

# The Hurt Locker

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Story by  
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"The rush of battle is a potent and often lethal addiction, for war is a drug."

Chris Hedges, WAR IS A FORCE THAT GIVES US MEANING

"The worst imaginable news: war thrives because enough men still love it."

TIME

BLACK SCREEN

Over the BUZZING sound of an electric engine we--

CUT TO:

EXT STREET/DAWN

*A grainy, low-resolution view, seen from sixteen inches above street level. And we're moving fast -- nauseatingly fast.*

From this angle close to the ground we FLY down a road strewn with war garbage: munitions, trash, rubber, animal shit -- all of which, from this odd, jarring perspective, looks gigantic, monstrous.

We zoom towards a crumpled COKE CAN, the white 'C' growing enormous on the screen, filling the screen like a skyscraper.

We SMASH into the can and barrel ahead.

A RAG flutters, blocks the view, then tumbles away, as we --

-- zoom downhill, see nothing but gray sand, then zoom back up hill and off, catching air, a flash of the horizon line, BRIGHT SUN, and land hard on a packed road.

We close in on one particular pile of trash, which is topped with a white plastic garbage bag, and stop. Puffs of dust and fluttering plastic.

We glide across the fluttering plastic. Flies buzzing. Advancing slowly, inch by inch, to the edge for our first glimpse *inside* the bag:

*A RUSTY ARTILLERY SHELL.*

CUT TO:

EXT MIDDLE EASTERN STREET/DAWN

A military ROBOT (about 3 feet long and 2 feet high, aka 'the bot') that rolls on tank-like treads and has a mechanical hand and an array of CAMERAS is moving around the bag.

**TITLE OVER:**

**BAGHDAD, IRAQ - JANUARY, 2005**

This is all taking place on a dusty stretch of road in a quiet section of Baghdad, barren except for a few shops, some cement houses and a couple of parked cars.

THE U.S. MILITARY HAS CONTROL OF THE CITY, BUT INSURGENT GROUPS ARE MOUNTING FRESH ATTACKS IN AN ATTEMPT TO DISRUPT THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS ON 31 JANUARY 2005.

THEY'VE ADOPTED A DEADLY NEW TACTIC, USING I.E.D.s - IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVICES - TO AMBUSH AMERICAN TROOPS. THE BODY COUNT IS RISING.

IN RESPONSE, THE ARMY HAS DEPLOYED THE LAST OF ITS ELITE BOMB SQUAD UNITS, HOPING THAT THESE THREE MAN TEAMS CAN DISARM THE BOMBS BEFORE THEY EXPLODE, AND STEM THE TIDE OF DESTRUCTION.

SOUND of far off GUNSHOTS and CALL to prayer.

SEVERAL U.S. INFANTRY SOLDIERS are moving PEDESTRIANS away from the bag. Another group of SOLDIERS is clearing out all the shops: bakery, sandwich shop, and a butcher shop.

Next to a parked Humvee, THREE EOD (Explosive Ordinance Disposal, aka Bomb Squad) SOLDIERS are crouched over a laptop computer, looking at the screen and the same image of the metal artillery shell inside the fluttering plastic.

SERGEANT MATT THOMPSON wipes at the sweat on his forehead. This is summer in the desert and the median temperature on this bright clear morning is 110 degrees.

THOMPSON

It's to the left.

Thompson tears open a mushy Snicker's. He is fleshy around the arms and middle, but there's real muscle underneath the flab and truth be told, after so many years in EOD, he's lost the need to have a show-off build.

SANBORN

Going left.

SERGEANT J. T. SANBORN works the joystick on the laptop. He is a strapping Iowa farm boy, with a thick back from bailing hay. In contrast to his bulky frame, his face is soft, open, kind. He has a relaxed demeanor. Which might lead you to think nothing ever bothers Sanborn. But if you thought that, you'd be mistaken. Before joining EOD, Sanborn was in Military Intelligence. He quit. Military Intel was too easy.

THOMPSON

Up a little.

LAPTOP SCREEN

Rusty artillery shell now almost full frame.

SANBORN

SANBORN

There?

THOMPSON

Closer. I want to see the ojive.

Zoom on the nose cone of the shell.

The third soldier leans in for a better look.

SPECIALIST OWEN ELDRIDGE is a tall, lanky young man, the youngest of the group. He's a fighter like the others but also a reader, and something of a thinker. Eldridge crouches behind the other two soldiers, sipping a bottle of water, eyes never leaving the screen.

THOMPSON

Push it in.

SANBORN

I can't get it inside.

THOMPSON

Pretend it's your dick.

SANBORN

(smiles)

I'm pretending it's *your* dick.

Eldridge laughs. He clearly likes the two men he's with.

THOMPSON

Let me try.

SANBORN

Give me a second.

THOMPSON

Give me a crack at it.

SANBORN

Shit. Okay.

They change places. Thompson now on the controls.

THOMPSON

Hello mamma. See that?

SANBORN

Looks like a one-five-five.

Eldridge gets up and goes to the Humvee, fishes around inside.

THOMPSON

Yeah. That can do some damage.

SANBORN

We're going to need a charge.

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

ELDRIDGE

Figured four blocks. Hey with these four blocks and the ninety pounds, are we going to be far enough away?

Now we see the tiny toy robot in the far distance -- far, far away.

Behind the Humvee and on either side of the road INFANTRY SOLDIERS are still clearing civilian onlookers from nearby stores.

Thompson stands and takes a good look at his surroundings.

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 an umbrella pattern. Some smaller pieces and shell fragments will come out this way -- but we'll be okay if we are behind the truck.

The idea that he would be standing in the open amuses Eldridge.

ELDRIDGE

You know *I'll* be behind the truck.

THOMPSON

Nothing wrong with that, Owen. Let's get the area cleared--  
(looks around at the crowd of onlookers)  
--as best we can, then load up the bot.

Eldridge double times it over to a nearby soldier. Together they herd away various bystanders.

CUT TO:

DOWNRANGE

The bot dutifully makes its return voyage to the plastic bag, this time towing a cart which is loaded with C4 and a blasting cap, and a coil of unspooling detonation wire.

The robot hits a bump causing the blasting cap to tumble to the ground, where it begins to roll --

UPRANGE

Everyone cringes. The cap doesn't explode. Close call.

SANBORN

Damn.

DOWNRANGE

The blasting cap has rolled into a gully, out of reach of the robot hand.

UPRANGE

Sanborn wiggles the stick. It's not happening.

SANBORN

Matt, the bot's not going to do it.

THOMPSON

Keep trying.

DOWNRANGE

The robot hand tries again. No dice.

UPRANGE

THOMPSON

Okay, you're right. I have to go down there - don't you think?

Sanborn nods.

THOMPSON

I don't want to wait around here in this neighborhood anyway.

SANBORN

(wryly)

What, you don't like it here?

THOMPSON

Let's just get me dressed.

CUT TO:

HUMVEE

Sanborn unpacks "THE SUIT." A bizarre 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.

A strap near the crotch prompts Thompson to wisecrack:

THOMPSON

Watch it.

SANBORN

(smiling)

I thought you already had your children, Sergeant.

THOMPSON

Need to keep my options open.

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 blow it. Boom -- no more bomb -- give these people something to think about.

(MORE)

THOMPSON (cont'd)  
 I want them to know if they're  
 going to leave a bomb on the side  
 of the road for us, we're going to  
 blow up their little road. Leave  
 them a crater and an ear ache.

Sanborn and Thompson put in their earplugs.

SANBORN  
 Ready?

Thompson nods.

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

Next, Sanborn takes a metal helmet with a thick glass front  
 and seals Thompson's face in. Sanborn attaches the breathing  
 hose. Taps his boss on the shoulder.

SANBORN  
 Not for you. (sealing him in)  
 Happy trails.

THOMPSON  
 (headset)  
 This is Blaster One.

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

Thompson turns to face the white bag and begins his walk  
 toward it.

EXT. ROAD DAY

Thompson's stride is slowed by the eighty-pound suit...He  
 CLUNKS down the road. Dust clouding from his boots...

He moves past the same mounds of charred and rotting stuff,  
 inner tubes, soda bottles, crumpled cans, steaming animal  
 waste, and bits of fluttering plastic that the bot passed...

*The question is not - do you see a white garbage bag? It's  
 which of these bags is the BOMB?*

Sweat slides down into his eyes.

THOMPSON  
 (headset)  
 200 meters. It's boiling in here.

UPRANGE

SANBORN  
 (into walkie)  
 Copy that. 200 meters.

The RASP of Thompson's BREATHING loud on Sanborn's walkie-talkie...

DOWNRANGE

Thompson walks on.

A knot of flies floats in the air in front of his helmet. He lifts an arm and they disappear.

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.

He looks down, CAREFULLY watches his footfalls. Garbage piled on top of garbage.

UPRANGE

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

THOMPSON (O.S)  
 (over walkie)  
 One hundred.

SANBORN  
 (into walkie)  
 Copy, that. 100 meters out.

DOWNRANGE

Thompson: careful footfalls on sand.

Breathing. Heat. Sun. Sweat. Flies.

Suddenly a DOG out of nowhere charges, BARKING ferociously.

Thompson is momentarily startled. Then resumes his walking.  
The dog runs off.

Thompson blinks more sweat out of his eyes.

THOMPSON  
(headset)  
Twenty five.

UPRANGE WITH SANBORN

Sanborn lifts the walkie. Sweat in his eyes. Wipes it away.

SANBORN  
Copy twenty five. You're in the  
kill zone.

THOMPSON  
(headset)  
Thanks for reminding me.

Eldridge nods. Everything progressing nice and easy.

DOWNRANGE WITH THOMPSON

Thompson is standing over the blasting cap.

THOMPSON  
(headset)  
Alright. I'm here. I'm gonna put it  
in.

SANBORN  
(over walkie)  
Copy that.

Thompson picks the blasting cap off the ground and looks up --

As distant THUMP of approaching chopper wash quickly becomes  
super loud in his ears.

SANBORN  
(over walkie)  
Hold on. Bird coming in.

THOMPSON  
(headset)  
I hear it.

Thompson pulls the cap back out. He looks up to see the giant  
black shape passing over him.

[Note: we see now what Thompson is worried about: as it chops the air, a helicopter rotor produces static electricity. We see this electricity as a faint, nearly transparent rippling wave.]

THOMPSON  
(headset)  
Guy is trying to kill me.

The helicopter turns, and swings back around.

THOMPSON  
(headset)  
If he brings that electricity back here, I'm going to put a bullet in his tail.

The helicopter banks in the other direction, away from Thompson.

UPRANGE

A collective sigh of relief.

SANBORN  
Jesus. (into walkie) I think he figured out we were EOD. You're good, Blaster One.

DOWNRANGE

Thompson inserts the cap back into the C4.

THOMPSON  
(headset)  
We're armed and ready to blow, Blaster Mike.

SANBORN  
(over walkie)  
Copy that. You coming back?

THOMPSON  
(headset)  
Copy that, I'm on my way.

Thompson gets up. Looks around at the expanse of empty, still 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.

UPRANGE

Sanborn and Eldridge lower their rifles.

DOWNRANGE

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

UPRANGE

Eldridge turns away from Thompson and opens the HUMVEE trunk to stow the bot.

Sanborn swats a fly and takes a sip of water.

Eldridge loads the bot. Out of the corner of his eye he sees some movement in the butcher shop.

ELDRIDGE

Hey Sanborn --

SANBORN

(turning)

Yeah?

ELDRIDGE

Butcher shop - dude has a phone.

SANBORN

He shouldn't be --

Eldridge is already moving towards the store.

Sanborn raises his gun and puts it on the store. The back of Eldridge moving in and out of his scope. He can't get a shot.

ELDRIDGE

(shouting, waving his gun)

Hey - put that down--

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

THOMPSON

--walking towards the Humvee away from the bomb. Lumbering steps.

THOMPSON  
(headset)  
50 meters. Why is Eldridge running?

ELDRIDGE

--running hard--

ELDRIDGE  
*Hey - put the phone down!*

SANBORN

--bolting sideways trying to get Eldridge out of his line of sight--

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

ELDRIDGE

--legs pumping, his thumb flicks the rifle safety--

The butcher smiles. Gives Eldridge the thumbs up sign. His other thumb is jamming a button on the phone.

Now Eldridge is panicked, shouting:

ELDRIDGE  
*DROP THE PHONE!!!*

THOMPSON

--starts to run. Fear in his eyes.

BUTCHER

--smiles back at Eldridge--

*MACRO: thumb on send button of the cell phone.*

THOMPSON

--running full out now--

**BOOM** ---

- Fireball blasts out from the bomb

-- flattening Thompson

-- Blood splatters the inside of his helmet.

-- thick cloud of particulate matter *roils* out in slow motion

-- hitting Eldridge and Sanborn -- *turning them black.*

*With the roiling cloud we begin to float up and out over the entire city of Baghdad:*

*--we see intersections jammed with traffic; American Humvees and tanks idle next to red-and-white taxis, beat-up Opals, the military and civilian mixed up in one snarling line, all competing for space, advantage...*

*--we continue to rise until we take in the entire massive metropolis. Mosques and office towers ascend from a maze of dusty streets teeming with life despite two decades of war...*

*The roiling black cloud thins in a light breeze and we hard cut to:*

BLACK

CUT TO:

INT CAMP VICTORY TRAILER DAY

A shaft of afternoon sun creeps past a plywood-covered window, faintly lighting the interior of a narrow, low-ceilinged room.

In the dimness we see contours: desk, chair, a large locker, and the silhouette of a MAN moving a cot away from the window. On the cot is a small duffle bag.

We hear a knock from the outside.

The man moving the cot stops.

JAMES

Yeah.

SANBORN O.S.  
Sergeant James?

JAMES  
It's open.

The door opens and in the light we see Sanborn.

SANBORN  
Sergeant James. (extending his  
hand) J.T. Sanborn. Welcome to  
Bravo Company and welcome to Camp  
Victory.

JAMES  
Victory? I thought this was called  
Camp Liberty.

SANBORN  
(shrugs)  
They changed it last week. Victory  
sounds better.

JAMES  
It's Will. Good to meet you J.T.

SERGEANT WILLIAM JAMES extends a hand. A former DELTA soldier is in his late twenties, good-looking, appealing face, solid build, one of the lucky ones. And yet, look closer. In the right light, there's an unusual depth to his expression, to his eyes and all-American face, as if he's guarding an inner chaos that could rush out at any time.

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

Sanborn looks around the empty room. One duffle.

SANBORN  
So, is that all you brought from  
Kabul?

James motions to the locker.

JAMES  
Yeah. Here, give me a hand with  
this.

Sanborn helps James move the locker against the wall.

JAMES  
By the window.

They push the locker over the window, blocking the light.  
It's very dark in the room now.

JAMES

A mortar once hit near my trailer --  
boom -- a two inch piece of frag  
cut through the aluminum and flew  
this far (gesturing with his hands)  
over my head, past my balls and  
landed in my computer hard-drive.  
Where's the damn light?

Sanborn finds the switch in the corner. Then he comes back  
and taps the metal locker, testing its strength.

SANBORN

This should stop any lateral  
pieces.

JAMES

Yeah, I'm good unless it comes  
through the roof (smiles) in which  
case I'm gonna need a closed  
casket.

Sanborn doesn't like the joke, tries to change gears.

SANBORN

The accent -- you from Georgia?

JAMES

Tennessee. Trailer park off I-5.

SANBORN

Oh, right. I'm from Vermont. You  
know, "live free or die." Trees.  
Snow. Maple syrup. Pot.

James gives him a polite smile.

Sanborn soldiers on:

SANBORN

Well, if you need anything to get  
squared away, just let me know.  
Either myself or Owen -- Eldridge --  
be happy to steer you in the right  
direction for supplies, whatever.

JAMES

Okay. (pause) Thanks.

SANBORN

Anyway, the mess tent can be hard to find the first time ... so ... if you want ... we're going over there now to grab chow ... come along.

JAMES

Thanks. But no.

