Heroes Aren't Born

by

John B. Etterlee
FADE IN:

INT. FIELD HOSPITAL - IRAQ - DAY

SERGEANT NATHAN ATKINS, late twenties, is lying in a hospital bed, with his head half bandaged, and his right leg missing. He is barely conscious.

His uniform blouse is strewn over a chair, with his Ranger Tab visible. Doctor's and nurses are running around the tiny hospital, tending to the wounded. Helicopters can be heard outside.

There is a lot of chatter in the room and you can't really make out what they are saying. A man who is very familiar to Sergeant Atkins walks up to his bedside.

The man is CORPORAL STEVEN BUTLER, early twenties. Nathan can't make out his face. Corporal Butler grabs Sergeant Atkins hand.

    STEVEN
    Sergeant? Can you hear me? It's Butler.

Nathan just bobs his head up and down.

    STEVEN (CONT'D)
    You'll be alright buddy. You hang in there! You hear?

There is a minimal response from Nathan; only the shaking of his head. The doctor walks into the room and approaches Steven.

    DOCTOR
    Sorry son. You're going to have to leave. We don't have the room.

Steven glances over at the doctor.

    STEVEN
    Yes sir.

Steven takes one last look at Nathan and walks out. The doctor shines a light into Nathan's eyes and checks his IV.

    NATHAN (V.O.)
    My name is Sergeant Nathan Atkins. U.S. Army. To understand why I am lying here; why any of us are lying here, you first must understand where we have been. (MORE)
NATHAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Some call me a hero. Am I a hero?
No. I don’t think so. We are
Soldiers and have a job to do. To
understand what I mean, I’ll take
you back to where it happened.

EXT. FALLUJAH - DAY (2004)

Soldiers are seen running across the road. Military vehicles
are driving in convoys down the road. Iraqi men, women, and
children are walking up and down the road.

It is a very dusty day. Soldiers are trying to keep the
civilians from getting too close to their vehicles.

NATHAN (V.O.)
It was April 2004. Four American
contractors were just killed and
Iraq was the wild Wild West.
Fallujah had become a hot spot for
insurgent's and we were sent there
to retake the city.

INT./ EXT. MILITARY BASE - DAY

SERGEANT FIRST CLASS JAMES MASON, late thirties, is standing
in his commanding officer's office at attention. The officer,
CAPTAIN Will PRICE, early thirties, is briefing James on
their responsibilities in Fallujah.

CAPTAIN PRICE
You understand what we are doing
here? Right Sergeant?

JAMES
Yes sir.

CAPTAIN PRICE
Is there anything you need to make
it more feasible?

JAMES
Well sir. We could use snipers to
cover our guys. We have intel on a
few snipers operating in the city.

CAPTAIN PRICE
Roger that. Anything else?

JAMES
No sir. Not that I can think of.
CAPTAIN PRICE
We need to flush out these guys before we can restore order. Remember the rules of engagement. But, if you spot a threat you have my permission to put one in his head and two in his chest. Got it?

JAMES
Roger that sir.

CAPTAIN PRICE
Alright sergeant. Get your men some chow and some sleep. Mission briefing is at 0600.

JAMES
Yes sir.

CAPTAIN PRICE
Alright. Dismissed.

James renders a salute to Captain Price, and he returns the salute. James executes an about face, walks out of the office, and puts his hat on.

Sergeant Nathan Atkins is waiting for James outside.

NATHAN
Well?

JAMES
Well what?

NATHAN
We going sergeant?

JAMES
Yeah Atkins. Briefing 0600.

NATHAN
Awesome. I've been wanting to kick some ass.

INT. BRIEFING ROOM - DAWN

Sergeant First Class James Mason is briefing the platoon on their mission for the day. They are going to cordon and search a neighborhood that has been heavily involved in placing improvised explosive devices; one in which they lost a platoon member from the month prior.
JAMES
We are looking for bomb making material. So, just so we are clear; NOBODY is to enter or exit once we are in place. I don't care how long it takes. Guards stay alert.

EVERYONE
Roger sergeant!

JAMES
We search every person and every house. Got it?

EVERYONE
Hooaahh!

JAMES
Alright. Go get ready and everyone meet in the staging area in forty five mites.

INT. BARRACKS - CONTINUOUS
Nathan and his team are getting their gear ready to go on mission. They are putting their kevlar vests on and checking their magazines and equipment.

STEVEN
What you thinking sergeant?

NATHAN
I am thinking that we better keep our heads on a swivel. Fallujah's got to be hell on earth right now.

STEVEN
Roger that.

NATHAN
All I'm saying is don't let anyone get too close. Fucking 3rd platoon had a kid throw a grenade in the gunners hatch the other day.

STEVEN
Man that's fucked up.

NATHAN
Yeah it is. Tell everyone to watch each other's backs.
EXT. STAGING AREA - CONTINUOUS

Everyone jogs up to the vehicles in the staging area and puts their helmets on. Nathan's team is the lead vehicle of four HMMVVs in the platoon.

The driver is PRIVATE FIRST CLASS CHAD SINGLETON, late teens. The gunner is SPECIALIST MIKE MENDOZA, early twenties. In the back seats are SPECIALIST BEN FULTON, early twenties, and Corporal Steven Butler.

NATHAN
Everyone fall in. Let me check you over.

All team members stand in front of Nathan. He looks over all of their gear. He notices Private Chad Singleton's chin strap is sideways. Nathan looks over at Steven.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Butler. Fix that for him.

STEVEN
Roger sergeant.

CHAD

Steven fixes Chad's chin strap.

NATHAN
Guys I probably don't need to say this. But, you know what to do if you see anything out of the ordinary. We are responsible for each others lives ok?

STEVEN
Hooah!

MIKE
Hooah!

NATHAN
Alright mount up.

Everyone gets into the vehicle. Nathan grabs the radio.
NATHAN (CONT'D)
(into the radio)
Viper 6, Viper 2-4. Radio check.
Over.

James comes on the radio.

JAMES.
(into the radio)
Read you LIMA CHARLIE. Everyone move out.

NATHAN
Hooaahh.

The vehicles begin to roll.

MIKE
Another day in paradise huh?

STEVEN
You know. If it weren't for the open sewers and sand storms this wouldn't be a bad place to visit.

Chad looks back at Steven.

CHAD
You need to stop smoking hashish!

EXT. FALLUjah - DAY

The four platoon vehicles pull up beside the first entrance to the neighborhood. James motions for the other three vehicles to get into position at the other entrances.

Nathan's team pulls up to their entrance to the neighborhood. Nathan, Ben, and Steven get out of the vehicle. The gunner, Mike, and the driver, Chad stay in the vehicle.

NATHAN
Mendoza! Make sure you cover our 6!

MIKE
Roger that sergeant!

The rest of the team all head toward the first house. There are civilians running into their houses.

The team makes it to the door and stacks up. Nathan knocks on the door. An Iraqi woman holding a child answers.
WOMAN

na’am?

Nathan looks at the woman.

NATHAN

You speak English?

The woman shakes her head no. Nathan turns to Steven.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Get the interpreter over here!

Steven runs to get the interpreter. He comes back moments later. The interpreter jogs up to Nathan and speaks in very good English.

INTERPRETER 1

Yes sergeant?

Nathan points to the woman.

NATHAN

Tell her we need to search her house.

The interpreter turns to the woman.

INTERPRETER 1

nahn bihajat lilbahth munzilik.

The woman turns to look at Nathan; then moves out of the way. The team moves in to clear the house and search for bomb making items.

They glance into her closet and looks through drawers in the kitchen and bedroom. her closet and looking through drawers in the bedroom.

STEVEN

I think she's clean sergeant.

NATHAN

Roger that. Let's move.

The team moves toward the front of the house. As Nathan passes the woman he says thanks in Arabic.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

shukr.

Nathan's team moves to the second house. They stack the door and prepare to enter.
Nathan knocks on the door. There is no answer. He knocks again. Still, no answer.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Breacher up!

Steven runs up to the door with a sledge hammer. He hits the door and it moves a little. He hits it one more time. Then Nathan walks up to the door.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Look out.

Nathan kicks the door and it flies open. The team begins to clear the house. They move through the first room.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Clear.

The team enters the second room. It is empty.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Clear.

As they get to the last room, Nathan finds a man, Ahmed Muhammed, forties, hiding in a closet. He grabs the man by the shirt.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Why are you hiding sir?

The man doesn't answer.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Answer me God damn it!

The man still doesn't answer. Nathan turns to Ben.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Watch him.

BEN
Got it.

Nathan begins to search the closet and sees Something sticking out from behind a small dresser. He pulls the dresser out of the way and sees weapons stacked up.

NATHAN
What the fuck?

Nathan walks up to the man and grabs him.
NATHAN (CONT'D)
Sir. What is this? What the fuck is this?

The man shrugs his shoulders.

AHMED
No English.

Nathan turns to Ben.

NATHAN
Get him the fuck out of here!

Ben escorts the man out of the house. Nathan goes outside and calls for James.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Sergeant Mason! You need to see this!

James runs up to Nathan.

JAMES
What you got sergeant?

Nathan escorts James to the site of the weapons cache.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Holy shit! This guy arming a small militia? Fuck. Alright let's get all this shit out of here.

NATHAN
Roger that.

JAMES
This guy is coming with us.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER

LIEUTENANT DAN PETERS, 24, is standing in front of Ahmed, who is sitting at a table in a tiny interrogation room. The man is visibly nervous.

LIEUTENANT PETERS
So. Mr. Muhammed. You want to come clean?

AHMED
About what?
LIEUTENANT PETERS
Thought you didn't speak English.

AHMED
I lied. What you want from me?

Lieutenant Peters leans over the metal table and looks into Ahmed's eyes.

LIEUTENANT PETERS
Information Mr. Muhammed. We know you are Al-Qaeda.

AHMED
You have wrong information.

LIEUTENANT PETERS
Really? And you're going to tell me all of those weapons were for home protection?

AHMED
Iraq is a rough place. You get to go home. We are home. This is our world.

Another officer, CAPTAIN WRIGHT, thirties, walks into the room. Ahmed glances over at him.

AHMED (CONT'D)
I had relatives in Baghdad. Killed by your bombs. My sister, a school teacher, killed walking home. And you detain me for having weapons? You American's are hipocrites. Things were at least stable under Saddam. Now, you can't even walk down the street.

INT./ EXT. MILITARY BASE - NATHAN'S HOUSE - DAY - NIGHT

Nathan's wife STACEY, mid twenties, is sitting on the sofa with their daughter APRIL, (3) beside her. She is flipping through the channels on tv. Suddenly the phone rings. She picks it up.
INTERCUT BETWEEN NATHAN AND STACEY

STACY
(into the phone)
Hello?

NATHAN
(into the phone)
Hey baby.

STACY
(into the phone)
Hey babe! How is it going?

NATHAN
(into the phone)
Oh you know. Still counting down the days. Getting pretty tough lately. How's my little girl?

STACY
(into the phone)
Sleeping. I just got done feeding her. How many days you have left?

NATHAN
(into the phone)
Sixty. I can't wait.

STACY
(into the phone)
Me either. I miss you.

James walks into the room and motions for Nathan.

NATHAN
(into the phone)

Nathan walks over to James. They begin walking across the base.

JAMES
That guy we picked up.

NATHAN
Yeah?

JAMES
AQI.
NATHAN

No shit.

JAMES

Yeah. And apparently he was pretty
talkative about the big bad wolf
that is America.

NATHAN

I bet he was.

