

TILLMAN

by

Sean Thomas

A true story.

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EXT. SUN DEVIL STADIUM - FIELD - DAY

Inside an empty football stadium, PAT TILLMAN, 21, strapping with shoulder-length hair, begins scaling the steps of a thirty-story light pole in jeans and flip flops. As he does, we **intercut archive footage** through his career.

PLAY-BY-PLAY ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Mr. Pat Tillman. Raising hell again.

Pat throws the OREGON QUARTERBACK down for a sack, long mane flopping under his Arizona State helmet.

COLOR COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
He's a 3.8 student. And obviously he spends more time in the library than he ever did in the barbershop.

Ten feet below Pat on the ground, a PHOTOGRAPHER watches with trepidation. Pat looks down. You coming or what? Fuck it. The photographer climbs up after him.

A mob of ASU STUDENTS surround Pat on the field after an upset victory. He lets loose into a REPORTER'S mike--

TILLMAN
We never lose at home! We kicked the shit out of them, baby!

The reporter lowers his mike -- you can't say that on TV!

While Pat breezes up the pole, the photographer takes slow, deliberate steps -- inch by inch through paralyzing fear.

Surrounded by rabid fans, the same reporter interviews Pat after another thrilling victory--

SPORTS REPORTER
What about that defensive stand here on that last overtime drive?

Pat puts an arm around him, smiles, can't help himself--

PAT
Once again... we kicked the shit out of 'em!

The reporter and fans cackle. What'd you expect from Pat?

Now halfway to the top of the light pole, Pat takes in the Tempe Salt River as small boats drift along its current.

The crowd is sparse at the end of the NFL Draft. All that remain: diehards and drunks. The Deputy Commissioner stands at the podium announcing the latest selection--

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER
 With the 226th pick in the 1998 NFL Draft, the Arizona Cardinals select... Pat Tillman, Linebacker. Arizona State.

Bracing himself against the pole, the photographer snaps photos as Pat summits the tower platform.

Pat strolls up on a beach cruiser to the Cardinals' parking lot. He's shirtless in khaki cutoffs, duffel bag slung across his chest. He smiles, waves to the assembled media.

The photographer finally joins Pat at the top. The payoff for this perilous climb: an unobstructed view of the serene desert in every direction.

The SEAHAWKS QUARTERBACK scrambles to his right to pass.

PLAY-BY-PLAY ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
 Foley rolls out of the pocket. Throws far side.

Out of nowhere, Pat steps in front of the pass--

PLAY-BY-PLAY ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
 Intercepted by Tillman!

--and sprints down the sideline for a Cardinals touchdown.

The photographer snaps a photo of Pat lounging between the railings like a metal hammock. We freeze on the picture as it dissolves into an article in *Sports Illustrated*.

"A Cut Above Pat Tillman, Arizona State's Height-Loving, Tree-Swinging, Book-Cracking Linebacker, Is The Best Player You've Never Heard Of."

Pat watches a monsoon form as veins of lightning pulse on the horizon.

MATCH CUT:

INT./EXT. DANNIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Ominous clouds creep over a quaint one-story house as wind whips the lush elm leaves. A modest home elsewhere, but on the outskirts of Silicon Valley it fetches a cool million.

SUPER: FALL 1979 - NEW ALMADEN, CALIFORNIA.

DANNIE TILLMAN, 25, sleep deprived and overworked, pulls her dirty blonde hair into a bun as she glances out the window.

DANNIE

Can't we have just one nice day?

She returns to mixing a bowl of cookie dough while her MOTHER, 50s, plops two large balls onto a baking sheet.

DANNIE

That's too much.

She removes the balls. Rips them in half. Places them back.

DANNIE'S MOTHER

Oh let them live a little.

DANNIE

Easy to say. You'll be home when the sugar kicks in. I'll be the one dealing with those little devils.

Speaking of, Dannie's eyes roll up to the ceiling, spidey sense tingling. She looks at her mother--

DANNIE

It's too quiet.

DANNIE'S MOTHER

Go.

INT. DANNIE'S HOUSE - PAT'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Dannie bursts into the room as KEVIN, 2, stands on tip-toes peering out an open window. He babbles in excitement--

KEVIN

(pointing)

Pah-Pah!

Dannie sticks her head out to see PAT, 3, toe-headed and carefree, clinging to the trunk of a eucalyptus tree. Pat notices his mother, beaming all the while--

PAT

Here it comes!

The wind kicks up, blowing Pat to and fro, delicate life in the hands of mother nature while his own watches in horror.

DANNIE
Stay there, Pat. Don't move.

Her mother enters the room to provide backup.

DANNIE'S MOTHER
What's going on?

DANNIE
Take Kevin.

Dannie scoops him up -- hands him off.

As Dannie climbs out the window, a cloud bursts overhead. She manages to sit on the roof, scooting her way through the downpour. Extends out to Pat. He's just out of grasp.

A forceful gust of wind bends the tree, pushing Pat closer to Dannie. His grip begins to loosen. Dannie reaches for Pat just as he slips. Dannie catches him by the skin of his teeth. Pat's all smiles. Let's go again.

INT. DANNIE'S HOUSE - PAT'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Dannie climbs through the window with Pat clung to her hip like a baby Orangutan. Once her feet are planted safely, she sets him down. Takes a knee to discipline him eye-to-eye -- Pat's chubby cheeks staring back at her.

PAT
(frowning)
What's wrong?

DANNIE
You could've hurt yourself.

Ready to scold Pat, she decides to hug him instead.

DANNIE
Don't ever scare mommy like that again.

PAT
I'm sorry.

Dannie nods, tears beginning to well.

Off Pat's precious almond eyes--

MATCH DISSOLVE:

INT. CARDINALS CLUBHOUSE - GYM - EARLY MORNING

Pat, now 25, grunts as he squats enough weight to qualify for the Olympic team. A Balbo beard hugs the lines of his chiseled jaw. We pull back to reveal he's all alone.

After a few reps, a TRAINER enters through a side door. He picks up dirty, day old towels as he crosses.

TRAINER

Till, I know we have the week off,
but you can still ask for a spotter.

PAT

(as he racks the bar)
That's why I'm going easy.

The trainer shakes his head. Fucking Till.

INT. CARDINALS CLUBHOUSE - TRAINING ROOM - LATER

Pat keeps his eyes closed as he soaks in an ice bath. His zen-like focus is broken by the trainer entering and making a bee-line for the TV.

TRAINER

(flipping it on)
You see this shit?

Live news footage loops of the WORLD TRADE CENTER ATTACKS as anchors attempt to explain the inexplicable.

Pat lifts himself out of the tub -- speechless, spellbound.

INT. CARDINALS CLUBHOUSE - FILM ROOM - DAY

Fifty-three Arizona Cardinals PLAYERS are seated in the auditorium, all chattering about the attacks.

The side door swings open. COACH MCGINNIS, 50, sunburned face and polo shirt, walks to the front of the room.

COACH MCGINNIS

'Preciate y'all coming in on your day off. I'mma let you get back to your families soon. Reason I called you in is the league office wants every team to vote on whether we want to play this weekend. Figure I'll follow whatever y'all decide. So by a show of hands, who wants to play on Sunday?

Not a single hand up. Then, Pat raises his. Everyone stares.

PAT

(standing)

Maybe I'm the only one here who feels this way. But if going out on the field allows someone to watch the National Anthem and realize we're moving forward as a country, even with something as stupid as football, it's progress. Bottom line: I wanna play.

He sits down. A beat.

COACH MCGINNIS

Anyone else?

DAVE BROWN, 31, more closely resembling an accountant than a backup NFL QB, stands up in the front row.

DAVE BROWN

I'm pretty sure I'm the only one in this room from New York. I have friends and family who lost loved ones in those towers. And for us to go out and play a game after what happened yesterday. It's unconscionable in my mind. So for that reason, I'm saying no.

COACH MCGINNIS

Anyone want to change their vote?

Crickets.

COACH MCGINNIS

Alright. We'll see you next Monday.

As the players shuffle out, Dave approaches Pat--

DAVE BROWN

I hope you see where I'm coming from, Till. I know how much you love playing but some things in life are more important than football.

He walks out, leaving Pat to chew on his words.

INT. MILITARY RECRUITMENT OFFICE - DAY

From under the brim of his ball cap, Pat eyes inspirational military posters on the back wall -- more campy than kick-ass.

SUPER: SEVEN MONTHS LATER

KEVIN TILLMAN, 24, honest features, roguish dimples, leans back in his chair.

KEVIN

Would you recommend we enlist or go in as officers?

Across from him, a RECRUITER, 50s, crew cut and southern accent, tongues the chewing tobacco in his lower lip.

RECRUITER

You go in as officers, you'll be sticking pins in maps and thumbs in yer asses.

(then)

You boys really wanna make a difference? Go in as grunts. You'll be in the heart of the action.

KEVIN

Yes, sir. That's the idea. We wanna be Rangers.

RECRUITER

Well, best speak to yer wife first.

He nods to MARIE TILLMAN, 26, a warm blonde with ice blue eyes, who's been sitting silently next to Kevin the entire time.

KEVIN

That's why she's here. To give her support.

He puts a reassuring hand on Marie's. She squeezes out a meager smile. The best she can do.

RECRUITER

Well alright then. Soon as yer ready, y'all can sign the contracts.

He spits into a McDonald's cup, keeping his eyes fixed on Pat. There's a familiarity about him he can't quite place.

EXT. MILITARY RECRUITMENT OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Pat, Kevin, and Marie cross into the parking lot.

MARIE

Still don't understand why I couldn't play your sister or something.

KEVIN

Because Pat's a weirdo and thinks he's gonna get recognized.

PAT

Or because the only way you're getting married is by pretending.

With some effort, Kevin pulls Pat's wedding band off.

PAT

I know baseball players don't care about staying in shape but damn you got some fat fingers.

KEVIN

(tossing ring at Pat)
You just have tiny hands.
(unlocking his truck)
And we all know what they say about that. Right, Marie?

MARIE

Oh please. You've seen your brother naked more times than I have.

Pat opens the passenger door.

PAT

(whispering)
We can change that.

He puckers up for a kiss.

MARIE

Mm, not with that breath.

Denied. She smiles -- climbs in the back of the crew cab. Off Pat, giving himself a breath check--

EXT. HIKING TRAIL - EVENING

Dannie, now 47, hair showing signs of gray from a divorce and three boys, fights gravity and father time as she easily strides up a trail incline.

Fifty feet behind her, UNCLE MIKE, 44, sucks wind with hands interlocked atop his thinning hair.

DANNIE
(turning back)
Come on, Mike. Almost there.

UNCLE MIKE
You said this would be easy.

DANNIE
You're the baby of the family.
Shouldn't you be lapping me?

Mike flips her off -- seconds away from feeding the birds with his vomit.

UNCLE MIKE
You got the hiking gene from mom, and
I got the lounging gene from dad.

Dannie doubles back to give him a boost.

DANNIE
Come on. A little bit more.

She holds his arm as they climb up shoulder to shoulder.

UNCLE MIKE
You know, most mothers prefer to be
waited on hand and foot today.

DANNIE
When I retire, it won't be in a rocking
chair. I'm gonna be an active grandma.

UNCLE MIKE
Might wanna pump the brakes, Dan. It's
been what, a week since the wedding?

DANNIE
Let's hope Pat and Marie's marriage
lasts longer than mine.

They reach a turnout just as the sun begins to set.

UNCLE MIKE
Can't believe I almost died for this.

DANNIE
Worth it.

INT. DANNIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

As Dannie stirs a sauce pan, Mike sits at the dinner table reading the paper.

The cordless phone rings. Dannie wipes her hands -- checks the caller ID. Her eyes light up as she answers--

DANNIE

Hey, Nub!

KEVIN (V.O.)

Happy Mother's Day!

DANNIE

Aw. Thank you.

She crosses into the dining room.

INTERCUT:

INT. PHOENIX HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME

Kevin lounges on the couch in a modest McMansion, phone to his ear. A nearby UV light zaps any desert critter bold enough to meet its demise.

KEVIN

You get the flowers we sent?

She admires the 1-800-FLOWERS Mother's Day special on the table.

DANNIE

Yes. They're beautiful. Thank you.

(then)

Uncle Mike and I were talking about you earlier. Were your ears burning?

KEVIN

Only because it was a hundred and four today.

(then)

Is Uncle Mike there now?

DANNIE

Yeah, he's staying for dinner.

KEVIN

Alright. Well, uh--

(beat, deep breath)

--You know how I've talked off and on about enlisting?

DANNIE

Yeah...

KEVIN

I signed up.

DANNIE

(beat)

Kevin, have you really thought this--

KEVIN

--You know I wouldn't rush into it.

DANNIE

I know. I just-- what did Pat say?

A long, pregnant pause.

KEVIN

Mom... Pat's joining, too.

Dannie goes white. Looks over to Mike. Their eyes meet. He already knows.

KEVIN

Here. I'm putting him on.

Dannie nods as though Kevin can see her through the phone.

Mike places a chair behind Dannie -- gently nudges her to sit before her knees buckle.

Pat hops on the line, a tenderness in his voice--

PAT

I'm sorry we had to tell you over the phone, ma. We were gonna do it in person after Marie and I got back from our honeymoon, but we didn't want you finding out from a newspaper.

DANNIE

What about Marie? What did she say about this?

PAT

We've talked it through. A lot. She's been a fucking rock star. And you know Kevin and me. We did our research. We drove out to Utah and met with a special forces guy. He answered all our questions.

PAT (cont'd)

(beat)
You there?

DANNIE

I don't know what to say right now.

PAT

We'll talk when we get back from Bora Bora. OK?

DANNIE

OK.

PAT

Happy Mother's Day. I love you, ma.

DANNIE

I love you too, Pat.

Click.

Off Dannie holding the phone and still trying to process--

EXT. BEACH - BORA BORA - DAY

Pat and Marie lay out on the beach reading books and soaking in skin cancer. Pat highlights a passage in Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Self-Reliance* while Marie turns the page on John Krakauer's *Under the Banner of Heaven*.

Something in the distance captures Pat's attention.

PAT

We should do that.

MARIE

(eyes tilting up)
You are fucking crazy.

ANGLE ON -- Kite surfers glide along the ocean waves.

PAT

What?

MARIE

That's all you.

PAT

You wouldn't do it?

MARIE

Hell no.

PAT
What's life without adventure?

MARIE
A safe one.

PAT
What's fun about being safe?

MARIE
What's fun about getting hurt?

PAT
The world belongs to the energetic,
Mrs. Tillman.

MARIE
(nodding to his book)
Emerson?
(re: his grin)
You're such a nerd.

PAT
Whatever gets you going.

MARIE
Well right now, what gets me going is
laying on the beach. I'm fine right here.

PAT
You're fine wherever you are.

He rolls over for a kiss. She lets him. Flawless execution.

EXT. DANNIE'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A tense cloud hangs over the Tillman and Ugenti families. They're gathered around a table, but this isn't a friendly dinner. It's an intervention.

MARIE'S MOTHER, 52, voice as sweet as her cotton candy hair, starts off the cross-examination--

MARIE'S MOTHER
I'm just curious where this is coming from is all. I've never heard you mention anything about the military.

PAT
I didn't want anyone to panic before I had my mind made up.

PAT (cont'd)

I just felt it was important for me to make a sacrifice for our country.

MARIE'S MOTHER

And what about Marie? She's sacrificed more for you than anyone in this country. Your football career, your long distance relationship, your stint in juvie--

MARIE

(gritting teeth)

--Mom.

PAT

No. She's right. This is without a doubt the biggest test of our relationship. But I wouldn't be doing this without her blessing.

MARIE'S FATHER, 51, a gym teacher with a domineering presence, takes a more pragmatic approach--

MARIE'S FATHER

Have you thought about the financial implications? You're passing up millions to make fifty grand a year.

PAT

I know this sounds cliché, but money isn't everything. If it was, I would've signed with the Rams.

MARIE'S FATHER

Which I still don't understand.

MARIE

And you don't have to. It wasn't your decision, dad.

MARIE'S FATHER

All I'm saying is, the average NFL career is less than three years, and Pat's already played four. Can't this wait until he retires?

PAT

I can always go back. But if I tear an ACL, I can forget about being in the Rangers.

MARIE'S FATHER

And if you tear an ACL in the military, you can forget about nine million from the Rams. You'd be lucky to get a contract in the Canadian league.

Dannie cuts in--

DANNIE

Why are you still talking about money? No one is talking about the elephant in the room. War is not sports. Forget injuries, the boys could be killed.

PATRICK SR., 49, bald power donut and chevron mustache, tries extinguishing Dannie's emotional flame--

PATRICK

Dannie, just relax.

DANNIE

I'm sorry Patrick but even if they come back in one piece, they could end up like Uncle Rich: living on the streets with PTSD.

(turns to her sons)

What if something happens to one of you? What happens to the one left behind? Or everyone else who cares about you?

(to Pat)

You just got married!

Tears well in her eyes. Pat stands and wraps his python arms around Dannie to comfort her.

INT. FRANK BAUER'S OFFICE - DAY

Outside an office door, a stencil reads Sun West Sports Agency. FRANK BAUER, 54, a shark of an agent with slicked-back hair, reviews a contract at his desk. His phone beeps--

FRANK'S ASSISTANT (V.O.)

