

A BEAUTIFUL SOMEWHERE

by

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INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

SUPER: 2001

JOSH, (25), short brown hair, dark blue eyes and a possessing a quiet confidence only certain people can pull off, sits on a small wooden stool in front of a white backdrop.

White lights shine in his face. His dog tags rest between his pectorals.

REPORTER (os)

What would you say is your main reason for going to Iraq?

Josh gazes into the camera.

JOSH

I guess to be able to say that when the country needed me, I didn't just stand there. I want to be able to say that I did my part.

REPORTER (os)

Even if it seems that your time out there is spent fighting for a lost cause?

JOSH

I don't regret doing this...that would be a terrible way to live.

INSERT: Picture of the twin towers, taken from directly above, during the 9/11 attack. Black smoke fills the sky.

INT. BATHROOM- (PRESENT DAY) - DAY

Josh, underground, leans over the sink. He removes his dog tags and places them under the slow running water.

His army fatigues masked in sand and dried blood.

CUT TO

EXT. STREETS ABOVE - DAY

Angry fists poke out of the city gates. Chants are forming and frustrated citizens swing rifles and Iraqi flags above their heads in protest.

Across the street, a mob of Iranian Revolutionary Guardsmen.

They are heavily armed, watching with pleasure and a large dose of self righteousness.

They fire warning shots into the air.

BACK TO

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Hearing the noise above him, Josh examines his face in the cracked mirror, desperately trying to ignore the clamor of hate and anger.

KERBALL, (14), innocent eyes and speaking broken English, cautiously steps inside the bathroom.

KERBALL

What are you doing?

Josh hides his fear.

JOSH

Getting ready.

KERBALL

Are you scared?

JOSH

Yes...

KERBALL

When I get scared I pull my sheets over my head.

JOSH

Does that work?

KERBALL

Sometimes...

Kerball grins, missing several of his front missing, then scampers off.

Josh glances up at the ceiling, hearing the chants grow louder. He pins his body in between the toilet and side wall, attempting to escape from the moment.

JOSH (VO)
This is my Gethsemane...

DESOLVE TO

EXT. FRONT PORCH (FLASHBACK) - NIGHT

CYNTHIA, (50), motherly, and dressed as if she is still living in the swinging sixties, sits next to Josh.

Crickets and frogs create plenty of background noise.

CYNTHIA
If your father were still here, he would have never let you go.

JOSH
...but he's not.

CYNTHIA
I'm reminded of that everyday, and I'm not sure I want that for you too.

JOSH
What do you want?

CYNTHIA
I've always stood behind you. You never needed my approval.

JOSH
Can you do that for me now?

She smiles at him, takes his hand.

CYNTHIA
...Why would I stop now?

JOSH
That's what I needed to hear.

CYNTHIA
Just be careful.

She stands and slowly walks to the screen door.

CYNTHIA

A few months back...I took every picture of your father off the walls. I placed them in a shoebox, and hid it under my bed --

JOSH

-- why?

A dispirited look comes over her face.

CYNTHIA

It just hurt too much to see him everyday...and not really see him.

She swings open the screen door and walks inside.

INT. LININGER'S KITCHEN- NEXT MORNING - DAY

ALLISON, (mid 20's), long brown hair, the girl next door that wears her heart on her sleeve, leans up against her kitchen counter eating a bowl of cereal.

Her husband, SCOTT , (30), business professional, handsome and he knows it, reads his newspaper at the breakfast table.

ALLISON

Busy day today?

SCOTT

(reading)

Sort of. Did you have something in mind?

ALLISON

Not really. I'm going to visit a friend that's enlisting --

SCOTT

-- Iraq?

She nods yes.

SCOTT

Do I know him?

ALLISON

We knew each other in college, but we're not that close anymore.

SCOTT

When is he leaving?

ALLISON
Basic training starts in a week.

SCOTT
Tell him I think that's a great
thing he's doing.

ALLISON
...I'm not so sure how I feel
about it.

SCOTT
That's because you watch too much
television.

ALLISON
What's that supposed to mean?

SCOTT
It means...that unless you were
there, at the towers, you have no
idea how it changes you.

ALLISON
Just because I wasn't there
doesn't mean --

SCOTT
-- it means that you didn't feel
what I felt. I was there, I came
home covered in ash. They gave me
salt water to drink because no one
could find anything else... I saw
mothers of children jumping out of
windows. You can't possibly know
how that changes you.

ALLISON
So tell me...

He folds up his paper.

SCOTT
(somber)
They killed thousands of people
when the towers fell. People I
knew, friends of mine... It leaves
a hole... inside of you.

He stands up and kisses her on the cheek, then quickly
leaves the kitchen. She is left with little to say.

INT. ARMY RECRUITING OFFICE - DAY

Josh slumps over a desk, signing various waivers and forms. An overweight, arrogant recruiting officer prepares a welcome packet for him.

FAT RECRUITER

Do you have any questions at this time?

JOSH

Just what I need to bring to basic training?

FAT RECRUITER

It's here in your packet... two garbage bags for laundry, a good watch with a second hand and cover for that watch, shoe polish rags, a brush, liquid shoe polish, two cigarette lighters, razor cutting knives, and an old toothbrush-firm for cleaning your weapon...the rest will be given to you. Anything else soldier?

Josh nods, snatches up the packet, and leaves.

EXT. OUTSIDE RECRUITING OFFICE - DAY

Allison leans up against a parked car, just outside. Josh looks up and sees her bright smile beaming in the sun.

ALLISON

Look at you...United States soldier.

JOSH

What are you doing here?

ALLISON

I wanted to see you before you left.

JOSH

I don't leave for another week.

ALLISON

Well do you wanna go somewhere?

JOSH

That would be great.

CUT TO

EXT. GREEN SPACE- PARK - DAY

They lay on a picnic towel.

JOSH

...mom wasn't all that thrilled to see me go, but she understands.

ALLISON

What are your reasons?

JOSH

For enlisting?

ALLISON

Yea, I don't think you've ever told me.

JOSH

It's a sense of needing to do something. I woke up that morning and saw what everyone else saw... I was shocked like everyone else around me, but later it seemed like none of them wanted to take any responsibility.

ALLISON

For what?

JOSH

For what was happening...for what needs to happen now.

ALLISON

I don't see how invading a country that had nothing to do with the attacks can accomplish anything.

JOSH

If someone comes into your house and takes something you love... wouldn't you run after them no matter where they tried to hide?

ALLISON

God, you sound like SCOTT.

He sits up.

JOSH
And how is SCOTT?

ALLISON
He's good.

JOSH
You guys getting along?

ALLISON
He works long hours, but when he's
around, things are great.

JOSH
(biting his tongue)
That's good.

ALLISON
What about you? You breaking
anyone's heart these days?

JOSH
... only my own.

She changes the subject.

ALLISON
There's always been something I
wanted to ask you...and I never
really had the guts to say
anything before --

JOSH
(sarcastically)
-- and now that I'm leaving, what
better time?

ALLISON
Exactly.
(blinks nervously)
Why did you come to the wedding?

JOSH
I was invited.

ALLISON
Yea, but I didn't think you were
actually gonna be there.

JOSH
I'm sorry, did that upset you?

ALLISON

Do you know how hard it was to say
"I do" to another man, knowing you
were there.

JOSH

I'm sorry.

ALLISON

I felt so guilty.

JOSH

I wanted to be with you... more
than anything. But, the more I
thought about it...the more I
realized that I just wanted to see
you happy.

Awkward silence.

JOSH

Are you happy?

She stares directly at him.

ALLISON

As happy as everyone thinks...

EXT. PARRIS ISLAND, SC- BASIC TRAINING - DAY

The new recruits fall into lines of six, short hair and
sporting the typical army green t-shirts and pants.

SGT. RAMON, (40), tall, dark and intimidating by nature,
examines them one at a time.

He preps them in a loud manner.

SGT. RAMON

For the next nine weeks, you
belong to me. There will be miles
of marching, countless drills and
hours of standing in
formation...When standing in front
of me, you will remain perfectly
straight and still.

(paces)

That means if a bug bites you on
the face, you do not swat at
it...if you sweat and it rolls
down the side of your cheek, you
do not dry it off. And God forbid
you scratch an itch...you do

(MORE)

SGT. RAMON (cont'd)
twenty five push-ups and then
stand back in position. Is that
understood?

ALL
(together)
Yes Drill Sergeant!

SGT. RAMON
Good. Now, I hope you boys are in
tip top shape...because physical
training starts today...

MONTAGE - BASIC TRAINING

- Josh falls in line and begins his running.
- His sweatshirt is damp with perspiration as he finishes his sit ups and move directly into push-up position.
- He is injected with his immunizations through the side of his arm.
- He is issued standard army gear.

END MONTAGE

EXT. BASIC TRAINING UNIT- WEEKS LATER - DAY

Sgt. Ramon confronts Josh face to face while in line.

SGT. RAMON
Total control. Right now, I have
it and you do not. I am your mama
and you are my infant son...you
eat when I tell you to eat, you
sleep when I say it's time to
sleep, and you shit when I allow
you to or you do it in your
pants...are we clear?

JOSH
(yells)
Sir, yes sir.

Sgt. Ramon's face turns sour.

SGT. RAMON
What did you just say to me?

JOSH
 (yells)
 I said, yes drill sergeant.

SGT. RAMON
 That's not what you said...you
 called me sir didn't you?

JOSH
 Sorry drill sergeant!

SGT. RAMON
 Do I look like a sir to you? Do I
 look like I sit around all day
 watching soap operas and eating
 junk food... are you saying I
 don't work for a living?

