

The Hurt Locker

By

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Shooting Draft

BLACK SCREEN

Arabic man YELLING over a bull-horn.

TITLE:

**The rush of battle is often a potent and lethal addiction,
for war is a drug. - Chris Hedges**

The loud BUZZ of an electric engine and the CRUNCHING of wheels traversing rough terrain. Then SIRENS, HORNS, SHOUTS.

As the din intensifies, the quote recedes.

FADE IN:

EXT BAGHDAD STREET DAWN - ROBOT CAM POV

A grainy, low-resolution view of a dusty dirt road. We're low, just inches off the sun-washed ground, and moving fast.

ZOOMING down a street littered with the refuse of war: spent munitions, rubber bits, animal waste -- all of which, from this odd, jarring perspective, looks gigantic, monstrous.

We approach a crumpled COKE CAN, the white 'C' growing enormous on the screen, filling the screen like a skyscraper, SMASH into the can and barrel ahead.

A RAG flutters, blocks our view, then flies away as we pop over a bump, catching air and a flash of the horizon line, BRIGHT SUN, then landing hard and continue zipping down the dusty road.

CUT TO:

EXT BAGHDAD STREET - DAWN

A rushed, disorderly evacuation. Iraqi POLICE and SOLDIERS herd civilians away from some unseen danger.

INTERCUT:

A remote controlled TALON ROBOT (about a quarter million dollars of military-grade bomb squad electronics, aka 'the bot') whose SMALL VIDEO CAMERA we have been watching, drives down the side of the road on a pair of treads.

Across the street, an Iraqi BUTCHER wearing a bloody white smock resists being moved from his outdoor stand, which consists of little more than goat carcasses hung on metal hooks.

From all sides, American military arrive in armored TROOP CARRIERS, disgorging teams of U.S. ARMY INFANTRY SOLDIERS who shout "secure the area", 'watch your six,' 'stop traffic', etc.

TITLE:

BAGHDAD, 2004

This is all taking place in a densely populated, very noisy section of Baghdad; the SOUND of far off GUNSHOTS and CALL to prayer magnify the turmoil of a metropolis in the midst of an occupation/insurgency/civil war.

EXT STREET DAWN

The BUTCHER, furious with the way he's being pushed around, is forcibly removed from his shop by several IRAQI SOLDIERS.

EXT STREET DAWN - ROBOT CAM POV

Via the low-angle video camera we glimpse a herd of GOATS scampering through frame. BURKA-clad WOMEN and OLD MEN in traditional garb flee the scene.

Several more U.S. INFANTRY SOLDIERS move a few straggler PEDESTRIANS away from a trash pile and the TALON ROBOT.

View momentarily blocked by STATIC INTERFERENCE.

But when the screen clears, we close in on one particular TRASH PILE topped with a white plastic garbage bag.

Whatever it is that has everyone so afraid lies inside this bag.

EXT MIDDLE EASTERN STREET - DAWN

The TALON ROBOT pokes around the bag and the trash pile with its mechanical VISE GRIP.

UPRANGE

Next to a parked Humvee, THREE EOD (Explosive Ordnance Disposal, aka Bomb Squad) SOLDIERS crouch over a laptop computer screen showing an image of the TRASH PILE.

Working the joystick on the laptop is SERGEANT J. T. SANBORN, a type-A jock, high school football star, cocky, outgoing, ready with a smile and quick with a joke... or, if you prefer, a jab to the chin. Think Muhammad Ali with a rifle.

SANBORN

I think we have touchdown.

DOWNRANGE

The robot grinds the dirt, edging closer to the bag.

UPRANGE

Standing near Sanborn, SERGEANT FIRST CLASS MATT THOMPSON wipes the sweat on his brow. Although he's the team leader, every inch the professional soldier working a routine mission, Thompson's normally rock-solid nerves are wavering in the punishing desert heat.

While nibbling on a SNICKERS candy bar, Thompson glances over his shoulder noting potential threats: a WOMAN in a VEIL and then TWO MALES in a window - all of whom are watching him with inscrutable expressions.

Thompson turns back to Sanborn and the task at hand:

LAPTOP SCREEN

We glide across the pile. Flies buzzing.

Puffs of dust and fluttering plastic.

Advancing slowly, inch by inch, to the edge for our first glimpse inside the bag:

A RUSTY ARTILLERY SHELL WITH A WIRE PROTRUDING FROM THE NOSE CONE.

UPRANGE

SANBORN

Hello mamma.

Zoom in on the nose cone of the shell.

THOMPSON

(re: the robot's camera)

Push it in.

SANBORN

I can't.

THOMPSON

What do you mean - you can't?
Pretend it's your dick.

SANBORN

How about I pretend it's *your* dick?

THOMPSON

You'll never get it in if you do
that. Let me try.

A THIRD SOLDIER, clearly enjoying the two men he's with, leans in for a better look. This is SPECIALIST OWEN ELDRIDGE, the youngest of the group, impressionable, vulnerable, yet quite capable of showing surprising backbone.

SANBORN

Give me a second.

THOMPSON

No. Time is up. My dick.

They change places. Thompson now on the controls. They can see protruding from the rusty shell the tell-tale wire of an Improvised Explosive Device (IED).

THOMPSON

See that?

SANBORN

Nice one-five-five.

THOMPSON

Yeah. That's going to do some
damage.

SANBORN
(calling over his
shoulder)
Hey Eldridge, we're going to need a
charge.

Eldridge is already on it, approaching with the four blocks of C4 plastic explosive. He's done this enough to know what they need.

ELDRIDGE
Got it. Figured four blocks, gives
you about twenty pounds of bang
total. Are we going to be far
enough away?

Thompson takes stock of the situation. We see the IED in the distance -- far, far away.

THOMPSON
The blast is going to roll out
there (pointing) the shell will
probably kick out there (pointing),
and most of the shrapnel is going
to rain up in a beautiful umbrella
pattern. Some smaller pieces and
shell fragments will come out this
way but we'll be okay if we are
behind the Humvee. Bring the bot
back and we will load up.

SANBORN
No problem. Bot is moving.

CUT TO:

DOWNRANGE NEAR PLASTIC BAG

The bot dutifully makes its return voyage back to the men.

ACROSS THE STREET

A crowd of angry pedestrians is being held in place by a few Iraqi soldiers, but when one soldier turns aside to help an old man, the cantankerous BUTCHER slips past and dashes back to his store.

UPRANGE

Eldridge clips a make-shift wagon to a hitch on the rear of the robot. Inside the wagon, he's placed an array of C4. Sanborn asks "ready?," Eldridge replies "good to go."

SANBORN

Alright. Wagon is set. Bot moves.

The bot returns downrange, towing the cart and a coil of unspooling detonation wire, which Eldridge is holding.

When...

the HERD of GOATS from earlier circles back and momentarily impedes the robot.

SANBORN

(laughing)

Goats! Blow those bastards up.

DOWNRANGE

The robot churns down the now empty street.

UPRANGE

Thompson scans his surroundings, finds a third IRAQI MALE watching him from a nearby balcony.

A flicker of concern flashes across his face.

DOWNRANGE

The robot hits a bump and a rock jams in the wagon's wheel and breaks the lock nut, popping the wheel and causing the whole rig to grind to a halt.

UPRANGE

Everyone cringes.

DOWNRANGE

The wagon is stranded.

UPRANGE

Sanborn wiggles the stick. It's not happening.

SANBORN
Wagon is having a bad day.

THOMPSON
(to Eldridge)
Did you build that?

ELDRIDGE
No, the U.S. Army did.

THOMPSON
It looks like I'm going down there.

SANBORN
What, you don't like waiting around
this beautiful neighborhood?

Thompson ruefully tosses his helmet into the truck.

THOMPSON
I love it.

CUT TO:

EXT HUMVEE MOMENTS LATER

Sanborn unpacks "THE SUIT." A state-of-the-art contraption that looks like an astronaut suit and helmet crossed with the Michelin Man. Because of its weight and complexity it takes two men to put it on - or one Sanborn.

Sanborn kneels down and guides Thompson's feet into the suit's black boots, then lashes up a series of Velcro straps to secure the armor, like a squire working on a knight.

Thompson twists to get his chest protector on. Eyes tight, brow furrowed, squints into the far distance. *That's going to be a mean motherfucker.*

THOMPSON
Okay. I'm going to make my
approach. This area looks okay. No
power-lines. Clean line of sight.
If it looks alright when I get down
there, I'm going to plug it in and
we'll just BIP it.

(MORE)

THOMPSON (cont'd)
I want them to know if they're
going to leave a bomb on the side
of the road, we're going to blow up
their little fucking road.

SANBORN
Ready?

THOMPSON
I'm craving a hamburger, is that
strange?

SANBORN
Not for you.

Sanborn seals Thompson's helmet with a glass plate while
Eldridge attaches a breathing hose.

THOMPSON
(headset from inside the
helmet)
This is Blaster One.

SANBORN
(into walkie)
Roger that. Blaster One. You're
good to go.

Thompson begins the lonely walk toward the bomb.

Sanborn checks on the TWO IRAQI males in the balcony by
glassing them with his M4 scope.

SCOPE POV

The men are smiling. Low threat.

DOWNRANGE

Constrained by the eighty-pound suit, sweat in his eyes,
Thompson LUMBERS down the road, emitting dust clouds with
every step.

THOMPSON
(headset)
Nice and hot in here...
One fifty.

UPRANGE - HUMVEE

SANBORN
 (into walkie)
 Roger that. A hundred and fifty
 meters.

An excited, blustering YOUNG IRAQI MALE, having just exited a nearby building, approaches Sanborn with his hand extended in greeting:

YOUNG MAN
 Hi, where are you from?

Sanborn shakes his head, raises his rifle.

The young man maintains a nervous grin.

SANBORN
 No.

YOUNG MAN
 California? New York?

Now they are standing close to each other.

SANBORN
 Get out of here man.

YOUNG MAN
 Where?

SANBORN
 This ain't a fucking meet-and-greet. GET OUT OF HERE!

Sanborn shoves the young man in the chest hard enough to nearly knock him over.

SANBORN
 GO!

The man skulks away, offended and confused.

Eldridge -- who is about thirty feet away and inspecting a burned out car -- notices this interaction out of the corner of his eye and keys his walkie to Sanborn:

ELDRIDGE
 Making friends again, Sanborn?

SANBORN
(smiling)
All day long.

DOWNRANGE

Thompson walks on.

The desert sun glints off a nearby car and momentarily bleaches his mask bright white.

A YOUNG GIRL with an INFANT BABY in her arms appears in a far off doorway, then withdraws out of sight.

UPRANGE

Eldridge and Sanborn are at the ready, scanning the area and watching Thompson.

DOWNRANGE

Thompson: careful footfalls on sand.

THOMPSON
(headset)
Twenty five.

UPRANGE

Sanborn wearily keys the walkie.

SANBORN
(walkie)
Roger, twenty five. You are now in the kill zone.

THOMPSON
(headset)
Thanks for reminding me.

Eldridge nods. Everything progressing nice and easy.

DOWNRANGE NEAR PLASTIC BAG

Thompson stands over the blasting caps, picks them up and heads for the bomb.

THOMPSON
 (headset)
 Dets look okay.

SANBORN
 (over walkie)
 Roger that.

Thompson carefully lays the C4 on top of the IED.

THOMPSON
 (headset)
 Laying on the charge.
 (beat))
 Good to go, coming back.

Thompson gets up, looks around at the empty road under heavy guard.

The war has stopped for him and he knows it.

Thompson begins to walk back uprange, looking carefully at the ground around him.

THOMPSON
 (headset)
 Five meters.

SANBORN
 (walkie)
 Five meters, roger that.

UPRANGE

Sanborn and Eldridge lower their rifles.

DOWNRANGE NEAR PLASTIC BAG

Thompson carefully nudges a Coke can out of the way of his boots.

UPRANGE

Eldridge, killing time, turns to Sanborn as they both watch Thompson.

ELDRIDGE
 Hey Sanborn, you know what this place needs?

Looking around the war torn dirt street, the mud colored buildings, and endless expanse of dust and sand. Nothing but brown on brown.

SANBORN
I'm listening.

ELDRIDGE
Grass.

SANBORN
We gonna start our grass business?

ELDRIDGE
That's right. I'm going to sell the grass -- and you're going to cut it. It's going to be called 'Sanborn and Sons.' We'll be rich.

SANBORN
I like that. Crab grass, St. Augustine, I'm a scholar on this shit. How about this? You sell it -- I fertilize it.

THOMPSON O.S.
(headset)
Twenty five.

SANBORN
(walkie)
Twenty five. Roger that.

Eldridge squints into the sun.

Out of the corner of his eye he sees movement in the butcher shop and raises his carbine.

SCOPE POV

The BUTCHER is holding a cell phone.

UPRANGE

ELDRIDGE
Hey Sanborn -- Butcher shop - two o'clock! Dude has a phone!

SANBORN
Make him put it down --

Eldridge runs toward the butcher shop.

Sanborn raises his scope but Eldridge is blocking his line of fire and he can't get a shot.

ELDRIDGE
 (shouting, waving his gun)
 Hey - put that down--

The BUTCHER nods and puts up his hand as if to say, 'give me a minute.'

DOWNRANGE

Thompson senses trouble:

THOMPSON
 (headset)
 Why is Eldridge running? Come on
 guys, talk to me.

UPRANGE

Eldridge runs hard

ELDRIDGE
Drop the phone!

Sanborn bolts sideways, trying to maneuver around Eldridge to a clear sight line--

SANBORN	ELDRIDGE
(shouting to Eldridge)	<i>PUT DOWN THE CELL PHONE!</i>
<i>Burn him! Eldridge burn him!</i>	

Eldridge, legs pumping, flicks the rifle safety--

BUTCHER SHOP

The Butcher smiles. Gives Eldridge the thumbs up sign.

His other hand dials the phone.

UPRANGE

Sanborn sprinting but still can't find a shooting angle.

Eldridge is on fire:

ELDRIDGE
 DROP THE PHONE!!!

SANBORN
 GET OUT OF THE WAY -- BURN
 HIM!!

ELDRIDGE
 I CAN'T GET A SHOT!!!!

DOWNRANGE

Now Thompson starts to run. Terror in his eyes.

ELDRIDGE SCOPE POV

Prevented from locking aim on the butcher by two telephone
 polls.

BUTCHER SHOP

The Butcher smiles back at Eldridge

ECU: the Butcher's eyes.

ECU: his thumb on send button of the cell phone.

DOWNRANGE

Thompson running full out now when

BOOM!! --

-- A giant billowing fireball bursts from the bomb

-- flattening Thompson

-- blood splatters the inside of his helmet. Then:

-- a secondary explosion erupts

-- spewing dust and a wave of particulate matter

-- enveloping Eldridge and Sanborn *in a coarse cloud of
 debris.*

-- we stay on the blast's aftermath as the last dust *roils*
 out in slow motion and

-- floats silently over Thompson's slain body

CUT TO:

INT CAMP VICTORY WAREHOUSE MORTUARY AFFAIRS - DAY

An officious young MORTUARY AFFAIRS SOLDIER opens the wooden lid of a very white large box.

