

The Chosen Few

by

Daniel Johnson

Based on a true story

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BLACK SCREEN

SUPER: In the spring of 2007, American Paratroopers were deployed to one of the most dangerous regions on Earth, the mountains of eastern Afghanistan.

FADE IN:

We see the RUGGED Wyagal Valley in pre-dawn light.

SUPER: Their tour of duty would last 448 days.

We hear.

BELLA MIKE (O.S.)
Two Five, this is Two Six. We can't
raise the Afghan guard tower, over.

EXT. COMBAT OUTPOST BELLA - BEFORE DAWN

SUPER: 26 *January 2008*, One Hundred and Sixty-Five days remaining.

KAHLER (O.S.)
This is Two Five. Stand by. Let me
check it out.

Five heavily armed American soldiers creep silently through scattered trees, approaching a fortified guard tower. The men stop; kneeling in silence. Their leader, Sergeant First Class KAHLER, tall, lean and handsome, whispers...

KAHLER (CONT'D)
The fuckers are probably asleep again.
Stay here.

He reaches the bottom of a short ladder.

KAHLER (CONT'D)
Pssst.
(beat)
PSSSSSSST! Ahmed! Wake the fuck
up!

At the top of the ladder, his head at floor level, a darkened doorway, muffled sounds, movement. Suddenly; a GUNSHOT!

FADE TO BLACK.

We HEAR; shouts! Several bursts of gunfire!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CAMP BLESSING - MORNING

SUPER: *Camp Blessing*

A plywood sign, on it we see...

HEADQUARTERS, 2ND BATTALION, 503RD PARACHUTE INFANTRY, 173RD AIRBORNE.

Behind the sign, a door.

First Sergeant (1SG) Scott BEESON, lanky country boy type, late 30's, exits the door into the cold morning air. He stops outside, allowing his eyes to adjust to the morning sunlight. After a dip of Copenhagen, he zips his thick Gortex jacket while gazing intently across the compound.

A hundred yards away, a line of up-armored HMMWVs (pronounced Hum Vee). A dozen soldiers, around, under and on top of the vehicles, mounting weapons for an upcoming patrol.

The 1SG's boots crunch across the snow covered gravel, the line of vehicles getting closer. In the distance, a Black Hawk helicopter lifts into the air, joining two very angry looking Apache gun ships. BEESON watches their departure.

SOLDIER (O.S.)

Oh shit. Here comes the first sergeant.

A warning to the others.

SERGEANT

AT EASE!

Everyone stops working instantly. Those on the ground snap to Parade Rest (feet shoulder width apart, hands behind their backs). To the First Sergeant.

SERGEANT (CONT'D)

Good morning, First Sern't.

1SG BEESON

Sergeant STOCKARD?

SERGEANT

He's in the back. At the connex.

A nod from the grizzled older warrior.

BEESON

Carry on.

Behind the line of gun trucks, Sergeant First Class STOCKARD and Staff Sergeant David DZWIK (pronounced ZWIK) stand talking

loosely with three others. The morning is cold, the men wear black wool caps, their hands shoved deep into pockets; a 'no-no'.

The men snap to when BEESON appears. STOCKARD and DZWIK, athletic men in their early thirties; veterans.

STOCKARD

Mornin' Top.

To the others.

BEESON

How 'bout you gents shove off, let the grown ups talk a minute.

STOCKARD's stuck, but the others move like beetles to escape what can only be bad news, or an ass chewing.

BEESON (CONT'D)

Not you DZWIK.

Shit.

As soon as the others leave and only *after* making sure no one can see *him*, BEESON shoves his own hands deep into his pockets. STOCKARD and DZWIK share a quick look.

BEESON (CONT'D)

Sergeant KAHLER is dead.

Stunned. Shocked. STOCKARD has known the guy for years.

STOCKARD

What? When?

BEESON

'Bout an hour ago.

STOCKARD

What happened?

BEESON

One of the Afghan guards shot him.

STOCKARD

What the fu...

BEESON

Don't know. They're still trying to figure it out.

(beat)

Might be an accident.

(MORE)

BEESON (CONT'D)

(beat)

But right now, second platoon is ready to kill every Afghan up there.

We can only imagine.

BEESON (CONT'D)

Cap'n MYER and the colonel are flying up there now.

(beat)

They're gonna take Kahler's body to Jalalabad.

STOCKARD and DZWIK, downcast. Trying to process.

BEESON (CONT'D)

Look. Second platoon's still got another month to go at Bella before they rotate back here, and *right now*, they need a platoon sergeant.

Looking up now.

BEESON (CONT'D)

Sern't Dzwik, that's gonna be you.

On DZWIK, a deep breath.

BEESON (CONT'D)

You up for it?

Silence, then.

STOCKARD

Yeah. He's ready, Top.

DZWIK

Do I have a choice?

BEESON

Nope.

Accepting now.

DZWIK

When do I leave?

BEESON

Tonight. Got you a seat on the resupply bird. You got the rest of the day to pack your shit.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMP BLESSING - EVENING

BEESON, DZWIK and STOCKARD walking towards the flight line, in the distance sits the Army's modern pack mule; a double-rotored Chinook helicopter.

BEESON

It's a good platoon. The squad leaders are young but solid. Lieutenant BROSTROM, shit, he's young and cocky, but he's good. You'll see.

(beat)

Just keep a grip on him. He likes to get into the thick of a fight. Make sure he remembers that he's the platoon leader, NOT a rifleman.

The trio stops. BEESON extends his hand.

BEESON (CONT'D)

Safe flight.

The first sergeant walks away, not looking back. The two friends remain.

STOCKARD

Look man. Being a platoon sergeant is the best job in the Army. You'll see.

DZWIK

Heard you say that a million times.

(beat)

What about replacing a dead platoon sergeant? How's that work?

A soft punch to the shoulder.

STOCKARD

That's just bad timing man. You can't change *that*.

DZWIK

I know. I know.

At the helicopter, a crew chief waves impatiently.

STOCKARD

Get going.

As DZWIK strides towards his waiting ride, he gives a week wave over his shoulder, then replaces it with the bird.

STOCKARD (CONT'D)
See ya in a few weeks!

CUT TO:

INT. BELLA COMMAND POST - LATER

SUPER: *Combat Outpost Bella*

The radioman, Private First Class HAYES, early 20s, slight build but cocky and sure of himself, sits in front of a bank of radios. Two other soldiers bundle up before stepping into the cold for their turn on the perimeter.

We hear, a call from headquarters.

ROCK X-RAY (O.S.)
Chosen Two Six, Rock X-ray over.

HAYES
This is Two Six Romeo, send it.

ROCK X-RAY (O.S.)
Got a message for your Six element.
Your new platoon sergeant will be on
the resupply tonight.

HAYES
Roger. I'll relay.

The little brother of the platoon, Gunnar ZWILLING, 20, can't help but comment.

ZWILLING
Damn. Sern't Kahler ain't even cold
yet.

The big red neck, Specialist Pruitt RAINEY, of Haw River North Carolina, sarcastically adds his two cents.

RAINEY
I bet they're sending one of those
rejects from brigade, trying to see
a little combat.

HAYES, looking around, making sure he won't get in trouble, back on the radio.

HAYES
This is Six Romeo again. Does that
replacement have a name?

ROCK X-RAY (O.S.)
Uh, code name ZWICK, over.

HAYES

Good copy.

RAINEY, never missing a chance to pick on the smaller
ZWILLING.

RAINEY

Didn't you knock his motorcycle over
back in Italy? Fucked up his handle
bars right?

Always the victim, here *and* back then.

ZWILLING

That was an accident man.

HAYES

Think he's still mad at you?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CH-47 OVER COP BELLA - NIGHT

A nervous DZWIK, lost in deep thought, sits strapped inside
the belly of the thundering beast as it flies through the
cold night air.

The Chinook descends into the tiniest landing zone (LZ). A
hurricane of snow, dust and dirt.

DZWIK crouching under the down wash as the beast quickly
climbs up and away. He follows his new lieutenant into the
command post.

DZWIK (V.O.)

What do I say now? Glad to be here?
Good to see you again?

As they walk, he feels many eyes. The men are still angry,
frustrated. We can feel it. He nods to one of the staff
sergeants. On the inside, he's a bundle of nerves, but his
stride projects confidence.

Now inside. He's welcome, but not really. They know him,
respect him, but the shock of losing KAHLER is very raw; and
will be for some time.

The lieutenant downloads his gear. They can now speak without
having to yell.

DZWIK (CONT'D)

How you guys holding up, sir?

BROSTROM, 24 year old buff Hawaiian, exhausted, blood shot
eyes. Emotionally drained.

BROSTROM
Tough day is all.

To the point.

DZWIK
I'd like to speak with the sergeants.

BROSTROM
When?

DZWIK
If possible, now.

Brostrom, nods to HAYES who quickly puts out a call on the radio.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BELLA COMMAND POST - MOMENTS LATER

Assembled before us, the back bone of Second Platoon. The sergeants that manage the day-to-day fight. Athletic and rugged. All on their second tours.

Staff Sergeant Sean SAMAROO, mid-twenties, medium height, stocky, not someone you'd want to piss off.

Staff Sergeant DENTON, the quiet one, but a demon under fire.

Sergeant Issah GARCIA, the Long Beach native usually found with a pleasant smile, but not now.

Lastly, SGT Ryan PITTS, the attached Forward Observer, mature beyond his years.

The men before him are very angry, still processing Kahler's sudden, violent loss. They are not in the mood for any pat on the back or some lame ass speech.

Without a hint of apprehension, DZWIK sets the tone.

DZWIK
I'll keep this short.
(beat)
Most of you know me. We've jumped together. We've run ranges together. Trained together.
(beat)
I've never been the '*new sheriff in town*' type, and I'm not gonna start now.

Their anger fades ever so slightly; they witness 'continuity of government' in action.

DZWIK (CONT'D)

Run your squads, keep 'em focused.
Tell me what you need. That's why
I'm here.

(beat)

In four weeks, we rotate back to
Blessing, then we can relax. Let's
just keep everybody alive till then,
okay?

Any trace of nervousness or trepidation now evaporated.

DZWIK (CONT'D)

That's it. Thanks.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COMBAT OUTPOST BELLA - BEFORE DAWN

We are behind DZWIK's broad-shoulders, striding purposely
down a short hallway, three poncho covered doorways on both
sides. He sticks his head into each.

Confident but with a little compassion.

DZWIK

Time to get up. Stand-to in twenty
minutes.

The men, begin the morning ritual. The quarters are SPARTAN,
dusty and dank. Weapons, ammunition and all manner of
equipment hang from every conceivable nail or post.

Absentmindedly, they dress silently but quickly. We follow
the heavily armed young men as they exit, stepping outside
with them into the cold pre-dawn darkness. They move without
speaking; they've done "Stand To" hundreds of times.

CUT TO:

EXT. COMBAT OUTPOST BELLA - CONTINUOUS

The camera pans around the inside of the perimeter. The men
moving about like shadows reach their assigned positions,
weapons at the ready.

We peer into the darkness. The rugged terrain is pitch black,
the sky; dark blue, but discernable.

CUT TO:

EXT. ON THE HIGH GROUND - CONTINUOUS

From inside one of the many structures nestled against the steep terraced slope, we find the local Taliban commander and two of his henchmen observing the American outpost below.

Thirty five year old SADIQ claims to be a true believer, but in reality, he's a wanna be warlord, hoping to make a name for himself.

SADIQ

(subtitled)

What news from Harquanni? Will he send us the men we ask for?

NUMBER ONE

(subtitled)

No. Not until the weather changes.

SADIQ

What about weapons? Mortars?

NUMBER ONE

With in the week we can expect the first shipment.

SADIQ

Good.

(beat)

Very good.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. COMBAT OUTPOST BELLA - MOMENTS LATER

DZWIK and BROSTROM, standing behind a wall of HESCO barriers (wire mesh and canvas, filled with dirt). Their heads rotating back and forth slowly, the outpost eerily quiet. The camera turns away now peering outside the perimeter. There's just enough light to see that the outpost is surrounded by high, RUGGED terrain. The view takes our breath!

Back inside the perimeter. HESCOs form the walls. They are tattered, torn. Shrapnel and bullets have caused this damage. Along one wall, a recent mortar strike has scarred the ground, someone has recently lost some, no, a LOT of blood here. A dried pool; heavy splatters decorate one HESCO.

Across the face of another, a painted mural on plywood, depicting the names and dates of fallen comrades. There are six in all.

ANGLE ON PLYWOOD. "THE CHOSEN FEW" LISTED VERTICALLY.

9 NOV 2007: 1LT Ferrara, SGT Mersman, SPC Langevin, SPC Roque, and SPC Lancour.

We linger on the last date and name. The heavy black paint only hours old.

26 JAN 2008: SFC Kahler

It begins to snow; large heavy flakes.

DISSOLVE TO:

SUPER: *Camp Blessing, Five Months Later*

EXT. CAMP BLESSING - DAWN

DZWIK jogging along the inside of the Forward Operating Base (FOB). His shorts and running shoes indicate that the seasons have changed. It's a spectacular sunrise, one that declares ALL is well in the world! A wonderful new day; full of promise.

He passes under a guard tower where we see..

25 year old, Specialist Jason BOGAR, taking pictures of the inspiring sunrise. He gives DZWIK a wave as he runs by.

The run ends close to the headquarters building where we find the first sergeant, waiting. Dripping sweat, DZWIK stands with hands on hips, catching his breath.

DZWIK

Mornin' Top.

BEESON

How's the run?

DZWIK

Besides getting old? Not too bad.

BEESON

Old? Shit. You ain't even close to old.

DZWIK can only grin.

BEESON (CONT'D)

I got the first cut of the manifest.

A big, beautiful smile now.

DZWIK

Oh yeah?

BEESON

You and me are on the last lift out.
 (beat)
 We fly on the twenty-first.

DZWIK

Shit, Top! That's eighteen days. I
 can handle that.

BEESON

Come see me later, I'll give you the
 rest.

DZWIK

Will do.

BEESON

Have a good 'n.

CUT TO:

INT. CAMP BLESSING - MORNING

We are in the barracks room of 2nd Platoon. Two sets of
 plywood bunks against opposing walls. Along the back wall,
 the Lieutenant's bunk. BROSTROM swings his legs out of bed.
 He's barefoot, wearing only black PT shorts, his torso,
 muscular.

From inside the rucksack on the floor, he removes a sand
 colored t-shirt. Sleepily, he pulls it over his head then
 tries to insert one of his muscled arms into the sleeve, but
 his arm cannot go. The sleeve is sewn closed.

DZWIK enters happily, amused as he finds BROSTROM standing,
 continuing to struggle with the shirt.

PITTS

What's the matter LT? You havin'
 trouble?

BROSTROM

What the fuck?

He takes the t-shirt off, examines the sleeves, realizing
 that he is the butt of another prank.

BROSTROM (CONT'D)

Did you do this PITTS?

24 year old, Sergeant Ryan PITTS, laughs aloud, his towering
 frame shaking. At six feet four inches, he could be playing
 for U-CONN. The others smile to each other as they continue
 to dress.

BROSTROM (CONT'D)
 Sern't D, any chance we can leave
 PITTS here? Attach him to first
 infantry?

CUT TO:

INT. ANOTHER 2ND PLT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Specialist Gunnar ZWILLING, a younger version of Johnny Depp, already wearing VERY worn pants and t-shirt, seated on the bottom bunk. He reaches down grabbing an equally WORN combat boot. Absentmindedly, he shoves a foot deep into the boot. As he does, shaving cream squirts over the top. He looks down.

From across the room, the hearty laughter of big red-headed RAINEY.

RAINEY
 Boom! Gotcha!

ZWILLING
 Awe man! This is the only pair I
 have left you dumb fuck. What were
 you thinking?

RAINEY
 I'm thinking eighteen days mother
 fucker. We get back to Italy you
 can buy all the shoes you want.

ZWILLING throws the other boot at RAINEY's big head, it bounces harmlessly off his muscular shoulder.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING FACILITY - MOMENTS LATER

Breakfast! The only the thing the Army always does right. The men are happy, laughing, enjoying themselves. Their ticket home almost in reach.

CUT TO:

INT. GYM - CONTINUOUS

RAINEY, HOVATER and BROSTROM working the weights. HOVATER, early 20s, Hollywood handsome, from East Tennessee, on the bench, face red with exertion. The lieutenant coaches, RAINEY spots.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMP BLESSING - CONTINUOUS

At the motor pool we find Seattle native, BOGAR, Colin Farrel handsome, seated on the roof of one of the gun trucks, quietly cleaning his Squad Automatic Weapon (SAW). He's taking in the view, enjoying the beautiful morning.

