"Renovatio"

an original screenplay by

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FADE IN:

BLACK SCREEN

AZIZ (V.O.)

Boy meets girl.

QUICK FLASHES:

-- ELLIOT and DELIA in the third grade, running, laughing, chasing one another across the playground.

END FLASHES.

AZIZ (CONT'D)

Boy gets girl.

QUICK FLASHES:

-- In a fancy restaurant, Elliot smiles at Delia. She beams back at him.

END FLASHES.

AZIZ (CONT'D)

(sadly)

Boy loses girl.

QUICK FLASHES:

-- Elliot BLOWN from the convoy, landing in the Euphrates river, unconscious.

END FLASHES.

AZIZ (CONT'D)

(warm)

Boy gets girl back.

QUICK FLASHES:

-- Delia and Elliot, wrapped in each others arms.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MOSQUE - RAMADI, IRAQ - DAY

AZIZ (V.O.)

If only it were that simple.

It is one of the few times that it ever rains throughout the year, but it is pelting the cheap windows of the Mosque hard.

The room is full of men prostrate on prayer mats, humming.

The prayer sirens begin to sound, providing a most serene view of the other side of the world.

ABDUL AZIZ raises his head, opens his eyes. We can see the hurt, the shame. Yet he appears to be kind and gentle. He is young, and not foolish. Matured for his age. Bearded.

Aziz looks around at his fellow Muslims. They are all still in the middle of prayer.

Aziz quietly rolls up his prayer mat and stuffs it in a sack, and quickly exits the room.

EXT. MOSQUE - RAMADI, IRAQ - MOMENTS LATER

The high desert sun beats down despite the monsoon. Aziz draws out a pair of sunglasses from the sack. He puts them on. They are big and awkward, not stylish. But they will serve their purpose.

A MARINE CONVOY roars past the Mosque. Aziz watches it. Specifically a GUNNER who gives Aziz the bird as they pass.

Aziz shakes his head, and begins to walk down what the military calls, "Route Michigan" - the main highway that cuts through Ramadi.

EXT. ROUTE MICHIGAN - CONTINUOUS

Aziz strolls down the highway, apparently unperturbed by the several convoys that pass him or the pop shots that erupt randomly around him as he walks. For Aziz, this is nothing new.

As he approaches the edge of the city, Aziz removes the false beard and awkward sunglasses from his face. He stuffs it in the sack, and walks past the green city limits sign that reads (in Arabic and English):

## AR RAMADI

Aziz cuts through a wide alley, behind a large building near the edge of the city. He reaches an Opal that was once a taxi (which explains the disgusting orange and white pattern). Aziz attempts to start up the Opal, but it fails him.

He ditches the car, and jogs into the open desert before him, now moving with a purpose. The rain finally comes to a slow.

EXT. RAMADI, IRAQ - ESTABLISHING

An incredible sunset. The SIRENS sound the evening prayer. The black speck which is Aziz, races across the beautiful horizon, bag in hand, the night upon him.

DELIA (V.O.)

Do you not like it here?

ELLIOT (V.O.)

It's fine...Beautiful. It's just - a lot.

INT. EMPTY APARTMENT LOFT - DENVER, CO - DAY

City lights beaming in front of the expansive glass windows. ELLIOT HAMILTON and DELIA SHORE (both 22) are mesmerized by the beautiful view.

DELIA

It's a home.

ELLIOT

But is it our home?

Delia is upset he doesn't like it. She places a hand on her stomach.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

You ok?

DELIA

(ignoring the question)
It can be. I want you to have a home when you get back.

FIJITOT

My home will be wherever you are.

She can't help but smile.

DELIA

You're such a cheese ball.

ELLIOT

Because I love you.

He wraps her into his arms, still facing the city.

DELIA

I love you too.

She arches her neck up to him, he grins delicately.

The kiss is so passionate and energetic, so sad and solemn, that it becomes the most breathtaking kiss these two have ever shared.

She begins to cry. Just tears, no sobbing.

DELIA (CONT'D)

I don't want you to leave.

ELLIOT

I don't really have a choice. I'm sorry.

(beat)

I don't want to leave you.

(beat)

I have to do this. I'm lucky enough to only have to go once. After this, I'm home for good.

She cries quietly and he kisses the top of her blonde locks. They both share the moment as long as they can. Elliot's high and tight is fresh, his face is clean shaven.

DELIA

Tell me. Tell me you love me. Only me.

ELLIOT

Only you. I love you.

DELIA

Forever?

ELLIOT

And ever.

They kiss again...and again...and again.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY (FLASHBACK)

A massive play set, wooden and connecting every major item you could need in a playground. Swings, monkey bars, tether ball, etc. It is constructed to look like a castle, with "drawbridge" style entrances, and bridges and ladders that connect three colored towers: BLUE, YELLOW, and RED.

The playground is empty like an old western film. We hear the creaks of wood and metal being moved in the wind, fall leaves dancing across concrete, and cars driving in the distance.

DING. DING. DING.

Like a stampede, the children burst through various doors that lead onto the playground, teachers in their wake. The quiet sounds of before are replaced by yelling and screaming. This is where childhood begins: Recess.

The third grade version of Elliot runs with his best friend, BEN VANHORN, into the play structure. They begin to navigate the several twists and turns in the "castle" chasing each other. Ben reaches the Red tower, which is the second tallest one on the play set. Elliot comes into the tower shortly after, and they both take a moment to catch their breath. Elliot leans out the tower "window" and looks down at the children below...and he sees her.

Delia's dirty blonde hair, pulled in a pony tail, playing hop scotch with a few other girls. Even though she is about a hundred yards away, she strikes Elliot breathless. He grins uncontrollably. Ben looks at Elliot, curious, then sees what he is looking at.

Ben punches Elliot in the arm, bringing Elliot back down to Earth.

ELLIOT

Ow!

BEN

(sing-song)

Elliot likes Delia! Elliot likes Delia! Elliot and Delia sitting in a tree, k-i-s-s-i-n-g. First comes love....

Elliot runs out of the tower away from Ben. Ben chases after him, continuing to chortle.

He runs down the ramp, out of the play structure, and runs across the hop-scotch court, but trips over a loose shoelace and smacks his face on the ground. Delia and her friends watch him, so Elliot does his best not to cry. He simply stands and brushes himself off, and walks gingerly back inside the school.

Delia watches him go, managing a brilliant smile as he does.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STAGING AREA, RAMADI - DAY (PRESENT)

The beastly CONVOY spans the quarter mile length of the staging area. MARINES gather food, water, supplies, etc., and load everything into humvees, high backs, and semis.

GUNNY NOOSE (45) barks orders at any Marine that gets within arms reach.

CORPORAL UPTON goes over the route with the other VEHICLE COMMANDERS.

LANCE CORPORAL ELLIOT HAMILTON stacks his ammo, checks his flack and rifle alongside the other Marines by the clearing barrels.

Noose calls for the Marines to load up. They all do as they are told. At least fifty Marines flood into the vehicles, all ready to depart.

Elliot sets up his MK19 turret, lubing the rails, etc.

INT. ELLIOT'S HUMVEE - CONTINUOUS

Upton yanks on Elliot's leg. Elliot looks down.

UPTON

(deadpan)

I will yank your fucking balls off if you kick me in the head again.

Elliot grins.

ELLIOT

Play nice, Corporal. I wouldn't want you to get excited once you feel what I am packing down there.

Upton also smiles.

UPTON

Did I tell ya yer ma called the Sat Phone the other day?

Elliot becomes serious.

ELLIOT

What'd she say?

UPTON

She wants her Depends back.

All the Marines, including Elliot, roar at the joke... Elliot adjusts his Depends quickly.

The RADIO chirps.

RADIO

This is Black Actual, we are a go. Strap on ladies, move out.

There are cheers and whistles throughout the convoy. The diesel engines roar to life and begin to depart the gate.

UPTON

(singing to the tune
 of "California" by
 Phantom Planet)

Ar Ramadi here we come, right back where we started from, Ar Ramadi! Well we've been on the run driving in the sun, soldiers grab your guns, fuckers here we come, Ar Ramadi!

More laughs.

EXT. STAGING AREA - HURRICANE POINT, RAMADI - ESTABLISHING

The last of the convoy departs through the expansive gate, which two MARINES immediately close as the last vehicle departs.

INT. ELLIOT'S HUMVEE - CONTINUOUS

UPTON

(into mic)

Alright fuckers, tighten up. This is a smooth "log" run. Don't fuck it up.

Elliot kicks Upton in the back of the head as he adjusts his turret.

UPTON (CONT'D)

Motherfucker, Hamilton!

ELLIOT

(laughing)
Sorry, Corporal!

FULL SHOT: ROUTE MICHIGAN - DAY

Ten vehicles total complete the convoy. Civilian cars pull off the side of the road immediately for it. The Marines own the town.

EXT. ELLIOT'S HUMVEE - CONTINUOUS

They pass the decrepit buildings, the blown up vehicles, the warn down shops. Children chase the convoy as Mothers scold them and herd them away. A "Homeless" Man takes a shit on the sides of a building.

ELLIOT

(to himself)

What the fuck...

EXT. ROUTE MICHIGAN - CONTINUOUS

Donkeys pull carts of vegetables. Farmers walk alongside the carts, herding sheep at the same time.

INT. ELLIOT'S HUMVEE - CONTINUOUS

The radio chirps.

RADIO

White Actual to Falcon. Taking a detour along the river. Michigan is packed. How copy?

A beat. The radio chirps again.

RADIO (CONT'D)

Falcon to White Actual, full copy.

EXT. ALONGSIDE THE EUPHRATES RIVER - MOMENTS LATER

The river glistens in the sun. The convoy rumbles above it.

EXT. THE CONVOY - CONTINUOUS

The lead vehicle comes to a stop. A gas truck blocks the detour.

RADIO

Attention, gunners - toss flashbangs, get this fucking thing out of my way.

A fleet of flashbangs ERUPT in the air. The truck doesn't move. Gunny Noose opens his door.

The Iraqi DRIVER simply stares at the convoy.

NOOSE

(to the driver)

Hey! Get the fu--

The hole in Noose's head appears suddenly, and like an open faucet, begins to spill blood and brain matter. He drops to the ground, very dead...all before the gun shot even echoes.

RADIO/MARINES

(shouting)

CONTACT FRONT!

The GUNNERS (including Elliot) open fire, and the drivers all simultaneously begin to back up. The vehicles move into a tactical position, covering the closest intersections and angling the vehicles to deflect gunfire.

The DRIVER of the gas truck lifts a detonator into view...

Elliot sees the Driver, grabs his rifle from inside the humvee, and takes quick aim at the driver.

ELLIOT

Motherfuc --

KAFUCKINGBOOM!!!

FULL SHOT: THE CONVOY - CONTINUOUS

The GAS TRUCK explodes, sending a massive mushroom cloud into the air, wiping out the first five humvees (including Elliot's) knocking them aside like toys. The back five humvees open fire in every direction, trying to find the ambushing enemy.

Floating through the air with the other debris, fireballs, and pieces of humvee, ELLIOT flails through the sky like a rag doll, the fire-fight continuing around him.

He SPLASHES into the Euphrates, and immediately surfaces -- his flak keeping him afloat.

He doesn't move.

EXT. THE STREET - CONTINUOUS

MARINES dismount from the humvees and take cover wherever they can. The charred humvees in front of them provide a massive plume of smoke for cover.

Some MARINES stumble out of the charred humvees, badly burnt or worse.

MARINES

CORPSMAN UP! CORPSMAN UP!!

CORPSMAN rush to the injured Marines, one begins to call in a Medevac on his radio.

A MARINE tosses a SMOKE GRENADE into the middle of the wreckage. It bursts and thick plumes of green smoke emit.

THREE BLACKHAWK HELICOPTERS arrive within seconds. A few "healthy" Marines stay behind to provide cover for the medevac while the rest move out to hunt down the insurgents.

Two CORPSMEN begin to load the injured Marines onto respective choppers.

All of the Marines from Elliot's vehicle are among them.

A MARINE rushes up to the Corpsman.

MARINE

We are missing one!

CORPSMAN

Who?

MARINE

How the fuck you think I can tell who? We are missing one!

The PILOT overhears.

PILOT

I need to get this bird in the air, NOW!

MARINE

We have to send a search party!

PILOT

Fine! Load up everyone you can.

The Marine looks around. There is not enough support for a search party. He sees another Marine just standing around, in shell shock.

MARINE

Hey! HEY!

MARINE TWO

(broken out of trance)

Ya?

MARINE

Get on the hook and tell White Actual we need to send out a search party! We are missing one!

Marine Two runs to the closest humvee and grabs the mic.

INT. HUMVEE - CONTINUOUS

MARINE TWO

(into mic)

Uh...we need a search party. We are missing one.

RADIO

Marine, we don't have enough available units at this time. Head back to the wire for refit/refuel, White Actual, out.

FULL SHOT: THE STREET - CONTINUOUS

As the sun begins to set, the dust begins to settle, the wreckage continues to burn. The choppers take flight, evacuating the injured and dead. The remaining Humvees depart to head back to base. The red smoke dissipates. The river rages against the rock cliffs.

EXT. THE RIVER - CONTINUOUS

Elliot's body begins to float with the current. He remains motionless.

DELIA (V.O.)

Forever?

ELLIOT (V.O.)

And ever.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY (FLASHBACK)

She runs as fast as her little legs will take her.

Ben is right on her tail.

They weave through the swing set, and Delia leaps onto a wooden platform.

He charges through other children, pushing them out of the way as he runs.

She reaches the monkey bars, and stops.

Ben is getting closer.

The monkey bars look much too long for her to manage, she looks back and sees Ben...