Victoria Clarke. Line one.

FRANK

Remind me who she is. 49ers?

FRANK'S ASSISTANT (V.O.)

Pentagon.

He glares at the blinking red light. The fuck?

FRANK

Put her through.
(clicks over)
Frank Bauer speaking.

VICTORIA CLARKE (V.O.)

Hi Mr. Bauer, this is Victoria Clarke. I work in Public Affairs at the Pentagon, and I'm calling on behalf of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld about your client--

FRANK

--Gonna cut you off right there. I'mma tell you the same thing I told every reporter who's called. Patty's not doing interviews or press. He wants to be treated like everyone else.

VICTORIA CLARKE (V.O.)

Oh, no. That's not the reason for my calling. We think it's an admirable thing that he's decided to enlist--

FRANK

--Safe to assume we're both very busy people. So let's cut to the chase.

VICTORIA

Are you aware that the life expectancy of a Special Forces soldier is seven and a half minutes in battle?

FRANK

I wasn't.

VICTORIA CLARKE (V.O.)

I'm not here to talk Pat out of joining. We just think his best contribution as a Ranger would be speaking to troops stationed around the globe. To go from a seventh round pick to one of the best safeties in the NFL... it's quite inspiring.

FRANK

Hey, you don't have to tell me about it. Been with the kid long before anyone thought he'd even make an NFL roster.

FRANK (cont'd)

And because I've known him so long,
I'm gonna tell you right now he won't
go for that.

VICTORIA CLARKE (V.O.)

I trust your judgment, Mr. Bauer. But
we'd strongly encourage you to
present him the opportunity. It's in
everyone's best interest if Pat
remains unharmed. Including yours.

INT. SFO - DEPARTURES - EVENING

Pat's on the phone, seated at the terminal gate as the rest
of the passengers board.

PAT

I'm not prostituting myself, Frank.

Kevin smirks as he plays "Snake" on his Nokia brick phone.

FRANK (V.O.)

And I'm not trying to pimp you. But
anywhere you've gone, you've always
said, 'I'll do whatever helps the team.'

PAT

And that hasn't changed. But we both
know a Rose Bowl story means jack shit
to soldiers who've seen combat.

FRANK (V.O.)

Football is about leadership and
teamwork and execution. It's the same
thing in the military.

PAT

If you make a mistake in football,
you go home with a loss and some
bruises. If you make a mistake in
battle, you go home in a body bag.
I'm not going to insult their
intelligence like that.

FRANK (V.O.)

Pentagon doesn't see it that way. They
think you can be more valuable without
putting your life on the line.

PAT

Thousands of people put their lives
on the line every day, Frank.

PAT (cont'd)
 And who am I to think I'm above that?
 I haven't done shit.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT (O.S.)
 Attention passengers, last call for
 Delta Flight 62 to Atlanta.

PAT
 I gotta go. You know my answer.

He flips his phone shut.

EXT. LA JOLLA BLVD - SAN DIEGO - DAY

UNCLE RICH, 49, unkempt hair and untamed beard, speaks on one of the rare pay phones left. Given his hygiene and clothing, he's quite obviously homeless.

UNCLE RICH
 Military's no place for pro athletes.
 It's filled with pettiness, jealousy.
 I saw it first hand.

INTERCUT:

EXT. DANNIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME

Dannie paces around the room on the other end.

DANNIE
 Rich, things have changed since Vietnam.

UNCLE RICH
 Like hell it has. Human nature is
 human nature.
 (accusatory)
 I can't believe you let them enlist.

DANNIE
 Let them? Mike and me and the whole
 family tried to talk them out of it.

UNCLE RICH
 Hell of a job, Dan.

On the mantle, Dannie eyes a black and white photo of her and Mike next to Rich in his Marine Dress Blues at USMC graduation.

DANNIE
 Well you're always welcome to join
 the conversation, but you haven't
 exactly been easy to reach lately.

UNCLE RICH

Gonna have targets on their backs.
And I'm not talking about the enemy.

DANNIE

What's that supposed to mean?

UNCLE RICH

Society worships celebrity. The
military worships conformity. Kevin
and Pat are gonna get shit on by
every spiteful soldier they meet.

DANNIE

You're not helping, Rich.

UNCLE RICH

Yeah? Well you aren't, either.

He slams the receiver down.

INT. FORT BENNING - BARRACKS - NIGHT

BOOT CAMP RECRUITS clean rifles, write letters, play cards.
Pat, head now shaven, lies in bed reading *The Book of Mormon*.

PFC. O'NEAL, 19, Tiny Tim with Dumbo ears, takes a seat in
the adjacent bunk. Notices Pat's reading material. Perks up
like a nerd invited to the cool kids' table.

PFC. O'NEAL

Oh wow. I didn't know you were Mormon, too.

PAT

Oh, ah, I'm not. Atheist actually. But I
like to hear everyone's point of view.

PFC. O'NEAL

Got it. Right on.

(awkward beat)

Well, let me know if you have any
questions.

PAT

I will. Thanks.

DRILL INSTRUCTOR (O.S.)

All-Star. You got mail.

A DRILL INSTRUCTOR, 24, full Napoleonic complex, flings a
letter in Pat's general direction. It lands on the floor.

PAT
Hey, what the fuck?

The instructor stops cold. Still staring straight ahead--

DRILL INSTRUCTOR
(purposely loud)
I must be hearing things.

A silence falls over the barracks. All eyes on them.

PAT
(doubling down)
You didn't have to throw it. Coulda
handed it to me or put it on the bed.

The instructor flashes a sadistic smile.

CUT TO:

Pat does one-arm push-ups with his right hand, scrubbing the floor with a tooth brush in his left. Judging by the fatigue, he's done at least two hundred by now.

DRILL INSTRUCTOR
All the way down.

He places a perfectly polished combat boot under Pat's chest.

DRILL INSTRUCTOR
Now let's see what was so goddamn
special about this letter that you
needed it hand delivered.

He opens the envelope and pulls out a letter, as the rest of the recruits stand deadly quiet in formation.

DRILL INSTRUCTOR
'Dear Mr. Tillman, I heard that
you're leaving the National Football
League to become an Army Ranger; it
is a proud and patriotic thing that
you are doing.'
(beat)
'With best wishes, Donald Rumsfeld.'
(looking around)
I never received a letter from the
Secretary of Defense when I enlisted.
Any of you?

Not a peep. And if they did, no one would dare say so now.
The instructor drops the letter to the floor.

DRILL INSTRUCTOR
 (bending down to whisper)
 Out in the real world, you might be hot shit. But in boot camp, you are less than zero. You are dirt. And you will scrub this floor to remind yourself of that fact. Do you understand me, All-Star?

Pat grits through the pain, arm shaking--

PAT
 Yes. Drill. Ser. Geant.

DRILL INSTRUCTOR
 (turning head)
 One more time. Left ear's my good one.

PAT
 YES DRILL SERGEANT!

DRILL INSTRUCTOR
 (calmly)
 Fall out.

Pat drops to the floor, lactic acid coursing through his muscles. As the recruits return to their bunks, Kevin walks over to give his brother a hand and some advice--

KEVIN
 (pulling Pat to his feet)
 You can't do shit like that, man.

PAT
 Guy's an asshole.

KEVIN
 And he outranks you. So get used to shoveling shit.

He picks up the letter, holds it out for Pat.

PAT
 Keep it.

EXT. VARIOUS - DAY/NIGHT

A succession of quick images and moments take us through the intense preparation of--

SUPER: RANGER INDOCTRINATION PROGRAM

BENNING PHASE. Burpees. Buddy carries. Belly crawls. Lines of four soldiers carry rucksacks and rifles, balancing a giant log across their shoulders. Equal parts training and torture.

Pat lunges left then right in unison with his team as they're sprayed with a hose. The freezing cold water washes away the dirt, sweat, and blood caked on their pained faces.

MOUNTAIN PHASE. Steep climbs along rugged hills. Hunger. Stress. Sleep deprivation. A soldier nods off against a tree to rest. An instructor catches him, screams into a bullhorn to wake the poor bastard.

As Pat battles exhaustion up a fifty foot climbing rope, he watches a recruit approach an instructor to quit. Witnessing this gives Pat a boost -- he surges on.

FLORIDA PHASE. War games in jungle-like terrain. Soldiers paddle down swampy waters in an inflatable raft.

Through a torrential downpour, Pat pulls himself across a rope bridge in waist-deep water. Wading five feet to his left, an alligator stares him down like an appetizer.

MATCH CUT:

INT. BRET HARTE JUNIOR HIGH - DANNIE'S CLASSROOM - DAY

A pet turtle snaps up a cricket inside a glass tank.

Dannie is mid-lesson, drawing a diagram on the chalkboard. Though most students would be comatose in civics class, Dannie's passion keeps them engaged.

DANNIE

The President is part of the executive branch. And his job is to approve or reject the laws passed by the legislative branch. And the judicial branch decides whether those laws are allowed to be enforced.

LINDSAY, 12, teacher's pet, raises a hand in the front row.

DANNIE

(pointing)

Yes?

LINDSAY

(deadly serious)

My dad says President Bush can do whatever he wants.

The students laugh. Lindsay slinks a little in her chair.

DANNIE

That's an interesting point, Lindsay. I'm glad you brought it up. Because even after declaring independence from Great Britain, some of the founding fathers wanted to install a monarchy in America. Replacing one king with another. So we could've had King George Washington instead.

(re: shocked faces)

Surprising, right? Luckily, the founding fathers decided on a system which separates power and prevents any one person from attaining too much of it. So the judicial, legislative, and executive branches act independently to keep the others in check. Which is why we refer to it as 'checks and balances.'

Head nods from the students. Makes sense.

DANNIE

And two hundred plus years later, that same system is still in place today.

EXT. FORT BENNING - HURLEY HILL - DAY

Emerging through WHITE SMOKE, fresh RANGER GRADUATES, in fatigues and tan berets, march in formation.

Sitting in the bleachers with the other families, the Tillmans search for Pat and Kevin. Nearly every soldier is indiscernible from the next -- just as the Army intended.

They finally spot the Tillman brothers -- wave excitedly.

EXT. FORT BENNING - HURLEY HILL - LATER

The graduates greet family and friends after the ceremony, a mixture of smiles, hugs, and joyful tears.

Pat and Marie spot each other through the crowd -- make a beeline for one another. Pat lifts her in the air as they kiss, knocking off his beret in the process.

MARIE

(patting his buzz cut)

Oh my god. Your hair.

PAT
I missed you, too.

MARIE
I just need a moment to mourn the loss. It was like ninety-percent of your personality.

PAT
What's the other ten percent?

MARIE
(kisses him deeply)
That.

He puts her back on the ground.

PAT
Oh, before I forget.

He reaches in his pocket. Hands her a folded sheet of paper.

PAT
Had to sneak this out.

She opens it. Reads. Realizes what it is.

MARIE
Pat, I don't want to think about this right now...

PAT
I know. But I need you to have a copy. Just in case.

DANNIE (O.S.)
Smile!

They turn as Dannie snaps a photo of their now dour expressions. Perfect timing.

OVER BLACK

MARIE (V.O.)
Ready?

EXT. TACOMA HOUSE - NIGHT

Marie removes her hands from Pat and Kevin's eyes to reveal a cream-colored cottage decorated with Christmas lights.

MARIE
Welcome home.

Pat and Kevin take it in for a few beats.

MARIE
So?

KEVIN
Wow.

PAT
It'll do.

MARIE
It'll do?? I guess you prefer
sleeping outside tonight.

She darts up the pathway. Pat chases after her. Marie opens the front door and locks it behind her. She smiles tauntingly through the front door window.

PAT
Very funny. It's supposed to rain
tonight.

MARIE
Isn't that what you trained for, Mr.
Big Bad Ranger?

PAT
You're evil.

MARIE
I know.

Having had her fun, she finally unlocks the door.

MARIE
I wouldn't have been able to sleep
listening to you cry all night.

PAT
Who said anything about sleep?

He drops his bag -- lifts her up, begins carrying her.

PAT
Wait... where's the bedroom?

Marie laughs, points the opposite direction. Pat changes course. Back on track.

INT. TACOMA HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

The Tillman family is gathered around the Christmas tree, surrounded by shreds of wrapping paper and boxes.

Pat, in a cheesy Christmas sweater, pulls a small gift out of his stocking. Unwraps it to find a black Moleskine notebook. Sorts through the blank pages.

MARIE

Figured you could journal while you're in Afghanistan.

PAT

(kisses her)

Thanks, babe.

(then)

Assuming we deploy there, of course.

DANNIE

Why, what are you hearing?

PAT

Just reading the tea leaves.

DANNIE

Iraq?

PAT

Sixty-percent of Americans want to invade.

DANNIE

Because sixty-percent of Americans think Saddam was involved with 9/11.

PAT

Bush isn't exactly helping to dispel that myth.

Kevin pulls a candy cane out of his mouth--

KEVIN

I don't see it. No way we go into Iraq with Bin Laden still out there.

SMASH CUT:

INT./EXT. TALLIL AIRFIELD - NIGHT

In the distance, explosions illuminate the sky courtesy of 'shock and awe.'

SUPER: 01 APRIL 2003. TALLIL AIRFIELD, IRAQ.

Inside a billet (military tent), soldiers blast music, lift weights, and hold grappling contests. Anything to take their minds off the monotony.

SPC. BAER (pronounced bear), 23, hazel eyes, bushy brows, hovers over Pat's bed, watching him write in his Moleskine.

SPC. BAER
I wouldn't do that.

Pat shuts his notebook startled by Baer's eavesdropping.

PAT
What, reading and writing? You should try it sometime.

SPC. BAER
It's bad luck to write letters before a mission.

A few feet away, Kevin and STEVE WHITE, 33, Luke Wilson's ripped Navy SEAL doppelganger, lounge in camping chairs.

KEVIN
Why what'd you hear?

WHITE
That we had to wait for the PsyOps camera crew.

KEVIN
Bullshit.

WHITE
Came straight from my team leader.

Pat licks an envelope shut. Scrawls "MARIE" on the front.

PAT
(to Kevin)
You sound surprised, Nub. Pretty blonde damsel in distress? That's ratings gold right there.

KEVIN
You really believe that tin foil fuckery?

PAT
It's not tin foil if it's true.

KEVIN

You'd have to be the world's biggest cynic to believe they'd delay a rescue op just to capture it on video.

PAT

They lied about WMDS to justify the invasion of a sovereign country, and this is the detail you're hung up on?

SGT. PARSONS, 24, blue collar, red neck, folds his poker hand to add his two-cents--

SGT. PARSONS

Man, fuck WMDs. The Hajjis are better off without Saddam. You see them waving to us?

PAT

Saddam is a piece of shit. But he's just one turd in the world's toilet bowl. Not our job to flush 'em all.

SGT. PARSONS

Shit, you're something else, Till. Never met an anti-war Ranger.

PAT

I'm not anti-war. I'm anti-this war. I signed up to fight in Afghanistan.

LT. UTHLAUT, 25, a West Point Wunderkind with a crooked nose, pops into the tent to give an order--

LT. UTHLAUT

Gear up, gentleman. Operation's a go.

SGT. PARSONS

Lieutenant, we actually gonna fuck or what? After last night, my dick can't handle all this teasing.

LT. UTHLAUT

I'm sure I'm not the first one to tell you this, but you'll have to keep your dick in your pants tonight, Parsons. We're on backup duty.

Groans from the soldiers. Battlefield blue balls.

LT. UTHLAUT
 (to the platoon)
 Hey, I don't make the orders. I just
 relay 'em.

SPC. BAER
 (to Pat)
 Told you that letter was bad luck.

With the bad news delivered, Uthlaut turns to leave.

KEVIN
 Hey L.T., why didn't we run rescue op
 for Lynch last night?

LT. UTHLAUT
 (turns around)
 Because she's the star of the movie,
 and they weren't ready for her closeup.

White eyes Kevin. Believe me now?

ARCHIVE FOOTAGE - VARIOUS

News broadcasts from around the world play grainy night-vision footage of the JESSICA LYNCH RESCUE MISSION. For the past week, Americans have been enraptured by the Lynch story, the pretty brave soldier captured behind enemy lines.

Inside a CHINOOK HELICOPTER, Lynch is secured to a gurney, a bunched up American flag resting on her chest.

As medics tend to Lynch, a soldier off camera asks her to look into the camera and smile. She squeezes out one like a first grader on portrait day.

Now safely home, Lynch wears her uniform in the back of a convertible in small town America -- on full display for the homegrown patriots snapping photos and waving flags.

EXT. TACOMA HOUSE - DECK - EVENING

The blood orange sky reflects off Puget Sound as Pat and agent Frank Bauer sip beers and watch the sun fall behind the Olympia Mountains.

FRANK
 Nothing like this over there.

Pat lifts his beer -- he'll drink to that. So he does.

FRANK

Sign with the Seahawks, and you could come home to this every day.

PAT

If they still want me next year.

FRANK

I'm not talking about next year.

Pat turns to him. He's got his undivided attention now.