JAMES

There's something else. Bravo
company got hit by an IED yesterday
on the same street.

NATHAN

Anybody hurt?

They stop walking.

JAMES

Yeah. One KIA and three critical.

NATHAN

I have a feeling someone has been
watching our routes.

JAMES

I got that same feeling. Listen. We
are going to have to start changing
it up some. We have already lostive guys in the last three months.

Nathan turns to look at James.

NATHAN

Sergeant. You don't think AQI has
infiltrated the Iraqi Police do
you?

JAMES

They use women and children as bait
so I wouldn't put it past them.

NATHAN

Yeah.

JAMES

You guys just keep an eye out. You
see anything suspicious you let me
know. Got it?
NATHAN
Roger that sergeant.

James walks away.

EXT. BARRACKS - DAY

Nathan and his team are outside of the barracks. They are listening to music and playing football.

Their platoon leader, LIEUTENANT JOSH HOYT, early twenties, is standing there watching them. James walks up behind him.

JAMES
What's up sir? You not playing?

Josh turns to James.

JOSH
Hey sergeant. No. Just watching. I need to get the platoon together later.

JAMES
What's going on sir?

JOSH
We have been tasked to be Colonel Bradley's personal security detachment.

James glances at the lieutenant in disbelief.

JAMES
Are you serious sir?

JOSH
Yep. The colonel wants to go talk to civilians and the Iraqi Police tomorrow.

JAMES
Damn. Fallujah is hot right now. You sure that's wise sir?

JOSH
No sergeant. I'm not. But what the colonel wants the colonel gets.

JAMES
I guess so.
JOSH
Just get the platoon together this evening so we can go over everything.

JAMES
Roger that sir.

Josh walks away.

JAMES (CONT'D)
(to himself)
Fuck me.

INT. TEAM ROOM - EVENING

JOSH
Anybody have any questions about what we are supposed to be doing?

Nathan raises his hand.

NATHAN
Yes sir. I do.

JOSH
Shoot.

Nathan looks around the room and back to Josh.

NATHAN
Why did we get picked to baby sit the colonel?

Nathan's platoon mates giggle.

JOSH
Well Atkins. Because the colonel thinks we are the best platoon in the battalion.

NATHAN
(sarcastically)
Oh. Aren't we too lucky?

JOSH
I'm sensing your sarcasm sergeant. But just bite the bullet. It's only for a little while.

NATHAN
Roger sir.
JOSH  
Make sure you get some sleep tonight.

Josh glances over at James.

JOSH (CONT'D)  
Alright sergeant Mason. Dismissed.

EXT. STAGING AREA - MORNING

The platoon is getting ready to go on mission. Nathan is conducting a radio check in his teams vehicle.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL JIM BRADLEY, early forties, walks out of a building and up to his vehicle and gets in. Nathan's team jumps into the fourth vehicle and they get ready to go.

NATHAN  
Here we go. This should be interesting.

EXT. FALLUJA - CONTINUOUS

The convoy is driving down the road. Nathan and his team are in their vehicle talking. Mike is scanning the area in his gunners turret.

CHAD  
I hope the colonel doesn't get us all fucking killed.

Nathan looks toward the driver's seat at Chad.

NATHAN  
Me too. But we don't really have a choice.

STEVEN  
I heard he has never been outside the wire before.

Nathan turns to Steven who is in the back seat.

NATHAN  
He hasn't. Which scares the fuck out of me. Just keep and eye out for fucking IED's. I don't feel like dying today.
STEVEN
(sarcastically)
Roger that Sergeant Atkins.

Nathan pats the gunner, Mike, on the leg.

NATHAN
Mendoza. Watch those fucking roof tops!

MIKE
Hooah!.

The convoy travels about a mile and stops.

CHAD
Why the fuck are we stopping?

Colonel Bradley gets out of his vehicle and walks into a little bread shop.

NATHAN
No fucking idea. Be right back.

Nathan gets out of the vehicle and jogs up to James vehicle.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Sergeant. Why we stopping here?

James shrugs his shoulders.

JAMES
The colonel wants to buy some fucking bread.

Nathan leans against the vehicle.

NATHAN
Right here? Seriously? This isn't Wal-Mart. We are sitting ducks.

JAMES
I know. Just do what you do.

Nathan jogs back to his vehicle and gets in.

CHAD
What's going on?

NATHAN
The colonel wanted to stop.

STEVEN
This is some straight up bull shit.
MIKE
Yeah. I don't want to get blown up because the colonel wants to make friends!

The colonel walks out of the bread shop and starts talking to an Iraqi man in front of the store.

CHAD
What the hell is he doing?

NATHAN
I don't fucking know.

The colonel walks back to his vehicle and gets in.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Let's go!

The vehicles start rolling again.

CHAD
I gotta bad feeling about this.

NATHAN
Just keep an eye out for any suspicious looking motherfuckers alright?

The convoy continues down the road. They come up to an intersection and there are FOUR IRAQI GUYS standing on the side of the road.

The men are watching the convoy go by. The vehicles began to turn right and the Iraqi men scream and run off.

IRAQI MEN
Allahu Akbar!!

There is a huge explosion and a big black cloud of smoke. The first vehicle in the convoy sustains a direct hit. The entire convoy stops and begins security of the area. Nathan yells to the gunner.

NATHAN
Scan the fucking area! 5's and 25's!

The vehicles and gunners move into position. Nathan jumps out of his vehicle and runs up toward the damaged vehicle while the medics work to pull the casualties out.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Casualties?!?
Nathan watches as the medics pull SERGEANT TERRY, twenties, from the vehicle.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Motherfucker.

James runs up beside Nathan.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
We just lost a whole fucking team.

JAMES
We need to get the colonel back to
table like now. Call for evac.

Nathan runs back to his vehicle.

STEVEN
What's going on sergeant?

NATHAN
Sergeant Terry is fucking KIA.

Nathan grabs the radio and calls in a chopper for evacuation. James and other Soldiers are assisting the medics in moving the casualties to the landing area.

STEVEN
Fuck. I want to go kill those bastards!

NATHAN
Me too. But we can't right now.
Have to get the colonel back to
base.
Get a grip corporal. I need you
guys to keep a level head out here.
Keep your head on a swivel.

BEN
Fucking A sergeant. It just doesn't seem right. We are out here putting our lives on the line because the colonel wants to make friends!

NATHAN
I know. It's fucked up.

The chopper lands at the LZ. James and others are carrying the casualties to the waiting chopper. Colonel Bradley runs up to the chopper and gets in. The chopper takes off and James runs back to his vehicle and grabs his radio.
JAMES  
This is Viper 6. We are going after these motherfuckers. Dismounts form up.

NATHAN  
Hell yeah. That's what I'm talking about.

Nathan, Steven, and Ben get out of the vehicle; along with the rest of the platoon dismounts. James jogs toward Nathan.

JAMES  
Sergeant. Take your team and go around the right flank. Check those buildings.

NATHAN  
Roger!

Nathan turns to his team.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
Follow me!

Nathan and his team run to the right side of the building.

STEVEN  
What's the plan sergeant?

The team takes a knee.

NATHAN  
Well. We are moving through this building. If you see a weapon, fire. This is going to be quick. Form on me.

The team enters the building and moves down the hallway. They come to the first room and stack up.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
Already ready? Go!

They enter the room and find nothing.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
Move out.

The team continues down the hall to the second room and stack up.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
Go.
They enter the room. There is an Iraqi man standing there looking out of the window. He is holding a cell phone.

BEN
Sergeant look.

Ben points to the man's phone. Nathan walks up to the man and grabs him.

NATHAN
What are you doing sir? Blowing my friends up? You fucker.

Nathan pushes the man against the wall.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Grab this guys phone.

Steven grabs the Iraqi man's phone. Nathan grabs the phone out of Steven's hand and lets the man go.

Nathan takes one step back, glancing intensely at the Iraqi man. He throws the phone on the floor very hard, breaking it.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Motherfucker.

Nathan looks back at his team.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Restrain him.

Steven pulls the man's arms behind his back and put zip tie cuffs on his wrists.

STEVEN
Stay still mother fu**er.

NATHAN
Let's go.

Steven grabs the man's arm and escorts him outside to where James is standing.

JAMES
That him?

NATHAN
Just a poor guy with a cell phone.

JAMES
Did you take it?
NATHAN
Nope. I smashed it.

JAMES
Good. Let's get this piece of shit where he belongs.

INT. CHAPEL - NIGHT

The company is sitting in the chapel for Sergeant Terry's memorial service. Taps is playing.

The CHAPLAIN, CAPTAIN FLANAGAN, is giving a speech. Nathan is staring at Sergeant Terry's picture.

CHAPLAIN
As we have remembered the many who lost their lives through the evil actions of a few, I pray that we will be a source of life and hope for many as we live our lives in such a way that reflect the goodness in our world, rather than the despair.

STEVEN
(whispering to Nathan)
Despair? How about pissed off?

There is a moment of silence in the room.

CHAPLAIN
Bless all who serve in uniform under the flag of the United States and our Allies, and please Lord, help and bless the United States of America. In your holy name I pray,
Amen.

EVERYONE
Amen.

Everyone gets up and begins filing in toward Sergeant Terry's memorial. Nathan and Steven get to the front of the line and place their name tapes beside his picture.

Both render a salute, drop the salute, execute facing movements, and walk away.
EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

Nathan's unit is seen getting off of the C-130. All of their loved ones are waiting beside the tarmac.

Nathan's wife Stacey, and daughter April, are waiting for him. Nathan walks up to both of them and gives them a big hug.

NATHAN
Hey baby.

STACEY
Hey you.

NATHAN
How are my girls?

Stacey glances up at Nathan and smiles. Nathan grabs April from Stacey.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Damn I missed you guys.

Nathan kisses April on the cheek.

STACEY
And we missed you too.

NATHAN
Let's get out of here.

Nathan puts his arm around them as they walk toward the car.

EXT./ INT. NATHAN'S HOUSE - EVENING

They pull up to the house, get out, and walk toward the front door. As they walk in somebody turns the lights on.

EVERYONE
Surprise!!!

Nathan's friends and family are all in the room. It's a surprise welcome home party. Nathan looks stunned.

He walks through the room and everyone is cheering and patting him on the back. He is a little uneasy with so many people there.

Brad turns around and sees his friend THEO, late twenties, holding a beer. Theo hands the beer to Nathan.
THEO
Hey brother. Thought you could use this.

Nathan grabs the beer from his hand.

NATHAN
You aren't wrong.

Nathan opens the beer and takes a gulp.

THEO
How long you home for?

NATHAN
Not sure yet. Maybe six months.

THEO
Well. welcome home.

NATHAN
Thanks man.

Nathan's begins walking around the room and sipping his beer. He hears a loud noise like a firecracker and hits the ground. When he looks up everyone is staring at him.

Embarrassed, Nathan makes his way to his room and sits on the bed. Stacey walks in behind him and sits beside him.

STACEY
Honey you ok?

NATHAN
Yeah. I just...

STACEY
You just what?

Nathan is silent. He takes a deep breathe.

STACEY (CONT'D)
Honey don't worry. Nobody is judging you.

Nathan just looks at Stacey. She puts her hand on Nathan's back.

STACEY (CONT'D)
We aren't going anywhere.

Nathan glances up at Stacey.
NATHAN
I know. It's just...my mind isn't here. It's there. And I don't know how to turn it off.

Stacey grabs Nathan's hand.

STACEY
We'll just take it one day at a time. You don't have to do anything you don't want. Everyone is happy to see you though. To them and to us you are a hero.