Inside, wrapped in plastic, are the remains of a soldier's life: a pair of boots, a toothbrush, a comb, an American flag.

Sanborn stares. Struggling to find meaning in the objects.

Now we see that he's standing in a large warehouse, the mortuary affairs office, which is filled with rows and rows of many other identical white boxes.

MORTUARY SOLDIER

Anywhere is good.

Sanborn gently places Thompson's dog tags in the box.

SOLDIER

Is that everything?

SANBORN

Yeah.

The white box closes. Latches secure the lid.

And that's that. The soldier walks away.

Sanborn grips the box. He does not let go.

EXT CAMP VICTORY DAY

Sanborn trudges across a camp clearing which is bounded by the barracks and rows of identical aluminum trailers.

INT TRAILER

Inside a darkened standard-issue military trailer Ministry is BLASTING, rattling the walls.

Sanborn knocks on the door, hears "yeah, it's open, come in," and steps inside.

He's greeted by a MAN holding a roofing hammer in one hand and a cigarette in the other. This is SERGEANT FIRST CLASS WILLIAM JAMES, his new boss.

Sanborn extends his hand and they shake.

SANBORN

Sergeant James? J.T. Sanborn, my man.

JAMES

Call me Will.

SANBORN

Welcome to Bravo Company and welcome to Camp Victory.

JAMES

Camp Victory? I thought this was Camp Liberty.

SANBORN

No, they changed the name about a week ago. 'Victory' sounds better.

An awkward silence ensues allowing us to get a better look at James. Though a former U.S. Army Ranger in his early thirties, fit and good-looking, one of the lucky ones, he possesses an unusual demeanor. In a world of outgoing young men, James seems markedly self-absorbed. Sanborn notices this trait instantly and is puzzled by it. The truth is that after so many years down range, racking up kills and disarming bombs, James has lost some of the ability and most of the need to connect to other people.

Right now, however, James is doing his best to act like a regular nice guy.

JAMES

Alright. Well I guess I'm in the right place.

(Beat)

As long as you are here, could you give me a hand with this?

James jerks his head to a window covered with a board of plywood. He walks over to it and starts removing the wood, motioning for Sanborn to grab one end of the board.

SANBORN

Maybe you shouldn't take this down.
We get a lot of mortars at night
here. The plywood helps stop the
lateral frag from coming through.
That's why it's up there.

JAMES

It's not going to stop a mortar
from coming through the roof -- you
know. Besides, I like the
sunshine...(awkwardly) I'm sorry
about Thompson, I heard he was a
good tech.

SANBORN

Yeah, he was, and he was a great
team leader too.

JAMES

I'm not trying to fill his shoes.
I'm just going to do my best.

SANBORN

Appreciate it.

Although Sanborn is almost warming to his new Sergeant, James has reached his intimacy limit.

He cranks the music, grabs his still-burning cigarette, and flops down on the bed -- all in one surprisingly fluid motion.

Then announces cheerfully:

JAMES

Home sweet home.

CUT TO:

INT HUMVEE CAMP VICTORY

Sanborn is behind the wheel. James is in the passenger seat. Eldridge is in the back seat.

Looking through the Humvee window, we drive past a long line of M1 Abrams battle tanks. They're neatly parked and gathering sand on all horizontal surfaces.

ELDRIDGE

Aren't you glad the Army has all these tanks parked here, just in case the Russians come and we have to have a big tank battle.

SANBORN

I'd rather be on the side with the tanks, just in case.

ELDRIDGE

But they don't do anything here. Anybody comes alongside the Humvee, we're dead. Anybody even looks at you funny, we're dead. Pretty much, the bottom line, is if you're in Iraq you're dead. How's a fucking tank supposed to stop that?

SANBORN

Shut the fuck up, Owen.

ELDRIDGE

(smiling)

Sorry. Just trying to scare the new guy.

James shrugs this off:

JAMES

I saw a little bit in Afghanistan.

EXT CAMP VICTORY/BAGHDAD OUTSKIRTS MORNING

The Humvee moves out of the base and into the outskirts of the teeming city.

TITLE:

DAYS LEFT IN BRAVO COMPANY'S ROTATION: 38

INT HUMVEE

SANBORN

Hey Owen -- watch the fucking road.

The Humvee edges close to a cluster of cars. Eldridge moves up to the gunner's seat on top of the Humvee.

EXT HUMVEE

Eldridge has a collection of half-empty water bottles that he keeps in the gunner's nest.

He throws a water bottle at the car in front of him.

It smashes into the car's rear windshield.

A passenger inside spins, enraged. He sees the Humvee. Settles for a one finger salute for the American.

ELDRIDGE
Imshee -- Imshee !

EXT BAGHDAD STREET EARLY MORNING

The Humvee grinds to a stop in a ghetto overflowing with trash, with more mud dwellings that look as beaten down as the people.

James is first out, lighting another cigarette.

Sanborn comes up behind him. Eldridge climbs out of the turret.

They are now completely out in the open, feet on Iraqi ground, where anything can happen.

Eldridge begins turning suspicious bits of plastic over with the tip of his boots.

JAMES
(looking around at the
empty street)
Where are the guys who called this
in?

James walks on down the street.

Sanborn and Eldridge exchange a glance 'what the hell,' and follow him.

Meanwhile, in the background, Iraqi civilians go about their daily life.

SANBORN
(into walkie)
Victory Main, Victory Main, this is
Blaster Mike. Interrogative, do you
have an updated position?

DISPATCH O.S.
(over walkie)
This is Victory Main. Negative.
Figures to follow. Grid 3453.

SANBORN
(into walkie)
Well, that's exactly where I am and
I don't see anybody in fatigues.

DISPATCH O.S.
Give me a second to confirm. That
visual is 3453.

James, Sanborn and Eldridge continue their slow walk down the street.

Around a corner, an empty Humvee comes into view.

JAMES
We got a Humvee.

On the other side of the street, Sanborn rounds the corner, approaching the Humvee. He shouts in case someone is inside.

SANBORN
Friendly!

But there is nobody to hear him. The truck is empty.

Eldridge looks inside the vehicle, checking for blood.

James sees a tiny American flag being waved in the window of a nearby building, and heads over to it.

ELDRIDGE
(scared)
They abandoned their vehicle.

SANBORN
(scared too)
We got an empty Humvee over here!

JAMES
Got it!

EXT/INT BAGHDAD BUILDING DAY

James peers into a garden where a half dozen young SOLDIERS are resting and trying not to look afraid, and one SERGEANT CARTER is trying not to look embarrassed.

JAMES

Morning boys. Don't tell me the bomb is in there with you.

SERGEANT CARTER

Let's step outside, I'll show you what's going on.

He moves into the open and points down the block.

SERGEANT CARTER

Down the block, about 20 meters this side of the mosque, East side of the street, one of our informants saw wires in a rubble pile - possible IED. I trust this guy, I know him. You want to talk to him?

JAMES

I'll handle it. Keep your guys back.

(to Eldridge)

Specialist! Bring up the Humvee!

Sanborn is already unloading the robot.

SANBORN

What's going on?

JAMES

Break out the suit.

SANBORN

What about the bot?

JAMES

I'll take care of it.

SANBORN

What? Don't you want us to get the bot down there to see what it looks like?

JAMES

I'll handle it.

SANBORN
It's kind of tight down here,
James.

James grins. Sanborn shoots Eldridge a look. *Is he a new guy or what?*

EXT HUMVEE MOMENTS LATER

Sanborn and Eldridge kneel before James, buckling on the suit.

SANBORN
You know you don't have to go down there, man, we already have the bot half way out.

JAMES
It will be alright.

Sanborn puts the helmet on.

SANBORN
First day, I was thinking you might want to take it easy.

Now enclosed in the suit, James is ready to go.

JAMES
Let's rock 'n roll.

James heads downrange, a jaunty bounce to his step.

In stark contrast to Thompson's cautious, lumbering gait, he seems eager, almost happy, to approach the bomb.

The guys watch him go.

ELDRIDGE
He's a rowdy boy.

SANBORN
He's reckless.

EXT BAGHDAD STREET

Without warning, James tosses a round metal canister, a smoke grenade, into the middle of the street.

ECU: canister jets explode, propelling a billowing cloud of gray smoke.

EXT HUMVEE

Sanborn looks on in confusion as the dense smoke fills the street, obscuring his view of James.

SANBORN
(walkie)
Blaster One, what's going on?

No answer. James disappears into the smoke.

SANBORN
(walkie)
Blaster One, what are you doing?

No answer.

SANBORN
(walkie)
Blaster one, this is Blaster Mike.
What's with the smoke on the side
of the road?

No answer.

SANBORN O.S.
(walkie)
Hey James, can you hear me? What's
with the smoke?

JAMES O.S.
(headset)
Creating a diversion.

Sanborn can no longer see James through the smoke.

He climbs up on top of the Humvee to get a better look. But he gets only a partial view.

SANBORN
(walkie)
From what? Is there a threat?
(to Eldridge)
Get up on that wall. Tell me what
you see, Specialist!

Eldridge leaps onto a nearby narrow stone wall, feet precariously balanced.

ELDRIDGE
I got him. He's walking downrange.

SANBORN
(walkie)
James, the smoke is killing my
visibility. Where are you in
relation to the IED? Are you within
100 meters, yet?

EXT BAGHDAD STREET/INTERSECTION

JAMES
(headset)
Hell, I don't know. I'll let you
know when I'm standing over it.

We see the world from James' point of view: the city takes on an intense, dreamy hue as if *somehow* we're in some sort of fugue state.

James walks on and the world returns to normal as he nears an intersection guarded on either side by a HUMVEE and several SOLDIERS, when...

Suddenly a red-and-white TAXI swerves past the SOLDIERS on the left side of the intersection.

The soldiers take cover and shout contradictory commands - "Stop the car" "Get Down Don't Move! Back up! Out of the vehicle!"

The TAXI BRAKES in front of James.

EXT HUMVEE

Sanborn and Eldridge can hear the shouting but the lingering smoke still obscures their sight.

ELDRIDGE
(shouting to Sanborn)
Car! Car! A car stopped in front of
him.

EXT BAGHDAD STREET/INTERSECTION

James' headset barks to life:

SANBORN O.S.
(headset)
James, come back *now*.

James pulls a pistol from his holster, aims it at the car...

SOLDIER

SOLDIER
(over walkie)
EOD has a nine on the Haji in the
car. Should I send back up?

JAMES

JAMES
(headset)
I got it.

DRIVER'S FACE

Impossible to discern whether he's simply an annoyed taxi driver -- or a Jihadi on a suicide mission.

EXT HUMVEE

SANBORN
(into walkie to soldier)
Negative, negative. You're too
close, the blast will come up the
street. Stand down. Stay behind the
corner. EOD has the situation under
control.

EXT BAGHDAD STREET/INTERSECTION

James aims at the windshield. The driver is impassive.

Soldiers shout, "get out of the car!"

James SHOTS two rounds into the dirt near the car's front
tire.

The Driver remains still. Staring back.

James gestures with the pistol.

JAMES
It's that way...Back.

James FIRES --

-- smashing the windshield into a million shards of glass.

But the car doesn't budge.

Now James jams his gun into the driver's forehead.

SOLDIER

SOLDIER
(into walkie)
Three, four rounds fired. The nine
is now pressing into the Haji's
forehead.

JAMES

The driver slowly shifts into reverse and eases the taxi back to the soldiers.

Soldiers rush the car, yank the driver out and pound him roughly to the ground.

The taxi driver is zip tied and dragged away.

JAMES
(into mic)
If he wasn't an insurgent he sure
as hell is now.

DOWNRANGE

James resumes his walk, noting possible threats -- a MAN in a window down the road, TWO KIDS in another window.

EXT BAGHDAD STREET/RUBBLE PILE IED

One of a million in this city. James draws near. Two wires protrude from the mess.

Moment of decision.

Moving quickly, James removes rubble and trash to expose the wires and the artillery shells.

He kneels down into the rubble pile. Touches the bomb.

Then with great care, he removes the blasting cap from the bomb, making sure that it doesn't make contact with the metal edges of the artillery shell.

He cuts one wire leading to the blasting cap.

Then he flips the artillery round over and cuts the other wire.

JAMES
(headset)
We're done. Good to go.

UPRANGE

SANBORN
Come down, Specialist.

ELDRIDGE
Roger.

Eldridge jumps from the wall.

DOWNRANGE

James stands and uses his big boot to clear more rubble, revealing: *Another wire snaking out of the ground.*

JAMES
(headset)
Got a wire. Hang on..

James traces this wire, pulling it out of the ground, inch by inch, like extracting a buried root.

The more he pulls, the more wire gets revealed.

It doesn't seem to end.

BALCONY

Overhead, a YOUNG FACTORY WORKER on a high balcony studies James as he unearths the wire.

EXT BAGHDAD STREET/RUBBLE PILE IED

James, still pulling the wire, comes to a length that ends in a bundle of wires that spider out in several different directions.

JAMES
(headset)
Secondary!

He pulls on this bundle and unearths a second IED.

Then he finds a third IED.

Then a fourth bomb.

Then realizes he's surrounded by a ring of IEDs.

This is the daisy-chain. One of the deadliest forms of IEDs.

UPRANGE

SANBORN
(to Eldridge)
Off the wall, Owen!
(to soldiers)
Get behind something. Find cover.

Soldiers scrambling to find concrete to hide behind.

BALCONY

The factory worker leaves his position and heads down the stairs.

We follow him walking down the stairs, intercut with:

James working on the bombs individually.

ECU: James' helmet - glass clouding over from condensation -- losing visibility.

ECU: blasting cap

ECU: feet on stairs

ECU: knife tip separates the wire.

INT BUILDING STAIRCASE

The factory worker is now on a landing, still heading down.

EXT STREET

James notices the worker coming down and quickens his pace.

INT BUILDING STAIRCASE

The worker matches James' accelerated movements, and is now rushing down the stairs.

EXT STREET

The worker reaches the bottom of the stairs, opens the building's front door, and steps into the street.

He looks at James.

James shows him the last blasting cap, indicating that the bombs have all been rendered safe.

The worker reveals nothing.

He turns and steps down an alley. As he goes he drops a 9-volt battery.

We find a WIRE TERMINAL attached to the alley wall, where on a different day the battery would have been connected to initiate the bomb.

CUT TO:

EXT HUMVEE MOMENTS LATER

James strides upränge. Eldridge isn't sure what to make of James. Sanborn is, but not ready to show it.

Sanborn unstraps the Velcro on James' bomb suit, yanking roughly. This gets James attention.

JAMES

That wasn't too bad, for our first time working together. What do you think?

SANBORN

I think working together is I talk to you. And you talk to me.