On another vehicle, HAYES attempting to teach a baby-faced new guy, 18yr old KRUPA, how to load a fifty caliber machine gun.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMP BLESSING - LATER

A beautiful day; sunny and mild.

At the motor pool. The troopers of second platoon happily laying out weapons and equipment in front of the gun trucks. Some type of inspection.

Behind the vehicles, we join DZWIK, SAMAROO, GARCIA and PITTS, handing out equipment from inside 12 x 12 foot shipping containers (CONNEX). Their mood relaxed and jovial. DZWIK is now the energetic happy father figure of the platoon. The men are happy in their work.

DZWIK

So there I am. I've got one last chance to pass Jump Master School and my grader is the meanest, scariest black hat there.

We see...

A VERY muscular black man wearing camouflage trousers and a skin tight black t-shirt. On his head, the BLACK HAT of an Airborne School instructor. He stands menacingly before us, a clip board in one hand, a stop watch in the other.

He reads robotlike, his eyes peering daggers over the top.

BLACK HAT

Jump Master, you have five minutes to complete your inspection of three jumpers...

GARCIA (V.O.)

You failed the first test?

DZWIK

Did I? I pulled a hat trick dude. Over time, out of sequence AND I missed the major deficiency.

To their look.

DZWIK (CONT'D)

The static line on the first jumper was cut. Right on one of the retainers. I missed. So any way.

Back on Mr. Black Hat.

BLACK HAT

Time will start when you turn and face your first jumper.

(beat)

Do you have any questions?

DZWIK (V.O.)

Suddenly, I get an idea and I swear to God, I have no clue where it came from.

Mr. Hat still staring; waiting.

DZWIK (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I say, "Can I take a look at your clip board?".

SAMAROO (V.O.)

No way.

PITTS (V.O.)

What he do?

Mr. Black Hat, blinks once, then twice.

DZWIK (V.O.)

Dude looks around real cool like.

Left then right.

DZWIK (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Then he flips that clipboard around so I can see his score sheet. A two second look, then he flips it back. That's it.

GARCIA (V.O.)

See anything?

ANGLE ON CLIPBOARD, THE SCORE SHEET, THREE COLUMNS LABELED JUMPERS 1, 2, AND 3.

We see, under column one, a bold 'X' next to "Static Line Cut".

DZWIK (V.O.)
 The *only* thing, I MEAN the ONLY thing
 I saw was 'static line cut'.

BACK TO SCENE

PITTS
 That's a good thing, right?

DZWIK
 No! That's the worst thing! They
 never, I mean NEVER have the same
 major deficiency two tests in a row!
 I was stunned! Thought it was a
 trick to catch smart assed idiots
 like me.

(beat)
 I froze. Couldn't move, my mind
 just went blank. Here it is my *last*
 chance and I just fucked myself.

Back on Mr. Hat.

BLACK HAT
 Some time today Jump Master.

DZWIK (V.O.)
 I said 'fuck it' and turned around.

Now watching Mr. Black Hat grading DZWIK's inspection of his
 first of three jumpers. The front side of number one going
 well, but we can tell DZWIK is flustered, keeps shaking his
 head.

DZWIK (CONT'D)
 Turn!

The test jumper turns quickly, rooting silently for his
 inspector. Again, inspection smooth, but the testee visibly
 flustered.

DZWIK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 And then, there it was.

Close in on inspecting the static line attached to the back
 of the parachute. An obvious cut, right under a retaining
 band. It's *THE* Major Deficiency!

DZWIK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Static Line cut! Jumper's right
 side!

His nerves disappear, replaced with a smile. His hands fly
 through the rest of the inspection!

DZWIK (CONT'D)

I don't even remember the rest man!
 Couldn't believe it. I passed.

The others laugh. Another successful 'war story'. The 'there I was type' all soldiers love to tell and hear.

SAMAROO

I went to the very next class. Had
 the same dude for my inspection.
 Know what he said to me?

Waiting; smiling.

Mimicking Mr. Black Hat.

SAMAROO (CONT'D)

You have five minutes. Any questions?
 (beat)
 And no, you may NOT see my clipboard.

Loving it.

SAMAROO (CONT'D)

I thought "what kind a idiot would
 ask to see his clipboard".

From between the trucks, a smiling HOVATER appears, wishing he'd heard the joke.

HOVATER

Sern't D. The LT's here.

In front of the vehicles now. Equipment laid out on canvas tarps in front of each truck.

BROSTROM and a fresh-faced young captain approach. BROSTROM's uniform is worn and very faded, the captain's, fresh and clean. The difference is striking. DZWIK joins the arrivals, snapping a relaxed yet proper salute.

DZWIK

Gentlemen.

BROSTROM

Captain Davis, my platoon sergeant,
 DZWIK.

DAVIS

Nice to meet you.

Behind them, we see activity at the vehicles. Inside the windshields, card board signs suddenly appear.

CLOSE ON SIGNS:

Owner Motivated (lined through), DESPERATE to sell!

Free to ANYONE in the First Infantry Division!

LOW Mileage, only blown up ONCE!

1 year supply ammo included, Free!

BACK TO SCENE

BROSTROM

Captain DAVIS is the S-4 for our replacements. He's gonna sign for everything.

Happily shaking the captain's hand.

DZWIK

My new best friend.

To BROSTROM.

DZWIK (CONT'D)

Are we waiting for the CO?

BROSTROM

No. He got called to battalion.

CUT TO:

INT. CAMP BLESSING - CONTINUOUS

Inside a short hallway in the bowels of headquarters.

Close on, the left shoulder of Captain Matthew MYER, the company commander. We see the coveted Ranger Tab above the unit patch of the 173rd. Between the patch and Ranger tab, another that says simply; Airborne.

Close in on his chest, viewed from the front while walking. In the center, his captain's bars. Above his heart; the much sought after Combat Infantry Badge, Airborne and Air Assault wings. We pull back to see,

He's Hugh Jackman handsome, calm and confident; West Point class 2001. A true poster boy.

He stops in front of a simple plywood door, on it we read: Battalion Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Ostlund.

MYER knocks respectfully.

OSTLUND (O.S.)

Yes!

MYER

You needed to see me, Sir?

OSTLUND

Come on in Matt.

(beat)

Got a change of mission for you.

OSTLUND, early 40s, trim and fit, sits behind a battered metal desk, a hand-me-down from every other commander before him. MYER takes a seat on an equally worn couch.

Straight to the point.

OSTLUND (CONT'D)

Task Force headquarters just sent down word.

(beat)

Operation Rock Move is now a 'Go'.

MYER

Any chance that will change, sir?

OSTLUND

No. Not this time.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CAMP BLESSING - AFTERNOON

Inside 2nd Platoon's living area. Music plays; rhythmic European TECHNO. We see RAINEY, reading "The World Series of Poker". BOGAR, editing photos on a laptop.

ZWILLING slowly enters scene. He takes a step then stops; the beat takes over.

HOVATER

Oh shit. Here he goes.

First one leg, popping with the beat, then the other. In four beats his whole body.

PHILLIPS

Yeah baby!

HOVATER joins him, mirrors his movements. The crowd encourages.

PHILLIPS (CONT'D)

The shopping cart!

In unison; HOVATER and ZWILLING mimic pushing a shopping cart. With their right hands, pulling invisible items off the shelf, to the beat!

STAFFORD

The Q-tip! The Q-tip!

Still in unison. The right hands; Q-tip to the ear, then toss, repeated.

MCKAIG

Baseball!

HOVATER swings, ZWILLING pitches, still to the beat. The boys are having a blast! A celebration! They're going home soon! Life is good; they've survived!

In the background, two socked feet appear. Wool knee highs, OD Green. Closer now, the total opposite of rhythm, pasty white 'chicken' legs. Then suddenly, a full body shot!

It's RAINEY! Super tight black underwear pulled up into the crack of his ass, his tan t-shirt rolled up and over what can only be described as a 'red neck' twenty-four pack. On top; RAINEY's stupid grin!

CROWD

Ohhhhh, helllll nooooo!

HOVATER

It just got weird, man!

The laughing continues. Nothing can dampen this jubilant mood!

Then we see the stocky form of Sergeant Erik AASS, the Norwegian born radioman for the company commander. His subdued expression at first unnoticed.

HOVATER (CONT'D)

Here he is! Aass, get your aaaaasssss in here!

AASS

Rock Move is a go; is on.

VOICE

What he say.

Someone kills the tunes.

AASS

We are going to Wanat. Just heard the captain spreading the word.

Stunned silence.

VOICE

Bullshit! They can't do that!

CUT TO:

INT. CAMP BLESSING - MOMENTS LATER

In the Chosen company command post (CP). A small and rudimentary office space for the management of the company. MYER and BEESON have just broken the news to BROSTROM and DZWIK. The young lieutenant is anything but happy.

BROSTROM

I don't get it! Why don't they just wait until the guys from First Infantry get here? We'd have *more* than enough people to build the god damned thing.

DZWIK, takes it in stride, mentally building a checklist of things to do.

MYER

It's all about assets John. We barely have enough to maintain Bella as it is.

As MYER speaks, he's stuffing items into his backpack.

MYER (CONT'D)

How do you think we'd get the assets to close it down, build a new one *AND* bring in a new unit?

(beat)

Are there easier ways of doing this? Yes, but there's no time for easy. Besides, as soon as the locals realize we are closing down Bella, they'll do their best to hit us before we're done. All you need to worry about is building up Wanat. By the time they see what your up to, we'll be on a plane back to Italy.

Packing complete, MYER cinches the top flap closed.

MYER (CONT'D)

I'm headed up to Bella now. I'll be with first platoon until we finish loading out. I'll link up with you at Wanat as soon as we're done up there.

CUT TO:

INT. CAMP BLESSING - MOMENTS LATER

With BROSTROM and DZWIK as they leave the CP.

BROSTROM

This is bullshit! Why now? We should'a done this months ago.

The father figure now.

DZWIK

Doesn't matter, sir. No use getting bent outta shape.

BROSTROM

The boys are the ones gonna get fired up. Holy shit, they're gonna lose their damn minds.

DZWIK

That's not your concern. You let me and the NCOs deal with that.

Reassuring.

DZWIK (CONT'D)

The boys 'll bitch but that's what Joes do. We'll let 'em vent, they'll be alright.

The pair reach the exit. As they walk out..

DZWIK (CONT'D)

Tell the truth, I'm more worried about first platoon getting out of Bella.

CUT TO:

INT. BELLA COMMAND POST - MOMENTS LATER

SUPER: *COP BELLA*

With THURMAN and STOCKARD. A beehive of activity all around, they've obviously gotten the word.

THURMAN

The CO's on his way. See if you can load out the excess comms gear and computer shit.

STOCKARD

We're gonna need more sling sets. See if the 'Ole Man can bring us some.

On STOCKARD's nonchalance.

THURMAN

You're not surprised? That we're
doin' this now?

STOCKARD

Not really. Ask me, it makes sense.
Should 'a been done awhile ago, but
it still makes sense.

(beat)

Ask me in eighteen days,

(beat)

I won't give a shit.

THURMAN

Fair enough.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ONE VALLEY AWAY - CONTINUOUS

Four rugged, heavily armed Afghan men descending a steep draw. Each man carries a medium sized backpack. Their weapons, Ak-47s, are carried at the ready. They reach several large boulders at the edge of a wooded thicket. The lead man reaches down and pulls a faded brown tarp, exposing a 60 millimeter mortar and a dozen mortar rounds.

CUT TO:

EXT. COMBAT OUTPOST BELLA - MOMENTS LATER

We are back with STOCKARD and THURMAN. Their eyes peer intently around the rugged terrain, pausing every few moments to concentrate on areas the enemy has used before.

In the background. Weapons cleaning, equipment inventories, packing tough boxes. The men are shocking to look at. Their uniforms are worn, torn and tattered. One man's boot is held together by several wraps of dark green industrial tape. It's been a LONG fucking fourteen months.

In the distance, the thumping of rotor blades approaching.

CUT TO:

EXT. BELLA VILLAGE MEDICAL CLINIC - CONTINUOUS

A beat up Land Rover and an equally tired Toyota pick up are parked out side the small village medical clinic. The two doctors and their handful of staff busy loading as many supplies as will fit into each vehicle.

A troubled middle-aged villager, HASAN, approaches.

HASAN
 (subtitled)
 You are leaving?

The good doctor is quite busy. He continues loading but answers.

DOCTOR
 (subtitled)
 The Americans are leaving the village.
 When they do, the Taliban will take
 everything. I can't let that happen.

HASAN
 But my son. He still needs you.

This gives the doctor pause. Good doctors are universally compassionate. He is no different. He places his hands on HASAN's shoulders.

DOCTOR
 Your son is strong. Like his father.
 (beat)
 The Americans leave, the Taliban
 move in, but they will find nothing.
 They will make their speeches, film
 their antics. Then they will move
 on. They will go where the Americans
 go.

He's back to loading.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
 After they're gone, we will return.

STAFF MEMBER
 (subtitled)
 That's the last of it doctor. We're
 ready when you are. *

DOCTOR
 Thank you.

The doctor reaches into a box, searches a moment, reading a label, finding what he needs.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
 Here is enough medication for a week's
 time. One pill every night on a
 full stomach.

HASAN accepts the medicine thankfully but is still concerned.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
 This is the best I can do for now,
 but I *will* return. You have my word.

With that, the medical party begins their evacuation of the village named Bella.

HASAN
 Peace be with you.

DOCTOR
 And to you my friend.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CH-47 OVER COP BELLA - LATER

MYER, sits calmly inside the large cargo helicopter. Two Apache gun ships fly escort, buzzing back and forth like angry Dragonflies.

As the thundering monster lands inside the perimeter MYER and Sergeant AASS quickly unbuckle their restraints and exit the aircraft. As they step off the ramp, mortar rounds begin landing nearby. Krump! Krump! Screams of "Incoming" from several locations.

The pair run as fast as they can into the command post.

CUT TO:

EXT. ONE VALLEY AWAY - CONTINUOUS

The four enemy fighters quickly stash the mortar then run away as their last rounds detonate in the distance. On the road below them, the two vehicles from the Medical Clinic approach. The men step into the road; brandishing their assault weapons.

ENEMY #1
 We're getting in.

DOCTOR
 You cannot! We are medical personnel!
 We are not a party to your fight.

ENEMY #1
 This is your lucky morning, brother.
 Until I say otherwise, you are part
 of this fight.

The civilians have no choice; comply or lay dead on the road.
 The fighters jump in.

ENEMY #1 (CONT'D)

Go!

The driver steps on the gas, hoping to expedite an end to this unfortunate development. In the bed, one of the holy warriors fails to hide his weapon.

CUT TO:

INT. BELLA COMMAND POST - CONTINUOUS

MYER enters the command post; a hive of activity.

THURMAN

OP One has eyes on two trucks haulin' ass to the south. I think that's our mortar team.

MYER

Positive ID?

THURMAN

Affirmative. Confirmed at least one weapon.

MYER

In broad daylight?

THURMAN

Don't know, sir, maybe it's the JV team.

A nod.

MYER

Get the Apaches on em'.

The green light given.

THURMAN

Hedgerow Five One, you are cleared to engage. Commander's initials, Mike Mike.

FIVE ONE (O.S.)

Roger, we are inbound with cannon and rockets.

CUT TO:

EXT. IN THE AIR ONE VALLEY AWAY - CONTINUOUS

The gun ships in tandem, one thousand meters from the target.

A view through the thermals; an AK clearly visible in the back of the second truck.

PILOT (O.S.)
I've got a visual on weapons.
(beat)
Engaging.

A dozen 30mm high explosive shells, the sound instantaneous. In the gun sight, the vehicles proceed unaware of impending doom.

Three seconds later, we witness the impact. Shells strike and explode across the engine compartment, through the wind shield and into the crowded bed. The trail vehicle brakes quickly but suffers the same fate.

PILOT (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Banking left. You're clear for rockets.

View from behind the trail gun ship, as lead exits left.

PILOT 2 (O.S.)
Confirmed clear... engaging.

Thermal view. Both trucks stopped, the dead and dying visible. The first missile strikes underneath the lead truck, the explosion launches the vehicle into the air, cart wheeling front over tail. With every flip, bodies and body parts fly in every direction.