NATHAN
Careful with that word. The guys who didn't come back are the heroes. Not me.

STACEY
Well to us you are.

NATHAN
Thanks.

STACEY
So you ready to go back to the party?

Nathan smiles.

NATHAN
Yeah sure. Why not?

INT. MALL - DAY

Nathan and his family are walking through the mall. Nathan has bought them some clothes and a teddy bear for April.

They walk up to the food court and see Steven sitting there with his family. Steven turns and sees Nathan behind him. Stevens walks up to him.

STEVEN
Hey sergeant!

NATHAN
Hey Butler. How you doing man? You enjoying leave?

STEVEN
Yes. Just hanging with the family.

Steven sees Nathan's little girl April. He walks up to her.
STEVEN (CONT'D)
This your little girl?

NATHAN
Yeah. She's kind of feisty today.

Steven kneels in front of April.

STEVEN
Hey there little one. She's cute.

NATHAN
Thanks.

STEVEN
I saw sergeant Terry's wife the other day. I didn't know what to say to her.

NATHAN
Yeah. I need to go see her. I can't imagine what she's going through right now.

STEVEN
Yeah. Well sergeant. I have to go.

NATHAN
Alright buddy. Don't do anything I wouldn't do.

STEVEN
Yeah. You know me.

NATHAN
Yes I do.

Nathan chuckles. Steven smiles and turns to walk back to his family.

STACEY
Who's Sergeant Terry?

NATHAN
A guy we lost a few weeks ago.

STACEY
Oh. I'm sorry honey.
INT./ EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Nathan is sitting in a hospital room, waiting for the nurse. He glances around the room and he is fidgeting in the chair. The nurse walks into the room.

    NURSE
    Sergeant Atkins?

    NATHAN
    Yes mam?

    NURSE
    I am just going to take your vitals ok?

The NURSE, early forties, sticks a thermometer in Nathan's mouth and a blood pressure cuff around his arm. She is watching the monitor as the cuff begins to work.

    NURSE (CONT'D)
    Sergeant Atkins. Your blood pressure is pretty high. How do you feel?

Nathan looks at the monitor and back to the nurse.

    NATHAN
    I feel fine.

    NURSE
    Your face is very red. I am just going to talk to the doctor and he'll be right in ok?

Nathan glances up and nods his head as if to say yes. The nurse walks out.

Nathan sits there nervously and can't keep his leg from bouncing. Moment's later DOCTOR IGNACIO, early fifties, walks into the room.

    DOCTOR IGNACIO
    Sergeant Atkins? I'm Doctor Ignacio.

Doctor Ignacio shakes Nathan's hand.

    DOCTOR IGNACIO (CONT'D)
    Seems you had a pretty high blood pressure reading. How do you feel?

Doctor Ignacio glances at Nathan's chart.
NATHAN
Honestly doc? I feel fine.

Doctor Ignacio gives Nathan a puzzled look.

DOCTOR IGNACIO
Then why can't you sit still?

Nathan glances down at his legs.

NATHAN
I don't know.

Nathan readjusts himself in the chair.

DOCTOR IGNACIO
Go ahead and have a seat on the bed for me.

NATHAN
Ok.

Nathan moves over to the bed.

DOCTOR IGNACIO
I am just going to give you a quick exam.

Doctor Ignacio examines Nathan. He notices that Nathan's heart seems to be beating pretty fast. He glances up at Nathan.

DOCTOR IGNACIO (CONT'D)
Sergeant. There is nothing wrong with asking for help ok? If you feel the need shoot me an email and I'll give you a referral.

Nathan nods his head as if to say yes.

NATHAN
Alright doc.

DOCTOR IGNACIO
In the mean time I am going to prescribe you some meds to help with that. But, if you continue to be this stressed please come back to the hospital ok?

NATHAN
Ok.
Nathan is walking out of the hospital and his cell phone begins to ring. He reaches into his pocket for it and answers. It is Stacey.

**INTERCUT BETWEEN NATHAN AND STACEY.**

**STACEY**
(entering the phone)
Hey baby. How'd it go?

Nathan answers but he doesn't want to admit the truth.

**NATHAN**
(entering the phone)
It went ok. No issues.

**STACEY**
(entering the phone)
You sure?

**NATHAN**
(entering the phone)
Yeah I'm sure. I'll be home in a bit.

**EXT. FIRING RANGE - DAY**

Nathan's unit is at the firing range. He is walking down the line behind his Soldiers, observing their form and targets.

**NATHAN**
Cease fire!

The firing stops.

**NATHAN (CONT'D)**
Clear your weapons!

The Soldiers clear their weapons and put them on safe. They begin walking down range to grab their targets. Nathan looks over at Corporal Steven Butler's target.

**STEVEN**
Check this out sergeant!

Nathan pulls Steven's target down.

**NATHAN**
Nice!
STEVEN
Hell yeah sergeant. I'm a killing machine.

NATHAN
I might have to put you on the 50.

Specialist Mike Mendoza glances over at Nathan and Steven.

MIKE
You ain't taking my spot!

STEVEN
I outrank you specialist!

MIKE
Whatever man. You still ain't taking my spot.

Everyone walks back toward the firing line.

INT. NATHAN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING

Nathan and his family are sitting down to eat dinner. Stacey is trying to get April to eat her food.

STACEY
Baby eat your food.

NATHAN
Honey listen to your mom ok? Growing girls have to finish their plate.

Stacey glances over at Nathan.

STACEY
How was your day hun?

NATHAN
All day shooting.

STACEY
Sounds fun.

NATHAN
Yeah.

STACEY
Any idea yet?

Nathan shakes his head.
NATHAN
No. But I think it'll be pretty soon though.

STACEY
You talk to your parents lately?

NATHAN
Hmmm no.

STACEY
You might want to call them. They've been a little worried about you.

BEDROOM
Nathan and Stacey are lying in the bed. Both are staring at the ceiling.
Stacey seems like she wants to say something but she can't seem to get the words out.

Nathan turns to face Stacey.

NATHAN
Honey. What's wrong?

Stacey takes a deep breath.

STACEY
It just seems like you just got home. Now you are going back.

NATHAN
I know babe. But, it'll be ok.

Stacey faces Nathan.

STACEY
How? I am left here raising our daughter. I don't know how much more I can take.

NATHAN
I'm sorry. But this country needs us.

STACEY
I know. I am proud of you. I just wish I didn't have to share you.
NATHAN
Well. It won't last forever.

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

Soldier's and families are waiting on the tarmac for word to board the C-130. People are holding their loved ones.

Some are having a hard time fighting back tears. James walks up to Nathan and the rest of the platoon.

JAMES
Alright people. Time to go! Say your goodbyes.

Nathan gives Stacey and April and hug and a kiss. Then He grabs her hand.

NATHAN
Don't worry. I'll call you soon ok?

STACEY
You better.

Nathan turns and grabs the rest of his team to board the plane. The plane begins moving as family members stand there, watching it take off.

EXT. BAGHDAD - DAY (2005)

A convoy of four HMMVV's is moving down a city street in Baghdad. Nathan and his team are in the second vehicle.

NATHAN (V.O.)
In 2005 there were 846 U.S. Deaths. The insurgency showed no signs of letting up. Insurgents were even targeting Mosques. Our rules of engagement were clear. Don't fire unless fired upon. The hardest part of fighting a war like this is...you don't know who the enemy is. The free elections in Iraq were just starting to take place.

The wind is picking up and the city is very dusty. Nathan yells to Mike, who is in the gunners hatch.

NATHAN
Mendoza. How you doing up there?
MIKE
I'm straight sergeant!

The convoy continues down the road. They come to a spot on the road that leads to the polls, which Civilian vehicles are banned from entering.

Voters walk along the sides of the road toward the polling station. Nathan and his team glance around at all of them.

CHAD
Man. Look at all these people. Probably their first time voting ever.

NATHAN
Don't get complacent though. It's not safe in here either. Make sure you watch for anything that doesn't look right.

CHAD
Roger that.

The convoy continues toward the polls. They stop just before the front of the line.

BEN
I don't like this sergeant. It's too quiet.

STEVEN
Damn right.

Mike is scanning the crowd. He sees a suspicious person toward the middle of the line.

MIKE
(in a low voice)
Sergeant Atkins. You see this guy over here?

NATHAN
Who?

MIKE
That guy with the hoodie on. He keeps looking over at us like he's looking for something..

Nathan turns to look back and sees the man.

NATHAN
Keep watching him Mendoza.
Nathan picks up the radio to call James.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Viper 6, this is Viper 2-4. Over.

JAMES
Viper 6, go.

NATHAN
Sergeant we got a suspicious guy
over here. Think he might be hiding
something. Over.

Before James can radio back there is a huge explosion from
the suicide vest the guy was wearing. Numerous Iraqi's have
been hit and a huge piece of shrapnel shoots into Nathan's
vehicle and hits Ben in his right leg.

BEN
Shit!! Oh fuck!

STEVEN
Oh my God! Fulton's hit! There's
blood everywhere! Damn it! Fuck!

Steven grabs a tourniquet and wraps it around Ben's leg.

BEN
Fuck it hurts!

NATHAN
Shit!

Nathan gets out of the vehicle and runs through a huge cloud
of dust and fire. James meets him halfway.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
We need a medic over here sergeant!

JAMES
Shit! Who is hit?

NATHAN
Fulton!

JAMES
What's his status?

NATHAN
He's fucked up!

James runs to get a medic. Iraqi's are running everywhere,
tripping over the dead and wounded.
INT. FIELD HOSPITAL - DAY

Nathan's team is sitting in the waiting area for word on Ben's condition. James walks into the room.

JAMES
Anything yet?

NATHAN
No sergeant.

James takes a seat beside Nathan. After a few moments the doctor, MAJOR JONATHAN BRADLEY, late thirties, walks into the waiting area.

Everyone stands up.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Sir? Is he ok?

JONATHAN
He'll live sergeant. But not in this Army. He's going home.

NATHAN
Damn it.

JAMES
Doc. Will he be able to walk?

JONATHAN
We don't know yet.

James shakes his head.

JAMES
Ok. Thanks doc.

JONATHAN
Sure. I am very sorry guys. I wish I had better news.

The doctor turns and leaves the room. Nathan and James begin walking toward the door.

As they are walking through the door Nathan balls his fist up and punches the door.

NATHAN
Fuck!

JAMES
Sergeant!? What the hell are you doing?
Nathan stops, breathing heavily. His face is red.

NATHAN
I don't fucking know Sergeant Mason!

JAMES
Sergeant. It's not your fault. You know that right?

Nathan glances at James intensely.

NATHAN
That's bull shit. It is my fault.

JAMES
Listen to me.

NATHAN
If I had been paying attention it never would have...

James interrupts Nathan.

JAMES
Sergeant! Get a grip. Things sometimes happen that we can't control or prevent. It's called being at war!

Nathan and James continue walking.

NATHAN
I know but...

JAMES
But nothing! Suck it up sergeant. I still need your game face!

EXT. STAGING AREA - NIGHT

Nathan and his team are standing in a briefing by their vehicles before going out on mission.

Captain Price is giving the briefing. Ben's replacement, SPECIALIST TREY HENDERSON, late twenties, is standing with Nathan's team.

CAPTAIN PRICE
The guy we are looking for is IZZAT IBRAHIM AL-DOURI.
(MORE)
CAPTAIN PRICE (CONT'D)
We have a few pieces of intel that suggest he has been spotted in and around Baghdad. But, so far he has eluded capture.