...Who is almost on the platform with her.

She jumps...

... Through the air, as far as she can get across the monkey bars.

Thinking quickly, Ben calls out after he...

BEN

You can't touch hot lava! The ground is hot lava now!

With that, the ground literally becomes hot, boiling, lava. Other children splash through the lava carelessly.

Delia screams and reaches for the closest bar, barely getting hold of it with her finger tips!

Ben laughs jovially, and starts to cross the monkey bars, towards the dangling Delia...

Out of nowhere, Elliot lunges at Ben, grabbing him around the torso, beginning to pull him down, inching closer and closer to the lava.

ELLIOT

Vicky! RUN!

Delia musters some brief strength and swings off of the monkey bars onto the opposite platform, slipping briefly, but regaining her balance.

DELIA

BATMAN! CAREFUL!

Ben's grip loosens from the bars...

Elliot struggles to grab hold of a bar...

Ben let's go...

Elliot grabs a bar at the last moment...

Ben falls toward the lava...

But Elliot grabs him by the shirt collar and hangs onto him.

ELLIOT

No more lava for you, Joker!

The lava vanishes immediately, and the playground looks normal again.

BEN

FOOL!

Ben kicks off of Elliot and swings effortlessly to the platform where Delia remains. He grabs her and runs off into the wooden castle...leaving Elliot to himself.

Elliot dangles from the monkey bars, looking longingly to where Ben ran off with Delia. Children continue to play around him.

He crosses the monkey bars and lands on the other side of the play structure. He runs up a flight of wooden stairs to an overlook.

He searches, but cannot see either of them through the mass of children. From a distance, Delia SCREAMS.

Elliot charges down the stairs to the sound of the screams. He crosses the playground, bumping into children and tripping over himself as he goes.

He reaches the other side, the side with a tall blue tower. He sees them.

Ben holds Delia by both of her arms, leaning her over the side of the railing.

Delia sees Elliot.

DELIA

Batman!

Elliot runs into the play structure, and begins to navigate the maze.

Delia SCREAMS again.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE HAMILTON HOME - DENVER, CO - DAY (PRESENT)

Modern, clean, and quite possibly the home they will retire in. MICHAEL and GLORIA HAMILTON (mid forties) share lunch with Delia in their expansive kitchen. Michael is in the middle of an anecdote.

MICHAEL

-- And I say, "as long as you promise me, that this is right. That this is you. Then I will sign."

GLORIA

I told him I would move him to Canada if he ever joined. I think it is every parents worst nightmare.

MICHAEL

Don't get us wrong. We are proud. Thankful. We owe him our lives in many ways. But this is not, not what you think it is.

DELIA

He told me the morning he signed up that he had a job interview.

GLORIA

I guess that's not really a lie...

MICHAEL

Act by omission.

GLORIA

(to Michael)

I think we both just became numb, once he told us he was leaving.

DELIA

It's so hard to picture him there...

MICHAEL

He has always wanted to run with the big dogs. Always.

GLORIA

He is stubborn.

DELIA

Refuses to give in.

MICHAEL

(beat)

I guess he's perfect for this fucking thing, now that I think about it!

The irony is true amongst all of them.

GLORIA

On my way to work, I pray for him. Because I don't get to hear his voice every day...that feeling is just, hard.

DELIA

No news is good news.

All three sit in nostalgic silence for a moment...

GLORIA

Who wants some Pecan Pie?

MICHAEL

Oooo. Absolutely.

GLORIA

Delia?

DELIA

A small slice. Thank you.

The doorbell rings.

Gloria's smile fades.

GLORIA

(to Michael)

Are you expecting someone?

He shakes his head, "no."

Gloria walks cautiously to the front door.

She is short, looks ten years short of forty, and has the appealing look of a suburban mother.

The glass plated window slits by the door give too much away for Gloria to reach the door. She catches herself from falling.

Michael rushes over to her. He sees as well. He chokes.

Delia is the only one left. Given their reaction, she knows too. Tears begin to form in her eyes. She stands and walks straight for the door, holding her stomach as she walks.

She opens it.

Two MARINES IN DRESS BLUES stand before the family. They both see Michael and Gloria on the floor.

SGT. ALVAREZ

Madam, my name is Sergeant Alvarez with the United States Marine Corps.

(re: other Marine)
This is Corporal Fallon. May we
come in?

Delia simply stares at the white envelope in Alvarez's hand.

INT. THE HAMILTON LIVING ROOM - LATER

Gloria is finally composed enough to sit through what the two Marines have to say. Michael hands each of them bottled water. Delia just stares at the white envelope, which is now opened, and a letter accompanies it on the coffee table.

SGT. ALVAREZ

There is no guarantee on what exactly has happened. All we can do is hope for the best. But you will certainly be notified immedia --

DELIA

How hard is your job?

A pin drops in a distant corner.

Everyone stares at her.

DELIA (CONT'D)

I mean, telling people their loved ones are dead. Is it this easy? Really?

SGT. ALVAREZ

There is nothing that says Elliot is gone, ma'am.

DELIA

I'm not talking about Elliot.

Alvarez considers the question.

SGT. ALVAREZ

It's not pleasant.

DELIA

How hard is it though?

A long beat.

SGT. ALVAREZ

You become numb to it after awhile.

Delia nods, accepting his answer. She stands and walks off into a separate room, shutting the door behind her.

Gloria finally looks up at the two men.

GLORIA

Did you know him?

SGT. ALVAREZ

No Ma'am.

GLORIA

(to Corporal Fallon)

You haven't said a word. Did you?

Fallon looks up, a bit far from numb.

CPL. FALLON

(after a beat)

We went through basic together.

(vulnerable)

I can't stop thinking about him.

CUT TO:

EXT. SOMEWHERE OFF THE COAST OF THE EUPHRATES - NIGHT

Limp, probably dead -- Elliot's body has washed up onto the river bank. The full moon illuminates the water and sand...but nothing else.

Footsteps. Crunching through the sand.

Slow at first.

Faster now.

Running.

A BLACK SILHOUETTE stands over Elliot's body. The figure mutters something in Arabic, and checks Elliot's pulse and breathing. Whatever the result, the figure begins to gather Elliot's things. He rips the flak vest off of Elliot, along with most of his other combat gear.

He stuffs Elliot's essential items in a large burlap sack, and drags it all away.

EXT. THE SHACK - LATER

The Figure drops the sack by a shack of sorts. He walks behind the shack and gets a small fire going.

He rustles through the sack and comes upon an MRE (meal ready to eat), illuminated by the fire light. The figure rips open the package, and dumps all of the contents out, leaving only the bag in his hand.

He reclines by the fire, shadows dancing across his face from the flicker of the flame...

He turns the MRE bag over, and begins to write on the back of the bag...in Arabic...with black ink.

EXT. SOMEWHERE OFF THE COAST OF THE EUPHRATES - DAY

Sand cakes the side of Elliot's face. Some of it muddied by the water. There are a few deep cuts on his face, and dried blood. He begins to crack his eyes open, but stops because of the sun.

Elliot rolls over onto his belly, immediately noticing his gear is no longer on him. He squints around...nothing. He tries to stand, and his knees immediately buckle.

A SCORPION scurries across the sand in front of Elliot. He watches it.

The scorpion burrows under a rock.

Elliot looks around for some form of sustenance. MRE, water, anything....

Nothing.

He tries to stand again, wobbles a bit, but gains his balance. He walks over to the river and submerges himself, trying to clean the sand off of his wounds. He moans and groans, but endures the treatment.

After washing up, he takes off his green skive shirt, revealing several other deep wounds across his chest, arms, torso and back.

ELLIOT

(re: wounds)

Shit.

He rips the shirt apart, bandaging the deepest wounds. He sits down and begins to undo his boot laces. Using a pocket knife, he strips the laces apart, revealing thread.

Elliot puts the laces aside, and walks around, searching the ground for some sort of needle...when he comes to a harsh realization.

He takes out a larger knife from his pocket, and walks over to the rock where the scorpion found sanctuary.

He uncovers the rock, causing the scorpion to scurry across the sand...

Elliot chases the scorpion, hurling the rock at it, missing. He throws his knife, and SPEARS the scorpion...barely.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

(pleased)

HA! Fucker!

Using the scorpion tail as a needle, Elliot punctures the skin around his wounds that need stitching. He tries with difficulty this unconventional stitching method, and it certainly fails each time.

Elliot tosses the scorpion tail away in frustration. He strips his blouse into several sections with the knife, and uses each section for bandaging.

Finally finished with tending to his wounds, Elliot takes his first look at his surroundings.

Nothing but sand and river. He can't even see the horizon of Ramadi. He is a long way from home.

With nothing else left to do, Elliot begins to walk west, along the river.

CUT TO:

INT. ELLIOT'S APARTMENT - DENVER, CO - NIGHT

Gloria and Delia enter the not-so-well-kept apartment. It's no wonder that Delia wanted him to live somewhere nicer.

GLORIA

I haven't been here in ages.

DELIA

I don't think he has either.

They share an awkward laugh.

Delia leads the way.

GLORIA

I will go grab the boxes. You'll be fine alone for a couple minutes?

Delia nods. Gloria exits the apartment.

INT. ELLIOT'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Marine regalia decks the walls. Posters of popular bands and movies accent the Marine stuff. The bed is perfectly made. The room itself is immaculate.

Delia fingers items on Elliot's desk. Pictures, keepsakes, etc. She admires a framed photo of her - her senior picture. She moves on to a tin can that is thick with letters and envelopes: every letter he sent home during boot camp.

She sits down on the edge of his perfectly made bed, holding the framed photo of her. She turns the frame over and opens the back, revealing a wad of pictures - all of Elliot and Delia. She comes across a wallet-size photo of a blonde girl - her - in the third grade. She smiles through her tears...and places a hand on her stomach once again.

Gloria enters the room.

GLORIA

How far along are you?

Delia chokes through her tears and stares at Gloria. Surprised.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Delia SCREAMS again as Ben cackles, leaning her over the edge of the tower.

Elliot flies through the wooden maze, tripping over other children as he goes.

His shirt gets caught on a nail. He tugs. It rips. He runs...

Up a flight of stairs, onto a platform. Up a ladder and into the tower.

He stands powerfully in the "doorway." Ben turns and sees him. He smiles.

BEN

You're mine, Batman! AHAHAHAHA!

He lets Delia go, who immediately runs to cower in the corner of the tower.

Elliot looks at her, and smiles.

ELLIOT

(to Delia)

I'm here.

She smiles back at him, and nods gleefully.

He charges Ben.

Ben's face turns to horror.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

DIE JOKER!!!

Ben's horror turns to a sinister smile as he produces a rock in his hand...

Elliot does not see it.

Delia screams.

DELIA

ELLIOT!

Ben hurls the rock...

Elliot ducks....

Delia jumps ontop of Ben.

...And they fall to the floor of the tower, laughing. Joyful and careless. Elliot watches as they roll on the tower floor, wrestling and laughing.

DELIA (CONT'D)

(to Ben)

You cheated!

(beat)

Elliot! You be the Joker now!

Elliot?

She gets up from the floor and looks around the tower, the castle, the play set...

... Elliot is gone.

EXT. ALONGSIDE THE EUPHRATES RIVER - DAY (PRESENT)

Elliot quickly begins to don a very ripe shade of red across his skin. He trudges through the sand, making every attempt to not get caught in a sink hole - but that is simply inevitable.

He trudges along the bank, watching the river float on lazily beside him. It is not long before the desert lynches Elliot's mind.

He spins, looking, realizing, what is likely to happen. Certain death or worse...uncertain death. He bends over and hurls chunks of vomit, and blood, into the sand.

The blood surprises him. He dares to touch it, but does not. Instead he wipes his mouth off. He suddenly throws off all of his clothes, every last article, and he leaps into the river.

INT. THE RIVER - CONTINUOUS

He splashes and makes some waves, howling as his wounds react to the salt. He enjoys the pain. He does breast strokes up and down the river. Nothing. One one can see him. No one can hear him.

EXT. ALONGSIDE THE EUPHRATES RIVER - LATER

Elliot slips on his clothes, now feeling a bit more refreshed than before. He moves slowly, due to his wounds...

HIS WOUNDS!

Elliot looks all around him, and the bandages he made have gone. The river did it's job and pacified the small ones, but there are still many that need serious attention.

He quickly finishes dressing and begins to make his way swiftly down the bank.

He stumbles and falls into the sand, yelping at how hot the grains are.

He rolls over and tries to get back up...

His left knee cracks and pops, dislocating underneath his weight.

He falls again, screaming now.

ELLIOT

FUCK!

He rolls up his pant leg and examines the knee.

It has already swollen larger than a baseball.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Fuck! Fuck! FUUUUUUUUCK!

Tears begin to creep out of Elliot's eyes, but the sun laps them up before they reach his cheek bones.

Elliot, now immobile, sits and waits for the rotting to begin...throwing the ultimate temper tantrum where no one can see or hear him.

He decides that self-pity will certainly not make his situation improve by any means. He massages his knee for a few moments, allowing the swelling to calm down.

Gingerly, Elliot begins to rise from the sand, babying the knee with every breath. And slowly but surely, Elliot begins to hobble, broken in more ways than we can imagine, across the barren desert. Under the hot sun. Subject to his infected wounds. Bleeding out.

Alone.

INT. THE BARRACKS, 29 PALMS - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Marines are everywhere. Some get back from training, others get back from the chow hall. Section leaders take their men on runs into the hills. Families drive to the base theater for a night on the town.

Elliot and Upton watch it all from the catwalk of their barracks.

CPL. UPTON

You be crazy, join the Marines. Know that right?

