thankful to be here, around  
dedicated guys I really look up to...

Bam Bam & Kelly are in close conversation...

ERIC (VO CONT'D)

I can't stand the idea of goin'  
home with nothin' to show for bein'  
here - without contributing to what  
we're all tryin' to do...

Eric is thoughtfully mopping up his gravy while staring  
at a BLANK PAGE on the pad next to his plate.

ERIC (VO CONT'D)

But I'm startin' to wrap my head  
around makin' do with "it was an  
honor to have served -"

And Kelly interrupts the unwritten letter in Eric's head:

KELLY

You gotta understand, in the battle  
for hearts and minds, Muhammad  
Ibrahim's driver's uncle - the  
Chief of Security for the Mayor of  
Tikrit, *the pro U.S. Sunni Governor  
of the Province* - is considered a  
"friend." And when I say "friend,"  
I mean he's on the Secretary of  
Defense's speed dial.

Bam Bam ladles gravy on his stuffing and adds:

BAM BAM

You wanna get a call from Paul  
Bremer or Colin Powell and explain  
why we destroyed one of the most  
important relationships we have in  
this entire country?

ERIC  
I've only got 4 weeks before my  
tour's up.

Bam Bam takes a deep breath and lets it go. He looks at his Team, tucking into their meal...then at Kelly...then at Eric.

BAM BAM  
We fuck with politics...and my team  
draws the attention of D.C. and  
Generals with many stars.

ERIC  
No, I get it.

BAM BAM  
Class five shit storm.

ERIC  
Maybe...the cement mixer -

Bam Bam nods to Kelly:

BAM BAM  
Tell him.

ERIC  
What...

KELLY  
We pushed back a little bit. The  
Chief of Security for the fucking  
Mayor of Tikrit...

ERIC  
(Eagerly, playing along)  
...the Governor of the Province...

KELLY  
Might be willing to set up an  
*interview* with his nephew...

ERIC  
...Basim Latif...

KELLY  
At the Mayor's Mansion. He said -  
his words: "Basim wants to help."

Eric is stunned. He stares at Kelly...at Bam Bam.

ERIC  
You gotta be there - both of you!

BAM BAM  
You're fuckin' A we're gonna -

ERIC  
If I can get him to lie - about something - *anything* - if I can show you that he's hiding information...then you can arrest him - treat him like any other detainee, right?

BAM BAM  
Whoa...

KELLY  
What's he going to lie about?

ERIC  
I don't know. But if he claims to want to help...and I get him to lie...

BAM BAM  
How's this - *if* we arrest him, and he *doesn't* lead us to Muhammad Ibrahim, this could be the last mission my team conducts in this war.

(Pause)  
Are we clear?

ERIC  
Yeah.

BAM BAM  
But no matter what happens, you owe us beer for this one, Staff Sergeant.

Kelly stands, places a forefinger on the blank page on the pad beside Eric's plate.

KELLY  
Yeah. *And Debbie does, too.*

**EXT. MAYOR'S MANSION - ESTABLISHING SHOT - DAY**

**SUPER: 1130 02DEC2003. MAYOR'S MANSION. TIKRIT**

**US SOLDIERS, LOCAL POLICE and IRAQI MILITARY** patrol this fortified building in the middle of Tikrit. An Iraqi man's BOOMING VOICE is heard -

BASIM (VO PRE-LAP)  
Happy greetings, my friends!

**INT. MAYOR'S MANSION - OFFICE - DAY**

Basim Latif enters, arms wide, hugging his Chief of Security uncle - kissing both cheeks - then turning to Eric, Kelly, Bam Bam and several other Team Members.

BASIM

So happy to make all of your acquaintances!

CHIEF OF SECURITY

You see, my nephew is here to help the U.S. Army! To be your most valuable informant!

BAM BAM

Thank you, Chief. I hope we have not put you...and the Mayor...to too much trouble.

CHIEF OF SECURITY

No trouble! I am only concerned that this meeting is not completely cordial. I would like your assurance that you are aware of our friendship and protected political affiliation with your government.

Bam Bam nods at all this gobbledygook.

BAM BAM

As long as everyone's honest, there'll be no problem, Chief.

CHIEF OF SECURITY

Basim has sworn upon the Koran for his honesty and loyalty to Americans!

BAM BAM

Well, that's great.

Bam Bam smiles broadly. The Chief smiles. Everyone smiles. Bam Bam turns to Eric:

BAM BAM (CONT'D)

Staff Sergeant Maddox?

ERIC

Have a seat, Basim.

BASIM

Yes, I would like to!



ERIC

Good. Because a lot of informants ...they tell us just enough to make us *feel* like they're useful. But they still think they've gotta protect themselves and their families. So they're always hidin' *something*. And they never tell us *everything*.

(Smile)

That's the only reason we gotta arrest people sometimes. So they have no choice but to tell us the truth.

BASIM

That is not me! I have nothing to hide! I seek the same peace as the Americans!

ERIC

Well, great. Then this shouldn't take long.

The Chief picks up a pack of cigarettes next to an empty ashtray. He lights one. Is his hand trembling?

ERIC

You were late today. Where do you live?

BASIM

I rent a house in the hundred houses neighborhood.

ERIC

How much do you pay for rent?

BASIM

\$250, but I am two months behind.

ERIC

Who do you pay your rent to?

BASIM

A man named Amir.

ERIC

Amir who?

BASIM

I do not know his full name. Just Amir.

ERIC

You don't know his name? How do you pay him? Do you go to his house?

BASIM

I...don't know where he lives. I pay him at the market or the store.

ERIC

What store?

BASIM

A cement store.

ERIC

Basim...your old boss, Muhammad Ibrahim, does he have family?

BASIM

Oh, yes. Brothers and children...

ERIC

What's his wife's name?

BASIM

Sarah.

ERIC

Does Sarah have sisters?

Basim shifts in his chair. The Chief lights another cigarette. Bam Bam & Kelly exchange a glance.

BASIM

Yes...two.

ERIC

Who are they married to?

BASIM

One to Muhammad Ibrahim's brother...one to Bashar Omar Hamdani.

ERIC

Bashar...does he have sisters?

BASIM

Yes. Two.

ERIC

Brothers?

BASIM

Yes. One.

ERIC

Name? What's his name?

BASIM

Hasan.

ERIC

Is Hasam married?

BASIM

Yes. To Mariam.

ERIC

Does Mariam have sisters?

BASIM

Yes.

ERIC

Who?

BASIM

(Smile)

My wife!

Basim looks uncomfortably to the Chief who is utterly confounded by this line of questioning. A couple of Team Members clear their throats...

ERIC

Bashar's sisters. What are *their* names?