Nathan raises his hand.

NATHAN
Any specific's sir?

CAPTAIN PRICE
We think he is holed up with his henchmen in a building near Sadr City. He is to be captured or killed. Capture if you can. We think we can get some valuable intel out of him. But, don't be reckless. If you encounter a lot of resistance, put two bullets in his fucking chest. Got it?

EVERYONE
Huh!

CAPTAIN PRICE
Alright. Mount up.

EXT. BAGHDAD - NIGHT

The convoy is driving down the street. The city seems eerily quiet. Only a few people can be seen walking down the street.

Nobody in the vehicles are really talking. Gunners are scanning the area. Nathan looks back at everyone in his vehicle.

NATHAN
Mount your night vision.

The team puts their night vision on.

STEVEN
Sergeant. Wasn't this guy like Saddam's second in command?

NATHAN
Yes. And I doubt he will give himself up.
CHAD
Yeah it seems like these guy would rather blow themselves up.

Mike yells down from the gunners hatch.

MIKE
That's called American fire power man! This .50 cal can rip a man in half. I'd rather have a quick death too!

NATHAN
That's why I put you up there Mendoza!

MIKE
Roger that Sergeant Atkins!

Nathan turns to look at Trey.

NATHAN
New guy! You taking notes? This is some good shit!

The convoy pulls up to the side of a building. The gunners and drivers stay in the vehicles to cover everyone.

Everyone else gets out and forms up on the building. Helicopters can be heard overhead. James runs up to Nathan.

JAMES
By the way, the captain called in air support. We have two apache's just in case anyone decides to run.

NATHAN
Roger that sergeant.

JAMES
Let's go get this motherfucker.

Each team moves in a single file line down separate alleys. As Nathan and his team come up to a door, there is a woman standing outside holding a baby. Nathan puts his finger to his mouth.

NATHAN
Ssshhh.

The woman nods her head.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Stack up.
Nathan's team stacks the door. He tries to open it but it is locked.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Stand back.

Nathan kicks the door twice. It doesn't open. He kicks it a third time and it flies open. The team enters the building and begins to clear it.

They get through the first room.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Clear.

The team moves to the second room.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Clear.

The team moves into the third room.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
And clear.

Nathan's team looks around the room for intelligence but they find nothing. Nathan motions for his team to move.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Move out.

They move to the next building and stack the door. They hear some commotion going on inside.

Nathan leans closer to the door to listen. He turns his head and whispers.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Get the interpreter over here.

Steven jogs over to where the interpreter is standing. They jog back over to Nathan's position.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Tell me if you can make out what they are saying.

The interpreter puts his ear to the door.

INTERPRETER 2
Something about explosives. I think they are trying to hide them.
NATHAN
Alright. Stand back.

The interpreter moves back.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Get ready to breach.

The team gets back into position.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Go.

Steven kicks the door in and there are three occupants in the
building. The team starts yelling at them and pointing their
weapons and the Iraqi's hit the floor.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Get down!! Get the fuck down!

Steven sees one of the guys try to get up and puts his boot
on his back.

STEVEN
Don't even try it!

Nathan turns to Steven and Trey.

NATHAN
You two guard them. I'm going to
look around.

TREY
Roger sergeant.

Nathan moves to the first room and it's empty. He moves to
the second room and looks around a bit. He notices and rug on
the floor and moves it out of the way.

Nathan finds a huge piece of wood covering a hole in the
floor. He moves it and notices bomb making materials.

NATHAN
Motherfucker.

Nathan moves to the first room where Steven and Trey are.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Get these guys out of here.

One of the men spits on Steven. Steven punches him in the
face.
STEVEN
Fucker! I will put your ass down! Move!

Steven pushes the man toward the door.

STEVEN (CONT'D)
Move!

NATHAN
Get EOD over here!

INT. NATHANS HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Stacey is sitting on the couch watching coverage of Iraq on CNN. She is glued to the TV, obviously concerned about Nathan's safety.

All of a sudden her phone begins to ring and it startles her. She answers it.

INTERCUT BETWEEN STACEY AND NATHAN

STACEY
(into the phone)
Hello?

NATHAN
(into the phone)
Hey baby.

Nathan clears his throat.

STACEY
(into the phone)
You ok?

NATHAN
(into the phone)
Yes. I think I'm just getting a cold.

STACEY
(into the phone)
Hey I heard on the news about some car bombs Where you are. You know anything about that?

NATHAN
(into the phone)
Yeah. Nothing to worry about though. I'm fine. I just...
STACEY  
(into the phone)  
You just what?

Nathan takes a deep breath.

NATHAN  
(into the phone)  
I just miss you guys. I wish I was home.

STACEY  
(into the phone)  
Me too. But it won't be long now. What are you guys doing over there?

NATHAN  
(into the phone)  
Honey you know I can't talk about it.

STACEY  
Sometimes I forget. By the way I talked to Ben's wife yesterday.

NATHAN  
You did? How is she?

STACEY  
She's ok. I didn't really know what to say so I just listened. He got sent to Walter Reed apparently.

NATHAN  
I feel really awful for them. But, it could have been much worse. We got lucky.

Chad walks into the room looking for Nathan. He spots him in the corner and walks up to him.

CHAD  
Sergeant Atkins?

Nathan turns to see Chad.

NATHAN  
(into the phone)  
Hang on babe.

Nathan sits the phone down and glances up at Chad.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
What's up?
CHAD
Butler's wife just had her baby.

Nathan looks shocked.

NATHAN
What? I thought she wasn't due for a while.

CHAD
I guess he just didn't want to say anything. He's taking it pretty hard though, not being able to be there.

NATHAN
Alright. I'll be there in a minute.

CHAD
Ok.

Chad walks away.

INT. BARRACKS ROOM - NIGHT

Nathan walks into Steven's barracks room. He sees him sitting on his bunk with his head down. He seems to be crying. Nathan walks over and sits down beside him.

NATHAN
You ok man?

Steven doesn't answer.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Hey. I've been there man. I know it's hard. It's the nature of the beast sometimes. But it's ok to talk about it.

Steven glances up at Nathan with red puffy eyes.

STEVEN
I don't know sergeant. I've never been away this long. Now I have a kid who hasn't even seen me yet.

Nathan puts his arm on Steven's shoulder.

NATHAN
I know man. But we'll be home soon. It'll be ok.

(MORE)
NATHAN (CONT'D)
I know you aren't that religious but it might help if you learn to pray.

STEVEN
Right now I'll take anything I can get.

NATHAN
Just remember. Every day is one day closer to going home.

Steven shakes his head and glances up at Nathan.

STEVEN
Amazing.

NATHAN
What?

STEVEN
I didn't realize you were an optimist sergeant.

Nathan glances over at Steven and smiles.

NATHAN
There's probably a lot of things you don't know about me Butler.

EXT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Stacey has just bought groceries and she is pushing her shopping cart across the parking lot toward her car.

She bumps into her friend CHERYL (30), who is walking toward the store.

STACEY
Cheryl. Hey. How are you?

Cheryl stops.

CHERYL
I'm good. Getting some supplies for a cook out tomorrow. You want to come? You can bring your daughter. My friend's daughter has offered to babysit for us.

STACEY
Uh. Yeah sure. What time?
CHERYL
6 pm. We are thinking about doing this every week while the husbands are gone. Kind of give us an outlet you know?

STACEY
Yes I do. Have you heard anything yet?

CHERYL
Not in a few days. They haven't had much time lately.

STACEY
Yeah I know. Well I will see you tomorrow then.

CHERYL
Ok. See you.

Cheryl continues walking toward the store.

EXT./ INT. CHERYL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Stacey walks up the steps to Cheryl's front door, holding a casserole in one hand, and April's hand in the other.

She rings the door bell. Cheryl answers.

CHERYL
Hey!

STACEY
Hi! How are you?

CHERYL
I'm good, good. Please Come in.

STACEY
Thanks.

Stacey walks into the house.

CHERYL
And who is this little munchkin?

Cheryl points to April.

STACEY
This is my little girl, April. April, this is Cheryl.
Cheryl kneels down in front of April.

**CHERYL**
Hey precious. Why don't you go sit right over there with the other kids ok?

April looks up at Stacey.

**STACEY**
Go ahead.

April runs over to the other kids watching cartoons.

**STACEY (CONT'D)**
Oh. I brought a casserole.

**CHERYL**
Oh thanks.

Cheryl grabs the casserole and puts it on the counter.

**CHERYL (CONT'D)**
Come on.

Stacey and Cheryl continue to walk out to the back patio where the others are. The grill is going.

**KELLY, MICHELLE, GRACE, and BECKY** are sitting at a round patio table talking.

**CHERYL (CONT'D)**
Everyone this is Stacey. Stacey this is Kelly, Michelle, Grace, and Becky.

Stacey smiles.

**STACEY**
Hey guys.

**EXT. BAGHDAD - DAY**

Nathan's team is driving in a convoy of five vehicles close to Sadr city. They are driving along a dirt road and the air is very dusty.

**MIKE**
Man I don't care if I ever fucking see sand again!

Nathan laughs.
CHAD
I don't know. I may go to the beach when I go on leave.

TREY
Man screw that. I'm getting as far away from sand as I can get. This place needs more grass.

NATHAN
I heard that.

Steven turns to Trey.

STEVEN
Hey. New guy. You haven't even been here long enough to say that!

TREY
My bad. Damn!

The convoy continues down the road. Nathan notices a couple of guys with shovels along the side of the road.

NATHAN
Shit. Did you see that?

MIKE
Sergeant!

NATHAN
Already on it Mendoza!

Nathan grabs the radio to call James.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
(into the radio)
Viper 6, this is viper 2-4, over.

JAMES
(into the radio)
Viper 6, over.

NATHAN
(into the radio)
Viper 6 we just passed a couple of suspicious guys with shovels. Over.

JAMES
(into the radio.)
Alright. Let's turn it around.
The convoy turns around on the other side of the road. They continue about 500 yards and James sees the two suspicious guys.

JAMES (CONT'D)
(into the radio)
I see them. Stop here.

The vehicle stops on the side of the road. Nathan looks over at the two guys with the shovels.

They see the convoy and take off running. James grabs the radio.

JAMES (CONT'D)
(into the radio)
Alright everybody but me and Atkins stay in the vehicles. Gunners pull security.

MIKE
Hooaahh!

Nathan and James get out of their vehicles. They run across the road toward where the two suspicious guys were standing.

JAMES
Be careful sergeant.

NATHAN
Roger that.

They continue walking slowly toward the site. As they get closer they see something big sitting inside of a half dug hole.

JAMES
Shit. You see any wires?

NATHAN
Nope.

JAMES
Ok. We can't just leave this shit here. Let's get back to the vehicles. I'll call EOD.

EXT. CHERYL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Everyone is sitting around the patio table talking and playing cards. The kids are in the swimming pool.
CHERYL
Anyone know how much longer?

STACEY
I'm hearing a couple of weeks.

KELLY
I am sure they can't either.

Stacey glances over at April by the pool.

STACEY
Honey. Don't go in without your floats.

CHERYL
You guys want another margarita?

KELLY
Yes please.

STACEY
None for me. Thanks

Cheryl grabs their glasses and walks toward the kitchen. Kelly glances over at Stacey.

KELLY
So Stacey. How long you guys been here?

STACEY
A while. This is his third deployment.

KELLY
We are on our second.

STACEY
It never gets easy. But I suppose you do get more used to it.

KELLY
The hardest part for me is the kids.

STACEY
How many do you have?

KELLY
Three.