ELLIOT

You were too.

CPL. UPTON

You have somtin back home, to live fer.

ELLIOT

What says you don't?

CPL. UPTON

I like it there.

ELLIOT

Iraq?

CPL. UPTON

Mmmhmm.

ELLIOT

Why? Why the fuck would anyone love that shit hole?

CPL. UPTON

Ain't no shit hole. Place is beautiful at night. No lights, just muzzle flashes.

Elliot scoffs.

ELLIOT

Sick bastard.

CPL. UPTON

I'm serious. I miss it. Been there twice. This? All this? It ain't normal. Not no more. Iraq is normal, for me. This isn't.

ELLIOT

Why though?

Upton laughs, spits some seeds out of his mouth.

CPL. UPTON

You're so green behind the ears man. Why you join the Corps?

ELLIOT

To be a better man.

This time Upton scoffs.

CPL. UPTON

You're full of shit.

ELLIOT

No I'm not!

CPL. UPTON

Ya you are. If you wanted to be a better man and have group therapy sessions, you would joined the Air Force. You joined the Corps son. We are God's motherfucking spec ops team.

Elliot grins.

CPL. UPTON (CONT'D)

Besides, every one says that. But once you get to throw some lead down range at something other than paper...you will realize you joined not to become a better man...but to kill the part of you that is a better man.

Elliot's grin fades, and he looks up at the vet.

ELLIOT

You really miss it. You really think that shit hole is worth something?!

Upton spits. Looks at him.

CPL. UPTON

My mom used to tell me about how there was this king. Long, long time ago. Middle ages. Anyway, it's a monarchy, right? What he says goes. So one day, the king decides he wants a new painting. Not just a new painting, but one he can hang above his throne. He probably had a picture of himself up there or whatever.

INT. KING'S CASTLE - TIMELESS

The KING stands before his large, golden throne. There is a cheesy picture of himself that hangs behind the throne. He is old. He wears a small golden crown atop his head, and a large fur cloak.

CPL. UPTON (V.O.)

So he has his messenger post a decree throughout the land. Decree says, anyone may paint the king a painting to go above the king's throne. The king would choose one, and the victor would receive a handsome reward. A couple weeks later, the king holds a festival. The paintings are displayed for all the townsfolk to see. Now, this is the first time the king gets to see all of the paintings. And there are a lot of em.

EXT. TOWN CENTER - TIMELESS

The MESSENGER posts large pieces of parchment on the trees throughout the Town.

EXT. TOWN FAIR - TIMELESS

The King is applauded as he enters the fair, surrounded by TOWNSFOLK. There are several booths, each with a tasty item to eat for the king, and a painting for him to view while he settles his hunger.

INT. KING'S CASTLE - BEDROOM - TIMELESS

The King stands before four paintings, pacing back and fourth - trying to decide.

CPL. UPTON (V.O.)

Well, he picks four and has them all brought back to his castle. Later that evening, the king views the paintings, one by one. Narrows it down to two. Being a king, you make big decisions. This king was stuck. Didn't have a clue as to what painting he should choose.

EXT. KING'S CASTLE - COURTYARD - TIMELESS

The SERVANTS, the QUEEN, and the PRINCE all stand behind the King as he views the final two paintings. Their ARTISTS stand to the side, eagerly awaiting his decision.

The King motions for the Prince to come forth. The Prince stands beside his father - a spiting image of him.

CPL. UPTON (V.O.)

The next day, he calls in his servants and his queen, and his son - the prince. The prince knew his father was getting old, and he would soon take his place. The king, of course, knew this as well. So he takes his son, and walks up to both paintings to view them.

The FIRST ARTIST removes a veil from the first painting in a pompous manner...he bows as he pulls the sheet away.

INSERT -- The first painting Lots of color, large hills, very detailed depiction of the King's castle. Brilliant sunset illuminating the kingdom.

CPL. UPTON (CONT'D)

The first painting - magnificent. It depicts the castle atop a large hill, overlooking all of the kingdom. There is a sunset in the background, and a beautiful forest on the edge of the town.

## BACK TO COURTYARD

The Prince is pleased and very happy about the first painting. He nods and claps with encouragement.

The SECOND ARTIST walks meekly to his painting. He carefully removes the veil covering it, and steps away.

INSERT - THE SECOND PAINTING

A storm rages amongst the cliff and shadows prevail amongst the painting. A large waterfall pours into the deep waters below. Lightning strikes in the sky. Waves crash.

CPL. UPTON (V.O.) (CONT'D) The second - dreadful. Dark stormy waters crashing against a large waterfall in the midst of an angry storm. No light. Just darkness.

The Prince stifles a laugh, and immediately points the the first painting. The FIRST ARTIST smiles and begins to walk toward the King to collect his reward.

CPL. UPTON (CONT'D)
The prince is appalled. He tells
the king the obvious choice is the
one of his kingdom. The king smiles,
and dismisses that exact painting,
selecting the storm.

The King smiles, and motions for one of his servants to dismiss the first painting, selecting the second. The SECOND PAINTER is immediately humbled, he bows in humility.

The Prince goes into a rage, withholding all his might from screaming and disgracing his father. The King gently walks his son closer to the Second Painting, and he points lightly.

CPL. UPTON (CONT'D)
The prince is outraged that his father would embarrass him like that. The king walks his son closer to the dark painting, and points.

INSERT -- The second painting In a crack within the waterfall blooms a single red rose.

## BACK TO COURTYARD

CPL. UPTON (CONT'D)
The king looks at his son and says...
Sometimes, in order to make it through
the darkness - we must search for
the beauty within.

EXT. THE BARRACKS, 29 PALMS - CONTINUOUS

Upton spits his seeds, not really paying attention to Elliot.

CPL. UPTON

Look, you're a good kid. Don't let these bastards get to ya. People are people, man.

ELLIOT

Aye aye, Corporal.

Upton nods, pleased.

CPL. UPTON

Get the fuck outa here.

Elliot takes off, leaving Upton to himself.

EXT. ROUTE MICHIGAN - EVENING (PRESENT)

A SEARCH PARTY charges down route Michigan, tearing through the "rush hour" traffic, flashbangs going off every few seconds to clear the way.

Curfew is upon the city.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

The humvees cordon off an alley...

Marines dismount, and charge a house...

Plumes of red, yellow, and green smoke rise...

EXT. RAMADI SKIES - CONTINUOUS

A Blackhawk, flying low, rips across the buildings and streets, shining a spotlight on the city below...

Two more Birds fly in to provide cover for the first.

INT. IRAQI HOME - CONTINUOUS

MARINES burst through the door -- fluid, a machine -- separating the men, women, and children.

## MONTAGE:

- -- Door after door is taken down in the same mechanical fashion. Men are flexi-cuffed, detained, questioned, bagged and tagged.
- -- Rooftops are taken over by Marines, providing over watch for convoys and foot soldiers below.

-- CORPORAL UPTON, heavily bandaged and lying in a hospital bed, listens to RADIO chatter of the ongoing search party.

END MONTAGE

CUT TO:

INT. PHYSICIANS CLINIC, DENVER - DAY

The all too familiar black and white tv screen shows us the new life. Poor imaging, really, but breathtaking for Delia.

She seems to be torn as to whether she is to cry, or smile, or both, or nothing at all.

Gloria seems equally conflicted. After all, that's her grand-baby on the TV, and she doesn't even have a daughter in-law to go along with it.

The NURSE takes a quick queue.

NURSE (CONT'D)

I will print this out for ya. Be right back.

She turns and escapes the room.

Delia can't take her eyes off the monitor.

GLORIA

(genuine)

I know you both wanted to wait.

The tears begin to come in waves for Delia.

DELIA

I swear to God, Gloria! We just -- before he left and...

GLORIA

(deadpan, the "light-

bulb")

He doesn't know.

(beat)

Does he?

Delia shakes her head. Now she seems to not be so happy. Her face begins to contort, horribly. Gloria sits down on the bed with her and wraps Delia into her arms. It's all Gloria can do to hold back the water works.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

Shhhhh. Shhh. It'll be ok. He's coming home. I promise.

DELIA

Oh my God! What do I do, Gloria? What do I --

GLORIA

(can't hold back,
 determined through
 tears)

You keep your faith. Ok? You believe in that man, my son. He will be home, for you and this child. Ok?

Delia nods. The Nurse walks back into the room with the black and white photo. She quietly walks over to Delia, and hands her the photo. Delia and Gloria quickly compose themselves.

NURSE

It's ok. I was outside the door the whole time.

(beat)

My sister is over there, too.

EXT. THE DESERT - DAY

The tin roof gleams under the hot sun. Elliot shields his eyes, unsure if this is a mirage of sorts.

As he walks closer, the shack becomes more defined. The tin roof is practically junk yard sheet metal. Nails poke out from obscure areas.

Pieces of plywood, lined with a blue tarp, make up the "walls". Those walls are lined with different sized tires, in order to keep the shack from falling over.

It is obvious someone lives here, but Elliot is apprehensive to find out who.

After a moment of consideration, pain takes over Elliot once more, influencing him to approach the shack and take his chances.

The "door," which is actually a dismantled car door, rests against the shack.

He doesn't know if he should knock or just go in.

He raps against the door lightly.

ELLIOT

Hello?

No answer. He doesn't have much of a choice. Elliot slowly pries the car door away from the poorly cut hole that it

hides. He lowers himself to the ground, and crawls into the shack.

INT. SHACK - CONTINUOUS

The inside of the shack is worlds apart from the outside.

Elliot is greeted by a humongous man-made hole, that has three outlets that are probably tunnels leading elsewhere.

Sandbags line the interior, making the shack much more reinforced than we first saw. There are small slits cut in the plywood, that serve as "windows", but only just enough so someone can see any unwanted guests.

The hole drops about ten feet after a grade that leads into the hole. It is complete with a man made table, a military cot, and a freezer box.

Overflowing in a corner are several burlap bags, some of which are stained with blood, every one of which is full of different items.

Finally out of the heat, Elliot's health seems to improve rapidly. He nearly cries at having found sanctuary.

The cock of a bolt action rifle shatters Elliot's enthusiasm. He freezes, slowly raises his hands...

AZIZ (O.S.)

Turn around. Slowly.

ELLIOT

My name is Elliot J. Hamilton, my service number is --

AZIZ (O.S.)

Shut up! Turn around!

Elliot begins to turn, contemplating escape is futile. He would not get far.

He sees Aziz pointing the rifle at his nose.

Aziz's face softens into worry when he sees Elliot.

He lowers the rifle and moves over to the stack of burlap bags, leaving Elliot alone with confusion. Aziz grabs the top one and throws it at Elliot, the bag landing at Elliot's feet.

AZIZ (CONT'D)

Take it! Get out!

He waves towards the exit. Elliot doesn't budge.

Elliot looks down at the sack, and sees his belongings. All of his gear, food, water. He lunges for the canteen, throws the cap aside, and gulps down the elixir.

AZIZ (CONT'D)

You speak English? Get out!

Elliot continues to drink.

Like lightening, Aziz knocks the water aside, shoves the rifle back into Elliot's face, knocking him to the ground. Elliot howls in pain, as his knee snaps once again.

Aziz realizes that Elliot cannot go. He looks over the several bandages on Elliot for the first time. He frowns.

AZIZ (CONT'D)

Wait here.

Aziz walks over to the freezer box and pulls out some ice packs. He then crawls into one of the tunnels and disappears.

Elliot watches the tunnel. Afraid and confused. Unsure of what to do next.

After a moment, Aziz reappears from the tunnel. He carries a large backpack (similar to the ones the Corpsmen were carrying earlier) over his shoulder, and several bottles of water line his cargo pockets. Aziz drags the cot over to where Elliot lies. Elliot looks up at him.

ELLIOT

(worried)

What are you doing?

AZIZ

Fixing you.

He digs into the pack and pulls out disinfectant, scissors, and plenty of gauze. He pulls out another empty burlap sack, and lays it across the sand. He puts the supplies on the sack, and clears off the cot. He looks over at Elliot.

AZIZ (CONT'D)

Can you move?

Elliot tries to stand, but is unsuccessful. Aziz wraps his arms under Elliot, and lifts him effortlessly on to the cot. He begins to remove Elliot's bandages. He works quickly, removing a bandage, dousing the wound with water, and replacing with gauze before Elliot can bleed out more.

FLITTOT

You can't stitch?

Aziz says nothing and simply holds up his right hand...his dominant hand...

...Which is missing the tips of every finger except his thumb.

Elliot swallows hard. Aziz continues to refresh the bandages.

He hands a bottle of water to Elliot for him to drink. Elliot does, quickly.

AZIZ

Slow down. You'll get sick.

Elliot stops drinking and sets the bottle aside.

Aziz cuts open Elliot's pants, exposing the enflamed knee. He hands Elliot a wooden stick.

AZIZ (CONT'D)

(re: stick)

For your mouth.

Elliot panics.

ELLIOT

Wait! What are you doing?

Aziz pulls a 14 gauge syringe from the sack. It looks far from sanitary.

Elliot, wide eyed and staring at the syringe....

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

No! Fuck no! Get the hell away from me!

He squirms.

Aziz frowns and pushes down on Elliot's chest with his free arm. His strength overwhelms Elliot. He stabs the inflamed knee with the needle. Elliot screams. Aziz draws out the fluid.

He lets the syringe dangle on Elliot's knee, in order to free his hand to pull a red biohazard bag from the pack.

He grabs a piece of gauze, and draws out the syringe quickly, but replaces the hole in Elliot's knee with the piece of gauze.

Elliot begins to calm down.

AZIZ

Hold it.

Elliot holds the gauze down firmly.