SANBORN

You want me to bring you back a burger or something?

JAMES

(shaking his head)

Nah. I'm good.

James unzips his duffel and gets up to put his clothes on an overhead shelf. Sanborn watches him, then starts for the door. James turns to face Sanborn.

JAMES

I'm sorry about Thompson, I heard he was a good tech.

SANBORN

Yeah, he was. And he was a good team leader too.

JAMES

I know I can't fill his shoes, but I'm here to try--

SANBORN

Appreciate it.

JAMES

--but you know, if it's your time it's your time. No man can change that.

SANBORN

(puzzled)

Yeah, I guess that's true.

(recovering)

So, we roll at oh-six-hundred.

James smiles slightly as he contemplates the next day's mission.

JAMES

Looking forward to it.

EXT TRAILER MOMENTS LATER

Sanborn comes out and sees Eldridge, who has been waiting by the door.

They walk towards the mess tent. Sanborn is absorbed in thought. Eldridge doesn't want to interrupt.

After a moment.

ELDRIDGE

So?

SANBORN

A good 'ole boy. You know, loves the Army, blood runs green. Country boy. Seems solid.

ELDRIDGE

I always liked southerners, for some reason.

SANBORN

Then he's just your type.

ELDRIDGE

Why is it always the gay jokes with you. It's not even funny.

SANBORN

(growing serious, he imitates James' accent)  
It's your time it's your time.

ELDRIDGE

(concerned)  
He said that?

Sanborn nods.

CUT TO:

EXT CAMP VICTORY ELDRIDGE'S TRAILER EARLY MORNING

The sand has completed its daily march across Eldridge's steps. His boots sweep a bit away as he steps outside in full battle gear, and kisses a photo of the Virgin Mary and slips it inside his helmet. He steps out into the bright morning sun.

EXT CAMP VICTORY HUMVEE PARKING LOT

Sanborn is gearing up, strapping on a shitload of weapons and ammunition. Ready for anything.

Eldridge comes up.

ELDRIDGE  
Where's the FNG?

[Note: FNG. Fucking New Guy.]

EXT JAMES' TRAILER

Eldridge, surprised to see James is not outside ready to go, knocks on his door.

Beat.

JAMES (O.S.)  
Yeah?

ELDRIDGE  
It's oh-six-hundred.

The door opens a crack, revealing James dressed in his skivvies and wrapped in a blanket, blinking awake.

JAMES  
Gimme a minute.

Before Eldridge can express the shock that's written all over his face, James has closed the door.

CUT TO:

EXT CAMP VICTORY

An American Humvee drives past a long line of parked tanks arranged in a neat rows, and gathering dust on all horizontal surfaces.

INT HUMVEE

Sanborn is behind the wheel, simultaneously driving and loading his rifle. James sits next to him in the passenger seat, loading his rifle and looking out the window. Eldridge is in the back seat.

ELDRIDGE

(looking out window)

Those Abrams have been parked ever since I got here nine months ago, and I ain't seen them move once. They should put those on eBay. Hey, J.T., how much you think one of those would cost?

SANBORN

Ten million?

ELDRIDGE

Well I guess it makes sense. Anybody comes alongside the Humvee, we're dead. Anybody looks at you funny, you're dead. Pretty much, the bottom line, is if you're in Iraq you're dead. How's a tank going to stop that?

SANBORN

Gimme a break, Owen.

ELDRIDGE

(smiling)

Sorry. Just trying to scare the new guy.

EXT CAMP VICTORY/BAGHDAD OUTSKIRTS MORNING

The Humvee moves out of the base and into the outskirts of the city. Heat and sand and little else.

INT HUMVEE

JAMES

We had a few bombs up in Kabul too.

ELDRIDGE

Sure, I bet you did. But you're going to be *real* busy here, boss.

James smiles, settles back in the seat.

EXT HUMVEE

The Humvee is now approaching a cluster of cars.

INT HUMVEE

SANBORN

Hey Owen -- watch the fucking road.

Eldridge moves up to the gunner's seat on top of the Humvee.

EXT HUMVEE

Eldridge has a collection of rocks he keeps in the gunner's nest and now he throws one at the car in front of him. The passenger turns around.

ELDRIDGE

Imshee -- Imshee !

CUT TO:

EXT BAGHDAD STREET EARLY MORNING

The Humvee grinds to a stop on the outskirts of town. It's a place teeming with trash, with dwellings that look as beaten down as the people. The ghetto of the ghetto.

James is first out, Sanborn comes up behind him.

Eldridge climbs out of the turret.

They are now out in the open -- standing on Iraqi sand -- where anything can happen.

SANBORN

(to Eldridge)

Clear here.

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

ELDRIDGE

Clear here.

JAMES

(looking around at the  
empty street)

Where are the guys who called this  
in?

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

SANBORN  
 (into walkie)  
 Victory Main, Victory Main, this is  
 Blaster Mike. Interogative, Do you  
 have an updated poz for the link-  
 up? Has their position changed?

After a moment a scratchy voice over his walkie.

DISPATCH O.S.  
 (over walkie)  
 Blaster Mike, this is Victory Main.  
 Negative. Figures to follow. Three-  
 four-five-three is your grid. You  
 should have a visual on them right  
 now. They're waving an American  
 flag

Sanborn keys his GPSw unit.

SANBORN  
 (into walkie)  
 Negative, Main. No one in sight.

DISPATCH O.S.  
 (over walkie)  
 Blaster Mike. You should have a  
 visual, waving a flag.

SANBORN  
 (into walkie)  
 (looking at empty space) Well,  
 that's were I am and I don't see  
 any guys in fatigues, and I sure as  
 hell don't see any American flag,  
 Over.

James, Sanborn and Eldridge continue their slow walk down the  
 street. An empty Humvee comes into view.

ELDRIDGE  
 They abandoned their vehicle?

James walks forward. Unconcerned. Takes out a cigarette and  
 lights it. Sanborn's walkie comes to life.

DISPATCH O.S.  
 (over walkie)  
 Roger, Blaster. I copied you the  
 first time.

James approaches the empty Humvee.

Stops. Turns to see a tiny American flag being waved in the window of a nearby building. James jogs over to the building, opens the door.

JAMES  
Hello boys --

Looking into a room full of SOLDIERS who are trying not to look afraid.

SANBORN  
(into walkie)  
Yeah, thanks. Roger that.

JAMES  
(to soldiers)  
Don't tell me the bomb is in there with you.

A SERGEANT, slightly embarrassed, climbs out into the open and tries to act nonchalant.

He points down the block, which is a sea of trash and white plastic bags.

SERGEANT  
(pointing far down the road)  
Down on that block, one of our informants says there is an IED in a white plastic bag.

James has heard enough and even though the Sergeant may have more to say --

JAMES  
I'll get it.  
(turning to Sanborn)  
Break out the suit.  
(turning back to the Sergeant) )  
Keep your guys back.

Sanborn is already unloading the robot.

SANBORN  
What about the bot?

JAMES  
Don't need it.

SANBORN  
 (surprised)  
 What? Aren't we going to send the  
 bot down to take a look?

JAMES  
 Nah, I'm going to take care of it.

Sanborn shoots Eldridge a look. *Is he an FNG or what?*

CUT TO:

JAMES

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

SANBORN  
 I was thinking if we sent the bot  
 down first --

James ignores him.

As soon as he's enclosed in the suit, James moves quickly  
 toward the rubble pile.

UPRANGE

ELDRIDGE  
 He's a rowdy boy.

SANBORN  
 He's reckless.

ELDRIDGE  
 Somebody should tell the U.N. to  
 send the rice in clear plastic bags  
 so there's no place to hide the  
 IEDs. The insurgent would be like,  
 'Allah has forsaken me all the bags  
 are clear'.

[Note: IED Improvised Explosive Device. A homemade bomb. The  
 number one weapon of the Iraqi insurgency.]

SANBORN  
 (smiling)  
 I've seen so much garbage I'm  
 starting to like the smell.

JAMES

As he advances downrange, he passes a line of bushes and tosses an incendiary grenade at it, setting the foliage ablaze.

UPRANGE

Sanborn looks on in confusion.

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

No answer.

SANBORN  
(into walkie)  
Blaster One, this is Blaster Mike,  
what's with the fire on the side of  
the road, over?

No answer. Sanborn and Eldridge struggle to get a visual. They dash to a better vantage point.

SANBORN  
(into walkie)  
Hey James, can you hear me? What's  
with the fire on the side of the  
road, over?

JAMES

Finally:

JAMES  
(over headset)  
Creating a diversion.

Sanborn can barely see James through the flames and smoke.

UPRANGE

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

SANBORN  
(into walkie)  
From what? Is there a threat?

Eldridge scans the area with his rifle, tense, trying to figure out how to behave.

SANBORN  
 (to Eldridge)  
 Get up on that wall.

Eldridge hustles over to the wall, but can't manage to pull himself up with all his gear on, so dashes down to a mound of dirt, which gives him a leg up.

SANBORN  
 (into walkie)  
 James, I can't see you, over.

The last thing he expects is James' laconic reply:

JAMES O.S.  
 (over walkie)  
 Copy that.

Sanborn shoots Eldridge a look - what the fuck.

SANBORN  
 (to Eldridge)  
 Tell me what you see, Specialist.

Eldridge, on the wall, feels awfully vulnerable and in the open. The wall is quite narrow. His feet are precariously balanced. His view of James is not much better

ELDRIDGE  
 I see his back. He's walking  
 downrange. Oh, I lost him.

SANBORN  
 Eldridge, move down that wall and  
 maintain a visual. Move. Move.

Eldridge teetering down the wall.

ELDRIDGE  
 Roger, roger. I'm on him. He's  
 still walking.

SOUND of BREATHING in Sanborn's walkie.

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

JAMES

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 now, the city of Baghdad has taken on an intense and dreamy hue, as if we're in some sort of fugue state:

--He looks down the strange, threatening Iraqi street.

He walks on. The suit is heavy, little puffs of sand with each footfall. The sun beats down.

James nears an intersection guarded on either side by a Humvee and several SOLDIERS, when...

INTERSECTION

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 - Get Down Motherfucker! Don't Move! Back up! Out of the vehicle!

The TAXI BRAKES in front of James.

UPRANGE

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

SANBORN

(into walkie)

James --

ELDRIDGE

(shouting to Sanborn)

Car! Car! A car stopped in front of him.

JAMES

James' HEADSET WALKIE barks to life:

SANBORN O.S.

(headset)

Come back.

James pulls a pistol from his holster, and --

JAMES  
(headset)  
I got it.

-- shoots two rounds into the dirt, near the car's front tire.

DRIVER'S FACE

Impossible to read. Is he a taxi driver annoyed by the roadblock, or an insurgent fighter getting ready to blow a suicide bomb?

ONE OF THE ARMY SOLDIERS

With field glasses on the intersection he speaks into the walkie.

SOLDIER  
(over walkie)  
EOD has a nine on this Haji in the car. I'm going to get two guys over there to back him up.

SANBORN

Still can't see clearly. Processing this information. Turns to Eldridge.

Eldridge using his rifle scope as well - shakes his head. No visual.

SANBORN  
(into walkie to soldier)  
Negative, negative. You're too close to the IED--  
(hesitating)  
Stand down. EOD has the situation under control.

Sweat on his forehead.

JAMES

Now aiming at the windshield. But the driver is impassive.

UPRANGE

Eldridge looks through his rifle scope.

ELDRIDGE  
(shouting to Sanborn)  
We're in a kill zone!

INTERSECTION

James fires, shattering the windshield. *But the car doesn't budge.*

James is pissed. He lunges through the windshield and jams his gun into the driver's forehead.

SOLDIER

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

INTERSECTION

The gun digs into the driver's forehead. Beat. The driver shifts into reverse.

He rolls back to the soldiers, who then rush the car, yank the driver out, and deliver a savage beating as James looks on.

JAMES

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

And he resumes his walk towards the white garbage bag and the rubble pile, noting possible threats -- a MAN in a window down the road.

UPRANGE

SANBORN  
(coolly, into walkie)  
Copy that.  
(MORE)

SANBORN (cont'd)  
 But I have no idea what you're  
 talking about, Blaster One, since I  
 can't see you. Over.

JAMES O.S.  
 (headset)  
 I'll tell you later. James out.

PILE OF RUBBLE

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

Moving quickly, he deftly removes rubble and trash to expose  
 the wires and the artillery shells they are attached to --  
 sees out of his peripheral vision the MAN in the window --  
 reaches for his pistol -- but the man disappears from view --  
 he then goes back to work, with swift sure hands. He loves  
 this, loves being close to oblivion.

The wires are exposed. He cuts one. Then flips the artillery  
 rounds over and cuts the other wire.

JAMES  
 (headset)  
 We're done.

He stands and uses his big boot to clear more rubble. A  
 banana peel is pushed away, revealing:

*Another wire snaking out of the ground.*

JAMES  
 (headset)  
*Secondary!*

James spins to look uprange. Sees Sanborn motioning for the  
 men to get down.

UPRANGE

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

Soldiers scrambling to find concrete to hide behind.

JAMES

James YANKS the wire out of the dirt but it turns out to be buried like a root, and the more he rips the more the wire is revealed. He rips and rips, going back ten feet.

---The wire is *stuck* in the ground, and it will not come out anymore. James digs with a knife -- FURIOUSLY moving earth -- until he reaches a third artillery shell, which he pulls out of the ground.

--CU knife blade inside the shell --

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

--ECU blasting cap --

--ECU knife tip separates the wire...

CUT TO:

UPRANGE MOMENTS LATER

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

JAMES  
 (gulping air as the helmet  
 is removed)  
 Did you see that guy?  
 (smiles, recovers his  
 macho)  
 Man, I need a beer.

Sanborn begins the bomb suit removal ritual - unstrapping Velcro.

SANBORN  
 We can arrange that.

He yanks at the strap - a little roughly.

SANBORN  
 What do you like?

JAMES  
 Colt.

SANBORN  
 Nice southern brand.

Yanks at another strap.

James looks down, the tone of Sanborn's voice and the force of the strap gets his attention.

Eldridge picks up the pieces of the suit and places them into the Humvee. Listening to this exchange.

ELDRIDGE  
I'd take a beer.

JAMES  
(smiling)  
Hey, that wasn't too bad, for our first time working together.

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

JAMES  
Are we going on a date, J.T.?

Sanborn stands, removing the last piece of the suit.

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.

With that James walks to the Humvee and gets inside.

Sanborn closes the trunk, hard, startling Eldridge. Eldridge comes close, speaking out of James' earshot.

ELDRIDGE  
It's just thirty nine days.

SANBORN  
Thirty eight. Assuming we survive today.

ELDRIDGE  
Tick-tock. Tick-tock.

INT HUMVEE

James is in the passenger seat, waiting impatiently. Sanborn and Eldridge get in.

JAMES

I don't mean to mix it up. But the situation dictated it.

SANBORN

(coolly)

Roger that.

JAMES

I'm serious. We're gonna work together. You'll get used to my ops tempo.

SANBORN

Your ops tempo?

JAMES

I don't always stop to chat, and I like to go fast. You know, so the insurgents don't have time to plan. I don't want them make any cell phone calls.

Off Sanborn's face.

INT. CAMP VICTORY MESS TENT DAY

Eldridge and Sanborn chowing down - two guys among a sea of SOLDIERS. Behind them in the mess tent hang the signs of various fast-food restaurants that cater to the troops: PIZZA HUT, SUBWAY, BURGER KING.

SANBORN

Ketchup?

Eldridge passes his ketchup over to Sanborn.

ELDRIDGE

This is not Pizza Hut.

(removing a slice of pepperoni)

And this is not pepperoni. It's round and meaty, but it ain't pepperoni.

SANBORN

Goat meat, probably.

ELDRIDGE

Goat meat pepperoni? I'd be glad if this was goat meat pepperoni.

(MORE)

ELDRIDGE (cont'd)  
I'd eat a truckload of goat meat  
pepperoni. No, this is something  
else. (slapping the fake pepperoni  
on the table) This is unholy.