STACEY
Oh wow.
KELLY
Yeah. I'm having to get a babysitter at least once a week so I can recharge my batteries.

STACEY
I know what you mean.

Cheryl comes back with the drinks and sits them on the table.

CHERYL
Here you go. And a soda for you Stacey.

STACEY
Hmmm. Thank you.

CHERYL
You are welcome.

EXT. BAGHDAD - DAY
The convoy is still sitting on the side of the road and the guys have been waiting for EOD for a while. Nathan grabs the radio.

NATHAN
(into the radio)
Viper 6, this is Viper 2-4.

JAMES
(into the radio)
Viper 6.

NATHAN
(into the radio)
Sergeant. We are sitting ducks here. Any idea how long it's going to be?

JAMES
(into the radio)
No sergeant. It's EOD's fucking MO. Just sit tight and I'll call them back.

NATHAN
(into the radio)
Roger.

Nathan puts the radio down.
NATHAN (CONT'D)

Fuck.

CHAD
I wish they would hurry up. It's hot as balls out here.

NATHAN
Tell me about it. If it were up to me I'd just shoot a grenade in the damn hole and call it a day.

STEVEN
I heard that.

EXT. BAGHDAD - LATER

Nathan glances into his side mirror and sees EOD pulling up.

NATHAN
Finally!

CHAD
That them?

NATHAN
I think so.

CHAD
It's about damn time. I don't know why they make us wait so freaking long.

The EOD convoy pulls up in MRAP's in front of Nathan's convoy. A guy gets out from the driver's seat and jogs over to Nathan's vehicle.

EOD TECH
Where's it at?

NATHAN
See the shovels over there?

Nathan points across the street.

EOD TECH
Yeah.

NATHAN
Right there.
Alright. I need you guys to pull security out to 300 meters. Nobody comes in.

NATHAN
Alright.

The EOD guy runs back to his vehicle. Nathan's convoy moves out and into position.

Some time later a guy gets out of one of the EOD trucks and grabs a robot from the back. They can be seen moving it into place with a remote control.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
I sure as hell wouldn't want that job.

STEVEN
Me either. But it does look kind of cool from way over here.

MIKE
Yeah. Until you blow yourself up.

The EOD guy brings the robot back over to his vehicle. Another guy gets out of one of the other trucks and puts a bomb suit on.

NATHAN
I get nervous every time I see this.

MIKE
Uh sergeant.

NATHAN
What is it Mendoza?

MIKE
There's a guy up on that balcony with a cell phone. And he's watching our guys.

Nathan picks up the radio to call James.

NATHAN
(into the radio)
Viper 6. we have a guy up here with a cell phone and he's watching.

Before James can radio back there is a huge explosion at the bomb site. The EOD guy in the bomb suit is hit.
The guys start taking small arms fire from the buildings.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Mendoza! Pound that building over there!

MIKE
Roger!

Mike shoots his .50 cal machine gun at the building. James comes on the radio.

JAMES
(into the radio)
Move towards those buildings!

The convoy gets back into position and moves over toward the buildings where the fire came from.

NATHAN
You guys see anything!?

CHAD
Negative!

STEVEN
Negative sergeant!

NATHAN
Alright gunners and drivers stay. We are going after these guys.

All the dismounts get out of the trucks and run toward the buildings. The trucks move closer to the buildings to pull security.

Everyone else runs toward the buildings.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
These guys are really beginning to piss me off! All they do is shoot and run!

JAMES
Tell me about it!

They stop and take cover behind the buildings facing an alley. Nathan peeks around the corner.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Sergeant Atkins. Take your team and clear that building right there.
NATHAN
Roger that.

Nathan peeks around the corner one more time.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Alright. Everybody on me.

Nathan's team moves around the corner and down the alley. They get to the door and it is slightly cracked open. Nathan motion's for them to get ready to enter.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Go!.

Nathan pushes the door open and the team enters. The first room is empty.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Clear.

They begin moving to the second room. An insurgent jumps from behind the door and tries to grab Nathan.

Nathan kicks the man in the stomach and Steven shoots him with his M-4.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Fuck. Thanks.

The team continues moving to the next room. Nathan can hear a couple of guys in the room talking.

The door is closed. He kneels down to look through the key hole and sees the men holding AK47's.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
I got weapons.

TREY
What do you want to do sergeant?

NATHAN
Shit. Move back. I'm going to toss a grenade in there.

Steven and Trey take cover behind a table. Nathan grabs a grenade from his pouch and turns to his team.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Get down.

Nathan pulls the pin on the grenade.
NATHAN (CONT'D)
Fire in the hole.

Nathan cracks the door open more and tosses the grenade into the room. He dives down the hall onto the floor.

The grenade goes off in a huge explosion. The room goes silent.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Shit. Alright Come on.

The team gets up and prepares to go into the room. Nathan opens the door and sees two guys laying on the floor with rifles laying next to them.

Steven sees a cell phone laying on the floor and points to it.

STEVEN
Sergeant. I think this may have been the trigger man.

NATHAN
Yep. I think so.

The team runs out of the building where James and the rest of the platoon are at.

JAMES
You guys good?

NATHAN
Roger that. Three insurgents KIA.

JAMES
This shit was coordinated. They just didn't anticipate us seeing it before they could bury it.

NATHAN
The EOD guy?

JAMES
He didn't make it. Too big of an explosion. Mount up.

The Soldier's jog back toward their vehicles to go back to base.
EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

The Soldiers are seen walking across the tarmac towards their waiting families. Chad runs past Nathan.

NATHAN
Don't get into any trouble Singleton.

CHAD
Yeah you know me sergeant.

Nathan glances around and sees Stacey and April waiting for him across the tarmac. He jogs up to them.

STACEY
Hey baby!

Nathan wraps his arms around Stacey tightly. He glances down at April, grabs her and spins her around.

NATHAN
How's my little girl?

STACEY
We missed you.

NATHAN
I missed you more.

Nathan leans to give Stacey a kiss, puts his arms on them both, and they walk toward the parking lot.

EXT. CHERYL'S HOUSE - DAY

Everyone is standing around the pool eating BBQ and drinking beer. There are people in the pool.

Nathan, Stacey, and Cheryl are in the corner talking among themselves. Nathan's team is there.

Everybody is dancing. Mike walks up to Nathan and Stacey.

MIKE
Hey Sergeant A.

NATHAN
Hey. What's up man?

MIKE
Not much you know? Just enjoying the time off.
Mike's wife MELISSA, mid twenties, walks over to them.

MELISSA
So you must be the infamous Sergeant Atkins.

Nathan smiles at Melissa.

NATHAN
I don't know about infamous. But yeah. That's me.

MELISSA
I'm Mike's wife, Melissa. Nice to meet you. Stacey talks about you all the time.

NATHAN
Nice to meet you.

Steven runs up to Mike.

STEVEN
Hey dude. Come on. We are over here doing shots.

Mike looks over at Nathan and Stacey.

MIKE
Well. Duty calls.

Nathan laughs at Mike.

NATHAN
Go man.

Mike runs off.

INT. NATHANS HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nathan and Stacey are both lying in Bed. Stacey can't sleep because Nathan is continuously moving and slashing around in his sleep.

She is obviously worried about him. All of a sudden he screams and jumps up, sweating profusely.

NATHAN
(breathing heavily)
Shit!

STACEY
Honey you are scaring me.
NATHAN
Sorry. I'm ok. I think.

STACEY
What's wrong?

NATHAN
I think I was having a nightmare. But I don't remember it.

STACEY
Babe there's no shame in talking about it.

Nathan sits up.

NATHAN
I don't really know where to begin.

STACEY
I think maybe we should go see the doctor before this gets out of control.

Nathan looks over at Stacey.

NATHAN
Ok.

April walks up to the doorway holding a teddy bear.

APRIL
Mommy. Is everything ok? I heard a loud noise.

STACEY
Yes baby. Everything is fine. Go back to sleep.

April runs away. Nathan is sitting up visibly anxious.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Nathan and Stacey are sitting in the hospital room waiting for the doctor. Nathan can't sit still.

He is biting his nails and can't stop shaking his leg. DOCTOR PHILLIPS (55) walks into the room.

DOCTOR PHILLIPS
Hi. Guys. I am Doctor Phillips.
STACEY

Hi.

The doctor shakes Nathan's hand.

DOCTOR PHILLIPS

So what seems to be the problem?

Nathan is silent.

STACEY

Well doc. We have been having some trouble with nightmares and lack of sleep,

DOCTOR PHILLIPS

I see.

Doctor Phillips sits down in front of Nathan.

DOCTOR PHILLIPS (CONT'D)

You know sergeant, there is no shame in seeking help.

NATHAN

I know. I just can't shake this feeling.

DOCTOR PHILLIPS

You've been deployed how many times?

NATHAN

Three times so far.

Doctor Phillips nods his head.

DOCTOR PHILLIPS

I see. Would you like to share a little history about that? I know it isn't easy to talk about.

NATHAN

Well. Between getting blown up, shot at, and all that I don't know where to start.

DOCTOR PHILLIPS

I'm not here to force you to do anything. But, talking about it is the first step in the recovering process. It takes time.
Nathan glances down at the ground, then looks back up at Doctor Phillips.

NATHAN
I understand.

DOCTOR PHILLIPS
Ok. So let's start with your nightmares. Do you remember them?

NATHAN
Not really. Only the intense feeling of paranoia.

DOCTOR PHILLIPS
Ok. So what do you remember feeling after these nightmares?

NATHAN
Sweating and gasping for air.

DOCTOR PHILLIPS
Ok. Anything else?

NATHAN
I guess part of it is survivor's guilt. Feeling helpless not being able to do anything about it.

DOCTOR PHILLIPS
I see. Well it's important to understand that most times you can't control it.

NATHAN
That doesn't help the feeling though.

DOCTOR PHILLIPS
I understand.

Nathan starts getting stressed out and irate towards the doctor.

NATHAN
Do you doc? Really? How many times you been deployed?

Stacey grabs Nathan's arm.

STACEY
Honey.
NATHAN
No! I'm sorry. I can't do this!

Nathan storms out of the room.

INT. CAR - DAY

Nathan and Stacey are driving down the road. Nathan is visibly upset. Stacey glances over at him.

STACEY
Honey. This won't get better unless you learn to talk about it. You can't keep holding it in. We have kids to think about.

Nathan looks over at Stacey.

NATHAN
You don't think I know that?

STACEY
Well...

NATHAN
I am responsible for my family. I'm responsible for my team. It's overwhelming sometimes. And I just can't seem to shake it.

STACEY
Well honey. I am here for you. But you have to let me in.

NATHAN
I'm working on it.

STACEY
We are still going tomorrow right?

NATHAN
Yes. I kind of have to.

STACEY
It'll be good for you just to chill for a day anyways.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Nathan, Stacey, and April pull into the parking lot. The entire company is there. They have games and prizes. Everyone is getting ready to play baseball.
Nathan and Stacey get out of the vehicle and Nathan grabs his baseball equipment from the back of his truck.

Chad, Steven, Mike, and Trey walk up to Nathan's vehicle. Stacey turns to April.

**STACEY**
Honey go play with the other kids on the swing ok?

**APRIL**
Yes mam.

**CHAD**
Hey sergeant.

**NATHAN**
What's going on guys?

Chad puts his hand on Nathan's back.

**CHAD**
Oh you know. Getting ready to kick some officer ass!

**MIKE**
I know that's right!

Nathan laughs.