JOSH
 No Drill --

SGT. RAMON
 -- you eye balling me boy! Drop
 and give me twenty push ups, now!

Josh sinks to the ground, his arms start firing off push-ups
 in rapid succession.

EXT. TRAINING FIELD- COMBAT - DAY

The Marines make their way through a simulated hostile town.
 Abandoned buildings and traps lay in wait around each wall.

SGT. RAMON (OS)
 The situation... is there has been
 a blast from an improvised
 explosive device. Your mission is
 to find the wounded Marine, bring
 him to safety and exit the kill
 zone.

Josh and his loaded M-203 grenade launcher makes his way
 into an abandoned home, a dummy in Marine uniform lay on the
 ground just in front of him.

He signals for the evacuation of the body.

JOSH
 (into his radio)
 Building is clear, removing the
 body now...

Suddenly an improvised explosive device blows up just 15 feet away.

Red paint and dust fill the air.

Two of the Marines are immediately struck by fragments of the bomb, paint covering their faces and upper thighs.

The situation rapidly grows worse and Josh drags the heavy body out of the building. The sound of blank rounds permeates in through the smoke.

He makes it outside unscathed, the only one not hit.

He drops the body at Sgt. Ramon's feet and looks up at him, breathing heavily.

SGT. RAMON

No matter how many times I try to kill you, you keep making it through...

JOSH

Sorry to disappoint drill Sergeant.

SGT. RAMON

It would be a hell of a lot more dissappointing if you were dead...

INT. GAS CHAMBER - DAY

The soldiers stand in line, all wearing chemical equipment, nervously awaiting a turn. Josh is at the head of the group.

SGT. RAMON

The gas chamber is the most frightening experience you will ever have. You will enter the chamber, be exposed to the CS gas, and be asked to recite the pledge of allegiance while inside. The idea behind this nightmare...is to allow you to gain trust in your equipment and to trust me as your leader.

(sarcastic grin)

First up, let's go...

Sgt. Ramon flings a CS gas can inside, inciting a cloud of darkness. JOSH runs in, surprisingly calm.

INSIDE

Once inside, he can see very little. His breathing is burdened and excessive as he searches the ground for the can. He finds it.

JOSH
(yells)
Found the gas!

SGT. RAMON (OS)
Recite the pledge!

JOSH
(loud)
I pledge allegiance to the flag of
the United States of America, and
to the Republic for which it
stands: one Nation under God,
indivisible, With Liberty and
Justice for all...

SGT. RAMON (os)
Now, get the hell out of there!

He emerges from the chamber, removes his mask and coughs.
Sgt. Ramon glances at him.

SGT. RAMON
Well done soldier. Don't rub your
eyes, you'll feel better in a few
minutes.

JOSH
Yes drill Sergeant!

SGT. RAMON
Make sure you don't touch your ass
either... or you'll be shittin'
fire for a month.

EXT. PUGIL TRAINING AREA - DAY

Josh wears chest and groin protectors, hockey gloves, and a protective helmet.

His pugil stick tightly gripped in front of his body. An unnamed Marine stands opposite him ready to attack.

The whistle blows.

Josh pounces in an aggressive yet controlled manner.

He is able to pin his opponent back and strikes him several times in the face and chest with the rifle butt end of his pugil stick. Then, he approaches swiftly and uses the opposite end to simulate a killing stab.

SGT. RAMON
 (stands in between
 them)
 Time! Nice work CRAVEN...

INT. BUNKS - NIGHT

Sgt. Ramon paces down the line of molded recruits offering new rules.

SGT. RAMON
 From now on...you don't go
 "upstairs," you go "topside." You
 do not go downstairs, you go "down
 below." Your bunk becomes a
 "rack." The latrine is now called
 a "head." The floor is a "deck."
 The walls are "bulkheads." The
 windows are "portholes." the
 ceiling is an "overhead." You face
 "forward." Behind you is "aft."
 Facing forward, left is "port,"
 and right is "starboard." Never,
 call the D.I.'s office an
 "office." It is, and always will
 be the "D.I. House." Are we clear?

ALL
 (together)
 Yes drill Sergeant!

INT. CYNTHIA'S HOME- MONTHS LATER - NIGHT

There is a knock at the door, and a yellow cab drives off. Cynthia opens the door, unveiling Josh in his service uniform. He removes his hat.

JOSH
 Hello.

CYNTHIA
 You look so handsome.

They embrace.

CYNTHIA

Let me look at you...I'm so glad
you're here, come on in, I made
supper.

KITCHEN

They slowly walk into the kitchen, revealing Allison, seated
at the dinner table.

A nervous smile sweeps over her face.

JOSH

(to her)

I didn't know you were coming.

ALLISON

Surprise.

JOSH

It is.

CYNTHIA

She called me last week. I told
her you were coming in town
tonight...so we're all going to
have dinner together.

CUT TO

THE TABLE

They drink red wine and eat.

JOSH

The food was great mom.

CYNTHIA

I'm glad you liked it.

ALLISON

How's the food in the army?

JOSH

Honestly...it sucks.

CYNTHIA

Oh, I hate that word...use another
word.

JOSH

Sorry, it's pretty awful, but it's
a square meal.

ALLISON

Do they really yell at you as much as they make it seem in the movies?

JOSH

Yea, pretty much. It's a shock the first few days, but you get used to it --

CYNTHIA

-- I could never get used to anyone yelling at me that way.

JOSH

They're just doing their job.

ALLISON

It just seems...unnecessary.

JOSH

It serves a purpose, eventually.

CYNTHIA

(jokes)

He can handle it, his father was probably a lot scarier than any of the drill sergeants he's met so far.

He smiles at his mother.

CYNTHIA

Well...You two go for a walk, I'll clear the table and get us some dessert and we'll eat on the porch...key lime pie?

ALLISON

Are you sure? I can help with the dishes --

CYNTHIA

-- don't be silly. Just go.

Cynthia jumps up and kisses Josh on her way to the sink.

EXT. WALKING TRAIL - NIGHT

Josh and Allison pass the lake on their walk.

ALLISON
You're mom is still the sweetest
woman on the planet.

JOSH
I missed her.

ALLISON
I hate that she's alone now.

JOSH
You coming by was good for both of
us.

ALLISON
I'm glad...

They uneasily stare out at the lake.

ALLISON
Do you remember when we were
younger, and my dad dropped me off
at your house for the weekend? And
we fished out there?

JOSH
(jokes)
I don't think you can call that
fishing.

ALLISON
You know what I mean...

JOSH
Yea, I remember that. We pulled
out the trampoline that weekend,
and it snowed --

ALLISON
-- and every time we bounced up
the snow would smack us in the
face.

JOSH
That was fun.

ALLISON
I never have fun like that
anymore...

JOSH

We grew up...things change, the world is a lot easier when you don't have to worry about much.

Silence.

JOSH

Does SCOTT know you're here?

ALLISON

He's in Chicago.

She fiddles with her wedding ring.

JOSH

It's beautiful.

ALLISON

I picked the design out myself.

JOSH

It's so like you to not let him pick out your wedding ring.

ALLISON

I guess... I just knew what I wanted.

They reluctantly look at each other wanting to say more.

JOSH

We should head back...

INT. KITCHEN- THE NEXT MORNING - DAY

Josh stands at the back window, Cynthia sneaks up behind him offering a glass of OJ.

CYNTHIA

Did you sleep well?

JOSH

(taking the glass)

Better than I have in a long time.

CYNTHIA

Good, now what do you want for breakfast?

JOSH

Can I ask you something?

CYNTHIA

Sure.

JOSH

Last night, after ALLISON left, I went up to your room and looked for the shoebox full of dad's pictures...I couldn't find it under the bed.

CYNTHIA

Why do want them?

JOSH

I wanted some to take back with me.

She sits, obviously riddled with guilt.

JOSH

Mom?

CYNTHIA

I got rid of them...

JOSH

What do you mean?

CYNTHIA

I couldn't stop...looking at them all the time.

JOSH

Where'd you put them?

CYNTHIA

(low)

I took them out back and emptied them into the lake.

JOSH

You what?!

CYNTHIA

You don't understand! I am alone in this house everyday and sometimes I just can't live with the memories --

JOSH

-- those were all we had left of him.

CYNTHIA

-- I needed to get them out of
the house completely --

JOSH

-- why didn't you give them to me?

She tears up.

CYNTHIA

-- You don't understand how alone
it feels...how afraid I am to lose
everything.

Josh sets the glass down on the counter and embraces her.

JOSH

Don't be scared...

INT. MARINE CORPS TRAINING FACILITY- CA - DAY

MONTAGE- MARINE TRAINING

- Josh runs three miles by himself, the rest of the group
falls behind.

- He struggles through push-ups until his muscles fail,
slamming his chin on the ground.

- He hangs on the chin up bar, sweat beads then drips off
his brow, he grinds his teeth.

- During the shooting simulator, Josh lays on his stomach,
firing his M16- A4. He finds his aim, controls his breath
and fires.

END MONTAGE

INT. MARINE PASSENGER PLANE - KUWAITI DESERT - DAY

Josh and his fellow marines line the wall mounted seats.

Many of the men check their weapons, some say their prayers
silently, others sit in deep, concentrated thought.

The relentless hum of the engines makes talking nearly
impossible without yelling.

RODGERS, (23), small in stature with a huge ego, basically a
check his actions cannot cash, chews his gum obnoxiously.

RODGERS

Hey CRAVEN- I heard it's 125
degrees down there.

JOSH

Who told you that?

RODGERS

The pilot... he said it hits you
like a wall of heat when you get
off.

JOSH

You're not helping...

CAPTAIN DIGGS, (34), African American, a smart, strong
willed soldier with years of experience to prove it, emerges
from the back of the plane.