SANBORN  
Pray for something better -- and  
while you're at it, pray for a new  
team leader.

ELDRIDGE  
You sure you want to be the guy in  
the bomb suit?

They see James at a food station.

SANBORN  
Be better than him.

James approaches the table.

ELDRIDGE  
Hey, James.

James sits down to an awkward silence. Eldridge stops eating.  
Considers him.

ELDRIDGE  
(to James)  
That was some crazy shit you pulled  
out there.

JAMES  
Yeah?

ELDRIDGE  
Hell yeah. You're either really  
lucky or really good. Right up on  
the car like that. Gun to the head.  
Crazy. You know it might backfire  
on you someday. You know that. You  
might actually die. And then what?

James is puzzled.

JAMES  
I don't know, what?

ELDRIDGE  
You don't meet your maker. You just  
get vaporized into little bits of  
DNA.

Sanborn watches Eldridge closely. *Is he referring to Thompson?*

SANBORN  
 (trying to be helpful)  
 He asks everyone what they think  
 about death. Ever since Thompson  
 was KIA.

James nods, turns to Eldridge:

JAMES  
 I don't think about it. Waste of  
 time.

James goes back to eating. Eldridge keeps looking at him,  
 then lets it go.

EXT. CAMP VICTORY MESS TENT DAY

Midday in Iraq. The heat is oppressive, biblical.

James, Sanborn and Eldridge emerge into the blazing sun and  
 the tumult of the base. Trucks barrel by. And troops --  
 everywhere, troops.

James stops in front of young Iraqi KID selling pirated DVDs,  
 while Sanborn and Eldridge continue on to the head shed. The  
 kid, whose name is PELE, has DVDs fanned on a table.

PELE  
 One for five, two for nine.

JAMES  
 (having fun)  
 Three for twelve?

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

JAMES  
 (laughing, fishes out a five) Keep  
 the change.

EXT HEAD SHED PORCH

Sanborn is smoking a cigarette and watching James buy DVDs,  
 weighing him, when the team's FIRST SERGEANT, stocky with a  
 paternal way about him, holds out a white envelope to  
 Sanborn.

FIRST SERGEANT

The tags finally came. Figured you'd want to be the one to take them over. (handing Sanborn the envelope)

SANBORN

Thanks, I will handle it.

The Sergeant nods. Sanborn stuffs the envelope in his back pocket. And the Sergeant heads inside, walking past --

INT HEAD SHED SIDE OFFICE

A small office space with the door opened a crack. Behind the door, Eldridge is sitting on a swivel chair, looking at a computer screen, playing a computer game. Next to him in another swivel chair is LT. COL. JOHN CAMBRIDGE, a MILITARY PSYCHIATRIST, who is looking at Eldridge and the screen.

ELDRIDGE

(singing the jingle)  
 "Be all that you can be," right?  
 But what if all I can be is dead on  
 the side of an Iraqi road?

LT. COL CAMBRIDGE

I'd like to see you move past this  
 feeling that you're going to die,  
 Owen.

ELDRIDGE

(looking at the screen)  
 Why? I think it's logical. This is  
 a war, right Doc? People die all  
 the time. Why not me?

LT. COL CAMBRIDGE

That's true. But what concerns me  
 is how much you *think* about it. You  
 have to change the record in your  
 head, think about other things.

ELDRIDGE

What do you think about?

LT. COL CAMBRIDGE

I don't dwell on death. (looking at  
 his watch) I don't obsess. You  
 understand what I'm getting at?

Eldridge looks up at last.

EXT CAMP VICTORY JAMES' TRAILER NIGHT

James stands before the open door of his trailer with the satellite phone in hand. Overhead a canopy of stars blinks.

Through the earpiece of the phone the faint but unmistakable BEEP of an answering machine.

JAMES

(into phone)

Hey, guess you're out...wherever you are you're probably wearing those tight jeans, damn those look good... Anyway, Baghdad's alright, guys are a little uptight down here, but then they just lost a brother so I understand... uh...(looking up at the stars)...really beautiful night, wish you could see these stars...miss you...bye...

He disconnects. Sits in the darkness. Distant WASH of engine noise.

INT CAMP VICTORY SHOWER STALLS NEXT MORNING

Sanborn is shaving in a mirror, otherwise dressed for combat and ready to go, when James shuffles in wearing a T-shirt and boxer shorts, looking like he just woke up.

Sanborn can't believe James is this relaxed.

SANBORN

Hey.

JAMES

Hey.

James starts to brush his teeth.

SANBORN

I gotta talk to you about something before we roll out.

James keeps brushing.

JAMES

Shoot.

SANBORN  
 Yesterday -- that was not cool.

JAMES  
 I know. We'll get it.

More tooth brushing. Face cleaning.

James notices a tatoo on Sanborn's forearm.

SANBORN  
 I was in Military Intel for seven  
 years. Before EOD. We ran combat  
 missions in every shit hole on the  
 planet  
 (beat, smile on his face)  
 So I'm pretty sure I can figure out  
 a dumb trailer park redneck like  
 you.

JAMES  
 (spitting out water,  
 smiles back)  
 Looks like you're on the right  
 track.

INT HUMVEE SOMEWHERE IN BAGHDAD MORNING

Sanborn drives. James in the passenger seat. Eldridge is in the gunner's turret. They ride in silence, each man alone with his thoughts.

**TITLE OVER:**

**DAYS LEFT IN BRAVO COMPANY'S ROTATION: 37**

EXT ROAD BEHIND BRITISH EMBASSY DAY

A faded blue Opal sits by a high wall laced with concertina wire. It's at the end of a narrow cul de sac which backs onto the embassy.

The narrow cul de sac dog-legs into another street. At the entrance to the cul de sac, there is a phalanx of SOLDIERS and our EOD techs.

Sanborn and Eldridge are unloading the robot from the Humvee.

Other soldiers are evacuating OFFICE WORKERS from the embassy.

James seems frustrated with the situation - frowning into the face of the SERGEANT in charge.

SERGEANT

An office worker called it in. The car doesn't belong to anyone who works at the building. It's been parked there for an hour. No license plate and the suspension is sagging, so there's something heavy in the trunk -- three or four hundred pounds. Could be a bomb.

JAMES

Did you evacuate?

SERGEANT

We're trying. But the English Ambassador said we're supposed to guarantee his safety.

Sanborn approaches, lap top in hand.

SANBORN

Bot is ready.

EXT ROAD BEHIND EMBASSY

A WOMAN in a Bhurka on a motorcycle rides past the Soldiers and towards the Opal --

SOLDIER 1

(raising his rifle)

Shit -- What do you want me to do?

SOLDIER 2

Shoot her.

SOLDIER 1

We can't shoot her for riding a bike...

-- CU the motorcyclist's hands, holding a MOLOTOV COCKTAIL. It's hidden from view of the soldiers.

-- She rolls the cocktail under the car and darts down an alley

The car BURSTS into flames, and the scene breaks into --

Pandemonium --

-- Eldridge frantically straps James into the suit, as the car burns.

-- James takes off his sunglasses, cleans them, calmly.

-- Sanborn runs to the truck and returns with a fire extinguisher, which he hands to James.

JAMES

Eldridge - I want you in that  
window - keep the alley clear.  
Sanborn, cover it from the street.

Sanborn looks at the alley: not a happy place. Eldridge takes off towards the Embassy entrance.

INT. AMBASSADOR'S OFFICE

AMBASSADOR SIR AUCKLAND GEDDES, the epitome of the old style of British foreign service: elegant, self assured, a gentleman adventurer in Seville Row, hoping to improve the world, certain he'll profit in the attempt.

He's holding court with a group of EXECUTIVES. The executives are seated around a conference table under the Ambassador's sway. There's a model of a British Petroleum gas station/convenience store, in English and Arabic, in the center of the table.

AMBASSADOR GEDDES

...So in sixteen months time I  
believe five million gallons per  
day is in fact rather conservative.

SOUNDS out the window. An Executive turns his head nervously.

EXECUTIVE

But security is still the big  
variable?

The Ambassador brushes his hand in dismissal.

AMBASSADOR GEDDES

Only on the margins.  
(smiling)  
Everyday, the risks diminish and  
the rewards multiply--

Eldridge enters.

AMBASSADOR GEDDES

Ah, and here is EOD. You see gentlemen, everything is fine. The site is secure. The bomb -- if there even is one -- will easily be dispensed by the crack American team.

ELDRIDGE

Excuse me.

Eldridge rushes over to the window to see the street.

ELDRIDGE

(into walkie)

Blaster Mike, I'm at the window.

SANBORN

He's stationed himself near the mouth of the alley. Wisps of smoke and flames in the air.

SANBORN

(into walkie)

Copy that. How's the fire look from up there.

AMBASSADOR'S OFFICE

ELDRIDGE

(into walkie)

Flames a meter high, over.

JAMES

Close to the burning car. SMOKE rising from the hood and the under carriage awash in FLAMES, like a sleeping dragon.

James sprays the fire-extinguisher and the fire subsides. He inspects the interior - looks normal enough - and tries to open the trunk with a pair of pliers, but the handle doesn't give and snaps off under his effort. He kicks the trunk but it remains shut. He turns and lumbers up range, jaw set.

SANBORN

Watching James walk back uprange.

SANBORN  
(into walkie)  
Blaster One, what is going on?

JAMES O.S.  
(headset)  
Stay put, I'll be right back.

Standing alone in the kill zone at the mouth of the alley.

ELDRIDGE  
(over walkie)  
What's happening?

SANBORN  
(into walkie)  
Good question. But I'm not liking  
it.

HUMVEE

James is buried inside the Humvee, searching. He tosses what he doesn't need, and a succession of items comes flying out -- food, clothing, a tarp. Now James walks back towards the Blue Opal without saying a word. In his hand is a crowbar.

BLUE OPAL

James winds up and swings hard at the door. Wham! Nope. Wham! Wham! Wham!

He drops the crowbar and tries the trunk. Presto, it opens, revealing: a trunk overflowing *with* EXPLOSIVES -- ten times what we've seen before. James is taken aback.

JAMES  
(headset)  
We're all in the kill zone on this  
one.

SANBORN

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

JAMES

Now inside the car, slipping on the slimy seats, he cuts the seat cushions with his knife, and rips out the foam upholstery, and finds more bad news buried underneath: SIX ARTILLERY SHELLS and a WIRE that leads to the floorboard and goes under the carpeting.

James DIVES to the wire and cuts it, then rips open the carpet to reveal more wire -- and follows the wire through the car, ripping apart the car PIECE by PIECE, cutting wire as he goes.

AMBASSADOR'S OFFICE

An executive gets up to look out the window.

ELDRIDGE

(to executive)

Sir, I'm going to need you to stay away from the window.

AMBASSADOR GEDDES

Yes, please, sit down. It's safe.

EXECUTIVE

Why is he here, if it's safe?

AMBASSADOR GEDDES

He is just an observer.

EXECUTIVE

(to Eldridge)

Is that true, we're safe here?

ELDRIDGE

(distracted)

In my opinion, no.

Executives take this as a cue to leave. Getting up, shuffling out of the room. The Ambassador is furious at Eldridge, advancing on him.

AMBASSADOR GEDDES

This is idiotic. Why not tow the vehicle away from the building?

ELDRIDGE

I believe the lane is too narrow for a Humvee, Sir.

AMBASSADOR GEDDES  
Donkeys. Use donkeys.

ELDRIDGE  
I don't believe we have any of  
those on hand, Sir.

AMBASSADOR GEDDES  
Jesus, Lord. You Americans really  
are incompetent. No donkeys on  
hand? What do you think I'm  
talking about, a full squadron of  
farm animals?

Eldridge trying to stay on task.

ELDRIDGE  
Sir--

AMBASSADOR GEDDES  
(cutting him off)  
Go downstairs, grab a farmer or one  
of those street vendors and procure  
- meaning purchase, buy - several  
donkeys. Then tow this car bomb  
away from my office.

ELDRIDGE  
(steeling himself)  
Sir, I'm going to need you to step  
away from the window.

Geddes looks out the window at the burning car.

SANBORN

His walkie barks to life.

JAMES O.S.  
(over Sanborn's walkie)  
Lot of pink Det cord here.

SANBORN  
(into talkie)  
Where's the switch?

JAMES

JAMES  
(headset)  
Not in the back seat.

James is now in the front seat, tearing up the upholstery.

JAMES CONT'D

(headset)

Not in the front seat. Doors. Dash.

A WISP of smoke curls out of the heating vents. James doesn't notice.

SANBORN O.S.

(walkie-talkie)

If you haven't found it yet, it's probably under the car.

JAMES

(headset)

None of the cord goes under. It's up here -- somewhere.

SANBORN O.S.

(walkie-talkie)

Try the weather-stripping.

James rips off a chunk of weather stripping. Just bare metal.

SANBORN

SANBORN

(into walkie)

It's been thirty seconds. You need to bail.

JAMES O.S.

(walkie-talkie)

I can find it.

JAMES

He crawls to the back seat, slipping on the foam and slime. More smoke escapes from the vents.

SANBORN O.S.

(walkie-talkie)

James, seriously, you need to bail.

JAMES

(headset)

Roger that. Be right out.

James retraces what's left of the wire, yet again, ignoring Sanborn. He sits back in the seat, strangely relaxed.

EXT. ALLEY

A shadow comes into Sanborn's sight. It's an IRAQI on a bicycle, riding straight towards him.

ELDRIDGE O.S.  
(walkie-talkie)  
Incoming.

Sanborn raises his rifle. The man peddles on, waving his hand.

BICYCLIST  
(in Arabic)  
Where is the entrance to this building?

SANBORN  
Imshee! Imshee!

The bicyclist looks at the car.

ELDRIDGE

Trains his scope on the head of the bicyclist.

ELDRIDGE  
(into walkie)  
I'm going to burn him on three.  
One.

Geddes just looks at the big man at the window.

AMBASSADOR GEDDES  
Oh, that's rich. Give him a count.

Through Eldridge's scope the bicyclist grows. He flicks off his safety.

ELDRIDGE  
(into walkie)  
Blaster Mike, do you copy?  
(to himself)  
Please don't make me kill you.

AMBASSADOR GEDDES  
Been in combat very long?

SANBORN

SANBORN  
(into walkie to Eldridge)  
Copy that.  
(to James)  
James, you need to get out. There's  
another potential bomber here.

BACK TO JAMES

JAMES  
(to Sanborn)  
So shoot him.

BACK TO SANBORN

BICYCLIST  
(in Arabic)  
I need to make a delivery down  
there. Please let me through.

AMBASSADOR'S OFFICE

ELDRIDGE O.S.  
(into walkie)  
Two!!

SANBORN

SANBORN  
(into walkie)  
Negative, Negative. Hold your fire.  
(shouting at bicyclist)  
Get the fuck out of here!

The bicyclist does an about face, but not before casting a last suspicious glance back at the car bomb.

Sanborn refocuses on the Opal; he's losing his cool.

SANBORN  
(into walkie)  
Blaster One, do you copy, over?

JAMES

Still sitting in the back seat. Now he sees the smoking vent.

JAMES  
(headset)  
Gimmie a minute.

ELDRIDGE

Eyes never leaving the street below, flicks the safety of his rifle back on.

Geddes notices the sweat on Eldridge's face, and feels a sudden surge of sympathy for the younger man.

AMBASSADOR GEDDES  
Well done. That took great self control.

ELDRIDGE  
Thank you, sir. Again, I apologize for the intrusion into --

AMBASSADOR GEDDES  
Yes, but I doubt the insurgents will appreciate your restraint. (in a kindly, paternal tone) If I may give you a piece of free advice, next time, pull the trigger.

ELDRIDGE  
Well, actually, the uh--rules --

AMBASSADOR GEDDES  
That's the only way out, I'm afraid. When you're in a losing battle, you have to draw blood. No insurgency in modern history has ever been truly defeated, so all you can do is manage your exit. Clear a wide swath of bodies so you have room to withdraw.

Suddenly the office door opens and a YOUNG AIDE appears.