FRANK

Their GM found a loophole. Since you volunteered and already served in battle, you can get out. Right now. No more Iraq. No more deployments. No more bullshit.

(then)

You can join the team next month in time for offseason workouts.

A beat as he lets Pat mull over the offer.

FRANK

It's what you wanted, isn't it?

PAT

Yeah.

FRANK

Then let me handle it. Just say the word.

PAT

I can't.

FRANK

What do you mean, you can't? I just sat here and listened to you bitch for an hour about Iraq. I'm giving you an out here, Patty.

Marie ducks her head outside.

MARIE

I need you to put the food on.

PAT

Right now?

MARIE

No. Ten minutes ago.

She ducks back inside.

FRANK

(re: Marie)

See, you're already derelict of duty.

PAT

(stands; drains beer)

Regardless of my personal feelings on our country's foreign policy, it wouldn't be right to turn my back on my platoon. None of them have the option to leave early. I shouldn't be treated any differently.

He collects Frank's empty bottle. Heads in.

EXT. TACOMA HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

Pat rotates hot dogs on the grill as friends and family mingle and drink.

RICHARD TILLMAN, 23, forehead bangs and lacking an internal filter, steps outside to loudly announce--

RICHARD

Yo Pat, you got a plunger? Toilet's clogged. There's shit water everywhere.

PAT

Goddamn it, Rich.

Marie slams down a pitcher of lemonade. Marches inside. All take notice -- everyone suddenly on eggshells.

INT. TACOMA HOUSE - BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Pat and Marie are mid-argument but keep their voices low.

PAT

What's going on? You're acting like a lunatic today.

MARIE

I've been playing host for a fucking week straight. Why can't they stay in a hotel? I'll pay for it myself.

PAT

They're my family. What do you want me to do, tell them to fuck off?

MARIE

No, that's not what I'm saying. I wanted to spend time with you. Alone. No Kevin, no parents, no one else.

PAT

We'll make time. Everyone just wants to see us before we deploy again.

MARIE

Frank told me about the Seahawks.

Pat nods. So that's what this is about.

PAT

You know I can't just leave--

MARIE

--I would never ask you to.

(beat)

But what's our plan once you're out? Are we gonna move again? Do I have to find a new job? Make new friends? Some stability would be nice. I actually like it here.

Off Pat, weight of the world on his shoulders--

EXT. TACOMA HOUSE - BACKYARD - LATER

As the Tillmans clean up after dinner, Frank tosses empty beer bottles into a recycling bin.

PAT (O.S.)

I wanna play football again--

Frank turns to him, trying to hide his excitement.

PAT

--After I finish this tour.

Not the answer Frank was expecting to hear--

FRANK

Yeah. Sure.

PAT

I know you're pissed at me right now, but would you be up to represent me when I'm back?

FRANK

Patty, I've been a sports agent for twenty-five years. I've never had a client turn down millions of dollars out of loyalty. If I left you now, what does that say about me? Come on, that's not even a question.

He pulls Pat in for a hug.

INT. TACOMA HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - MORNING

Marie enters the room in a towel, watching Pat sleep. She walks over and crawls under the covers, careful not to disturb him. As she lays her head on Pat's chest, he stirs awake--

PAT

Mm. You're gonna be late.

MARIE

I called in sick.

He flips over and wraps his arms around her.

PAT

Good. Fuck work.

He nuzzles against her as they drift back to sleep.

INT. COMMERCIAL AIRLINER - COACH - MOVING - NIGHT

Dannie fidgets in the window seat, her body as restless as her mind. She turns finally to Uncle Mike next to her--

DANNIE

When was the last time you heard from Rich?

UNCLE MIKE

(shrugging)

Sometime last year. Been a while.

DANNIE

I don't know why he refuses to check in.

UNCLE MIKE

I don't know why he does anything.

DANNIE

I'm just worried that he could...

She trails off, unable to complete the thought.

UNCLE MIKE
He'll be fine, Dan. Always has.

DANNIE
I want to keep him updated on what's
happening with the boys. He's still
part of the family.

UNCLE MIKE
Yeah, when he wants to be.

As she stares out the window watching the clouds pass--

MATCH CUT:

EXT. KHOST PROVINCE - MOVING - ESTABLISHING

We push through the night sky as moonlight bathes the snow-capped Hindu-Kush peaks which look straight out of an Aspen tourism video.

SUPER: 20 APRIL 2004. KHOST PROVINCE, AFGHANISTAN.

INT. VILLAGE HOME - EVENING

Pat and Kevin wield M4 rifles as they calmly toss the mud hut like prison guards searching a cell for contraband.

PAT
I feel like mom when she thought I
was hiding a stash.

KEVIN
Weed?

PAT
Playboy.

KEVIN
She ever find anything?

PAT
If she did, she never told dad.

KEVIN
How do you know?

PAT
Because I'm still alive.

Kevin purses his lips. Good point.

PAT

You ever think these raids are just one big self-licking ice cream cone? It's like the drug war. The moment the DEA seize a shipment, there's five more waiting to replace it.

KEVIN

I'll gladly keep taking their weapons if it means we prevent an attack.

PAT

But nine times out of ten we don't find anything. We just piss 'em off and make 'em sympathetic to the Taliban.

Kevin spots something underneath a pile of clothes. Peels them away to find a ceramic container. Twists off the lid.

KEVIN

(sniffs)

Speak of the devil's lettuce.

He pulls out a marijuana bud the size of a pine cone.

PAT

Just say no.

EXT. KHOST HOME - MOMENTS LATER

The Tillman brothers walk up to SGT. WEEKS, 24, a buff Mr. Clean who is anything but, with a face covered in moon dust.

SGT. WEEKS

Any heat?

PAT

Only the kind that causes munchies.

SGT. WEEKS

Alright, hat up. We're Oscar Mike.

EXT. KHOST PROVINCE - MOVING - NIGHT

A convoy of SEVEN HUMVEES and FOUR HILUX TRUCKS travel southbound on KANDAHAR HIGHWAY, the only paved road in a hundred mile radius.

This is the BLACK SHEEP PLATOON of the 75TH RANGER REGIMENT.

INT. HUMVEE - MOVING - SAME

SPC. ALDERS, 22, a jittery Texan, chomps on a protein bar behind the driver seat.

SPC. ALDERS
Look, Sarn't. All I'm saying is I ain't bust my ass through Ranger School to raid Hajji houses.

To his right, SPC. ELLIOT, 23, dark humor, corrects him.

SPC. ELLIOT
Muj mansions. Hajjis are Iraqi.

SPC. ALDERS
Man, whatever. Point is, we're just running the same missions. It's feeling like goddamn Groundhog Day out here.

SGT. BAKER, 27, sturdy and composed, turns around from the passenger seat--

SGT. BAKER
Is this about chest candy, again?

SPC. ALDERS
One firefight. Is that too much to fucking ask?

SGT. BAKER
Alders, just buy the fucking badge.

SPC. ALDERS
Nah, fuck that. I ain't gon' be no PX Ranger. I earns my badges.

SGT. BAKER
Then join the Boy Scouts. They have plenty for you to earns.

Driving is SGT. SAYRE, 24, a wiry strong wise-ass, and the only one with his Night-Vision Goggles (NVGs) flipped down--

SGT. SAYRE
Don't they have a policy against letting gays in?

SGT. BAKER
Yeah but he's already used to 'don't ask, don't tell.'

SPC. ALDERS
Man, fuck you guys.

SAYRE'S NIGHT-VISION POV

BLACKOUT BRAKE LIGHTS FLASH on the Humvee ahead. In seconds the entire convoy grinds to a halt.

SGT. SAYRE
Ah, shit.

EXT. KANDAHAR HIGHWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The Black Sheep Platoon, forty-five Rangers in all, hold a security perimeter around the parked vehicles.

They're joined by 8 soldiers of the Afghan Military Forces (AMF). Bearded, in tiger stripe camo, and holding AK-47s, they're more Gomer Pyle than GI Joe.

Lt. Uthlaut stands next to the cause of the stoppage: a broken down Humvee, hood up and smoke pouring out.

LT. UTHLAUT
How much longer you need?

The PLATOON MECHANIC looks up from his work--

PLATOON MECHANIC
Hour. Two Max.

LT. UTHLAUT
Fuck. That. Gonna have every Muj in a ten mile radius on us. Hook it up. We're towing the fucker.

EXT. EASTERN CANYON - LATER

A STRAP connects the bumpers of the disabled Humvee and the last vehicle in the platoon. The convoy slowly descends down a narrow canyon path created more for hiking than driving.

EXT. BORDER CHECKPOINT 5 - MAIN OUTPOST - DAY

An AMF outpost fortified by nets, boulders, Hesco barriers.

SUPER: BORDER CHECKPOINT 5 - NEAR THE PAKISTAN BORDER

Lt. Uthlaut and his RADIO OPERATOR approach the disabled Humvee and address the pair combat boots peeking out.

LT. UTHLAUT
What's our status?

PLATOON MECHANIC (O.S.)
Fuel pump's FUBAR.

LT. UTHLAUT
Fixable?

The mechanic rolls out from the undercarriage.

PLATOON MECHANIC
That's a negative, Ghost Rider. Need
a replacement.

LT. UTHLAUT
Shit.
(to radio operator)
Get TOC on the line and have them
send out a pump--

He stops mid-sentence watching a group of Rangers attempt to
corner a MOUNTAIN GOAT.

PLATOON MECHANIC
Hey, when in Rome...

LT. UTHLAUT
Does that mean they're going to eat
it or fuck it?

Pat carries the frightened animal as it thrashes in his arms.

EXT. BORDER CHECKPOINT 5 - FIRE PIT - LATER

FRESH GOAT MEAT rotates on a jerry-rigged spit-roast.

Pat slices the leg off with his bush knife. Tears a chunk
out with his teeth. Chews. Passes the rest on.

PRE-LAP: Squishes and guttural grunts.

EXT. BORDER CHECKPOINT 5 - FIELD - MIDNIGHT

Under cover of darkness, Pat, Kevin, and Baer squat in a
ditch, pants around their ankles. Somehow this scene never
makes it into recruitment ads.

SPC. BAER
It's 'ram's revenge.' Black Sheep
aren't supposed to eat our own kind.

PAT
Baer, you do realize goats and sheep
are different species, right?

KEVIN
(groans)
AGHH. Fuck. Feels like I'm exorcising
rectal demons.

PAT
Maybe that's why they always portray
Lucifer as a goat.

All three burst into laughter. This only increases the pain.

OUT OF NOWHERE, a CHINOOK SOARS OVERHEAD before hovering
above the outpost -- lowering cargo pallets by rope.

EXT. BORDER CHECKPOINT 5 - FIELD - MORNING

Perched up in the branches of a Kashmir elm tree, Pat
journals in his Moleskine. Pfc. O'Neal walks up to inquire--

PFC. O'NEAL
Hey Till, mind throwing for us?

He points to Rangers and AMF soldiers taking turns shot
putting a chunk of limestone.

PAT
(continuing to write)
Yeah, gimme a minute.

PFC. O'NEAL
Writing the next great American novel?

PAT
Just some thoughts on the war.

PFC. O'NEAL
You should publish it when you're out.
I'm sure more than a few people would love
to get inside the mind of Mr. Pat Tillman.

He makes his back toward the rock throwing contest.

PAT
(after him)
I'm not who they think I am.

PFC. O'NEAL
 (turning back)
 Even more reason to do it.

EXT. BORDER CHECKPOINT 5 - FIELD - MOMENTS LATER

Pat stands behind FARHAD, 24, unibrow and beard, who hurls the hefty rock for the AMF team. It lands a foot beyond the stick marking first place. The AMF clap in excitement. Farhad smiles. A new leader has emerged.

Pfc. O'Neal retrieves the rock. Drops it behind the starting line. Pat's turn. He picks it up. Takes a few steps back. Generates forward momentum, and with an effortless heave, launches the rock TWENTY FEET BEYOND Farhad's lead. THUD.

Off Farhad, floored by Pat's feat of superhuman strength--

EXT. BORDER CHECKPOINT 5 - MAIN OUTPOST - LATER

The mechanic ratchets a new fuel pump in place. Hops in the cab. Turns the key. Nothing. He punches the steering wheel.

INT. DANNIE'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Dannie merges onto the 5 Freeway in her Honda Accord. A road sign reads: SAN DIEGO - 415 MILES.

EXT. MAGARAH - ROAD - MOVING - DAY

The black sheep convoy is back on the move.

Kevin mans an MK19 grenade launcher in the turret of the last Humvee in the convoy. Behind him, the disabled Humvee is once again connected to each bumper.

CLICK. CLICK. CLICK. RRRRRKKKKKK!

Kevin whips around to see the FRONT BUMPER YANKED OFF, skipping along the road as it's dragged behind. Now untethered, the disabled Humvee begins veering off the road.

INT. FOB SALERNO - TACTICAL OPERATIONS CENTER - LATER

Inside a cramped billet, an American flag waves in the breeze of an oscillating fan.

SUPER: FOB SALERNO - TACTICAL OPERATIONS CENTER.

Flat screens display maps and live imagery from various battlefields as UNIFORMED OFFICERS work on tough book laptops.

CAPT. SAUNDERS, 25, a yes-man covered in freckles, approaches one of these men. He swallows, almost afraid to ask--

CAPT. SAUNDERS
Major Hodne, what would you like me
to tell Lieutenant Uth--

MAJ. HODNE, 33, short temper and narrow eyes, spins around--

MAJ. HODNE
--Tell Utlaut further mission delays are
un-fucking-acceptable. I'm not getting
passed up for colonel because he can't
handle a busted vehicle. Got it?

Off Saunders, message received--

EXT. MAGARAH - SIDE OF THE ROAD - LATER

As the platoon holds a security perimeter, LOCAL ONLOOKERS begin assembling, curious about the sudden military presence.

Lt. Uthlaut speaks into a SAT PHONE with a terrain map splayed on the hood of his Humvee.

LT. UTHLAUT
I don't understand why a wrecker
can't meet us and tow it.

INTERCUT:

INT. FOB SALERNO - TOC - SAME

Capt. Saunders is at his desk on the other line--

CAPT. SAUNDERS
The roads are too rough beyond the
rendezvous point.

LT. UTHLAUT
Correct. That's why I first requested
a helo extraction. We tried towing it
and now this piece of shit doesn't
have a front bumper.

Channeling his inner-Hodne, Saunders lays down the law--

CAPT. SAUNDERS

Listen, Iraq is daddy's favorite, and Afghanistan is the red-headed step-child. So I don't have a bird to give. But we're Rangers. We make due.

LT. UTHLAUT

Hooah.

EXT. MAGARAH - SIDE OF THE ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Lt. Uthlaut briefs his squad leaders. Based on their body language, they are not happy with the news.

LT. UTHLAUT

If it was up to me, we'd just stick some fucking C4 on it and celebrate Fourth of July early. But it isn't, so we're gonna follow orders.

SGT. WEEKS

Why can't the whole platoon drop the Humvee off?

LT. UTHLAUT

(drawing a long breath)

Because we won't meet TOC's mission timeline.

Head shakes and grumbles. This is fucked.

SGT. JACKSON, 25, black with a burgeoning porn 'stache, musters the courage to say what no one else will--

SGT. JACKSON

So we gotta divide our manpower just so a mustang in an air conditioned tent can check off boxes and get his gold star?

SGT. GODEC, 24, straight-laced, cleft chin, turns to him--

SGT. GODEC

We're all eating the soup sandwich, Jackson. Take a bite. And smile.

EXT. LA JOLLA - STREET - DAY

A SERIES OF SHOTS as Dannie places flyers reading "**RICH, PLEASE CALL ME**" on every available telephone pole, electric box, and newspaper stand in the bourgeoisie beach community.

From the corner of her eye, she spots a HOMELESS MAN pushing a grocery cart in the opposite direction. She jogs toward him.

DANNIE
Rich. Hey, Rich!

The man turns his head at a crosswalk. Dannie stops. Not him.

EXT. MAGARAH - COURTYARD - LATER

The front end of the disabled Humvee is chained to the flatbed of a brightly decorated JINGA (picture a Mack truck bedazzled by the Grateful Dead).

An AFGHAN DRIVER stands before Lt. Uthlaut as \$20 BILLS are counted into his outstretched palm. The driver mumbles in Pashto. Uthlaut turns to the AMF INTERPRETER for clarification.

AMF INTERPRETER
Says his daughter is very ill.

Uthlaut shakes his head. It's probably bullshit, but he riffles off another bill because it's easier than arguing.

LT. UTHLAUT
(to driver)
We good?

The driver gives a thumbs up. Right then, an AFGHAN BOY, 8, runs up and hands Uthlaut a note. Points to a VILLAGE ELDER sitting on the stoop of his hut.

EXT. MAGARAH - SIDE OF THE ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Sgt. Godec reads the note as Lt. Uthlaut waits for a verdict.

LT. UTHLAUT
What do you think?

SGT. GODEC
(handing it back)
What I think is that we don't have time right now.

ANGLE ON -- Rangers hand out CANDY and MREs (Meals Ready to Eat) to VILLAGE KIDS, snatching them up like free samples at Costco.