CAPTAIN DIGGS

Alright listen up...we'll be on
the ground in fifteen minutes.
Once we land, there will be small
bus on the runway. Carry all your
gear over there and pack in. We're
gonna be taken to a small base
camp where we can be briefed
directly by the Colonel. The base
camp we usually land at was
attacked just a few days ago, so
we'll have to make due until our
orders come in. Be on your toes
and stay alert... Everyone clear?

ALL

(together)

Hooah!

INT. BUS- RUNWAY - DAY

The marines are packed like sardines in a tin, many of them
holding gear in their laps.

Rodgers scampers past Josh on his way to the back.

RODGERS

You'd think the army would have
better accommodations for
Marines...

JOSH

I'm swimming in sweat already.

RODGERS

Wait until we get on the sand,
gets up to 140...

JOSH

Great.

INT. LIVING ROOM- THAT MOMENT - DAY

Allison sprawls out on her plush couch, intently watching a CNN report on the war in Iraq. The front door clicks open, Scott drops his briefcase.

SCOTT

Hey you, whatcha doing?

ALLISON

Nothing, just waiting on you and
watching the news.

He fixates his eyes on the screen.

SCOTT

Anything exciting?

ALLISON

There isn't anything exciting
about what's going on over there.

SCOTT

I didn't mean it like that, I know
you have a friend over there and
all.

ALLISON

Every time they talk about
soldiers being killed, I can't
help but wonder if it's him.

SCOTT

They're in the military by choice.
They're prepared for that kind of
thing.

ALLISON

I hope so.

SCOTT

What was your friend's name again?

She is reluctant to answer.

ALLISON

Josh Craven...

SCOTT

CRAVEN, that sounds familiar...I think I've seen that name before.

ALLISON

He came to the wedding...

SCOTT

Well I hope he's alright...I'm starved, anything to eat?

ALLISON

Check the fridge, there's some leftovers you can just heat up.

SCOTT

Great...

He undoes his tie, and disappears into the kitchen

INT. INTELLIGENCE TENT- IRAQ - DAY

COLONEL BARRY, (52), baptized by fire, with a sense of self motivating determination stands in the middle of the army tent. The Marine squad kneels in front of him.

COL. BARRY

What you men are about to embark upon is classified above top secret. We're under fire out here, we're encountering heavy casualties and we're unable to reinforce them as quickly as we'd like. You're here to help reinforce in a particular situation.

CAPTAIN DIGGS

There's a small city, just up the Tigris from Baghdad, called Al'Bafar...the city itself is surrounded by a ten foot wall.

COL. BARRY

About three weeks ago, I contacted the CAPTAIN in regard to assembling a team of his best men to escort him to that city. We need you to act as an extraction

(MORE)

COL. BARRY (cont'd)
team.

RODGERS
Extracting who, sir?

COL. BARRY
Four weeks ago a small team, no
bigger than yours, was sent there
to secure the city walls from a
band of Iranian Revolutionary
terrorists --

CAPTAIN DIGGS
-- this organization exists for
one reason... to stop our progress
here in the desert. They
infiltrate civilian cities,
recruit and fire sale the
resistance.

COL. BARRY
Our troops were attacked, we
believe some of them were pulled
into the city by its citizens for
care ...some are unaccounted for.
No one will know the extent of our
mission. Simply put...you're on
our own. There will be no radio
contact beyond the Baghdad city
limits...You're to get in, find
the injured troops and any
remaining bodies of American
soldiers only. Bring them back to
base so we can send them to their
families back home...dead or
alive.

JOSH
Sir, the terrorists, do we know
how many?

CAPTAIN DIGGS
We don't know, we consider their
size to be manageable. We believe
their numbers don't warrant us
sending all our boys up river just
yet.

COL. BARRY
What we do know is that these sons
of bitches want those bodies as
bad as I do...and they'd love to
cut one up on the six o'clock news
(MORE)

COL. BARRY (cont'd)
for all their cave dwelling
buddies to see...but that cannot
happen. Not on my watch.
Understood?

ALL
(together)
Hooah!

CAPTAIN DIGGS
Alright...this is what you came
here for, let's go to work.

CUT TO

EXT. / INT. HUMVEE - DAY

The squad files into three separate vehicles. The engines
fire up and they are on their way.

BACK SEAT

Josh sits incommodiously between Rodgers and another large
Marine, fighting the sun, gazing ahead.

Captain Diggs turns from shotgun.

CAPTAIN DIGGS
We'll be out of radio contact as
soon as we leave Baghdad city
limits. The convoy will only take
us three quarters of the way. I
hope you brought your walking
shoes gentlemen.

EXT. DESERT- LATER - DAY

The squad, led by Captain Diggs, takes fatigued step after
fatigued step.

They carry nearly 80 pounds of gear on their backs, mostly
consisting of flashlights, grenades, water bottles and both
an army issued M4 and 9-mm Beretta.

Rodgers taps Josh's shoulder.

RODGERS
In case anything happens...can you
get this letter to my girl back
home?

JOSH
 Sure, but I don't expect anything
 like that to happen, do you?

RODGERS
 I just know we're supposed to ask
 someone.
 (pressing in)
 You got a letter?

JOSH
 No.

RODGERS
 Well why the hell not?

JOSH
 I got no one to send it to.

Up ahead, the captain stops, the group follows suit.

CAPTAIN DIGGS
 (to them)
 Let's get some tents up. We'll
 camp here for the night. Two hour
 watches...HALLOWAY you're up
 first.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

The openness is quiet, almost too quiet. Josh emerges from
 his tent, surveys the others around him and the blackness of
 the sky above.

Captain Diggs sits out in front of camp, alone on his watch,
 smoking a Cuban cigar.

JOSH
 (overwrought)
 So this is what the Middle East
 looks like sir?

The captain takes in a puff, lets it out.

CAPTAIN DIGGS
 Embrace the suck soldier.
 (puffs)
 This aint your watch, what are you
 doing up?

JOSH
 I couldn't sleep.

CAPTAIN DIGGS
I know the feeling...cigar?

JOSH
I don't smoke sir.

CAPTAIN DIGGS
Fair enough.

He looks up at the sparkling stars.

CAPTAIN DIGGS
You got a family back home?

JOSH
I'm part of a family, but I don't
have one of my own sir.

Captain Diggs reaches in his pocket, hands a photo to him,
he kneels down.

INSERT: A photo of a loving wife and two sons dressed up in
their Sunday best.

JOSH
This your family sir? They're
beautiful.

CAPTAIN DIGGS
They're my world even when I'm so
far away.

JOSH
Do you miss them sir?

CAPTAIN DIGGS
It's been a year since I've been
home and I've spent the better
part of that time out here...in
the heat, the sun... this desert.
(puffs)
But I know why I'm here...even
when I doubt it. Because I carry
that picture with me. You got
something like that?

JOSH
Not really sir.

CAPTAIN DIGGS
You always have to carry
something...I have a buddy of mine
in Afghanistan that wears his
wife's wedding band and while he's
(MORE)

CAPTAIN DIGGS (cont'd)
away she wears his back home...
The Colonel, he has this wooden
cross his son gave him, he wraps
it in a sock and takes it
everywhere he goes. He once told
me that it was the smallest, but
heaviest thing he carries out
here.

JOSH
I need to be more creative sir.

CAPTAIN DIGGS
Tell me about your family.

JOSH
I'm sorry --

CAPTAIN DIGGS
-- Since we're both awake and
there's nothing to do but stare at
sand...tell me about your family.

JOSH
What about them sir?

CAPTAIN DIGGS
Hell, I dunno soldier...start with
your father- you got a father
right?

JOSH
(pensive)
I had one.

CAPTAIN DIGGS
Did he die?

JOSH
When I was a teenager sir. My
mother raised me by herself.

CAPTAIN DIGGS
Does he know you shipped off to
Iraq?

Josh nods no.

CAPTAIN DIGGS
Is he proud of you?

JOSH
He's dead sir --

CAPTAIN DIGGS
-- so? He doesn't have to alive
to be proud of you. What the hell
do you think we're out here for
anyway?

Awkward silence.

CAPTAIN DIGGS
Tell me something about your
father.

JOSH
What he was like sir?

CAPTAIN DIGGS
Anything, a story or whatever.
We're just two guys talking out in
the desert.

JOSH
(reminiscing)
His favorite holiday was
Thanksgiving, maybe because he
loved to eat, or maybe because all
of us were together at once.
Either way, at the end of the
meal, there was always one dinner
roll left...sitting there in the
basket, staring back at he and I.
And he'd look at me, and he knew I
wanted it...but he'd snatch it up
and take it for himself.

(smiles)
Then, while eating it and
celebrating his small victory,
he'd wink at me and say...there's
only two kinds, the quick and the
hungry.

CAPTAIN DIGGS
(laughs)
The quick and the hungry...

JOSH
You either stick your hand out
there and take what you really
want, or you go hungry.

CAPTAIN DIGGS

I like that. Smart man.

JOSH

What about your father sir?

CAPTAIN DIGGS

He was a soldier. Fought in World War Two. Survived the beach, got sent back, survived all four of his following jumps... I still can't even imagine.

(nods his head)

He used to make us kids tell him about our day- every night at the table, he'd go around and ask about school, or whatever it was we did that day. And when he came to you and you were telling a lie or making something up, he'd call you out on it...he'd say "Hockey Puck".

JOSH

Hockey puck sir?

CAPTAIN DIGGS

Yes, hockey puck. And as the lie grew, the puck turned into a rock, then a boulder, then a mountain. It just kept growing until the lie got too big for you to get out from under.