AIDE  
The building is empty, Sir, except for you.

Geddes nods, grabs his coat and moves to Eldridge for one last jab.

AMBASSADOR GEDDES

I'm sorry to say it, but that's just how it's done. You need to show some vigor. In Kenya, we executed the insurgents in their beds, until they gave us room. Falklands, the same. That's just how it's done.

Eldridge looks up, he's had enough. Swings around.

ELDRIDGE

Is that how you did it in Northern Ireland? With murder?

AMBASSADOR GEDDES

(smiling)

There you are. Now you're showing some vigor.

And leaves.

ELDRIDGE

(into walkie)

J.T, the building is clear now. We can pull out.

SANBORN

SANBORN

(into walkie)

Roger that. (to James) Will, we can pull out. The building is evacuated.

(no answer)

James?

Still no answer.

SANBORN

(into walkie)

Blaster One, we are cleared to leave this fucking site. Walk away. Do you copy, over?

JAMES

JAMES  
(headset)  
Stay where you are, Sanborn. I'm  
not done.

And with that, James turns *off* his walkie. CLICK.

ELDRIDGE

ELDRIDGE  
(into walkie)  
J.T., are we moving?

SANBORN

SANBORN  
(into walkie)  
Negative. Negative.

ELDRIDGE O.S.  
(over talkie)  
I didn't copy that. Did you say  
negative?

SANBORN  
(into walkie)  
Roger. We are staying until James  
is finished.  
(nervously)  
James, what's the situation?  
(no answer)  
Goddamn, Will, I need a report.

JAMES

James' POV. He sees in the corner of the back seat, having just wiped away a puddle of fire retardant, a little black box, with a wire leading out of it. He grabs the box.

JAMES  
Got it.

BLUE OPAL

The black box goes flying out of the car.

EXT MOUTH OF CUL DE SAC

Sanborn is furious, stalking ahead of James as they return uprange.

Sanborn passes Eldridge, who has come down from the ambassador's office.

SANBORN  
Take the suit.

HUMVEE

James' face looks flushed, red, sweat dripping. Eldridge begins ripping apart the Velcro from James' legs.

MOMENTS LATER

James sits in the car, smoking.

Sanborn leans into the window.

SANBORN  
Hey, James.

JAMES  
Yeah?

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

SANBORN  
Don't you turn off your walkie again.

Sanborn stalks off and James explodes out of the car.

He crouches down -- searching the floor of the Humvee. Sees his cigarette, damaged and dirty on the mucky floor, but still burning. He extracts it and carefully cleans it off, then jumps on the hood of the Humvee and goes back to his smoke. He's calm as can be. The Marlboro man.

As he puffs away, watching Sanborn converse with a group of SOLDIERS, a JEEP drives up.

COLONEL REED jumps out wearing a uniform covered in army bling - medals he won a long time ago, before he traveled up the food chain. An AIDE trots along beside him.

COLONEL REED

Hi boys.

James turns around.

JAMES

(uncharacteristically  
awed)

Hello, sir.

COLONEL REED

(points to James)

That you in the bomb suit?

JAMES

Yes, sir, it was.

COLONEL REED

(reading his name tag)

You were the guy in the flaming  
car, Sergeant James?

James is concerned.

JAMES

Yes, sir.

COLONEL REED

Well hot damn, that was some hot  
shit. You're a wild man, you know  
that?

The Colonel spins his head around to Eldridge.

COLONEL REED

He's a wild man, you know that?

(back to James)

Let me shake your hand.

Extending his meaty paw.

JAMES

Thank you, sir.

Slapping him on the back.

COLONEL REED

How many bombs have you disarmed,  
Sergeant?

James seems slightly self-conscious. Eldridge listens in.

JAMES

Hell, I'm not sure. A lot.

COLONEL REED

Sergeant, I asked you a question.

JAMES

One seven three. Counting today,  
Sir.

COLONEL REED

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

James doesn't answer as he looks at the black box. Finally:

JAMES

The way you don't die.

COLONEL REED

(laughing)

Good one, spoken like a wild man.

(looking around)

I'd like a picture with this man -  
anybody here have a camera?

A nearby soldier holds a digital camera up to his eye.  
Colonel Reed smiles big, arm draped around James's shoulders.  
SNAP.

JAMES

Thanks, sir, thank you very much.  
Sir, couldn't do it without my team  
(looking around for Sanborn) Hey,  
Sanborn! Get over here!

Sanborn trots over, glowering.

JAMES

(to Col. Reed)

This here is Sergeant Sanborn, the  
key to the whole team.

(rubbing it in)

And Specialist Eldridge.

Colonel Reed extends his hand. Sanborn is shocked.

COLONEL REED

You guys should all get Bronze  
stars and I'm gonna recommend it.

JAMES  
Thank you, Sir.

ELDRIDGE  
Thank you, Sir.

SANBORN  
Thanks, Sir.

COLONEL REED  
Good luck, boys. Keep on keeping  
on.

FEW FEET AWAY

Out of earshot Colonel Reed addresses his aide.

COLONEL REED  
You wouldn't catch me walking down  
on no fuckin' bomb. Hell no,  
you're not gonna get me in that  
monkey suit.

HUMVEE

James sits in the front with his IPOD earphones on. Lost to  
the world.

Eldridge starts to climb into the turret. Before he does he  
speaks softly to Sanborn.

ELDRIDGE  
Bronze star?

SANBORN  
I don't care, (not caring that  
James may overhear) the guy is not  
safe. You can have mine and I'll  
pin it on your coffin.

ELDRIDGE  
So you *do* think I'm going to die.

SANBORN  
Fuck, Owen. I don't know. Probably  
not.

CUT TO:

EXT CAMP VICTORY WEAPONS DISCHARGE STATION AFTERNOON

James, Sanborn and Eldridge are discharging their weapons, dry firing them into steel drums. Clicking of ammunition. Long shadows.

EXT CAMP VICTORY FIRST SERGEANT'S TRAILER AFTERNOON

James steps out, grabs a smoke, as a soccer ball rolls beside him. It's Pele's. Inviting James to play.

PELE  
(shouting)  
Ball! Ball!

James picks it up, and carries it over to a pile of sandbags and sits down. Pele runs up.

PELE  
Give it.

JAMES  
Give me my five bucks and I'll give you your ball.

PELE  
Five dollars - for what?

JAMES  
Those DVDs were crap. They were so fuzzy I couldn't see a thing.

PELE  
No, impossible.

JAMES  
I'm telling you, they were fuzzy.

PELE  
That's Hollywood, my man. Special effects.

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

JAMES  
What's your name anyway?

PELE  
Pele.

JAMES  
Oh yeah - like the soccer player?

PELE  
Yes, the great Pele

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

JAMES  
Ready? One, two --

He smashes the ball in Pele's direction -- it flies up. Pele blocks it easily, kicking high in the air.

JAMES  
-- three. Shit.

Pele comes back over to James, who has sat back down. He notices the bomb patch on James' uniform.

PELE  
(pointing to the patch)  
So you are EOD -- boomala boomala.  
It's fun, no?

JAMES  
I like to disarm them. Tell you what, kid, I'll buy another DVD from you but if this one is fuzzy you better watch out. Cause I'm coming for you.

INT CAMP VICTORY MESS TENT DAY

Sanborn and Eldridge eat together. In the corner of the room, James is eating alone in a sea of soldiers.

INT CAMP VICTORY HEAD SHED

Eldridge and the psychiatrist are back in session.

ELDRIDGE  
(leaning forward)  
What if I should be pulling the trigger more often? Killing people? Bomb makers.

LT. COL. CAMBRIDGE  
That's not your mission. Your mission is to protect life. Render safe.

ELDRIDGE

But what if I need to change the mission - to survive? That bicyclist I told you about? I'm ninety percent sure he was an insurgent. I could have shot him. Not my mission. But it would have been legal.

LT. COL. CAMBRIDGE

You don't have to turn into an animal just to protect yourself.

ELDRIDGE

You don't?

LT. COL. CAMBRIDGE

No.

ELDRIDGE

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

LT. COL. CAMBRIDGE

I've done my field duty.

ELDRIDGE

Where was that? Yale?

LT. COL. CAMBRIDGE

Look, Specialist, if you want to stop talking to me, you can. These sessions are voluntary. You chose to be here, talking to me, just like you chose the Army, just like you chose EOD. You're in an elite volunteer unit. Not many guys have the IQ or the nerves to do it. Be proud of it.

Eldridge considers this. The psychiatrist taps his pencil. Waiting.

ELDRIDGE

Keep the soldier in the fight and the fight in the soldier, right Doc?

Eldridge puts out his hand, and they shake.

ELDRIDGE

Seriously, I appreciate what you're saying. But you need to get out from behind this desk more.

INT CAMP VICTORY LAUNDRY ROOM NIGHT

James is watching his clothes dry as they tumble around the machine.

Sanborn comes in with a pile of laundry. Sees James.

SANBORN

Hey.

JAMES

Hey.

Sanborn stuffs his laundry into a machine. James is still watching the drier, starts to speak.

JAMES

(quietly)

If you ever get in my shoes and put on the bomb suit you'll see your whole mind changes when you're in front of a bomb. You lose 20 IQ points just from the weight of the suit. Your brain gets so much adrenaline that you hallucinate. Turn off the walkie?

Sanborn stares straight ahead.

JAMES

You'll be lucky if all you do is turn off the walkie.

Off the spinning dryer, we --

CUT TO:

EXT BAGHDAD SOMEWHERE IN THE CITY MID AFTERNOON

Heat playing tricks with light on the ribbon of road - imaginary water pooling on the surface.

Again, the auditory landscape of Baghdad: distant CALL to prayer and the incessant RAT-TAT-TAT of gunfire.

**TITLE OVER:**

**DAYS LEFT IN BRAVO COMPANY'S ROTATION: 23**

James is walking uprange with a large artillery shell. It looks very heavy and he's sweating profusely.

He brings the bomb to the Humvee where Sanborn and Eldridge are waiting. They're also suffering in the heat. They take the shell from him, and stow it in the truck.

JAMES

How are we on water? I'm dying.

ELDRIDGE

J.T.'s got some.

JAMES

(to Sanborn)

Water?

SANBORN

No. I'm all out.

James just looks at him.

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 and bordered on one side by a small number of dwellings.

**BOOM!!!** A huge bomb explodes, sending dust and debris into the air in a mini mushroom cloud...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 blow it.

SANBORN

Fire in the hole. Fire in the hole

James 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, and Sanborn and Eldridge watch him recede in the distance.

James is a tiny figure, ambling around the explosives pile. There's nobody else around.

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

ELDRIDGE

Those detonators break all the time. Accidental misfire.

SANBORN

With that shot laid out like that, it could be a UXO that just cooks off.

ELDRIDGE

Boom.

SANBORN

Boom.

ELDRIDGE

A shot that size would obliterate everything in its path.

SANBORN

His helmet, you'd have that.

ELDRIDGE

Oh yeah, there'd be half a helmet somewhere.

SANBORN

And little bits of hair stuck to it.

ELDRIDGE

Little bits of hair.

SANBORN

We'd have to recommend a major change in techniques and protocols so that kind of accident never happens again. You'd write the first draft of the report.

ELDRIDGE

Are you serious?

SANBORN  
I'm not going to write it.

ELDRIDGE  
No, are you serious about killing  
him?

-- Sanborn looks up at Eldridge. Smiles.

James starts driving back uprange.

CUT TO:

EXT FIELD OUTSKIRTS OF BAGHDAD LATE AFTERNOON

Another dusty nowhere. The EOD team is stopped in the middle of a road that cuts through a swath of desert.

At the roadside are several SOLDIERS and their vehicles. The soldiers look sunburned, tired.

Sanborn and Eldridge are near the soldiers, looking down the road where --

**TITLE OVER:**

**DAYS LEFT IN BRAVO COMPANY'S ROTATION: 17**

CRATER

James is inside a CRATER in the middle of the road, working on an EIGHT-FOOT MISSILE. He attaches A ROCKET WRENCH, a metal band with two explosive tubes, to the nose of the missile -- and flips a switch.

The two tubes ignite like a firecracker, shooting small flames. Then the flames grow and band spins and FLIES off, ZIPPING into the air above James' head like a metal frisbee, landing fifty feet away.

James peers into the nose cone. A hollow void.

SANBORN  
(over walkie)  
James? Do you copy? James?

He climbs to the top of the crater.

JAMES  
 (into headset)  
 It's empty.

EXT/INT CRATER MOMENTS LATER

The soldiers are gathered around the pit to see EOD work. It's not everyday you get to see an eight foot missile towed out of a hole.

James is down in the pit. Sanborn hands him a chain. Working together, they wrap it around the missile. When they're done, Sanborn signals Eldridge, who is behind the wheel of the Humvee, ready to tow the missile out of the crater.

SANBORN  
 (to Eldridge)  
 Rock it out, slowly.

The chain creaks, then stops. The tires spin uselessly.

SANBORN (CONT'D)  
 Try gunning it.

The tires only spin faster.

Sanborn moves to get a closer look. His knees come very near to the creaking chain.

JAMES  
 (seeing this from the pit)  
 Sanborn, watch that chain.

SANBORN  
 It's alright.

When...

**KA-BOOOOM** -- the sky flashes orange overhead -- *James flat on his back, dazed.* A shard of metal ZOOMS into the pit, missing him by inches -- as the soldiers dive into the pit for cover, shouting "RPG, RPG!"

HUMVEE

Eldridge, who is in the driver's seat, starts shooting his M4 rifle.

ELDRIDGE  
 (shouting)  
 What am I shooting at?

Sanborn jumping into the Humvee.

SANBORN  
 (shouting back)  
 I don't fucking know! -- but James  
 is down!!!

He fires in the same direction as Eldridge. The Humvee gets peppered with bullets. The armor holds. But it doesn't look like it's going to last for much longer.

Sanborn grabs Eldridge. And they dive back into the pit, joining James and THREE SOLDIERS: a SERGEANT one PRIVATE and a CORPORAL who is a SNIPER.

James is sitting up, taking off his bomb suit. He appears to be unharmed.

ROAD

One of the soldiers is in the turret of a Humvee, firing the big .50 machine gun in all directions.

CRATER

SERGEANT  
 (to sniper)  
 Get up there with your Barret and  
 help him out.

[Note: Barret is the large .50 SNIPER RIFLE carried by one of the soldiers, a specialty gun with an extremely long range.]

The SNIPER hoists the heavy gun to the edge of the crater and looks down the scope.

As he does, Sanborn, Eldridge, and James, and the other soldiers pop up and lay down covering fire. Then they quickly pop back down.

ROAD

The soldier in the Humvee is still churning his machine gun, shooting in all directions, expending hundreds of bullets a minute.

CRATER

SNIPER  
 (to Sergeant)  
 I don't see nothing out there.  
 Chris is shooting wild.

SERGEANT  
 (into walkie)  
 Hey Chris - can you hear me? Chill  
 out on the fifty man.

ROAD

The soldier in the Humvee fires a few more seconds. Picks up his walkie.

SOLDIER  
 (into walkie)  
 Copy that.

-- As a bullet hits him in the neck, killing him instantly.

CRATER

SNIPER  
 Holy shit. He killed Chris.

Everyone in the pit pops up and fires in every direction, a knee-jerk response.

A soldier picks up his walkie and keys it. We can't hear him talking over the retorts of the soldiers firing rifles.

The men are pinned down, paralyzed by fear. Sniper fire from one of the buildings rakes the top of the crater.

-- Bullets kick up sand on the far side of the crater, opposite the men.

-- Eldridge looks like he's having a heart attack. *This is how it ends*, he thinks.

--James seems preternaturally calm.

After a while --

JAMES  
 We should save our ammo at least  
 until we can see these bastards.

The Sergeant takes off his pack, and pulls out a pair of binoculars. Inching up to the edge of the crater, where he joins the SNIPER

SERGEANT  
(to Sniper)  
Do you see anything.

SNIPER  
It's got to be coming from those buildings. Somebody moved on the roof of the tall one there.