(Pause; louder)

Don't act like you're not related, Basim! What are the names of your wife's sister's husband's sisters?

BASIM

Uhm...Ronnah and Renay.

ERIC

Who is Ronnah married to?

BASIM

Thamir.

ERIC

Thamir what?

BASIM

Thamir...Al-Asi.

ERIC  
What does he do?

BASIM  
He...he owns a cement shop.

ERIC  
Do you know his son, Amir?

BASIM  
Yes.

ERIC  
How? I mean, besides the fact that  
you're related to him by marriage,  
how do you know him?

Checkmate. Basim has been cornered with no way out.

BASIM  
Because...I pay him...my rent.

KELLY  
*Jesus...*

ERIC  
So...I guess you *do* know Amir Al-  
Asi's name, don't you, Basim?

Eric looks triumphantly to Bam Bam.

CHIEF OF SECURITY  
It...it is time for us to pray now!  
Will you please give us some  
moments?

BAM BAM  
You go right ahead, Chief.

And Bam Bam turns to one of the Team Members, re. Basim:

BAM BAM (CONT'D)  
Cuff him.

CHIEF OF SECURITY  
I am sorry?

BAM BAM  
He had his chance, Chief. But he  
lied to us.

BASIM  
No, mister, I am never lying! I...  
just...forgot his name!

CHIEF OF SECURITY

Please ! I will take complete responsibility for him! Basim will be your best source! Full access!

BAM BAM

You gave us your word, Chief. So did he.

CUT TO:

**EXT. SADDAM'S MANSION - GUEST HOUSE - NIGHT**

Two Team Members escort Basim from a HUMVEE to the guest house. Bam Bam walks alongside Eric:

BAM BAM

We got about 48 hours before the shit hits the fan in D.C., so unless you wanna go with me to explain to General Abizaid why we just pissed all over our only ally in the whole Sunni Triangle... you'd better get leads out of this guy and soon.

ERIC

I'll get 'em. Just a little time -

BAM BAM

(Sarcastically)

Oh, sure. No rush.

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - GUEST HOUSE - LATER**

Eric stares across the interrogation table at Basim, face damp, eyes wide.

ERIC

Why did we arrest you, Basim?

BASIM

I do not know. I promised to help -

ERIC

- because your days of *pretending* to help are over. And you're not gettin' out of here until we find Muhammad Ibrahim.

BASIM

And...why do you want him?

ERIC

I'm askin' the questions, here,  
asshole! Americans are dyin', and  
the people who're doin the killin'  
are taking orders from that son-of-  
a-bitch.

BASIM

(Smile)

From Muhammad Ibrahim?

ERIC

Don't fuck with me -

BASIM

I have no choice...

ERIC

*What?*

BASIM

You do not understand. The first  
time I was arrested and released...  
I was accused of working for the  
Americans...of giving up Radman.  
It is the opinion...that Radman's  
blood is on my hands. Now I have  
been arrested again...they will  
believe that their suspicions are  
true. And now my family is in  
danger. For their safety, *I have  
no choice but to help you...but...*  
Muhammad Ibrahim does not order the  
attacks...

ERIC

Stop lying to me -

BASIM

He takes the orders -

ERIC

Bullshit. From who?

BASIM

There is only one man who gives  
orders. Only one man who has ever  
been in charge - and his name is  
Saddam Hussein.

Eric is about to say something, but he stops cold.

ERIC

What did you say?

**EXT. SADDAM'S MANSION - MOMENTS LATER**

Eric sprints out of the house to catch Bam Bam & Kelly - pulling out of the DRIVEWAY in a HUMVEE.

BAM BAM  
Jump in. We're goin' to Beiji.

ERIC  
No, you're not.

BAM BAM  
Yeah, we are. Jump in.

Eric climbs into the back seat and Bam Bam peels away.

ERIC  
It's official. The whole  
insurgency is under Muhammad  
Ibrahim's control.

KELLY  
All of Tikrit?

ERIC  
No. All of Iraq. And he takes his  
orders...from Saddam Hussein.

Bam Bam *SLAMS* on the brakes and the HUMVEE *SKIDS* to a halt in the dirt and sand.

BAM BAM  
Don't bullshit me right now.

ERIC  
I'm not. Basim said he would carry  
around as much as a quarter mil in  
U.S. cash to recruit and carry out  
insurgency attacks throughout all of  
Iraq. He said the money and the  
orders came directly from Saddam to  
Muhammad Ibrahim, who has his own  
chain of command.

BAM BAM  
So, where is he? Where's Muhammad  
Ibrahim?

ERIC  
Basim said he was sleeping at  
Thamir's place - the cement store.

CUT TO:

**INT. THAMIR'S CEMENT STORE - DAWN**

Bam Bam's Team stands silhouetted against the RISING SUN as TWO IRAQI PRISONERS - one OLD MAN (**THAMIR AL-ASI**) and his SON (**AMIR**), looking nothing like the linchpins of the insurgency - step forward from the shadows of a cement store entrance.

BAM BAM  
 (Into radio)  
 Lima 2-1 to Bravo Sierra. Take  
 this down. Ready? D-R-Y-H-O-L-E.  
 Do you copy, over?

He listens to the WHITE NOISE...then...a small, defeated voice:

ERIC (RADIO)  
*Copy, Lima 2-1...*

Bam Bam turns, walks back to his HUMVEE...and...

BAM BAM  
 Fuck...me...

...KICKS it.

CUT TO:

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - GUEST HOUSE - DAY**

Eric sits, exhausted, papers strewn in front of him. Thamir Al-Asi sits across from to him, drenched in sweat, hands cuffed, trembling violently.

Eric looks to Adam...then to Kelly - leaning, against the wall - then turns to the Guard in the corner.

ERIC  
 Bring me his sons. And have Basim  
 Latif nearby.

The Guard moves to take Thamir out.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
 No. Leave him here.

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - GUEST HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER**

Amir - a college student who speaks English - lands in a chair and stares across the table at his father.



ERIC

Look at your father, Amir. He may die in prison because you won't help him.

AMIR

I have told you. I do not know anything about this Muhammad Ibrahim and he is certainly not connected to my father who is much too old for the things you describe.

ERIC

Amir, I just told you everything we know about Muhammad Ibrahim. That's dangerous knowledge. If I let you go, you could take it back to the bad guys.

Eric nods to the Guard, who exits...

AMIR

But...but we are nobody.

ERIC

You were nobody. I've just made you too important to let go.

The Guard reenters with Basim. He sits, crosses his legs, and assumes the air of a collaborating co-interrogator.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Basim, talk to this fool and tell him to be honest.