**BASEBALL FIELD**

Everyone is gathered around the baseball field. Nathan's team, the enlisted, are up to bat. Nathan walks up to home plate. Captain Price is pitching.

**NATHAN**
Get ready sir. It's coming right out you!

**CAPTAIN PRICE**
Bring it Atkins.

**UMPIRE**
Play ball!

Nathan warms up. Captain Price pitches the ball. It is a little to the outside. Nathan doesn't swing.

**UMPIRE (CONT'D)**
Ball 1!
Captain Price pitches a second time. The ball goes right down the middle. Nathan swings and hits the ball straight to center field.

He makes it to second base. Next, Mike is up to bat.

    CHAD
    Show him what you got Mendoza!

Captain Price pitches the ball. It's a strike.

    STRIKE ONE!

    MIKE
    Shit.

Captain Price pitches the ball again. It is a little low but Mike manages to get a good hit on it. The ball sails over left field and outside of the fence.

    TREY
    Hell yeah!

Mike and Nathan jog around the bases. They high five when they get to home plate.

BASEBALL FIELD - DUSK

Everyone is gathered in a group right outside of the baseball field. Captain Price is standing up front, giving them a motivational speech about their upcoming deployment.

    CAPTAIN PRICE
    So you guys know we have an upcoming deployment? Enjoy the down time with your families.

    EVERYONE
    Huh!

    CAPTAIN PRICE
    Just like last time. I want you guys to be safe. Watch each others backs. And we will get through this one just like we did before.

Captain Price glances at the crowd.

    CAPTAIN PRICE (CONT'D)
    I am proud of you guys. And you know I have an open door policy.
    (MORE)
CAPTAIN PRICE (CONT'D)
Anyone who has a problem, whether personal or professional, is welcomed to come see me.

EVERYONE
Huh!

CAPTAIN PRICE
And it pains me to say this. But without further ado, the company baseball champs are...

Captain Price pauses for a second.

CAPTAIN PRICE (CONT'D)
The enlisted team!

Everyone begins to cheer.

INT. POST EXCHANGE - DAY
Nathan, Stacey, and April are sitting in the food court after eating. Stacey grabs April's hand.

STACEY
Honey why don't you go play a game over there? Mommy needs to talk to daddy real quick.

APRIL
Ok mom.

April runs toward the arcade. Nathan looks over at Stacey.

NATHAN
What's up?

STACEY
Well...I um.

NATHAN
What? Wait. You aren't cheating on me?

Stacey smack Nathan on the arm.

STACEY
No silly. There is something I need to tell you that I didn't want to tell you while you were over there.

NATHAN
What is it?
STACEY
Well. I took a pregnancy test.

NATHAN
And?

STACEY
Well I still need to confirm it with the doctor but it came back positive.

NATHAN

Nathan grabs Stacey's hand.

STACEY
Really? That's a relief. I wasn't sure how you would react.

NATHAN
Yeah. Now that's great news! April needs a brother.

STACEY
Well it's too early yet to be thinking about the sex. But I'm going to the doctor tomorrow and I want you to come with me.

NATHAN
Of course! You should tell your parents.

STACEY
Not yet. I want to make sure first.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Nathan and April are sitting in a hospital room waiting for DOCTOR RAMSEY. Forties, to come in. She walks in and introduces herself.

DOCTOR RAMSEY
Stacey Atkins?

STACEY
Yes mam.

Doctor Ramsey shakes April's hand.
DOCTOR RAMSEY
Hi. I'm Doctor Ramsey.

STACEY
Nice to meet you.

DOCTOR RAMSEY
Same here. So what brings you in today?

STACEY
Well. I took a pregnancy test and it came back positive so here we are.

DOCTOR RAMSEY
I see. Well let me just check real quick.

Doctor Ramsey grabs the sonogram and adds some lubricant to it.

DOCTOR RAMSEY (CONT'D)
This is going to be cold.

Doctor Ramsey inserts the sonogram. The baby can be seen on the monitor.

DOCTOR RAMSEY (CONT'D)
Yep. Looks like you are pregnant. I'd say about 10 weeks.

STACEY
That's it?

DOCTOR RAMSEY
Yep. That's it.

Stacey glances over at Nathan and moves closer.

STACEY
Oh my God we are having another baby.

NATHAN
(jittery)
We are having another baby.

Nathan smiles, moves closer, and kisses Stacey.

STACEY
You know what this means right?
NATHAN
What?

STACEY
You have to come home to us.

EXT. BAGHDAD - DAY (2007)

Nathan and his squad are riding in a Blackhawk Helicopter over Baghdad. Nathan is now wearing the rank of STAFF SERGEANT.

Everyone is looking out of the window. They are headed to their new base in the heart of Baghdad.

NATHAN (V.O.)
Baghdad, 2007. President Bush announced a surge of additional troops to Iraq to counter the non-stop insurgency. The United States death toll in Iraq reached 3500. Many people, including me, are beginning to doubt our mission here. But, most of us tried desperately not to lose faith.

The helicopter lands on the helipad. The squad jumps out and meets James on the other side.

JAMES
You guys make it ok?

NATHAN
Yes sergeant.

JAMES
By the way Staff Sergeant Atkins, congratulations on your promotion.

NATHAN
Thanks.

JAMES
By the way everyone, congratulate Sergeant Atkins. His wife is having another baby.

STEVEN
Oh man that's great!

MIKE
Congrats!
NATHAN
Thanks guys!

JAMES
Alright. Come on guys. The commander is waiting for us in the briefing room.

Nathan, his squad and James jog toward the briefing room.

INT. BRIEFING ROOM - DAY

Nathan's company is sitting, listening to the new commander, CAPTAIN JOSEPH, early thirties, give a speech.

CAPTAIN JOSEPH
Everything has changed now. We are no longer just focused on doing raids and bombing neighborhoods. General Patreaus wants us to win hearts and minds.

Nathan and Steven glance at each other in disbelief.

CAPTAIN JOSEPH (CONT'D)
This means, ultimately, reducing the number of civilian casualties. Yes, it does mean taking more of a risk for us. But the commander believes that over time the civilian population will rise up and assist us. So, there will be much more accountability.

Steven leans toward Nathan.

STEVEN
What the fuck?

NATHAN
You can say that again.

EXT. STAGING AREA - LATER

Nathan and his squad are leaning up against their vehicles waiting for James. He walks up to them a few moments later.

JAMES
So. What do you think this means for us?

Nathan glances up at James with disgust on his face.
NATHAN
Honestly sergeant? It means more kissing ass. And, we still won't know who the enemy is.

TREY
Yeah. What if those same people we are supposed to be making friends with end up blowing us up?

STEVEN
Yeah. It's fucked up.

James glances up at them and shakes his head.

JAMES
I know it's fucked up. You know it's fucked up. But, it's where we are. These fucking politicians get to make these decisions from an air-conditioned office. We are the pawns.

NATHAN
Roger that.

JAMES
But, just keep doing what you do. Just try not to fire into a crowd of civilians ok?

NATHAN
Yep.

JAMES
Alright listen. We are going to look for a weapons cache this afternoon.

NATHAN
Where at?

James hesitates.

JAMES
Well. We are getting intel reports that it is located, along with numerous insurgents, inside a Mosque in downtown Baghdad.

NATHAN
A Mosque?
JAMES
Unfortunately, yes. We have tried
to get the Iraqi's to go in as
usual but, they are refusing.

Nathan looks at the ground and shakes his head.

NATHAN
You know what this means. Right
sergeant?

JAMES
Yep. But we can't ignore it. Too
many people complaining. The Iraqi
Police are useless. And I wouldn't
doubt if some of those police were
involved.

Nathan shakes his head in disbelief.

NATHAN
Fuck me.

EXT./INT. BAGHDAD - MOSQUE - DAY

Nathan and the rest of the platoon are driving down the
street in two up-armored hmmvv's and two MRAP's.

Nathan's squad is in the second MRAP. The trucks come to a
stop. James comes on the radio.

JAMES
(into the radio)
I need second and fourth squad to
go around and cover the other side
of the building.

NATHAN
(into the radio)
Huh.

Second and fourth squad's vehicles move to the other side of
the Mosque.

STEVEN
We might go to hell for this.

NATHAN
Well. I guess it all depends on how
you look at it Butler.

Nathan grabs the radio and calls James.
NATHAN (CONT'D)
( into the radio)
Viper 6. Is there any chance the Iraqi's are coming?

JAMES
It's not looking too good.

NATHAN
Shit. These guys are worthless.

TREY
What are they doing here sergeant?

NATHAN
They know we aren't supposed to attack a Mosque.

CHAD
Yeah. But they aren't supposed to either.

The interpreter sitting in the back leans up front where Chad and Nathan are sitting.

INTERPRETER 3
These guys are not true Islam.

CHAD
Yeah. No shit.

INTERPRETER 2
I mean they are trying to exploit Islam in the name of terrorism. They know the United States rules of engagement and try to use it against you.

NATHAN
Well how the hell are we supposed to counter that if our government doesn't see it that way?

INTERPRETER 2
I don't know sergeant. I think maybe you wait and if they attack, attack back. Your responsibility is to your Soldiers.

TREY
That's a fucked up situation to be in.
The interpreter moves back to his seat. Nathan smacks the gunner, Mike, on the leg.

NATHAN
Mendoza. You see anything up there yet?

MIKE
No sergeant.

Nathan picks up the radio and calls the other MRAP. SERGEANT ORLANDO WILSON, late twenties, answers.

NATHAN
(into the radio)
Viper 2-2 this is Viper 2-4. You guys see anything?

ORLANDO (O.S.)
That's a negative.

NATHAN
Damn. We can't just sit here.

Mike leans down from the gunner's hatch.

MIKE
Sergeant Atkins. I see some movement up there.

NATHAN
Do you see any weapons?

MIKE
No sergeant.

NATHAN
We can't enter yet. For all we know these guys could have the entire building rigged with explosives.

TREY
I wouldn't put it past them.

The interpreter leans back toward where Nathan is sitting.

INTERPRETER 3
Sergeant. I have an idea.

NATHAN
What's that?
INTERPRETER 3
Well. What if you send some guys to
the top of that building over
there? You could sit and monitor
and that way you know if you need
to go in.

Nathan looks back at the interpreter.

NATHAN
That's actually not a bad idea.

INTERPRETER 3
Thank you.

Nathan picks up the radio again.

NATHAN
(into the radio)
Viper 6 this is 2-4. Over.

JAMES
Viper 6.

NATHAN
Sergeant. What if we send some guys
over to that building across the
street? Monitor the Mosque from the
roof.

JAMES
(into the radio)
Hold.

There is a brief silence on the radio. Moments later James
comes back onto the radio.

JAMES (CONT'D)
(into the radio)
Sergeant. Take 3 members of your
squad up there. We'll pull back.
Make sure you take a radio with
you.

NATHAN
(into the radio)
Roger that.

Nathan, Chad, Steven, and Trey get out of the vehicle and run
across the street. Nathan turns to Mike.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Mendoza. You're our eyes down here.
Keep sharp!
MIKE
Roger that Sergeant Atkins!

The team continues across the street and to the building. The door is partially cracked open. They continue inside and come up to a stair case.

NATHAN
Guys. Watch these corners!

TREY
Huh!

The team continues up the stair case. They get to the top and come up to a locked door that leads to the roof. Chad grabs the door knob.

CHAD
Shit. It's locked.

TREY
Stand back.

Trey moves toward the door and kicks it really hard. The door flies open.

STEVEN
Damn. Look at you.

The team continues to the far corner facing the Mosque and get down. Nathan glances over the low wall.