We see the buildings in the distance. They look too far away to be threatening.

SERGEANT  
Hit him if you see him again.

As suddenly --

The SNIPER is hit in the breastbone.

SERGEANT  
Oh fuck. Oh fuck. Jesus.

In the pit: total meltdown. This is it. The day you die. Everyone starts talking at once.

SOLDIER  
Man we got to get out of here.

SANBORN  
I'll get on the Barret.

ELDRIDGE  
Don't do that J.T.

SERGEANT  
Shit. Okay. We need help.  
(into walkie) )  
This is Alpha Nine. We're in deep shit. Over.

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

JAMES  
(to Sergeant)  
Let me see those binocs.

The Sergeant hands the binocs to James.

SERGEANT  
(into walkie)  
We are taking incoming fire. I have two KIA. The grid --

James gives Sanborn a look. He leans in to say something to Sanborn, which we can't hear.

Over the Sergeant's walkie:

DISPATCH (O.S.)

I know where you are Alpha. Go ahead.

Sanborn crawls into the SNIPER's position, moving the dead body out of the way. James follows next to him to observe with the binocs

SERGEANT

(into walkie)

Copy that. Okay. Can you get us some help.

(to James and Sanborn)

Don't do that fellas.

Sanborn is already shooting. The SNIPER RIFLE puts down bullets slowly. It has a clip of six rounds. One by one Sanborn expends them.

JAMES

Eldridge, I need ammo.

Eldridge pulls two clips of ammunition off the bloody chest of the dead sniper.

JAMES

(looking through the binocs)

You're shooting high.

Eldridge hands the ammo to Sanborn, who jams the clip in the rifle, and then adjusts the sight. He pulls the trigger. The gun jams.

JAMES

(to Sanborn)

Clear it, clear it. (the clip is removed, passed to James) Eldridge clean the bullets. The blood is making them jam.

Eldridge is handed the bloody clips. He pops the bullets out, one by one, and tries to clean them. But the blood is sticky. A bullet slips out of his hand, rolls down the crater. The soldier helps him by picking up the bullet and cleaning it.

James looks back to see Eldridge's progress.

JAMES

Spit on 'em Eldridge. Spit. Rub. Spit rub.

Eldridge is trying. He's really trying.

JAMES  
Come on, Eldridge. I need ammo.

James sees that Eldridge is not getting it and he draws close to him.

JAMES  
You're doing good, man. (putting  
his hand on Eldridge's shoulder).  
You're okay.

Eldridge nods. His mind is there but his hands are disobeying him. James attempts to clear his head.

JAMES  
I will keep you safe, Owen, that's  
my job.

ELDRIDGE  
Roger.

The soldier hands the ammo to James.

JAMES  
(to both of them)  
Alright. Scan your sectors.

Then Eldridge positions himself so he's looking in the opposite direction that James and Sanborn are looking.

Sanborn fires two more rounds.

JAMES  
(calmly)  
Still high, adjust your windage.  
Elevation.

SANBORN  
Got it.

SNIPER RIFLE POV

The roof of the tall building in the distance bobs in and out of view. At this great range, the scope dances.

CRATER

JAMES

He's on the left by the smoke stack. Guy in white.

Sanborn fires once. He turns his head away from the gun and makes an audible exhale to release tension -- the sniper breath control technique.

JAMES

Good. There's another one just behind him. Up a meter.

Sanborn fires once. Audible exhale.

JAMES

Good.

James scans the area. Silence.

CRATER AN HOUR LATER

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

Eldridge and the remaining soldier have exhausted their water supply.

Sanborn and James are in EXACTLY the same position as when we left them. Focused. Sanborn's finger on the trigger. Sanborn breathes out, the sniper breathing. He's been doing this for an hour, time and the desert heat have taken their toll.

Sanborn blinks sweat away.

SANBORN POV

The scope BLURS. He regains focus.

JAMES

Noticing Sanborn's fatigue.

JAMES

Eldridge, grab me the juice out of an MRE.

Eldridge digs around the DEAD SOLDIER'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. But he brings the straw to Sanborn's lips.

At first, Sanborn keeps his attention on the rifle scope. But then he opens his parched mouth, and sips.

--Suddenly, there's movement, a flutter of fabric, in the distance off Eldridge's shoulder. He stiffens.

ELDRIDGE

Uh, Will.

JAMES

Yeah.

ELDRIDGE

At my one o'clock. Two hundred meters. Something moved behind a parked car. Either a tan dog or a man in a light-colored shirt.

JAMES

Deal with it.

ELDRIDGE

Uh--Ok.

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

ELDRIDGE

I don't think it's a dog. Should I fire?

JAMES

It's your call.

Eldridge shifts his weight onto his rifle.

There's a flutter of movement in the distance.

Eldridge pulls the trigger. Spraying the car in the distance. Empties his entire magazine.

From behind the car, something falls to the ground, and the tiniest sliver of a rifle clatters after it.

The soldier in the pit comes over to Eldridge to see what he's done.

SOLDIER  
Good hit, man.

James and Sanborn don't turn around.

Eldridge slumps, spent.

CRATER TWO HOURS LATER

Sun casting long shadows.

James and Sanborn in the same focused position. Eldridge still watches the rear.

The soldier in the pit reaches his breaking point.

SOLDIER  
I'm going to go for the Humvee.  
What do you say?

SERGEANT  
I don't know.

SOLDIER  
We've been here two hours and they  
ain't seen nothing. I'm going to go  
for it.

And with that he dashes up and out of the crater.

Sanborn keeps his eye on the scope.

ROAD

The soldier runs to the Humvee, gets in, and turns the vehicle around, driving it back to the pit.

He dives out of the vehicle and back to the pit.

SOLDIER  
(excited)  
Those fuckers are dead.

SERGEANT  
What if they hit us with an RPG  
when we get out? What if they were  
just waiting for us to get in the  
Humvee.

SOLDIER  
 It's safe. I'm telling you  
 (to Sanborn)  
 You got those fuckers.

The soldier jumps out of the pit. Stands in the middle of the road. A sitting duck.

SOLDIER  
 (to men in the pit)  
 See? You got them.  
 (turning to building,  
 shouting)  
 We got you mother fuckers. You're  
 fucking dead Hajis. Haha.

The soldier pulls down his pants and moons the building.

SOLDIER  
 Kiss this mother fucker!!!

James lowers his binocs. Sanborn lowers his rifle.

They exchange a mirthful look.

CUT TO:

INT CAMP VICTORY JAMES' TRAILER NIGHT

James and Sanborn face each other; both men are red-faced, drunk, swaying.

JAMES  
 Ready?

Sanborn nods. Wham! Sanborn reels back from the punch. James is standing over him. Glowering. He looks good. The rage is like a vitamin.

JAMES  
 Now we're even.

Sanborn stumbles back, recovers. Around them in James' room are the remains of an Irish wake: two bottles of Scotch, already empty. A third half gone. Cigarettes burned down in an ashtray.

SANBORN  
 Be right back. I gotta piss.

As Sanborn stumbles out, James turns to Eldridge

JAMES  
One more, boy.

ELDRIDGE  
(imitating a young  
recruit)  
Yes, Sir, Sergeant James Sir.  
You're not very good drunk are you  
SIR!! You're a good fighter, Sir.  
Natural born warrior, Sir.

JAMES  
(semi-seriously)  
You acquitted yourself well on the  
field of battle today.

ELDRIDGE  
Really? I got scared.

JAMES  
Everyone is a coward at some point  
in their lives.

Sanborn comes in. He sees a box under James' bed. Sanborn picks up the box under James' bed and plops it on the table, intentionally breaking up the love-fest between James and Eldridge.

SANBORN  
Hey Owen, look! Will has  
possessions! I didn't know you  
owned anything, Will.

Sanborn pulls a picture frame out of the box. It's a picture of a baby boy. Eldridge leans in.

JAMES  
That's my son. A real tough little  
bastard. Like me.

SANBORN  
So you're married?

James is uncomfortable with the subject. Intimacy isn't easy for him. He rolls his eyes, nods.

JAMES  
Well, she was my girlfriend, we had  
a baby, then she became my wife,  
then we got divorced. (pause) I  
thought we got divorced. (pause)  
But she's still in the house, and  
she says we're still together.  
(MORE)

JAMES (cont'd)  
So, I don't know. What does that  
make her?

SANBORN  
Dumb, to be with you?

JAMES  
She ain't dumb. She's loyal.

SANBORN  
My problem is the one girl who I  
like keeps talking about kids.  
Kids. Kids.

JAMES  
(to Sanborn)  
Give her your sperm, stud.

SANBORN  
Nah. I'm not ready.  
(looking around the box,  
finds a circuit board.) )  
And what's this?

Sanborn sees there are many such parts in the box.

JAMES  
Bomb parts.

SANBORN  
No shit. Why do you have them?

James reaches into the box. Pulls out a circuit. Looks at it  
admiringly.

JAMES  
This is from the Blue Opal. (to  
himself) It's wild, isn't it, to  
hold something in your hands that  
could have killed you. (he tosses  
the board to Sanborn)

Eldridge leans over, pulls another board out of the box. He's  
fascinated by James' obsession.

ELDRIDGE  
What's this one from?

JAMES  
(warming to the attention)  
That was one of our early roadside  
bombs we disarmed, the one with --

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

James shrugs. He reaches over to get the circuit board from Sanborn, who clearly doesn't share his fascination.

ELDRIDGE  
It's interesting

JAMES  
I agree.

In the distance, sound of BOMBS going off. The men pause to listen.

SANBORN  
(to Eldridge)  
The only reason he likes you is  
because you act like his bitch, and  
you look up to him, and he likes to  
be the top dog.

JAMES  
I agree with that too.

ELDRIDGE  
Oh no, (picking up James' pistol)  
The humiliation is too great to  
bear. (he pulls the trigger while  
slipping out the clip). Good-bye  
world.

The gun clicks harmlessly. Eldridge laughs.

A gust of wind rattles the front door.

SANBORN  
That punch was harder than I hit  
you. I'm owed a good one.

JAMES  
Alright.

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

James lifts off his shirt, getting into fighting mode. Eldridge picks up a marker and begins to draw a bulls-eye on James' stomach, stopping when he sees a cluster of scars.

JAMES

Beauty mark, my mother dropped me  
at birth.

ELDRIDGE

Looks like frag scars.

Sanborn slugs James. James doubles over, loses his balance and falls back. James gets up, laughing so hard it hurts. Tears of laughter falling down his face.

JAMES

Ahhhh! Excellent. Now your turn.

Sanborn braces for the blow. James gets ready to strike, then fakes a swing -- his fist stops just shy of Sanborn's cheek.

Sanborn's eyes go wide as -- James nails him with his other hand, right in the gut -- Sanborn doubles over.

JAMES

(laughing)

Looks like it hurt.

Moving forward aggressively, suddenly James looks like he could kill. A complete change in his demeanor, as wind rocks the trailer, causing the light bulb to rattle and cast a strange shadow

-- then James rushes Sanborn, tackling him -- they crash into the corner of the room -- in a flash James is on top of Sanborn, pinning him -- Sanborn moves to punch James but James pins his hands -- James taps Sanborn lightly on the cheek, caressing his cheek.

JAMES

There there. It'll be okay.

SANBORN

Get off of me you freak.

Sanborn tries to buck James off. Forcefully raising his hips.

JAMES

Oh yeah, ride me, ride me.

Sanborn reaches for his boot knife. He flicks it open, brings the blade to James' throat. Their eyes lock. James dismounts, laughing. Stumbles back to the table.

JAMES  
You're alright, Sanborn. Let's have  
another.

CUT TO:

EXT CAMP VICTORY LATER

The wind is blowing harder, kicking up sand. Overhead, a full moon is blazing.

James looks up at the moon. It's dazzling. James and Eldridge support Sanborn as they weave towards Eldridge's trailer.

JAMES  
I got him.

Eldridge passes Sanborn off to James, and heads up the stairs to his trailer.

ELDRIDGE  
Later.

Sanborn sags. James pulls him back. They walk a little farther to Sanborn's trailer --

JAMES  
Okay. Here we go big boy.

And half carries Sanborn up the steps.

INT. SANBORN'S TRAILER

James eases Sanborn onto a cot, and as he falls onto the cot, the WHITE ENVELOPE falls out of his pocket.

SANBORN  
Do you think I have what it takes  
to get in the bomb suit?

James didn't expect this.

JAMES  
Sure.

James picks up the white envelope and puts it on Sanborn's night table.

He looks back. Sanborn is already asleep.

EXT CAMP VICTORY AFTER MIDNIGHT

The whole camp is asleep but James is standing outside, holding a satellite phone. He's swaying. Drunk.

CONNIE O.S.

(sleepily)

James, my God, what time is it? Are you alright.

Pause.

CONNIE O.S.

James?

JAMES

(slightly slurred)

I'm doing fine, babe. How are you?

CONNIE O.S.

Well, you woke me up. But - ah - we - we're fine. (getting more lively)  
Will junior said "bobba" He means bottle, but he's talking, Will.

James looks around the camp. All he sees is its immensity, the tremendous scope of the operation. This is military might, raw power. As good as it gets.

JAMES

Great. I'll call you tomorrow when you're awake.

CONNIE O.S.

Will, I can't wait until you come home.

Silence.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

Will?

JAMES

(trying his best to mean it)

Yeah, me too.

CONNIE O.S.

Will you call me again soon?

JAMES

Sure. Bye honey.

CONNIE O.S.

Bye honey.

James hits the END button on the phone and walks up the steps to his trailer --

INT JAMES TRAILER LATER THAT NIGHT

He stumbles inside, drops the satellite phone down on his desk, next to his bomb suit helmet, and sinks into bed. He lies there, clothed and awake, and stares at the helmet, looking at his reflection in the polished glass.

Then James reaches over to the helmet and lifts it up, hefts it.

He puts the helmet on his head.

Alone in his bed, wearing his helmet.

Smiling behind the glass, for he now he can sense the bomb, and feel his nearness to death.

We hear the RASP of his breathing.

CUT TO:

INT SANBORN'S TRAILER MORNING

Sanborn blinks awake to a painfully bright sun. He shifts his attention to the white envelope on the table.

INT CAMP VICTORY WAREHOUSE DAY

A SOLDIER wearing glasses is talking to Sanborn.

SOLDIER

What can I do for you?

SANBORN

I have something?

SOLDIER

Remains?

SANBORN

No.

SOLDIER

Personal effects?

SANBORN

Yeah.

Sanborn reaches into his back pocket, withdraws the white envelope. He opens it. Inside are Thompson's DOG TAGS. He crumples the envelope, lets it fall to the floor. And grips the tags tightly.

SOLDIER

What's the name?

SANBORN

Thompson, Matt. Sergeant EOD. Baker Company.

SOLDIER

(looking at a form)

Okay let me see. He's at three-three-eight. (looking) third aisle down the hall.

Sanborn turns to look, and now we see where he's standing: in the MORTUARY AFFAIRS UNIT, in a large room filled with white boxes. It looks like an art installation, each white box spaced evenly in a cavernous space.

SOLDIER

I'll walk you over there.

They walk down the aisles, passing rows and rows of white boxes, and finally stop.

The soldier opens one.

Inside are a pair of boots. A stack of clothes. Books. Photographs. The remains of a life.

SOLDIER

Here you go. Did you know him?

Sanborn places the tags on the uniform in the box.

SANBORN

Yeah, I did. He was my team leader.

SOLDIER

Oh, I'm sorry brother.

They walk up the aisles, again passing the rows of white boxes.

At the entrance, Sanborn turns. The soldier offers his hand. They shake warmly.

SANBORN

Thank you. Thank you.

The soldier, a little perplexed at Sanborn's gratitude, doesn't know what to say.

Sanborn leaves, notices the empty ENVELOPE on the floor. Litter. He picks it up and stuffs it back into his pocket.

INT MESS TENT DAY

James and Eldridge eat in hung-over silence.

Tired.

After a while...

ELDRIDGE

Tough night.