SGT. GODEC
(shouting)
Hey! Tell them to back the fuck up!
And stop giving away our food!

SGT. GODEC (cont'd)
 (turns to Uthlaut)
 Goddamn kids think they're meeting
 The Beatles.

LT. UTHLAUT
 Yeah, well, not everyone's a fan.

He gestures to a GROUP OF MILITARY-AGE MALES sitting on a hill, staring ominously in the their direction.

SGT. GODEC
 You'd be pissed too if you lived in
 this shithole.

LT. UTHLAUT
 Hearts and minds, Godec. Hearts and
 minds.

EXT. MAGARAH - SIDE OF THE ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Lt. Uthlaut relays final instructions to his squad leaders as he points to the terrain map.

LT. UTHLAUT
 We'll split the platoon here. Serial one
 will proceed left to the AO. Serial two
 will proceed right to the rendezvous
 point -- the opposite way we came.

SGT. JACKSON
 Up that fucking goat path?

SGT. GODEC
 (to Jackson)
 You know a better way?
 (he doesn't)
 Then shut your dick trap.

LT. UTHLAUT
 Serial two will drop the Humvee off
 for the recovery team then re-join
 serial one at zero-dark-stupid to
 clear the village. Comms could be
 fucked in the canyons, so Godec will
 take point with serial two.
 (looks around)
 Questions?

SGT. JACKSON
 Just one. Where am I riding?

LT. UTHLAUT
In the jingle.

PRE-LAP: PASHTO MUSIC BLARES through blown out speakers.

INT. JINGA TRUCK - MOVING - EVENING

The driver and AMF interpreter belt off-key lyrics and at the top of their lungs. Seated behind them, Sgt. Jackson looks as if he'd prefer an ice pick in his eardrums.

SGT. JACKSON
(to interpreter)
This is good. Who sings this?

AMF INTERPRETER
Ubaidullah Jan.

SGT. JACKSON
I bet he's even better live.

AMF INTERPRETER
No.
(beat)
He dead.

SGT. JACKSON
Damn, Terp. All the good ones leave
us too soon. Jimi, Kurt, Pac...
(interpreter nods)
How'd he go? Overdose? Suicide?

He pantomimes a knife to his throat--

AMF INTERPRETER
Mujahideen.

Jackson nods. Oh. Great.

REFERENCE MAP



BLACK SHEEP PLATOON VEHICLES

SERIAL ONE



UTHLAUT'S VEHICLE



PAT'S VEHICLE



ARMORED HUMVEE



BAER'S VEHICLE



FARHAD'S VEHICLE



HILUX

SERIAL TWO



JINGA TRUCK + DISABLED HUMVEE



BAKER'S VEHICLE



CARGO HUMVEE



CARGO HUMVEE



KEVIN'S VEHICLE

EXT. NORTHERN RIDGELINE - MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE ON -- Four pairs of baggy tunban pants and sandals traverse the rocky cliffside with relative ease.

EXT. CANYON FORK - MOVING - MOMENTS LATER

The convoy splits at the CANYON FORK. Serial one heads left. Serial two, led by the jinga, heads right.

INT./EXT. JINGA TRUCK - MOVING - MOMENTS LATER

Serial two creeps along the steep canyon path, one untimely sneeze from death.

The driver STOPS the jinga. Puts it in park. Cuts the engine.

SGT. JACKSON
(to interpreter)
Why are we stopping?

The driver and interpreter share a tense back and forth.

AMF INTERPRETER
(to Jackson)
Says path too risky.

SGT. JACKSON
Where the hell are we supposed to go?

AMF INTERPRETER
Says faster to follow the others.

SGT. JACKSON
Why didn't he fucking say so earlier?

His radio cuts on--

SGT. GODEC (V.O.)
Black Sheep One-Six, this is One-Niner Actual. What the fuck is the hold up? Over.

INT./EXT. PAT'S HILUX TRUCK - MOVING - SAME

As serial one vehicles pass through NARROW CANYON WALLS, Pat tucks his elbow in to avoid breaking it on jutting stone.

EXT. EASTERN CANYON - MOMENTS LATER

Sgt. Godec converges with Sgt. Jackson behind Kevin's Humvee.

SGT. JACKSON
Anything?

SGT. GODEC
Can't get a fucking signal.

SGT. JACKSON
If he won't drive, we don't have much
of a choice, do we?

SGT. GODEC
Not unless you wanna commandeer the
jingle.

SGT. JACKSON
Shit. I will if I can pick the music.

SGT. GODEC
Let's get Oscar Mike. My asshole's
pucker factor is at a ten right now.

SGT. JACKSON
Hooah.

EXT. NORTHERN RIDGELINE - SAME

As they climb, the four hillside hikers are revealed as
ARMED INSURGENTS carrying AK-47s and RPGs.

EXT. CANYON FORK - MOVING - MOMENTS LATER

The serial two convoy arrives back at the fork to follow the
same path as serial one into the western canyon.

EXT. WESTERN CANYON - WADI PATH - SAME

On the outskirts of MANAH, serial one vehicles drive by an
elevated HAMLET dotted with a dozen mud huts.

EXT. NORTHERN RIDGELINE - SAME

The insurgents reach the summit, only to witness serial one exit
the canyon -- just out of striking distance.

EXT. WESTERN CANYON - MOVING - MOMENTS LATER

Serial two navigates through the same narrow canyon walls as
serial one only minutes prior.

As Kevin's Humvee winds around a bend--

EEEEEEEEERTTTT

--the wall SHEERS THE BARREL of his MK19. It's toast.

SGT. GODEC (O.S.)
 (shouting from inside)
 That better be the sound of your
 brass fucking balls, Tillman.

KEVIN
 (inspecting damage)
 Shit!

EXT. WESTERN CANYON - MOUTH - SAME

The serial one vehicles PARK at the top of the canyon mouth.

LT. UTHLAUT
 (keys mike)
 All victors, you are now free to move
 about the canyon. Over.

EXT. WESTERN CANYON - MOVING - MOMENTS LATER

Serial two continues slowly rolling through until--
 SSHHBOOM! An EXPLOSION between the jinga and Baker's Humvee.

SGT. BAKER
 (keys mike)
 Contact! Contact!

The Rangers DISMOUNT and DUCK FOR COVER. Shit meet fan.

SGT. GODEC
 (keys mike)
 Call it out!

SSHHBOOM! A SECOND EXPLOSION two hundred feet above. ROCKS
 and DUST rain down on their helmets.

The Rangers return with a VOLLEY OF FIRE aimed in no
 particular direction at no particular target.

The jinga driver runs for safety under an overhang.

SGT. BAKER
 (shouting at driver)
 Where the fuck are you going?

SGT. GODEC (V.O.)
 (keys mike)
 We're taking indirect! They are not
 IEDs! Dispatch to your victor. We are
 Oscar Mike! Repeat. Oscar Mike! Over.

SGT. BAKER
 (keys mike)
 Negative, One-Niner. Jinga's in the
 way.

SGT. GODEC
 (keys mike)
 Then fucking move it!

SGT. BAKER
 (to team)
 Cover me!

While his team provides covering fire, Baker SPRINTS to the
 overhang--

SGT. BAKER
 (grabbing driver's arm)
 We gotta get the fuck outta here!

They rush back to the jinga. Hop inside. Sgt. Jackson and
 the AMF interpreter jump in the back.

SGT. BAKER
 Go! Go!

EXT. WESTERN CANYON - MOUTH - SAME

The serial one Rangers confer as RED TRACER ROUNDS light the
 pre-dusk sky like a laser show.

SGT. WEEKS
 (over the din)
 Anything on radio?

RADIO OPERATOR
 Negative!

LT. UTHLAUT
 We gotta get 'em off our guys.

PAT
 If we take the hill, we can get a
 better vantage point.

LT. UTHLAUT
Go. I'll call in air support.

Sgt. Weeks points to a group of Rangers beside him.

SGT. WEEKS
My team, let's move!

As Weeks' team charge the berm overlooking the hamlet, Pat notices Pfc. O'Neal pasted in place.

PAT
O'Neal, with me!

He tugs at O'Neal's arm then darts up the hill. Though he would struggle to make a JV team, O'Neal manages to keep pace with a former NFL star.

In the midst of the action, all of the AMF soldiers remain in the canyon mouth apathetic and unwilling to help. Except one.

We narrow on the eyes of Farhad, the only one with balls in the bunch, as he clocks Pat and O'Neal's climb.

INT./EXT. JINGA TRUCK - MOVING - SAME

AK-47 ROUNDS RICOCHET around the jinga as it drives through the western canyon. Though in peril, the UNEVEN TERRAIN forces serial two to drive no faster than ten miles an hour.

SGT. BAKER
(spotting muzzle flashes)
Tangos -- three o'clock.

He BUSTS OUT the passenger window with the butt of his M4. Glass sprays. The driver curses at Baker in Pashto.

SGT. BAKER
(over his shoulder)
Just drive. We'll pay for it later!

Baker returns fire. His team follows suit and unleashes a HELLACIOUS BARRAGE from the Humvee following the jinga.

SPC. ASHPOLE, 23, GI glasses and an itchy trigger finger, mans the .50 CAL TURRET firing ammunition belts faster than can be fed.

BRRRT! BRRRT! BRRRT!

M2 Browning shells cascade onto the roof like a brass waterfall.

EXT. WESTERN CANYON - BERM - MOMENTS LATER

Halfway up the berm, the pace of the Rangers slows from the steep incline and weight of their gear. Spc. Baer struggles more than anyone else, lagging far behind the pack.

PAT
 (ahead to Weeks, panting)
 Sarge, permission to drop body armor?
 I can get up quicker without it.

EXT. WESTERN CANYON - MOVING - SAME

SSHHBOOM! A THIRD EXPLOSION followed by more SMALL ARMS FIRE. The jinga driver STOPS -- once again blocking the wadi path.

Inside the trailing Humvee, Baker's team panics.

SGT. SAYRE
 The fuck's he doing?

He lays on the pathetic sounding horn. Beep. Beep. Beeeeep.

SGT. SAYRE
 Fucking move!

SPC. ALDERS
 This is a goddamn death trap.

Spc. Elliot stops firing his M240--

SPC. ELLIOT
 (to Alders)
 Least you can get your badge now.

SPC. ALDERS
 It'll look great on my fucking corpse.

EXT. WESTERN CANYON - BERM - SAME

Sgt. Weeks and his team arrive at the top of the berm. A hundred feet below, Pat and O'Neal take cover behind two boulders. Pat spots ENEMIES on the southern ridgeline.

PAT
 (to O'Neal)
 Follow my tracers.

Pat fires his SQUAD AUTOMATIC WEAPON (S.A.W.) as O'Neal does the same with his M4.

In close proximity to them, we hear a TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT.

Pat whips his head around to the sound of an AK-47. Finds Farhad also firing at the southern ridgeline. Their eyes meet. Pat nods -- mutual respect between soldiers.

PAT
I'll be back. Keep firing!

He keeps low and scrambles up to Sgt. Weeks' position.

SGT. WEEKS
See anything?

PAT
(dropping down)
Three tangos, two o'clock.

SGT. WEEKS
(to his unit)
Tangos -- two o'clock!
(to Pat)
You guys squared away?

PAT
Yeah. We're taking cover and engaging.

Weeks tilts up to check Pat's homework. Spots O'Neal and Farhad.

SGT. WEEKS
Alright. Get back to your team.

EXT. WESTERN CANYON - HAMLET - SAME

As the firefight rages on, Lt. Uthlaut and the radio operator take cover behind a hut in the middle of the hamlet and unpack their gear.

EXT. WESTERN CANYON - BERM - MOMENTS LATER

Sgt. Weeks' radio crackles to life with FRENETIC CHATTER.

SGT. WEEKS
(keys mike)
Black Sheep One-Niner, this is Black Sheep One-Delta. Do you copy? Over.

More cross-talk.

SGT. WEEKS
(keys mike)
Break. Break. Black Sheep One-Niner, this is Black Sheep One-Delta. I say again. Do you copy? Over.

SGT. WEEKS (cont'd)
 (overlapping chatter)
 Stop stepping on the comms!

Spc. Baer finally turns up to Weeks' position.

SPC. BAER
 (winded)
 Sorry... I'm dragging ass, Sarge--

THWACK! THWACK! CRACKS OF GUNFIRE interrupt his apology.

SGT. WEEKS
 Get the fuck down!

As he yanks Baer to the ground--

KRRRPPPPHH! An EXPLOSION fifty feet to their right. A CLOUD OF DUST obscures visibility.

RANGER (O.S.)
 Indirect!

SGT. WEEKS
 Anyone hit?!

KRRRPPPPHH! A SECOND EXPLOSION in the same vicinity. All but Weeks and Baer RETURN FIRE out of instinct.

SGT. WEEKS
 (shouting)
 Hang fire! Hang fire! Hang fire!

They stop.

SGT. WEEKS
 Stop wasting ammo! Ain't gonna hit
 shit from here.

PEEEEEEEW!

A THIRD PROJECTILE whizzes over their heads.

EXT. WESTERN CANYON - HAMLET - SAME

Lt. Uthlaut types on his tough book, with his radio operator kneeling to establish a sat phone connection.

KRRRBOOOOM!

An EXPLOSION between huts. The SHOCK WAVE knocks them both down. As Uthlaut gains his bearings, BLOOD GUSHES from his face.

RADIO OPERATOR

You OK?

(re: Uthlaut nodding)

You sure? You look pretty fucked up.

LT. UTHLAUT

(teeth coated red)

Am I?

RADIO OPERATOR

Yeah. You didn't feel that?

Uthlaut touches the tips of his Nomex gloves to his mouth. Surveys the damage. Shit.

EXT. WESTERN CANYON - BERM - MOMENTS LATER

As Farhad trains his fire on the southern ridgeline, a series of rounds strike him center mass. He drops. Lifeless.

EXT. WESTERN CANYON - HAMLET - MOMENTS LATER

LT. Uthlaut and the radio operator belly crawl between huts in an effort to escape STRAFING ROUNDS.

SHHNK!

A BULLET SHREDS the radio operator's knee.

RADIO OPERATOR

AHHH! FUUUUCK! FUCK!

Uthlaut crawls over, grabs the sat phone--

LT. UTHLAUT

(shouting)

This is Black Sheep One-Actual. We need fire support right fucking now!

EXT. WESTERN CANYON - BERM - MOMENTS LATER

At the lower boulders, Pfc. O'Neal lies FACE-DOWN in the dirt, covering his head for protection as rounds crack overhead.

THHNK. THHNK.

We hear a body hit the dirt.

Amidst the sonic chaos of battle, the distinct sound of running water.

PFC. O'NEAL
 (eyes still covered)
 Did you just piss yourself, Till?

EXT. WESTERN CANYON - MOUTH - MOMENTS LATER

Sgt. Baker's Humvee rolls up and parks behind the serial one vehicles. With the firefight finally over, an eerie quiet fills the canyon.

EXT. WESTERN CANYON - BERM - MOMENTS LATER

In the twilight, Sgt. Weeks makes his way down the berm. We hear a lone, distressed voice in the darkness--

PFC. O'NEAL (O.S.)
 Oh my god! Oh my fucking god!

Arriving at the boulders, Weeks' worst fears are realized.

Pfc. O'Neal, covered head-to-toe in blood, genuflects over PAT'S DEAD BODY. He looks up at Weeks--

PFC. O'NEAL
 He's fucking dead. They fucking killed him.

Weeks turns away from the scene to collect himself. Then--

SGT. WEEKS
 (keys mike)
 All victors, this is Black Sheep One-Delta. I've got one Eagle KIA. Call sign...

Off Weeks, a long beat before relaying the final detail--

EXT. WESTERN CANYON - WADI PATH - SAME

Kevin stands in the turret of his parked Humvee, oblivious to the radio transmission in Sgt. Godec's headset below--

SGT. WEEKS (V.O.)
 Call sign: Tango. Over.

Godec closes his eyes. Fuck.

EXT. WESTERN CANYON - WADI PATH - MOMENTS LATER

Through the darkness, Sgt. Weeks approaches a group of serial two Rangers wearing NVGs and pulling security detail.

SGT. WEEKS
Parsons, you have any skedcos in your
vehicle?

SGT. PARSONS
Uhhh. Think so.

Kevin overhears them, keeping an eye out from the Humvee turret--

KEVIN
Hey Sarge, who got hit?

SGT. WEEKS
(lying)
Not sure.
(to Parsons)
Where would they be?

SGT. PARSONS
Check in back. Know they definitely
got some up there.

He points to the serial one vehicles parked in the mouth.

SGT. WEEKS
Thanks.

SGT. PARSONS
Why?

Weeks doesn't answer as he makes his way toward the serial
one vehicles. Seconds later, SPC. AKER, 19, a doe-eyed
booter, arrives and is careful to whisper his question--

SPC. AKER
Hey Sergeant Parsons, do you have any
woobies in the back?

SGT. PARSONS
Alright, the fuck's goin' on?

CUT TO:

Parsons and Aker rummage through the back of Kevin's Humvee.

KEVIN
Guys need any help?

SGT. PARSONS
Nah. We got it.