WITH THE DOCTOR

Lying on his back at the edge of the road; seconds from death. From his point of view, an Apache gun ship flies across the valley, its deadly task complete.

CUT TO:

INT. BELLA COMMAND POST - CONTINUOUS

Cheers all Around! On the Captain; no emotion.

MYER
Send a squad to check it out, but keep packing. We're out of here in four days.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CAMP BLESSING - DAY

DZWIK with the assembled sergeants. Tension fills the room; their's not his, he's still the happy father figure, but he needs the sergeants on the same page; with him.

DZWIK

Look. 1st Platoon has the shit end of this stick. Chances are, they're gonna get hit while closing that bitch down.

A frown. Don't they get it?

DZWIK (CONT'D)

The local shit heads KNOW we've been planning to leave that fucker and I'll bet money they won't pass on a chance to take a shot at it, maybe even try to knock down a Chinook.

He looks sternly into each of their eyes.

DZWIK (CONT'D)

All we have to do is build a COP. Set the new guys up for success, okay.

SAMAROO (O.S.)

But this is crazy boss! We've only got 18 days left.

DZWIK

That's right. We're still out of here in eighteen days. The time line hasn't changed.

A deep breath; final thoughts.

DZWIK (CONT'D)

We came here to do a fifteen month job, not fourteen and a half. We're not done with that job until we're done.

(beat)

Now go give the boys the news and..

Interrupting,

GARCIA

They already know.

DZWIK

Good.

(MORE)

DZWIK (CONT'D)

Let 'em piss and moan, then get 'em
focused. And remind them,

(beat)

We're still going home.

The Sergeants, clearly not happy, shove off, but each understands the task ahead.

CUT TO:

INT. CAMP BLESSING - MOMENTS LATER

In the barracks rooms, a very upset RAINEY speaks for all and he doesn't give a shit who might over hear.

RAINEY

This is horse shit! Haven't we done
enough?

STAFFORD, a very stocky young Mark Whalburg type..

STAFFORD

Why do we have to build that fucker
man?

AYERS, 24 years old, tall thin, glass wearing story teller from Snellville, GA. A guy you'd expect to see in an engineering class, not a combat paratrooper.

AYERS

Makes perfect sense to me. We've
been through there. The locals know
us and we know exactly what we're
supposed to build. Can't just leave
that to the new guys, they won't
know shit. Won't be fair to them.

STAFFORD

Fair? Who give's a fuck about fair.

RAINEY

I still don't like it, we're too
fuckin' shorthanded as it is.

AYERS

Even more reason for us to get tagged
to build. The company replacing us
has fewer people than we've EVER
had.

Suddenly, the men notice SAMAROO standing menacingly in the doorway; he's heard everything.

SAMAROO

You done? Feel better now?

Staring each man down; he's called them out!

SAMAROO (CONT'D)

Need a fucking hug?

Questioned their manhood. Their anger hangs in the air like a thick fog. Somebody's fixing to say something they'll regret, then SAMAROO's gonna go ape shit on everybody! The pressure cooker about to blow when...

Softly from the back of the crowd.

HAYES

I'll take a hug Sern't SAMAROO.

(beat)

If it'll make you feel better.

Sudden silence.... then laughter! Crisis averted. We love this cocky little shit.

CUT TO:

INT. BATTALION TACTICAL OPERATIONS CENTER - AFTERNOON

The battalion executive officer, attempting to explain some details to his frustrated yet patient boss.

XO

Sir, I need your decision on a couple of redeployment taskings.

OSTLUND

XO. Don't bring me any of that shit right now.

(beat)

Look. I trust your judgment. You deal with redeployment. Just give me a good brief once we're done with *this* move.

The day shift Battle Captain interrupts the conversation.

BATTLE CAPTAIN

Excuse me, sir.

OSTLUND glances towards the large flat screen that projects his unit's area of operations. Is someone in contact?

OSTLUND

What's up.

BATTLE CAPTAIN

Brigade's reporting that Captain Myer's Apache strike took out the doctors from the Bella Medical Clinic. Saying at least ten civilians killed.

OSTLUND

What?.... Shit.

OSTLUND takes a moment to collect his thoughts. Another frustrating day in a very LONG string of frustrating months.

OSTLUND (CONT'D)

Okay. First let's get someone out there to see for ourselves. Second, give division a heads up. Bet my left nut they'll want another investigation.

An afterthought.

OSTLUND (CONT'D)

And get MYER back here! It was his call, he's gonna need to deal with this.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CAMP BLESSING - AFTERNOON

DZWIK stands alone, collecting his thoughts. He looks skyward; closes his eyes. Deep relaxing breaths, now a fighter at the cage door. His eyes open; determination, he's ready. He pushes through a door where we join..

BROSTROM standing confidently before the assembled platoon.

DZWIK

Before the LT gets started, let me get a few things off my chest, give you a little perspective.

Half listen stoically, subdued anger still obvious on a couple of the younger soldiers.

DZWIK (CONT'D)

Nobody asked our opinion on this did they?

Back and forth in front of them, engaging.

DZWIK (CONT'D)

You don't like that. Some of you got your feelings hurt.

(MORE)

DZWIK (CONT'D)

I could hear some of you bitching
from inside a damn Chinook. I get
it. I get it.

(beat)

But now...

Stopping now, an icy glare.

DZWIK (CONT'D)

Get the fuck over it.

The words cause a few of the soldiers to sit up a little
straighter, they've been called out.

DZWIK (CONT'D)

We've got a mission, one *more* job to
do. We gotta put in just a *little*
more work.

(beat)

THEN, we can go home. It's that
simple.

(beat)

For those of you still thinking,
"why us", I'll tell you why? Cause
your dependable.

Letting that sink in.

DZWIK (CONT'D)

You cat's have done everything we've
(indicating the LT)
Ever asked of you. Everything. But
now we've gotta come together; get
this one last job done. That's it.

In the back of the room, hidden in shadow stands BEESON.
He's heard it all. He nods to DZWIK then quietly exits.

DZWIK (CONT'D)

Sir.

The LT taps in.

BROSTROM

Alright. Here's the pitch. Division
believes that anywhere from one
hundred fifty, to two hundred enemy
forces, including foreign fighters,
are in the final stages of launching
an attack on COP Bella.

Letting that sink in.

BROSTROM (CONT'D)

Higher 's made the call to evacuate
before that attack takes place.

Everyone onboard.

BROSTROM (CONT'D)

First Platoon, will load out
everything from COP Bella by air.
After the last lift is out, what's
left 'll ground convoy from Bella to
Wanat, link up with us, then they're
coming here to Blessing. After dark
on the 8th, 2nd Platoon, plus one of
the TOW trucks from Delta company,
will ground convoy from Blessing to
Wanat. When 1st platoon links up
with us we're going to take all their
water, chow and most of their ammo.

He scans the platoon. Now starts pointing to a sketch of
the village of Wanat; their destination.

A quick look to the 1st Squad Leader, Staff Sergeant SAMAROO.

BROSTROM (CONT'D)

1st Squad will establish the entry
control point, just off the road
here.

SAMAROO nods his understanding.

BROSTROM (CONT'D)

We'll use the northern side of these
buildings for the command post.
Mortars will go here.

To the 2nd Squad Leader, Staff Sergeant BENTON.

BROSTROM (CONT'D)

2nd Squad is along the road opposite
the bazaar, and 3rd Squad,

At Sergeant GARCIA.

BROSTROM (CONT'D)

You've got the norther side of the
perimeter.

PITTS

How 'bout the OP, sir?

BROSTROM

Right now, I think our only choice is this spur just on the other side of the road. That's where you and Weapon's squad will be.

A more positive DZWIK interjects.

DZWIK

Sern't SAMAROO, since you'll have ANA to your front, give up BOGAR and his SAW to Sern't PITTS for the OP.

SAMAROO, calm and confident, a true veteran, simply nods.

DZWIK (CONT'D)

Sern't GARCIA, likewise, give up Sern't GOBBLE and PHILLIPS.

GARCIA

No problem boss.

DZWIK

Good.

In closing, projecting confidence.

BROSTROM

Like it or not, we owe it to the new guys to get this done. How you gonna feel if they get fucked up in their first few weeks 'cause *WE* didn't do our jobs?

He locks eyes with a couple of different troopers; letting everyone know where *he* stands. Reassuring.

BROSTROM (CONT'D)

And look, this move is the *main effort* for the division. We will have priority for everything. Artillery, Intel and aircraft. The engineers are even giving us a Bobcat loader and a squad to fill the HESCOS. We're also going to have our own mortar section, a single 120 and a 60mm, AND a platoon of Afghan army.

(beat)

It's not like at Bella. We're not gonna be twenty dudes all by our lonesome. With all these attachments, we're gonna have sixty plus troops on the ground.

A final look around the platoon; *his* platoon.

BROSTROM (CONT'D)

By dawn on the 9th, we start building.

DZWIK adds a final thought, sealing the deal.

DZWIK

Remember. We're not jumping into to
Normandy for Christ's sake. Just
building an outpost. And... We're
naming this one after Sern't Khaler,
(beat)

Which means it's gonna be done *right*.
He wouldn't have it any other way

(beat)

And neither will we.

The last point hits home. They might bitch, but it will be
done...to standard. As they leave..

KRUPA

We're taking a wrecker? A tow truck?

HAYES

T.O.W. Tube launched, optically
tracked, wire guided... a missile
launcher ya dumb shit.

DISSOLVE TO:

SUPER: *July 8, 2008, COP BELLA, Twelve Days remaining.*

EXT. COMBAT OUTPOST BELLA - NIGHT

The sound of pounding rotor blades fill the air, thundering,
all powerful. The valley is filled with shifting blasts of
dusty air. The large cargo helicopter hovers in the darkness
over COP Bella.

Chinook crew chief, flat on his belly, head hanging out over
the edge of the floor. He's looking down, talking the pilot
downward onto the waiting cargo net.

CREW CHIEF

'Bout fifteen feet.

(beat)

Ten feet. Looking good.

Three troopers under the hurricane, one squats on top of the
load, anxious to hook up and get the massive bullet magnet
away.

Troops in the guard towers, straining to see or hear any incoming rounds they are *positive* will come; and in great numbers.

The platoon medic squats behind a HESCO; the strap of his aid bag in one hand, a Rosary in the other.

MEDIC
Hail Mary full of grace.....

CUT TO:

EXT. ON THE HIGH GROUND - CONTINUOUS

In the village, just across the river, SADIQ and two of his underlings observing from a second story window. All they can really see are flashing electric circles formed by static electricity from the massive rotor blades.

Another man enters the room.

SADIQ
(subtitled)
What is it?

LOCAL 1
The Arabs are coming.

SADIQ
When?

LOCAL 1
One, possibly two days.

SADIQ
They need to hurry.

CUT TO:

INT. BATTALION TACTICAL OPERATIONS CENTER - CONTINUOUS

OSTLUND and staff, watching an assortment of Predator feeds. Tension EXTREME. RTOs standing by, ready to submit contact reports or requests instantly.

One of several helicopter flights retrieving over a ton of unused ammunition, batteries, case upon case of Meals Ready To Eat. The goal is to leave nothing behind but walls and an empty building.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMP BLESSING - CONTINUOUS

With engines running, five up-armored gun trucks queued for departure. Troopers making last minute adjustments, strapping everything down. Shoving in just one more case of water; packed to the gills.

The bitching is over; nothing left but a task at hand. With any luck, the last.

Convoy brief at the hood of BROSTROM's truck.

BROSTROM

Things are going good at Bella, but that doesn't mean we're in hurry. Sern't SAMAROO, keep the pace nice and easy. I don't want to hit an IED in the dark.

(to PITTS)

As soon as the last lift is out, the Apaches are gonna be over watching us and first platoon. You monitor their net, I'll be on battalion and platoon.

Final thoughts.

DZWIK

Once we roll, if one of those Chinook's get shot down, we'll push to secure the crash site.

(beat)

Let's just hope we don't have to deal with that.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMP BLESSING - MOMENTS LATER

Second Platoon, mounted and headed out the gate. Gunners on top, weapons alternated left and right. Playful words exchanged with the guards as they pass, trying to put on a good face, everyone trying to hide the fact that they're scared.

There is never a guarantee of safety. Not in Afghanistan. Never.

We watch has they drive off into the darkness and the unknown.

CUT TO:

INT. BATTALION TACTICAL OPERATIONS CENTER - CONTINUOUS

OSTLUND and his staff watching the monitors. Multiple radios squawk in the back ground.

BROSTROM (O.S.)

X-ray, this is Chosen Two Six. We are on the road, time, two one zero zero, five vehicles, twenty five personnel, over.

BATTLE CAPTAIN

This is Rock X-ray, roger.

(beat)

Safe trip, over.

2nd Platoon's icon starts moving on the monitor. We now see the Predator's POV. Tension remains thick. Everyone still holding their breath; the night only half done.

CUT TO:

EXT. ON THE ROAD FROM BLESSING - LATER

The vehicles move slowly, everyone using night vision, tense and scanning. A faint green glow on every eye. BROSTROM over hears a status report from COP Bella.

MYER (O.S.)

This is Chosen Six. One more lift to go. Negative contact.

More to himself than anyone.

BROSTROM

Good. Good. No worries.

WITH SAMAROO IN THE LEAD.

GREEN against BLACK. A pale path before us. High ground close in on the right. The Waygal River bed dangerously close, down and to the left.

CUT TO:

EXT. OVER COP BELLA - CONTINUOUS

A mighty dragon struggles into the air; heavy cargo net slung beneath. Weary eyes scan the high ground; weapons ready. Close on one soldier praying quietly while rubbing a small crucifix necklace.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WANAT - NIGHT

Dark and cloudy, the trucks of 2nd Platoon form a tight circle on the flat valley floor, next to a sleeping village. It begins raining. Slowly at first, but moments later, a downpour.

INSIDE BROSTROM'S TRUCK.

Baby faced HAYES watching the roof leak like a sieve.

HAYES
Man..... fuck me.

The others smile at his discomfort.

BROSTROM
X-ray, Chosen Two Six. Patrol Base
Kahler is set. Grid, X-ray Delta,
seven four zero zero, eight zero
four five. Please activate my roz.
Over.

BATTLE CAPTAIN (O.S.)
Roger. Restrictions in place time
now.

Leaning back in the seat, stretching tense muscles.

BROSTROM
See? That wasn't so bad.

CUT TO:

INT. CH-47 OVER COP BELLA - MOMENTS LATER

The last Chinook struggles into the heavy night air.

MYER dons a headset as he takes a seat in the last bird out. The noise of the thundering beast makes any conversation difficult, yet MYER speaks calmly into the boom mike.

MYER
Rock Six, Chosen Six... Be advised,
out load is complete and we are wheels
up. ETA to your location is three
zero mikes, over.

CUT TO:

INT. BATTALION TACTICAL OPERATIONS CENTER - CONTINUOUS

A very relieved battalion commander, now smiling.

OSTLUND

Outstanding! Great job! Great job.
I'll see you in a bit. Rock Six
out.

CUT TO:

EXT. WANAT - LATER

The vehicles of 1st Platoon arrive, soaked troopers quickly cross load supplies. DZWIK approaches the passenger door of the last truck. STOCKARD lowers the bullet proof window. The banter is light hearted and familiar.

DZWIK

I can't believe they didn't take a
shot at you guys on the way out.

STOCKARD

Shit, you and me both. My asshole's
been puckered for the last eight
hours man. Won't be able to shit
for a week.

DZWIK

Speaking of shit, don't steal any of
mine back at Blessing. Stay out of
my hooch, or I'll fuck you up.

STOCKARD

You ready to come back to First
Platoon now?

DZWIK

Hell no. Didn't like working for
you in the first place. Besides,
you traded me here remember.

STOCKARD

Oh yeah. Still not used to the quiet.
How's your lieutenant?

DZWIK

He's good. He listens.

STOCKARD

Always thought ya'll make a cute
couple.

DZWIK

Yeah, yeah.

STOCKARD takes a long hard look around the general area; his
mood now very serious.

STOCKARD

Hey man. You guys be careful up here okay. I've had a bad fuckin' feeling about this whole damned thing for weeks... I won't feel better till we're wheels up.

DZWIK shakes the mans hand.

DZWIK

We'll be alright. They may throw some mortars our way but that's about it.

STOCKARD

Anything happens, you just hold tight. Me and the boys will get here, won't stop for shit.