Aziz disposes the syringe in the red bag, and gets medical tape from the pack. He takes over the gauze, and wraps the tape firmly around Elliot's knee, keeping the gauze in place.

He hands Elliot his water and an ice pack.

AZIZ (CONT'D)

Drink.

(beat)

You should have listened to me.

Aziz nods at Elliot's face...blood drips from Elliot's mouth. He bit his tongue.

Elliot swishes and spits water repeatedly.

Aziz nods in satisfaction and pulls an orange pill bottle from the corpsman pack. He sets it on Elliot's chest.

AZIZ (CONT'D)

Take two every two hours. Ice the knee. Get some rest.

He gets up to leave.

ELLIOT

(re: pill bottle)

What are they?

AZTZ

For pain...How do you call, "The good shit?"

Elliot nearly grins at his honest attempt at American lingo. He opens the pill bottle, takes FOUR out, and gulps them down, careless of any consequences.

Aziz gathers up the supplies, puts them back in the corpsman pack in an ordered fashion.

ELLIOT

(abrupt)

You look familiar.

Aziz doesn't even flinch, or look at Elliot.

AZIZ

Rest.

Elliot watches Aziz disappear into the tunnel with the medical supplies....then passes out.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The TEACHER is in the middle of a math lesson as Elliot sneaks in.

He surveys the room, and selects a desk as far from Delia as possible.

She watches him, and frowns as he ignores her gaze completely.

Elliot pretends he is immersed in the lesson, and begins to try and solve the problems on the chalk board.

Delia tries to concentrate, but she cannot.

Ben looks at her, then Elliot. He makes a face at Elliot, trying to make him laugh.

Elliot does not notice.

DING.

TEACHER

Alright, lunch time everyone. Line up by the door, and wait for me, please. Ben, you can lead the class to lunch today.

Ben jumps up and runs to the door, spreading his arms and legs across it to make sure no one passes.

Elliot and Delia shuffle into the line.

DELIA

Elliot.

He doesn't look at her.

DELIA (CONT'D)

Elliot!

He is suddenly very interested in the wall clock.

INT. LUNCH ROOM - LATER

The Lunch Room is actually the gym, converted by a simple application of fold out tables and chairs.

Children file through the line, chattering excitedly about the new "Goosebumps" book, the cute boy that sits next to them, and the shenanigans that occurred during P.E. that morning.

Elliot sits alone at a large table. His brown bag lunch just sitting dully in front of him.

Delia sets down her tray of cafeteria food in front of him.

DELIA

Hello?

Elliot's lunch finally becomes appealing. He munches on a sandwich.

DELIA (CONT'D)

Why are you mad?

A very tasty sandwich.

DELIA (CONT'D)

Fine. I'm no longer Vicky Vale.

She leaves. Elliot just eats.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Elliot stands alone on the tether ball court, beating the ball back and forth.

He gets bored with that and he sits down on a nearby swing and simply rocks gently back and forth.

Delia appears in front of him.

He looks up at her, the sun making him squint his eyes. She shoves her had out at him, holding something. He takes it from her, and she runs away, embarrassed.

Elliot opens his hand, and stares at Delia's third grade picture.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SHACK - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Elliot jolts from his slumber, the effect of the drugs still present in his glazed eyes. He looks around and doesn't see Aziz at all.

The three tunnels glow in the moonlight, but do not give a clue as to where Aziz may be.

He looks down and sees a pair of old wooden crutches lying next to his cot.

Elliot grabs the crutches and crawls out the exit.

EXT. SHACK - CONTINUOUS

He stands up with the crutches, and hobbles a few yards from the shack.

Elliot undoes his fly, and pees into the sand. He finishes, and looks up at the night sky.

It is beautiful, seemingly dotted in every corner. No clouds, and the tiniest pin-prick stars can be made out.

Shooting stars are aplenty and visible.

The moon accents the dark blue night.

AZIZ (O.S.)

Your people would never believe this country could be beautiful.

Elliot turns and sees Aziz, who is still staring at the sky.

Aziz looks at Elliot.

AZIZ (CONT'D)

If you don't make it back to your people soon... Those bandages will only last for so long.

ELLIOT

I know. How far is Ramadi?

AZIZ

Twelve miles to the city limits.

Off Elliot's look.

AZIZ (CONT'D)

After the great flood, many died. It has been said the Euphrates grants new life to those who are in need. A second chance for the river, a second chance for the souls that get lost in it.

(beat)

There is a group of people not far from the Ramadi border that help smuggle refugees out of the country. I have no doubt they could help you make it back to your base. I will take you there. We leave at dawn.

He begins to walk away.

ELLIOT

What happened to your hand?

Aziz stops, looks at him.

AZIZ

Unfortunate things. Get some rest.

He disappears into the Shack.

Elliot waits a moment, then follows suit.

EXT. THE DESERT - DAWN

Elliot looks reminiscent as he packs his assault bag. He stuffs it with MRE's and some spare gear.

For the first time, he realizes he doesn't have his rifle.

Aziz is also packing a bag.

ELLIOT

Did you take my rifle too?

AZIZ

No. It was probably lost in the river.

Elliot frowns, unsure if he wants to make the journey without a weapon.

A .45 caliber Glock lands on the cot.

Elliot looks up at Aziz.

AZIZ (CONT'D)

Keep that. It belonged to one of your people anyway.

Elliot nods and straps on his thigh holster, then holsters the Glock.

ELLIOT

Why do you scavenge the dead?

AZIZ

I must survive. They are dead. They will not need it where they go.

ELLIOT

That's no excuse.

Aziz continues to pack, saying nothing.

Elliot stops packing, looks at him.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Why do you live all the way out here? Like this?

AZIZ

You are full of questions today, Mr. Hamilton.

(beat)

Because my people no longer need me.

(re: crutches)

Will you be needing those?

ELLIOT

No. But if I do, I suppose that means you get to carry me.

Aziz smiles.

AZTZ

Let's go then.

EXT. THE DESERT - LATER

The Shack is no longer in sight, and the desert seems claustrophobic with how vast and lonely it is.

The morning sun is already high and hot.

Elliot and Aziz walk in silence.

AZIZ

Eat. Drink. Ten minutes. Then we must continue.

Elliot sets down his bag and pulls out an MRE.

ELLIOT

(re: MRE)

Chili cheese macaroni?!

He begins to rip open the bag eagerly.

AZTZ

I have become fond of that meal as well. Your country captain chicken? No.

Elliot laughs.

AZIZ (CONT'D)

I eat what I can find. Or I hunt. Your convoy's seem to prefer starvation over the chicken.

ELLIOT

It's as good as trash. Makes you shit bricks for weeks. The chili mac does too, but the macaroni is actually worth the discomfort.

Aziz pulls out the MRE heater from his bag.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

(re: heater)

You can make a bomb out of that.

Aziz flinches at the word.

AZIZ

Really?

ELLIOT

All you need is a two liter bottle. Add water, seal the lid. Shake it. Get out of dodge. Chemistry takes over in a few seconds.

Aziz tosses the heater aside and eats his macaroni -- cold.

Elliot eats, watches Aziz. He stares at the mutilated fingers.

AZIZ

(not looking up)

Why does my hand bother you?

ELLIOT

Because it has something to do with all of this.

Aziz puts down his macaroni and looks at Elliot.

AZIZ

It is not your concern.

ELLIOT

I think it is, Abdul. Considering you didn't put any ammo in my weapon.

Aziz stares at Elliot hard.

They wait for the other to make the first move.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

We studied those H.V.T. binders for a couple hours each day before we deployed. "Abdul Aziz" was the only one who had a note saying "speaks fluent English."

(beat)

Most of you look the same though. Said nothing about the hand. Must have happened after they did up your profile.

High winds begin to move across the desert, blowing sand all over their food.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

You going to kill me now? Or when we get to your friends?

AZIZ

(ignoring him)

We need to go.

Aziz ignores Elliot and begins to put his meal away.

Elliot doesn't budge.

Aziz notices.

AZIZ (CONT'D)

I am not going to kill you! The people I am taking you too will help you. We need to go. These storms will kill you!

Elliot considers his options.

He sets down the MRE and walks up to Aziz.

ELLIOT

You got my ammo?

Aziz reaches into his pack and hands Elliot three fully loaded magazines.

AZIZ

Are you going to kill me now, or later?

EXT. THE DESERT - LATER

The sandstorm is now in full swing, beating Elliot and Aziz ruthlessly.

They shield their faces with balaclava masks, and move slowly.

Aziz stops and pulls a compass from his pocket. He checks their direction.

AZTZ

We are about a mile off course! We have to wait it out!

ELLIOT

How the hell are we going to do that?

Aziz pulls a blue tarp and stakes from his bag. Aziz stakes the tarp into the sand.

AZIZ

Come on!

Elliot runs under the tarp with Aziz.

AZIZ (CONT'D)

You need to hold down that end! I will take care of this side!

Elliot holds down his end. The storm rages.

EXT. THE DESERT - LATER

Having calmed slightly, both the storm and the two men give in.

ELLIOT

If you aren't going to kill me, why are you helping me?

AZTZ

You would die if I did not.

ELLIOT

What do you care? You have killed plenty of soldiers before! Why stop now?

AZIZ

That was over three years ago!

ELLIOT

That's an excuse?!

AZIZ

No! Of course not! It's just that...I...

(nostalgic)

... I wanted to be like my father.

The tarp begins to fall on top of them, they get out from under it. Aziz remains in the sand. They remove the masks.

AZIZ (CONT'D)

He served under Saddam in the Republican Guard. I thought it was honorable. Glorious. So I joined when I was old enough.

Elliot takes a swig of water, not taking his eyes off of Aziz.

AZIZ (CONT'D)

I was recruited into the insurgency a year after I had joined. Not long after, I became important. High ranking. When we began to decapitate the innocent and the weak, I knew it could not be right.

INSERT CUT -- The all too familiar footage of a beheading.

AZIZ (CONT'D)

I believed in these things my whole life, but I began to question them. And in turn questioned my superiors. A friend told me they put a bounty on my head. All of Ramadi was told to turn me in.

(beat)

My wife and daughter -- I went to tell them we must leave.

INSERT CUT -- AZIZ's WIFE spits in his face.

AZIZ (CONT'D)

So I left the city, alone. I began to return in disguise to receive word from my friends, and to attend prayer at the mosque. I learned of their murders after my second visit.

INSERT CUT -- HOODED INSURGENTS beat AZIZ'S WIFE and DAUGHTER. They rape them both. Slit their throats. Spit on their bodies. They burn the house.

AZIZ (CONT'D)

They made sure I had no reason to come back if I was still alive.

He continues to show no emotion.

AZIZ (CONT'D)

I am helping you because I want to believe that I can be good. That I can be better than -- them.

ELLIOT

You're risking your life for me.

AZIZ

I am not afraid to die, Mr. Hamilton. I want to go home.

Elliot chokes.

ELLIOT

So what happened to your hand?

Aziz manages a grin.

AZIZ

Bad flashbang.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

THUNDEROUS cheering and clapping erupts. Banner's in black and gold read: CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2004!

Pomp and Circumstance ushers in the black and gold sea of pimply and over-sexed teens. Flash bulbs pop every few seconds. Moms and dads and uncles whistle and blow air horns. It's the happiest day of these kids lives.

INT. AUDITORIUM - LATER

The PRINCIPAL has finished his address to the class. Mild clapping compliments the rather boring speech.

PRINCIPAL

Ladies and gentlemen. Your first student speaker of the evening, Mr. Elliot Hamilton!

Once again, dull clapping. Not much hooting, some distant whistles. A much less composed Elliot than what we met before. He seems...shifty, unsure.

Elliot shakes the Principal's hand and looks out at the sea of his peers.

All of them bored, probably somewhat drunk already too. Every one of them prepared to call mutiny if Elliot sucks.

He steps up to the podium, and surveys the massive crowd in the auditorium.

Every person in here, did not come to see him talk.

He clears his throat.

FILLTOT

Stop. Do not think - Listen. What do you hear? Nothing. Silence. - Where is the noise coming from? Stop. Now think about your life. Remember. STOP. Your family? They love you. Now stop.

(MORE)

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Do not listen, just think. Look left, look right - remember. That man, that woman, together - forever.

Some of his classmates follow the order and look around. Others still appear bored.

Elliot sees all of it.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

That man off to college, that woman - expecting. That man off to defend his country, that woman - the next president. Oh the places you will go and how time will fly. Do not think about tomorrow - think about your future, instead. Do not worry about yesterday, yet worry about the past.

EXT. A DESERTED ROAD - UNKNOWN

We move along a dirt road as if we are floating. The road is bordered by a canopy of Aspen trees - in the full bloom of summer.

The leaves magically begin to turn the golden, red, and brown colors of fall - and they do - blanketing the road as we float past.

ELLIOT (V.O.)

Idiosyncrasies, hypocrisies. Will they end? No. Stop. Just think. What is your gift? Nothing. You are no different than she - just the same as he. Will we get along? No.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - UNKNOWN

A FAT KID and NERDY KID fight to the death - the way nine year olds do.

INT. SCHOOL - UNKNOWN

The NERDY KID sits in front of a PRINCIPAL, with a black eye. He is being scolded for the fight - but we know he didn't start it.

ELLIOT (V.O.)

Stop. Listen, do not think, remember. Remember the good times. Remember the worst. Remember the first time - dream of it again. Remember the awards, the honor, the shame.

EXT. CITY PARK - UNKNOWN

The Nerdy Kid lays in the green grass, staring at the clouds.

INT. AUDITORIUM - UNKNOWN

The Nerdy Kid - older now, accepts an ambiguous award in front of a standing ovation.

ELLIOT (V.O.)