EXT. WESTERN CANYON - BERM - MOMENTS LATER

Four Rangers are positioned around an ORANGE SKEDCO, a lightweight plastic liner designed to carry bodies off the battlefield. Inside it, Pat's body is covered with a green poncho.

SGT. WEEKS

On three. One.

ALL

Two, three, up.

EXT. WESTERN CANYON - WADI PATH - SAME

Kevin watches the Rangers labor as they carry the skedco downhill. Curiosity has finally gotten the best of him--

KEVIN

(to group)

Who is that?

RANGER (O.S.)

Ah, heard it was an AMF.

KEVIN

(skeptical)

AMF?

EXT. WESTERN CANYON - WADI PATH - LATER

Sgt. Parsons makes his way back to Kevin's Humvee--

KEVIN

Hey, where's Pat?

--and pretends not to hear Kevin as he climbs inside.

Parsons turns the ignition. Drives up and parks in the canyon mouth. As he exits, Kevin inquires once more--

KEVIN

Sarge, where's Pat?

Parsons continues walking.

KEVIN

I asked you a question, Jason.

Parsons stops. Contemplates for a beat. Walks back toward Kevin then makes his way up into the turret with him. A beat.

SGT. PARSONS

(hushed)

I'm sorry, man. I didn't wanna be the one to have to tell you...

(beat)

Your brother's dead.

Kevin shakes his head. No. Nope. That cannot be true.

KEVIN

Why would you say that?

SGT. PARSONS

I'm really sorry.

KEVIN

Don't fucking lie to me. Don't fucking--

SGT. PARSONS

(forceful)

--I'm not lying.

Kevin glances around, hoping Pat will show up and let him in on a cruel practical joke. But no one is laughing. He jumps down from the turret with his M4. Begins pacing.

KEVIN

Fuck. Fuck!

(slams helmet)

FUCK!

Parsons gestures to the PLATOON MEDIC for help. He walks up to Kevin, a soothing tone in his voice--

PLATOON MEDIC

Kevin...

KEVIN

Not now, Doc.

PLATOON MEDIC

I know you're upset. But I need your weapon.

He puts a hand on Kevin's shoulder.

PLATOON MEDIC

I'm here for you. I don't want anything else to happen to you. OK? Think about your family.

KEVIN
My fucking family. My fucking family.

PLATOON MEDIC
They need you home safe. OK?
(beat)
I need your weapon. Come on.

A tense beat.

Kevin nods.

The medic slowly lifts the rifle over his head. Once secure, he hands it to Parsons, embraces Kevin with a much-needed hug.

INT. CONSULTING FIRM - MARIE'S CUBICLE - EVENING

The office has cleared out for the night. Marie packs her bag while her FEMALE COWORKER, 27, tatted but tamed by the corporate world, leans against her desk.

FEMALE COWORKER
You know if you'd been with me, it wouldn't have happened. So technically this is all your fault.

MARIE
Somehow I knew you'd blame me.

FEMALE COWORKER
Bad things happen when I'm drunk. And single. You know how it is.

MARIE
Actually, I wouldn't know how it is.

FEMALE COWORKER
Yeah. Yeah. High school sweethearts. Soul mates. Blah, blah, blah. You're so cute I want to vomit.

A MALE COWORKER approaches them.

MALE COWORKER
Um, Marie? There's some people here to see you.

INT. CONSULTING FIRM - BREAKOUT ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Marie sits alone at a conference table looking out at the Space Needle in the Seattle skyline.

The door swings open. An ARMY MASTER in a Class A uniform enters with a CHAPLAIN in tow. Marie gives them a once over. This is can't be good.

ARMY MASTER
Mrs. Tillman?

MARIE
What's going on?

The chaplain reaches out for her hand.

ARMY MASTER
I'm sorry to inform you--

We dolly out, unable to hear him finish delivering the news.

INT. FOB SALERNO - TOC - LATER

Maj. Hodne sits across from a grief-stricken Kevin, hunched over in his chair.

MAJ. HODNE
Did you see it happen?

Kevin shakes his head.

MAJ. HODNE
Could I get you some water, coffee, food, anything?

Another head shake.

MAJ. HODNE
Alright, well, the chaplain's on his way. I can send him by if you want.

Kevin finally looks up at him--

KEVIN
I need you to make me a promise.
(beat)
Promise me that we'll get revenge on the motherfuckers who did this.

MAJ. HODNE
(tepid)
Of course.

Good enough. Kevin exits.

INT. DANNIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DUSK

Dannie's on the cordless as she puts away groceries.

DANNIE
Hey, I just got home and heard your--

MARIE'S BROTHER-IN-LAW (V.O.)
--Dannie, hang up and call Marie.

Click. Uh oh. Dannie dials a number. Rings once before--

MARIE (V.O.)
Hello?

DANNIE
Hi, Marie. It's Dannie. Alex told me
to call you. What's up?
(silence)
Marie?
(still nothing)
Marie, what's going on? What's wrong?

MARIE
(numbly)
He's dead.

DANNIE
Dead? Who's dead?

MARIE
Pat.

Dannie reflexively drops the phone in shock. She staggers out to the living room. Grabs a FRAMED PHOTO of Pat. Clutches it to her chest. Makes her way outside, wandering aimlessly about the front yard.

As an ELDERLY NEIGHBOR checks the mail, she takes notice--

ELDERLY NEIGHBOR
Dannie, what's the matter?
(approaching)
Is everything alright?

DANNIE
(now bawling)
My baby. My baby. My baby's... dead.

She drops to her knees, rocking back and forth as she chillingly repeats the refrain--

DANNIE
 April 22nd, 2004. April 22nd, 2004.
 April 22nd, 2004. April 22nd, 2004.

FADE OUT.

FADE UP ON:

EXT. WESTERN CANYON - BERM - DAWN

SGT. FULLER, 32, delicately scoops bits of flesh and skull off the boulder into an ammo can. Though his body is built for war, his mind can barely handle this gruesome task.

CAPT. SAUNDERS (O.S.)
 Which asshole assigned you to this?

SGT. FULLER
 I did.
 (turning to Saunders)
 Second platoon's been through enough.
 Couldn't make 'em do it.

CAPT. SAUNDERS
 Hear what happened?

SGT. FULLER
 Most of it.

CAPT. SAUNDERS
 Goddamn tragedy is what it is.

We hear the blades of a helicopter approaching in the distance.

SGT. FULLER
 Heads are gonna roll.
 (beat)
 And shit rolls down hill.

Off Saunders, suddenly realizing the implication--

EXT. MANAH - LANDING ZONE - MOMENTS LATER

LT. COL. BAILEY, 42, the kind of guy who irons his socks, dismounts from a Chinook and is greeted by Capt. Saunders.

INT. BAGRAM AIRFIELD - JSOC - LATER

This is the epicenter of the Middle Eastern wars, and JSOC hosts the highest ranking special forces personnel.

It's TOC on steroids. The screens are wider, computers faster, and snacks tastier.

SUPER: BAGRAM AIRFIELD - JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS CENTER.

COL. NIXON, 44, frost-white crew cut, sits behind a table on a landline, rubbing the bridge of his nose.

COL. NIXON

Shit.

(then)

Are you absolutely certain?

INTERCUT:

EXT. MANAH - LANDING ZONE - SAME

Lt. Col. Bailey speaks on the other line inside a Humvee.

LT. COL. BAILEY

Affirmative. Every witness on the scene confirmed. But I owe you the details. Let me arrange the 15-6.

COL. NIXON

Let's hold off on an investigation until I meet with the pope.

LT. COL. BAILEY

Roger that.

INT. BAGRAM AIRFIELD - DINING QUARTERS - MOMENTS LATER

BRIG. GEN. MCCHRYSTAL, 49, hawk nose and jug-like ears, eats alone in the noisy mess hall. On his plate is what he eats every day: ribeye and scrambled eggs. This is the pope.

Col. Nixon approaches his table. Before he can utter a word--

BRIG. GEN. MCCHRYSTAL

(eyes still on his plate)

I don't like the look on your face.

EXT. BAGRAM AIRFIELD - DINING QUARTERS - MOMENTS LATER

Col. Nixon and Brig. Gen. McChrystal are mid-conversation, speaking low to prevent eavesdroppers.

BRIG. GEN. MCCHRYSTAL

Who else knows?

COL. NIXON
 Everyone in third platoon.
 (beat, thinking)
 And I imagine a few inside the wire.

BRIG. GEN. MCCHRYSTAL
 Who told third platoon?

COL. NIXON
 No one. They found out when they
 arrived to provide backup support.

BRIG. GEN. MCCHRYSTAL
 Under no circumstances are you or
 anyone else to speak about this until
 I give further orders. Understood?

INT. BAGRAM AIRFIELD - JSOC - NIGHT

A YOUNG SERGEANT stands before LT. COL. KAUZLARICH, 38,
 receding hairline fighting a multiple front war, as he pours
 a cup of coffee. Kauzlarich is a man dedicated to god,
 country, and family. In that order.

LT. COL. KAUZLARICH
 He's on his way?

YOUNG SERGEANT
 Yes, sir. But Kevin Tillman said he
 doesn't want him there.

LT. COL. KAUZLARICH
 He say why?

YOUNG SERGEANT
 Well, sir, evidently he and his
 brother were raised as atheists.

A beat.

LT. COL. KAUZLARICH
 Atheists?

YOUNG SERGEANT
 From what I understand. Yes.

LT. COL. KAUZLARICH
 You tell Specialist Tillman the
 repatriation ceremony isn't about
 him. Or his family. It's about
 everybody in the Joint Task Force.

LT. COL. KAUZLARICH (cont'd)
 And when we bid farewell to his
 brother, there will be a chaplain and
 there will be prayers.

He takes a sip of coffee. We're done here.

INT. FOB SALERNO - BILLET - LATER

Between a row of bunks, Kevin kneels down to a locked trunk labeled "P. Tillman." He tries a combination. Tugs. Nothing. Another. Same result. Then a third. Click. He sorts through the trunk. But whatever he's searching for isn't there.

EXT. FOB SALERNO - RUNWAY - NIGHT

Kevin and Spc. Baer make their way to a waiting Chinook as Maj. Hodne stands by. They salute.

MAJ. HODNE
 (over the blade noise)
 Got everything?

KEVIN
 Almost.
 (then)
 My brother kept a journal in a small notebook. It's very important that it's returned to my family.

MAJ. HODNE
 We'll find it. Even if it means we have to turn up the entire base.

KEVIN
 Thank you, sir.

MAJ. HODNE
 Call me if you need anything.

KEVIN
 I will, sir. Thank you.

He salutes Hodne again. Climbs aboard. Baer follows behind until Hodne places a hand out and stops him cold. He gives him a look as if to say, "Don't say a fucking word."

EXT. FOB SALERNO - LATER

FLAMES IGNITE inside an oil drum in a remote corner of the base.

SGT. VALDEZ, 20, Latino, widow's peak, opens an orange garbage bag and pulls out a BLOODIED CAMOUFLAGE JACKET. He runs his thumb over the name tape embroidered with the name "TILLMAN."

In the pocket of Pat's cargo pants, he finds the Moleskine. Scans through. Stops to read a section. Tosses it in the barrel. As the pages curl in the fire, Pat's uniform and body armor are thrown on top.

NBC NIGHTLY NEWS - ARCHIVE FOOTAGE

TOM BROCKAW

Pat Tillman, who gave up a multi-million dollar contract in professional football--

NFL NETWORK - ARCHIVE FOOTAGE

RICH EISEN

--to join the Army Rangers was killed in action Thursday night in Eastern Afghanistan.

EXT. LA JOLLA BLVD - SAN DIEGO - DAY

Uncle Rich peruses the fare at a newsstand. Suddenly, he freezes. His trembling hand reaches out. On the cover of *Sports Illustrated*, a photo of Pat running in full pads and Cardinals uniform, helmet in hand.

"An Athlete Dies A Soldier - Pat Tillman 1976-2004"

Off Rich, living his nightmare--

INT./EXT. TACOMA HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Crowding the street, TV CREWS film live remote broadcasts.

The curtains are pulled shut by Marie's mother. She takes a seat on the couch next to her nearly catatonic daughter.

MARIE'S MOTHER

They have a word for this. It's called stalking. But apparently it's not against the law if it's your job.

RAP. RAP. RAP.

MARIE'S MOTHER

Lord Jesus, give me the strength--

She springs for the door. Throws it open. An abrupt about-face... not who she expected.

Three ARMY OFFICERS stand before her. Hats literally in hand.

SGT. HIGH

Hello, ma'am. I'm very sorry to be troubling you. We're with the Casualty Assistance Office at Fort Lewis. Is Marie Tillman home?

She turns to Marie who nods her tacit approval. As they enter, she gives a DEATH STARE to the media outside.

INT. TACOMA HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Mountains of legal paperwork are stacked on the coffee table. As Marie initials here and signs there, her mother hands the officers cups of Earl Grey.

SGT. HIGH

Thank you.

MARIE

When will his body be returned?

SGT. HIGH

I was told Kevin will accompany it early next week. And of course you'll have a chance to view him before the military burial.

Marie nods, but it doesn't quite sit right with her.

MARIE

Wait a second, military burial? No, that's... that's not right. That's not what Pat wanted.

SGT. HIGH

(forceful)

No, that is what Pat wanted. That's the way it's done.

Marie gets up, and we follow her to the bedroom. She opens a drawer. Rifles through. Finds the folded page Pat gave her at graduation. Walks out.

MARIE

(handing it to Sgt. High)

Clearly it wasn't what he wanted.

Sgt. High gives it a once over.

MARIE'S MOTHER
Marie, what's going on?

MARIE
Pat had to sneak out a copy of his
burial instructions because he was
afraid they'd go against his wishes.
That he'd be turned into some kind
of... publicity stunt.

He hands the paper back to Marie.

MARIE
I'd like for you to leave now.

PRE-LAP: The low drone of an airplane.

INT. C-130 HERCULES - NIGHT

Kevin stares at an American flag draped over PAT'S CASKET.
It separates him from Spc. Baer, the only passengers aboard
the empty cargo plane.

MATCH CUT:

EXT. DOVER AIR FORCE BASE - RUNWAY - DAY

Pat's casket is carried through two rows of SALUTING
SOLDIERS on the tarmac.

INT. DOVER AIR FORCE BASE - MORTUARY - LATER

A MEDICAL ASSISTANT rolls in a COVERED GURNEY. We stay on
DR. MALLAK, 44, a firecracker with a license to practice
medicine, as he pulls back the white sheet.

DR. MALLAK
Where's the uniform?

MEDICAL ASSISTANT
That's how we received him.

DR. MALLAK
It wasn't with the body?

MEDICAL ASSISTANT
They said it was a bio-hazard.

DR. MALLAK

Did they send anything with him?
 (re: assistant head shake)
 How am I supposed to conduct an
 autopsy when the uniform, armor, and
 Kevlar are missing?

The assistant shrugs. You're the one in charge.

EXT. HOUSE - SAN JOSE - NIGHT

Kevin and Marie stand on the steps of what appears to be a dimly lit home. In the front yard, a posted sign reads: Willow Glen Mortuary - Funerals • Cremations.

Dannie, Patrick, Richard, and Uncle Mike approach. Kevin greets Dannie first with a hug as they whisper--

KEVIN

It's good to see you.

DANNIE

Thank you for bringing him home.

He nods. They break. The rest of the family take turns greeting Kevin and Marie with hugs.

KEVIN

Thanks for coming, Uncle Mike.

UNCLE MIKE

'Course. Do anything for you boys.

The MORTUARY DIRECTOR steps outside, greets Patrick first.

MORTUARY DIRECTOR

If there's anything I can do, please
 don't hesitate to ask.

PATRICK

I'd like to see my son.

MORTUARY DIRECTOR

Oh. Well, ah, his body just arrived.
 I'd like to have some time to prepare--

PATRICK

Right now please.

MORTUARY DIRECTOR

Yeah. Sure. Ah, would anyone else...?

He surveys -- Kevin and Marie both shake their heads.

DANNIE

I would.

UNCLE MIKE

Dannie...

DANNIE

If Pat was brave enough to risk his life, I need to be brave enough to see him.

INT. MORTUARY - VIEWING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

As Dannie enters clutching Uncle Mike's arm, Patrick and Richard stand over Pat's half-opened casket.

Patrick leans in to hug his son. Dannie turns away and takes a seat facing the door. This is proving to be more difficult than she imagined.

Richard whispers a few words to Pat and kisses him on the nose.

Kevin enters, careful not to look in Pat's direction, and bends down to check on his mother--

KEVIN

You OK?

DANNIE

Yeah.

KEVIN

Remember mom. That isn't Pat in there. The Pat we knew is gone.

Dannie nods then stands and steels herself as she approaches.

Inside the casket, Pat is dressed in a plain white shirt. The back of his head wrapped in gauze and plastic. His bloated, expressionless face is covered in a wax-like substance to conceal the entrance wounds on his forehead.

Dannie stands over the casket and places a hand on his chest.

DANNIE

(smiling weakly)

Hi, Pat.

EXT. MUNICIPAL ROSE GARDEN - DAY

A row of TV cameras follow BAGPIPERS as they belt "Going Home" for two thousand FUNERAL ATTENDEES in the grass courtyard.