JAMES

Are we going on a date, Sanborn?

Sanborn stands face-to-face with James.

SANBORN

No, we're going on a mission. And it's my job to keep you safe, so we can keep going on missions.

JAMES

Hey, this is combat.

James pats Sanborn on the shoulder, moves to the Humvee for a Marlborough.

Sanborn and Eldridge confer out of ear-shot.

ELDRIDGE

It's just thirty nine days.

SANBORN

Thirty eight. Assuming we survive today.

PRELAP:

Electronic GRUNTS of a first-person shooter video game.

INT HEAD SHED SIDE OFFICE

In a small recreation area, Eldridge, on a couch, plays Gears of War on a flat screen TV.

LT. COL. JOHN CAMBRIDGE, a combat stress therapist, enters.

ELDRIDGE

Hey, it's mister "Be all that you can be." What's up, doc?

CAMBRIDGE

Not much. How are you?

ELDRIDGE

I'm good. I had a question about that song, though. What if all I can be is dead on the side of an Iraqi road? I think it's logical.

(MORE)

ELDRIDGE (cont'd)

This is a war. People die all the time. Why not me?

CAMBRIDGE

You got to stop obsessing. Change the record in your head. Think about other things. Right now, what are you thinking about?

ELDRIDGE

You want to know what I'm thinking about?

CAMBRIDGE

Yes.

Eldridge picks up his M4 rifle, which had been resting on the couch, and puts his finger on the trigger.

ELDRIDGE

This is what I'm thinking about.
Here's Thompson dead.
(Now he dry fires. CLICK.
He snaps the slide back.)
Here, he's alive.

Finger back on safe. He dry fires again.

ELDRIDGE

He's dead. He's alive.

EXT. CAMP VICTORY MESS TENT DAY

Midday in Iraq. The heat is oppressive, biblical.

James is walking around the base when he's stopped by a young Iraqi KID selling pirated DVDs.

The kid, whose name is BECKHAM, is a street savvy punk.

BECKHAM

Hey, wassup my nigger? You cool or not? You want to buy the cool shit? The tight shit? No? Fuck you!
(he targets James)
Hey nigger, buy some DVDs? New releases. Very good.

JAMES

How much?

BECKHAM

One for five, two for nine.

JAMES
 (having fun)
 Three for twelve.

BECKHAM
 Three for thirteen. And for you, no
 tax.

JAMES
 No tax? Alright.

BECKHAM
 You're a smart shit, you know.
 You're not like those stupid fuck
 face shits.

JAMES
 I'm a smart guy? You're a smart
 kid. Give me your best one.

BECKHAM
 Here you go. This is the best shit.

James pays. Offers a cigarette.

JAMES
 Keep the change. Want a cigarette?
 Are you kidding? You shouldn't
 smoke.

INT CAMP VICTORY SHOWER STALLS NEXT MORNING

Sanborn is shaving in a mirror, otherwise dressed for combat
 and ready to go.

James shuffles in wearing a T-shirt and boxer shorts, looking
 like he just woke up.

James starts to brush his teeth.

SANBORN
 I need to talk to you about
 something before we roll out again.

JAMES
 Shoot.

SANBORN
 Yesterday -- that was not cool.

JAMES
 I know. You'll get it.

Sanborn wipes his face, trying to stay calm, notices a tatoo on James' forearm.

SANBORN

You were a Ranger? I was in intelligence seven years before EOD. We ran combat missions in every shit hole on the planet.

(beat)

So I'm pretty sure I can figure out a redneck piece of trailer trash like you.

James grins.

JAMES

Looks like you're on the right track.

INT/EXT HUMVEE UNITED NATIONS TEMPORARY HEADQUARTERS MORNING

The men drive into a parking lot teeming with people on the run, hundreds of UN EMPLOYEES, mostly white, many dressed in business suits, flee the United Nations building.

Parked beside the building is a blue sedan.

TITLE OVER:

DAYS LEFT IN BRAVO COMPANY'S ROTATION: 37

The Humvee passes through a roadblock, stops, and James gets out to talk to an IRAQI SERGEANT.

Due to his current position in the parking lot, James can't see the blue sedan that everyone is running from.

IRAQI SERGEANT

It's behind the wall.

JAMES

Did you see any wires? Any smoke?

IRAQI SERGEANT

No. I didn't look.

JAMES

So how do you know it's a bomb?

IRAQI SERGEANT

The car has been parked there illegally and the suspension is sagging, so there's definitely something heavy in the trunk.

JAMES

Why don't you peek inside and tell me what you see?

IRAQI SERGEANT

You want me to go close to it? In Arabic: you crazy piece of shit!

CUT TO:

EXT UN BUILDING NEAR SEDAN MOMENTS LATER

James now dressed in the bomb suit walks beside the Humvee towards the blue sedan.

Workers continue to stream out of the building, hurrying faster down a flight of stairs when they see James in the bomb suit.

James comes to within twenty feet of the blue sedan. He stops.

BALCONY

On a third-floor balcony, unseen by the soldiers, a INSURGENT SNIPER takes aim.

SEDAN

-- a SHOT rings out

-- bullet strikes the car

-- it bursts into flames

-- a plume of flame rushes out from the gas tank, like a blowtorch

-- we see the flames through James' helmet.

EXT STREET NEAR UN BUILDING

"It's coming from over here", shout INFANTRY on the grounds outside the building as they FIRE M4s at the sniper's balcony.

Their bullets hit concrete, missing the sniper. A TEAM of SOLDIERS charges inside the building.

SEDAN

James backs away from the fire, toward Sanborn who is now running toward him with a fire extinguisher. Eldridge follows just behind Sanborn.

EXT UN BUILDING PARKING LOT

Sanborn passes James a fire-extinguisher to James.

ELDRIDGE

I got top cover!

JAMES

That's a negative, Specialist.
Eldridge stay with me. Sanborn, you
take top cover.

It takes Sanborn an instant to process the insult: top cover, in this case, is the junior man's job.

Shaking his head, Sanborn runs to the building.

Eldridge positions himself at the top of a staircase, hunkered down behind a low concrete wall.

JAMES

James sprays the extinguisher into the roaring fire. Flames lick his suit.

SANBORN

Sanborn pounds up a long flight of stairs.

JAMES

Gaining control of the fire.

SANBORN

Charges through the rooftop door and runs to the edge of the roof.

JAMES

The fire is nearly out, the car a smoking ruin, dusted with white fire retardant powder.

SANBORN

At the edge of the roof, looking down over James and Eldridge.

SANBORN
(walkie)
Blaster Mike in position.

INT SEDAN

James stops. He's done. The fire is out.

He looks up at Sanborn, nods.

Then he wipes the car's blackened window and looks inside for the bad news.

SANBORN

Scans his surrounding, noting potential threats in every direction.

EXT HUMVEE/STREET

A salty officer, COLONEL REED, whose uniform shimmers with military bling and Army skill patches, crosses the street to a spot where an Army medic is treating the now badly wounded SNIPER.

Other SOLDIERS in Reed's troop stand nearby.

REED
(to medic)
What have you got?

MEDIC

Through and through to the chest
but I got him stable.

COLONEL REED

(smiling)

He's not going to make it.

MEDIC

If we're leaving in fifteen minutes
we got a survivable wound, Sir.

COLONEL REED

(giving an order to
Soldier 1)

He's not going to make it.

The Colonel turns away. Soldiers crowd around the MEDIC,
blocking our view.

We HEAR TWO SHOTS, killing the sniper -

CUT TO:

ROOF

The shots echo on the roof. Sanborn spins. Looks down to
James.

EXT SEDAN

James tries to use a crow bar to pry open the trunk but that
fails.

So he kicks the trunk with the bar, smashing it, until
finally it squeaks open, revealing...

a trunk full of South African 155 rounds, linked with det
cord.

James is so taken aback that he drops the crowbar.

Then he pulls the bomb suit's quick release tab. The bomb
suit falls away.

Then he takes off his helmet.

EXT UN BUILDING ROOF

SANBORN
 (into walkie)
 What is he doing?

EXT UN BUILDING PARKING LOT

ELDRIDGE
 (into walkie)
 I don't know.

EXT SEDAN

ELDRIDGE
 What are you doing?

JAMES
 There's enough bang in here to send
 us all to Jesus. If I'm going to
 die, I want to die comfortable.

James passes the helmet to Eldridge.

JAMES
 I need my kit and my cans.

EXT UN BUILDING ROOF

Sanborn stares down at James and the car. *Great.*

SANBORN
 (into walkie)
 What's going on?

ELDRIDGE
 (into walkie)
 I'm getting his kit and cans.
 (beat)
 Cover me, please.

Eldridge runs to get the equipment, while James finishes removing his suit.

Sanborn watches all this.

Across the street, a young IRAQI MAN with a consumer VIDEO CAMERA is also watching. He goes unnoticed.

Eldridge returns with the kit, hands it to James. James approaches the car and shines his flashlight into the trunk.

Smoke. Wires. Bombs.

JAMES
(into mic)
Got a lot of det cord. Electrical.

He snips a wire.

JAMES
(into mic)
I'm going to look for the
initiator.

SANBORN

Nods, feeling vulnerable and exposed on the roof.

JAMES

James gets into the back seat, presses the upholstery.

JAMES
(into mic)
It's not in the back seat, I don't
think.

He rips the upholstery with his knife. Tearing out foam. But no wires.

JAMES
(into mic)
Nope. It's not in the back seat.

EXT UN BUILDING ROOF

Sanborn sees a YOUNG MAN on a balcony at 9 o'clock and waves to him while slightly raising his rifle.

The boy waves back.

SANBORN
(into walkie)
I've got eyes on a young man on a
balcony, at your 9 o'clock. Keep an
eye on him.

EXT UN BUILDING PARKING LOT

Below, Eldridge raises his hand "roger that" - understood - and nervously scans the surrounding buildings.

INT SEDAN

James in the front seat now rips apart the door, rips the weather stripping to just bare metal.

JAMES
(into mic)
It's not in the front seat... It's
not in the door...not in the
floors...not in the glovebox.

EXT UN BUILDING ROOF

SANBORN
(into walkie)
If you haven't found it yet it's
probably under the car somewhere.

INT SEDAN

JAMES
(headset)
None of the cord goes under. It's
up here -- somewhere.

EXT UN BUILDING ROOF

Sanborn keeps moving to avoid being a static target. Not liking this.

EXT UN BUILDING PARKING LOT

Eldridge now notices the MAN on a roof-top his 12 o'clock, holding the video camera.

ELDRIDGE
(into walkie)
You got eyes on a guy with a video
camera?

SANBORN O.S.
(over walkie)
No. Where?

ELDRIDGE
(into walkie)
He's right at my 12 o'clock. You
see him? He's pointing the thing
right at me!

JAMES

Jabbing his knife into the upholstery.

EXT UN BUILDING ROOF

SANBORN
(into walkie)
Negative. I don't see him.

EXT UN BUILDING PARKING LOT

Eldridge raises his rifle, motions for the man to leave.
The man ignores him, keeps filming.
Eldridge flips.

ELDRIDGE
Right at my 12 - look 12 o'clock!

EXT UN BUILDING ROOF

Sanborn jogs over to the side of the roof where he can now
see the MAN that Eldridge is referring to.

SANBORN
(into walkie)
Roger that, I got him. Yeah, he's
shady.

EXT UN BUILDING PARKING LOT

Eldridge lifting his gun.

ELDRIDGE
(into walkie)
So what's the play?

SANBORN O.S.
 (over walkie)
 Be smart. Make a good decision.

Off Eldridge's panic:

CUT TO:

JAMES

Ripping wires in the car, increasingly frustrated, sotto voice "more wires going nowhere."

SANBORN O.S.
 (over walkie)
 Hey James, how you doing?

JAMES
 (into mic)
 I'm wonderful. How are you?

EXT UN BUILDING ROOF

More and more, FACES are appearing in the windows around Sanborn and Eldridge.

SANBORN
 (into walkie)
 We've been here a while. We need to get out of here soon. We got a lot of eyes on us.

INT SEDAN

James ignores this. He's in a flow state, the athlete totally focused on the game.

He retraces what's left of the wire yet again. Thinking.

SANBORN O.S.
 (over walkie)
 We got to get out of here.

JAMES
 (headset)
 Roger that. I'm going to figure this out.

SANBORN O.S.
James, we need to get out of here.

James ignores him.

SANBORN O.S.
James do you copy?

James throws his headset walkie talkie out of the car.

It lands with a rattle on the ground.

EXT UN BUILDING PARKING LOT

ELDRIDGE
(into walkie)
I'm a sitting duck.

EXT UN BUILDING ROOF

Sanborn sees below a SOLDIER helping an older woman out of the building. The soldier looks up to Sanborn and gives him a thumbs up sign.

SANBORN
How's it looking down there?

SOLDIER
All clear.

SANBORN
(into walkie)
The building is evacuated. We can leave, let the engineers handle this mess.

EXT UN BUILDING PARKING LOT

ELDRIDGE
(into walkie)
Are we moving?

EXT UN BUILDING ROOF

SANBORN
(into walkie)
That's affirmative.

SEDAN

James pulls out the car radio.

Suddenly --

The car's rain wipers SCREECH and flap across the windshield.

JAMES
(sotto voce)
Interesting.

ROOF

SANBORN
What's going on with James. He's
not answering me.

PARKING LOT

ELDRIDGE
I think he removed his headset.

ROOF

SANBORN
(into walkie to Eldridge)
Will you tell him to his radio back
on.

EXT UN BUILDING PARKING LOT

ELDRIDGE
(shouting to James)
Hey James, Sergeant Sanborn is
asking if you'll please put your
headset back on.

James raises his hand and gives Eldridge the middle-finger
'fuck-you'.

ELDRIDGE (CONT'D)
(into walkie to Sanborn)
That's a negative. It's not
happening.

EXT UN BUILDING ROOF

Sanborn is pacing now, like a caged lion.

He notices three MEN at a minaret behind him and waves to them.

SANBORN

I got eyes on three guys at the minaret. Six o'clock.

INT SEDAN

James keeps working. He gets out, checks under the hood of the car. Traces the wires there.

EXT UN ROOF/PARKING LOT

SANBORN

What the hell is he doing?

ELDRIDGE

I don't know - it looks like he's checking the oil.

SEDAN

James pulls a wire. The windshield wipers stop their horrible screeching.

He goes back inside the car, checking under the steering wheel.

EXT UN BUILDING ROOF

The angry MAN in the minaret that didn't wave is now joined by two other MEN, and they begin to point to Sanborn, and then down to James and Eldridge.

They wave to the VIDEO CAMERA MAN. He waves back to them.

SANBORN

(into walkie)

They're communicating with your camera man.

EXT UN BUILDING PARKING LOT

ELDRIDGE
(into walkie)
This is bad.

SANBORN O.S.
(into walkie)
Get behind a Jersey barrier.