BASIM

(Sitting)

What is the problem? Do you know who this is? You cannot lie to him! Trust me, I tried! What are you afraid of? Muhammad Ibrahim has tortured your family for long enough! Be honest! It is your only way out!

AMIR

Then you tell him!

BASIM

I do not know! I was fired last month! No one will know it was you! They will blame it on me!

Eric looks to Basim - realizes that this rogue is doing his best and truly laying it on the line. Eric looks to Amir, digesting Basim's words...

ERIC

Amir. Where is Muhammad Ibrahim?

AMIR

Ever since they arrested Basim, he left. He went to Samarra. He has a rental house there. But I do not know where it is. The one running the insurgency there is named Sabah.

*The DIGITAL LINK DIAGRAM creates the **SABAH** DATA FIELD...*

ERIC

Basim, do you know this Sabah?

BASIM

Yes, but not where he lives.

AMIR

I...I can take you to Sabah's house.

BASIM

Yes! Good! And Sabah will tell you where to find the rental house of Muhammad Ibrahim!

ERIC

What makes you think that?

BASIM

Because, Mister in the Blue Shirt!  
I have told you everything I know,  
and I did not want to tell you  
*anything!*

**EXT. SADDAM'S MANSION - NIGHT**

**SUPER: 1815 04DEC2003**

The Team loads their gear. Basim and Amir climb into the HUMVEE while Eric watches.

BAM BAM

(To Eric)

Time's still tickin' on this Basim situation. This'd better pay off.

BASIM  
Mister, shoot me now if I am lying!

BAM BAM  
Don't tempt me.

He *SLAMS* the door on Basim.

SMASH CUT TO:

**INT. SABAH'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

**LUAY** (30) - hands up in surrender, his face swelling from his encounter with the Team - confesses in Arabic as Basim translates for Bam Bam and his men:

BASIM  
He says he is Luay - Sabah is his brother. He has not seen him.

BAM BAM  
*Fuck...*  
(To his Team)  
Snatch and grab! Anything that looks important.

BASIM  
But he knows where the rental house is, and he will take us right now.

Already, the Team Members are tossing BOXES and BAGS in the HUMVEES and *SLAM* the hatches shut -

SMASH CUT TO:

**INT. MUHAMMAD IBRAHIM'S RENTAL HOUSE - LATER**

A confused, scrawny IRAQI TEEN - **JUNIOR** (17) with his hands up, crying as Adam *SHOUTS* at him in Arabic and Basim - his face wrapped - stands by like a Team Member.

PUSH IN ON BAM BAM'S DISAPPOINTED FACE, lifting the radio...

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - OPS ROOM - SAME**

Bam Bam *CRACKLES* over the radio:

BAM BAM (RADIO)  
*Dry hole at second objective. RTB with two PAKs.*

And Eric, elbows on the counter, buries his face in his hands.

ERIC

*SHIT!*

**EXT. SADDAM'S MANSION - LATER**

As the HUMVEES roll up and the Team piles out with the hooded Luay & Junior. Eric runs up to them. Basim is distraught:

BASIM

I am sorry! He *should* have been there! I am sorry!

BAM BAM

(To Basim)

A little heavy on the drama, don't you think?

(To Team, re. the prisoners)

Take these assholes to the Guest house, then on me in five!

ERIC

It's not drama. He's...as long as Muhammad Ibrahim is at large...our friend Basim here is a marked man.

Eric claps Basim on the shoulder.

ERIC

We'll get him, Basim And when we do, I promise you'll be free.

Basim nods, and Bam Bam cuts it short with a simple:

BAM BAM

Right. C'mon -

And he takes Eric by the arm and drags him toward the house.

ERIC

What -

CUT TO:

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - DINING AREA - MOMENTS LATER**

As a BOX is upended and STACKS of US \$100 bills cascade onto the table - now surrounded by the Team.

KELLY

Je-sus...

Bam Bam looks at Kelly.

BAM BAM

(Grinning)

I think...we just...bought us some  
time with Baghdad.

ERIC

How *much* time?

KELLY

I'd say...I don't know...about a  
coupla million dollars worth?

Eric grins.

ERIC (VO PRE-LAP)

Dear Debbie...

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - GUEST HOUSE - DAY (MOS)**

DOLLY PAST Eric to his new interrogation assistants,  
Basim and Amir, comforting Luay.

ERIC (VO)

Ten days since I almost gave up, and  
I'm makin' up the rules as I go.

Scattered around the room are makeshift SLEEPING COTS,  
CARTONS OF IRAQI CIGARETTES, COFFEE, TEA...

ERIC (VO CONT'D)

I'm bunkin' my prisoners together.  
Made 'em a little hotel in the  
guest house.

We PUSH IN ON LUAY - broken down, in tears...

ERIC (VO CONT'D)

Luay, Sabah's brother, crumbled.  
Poor kid was gettin' married in  
four days, and would do just about  
anything to lose his cherry.

MOVING AROUND Eric...Basim...Amir...Luay...talking...

ERIC (VO CONT'D)

They seem to enjoy collaboratin'.  
So long as they don't get seen by  
Muhammad Ibrahim's son -

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - GUEST HOUSE - CELL - NIGHT**

PUSH IN ON JUNIOR - Muhammad Ibrahim's son - being interrogated by Eric. Adam translates. Kelly looks on.

ERIC (VO)  
 - a pampered and kinda pathetic kid.  
 But Basim, Amir and Luay are so  
 terrified of bein' seen by him  
 they're willin' to do just about  
 anything...

*The DIGITAL LINK DIAGRAM is SWIRLING around Eric...*

ERIC (VO CONT'D)  
 Gotta go. Lots to do. Eric.

And we resume the interrogation:

JUNIOR  
 My father moved me to that house  
 three weeks ago for safety.

ERIC  
 But you had been to Samarra before.

JUNIOR  
 Yes. My father would take me  
 fishing there. He still goes, but  
 he does not take me.

ERIC  
 Why?

JUNIOR  
 Because he hates his own son.

ERIC  
 When was the last time you saw him?

JUNIOR  
 He was at the house two hours  
 before you attacked it.

ERIC  
 Where did he go?

JUNIOR  
 Fishing.

Eric shakes his head and looks ruefully at Kelly.

ERIC  
 Fishing...

And then...suddenly...Eric remembers something. He takes a deep breath and asks:

ERIC (CONT'D)

*Fishing?*

*And the DIGITAL LINK DIAGRAM SPINS and the image of the **FISH** GLOWS - PULSING WITH COLOR...and its DATA FIELD bears the word: MAZGOUF*

Eric gets to his feet...looks at Kelly...

KELLY

What?

...and dashes out of the room.