Laughing.

DZWIK

You been out here too long boss. Take a shower, and get some sleep. I'll see ya in a few days.

STOCKARD

Yeah, yeah.
(beat)
Be seein' ya.

DZWIK

Have a good'n.

The 1st platoon convoy slowly move's off. STOCKARD's gloved hand gives a final wave, then the finger. They disappear into the rain.

CUT TO:

INT. BATTALION TACTICAL OPERATIONS CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

BATTLE CAPTAIN

That's it sir. Hand off is complete. First platoon's enroute back here. No issues.

Everyone visibly relieved, breathing normal again.

OSTLUND

Good. Good. Well done.

He stands, stretching tense muscles. A very stressful few hours. His energy drains before our eyes.

OSTLUND (CONT'D)

I'm gonna grab some sleep. Wake me at zero four. Tell the XO we can talk re-deployment over breakfast.

An after thought.

OSTLUND (CONT'D)

Have Captain Myer, report to the brigade XO first thing in the morning. He's not going anywhere till he testifies about that Apache strike.

BATTLE CAPTAIN

Will do sir.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WANAT - MORNING-PRE-DAWN

The rain has stopped. It's muddy and humid. QUIET.

Stand To is on going. PITTS and the weapon's squad quietly forming by the command post; really just the lieutenant's truck parked next to the wall of an unfinished C-shaped building.

We join the huddle already in progress. PITTS indicates his destination; the out cropping to the east.

PITTS

I'm gonna set the machine guns in, then start sending guys back for sand bags.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CAMP BLESSING - CONTINUOUS

In Chosen Company's Command Post. A bank of radios squawk in the back ground. First Sergeant BEESON, and an RTO are seated. A tired MYER and AASS enter after the flight from Bella; there's hot coffee waiting.

BEESON

Welcome back, sir. How'd it go?

MYER

Surprisingly well. What's our status?

BEESON

The good news. Hand off is complete. Second Platoon's secure. First should be here in just a few minutes. No contact, no issues.

MYER

Good.

BEESON

There's more. Got you scheduled to meet with brigade at zero nine for your testimony.

Glances at his watch.

BEESON (CONT'D)

That'll give you a few hours of sleep, at least. Brigade says you should be done by the end of the day.

MYER

Bad news?

BEESON

I don't know when we can get you back out to Second Platoon. All flights are getting re-tasked. Word is, first brigade's putting together a direct action mission in the next forty eight hours. We're gonna lose resupply birds AND any Predator feeds over Wanat.

Lets those words sink in.

BEESON (CONT'D)

AND, get this, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs will be here in three days.

MYER

You're kidding?

BEESON

Guess he wants to see the Korengal Valley. Find out why Battle Company keeps making the news.

MYER

Maybe he forgot there's a war going on over here.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE - MOMENTS LATER

Brostrom and Pitts survey the rocky outcropping which will serve as the platoon's Observation Post. The weight of responsibility lays heavily on the young officer's shoulders.

BROSTROM

I don't like it. Nope. Not a bit.

PITTS

It's shitty, sir, but we can make this work. These boulders 'll give us some good protection. It's not perfect, but we've got elevation and we're still close enough..

BROSTROM

What if we move you up there..

Pointing uphill to the south.

BROSTROM (CONT'D)

Put you in that house. You'd be able to see everything.

PITTS

We'd gain elevation, that's true. But that's alot of open terrain between the COP and the OP, sir. We could get cut of real easy.

BROSTROM

Fuck.

BROSTROM makes a slow turn, all the way around, then pointing to the north east, down hill into a long shallow draw.

BROSTROM (CONT'D)

What about all this dead space?

PITTS

We'll claymore the shit out of it. Only thing we'll need is about a thousand sand bags.

BROSTROM

I still don't like it... But, I don't see another option.

(beat)

Okay. Build it as strong as you can, but don't get too tied to it. Soon as we get all the HESCOs and wire in down *here*, we're movin' this bitch up *there*.

PITTS

Roger sir. We'll get it done.

CUT TO:

EXT. ON THE HIGH GROUND - CONTINUOUS

A local enemy fighter observes the new, unexpected activity in the valley below. He quietly speaks into a hand held radio.

WATCHER

(subtitled)

They build as we speak.

He listens, then responds to an unheard question.

WATCHER (CONT'D)

Maybe thirty men. It looks like a few intend to occupy the rocks behind the market.

(beat)

I understand.

CUT TO:

EXT. WANAT - LATER

We take in the new view; ridges high above, village buildings WAY to close!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. 1ST SQUAD'S TCP - CONTINUOUS

Full daylight now. In the background, the call to prayer wails from the village mosque.

We join BOGAR, getting his gear ready for the move to the OP. SAMAROO joins him behind the truck.

SAMAROO

Got everything you need?

BOGAR, shoulders his pack seemingly without a care in the world; a veteran. Looking towards the mosque.

BOGAR

Can you get them to play something else?

SAMAROO

You'll get used to it.

BOGAR

Haven't yet.

He begins to turn away, but SAMAROO grabs his arm.

SAMAROO

Listen, man. If shit gets crazy up there, don't get cut off.

BOGAR is listening, his boss clearly nervous.

BOGAR

What'd ya mean?

SAMAROO

It gets too hot, you guys beat feet back here. Just hug the fuckin' terrace and follow it all the way down okay.

BOGAR

Twelve and a wake up Sern't. We'll be alright.

CUT TO:

EXT. 3RD SQUAD'S POSITION - CONTINUOUS

A smiling GARCIA, speaking with GOBBLE, and PHILLIPS, both early 20s, fit and trim.

GARCIA

Sern't PITTS is in charge up there, give him all the help he needs.

(beat)

But, if you guys take contact, you take charge of the fight, let him work the radios.

GOBBLE

I got it Sern't. We'll be alright. Don't worry.

GARCIA

Let me know if you guys need anything.

PHILLIPS

I'd take our replacements if you can swing it.

As GOBBLE and PHILLIPS step off, the pounding thump of CH-47 rotor blades echo through the valley. GARCIA watches the monstrous beast approach, a Bobcat loader slung underneath.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMP BLESSING - CONTINUOUS

SUPER: *Camp Blessing*

First Platoon arrives after a very long night. The men dismount their vehicles; they're worn out, uniforms in very ragged condition. The sergeants assemble behind STOCKARD's truck.

STOCKARD

No bodies' doin' anything until we refit. We are NOW the company QRF. I want fuel topped off, weapons cleaned and load plans squared away.

Checking his watch.

STOCKARD (CONT'D)

Get to work. I'll make sure they save us a decent breakfast.

CUT TO:

EXT. COP BELLA - MOMENTS LATER

Back at Bella, now abandoned.

Local Taliban fighters explore the out post. Playing for the cameraman, a fake takeover. The whole show supervised by a very satisfied SADIQ.

A new group arrives, very different from the local talent. They're Arab. Tough, brutal and talented in the game of death. They stand to the side, watching stoically.

Their leader, BAKAR strides towards SADIQ. He's massive! Six and half feet tall, rugged hands the size of dinner plates. Above a dirty dark orange beard, a ragged pink scar traverses the length of his left cheek, a very fresh wound.

SADIQ

(subtitled)

Welcome brother. It seems you are too late for this victory.

BAKAR remains silent; poker faced.

SADIQ (CONT'D)

The media will announce our victory here. The Infidels are retreating, again.

From SADIQ's radio, the WATCHER's report is heard. The menacing BAKAR's gravely voice sends chills.

BAKAR

Where?

SADIQ waves to the south.

SADIQ
Down the valley. Eight, maybe ten
kilometers.

We close on BAKAR; the face of evil.

BAKAR
It appears that we are just in time.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE - LATER

GOBBLE, BOGAR and PHILLIPS arrive at the position they now call *Topside*, where they find PITTS and the others digging in.

GOBBLE
Hey SGT PITTS, your reinforcements
are here.

PITTS
You mean my bitches. Welcome to OP
Topside, boys.

Handshakes exchanged.

PITTS (CONT'D)
Hey Phillips, Bogar, good to see you
man. How's it goin'?

BOGAR
Not bad. Figured you needed a little
culture up here with all these red
necks.

PHILLIPS
Shit, I'm gonna fit right in.

MCKAIG
Shit, look who's here.

RAINEY
There goes the neighborhood.

STAFFORD
Hey, BOGAR. We got a couple trees
you can hug.

BOGAR
No tree hugging,
(beat)
Not until after dark.

PITTS
 Alright, alright, shut the fuck up.
 We got work to do.

The men ground their ammo harnesses, wearing only their armored vests, t-shirts and helmets, they get to work.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE - LATER

A cheerful DZWIK arrives to check out the OP, he finds the men digging in.

DZWIK
 How's it goin' up here?

PITTS
 We're good.

DZWIK
 Told you I'd make a decent grunt out of you.

PITTS gives a quick tour.

PITTS
 STAFFORD and ZWILLING have the north side with a two-forty. They can cover to the north and northeast.

He points to the east, one terrace level higher.

PITTS (CONT'D)
 AYERS and MCKAIG got the good seats, we call their spot the 'Crows Nest'. Over here we have..

He points to the most southern edge of the position.

PITTS (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
 Bogar's SAW, he'll cover south, tied in with first squad.

DZWIK now looking north, into the low ground, obscured by trees.

DZWIK
 Kay, this sucks.

PITTS
 Gonna use claymores to cover that. Put 'em out after dark.

Nodding approval.

DZWIK

Good. And get some wire in there, a
shit load.

To the group.

DZWIK (CONT'D)

Lean into it fellas. Make sure the
locals see how tough this spot is.
You guys need anything else?

RAINEY

Any word on our replacements?

A stern look from PITTS.

DZWIK

Nothin' I haven't already told you.

To PITTS, with a wink.

DZWIK (CONT'D)

Anybody slacking off, send 'em to
me. I'll find something for 'em to
do.

We hear, the thumping of an inbound helicopter. DZWIK turns,
watching the approach, when he spies, on the high ground
opposite, a goat herder with his flock.

CUT TO:

EXT. WANAT - CONTINUOUS

The double rotor aircraft lands gently. Two dozen Afghan
soldiers emerge from the ramp, quickly taking a knee a few
yards away. The helicopter thunders back into the air leaving
a hurricane of dust and debris in it's wake. We recognize
the distinctive uniforms of three US Marines with the new
arrivals.

In the village we see; normal activity, the market stalls
are open for business. Children scamper about, many curiously
observing the Americans. Those in front of 2nd squad catch
some candy.

The adults do their best to ignore the activity behind them.

CUT TO:

EXT. WANAT COMMAND POST - MOMENTS LATER

Marine Staff Sergeant reports into the platoon command post
where he finds BROSTROM.

REPPEZA

Mornin', sir. I'm Staff Sergeant
REPPEZA.

BROSTROM

Welcome aboard.

REPPEZA

Where ya want us sir?

BROSTROM

How many PAX you have?

In the near distance, the friendly Afghan troops are being organized by two very competent looking Marine corporals.

REPPEZA (O.S.)

Two squads, twelve men each with a
Marine team leader for both.
Corporals OAKES and JONES.

BROSTROM

Good. Take one squad over to the
road...

(pointing)

To the south. The rest will dig in
on the north from ten o'clock till
about one, in front of that Mark-
Nineteen truck. That's your over
watch.

REPPEZA

Where's the twelve o'clock, sir?

Pointing.

BROSTROM

The mosque.

CUT TO:

EXT. MORTAR PIT - CONTINUOUS

Troopers setting up HESCO baskets, one swings a pick ax to bust up the hard surface. The sun is in full force. Men dripping sweat.

DZWIK, making the rounds; "Mr. Chipper Himself".

DZWIK

Work smart, not hard boys. Let the
bobcat do the heavy lifting. we'll
be out of here in a couple of days.

CUT TO:

EXT. ON THE HIGH GROUND - CONTINUOUS

A middle aged Afghan stands amongst a small herd of goats. He watches the construction effort below with interest.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE - LATER

One Hundred plus degrees. RAINEY bent over at the waist retching. PITTS makes a decision.

PITTS

Hey guys. Every body stop.

Curious looks, everyone drenched in their own sweat.

PITTS (CONT'D)

We're killing ourselves. It's too fuckin' hot. Twenty minute break.

STAFFORD

Best idea yet.

(sarcastic)

That's why you're the sergeant, yep.

ZWILLING

Looks like the rest of the platoon had the same idea.

PITTS looks towards the main outpost. Very little digging going on. It's just too fucking hot. Gunners pulling security from the top of each truck. Most of the men lounging inside half dug holes underneath camouflaged netting or inside the trucks.

PITTS

Well, they've got armored trucks to chill in, we don't. We can slow down as much as we need to but we can't stop completely.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WANAT-2ND SQUAD'S POSITION - DAY

The men of 2nd squad digging in next to an existing rock wall that parallels the road. Directly across from them is the village bazaar; a single story collection of crude market stalls. On the road, a half dozen Afghan kids, begging for candy.

KIDS

Mister, mister. Kandy?

Always the jokester, HOVATER channels a little Ron Burgundy.

HOVATER
It's soooo hot!

A fellow squad mate eggs him on.

SOLDIER 1
Hovy, check out these little fuckers.

Standing now, dramatically facing the cluster of kids, full Burgundy mode

HOVATER
Mornin' little terroizors. How goes the war? Do you know who I am? I'm kind of somebody.

The kids giggle, but keep trying.

KIDS
Mister, kandy?

SOLDIER 2
Some welcoming committee?

SOLDIER 1
'Least they're unarmed.

HOVATER
Kids don't kill people men. Only kids with guns kill people.

DZWIK arrives, still making the rounds.

DZWIK
How's it going over here?

HOVATER
Livin' the dream, boss. We're golden like a shower.

DZWIK
Don't waste your time on the kids. We're here to build this bitch remember? We'll let first infantry build relationships.

In the distance, soldiers pounding metal pickets into the ground to anchor the c-wire around the perimeter.

CUT TO:

EXT. WANAT COMMAND POST - AFTERNOON

A command post in name only. Ponchos strung from the the truck's roof to the building, providing shade for PFC HAYES, busy filling sandbags. BROSTROM returns from a visit into the village, drenched in sweat.

DZWIK

How'd it go?

BROSTROM

It didn't. They blew me off!

DZWIK

What do you mean?

BROSTROM, down loading some of his gear, explains between gulps of water.

BROSTROM

We get to the police station, find the police AND district chief climbing into a pick up.... I stopped 'em, said we needed to talk. District chief says, "we have another engagement and we're late. We'll stop by when we get back."

(beat)

What do you think of that?

DZWIK

That's a big "fuck you". Those dicks should have come here to *welcome you* into the neighborhood.

BROSTROM

I know, right? I've been through here a dozen times and I've never had that happen. They also gave me this...

BROSTROM hands over a crumpled sheet of paper.

BROSTROM (CONT'D)

They say it's the list of civilian casualties... From the Apache strike back on the fourth.

DZWIK

That's great. What the fuck do they want us to do?

Scanning the on-going work around the perimeter.

BROSTROM

How's it going back here?

DZWIK

Not bad in spite of the heat. The mortar pit's almost done. Wire's goin' up but we don't have enough picket-pounders to get it done today. AND we're gonna run out of pickets.

We watch the Bobcat; the small blade angles down into the dirt, when the driver pushes forward, the blade pushes back. The front tires come off the ground.

DZWIK (CONT'D)

What we need is an old fashioned back hoe, something with some real balls. That god damned thing is for landscaping.

We see his point.

CUT TO:

INT. BATTALION TACTICAL OPERATIONS CENTER - LATER

MYER and his RTO, AASS, enter the TOC. They find the battle captain bored, reading a worn paperback.

MYER

Any chance we can get a lift to Wanat tonight?

BATTLE CAPTAIN

'fraid not Matt, the bird we *did* have got diverted. Ain't got shit until tomorrow, and then, only maybe. Sorry.

CUT TO:

EXT. WANAT - LATER

A very sweaty DZWIK arrives after another lap around the perimeter. He joins BROSTROM, standing outside the command post. BROSTROM keeps looking towards the OP. Still nervous. DZWIK hasn't noticed yet. He's concentrating on the calculations he's made in his notebook.

DZWIK

Water's gonna be the biggest issue. I figured we had enough for two days, but I didn't consider the heat verses work.

(MORE)

DZWIK (CONT'D)

It stays above a hundred, we're gonna be drinking more than working.

BROSTROM, looking to the east.