EXT UN BUILDING PARKING LOT

ELDRIDGE
(into walkie)
I can't keep eyes on James from
here.

Eldridge stands.

SANBORN O.S.
(over walkie)
Get down. Now.

Eldridge crouches back down. Not sure what's right or wrong anymore.

ELDRIDGE
(to James)
We can go!

INT SEDAN

James ignores Eldridge and continues to work. Finally, he finds what he's looking for under a tangle of wires: a black box.

Slowly prying off the lid, taking it apart.

Then he throws the black box. It goes flying out of the car.

James gets out. Shouts to Eldridge.

JAMES
We're done... Sanborn, let's get
out of here!

He picks up his headset, waves to Sanborn to come down off the roof.

EXT UN BUILDING ROOF

Sanborn bangs open the door to the staircase.

EXT UN BUILDING PARKING LOT MOMENTS LATER

James is flushed, red, sweat dripping as he approaches the Humvee, a big satisfied grin on his face.

Sanborn, furious, charges him.

INT UN BUILDING HUMVEE MOMENTS LATER

James gets inside the vehicle, lights up a cigarette.

JAMES

That was good.

Sanborn leans into the window.

SANBORN

Hey, James.

JAMES

Yeah?

Sanborn JABS him in the jaw, knocking the cigarette out.

SANBORN

Never turn your headset off again.

Sanborn stalks off and James explodes out of the car.

He crouches down, searching the floor of the Humvee. Sees his cigarette, cleans it off, then goes back to his smoke.

Once again, calm as can be, looking at Sanborn, considering him.

As James puffs away, watching Sanborn, two HUMVEE's drive down the ramp to the parking area of the building.

Several soldiers exit, among them is COLONEL REED. SOLDIERS trot along beside him.

The Colonel strides up to Eldridge.

COLONEL REED

You the guy in the bomb suit?

ELDRIDGE

No, Sir. That's Sergeant James.
He's right here.

(to James)

Somebody here to see you.

James comes around.

JAMES

Hello, sir.

COLONEL REED

(to James, pointing)

You the guy in the flaming car?
Sergeant James?

JAMES

Yes, sir.

COLONEL REED

Well, that's just hot shit. You're
a wild man, you know that?

The Colonel spins his head around to an aide.

COLONEL REED

He's a wild man, you know that?

(back to James)

Let me shake your hand.

JAMES

Thank you, sir.

COLONEL REED

How many bombs have you disarmed,
Sergeant?

JAMES

I'm not quite sure.

COLONEL REED

Sergeant, I asked you a question.

JAMES

One hundred and seventy three.
Counting today, Sir.

COLONEL REED

One hundred and seventy three? That
must be a record. So tell me,
what's the best way to go about
disarming one of these things?

JAMES

The way you don't die.

COLONEL REED

Good one. Spoken like a wild man.
That's good.

CUT TO:

EXT CAMP VICTORY FIRST SERGEANT'S TRAILER AFTERNOON

James, sitting on a bench under a camo net, grabs a smoke and inspects a circuit board.

A soccer ball rolls beside him.

James picks it up. The DVD kid, Beckham, comes up to retrieve the ball.

BECKHAM

Give it.

JAMES

Wait a minute. Look who it is. I want my five bucks back, buddy.

BECKHAM

Five dollars - for what? Are you crazy?

JAMES

Those DVDs you sold me were crap.

BECKHAM

No, you're crazy. That's impossible. It's Hollywood special effects.

JAMES

It was shaky and out of focus, buddy.

BECKHAM

Special effects! What do you want, donkey porn? Girls on dog? Just tell me what you want! Are you gay? You want gay sex?

The boy's chutzpa amuses James. He's starting to like this kid.

JAMES
What's your name anyway?

BECKHAM
Beckham.

JAMES
Oh yeah - like the soccer player?
You good like him, too?

BECKHAM
Better, my man.

James gets up. Motions for the kid to give him space.

JAMES
Alright, make you a deal. If you
can stop the ball I'll give you
five bucks --

BECKHAM
-- Five dollars? More like ten,
twenty.

JAMES
But if you can't, I'm going keep
the ball. Deal?

BECKHAM
Deal.

The boy runs to a makeshift goal post. James prepares to kick

JAMES
Ready? One, two --

He kicks the ball in Beckham's direction and it flies up but
Beckham blocks it easily. He's very skillful.

JAMES
-- three. Shit.

Beckham comes back over to James, ball in hand, and notices
the bomb patch on James' uniform.

BECKHAM
(pointing to the patch)
Come on, where's the five dollars.
You are EOD. EOD -- boomala
boomala. It's fun, no? It's
gangsta?

James is surprised by the question. Not sure how to reply.

JAMES

Yeah I think so. Tell you what, kid, I'll buy another DVD but if it's shaky or out of focus or in any way not 100 percent, I'm going to chop off your head with a dull knife.

(long beat)

I'm kidding.

James affectionately puts the kid in a headlock.

INT CAMP VICTORY GARAGE

Eldridge is repairing something near the under carriage of the HUMVEE when the psychiatrist approaches.

CAMBRIDGE

How's it going?

EDLDRIDGE

Good. Breaks are squeaky.

CAMBRIDGE

How you doing?

ELDRIDGE

Good. Sleep is good. Eating well. Feeling pretty squared away.

CAMBRIDGE

Glad to hear it. You getting along with the men in your unit?

ELDRIDGE

Yeah, my team is great. My team leader is inspiring.

CAMBRIDGE

You being sarcastic, soldier?

ELDRIDGE

No. I mean, he's going to get me killed. I almost died yesterday. But at least I'll die in the line of duty, 'Proud and Strong.'

CAMBRIDGE

You know, this doesn't have to be a bad time in your life. Going to war is a once in a life time experience. It can be fun.

ELDRIDGE

And you know this from your
extensive work in the field?

CAMBRIDGE

I've done my field duty.

ELDRIDGE

Where was that - Yale?

CAMBRIDGE

Look, if you want to stop talking
to me, you can. These sessions are
voluntary.

Eldridge considers this.

ELDRIDGE

I appreciate what you're saying.
But you need to get out from behind
the wire. See what we do.

CAMBRIDGE

If the circumstance calls for it, I
will. Just like any other soldier.

CUT TO:

EXT BAGHDAD PURGATORY DAY

We're at the south end of an EXPLOSIVES DISPOSAL RANGE,
nicknamed, 'Purgatory' -- an empty expanse of dirt pockmarked
with craters.

TITLE OVER:

DAYS LEFT IN BRAVO COMPANY'S ROTATION: 17

BOOM!!!

A tremendous EXPLOSION, by far the largest we've seen yet,
kicks out a mushroom cloud of debris.

We move across the field with the cloud and settle where our
EOD team is positioned by their Humvee.

Sanborn has a remote detonator in his hand and is about to
trigger it a second time.

SANBORN

Ready for second det? Fire in the hole. Fire in the hole.

James cheerfully interrupts --

JAMES

Hold on a second. I think I forgot my gloves back there.

James jumps into the Humvee and drives down range, reversing the course we just took.

It's a long way to the explosives, at least half a mile.

Sanborn and Eldridge watch him recede in the distance.

James is a tiny figure ambling around the explosives pile.

Sanborn looks down at the detonator in his hand. Eldridge notices the look.

SANBORN

(re detonator)

Those detonators misfire all the time.

ELDRIDGE

What are you doing?

SANBORN

I'm just saying, shit happens. They misfire.

ELDRIDGE

He'd be obliterated to nothing.

SANBORN

His helmet would be left, you could have that. Little specs of hair charred on the inside.

ELDRIDGE

Yeah, there would be half a helmet somewhere...specs of hair.

SANBORN

We'd have to ask for change in technique and protocol - make sure this type of accident never happens again. You'd have to write the report.

ELDRIDGE
Are you serious?

SANBORN
I can't write it.

ELDRIDGE
No, are you serious about killing
him?

Sanborn stares at Eldridge. Dead serious.

They look downrange at the their leader/tormentor.

He's recovered his gloves. He's celebrating that fact by
pumping his fists in the air.

CUT TO:

INT/ EXT HUMVEE DAY

Find the Humvee driving across the desert void. Driving and
driving.

Outside, horizon of sand and sun.

Inside, shell-shocked men.

EXT HUMVEE DAY

The Humvee crests a hill and comes in range of a HEAVILY
ARMED MAN/face wrapped in a KEFFYYIEH/nationality unclear, who
is waving an AK-47.

Behind him are four additional ARMED MEN of uncertain
nationality, as well as a large, disabled SUV.

INT HUMVEE

In the turret, Eldridge fingers the trigger of his .50
machine gun.

ELDRIDGE
(shouting below)
12 o'clock. I see an SUV. I
got four armed men. They're
in Haji gear.

SANBORN
Roger that.

JAMES
Careful now, guys.

SANBORN
(to James)
We're in it now.

JAMES
Eldridge, stay on that fifty.

EXT HUMVEE

The keffiyeh-clad man stops waving his arms, and walks towards the HUMVEE. Sanborn brakes.

James and Sanborn charge out of the vehicle, blood boiling, guns high, yelling: DROP YOUR FUCKING GUNS! HANDS UP! ON YOUR KNEES!

The keffiyeh man does not comply. Instead, he shouts a reply that is drowned out by the desert wind.

SANBORN
Hands high!

JAMES
Eldridge, cover!

ELDRIDGE
I got you!

Sanborn continues shouting orders: GET DOWN NOW! ON YOUR KNEES MOTHERFUCKER! HANDS ON YOUR HEAD! HANDS ON YOUR HEAD!

Finally, the keffiyeh man nods to his men, who lower their prodigious weapons.

Then he takes his own piece...and carefully unsnaps it from the shoulder sling.

He kneels and interlaces his hands on his head.

As James and Eldridge provide cover, Sanborn rushes forward, shaking with adrenaline, M4 darting back and forth.

When he's close, Sanborn notices a pistol still strapped to the man's leg.

SANBORN
Pistol - take it off now.

KEFFIYEH MAN

(in English)

What do you want me to do, put my hands up or take off my pistol?

SANBORN

Keep your hands up.

KEFFIYEH MAN

Okay.

Sanborn reaches for his pistol. It catches in the holster, then comes free.

KEFFIYEH MAN

Can I touch my fucking head now?

SANBORN

Slowly.

Slowly unfurling his Keffiyeh...

Until we see that he's not at all Arabic but just a darkly tanned, bearded Anglo-Saxon: a former member of the British SAS turned MERCENARY TEAM LEADER -- who at this moment is feeling pretty sick of American yahoos.

MERCENARY TEAM LEADER

We're on the same side. You guys are wired tight - you know that?

JAMES

What are you doing out here? This is no place for a picnic.

MERCENARY TEAM LEADER

We've got a flat tire. Can you help us?

JAMES

Sure. Do you have spares?

MERCENARY TEAM LEADER

We have a spare but we used up our wrench.

JAMES

How do you use up a wrench?

MERCENARY TEAM LEADER

(pointing to FEISAL, one of the mercenaries)

That guy - he threw it at someone.

SANBORN

(to FEISAL)

You know you don't have to throw wrenches. You can shoot people here.

FEISAL

Fuck off.

They walk back to the contractor's vehicle, where two ENEMY PRISONERS OF WAR (EPWs, or so we assume), shrouded in black hoods, hands bound, are kneeling uncomfortably on the desert floor.

CUT TO:

EXT ROAD MOMENTS LATER

A moment of calm:

FEISAL crouches by the SUV's flat tire, twisting a wrench.

A second mercenary - call him JIMMY - gives a drink of water to the two bound and hooded EPWs.

The two remaining mercenaries, CHRIS and CHARLIE, quietly stand guard around the perimeter of the SUV.

Sanborn relieves his bladder on an innocent sand dune.

James and Eldridge are hanging out with the MERCENARY TEAM LEADER. He's bragging about his two high-value prisoners, who appear in a DECK of MOST WANTED PLAYING CARDS.

MERCENARY TEAM LEADER

(re: the EPW's)

Picked them up in Najaf. Nine of hearts... Jack of Clubs.

ELDRIDGE

Same guys?

MERCENARY TEAM LEADER

That's them.

James, mildly impressed, notices that Feisal is having an issue with the tire wrench.

JAMES

Need a little help there?

MERCENARY TEAM LEADER

What's the problem with the tire? Why the delay?

FEISAL

No good, boss. This wrench is too small.

MERCENARY TEAM LEADER

Alright, solutions anyone?

ELDRIDGE

I think there is another wrench in the back of the Humvee if you want to check.

FEISAL

Thanks, I'll look.

Feisal walks to the EOD HUMVEE.

MERCENARY TEAM LEADER

How long are you guys out here?

JAMES

I don't know. Specialist, what do we got?

ELDRIDGE

We've got...ah...seventeen more days.

JAMES

But no one is counting, right.

Feisal returns with a new wrench, when...

--A BULLET RIPS INTO HIS BACK

--FLATTENING HIM INSTANTLY

MERCENARY TEAM LEADER

Contact left! Contact left!

--THE MERCENARIES AND SOLDIERS ALL BEGIN SHOOTING TOWARDS THEIR LEFT HAND SIDE, UNLEASHING A BARRAGE OF INDISCRIMINATE GUNFIRE INTO THE DESERT

--ANOTHER BULLET ZIPS BY, NARROWLY MISSING ONE OF THE CONTRACTORS.

Bedlam: as the firing continues on all sides, the mercenaries scramble for supplies and ammunition in their SUV, following the commands of their leader who shouts "Jimmy get the go-bags," "Charlie, grab the Barrett", "Chris take the fifty", "into the ravine", etc.

CHRIS leaps into the HUMVEE turret and sprays bullets in all directions.

The soldiers dash for cover into

EXT RAVINE

a nearby ravine, and continue firing indiscriminately

HUMVEE

Chris makes the big gun smoke.

Spent brass spins red hot out of the barrel and large caliber bullets pound the desert.

But there is no enemy in sight.

RAVINE

ELDRIDGE
(shouting)
What are we shooting at?

SANBORN
(shouting back)
I don't know!

SUV

In the confusion, the two hooded prisoners rise up and run blindly into the desert.

RAVINE

Seeing that his valuable prisoners are escaping, the TEAM LEADER shouts:

MERCENARY TEAM LEADER
The packages are moving!

JIMMY
They will not get far on foot.

MERCENARY TEAM LEADER
Three bloody months hunting those
fuckers. I'm out five hundred
thousand quid!

With that, the TEAM LEADER brazenly dashes into the open in order to get an angle on the fleeing prisoners and as bullets snap around him he shoots the prisoners in the back.

Then he bolts to the ravine, very pleased with himself:

MERCENARY TEAM LEADER (CONT'D)
I forgot, it's five hundred
thousand DEAD OR ALIVE!

EXT ROAD

Chris in the turret of the Humvee keeps firing the machine gun in all directions.

EXT/INT DEEP RAVINE

As the shooting continues, the Mercenary Team Leader scrambles up one side of the ravine.