SUPER: 03 MAY 2004. MUNICIPAL ROSE GARDEN - SAN JOSE, CA.

LT. GEN. KENSINGER, 55, permanent frown creased into battle-worn cheeks, greets Dannie and Patrick in the front row.

LT. GEN. KENSINGER
(shaking their hands)
My condolences.

PATRICK
Thank you, General.

LT. GEN. KENSINGER
Please let me know if there's
anything I can do for your family.

Behind Pat's parents, MARIE'S BROTHER-IN-LAW, 31, leans over, biceps practically ripping apart his jacket seams--

MARIE'S BROTHER-IN-LAW
(to Marie)
What happens after all this ends?

Marie's zoned out behind her large sunglasses, no mental currency to spend on philosophical questions.

MARIE
What??

MARIE'S BROTHER-IN-LAW
I just don't want this to be
everyone's last memory of him.

EXT. MUNICIPAL ROSE GARDEN - DAIS - LATER

Two large PHOTOS OF PAT stand atop easels on either side of the stage. At the lectern Steve White, the SEAL from Iraq, delivers a gripping eulogy in his Navy Dress Blues--

WHITE
The Silver Star is one of this
nation's highest awards.
(then)
If you're the victim of an ambush,
there are very few things that you
can do to increase your chances for
survival.

WHITE (cont'd)

One of which is to get off that ambush point as fast as you can. One of the vehicles in Pat's convoy could not get off. He made the call; he dismounted his troops, taking the fight to the enemy, uphill, to seize the tactical high ground. This gave his brothers in the downed vehicle time to move off that target. He directly saved their lives with that move. Pat sacrificed himself so his brothers could live.

EXT. MUNICIPAL ROSE GARDEN - LATER

Dannie, Patrick, and Marie stand across from Spc. Baer and TWO SOLDIERS, each holding a tri-folded American flag.

Baer avoids eye contact as he hands his to Dannie. Sensing his unease, she places a comforting hand atop his.

INT. TACOMA HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

An orange and white TABBY CAT purrs beside Marie as she tosses and turns in bed. Unable to settle, Marie throws the comforter off. Walks to her desk. Pushes papers aside.

At the bottom of a stack of mail, she finds an ENVELOPE with "MARIE" written on the front. The same one Pat wrote before the Lynch rescue. She holds it in her hands for a beat, unsure whether to proceed.

She takes a breath then slides her finger through. Removes the letter, smoothing the folds in her lap. The page is chock full of smudges, scribbles, crossed-out sentences.

PAT (V.O.)

It's difficult to summarize ten years together, my love for you, my hopes for your future, and pretend to be dead all at the same time.

Though macabre, Marie smiles at this line.

PAT (V.O.)

(beat)

I simply cannot put all this into words. I'm not ready, willing, or able.

Her eyes continue scanning the page. Much of the message kept secret by Marie -- known only between husband and wife.

PAT (V.O.)

Through the years I've asked a great deal of you, therefore it should surprise you little that I have another favor to ask.

(beat)

I ask that you live.

Marie's stoic facade crumbles. Tears stream down her cheeks, a private, cathartic release after holding it together in public.

INT. BRET HARTE JUNIOR HIGH - DANNIE'S CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON

Students excitedly file out with school finally over. Lindsay stops by Dannie's desk to offer her solace--

LINDSAY

I'm sorry about your son, Mrs. Tillman.

DANNIE

Thank you.

LINDSAY

We're glad to have you back.

She smiles, hoping it helps. It does.

DANNIE

I'm glad to be back.

LINDSAY

See you tomorrow.

DANNIE

See you tomorrow.

Off Dannie, watching her go--

INT. BAER'S GRANDPARENTS HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Spc. Baer lounges on the couch flipping through channels. Judging by his five o'clock shadow, he hasn't ventured far this week.

His CELL BUZZES on the coffee table. He picks it up, stares at the screen. Six missed calls -- three messages. Punches in his voicemail pin. Puts it on speaker.

SGT. MAJ. BIRCH (V.O.)

Specialist Baer, this is Sergeant Major Birch.

SGT. MAJ. BIRCH (V.O.) (cont'd)
 You better have a good goddamn reason
 why you haven't reported for duty--

Delete. Next.

SGT. MAJ. BIRCH (V.O.)
 You're a fucking deserter, Baer.
 Worst fucking Ranger I've ever laid
 eyes on--

Delete. Next.

SGT. MAJ. BIRCH (V.O.)
 If you don't get your ass back to Fort
 Lewis, I will court martial your ass.
 This is your last fucking warning.

Baer's GRANDMOTHER, 70s, enters with a tray of sandwiches.

GRANDMOTHER
 Who was that? He sounded upset.

SPC. BAER
 Wrong number.

He flips his cell shut. Tosses it on the table.

INT. FORT LEWIS - BARRACKS - NIGHT

Kevin sweeps up behind the CQ desk on graveyard shift in the deserted lobby.

SUPER: 22 MAY 2004. FORT LEWIS - TACOMA, WASHINGTON.

The Black Sheep Platoon bursts through the door -- joking, laughing, ready to get laid after returning from deployment.

But as soon as they spot Kevin, their enthusiasm wanes. Smiles suddenly become silent head nods.

INT. CONSULTING FIRM - BULLPEN - MORNING

Marie crosses to her cubicle feeling all attention on her. Those who dare make eye contact only give pity-filled stares.

Laying across her keyboard, a full manila folder is marked "Condolences." She might as well be an emotional leper.

FEMALE COWORKER
 Figured I'd keep it all organized if
 you ever want to look at that.

MARIE

Thanks.

FEMALE COWORKER

Come on. Let's grab a coffee.

INT. FORT LEWIS - BARRACKS - DAY

Kevin disassembles his M4 rifle as Rangers shoot the shit.

KEVIN

Hey Bake, you got any lube?

SGT. BAKER

(points to rifle)

For that or--

(points to crotch)

--for this?

KEVIN

We both know your rifle's the only thing getting action.

Sgt. Baker snorts. He walks over, hands Kevin a bottle of gun lube. Without a hint of humor in his tone--

SGT. BAKER

Shit, wish it didn't get action after hitting that AMF.

KEVIN

What?

SGT. BAKER

On the hill.

Kevin's still lost. Baker quickly changes the subject--

SGT. BAKER

Just leave it on my locker when you're done.

Off Kevin nodding, still trying to decipher Baker's comment--

INT. FORT LEWIS - GYM - LATER

Lt. Col. Bailey runs on a treadmill, watching Spc. Alders and Kevin spot Spc. Elliott on bench press. Bailey hits the stop button -- dabs his sweaty forehead with a towel.

COL. NIXON (PRE-LAP)

You need to keep them apart.

INT. FORT LEWIS - BAILEY'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Lt. Col. Bailey's on the phone still in gym clothes.

LT. COL. BAILEY

How can I separate him from the entire battalion? There's six hundred Rangers. Someone's gonna talk, Colonel.

COL. NIXON (V.O.)

Then it's on you.

INT. FORT LEWIS - FULLER'S OFFICE - DAY

Across from Sgt. Fuller, Kevin leans forward, elbows on knees, racking his brain for some sort of explanation.

KEVIN

I don't -- this doesn't make sense.

SGT. FULLER

Colonel Bailey will give you all the details tomorrow. But I thought you should know what's happening.

KEVIN

(meekly)

Yeah.

SGT. FULLER

And I'd hold off telling your family until we have official word.

Kevin nods.

INT. DANNIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING

Dannie places a letterbox full of student essays on the counter. Taps play on the answering machine. BEEP.

BILLY HOUSE (V.O.)

Hi, this message is for Dannie Tillman. This is Billy House of the Arizona Republic. I was hoping you could give me a call back.

A curious expression spreads across her face. Dannie picks up the phone. Dials *69. Rings twice.

BILLY HOUSE (V.O.)

(answering)

Hello?

DANNIE

Hi Billy, this is Dannie Tillman
returning your call?

BILLY HOUSE (V.O.)

Hey, Mrs Tillman. Sorry to bother you before
Memorial Day weekend. I just heard from one
of my military sources earlier today. And I
was calling to confirm the story and get
your thoughts on the news.

DANNIE

On what news, exactly?

BILLY HOUSE (V.O.)

The Army hasn't told you?

DANNIE

Told me what? What are you talking
about?

BILLY HOUSE (V.O.)

That Pat may have been killed from
friendly fire.

All of Dannie's emotional scars are ripped wide open.

BILLY HOUSE (V.O.)

(a long silent beat)

Hello? Mrs. Tillman?

INT. FORT BRAGG - PRESS ROOM - DAY

Lt. Gen. Kensinger, from Pat's funeral, stands at a lectern
in front of a sparse gathering of MEDIA. Dance recitals
attract bigger crowds.

LT. GEN. KENSINGER

Good morning. I would like to make a
brief statement on the events
surrounding the death of Corporal Pat
Tillman on the 22nd of April in
Afghanistan. I will not be taking
questions.

(then)

A military investigation by U.S.
Central Command into the circumstances
of the April 22nd death of Corporal
Patrick Tillman is complete.

LT. GEN. KENSINGER (cont'd)
 While there was no one specific finding of fault, the investigation results indicate that Corporal Tillman probably died as a result of friendly fire while his unit was engaged in combat with enemy forces. We regret the loss of life resulting from this tragic accident. Our thoughts and our prayers remain with the Tillman family. Thank you all for being here this morning.

He immediately exits stage right leaving a trail of unanswered questions in his wake.

EXT. DANNIE'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - EVENING

An economy rental pulls up and parks in the driveway.

Lt. Col. Bailey gets out driver-side, smoothing the creases of his Class A uniform. As Richard opens the passenger door, he's greeted by Dannie.

DANNIE
 Where's Kevin?

RICHARD
 He'll be here later. Wanted to stay with dad for a bit.

Bailey sticks out a hand for Dannie.

LT. COL. BAILEY
 You must be Mrs. Tillman. Richard told me all about you on the ride over. Lieutenant Colonel Bailey.

DANNIE
 Nice to meet you, Colonel. I just wish it were under different circumstances. Please come inside.

INT. DANNIE'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER

Lt. Col. Bailey is surrounded by Dannie, Marie, Richard, and Uncle Mike at the dining room table.

LT. COL. BAILEY
 First, I want to apologize for how you all had to learn about this. That was never the Army's intention.

LT. COL. BAILEY (cont'd)
 I visited the area the day after Pat's death and was certain it was fratricide, but no one wanted to say anything until we conducted a thorough investigation. So until that report is final, this is an unofficial briefing.

DANNIE
 That's fine, Colonel. I just want know to what happened to my son.

LT. COL. BAILEY
 Absolutely.
 (then)
 Do you happen to have a piece of paper?

Dannie gets up -- grabs a few sheets from the printer tray. Hands them to Bailey. He removes a pen from his shirt pocket. Clicks it. Draws a circle.

MATCH CUT:

EXT. WESTERN CANYON - WADI PATH - EVENING (FLASHBACK)

The wheels of the jinga slow to a stop beside the retaining wall of a terraced opium field. Seconds later, Baker's Humvee emerges out of the canyon and parks behind the truck.

Sgt. Baker hops out of the jinga -- FIRES his M4 up the berm. His team exits the Humvee and follows his lead.

Pat and Pfc. O'Neal take cover behind the boulders under a HAIL OF BULLETS -- coming from Baker and his team.

PFC. O'NEAL
 They're fucking shooting at us!

Pat frantically waves his arm over his head--

PAT
 Hey! We're friendly! Cease fire!
 Cease fire!

PFC. O'NEAL
 Cease fire! Cease fire!

The firing halts. Baker and his team fall back to their vehicle as they reload. The Humvee starts up, accelerates around the jinga and up the wadi path.

On the berm, Farhad resumes firing at the southern ridgeline.

INT. BAKER'S HUMVEE - CONTINUOUS (FLASHBACK)

From the passenger seat, SGT. Baker brings an eye to his scope. Time slows as Farhad's MUZZLE FLASHES burst from his AK-47.

TAT. TAT. TAT.

Baker squeezes the trigger.

POP. POP. POP. POP. POP.

Back to real speed. Farhad collapses. Fatally wounded.

SPC. ALDERS

Woo! Get some, Sarge!

SPC. JOHNSON, 22, bullnecked, lobes a grenade from his M203. PHOONK. We track it up the berm as it EXPLODES, pinning down Sgt. Weeks' team.

RANGER (O.S.)

Indirect!

SGT. WEEKS

Anyone hit!?

Johnson's second grenade EXPLODES nearby.

Still driving, Baker's men orient their fire back on the boulders. Pat and Pfc. O'Neal lie prone as debris kicks up around them. Rounds CRACK overhead like the end of a whip.

THWACK-THWACK-THWACK

O'Neal throws his M4 down -- curls into the fetal position.

PFC. O'NEAL

Dear God, please help us out of this situation. I promise I will serve you every day of my life.

PAT

O'Neal, quit fucking praying and focus! God can't help you now. I don't need you going off into la la land getting killed.

He looks over at Farhad's body -- he has to do something.

As chunks of boulder pelt him, Pat lifts a pouch on his tactical vest. Removes a METAL CANISTER. Yanks the pin.

POW! A PURPLE STREAM BLASTS from the bottom of his smoke grenade. Pat props himself up -- launches it into the wadi path. A LAVENDER CLOUD BILLOWS in the wind.

A beat.

Firing halts.

PAT
(relieved)
Goddamn. What the fuck?

Pat gets up on a knee to see what the hell went wrong. As he does, an S.A.W. UNLOADS on his position.

SSSNK. SSSNK.

Pat is DROPPED on his ass. He moans in pain -- inspects the damage. GREEN MARKINGS encircle TWO BULLET HOLES center mass. Stopped by his body armor.

PAT
Thank you, Sergeant Weeks.
(groaning)
Son of a fucking bitch.

Another pause in fire. Pat SITS UP on his haunches; pissed, hurt, and feeling helpless--

PAT
The fuck are you shooting at!? I'm
Pat Tillman! I'M PAT FUCKING TILLMAN!

PINK MIST SPRAYS out the back of his head from rounds striking his forehead. His legs cave instantly.

Once more, we hear the sound of running water.

PFC. O'NEAL (O.S.)
Did you just piss yourself, Till?

O'Neal looks up to find BLOOD STREAMING down the boulder like rain from a gutter. He checks himself. Everything in place. We stay on O'Neal, finally seeing the carnage of Pat's dead body.

PFC. O'NEAL
(screaming)
Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. What the fuck. HELP!
HELP! HELP!

INT. DANNIE'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - EVENING (PRESENT)

A stillness hangs over the Tillmans, now joined by Kevin. Lt. Col. Bailey clicks his pen and tucks it in his pocket.

DANNIE

Help me understand something, Colonel. Why couldn't they leave the Humvee on the side of the road to be picked up later?

LT. COL. BAILEY

Ma'am, they couldn't leave the vehicle. Locals could get on it and take pictures. Then use those pictures for propaganda. Which wouldn't look good for the military.

DANNIE

So pictures on Humvees don't look good but friendly fire does?

Bailey says nothing. Point made.

DANNIE

Why wasn't it airlifted? Or destroyed? Kevin said a lot of the Rangers wanted to blow it up.

LT. COL. BAILEY

That goes against Army policy, ma'am.

UNCLE MIKE

Why wouldn't the officers at Salerno listen to the lieutenant in the field? It seems like he knew the situation best.

LT. COL. BAILEY

Well, as it turns out, Lieutenant Uthlaut misunderstood the orders. He was to have troops in the Manah by dawn. Not dusk. The TOC commander didn't realize Uthlaut heard it that way.

DANNIE

What about military time? Kevin and Pat referred to military time when they talked about, I don't know, going to breakfast. Or to a movie. Why weren't they using military time?

LT. COL. BAILEY
I'm not sure, ma'am.

Dannie leans back. One part anger, one part exasperation.

MARIE
Colonel, what would you want your wife to do if this happened to you?

LT. COL. BAILEY
I would hope she'd realize mistakes happen in battle. In my view, Lieutenant Uthlaut should have had more control of the situation. And I'm disgusted by Sergeant Baker, who in my mind, is very much to blame. He was in charge of that vehicle, and he allowed his men to lose trigger discipline.

(then)
I will make sure the people responsible for Pat's death are punished. But a lot of mistakes were made, and everyone in the platoon bears responsibility for what happened.

Kevin looks hurt as though guilty by association.

DANNIE
(re: Kevin's reaction)
Five vehicles of soldiers didn't shoot at the men trying to help them. How can the entire platoon be responsible?

LT. COL. BAILEY
(contrite)
Yes, ma'am.

EXT. DANNIE'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - EVENING

As Lt. Col. Bailey's car reverses out of the driveway, the Tillmans are gathered around the fire pit deliberating.

UNCLE MIKE
Anyone find it strange he was wearing his uniform for an unofficial briefing?

RICHARD

I'll tell you what's more strange. After listening to this bullshit at dad's, I told Bailey on the way over here, 'I don't care what anyone says, I think my brother was fucking murdered.'

He takes a long drag from his cigarette.

KEVIN

What'd he say?

RICHARD

(exhaling)

He said, 'You may be right.'