DZWIK (CONT'D)

LT.

BROSTROM

Huh?

DZWIK now understands.

DZWIK

Look, sir. It's not the best spot, but PITTS and GOBBLE can handle it. AND Those big ass boulders mean they don't have to build as much.

Still nervous.

BROSTROM

I know. I know. But as soon as we get some walls up, we're gonna move that fucker to higher ground.

(beat)

And yes. I heard you.

Putting his helmet back on.

BROSTROM (CONT'D)

Tell the first sergeant to double the push for more water. You tell 'em we're BLACK on water, somebody back there'll start tripping.

CUT TO:

EXT. WANAT - DAY

SUPER: *July 11, Eleven Days Remaining*

The HEAT is suffocating! The majority of the troopers lounge inside their shallow positions; half pull security from the tops of the trucks. The only guy consistently working is the driver of the Bobcat.

WITH SECOND SQUAD

HOVATER takes a break from swinging the pickax, panting, covered in sweat. He observes...

Two separate groups of military aged males, one group obviously from out of town, seated at the bazaar.

Very little conversation; stoic observation.

DZWIK arrives. Does this guy ever rest?

DZWIK
What's up fella's? How 'sit goin'?

HOVATER
I feel like we're in a zoo.

DZWIK
You are.

While taking a pull of water, DZWIK gazes across towards the active bazaar where he spies..

A couple of the males looking towards the high ground, above the interior of the outpost. Another begins tracing something in the dirt.

A innocent local man walking on the road, approaches the bazaar. We see..

The man stops walking when he sees the rugged group of strangers. He turns around, heading back home.

DZWIK (CONT'D)
What's up with these dicks?

A welcome break for HOVATER..

HOVATER
Which ones?

Back on the suspicious group.

DZWIK (V.O.)
Them.

BAKAR sits behind the others, trying to hide his massive frame.

HOVATER
Don't know Sern't. It's been pretty busy today. Seems normal enough.

DZWIK turns back to the fighting position, assessing the work so far, but takes on a new tone; more serious.

DZWIK
Dig it deeper and add a couple more layers of sand bags.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WANAT - EVENING

BROSTROM, DZWIK and SPC HAYES, updating a sketch of their position on a 2X2 foot 'map board'. The baby faced HAYES is impressive; amazingly competent in spite of his youthful appearance and usual cocky attitude.

HAYES

As of now, Sern't PITTS has registered nine targets on likely enemy positions or avenues of approach.

BROSTROM

Do we need to make another map board for him? For the OP?

HAYES

No sir. He made this one for us.

BROSTROM

Good. Keep it updated and keep it inside the truck.

From the radio speakers we overhear the ongoing Battle Update Brief.

ROCK X-RAY (O.S.)

No new intercepts to report. Enemy likely course of action follows.

(beat)

Continued harassing attacks with small arms and indirect fires against Battle and Destined companies.

(beat)

Continued observation of Chosen company in the vicinity of COP Kalher.

(beat)

Possible indirect attacks against Rock X-ray.

DZWIK

Continued observation.

BROSTROM

Let's hope so.

(beat)

How many days left?

CUT TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE - EVENING

A tired looking DZWIK at the OP while the men of Weapon's squad eat MREs.

The men; filthy, covered in sweat, swatting flies away from what food they do have.

BOGAR

You know sern't. Something's still bothering me.

DZWIK

What's that?

BOGAR

I can't help but wonder, what ever happened to those one hundred and fifty Taliban fixin' to attack Bella?

PITTS

That's an interesting point.

BOGAR nods to the north, up the rugged valley.

BOGAR

I mean shit. We can see the high ground over looking Bella from here.

The others turn; it *IS* a very interesting point.

BOGAR (O.S.) (CONT'D)

What's to say those dicks didn't decide to come down this way.

While the others turn back to BOGAR, DZWIK gives the high ground a more deliberate look.

STAFFORD

Battalion says they gotta scope us out a while before they can launch an attack.

PHILLIPS

Yeah. They're gonna throw some indirect at us; see how we react.

GOBBLE

Besides. They've never done *anything* hasty. They're always deliberate. You know, the planning, recon, rehearsals.

BOGAR chews thoughtfully, finding the right words.

BOGAR

I know.

(beat)

But have we ever been this exposed before?

The words hang, suspended. Shudder the thought.

DZWIK, staring hard at the high ground.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE - NIGHT

The men quietly continue construction. The stars fill the night sky; stunning, beautiful grandeur. If only there wasn't a war going on.

In the COP below, we see DZWIK, walking the line, headed towards 1st Squad.

PITTS and BOGAR recline against the boulders, enjoying the cooler night air, GOBBLE scans with the LRAS.

BOGAR
Sern't D's looking a little tired.

PITTS
The man is busy.

PITTS remains in repose, BOGAR and PHILLIPS continue working; fill sand bag, tie off top, lay on ground, pat flat. Repeat one hundred times.

CUT TO:

EXT. 1ST SQUAD'S TCP - LATER

GARCIA and SAMAROO speaking quietly behind SAMAROO's truck. DZWIK approaches, but stops short to listen.

GARCIA
What do you think?

SAMAROO
I don't give a shit what battalion thinks. I think were gonna get hit dude.

GARCIA, always the optimist, shakes his head.

GARCIA
Nah, bro..

SAMAROO
Look at it this way.

He traces in the sand, we see. The outline of the Waygal Valley, from north to south; the Ranch House, Bella, Wanat and Camp Blessing.

SAMAROO (CONT'D)

They hit us, in strength, at Ranch House. What'd we do? We pulled out.

He traces an 'X' on the Ranch House.

SAMAROO (CONT'D)

The shit heads claim a victory, right?

GARCIA

Kay.

Another 'X'.

SAMAROO

We close and evacuate Bella. What'd they do?

Starting to see.

GARCIA

Claim a victory.

SAMAROO

Right. That's two. Didn't cost them shit.

Draws a big cross hair over Wanat.

SAMAROO (CONT'D)

They've been watching us for two fuckin' days, man. They've seen everything. Know where *all* of our key weapons are.

GARCIA nodding.

SAMAROO (CONT'D)

They've seen enough to know how vulnerable we are man. And we are.

An 'X' over Wanat.

SAMAROO (CONT'D)

They hit us now, *before* we get this bitch completed, they're gonna hurt us pretty good.

Eye to eye now.

SAMAROO (CONT'D)

They know we're the outgoing unit. Known it for months.

(MORE)

SAMAROO (CONT'D)

(beat)

They spill enough blood...here...
now, the new guys are NOT gonna want
this bitch. We are a fat, juicy
target. Another easy victory for
them.

Waiving an arm.

SAMAROO (CONT'D)

Look around dude. Fish in a barrel,
man. Tell me I'm wrong.

GARCIA

Well, I hope you are.

Shaking his head.

SAMAROO

I'm not. It's only a matter of time.

In the back ground stands DZWIK. He's heard every word.

CUT TO:

EXT. WANAT COMMAND POST - LATER

WITH BROSTROM and DZWIK at the command post.

DZWIK

What's the word?

BROSTROM

Captain's stuck at Blessing. He's
gotta another interview with legal.

DZWIK

Sucks for him. What else?

BROSTROM

Asked if we needed anything.

DZWIK

And?

A stab at humor.

BROSTROM (O.S.)

Nothing we haven't already requested.
Water... Pickets... replacements...
airline tickets.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WANAT - DAY

Another Chinook arrives. The beast of burden gently sets a 3,000 gallon fuel blivet on the ground. Three troopers quickly get it unhooked, then kneel behind it as the powerful helicopter quickly rises into the air; the air crew and ground troops hoping not to get shot for the effort.

CUT TO:

EXT. WANAT - MOMENTS LATER

Two sweating Engineers standing by the fuel blivet.

ENGINEER

Ain't that a fuckin' bitch?

ENGINEER 2

What?

Pointing at the obvious.

ENGINEER

Look! No hoses. No fuckin' clamp. No spigget. Went to all that trouble to send this bitch out here and we can't get any fuckin' fuel out of it.

ENGINEER 2

We could cut it open.

God bless him.

ENGINEER

Naw.

(beat)

They'd make us pay for the goddamn thing. Just go tell Sergeant Hodge.

Wiping his brow.

ENGINEER (CONT'D)

And bring back some water!

CUT TO:

EXT. WANAT COMMAND POST - LATER

The Bobcat runs out of fuel. It dies out in the open, the blade angled into the dirt.

With DZWIK, knee deep in the headquarter's fighting position, covered in sweat. Hearing the bobcat go silent, he looks up, finding a dejected Sergeant HODGE walking his way.

DZWIK

Shit.

Tossing the entrenching tool aside, he climbs out of the unfinished hole, leans into the headquarter's truck.

DZWIK (CONT'D)

Give me the company net.

MINUTES LATER

DZWIK (CONT'D)

This is Chosen Two-Five. I SAY AGAIN.
We got the blivet but there's no
attachments. Nothing to hook up.

(beat)

Just get that shit on the next flight
so we can actually USE the god damned
thing. Five out!

BROSTROM arrives.

BROSTROM

Anything new?

DZWIK

Bobcat's out of fuel.

Curious. Pointing out the obvious.

BROSTROM

What about the fuel blivet?

DZWIK removes his helmet, rubs his temples where we notice the first touches of grey hair.

DZWIK

Would you believe? No attachments.

BROSTROM

And?

DZWIK

Same shit. They're 'working the
issue.'

After a long thoughtful look.

BROSTROM

When was the last time you ate
anything?

CUT TO:

SUPER: *July 12*

EXT. WANAT - MORNING

Another Chinook lands in a hurricane of dust. Strolling off the ramp, a smiling Captain MYER and his RTO. AASS carries an assortment of hoses. Behind them, cases of bottled water shoved off the ramp. As the helicopter departs, the dust settles. We see...

The fortifications show a great deal of improvement, even without the bobcat. Double strands of concertina wire, layers of sand bags and camouflaged netting at every position. Even the Afghans are dug in reasonably well.

A very relieved BROSTROM happily joins the captain at the edge of the landing zone.

BROSTROM

Welcome to COP Khaler, Sir.

MYER

Good to be here John, sorry for the delay.

BROSTROM

No worries, sir. At least now we can get the Bobcat running again.

BROSTROM nods AASS in the direction of the engineers.

BROSTROM (CONT'D)

They done with the investigation?

MYER

With me at least.

The captain stands scanning the perimeter; impressed.

MYER (CONT'D)

Damn. You guys *have* been busy.

They reach the command truck where they find a very haggard DZWIK.

MYER (CONT'D)

Damn, Sern't 'ZWIK. You look like shit.

DZWIK

Thanks sir. Good to see you too.

Trusty HAYES, has the map board on the hood. BROSTROM proudly uses it to orient his boss.

BROSTROM

The mortar position is almost complete, as you know...

Sarcastically.

DZWIK

We had some issues keeping the bobcat running. Should be finished by the end of the day.

MYER

Got it.

BROSTROM

We've got pre-set targets on likely enemy positions. Our mortars are locked in and the FDC has the rest.

MYER

Good.

BROSTROM

There's a dug in fighting position next to each truck, with overlapping fields of fire, but none have overhead cover yet.

MYER

How deep?

DZWIK

Eighteen to twenty four inches down, the sand bags add about two, three feet more protection.

MYER

How 'bout the OP?

DZWIK

It's not the best spot, but it's the strongest position here.

MYER looks towards the east, barely making out the location over the roof of the bazaar.

BROSTROM

We're calling it 'Topside'.

MYER

I can see why.

BROSTROM

First thing in the morning, I'm taking one of the Marines and a squad of ANA up there.

Pointing.

BROSTROM (CONT'D)

Now that we have some walls up, gonna relocate the OP... You want a quick tour?

CUT TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE - LATER

MYER inspecting, truly impressed with the work, but definitely not the location.

MYER

Sern't DZWIK and I can cover the main COP while you settle the new OP.

PITTS and some of the others have overheard; eavesdropped more accurately. He gives his lieutenant a covert nod and a thumbs up.

BROSTROM

Roger sir. No worries.

Behind the officers as they leave.

ZWILLING

See? I told you.

AYERS

Who cares man? Eleven days dude. Give us somethin' to do.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WANAT COMMAND POST - NIGHT

Back at the CP, MYER, BROSTROM and DZWIK seated on sandbags.

MYER

'S good work. You got a lot more done than I imagined.

DZWIK

Any word on our replacements?

MYER

I'm pretty sure their ADVON's at Jay-Bad.

BROSTROM

Now that's good news!

MYER

How 'bout the locals? Any concerns?

DZWIK

Well... We've been under observation since day one. They've seen everything...

BROSTROM

Didn't see as many kids today as before. Not sure if that means a whole lot.

DZWIK

Any chance we can get some Predator coverage? Maybe get some Apaches over head, at least before Stand To?

That statement hangs in the air as MYER takes another long look around the outpost.

MYER

That's not gonna happen.

(beat)

Higher thinks we dodged a bullet. The way they see it, the only real chance the shit heads had was to hit you guys the first day, maybe the second. Battalion's also convinced that my Apache strike the other day interrupted any attack here.

DZWIK

Hope they're right. I'm ready to hand this bitch off.

BROSTROM

Been ready.

MYER

They'll be here. Four, maybe five days tops.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WANAT - NIGHT

Around the perimeter, men sleep inside their fighting positions. A two-man patrol roves inside the wire. Gunners awake on each truck, scanning, alert yet passing the time.

HAYES completes his shift on the HQ's truck. Replaced by an even younger looking Private KRUPA.

HAYES

Nothin' happin' dude. I counted fourteen shooting stars in one hour. Can you believe that?

KRUPA

That's cool. Gave you something to do at least.

HAYES

All you gotta do is stay the fuck awake, Cherry.

HAYES slides into the driver's seat, hoping to catch a few minutes of shut eye before Stand To.

KRUPA

I been here two fucking months man. How long ya'll still gonna call me Cherry?

Laughing.

HAYES

Forever you don't shut the fuck up.

Snug in the seat.

HAYES (CONT'D)

Fuckin' Cherry.

In the fighting position just a few feet away, we see, DZWIK, flat on his back, unable to sleep. He checks his watch then sits up. Might as well be doing something. He stands, donning equipment; looking towards the OP.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE - LATER

PITTS, pacing slowly, stopping every now and then to scan with his night vision goggles; listening. The others sleep peacefully, one terrace below.

In the distance, we see DZWIK, making his rounds.

PITTS checks the time then turns to STAFFORD seated at the bulky, tripod mounted, Long Range Acquisition System (LRAS), scanning the high ground to the north.

PITTS

Hey dude. It's time. Get every one up.

STAFFORD quietly slips down towards the sleeping terrace where we find RAINEY snoring softly.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE-STAFFORD'S POSITION - MOMENTS LATER

STAFFORD and ZWILLING scanning quietly; yawning. Zwilling looking left then rotating right. STAFFORD scanning right, rotating left. They find themselves looking at each other through their night vision. STAFFORD flips a bird. ZWILLING flashes a brilliant smile, whispers...

ZWILLING

Ten days motherfucker.

CUT TO:

INT. WANAT HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Five enemy fighters quietly enter the bottom floor of the two story building, two carry light machine guns. The others carry ammo and AK rifles.

CUT TO:

EXT. DEAD SPACE NORTH EAST OF TOPSIDE - CONTINUOUS

Two groups of twelve heavily armed enemy quietly sneaking towards the OP. They are invisible. BAKAR and the more vicious looking group stay concealed in the trees.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE-AYERS' POSITION - CONTINUOUS

AYERS and MCKAIG scanning. AYERS jerks his head to the right. He's heard *something*. MCKAIG lets out a subdued but audible fart. His head still facing to the right, AYERS raises his left hand to indicate...

AYERS

Sssshhhhh!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WANAT, T.O.W. TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

The T.O.W. gunner, slowly rotates the missile launcher, using thermal sights to scan the high ground.

GUNNER

Hey, Sern't GRIMM, I got movement.

Speaking down into the cab.

GUNNER (CONT'D)

Seven dismounts, looks like they're wearing backpacks...

Sergeant Grimm immediately grabs the radio hand mike.

GRIMM

Chosen Six, this is Delta One Three. We got contact, over.

AASS (V.O.)

This is Six Romeo, Six is listening, send it.

GRIMM

Seven dismounts on the high ground to the south, maybe eight hundred meters. Backpacks, no weapons.