**INT. GUEST HOUSE - INTERROGATION ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

As Eric BURSTS in - startling Basim, Amir and Luay.

ERIC

What did Muhammad Ibrahim do for fun in Samarra?

The prisoners look at one another...then:

LUAY

They went fishing.

BASIM

Yes. All the time.

ERIC

Where?

LUAY

At the river...

ERIC

Why?

LUAY

Uh...for fish to put in the pond.

ERIC

What pond?

LUAY

Muhammad Ibrahim made a pond. A fish farm. For fresh fish. To make *mazgouf*.

ERIC

*They.* You said *they* went fishing  
...who is *they*?

AMIR

Muhammad Ibrahim and Muhammad  
Khudayr. They are always together.  
"The Two Muhammads," people say.

*And the MUHAMMAD KHUDAYR DATA FIELD and its appropriate  
links - to the FISH...to MUHAMMAD IBRAHIM...etc. -  
generates before our eyes.*

ERIC

(To Basim)

Why the fuck didn't you tell me  
this before?

BASIM

You did not ask. But...Saddam...he  
eats *mazgouf*...every day.

ERIC

*Where is this pond?*

#### **INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - OPS ROOM - NIGHT**

Bam Bam is hunched over a map and Kelly is on the radio  
as Eric bursts in.

ERIC

Guys -

But Bam holds up a warning hand - indicates Kelly...

KELLY

(Into radio)

Copy that. Kilo 2-1 clear.

Kelly hangs up the mic and turns to Eric.

KELLY

I'm sorry, pal.

ERIC

What -

BAM BAM

Your tour's up, Eric.

ERIC

No...that's...that's not for  
another week.



BAM BAM

Baghdad says this is your last night in Tikrit. We gotta send you back.

ERIC

No...man, you gotta be kiddin' me.

KELLY

You're gonna fly with Admiral McCraven from Baghdad to brief General Custer at CENTCOM about the 1.9 million...then you're headed stateside.

Eric takes a moment to muster his trained military self...then nods.

ERIC

Right. Okay. Then...I guess...I'm finished here.

A long awkward PAUSE. No one knows what to say. Then:

ERIC (CONT'D)

But...so...lemme ask you guys...if you're Muhammad Ibrahim and you have to deal with Saddam Hussein, who's probably grumpy as shit since he lost his country, what better way to keep him happy than to make sure he gets his favorite food?

Bam Bam & Kelly exchange a glance.

KELLY

Come again?

ERIC

Muhammad Ibrahim and his buddy, Muhammad Khudayr, are *fishing*. They're stocking a pond...at a fish farm in Samarra. There's this dish called *mazgoof* - and Saddam Hussein can't get enough of it -

Bam Bam puts his arm around Eric's shoulders...looks at Kelly and says, simply:

BAM BAM

Whaddaya say...we go fishin'?

SMASH CUT TO:

**EXT. HELICOPTER - MOVING - NIGHT**

**SUPER: 0030 07DEC2003**

The STROP of ROTOR BLADES, as a BLACKHAWK moves through the night sky toward a small body of water.

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - OPS ROOM - LATER**

Kelly is glued to a COMPUTER SCREEN as Eric enters the room for the play-by-play on the raid.

KELLY  
Baghdad's thrown us a curveball.  
(Pause)  
They're in on the hit.

ERIC  
What? *Why?*

Kelly give Eric a sideways glance.

KELLY  
A staff sergeant interrogator and a three-hundred-thousand-dollar-a-week unit hauls in two million U.S. and a hot lead on Saddam. How do you think that makes the guys charging taxpayers 1.8 BILLION dollars a week look? Pretty fuckin' stupid, don't you think?

Suddenly, something on the otherwise BLACK COMPUTER SCREEN gets his attention.

KELLY  
Jesus H. Christ. There they are...

Kelly tilts the display so we can see

**A FLIR THERMAL IMAGE**

- with a TARGET RETICLE superimposed. Two distinct heat signatures in the middle of the pond glow ghost-like on the screen.

ERIC  
Ho-ly shit...

KELLY  
(Into the radio)  
Jackpot! Two PAKs on the pond.

ERIC  
 "The Two Muhammads"...

**INT. HELICOPTER - MOVING - NIGHT**

Bam Bam jacks his FLIGHT HELMET into the chopper's console, linking his helmet to the gunport camera.

**FLIR POV**

The pond cuts a cool black swath with the two telltale signs of heat and life smack dab in the middle.

BAM BAM  
 I got 'em. Settin' 'er down...

**EXT. SAMARRA FISH FARM - NIGHT**

Bam Bam steps out the instant the chopper touches down.

A swarm of **SPEC OPS & TASK FORCE SOLDIERS** form a perimeter around the pond.

HIGH-POWERED BEAMS light up **TWO MEN** in a boat on the water, frozen in fear.

**INT. SADDAM'S MANSION - OPS ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

ON ERIC as the radio *SQUAWKS* and:

BAM BAM (RADIO)  
*Bravo Sierra, Lima 2-1, two PAKs  
 detained...*

Eric *SHOUTS* and punches the air.

KELLY  
 We got 'em.

BAM BAM (RADIO)  
*Dry hole.*

Eric's face collapses - his guts ripped out.

BAM BAM (RADIO)  
*Repeat, it's not our guys. Just a  
 coupla fishermen. Baghdad's takin'  
 them directly to BIAP.*

Eric and Kelly are momentarily dumbfounded. Then Eric *POUNDS* on the Ops desk with his fist.

ERIC  
*NO! FUCK ME!*

Kelly nods with bitter resignation.

KELLY  
 (Into radio)  
 Copy that.  
 (To Eric)  
 That's it.

BAM BAM (RADIO)  
*Roger. Have the Staff Sergeant  
 ready for pick up on the pad, ETA  
 20 minutes.*

KELLY  
 (Into radio)  
 Copy.

Kelly hangs up the mic and stares at the computer screen.

ERIC  
 Kelly...I'm sorry...

KELLY  
 Don't sweat it, man.

ERIC  
 Kelly...can you...put Basim on my  
 flight back?

Kelly smiles. A parting gift is the least he can do.

KELLY  
 Brother, you can have 'em all.

And Kelly offers his hand. Eric takes it, shakes it...and can't find the words. He walks out.

#### **EXT. SADDAM'S MANSION - HELIPAD - LATER**

The *THROP-THROP* of the BLACKHAWK'S blades, decelerating to idle. Eric waits with Basim, Amir, Luay & Junior while the Team jumps out. Bam Bam is last on the ground.

Eric shakes hands with Adam, then grips his duffel, head down, avoiding dust, hiding his disappointment.