We do not grow with our successes, but with our failures...never forget. Stop. Remember.

SERIES OF SHOTS: SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

- -- THE SECOND PLANE EXPLODES AGAINST THE TOWER
- -- DUST SHOWERS THE PEOPLE BELOW -- THE TOWERS COLLAPSE

INT. CLASSROOM - UNKNOWN

Teens watch the horror unfold on the television. We recognize some of them as part of Elliot's graduating class.

ELLIOT (V.O.)

Tears. Hate. Fear. Terror. All collapsing into a city. Into the fire goes the steel, out comes the sword! Forget the flags, they meant NOTHING!

INT. AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

Elliot has the crowd by their balls. He hardly looks at his notes.

ELLIOT

Remember the hands, lifted high, ready to survive! Remember the men, dressed in helmets and camouflage, barely nineteen! Ready to die for you! For a purpose!

AUDIENCE MEMBERS begin to cry softly.

Delia smiles at Elliot, in love and in awe. He sees her, and smiles back.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

(softer)

Remember the pipes. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound. Stop. Dead silence. Recover. Now breathe.

(MORE)

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Breathe new life, breathe a song, breathe a tear. Freedom. What is the cost? Life.

EXT. A DESERTED ROAD - UNKNOWN

The road is now a crisp white. The trees are dead. The snow beats the ground. The sun begins to rise in the distance.

ELLIOT (V.O.)

That car, that dress, that life?! Some never make it. But we did! Together, forever. Stop. Is there equality? Hope? Life? No. But there are people.

INT. UNION STATION - UNKNOWN

FLOODS of PEOPLE get on and off the trains. Not paying any attention to each other.

ELLIOT (V.O.)

Black, white. Stop. Brown, yellow. Think. Christian, Jewish. Remember. Muslim, Buddhist. Cry. (beat)

ARE YOU LISTENING?! You better not. You never have. Until now.

EXT. A DESERTED ROAD - UNKNOWN

The snow begins to melt rapidly as the sun rises higher.

INT. AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

He seems almost desperate now in the way he speaks to the crowd.

ELLIOT

Look left, look right! WHAT DO YOU SEE!!? Man, woman? Freak, jock? Friend, foe? Smart, stupid? Fat, skinny? Thespian? LESBIAN? Does it matter!? YES.

The crowd dares to look.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Stop. Do not think, listen, or care. Just pray. Pray for life, a purpose. Pray for peace, for war.

(MORE)

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Pray for your father, mother, sister, brother. Look left, look right, NOW what do you see? Person? Or brother? Now recover. And dance.

INT. EMPTY GYMNASIUM - UNKNOWN

A NERDY MAN and BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN slow dance together under a single spotlight.

ELLIOT (V.O.)

Just dance. Dance for a reason.

Dance for no reason. Dance because you have life - purpose. Dance because of that man, that woman: together forever. Dance for your faith.

The spotlight shuts off and plunges the Couple into darkness.

EXT. A DESERTED ROAD - DREAM

Snow melted. Trees blooming. Birds flying. Sun shining. It is spring.

INT. AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

His voice shaking, tears welling. He ends it.

FIJITOT

Your never failing faith. Always faithful. Always, class of 2004. Welcome to life. (beat)

Thank you.

The silence is unnerving. Elliot stands awkwardly.

Delia can't help her smile.

The crowd ERUPTS. They rise to their feet, and give Elliot a standing ovation. He smiles, blows a kiss to Delia and waves to his family. He bows to his Class.

Every part of the school Administration shakes Elliot's hand, he tries to make it off stage.

Delia leaves her seat and begins to run through the crowd to Elliot.

They all continue to cheer.

Elliot shakes the hands of several classmates, he sees Delia running at him.

He smiles brightly and she jumps into his arms, planting a very passionate kiss on him.

The crowd whistles and hoots in favor of the display.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ELLIOT'S APARTMENT - DAY (PRESENT)

Boxes are piled on top of one another now, making the apartment appear even more empty. Elliot's bedroom remains untouched.

Gloria scrubs down the bathroom while Delia packs dishes in the kitchen. The doorbell rings.

GLORIA

I thought his roommates already moved out?

Delia walks to the door and opens it. Corporal Fallon looks back at her, standing in civilian clothes.

DELTA

Uh, hi.

Gloria joins them at the door.

CPL. FALLON

Ladies. May I come in?

GLORIA

Please! Has something happened?

CPL. FALLON

I wouldn't be dressed like this if something had. In fact, it is rather unorthodox that I am even here.

Gloria and Delia both breathe a sigh of relief. Fallon carries a small box.

CPL. FALLON (CONT'D)

Your husband, Michael said you were here.

(re: box)

These are some of the items Elliot had at Buckley. Sergeant Alvarez wanted me to bring them to you...Just in case.

Without warning Gloria slaps Fallon, open handed. He hardly flinches.

GLORIA

How dare you!

She grabs the box from his hands and retreats back into the apartment.

CPL. FALLON

(to Delia)

Your mother needs to prepare for the worst.

DELIA

She's not my mother.

CPL. FALLON

I'm sorry I --

DELIA

Don't come back here, ok? Ever.

Fallon looks at her, knowing what she is thinking.

CPL. FALLON

If he is alive, you are keeping him alive. Don't lose your hope.

Delia watches him leave, part of her wanting to scream...but she doesn't.

EXT. THE DESERT - DAY

It is almost depressing how the scenery remains unchanged, save a few rocks and critters that roam the land.

Elliot and Aziz move slowly, the journey having already begun to take a large toll on Elliot.

Aziz is a few paces ahead, he turns and watches Elliot struggle to catch up.

AZIZ

We break. Fifteen minutes this time. You need to conserve your energy as much as possible now, Mr. Hamilton.

Elliot smiles cheaply.

ELLIOT

You can stop calling me Mr. Hamilton. Elliot is fine.

Aziz hands him a bottle of water and a pack of CHARMS.

Elliot takes the water.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

(re: charms)

Put those away.

Aziz is confused, he keeps the Charms for himself.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

NO. Put. Them. Away. Bury em, do whatever. Don't eat em though.

AZTZ

I love these candies!

He begins to unwrap the Charms.

Elliot swats the package out of his hand. Aziz begins to get upset.

AZIZ (CONT'D)

What are you doing!? It's just candy!

ELLIOT

NO. They're cursed. If you honestly believe in that shit you told me about the Euphrates, then you damn well better believe me when I say Charms are cursed. Trust me.

Aziz rescinds and digs in his bag for a different snack.

AZIZ

Have you seen this "curse?"

ELLIOT

Ya. When I was in S.O.I., we went on a 10k hike. It was raining, but just rain. We took a break for chow, and the asshole next to me ate his Charms. A minute later, it was a fucking monsoon.

AZIZ

Understood. Though I don't really believe a candy can change your fate.

ELLIOT

You don't have to believe in the Charms, Aziz. But the Charms believe in you.

Aziz smiles.

AZIZ

Peanut butter and crackers then?

ELLIOT

Please.

Aziz tosses him the package.

AZIZ

We are running low on food. You need it more than I do. I won't eat the next meal. We should reach the border by nightfall anyway. Remove your blouse, I will change your bandages before we continue.

Elliot unbuttons the blouse and slides it off his shoulders, showing immense pain as he does.

The gauze no longer holds a spot of white, and each bandage is drenched in blood.

Trails of dry blood run down Elliot's arms and torso, seeping from the useless bandages.

ELLIOT

(managing a grin)

Could be worse.

Aziz begins to change out the bandages.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

What happens to you if I die before you get me to your people?

AZIZ

That will not happen.

(beat)

I will simply go home.

ELLIOT

How far?

AZIZ

A few hours walk and we should be there -- hold still.

ELLIOT

Sorry.

(beat)

Thank you.

AZIZ

You're welcome.

INT. MILITARY HOSPITAL ROOM - BAGHDAD - DAY

Cpl. Upton rests in his bed, watching a DVD on the elevated TV. He sips on a juice box, and eats a cookie.

He looks remarkably better, but scars from the burns are fresh on his face and arms.

There is a knock at the door.

CPL. UPTON

Come in.

A NURSE enters.

NURSE

Corporal Upton, a Lieutenant Swanberg is here to see you.

CPL. UPTON

Thank you.

The Nurse leaves, and Swanberg enters.

Swanberg sports a thin blonde mustache, a fresh high and tight, and looks like a military version of Lance Armstrong: thin and fit.

CPL. UPTON (CONT'D)

I would salute, but I can't exactly move much.

Swanberg smiles.

LT. SWANBERG

That's quite all right. How you feeling, Cory?

CPL. UPTON

Good as new.

Swanberg takes a seat, and picks thin pieces of hair off of his pants as he adjusts himself.

The camo outfit is otherwise perfect and pressed. A bit out of place for a war zone.

LT. SWANBERG

Cut the bullshit.

CPL. UPTON

(rehearsed)

Pain is weakness leaving the body, sir.

Swanberg grins again, but quickly turns grim.

LT. SWANBERG

Hamilton is M.I.A.

Upton's face becomes stone.

LT. SWANBERG (CONT'D)
I know you two were close, so I wanted
you to hear it from me first. We
have had search parties out round
the clock ever since the ambush. No
sign of him yet.

CPL. UPTON

So what? We wait for Al Jazeera to release his beheading on the nightly news?

LT. SWANBERG

Not exactly. Fifteen miles outside of the city limits is a river bank. A group of SEALS were training in the area, and one of em spotted footprints in the sand. Two sets. The first were military issue. The second set were sandals.

CPL. UPTON

He was captured.

LT. SWANBERG

That's the assumption for now. There was a heavy sandstorm recently, so they had no way of tracking the prints. With Elliot being a smart Marine, we figured he would try and follow the river west. We are removing the search party from the city and re-directing it to the outskirts of Ramadi as we speak.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE OUTSKIRTS OF RAMADI - CONTINUOUS

SEALS patrol the Euphrates in a Special Operations Craft Riverine.

Blackhawks fly over head, surveying the ground below.

Humvees depart the city of Ramadi, and roll into the barren desert.

INT. MILITARY HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Swanberg sips on a cup of water.

CPL. UPTON

So there is a chance.

LT. SWANBERG

A slim chance. If these bastards want to film Elliot's beheading and air it on international TV, they will have to bring him closer to the city, if not completely inside. Effective...

(looks at watch)
...An hour ago, the city is on lock
down. No one in or out. Naturally,
the locals are upset.

CUT TO:

EXT. ENTRY CONTROL POINT - RAMADI - DAY

A massive line of cars are backed up on a bridge that leads into Ramadi.

A flood of citizens are out of their vehicles, and screaming and yelling in Arabic at the Company of Marines that keep the border closed.

MOLOTOV COCKTAILS fly out from the sea of citizens, and explode on empty humvees.

Gun fire breaks out.

Marines shout orders in Arabic.

Hell has broken loose.

INT. MILITARY HOSPITAL ROOM - RAMADI - DAY

Swanberg stands to leave.

LT. SWANBERG

You will know immediately of any developments. Get some rest.

He gets up to leave, and notices a book by Upton's bed. LTCol Grossman's "On Killing."

LT. SWANBERG (CONT'D)

Is this as good as they say?

CPL. UPTON

Ask Hamilton. I borrowed it from him.

LT. SWANBERG

You mind?

CPL. UPTON

Keep it.

LT. SWANBERG

Thanks.

He leaves.

EXT. THE DESERT - EVENING (PRESENT)

Shadows have finally begun to cast. Aziz and Elliot don't seem to be sweating as much either...but Elliot is moving incredibly slow.

The city of Ramadi finally rests on the horizon.

AZIZ

(frustrated)

Stop. We break. Again. At this rate we won't reach the city before curfew.

ELLIOT

I'm sorry, I am a bit impaired right now. Let me wave my magic fucking wand and maybe I can start running.

AZIZ

We are nearly there, Elliot! Do you have no will?

ELLIOT

Fuck you! I didn't ask you to come.

AZIZ

You didn't really have another option.

They settle...the day has taken the best of them.

AZIZ (CONT'D)

(genuine)

I apologize. I am worried for us. We are out of food, and short on water.

ELLIOT

I know. How far are your people?

Aziz points to a hill about a mile from their location.

AZIZ

There is a cave there. Every evening they go into the city and smuggle out a group of refugees. They will drive them as far as Kuwait. On their way, we will have them drive us to your base.

ELLIOT

You've used them before?

AZIZ

(deadpan)

No. I used to hunt them.

(beat)

The refugees are civilians that have ties to the insurgency, but wish to sever those ties forever.

ELLIOT

Why didn't you use them when you left? You could be in the Persian, floating on a boat somewhere.

AZIZ

They would not have believed me, let alone help me.

ELLIOT

You said before you had friends you contacted. Why didn't they help you?

AZIZ

(solemn)

They tried.

ELLIOT

So these people are our only chance?

AZIZ

If we want to get through the city alive? Yes.

INT. PHYSICIANS CLINIC - DAY

Delia waits alone in a chair, reading a tabloid magazine. She doesn't stay on any one page for very long. She appears preoccupied. Nervous.

DOCTOR RALSTON enters the room.

He is tall, thin, and wears bright yellow crocs, which contradict his nice collared shirt, tie, and of course his white coat.

DR. RALSTON

(looking at Delia's

file)

Delia Shore?

DELIA

Yes.

He extends his hand, she takes it.

DR. RALSTON

My name is Eric Ralston. How are we doing today?

DELTA

Um. Good.

DR. RALSTON

Good, good. I apologize for being gone the other day, but I trust Jaqueline took good care of you and the little one to be?

DELIA

Yes. She was great.

