

Heroes Aren't Born

by

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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 convoy's 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.

STEVEN

Hooaah.

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 HMMVV"s 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)  
Shit. Hey babe. I gotta go. Yeah  
look I'll call you later. Love you  
too. Bye.

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 five 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. FALLUJAH - 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 an 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  
Hooaah!.

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 mother fuckers  
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 base 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 mans 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 mans arms behind his back and put zip tie cuffs on his wrists.

STEVEN  
Stay still mother fucker.

NATHAN  
Let's go.

Steven grabs the mans 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  
(into the phone)  
Hey baby. How'd it go?

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

NATHAN  
(into the phone)  
It went ok. No issues.

STACEY  
(into the phone)  
You sure?

NATHAN  
(into 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 a 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.

EOD TECH

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. CHERYLS 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 door way 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

Seriously? Oh my God. Wow. That's great.

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 hmvv'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 door way.

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.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
Clear. Move on.

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)  
Viper 6. Viper 2-4.

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)  
adhhab '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 over hear 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 door way 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./ EXT. 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 looks over at him.

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.