CHAD
You see anything sergeant?

NATHAN
No. Hand me the binocular's.

Chad hands him a pair of binocular's. Nathan takes a better look at the roof of the Mosque.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
I see someone down there. No weapons yet though.

Nathan takes a closer look at the man on the roof.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
He's carrying something. I just can't make out what it is.
INT. NATHAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Stacey's parents, MR. AND MRS. MILLS, have come down to stay with her for a little while. They are sitting at the dinner table eating pot roast and talking.

MRS. MILLS
Honey. This is great.

STACEY
Aww. Thanks mom.

Stacey turns to April, who hasn't eaten much.

STACEY (CONT'D)
Honey. Eat your food.

APRIL
Yes mam.

Mr. Mills glances up at Stacey.

MR. MILLS
Honey. Have you heard from Nathan?

Stacey looks up at Mr. Mills.

STACEY
Not in a couple of days dad. I am sure he is busy.

MRS. MILLS
When are they scheduled to come home?

STACEY
Couple of months mom. He's been talking about getting out.

MR. MILLS
Well. The military has good benefits. But, that could be a good thing. I did my four and get out.

STACEY
I know dad.
KITCHEN

Stacey walks up behind her mother doing dishes in the kitchen.

STACEY
Mom. You don't have to do that.

MRS. MILLS
We are guests in this house.

STACEY
Well here. Let me help you.

Stacey rolls her sleeves up and begins to help her mother with the dishes.

LIVING ROOM

Mr. Mills walks into the living room where Stacey is watching the news.

MR. MILLS
Honey. I believe we are going to turn in.

STACEY
Ok dad.

Mr. Mills leans down to kiss Stacey on the forehead.

STACEY (CONT'D)
Good night dad.

MR. MILLS
Night hun.

Mr. Mills heads to bed. Stacey's eyes are on the tv. The current U.S. Death toll just came on.

EXT./INT. BAGHDAD - DAY

Nathan and his team are still sitting on the roof. Steven sees a few guys walk into the Mosque.

STEVEN
Sergeant. I got something over here.

NATHAN
What?
Nathan moves closer. He grabs the binoculars and looks through them. Then he grabs the radio.

    NATHAN (CONT'D)
    (into the radio)
    Viper 6. Viper 2-4. We have some guys just went into the building.

    JAMES
    (into the radio)
    Roger. I see them.

    NATHAN
    (into the radio)
    Please advise.

    JAMES
    (into the radio)
    Just sit tight and keep observing. Tell me if you see any weapons.

    NATHAN
    (into the radio)
    Roger that.

Nathan tosses the radio on the ground.

    NATHAN (CONT'D)
    Damn.

Trey glances up over the wall. A sniper fires a bullet that hits just below the top of the wall. Trey jumps down.

    NATHAN (CONT'D)
    Fuck! Stay down!

    TREY
    What was that!?

Nathan grabs Trey and pushes him down.

    NATHAN
    That was a sniper. Stay the fuck down new guy!

Nathan grabs the radio again.

    NATHAN (CONT'D)
    (into the radio)
    Viper 6 we got sniper fire. We are pinned down up here! Gunners, put some rounds into that fucking building!
Mike turns his gunners hatch toward the top of the building and fires numerous rounds from his .50 cal.

The machine gun tears through the top of the building. There is a brief silence as the smoke settles.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
I think he got him.

CHAD
Fuck yeah Mendoza!

TREY
Are we clear?

Nathan turns to Trey.

NATHAN
I think so.

As soon as Nathan turns his head back around an RPG is fired and lands behind them.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Fuck! Come on. We gotta get off this God damn roof!

Nathan and his team run toward the door as another RPG is fired and lands by where they were just sitting. They run down the stairs to the bottom floor.

The team stacks on the door and Nathan peeks around the corner. As soon as he takes a look he sees a machine gun being set up on the roof.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Holy fuck.

CHAD
What sergeant?

Nathan grabs the radio to call James.

NATHAN
(into the radio)
Viper 6. You need to move. There is a heavy machine gun on the roof.

JAMES (O.S.)
Roger.

As soon as the vehicles begin to move the platoon takes fire from the roof of the Mosque.
JAMES (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Fuck. fuck. Move!!

The convoy drives around the corner out of sight. James comes back on the radio.

JAMES (CONT'D)
(into the radio)
Mosque or no Mosque. I'm calling air support!

Nathan turns to look at his team.

NATHAN
Hold here. Sergeant Mason is calling in the Apache's.

STEVEN
Hell yeah.

NATHAN
Fuck. Let's go back up top.

Nathan and his team run back to the roof and wait for air support to arrive. They hold just below the wall. Moments go back and they can hear the roar of the approaching Apache's.

The Apache's launch rockets onto the roof of the Mosque. Everything on the roof explodes in a cloud of fire and smoke.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
This shit is going to be all over the news tomorrow.

TREY
Hell yes it is.

Nathan glances over the wall at the roof of the Mosque.

NATHAN
Hand me the binoculars.

Chad gives Nathan the binoculars.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Damn it.

STEVEN
What sergeant?

NATHAN
There's still guys inside.

Nathan grabs the radio.
NATHAN (CONT'D)  
(into the radio)  
Viper 6. We still got guys inside.

JAMES  
(into the radio)  
Roger. We are going to have to go in. I want to avoid destroying the whole damn building.

NATHAN  
(into the radio)  
Roger.

Nathan hands the radio back to Chad.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
We're going in.

INT. NATHAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Stacey walks into April's room. She sees April lying on the bed with the teddy bear Nathan bought for her beside her.

Stacey sits beside April on the bed and begins stroking her hair. She picks up a family picture that is sitting on the night stand and smiles.

Stacey leans over and pulls April's blanket up over her. She gets up and walks toward the door. As she walks out she turns to look at April one more time, then smiles and shuts the door.

EXT. BAGHDAD - DAY

Nathan's team and the rest of his squad (four additional Soldier's), are standing beside James' vehicle. They are establishing a plan to enter the building.

JAMES  
Alright, We separate by squad. One squad per side. Atkins. Your squad has the back entrance. Let's kick some ass and flush these guys out. Roger?

NATHAN  
Huh!

Nathan and his squad run back to their vehicles and get in.
NATHAN (CONT'D)
Listen guys. We pull around to the rear of the building. Stay close to the building. Gunners and drivers...stay in and cover the exits.

MIKE
Roger sergeant.

NATHAN
Alright let's move.

The trucks begin toward their objectives. Nathan's squad gets out of the vehicle and Nathan turns around toward Mike.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Mendoza. You see weapons...light their asses up.

MIKE
Huh!

Nathan's squad stacks up beside the rear entrance.

NATHAN
Breacher. You know what to do.

Steven runs up to the door with the sledge hammer. He hits the lock two times really hard and the doors flings open.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Go! Go!

The squad enters the building and begins to clear it. They come to the first room and see two men standing there with AK-47's. They shoot both of them and continue moving.

As they come around the corner there is a man with a knife. The man looks at Nathan intensely.

MAN
Amriki.

Nathan shoots him twice in the chest.

NATHAN
Don't bring a knife to a gun fight.

Nathan's squad continue around the corner but see nobody else there. Nathan meets James in the middle of the room.

JAMES
You guys find anything?
NATHAN
Just bad guys.

James catches his breath.

JAMES
We found a weapons cache over here. A big one.

NATHAN
Serious?

JAMES
Yep. Why they would use a Mosque is beyond me.

INT. CAR - DAY

Stacey is driving to pick April up from JENNA, early twenties, a trusted family friend. She pulls the car into the driveway.

EXT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Stacey rings the door bell and Jenna answers, holding April, who is wrapped in a blanket.

JENNA
Hey!

STACEY
Hello.

Jenna hands April to Stacey.

JENNA
She's been restless all day.

STACEY
Uh oh. Somebody's going to need a nap.

Jenna hands April to Stacey.

STACEY (CONT'D)
Thank you so much. I don't know what I'd do without you.

JENNA
You are most welcome.

Stacey pulls April in close.
STACEY
Come on baby.

Stacey carries April to the car. She puts her in a car seat, gets into the car and they take off.

As Stacey is driving down the road, news of a big weapons cache found in Iraq comes on the radio.

INT. BRIEFING ROOM - DAY

Nathan's entire company is sitting in the briefing room listening to Captain Joseph. He is giving a mission briefing for a new task force.

CAPTAIN JOSEPH
We are being tasked to participate in OPERATION ARROWHEAD RIPPER. We are going into Baqubah. It is a neighborhood to the north east of Baghdad. Since the formation of the Islamic State, they have claimed this area as their capital. And we need to flush them out. No more safe havens for terrorists. We are not driving. We will be inserted via chopper. Now, this is a completely hostile area. Forget hearts and minds for now. You spot a threat, eliminate it. Roger?

EVERYONE
Huh!!!

CAPTAIN JOSEPH
Alright move out.

Everyone gets up and makes their way to waiting choppers outside. James stops Nathan in the doorway.

JAMES
Hey Atkins.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Sergeant?

JAMES (CONT'D)
You stick close to your guys. I have a bad feeling about this one.

NATHAN
Will do.
JAMES
Watch each others backs and we should come out of this just fine ok?

NATHAN
Roger that sergeant.

EXT./ INT. BAQUBAH - NIGHT

The Blackhawk helicopters come up to the insertion area, just outside of town. The helicopters land and the Soldiers get out.

Nathan's squad runs toward a nearby abandoned building. They go inside and into an empty room on the bottom floor.

Helicopters can be heard overhead. Nathan turns to look at his squad.

NATHAN
Guys. Remember your training. I need one hundred percent from each of you. We are clearing these buildings one at a time before we reunite with the rest of the company.

MIKE
Roger that sergeant.

TREY
Hooaahh!

NATHAN
Alright. Form up on me. Let's go get it done.

The squad moves outside and hugs the walls while moving down the street. They stop by the front door of the next building over. Nathan turns to his squad.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Alright guys. Look. We are going to divide this up into teams. Alpha team you go with SERGEANT HOLMES. Clear the next building. The rest of you are on me.

Sergeant Holmes team moves to the next building. Nathan's team begins clearing their building. They move into the first room, glance around, and see nothing. They continue.
As they exit the first room they meet rifle fire coming from down the hall. Mike fires and both insurgents go down.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Move! Move!

They get to the second room and it is locked.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Mike.

Mike goes up to the door and kicks it as hard as he can. The door flies open. There is an insurgent holding an Iraq woman hostage. He yells at Nathan's team.

INSURGENT
la tuqtarb!

NATHAN
Motherfucker.

Nathan yells at his team.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Everyone get back!

CHAD
What we going to do sergeant?

Nathan kneels down.

NATHAN
Hold on. Let me think.

MIKE
Sergeant. I have an idea.

NATHAN
What?

MIKE
Shoot him in the leg he might go down. Then we can get him.

Nathan glances up at his team.

STEVEN
That could work sergeant.

Nathan gets back up.
NATHAN
Let's give it a shot. If not, just toss a grenade and call it collateral damage.

The team stacks the door.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Mike.

MIKE
Roger.

Mike moves to just before the opening to the room. He peeks in and fires one shot and hits the insurgent in the foot. The insurgent goes down. The Iraqi woman runs out.

NATHAN
Move.

The team runs into the room and Nathan fires a shot into the insurgent's chest, killing him. Nathan turns around.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Alright. Go!

The team continues down the hall. Two insurgents run out of the last room and fire at Nathan and his team. Chad is hit in his hand and drops his weapon.