CUT TO:

AT THE VILLAGE MOSQUE

Eight heavily armed enemy fighters slip quietly into the back side. The building, only 30 meters from the American perimeter.

BACK TO

BROSTROM, armed for patrol, strides towards the ANA position. We see a dozen men with OAKES quietly assembling.

MYER stands next to the gun truck, listening over the speakers. AASS sits in the passenger seat. In the driver's seat, HAYES; the map board leans against the radios between them.

MYER

Tell them to keep an eye on 'em.

MYER eyes the map a moment then turns to DZWIK.

MYER (CONT'D)

Get the mortars on standby.

(MORE)

MYER (CONT'D)

I want them lined up with four rounds
HE on... Charlie Six November. At
my command.

DZWIK

Got it.

DZWIK hustles towards the mortars, thirty yards away.

CUT TO:

EXT. WANAT -MORTAR PIT- CONTINUOUS

DZWIK arrives into, the most completed fortification of all,
six foot tall HESCOS formed in a horseshoe.

DZWIK

Did you guys monitor the contact
report?

The mortar crew kneels at the ready. SSG PHILLIPS cradles a
thirty pound shell, ready to drop into the tube at the
captain's command. The others crouch, peering intently over
the barriers.

SSG PHILLIPS

Roger. We're dialed in, ready to
fire.

CUT TO:

ON THE WESTERN SIDE, ABOVE THE PERIMETER.

SADIQ and five others creep onto a rocky outcropping. To
his left and right, RPG teams crawl into position. Below
them we barely make out the American positions.

CUT TO:

EXT. T.O.W. TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

The gunner, scanning to the west along the ridge line. The
view is through the T.O.W.'s sights, green against black.
Heat signatures suddenly appear.

GUNNER (O.S.)

I got more movement... To the
west.... Five dismounts. I'm on
target.

CUT TO:

With MYER at the command post.

GRIMM (O.S.)
 Six, this is One Three. Second
 contact, five dismounts above the
 LZ. Request permission to engage,
 over.

On MYER

MYER
 Those dicks sure as hell aren't
 herding goats.

In the back ground; a contact report to headquarters.

AASS
 Rock X-ray, Chosen Six Romeo, second
 contact...

CUT TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE - CONTINUOUS

PITTS, looking through the LRAS eyepiece, two hand mikes
 dangle from both sides of his shoulder harness.

HAYES (O.S.)
 Six wants to know if you see any
 weapons.

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

PITTS
 Psst! Rainey. We got dismounts on
 the high ground to the south and
 west. Pass the word.

RAINEY moves quickly to alert the others.

RAINEY
 Ahhh shit. Shit. Shit! This can't
 be good. God damn it!

CUT TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE-BOGAR'S POSITION - CONTINUOUS

BOGAR, behind his SAW, scanning to the south. The hushed
 activity behind him can't mean anything good.

His right hand remains on the pistol grip, with his left, he
 begins stacking ammunition drums next to his knee. GOBBLE

seeing this, quietly places two hand grenades on top of the sand bag between them.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE-STAFFORD'S POSITION - CONTINUOUS

ZWILLING, whispers quietly to STAFFORD.

ZWILLING

Dismounts on the high ground to the south and west.

STAFFORD

Fuck! Ten days man. Bogar was right.
Fuck.

CUT TO:

INT. WANAT HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Over looking the OP, 30 yards away. The barrel of an enemy machine gun eases out of a second floor window. The Americans at Topside have *no idea* of the enemy presence.

CUT TO:

EXT. MORTAR PIT - CONTINUOUS

DZWIK and Staff Sergeant PHILLIPS stand together, listening.

MYER (O.S.)

I wanna hit the group to the west
with a missile, then drop the mortars
on the group to the south.

Anticipation all around; it's gonna be nice to hit them first for a change.

MYER (CONT'D)

One Three, this is Six. You ready?

CUT TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE - CONTINUOUS

PITTS, still scanning. Everyone tense! GOBBLE takes a knee next to him.

GOBBLE

What the fuck man? You see anything?

A short burst of machine gun fire, seemingly far away, then another, closer.

PITTS

Oh shit.

Suddenly, ALL HELL BREAKS LOOSE! Hundreds of tracers, dozens of RPGs CRISSCROSS the entire perimeter!

AN OVERHEAD VIEW

Enemy machine gun tracers from the high ground, from the mosque and the hotel, targeting the trucks.

With BAKAR and his assault team, in the low ground, two hundred meters north east of the OP.

BAKAR

(subtitled)

Wait! Not yet.

CUT TO:

EXT. WANAT TOW TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Three RPGs slam into the truck, the front and both sides! The gunner instantly drops inside!

GUNNER

Holy Shit!

Bullets slam violently into the bullet-proof windshield!

CUT TO:

EXT. MORTAR PIT - CONTINUOUS

RPG rounds slam against the HESCOs, two detonate inside. Everyone instantly knocked flat! DZWIK, knocked backwards against the western wall, on the ground looking back towards the T.O.W. Truck!

Into his hand mike.

DZWIK (CONT'D)

They just took out the TOW!

His gaze now towards the OP, across the perimeter.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE - CONTINUOUS

The first RPG explodes against the boulder behind ZWILLING and STAFFORD. In a blinding flash, ZWILLING and STAFFORD blasted violently out of their position, onto the sleeping terrace, one level below. Three feet to the left, PITTS is blown over.

GOBBLE is caught mid-stride, shrapnel peppers his entire left side, blowing him back towards BOGAR in the southern position.

CUT TO:

INT. WANAT HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Enemy RPK POV, a long continuous burst into the OP! Tracer rounds ricochet crazily into the air! Sparks flash as bullets impact against rock!

CUT TO:

INT. WANAT COMMAND POST - CONTINUOUS

MYER tosses one hand mike to HAYES, grabs another from AASS.

MYER

Rock X-ray, Chosen Six, we're in heavy contact! Multiple RPGs and machine guns.

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTALION TACTICAL OPERATIONS CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Every member of the operations center instantly alert! All eyes on the large television screen!

MYER (O.S.)

Just like the Ranch House attack!

Machine gun and explosions clearly heard over the radio. The Battle Captain glances to the the now standing commander.

OSTLUND

Air Boss! What's in the air? Anything close?

The Air Boss, a fresh faced lieutenant, quickly traces a finger across a laptop screen.

AIR BOSS

Uh.. two B-1s, sir! About ten minutes out.

OSTLUND

Get'em.

Turning back to the battle captain.

OSTLUND (CONT'D)

Alert the QRF.

One of the orderlies bolts out the door. Another young soldier types quickly!

ANGLE ON COMPUTER SCREEN

0430. Chosen 6 reports, Troops In Heavy Contact! Grid: XD 740 805.

CUT TO:

EXT. JALALABAD AIRFIELD - CONTINUOUS

Two Apache gun ships sit with rotors spinning, weapons racks loaded and ready.

INSIDE HEDGEROW 50 we find the crew seated in tandem, the gunner, in front of and slightly below the pilot.

SABER MAIN (O.S.)
Hdgerow, Saber Main. Troops in heavy
contact! Launch! Say again LAUNCH!
Grid, X-ray Delta...

The war birds climb, then turn northward, heading toward the fight.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE - CONTINUOUS

STAFFORD rolling around, bleeding from both legs and stomach, in a panic, a trouser leg aflame. PITTS into the radio!

PITTS
This is Topside! Three wounded!

Notices his own wound, a deep gash in his left forearm.

PITTS (CONT'D)
Correction! Four wounded! Request
immediate suppression! Charlie One
One November!

Another viscous burst of machine gun rounds stitch a path above him.

ON THE SLEEPING TERRACE, STAFFORD, and ZWILLING share a look. On all fours, a dazed ZWILLING, bleeding from the nose, tracers zipping back and forth. PHILLIPS, behind sandbags, rapidly firing his M-14 at the machine gun in the hotel.

STAFFORD
Phillips! Hey man, I'm hit.

Ducking, PHILLIPS retrieves a fragmentation grenade. He glances at STAFFORD. Flashes a smile and a wink.

PHILLIPS

Hold on man, let me take of this asshole first!

Phillips rises to a knee, throwing the grenade as hard as he can, but suddenly disappears within another RPG volley.

CUT TO:

EXT. WANAT COMMAND POST - CONTINUOUS

AASS and HAYES, still seated. HAYES slams shut the passenger door! Two slugs spider-web the bullet proof glass. KRUPA, pounding away on the fifty above them.

MYER leaning into the open rear driver's side door.

PITTS (O.S.)

Immediate suppression, Charlie One
One November!

MYER nods to AASS.

MYER

Send it.

The captain steps back out, looking first towards the OP, then quickly all around. Fire comes from every direction!

AASS (V.O.)

X-ray! Six Romeo! Four wounded!
Immediate Suppression! Charlie....

Gunners on every truck, return fire between incoming bursts. Enemy rounds ricochet crazily off every protective gun shield!

CUT TO:

INT. BATTALION TACTICAL OPERATIONS CENTER - CONTINUOUS

OSTLUND takes the hand mike from the young battle captain.

OSTLUND

Chosen Six, Rock Six! That fire mission is danger close! Can you confirm that all your people are within your perimeter?

MYER (O.S.)

AFFIRMATIVE!

Forceful, yet composed, incoming fire thunders in the back ground.

MYER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Affirmative. We are secured, but I need fires as close as I can get them!

CUT TO:

EXT. IN THE AIR - CONTINUOUS

WITH THE APACHE QRF. The two gun ships have cleared the airfield, moving rapidly thirty feet above the ground.

SABER MAIN (O.S.)
Five Zero, Saber Main. Be advised!
You'll need to escort DUSTOFF. Stand by for link up.

PILOT
Shit.

In response, but frustrated.

PILOT (CONT'D)
Roger. Standing by, northern mark.

The rapid launch now stalled; the gun ships hover. The lights of the air field behind them.

CUT TO:

EXT. CROW'S NEST - CONTINUOUS

AYERS on the machine gun, a long vicious burst to his right; the targets, muzzle flashes only 100 meters away! McKaig breaking open ammo cans, spotting.

MCKAIG
To the left!

Linking belts together.

MCKAIG (CONT'D)
To the left! Down! There!

RAINEY's head appears from the middle position.

RAINEY
You guys good? Anybody hit!?

MCKAIG
No! No! We're okay.

RAINEY
Control your fires! Don't burn out
the barrel!!

CUT TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE - CONTINUOUS

STAFFORD's POV, smoke clears enough to see PHILLIPS, slumped over dead. PITTS, wounded in both legs, trying to find the hand mike for the radio. RAINEY lands next to STAFFORD, finding him injured but alive. He yells towards the south.

RAINEY
Sern't GOBBLE! You okay!?

GOBBLE
I'm hit. I'm hit.

RAINEY on STAFFORD, assessing the wounds, there are many.

CUT TO:

EXT. MORTAR PIT - CONTINUOUS

Under heavy fire, bullets zipping all around. While DZWIK renders aid to a wounded ABAD, brawny SSG PHILLIPS and a young Private manage to launch four rounds but that's it. Incoming fire too heavy! A bullet glances off the Private's helmet.

SSG PHILLIPS
NO USE! Grab some fucking cover!

He forcefully throws the young Private towards the protection of the HESCO. DZWIK now returns to the wall, rapidly engaging targets over the barriers; bad guys visible through the trees, only 10 meters away.

DZWIK
Shit!

CUT TO:

EXT. T.O.W. TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Flames lapping at the driver's feet, bullets smack into every side! An RPG slams into the missile launcher above.

DRIVER
Shit! OH SHIT! The trucks on fire!

GRIMM
WHAT!?

DRIVER
FIRE! We're on FIRE!

GRIMM
Get the fuck out! Head for the CP!

A mad scramble ensues.

GRIMM (CONT'D)
Go! Go! Go!

They bolt, the truck quickly engulfed behind them, the massive flame lights the entire perimeter.

CUT TO:

INT. CAMP BLESSING - CONTINUOUS

A runner bursts into the 1st Platoon area.

RUNNER
Mount up! Mount Up! Second Platoons'
in heavy contact!

The men of 1st Platoon on their feet, yelling, grabbing everything they need!!

STOCKARD
I fucking knew it! I fucking knew
it!

CUT TO:

EXT. WANAT COMMAND POST - CONTINUOUS

Tracers crisscross from all directions, rounds slam into everything. KRUPA hammers away; impressive work from a baby faced paratrooper.

BROSTROM, sliding into the headquarter's fighting position.

The lieutenant looking towards Topside; where he sees utter chaos! RPGs explode, tracers ricochet crazily into the air!

Inside the command truck, *controlled* chaos. HAYES, AASS and MYER working the radios; multiple channels, back and forth. The young soldiers are extensions of MYER's command. When they can; they speak *for* him. When they cannot, they pass him the mike.

Every few moments, one or the other hands KRUPA another box of ammo. Conversations are short, but they are in absolute control.

AASS

Sir, two B- ones on station with
GBUs. Where do you want'em?

Jabbing a finger onto the map board.

MYER

To the west. Here and here.

AASS

Two targets! Grid, X-ray Delta,
seven three two five.....

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMP BLESSING 155MM GUN POSITION - CONTINUOUS

Shouted commands! The gun crew, in full combat uniform,
load the massive cannon, then raise the elevation as fast as
possible; almost vertical when it fires.

Others quickly arrive, most wearing black PT shorts and body
armor. A minute ago, these guys were either asleep or in
the shower. One guy actually wearing shower shoes, another
hurriedly wipes away shaving cream!

CUT TO:

EXT. WANAT COMMAND POST - CONTINUOUS

HOVATER slides in next to BROSTROM joining the assembled
chaos of the CP. The .50cal still hammers away.

HOVATER

We can't get a hold of the OP! We've
lost contact with the OP!

BROSTROM

Captain Myer....

(beat)

CAPTAIN MYER!

MYER and BROSTROM face each other.

BROSTROM (CONT'D)

PITTS needs help. I have to get up
there!

BROSTROM's eyes say it all. MYER, still composed, has no
choice.

MYER

Okay. Go.

BROSTROM

Hovey, you're coming with me! Doc,
grab your shit, you're coming too!

CUT TO:

EXT. CROW'S NEST - CONTINUOUS

AYERS burns through another belt of ammo. MCKAIG scrambling to find another box. Their backpacks, on the ground behind them, catch fire. MCKAIG starts kicking, trying to stomp out the flames.

MCKAIG

A fuckin' fire extinguisher would be nice!

Their adrenaline way up, the pair start laughing.

AYERS

Never a dull moment!

RAINEY appears again.

RAINEY

They're coming from the north east!
Two o'clock! Two o'clock! In the
fucking low ground!

CUT TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE-BOGAR'S POSITION - CONTINUOUS

BOGAR, blazing away on the SAW. Impressive! Fearless!
Calmly takes a knee to reload. GOBBLE crawls next to him;
covered in blood!

BOGAR

Sern't GOBBLE. You okay?

BOGAR pops up quickly, unleashing another long burst, then drops down.

BOGAR (CONT'D)

SERGEANT GOBBLE! ARE YOU OKAY?!

GOBBLE, trying to render self aid, having little success.
BOGAR jumps into action, a quick assessment, patches the
biggest holes. Lying to the wounded man.

BOGAR (CONT'D)

Nothin' serious Sern't. You're good.
You're good.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE-AYERS' POSITION - CONTINUOUS

Ayers take a round in the helmet, knocking him down. An angry MCKAIG pops up with his M-4, firing on burst, quickly empties a magazine. He glances down to find AYERS on all fours, shaking his head.

AYERS
Mother fucker.

AYERS shakes it off, he's back on the gun in an instant.

MCKAIG
Thought you were dead man!

AYERS
Not yet.

Burns through another belt, to the left; to the right. Short bursts, long bursts, all very well aimed! MCKAIG opens the last box, quickly yanking a belt, snapping it onto the one hanging from the gun.

MCKAIG
That's it man! Last belt! LAST
BELT!

AYERS
Fuck it.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE - CONTINUOUS

RAINEY is every where, armed only with a 9mm pistol. Keeping everyone informed. He reports to PITTS!

RAINEY
PHILLIPS is dead! I can't find
ZWILLING!

The news enrages PITTS; he's now a man possessed! He stands, vicious, bleeding! Unleashing a barrage of rifle fire over the northern wall.

PITTS
FUCK YOU! FUCK YOU!

WE SEE... three of the enemy climbing up towards the sand bagged position. PITTS suddenly towers above them. A demon back-lit by the fires behind! The three are blasted backwards, VERY dead.