(puffs)

He kept those pretend hockey pucks in his shirt pocket and he'd pull them out when he knew you were lying. I remember that like it was yesterday.

JOSH

Is he proud of you, sir?

CAPTAIN DIGGS

Every day soldier...

Josh stands, feeling comforted.

JOSH

Sir...am I at liberty to ask you something personal?

CAPTAIN DIGGS

You've earned that right soldier.

JOSH

What do you feel...when you kill someone sir?

CAPTAIN DIGGS

Before 9/11...I used to not feel anything. Now, in a strange way it feels good. It feels like I'm taking back a life that these people took from us.

JOSH

Even if that's not true sir?

CAPTAIN DIGGS

(confirms)

Even if that's not true. What you have to do is forget the papers, the TV shows, talk radio. You have to tell yourself that no matter what the reason is, we're here and we got a job to do...and there aint no way we're going home until our job is finished.

JOSH

Thank you sir.

CAPTAIN DIGGS

Do you know what Marines stands for?

JOSH

No sir I don't.

CAPTAIN DIGGS

Many Americans running into never-ending shit.

They share a heavy hearted laugh.

EXT. DESERT- APPROACHING AL'BAFAR - DAY

Captain Diggs and his men walk over the cracks in the ground, driven there by the loss of water in the region. They stay close knit and aware of their surroundings.

RODGERS

I'm so sick and tired of this heat. There isn't any amount of water in the world that could make this place attractive.

HALLOWAY, (24), brutally strong and owner of a short fuse, speaks up boldly.

HALLOWAY

It's the desert, what did ya expect?

RODGERS

There hasn't been shade for miles.

JOSH

We haven't been walking for miles
RODGERS, give it a rest.

HALLOWAY

Yea, save all the energy that big mouth of yours puts out. You knew what you signed up for.

RODGERS

With all due respect, blow me...the desert doesn't look so bad on TV.

HALLOWAY

Maybe you need to read some books...

RODGERS

At least I can read --

HALLOWAY

-- you mother read to me last night.

RODGERS

Still need to read bedtime stories huh tough guy?

HALLOWAY

Actually it was the karma sutra, but I had trouble with some of the words so she demonstrated.

They all laugh.

CAPTAIN DIGGS

(interjects)

Desert...a region so arid because
of little rainfall that it
supports only sparse and widely
spaced vegetation or no vegetation
at all...

The men are quiet.

CAPTAIN DIGGS

(to RODGERS)

Anyone ever tell you what Marines
stands for?

RODGERS

No sir- nothing serious anyways.

CAPTAIN DIGGS

Try me...

RODGERS

This guy in Basic sir, he said it
meant muscles are required
intelligence not expected, but it
was a joke sir.

CAPTAIN DIGGS

So you're pretty sure that's not
what it means then?

RODGERS

Positive sir...

CAPTAIN DIGGS

CRAVEN, tell the man what it
stands for.

JOSH

Many Americans running into
never-ending shit sir!

CAPTAIN DIGGS

That's right, we're the one
running in when everyone else is
running out...

(serious)

Stop complaining.

EXT. AL'BAFAR - DAY

They arrive just outside city walls that are riddled with bullet holes, missing chunks of cinder and showing signs of shoddy masonry work. The men stare out ahead.

Captain Diggs tosses away his cigar butt, and squinting past the sun, turns to his men.

CAPTAIN DIGGS

This is it. We're here.

DOWN THE HILL

A football field away, armoured trucks, intelligence tents, humvees and three dozen Iranian Revolutionary Guardsmen are stationed like hungry wolves looking to pick a fight.

They are positioned directly parallel to the city gate.

TOP OF THE HILL

The captain stands, peering through binoculars. His men behind him, like a band of wounded and exhausted freedom fighters, tough and rugged.

He turns to them.

CAPTAIN DIGGS

These are the guys responsible for the disappearance of our fellow brothers in arms...I don't have to tell you how we are supposed to feel about that...you already feel it.

He looks deep into their eager eyes, one by one, and pulls out a piece of paper.

CAPTAIN DIGGS

(more)

I have here a written mandate, executed by President Bush and signed by COLONEL BARRY three days ago. It states that the opposing forces in the area will allow us to search the premises for any and all remains of injured or dead United States Soldiers. Furthermore, that we will be allowed without interruption, to extract these said soldiers and their remains as we deem

(MORE)

CAPTAIN DIGGS (cont'd)
appropriate.

He takes out his 9mm Biretta and hands it to Josh.

CAPTAIN DIGGS
I'm going down there, unarmed, to
offer this mandate to these sons
of bitches with the hopes that
they come to their senses, let us
do our jobs, and no one is
injured, blown up, or killed in
any way...if for any reason, shots
are fired...
(pauses)
You're Marines.

He turns, collects himself and makes his way down the hill.
The squad arms themselves with M4's, their eyes intensely
watching each step the captain places in the sand, waiting
for the first sign of imminent trouble.

DOWN THE HILL

ABDUL-HAFIZ, the guardsmen leader, stands at attention with
his men around him, heavily armed.

They carefully watch Captain Diggs as he walks down the hill
with his hands in the air at each side.

EXT. MIDDLE GROUND - DAY

Minutes later, the captain meets the guardsmen leader and his
interpreter smack dab in the center of the desert, nothing
around them but air and dust.

CAPTAIN DIGGS
Who are you?

ARAB INTERPRETER
(broken)
I am his interpreter.

CAPTAIN DIGGS
You speak English?

ARAB INTERPRETER
Yes.

CAPTAIN DIGGS
Who taught you English?

ARAB INTERPRETER

The Christians, they bring books.

The captain angrily gazes at Abdul-Hafiz, who shoots a cocky, nonchalant grin back at him.

CAPTAIN DIGGS

You must be in charge, the guy in charge always has a stupid ass look on your face...

ARAB INTERPRETER

Yes, he is. He leads these men.

CAPTAIN DIGGS

Good, well tell him that this piece of paper comes from George W Bush and that he needs to read it very carefully --

ABDUL- HAFIZ

(broken English)

United States?

ARAB INTERPRETER

He wants to know if you are American...

CAPTAIN DIGGS

I know what he said, I heard him... yes we are United States Marines.

He points to his men on the hill. They look aggressive and swag.

CAPTAIN DIGGS

(more)

Read the paper. I only got one copy so don't lose that one.

Abdul-Hafiz takes it from the captain, looks it over, then sarcastically smiles back at him.

TOP OF THE HILL

The men wait, aiming at the situation, trigger fingers ready. They watch the captain and the Iranian counterparts talk MOS.

RODGERS

What the hell do you think they're talking about?

JOSH
I have no idea...

RODGERS
It seems like it's taking a long
time.

HALLOWAY
Relax, he knows what he's doing.

JOSH
Just keep your eyes open.

BACK TO MIDDLE GROUND

CAPTAIN DIGGS
Do we have an understanding? Or
are we gonna do this O.K. Corral
style?

ARAB INTERPRETER
Yes, we do.

CAPTAIN DIGGS
Yes we do what? Which one?

ABDUL- HAFIZ
(broken)
Okay America...

CAPTAIN DIGGS
Damn right Okay America...when my
men move into the city, I expect
your troops to fall back.

ARAB INTERPRETER
Of course, we do not want trouble.

ABDUL- HAFIZ
(in Arabic)
Americans, you think you rule the
world, but only on your side of
it.

CAPTAIN DIGGS
What did he say?

ARAB INTERPRETER
He says he understands and he will
comply with the paper.

ABDUL- HAFIZ

(in Arabic)

The towers were only the beginning, you are weak and in time we will destroy the rest of you.

ARAB INTERPRETER

He apologizes, he says you can go now.

CAPTAIN DIGGS

Pull your men back or we will engage...understand?

ARAB INTERPRETER

Yes, yes we understand.

Captain Diggs shoots them both one last stare, then turns and begins to walk back up the hill.

TOP OF THE HILL

HALLOWAY

He's coming back.

RODGERS

That seemed like it went well, right?

JOSH

Relax. Keep your hand steady, he still needs to make it back up here in one piece...

WALKING UP THE HILL

The captain walks toward them, staring up as he grows closer with each step. Suddenly, a lone gunshot is heard, followed by a deafening silence.

He stops in his tracks, reaches his hand down with a sick look on his face, blood seeps through the left side of his army uniform. His body falls to the sand like a dead fish.

TOP OF THE HILL- THAT MOMENT

JOSH

Who fired that shot?

RODGERS

I didn't see!

HALLOWAY
(alarmed)
He's down, he's down!

JOSH
(without
hesitation)
Cover me!

They see the captain's body, twitching on the sand. They open cover fire across the desert.

EXT. MIDDLE GROUND- A MOMENT LATER - DAY

Bullets in every direction.

Josh arrives at the captain's body, his front covered in blood, his hands twitch on his chest uncontrollably.

JOSH
(low)
Shit...

CAPTAIN DIGGS
(struggles)
Get inside the gate...

JOSH
Not without you sir.

Josh lifts the captain to his feet and glances up at his squad ignoring the blasts of fury behind him.

SERIES OF SHOTS- TOP OF THE HILL

- Halloway fires round after burning hot round, shells erupting from his chamber. He takes a slug to the neck, thick hot blood squirts out from the wound and he drops to his knees in pain.

- Armour piercing rounds tag Rodgers through his arms and legs, sending him to the sand in screeching anguish.

- The remainder of the Marine squad is decimated, outnumbered and under equipped for the firefight that occurs.

- Josh's eyes widen in complete confusion.

EXT. MIDDLE GROUND - DAY

Seeing that his fellow soldiers have been picked off like ducks on a pond, the remainder of the fire power is concentrated on Josh and the captain in his arms. He runs to the the city walls, seeing them as his only prayer of survival.