DR. RALSTON

Excellent. Just a few questions, kinda get to know you type stuff...So any morning sickness, shortness of breath, back pain, increased levels or irritation?

DELIA

No. No. Not yet.

DR. RALSTON

Perfect. So lets talk about where we are going to go from here. If you like, and feel comfortable, I can be the doctor that delivers your child on the big day...

He trails off. She's not hearing him.

DELIA

Umm, I think. I think I want to -talk about an, um, abortion. It
wouldn't feel anything this early
right?

Ralston screeches to a halt, trying to keep his composure. She begins to cry softly.

DELIA (CONT'D)

It's just. The father is, um...not around.

DR. RALSTON

Ms. Shore, I thought everything was fine when you came in here the other day?

DELIA

It was. But he is um...

She tears up.

DELIA (CONT'D)

He's missing. In Iraq. I, I just don't think I can do this without him.

Ralston's heart aches for her. He puts a gentle arm around her shoulders.

DELIA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. So sorry. I have wanted to share this with him my entire life, and if he doesn't come back....

DR. RALSTON

Do they think he will make it?

She shrugs through her sobs and grabs a box of kleenex from the counter.

DR. RALSTON (CONT'D)

Ms. Shore, I can't possibly imagine what you are going through right now. But may I say something? As a friend?

She nods.

DR. RALSTON (CONT'D)

Your child's father went over there to fight for your right to make a decision like this, and many others like it. It is my guess, that the last thing in the world that he would want you to do is make this child of yours suffer - no matter what his circumstance.

DELIA

I know, I know. But I just can't...I just can't.

DR. RALSTON

You can, Ms. Shore. Because you were strong enough to tell me what you were thinking, I am guessing in hopes that I would talk you out of it.

Delia manages a weak smile and nods.

DR. RALSTON (CONT'D)

Ok then. Let's have a baby.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PARTY HOUSE - LATER (FLASHBACK)

The black and gold gowns now disposed of, suits and ties and dresses traded in for jeans and t-shirts and summer skirts, the class of 04 celebrates their freedom.

And they celebrate hard.

Every clique seems to be represented, but like a bad car ad, for one night only - they are all accepted.

Delia and Elliot converse in a corner with a group of their friends.

She continues to beam at Elliot, smiling at her and giving her random kisses on the cheek, lips, and forehead.

FRIEND 1

You guys gonna miss each other next year?

ELLIOT

Of course we are!

FRIEND 2

(to Delia)

That's so great you get to travel across Europe! Take plenty of pictures!

DELIA

I will. I promise.

They all share a fairly abrupt silence with one another.

ELLIOT

(to Delia, re: her

drink)

You want another?

DELIA

Sure!

ELLIOT

Be right back.

He leaves the group behind, and walks up a flight of stairs to a much less crowded, and fairly quiet area of the house. He walks outside to a balcony...

EXT. BALCONY - CONTINUOUS (FLASHBACK)

... Revealing the house is actually tucked away in the hills of the city.

The lights below glow. He pulls out a pack of cigarettes, gets ready to light one...

BEN

Can I bum one of those?

Elliot stops and looks behind him. BEN VanHORN, drunk as hell, wobbles over to him.

Elliot hands him a cigarette.

ELLIOT

How you doin, Ben?

BEN

Probably better than you.

Elliot doesn't know how to respond.

BEN (CONT'D)

You're not worried at all? Eighteen months in the most sexually promiscuous country in the world? You think she isn't going to exploit that shit?

Elliot just smokes his cigarette. Ben struggles to light his.

BEN (CONT'D)

You two must really love each other.

(beat)

She used to look at me the way she looks at you.

ELLIOT

(angry)

You wanna do this now, man?

BEN

Fuck you, Elliot!

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

Your little self righteous speech may have fooled everyone, but not me. You fucking stole her from me. I should beat your scrawny ass.

Ben continues to wobble, obviously in no condition for any sort of fighting.

Ben gets really, really close to Elliot.

ELLIOT

Go home, Ben.

BEN

I know what you really are. You may have everyone else fooled, but you are a no good piece of shit...

(beat)

Just. Like. Me.

Elliot flicks the cigarette off the balcony and squares up to Ben. He could easily take him.

BEN (CONT'D)

(laughing)

I heard her say you were saving yourselves for each other. Until the time is right? She told you she was a virgin.

He laughs and stumbles some more.

Elliot grabs Ben by the shirt and throws him up against the balcony.

BEN (CONT'D)

You gonna throw me off? Because I fucked your girl first? Those conjugal visits in jail sound sexy. I'm sure she would love that! She didn't tell you because she was ashamed she fucked a guy like me! But it was still a fuck she will never forget.

(beat, whispering)
I was her first.

Elliot's fist shatter's Ben's nose, which immediately begins to gush blood.

He knees Ben in the stomach, and lets him drop to the ground.

Elliot stands over him, unsure of what to do next.

Ben spurts blood, and continues to laugh.

BEN (CONT'D)

Feel better?

ELLIOT

Fuck you!

Elliot kicks him in the face.

DELIA

Elliot!

He turns to see Delia.

DELIA (CONT'D)

What the hell are you doing?

Elliot stares down at her. She realizes what is going on.

She grabs Elliot by the hand and drags him back into the house.

INT. PARTY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS (FLASHBACK)

Elliot fumes. He can't even look at her.

DELIA

Elliot, I'm sorry I didn't tell you. I was so repulsed by him and what I had done that I didn't even want it to be real. So I didn't treat it that way. I know that is no excuse. I love you, Elliot.

She tries to take his hand in hers, he pulls away.

Elliot glares at her.

ELLIOT

Have fun in Europe.

Elliot moves past her and out the front door of the house. Delia watches him go, tears beginning to fall.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE SHACK - EVENING (PRESENT)

A group of Navy SEALS surround the shack. SEAL #1 slowly removes the car door from the shack, while the other three enter the shack swiftly and silently.

INT. THE SHACK - CONTINUOUS

They are greeted by obvious desertion. SEAL #2 scans the small area.

He sees the tunnels, and motions for the other three men to stack on them. They do.

He makes a hand signal, telling SEAL #1 to enter his respective tunnel.

INT. THE TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

SEAL #1 crab walks into the tunnel, his handgun drawn in front of him.

Shortly after he enters, the other three follow him in.

SEAL #1 quickly shines a red lens flashlight into the tunnel.

In front of him is row upon row, stack upon stack of MRE covers.

SEAL #1

What the hell?

He picks up one of the brown latex bags, and examines it.

INSERT - THE MRE BAG

Arabic writing covers the bag completely.

BACK TO SCENE

Each bag is covered, each one with writing in Arabic.

He taps his throat mic.

SEAL #1 (CONT'D)

The shack is clear, but we found something you may want to take a look at, sir.

The radio chirps back.

RADIO

What is it?

SEAL #1

I think -- I think it's a journal,
sir.

EXT. THE DESERT - EVENING

Aziz spots the plume of smoke behind the hill.

AZIZ

That is their signal! They are ready to leave soon!

ELLIOT

Why did you hunt them?

Aziz did not expect this.

AZIZ

They were a threat. They took away our man power. We had to hunt them.

ELLIOT

And they were here the whole time? You guys must have not bothered looking outside of the city.

AZIZ

They move when they feel they may be compromised.

ELLIOT

You know a lot about them.

AZIZ

Know your enemy.

Elliot grins.

ELLIOT

I can't believe you have read the "Art Of War."

AZIZ

My father believed in strict education. There was nothing I did in my spare time besides reading. Every day he would come home with a new book and hand it to me. When I finished the book, he would ask me questions about the story to test me.

ELLIOT

That's a lot of reading.

AZIZ

He was a good man. We didn't go to a regular school. So he brought school to us.

Elliot nods.

AZIZ (CONT'D)

What about your father?

ELLIOT

He was like that. But I never subscribed to his beliefs. Which I guess is what landed me here instead of a university.

EXT. REFUGEE CAVES - CONTINUOUS

Small flames dance across the smoldering floor of sand. Charred human remains spill out of an equally charred Opal. A burnt American passport lies on the ground.

Aziz is livid, saying nothing.

ELLIOT

I suppose this means -- AAAAAARGH!

He grabs his side and curls into a fetal position. Aziz grabs him before he falls.

AZTZ

We are running out of time. We need to go. They were attacked within the hour. Can you make it, Elliot?

Elliot smothers his discomfort and stands up straight.

FIJITOT

I feel peachy. Let's move.

Aziz studies Elliot, wondering if he is telling the truth.

AZIZ

Ramadi is only a mile away, once we reach the city, we will have to move through the neighborhoods. I doubt we will make it before curfew. That means we have about three hours before you are home.

ELLIOT

Ya? And three hours before you are where?

Aziz blushes. He puts a hand on Elliot's shoulder.

AZIZ

At peace.

Elliot smiles and drinks a bottle of water.

The faint sound of a helicopter is heard in the distance.

Elliot drops the bottle.

ELLIOT

Shit!

AZIZ

What?

ELLIOT

You don't hear that?

He points to the sky. Aziz looks up, sees nothing...but then he hears it.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

They had to have moved the search out of the city to be flying out here. Which means they found your shack.

(beat, swallows hard)
Which means they know you're alive.

INT. MILITARY HOSPITAL ROOM - BAGHDAD - NIGHT

The Nurse helps Upton change into a fresh nightgown. She applies burn cream to his back, and he groans in pain.

LT. SWANBERG

That looks fun.

Upton manages a small grin. Swanberg takes his usual seat by the bed. His camo still as perfect as ever.

LT. SWANBERG (CONT'D)

(to Nurse)

Can you give us a minute?

She nods.

NURSE

(to Upton)

We need to finish before you go to bed. Call me when you are done.

She gives Swanberg an unpleasant smile as she leaves.

LT. SWANBERG

(watching the Nurse

leave)

I am beginning to think I should get myself injured too.

Upton laughs.

CPL. UPTON

That would require you actually going out of the wire.

LT. SWANBERG

I do what I am told, Marine.

Upton faces him.

LT. SWANBERG (CONT'D)

You remember reading about a young little hod; named Abdul Aziz?

CPL. UPTON

Guy that lead the slaughter of thirty Kurds under Saddam?

LT. SWANBERG

That's his father. Shithead has the same name, of course. Middle name is too hard to pronounce for these fucks, anyway.

CPL. UPTON

So we are talking about a generational family?

LT. SWANBERG

Exactly. His father was killed by who else? The Marines. So Little Aziz Junior decides he will avenge daddy. It's the same story, different names, every time.

CPL. UPTON

That's why a "War on Terrorism" is impossible.

LT. SWANBERG

You're preaching to the choir.
Anyway, Aziz Junior went missing for three years. A lot of folks wrote him off as dead, except us of course.
We like to see a body before we assume anything, especially with a grisly bastard like Aziz.

Swanberg is nearly grinning. Upton notices.

CPL. UPTON

Cut to the chase sir, I need my back rubbed down.

LT. SWANBERG

I could find a nice filthy hodji to do it for ya. She would probably even give you a happy ending.

(beat)

We found his hideout. And we can almost guarantee he has Elliot. Fucker built a shack in the woods. He should stuck to the caves like Osama.

CPL. UPTON

"Almost guarantee?"

LT. SWANBERG

Our only evidence is the footprints. But when you add two and two, you get Aziz.

CPL. UPTON

So Aziz captured Elliot. Now what?

LT. SWANBERG

That's the problem. Night is falling, and the SEALS are trying to track them as we speak, but bet your ass they are getting closer to the city. The closer they get, the less time Elliot has.

CPI. UPTON

We don't know they are actually going to try and video tape his beheading...or even if they are going to behead him.

LT. SWANBERG

The fuck we don't! That's Aziz's M.O.! He was good at it too. And he always did it live. Not that tape now, play later bull shit his friends are doing these days.

(beat)

Anyway, you leave for Germany tomorrow. Buy the nurse some flowers before ya go, ok?

Swanberg leaves. Upton presses his call button, and the Nurse returns.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PARK - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Looking rather suave, sipping on a coke, Elliot watches a group of teenagers play a fairly rough and competitive game of football. He grins as one of the smaller players gets creamed by a monster.

Delia parallel parks her brand new BMW 328 SI by the park.

The car, and Delia, glisten in the sun. She also looks incredibly done up.

Her hair curled, summer skirt, and the perfect amount of makeup - all accented by a pair of chic sunglasses.

This is obviously not a "meet and greet."

Elliot pretends he doesn't notice her pull up to the park, and Delia pretends she doesn't know he's pretending.

He waits until the last possible moment to "notice" her.

ELLIOT

(not getting up)

Hey.

DELIA

(not sitting down)

Hey.

They both watch the football game awkwardly for a few moments.

ELLIOT

So what's new?

DELIA

Not much. Work, school. That sorta thing.

ELLIOT

Cool. Cool.

DELIA

What's new with you?

ELLIOT

Same.

DELIA

(bored, annoyed)

Nice.

Elliot acts incredibly interested in the football game, unsure of what to say next.

DELIA (CONT'D)

(trying)

You look good.

ELLIOT

Ya? You too. You too.

DELIA

So what do you want to do?

ELLIOT

I dunno. Go on a walk, or something?

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - LATER

They stroll down the middle of the road together, neither making any eye contact.

We get the feeling they have been walking in silence the entire time.

DELIA

So, I actually have a new job.

ELLIOT

Oh ya? Where at?

DELIA

The homeless shelter downtown. The pay isn't great, but it's fulfilling.

ELLIOT

That's great.

DELIA

Ya.

They continue to walk in silence. Finally, Elliot stops and faces her.

ELLIOT

You called me.

DELIA

I know.

ELLIOT

So what's with the random banter? Are we just going to pretend none of this happened? Try and be "friends?" That sorta bullshit?