BACK WITH RAINEY... taking a knee next to the very wounded Gobble.

RAINEY

Let me borrow your 203!

Without waiting, RAINEY snatches the weapon and GOBBLE's vest of 40mm grenades.

CUT TO:

EXT. WANAT COMMAND POST - CONTINUOUS

BROSTROM gets the attention of 2nd Squad 10 yards away.

BROSTROM

We're going up! Throw smoke and cover us!

BENTON

Are you fuckin' crazy Sir!?

BROSTROM

NO CHOICE! Do it!

BROSTROM, steeling himself. To HOVATER and DOC.

BROSTROM (CONT'D)

You ready?

Surprisingly speechless, HOVATER only nods.

BROSTROM (CONT'D)

Let's go!

They burst out of the CP, after only 2 steps, DOC is knocked down, deep gashing wound in his shoulder. BROSTROM and HOVATER don't even notice; they charge across the road into the smoke....then disappear.

CUT TO:

EXT. WANAT MORTAR PIT - CONTINUOUS

The position is on fire! Another RPG slams against the back side, ammo crates start to catch fire!

SSG PHILLIPS

We've got to go! Those crates catch fire we're fucked!

DZWIK

Shit! Okay. Go! GO! Head for the CP!

DZWIK blazes away to cover their move. The six men burst out of the position as fast as they can. CHAVEZ and another dragging a wounded ABAD.

Halfway across, CHAVEZ goes down hard, two machine gun slugs through his legs, only steps from the command post.

Bringing up the rear, DZWIK and SSG PHILLIPS snatch up the two wounded, never loosing stride. Rounds impacting everywhere, tracers zip past, dust kicked up at their feet!

DZWIK and party slide into the fighting position, built for five, now holding ten! Finds DOC bleeding heavily, trying to help himself. They toss the wounded into the cramped fighting position! To KRUPA on the fifty.

DZWIK (CONT'D)

Watch the mortar pit!! Blast ANYTHING that moves!

To MYERS.

DZWIK (CONT'D)

Where's my LT!?

CUT TO:

EXT. CROW'S NEST - CONTINUOUS

With MCKAIG and AYERS, the machine gun lies next to them; out of ammo. The pair defend with M-4s, taking turns; popping up, unleashing rapid shots. It's working. Suddenly, AYERS takes a round in the head, he slumps dead. Another RPG blows MCKAIG back against the large boulder.

CUT TO:

EXT. ON THE ROAD FROM BLESSING - CONTINUOUS

1st Platoon, mounted and hauling ass! Every tree, every dip, every outcropping gets a burst of 40mm grenades or fifty cal! Determination on every face. Scared beyond words, but not stopping for shit!

MYER (O.S.)

Had to abandon the mortars! OP under heavy pressure....

CUT TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE - CONTINUOUS

The Crow's Nest now silent. PITTS tossing grenades over the northern wall.

PITTS

AYERS! MCKAIG!

RAINEY appears with the 203.

PITTS (CONT'D)
Get on that fucking gun man!

RAINEY drops the grenade launcher, begins trying to get STAFFORD's machine gun in the fight.

PITTS (CONT'D)
AYERS! MCKAIG!

A shell shocked MCKAIG sticks his head over the terrace.

MCKAIG
He's gone, man. AYERS is dead.

PITTS
The claymores! BLOW the claymores!

CUT TO:

EXT. WANAT - CONTINUOUS

BROSTROM and HOVATER fighting their way through the bazaar. One moves, the other covers.

BROSTROM
Where's Doc!

As shrug. HOVATER has no idea.

BROSTROM (CONT'D)
Keep going!

CUT TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE - CONTINUOUS

MCKAIG dives back into the fight, grabbing the initiator for the claymore mine! A crashing Boom! We see... An enemy fighter takes the full blast, ten paces away. 900 ball bearings rip into and through him. Sparks flash as his carried ammunition ignites.

CUT TO:

EXT. WANAT COMMAND POST - CONTINUOUS

DZWIK, organizing the casualties! A bandaged DOC, applying dressings on the legs of CHAVEZ. A very pale ABAD, loses consciousness. When SSG PHILLIPS, ducks to reload, he glances down.

SSG PHILLIPS
DOC! ABAD's goin' into shock!

CUT TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE - CONTINUOUS

Brostrom and Hovater arrive at the sleeping terrace. PHILLIPS lays dead a few feet away. The lieutenant's head appears over the sand bag wall.

BROSTROM
PITTS! PITTS!... Holy shit.

A SHOCKING sight! PITTS leans against the northern wall in a puddle of blood as STAFFORD treats one of his wounds. Equipment scattered, tree branches hang. A very wounded GOBBLE lying on the ground reloading magazines. Pitts and Rainey visibly relieved.

BROSTROM (CONT'D)
RAINEY! Bring me that gun!

Behind him, HOVATER unleashes a dozen rounds!

HOVATER
Contact!!

BROSTROM ducks back out of view. RAINEY, with the machine gun in one hand, a 9mm pistol in the other, vaults over the wall to join the new arrivals now firing towards the back side of the hotel and bazaar.

CUT TO:

BACK AT THE COMMAND POST

The T.O.W. truck erupts in a MASSIVE explosion and fireball! Four foot long TOW missiles cartwheel crazily up into the air! We watch in horror as one flips end over end, straight towards MYER at the command post! All he can do is lean as far into the back of the truck as possible. In the hole, DZWIK and DOC lay their bodies over the wounded.

DZWIK
Down!!

The smoking missile thuds hard against the edge of the building, then comes to rest four feet away; red hot and smoking. Everyone cramped in the fighting position squashing themselves lower, expecting the missile to kill them all!

MYER snatches free a tattered poncho hanging over the position, tossing it over the live missile. Before the poncho begins to melt, he's picked it up. In three great strides, the brave captain hurls it up and over the edge of the perimeter.

Frightened eyes peer over the sand bags. Glad to be alive, but even more amazed at MYER's courage.

While the captain sprints back to the truck, we see DOC pounding on ABAD's chest!

AASS
Sir! You're not supposed to do
shit like that!

No reaction; MYER calmly retrieves a hand mike.

MYER
Two Six, this is Six, over!

CUT TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE - CONTINUOUS

RAINEY, catches movement to his right; an enemy fighter! He dispatches him with four quick pistol shots. Another appears.

RAINEY
They're in the Wire!!

HOVATER
Reloading!!

BROSTROM
Where?!

RAINEY
Right behind the fucking sand bag!!

A crescendo of gunfire; strobe-lit from muzzles fired rapidly!

Another volley of RPGs! PITTS suffers additional wounds. His head spinning, ears ringing!

CUT TO:

EXT. 1ST SQUAD'S TCP - CONTINUOUS

SAMAROO, crouched behind a short sandbag wall, he sees the RPG volley slamming into TOPSIDE but unaware that BROSTROM has attempted to reinforce.

SAMAROO
Chosen Six, this is Two One, I'm
gonna try for the OP!

MYER responds over the radio, calmly yet very firm.

MYER (O.S.)
Two one, this is six, NEGATIVE!

No time to explain.

MYER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Hold what you have until I get an update.

SAMAROO, to himself.

SAMAROO

Fuck!

MYER (O.S.)

Acknowledge, over!.

SAMAROO

This is two one, ROGER! Standing by!

CUT TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE - CONTINUOUS

Bogar's SAW is finished, the barrel is white hot and smoking. He angrily tosses it down and grabs an M4. In response to RAINEY's shout, he turns around, now looking towards the lower terrace. Fifteen yards away we see...

Two Taliban fighters dragging ZWILLING's lifeless body. BOGAR snaps of a shot, killing one, but his magazine is empty. INSTANTLY he VAULTS over the sandbag wall, landing heavily on the lower terrace, where he discovers,

HOVATER, face down and dead. BOGAR takes the fresh mag from his now lifeless hand. Without missing a beat, he reloads and charges screaming towards the Taliban. He takes two more by surprise, killing them.

Suddenly, he's knocked down by a burst of machine gun from the bazaar. Now on his back and bleeding from the lungs, he fires in defiance!! After three or four shots, his bolt locks to the rear; he's out of ammo! The enemy machine gunner now takes careful aim then squeezes off a dozen rounds. Bogar's gallant charge is over.

BOGAR'S POV. Gunfire slowly fading in the back ground. The first trace of sunrise graces the high ground on the far side of the valley, slowly fades into darkness.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE SOUTHERN SIDE OF THE OP - CONTINUOUS

GOBBLE, STAFFORD and MCKAIG. Yelling for PITTS. Pitts can't hear shit, he's in a daze, clumsily launching M203 rounds almost straight up. An enemy grenade lands between his legs, weakly, he snatches it up and drops it over the wall. The detonation drowns out MCKAIG's shout.

GOBBLE

I think they just got PITTS.

GOBBLE, covered in blood, weaker now; at risk of bleeding out. STAFFORD bleeding heavily from his stomach and legs. Burly MCKAIG chooses his only option.

MCKAIG

I gotta get you the fuck out 'a here
Sern't.

GOBBLE

Ok.

MCKAIG knocks over a portion of the sandbag wall, they quickly crawl over. MCKAIG dragging STAFFORD; STAFFORD dragging GOBBLE.

CUT TO:

EXT. 1ST SQUAD'S TCP - CONTINUOUS

A VERY livid SAMAROO! He can no longer see back into the main position, the entire perimeter masked by thick black smoke.

SAMAROO

Fuck it! HANSON, HAMBY! On me!!

SAMAROO tosses two smoke grenades; one on the road to the south, the other back towards the bazaar. He screams to the 50. Cal gunner.

SAMAROO (CONT'D)

Cover us! We're goin' up!

The Gunner lays down a very long continuous burst from the heavy machine gun.

GUNNER

Go! Go!

The three man team bursts across the road then bounding up onto the first terrace.

CUT TO:

EXT. IN THE AIR - CONTINUOUS

The Apache QRF and two Black Hawk MEDEVACs approach BLESSING from the south.

PILOT

Rock X-ray this is Hedgerow Five
Zero. Two minutes from your position,
requesting SITREP over.

OSTLUND (O.S.)

This is Rock Six. We have fire
missions on going. Hold your current
positions until I clear the airspace.

PILOT

Rock Six, Hedgerow acknowledges.

Speaking directly to his wing man and the MEDEVACs.

PILOT (CONT'D)

DUSTOFF, this is five zero. We are
to standby until cleared to proceed.
We're gonna push ahead as soon as
they release us! We'll call you
forward after we clear the way.

DUSTOFF

Roger.

CUT TO:

EXT. WANAT COMMAND POST - CONTINUOUS

In the position between the command truck and the wall, a
very busy DZWIK manages the growing casualties. In the back
ground, DOC pounding on ABAD's chest.

In the command truck, MYER now seated in the left rear, still
working the radios.

MYER

HEDGEROW, this is Chosen Six.

CUT TO:

EXT. IN THE AIR - CONTINUOUS

From the pilot's seat in HEDGEROW 50, flying tight circles
just outside of BLESSING.

MYER (O.S.)

Be advised, we're in a BAD situation
here. I need you to come in HOT
immediately!

PILOT

FUCK! Come on, COME ON!

The Apache gunner, punches the console out of frustration.

OSTLUND (O.S.)
 HEDGEROW, this is Rock Six. Airspace
 is clear! Proceed! Proceed!

Both gun ships dip their nose and pour on the gas! Their
 rotor blades pounding the air viciously.

TOWNSAND
 This is HEDGEROW five zero. We are
 inbound, five minutes out!

CUT TO:

AASS
 Gun ships, five minutes out!

MYER grabs another handset. Tries again to raise BROSTROM.

MYER
 Two Six, this is Six, OVER!

CUT TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE - CONTINUOUS

PITTS all alone, launching his last few 40mm grenades. Finally
 hears MYER on the radio. Weak, almost dead. Whispering.

PITTS
 This is Pitts. I'm all that's left.

Thunk! He fires another grenade.

PITTS (CONT'D)
 Need a little help. They're right
 on top of me...

ON MYER, finger in the other ear, trying to listen to PITT's
 weak transmission.

PITTS (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 I can hear 'em talking.

CUT TO:

EXT. IN THE DRAW - CONTINUOUS

BAKAR with eight men, observing the fight at the OP. He's
 been waiting for just the right moment.

BAKAR
 (subtitled)
 Now! Go! Go!

The evil group sprints forward out of the trees; they'll be on PITTS in moments!

EXT. TERRACE - CONTINUOUS

SAMAROO encounters the wounded trio of MCKAIG, STAFFORD and GOBBLE on the second terrace. He grabs MCKAIG and GOBBLE by the collar.

SAMAROO
Where is everybody!?

MCKAIG
We're it!

SAMAROO
What the fuck??

GOBBLE tries to speak but SAMAROO quickly cuts him off.

SAMAROO (CONT'D)
You're okay now! HAMBY! Back to
the truck! Go! Go!

SAMAROO's three men drag their bleeding comrades back down the terrace towards 1st squad's position on the road.

CUT TO:

EXT. WANAT COMMAND POST - CONTINUOUS

A concerned and angry DZWIK, standing next to MYER's open door.

DZWIK
ABAD's dead.

Suddenly, two Marine corporals slide into the position with their machine gun.

SAMAROO (O.S.)
Six! This is two one! I've got
three wounded from the OP! Taking
em back to my truck, then I'm going
back. Send anybody you can to me.

CPL OAKES
Where do you need us?

CUT TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE - CONTINUOUS

PITTS, VERY alone, sitting in a growing pool of blood. Now using hand grenades, "cooking" them off before weakly throwing them in the air. The effort of each toss reducing his energy even more. He's running out of time. Another volley of RPG detonate above him at the Crow's Nest!

CUT TO:

EXT. 1ST SQUAD'S TCP - CONTINUOUS

From out of no where, GARCIA slides next to SAMAROO who's again crouched behind the sand bag wall, scanning the OP through his scope.

Scope POV. The smoke clears a little, but no movement; friend or foe! GARCIA checks on GOBBLE.

GARCIA
Where's PHILLIPS?

GOBBLE's lost a lot of blood; almost gone.

GOBBLE
He's still up there.

GARCIA
Okay. Okay. I'll get him.

SAMAROO quickly tosses more smoke grenades, then quickly attaches a few more to his harness.

SAMAROO
You guys ready?

Determined nods all around. They know what he's asking of them.

SAMAROO (CONT'D)
We don't fucking stop! Not till we get there! Let's go!

SAMAROO, GARCIA, and DENTON bolt towards the terrace while HAMBY and HANSON shelter the wounded. We follow the charge.

Through SAMAROO's scope; BAKAR's massive frame appears on one of the boulders, shooting down into the OP itself. Crack, Crack! SAMAROO drops him with two shots in the chest.

SAMAROO (CONT'D)
Go! Get up there!

CUT TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE - CONTINUOUS

SAMAROO and team vault into the beleaguered OP. Where he finds PITTS, covered in blood, leaning against the northern wall. STAFFORD's machine gun lays abandoned at his feet.

SAMAROO

Holy shit...

Weak but relieved.

PITTS

'Bout fuckin' time...

SAMAROO glances over the sand bag wall, towards the low ground. Enemy fighters visible through the trees. He quickly throws two grenades, then ducks down.

SAMAROO

FRAG OUT!!

The grenades detonate below, leaves fall into the position, but the enemy's attack is now stalled. SAMAROO's group needs to gain control; immediately!

He finds STAFFORD's abandoned machine gun laying against the western wall, a long belt of ammunition dangles from the feed tray. He throws the machine gun in DENTON's chest then points at the upper position.

SAMAROO (CONT'D)

Get up THERE and put out rounds!!

To GARCIA.

SAMAROO (CONT'D)

Grab Pitts! Get him over there!

Pointing towards BOGAR's former fighting position. We hear DENTON on the machine gun; thunderous! SAMAROO grabs his hand mike.

SAMAROO (CONT'D)

Chosen Six, two one over!

DENTON engages more of BAKAR's men. Bits of bark and flesh fly as he unleashes an extra long burst of fire.

MYER (O.S.)

Send it!

SAMAROO

Am at the OP!

(beat)

I found PITTS and...

Suddenly, another volley of RPGs slam into the OP. DENTON is blasted out of the Crow's Nest, landing heavily close to SAMAROO. Another hits GARCIA squarely in the stomach, he disappears in the blast.

CUT TO:

EXT. WANAT COMMAND POST - CONTINUOUS

MYER, outside of the truck, witnessing the RPGs impact. To DZWIK.