EXT. CITY WALL- NORTH SIDE, MINUTES LATER - DAY

Relentless explosions of sand and flame. Josh wedges himself against the stone wall.

JOSH
(frantic)
Stay with me captain, tell me what
you think we should do.

There's no answer. He lowers his eyes from the war zone beyond his reach and reluctantly makes contact with his captain. Cold and not moving. Ignoring his present hellish situation, Josh hunkers down and works on the captain.

Administers CPR.

JOSH
(yells)
Stay with me!

Pounds his chest, forcing air.

JOSH
(yells)
Captain, stay with me!

Bullets miss by fractions of an inch, Captain Diggs is gone. Josh, angered and frightened, reaches into the captain's flack vest pocket and takes out the picture of his family, stuffing it in his own back pocket. Without time for mourning, he surveys the distressed situation.

EXT. CITY GATE- SOUTH WALL - DAY

Josh sprints towards the city's main gate, spitting off lines of fire in the direction of his enemy, having no way of knowing if he's helping his cause. His muscles exasperated, his steps conflagrant.

Simply put...he either makes it to the gate or dies in the desert.

Suddenly and without any warning, a rifle butt sticks out and into JOSH's face.

Darkness takes him offering a much needed calm and almost spiritual silence.

INT. RESTAURANT, DOWNTOWN - DAY

Cynthia and Allison sit across from each other in the corner booth.

CYNTHIA

This was a pleasant surprise,
thank you for inviting me.

ALLISON

It's my pleasure.

CYNTHIA

I've been so cooped up in the
house lately, it's good for me to
get out every now and then.

ALLISON

I figured you could use some girl
time.

A waiter drops off their meals.

ALLISON

Have you heard anything from JOSH?

CYNTHIA

Not lately. The last letter I got
was about two weeks ago.

ALLISON

I can't help but wonder what it's
like for him over there,
especially with how bad things are
getting...everything I see on the
news is so terrible.

CYNTHIA

I had to stop watching. It wasn't
making it any easier to sleep at
night.

ALLISON

You know, I never said anything
but I hated the fact that he went
over there.

CYNTHIA

It's something he wanted to do...

ALLISON

I know, but as bad as it sounds...before he left I didn't care about the war...probably because I didn't know anyone over there. Now, I can't stop thinking about it. And who wants to think about that all day.

CYNTHIA

You can't stop people from wanting revenge, and honestly, in this case I don't think it's such a bad thing...

Allison begins to confess.

ALLISON

(full of regret)

I miss him. I really do.

CYNTHIA

So do I.

ALLISON

I waited and waited for him to ask me. I prayed for it before bed every night, but he would always be caught up in his own world, always too busy trying to help other people. He once told me that he felt guilty just being able to sleep at night...

(her chin quivers)

So, I asked him, and I told him that I didn't need a ring or anything. I just needed him... but I could see it in his eyes... He had no room for me.

CYNTHIA

When he came home from the wedding, all he talked about was how happy you looked with SCOTT.

ALLISON

SCOTT was always my back up plan... I don't know if I can ever let him be first.

Cynthia comforts her.

CYNTHIA

I was sick, years ago, and I spent months in a hospital getting well. JOSH, wrote me comforting words on index cards, he bound them together and I would read them, even when I wasn't sick. Those words seem to heal faster than any medicine out there. They don't make the pain go away, but they help you to realize the that love can go anywhere and bring you through anything.

Allison looks out the window, struggling to hold her emotions in.

EXT. IRAN REVOLUTIONARY CAMP- OUTSIDE AL'BAFAR - DAY

Abdul-Hafiz sits under an umbrella, his blank stare both satisfied and unyielding. Two of his armed men present him with a young Iraqi boy.

He remains seated during questioning.

ABDUL- HAFIZ

(in Arabic)

What is your name?

The boy's face is battered and bruised.

ABIDA

(in Arabic)

My name is Abida.

ABDUL- HAFIZ

(in Arabic)

And how old are you?

ABIDA

(in Arabic)

I am 17.

ABDUL- HAFIZ

(in Arabic)

Your name means...one who worships. Do you worship Allah?

ABIDA
(in Arabic)

Yes.

ABDUL- HAFIZ
(in Arabic)

Do you know what my name means?

He nods no, frightened for his fate.

ABDUL- HAFIZ
(in Arabic)

Protector....sent from Allah to
defend his people. Do you wish to
defend his people alongside me?

ABIDA
(in Arabic)

I wish to look after my family.

He stands up and approaches the boy, his men release him.

ABDUL- HAFIZ
(in Arabic)

Then you are not who your name
says you are...

He turns his back as his men place ABIDA face down in the sand. He then looks back and abruptly stomps his steel tipped boot into the back of ABIDA's head, killing him instantly.

INT. DOCTOR'S BUILDING- AL'BAFAR - NIGHT

Josh awakes up from his sleep. He looks up at the ceiling. He hears the dull buzz of the light bulb above him and the occasional gun shot in the distance.

ALI, (45), short brown hair, olive skin and an overwhelming sense of honest decency, sits in the corner of the room.

ALI
(decent English)

How do you feel?

Josh sits up, his gear completely taken off, and his forearm tightly bandaged. His lower lip lined with dry blood he sports a swollen chin.

ALI
I appologize for hitting you.

JOSH
You did that?

ALI
Yes, I thought it was necessary in
order to get you inside the city.

JOSH
You got me in?

ALI
Me and some of the others --

Josh looks at his forearm.

JOSH
-- who did this?

ALI
The doctors.

Ali walks to him, standing in the light.

ALI
My name is ALI.

JOSH
You speak good English...

Ali extends a friendly hand. After a brief hesitation, Josh
shakes.

JOSH
Are you in the military?

ALI
No. I used to be a cook in the
governor's home.

JOSH
So how does a cook know how to
drag me in here and do all of
this?

ALI
I quit my job there when the
Iranians came. I did not want to
put my family at risk. The
Americans trained us to watch over
the people here. They gave us
weapons and taught us how to
fight.

JOSH
So you're militia?

ALI
More or less.

Josh examines his arm.

ALI
They tell me you're going to be
fine, that you were shot and
didn't even know it.

JOSH
It was all happening so fast.
(beat)
Where's my gear?

ALI
It is at my home. It is safe
there.

JOSH
What about my men?

ALI
You were the leader of those men?

JOSH
No, it's a phrase we use. We all
belonged to the same squad...where
are they?

ALI
That depends.

JOSH
On what?

ALI
(low)
On which men you speak of.

CUT TO

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

Ali and Josh stand just in front of a blank head stone, no
epitaph or writing of any kind on it.

Just beyond, there are four large white stones representing
the spots in the ground where the dead were buried.

JOSH
 (somber)
 Who were they?

ALI
 American Soldiers. We buried them
 in pairs. Eight total.

JOSH
 When?

ALI
 Nearly a month ago.

JOSH
 Were they attacked, like we were?

ALI
 Yes...the doctors did not have
 enough knowledge to save them. We
 were surprised because your army
 did not send more soldiers for
 them.

JOSH
 That's because no one knew they
 were here.

ALI
 I don't understand...

The breeze blows. Josh kneels to touch the head stone.

JOSH
 (sickening despair)
 Where are my men?

INT. TENT - NIGHT

Josh sits adjacent to a table which holds a body wrapped in clean, crisp white linens from head to toe. Tears stream down his face. In his hands, the picture of Captain Digg's family.

ALI (OS)
 After the shooting stopped. Some
 of the men brought the wounded and
 dead in here. We cleaned the
 wounds and left them here until
 you awoke. We hoped...you would
 know what to do.
 (distracted)
 (MORE)

ALI (cont'd)

I'm very sorry.

Just behind the table are eleven more bodies wrapped in the same manner.

SERIES OF SHOTS - GATHERING LETTERS

- Josh finds Halloway's gear at the foot of his body. He opens the flack vest and removes a white envelope.

- Next, Josh sifts through Rodger's gear, finding and taking a picture of his girlfriend and basset hound.

- JOSH grabs a few more letters from the gear of his fellow fallen Marines.

EXT. AL'BAFAR STREET - DAY

The warm sun has come up. The city is old and rich with orange and yellow colors. A sense of peace within this side of the walls, yet frail from attacks of hatred on the opposite side.

Ali watches Josh emerge from the tent.

JOSH

The sun's out?

ALI

You were up all night.

JOSH

I didn't notice...

He runs his fingers through his hair.

JOSH

You said my gear was at your home?

ALI

Yes of course, I will take you there. Please, come with me. My wife will cook you food.

They walk down the street.

ALI

You know, not many Americans have come to AL' Bafar...you are lucky.

JOSH

How's that?

ALI

I have never seen America. I wish to, but you probably have never even heard of our small town.

JOSH

Like thousands of small towns back home --

ALI

-- yes, but we are so far away. We are peaceful, never fighting with one another like I read about in American newspapers --

JOSH

Yea, that's because America does all your fighting for you...

INT. ALLISON'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Allison sits on her couch, glued to the television. A popular talking head spins his views on the war in Iraq.

COMMENTATOR

(on TV)

"The current situation proves my point that this war has divided the country in two parts. The first part is made up of John and Sally Jones who work hard and see their eighteen year old son shipped overseas. They don't like it, but they believe in the greater good...The other half, are the people I describe as pit bulls. They love the sense of protection those animals give, but wouldn't ever want to be one...let alone want America to be perceived as the aggressor."

Scott walks in with the mail in hand.

SCOTT

You got something from Iraq.

She takes the letter.

ALLISON

When did this come?