INT. COMMERCIAL AIRLINER - COACH - DAY

Dannie sits in the aisle seat beside Patrick and Uncle Mike. Across from her, a TODDLER pushes a toy plane on the seatback tray. A dead-ringer for a young Pat. He looks up at Dannie making airplane sound effects as he plays.

INT. FORT LEWIS - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

While Lt. Col. Bailey fires up a decades old projector, Col. Nixon hands out a stapled packet of PowerPoint slides to the Tillmans. Patrick flicks through the pages with skepticism--

PATRICK

What's this? Where's the official narrative report?

LT. COL. BAILEY

It's, ah, not ready to be distributed quite yet.

PATRICK

When I requested it last month, I was told it would be ready today.

LT. COL. BAILEY

I do apologize for that.

(flips lights off)

Before we begin, I want to start by saying I made some errors in the briefings I gave you prior. So I'd like to clarify a few points. First, Sergeant Baker actually did not get out of the vehicle. In fact, the vehicle never stopped.

LT. COL. BAILEY (cont'd)
 Second, when the Humvee exited the canyon, Baker saw the Afghan soldier in prone position, not standing. And, thinking he was the enemy, shot him. The other soldiers, following their squad leader, fired up the berm. Wounding Lieutenant Uthlaut and Specialist Lane and killing Corporal Tillman. And lastly, visibility was not as good as originally believed.

PATRICK
 Wait a second. You told me light conditions were good because you walked the site the day after.

LT. COL. BAILEY
 As I mentioned, there were some errors in my initial debrief. The soldiers who were present that day stated visibility was poor.

Off Dannie and Marie giving each other a sideways glance--

DISSOLVE TO:

The final slide "Q&A" is pulled up behind Lt. Col. Bailey.

UNCLE MIKE
 What about the lull in fire? Pat wouldn't come out from behind the rock while they were shooting.

LT. COL. BAILEY
 Turns out there was no lull in fire.

DANNIE
 You said they stopped shooting, so they could reload.

LT. COL. BAILEY
 Yes, that was also my error, ma'am.

PATRICK
 So they didn't see the purple smoke grenade?

LT. COL. BAILEY
 We're told it was actually white smoke. And the Rangers believed it was dust stirred up from rounds hitting the dirt.

DANNIE

Wait, dust?? I've seen that smoke at Pat and Kevin's graduation. It's nothing like dust. It's like movie smoke. You can't miss it.

COL. NIXON

When the adrenaline kicks in, it's easy to make those mistakes. There was a lot of chaos happening that day. Have you seen the opening scene in *Saving Private Ryan*? It was like that.

PATRICK

(cutting through the bullshit)
Pat didn't earn the Silver Star.

An awkward silence fills the room. Dannie shoots daggers into her ex-husband. Marie exits the room in disgust.

COL. NIXON

I have several Silver Stars, Mr. Tillman. And I can assure you, Pat was far more heroic than I ever was.

DANNIE

I think what he means to say, is that you made it suspect giving it to Pat knowing he may have been killed by his own men. The Silver Star isn't usually given to victims of fratricide is it, Colonel?

COL. NIXON

Pat was very heroic out there.

INT. FORT LEWIS - CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

The Tillmans huddle up at the end of the hall while Dannie and Col. Nixon hang back.

UNCLE MIKE

If the vehicle never stopped, how the hell did Baker leave the jinga and get inside? It sounds like horse shit.

Patrick lays prone on the ground.

PATRICK

Tell me how someone on their stomach gets shot in the chest eight times. It's fucking impossible.

Down the hall, Dannie and Nixon wrap up their chat.

DANNIE

I know that's probably an unusual request to make.

COL. NIXON

No, not at all. We'll get it to you as soon as possible.

DANNIE

Thank you.

He hands her a business card.

COL. NIXON

If you need anything.

DANNIE

(staring at the card)
Are you taking command?

COL. NIXON

Already have. Bailey's been promoted.

Off Dannie, processing this unexpected development--

EXT. SUN DEVIL STADIUM - FIELD - DAY

On the JUMBOTRON, a recorded tribute plays as President Bush reads from a teleprompter--

BUSH

Pat Tillman loved the game of football. Yet, as much as he loved competing on the field, he loved America even more. Courageous and humble, a loving husband and son, a devoted brother and a fierce defender of liberty. Pat Tillman will always be remembered.

SUPER: 19 SEPTEMBER 2004. PHOENIX, ARIZONA.

Arizona and New England fans cheer, wave flags, and hold signs like "ARIZONA'S MVP, AMERICA'S HERO" and "TRUE PATRIOT."

In the upper deck, a group of fans remove a tarp covering a section of the Cardinals Ring Of Fame to reveal: 40 PAT TILLMAN.

The CHEERING CRESCENDOS as photos of Pat dissolve on screen.

Standing on the sideline, the Tillmans watch through forced smiles and bleary eyes. It's a touching, bittersweet, and all-too-public way to mourn Pat's loss.

INT. US SENATE OFFICE - PHOENIX - DAY

In a nondescript government lobby, Dannie speaks to a SECRETARY behind the front desk.

DANNIE

I know it's last minute. But I'm not usually in the area. Figured I'd at least swing by.

SECRETARY

I understand, ma'am. But unless you have an appointment--

DANNIE

--Could you at least let him know I stopped in?

SECRETARY

(grabbing a Post-It note)
Sure. Name?

DANNIE

Dannie Tillman.

SECRETARY

I'll pass it along.

DANNIE

Thank you.

Dannie turns to leave then stops. Spins around.

DANNIE

I'm really sorry to ask. Do you have a bathroom I could use?

SECRETARY

It's not really open to the public.

DANNIE

(trying for levity)
Our taxes pay for it right?
(then)
I wouldn't normally ask. But I'm having...
(leans in to whisper)
...issues.

The secretary nods. Say no more.

SECRETARY
 (handing her the key)
 Third door on the left.

Dannie walks past the secretary into the hallway. Stops at the bathroom. Peers over her shoulder -- sees the secretary answering the phone -- continues walking.

INT. MCCAIN'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

On the wall, at least twenty framed magazine covers featuring John McCain from his 2000 Presidential run.

JOHN MCCAIN, 68, snow white comb-over, struggles to unbutton his navy jacket, arms damaged from years of torture in the Hanoi Hilton P.O.W. camp. He leaves it as is. Takes a seat.

JOHN MCCAIN
 It's too bad Velcro isn't more socially acceptable.

Across from him, Dannie sits in a leather Queen Anne chair. She's not really in the mood for jokes.

DANNIE
 No judgment.

JOHN MCCAIN
 I appreciate that. But something tells me you're not here to give fashion advice.

DANNIE
 Afraid not.
 (then)
 I need a copy of Pat's autopsy.

JOHN MCCAIN
 And given that you're in my office, I'm guessing you've already put in a formal request.

DANNIE
 Five months ago. And four months ago. And every week since.

JOHN MCCAIN
 Wow. I know things are slow in Washington, but that seems exceptionally long.

DANNIE

I thought so too, but this is new territory for me. I'm not trying to be, but it seems that I've been a thorn in their side.

JOHN MCCAIN

(smiling)

I've made an entire career out of it.

The secretary barges in.

SECRETARY

I'm really sorry, Senator McCain. She only asked to use the--

McCain holds a hand up. It's fine. She leaves them be.

JOHN MCCAIN

(to Dannie)

So what can I do to help?

INT. BRET HARTE JUNIOR HIGH - FACULTY LOUNGE - MORNING

While teachers drink coffee and gossip, Dannie opens a FedEx envelope and pulls out a packet.

On the front cover:

FINAL AUTOPSY EXAMINATION

Report Name: Tillman, Patrick D.

Date of Autopsy: **27 APR 2004**

Date of Report: **22 JUL 2004**

Her eyes dart between the dates. Odd. Further down the page--

"chest contusion... consistent with defibrillation attempt."

DANNIE

(to herself, baffled)

Why would he be defibrillated? His head was practically missing!

Her coworkers stop chatting and stare. Should we go?

INT. DOVER AFB - DR. MALLAK'S OFFICE - LATER

Dr. Mallak's on the phone, a copy of Pat's autopsy on his desk.

DR. MALLAK

Ma'am, we normally don't fault people for trying to save someone's life.

INTERCUT:

INT. BRET HARTE JUNIOR HIGH - DANNIE'S CLASSROOM - SAME

Dannie's on her cell, flipping through the autopsy at her desk--

DANNIE

I'm not faulting anyone, Dr. Mallak.
I'm just wondering why an attempt was
made when he was so clearly gone.

DR. MALLAK

The abrasion shape on his chest was
interpreted as a mark from a
defibrillator. It's possible it wasn't.
It could've been from prolonged CPR or
other medical treatment.

DANNIE

Alright. Thank you for clearing that
up for me. Just one last question.
Why is the report dated three months
after you conducted the autopsy?

DR. MALLAK

To be honest ma'am, I didn't believe
the information presented in the
casualty report.

DANNIE

I'm sorry, what do you mean by that?

DR. MALLAK

Well it said your son was killed by
enemy fire but enemy rounds don't
cause the wounds your son had.

DANNIE

So why didn't you say anything?

DR. MALLAK

I did. I refused to sign the Silver
Star recommendation and called to
stop it.

Off Dannie, blindsided by this bombshell--

INT. FORT LEWIS - CORRIDOR - EVENING

Kevin flags down Col. Nixon in the hallway.

KEVIN
Colonel Nixon.

Nixon turns around.

KEVIN
Wanted to talk to you about my
deployment order.

COL. NIXON
Make it quick.

He continues on. Kevin keeps pace.

KEVIN
I don't think I can.
(beat)
Go on deployment. Sir.

COL. NIXON
Why, you got some sort of health
condition?
(re: Kevin shaking head)
Muslim?

Kevin doesn't entertain that with a response.

COL. NIXON
How long do you have left on your
enlistment? A year?

KEVIN
Eight months, sir.

COL. NIXON
Alright. I'll give you an honorable
discharge if that's what you want.

KEVIN
No, I want to continue to serve.

COL. NIXON
Then you can serve by going on your
deployment.

KEVIN
Sir, I'm being asked to deploy with
guys who killed my brother. We're
supposed to have each other's backs.
Unconditionally. But I can't trust
them. And it would be irresponsible
to send us together.

Nixon stops outside a conference room, turns to Kevin--

COL. NIXON
So how do you propose I resolve this,
Corporal Tillman?

KEVIN
Transfer me.

EXT. FORT BRAGG - SHOOTING RANGE - DAY

A round kicks up dirt ten feet wide of its intended target. Kevin lies prone, eye to the scope of his M24 sniper rifle.

Beside him, a SPOTTER peers downrange through binoculars.

SPOTTER
So why exactly did you become a sniper?
Clearly wasn't your shooting ability.

KEVIN
Are you gonna help me? Or heckle me?

SPOTTER
Someone had to get a shot in.

Kevin stares him down. Funny.

SPOTTER
(smiling)
Hold left-three, up-four.

Through the scope, Kevin's target come into focus.

CA-POW!

Dust.

KEVIN
Fuck.

CAPT. SCOTT (O.S.)
Tillman!

CAPT. SCOTT, 32, a rosy-cheeked Asian, waves Kevin over. Smart and soft-spoken, he's not your typical Ranger.

CAPT. SCOTT
C'mere a sec!

KEVIN
Shit.

SPOTTER
Bang up job, Tillman. Already managed
to piss off the new cap.

KEVIN
Sorry, man.

SPOTTER
Hey, I'm good. You're the one who missed.

Kevin leaps to his feet -- jogs over to Scott.

KEVIN
Sorry, Captain. Shooting like dog
shit today.

CAPT. SCOTT
I wouldn't say that. My dog shits
with better aim.
(then)
You squared away?

KEVIN
(clearly not)
Yeah. Yeah.

CAPT. SCOTT
What's going on?

KEVIN
Ah, just some shit with my brother.

CAPT. SCOTT
You need some time off?

KEVIN
No, it's just--

Scott nods for them to walk and talk in private.

KEVIN
--It's just that General Jones is
doing another investigation, and he
wants to question me. And to be
honest, I'm not sure what say.

CAPT. SCOTT
Just tell him what you know.

KEVIN
It's not that. I'm not sure how I'm
gonna keep my cool.

KEVIN (cont'd)
 I've seen guys get harsher punishment returning an hour late from weekend leave. And not one of the motherfuckers who killed Pat has been so much as court-martialed.

CAPT. SCOTT
 Hey man, I hear you. I suggested as much at the end of my report.

Kevin stops in his tracks--

KEVIN
 Your report?

INT. FORT BRAGG - SCOTT'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Kevin scrolls through a PDF on a laptop.

KEVIN
 Why haven't I heard about this?

CAPT. SCOTT
 Because technically it doesn't exist. I thought it was odd command asked me to do a 15-6 in the first place.

EXT. WESTERN CANYON - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Capt. Scott

--SNAPS PHOTOS of the bullet-riddled boulders.

--MEASURES THE DISTANCE to the opium terrace.

--COLLECTS SHELL-CASINGS on the wadi path.

CAPT. SCOTT (V.O.)
 Let's be honest, I'm an infantry officer, not a forensics expert.

INT. FOB SALERNO - BILLET - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Rapid jump cuts as Capt. Scott takes notes during interviews with the Black Sheep Platoon: Spc. O'Neal, Sgt. Baker, Sgt. Sayre, Spc. Alders, etc.

CAPT. SCOTT (V.O.)
 But the interviews pulled everything together.

CAPT. SCOTT (V.O.) (cont'd)
 I mean, shit, you didn't have to be Sherlock Holmes to figure out what happened when everyone was saying the same damn thing.

INT. FOB SALERNO - TOC - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Capt. Scott stands before Maj. Hodne and Lt. Col. Bailey as each study his report in a binder.

CAPT. SCOTT (V.O.)
 A couple days after I turned in my report, I was told, 'You completed a Battalion Level 15-6, but now we're initiating a Regimental 15-6.'

INT. FORT BRAGG - SCOTT'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS (PRESENT)

Kevin shuts the laptop screen and turns to Capt. Scott.

KEVIN
 I don't understand why they would need to conduct two.

CAPT. SCOTT
 I figured it was because of how serious the situation was. And the recommendations I made.

KEVIN
 What were your recommendations?

CAPT. SCOTT
 That certain leaders be investigated because I felt there was negligence on their part.

KEVIN
 So they didn't sign off.

CAPT. SCOTT
 I can't know that for sure. But I don't have another explanation. After I submitted my report, I was called into Colonel Bailey's office. And the reason he called me in was because the NCOs changed their story. The timing, the distance -- all of it.

KEVIN
 To cover their asses.

CAPT. SCOTT

They insinuated that my report wasn't accurate when I submitted it. So instead of giving out punishment to Baker and his team, I'm in there saying, 'No, this is accurate. They signed the interviews they gave me.' Baker did show gross negligence. And he wasn't chaptered out of the Army. Ashpole and Elliot were 'Released for Standards' and given company grades to serve in a different unit. So I went through that whole process and came to the conclusion that some individuals demonstrated lack of control and negligence. That they should look into it. And, at the end of it all, they didn't get their due punishment. They were put back into the rank and file.

KEVIN

When did you turn in your report?

CAPT. SCOTT

(thinking)

I don't know. About a week after your brother passed?

INT. FORT BRAGG - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

GEN. JONES, 50, ash trim, rigid posture, sits to Kevin's left at the head of the table. A gold star on each of his shoulders glistens with intimidating authority.

GEN. JONES

And why do you believe the regimental report to be inaccurate?

KEVIN

Because I read Captain Scott's battalion report. Yesterday.

GEN. JONES

(clenches jaw)

Alright. Can you give a specific examples of inaccuracies?

KEVIN

Captain Scott stated based on eyewitness testimony, that the soldiers on the hill were waving their hands and arms to signal a cease fire. However, the soldiers in the lead vehicle continued to shoot into the village. It's clear those soldiers were firing without being fired upon.

GEN. JONES

Correct me if I'm wrong, Corporal Tillman, but that information is in the regimental report.

KEVIN

But the lead Humvee was commanded by Sergeant Baker, information Colonel Bailey gave us as fact when he came to our house. Yet the final regimental report says it's 'inconclusive' as to who or what vehicle fired. Why say it's inconclusive? It doesn't make sense. Did the investigator not agree with Scott's findings and all of the witness testimony, or did someone have a foot on his head to water it down?

EXT. SANTA CRUZ HARBOR - SUNSET

A FISHING BOAT drifts toward a white lighthouse standing at the edge of a stone jetty. The Tillmans are gathered starboard as Dannie tilts an urn of PAT'S ASHES into the waves.

DANNIE

Happy birthday, Pat.

LT. COL. KAUZLARICH (PRE-LAP)

If you're an atheist and you don't believe in anything, what's after death? Nothing. You're worm dirt.

INT. KAUZLARICH'S HOME - DEN - NIGHT

Lt. Col. Kauzlarich is on the phone in a room which could double as a military museum: antique pennants, medals, rifles.

LT. COL. KAUZLARICH

These people have a hard time letting go. And maybe it's because of their religion, or, lack thereof.

LT. COL. KAUZLARICH (cont'd)
I don't know what they think to tell
you the truth.