MYER

I need you up there!

DZWIK reacts instantly! Jabbing a finger at every able bodied man cramped between the command truck and the wall; Staff Sergeant PHILLIPS and QUECK from the Mortars, the two Marines, SCANTLIN and DAVIS from the now destroyed TOW truck.

DZWIK

We're goin' up!

To SCANTLIN.

DZWIK (CONT'D)

You're my medic! Grab the aid bag!

The group charges violently out, headed towards the terrace.

MYER

Two one! Gun ships inbound. Give me smoke and a target!

CUT TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE - CONTINUOUS

A wounded SAMAROO on his back. Ears ringing. Smoke clearing.

SAMAROO

Fuck.... GARCIA! GARCIA! I'm hit.

He grabs frantically on his harness until he finds what he's looking for; a green colored smoke grenade. SAMAROO weakly tosses the smoke grenade over the northern wall.

SAMAROO (CONT'D)

Green smoke! GREEN SMOKE! Targets five meters north!

His eyes widen in shock as he sees GARCIA, practically cut in half but still conscious and trying to open his aid pouch.

CUT TO:

EXT. WANAT COMMAND POST - CONTINUOUS

MYER, desperately looking down the valley; searching hopefully! There they are! Two vicious looking Apache Helicopters. He now turns towards the OP, screened by thick green smoke. He grabs a hand mike from HAYES.

In the lead Apache.

MYER (V.O.)

HEDGEROW, this is Chosen Six. I need an IMMEDIATE gun run five meters north of the green smoke! Friendlies are INSIDE that smoke!

53 GUNNER

Fuck me. Did he say 'five meters'?

PILOT

This is Hedgerow Five Zero. I'm inbound with cannon.

To his gunner...

PILOT (CONT'D)

Affirmative, he said five meters.

GUNNER

You gotta get me in close boss, I don't wanna hit the wrong guys.

PILOT (V.O.)

Here we go!

The menacing gun ship dives straight into the center of the fight. An internal speaker announces the obvious.

FEMALE VOICE WARNING (O.S.)

Altitude low! Altitude low!

Beneath the aerial charge, we see DZWIK's group grenading their way through the bazaar, then launching themselves onto the first terrace level.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE - CONTINUOUS

On his back, SAMAROO watches amazed as the gun ship descends straight towards him.

SAMAROO

Get Down!!

This is gonna be close.

CUT TO:

EXT. ABOVE THE FIGHT - CONTINUOUS

In the thermal sight we clearly see SAMAROO and his small band inside the OP. Through the trees on the north side, we also see six enemy fighters, again attempting to gain the position.

GUNNER

I've got visual! Bad guys right on the other side of the tree!

PILOT

Light 'em up.

GUNNER

Firing!

FEMALE VOICE WARNING (O.S.)

Altitude low!

Three enemy fighters disappear in a viscous barrage of 30mm cannon fire. We are rewarded with the sight of body parts flying through the air.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE - CONTINUOUS

SAMAROO looking skyward. HEDGEROW 53 passes directly overhead, so close he could reach up and touch the avenging angel. With a sudden THUD, a wounded DENTON lands next to him.

DENTON

Holy shit! Never saw an Apache get that fucking low!

SAMAROO on the radio.

SAMAROO

That's perfect! Do it again.

The second Apache follows, pulverizing the dead space just beyond the northern wall.

CUT TO:

EXT. IN THE AIR - CONTINUOUS

Both Apaches climb out of their diving guns runs, gaining altitude. We are with the pilot of the trail gun ship, HEDGROW 53.

All around the valley, muzzle flashes indicate the presence of enemy fighters. Green and red tracers crisscross around, in front of, and under both aircraft!

PILOT 2

Looks like fucking lightning bugs!
They're everywhere!

CUT TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE - CONTINUOUS

As the gun ships climb away, the incoming fire slacks off noticeably.

SAMAROO

Six this is Two One. We're still here.

MYER (O.S.)

Status?

SAMAROO

It's bad...

CUT TO:

INT. BATTALION TACTICAL OPERATIONS CENTER - CONTINUOUS

A beehive of activity, a full court press of action. OSTLUND hands off the radio then turns his attention to a dependable looking Major.

OSTLUND

Division is sending down more helos. Grab who you need but you're getting out there! I need you on the ground...in command.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE - CONTINUOUS

DZWIK and party arrive one level below the sleeping terrace where he discovers HOVATER's lifeless body. To the others.

DZWIK

Keep going!

The two Marines, OAKES and JONES charge past him leaping onto the next higher terrace. DZWIK stands erect, himself preparing to follow, but now he can see...

BROSTROM and RAINEY, both dead. The young lieutenant lies on his back, sightless eyes open to the sky above, RAINEY's

massive frame crumpled across the lieutenant's legs. The sounds fade as DZWIK takes in the scene before him.

DZWIK (CONT'D)

God damn it.

NOW with SAMAROO and DENTON. The two Marines quickly occupy the Crow's Nest with their own machine gun. Within seconds their retaliation begins! A thunderous roar of outgoing fire!

Back to reality now, DZWIK finishes his climb, diving into the position just as the the Apaches begin another gun run.

DZWIK's POV.

The very wounded PITTS laying next to the mortally wounded GARCIA. PITTS and GARCIA lay facing each other. The always cheerful GARCIA smiles weakly to PITTS, who grabs his hand.

PITTS

Hang in there man! You're gonna be all right!

There's still humor behind the smile.

GARCIA

Not if I look like you bro.

He painfully coughs up a little blood; still smiling.

GARCIA (CONT'D)

Where's PHILLIPS man? He okay?

PITTS, knowing the truth.

PITTS

He's busy man... he's busy.

GARCIA

Okay.... good.... okay...

Then GARCIA's beautiful smile is gone.

DZWIK to MYER.

DZWIK

This is Two Five. How far out is DUSTOFF?

MYER (O.S.)

Did you link up with Two Six?

CUT TO:

EXT. WANAT COMMAND POST - CONTINUOUS

MYER looks quickly at AASS.

AASS
Five minutes!

MYER
Dustoff is five Mikes out!
(beat)
Did you link up with BROSTROM?

Defeated.

DZWIK (O.S.)
I'm sorry boss.

Deflated.

DZWIK (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Two Six is gone.

A final RPG round detonates in the tree above. DZWIK knocked down, a quarter sized hole blasted through his right forearm. He tries to fire his weapon, but can't, tries firing with his left hand.

CUT TO:

EXT. ON THE ROAD FROM BLESSING - CONTINUOUS

First platoon, just a few hundred meters away. Through their windshield we can see the smoke and the tracers.

The platoon leader shouts into his hand mike.

THURMAN
Check your fire! Check your fire!
We don't know where anybody is!

To his driver.

THURMAN (CONT'D)
Keep going! Go! Go!

CUT TO:

EXT. IN THE AIR - CONTINUOUS

The two MEDEVAC helicopters, one behind the other, easing down towards the smoke covered hell.

DUSTOFF 35
 Chosen Six, this is DUSTOFF Three
 Five. Where do you want us to land?

CUT TO:

EXT. WANAT COMMAND POST - CONTINUOUS

MYER, standing outside of BROSTROM's truck, oblivious to the still ongoing enemy fire.

MYER
 DUSTOFF, be advised, my primary LZ
 is the open area to my immediate
 south.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE - CONTINUOUS

DZWIK, his right arm hangs bleeding and useless, hears MYER speaking with the inbound MEDEVAC.

MYER (O.S.)
 However, the bulk of my wounded are
 on the spur, sixty meters to my east.
 I don't think you can land there,
 you're gonna need to lower a hoist.

DZWIK weakly tosses another smoke grenade over the sand bag wall. Thick red smoke bellows out quickly.

CUT TO:

EXT. IN THE AIR - CONTINUOUS

Both birds complete a quick circle of the valley floor.

DUSTOFF 35
 Three Six, this is Five. I'm gonna
 land at the marked LZ. See what you
 can do for them at the eastern spur.
 Can you lower a hoist?

DUSTOFF 36
 Copy.

DUSTOFF 36 CREW CHIEF
 I've got red smoke thirty meters
 east of the road!

DUSTOFF 36 descends over OP TOPSIDE. Its rotor wash knocking back the smoke.

DUSTOFF 36

Chosen Six. I've got visual on red smoke to your east. Is that it?

MYER (O.S.)

Affirmative. Affirmative. That's it!

DUSTOFF CREW CHIEF

We fuck around with that hoist sir, they *WILL* shoot us down!

(beat)

Think you can get a wheel on that terrace?

DUSTOFF 36

Only one way to find out.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE - CONTINUOUS

SAMAROO leans over GARCIA's lifeless body, gently closes his friends eyes. He pats the wounded PITTS reassuringly on the chest. DZWIK takes a knee next to them both.

DZWIK

You're bleeding.

SAMAROO

I'm good.

Powerful rotor blades approach; very close and very loud.

DZWIK

Will ya take a look at that.

Nodding in the direction of the descending MEDEVAC.

SAMAROO

Guy's got balls.

AMAZINGLY, DUSTOFF 36 settles onto the tiniest piece of ground. An instant hurricane! Debris is thrown everywhere from the powerful down wash. Two flight medics jump from the aircraft and run towards TOPSIDE.

We pan up and away slowly revealing the shattered landscape below us. What's left of the TOW truck burns bright as the sun. From several points around the perimeter and from the village itself, massive clouds of thick black smoke.

The vehicles of First Platoon appear below us.

The Hotel, source of the enemy machine guns, disappears in a massive explosion, we see the Apache gun ship climb into the air after delivering the fatal blow.

CUT TO:

EXT. 1ST SQUAD'S TCP - CONTINUOUS

STOCKARD's vehicle stops at SAMAROO's old position; he's out the door instantly.

STOCKARD

Where!?

The gunner points uphill to the descending MEDEVAC. STOCKARD sprints away. The remaining trucks of first platoon charge into the village, guns blazing.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOPSIDE - MOMENTS LATER

Flight medics have arrived, their attention immediately focused on PITTS, a flurry of action. The sounds of battle fading, replaced by the thump of helicopters overhead.

MOMENTS LATER

We join STOCKARD as he arrives outside the OP, he finds a very exhausted and bleeding DZWIK. His friend kneeling next to the bodies of BROSTROM and RAINEY, shaking his head. Sadly, he reaches down, closing the lieutenants open mouth.

STOCKARD

Zwick. Hey man, you okay?

DZWIK, still gazing down at the bodies before him. STOCKARD places a reassuring hand on his shoulder. Glad to find his friend alive, but saddened by his loss.

STOCKARD (CONT'D)

David.

They're eyes meet. Dear friends; nose to nose.

STOCKARD (CONT'D)

You okay?

DZWIK

I'm still missing two.

STOCKARD takes in the bleeding right arm.

STOCKARD

Okay. We'll find 'em. Let me take
a look at that arm.

As if for the first time, DZWIK notices his right sleeve, dripping blood. STOCKARD gently leans him back against the rocks. DZWIK, slowly removes his helmet, dropping it weakly on the ground. A dejected DZWIK looks into the eyes of his friend. We notice that his temples are streaked with vivid grey hair. He's broken-hearted and tired beyond words.

Thirty feet away and one level below, a first platoon soldier discovers something unpleasant.

SOLDIER

Sergeant Stockard!

The tone indicates bad news. STOCKARD looks over his shoulder, shielding DZWIK. The soldier flashes two fingers.

DZWIK

Who is it?

A nod from STOCKARD.

SOLDIER

Zwilling and Bogar.

On DZWIK, his last ounce of energy drains before our eyes.

DZWIK

Yup... That's them.

Still treating the wound, a field dressing.

STOCKARD

You got wounded headed to the
hospital... you're gonna need to be
with *them*.

An empty look.

STOCKARD (CONT'D)

Let me take care of things here,
okay?

DZWIK closes his eyes, deflated. Almost a whisper.

DZWIK

Okay.

STOCKARD

DOC! Give a hand!

DISSOLVE TO:

FLASH:

Flight medics struggle to carry PITTS over the wire and up the next terrace. Those that see him carried away, already consider him DIED OF WOUNDS.

BACK AT THE COMMAND POST.

Hands reach down to lift a poncho covered body.

AASS

Not him. Get the wounded out first!
Just the wounded!

We pull back to see; dozens of wounded. Some standing, some helping. Those requiring evacuation, being carried on stretchers towards the busy landing zone.

The sun now in full force. Survivors sweat heavily, many near collapse. Dazed, angry expressions on all.

CUT TO:

EXT. IN THE AIR - MOMENTS LATER

Finally, a Predator drone provides the view. Fires still burn. MEDEVAC birds lift away, Apaches circle. Angry hornets back and forth over a broken nest.

MYER (O.S.)

Be advised, I will need more flights to follow... I have a total of nine KIA over.

HEDGEROW 50

God damn it!.....God damn it.

CUT TO:

INT. BATTALION TACTICAL OPERATIONS CENTER - CONTINUOUS

An exhausted, heartbroken OSTLUND sits quietly facing the large screen. His eyes rest on the display, his mind lost in sorrow.

Multiple radios squawk in the back ground, casualty numbers being reported. The officers and orderlies shuffle to and fro, but none seem inclined to disturb their boss.

At the entrance, a small group of fresh-faced officers appear. They're the advance party from the 1st Infantry, the patch on their shoulders, a red numeral '1' on a olive green background. Their uniforms, clean and crisp, but the expressions on each face? "What have gotten ourselves into?"

VIEW FROM ABOVE.

A large Chinook helicopter settles on the landing zone below. Dozens of soldiers fanning out as they exit. The battle is over, aircraft targeting pockets of fleeing enemy.

CUT TO:

EXT. WANAT COMMAND POST - MOMENTS LATER

A fresh faced major, "Mr. Dependable", joins an exhausted MYER at the shattered command post.

MAJOR

I'm here to take over, Matt.

Without saying a word, MYER stands, taking in the carnage surrounding the perimeter; the fires, the smoke, gun ships zipping back and forth over the valley, another Chinook disgorging more troops.

His eyes finally settle on TOPSIDE, the battle now over. He walks slowly toward the outcropping, time to learn the butcher's bill.

Besides; he's been relieved.

We see the faithful AASS, jogging to catch up.

SUPER: One Day After the Battle of Wanat, the outpost was abandoned for good. It was decided that rebuilding was not worth the effort....

DISSOLVE TO:

BLACK SCREEN, the sound of footsteps.

SUPER: FORT BENNING, GEORGIA, ONE YEAR LATER

INT. HALLWAY - MORNING

We follow behind a pair of sand-colored combat boots, striding purposely down a long hallway.

We enter an orderly room where we find a collection of military personnel preparing for the day's work. Close in on the combat patches of the men; the Screaming Eagle of the 101st, the Double 'A' of the 82nd, and finally the Winged Sword of the 173rd Airborne.

As we enter,

SERGEANT

Good morning, Sergeant.

VOICE
'Morning. Got the roster?

Handing over a clipboard.

SERGEANT
Here you go.

VOICE
Thanks.

To the others.

VOICE (CONT'D)
Ready?

The group follow outside, once through the door we pull back to reveal, DZWIK, the man in charge. As the others exit behind him, each man dons a black baseball cap. We discover they are all Airborne School Instructors; *Black Hats* of the US Army.

82ND SERGEANT
Well? What did the doctor say?

DZWIK
A girl.

Laughing.

82ND SERGEANT
Hey that's great! Congratulations Boss.

101ST SERGEANT
Least she'll have older brothers...
Thirteen years from now, you'll be hatin' life brother.

Off their amusement.

DZWIK
I'll be good and retired by then.
Just sit on the porch with a shotgun
on my lap.

The others smile at the thought.

DZWIK (CONT'D)
Come on. Let's go make some
paratroopers.

The men stride forward, now headed towards a large formation of very nervous recruits. It's Day One of the next class.

The camera pans upward and away to reveal; soldiers running in formation. In the distance, others leap from the 34 foot towers. Farther away, a jumper descends from the 250 foot towers. Black-hatted instructors are visible at every location.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - DAY

News footage showing the *real* Staff Sergeant Ryan PITTS as President Obama drapes the blue ribbon of the Medal Of Honor around his neck. The citation for the award read.

We also see, assembled at the front of the audience, MYER, DZWIK, and the other survivors, present for the ceremony.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE OF THE FALLEN. FROM SFC KAHLER THROUGH SGT GARCIA.

THE END