SCOTT

Today, but I think the mail is slow over there because it's postmarked two weeks ago.

She tears it open and unfolds. Scott kisses her on the head and walks into the back room.

INSERT- LETTER FROM JOSH

It reads:

JOSH

"Allison. I feel dumb writing this letter to you. It feels like I am preparing you for something that you don't want to hear. I just need to write some things down and you were always a good listener...I'm okay with whatever happens to me here. My only regret is that I'm not there with you right now, face to face to tell you I'm so sorry for not being all you needed me to be. I promised a friend here I wouldn't write one of these because I had no one to send it to, but that was a lie. Just know that my heart will be yours, always. Tell my mother I love her and I am always with her. I wish I could write more, but I don't have to because I am going to come home soon. I love you very much. JOSH."

BACK TO THE COUCH

Her eyes well up and tears explode out of them.

She holds the letter close to her chest, unable to breath, and wanting to somehow burn each word into her heart.

INT. ALI'S HOME - DAY

Ali and Josh sit at a narrow rectangular table in what can hardly be called a kitchen. Ali's wife SHADA cooks them food.

ALI

What do you want me to do with the bodies?

JOSH

They need to be sent back to the states so they can be buried by their families. Along with these letters.

He takes out a pile of envelopes, covered in bloody fingerprints.

ALI

How do you intend to do that?

Shada brings them a dish full of warm food.

JOSH

What is this?

ALI

Tashreeb, you will like it.

JOSH

No offense but it looks like shit.

ALI

It's only vegetables in sauce. Green peppers, tomatoes, onions, and chilies.

(he smiles to him)

And I am sure my wife does not appreciate you saying her food looks like shit...

Josh nods to her, she shoots him a dirty look.

JOSH

(low)

Sorry...it's fine.

ALI

After you eat, I will take you to your gear. Then, it is up to you find what it is you need to do.

JOSH

I need to speak someone about getting out of here. I need to find my way back to Baghdad.

ALI

The governor.

JOSH

How can I speak with him?

ALI

We will talk to him. Eat first.

His sons run into the house, Karball and an older son named JAMIRE, (18), and struggling as a teenager who wants more in a lesser place of the world.

ALI

These are my sons...

Josh nods to them. They smile at him.

KERBALL

You are American right?

JOSH

That's right.

KERBALL

Kill a man with your hands right?

JOSH

Not just a man, a boy...

KERBALL

What about your gun?

ALI

KERBALL, enough now...go and wash up. Go!

The boys run off.

ALI

I appologize, he didn't mean that.

JOSH

It's fine...that's what we came over here for anyway.

They eat.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Josh hovers, sorting through what's left of his filthy, musty gear. He puts on his flack vest, buckles his gun holster, and makes sure there is a round in the chamber.

Ali appears in the doorway behind him.

ALI

You are not going to need your vest.

JOSH

Why?

ALI

The governor's office will not let you enter with it on.

JOSH

Do they have a radio there?

ALI

They can call the troops for you.

JOSH

Is he --

ALI

-- he's Shiite. He does not agree with the Iranian, but he is outnumbered.

JOSH

Shiite, Muslim...why can't you people all pick one side already?

ALI

If only it were that simple my friend.

JOSH

Do you think he'll talk to me?

ALI

He is a friend.

He removes his dusty vest and 9mm.

ALI

Bring your gun.

Josh shoots him a confused look.

ALI
(smiles)
This is Iraq.

INT. AL'BAFAR- STREET - DAY

Josh and Ali aggressively stroll past mosque after bulbous mosque, the hot uncomfortable sidewalks teeming with men, women and children. They dodge the erratic driving of young men on scooters and late model luxury cars.

Holy war soldiers shoulder bazookas, their faces covered in checkered guthras. Josh sticks out like a sore thumb.

ALI
It's just ahead...

JOSH
Are you sure he's gonna be able to negotiate getting me out of here?

ALI
He will get you to the big army in the desert...

Josh's rigid training keeps his eyes constantly shifting from right to left in anticipation.

OUTSIDE THE GOVERNOR'S HOME

The governor runs wildly out of his home. He is carrying his injured young son in his arms. A BMW pulls up in front of him.

JOSH
What's going on?

ALI
I have no idea...

He gets in the back seat, and the engine starts.

A mysterious unarmed man sprints over to the car and knocks on the window.

The window lowers and then he flings a grenade inside.

Seconds later, the car explodes sending engine and body parts into the dusty air.

JOSH
Get down!

Ali ducks and Josh draws his 9mm, raises it overhead and squeezes off a shot. The crowds disperse in fear.

JOSH

Go home...

ALI

(frightened)

Where are you going?

There is no answer. Josh races after the mysterious man, passing by women and children, his hand and gun welded together as one.

He fires ahead, three shots, missing by inches. The man ducks, quick and lithe, trying to reach the safety of the city gate.

CITY GATE

It's shut. he pivots, calmly strides forward and pops off a round that slams into the man's back. He falls to his knees, slack-jawed.

Josh grabs a fist full of shirt, raises him to his feet and slams his body up against the iron gate. He holds him there, pressing the hot barrel against the back of his head.

Ali arrives out of breath.

ACROSS THE DESERT

Abdul-Hafiz and his men keep a close eye on the developments surrounding their young scout.

CITY GATE

Josh pulls himself off the man, stepping back a few feet.

He stretches out his arm, and cocks his gun.

ALI

(pleads)

Put down your gun!

The anger in his eyes makes its way through his body and ends up in his hand as he yells out to the desert.

JOSH

Is this what you want!

Pulls the trigger, the bullet pounds through the man's head and comes out the front, sending a splattering of blood and thick matter to the sand along with the flailing body.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. ALI'S HOME- LIVING AREA - DAY

Josh sits on the sofa, his gun in his shaking hands. Ali softly walks in and takes it from him, placing it on the cushion nearby.

ALI

I have never killed a man before,
but I fear that one day, I may
have to.

Josh continues to look down.

ALI

I don't need to tell you, but that
was extremely bad today.

JOSH

I had no choice.

ALI

There is always another choice --

JOSH

(angry)

-- no there isn't. You said it
yourself. The governor was my only
ally out here, he was my only way
home --

ALI

-- there can be another way. You
can talk to them yourself --

JOSH

-- you think they're going to
openly talk to an American? One
who just blew out the brains of
one of their own men?

ALI

They may.

JOSH

You saw what they did to my men...what makes you think they don't want the same thing for me?

ALI

They hate America...but so did I once.

He sits next to him.

ALI

I used to think you were always coming over here to fight, just to prove you could fight. I never saw a reason for the army to come here.

JOSH

What changed?

ALI

I got older and had a family.

JOSH

What did that have to do with it?

ALI

I had to think about others. I was not as important anymore. When I look at my children, I can see why you came- for them.

JOSH

It's nice to know you don't all hate us...

ALI

Tell me why you joined your army?

JOSH

(thinks)

Because of your children. Because the actions of a few shouldn't ruin the future for everyone else.

ALI

But not everyone believes as you do...back home?

JOSH

It's easy to feel self-righteous
when you're a thousand miles
away...

Ali places his hand on his shoulder.

ALI

I am happy you came here...

They share a half smile.

JOSH

(low)
So what do we do now?

INT. ALLISON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Allison sits up, half covered in sheets, and wearing an uneasy frown. Scott peers at her through the bathroom door, brushing his teeth.

SCOTT

Is everything alright?

ALLISON

Yea, why wouldn't it be?

SCOTT

You hardly spoke at dinner, now
you're laying in bed...silent,
staring off at nothing.

ALLISON

I just have a lot on my mind.

SCOTT

Did you ever think about going
back to work?

ALLISON

Why?

SCOTT

I dunno, it's something to do.

ALLISON

You think I should?

SCOTT

You've been acting so strange
since you've been home... you just
sit around watching television.

(MORE)

SCOTT (cont'd)
All you talk about is the war.

ALLISON
Do you think working is gonna help
me to forget?

SCOTT
I don't know... just get back to
normal things. Get your mind off
of all that crap. It's not
healthy...

ALLISON
I know you just think it's not
fair to you. And it probably
isn't.

He walks to her.

SCOTT
Are you sure...there isn't
anything else?

ALLISON
Like what?

SCOTT
I don't know- anything, anyone?

ALLISON
No. There's nothing.

SCOTT
You would tell me, right?

ALLISON
(low)
Of course.

Scott moves back into the bathroom. She sits there, glances
at the letter from Josh nestled in between two books across
the room.

EXT. ALI'S STEPS - DAY

Ali tosses Josh's flack vest on, tightens the straps and
gets comfortable. They goes over the plan one last time.

JOSH
Are you sure he'll listen to you?

ALI
If he doesn't kill me first...yes
he will listen.

JOSH
I'm serious, you're my only chance
now.

ALI
He will.

JOSH
If you see anything out of the
ordinary, you run like hell you
got it?

ALI
I will come find you. Stay here.

JOSH
Let me walk you up there --

ALI
-- no you must stay here. I do
not want him to know you are
nearby. Please, I know how to do
this.

JOSH
(reluctant)
Okay. But will you at least take
my gun?

ALI
That would be pointless...

JOSH
Why?

ALI
(grins)
I told you, I have never killed a
man before.

CUT TO

EXT. DESERT- OUTSIDE OF AL'BAFAR - DAY

ALI walks to the Iranian camp, his steps awkward and filled
with uncertainty. He wears Josh's Kevlar vest and holds a
white flag in his outstretched hand.

His eyes survey the landscape, an almost white tint to the open sand around him.

IRANIAN CAMP

Abdul-Hafiz stands upright along side his interpreter, smoking a cigarette and holding a loaded M16.