MERCENARY TEAM LEADER
Jimmy, give me the Barrett.

[referring to a .50 caliber tripod-mounted sniper rifle]

The Mercenary Team Leader hoists this heavy gun to the edge of the ravine and looks down the scope.

Jimmy crawls next to him with a spotting scope in hand.

EXT ROAD

Chris is still working the machine gun, expending hundreds of bullets a minute.

EXT/INT DEEP RAVINE

The Mercenary Leader says to Jimmy:

MERCENARY TEAM LEADER
Chris is shooting wild. We have to
conserve ammo.

JIMMY
(into radio)
Hey Chris - can you hear me? Chill
out on the fifty.

EXT ROAD

Chris ceases fire for a moment and takes his finger off the trigger. Silence while he keys his walkie.

CHRIS
(into walkie)
Roger that.

-- A bullet strikes him in the neck, killing him instantly.

EXT/INT DEEP RAVINE

JIMMY
He shot Chris.

The mercenary team leader deflates. He rests his chin on the rifle.

Everyone else in the ravine ceases firing as the futility of their situation sinks in.

SCOPE POV

Scanning the barren landscape. Gravel and sun. No enemy, not a living soul in sight.

Then...a structure...a one-story building, in the far distance.

RAVINE

JIMMY
It must be coming from that
building.

MERCENARY TEAM LEADER
I can't see anything.

SCOPE POV

Heat shimmers.

Then...on the roof of the building...slight movement.
Possibly, it's a MAN lying prone. Possibly, it's two MEN.

RAVINE

JIMMY
Movement on the roof.

The mercenary team leader concentrates his aim. He fires.

BUILDING

A pause while the bullet closes the gap - then SMASHES into the building's side, tearing apart bricks and mortar.

The figures on the roof, if they are men, have certainly gone unharmed.

RAVINE

JIMMY
Three meters higher.

MERCENARY TEAM LEADER
I've got to adjust.

He jostles the heavy sniper rifle forward a few inches.

INT. BUILDING

Inside the building, an INSURGENT SNIPER team peers at the ridge-ravine complex where the mercenaries and soldiers have taken cover.

SNIPER POV

The wispy form of the two mercenaries lying on the ridge can be faintly seen.

INT. BUILDING

The sniper's muzzle FLASHES.

RIDGE

The mercenary team leader hoists himself up into a low crawl only to --

--take the bullet square in the chest

--spinning him off the ridge

-- face first into the ravine

-- his back a pulped and bloody mess from the exit wound.

RAVINE

Jimmy jumps down from the ridge to check for a pulse.

JIMMY

He's dead.

Now the men plummet into a full-bore panic and everyone starts talking at once.

SANBORN

I'll get on the Barret.

JAMES

Go, go.

ELDRIDGE

No Sanborn don't do that.

JAMES

Go, go. Stay low.

OLDER CONTRACTOR

(into radio))

This is Alpha Nine. We're in deep shit. We're taking incoming fire.

DISPATCH (O.S.)

Roger that, Alpha Nine. Go ahead.

RIDGE

Sanborn crawls to the Barrett, followed by James, who takes Jimmy's spotting scope. Effectively, our soldiers have replaced the first sniping team.

RAVINE

JIMMY

(into walkie)

We are taking incoming fire.

(MORE)

JIMMY (cont'd)
I have two KIA. Correction three
KIA. Can you get us some help?

DISPATCH (O.S.)
Roger that Alpha Nine. Go ahead.

OLDER CONTRACTOR
Our grid -- MDRF:5542973420.

DISPATCH O.S.
Alpha Nine, this is Big North
Seven. You are going to have to sit
tight.

Off his despair:

CUT TO:

RIDGE

Sanborn prepares to shoot at the men in the building.

JAMES
(quietly)
Breathe easy. I got movement at
that house. 800 meters. By the
window: you have a target

SANBORN
Got it.

Sanborn squeezes the trigger. The muzzle flashes.

SCOPE POV

A bullet strikes the left side of the house. Another miss.

RIDGE

JAMES
(softly)
A little left.

Sanborn squeezes the trigger... only to hear the METALLIC
CLICK of an empty chamber.

SANBORN
I'm out of ammo.

JAMES

Huh?

SANBORN

I'm out of ammo.

JAMES

(shouting over his
shoulder)

Eldridge! We need ammo.

RAVINE

Eldridge frantically searches a few nearby backpacks.

RIDGE

JAMES

I need that ammo man!

RAVINE

ELDRIDGE

I'm looking. Where is it?

JAMES O.S.

Check the dead guy.

Eldridge flips over the body of the slain contractor. His chest is pulped.

Nestled in the gore are several .50 magazines. Eldridge grabs them with shaky hands and passes them up to James.

RIDGE

James passes the ammo to Sanborn. He slams it into the receiver.

JAMES

Same target.

SANBORN

Got it.

Sanborn pulls the trigger. Click.

ECU: Hand cycling the weapon. Finger pulling trigger. Bolt catching, jammed.

SANBORN

It's jammed. The blood is making it jam.

Sanborn removes the clip and hands it back to James who hands it back down to Eldridge in the ravine, instructing him:

JAMES

Eldridge, you got to clean the blood off the bullets. The blood is making it jam.

Eldridge takes the magazine and rubs the top bullet to no good effect, for the dust on his hands sticks to the blood and the blood sticks to the bullet.

He rubs harder, only making it dirtier.

James peers down and realizes that Eldridge is lost.

JAMES

Spit and rub, man. Spit on them.

Eldridge tries to spit on the bullets.

His mouth is too dry to produce saliva.

He tries again. Nothing.

James sees his escalating despair and slides down the ridge, coming next to Eldridge.

JAMES

Use your camel (referring to the Camelback water canteen).

James squeezes the nipple of Eldridge's Camel and directs the water to drip on the bullets. It sort of works.

Sitting side by side now, they rub away the grime and polish the bullets to a bright shine.

JAMES

You're doing good, man. You're okay. I'm going to keep you safe.

James takes the clean bullets and climbs back to the ridge, telling Eldridge:

JAMES

Scan your sectors.

RIDGE

Sanborn loads the clean bullets and fires.

SCOPE POV

One figure on the roof is hit. The other man crawls back and out of sight.

RIDGE

JAMES

Nice. You got him. Second one is out of range.

SCOPE POV

Scanning... Another FIGURE, lying on the desert floor.

RIDGE

JAMES

Twenty meters to the right of the building. You got a target.

SANBORN

I got him.

JAMES

Fire when ready.

SCOPE POV

Sanborn's bullet strikes the ground a dozen feet in front of the man, kicking up a harmless puff of dust.

The man gets up and runs towards the building while firing his AK-47 back at Sanborn and James. His carbine's muzzle flash, ineffective at this great range, sparkles in the bright day.

RIDGE

JAMES

He's moving to the building. Follow him. You got him?

SANBORN

Got him.

Sanborn pulls the trigger.

SCOPE POV

Sanborn's bullet strikes the fleeing man in the upper chest, blood spurting as the large round throws him dead to the ground.

RIDGE

JAMES

You got him. He's down. Good night.
Thanks for playing.

SCOPE POV

The sniper in the building appears in the window.

BUILDING

The insurgent sniper team leans out the window and fires at James and Sanborn.

RIDGE

The bullet snaps near James and Sanborn.

JAMES

Window! Window!

SANBORN

Got it.

Sanborn fires.

SCOPE POV

Miss! Sanborn's bullet strikes the building just below the window and the insurgent team withdraws inside.

JAMES

He's still there.

The insurgent, having run to the other side of the building, now appears in the other window, the left window. James sees his barrel.

JAMES

Left window! Left window! Got him?

SANBORN

Got him.

Sanborn turns his head away from the gun and makes an audible exhale to release tension: the sniper breath control technique. Then he fires a hit; the insurgent slumps in the window.

JAMES

He's down.

SCOPE POV

The roof of the tall building in the distance bobs in and out of view; the scope dances at this range.

James scans the area. Silence.

DESERT WIDE

We mark the passage of time with dust devils spinning across a horizon of lengthening shadows.

EXT/INT DEEP RAVINE HOURS LATER

The sun lower in the sky. Around the pit, the fallen TEAM LEADER has been pushed to one side, and the living are hanging on to their sanity.

Eldridge and the remaining contractors have exhausted their water supply.

Eldridge is in a sentry position facing east, in the direction of the railroad tracks. The other two contractors are in sentry positions facing south and north.

Sanborn and James are in EXACTLY the same position as when we left them, exposed to the elements. Desert heat and sand have taken their toll on Sanborn especially.

EXT SANBORN POV

The scope BLURS as Sanborn's vision fails for a moment.

RIDGE

James notices Sanborn's fatigue.

JAMES

Eldridge, grab me the juice out of
an MRE.

Eldridge digs around the dead TEAM LEADER'S backpack and retrieves a packet of juice, which he passes to James.

James inserts the straw into the juice pack.

He hesitates, not sure if Sanborn will accept the gesture after all the hostility that's passed between them...

James brings the straw to Sanborn's lips.

At first, Sanborn keeps his attention on the rifle scope.

JAMES

Drink.

With some discomfort, Sanborn opens his sun-scorched lips and sips.

RAVINE

Eldridge scans the horizon--

--a small HERD of GOATS amble along the railroad tracks.

He rubs his eyes, looks again--

--*Somewhere within the herd a flutter of fabric--*

Eldridge stiffens.

ELDRIDGE

Uh, Will.

JAMES

Yeah.

ELDRIDGE
At your six o'clock. Movement on
the tracks.

JAMES
Deal with it.

ELDRIDGE
Uh, okay.

Eldridge looks down his scope, unsure. James keeps his focus forward on the building.

ELDRIDGE
Should I fire?

JAMES
Your call.

Eldridge shifts his weight onto his rifle.

Another flutter of movement at the edge of the tracks.

Eldridge pulls the trigger. Then he pulls it again. And again, emptying his magazine at the distant target.

The goats scatter, revealing a lifeless BODY draped across the tracks.

Eldridge slumps, let's go of his rifle.

TIME CUT TO:

RAVINE SEVERAL HOURS LATER

Dusk. Shadows fall over James and Sanborn, both of whom remain lying in the exact same sniping position, although now they are covered head to toe in sand.

There's no movement in the house. No movement on the far ridge. No sign of life anywhere beyond their encampment.

It's just them and the sky and the desert.

JAMES
I think we're done.

CUT TO:

INT CAMP VICTORY JAMES' TRAILER NIGHT

Play time: James and Sanborn square off, drunk, swaying, red-faced, fists clenched. When Sanborn nods, James punches him in the stomach.

James smiles; he looks good. The unleashed aggression is like a vitamin to him.

JAMES

That's what you get for hitting
your team-leader, motherfucker.

With difficulty, Sanborn straightens up and stumbles out of the trailer.

SANBORN

Be right back. I gotta piss.

James lurches towards Eldridge.

JAMES

Owen, another round. That's an
order.

ELDRIDGE

(imitating a young
recruit)

Yes, Sir, Sergeant James Sir.
You're not very good with people
are you -- but you're a natural
warrior.

JAMES

You acquitted yourself well on the
field of battle today, Specialist.

They clink cups. Eldridge gulps his whiskey.

James collapses in his chair.

Eldridge sits down carefully.

ELDRIDGE

I was scared.

JAMES

Everyone is a coward about
something.

(beat)

You did good.

As Sanborn loudly stumbles back into the room, he notices by the door something a little odd under James' bed: a box. It's odd because there is nothing else in the barren room besides Army-issue furniture, lights, and the whiskey they've been drinking.

Curious, Sanborn retrieves the box out and sets it on a makeshift coffee table to get a better look.

SANBORN

Just what do we have here? Will has possessions! I didn't know you owned anything, Will.

ELDRIDGE

Let's see what you got.

Sanborn pulls out a weathered snapshot of a baby boy.

SANBORN

What's that?

JAMES

That's my son. He's a real tough little bastard. Nothing like me.

SANBORN

You're married?

JAMES

Well, I had a girlfriend. She got pregnant and we got married and then we divorced. Or, I thought we divorced. She's still in the house and she says we're still together. So I don't know. What does that make her?

SANBORN

Dumb - for still being with your ass.

JAMES

(hotly)

She ain't dumb. She's just loyal, that's all. (beat) What about you guys - what have you got?

SANBORN

My problem is the girl I like I can't stop from talking about babies.

JAMES

Give her your sperm, stud. Make babies!

SANBORN

Nah.

JAMES

Go on, you chickenshit. Do it!

SANBORN

No, I know when I'm ready and I'm not ready for that yet.

(looking around the box,
finds a circuit board)

And what do we have here?

JAMES

(embarrassed)

Components. Bomb parts. Signatures.

SANBORN

I see that. But what are they doing under your bed?

James pulls out a circuit and gazes reverently at the mechanical design.

JAMES

This one is from the UN building, flaming car. Dead man switch - boom! This guy was good. I like him. This one was from our first call together. This box is full of stuff that almost killed me.

Eldridge rummages through the box and finds a gold ring hanging from a cheap chain.

He dangles the ring in front of James.

ELDRIDGE

What's this one from, Will?

JAMES

That's my wedding ring. Like I said, stuff that almost killed me.
(beat)

I think it's interesting to hold something in your hands that could have killed any one of us.

SANBORN
 (looking at the circuit
 board)
 It's a piece of junk from Radio
 Shack.

Eldridge, ever unsure, allies with James.

ELDRIDGE
 It's interesting.

JAMES
 I agree. I think it's
 interesting, too.

SANBORN
 I think that punch was harder
 than I hit you. Therefore, I
 owe you a punch. So get up
 motherfucker.

James leaps up, pleased to end the conversation.

Sanborn follows, clapping his hands -- cruising for a
 bruising.

ELDRIDGE
 Hold on, we need some rules. No
 face shots.

SANBORN
 (laughing)
 There's gonna be a face shot.

Eldridge picks up a magic marker and tells James to take off
 his shirt.

Then he draws a bulls-eye on James' bared stomach.

And as he does, he notices knotty scar tissue.

ELDRIDGE
 What happened?

JAMES
 My mother dropped me at birth.

ELDRIDGE
 Looks like frag scars.

SANBORN
 Let it go, Eldridge.

James smiles, raises his arms, exposing his midsection to
 Sanborn.

Sanborn winds up for a powerful blow. He leans back, then
 launches a gut punch that knocks James to the floor.

James lies there in a heap, laughing.

When he gets up, he's laughing so hard that gleeful tears run down his face.

SANBORN
You like that?

JAMES
That all you got?

Now Sanborn raises his arms, bracing for the blow.

James feints a right cross, fakes a jab, then grabs Sanborn by the neck and unleashes a brutal uppercut to the solar plexus. Sanborn collapses, moaning in pain.

JAMES
(laughing)
That's got to hurt.

ELDRIDGE
You alright?

SANBORN
Yeah.

JAMES
Get up, bitch.