While Team Members strap the prisoners together inside the chopper, Bam Bam *SHOUTS* over the *ROAR* of the ENGINE:

BAM BAM  
WE GAVE 'EM A HELLUVA RUN!

Eric nods, still looking down.

BAM BAM (CONT'D)  
HEY, MADDOX.

Eric looks up.

BAM BAM (CONT'D)  
WE KNOW HOW HARD YOU WORKED. FOR  
WHAT IT'S WORTH...I'VE NEVER SEEN  
ANYTHING LIKE IT.

ERIC  
THAT'S...WORTH A LOT.

BAM BAM  
I KNOW WE WERE CLOSE.

Eric nods. Bam Bam offers his hand. They shake. And  
Eric climbs aboard.

BAM BAM (CONT'D)  
AND YOU *STILL* OWE ME A BEER!

The ENGINE ROARS...the blades accelerate...dust billows  
as Eric smiles, waves, and the BLACKHAWK lifts off...

#### **INT. BLACKHAWK HELICOPTER - NIGHT**

Eric watches the dark DESERT PLAINS as they slip beneath  
his feet at 130 KNOTS. He looks over at Basim, Amir,  
Luay & Junior - gripping their tethers and terrified.

LEE (VO PRE-LAP)  
What's the matter, Eric?

#### **EXT. CAMP CROPPER - AIRFIELD - NIGHT**

Basim, Amir, Luay & Junior are marched past Eric and  
Lee, standing on the tarmac.

LEE  
Get so attached to your new  
friends, you couldn't leave 'em  
behind?

ERIC  
Something like that.

BASIM  
(As he passes)  
Please, I can have my own room?

ERIC  
Later, Basim.

Eric starts walking toward a Jeep.

LEE  
Seriously, man, what are we doing  
with these...uh...high value  
targets here?

ERIC  
Just keep 'em close for a day. I  
need you to run an end-around for  
me with Baghdad so I can  
interrogate those two fishermen.

LEE  
Five seconds on the ground, you're  
already the turd in the Baghdad  
punch bowl.

At the Jeep, Lee gets behind the wheel, pulls a couple  
of CIGARS from his shirt pocket and hands one to Eric as  
he climbs aboard. Eric pockets the cigar.

LEE (CONT'D)  
I'll see what I can do, but after  
your jackpot in Samarra, they want  
you in Doha to debrief General  
Custer -

ERIC  
I only need an hour with 'em.

LEE  
- and you owe me a beer.

ERIC  
I owe everybody a fuckin' beer.

The Jeep tears off across the tarmac.

CUT TO:

**INT. CAMP CROPPER - OFFICE - DAY**

Eric and Lee sit in metal chairs in front of **WALT** (30s) -  
Kelly's nebbish counterpart here in Baghdad.

WALT

Now what the hell would we want to raid a fisherman's cousin's uncle's house for?

LEE

That's what I wondered, sir, but after Sergeant Maddox here just interrogated those two fishermen we bagged -

ERIC

I have reason to believe Muhammad Ibrahim might be there.

Walt narrows his eyes.

WALT

Muhammad Ibrahim?

Eric takes a deep breath and, through his exhaustion, attempts to bring Walt up to speed:

ERIC

I know you don't know who that is, but -

WALT

I know *exactly* who that is. Kelly's been keeping me in the loop with what you've been doing up there in Tikrit. I think you're really onto something with that guy.

ERIC

(Stunned)

I'm...I'm mighty glad you think so.

WALT

Problem is, no one else has heard of him, which is why I can't guarantee I can push this hit through. But I'll lean on my CO as hard as I can. When do you leave for Doha?

LEE

We're on the Admiral's plane for Doha in 36 hours.

Walt whistles, shakes his head, leans back.

WALT

Gonna take a lot of stars to make it happen *that* fast.

**INT. CAMP CROPPER - REC ROOM - LATER**

Around a small table **THREE INTERROGATORS** talk over cups of watery coffee.

**SUPER: 0400 13DEC2003 - 3HRS TO DEPARTURE**

Eric, unable to sleep, walks in, grabs a *SPORTS ILLUSTRATED* and sits in a chair off in the corner.

FIRST INTERROGATOR (OC)  
We dunked him, but it was a no-go.

SECOND INTERROGATOR (OC)  
You hear about Brad's thing?

THIRD INTERROGATOR (OC)  
I don't want to talk about it.

SECOND INTERROGATOR (OC)  
Come on, man, you gotta tell him.

THIRD INTERROGATOR (OC)  
Three days I've been trying to get this fuckin' *haj* to sign a confession - that's the only way to really know you've broken a guy -

Eric peers up over his magazine, listening.

FIRST INTERROGATOR  
So what seems to be the problem, officer?

THIRD INTERROGATOR  
Nothin' until fuckin' McKenna walks into my cell and fuckin' tazes my boy in the balls.

**LAUGHTER.** Eric goes back to his reading as a **MAJOR** walks in and goes straight to the coffee maker. The Interrogators shut up and sip. The Major notices Eric.

MAJOR  
You Maddox?

The PHONE RINGS. The Third Interrogator picks it up.

ERIC  
Yes, sir.

MAJOR  
When your fishermen get back from the recon, can we cut 'em loose?



Eric drops the magazine and get to his feet.

ERIC  
Recon, sir? What recon?

MAJOR  
I dunno. They took 'em out this A.M.

The Third Interrogator hangs up.

THIRD INTERROGATOR  
Hey, Maddox, you know someone named  
Muhammad Khudayr?

ERIC  
Hell yes, I do!

THIRD INTERROGATOR  
That was Walt. They got Muhammad  
Khudayr and a few other guys, he  
said you'd know what he was talking  
about. Bringing them in now.

ERIC  
What about Muhammad Ibrahim?

THIRD INTERROGATOR  
He *said* you'd ask that. No. Just  
Khudayr.

**INT. CAMP CROPPER - BUNKHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER**

Eric shakes Lee awake.

ERIC  
You wanna to work tonight?

LEE  
What, you couldn't just leave me a  
fuckin' note?

CUT TO:

**INT. CAMP CROPPER - HALLWAY - LATER**

Eric and Lee follow a **GUARD#1** down a long HALLWAY.  
Behind them, **GUARD#2** leads Basim, Luay & Junior - all  
blindfolded.

They stop at a CELL DOOR where Walt, **GUARD#3**, and an  
INTERPRETER named **JOHN** (30s) are waiting for them.

WALT

You must have some friends in high places because I couldn't get the raid approved, but your boys in Tikrit personally vouched for this hit. Said it was your going-away present.

Eric grins.