Ali arrives in front of them, seeing several Iranian soldiers locked in on him with their rifles.

ALI
(in Arabic)
I am unarmed...

The interpreter spot searches him.

ALI
(more/ in Arabic)
My name is ALI. I come to you to negotiate --

ABDUL- HAFIZ
(in Arabic)
Your name means noble. It is noble of you to come out here, alone, to discuss your matters with me. However, I do not negotiate...

ALI
(in Arabic)
If you will not negotiate, then he begs you.

ABDUL- HAFIZ
(in Arabic)
Begs?

ALI
(in Arabic)
The American, he wants safe passage back to his men, the American army --

ABDUL- HAFIZ
(in Arabic)
-- why would I agree to such a thing? So he can go find more men to come back and kill me?

He lifts the gun in an intimidating manner behind his neck.

ALI

(in Arabic)

He only asks for your troops to allow him to leave. He has not made contact with his army.

ABDUL- HAFIZ

(in Arabic)

And what of the man he killed?

ALI

(in Arabic)

I don't know...

He inches forward, like a hawk about to swoop down and kill a smaller rodent.

ABDUL- HAFIZ

(in Arabic)

It appears...the American has sent the wrong man to negotiate...

EXT. SOCCER FIELD- THAT MOMENT - DAY

Josh sits on a splintered bench, watching a group of teenagers kick a tattered soccer ball into goals made from trash cans.

Jamire, checks out of the game and sits down beside him.

JAMIRE

Do you like soccer?

JOSH

It's not a big sport where I'm from.

JAMIRE

Then, what do you like?

JOSH

Basketball.

JAMIRE

The Lakers?

JOSH

How do you know about the Lakers?

JAMIRE

The missionaries, they bring videos. Shaq attack!

JOSH
(laughs)
Yea, Shaq attack...

JAMIRE
When will you go home?

JOSH
Soon.

JAMIRE
I wish to see America. Meet
American girls, see movies there.

JOSH
So you like American girls?

JAMIRE
Yes. I plan to go there to attend
school one day, be in movies. Like
Indiana Jones.

JOSH
Indiana Jones huh?

JAMIRE
Have you seen him?

JOSH
Sure. It's good that you have a
dream.

JAMIRE
Was your dream to be in your
country's army?

JOSH
Not exactly no.

JAMIRE
Then what was it?

JOSH
I didn't really have one.

JAMIRE
Maybe you will be a big hero for
your country?

JOSH

(sighs)

I'm not trying to be a hero. I
just want to do what's right and
go back home...

Jamire smiles, then heads back into the game.

JOSH

(to him)

What's up with that ball?

JAMIRE

It's the only one we have, we just
want to play...

JOSH

When I get back, I'll send you a
real one.

Josh watches him run back and join his friends.

INT. IRANIAN CAMP- MINUTES LATER - DAY

Ali still stands, speaking with Abdul-Hafiz in the
relentless heat of mid-day.

He lights a cigarette, offers one to Ali who declines.

ABDUL- HAFIZ

(in Arabic)

That is my final and best offer to
the American.

ALI

(in Arabic)

I will tell him.

ABDUL- HAFIZ

(in Arabic)

In one day's time, I will look for
his answer...

ALI

(in Arabic)

I understand.

Ali turns and begins to walk away, sweating profusely,
closing his eyes not knowing if he will make it back home
alive.

ARAB INTERPRETER
 (in Arabic/
 whispers)
 Do we kill him?

ABDUL- HAFIZ
 (in Arabic)
 No. I want the American...

ALI becomes a speck of dust to them, vanishing in the wide openness of white sand as he reaches the gate.

INT. INTELLIGENCE TENT- NEAR BAGHDAD - DAY

Col. Barry, exhausted, leans over a table. There is a spread of maps and information on the foreign terrain in front of him. A short soldier approaches him with the sat phone.

SHORT SOLDIER
 Sir, Colonel Patrick asking for
 you.

He takes the phone.

COL. BARRY
 Patrick...I need to know how
 quickly you think we can send a
 hundred men up the Tigris?
 (he takes a deep
 breath)
 I think we need to find out what
 the hell is going on up there...

He stares at AL'BAFAR, just a push pin on his map.

EXT. ALI'S HOME- ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Josh is bent over, leaning against the side wall, staring out at the distant rooftops.

Ali emerges from the stairs with an impassive look on his face and holding the Kevlar vest in his hand.

JOSH
 How did we do?

Tosses the vest to him.

ALI
 We wanted an answer...and we got
 one.

JOSH
I'm not getting out of here am I?

ALI
The Iranian will do what it takes
to get what he wants.

JOSH
What did he say?

ALI
He has made an offer. He will
allow you to leave the city, but
you will not make it far.

JOSH
What do you mean?

ALI
His offer is your life... for
ours.

JOSH
Meaning?

ALI
By tomorrow, you must decide if
you will surrender yourself to
him. If you do not, his men will
enter the city and kill
everyone...women and children
first.

JOSH
And if I agree?

ALI
(low)
He most certainly will kill you.

JOSH
Either way, somebody has to die.

ALI
It appears so.

Josh snappishly walks the roof, wrestling with his thoughts.

JOSH
Do you think there is anything at
all I can do?

ALI
You could try to talk with
him...otherwise he wants a
decision quickly.

JOSH
(thinks)
There has to be another way.

ALI
There is not.

JOSH
(angered)
There has to be, I'm not trained
to accept no as an answer --

ALI
-- he has too many men, there is
no chance anyone will fight
alongside you...

JOSH
-- would you?

ALI
I am only one man.

JOSH
-- and what about the other men?

Ali looks down, unable to get the words out.

ALI
I cannot go to war for you. I have
too much to lose.

JOSH
(snaps back)
So do I...

ALI
I won't tell you what to do... the
decision is yours. Just know, that
if they come for us all...I know
he will look for you first.

JOSH
So either way...there really isn't
a choice.

Silence between them. Ali walks to him.

ALI

I had a daughter once.
(his eyes glaze)
It was forbidden to have a girl as
your first child, so she was taken
from us- probably murdered, for no
reason... and when the
missionaries came they told us
about heaven and hell and I asked
them...where does my daughter go?

Josh perks up at the telling of the story.

ALI

(more)
They did not tell me. They didn't
know. So I made an answer for
myself...

JOSH

Where do you think she went?

ALI

A place, in between our Earth and
Heaven. A place where she sits on
a hill of green grass. She smiles
and counts the clouds. No one can
hurt her there or take her away.
It's beautiful there...

Tear form in Josh's eyes.

JOSH

How do you know she's really
there?

ALI

Because when you are innocent,
that is the place you go. It's
somewhere beautiful. And you wait
there for the ones you love...

Ali puts his hand on his shoulder, comforting him. The two
of them stand there in the thick air, as if they had known
each other for a lifetime.

INT. BEDROOM- LATER THAT NIGHT - NIGHT

Josh sleeps, his hand under his pillow clenching a large
knife.

Ali sneaks in and wakes him by vigorously shaking his arm. Josh jumps up instinctively, sweating and pointing the knife at his throat.

ALI
I couldn't sleep...

JOSH
(lowers the blade)
What is it?

ALI
There's a meeting...

CUT TO

INT. UNDERGROUND CELLAR- LATER - NIGHT

Ali and Josh walk inside the mildew ridden room. It is crowded with tired Iraqi men, older weapons and boxes of unopened supplies.

They're being eyed up closely as they make their way to the front of the mob.

Ali addresses them.

ALI
(in Arabic)
This is the American I spoke of.
His men, which tonight lay
embalmed in a tent not far from
here, were killed for coming to
our city. If he does not sacrifice
himself, ABDUL-HAFIZ will have us
all murdered, along with our
families...
(pleading)
Who will fight?

There is not a sound from anyone in the room.

ALI
(in Arabic)
No one? No one will stand up and
help the man who was sent here to
liberate our country?

Still no volunteers.

ALI
(in Arabic)
You are willing to let him die...
and do nothing.

After a brief silence, Jamire brushes past several men holding a rifle and takes his place next to his father.

JOSH
(whispers)
Not your son...

ALI
He doesn't have to listen to me
anymore...

No one else steps forward. They begin to file out, talking amongst themselves. Josh finds the strength for a last ditch effort.

JOSH
(to them)
So you're all gonna stand here and
do nothing? You're not gonna
fight! You're gonna let me die
along with the rest of your
children?
(to ALI)
Tell them...
(back to the mob)
I'll fight with you, America will
fight with you...you don't have to
be afraid anymore. That's why
we're here!

The bodies trickle out and the room is slowly emptied, leaving the three of them standing alone, defeated and unable to find a single word of hope for the current situation.

JOSH
Well...I guess that gives us our
answer.

INT. CYNTHIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cynthia sits on the end of the bed, sniffing and squeezing a used Kleenex in the quietness of her empty home.

She glances over at her nightstand, focusing on a framed picture of she and Josh at the county fair, smiling and happy.

A minute later, she removes the picture from the frame and places it in an empty shoebox.

HOURS LATER

Cynthia sits back on her bed, an over stuffed shoebox of memories laying next to her. She contemplates what to do with them, her eyes swollen and nose red from crying.

She picks up her phone.

INT. ALLISON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The phone rings in the dark. Allison, half asleep, turns on a small lamp on her night table and answers.

Into the phone:

ALLISON

Hello?

(checks on SCOTT)

No that's okay... Where are you?

CUT TO

EXT. LAKESIDE- LATER - NIGHT

Cynthia sits on a large, smooth boulder holding the box of photos in her fragile hands. Allison comes running up from behind, red cheeks and wearing Scott's navy peacoat.