James extends his hand to help Sanborn off the floor.

But when Sanborn reaches for help, James rushes him wildly, like a football tackle, knocking him back to the floor, and, in a sudden fit of aggression, he then jumps on Sanborn's chest, pins his arms with his knees and clasps his throat.

JAMES
What have you got now?

SANBORN
Get off me!

JAMES
Come on, what have you got.

SANBORN
Get off of me you freak!!

Sanborn tries to buck James off but he can't dislodge the former Ranger.

Sanborn redoubles his efforts, throwing his weight this way and that. Still, James remains on top -- his face twisted with a macho snarl.

JAMES

We got a wild one here!!

Sanborn bucks harder. But instead of knocking James loose, his kicking and struggling to get free spurs James to even deeper levels of male weirdness. And as Sanborn kicks and bucks underneath him, James pumps his hand like a cowboy at a rodeo, crying out:

JAMES

I'm riding him! That's right!! He's
a wild one and I'm riding him!!
COME ON BITCH!!!

Now Sanborn reaches for his boot knife.

ECU: knife blade snapping open

Sanborn jams the blade against James' throat and their eyes lock.

James smiles like a child. He pats Sanborn's head and laughs.

JAMES

I'm just kidding motherfucker!!
Shit!!!

At last, Sanborn is released. James pats him on the chest.

JAMES

You're alright, Sanborn.
(to Eldridge)
Owen, get this guy another drink.

CUT TO:

EXT CAMP VICTORY HOURS LATER

Sanborn, too drunk to stand, is being guided across the barracks square by Eldridge and James. When they come to Eldridge's trailer, James shoulders Sanborn by himself and Eldridge goes inside.

ELDRIDGE

Later.

It's not easy for James to carry Sanborn alone and Sanborn nearly slips to the ground.

JAMES

You need to go on a diet.

They walk a little farther to Sanborn's trailer, passing a SOLDIER who looks at them curiously. Drinking is not allowed on US bases in Iraq. James brushes aside the officious look, saying "he hurt his knee" and guides Sanborn up a set of stairs into Sanborn's trailer.

INT. SANBORN'S TRAILER

James eases Sanborn onto a cot and heads for the door.

JAMES
Get some rest.

Sanborn mumbles drunkenly:

SANBORN
Hey James, do you think I have what
it takes to put on the suit?

JAMES
(beat)
Hell no.
(Beat)
Good night, boy.

INT JAMES' TRAILER LATER THAT NIGHT

James stumbles inside, flops on the bed, and takes another swig of whiskey.

He lies there and stares at his bomb helmet, which is sitting on a desk adjacent to his cot.

He looks at the helmet... and reaches for it.

Then he brings the helmet over his head and adjusts the straps and unlocks the glass protective masks, so that it snaps down over his face and his entire head is sheathed in the protective metal.

A man encased in his armor.

He leans back in the bed and we HEAR the rasp of James BREATHING...daydreaming...as he re-experiences the feeling of a bomb in his hands, the morbid thrill.

CUT TO:

EXT/INT HUMVEE CAMP VICTORY PARKING LOT

A massive sandstorm is underway. Howling winds disperse red sand over the entire base, giving it an otherworldly, almost Martian aspect. Throngs of men and their vehicles fight the brutal weather.

TITLE:**Days Left in Bravo Company's Rotation: 16**

Lt. Col. Cambridge comes out of the gloom, approaches the vehicles window, and knocks.

CAMBRIDGE

Mind if I ride along? I'm sick of sitting behind a desk all the time.

James shoots Eldridge a look. Eldridge shrugs.

JAMES

It's a privilege.

(as Cambridge gets in))

I don't mean to insult your intelligence, Sir, but if the shit hits the fan please don't fire out the Humvee, the rounds will just bounce around and someone might get shot. I don't like getting shot.

CAMBRIDGE

Understood, Sergeant.

EXT. ABU GHRAIB CENTER BOMBED OUT BUILDING DAY

A partially destroyed building fills the screen. A mess of bricks and rebar. Wind swirls sand up into the air.

TITLE:**DAYS LEFT IN BRAVO COMPANY'S ROTATION: 16**

Nearby, an OLD IRAQI MAN with a DONKEY drawn cart is unloading new bricks to repair the building.

Farther up the road, a good distance from the building, are two parked Humvees. Nearby, James and his team are talking to a small cluster of SOLDIERS.

Eldridge gives Cambridge the drill:

ELDRIDGE

This is a pretty standard mission. We're just here to pick up some ordnance. Sergeant James is going to go see what the deal is. Hopefully, we're gone in a couple of minutes

JAMES

Guys, we got to gear up.

SANBORN

For what?

JAMES

Security hasn't gone in. Let's just go in quiet, radios off.

ELDRIDGE

Glad you came.

CAMBRIDGE

Stay safe.

INT BOMBED OUT BUILDING

James, Sanborn and Eldridge enter a landing. The floor is very wet. They cross it, and come to a room that has been severely damaged by a bomb, with rubble everywhere and exposed electrical wires dangling from the ceiling, and busted pipes gushing water. A tea pot sits on a STOVE, steaming hot, and a plate on the table has bread on it.

WATER LOGGED ROOM

They gingerly investigate a large cavernous room with leaky pipes dripping water onto an oil-slicked floor. We HEAR their breathing, the water DROPLETS falling. Moving tactically, covering all sides of their approach, they press deeper into the building down

CORRIDOR

A dark corridor which the insurgents have strewn with glass as an early-warning system. Advancing slowly, glass CRUNCHING underfoot, they pass through this corridor into

CLASSROOM

A classroom lined with student's desks and chairs, beyond which lies another room. James and Sanborn spin quietly into this room, rifles raised, while Eldridge hangs back to cover the corridor.

INSURGENT LIVING SPACE

They find themselves in a recently used living area. A teapot cooking on a bunsen burner hisses steam. Mattresses and bedding line the walls of the room. The walls are decorated with Jihadist slogans, and a video camera for making recruiting videos has pride of place on a tripod in the center of the room.

Sanborn checks under the mattresses for hidden explosives, finds none, and exchanges a worried look with James.

Moving as one unit they spin into the next room.

EMPTY ROOM

It's empty, another forboding large space strewn with rubble and garbage. They pass through this area and push open a door to --

BOMB FACTORY

Santa's bomb making factory.

In contrast to the spare spaces they've just passed through, this room is overflowing with the tools of a an insurgency that uses bombs as its primary weapon: electronics and explosives of all kinds are everywhere: artillery shells, boxes of batteries, plastic explosives, military manuals, rockets, grenades, stacks of dynamite, tools, magnifying glasses, and soldering guns.

Though a few of these munitions bear the stamps of foreign militaries, most bear insignias in English. It is, ironically, a cache of armaments that formerly belonged to the American military.

The men weave through the piles of explosives, slowly checking every space where a human could possibly be hiding.

At last they're satisfied:

SANBORN

Clear!

Eldridge draws near to one desk where a cigarette burns in an ashtray.

ELDRIDGE

This cigarette is still smoking!

SANBORN

This is all our shit. Motherfucking gold mine. Watch out for trips.

BACK OF ROOM

In the back half of the room, a plastic curtain hangs over a work table, forming a make-shift sterile room.

Smelling the copper odor of blood and death emanating from behind that curtain, James pushes the plastic to one side.

He draws near to a table, where he sees the DEAD BODY of a YOUNG BOY wearing pants but no shirt. Flies buzz over his bloody bare chest.

JAMES

I got something.

Sanborn and Eldridge come beside him, and approach the body cautiously.

The dead young man's chest has been cut open. An artillery shell is shoved inside the cavity where the heart used to beat. Wires protrude from the shell.

James shakes his head no as Sanborn moves closer to the body and inspects the wiring in the chest.

The boy's FACE, half in shadow, is so disfigured by bruises that it's hard to identify. But it might be someone familiar to James.

JAMES

I know this kid. His name is Beckham. He sells DVDs.

Sanborn ignores that and turns to Eldridge.

SANBORN

You ever see a body bomb before?

Eldridge shakes his head, pulling his neck scarf up over his nose.

SANBORN

This is disgusting, let's get out of here.

JAMES

Eldridge, grab all the C4 and det cord you can get your hands on. Let's get the rest of it out of here and just blow it in place.

SANBORN

Roger that.

Sanborn and Eldridge leave James alone with the body.

He stares at the boy.

EXT BOMBED OUT BUILDING

Cambridge, with limited Iraqi language skills, is trying to speak to a MAN piling rocks in the back of his donkey cart.

CAMBRIDGE

What are you doing? Moving the rocks?

The Iraqi peasant replies in Arabic, motioning to the rocks and his cart.

CAMBRIDGE

That's very nice. It's a little unsafe today. So maybe - I don't know - I'm thinking maybe we should move.

INT BODY BOMB

James steps away.

EXT BOMBED OUT BUILDING

Sanborn and Eldridge meet up outside.

SANBORN

You okay?

EDLDRIDGE

Yeah. You?

INT BOMBED OUT BUILDING MOMENTS LATER

James turns away from the body. Thinks.

Eldridge arrives with the C4. The look on James' face concerns him.

ELDRIDGE

You alright man?

JAMES

Yeah, no one in or out.

Eldridge nods. Makes a hasty exit.

James pulls C4 blocks from his pack and arranges them around the body. He plugs a blasting cap into the C4. In doing so he finds himself drawn to the dead boy's eyes, which seem *somehow* to stare directly at him.

James tries to keep his feelings in check and his mind on the task by arranging the charges and preparing the detonation.

But he can't. *The war has finally reached him.*

JAMES

(into walkie)

Cancel the det.

In one fluid motion James removes the charges and takes off his helmet.

He closes the boy's eyes.

And slams his fists on the table.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUILDING

Sanborn and Eldridge grab water by the Humvee.

SANBORN

What the fuck is he doing?

ELDRIDGE

I don't know.

CAMBRIDGE AT THE DONKEY CART

Now there are a few IRAQI MEN gathered near the donkey cart. Cambridge is doing his best to communicate.

CAMBRIDGE
Hello, how are you?

IRAQI MAN
Where are you from?

CAMBRIDGE
New York. The Big Apple.

IRAQI MAN
I'm from Iraq.

CAMBRIDGE
I love it here. This is a beautiful place. But today, it's not too safe here, so I think we need to move. Please.

INT BOMBED OUT BUILDING

James carefully checks the boy's body for trip wires, then proceeds to snip the wires which were sown into the boy's stomach.

One by one, he cuts them.

He inserts his hands into the boy's abdomen and removes the artillery shell bomb that had been diabolically placed there.

He wipes his face, smearing blood, then covers the body in a white cloth.

JAMES
(into walkie)
I'm coming down.

The boy's blood seeps through the cloth and stains it red.

INT BOMBED OUT BUILDING STAIRS

James carries the boy's body down the narrow corridor. The head and feet bump the sides.

EXT STREET/BOMBED OUT BUILDING

James brings the body out carries it to a blue and white pickup TRUCK emblazoned with the logo of the Iraqi National Police pulls up to their position.

A pair of POLICEMEN get out and after a few words with James, they load the body.

EXT BOMBED OUT BUILDING

James watches the police truck drive away. He then moves for the Humvee, motioning for Cambridge to load up.

INT HUMVEE

Sanborn and Eldridge sit across from each other, watching James.

ELDRIDGE

...So you think it was that little base rat?

SANBORN

No I don't.

ELDRIDGE

You positive?

SANBORN

Sure. I don't know. They all look the same, right?

ELDRIDGE

I don't know. Will seemed sure. But that was weird.

SANBORN

Very weird.

CAMBRIDGE AT THE DONKEY CART

Cambridge, losing patience with what is now a small crowd of Iraqis, motions with his M4.

CAMBRIDGE

Please, just move. Please. Ishmee (pronouncing the Arabic incorrectly).

The crowd slowly disperses, amid grumbling and cursing. Cambridge waves patronizingly at them as they go, saying "thank you, bye-bye," etc. He doesn't notice that one of the older men has left on the ground a white rice bag.

INT HUMVEE

Simultaneously, the conversation in the Humvee continues:

ELDRIDGE

But then Will's pretty weird. He keeps bomb parts under his bed.

SANBORN

I bet you he doesn't keep any of these parts under his bed.

James cracks the door of the Humvee, leans inside, sees Cambridge -

JAMES

(shouting to Cambridge)
Let's go!

Through the HUMVEE windshield: Cambridge, now pleased that the crowd has gone, waves good-bye to the entire neighborhood, and, hearing James, steps towards the Humvee, passing the white rice bag, which suddenly --

--explodes in a A SICKENING BLAST

--obliterating Cambridge

--sending his head crashing into the HUMVEE, along with a cloud of debris which instantly blackens the windshield and blots out the sun and our view of everything -

INT/EXT HUMVEE

CRIES of "IED!" "IED" as our three soldiers stumble out of the vehicle into the rancid air, while other soldiers, dashing to the scene from all sides, scramble to restore order and shout "it's the commander" "watch your six", etc.

We follow Eldridge, stunned, as he walks into the aftermath and finds a smoking helmet on the ground.

He picks it up.

Its nylon cover is burning; the inside is charred.

Eldridge looks down and sees body parts and bits of uniform strewn on the ground.

ELDRIDGE
Where's Cambridge? Cambridge! Come on, we got to go! (beat) Doc?

James rushes to Eldridge's side.

JAMES
He's dead.

ELDRIDGE
I just saw him! He was walking right here!

James pulls Eldridge into a bear hug. Eldridge sobs.

JAMES
He's dead. He's dead.
(beat)
But you're alright, buddy. You're alright.

CUT TO:

EXT CAMP VICTORY DUSK

As the sun sets behind him, James leans against a power pole and dials a SATELLITE PHONE.

He hangs up.

Dials again.

INT SUBURBAN HOME - HALFWAY AROUND THE WORLD

In a modest mid-Western kitchen, the phone rings. A young WOMAN holding a BABY rushes to get it.

WOMAN
Hello?
(beat)
Will? Hello?

Silence on the other end of the line.

EXT CAMP VICTORY DUSK

James hangs up and shoves the phone back in his pocket.

EXT CAMP VICTORY MESS TENT MORNING

James, smoking, twitchy, watching something... the OLDER IRAQI MAN who sells DVDs at Beckham's usual table. Although Beckham is not there, the man organizes his DVDs, business as usual. James stalks up to him.

JAMES

Hey, let me ask you a question,
what happened to the little kid
that used to work here?

The man shakes his head.

DVD MAN

Sorry man, no English.

JAMES

No English? Now you don't speak
English. The little kid? Beckham is
his name. He sells DVDs.

DVD MAN

DVD? One DVD five dollars.

James turns to a nearby INFANTRY GUARD.

JAMES

Excuse me, soldier, are you in
charge of this area?

GUARD

What's up?

JAMES

That guy over there could be an
insurgent. (referring to the DVD
merchant) How do we know he's not
giving intel to his buddies,
telling them where to drop mortars?