JAMES

Hell, yeah.

Eldridge nods.

Wind picks up. The whole tent shakes.

JAMES

Aren't you supposed to be at your shrink?

ELDRIDGE

I fired him. I said, Doc, shooting a man had a salubrious effect on me.

JAMES

What the hell does that mean?

ELDRIDGE

Healthy.

JAMES

You're healthy? Well, why not.

They go back to eating.

Sanborn joins James and Eldridge.

SANBORN

What's up team?

They nod silently as he sits. Sluggishly he throws his hand down on the table.

SANBORN

Can I get a Huu-haa?

Eldridge slaps a tired hand on top of Sanborn's. James follows suit. They wearily lift their arms in mock enthusiasm.

All at once: "Huu-haa."

Sanborn wolfs down some food.

JAMES

I'm going back to sleep now.

ELDRIDGE

Let's roll.

They get up to bus their trays. And nearing the dirty-tray bin, the flaps of the tent billow more and more vigorously. Outside, a storm is brewing.

Each man unfurls the checkered scarf around their neck and wraps their face for the wind.

EXT CAMP VICTORY DAY

Wind rakes sand and dust over the tent city, giving it an otherworldly aspect. Throngs of men and vehicles fight the swirl. It impedes their every move.

The three men continue onwards, as the intensity of the storm grows.

EXT HEAD SHED DAY

The storm is HOWLING now. Visibility is reduced to a few feet. Red sand blows mercilessly. It's Mars.

**TITLE OVER:**

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

As they approach the head shed, a Humvee comes blasting out of the storm from the other direction. It skids to a halt in front of them.

Three wounded EOD TECHS and an EOD TEAM LEADER tumble out.

They look awful. One step shy of death. One man's face is smeared brown. Blood oozes from a deep gash in his cheek. Another tech is covered in black soot. Their hands still clutch their weapons -- the battle still wages in their minds.

TEAM LEADER

(shouting to James)

It was a car bomb. Fucking nasty one -- they had a decoy detonator set up so that when I disarmed it nothing happened -- then, I'm walking back uprange to get some more tools and boooom!!! If I hadn't been wearing the suit, I'd be dead right now.

ELDRIDGE

Get a Medic to look at your cheek.

The wounded TEAM LEADER touches his face and blood smears on his hand...he looks down...surreal to see your own blood. The First Sergeant trots over.

TEAM LEADER

(amazed at the sight of his blood) )

It's no big deal.

(now turning his attention back to James) )

Be careful. They're starting to hide the detonator really well.

The FIRST SERGEANT turns his attention to James:

FIRST SERGEANT

Sorry to ruin your day off, but your team is up.

James blinks back sand and dust blowing into his eyes.

So much for the nap.

INT HUMVEE CAMP VICTORY PARKING LOT

Lt. COL. CAMBRIDGE knocks on the window. Startling the men. His face appears in the sand storm.

LT. COL. CAMBRIDGE

(shouting)

Are you guys about to go out?

JAMES

Yeah.

LT. COL. CAMBRIDGE

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

James shoots Eldridge a look. Eldridge shrugs.

JAMES

Anytime, Sir. It's a privilege.

The LT. COL. CAMBRIDGE gets in. As they drive out.

JAMES

Don't mean to insult your intelligence, Sir. But if the shit hits the fan, please don't fire out of these windows. They're bullet proof and the round will just bounce around the cabin.

EXT. ABU GRAIB 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.

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.

SOLDIER 1

(pointing back at the building)

Right up those stairs.

JAMES

You been inside already?

SOLDIER 1

In there? Fuck no. We've had reports of all kinds of shit coming out of that house -- and--

James takes his eyes off the building and turns to the Soldier.

JAMES

And what--

SOLDIER 1

--bodies.

James turns to Cambridge.

JAMES

Why don't you wait here? We'll  
bring out anything of interest.

INT BOMBED OUT BUILDING LATE MORNING

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.

James bends the gushing pipe, stemming the flow of water to a trickle. Now the spitting wire hanging above the water pipe looks less ominous. But not by much.

CORRIDOR

They continue down a narrow corridor, light diminishing. They switch on the lights on their M4s. The corridor ends at a door.

SANBORN

This would be a great place to put  
a pressure activator.

JAMES

Yeah, with like twenty pounds of  
high explosives on it so you get  
anyone in the room when you open  
the door.

ELDRIDGE

Rope trick?

Eldridge uncoils rope from his pack and hands it to James, who makes a lasso and tosses it over the doorknob.

EXT BOMBED OUT BUILDING

James yanks the rope -- we follow the rope inside through the kitchen to the doorknob, watching it turn. No bomb.

They head back in.

INT DOOR/STAIRS BOMBED OUT BUILDING

Ascending a staircase. James unstraps a flash grenade from his vest and heaves it onto the floor above. They stick their fingers in their ears...

Blinding FLASH and DEAFENING sound. Then silence. No movement.

JAMES

Guess no one's home.

SOLDIER O.S.

(walkie-talkie)

Blaster One, what was that?

JAMES

(into walkie)

Sorry, one of ours, just a flash grenade.

They come to a landing that opens up to the second floor.

SECOND FLOOR

A large cavernous space filled with what looks like Santa's bomb making factory: A pile of motherboards. Batteries. Boom boxes. Electronics in various states of disassembly. In another corner, stacks of artillery shells. Blocks of C4 plastic explosives.

In the back half of the room, there is a work table, and on the table is a DEAD BODY of a young man, wearing pants but no shirt. A JACKET draped is over its torso and face. Even for these hardened EOD experts, the sight is unnerving, and the copper smell of spilt blood and death is staggering, sickening.

James, Sanborn and Eldridge approach the body cautiously.

James pulls a retractable aluminum pole from his pack and telescopes it to its maximum length, about 10 feet, and uses the pole to lift the jacket. Gently. The FACE appears.

All that we can determine about this face is that it is young. The distinguishing lines of the nose and cheeks are so covered by bruises and blood and further obscured by the shadows and dappled light, that it could be the face of almost any young man.

The violence done to the face exerts an odd pull on James.

JAMES  
The kid at camp.

SANBORN  
What?

JAMES  
He sells DVDs.

SANBORN  
No, that's not him.

JAMES  
You see him every day. He sells  
DVDs by the mess tent. His name is  
Pele.

SANBORN  
Different kid.

ELDRIDGE  
This is sick.

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. It's meant to be a booby trap, to be placed on a street and elicit as much damage as possible.

SANBORN  
You seen a body bomb before?

James shakes his head no.

Sanborn moves closer to the body and inspects the wiring in the chest.

JAMES  
Don't touch it. Let's blow it.

JAMES

Positioning three blocks of C4 on the body, then plugs blasting caps into the explosives. James nods to Sanborn and Eldridge, and they leave him alone with the body.

James walks backwards out of the room, unspooling a roll of detonation cord as he goes. But before he gets to the door...

SOLDIER O.S.

(over walkie)

Blaster, we've got a hold. I'm not getting airspace clearance.

JAMES

(into walkie)

Copy that, How long?

SOLDIER (O.S.)

(walkie-talkie)

Roger. Could be anything. At least 15 minutes is what they're saying.

JAMES

(into walkie)

Can you -- you need to explain to them that we don't have 15 minutes.

SOLDIER (O.S.)

(walkie-talkie)

Roger. I'll see if we can push this ahead.

James squats down, rests his rifle, looks at the floor.

Moments pass and he feels a set of eyes on him.

He swivels his head to the left and makes eye contact with the dead kid on the table. The face doesn't have any of the markers of death; it looks alive.

James turns away, then is compelled to make eye contact again. He looks at his watch. The seconds tick by all too slowly. He grabs his walkie-talkie.

JAMES

(into walkie)

Fifteen is not going to work. I need to do this now.

SOLDIER (O.S.)

(walkie-talkie)

Roger, I understand. If it was me, I would go for it, but I don't think command is going to budge under the circumstances.

JAMES  
 (into walkie)  
 Tell command I'm in a fucking war  
 zone. And I'm going to blow now.

James gets up, clips his rifle, and takes the last few steps  
 out of the room.

SOLDIER (O.S.)  
 (walkie-talkie)  
 Blaster One, I don't know who you  
 know, but you got your permission.  
 Ready to det any time you say so.

At the door he stops to look at the dead boy on the table. He  
 looks and looks. Finally:

JAMES  
 (into walkie)  
 Cancel that det.

CUT TO:

JAMES

Reaching over the body of the boy. He pulls the artillery  
 shell out of the boy's abdomen with his bare hands. He wipes  
 his hands on his pants.

JAMES  
 (into walkie)  
 This is Blaster One, I'm coming  
 down.

INT BOMBED OUT BUILDING

James carries the body down the staircase. The head and feet  
 bump the sides of the staircase as he descends.

EXT BOMBED OUT BUILDING MOMENTS LATER

The BODY lies on the street, James standing over it. 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.

HUMVEE

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

ELDRIDGE  
 ...So you really don't think it was  
 the DVD kid?

SANBORN  
 No, I don't.

ELDRIDGE  
 You're positive?

SANBORN  
 Yeah. Could it be? One in a million  
 chance.

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

SANBORN  
 Very weird.

They look out the window and notice Lt. Colonel Cambridge  
 down the street surrounded by a crowd of IRAQI MEN.

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge is trying to talk to several of them at once.

CAMBRIDGE  
 This is not a safe area for you.  
 Imshee!

They don't leave. Cambridge lifts his rifle, not quite  
 shouldering it. Then one MAN, mid thirties, in a suit, steps  
 forward.

IRAQI MAN  
 (flawless English)  
 Why do you talk to us like  
 children. We are not children.

CAMBRIDGE  
 Gimme a break, will you?

IRAQI MAN  
 Why should I?

Cambridge, suddenly not so sure of himself, looks back to the Humvee and sees --

JAMES

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

INT HUMVEE

Eldridge guzzles some water. Wipes sweat from his brow.

ELDRIDGE

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

Passing the water to Sanborn.

SANBORN

I bet you he doesn't put this one under his bed.

Sanborn laughs.

James cracks the door, jumps inside.

He sees Cambridge walk past the brick pile that the OLD IRAQI MAN had created. The man is no longer there. Something crosses his mind when--

*--The brick pile explodes in a A SICKENING **BLAST**,  
obliterating Cambridge and flipping the Humvee*

*--James, Sanborn and Eldridge SPIN upside down as the Humvee is buffeted by the blast - landing upside down.*

*--Suddenly CAMBRIDGE'S helmeted HEAD crashes into the windshield.*

*--Billowing smoke, dirt and debris smears the windshield blotting out the sun.*

*--Inside, a flurry of HANDS yank on the heavy armored Humvee door. It doesn't budge.*

EXT HUMVEE

A SOLDIER runs to the rescue. He reaches for the Humvee door, the metal sears his hand, and he pulls back in pain.

The soldier uses his rifle butt to jam the door open - but that doesn't work, because the butt doesn't catch the handle. From inside, the POUNDING and YELLS grow louder.

The soldier drops the rifle and grabs the searing metal with his hand, burning his flesh as he pries the handle.

The Humvee door finally gives. Three men tumble out onto blackened sand.

CUT TO:

INT BOMBED OUT BUILDING LATER

James is standing in the doorway into the building, dividing his attention between the outside and the interior -- where Sanborn and Eldridge are slumped against a wall.

Sanborn stares at a blank wall. Eldridge is running his hand over a cigarette lighter -- seeing how much of the flame he can bear. He looks as if he's hoping the physical pain will help put the psychic pain in perspective.

James, standing in the light of the doorway, is smoldering with rage and ungovernable purpose. He's smoking.

We stay here for a moment to watch as each man makes his own deal with himself.

Through the open doorway a Humvee comes into view.

James stomps out his cigarette.

JAMES

Our ride is here.

Beat.

Sanborn and Eldridge remain in a trance.

JAMES

We're movin'.

He walks out into the glare. Sanborn and Eldridge rise to follow him.

EXT CAMP VICTORY DUSK

Funnel of wind erases a tank tread in the sand.

More sand drifts and piles like snow up against a small mountain of sand bags.

Sand disappears the windshield of a parked Abrams as day moves into night.

EXT CAMP VICTORY MESS TENT MORNING

Dust. Wind.

James is stalking towards an OLDER IRAQI MAN who is selling DVDs at Pele's usual table.

JAMES

Hey - you haven't seen that kid around here by any chance - who sells movies?

The man shakes his head.

DVD MAN

Sorry. No English.

JAMES

No English? Don't lie to me. Where's that kid?

DVD MAN

Sorry, my man. Movie? Five dollars.

James shakes his head and walks away, heading towards a clump of SOLDIERS standing in the shade of a tree.

JAMES

Are you guys responsible for this area?

GUARD

What's up?

JAMES

That motherfucker over there (pointing to the Man) could be an insurgent, watching the camp and giving intel to his buddies so they know where to launch their mortars.

GUARD

I think he's just a guy selling DVDs.

JAMES

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

GUARD

The merchants are cleared. I  
couldn't do anything to him without  
the say-so from my CO.

James realizes that he has no hope of prevailing. Agitated,  
he turns away, and we stay with him as he trudges down one of  
Victory's dusty roads.

EXT. CAMP VICTORY MESS TENT DUSK

It's the end of the day and the DVD seller packs up his wares  
to go.

James, in sunglasses, sweatshirt covering his army fatigues,  
follows him to his car. James draws near, and points his  
pistol at the guy's crotch.

JAMES

Does this change anything?

The DVD man looks stunned.

INT DVD MAN'S CAR CAMP VICTORY GATE DUSK

James leans across the DVD man and flashes his ID to one of  
two GUARDS.

JAMES

OGA.

The guard looks to his buddy who mouths "CIA"

GUARD

Are you cleared to leave the camp  
through this gate, Sir?

James nods.

GUARD

I'm going to need to see your ID  
again.

JAMES

Don't fuck with me man, I'm having  
a bad day already.

The guard stares at James. James stares at the guard. The guard shrugs, waves James through.

EXT BAGHDAD STREET NIGHT

The truck goes down a series of streets. It comes into a poor neighborhood and stops at a house.

DVD MAN

Pele.

JAMES

Wait here.

James gets out.

EXT BAGHDAD STREET HOUSE

The dwelling is set back behind a low wall. Hard to see much of it in the dim light.

James takes a step forward, toward the wall.

Suddenly--

the DVD truck peels out.

James looks at its retreating tail lights. A moment of indecision as he considers his situation: alone in Baghdad.

Then he vaults the low wall, landing in

EXT BAGHDAD COURTYARD

A modest courtyard. Light comes from one window in the house, the rest is dark. Crickets.

James walks around to the back of the house. There's a door. He tries the knob. 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 traditional garb, sits at a table drinking tea, watching an Egyptian game show on television.

James walks in, gun drawn.

The man is spooked. He spills his tea, looks wildly for an exit.

James puts his fingers to his lips.

JAMES

Do you speak English?

KALIM

English, French, Arabic.

JAMES

(quietly)

I want the people responsible for Pele.

KALIM

For whom?

JAMES

Pele. The body bomb.

KALIM

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

JAMES

Take me to the people responsible.

KALIM

Of course, whatever you seek, I will help you find. Please, please sit, down. You are CIA, no? I am very pleased to have CIA in my home.

James raises his gun to aim at the man's face.

JAMES  
 Maybe you don't understand?

The man is suddenly very afraid.

KALIM  
 Please, be careful. Be slow. A gun  
 can go off.

As the back door opens

-- James spins to see

-- a WOMAN, older, matronly. She sees James, his gun. And she starts shouting at James in Arabic, then English, "Get out, get out."

James swings his gun to her.

Suddenly--

-- behind the woman comes Pele. He runs to his father's side.

-- James turns to the boy, to say something --

-- his mother is rushing James now, swinging a candlestick

-- he spins to the door, trying to get out of there --

-- SMASHING his head on the stone archway on his way out.

EXT. IRAQI HOUSE

-- the street.

James is shaken. He looks around, down the street. It's murky. Dangerous. Even the shadows have shadows.