ALLISON

(apprehensive)

Hey, are you alright?

She turns to her, recovering.

CYNTHIA

I'm okay. Thanks for coming...I didn't know who else to call.

ALLISON

What's wrong? Did you hear something...bad?

She sees the box in her hands and takes a seat next to her.

CYNTHIA

He left me a message on my machine awhile back, and sometimes when I'm alone...I listen to it.

(sniffles)

(MORE)

CYNTHIA (cont'd)
I know I shouldn't do that...but
anything to hold on.

ALLISON
What are those?

CYNTHIA
Pictures.

ALLISON
There are gonna be good days and
bad...I know it's hard.

CYNTHIA
(struggles with
the pain)
I cry for hours, I don't eat, I
can't talk to anyone and I keep
asking myself if he's ever coming
back...then I think about what I
am going to say if they come to
tell me he's gone.

ALLISON
What are you going to do with
those?

CYNTHIA
I was going to put them in the
lake, like I did with his
father's...but then I thought you
should have them --

ALLISON
-- he's alive. I know it.

CYNTHIA
Maybe so. But, I have this feeling
that he's not coming home and if
he doesn't...I don't want to see
his face everywhere I turn.

ALLISON
You have believe he's going to be
okay.

CYNTHIA
But when you can't believe
anymore... what do we do?

Allison takes the show box.

ALLISON

We hold on...

They hug. The lake is still and quiet.

INT. BATHROOM- (PRESENT DAY) - DAY

Josh stands up from his crouched position by the wall. The chants from the streets above still going strong. On the back of the bathroom door hangs a white linen shirt and pants, he takes them down and examines the fabric.

Ali appears in the doorway.

ALI

It's the same fabric that we used
to wrap the others.

Josh nods slowly, then Ali turns to head back to his family.

JOSH

(to him)
How beautiful is it?

ALI

What?

JOSH

Where you daughter is...how
beautiful is it?

ALI

(his chin quivers)
It's the most beautiful place ever
created...

He turns slowly and walks off. Josh removes his shirt and begins getting changed.

INT. ALI'S KITCHEN - DAY

Josh enters, now dressed in his traditional Thobe. The family looks him over and smiles. He bends down to Kerball, handing him the letters.

JOSH

You wanna do something for me?

He nods.

JOSH
Take these and make sure my
friends back home get them...can
you do that?

KERBALL
Yes.

ALI
I will be sure to send them...

JOSH
(to him)
And my men?

ALI
I'll find a way.

Kerball digs in his pocket and pulls out a tiny cross made
of two toothpicks and red string. He offers it to JOSH.

KERBALL
I made this for you.

He clenches it tightly in his hand.

JOSH
Thanks...

He stands and turns his attention to Ali and Jamire.

JOSH
(to ALI)
Take care of your family...
(to JAMIRE)
Make sure you get to a Lakers game
soon.

They nod, not finding the appropriate words. Josh walks to
the front door and opens it.

JOSH
I'm gonna send you that soccer
ball...

Jamire smiles.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE HOUSE - DAY

The chants promptly end.

As Josh descends off the front steps, two outstretched lines of Iraqis pave the way to the outlying city gate. The children hold small yellow flowers in complete silence and toss them at his feet just before he takes his next tottering steps.

Ali approaches him from behind.

ALI
I feel like there is something
more I should say...

JOSH
It's alright...I already know.

ALI
I'm sorry --

JOSH
-- don't be. I guess, today, I get
to make a difference. That's what
I signed up for right?

They shake hands, not saying another word.

EXT. CITY GATE- MINUTES LATER - DAY

Josh looks back at the sorrowful populace, tears in most of the women's eyes. The spaces in between the rod iron gate reveal his fate across the desert floor.

CUT TO

EXT. IRANIAN CAMP- JUST THEN - DAY

The men gather. Abdul-Hafiz stands fervently awaiting Josh's arrival. An armed soldier makes his way to his side.

ABDUL- HAFIZ
(in Arabic)
When he is close enough...I will
signal...

BACK TO

EXT. CITY GATE - DAY

They sluggishly scrape open, allowing Josh to step outside of the friendly confines he had recently called home.

They gate slams shut behind him. The masses storm ahead, reaching out for Josh, desperately begging for his life. He turns and takes his hesitant steps ahead.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Josh walks, clenching his fist at his chest, fighting off thoughts of revulsion and feeling the ferocity of the sun, until he belatedly reaches the middle of nowhere.

He stands perfectly still, closes his eyes and sacrificially stretches out his arms.

IRANIAN CAMP

Abdul-Hafiz places his sunglasses on. His stoned face glaring at the angelic figure several yards away.

He glances over his shoulder and nods slightly. The marksman raises his weapon, aims and pulls his pointer finger back on the trigger.

JOSH

A single shot rings out, echoing above the sand.

Josh's body jolts back a step, the bullet tearing into the fleshy part of his thigh.

A red blot of blood grows through the white fabric. He looks at his wound, grinds his teeth and takes a few courageous steps closer to his enemy.

A second shot sounds.

Josh's face grimaces as the bullet sunders into the side of his abdomen.

He collapses to the sand, face down and battles the pain elevating from his thigh and stomach. His breathing has become a desperate wheeze.

Josh wrangles his eyes to find his hand. In it, the tiny cross, now bent and frail. He squeezes it tightly and uses every ounce of courage and bravery in his soul to endure a little longer.

The crowd's pleas for mercy grow louder.

He staggers to his feet, exhausted and broken, every heavy breath a tiny battle for survival.

He turns to the city gate and offers a reassuring smile of hope and redemption, then slowly spins back to his fate.

IRANIAN CAMP

Abdul-Hafiz, taken back by JOSH's sheer will and courage to press on, removes his sunglasses. He whispers to his marksmen, his words full of uncertainty.

ABDUL- HAFIZ
(in Arabic)
Finish this.

The disturbed marksman, pulls the trigger back.

A third and final shot rings out.

EXT. JOSH - DAY

Josh's head jerks back. He falls to his knees.

MONTAGE- JOSH'S MEMORIES

- Cynthia and her son sit on the porch talking on a cool night.
- Josh running an endless trail in basic training.
- Allison and Josh walking along the lake, talking innocently.
- The Gas Chamber and chemical equipment.
- Sgt. Ramon, Captain Digg's and Col. Barry's faces, broken from the desert heat.
- Rodgers on the plane over to Baghdad discussing the heat index.
- Ali and his family waiting on Josh in the kitchen.
- The World Trade Center collapsing and the cloud of dust and smoke.
- Allison at the alter kissing Scott. Josh watching from his seat.
- President Bush, the tattered soccer ball, Ali negotiating, the pile of letters and his dog tags in the sink.

BACK TO JOSH

His body lay still on the sand, his head to one side. A trickle of blood forms from his forehead and runs down the side of his nose.

The tiny cross still nuzzled in the palm of his hand, the last thing his eyes see.

Then, the sound of American Huey's moving into the area, followed by a host of XM-14 rounds...

FADE OUT

INT. CYNTHIA'S HOUSE- A WEEK LATER - NIGHT

KITCHEN

Cynthia washes out a coffee pot in the sink. She hears a knock at the door.

FOYER

She looks through the peep hole, seeing a Sergeant and a Captain standing there, holding their hats under their arms.

CYNTHIA
(to herself)
Let him just be injured...

She slowly opens the door.

PORCH

US ARMY CAPTAIN
(regret in his
voice)
Ms. CRAVEN?

CYNTHIA
Yes...

US ARMY CAPTAIN
Ma'm, I am sorry to have to inform
you that your son JOSH was killed.
He died in combat last week. I'm
sorry for your loss...

Cynthia covers her mouth with her quivering hand.

She grabs hold of the railing and lowers herself to the top

step. Both men place an hand on each of her shoulders. She hangs her head and sobs uncontrollably.

EXT. ALLISON'S FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

ALLISON opens her door, seeing a distraught, sobbing Cynthia in front of her. She walks out to her.

ALLISON
(alarmed)
What happened?

CYNTHIA
(sobs)
They took my son...

ALLISON
Oh my God...

Allison's eyes glaze over. She grabs Cynthia and pulls her close. They end up on their knees, still clinging to each other, praying for comfort in the dim porch light.

EXT. ARLINGTON CEMETERY - DAY

Ali, Jamire and Kerball stand over Josh's grave.

INSERT: EPITAPH

"JOSH CRAVEN, United States Marine, beloved son and friend.
1976-2008"

MONTAGE- GIFTS FOR JOSH

- Ali bends down, leaving a picture of his deceased daughter for Josh. It rests up against his head stone.

- Jamire lays his tattered soccer ball there, remembering his conversation with Josh.

- Kerball holds out the frail and tattered cross he gave to Josh. He walks over and places it on top of the head stone.

ALI
(low)
For everything you've done for
me... and for my family.

They walk away slowly.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - NIGHT

Cynthia sits on a small wooden stool in front of a white backdrop. White lights shine in her face. Her hands clasped between her legs.

REPORTER (OS)

Do you get angry at all?

CYNTHIA

I try not to, but I have bad days. I get angry at Arabs...angry that the media only shows what's wrong in Iraq and not what's right.

REPORTER (OS)

So what, if anything, have you gained from your son dying during this war?

CYNTHIA

If nothing else, he'll always be an example...

REPORTER (OS)

Example of what?

INSERT: Josh walking through the desert in full gear, the sun setting in the distance and a satisfied look on his face.

CYNTHIA (VO)

That there will always be someone watching out for us. Guarding us and without a second thought, doing the things we don't have the courage to do. Whispering that no matter what task stands ahead... it's never greater than the people standing behind us.

The End