GUARD

I think he's just selling DVDs.

JAMES

He's a security risk. You should
get rid of him.

GUARD

He's just selling DVDs. All the
merchants are cleared.

(MORE)

GUARD (cont'd)
I couldn't do anything to him
without the say-so from my C.O.

James, agitated, seeing that he has no hope of prevailing, turns away and trudges back into Camp Victory's maze.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMP VICTORY MESS TENT HOURS LATER

It's the end of the day and the DVD seller packs up his wares to close shop. James, in sunglasses, sweatshirt covering his army fatigues, watches him do this, and then follows the man to his truck. As the man starts the engine, James jumps in the passenger side and threatens with his pistol.

JAMES
Does this change anything? Speak
English now, don't you?
Drive!

INT IRAQI TRUCK

The truck passes through a middle-class Baghdad neighborhood and comes to a stop at a house surrounded by an 8-foot high concrete wall.

159

JAMES
This is the house? Beckham's house?

159

The driver nods, sort of.

JAMES
Wait here.

EXT BAGHDAD STREET NIGHT

James gets out and jogs to the house. He tries the front gate, sees that it is locked, and while he does the car drives off.

If he cares, he doesn't show it. James scales the wall and drops inside the front courtyard.

EXT IRAQI HOUSE COURTYARD

A modest courtyard. Light comes from one window in the house, the rest is dark. Crickets. Inside, a TV is playing. James tries the front door. It opens.

INT IRAQI HOUSE HALLWAY

In a dark hallway. Murmuring of a television. James moves towards the noise.

INT IRAQI HOUSE ANTECHAMBER

James comes to an antechamber. Behind it is a very low stone archway. He goes through the archway, where -

INT IRAQI HOUSE LIVING ROOM

A MAN -- call him KALIM -- older, fifties, dressed in Western fashion, is busy at the sink, washing dishes. James walks in, gun raised. Kalim drops a dish. James puts his fingers to his lips, shhhh.

JAMES

Do you speak English?

KALIM

English, French, Arabic.

JAMES

(quietly)

Good. Open your vest. Stay there. Tell me what you know about Beckham.

KALIM

For whom?

JAMES

Beckham. The 12-year old boy, the body bomb.

KALIM

Beckham? I don't know. But please sit down. I am professor Kalim, this is my home. You are a guest. Please sit down.

JAMES

I'm a guest...I'm just looking for the people responsible.

KALIM

You are CIA, no? I am very pleased to have CIA in my home. Please, sit.

As his certainty slips away, James hears rustling and spins to see

-- a WOMAN, older, matronly, carrying a tea tray. She sees James, his gun, and starts cursing him in Arab, appalled that an armed American would come to her house.

James steps back. Her cursing grows fiercer. She raises her tea tray.

KALIM

Be careful! The gun can go off.

Undaunted, she throws the tray at James. He twists to avoid it, takes a few steps to the door, and ends up HITTING his HEAD badly on the concrete archway as he runs out of the house.

EXT. IRAQI HOUSE/STREET

James is shaken. He looks around and down the street. *He runs...and runs...* Blood runs from the wound on his head as he navigates the busy Iraqi neighborhood at night, running down streets teeming with SHOPPERS who stare at him ominously, dodging traffic, moving past OLD MEN smoking at a CAFE who note his panic, by a BUTCHER SHOP where an entire COW CARCASS is being unloaded, and on and on... we stay with his eyes.

Off the a screeching car as James dashes across a street, we

CUT TO:

EXT CAMP VICTORY GATE NIGHT

James, hands held high over his head, walks up to one of the camp's check-points, shouting:

JAMES

USA Friendly coming in!

Powerful flood lights switch on, blinding him. Then the screaming of hyped up guards:

GUARDS

Stop, get the fuck down. On your knees!

GUARDS

Don't fucking move!

GUARDS

Stop!

GUARDS

On your knees, on your knees!!

James sinks to his knees.

GUARD GUARD
Open your fucking jacket! Cover!!

James unzips his sweatshirt and declares:

JAMES
I have a weapon!

A guard armed with a shotgun charges out of the glare and kicks James to the ground, pinning his knee into his back.

GUARD
Searching!

The guard finds James' pistol. He shouts:

GUARD JAMES
Gun!! Weapon's clear!! Like I said. (beat) Do you
want to look at my I.D.?

GUARD
What are you doing out here?

JAMES
(gasping)
I was at a whore house.

GUARD
(thinking it over)
Okay, if I let you in, will you
tell me where it is exactly?

CUT TO:

EXT CAMP VICTORY NIGHT

James steps into his trailer. His walkie, sitting on a desk, CRACKLES to life.

SANBORN
(over walkie)
I repeat, do you copy? Do you have
your ears on? James?

JAMES
(into walkie)
Yeah, this is James. What's up?

INT HUMVEE MINUTES LATER

In a bustling parking lot, aglow with headlights from Humvees and troop carries, we find James running towards one Humvee, which he jumps into. Sanborn is at the wheel and not amused.

SANBORN

We have a tanker explosion in the Green Zone. We have to do a post-blast assessment, see if it was a suicide bomber and if so how he pulled it off.

(beat)

So where did you say you were again?

JAMES

I didn't, Sergeant. Let's go.

SANBORN

What happened to your head, James?

James gives no reply. He turns to Eldridge.

JAMES

Ready? Game face buddy.

As the Humvee rolls out of the base,

SANBORN PRELAP

USA Friendlies coming in!

CUT TO:

EXT BAGHDAD STREET LATE NIGHT

A helicopter spotlight illuminates a Hieronymus Bosch nightmare of tangled limbs and body parts. Then fires, smoke, and the cries of wailing grievers and wounded carried on stretchers, ambulances, police, fire trucks...the ghastly, frantic aftermath of a major detonation.

Their combat flashlights send piercing white beams into this grim spectacle, while in the distance a huge fire, a GLOWING RED INFERNO at the end of the block, lights what we now see is a blast radius that extends for a nearly a mile.

Moving towards the glowing fire, past ten foot high flames and the remains of houses pulverized to concrete and glass, rubble piles, past screaming women and more bloody wounded being carried away by IRAQI POLICE...

they pause to try and help Iraqi police save a man pinned under a car. He's dragged away like a rag doll.

They press on towards the inferno and stop when they notice a hunk of metal.

JAMES

Oil tanker?

SANBORN

Yup. Pretty long flight.

Moving ahead, the men split up, navigating different paths through this hectic apocalypse:

ELDRIDGE

A Bhurka-clad WOMAN appears out of the distant flames and haze, looking disoriented, in apparent shock. Behind her is a blazing car.

On the ground beside the car lies a single black loafer.

Eldridge sees the lone shoe and is at a loss to process its significance.

Another mind-numbing, soul-numbing casualty of war.

SANBORN

At a gigantic rubble pile, Sanborn reaches down to remove chunks of stone covering a BODY.

The stone slides away but another falls in its place.

Sanborn looks down, sees a second man, or what's left of a man: head and torso but no legs -- just stumps, twitching.

Around him, GRIEVING FAMILIES pick through the dead and dying with IRAQI MEDICS.

JAMES

Drawing near to the inferno, he moves past burning palm trees which erupt into a fountain of embers.

And comes at last to the burning steel carcass of...

OIL TANKER

an OIL TANKER.

From what's left of the twisted metal sub-frame flames twenty feet high scorch the night, like the maw of hell on earth.

James stares, transfixed by the burning...the imprint of some insurgent's plan.

His face hardens now in a way we haven't seen before, and as the fire flickers on his features he seems lost in a private war of his own.

The insurgents are out there *somewhere*.

Ahab and the Whale.

SANBORN AND ELDRIDGE

Sanborn and Eldridge look helplessly at a girl who is trapped on the landing of a half-destroyed building. She cries for her father.

Behind them, several platoons of U.S. SOLDIERS and IRAQI POLICE arrive to secure the boundaries of the blast zone.

CUT TO:

EDGE OF BLAST RADIUS

James approaches a LEMON GROVE which lies just beyond the fire's reach.

As Sanborn and Eldridge walk up behind him, James touches a UNBLEMISHED LEMON nestled among the thorns.

JAMES

This is the edge of the blast radius.

Sanborn comes into view. James nods to him, then stares into the distance, a man possessed.

JAMES

So where's our trigger man?

SANBORN

Burnt up in the flames. Suicide bomber. You'll never find a body.

JAMES

But what if there was no body. What if it was a remote det?

(beat)

A really good bad guy hides out in the dark, right? This is a perfect vantage point outside the blast radius to set back and watch us --

ELDRIDGE

You want to go out there?

JAMES

Yes I do.

ELDRIDGE

I could stand to get in some trouble.

Sanborn looks at James and looks at the bandage on his head.

SANBORN

No, man, this is bullshit. You got --what?-- *three* infantry platoons here whose job it is to go haji hunting. That's not our job.

JAMES

You don't say 'No' to me, Sergeant. I say 'No' to you. You know there are guys watching us right now.

(on the move)

We're going.

James glowers at Sanborn and Eldridge and moves deeper into an unlit field behind the lemon grove.

Eldridge shoots Sanborn a sympathetic glance and follows James.

Sanborn watches them recede into the darkness. Then he runs after his team.

EXT FIELD

They move across the dark field, three abreast into the enveloping night.

We gradually lose sight of them in BLACKNESS. Seeing nothing, we HEAR, however, their BREATHING, and gravel CRUNCHING underfoot.

After a long moment of no visibility...they're faintly visible again in dim florescent light and we see:

EXT PARKING LOT

A shadowy parking lot filled with marooned cars, beyond which lies a neighborhood of one-story homes and narrow alleys.

Amid the cars, the men come across the bullet-shaped hull of an intact oil tanker. They crouch beside it, whispering:

JAMES

We know where the oil tanker came from.

SANBORN

It's the same kind.

JAMES

We're close. These alleys are probably set up in a grid. We're going to split up to flush them out. Sanborn take the first alley. Eldridge take two. I got three. Rally point at your intersection. Ready? Move!

SANBORN

Wait? Rally point? When?

But James has already dashed into the third alley.

ALLEY TWO

Eldridge, walking slowly, not sure he likes being alone.

ALLEY THREE

James runs confidently, sees a few kids in a doorway and tells them to scoot.

ALLEY ONE

Sanborn runs to make up for being the last to leave.

ALLEY TWO

Eldridge peers into an abandoned house. He thinks he hears something.

Spins.

It's nothing.

ALLEY ONE

Sanborn slows. Catches his breath when suddenly --

--*BLAM, BLAM, BLAM* - the staccato of *GUNFIRE* slaps off the concrete--

Sanborn dashes full speed back to the alley's opening.

ALLEY THREE

James turns, runs hard back into--

SANBORN AND JAMES

--the first intersection, where he sees Sanborn and shouts

JAMES
You got contact?!

SANBORN
Who is it?! What's going on?

JAMES
What have you got?!

SANBORN
It's Eldridge!!

ALLEY TWO

They come to Eldridge's alley where they see that a body lies on the ground. They run to it.

JAMES
Man down!!

SANBORN
Eldridge!!

As they draw close they see not Eldridge but the BODY of an Iraqi insurgent, dead from gunshot wounds.

JAMES
It's not him.

SANBORN
He's gone?!

A moment of decision.

SANBORN
That way is towards the tanker,
troops.

They run down the alley into a maze of narrow streets and dimly lit corridors.

NARROW STREET

Turning a corner, they catch a fleeting glimpse of Eldridge being dragged away by TWO INSURGENTS.

Before they can fire, the men are gone.

CORNER

They run to this corner and prepare to spin around it and shoot.

James hands Sanborn his flashlight.

JAMES
Hit 'em with both lights. One, two,
three!

DARK CORNER

They spin around the corner and flash light revealing NOTHING but an empty street.

NEXT ALLEY

They sprint to the next block, and again see Eldridge being dragged.

JAMES
One, two, three.

Again, they aim and spin: Sanborn shines the light - beams Eldridge and the two insurgents -- and James FIRES two short bursts from his M4.

The two insurgents collapse.

But Eldridge also goes down.

Running up, James and Sanborn see the insurgents are motionless, shot clean.

One bullet, however, has gone astray into Eldridge's leg and he's bleeding profusely.

JAMES
Eldridge you okay?

ELDRIDGE
I'm hit!

As James and Sanborn apply first aide:

SANBORN
You hit him in the leg!

ELDRIDGE
(panting)
Am I dead?

SANBORN
No, you're alright.

JAMES
You're fine.

Eldridge looks to Sanborn for confirmation that wound is indeed not mortal.

ELDRIDGE
Am I dead? Am I dead? Am I dead?

As Sanborn and James yank Eldridge off the ground, he screams in pain.

CUT TO:

INT CAMP VICTORY SHOWER STALLS LATER THAT NIGHT

James trudges into an empty bathroom and looks at himself in the mirror. Sees the faraway expression of a man lost to the war.

His shirt is crimson with Eldridge's blood.

He steps inside a shower stall, still dressed in full battle rattle, and turns on the hot faucet.

The water streams over him...and he lets go, punching the wall, thrashing his arms, then sinking down sobbing, broken, as his uniform soaks through and the reddish pink water swirls down the drain.

EXT CAMP VICTORY HEAD SHED MORNING

Looking fine and wearing a fresh clean uniform, James strides purposely out of the head shed toward a waiting Humvee in the parking lot.

He sees on the other side of the parking lot... none other than Beckham, who happily shouts to him:

BECKHAM

Hey, what's up man? Hey Boomala,
Boomala, wanna buys some DVDs, play
some soccer!

James stops. He stares. What can he say? The boy is fine.

His jihad was pointless. Insane.

Unable to face the kid and unwilling to explain, James turns away and stiffly gets into the Humvee.

The Humvee roars to life and drives away.

Beckham watches it go, hurt, confused.

Prelap: the ROTAR WASH of a helicopter preparing to fly.

EXT CAMP VICTORY TARMAC MORNING

Two SOLDIERS load Eldridge, strapped to a stretcher, onto a transport helicopter.

Sanborn and James run across the helipad to wish him good-bye.

JAMES

How you doing? Doc says you'll be
okay.

ELDRIDGE

My femur is shattered in nine places. He said I'll be walking in six months if, I'm lucky.

JAMES

Six ain't bad.

ELDRIDGE

Not bad? It fucking sucks man.

Eldridge is jostled as he gets put down; he cries out in pain.

ELDRIDGE

(angrily)

You see that! That's what happens when you shoot somebody, you motherfucker.

JAMES

I'm sorry. Sorry.

ELDRIDGE

You're sorry? Fuck you, Will. Really fuck you. Thanks for saving my life but we didn't have to go out looking for trouble so you could get your adrenaline fix, you fucking war mongerer.

James is crestfallen.

A U.S. MEDIVAC CREW MEMBER looks at Sanborn and gives a hand signal to wrap it up: time to go.

ELDRIDGE

(to Sanborn)

Take care of yourself, Owen.