*He runs...and runs...and we stay on his eyes. Blood runs from the wound on his head.*

SOUND of far off EXPLOSION. The sky turns orange briefly, then fades into blackness.

EXT CAMP VICTORY GATE NIGHT

A blast of bright white light floods James. He's stunned - and raises his ID in his open palm over his head. A scrap of blood stained fabric is wrapped around his head wound.

Multiple rifles suddenly trained on his upturned face. VOICES slap concrete:

GUARDS  
On your knees, on your knees!!

A big offish GUARD walks up and slams a rifle butt into the side of James' head.

He falls to the ground.

GUARD  
What're you doing?

JAMES  
(gasping)  
Ficke, ficke.

The guard sees the military ID splayed on the ground.

GUARD  
Yeah?

James nods.

JAMES  
Whorehouse two clicks from here.

GUARD  
If I let you in, will you tell me where it is exactly?

CUT TO:

EXT CAMP VICTORY NIGHT

James walking along a dark camp road. He walks up to the head shed porch, and goes inside. His walkie, sitting on a desk, comes to life.

SANBORN  
(over walkie)  
I repeat, do you copy? Do you copy?

JAMES  
(into walkie)  
Yeah, I'm right here. What's up?

SANBORN  
(over walkie)  
Oh nothing.  
(MORE)

SANBORN (cont'd)  
 (sarcastically) Just wondering if  
 you might want to join us in the  
 Humvee for a little outing the Army  
 wants us to go on.

JAMES  
 (into walkie)  
 Copy that. What's you're twenty.

SANBORN  
 (over walkie)  
 We're at the south gate, James.  
 We've been waiting for you for half  
 an hour. Where have you been? Over.

INT HUMVEE MINUTES LATER

James jumps in. Sanborn and Eldridge shoot him impatient  
 looks.

Sanborn hits the gas.

SANBORN  
 A tanker blew up near the Green  
 Zone about an hour ago. We're doing  
 a post-blast on it. To figure out  
 how the suicide bomber pulled it  
 off. So where did you say you were  
 again?

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

ELDRIDGE  
 What happened to your head.

JAMES  
 Watch the road, Owen.

Sanborn looks at him, shakes his head. James stares out the  
 window.

CUT TO:

EXT BAGHDAD STREET LATE NIGHT

A pair of Humvee headlights, glowing orange in smoke filled  
 air, come rapidly toward us. They stop, the Humvee groans on  
 idle.

James' team gets out.

They walk down the street, guns low, combat flashlights on.

JAMES

Sanborn, get the big spotlights.

Sanborn doubles back to the truck, roots around in the back, comes running back with two giant flash-lights. James hits the switch. Sanborn hits the switch.

A pool of intensely bright light opens in front of them, revealing a rubble strewn street. Concrete. Bits of glass. Metal. Everything that goes into a city -- pulverized.

We hear CRUNCHING sounds as the men walk down the street and their feet fall on the blast remnants. The crunching gets louder as they walk towards a GLOWING RED INFERNO at the end of the block.

A Soldier's head, then his shoulders visible in the distance.

SANBORN

Friendlys, coming 'in.

SOLDIER

You guys the Medics?

JAMES

No, we're EOD.

They walk past, deeper into the gloom.

Two soldiers run past them, carrying a stretcher.

SANBORN

Hey.

They stop to see what he's looking at. Twisted metal.

SANBORN

That's an engine block. A big one, too. From a truck probably.

JAMES

Oil tanker?

SANBORN

It's what I'm thinking.

The men keep walking, and now the SOUNDS from the Inferno are louder.

Another man rushes towards them, his face shrouded in blackness.

Sanborn points his rifle at the man's head. Hits him with the Hi-Beam of his light. The man is wearing a black wool ski mask.

SANBORN  
Stop! Wagef! Wagef!

SKI MASKED MAN  
No. I am working here.

Sanborn looks at him. Doesn't reply.

James puts his gun up on the guy. Now Eldridge does too. This guy is about to be toast.

When...

A face appears next to him.

FACE  
He's with me.

Guns cover the face...

Then they see that above the face is a helmet...

And on the top of the helmet is a COLONEL'S INSIGNIA.

COLONEL REED  
Okay fellas?

JAMES  
Sorry, Sir. I didn't recognize you.

Guns are lowered, fast.

Now that the Colonel is fully visible in the light we can see that he's shaken by the scene of destruction around him.

COLONEL REED  
We haven't found a body so it could be a suicide bomber or some clever bastard that caused all this -- and slipped away to sip tea with his mommie -- we just don't know.

As the Colonel struggles to define the horror he's just seen, James jumps in to save him:

JAMES  
We'll take a close look, Sir.

COLONEL REED

This kind of situation we may never know what happened. This is a mass casualty situation - terrible destruction.

JAMES

Roger that, Sir. We'll do our best.

A stretcher comes by.

COLONEL REED

They're cowards, you know. I wish they would stand up and fight us, man to man, instead of playing hide and seek with me.

JAMES

Roger, Sir. We better get moving.

COLONEL REED

Right, go ahead Sergeant.

The Colonel nods and moves off. His translator stands for a moment. Takes off his ski mask to reveal an intelligent face with deep set eyes and a dirty smear of five o'clock shadow.

SKI MASKED MAN

I'm Ahmed. My name is Ahmed. Thank you for not shooting me.

The men move on...

Advancing toward the plume of smoke and embers rising into the sky...smell of burning rubber and charred metal...

...until they see it --

--the twisted steel carcasses of two small vehicles and a TANKER.

The image is biblical - the wounded and dead piled together in one Hieronymus Bosch maze of tangled limbs, body parts...

Palm trees burning at the top...like Olympic torches.

SOLDIERS secure the area. GRIEVING FAMILIES swarm around the dead and dying --

James, Sanborn and Eldridge approach. Wind fans nearby flames into a fountain of embers that float up into the black desert night.

James moves through charred metal, stumbling over something sharp.

-- then something hits his leg... What? Flashlight, gun -- DOWN! -- it's a CHICKEN, *charred* -- feathers burned off but still walking around - disoriented, dying...

James stumbles sideways to avoid the charred hens...

SOUNDS distant and near of wailing, MEDICS racing onto the scene --

A WOMAN wearing Bhurka appears out of the distant flames and haze -- looking disoriented, in apparent state of shock --

SANBORN

A BODY lies trapped beneath a pile of rubble. Sanborn reaches down to remove one of the chunks of stone. It slides away, but another falls in its place.

ELDRIDGE

Shines his light on a concrete wall, stained with what looks like threads of black lace. He draws closer. What is it? Sanborn leans in.

SANBORN

It's hair.

JAMES

Approaches the woman in the Bhurka --

JAMES

Hey! Hey -- you alright? -- Keef Halek?

She turns to face him...madness in her eyes.

James' flashlight illuminates a massive crater, black...and empty.

Eldridge swirls around.

ELDRIDGE

(calling)

*James?!*

JAMES  
Hey, I'm right here.

James is shining his light into a orange tree. There's a PERFECTLY formed ORANGE, unharmed, nestled among the burnt leaves.

JAMES  
This is where the blast stopped.  
(beat) Look over there.

James is pointing to a building in the distance. It's past a row of houses and a field.

Sanborn comes into view. James nods to him and points again.

JAMES  
Perfect vantage point for a remote det -- and I bet he's out there right now watching us make fools of ourselves. We could get him.

ELDRIDGE  
You want to go out there?

James keeps looking into the distance.

JAMES  
Yeah, let's go hunting.

ELDRIDGE  
I could stand to get in some trouble.

Sanborn stares at James and the bandage on his head.

SANBORN  
No.

JAMES  
No?

SANBORN  
Man, this is bullshit. You got -- what?-- *three* infantry platoons here. That's their job.

JAMES  
(fiercely)  
You don't say No to me, Sergeant. I say No to you -- and I'm not going to let this bomber slink off while the grunts get their act together.  
(MORE)

JAMES (cont'd)  
(on the move)  
Let's go. Now.

James glowers at Sanborn and Eldridge and stomps off, down the alley toward an empty field.

Eldridge shoots Sanborn a sympathetic glance, and follows James. Sanborn watches them recede into the darkness.

Sanborn runs after them.

FIELD

They move three abreast across a dark field, guns raised commando-style. Poised to strike.

They walk in silence, alert to every decibel.

Gravel underfoot. Enveloping night.

They come to a high wall, behind which the ground raises to a gentle hill that looks out onto the tanker.

WALL

Sanborn gives James a leg up over the wall. James helps Sanborn over.

They lean over to pull Eldridge up but with the forty pounds of gear he's got on he's too heavy.

JAMES  
You got to work on your pull ups.

James and Sanborn drop over the other side, and we follow them as they crouch low and approach a building construction site.

WALL

Eldridge pushes his back against the wall and scans the area. It dawns on him that he's alone.

CONSTRUCTION SITE

Sanborn and James come to the edge of the site and find what may or may not be the remains of the trigger man's camp. There's a florescent lantern still glowing and cigarette butts in a pile.

JAMES

That little bastard. Let's torch  
this spot so he can't use it again.

James pats his pockets down, looking for something.

JAMES

Do you have an incendiary?

SANBORN

No.

Three quick SHOTS ring out -- they sound very close.

Sanborn and James instinctively fall to one knee. They scan  
the area -- nothing.

As one man, they rise and start running back to the wall.

JAMES

Eldridge!!!

There's no answer.

WALL

SANBORN

He's gone.

They both drop to the ground on the other side.

They scan the ground with their flashlights.

The BODY of an Iraqi insurgent is lying close to where  
Eldridge had been standing. He's pulped from bullet wounds,  
and gasping for breath.

JAMES

This guy comes out of the dark -  
Eldridge shoots.

He scavenges the ground looking for brass casings.

Nothing.

SANBORN

Three shots, close range. He takes  
a step forward to see what he's  
hit.

JAMES

Another guy comes from behind him --  
gets the drop on him. You're a  
hostage.

They look up and down the wall.

SANBORN

That way is towards the tanker,  
troops.

DARK STREET

They run about fifty yards when Sanborn TRIPS, stumbles,  
James catches him as he falls, and they keep going.

In the distance, they see Eldridge's back and the backs of  
two other MEN, just as they are turning a corner.

They SPRINT to the corner, and pause to catch their breath as  
James hands Sanborn his flashlight.

JAMES

Hit 'em with both lights on three.

SANBORN

Fuck. Okay.

JAMES

One. Two.

Sanborn shoulders his rifle and readies both spotlights.

JAMES

Three.

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

They sprint to the next block, where Eldridge is being walked  
quickly at gun point.

*The men's rifles are at his head.*

JAMES

Again. One two three. Do it. Do it.

Sanborn shines the lights on the backs of both men.

James fires. Three shots at the guy on the left of Eldridge.  
Three shots at the guy on the right.

Sanborn kills the flashlights.

James goes running towards the group, Sanborn running next to him. Both have their guns up but lights off.

They get to the group and all three men are on the ground. Both Iraqis are dead -- shot clean in the back.

Eldridge is bleeding profusely from his leg, but he's alive.

James and Sanborn pick Eldridge up and drudge back with him.

ELDRIDGE

Am I dead?

JAMES

No. You're fine.

ELDRIDGE

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

Off James' face --

INT CAMP VICTORY SHOWER STALLS LATER THAT NIGHT

James walks in. The room is empty. Florescent lights hum. James is still wearing his fatigues. His whole midsection is red with Eldridge's blood.

James heads to the shower and steps inside, fully clothed. He turns on the water.

Aims the shower head to his stomach. Sinks down so it can hit the bloody stains.

As the uniform grows wet, then gets soaked, the pinkish water swirls down the drain --

EXT CAMP VICTORY FIRST SERGEANT'S TRAILER

James and Sanborn emerge into the wind.

SANBORN

So how you doing with this?

JAMES

Fine. I'm fine.

SANBORN

Fine? You know I lied to our sergeant.

(MORE)

SANBORN (cont'd)  
So Eldridge wouldn't have to go  
around saying he was shot by his  
own team leader.

JAMES  
Yeah. Thanks. I'm just tired.

SANBORN  
You want some sleeping pills?

JAMES  
Nah, I'm good.

EXT CAMP VICTORY HEAD SHED MORNING

James walks purposely out of the head shed toward a waiting  
Humvee. He passes Pele who looks up and shouts:

PELE  
Hey, Boomala, Boomala!

James keeps walking. Eyes straight ahead.

PELE  
Hey--

Running up to James, holding DVD's, walks next to him.

PELE  
(smiling)  
Look at these, best quality. No  
special effects!

James just keeps walking. He gets in the car, Sanborn in the  
driver's seat.

Pele watches him go. Hurt.

EXT CAMP VICTORY TARMAC MORNING

Eldridge is on a stretcher, being loaded into a military  
transport helicopter. Sanborn and James are there to say good-  
bye.

As Eldridge is being loaded in, James touches his shoulder.

JAMES  
You'll probably be walking in a few  
months.

ELDRIDGE

My tibia is shattered in nine places I don't think I'm going to be walking soon. The doc said six months if I'm lucky.

JAMES

Wow. Six ain't bad.

ELDRIDGE

Not bad? It fucking sucks man.

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

ELDRIDGE

(angrily)

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

JAMES

I'm sorry.

ELDRIDGE

You're sorry? Fuck you, Will.  
(meaning it) *Really fuck you.*  
Thanks for saving my life and all but we didn't have to go hunting for the trigger man. *You invented it, to get your adrenaline fix.* You war mongering fuck.

James is stunned.

SANBORN

(grabbing Eldridge's hand)

Take care of yourself, Owen.

A TRANSPORT SOLDIER looks at Sanborn and gives a hand signal to wrap it up. Time to go. The door is closed on Eldridge.

James and Sanborn watch as the helicopter takes off. The rotor wash chops the air.

JAMES

Wind and sand buffet his face. He turns to say something to Sanborn.

But he's already walking away.

CUT TO:

EXT BAGHDAD STREET LATE AFTERNOON

A new sand storm has begun.

And so it's in a cloud of dusty orange air that we find James, encased in his bomb suit, taking the first steps of his trek towards...

DOWNRANGE

A WASHING MACHINE. Sitting in the middle of the street.

**TITLE OVER:**

**DAYS LEFT IN BRAVO COMPANY'S ROTATION: 5**

UPRANGE

Sanborn casts a nervous look around the poverty-stricken neighborhood. It has taken on a forboding vibe in the unrelenting storm.

DOWNRANGE

James approaches the washing machine.

JAMES  
(headset, impish grin)  
I hear ticking.

He uses a long pole to open the door of the washing machine. It's empty inside.

Getting closer, he sees the washing machine timer is at 30 minutes. James rests his head on the timer, listening.

He turns his attention to the back of the washing machine, unscrewing the rear plate.

Inside, just a tangle of wires. He traces the wires with his hand. Shrugs.

Then he turns back to the front of the machine. He twists the timer with his hand, slowly, all the way back to zero.

It DINGS -- harmlessly.

JAMES  
(headset)  
Hey, Sanborn.

SANBORN  
(over walkie)  
Copy. What's up?

JAMES  
(over walkie)  
Send your skivvies down here on the  
bot, I'll run a quick bleach cycle.  
Somebody threw out a perfectly good  
washing machine.

UPRANGE

SANBORN  
(relieved)  
Copy that.

--When, suddenly, the SOUND of SOLDIERS SHOUTING in the  
distance catches Sanborn's ear.

SANBORN  
(into walkie)  
Hustle back, something's going on.

MOMENTS LATER

James comes back sweating profusely from his run. Sanborn  
helps take his helmet off.

As two SOLDIERS come running over. More SHOUTING in the  
distance, louder now. "Hands on your head." "Don't move  
asshole." "Stop. Stop."

In addition, the sound of SHOUTING IN ARABIC. A loud jumble.

Over that, SOLDIERS YELLING: "Get back." "Form a perimeter."

A NERVOUS SOLDIER trots up to James and Sanborn.

JAMES  
What's going on?