LEE

Dude, we got less than three hours -

ERIC

(To Lee; re. Basim & Luay)  
Keep an eye on these guys for me.  
(To John; extending his hand)  
You the 'terp?

JOHN

Yes, sir.

ERIC

Let's go.

And Guard#3 opens the cell door.

**INT. CAMP CROPPER - INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

A HOODED-AND-HANDCUFFED MAN sits at a table, alone in cell. Guard#3 removes the hood to REVEAL **MUHAMMAD KHUDAYR** (40's) - eyes sunk deep like wells, a high-pitched voice filled with menace. Eric and John sit. John simultaneously translates:

ERIC

What's your name?

KHUDAYR

Muhammad.

ERIC

Muhammad what?

KHUDAYR

(Smiling)  
Muhammad.

ERIC

Muhammad Khudayr.

KHUDAYR

I do not know him.

Eric sits back, nods. In spite of the time pressure, he's got to play this cool.

ERIC

Okay. Okay.

(To Guard#3)

Hood him.

And Eric goes to the door and exits as Guard#3 places the hood over Khudayr's head.

Then Eric reenters with Luay - blindfolded. Eric sits him down in a chair with his back to Khudayr, then removes the blindfold.

ERIC

Luay. How many meetings did you attend with your brother, Sabah, when attacks were planned against the Americans?

LUAY

Many.

ERIC

Who ran these meetings?

LUAY

Muhammad Khudayr and Muhammad Ibrahim.

ERIC

Turn around.

He does. Eric nods to Guard#3, who removes Khudayr's hood. Luay GASPS, stunned.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Luay, who is that?

LUAY

M...Muhammad Khudayr.

ERIC

(To Guard#3)

Take him out.

The Guard hauls Luay out. Eric zeros in on Khudayr:

ERIC

Okay. Now, the only way you will ever leave this place is if you tell me where I can find Muhammad Ibrahim Al-Muslit.

KHUDAYR  
I do not know this person.

ERIC  
Right.

Eric goes to the door, opens it, points and walks back.  
And Guard#2 enters with Ibrahim's son, Junior -  
blindfolded. Eric cocks his head at Khudayr.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
Do you see who this is?  
(Pause)  
Now I'm gonna make it known to  
everyone in Iraq that because of  
information you gave me, Muhammad  
Ibrahim's son is gonna spend the  
rest of his life in prison.

KHUDAYR  
(Shaken)  
But...that is a lie.

Junior visibly reacts to the sound of Khudayr's voice  
and the threat. Eric holds Khudayr's gaze and shrugs.

KHUDAYR (CONT'D)  
Please...if I take you to him, he  
will kill me.

Eric nods to the Guard, who remove a trembling Junior  
from the room. Eric leans in.

ERIC  
'Course, Muhammad Ibrahim hates the  
boy, but that's not gonna help you.  
At some point, he'll find out why  
his son is in prison.

Eric points his finger in Khudayr's face, and:

ERIC (CONT'D)  
So think very carefully about how  
you answer this next question.  
(Pause)  
When was the last time you saw  
Muhammad Ibrahim?

Khudayr hesitates, then:

KHUDAYR  
Last night.

Eric tries to hide his genuine surprise.

ERIC  
Where did you see him?

KHUDAYR  
At my house.

And suddenly Eric understands. Khudayr is spitting Arabic at John - a virulent, hate-filled invective...

And Eric is stumbling backwards - lurching for the door, yanking it open, and *SHOUTING* at Walt:

ERIC  
THE OTHER GUYS - WHERE ARE THE  
OTHER GUYS YOU BROUGHT IN?

WALT  
(Alarmed)  
Uh...

Walt turns to Guard#1 and we

CUT TO:

**INT. CAMP CROPPER - HALLWAY/CELL - MOMENTS LATER**

TRACKING WITH ERIC - hauling Basim along with him - as Guard#1 leads him to a CELL DOOR...fumbles with his keys...and opens it to REVEAL:

**THREE HOODED PRISONERS**

sitting on the floor against the wall.

ERIC  
(To Basim)  
Stand...right...here.

And Eric enters the cell and removes the **FIRST MAN'S** hood. Basim shakes his head.

Eric removes the **SECOND MAN'S** hood. Basim shakes his head.

Eric places his hand on the last hood -

BASIM  
Please! NO! WAIT!

And Eric pauses and looks to Basim who is pointing to his own chin - pressing it with his forefinger.

Eric understands. And so he lifts the last hood just enough to REVEAL...A DIMPLED CHIN.

And Basim - eyes wide and mouth agape - starts nodding.

Eric drops the hood, joins Basim in the hallway and closes the cell door.

BASIM  
(Whispering)  
*That...that is him. That is him.*

ERIC  
Basim. *Basim.*

Basim calms down, looks at Eric.

ERIC  
You...are a free man.

Eric extends his hand to Basim. Basim looks at it... and they shake. And Basim is in tears.

BASIM  
And you...you are one...bad...  
motherfucker!

Eric smiles and nods.

**INT. CAMP CROPPER - INTERROGATION ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

**MUHAMMAD IBRAHIM** (50s), sits across the table from Eric.

ERIC  
You're Muhammad Ibrahim. I've been  
waitin' to meet you.

Then, in perfect English.

IBRAHIM  
And you are the interrogator in the  
blue shirt. *Many* are waiting to  
meet you.

Eric reaches into his breast pocket...and pulls out the cigar Lee gave him. He holds it out to Ibrahim, who takes it, smells it, bites off the end, and sticks it in his mouth. Eric lights it for him. Ibrahim leans back, smoking. Eric takes a deep breath, and leans in.

ERIC  
I need you to listen to me very  
carefully, Muhammad.

Ibrahim blows a cloud of smoke in front of him.

ERIC (CONT'D)

My name is Eric Maddox, and I'm the one who's been lookin' for you the past two months. Nobody else knows who you are. I'm the only one who can help you now. Now that we've finally met, I need you to understand we will be talkin' about one thing, and one thing only - the exact location of Saddam Hussein.

Ibrahim smirks...and shrugs.

IBRAHIM

You give me too much credit. I do not know where he is.

ERIC

I know you know *exactly* where he is. That's why I've been lookin' for you. And only you. Al-Muslits are in prison because of you. You got 'em involved in this insurgency and you're the only one that can get 'em out. You take me to Saddam, I don't need them anymore.

IBRAHIM

I do not know where he is.

Eric's chair *SQUEAKS* as he leans back slowly.

IBRAHIM (CONT'D)

You do what you have to do. Like you did with my brother, Radman.

ERIC

It doesn't have to be like that. Just take me to Saddam and they all go free.

IBRAHIM

If I take you to Saddam, they will know it was me and they will kill my family. You could not stop them.