DELIA

No, I --

ELLIOT

Because I really don't want to waste my time with you again.

DELIA

Waste your time, how could --

ELLIOT

(explodes)

We spent the better part of our lives, our fucking lives, together! Day in and day out! Since you understood what fucking really was, you always told me you wanted to wait, but no, you go off and fuck Ben instead, and then lie to me? What the fuck am I to you? Filler? Were you planning on some romantic one night stand with me before you took off for Europe? What the fuck?!

He is raging in her face while tears pour down her cheeks.

DELIA

Elliot, I am so sorry! Please just listen to me!

Neighbors begin to notice the tirade. Elliot realizes he better back off.

DELIA (CONT'D)

I love you, Elliot! Only you! You are the only one who has ever respected me, told me you would wait for me, been there for me. I made a mistake! I'm sorry!

She gets even more emotional. She takes Elliot by the hand. This time, he lets her.

DELIA (CONT'D)

You are the man I have dreamt my whole life of marrying. That will never change.

She cups his face with her other hand and stares into his eyes.

He can't help it.

He hasn't been able to help it his whole life. She encapsulates him.

The kiss is magical.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF RAMADI - NIGHT

A heavy checkpoint has been constructed to block off Route Michigan.

Marines are both dismounted and in the turrets, ready for anything.

Barriers are staggered for a hundred yards before the checkpoint, a Marine is stationed behind each, taking aim into the darkness...waiting.

Blackhawks roam the skies, shining their spot lights briefly in random areas of interest.

Elliot and Aziz survey all of this from several hundred yards away.

AZIZ

Have a nice life, Elliot.

He throws his bag over his shoulder and prepares to run from the vantage point.

ELLIOT

What are you talking about?

AZIZ

Your people made it easy for us. We don't need to journey through the city. It was a pleasure.

ELLIOT

Abdul! Are you crazy?! The second they see me they are going to lock down a perimeter and capture you!

AZIZ

Then I better move fast, good luck!

ELLIOT

You won't make it!

AZIZ

So what do you suggest I do? We obviously can't get into the city through here.

ELLIOT

So we go another way.

AZIZ

And then I am trapped in the city. Brilliant, Elliot.

ELLIOT

Listen to me! Once we reach the base, you have plenty of places you could hide, and you know it. Eventually they will give up looking for you and reopen the city. Then you can go home.

AZIZ

You're insane! You think I have a home now? You think I have a place I can go? I am done, Hamilton! It's over! Just go to your people! You are not responsible for me!

ELLIOT

I can't just let this happen to you! You saved my life!

AZTZ

And mine does not need saving! You are a good man, Elliot, but I cann --

He doesn't finish.

Elliot's eyes roll into the back of his head, and he drops to the ground like a dead weight.

Aziz runs to his side with the Corpsman bag and pulls out an epinephrine needle. He rips open Elliot's blouse and slams the needle into Elliot's heart, and injects the shot.

Elliot jolts awake and yells loudly, Aziz immediately placing his hand over Elliot's mouth.

EXT. CHECKPOINT - CONTINUOUS

A GUNNER hears Elliot's yell, swings the turret in their direction and flips on a spotlight.

**GUNNER** 

There!

The humvees roar to life and take off into the darkness after Aziz and Elliot.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF RAMADI - CONTINUOUS

AZIZ

(to Elliot)

Lets go!

Leaving all of their gear behind, they both run to the city limits near a large building.

The same large building where he left the Opal.

Elliot sees the Opal. And realizes what Aziz is doing.

ELLIOT

There!

AZIZ

Get in!

Both men throw open the car doors and slide into the tiny sedan, Aziz behind the wheel.

INT./EXT. THE OPAL - CONTINUOUS

AZIZ

(to Elliot)

Pray!

Elliot double takes as Aziz bows his head and begins to mutter a prayer in Arabic.

He lowers his head and clasps his hands.

ELLIOT

Please, God, please.

The roar of the humvees draws closer.

Aziz pulls a key from his pocket and shoves it into the ignition.

He turns it, but the car fails.

AZIZ

Shit!

He acts fast, pulling the MRE heater from his cargo pocket. He hands it to Elliot.

AZIZ (CONT'D)

Make the bomb!

ELLIOT

ARE YOU CRAZY?!

AZIZ

JUST DO IT!

Elliot dumps half of the water from his bottle, rips open the heater, and dumps its contents into the bottle. ELLIOT

Just say when!

AZIZ

WHENEVER YOU SEE THEM!

He continues to pray in between tries with the Opal.

The rumbling of humvees gets closer.

ELLIOT

Aziz! Hurry!

AZIZ

(to Opal)

COME ON!!!

The first humvee in the convoy enters the Alley, and immediately spots the Opal.

Elliot closes the cap, shakes the bottle, and hurls it at the humvee.

KABOOM!

The Opal roars to life.

Aziz throws it into gear, and peels out of the alley.

GUNNER

CONTACT FRONT!

ELLIOT

GO! NOW!

The Gunner opens fire on the Opal, shattering the back window and front.

EXT. ROUTE MICHIGAN - CONTINUOUS

Aziz turns hard onto the highway, and slams on the gas.

The convoy pursues them from almost every angle.

Blackhawks turn from the checkpoint and begin to head into the city, their spotlights flashing more rapidly now.

INT. THE OPAL - CONTINUOUS

AZIZ

You okay?

ELLIOT

Fine! We have to loose them or we are both as good as dead!

Aziz throws the emergency brake and spins off into an alley, screaming past houses and livestock. He brakes again, hard and fast, and kills the engine.

The convoy roars past the alley.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Thank God!

AZTZ

I know some back routes, but they will get us within a hundred yards or so of your base. You will have to separate with me there.

ELLIOT

Go.

Aziz starts the Opal back up, and rolls down the alley.

A few moments later, he quickly kills the engine again.

AZIZ

(whispering)

Get down!

He pulls Elliot down into the floor boards.

ELLIOT

What now?!

Aziz points over the dash, and Elliot slowly raises himself to see....

 $\dots$ A group of about TWENTY INSURGENTS, hooded and armed with RPG's, AK-47's, and swords.

Aziz puts his hand behind the seat and pulls out a M16-A1 service rifle. He hands it to Elliot. He then pulls up his pant leg and withdraws a compact Colt .45 caliber six shooter.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

You are just full of surprises!

EXT. THE INSURGENTS ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

They mutter to each other in Arabic. The INSURGENT LEADER stands in front of the group and leads them all in prayer. They hum and chant quietly.

INT. THE OPAL - CONTINUOUS

AZIZ

We are running out of time!

ELLIOT

Look!

The Insurgents finish their prayer and creep off into the dark, separately. One of them heading directly for the Opal.

AZIZ

Wait here!

Aziz slowly opens his door, trying his best to avoid any squeaking.

EXT. THE OPAL - CONTINUOUS

Aziz slithers out of the Opal, and slips just as fast underneath it.

The INSURGENT sees the Opal and raises his weapon.

Aziz positions himself under the engine.

The Insurgent walks up to the Opal, and looks around inside.

He sees nothing. He shrugs and continues to walk down the alley.

Aziz quickly slips back out from underneath the vehicle, and charges the Insurgent...

...Who turns just in time to see Aziz fly through the air, knife in hand...

The knife slices into the Insurgents jugular like butter. He gurgles for a moment, and dies as Aziz gently lowers him to the ground.

Aziz runs back to the car.

INT. THE OPAL - CONTINUOUS

Elliot emerges from underneath a blanket. He sees the blood all over Aziz.

ELLIOT

Better him than you.

Aziz nods, starts up the Opal, and rolls down the Alley.

CUT TO:

EXT. US. ARMED FORCES RECRUITING STATION - MORNING

Cpl. Fallon is on the phone, while Alvarez plays Madden on the Playstation.

CPL. FALLON

(into phone)

Sir...Yes, sir...Understood,

sir...Very clear, sir....Crystal,

yes sir....Oorah!

He slams the phone down.

CPL. FALLON (CONT'D)

(to Alvarez)

Get your Blues on!

SGT. ALVAREZ

Was that Swanberg?

Fallon nods.

CPL. FALLON

We're on standby for the Hamilton family.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - NIGHT

The automated intercom blares the loop regarding airport security, etc.

Business men talk their Blackberry to death.

Some Fliers run to their gate, while others simply stand on the moving sidewalk, taking their time.

A TSA AGENT patrols in a buggy, eyeing every foreigner he sees.

Elliot watches all of this from an international gate, sipping on a latte and reading Sports Illustrated.

Delia hurries over, carrying two bags of McDonalds, and two medium drinks.

DELIA

Big Mac or a Quarter Pounder with Cheese?

ELLIOT

Big Mac.

She hands him one of the bags, and a drink. She sits.

He looks at her, and brushes her hair out of her eyes.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

You stressed?

She gives him a knowing look as she takes a deep bite into the burger.

DELIA

I need to leave now. I can't wait any more.

ELLIOT

You'll be fine. You're just strung out. This is a wonderful opportunity for you.

P.A. INTERCOM

Good evening ladies and gentlemen, we will now begin boarding for flight 686 to JFK International, and continuing on to London, England.

Delia squirms. Elliot simply puts his arms around her and squeezes tight.

DELIA

Ok, help me take my things up there.

Elliot grabs a suitcase and she takes her purse and dinner.

He grins wildly at her.

ELLIOT

You're sexy when you're stressed.

DELIA

Oh stop it.

ELLIOT

You are.

She tosses her McDonalds in a trash can.

DELIA

That's disgusting. I will eat on the plane. Give me a kiss.

He pecks her on the lips.

DELIA (CONT'D)

Plant em!

He smiles and drops her bag at his side.

They embrace and kiss for a few moments. She begins to cry.

ELLIOT

Oh stop it. This is for you! You deserve it.

DELIA

You're sure you will be fine without me?

ELLIOT

I promise.

DELIA

Ok well, I guess, goodbye.

ELLIOT

See ya soon.

She picks up her carry-on, gives him one last kiss, and merges into the line next to her.

She gives her ticket to the agent.

He turns to walk away.

She looks back.

He looks back.

She smiles...so does he.

And she is gone ...

Elliot wipes his eyes, not realizing he was even crying a bit.

He walks over to the bench to finish his burger...

Delia pounces on him, wrapping her legs around him and shoving her lips on his mouth, he takes her hair in his hands and holds on tight.

She places a hand on his cheek and cries through her brilliant smile as she kisses him over and over again, Elliot trips over himself and they fall...

SMASH CUT:

INT. ELLIOT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

...Onto Elliot's bed, stark naked. Passion seething from their every movement.

Desire encapsulating the candles that surround them. Rain showers the streets outside.

They share a delicate smile, get under the covers, and make love.

## INT. ELLIOT'S BEDROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Already showered and dressed, Elliot slips the covers back over Delia as quietly as he can. She turns over and opens her groggy eyes.

DELIA

Where are you going?

ELLIOT

I just have a meeting I need to get to. I will be back in a couple of hours.

He pecks her on the cheek and turns to leave.

DELIA

It's Saturday. What kind of meeting?

ELLIOT

Job interview. I'll be home soon.

DELIA

Oh. Good luck! I love you!

ELLIOT

I love you too.

## EXT. U.S. ARMED FORCES RECRUITING OFFICES - LATER

He parks his old model Honda Accord in front of the U.S. Marines office, takes a deep breath and gets out.

Elliot removes his sunglasses, and looks in at the small hole in the wall of an office.

TWO RECRUITERS, dressed in civillian clothes, play Madden on a Playstation.

Elliot sighs, opens the door, and walks in, letting the door shut behind him.

DISSOLVE TO:

## EXT. U.S. ARMED FORCES RECRUITING OFFICES - DAY

Sharp as hell in the woodland fatigues, cliché aviator sunglasses drawn over his eyes, Lance Corporal Hamilton exits the recruiting station.

He puts his cover on over the fresh high and tight, and adjusts his crisply rolled sleeves for comfort.

Elliot walks into the parking lot to a jet black 2004 Mustang GT.

INT. MUSTANG - CONTINUOUS

Elliot adjusts his rear view mirror, and starts the car. He looks up at the recruiting station.

He suddenly becomes amused and lets out a light chuckle, shakes his head, backs out, and drives away.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MILITARY HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

The Nurse tucks Upton into bed. She fluffs his pillow, makes sure he has a bottle of water, complete with a straw, and drapes an extra blanket over him.

NURSE

Are you going to be ok for the night, Corporal?

CPL. UPTON

When I get outa here, we should go out for a night on the town. My treat. I will take you to the best Baghdad has to offer.

She stops and smiles at him.

NURSE

It's a date.

CPL. UPTON

Although, you should write your name down for me. This medicine makes me forget a lot.

She pulls a sharpie out of her scrubs, and takes his forearm. She writes her name.

NURSE

You can get my number when we get home.

She walks out of the room, and shuts off the light. Giddy as she goes.

Upton looks at his arm, and smiles as he reads her name.

He looks out his window...

The EKG roars to life and pulses rapidly, Upton seizes...

The lights flash on and the Nurse enters with several doctors, all rushing to his side.

NURSE (CONT'D)

Code blue! Code blue!

(to Upton)

Hang on, baby. Hang on!

EXT. THE OPAL - NIGHT

The Blackhawk flies overhead, looking down upon the alley, where the Opal sits.

RADIO (V.O.)

We are not receiving a positive heat signature from the Opal...they're gone.

EXT. BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Aziz tries to assist Elliot as he slides over the brick fence.

Elliot stumbles and falls flat on his face, scraping it heavily. Aziz grabs him and sits him upright.

Elliot is floating in and out of consciousness.