SANBORN

(grabbing Eldridge's hand)

Get home safe. See you on the other side.

As the helicopter door slams closed, Eldridge shouts "lets get out of this desert."

James and Sanborn step back from the rotor wash.

James turns to say something to Sanborn. But he's already walking away.

SOLDIER PRELAP
(shouting)
Don't move! If you keep walking, we
will shoot you!

CUT TO:

EXT BAGHDAD STREET CHECKPOINT LATE AFTERNOON

A young SERGEANT at a checkpoint raises his M4 and shouts nervously at a bewildered Iraqi MAN in a BLACK SUIT. The man's hands are raised. He's standing alone in the middle of a square which has been cleared of all other pedestrians, and which is flanked by US ARMY soldiers and a TRANSLATOR disguising his identity by wearing a black ski mask.

SERGEANT
Don't move! Keep that translator
back!

TRANSLATOR
But the bomb was forced on him.

SERGEANT
Don't move. Stay still. If you keep
walking we will shoot you.

SHOUTING IN ARABIC as the translator conveys this command.

TITLE:

DAYS LEFT IN BRAVO COMPANY'S ROTATION: 2

James wearing his bomb suit, approaches the scene, while Sanborn follows close behind him in the Humvee.

SERGEANT
Keep that translator back.

One of the soldiers grabs the translator, while others, seeing James, shout "give him room," "let him through," etc.

TRANSLATOR
(to the soldier)
But the bomb was forced on him.
Against his will. He is not a bad
man!

James and the Sergeant huddle.

SERGEANT

He came walking up to our checkpoint, said he had a bomb strapped to him. He was sorry. He didn't want it to go off. Then he started begging us to take it off him.

TRANSLATOR

(to James)

Help this man. He's not a bad man.

SANBORN

Not a bad man? He's got a bomb strapped to him.

(to James)

This is a trap. He wants to draw us close.

JAMES

(to translator)

Tell him to open his shirt, slowly. I need to see what's inside.

The translator SHOUTS in Arabic.

The MAN unbuttons his jacket, revealing...

Clamped to his chest is a metal cage, locked with padlocks, and loaded with blocks of C4 wrapped in nails.

JAMES

(to the soldier)

I'd need a seventy five meter perimeter.

(to translator)

Tell him to get on his knees and touch the sky. Get down!

The translator SHOUTS. The man in the BLACK SUIT, gripped with despair, drops to his knees and raises his hands.

SERGEANT

Can we just shoot him?

As James considers that option when --

TRANSLATOR

NO. He's not a bad man. He has a family. The bomb was forced on him. He is asking for help. Only help.

JAMES
(to translator)
I want you to get back. I got it.

Sanborn pulls James aside for a private moment and pleads with him to be careful:

SANBORN
We've had our differences.
Eldridge. It happened. That's
water under the bridge. But this --
this is suicide.

James considers. Sanborn's right, of course. But he can't help himself. Like a moth to a flame, this is what he does.

JAMES
That's why it's called a suicide
bomb, right?

Sanborn reluctantly seals James in the helmet.

They bang fists.

DOWNRANGE NEAR SUICIDE BOMBER

James grabs a nearby soldier's walkie, then starts the walk downrange. Soldiers moving back to their perimeter... PEDESTRIANS gathering for a look. Soldiers scattering them quickly.

Black Suit smiles thinly as James nears. James nods at him. The man nods, frightened.

BLACK SUIT
Inshalla. Inshalla.

JAMES
Put your hands up!

TRANSLATOR
He says he has a family,

James kneels down to get a closer look at the bomb strapped to the man's belly. He takes out his 9mm and puts it on the guy's forehead. Cocks the trigger.

JAMES
Look, it would be a lot easier for
me to disarm this if I just shoot
you. Do you understand?

BLACK SUIT replies in Arabic.

JAMES
 (into walkie)
 What is he saying?

UPRANGE FROM SUICIDE BOMBER

TRANSLATOR
 (over walkie)
 He says, I don't wish to die. I
 have a family. Please take this off
 me.

DOWNRANGE NEAR SUICIDE BOMBER

James holds his walkie up for the man to hear the translator.

JAMES
 (headset)
 Tell him to put his hands behind
 his head or I will be very happy to
 shoot him.

Translator conveys this to BLACK SUIT in Arabic. BLACK SUIT starts yelling in Arabic. Forehead wet with sweat.

TRANSLATOR
 (over walkie)
*He says, please hurry he has a
 family.*

JAMES
 (to translator)
 Look, it's not what I said. Tell
 him to put his hands behind his
 head or I will shoot him.

James holds the walkie up to the man's ear, "listen," "do you understand?"

Now James sinks to his knees and examines the bomb, all the while keeping his pistol on the man's head. There is a FOREST OF WIRES. He pushes them aside, revealing a cheap Casio digital WATCH, which is counting down from five minutes.

JAMES

(headset)

Sanborn, we got a timer. We got a lot of wires. I need a little help on this.

SANBORN

(over headset)

Roger that, what do you need?

James feels around the bomb. It's strapped to the BLACK SUIT man with heavy gauge metal. The man shakes.

JAMES

(headset)

Bolt cutters. But you got two minutes to get down here.

SANBORN

(over walkie)

Roger that. I'll be there in thirty seconds.

HUMVEE

Sanborn is already running towards the truck when he hears James.

DOWNRANGE NEAR SUICIDE BOMBER

James presses the man's head to comfort him.

JAMES

(to man)

I know. Its' okay. You're alright.

The Casio watch is at 4:30.

UPRANGE FROM SUICIDE BOMBER

Sanborn runs hard with the bolt cutters.

DOWNRANGE NEAR SUICIDE BOMBER

Sanborn hands James the cutters.

The man is crying.

Sanborn sees the Casio. It reads 4:00

SANBORN
You weren't kidding.

JAMES
Nope.

James works the cutter blade.

ECU: Bolt Cutter. It SCRAPES futilely against the metal.

JAMES
(sotto)
What is this made out of?

SANBORN
Case hardened steel.

James doubles his effort.

ECU: Bolt Cutter. The blade bites the steel, but it doesn't give. James squeezes with all his might.

SANBORN
What's our time?

JAMES
Two minutes.

JAMES
We'd need torch to get this off.

SANBORN
We don't have one of those in the truck. He's a dead man.

ECU: Casio Watch 1:46.

JAMES
Hold on let me think. We got this.
I can handle it. I'm going to look
at the back.

Sanborn nods. *His hand is starting to shake.*

James goes behind the man, and rips open the back of his shirt, revealing the back of the bomb.

Here too it is a welded band, but the metal looks thinner. James works it with the cutter.

ECU: Casio Watch 1:30.

JAMES

We don't have enough time, Sanborn.
We don't have enough time. I have
to get these bolts off.

SANBORN

We at a minute and a half, we got
to get out of here.

JAMES

I'll handle this. Go.

SANBORN

Look, Will, come on --

JAMES

Go.

SANBORN

Fuck him, Come on, man. James --

JAMES

Sanborn you have forty five
seconds. YOU HAVE FORTY FIVE
SECONDS. JUST LEAVE!

SANBORN

He's a dead man, Will!

JAMES

GO!

Sanborn runs upränge.

SANBORN

(shouting to soldiers)
GET BACK!!! EVERYBODY GET BACK!!!

The soldiers turn and run.

James strains to clip the metal bar of the lock, putting all
of his weight into the effort. Finally, the blades slices.

ECU: broken lock falls to the ground.

James sees that he has four more locks more to cut. The time
is ticking down to 20 seconds.

James brings himself face-to-face with the man he can't save.

JAMES

I can't There's too many locks. I
can't do it. I can't get it off.
I'm sorry.

BLACK SUIT

(in Arabic)
Please, please, please--

JAMES

I'm sorry. You hear me? I'm sorry?

BLACK SUIT

(in Arabic)
Help me. Help me!

James drops the bolt cutter, kneels down in front of the man,
and shakes his head. That's it.

The man understands James' gesture. He reaches forward,
grabbing James' suit.

BLACK SUIT

(in Arabic)
No! No! Please

James brushes his hand away.

JAMES

I'm sorry.

James turns his back to the man and runs for cover.

--James running, arms akimbo

--The Black Suit man stands up and cries out to ALLAH!

BOOM!!

-- He explodes and a *hailstorm of particulate matter comes
flying at 22,000 feet per second straight at us*

-- chunks of molten metal hit James, knocking him to the
ground

--Sanborn, diving to keep the translator behind a barrier, is
grazed by shrapnel.

EXT DOWNRANGE/BLAST SITE

James' white face; blood seeps from his nose. Then as if overcoming great resistance his heart turns over with a loud beating. And as Sanborn recovers and shouts orders, "everybody out" in the background, James opens his eyes to the sky.

A KITE flutters overhead.

CUT TO:

EXT HUMVEE DUSK

The Humvee chugs through a crowded neighborhood. Traffic thickening. Shadows against a dimming sky.

INT HUMVEE DUSK

James drives. Sanborn is in the passenger seat covered in grime and dust.

JAMES
You alright?

SANBORN
No man. I hate this place

James passes Sanborn some Gatorade.

JAMES
Have a hit.

Sanborn drinks, grateful, and puts the Gatorade down. Then he looks at James.

SANBORN
I'm not ready to die, James.

JAMES
You're not going to die out here,
bro.

Sanborn shakes his head. Unconsciously, his fingers touch his neck, finding the exposed area above the collar of his body armor.

SANBORN
Another two inches. Shrapnel goes
zing -- slices my throat.
(MORE)

SANBORN (cont'd)

I bleed out like a pig in the sand.
Nobody will give a shit. I mean my
parents, they care, but they don't
count. Who else?

(beat)

I don't even have a son.

JAMES

You're going to have plenty of time
for that.

SANBORN

No man, I'm done.

(beat)

I want a son. I want a little boy,
Will.

A long beat.

SANBORN

I mean, how do you do it? Take the
risk?

JAMES

I don't know. I guess I don't think
about it.

SANBORN

But you know what I'm talking
about, right? Every time we go out,
you throw the dice. You recognize
that, right?

JAMES

Yeah. I do. But I don't know why.
Do you know why -- I am the way I
am?

Sanborn thinks on this. After a beat -

SANBORN

No I don't.

They exchange a long look. Brothers at last.

EXT HUMVEE

A gang of laughing KIDS throw rocks at the armored Humvee.

TIME CUT TO:

INT KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE SUPERMARKET MONTHS LATER

We're walking with James down a wide, polished aisle, past shelves of frozen treats glistening behind reflective glass, in the shiny and perfectly sterile cathedral to consumerism otherwise known as a supermarket.

James looks different here, awkward, less sure of himself. With his hair grown-in and his dreamy expression, he could be just another suburban softy pushing a shopping cart.

He's home but this is clearly not where he lives.

A beautiful young WOMAN approaches him from the other end of the aisle. She too is pushing a shopping cart and in it is a small BOY. She smiles at James and says:

YOUNG WOMAN

Honey, will you grab some cereal
and I'll meet you at the checkout.

CONNIE JAMES smiles again and pats her husband on the shoulder. As she walks away, he mumbles:

JAMES

Where's the cereal?

But she's already out of ear shot.

CEREAL AISLE

James stares at the rows and rows of cereal boxes, a medley of different brands all containing the same sugar and coloring and starch.

He looks this way and that.

Thrown by the abundant choices after the starkness of Baghdad, he can't decide which brand is his.

He reaches for a box, then pulls back, still unsure of himself.

Giving up, he picks a box at random and tosses it into the cart.

EXT KNOXVILLE JAMES HOUSE FRONT YARD LATE AFTERNOON SOME DAYS LATER

Rain water. Falling leaves. James is cleaning out the gutter, working under an overcast sky.

INT KNOXVILLE JAMES HOUSE LIVING ROOM EVENING

James zones out in front of a snowy TV; the glow plays on his face.

INT KNOXVILLE KITCHEN NEXT MORNING

Domesticity. Connie peels a pile of carrots. James washes mushrooms in the sink.

He tries to clean them individually but they crumble in his hands.

JAMES

Some guy drove his truck into a middle of an Iraqi market. He starts passing out free candies. All the kids come running up - he detonates. (beat) They're saying fifty nine dead...

She's heard this kind of story before and knows where it ends. She can't bring herself to reply.

JAMES

You know they need more bomb techs.

CONNIE

(handing James the carrots)
Will you chop these up for me?

JAMES PRELAP

Boing! Boing! Boing!

INT JAMES' SON'S BEDROOM LATER THAT NIGHT

Bedtime. James is putting his son to sleep in a room decorated with mobiles and colorful wall hangings. He sets the mobile spinning.

JAMES
Boing! Boing!

The boy giggles and reaches up.

On the bed is a Jack-In-the-Box, which James picks up and winds. He opens the toy for his son who squeals with delight, eyes wide with admiration for his daddy. Daddy, however, isn't sure where to go with this..An odd moment for the wild-man of Baghdad: playing the awkward dad to his adoring child

James looks into his son's unconditionally loving eyes.

Something he sees there prompts a confession:

JAMES
You love playing with that, don't you..? You love all your stuffed animals. You love your Mommy, your Daddy. You love your pajamas... You love everything, don't you?

James playfully spins the mobile. The boy laughs at the whirring color.

JAMES
But you know what buddy, as you get older some of the things that you love might not seem so special anymore. You know? Like your Jack-in-the-Box.

The boy touches the Jack-in-the-Box, smiling beautifully.

JAMES
Maybe... you'll realize it's just a piece of tin and a stuffed animal. And the older you get, the fewer things you really love.
(beat)
By the time you get to be my age, maybe it's only one -- or two -- things.

James pauses. His son continues to giggle and play.

JAMES
With me, I think it's one.

CUT TO:

EXT BAGHDAD TARMAC

--sonic overload of a C-130 airplane landing.

Wheels touch down on tarmac.

INT EXT AIRPLANE

The hydraulics of a loading ramp engage, lowering the ramp, and revealing a troop of young SOLDIERS inside the belly of the plane.

Passing over their frightened faces, we find one man who looks remarkably at ease.

James.

The soldiers disembark and we follow James as he leaves the plane and greets a another young EOD SOLDIER who has been waiting for him on the tarmac.

SOLDIER
Welcome to Delta-Company.

James shakes his hand.

A Middle-Eastern sun bathes James' upturned face lengthening into a smile.

His pace slows...the tarmac *transitions* to dirt as little puffs of dust lift off his continuous passage.

He is now in the bomb suit and we are --

EXT. BAGHDAD OUTSKIRTS DAY

On yet another war-torn street.

Two fresh faced EOD SOLDIERS observe James as he makes another lonely walk down an empty block... heading to a bomb.

-- James' face glistening with pleasure

-- The noon day sun shimmers on his helmet shield

TITLE:

DAYS LEFT IN DELTA COMPANY'S ROTATION: 365

And we watch him go down the unnamed road until he disappears.

END