ERIC

*If* you take me to him. That means you *can* take me to him.

Ibrahim - his face frozen - just stares at Eric...

**CLOSE ON THE CIGAR TIP**

*as the cigar starts burning rapidly toward Ibrahim's fingers...*

ERIC (VO)

Muhammad, you are "they." Who's comin' after you if he's gone?

(Lying)

Every Sunni, every *hamaya* has told me to find you to get Saddam. Why? Because they're relyin' on you to set them free. The entire country wants to be free. To end the war, *and be free.*

*The cigar, still burning rapidly toward its extinction, descends from Ibrahim's face and toward the table...*

ERIC (VO CONT'D)

We're goin' to start over with this country.

*...reaches the table...*

ERIC (VO CONT'D)

And you and your family'll go home, because you will have stopped the reign of one of the most horrible men in the history of the world.

*...and is ground out into the table. Then, in REAL TIME:*

IBRAHIM

But I cannot help you, because I do not know where Saddam is.

But Ibrahim is thinking. Eric can see it...smell it. Ibrahim is weighing his options. Eric is close...

Then the door opens and Lee pokes his head in.

LEE

Admiral McCraven's plane. 20 minutes. Wheels up, bro.

Lee closes the door.

*And the overhead bulb appears to dim. Everything on the periphery GOES TO BLACK.*

Eric and Ibrahim are suddenly in a very small, very dark space as Eric looks at the insurgent leader and says:



ERIC

Listen to me, Muhammad. Once I walk outta here no one else is gonna come talk to you. *Ever again.* D'you understand? You're gonna be just another prisoner - another *hajji*, and you're gonna die of old age in a dark cell, just like this one.

IBRAHIM

This is fine with me, because I do not know -

ERIC

Your family is in prison. Saddam can't help them. No one can help them, except you. Right here. Right now. Now that you're captured, you're of no use to him.

Again, Ibrahim just stares at Eric.

ERIC (CONT'D)

You have one way out. When I walk out of here, think hard. Then when you decide to take me to Saddam, I want you to bang on the cell door. And you better do it as loud as you can, or I won't hear you. *And if I don't hear you...*

IBRAHIM

But...

ERIC

*...you'll never see the light of day.*

And Eric turns away and exits the dark space. And the *SLAM* of the metal door causes Ibrahim to *flinch*.

CUT TO:

**INT. CAMP CROPPER - TACTICAL OPS CENTER - MOMENTS LATER**

as Eric *BURSTS* into a room of wall-to-wall COMPUTER DISPLAYS and moves to the desk of an **ANALYST**, sipping coffee and facing down another day of digital warfare.

ERIC

Where's Walt?

The Analyst looks at the guy in the blue Oxford shirt -

ANALYST

I don't know -

ERIC (CONT'D)

I need your computer.

ANALYST

Whoa, whoa, what the fuck? Who are you?

But Eric doesn't reply as he bangs out an e-mail -

ERIC (VO)

*Muhammad Ibrahim was captured in last night's raid. He hasn't given up Saddam yet. I have to leave. Let Walt know what's going on. We got him. Thanks, Kelly. Maddox.*

ANALYST

Dude, seriously, what the fuck are you -

ERIC

Thanks.

Eric hits *SEND*, and runs out the door.

**EXT. CAMP CROPPER - LEE'S JEEP - CONTINUOUS**

Eric piles into the Jeep and Lee peels out across the tarmac. Eric leans his back, closes his eyes.

Lee starts to say something, but thinks better of it. They drive for a moment in silence. Then:

LEE

So, you got your guy.

ERIC

Yeah. Too late.

LEE

Dude. What the fuck did you do to him?

ERIC

Whaddaya mean? I didn't do anything to him.

LEE

Really? When I left the detention center he was screamin' his damn fool head off. Bangin' on the fuckin' door. I swear to God it was like he was, I don't know -

Lee looks over at the passenger seat - *but there is no one there.*

**EXT. CAMP CROPPER - AIRFIELD - SAME**

Eric hits the tarmac and *ROLLS* - scrambles to his feet - and realizes what a stupid thing he just did.

ERIC

Ow...shit...aw...*Jesus...*

And he shakes off his self-induced body shock...and *sprints* back toward the base as the Jeep *SCREECHES* to a halt and Lee jumps out.

LEE

ERIC. *WHAT ARE YOU DOING?*

ERIC

*HOLD THE PLANE!*

**EXT. CAMP CROPPER DETENTION CENTER - SAME**

Eric runs to the entrance where a **FAT GUARD** stops him.

FAT GUARD

Whoa! Hold up! Where you goin'?

ERIC

I'm an interrogator. I need to get in there and talk to a prisoner.

FAT GUARD

You got clearance?

ERIC

I'M ERIC MADDOX. I'VE BEEN WITH THE TASK FORCE FOR SIX FUCKIN' MONTHS, AND I GOTTA GET IN THERE *NOW!*

FAT GUARD

Okay...whatever...*asshole...*

THE SOUND OF A MAN *SCREAMING* AND *POUNDING* ON HIS CELL DOOR PRE-LAPS:

**INT. CAMP CROPPER - HALLWAY - SAME**

TRACKING WITH ERIC as he runs down the corridor to Ibrahim's cell where a **GROUP OF GUARDS** have gathered.

**INT. CAMP CROPPER - INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Ibrahim - in a frenzy, eyes red with anger - staggers back from the door as Eric enters.

ERIC

So where is he? Where is Saddam?

Ibrahim catches his breath.

IBRAHIM

I want to talk to Paul Bremer.

A stunned silence. Eric can barely believe what he just heard. And before he knows it, he's physically pushed Ibrahim against the wall.

ERIC

Listen to me, asshole. There is no Paul fucking Bremer! Paul Bremer doesn't know who you are, and doesn't care. It's just you and me, Muhammad. I'm the one that had your friends and family arrested. Me. The interrogator in the blue shirt. *The only man on the planet Earth who knows who the fuck you are.*

(Pause)

What's your deal? What do you want?

Ibrahim looks at Eric...the Guards...

IBRAHIM

I want myself and everyone in my family released...and protected. We can live in the same neighborhood. Your soldiers can protect us there.

ERIC

Done. After we get Saddam. Where is he?

IBRAHIM

I want to talk to the commanding officer.

ERIC

Forget it. He's not gonna know who you are, either. It's just me. What would you tell him?

IBRAHIM

That I will help you find Saddam.

ERIC

*No, motherfucker! You're not gonna help! You're gonna do it! You're gonna take us there. You're gonna end the war. Or you're never going anywhere again.*

And Ibrahim *SHOUTS* back:

IBRAHIM

YOU WANT TO GO NOW? LET'S GO! YOU AND ME! WE WILL GO RIGHT NOW!