AZTZ

Snap out of it! Elliot!

ELLIOT

Hmm? Wha?

AZTZ

We're almost there!

Elliot continues to move between worlds.

AZIZ (CONT'D)

Have you no faith?! Have you no desire for her!?

Elliot suddenly comes to. He stares at Aziz.

Aziz manages a smile.

AZIZ (CONT'D)

There is always a girl.

He hands Elliot the last bottle of water. He sits down next to him.

ELLIOT

Before I left, we were looking for apartments. She is always taking care of me, and I am always leaving.

AZIZ

The military is not family friendly.

ELLIOT

No. It's not.

(beat)

God, we have been through so much together...And I have been gone for most of it.

AZIZ

Are you married to her?

Elliot smiles.

ELLIOT

Ya. Not officially though. But if I get home, we will.

AZIZ

You will get home, Elliot. I promise.

ELLIOT

Don't make promises you can't keep, Aziz.

AZIZ

(angry)

Well then you can take yourself the rest of the way so I don't have to keep wasting my time.

ELLIOT

Wait? What?

AZIZ

Have you not realized that you should have been dead five minutes ago?

ELLIOT

No, I --

AZIZ

Or that you were dead when I found you by the river?

(beat)

Not only did I kill but I saved lives too, Elliot. You had no pulse, no heart rate, nothing. You were solid as rock! And yet here you are, alive and discounting your fate, STILL! Why? What makes a man so bitter that he cannot recognize his own miracle? A girl?

(MORE)

AZIZ (CONT'D)

You pity yourself too much! You must believe in the good, that we can make it through this!

(beat)

Get up! Quit bitching!

Elliot stands without really thinking.

AZIZ (CONT'D)

Believe that she is still waiting for you. That she has not given up on you, friend. Believe.

Elliot can't take it. He cries into Aziz's shoulder, and Aziz embraces him.

AZIZ (CONT'D)

Let's go. It's not much farther.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF HURRICANE POINT - NIGHT

Aziz and Elliot hide behind a wall, the looming guard towers not far behind them.

ELLIOT

You go over this wall, you're dead.

AZIZ

It has been fun, Mr. Hamilton.

ELLIOT

Maybe we can trade phone numbers. Get some beers when I am in town again?

AZIZ

That would be great.

They sit side by side, awkwardly...but then they shake hands. Aziz hands Elliot a folded white piece of paper.

ELLIOT

What is this?

AZIZ

Open it when you get home. It will do you no good until then, anyway.

Elliot pockets the paper. He takes his barracks cover out of his cargo pocket, and slits it open and turns it inside out...the camo is traded for white.

AZIZ (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

ELLIOT

(as he works)

I don't know if it's bullshit or just something they tell ya to doop ya into ruining your cover, but I heard that they made the insides of the cover white so that Marines can surrender themselves back to the American military, so they know it's us.

(off Aziz's look)

Only Marines are idiotic enough to believe that...

AZIZ

You heard?

ELLIOT

All right, fine! I did it when I was in S.O.I!

Aziz laughs.

AZIZ

I must go, Elliot. It has been an honor.

...And for a single moment, they understand that they have accomplished beyond the impossible. The silence tells of a thousands worlds before that never knew the bonds of these two men.

ELLIOT

Good luck on your journey home.

AZIZ

Good luck with the girl.

With that, Aziz runs behind the house, and disappears.

ELLIOT

(to himself)

Here goes nothing....

He leaps over the wall, waving the white cover wildly, he runs to the gates...

He tries to scream, he can't....

Blood is seeping through his fatigues rapidly.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

I am a....

He begins to stumble, he reaches a roundabout...

His eyes roll into the back of his head.... He snaps out of it.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

No!

He keeps running.

The convoy spots Elliot, barrels down Route Michigan.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

I am an American....I am an American!
 (beat, all of his
 might)

I AM AN AMERICAN!

Eyes gone. Hearing done. Body locked.

He collapses in front of the gates.

The gates open.

The convoy reaches Elliot, Swanberg dismounts, and turns him over.

SWANBERG

Corpsman UP! NOW!

The Corpsman run to Elliot's side, and with Swanberg's help, they carry him through the gates, back into Hurricane Point.

A fire fight erupts outside of the gate! The convoy is being attacked! They remain outside of the gate and open fire on the enemy...

INT. HURRICANE POINT - CONTINUOUS

The sound of gunfire and explosions continues as the gates close, and Elliot is rushed away, into the decrepit base...

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - RAMSTEIN BASE, GERMANY - DAY

Swanberg sits by Elliot's bed, reading Colonel Grossman's book, "On Killing." He looks up every now and then, monitoring Elliot.

Tubes, blood transfusions, oxygen tanks: the fucking works. Elliot is not on life support, but he may as well be.

SWANBERG

This guy is saying that soldiers don't aim. Fuck that. They aim, right for the goddamn grape. Ha!

He's talking to Elliot, but does not expect a response...

ELLIOT

That's a good book, sir...keep reading.

Swanberg tosses the book aside and stands. He looks at Elliot in a fatherly sort of way.

SWANBERG

How you doin' Devil?

ELLIOT

I am alive, sir.

SWANBERG

Your family will be notified today of your safe recovery, and your brave service.

Tears begin to stream from Elliot's cheeks.

ELLIOT

I'm sorry sir.

SWANBERG

You've been through a lot, Hamilton. Don't apologize.

Beep. Beep. Beep.

SWANBERG (CONT'D)

You must have quite a story to tell?

Elliot nods.

SWANBERG (CONT'D)

Once you get home, you will go through the proper debriefing, but for now, you can just rest.

(beat)

Try to avoid the media if you can. They are fucking ruthless.

Elliot nods again. Swanberg walks over to a window and opens it.

SWANBERG (CONT'D)

Germany is so beautiful at every hour of every day. Unlike that shit hole we just came from. Eh, Hamilton?

Elliot says nothing.

SWANBERG (CONT'D)

I have to be honest with ya. I really wanna know something.

ELLIOT

What is it, sir?

SWANBERG

Did he do this to you?

ELLIOT

He?

SWANBERG

Aziz, Elliot. Did he beat you?

ELLIOT

Who is Aziz?

SWANBERG

You don't remember what happened then.

ELLIOT

I remember perfectly, sir.

SWANBERG

The terrorist that captured you? That was Abdul Aziz. He has been missing for the past three years. He kept a journal on MRE packaging, accounting for every moment he spent out there. Evil sonofabitch. We have been looking to sit down with him for a long, long, time. He must have said something to you, to his friends? About where he would go next? I mean, why did they just dump you on our doorstep? Where's Aziz now, Elliot?

There is a prolonged silence between the two of them.

SWANBERG (CONT'D)

Hamilton, I understand they may have brain-washed you or some wacko shit, but you need to hear me when I tell you that Abdul Aziz is a terrorist! He is a very, very, bad man! Lord knows what he did to you while you were in captivity! Just tell me where you saw him last, and our people will find him! You will be saving thousands of lives, Hamilton!

(MORE)

## SWANBERG (CONT'D)

He must answer for every American life he took! Don't you want that? Otherwise your brothers who died by his hand will have died in vain... (beat)

...And I will personally make sure you are promoted to Corporal before you are discharged.

Elliot stares at Swanberg for a long moment.

CUT TO:

INT. BLACKHAWK - OVER BAGHDAD - NIGHT

The city moves below as Elliot watches from above. The hum of the rotors seems dull in Elliot's serene moment...He is finally leaving.

Unlike Ramadi, Baghdad is full of light in the night. Cars and people are everywhere. It is a metropolis. He pulls the note Aziz handed him out of his pocket. He unfolds it.

INSERT - AZIZ'S LETTER

Written on the letter is an address in New York....below that, is a note from Aziz:

Home.

BACK TO SCENE

Elliot refolds the letter, and stares back out at the disappearing world below him. Tears fall from his cheeks.

INT. MILITARY HOSPITAL ROOM - BAGHDAD - NIGHT

The Nurse holds Upton's hand, and weeps softly.

He sleeps.

INT. THE HAMILTON HOME - AFTERNOON

The doorbell rings.

Gloria sees them again, she turns and runs from the door, into Michael's arms.

Michael looks out the window at Alvarez and Fallon.

He nods at them.

They enter the house in their crisp dress blues, Fallon holding another white envelope.

He smiles, and hands the letter to Michael, and tells him that his son is alive.

Michael can hardly believe it, Gloria smiles through her tears....

All four of them embrace in the living room.

EXT. PARK - LATER

Delia sits at the precise spot where she and Elliot once watched a football game.

There is no game now, just a field.

The jet black Infinity parallel parks, and glows in the sunlight.

Fallon exits, alone, in his dress blues.

He walks toward her.

Delia stands, wind tossing her hair into her tear stained face. She can no longer muster any more.

Fallon smiles as he approaches her, and she falls into his arms.

FULL SHOT: ROUTE MICHIGAN - NIGHT

The quiet city sleeps, as convoys rumble through the darkness. Plumes of smoke rise from the ashes below...

A Blackhawk departs the city skies, and beelines straight for Huricane Point.

Marines take over houses, streets, and rooftops...

... The men are bagged and tagged...

The women look on...

EXT. ANDREWS AIR FORCE BASE - DAY

The massive C-130 lands on the tarmac, and begins to taxi over to the crowd.

Delia, Michael, Gloria, and several hundred other people, waiting for returning loved ones.

A band plays. Flags are waved. Tears of happiness are shed.

The ramp of the C-130 lowers, and a flood of Soldiers exit.

The C-130 crew lines the ramp, clapping for every departing soldier.

The crowd cheers.

Loved ones reunite and kiss and high five and hug and swing their children around the world.

Delia stands amidst it all, just waiting. She doesn't spot him at first, but then she does.

His arm in a sling, dressed in his Dress Green uniform, and a cane in hand, Elliot stands up as straight as ever for her.

She smiles. Says I love you.

He smiles. Says I love you.

Gloria and Michael take off running for Elliot, and he sees them, puts up his cane like a sword and whacks his dad playfully in the shoulder.

They embrace. Delia laughs.

She walks....then jogs....then runs...then sprints through the crowd at Mach 3 speed -- flying past everyone, her tears an afterthought, left on the tarmac, she smiles wildly and throws her arms open for Elliot...

And their kiss is magical, breathtaking, solemn, passionate, desirable....and full of love.

She takes his face in her hands and stares into his eyes.

DELIA

I am pregnant.

Elliot pulls her in tight.

ELLIOT

I love you.

DELIA

Forever?

ELLIOT

And ever.

CUT TO:

INT. THE HAMILTON HOME - DAY

A party is being thrown in Elliot's honor. Cake, balloons, booze, music and laughter fill the home.

Most everyone simply walks up to Elliot and shakes his hand, no questions asked.

Delia sits by his side, glowing at the love of her life.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Elliot stares at the picture of Delia. He looks up at her.

She blushes, the sun glowing behind her. Elliot leans in for the kill...

Delia turns her cheek for him...

His lips impact on her soft cheek.

She glows with delight...

AZIZ (V.O.)

Home is a state of mind.

INT. EMPTY APARTMENT LOFT - DAY

It's not so empty now. Boxes fill the corners, and a mattress is laid out in the living room.

Elliot and Delia lay on it, eating pizza and enjoying their time.

Elliot puts his hand on Delia's much larger belly. He kisses it, and whispers something to the baby.

AZIZ (V.O.)

It is a sanctuary.

EXT. CEMETARY - DAY

Rain pours on the sea of black suits and dresses.

MARINES are dressed in uniform as they salute the fallen. Among them is Elliot.

A 21 gun salute rips through the air. Onlookers mourn.

A picture of CPL. UPTON in his dress blues rests on a table near the grave.

AZIZ (V.O.)

Sometimes, we find our home with those who have gone before us.

INT. CATHEDRAL - DAY

A very pregnant Delia walks down the aisle in a captivating white gown.

Elliot stands with the PRIEST by the altar, in his formal dress blues, and stares in awe of her beauty.

AZIZ (V.O.)

Other times, it will encapsulate us at the most unexpected moments.

INT. BIRTHING SUITE - DAY

Delia grips Elliot's hand, sweating and breathing hard. She yells.

Dr. Ralston hands Delia a bloody, beautiful, baby girl.

AZIZ (V.O.)

And where we are, may bring a gift of life...

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

A BOY and GIRL chase each other across the playground, laughing and jumping and yelling joyfully.

A TEEN BOY and TEEN GIRL hold hands as they swing together.

AZIZ (V.O.)

... A second chance.

EXT. BROWNSTONE HOUSING - NEW YORK - DAY

Elliot exits a Taxi, and pays the fare. He holds the note Aziz gave him, and double checks the address.

He walks up the stoop, and knocks on the door.

AZIZ (V.O.)

Because when we fight the odds, and believe in ourselves...

The door opens, an OLD ARABIC WOMAN appears in front of Elliot.

AZIZ (V.O.) (CONT'D)

We find our home...

INT. THE BROWNSTONE - CONTINUOUS

A mass of Arabic families fill the home. Watching TV, eating dinner, playing cards...they all look up when Elliot enters.

AZIZ (V.O.)

Our hearts expand...

Elliot looks upon the crowd. The faces of the old men eyeing him cautiously, the women look at him expectantly, and the children rush to him joyfully.

AZIZ (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And we find peace.

ELLIOT

(to Old Woman)

Who are they?

OLD ARABIC WOMAN

They are refugees.

Elliot does his best to maintain his composure. He looks at a desk near the door, specifically a framed photo.

INSERT - THE PHOTO

A young Abdul Aziz smiles brightly in his Republican Guard uniform, his arm thrown around his father.

FADE OUT.