NERVOUS SOLDIER  
We've got a situation with a  
suicide bomber.

JAMES  
We'll follow you.

They follow the soldier down the road. The soldier is sweating, terrified.

EXT BAGHDAD ROAD

The road has been cordoned off by SOLDIERS on all sides.

In the middle of the road an IRAQI MAN IN A NEW BLACK SUIT is standing with his hands above his head. He's distraught. Hair mussed.

A SERGEANT seems to have taken command of the situation, and now he alone is shouting to the man. "Stay still. Don't Move. If you keep walking we will shoot you."

A TRANSLATOR in a black ski mask is helping him get the message across.

The translator edges forward to talk to the BLACK SUIT man.

SERGEANT  
Keep that translator back.

One of the soldiers grabs the translator.

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

James and Sanborn and the NERVOUS SOLDIER come onto the scene.

The Sergeant turns to James and explains.

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 blow up. He  
begged us to take it off him.

TRANSLATOR  
(to James)  
Help this man. He's not a bad man.

SANBORN

Not a bad man? You've got to be kidding me.

(to James)

This is a trap. He wants to draw people close to him.

JAMES

(to translator)

Tell him to open his jacket. I need to see the bomb.

The translator SHOUTS in Arabic and the MAN unbuttons his jacket, revealing several sticks of dynamite strapped to his chest.

JAMES

(to the soldier)

With that much bang, I'd need a hundred meter perimeter.

(to translator)

Tell him to get on his knees.

The translator SHOUTS. BLACK SUIT complies.

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 one hundred meters away, like everybody else.

TRANSLATOR

But how will I hear?

JAMES

You don't need to. I'm going down there.

Meanwhile, the BLACK SUIT man is SHOUTING something in Arabic.

JAMES

(to translator)

What the fuck is he shouting now?

TRANSLATOR

*He's asking you to hurry. He thinks  
the bomb has a timer on it.*

James turns to Sanborn

JAMES

Where's that helmet?

Sanborn pulls James aside.

SANBORN

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

James smiles at Sanborn. He just doesn't get it.

JAMES

That's why it's called a suicide  
bomb.

SANBORN

It's suicide for you, Will.

JAMES

Nah. That guy wants to catch an  
American? I'll give him an  
American.

Sanborn reluctantly hands him his helmet, and seals him in.

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

Uh-huh.

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

If I shoot you now, I can disarm this bomb much more easily. Do you understand?

BLACK SUIT stares at him blankly.

JAMES

(headset)  
Sanborn, give your walkie to the translator.

TRANSLATOR

(over walkie)  
Yes?

JAMES

(headset)  
What the hell is this guy saying?

BLACK SUIT jabbars on in Arabic.

UPRANGE

The translator keys his walkie.

TRANSLATOR

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

JAMES

Holds his walkie up for the man to hear the translator.

JAMES

(headset)  
Hands have to stay 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)

That's not what I asked you. Now I'm going to shoot if he doesn't understand that he can't move his hands.

James holds the walkie up to the man's ear. Translator has another exchange.

BLACK SUIT

Yes. Yes. Yes!

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, I need to get this rig off. There's too many wires here to figure it out.

SANBORN

(over headset)

Copy that, what do you need?

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

The man is shivering with fear.

JAMES

(headset)

Bolt cutters.

SANBORN

(over walkie)

Copy that. I'll get 'em.

JAMES  
(headset)  
You've got two minutes to get them  
and get down here.

UPRANGE

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

SANBORN  
(into walkie)  
Fuck. Copy that.

DOWNRANGE

James presses his pistol harder into the man's forehead.

JAMES  
(to man)  
Don't move.

UPRANGE

Sanborn runs to the truck. He roots around looking for the bolt cutter. At last he finds it, and comes charging out with it.

DOWNRANGE

The Casio watch is at 4:30.

SANBORN

Running hard with the bolt cutters.

--Past a crew of soldiers.

--Down the road, sprinting now. Rifle flapping.

DOWNRANGE

Sanborn skids to a halt, hands James the cutters.

James hands his gun to Sanborn, who holds it on the man's forehead.

James sets to work, applying the cutters to the thick metal holding the bomb to his chest.

The man is crying now.

Sanborn sees the Casio. It reads 4:00

SANBORN  
Holy shit. You weren't kidding.

JAMES  
Nope.

James works the cutter blade.

CU: Bolt Cutter. It SCRAPS futilely against the metal.

JAMES  
(sotto)  
What is this made out of?

BLACK SUIT  
*Please. Please.*

SANBORN  
Case hardened steel.

James doubles his effort.

CU: Bolt Cutter. The blade bites the steel, but it doesn't give.

James squeezes with all his might.

JAMES  
Motherfucker. What's our time?

Sanborn looks at the Casio.

SANBORN  
Three minutes.

JAMES  
Shit. Ok. Let me think.

He puts the bolt cutter down on the ground.

JAMES  
We'd need an arc welder to get this off properly.

SANBORN

I don't think we have one of those  
in the truck.

CU: Casio Watch 2:30.

JAMES

Let's try the back of it.

Sanborn nods. Keeps the gun on the man's head. *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. Weaker.

James works it with the cutter.

CU: Casio Watch 1:30.

SANBORN

We have to bail.

JAMES

Go. I got the suit.

Sanborn looks at the guy.

SANBORN

What do you want me to do with the  
pistol?

JAMES

Take it with you, that's a good  
pistol.

SANBORN

When do you leave?

JAMES

In forty five seconds.

Sanborn turns, and begins running uprange.

SANBORN

(shouting to soldiers)  
Get back! Get back!

The soldiers turn and run.

James tries and tries to clip the metal. It's a no go. He comes around to face the man.

JAMES  
I'm sorry.

BLACK SUIT  
*Please, please.*

JAMES  
The metal is too thick.

BLACK SUIT  
*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  
*No! No!*

James clubs his hand away.

JAMES  
Sorry.

CU: Casio Watch: 45 seconds.

James gets up and starts running-- lumbers, really, in the suit -- as fast as he can towards a retreating Sanborn.

Sanborn hears James' boots thumping towards him and cranes his neck to see

--James running, arms akimbo

--The Black Suit man stands up

BOOM!!

-- He explodes and the blast spits out fire and dust.

--James is nailed with shrapnel and debris, knocked over.

--Sanborn is blown to the ground.

JAMES POV

--through the helmet a hailstorm of particulate matter flying at 22,000 feet per second straight at us --

--chunks of molten metal hitting his stomach, stopped by the suit

--bits of shrapnel and body parts thump into him

--dust and blood splatters the *outside* of his helmet

JAMES

--CU his face: White. No movement. Total silence.

--blood seeps from his nose

--then, as if overcoming great resistance, his heart turns over -- Daaaa--duuuunk

--sharp, loud inhale of breath. Like birth. The heart kicks in again. Da-dunk. Da-dunk.

James struggles to stand.

He looks upranged.

Sanborn is staggering towards the soldiers.

CUT TO:

EXT HUMVEE DUSK

The Humvee snakes along the desert floor.

Traffic thickening.

Shadows against a dimming sky.

INT HUMVEE

Sanborn is in the passenger seat, shivering, and covered in grime and dust. James, in the driver's seat.

James looks over at Sanborn.

JAMES

You alright?

SANBORN

No. I hate this place

Sanborn stares out the window at the unforgiving landscape.

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, man.

JAMES

Bro, you're not going to die out here.

Sanborn shakes his head. Unconsciously, his fingers touch his neck, finding the exposed area above the collar of his body armor.

SANBORN

Another inch or two difference. Shrapnel goes zing (still touching his neck). Severs my throat. I bleed out in the sand.

(beat)

Fuck. If I die now, nobody will even really care. My folks, sure. But that don't count. Who else?

(beat)

I don't even have a son.

JAMES

You got time.

SANBORN

No... I'm done. I want a son, Will. I want a son.

They drive on in silence. Then Sanborn looks at James, as if seeing him for the first time.

SANBORN

Why do you do it? Take the risks?

JAMES

Hell, I don't know.

SANBORN

But you know what I'm talking about, right? Every time we go out, you throw the dice. Live or die, you just throw 'em down. You recognize that, right?

Beat.

JAMES

Yeah. (softly) I do. But I don't know why. Do you know why I am the way I am?

SANBORN

No, Will, I don't.

Silence. Then after a while:

JAMES

This traffic is pissing me off.

SANBORN

Where are we, anyway?

JAMES

I know where I am but I'm lost.

They drive on. Dust off the desert floor blows into the windshield --

TIME CUT TO:

INT KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE SUPERMARKET DAY

A big one. Vast, hyper-hygenic, the aisles stretching on, loaded with glistening produce. Muzac. A cathedral to consumerism.

We find James walking through the supermarket, looking like a new man. His hair has grown, softening his features. He's scrubbed clean, dust free, and dressed in Bermuda shorts and a clashing Polo shirt. The All American Dad. A suburban softie. Pushing a shopping cart.

Welcome home, son, for you are no longer in Baghdad. You're in the "big PX" -- America.

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, you grab the barbecue sauce and I'll meet you in aisle four.

And CONNIE JAMES smiles again, and pats her husband on the shoulder.

Now James knows he's really home.

JAMES

Pushes the cart over to the sauce section. Down the squeaky-clean aisle.

His progress is impeded by an OBESE WOMAN who is mulling over cat litter. Her overflowing cart blocks the aisle.

James stops. Hands tight on the shopping cart. He looks at her hard. She ignores him. *Where's the 9mm when you need it?*

James clears his throat. She sees him. Moves her cart.

He continues on, walking through the cavernous space.

At last, he's at the sauce section. He is rattled by the abundance after the bleakness of Iraq, and the array of choices is dizzying.

--He reaches for a bottle, then pulls back, unsure.

--Giving up, he picks a bottle at random and tosses it into the cart.

INT KNOXVILLE JAMES HOUSE KITCHEN MORNING SOME DAYS LATER

James is washing the vegetables they've just bought at the grocery store. Mushrooms bob in a pool of water at the bottom of the sink. James tries to clean them individually, but can't. They crumble in his hands.

CONNIE

Let's put the chicken on first and the vegetables on last, so they don't burn?

James struggles with the mushrooms. Makes no reply.

CONNIE CONT'D

Will?

JAMES

Yeah, okay. (beat) You know, they're really short on bomb techs over there.

Connie knows where this is going, but she fights the inevitable.

CONNIE

Well, good thing the army is hiring, and they've got so many great guys over there.

JAMES

Uh-huh.

James wipes his hands on the dish towel and walks out. Looking at his retreating back, she accidentally knocks a glass off the counter, and it shatters.

EXT JAMES HOUSE LATER THAT DAY

A few NEIGHBORS have gathered for a barbecue in James' backyard. It's a simple, low-key affair. James is tending meat on a grill.

INT JAMES HOUSE CONTINUOUS

The doorbell rings. Connie rushes to open it. It's Sanborn. She hugs him.

CONNIE

Thanks for coming. Maybe he'll listen to you.

SANBORN

I know how to talk to him.

EXT JAMES HOUSE A LITTLE LATER

Behind the barbecue, Sanborn finds a moment to confront James privately.

SANBORN

What the fuck is the matter with you? You got a family, kid, nice looking burgers.

James studies the grilling meat.

JAMES

I know, it's crazy. So how's life at home treating you?

Sanborn holds up his hand. He's wearing a wedding ring.

SANBORN

I made the plunge. (big smile) But  
I thought we were talking about  
you.

JAMES

We just did, buddy.

INT JAMES' SON'S BEDROOM LATER THAT NIGHT

The boy is in a cradle, face up and wide awake. James comes  
in to tuck him in.

James pulls a book of fairy tales off the shelf, flips  
through it. Can't read that fluff.

He pulls up a chair. Begins to play with a Jack-In-the-Box.  
He winds it up.

He opens it for his son. The Jack POPS out.

His son squeals with delight, then his eyes go wide with  
fear. He's not sure what to make of the bobbing clown.

JAMES

(trying to settle him  
down)

Well, let's see. I bet you don't  
know the story of these magic  
boxes.

James looks at the box. He stuffs the Jack back in and closes  
it.

The boy looks up at him with a son's pure admiration. Rapt.

JAMES

Once upon a time, in a distant  
kingdom, there were many magic  
boxes

He stops to think.

JAMES

Every person had a magic box. But  
you couldn't tell they were magic  
boxes on the outside. Like this  
one.

He brings the box close to the child's eyes. The boy is  
dazzled by the colors. He reaches out to touch it.

JAMES

It just looks like a plain old box. Then a new king came along and told all the people, you have to give me all your magic boxes. But the people, instead of giving away their boxes decided to hide them. And they put their boxes in secret places all over the kingdom. They put them in the roads. They put them in cars. They put them in buildings. And the King said, (does a King's gravelly baritone) "Well, how am I going to get my magic boxes now?" And one of the King's men said, "We have a special Knight with special armor, and he can find the boxes. And only he.

He tries to collect his thoughts.

JAMES

And this Knight gathered up all the boxes, far and wide. And sometimes - - when he wasn't sure if it was a magic box -- he opened them.

James slowly opens the box, holding the clown in with his hand so it doesn't pop. Releasing it slowly.

The boy giggles and reaches up.

JAMES

And the King said to the Knight, you have done a wonderful job. I will grant you one wish. What do you wish?

James thinks, struggles to find an ending.

JAMES

But the Knight didn't know what to say.

James realizes he can't finish the story.

JAMES

You see, the thing is, son. One day you'll understand that when you start out like you are now, you love everything. You love your Mommy and your Daddy. You love your bobba. You love your blanket.

(MORE)

JAMES (cont'd)

You even love your little crib, and these dumb toys. But as you get older some of the things you love don't seem special anymore. That bobba is one day just going to look like an ordinary plastic bottle to you. And the older you get, the more this happens and the fewer things you love. And by the time you get to be my age, sometimes you only love one -- or two -- things.

James pauses.

JAMES

With me, I think's it's one.

EXT KNOXVILLE BUS STOP DAWN

James waits for the bus. Wearing his camo. He's alone. His hair is shaved again.

The far off city BUS grinds its gears. James turns toward the sound when a Chevy PICKUP pulls ahead of the bus, and zooms to a stop in front of him.

INT PICKUP

Sanborn opens the passenger window.

EXT BUS STOP

JAMES

You lost again, Sergeant?

SANBORN

Get in, before I change my mind.

They drive away.

INT PICKUP

SANBORN

(smiling)

Couldn't risk letting you on a public bus. Probably shoot the damn driver if it wasn't moving fast enough.

INT AIRPLANE

A stewardess passing out glasses of water and packages of peanuts approaches James' aisle.

STEWARDESS

Here you are, Sir (noticing James' uniform) Thank you for your service.

JAMES

Your welcome, m'am.

The stewardess smiles lovingly, and waits for an opening to continue the conversation. When none comes, she moves on.

James turns to the window. In his hand he holds a photo of his son.

Tears well up.

The plane's ENGINE WHINE swells and merges with--

CUT TO:

EXT BAGHDAD DAY

--sonic overload:

Angry drivers SHOUT in Arabic - car HORNS blare - loudspeaker CALL to prayer - Humvee RUMBLE - incoming CHOPPER WASH - RAT-TAT-TAT of distant gunfire --

As James' feet hit the tarmac.

A SOLDIER is waiting for him, with a smile on his face.

SOLDIER

Welcome to Delta-Company.

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

-- in the desert.

The small CLUSTER of SOLDIERS at the side of the road parts to make way for James.

Hands pat his back as he begins the long walk down the street -- toward the bomb.

All SOUND telescopes down to just James' BREATHING...

--the view through James' eyes: the outside world of soldiers and Baghdad seems to pulsate with excitement --

-- James' face. As the SOUNDS of his breathing grow louder

-- The noon day sun beats brilliantly onto a car's windshield, the glass shimmering.

**TITLE OVER:**

**DAYS LEFT IN DELTA COMPANY'S ROTATION: 365**

-- James moves into the path of that reflected sunlight.

-- And vanishes into the glare.

END