CHAD
Oh fuck!!

The team fires at the two insurgents and they go down. Nathan kneels beside Chad.

CHAD (CONT'D)
Fuck it hurts sergeant!

Nathan grabs the radio.

NATHAN
(into the radio)

JAMES
(into the radio)
This is Viper 6.

NATHAN
(into the radio)
Sergeant. We got wounded. Singleton. We need medics over here!
JAMES
(into the radio)
Roger that.

Moments go by and two medics enter the building and run to Nathan's position.

NATHAN
His hand is fucked up.

MEDIC
Alright we'll get him out.

The medics wrap a bandage around Chad's hand.

MEDIC (CONT'D)
You ok to walk?

CHAD
Yes it just hurts like a bitch.

MEDIC
Ok come on.

The medics escort Chad out of the building.

NATHAN
Ok let's move.

Nathan and his team proceed out of the building. They look up front and notice explosions and the glow of gun fire ahead.

STEVEN
Where to sergeant?

Nathan looks around and spots a building ahead of them. He grabs the radio.

NATHAN
(into the radio)
Viper 6 we are moving to a building in the north east corner. Going to go to the roof for a better vantage.

Gunfire can be heard on James end of the radio.

JAMES
(into the radio)
Roger that. We are encountering a lot of resistance so it may be a few before we can reach you.
NATHAN
(into the radio)
Roger.

Nathan and his team proceed across the street to the next building. They run into the building and spot two insurgents firing out of a window at the opposite end.

MIKE
Hostiles.

The team opens up on the two insurgents, dropping them.

NATHAN
Let's move to the staircase. Come on. Watch your corners!

The team continues down the hall. As they approach the stairs there is a lone insurgent running down the stairs. Nathan points his weapon at him.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
adhab 'iilaa allah.

Nathan opens fire and the insurgent drops, sliding down the stairs.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Let's go.

The team continues up the staircase. As they reach the top they overhear three insurgents around the corner yelling down to the street.

Nathan's team stacks the door.

STEVEN
What are they saying?

NATHAN
No idea. When I say go we are going to round the corner and get rid of these assholes.

Nathan catches his breath.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Ready...go!

The team rounds the corner and opens fire on the three insurgents. All three fall off of the roof.

Nathan's team runs up to the wall and kneels down. Nathan glances over the wall down to the street.
He sees insurgents holed up inside of a big building about 100 yards from where they are. Apaches are flying overhead, firing down the street.

Nathan grabs the radio.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
(into the radio)
Viper 6. There is a big insurgent element inside of the building directly across from us.

James can barely hear Nathan. There is a lot of fire on the other end of the radio.

JAMES
(into the radio)
Say again sergeant!

NATHAN
(into the radio)
I said there is a huge insurgent element across from us! Over!

JAMES
(into the radio)
Roger. We are encountering a lot of resistance! Just wait there for us!

NATHAN
(into the radio)
Roger that.

MIKE
Sergeant. Why don't we call a fucking JDAM on these fuckers?

NATHAN
Because Mendoza. We are too close.

MIKE
Oh. Good point.

NATHAN
We could call in the Apache's. Yeah. That's it.

Nathan grabs the radio. He dials in the Apache frequency.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
(into the radio.)
Ghost one this is viper 2-4. Over
PILOT
Ghost one. Send your traffic.

NATHAN
(into the radio)
Roger. Need air support at the building across from us. Over.

The team waits momentarily. They hear the loudness of the Apache's as they hover overhead.

The Apache's fire rockets into the building, obliterating everything in sight.

MIKE
Hell yeah!

STEVEN
American firepower bitches!

NATHAN
Come on!

Nathan and his team proceed back down the stairs. As they come up to the door they stack on it.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Alright guys. We are going to make a run across to the other building over there. On my mark.

The team waits for Nathan to give the word. Nathan peeks around the corner.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Ready? Go! Go! Go!

Nathan and his team run out and dart across the street. Just before they can reach the other building an RPG is fired from the roof.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
RPG!!!

Nathan dives to knock Steven out of the way. Everything goes dark.
INT. FIELD HOSPITAL - DAY

Staff Sergeant Nathan Atkins is lying in a hospital bed, with his head half bandaged, and his right leg missing. He is barely conscious.

His blouse is laying over a chair, with his Ranger tab visible. Doctor's and nurses are running around the tiny hospital, tending to the wounded.

There is a lot of chatter in the room and you can't really make out what they are saying. A man who is very familiar to Sergeant Atkins walks up to his bedside.

The man is Sergeant Steven Butler. Nathan can't make out his face. Corporal Butler grabs Sergeant Atkins' hand.

STEVEN
You'll be alright buddy. You hang in there you hear!

There is minimal response from Nathan; only the shaking of his head. The nurse walks into the room.

NURSE
Hi. Who are you?

Steven hesitates.

STEVEN
I am the reason he is lying in this bed. It should be me.

The nurse looks confused at Steven.

NURSE
I am sure that's not true.

STEVEN
It is.

NURSE
War is complicated. It's ok to feel empathy.

Steven just looks at the nurse with a blank stare.

NURSE (CONT'D)
I'll just leave you two alone.

The nurse walks out of the room. Steven walks back over to Nathan and grabs his hand, a tear rolling down his face. Steven begins talking to Nathan.
STEVEN
Sergeant. It's me. Butler. I don't know if you can hear me or not.

Steven pauses.

STEVEN (CONT'D)
I really don't know what to say right now. I feel really awful that it is you lying there, and not me.

STEVEN (CONT'D)
But um...I just want you to know how grateful I am. You are my hero. I probably wouldn't be standing here if it weren't for you.

Steven grabs a piece of paper from his pocket and opens it up. It is a coloring that Steven's kid did for Nathan.

STEVEN (CONT'D)
My kid drew this for you.

Steven sits the drawing on Nathan's bedside.

STEVEN (CONT'D)
I'll just leave it here for you.

The rest of Nathan's squad walks up to the doorway and sees Steven.

STEVEN (CONT'D)
Hey guys.

MIKE
He awake yet?

STEVEN
Nope. The nurse said he'll be out for a while.

TREY
We'll be in the waiting room waiting for you.

STEVEN
Ok.
INT. HOSPITAL - MORNING

Nathan and his family are walking out of the hospital. Nathan is wearing a prosthetic leg and walking with a cane. Stacey is holding his arm as they walk across the parking lot.

STACEY
Honey slow down.

NATHAN
I'm good.

They continue walking toward the car. Stacey helps Nathan swing his leg inside the car. Stacey gets in.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
What time is the ceremony?

STACEY
One o'clock

INT. CEREMONY - DAY

Nathan and his family are sitting next to wounded Soldiers by the stage in the theater.

The battalion Commander, COLONEL POWELL, early fifties, is calling out names. He gets to Nathan's name.

COLONEL POWELL
Staff Sergeant Nathan Atkins.

Nathan makes his way up to the stage with Stacey's assistance. He walks to the front of where Colonel Powell is standing and does a hastily right face, balancing on his cane. Stacey steps back.

Colonel Powell pulls a Purple Heart out and pins it to Nathan's chest.

COLONEL POWELL (CONT'D)
Son. This Purple Heart is awarded to you for your gallantry in the face of the enemy, and the exercise of your duties as per the president of the United States of America. This country owes you a debt of gratitude.

Colonel Powell shakes Nathan's hand. Nathan then salutes Colonel Powell, and he returns it. Everyone in the room begins to applaud as Nathan walks back to his seat.
EXT. PARK - DAY

Nathan, Stacey, and April are sitting in a park watching the ducks on the water. Their newborn girl, HANNAH (6 months) is in a stroller. There are a few people in the park, and kites flying overhead.

April runs over to the water to throw crackers for the ducks.

STACEY
Honey. Don't fall into the water!

Nathan glances over at Stacey.

NATHAN
Amazing isn't it?

STACEY
What's that?

NATHAN
Freedom. Being able to just sit here and enjoy the outdoors. I almost forgot how nice it is.

STACEY
Honey. You still thinking about that?

NATHAN
Kind of. I feel very lucky to be alive.

Stacey grabs Nathan's hand.

STACEY
I know babe.

NATHAN
Other guys weren't so lucky.

STACEY
I know. But you can't feel guilty about that.

NATHAN
It's a work in progress. Time, time, time.

April runs back over to Nathan. He picks her up and sits her on the seat.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Hey baby.
APRIL
Daddy. I want some ducks.

Nathan and Stacey laugh.

NATHAN
I'll work on that sweet heart.

Nathan and Stacey hear some kids walking up behind them. One of them yells over to Nathan.

KID 1
What happened to your leg mister?

Nathan glances up at the kid.

NATHAN
War.

KID 2
Wow. So you are a war hero?

NATHAN
No. I am no hero.

KID 2
Dude. I personally don't agree with the war. But I have mad respect for you guys.

NATHAN
Thanks man.

KID 1
Keep the faith bro!

Nathan shakes the kids hand, and he walks away.

NATHAN
That was interesting.

INT. VA HOSPITAL - DAY

Nathan and his family are walking across the parking lot to their car. Just before they get there Nathan trips on a rock and falls forward.

A pedestrian sees him and runs over to help Stacey pick him up. Nathan gets his balance and Stacey looks over at the pedestrian.

STACEY
Thank you so much.
PEDESTRIAN
Oh you are very welcome. Thank you for your service.

EXT. STREET - DAY
Nathan and his family are driving down the road on the way home. They pass a Veterans' cemetery.
Nathan is staring at the cemetery, in deep thought. He looks back at Stacey, and she grabs his leg affectionately.

INT. NATHAN'S HOUSE - DAY
Nathan and Stacey are sitting in the living room watching television. The door bell rings.

NATHAN
Nathan goes to stand up.

STACEY
No honey. Stay there. I'll get it.

Stacey opens the door and it is Steven Butler.

STACEY (CONT'D)
Hi. You are Butler right?

STEVEN
Yes mam.

STACEY
Please come in.

STEVEN
Thank you.

Steven walks in and Nathan turns to look at him.

NATHAN
Butler? Hey! What are you doing here?

Nathan uses his cane to pull himself up.

STEVEN
Hey sergeant. Is that your new girl?

Steven points to Hannah.
NATHAN
Yep. That's her.

STEVEN
She's cute.

NATHAN
Thanks.

Steven grabs Nathan's arm.

STEVEN
Is there somewhere we can talk?

Nathan looks around.

NATHAN
Sure. Let's go out back.

Nathan and Steven walk to the back porch and sit down.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
What's up?

STEVEN
Well sergeant. I never got a chance to thank you.

NATHAN
Thank me?

Steven nods his head.

STEVEN
If it weren't for you I might be sitting in your place. Or worse, dead.

NATHAN
It's nothing man. I was just doing my job.

STEVEN
I know but. I just want you to know how grateful my family and I are. To us, you are a hero.

NATHAN
Well Butler. It's like I told you a while ago. There is a lot you don't know about me.

Nathan gives Steven a huge smile.
NATHAN (CONT'D)
Go raise your family. Be successful. And have a good life. That's an order!

Steven stands up in front of Nathan and salutes him. Nathan smiles and salutes Steven back.

STEVEN
Hooaahh sergeant!

Nathan and Steven begin walking back too the house, as Steven helps him walk.

NATHAN (V.O.)
People always thank us for our service. It's nice to hear. But there is one thing most don't understand. We do it for the one standing beside us. We join to serve our country. But, we end up serving our buddies. And I would do it all over again if it meant that my guys could come home to their loved ones.

FADE OUT.