ERIC

Don't fuck with me. You'll go tonight. With soldiers. Saddam'll be there, or you get nothing.

IBRAHIM

He will be there.

ERIC

Where?

IBRAHIM

At a farm in Ad Dawr. South of Tikrit. East of the river. It belongs to a man named Qies Niemic Jasim.

Eric feels in his pockets, finds a pen. But no paper. He's without his pad.

Suddenly, a piece of BLANK PAPER is thrust in Eric's face. Eric looks up at one of the Guards, offering the paper. He takes it and slides it and the pen across the table to Ibrahim.

ERIC

Show me.

Ibrahim lifts the pen...and we

SMASH CUT TO:

**INT. EMIRATES AIRBUS - ECONOMY - DAY**

ON ERIC in the pool of light from the overhead, sitting in the window seat, alone in his aisle.

His LAPTOP is open on the tray table in front of him. And the CURSOR is still blinking at the end of:

**To all of those who have served, fought, and sacrificed,  
and to all those who yearn for a seat at the bar.**

**CHAPTER ONE**

**We came in low, a hundred feet over the desert under the cover of night.**

VOICE (OC)  
Staff Sergeant Eric Maddox?

ERIC  
(Instinctively)  
Sir...?

Eric snaps out of his trance, and looks up at -

**THE GRAY MAN**

- the man from the terminal pub back at Heathrow. The grizzled crewcut, the deep drawling voice, the tumbleweed charm.

He's standing in the aisle. Under his arm is a NEWS-PAPER. In his hands is a thick and weighty CREAM-COLORED DOSSIER. He places it on the center seat beside Eric.

Its cover bears the four-bayonet EMBLEM of the **JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND**...a SERVICE NUMBER...and the name: **MADDOX, ERIC**

GRAY MAN  
Good read.

And the Gray Man settles into the aisle seat.

ERIC  
I don't...understand...

GRAY MAN  
I've only got one question. That story you told Radman's son. About...lookin' for your mother, and the house burnin' down...

Eric looks at the dossier, then back.

ERIC  
Kelly? Did Kelly tell you that?

GRAY MAN  
(Smile)  
Maybe. Was it true?

Eric thinks for a moment...chuckles...

ERIC  
No. No, sir.

CUT TO:

**EXT. ENID STREET - DAY**

Young Eric walks up the tree-lined street as before - comparing addresses with the paper in his hand. He looks up at -

**A MODEST HOUSE**

It's old, hasn't been painted in a couple of decades, but it's there. On the front porch, an **OLD WOMAN** is smoking a cigarette.

Young Eric moves up the walkway and stands in front of the porch. She looks at him, suspicious.

OLD WOMAN  
Help you?

ERIC  
Yes, hello, I'm uh...looking for someone. Are you Thelma Webster?

OLD WOMAN  
Who wants to know?

ERIC  
I'm from Enid. I was born here and I was adopted and I think you have a daughter. If she had a child and gave it up for adoption...uh... well, I think that's me.

The Old Woman doesn't move. Her cigarette ash is growing long...

OLD WOMAN  
No. No, you look too old.

ERIC

Does May 10th, 1972 ring a bell?

The faintest trace of a smile flickers across the Old Woman's face.

OLD WOMAN

Maybe you oughta come inside.

She stands and goes to the door. Eric follows.

**INT. THELMA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER**

Eric sits at Thelma's kitchen table, and thumbs through a PHOTO ALBUM. We can't see the pictures as Thelma stands over his shoulder as he turns pages.

OLD WOMAN

That's her, graduatin', after she went back and got her degree.

She points to a picture.

OLD WOMAN (CONT'D)

She lives in Austin now, with her husband. Would you like to try to call her?

Young Eric hadn't thought of that.

ERIC

Uh...

OLD WOMAN

I've got her number right here.  
'Course she might be at work now.  
Let me just see here...

She walks to the phone, opens a small phone book, and dials.

ERIC

Uhm...you don't have to...

He can hear the RINGING coming faintly through the receiver in the Old Woman's hand.

THELMA

Hmm. Not home.

ERIC

It's...OK.



Thelma hangs up. Eric watches the handpiece hit the cradle and *CLICK* home.

THELMA

I can give you her number if you want, so you can try her later.

ERIC

No. Thanks. But...

He holds up a strip of

**B&W PHOTOBOOTH PICS OF A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN**

ERIC (CONT'D)

I'd like to take this, if I could.

**EXT. THELMA'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER**

Eric walks out. Thelma follows close behind.

ERIC

Thank you so much, Thelma. For everything.

THELMA

Are you sure you don't want her number? I'm sure Debbie would love to hear from you...

ERIC

No. No, thank you, Thelma.  
(Pause)  
Goodbye.

And Young Eric turns and heads down the stairs. Then he stops, turns and smiles at Thelma.

ERIC (CONT'D)

I've got a great family. My adopted parents...my mom and dad ...I love them...more than anything.

Thelma smiles.

THELMA

I'll let her know.

Eric nods...and walks away, leaving Thelma looking after him. And we are

BACK TO:

**INT. EMIRATES AIRBUS - ECONOMY - DAY**

The Gray Man nods.

GRAY MAN

That's all I wanted to know.

(Pause)

Y'know...when they pulled Saddam  
outta that hole...they found a  
coupla things. A nine millimeter  
pistol...and a box of Cubans.

He reaches into his jacket pocket and pulls out A CIGAR.

GRAY MAN (CONT'D)

Kelly...and the boys...well, they  
saved one for you.

Suddenly, a FOREIGN-ACCENTED **FLIGHT ATTENDANT'S VOICE:**

FLIGHT ATTENDANT (INTERCOM)

*Ladies and gentlemen, as we make  
our final descent to Kabul  
International Airport, please be  
sure that your seatbelt is fastened  
and your tray tables are secure and  
bring your seats to an upright  
position...*

GRAY MAN

I'd buy you a drink, but...

FLIGHT ATTENDANT (INTERCOM)

*...welcome to Afghanistan.*

GRAY MAN

See you on the ground.

And he gets up and heads toward first class. Eric  
watches the Gray Man go, then looks to the seat where  
his abandoned NEWSPAPER HEADLINE READS:

**DECEMBER - DEADLIEST MONTH OF 2006  
FOR U.S. TROOPS IN IRAQ:  
TOLL REACHES 109, TOTAL 2,998**

Eric takes a deep breath and lets it go. He turns back  
to his computer. The BLINKING CURSOR. He clicks on  
SAVE...then closes the lid.

**BLACKOUT**

THE END