INTERCUT:

INT. MIKE FISH'S OFFICE - SAME

On the other end, MIKE FISH, 40s, takes notes on a laptop with an ESPN The Magazine sticker pasted on the back.

MIKE FISH
So you think that's the reason they
keep asking for new investigations?
Because of their religious beliefs?

LT. COL. KAUZLARICH
I mean, I would think so. Doesn't seem
to be a whole lotta trust in the system.

INT. MOFFETT FIELD - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

As Gen. Jones fires up the projector, a JAG OFFICER hands stapled packets to Dannie and Patrick seated at the conference table. This feels familiar.

SUPER: 01 MARCH 2005. MOFFET FIELD - MOUNTAIN VIEW, CA.

The first slide is titled "SCOPE OF INVESTIGATION."

GEN. JONES
Before we begin, I want to note that
the primary goal of my investigation
was to determine whether your son's
death was a result of fratricide.

Dannie and Patrick exchange a look. This is bullshit.

INT. MOFFETT FIELD - ELEVATOR - LATER

Patrick jams the lobby button, rage boiling over--

PATRICK
They present us sham investigations.
They call Pat 'worm dirt.' Then they
have the nerve to say we can't get
over it? What do they expect from us?

DANNIE
To play nice and go away.

PATRICK

Good fucking luck. I'm done playing nice.

Ding. The elevator doors part.

SMASH CUT:

INT. PATRICK'S LAW OFFICE - DAY

Cramped in between letter boxes and case files, Patrick furiously pecks away at a letter at least ten pages long. Of which we only hear the tail end--

PATRICK (V.O.)

The foundation of the ethical code at West Point is found in the Academy's motto, 'Duty, Honor, Country.' Cadets also develop ethically by adhering to the Cadet Honor Code, which states 'A cadet will not lie, cheat, steal, or tolerate those who do.'

Click. The printer spits out his literary tongue-lashing.

PATRICK (V.O.)

You are a general. On paper, you subscribe to this motto and honor code. To say otherwise means it ends on graduation day and is limited to cadets. There is no way a man like you, with your intelligence, education, military experience, rank and authority -- both apparent and real -- believes the conclusions reached in the briefing book. But your signature is on it. I assume, therefore, that you are part of this shameless bullshit.

He walks over, squares the pages, signs the final page.

EXT. PATRICK'S LAW OFFICE - COURTYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Patrick crosses through a manicured lawn with manila envelope in hand. No time for walkways.

PATRICK (V.O.)

The Rangers stand for something -- to this day in my mind -- the best.

PATRICK (V.O.) (cont'd)
 None of the five soldiers on the ground,
 nor anyone in a discretionary capacity
 involved in this briefing book, deserve
 to be affiliated with the Rangers. If
 your uniforms are so decorated, you
 should remove those badges.

He opens a blue USPS collection box, drops the letter inside.

PATRICK (V.O.)
 In sum: fuck you. And yours.
 Sincerely, Patrick K. Tillman.

INT. TACOMA HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Half the room is packed away as Marie studies PAT'S FRAMED SILVER STAR. She reads the written Army citation underneath. Shakes her head. Places it in a box.

She pulls Pat's dog-eared copy of *Self-Reliance* off the shelf. Flips through highlighted passages. Stops on one.

EXT. TACOMA HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The bed of Kevin's truck is filled with boxes. As he loads his suitcase in, Marie approaches from behind--

MARIE
 Gonna miss having a Tillman boy around.

KEVIN
 My mom said the same thing when Richard moved out. Lasted a week. Turns out we can be a difficult bunch.

MARIE
 (with a smile)
 No idea what you're talking about.
 (then)
 So what are you gonna do now that you're a free man?

KEVIN
 Thought I'd do some traveling.

MARIE
 Haven't gotten your fill?

KEVIN
 Figure this time I'll go where locals prefer to pour shots, rather than fire them.

MARIE
Good place to start.

KEVIN
What about you?

MARIE
I'm still open to suggestions.

She goes in for a hug. They embrace for a beat.

MARIE
Keep in touch, OK?

Kevin nods, trying best to stay composed.

INT. DANNIE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dannie lies in bed watching *All the President's Men*. The phone rings. Sensing it a little late, she checks the alarm clock: 10:29 PM. Checks the caller ID. Unknown number.

DANNIE
(answering)
Hello?

DAWN HELLERMAN (V.O.)
Hi, is this Dannie Tillman?

DANNIE
Yes... who's this?

DAWN HELLERMAN
I'm sorry to call you so late. I just found your number and--

DANNIE
--It's OK. May I ask who's calling?

DAWN HELLERMAN (V.O.)
My name's Dawn Hellerman. A friend of mine sent me an article on your son. I read about what you've all been going through, and it was like de ja vu.

DANNIE
I'm not sure I follow.

DAWN HELLERMAN
My husband was Staff Sergeant Brian Hellerman. He was killed in Iraq in 2003.

DAWN HELLERMAN (cont'd)

The Army said it happened in an ambush. But a few months later I got a phone call from a soldier in his unit. He told me it was friendly fire. At first I didn't know what he was talking about. He explained that everyone felt horrible about it and that it was an accident. He felt guilty I hadn't been told the truth and that he had to call.

(beat, voice breaking)

And hearing about Pat, it was like re-living Brian's death all over again.

EXT. DANNIE'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - MORNING

A UPS driver unloads four cardboard boxes beside Dannie's welcome mat. Rings the doorbell.

INT. BRET HARTE JUNIOR HIGH - HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

The SCHOOL PRINCIPAL, 50s, picks up a crumpled piece of paper by a locker. Tosses it in the garbage.

At the end of the hall, we hear the muffled sound of rambunctious students. He jogs over to investigate and peers through the window into Dannie's classroom.

Inside, students are shouting, throwing paper airplanes, and creating mayhem. Without an authority figure present, *Lord of the Flies* has become more than required reading.

INT. BRET HARTE JUNIOR HIGH - FACULTY LOUNGE - MOMENTS LATER

Dannie's engrossed in a mountain of documents laid out on the table. The principal knocks as he pops his head in--

PRINCIPAL

Hey, Dan. Ah, everything, alright?

DANNIE

Yeah. Just catching up on some work.

PRINCIPAL

Don't mean to interrupt but third period started fifteen minutes ago. Figured you might want to teach it.

Dannie whips her head toward the wall clock. 1:15. Oh shit.

DANNIE
I am so sorry. I totally lost track--

PRINCIPAL
--It's OK.

She frantically shuffles papers into some semblance of order.

PRINCIPAL
I'll take care of it.

DANNIE
Thank you.

She practically sprints out of the room. The principal walks over to see what had Dannie so enraptured. Finds an assortment of case files from Pat's investigations.

INT. TACOMA HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

The house has been entirely emptied of all furniture, decorations, and signs of life.

Marie stands in the foyer soaking in the memories one final time. As she locks the door, an image of Pat's face being locked out flashes before her. She can't help but smile.

INT. DANNIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Dannie sits on the floor, surrounded by hundreds of unsorted pages. She cross-references a heavily redacted document against another. It's impossible to make heads or tails of all this.

Dannie drops them in frustration, seconds away from a full-blown panic attack. She reaches for her laptop and out of total desperation, she Googles "what happened to pat tillman?"

Over a million results. Even better. She skims the first page. Mouses over a link that catches her attention. Clicks.

TELLING TRANSFORMATIVE TALES
The Strange Post-Ranger Saga of Pat Tillman
by Stan Goff

Off Dannie, eyes narrowing with intrigue--

INT. DANNIE'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

Dannie drops a set of heavy binders on the table in front of STAN GOFF, 56, a former Army Ranger with a kind smile and crazy eyes.

STAN
That all ya got?

DANNIE
In for a penny, in for a pound.
(then)
Oh wait.

She disappears for a beat. Returns with another box.

DANNIE
Almost forgot. Sworn testimonies.

STAN
A little more than pound.

He pulls out a binder and flips through the report pages. In addition to words covered by **thick black bars**, entire words have been replaced by DASHES. This is going to fucking ----.

DANNIE
What hasn't been censored is written like another language entirely.

STAN
I call it vernacular homicide. Keeps the riff-raff out. Hell, the entire legal profession subsists on it.

DANNIE
My ex-husband is a lawyer.

STAN
Then you already know.

Dannie cracks a smile. All too well.

DANNIE
They tried to bury me in bullshit.

STAN
Good thing I brought a shovel.

He opens a tall can of Red Bull. Takes a sip.

STAN
Doctor told me to stop drinking coffee. Bad for the adrenal glands.

DANNIE

The one thing I might've figured out was how to link specific names to each witness. That way we know who is saying what.

(leans over; counts dashes)

Six, seven, eight.

(checks her answer key)

Saunders.

She writes SAUNDERS above the dashes. An exact fit.

STAN

That'll work.

DANNIE

But not for everyone. Saunders is the only one with eight letters, but Baker and Hodne both have five.

STAN

Context. We know Baker was on the battlefield, and Hodne was at TOC. So their statements will be from two completely different perspectives.

DANNIE

That'll work.

(then)

So where do we start?

STAN

From the beginning.

INT. DANNIE'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

In front of Dannie and Stan, arrows, circles, and details are scrawled in red ink on the pages. They've been at it for days.

DANNIE

Inconclusive my ass. Listen to this, Stan.
(reading)

'Why did you fire at the figures on the ridgeline?'

(beat)

'I was excited. I saw muzzle flashes.'
(reading)

'Were you taking enemy fire?'

(beat)

'I couldn't tell. Others were firing, and I wanted to stay in the firefight.'

STAN

Absolutely no situational awareness.

DANNIE

Listen to the squad automatic gunner.

(reading)

'Why did you fire at waving arms?'

(beat)

'I saw the arms waving, but I didn't think that they were trying to signal cease fire.'

(to Stan)

Isn't it against the rules of engagement to shoot at the enemy if he's waving his hands?

STAN

Yes. And you must have positive identification to use deadly force. We were taught that in Ranger School. Hell, we were taught that in basic.

DANNIE

To think I had sympathy for them. Having to live with this for the rest of their lives. It doesn't sound like they were scared or confused. It sounds like they had a lust to fight.

EXT. MARIE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - MANHATTAN - EVENING

A CABBIE pulls luggage out of the trunk. Places it on the sidewalk next to Marie.

CABBIE

Husband not here to take up your bags?

Marie stares at him. How did you know? The cabbie nods to her wedding band. She shields it out of reflex.

MARIE

No, I'm fine. Thank you.

She hands him a few bills. Turns around to give the building a once over. Her new home.

INT. DANNIE'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

Dannie, Patrick, and Kevin are gathered at the table mid-conversation with SPECIAL AGENT GROSSMAN, 40, beady brown eyes, acting as investigator, educator, and mediator.

DANNIE

I'm just trying to wrap my head around all the changes in testimony. None of it makes sense. It's like up is down and white is zucchini. Either everyone has collective amnesia, or they're lying to cover their asses.

PATRICK

Colonel Kauzlarich may not like that our family isn't Christian but even we know 'thou shall not bear false witness' is one of the Ten Commandments.

SPECIAL AGENT GROSSMAN

I'm sure he regrets doing that interview. He said some things in poor taste. It's possible he was feeling sensitive because his investigation was being scrutinized. He probably wants to put it behind--

DANNIE

--What do you mean his investigation?

SPECIAL AGENT GROSSMAN

The regimental 15-6.

(beat)

Were you not aware that General Kauzlarich conducted the report?

DANNIE

I thought it was Major Hodne.

She rummages through a box on the table. Pulls out a folder with a colored tab bearing Kauzlarich's name.

DANNIE

This is from General Jones' interview.

(reading)

'It's getting to the point where he's becoming a pain in the ass for 2nd Battalion to train, deploy, fight, and win.'

(then)

That pain in the ass he's referring to is Kevin because he dared to ask for a transfer. How can a man with so much contempt for my family be put in charge of Pat's investigation?

SPECIAL AGENT GROSSMAN

I can't answer that because I couldn't tell you. But regardless of what happened before, if my office uncovers anything that appears criminal on anyone's part, we'll call for an official investigation.

PATRICK

And we're gonna wait what, another year and a half to hear there was no wrongdoing on anyone's part?

DANNIE

No offense Special Agent Grossman, I appreciate you visiting us in person, but we've been through a few of these now. And allowing the military to investigate itself, even by the Army Inspector General, is like allowing my students to grade their own papers. If I'm expecting unbiased results, I'm only fooling myself.

SPECIAL AGENT GROSSMAN

We take allegations of criminal misconduct very seriously. After we were received a copy of your Mr. Tillman's letter, this became a priority for us.

KEVIN

Shit, if an angry letter was all it took, my mom woulda told the Army to go fuck itself years ago.

INT. TIMES SQUARE STUDIOS - ESPN - DAY

A buzz of activity at the worldwide leader of sports. In a festively decorated cubicle, Marie fills out a call sheet on her computer monitor.

HANNAH, 40s, an alpha female with a spray tan and yoga membership, calls over from her office doorway--

HANNAH

Marie, can I borrow you a sec?

INT. HANNAH'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

We can't see what's on Hannah's computer screen, but gauging Marie's demeanor, it's something serious.

HANNAH
(standing behind Marie)
Editorial forwarded it over. Figured
you should know.

MARIE
How did they get these?

HANNAH
(shrugging)
No clue. But they were gauging our
interest in buying.

Marie leans back in disbelief.

HANNAH
We're not, for the record. But I
can't speak for everyone else.
Definitely some blogs out there who
wouldn't be above publishing autopsy
photos for clicks.

INT. TIMES SQUARE STUDIOS - ESPN - MOMENTS LATER

Marie stares at her monitor, mind still on what she just
witnessed. Her phone lights up with a text message.

Joe: We still on for tomorrow night?

Marie glares at the message, unsure how to respond.

INT. COMMONWEALTH CLUB OF CALIFORNIA - STAGE - NIGHT

On stage, a MODERATOR interviews GEN. WESLEY CLARK, 62, a
silver fox with an equally silver tongue.

GEN. WESLEY CLARK
This country was taken over by a
group of people with a policy coup.
Wolfowitz and Cheney and Rumsfeld and
you could name a half dozen other
collaborators from the 'Project for
the New American Century.' They
wanted us to destabilize the Middle
East. Turn it upside down. Take it
under control.

Dannie ducks down as she takes a seat in the back.

GEN. WESLEY CLARK

Now did anybody tell you that? Did Senators and Congressmen stand up and denounce this plan? Was there a full fledged American debate on it? Absolutely not. And there still isn't. They could hardly wait to finish Iraq, so they could move on to Syria. And it is imperative we have a national dialogue on these issues.

Claps from the assembled crowd.

MODERATOR

Before we began tonight, we had the audience submit some questions. We'll go through as many as we have time for. First question--

(reading)

'Do you plan to run for President?'

GEN. WESLEY CLARK

(laughs)

I think my wife might kill me if I didn't speak to her about it first.

He points to MRS. CLARKE, 63, in the front row. She gives a thumbs up to confirm his suspicion.

MODERATOR

Well, as soon as you're ready, come back and gives us the scoop. Second question--

(reading)

'What do you think about everything going on with our local hero, Pat Tillman?'

GEN. WESLEY CLARK

Well... friendly fire happens. And the military really does its best to prevent those kinds of accidents. I know some of the generals who are being investigated. These are not the type of men who would be involved in a cover-up.

Off Dannie, fuming--

INT. MARIE'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Marie models a bubblegum pink sweater in the mirror. It's bright. It's loud. It's exactly what she needs right now.

As she smooths the front of the sweater, she fixates on her wedding ring in the reflection. A beat. She slides it off. Places it on the counter. Rubs the bare spot with her thumb, feeling suddenly naked without it.

INT. DOKA SQUARE - LATER

Overpriced Asian fusion on the Lower East Side. Marie sits across from JOE, 37, crooked smile and a wicked sense of humor.

MARIE

It's definitely been an adjustment--

She's trails off as SERVERS emerge from the kitchen BELTING "Happy Birthday" and holding a cupcake with a lit candle. They make their way straight toward Marie.

MARIE

(whispering to Joe)

It's not my birthday.

Joe grins -- joins in the singing. Marie's eyes says "fuck you" but her smile says "well played." They place the dessert down in front of her.

JOE

Make a wish.

MARIE

It won't be for a second date.

(then)

You're gonna pay for this.

She blows out the candle. The entire restaurant claps.

INT. COMMONWEALTH CLUB OF CALIFORNIA - STAGE - LATER

As Gen. Clark greets the parting crowd, Dannie waits her turn. But she can't stay silent another second longer--

DANNIE

Excuse me. Excuse me, General Clark?

(he turns to her)

I'm Pat Tillman's mother.

Clark nods, smiles, turns to the next attendee until her statement sinks in and snaps him out of autopilot--

GEN. WESLEY CLARK
(turning back to Dannie)
I'm sorry. Did you-- Did you just say
you're Pat Tillman's mother?

DANNIE
Yes, sir. And I don't mean to be
rude, but you know nothing of the
circumstances surrounding his death.
You shouldn't be saying anything
unless you have the facts.

All eyes on Clark as the moderator attempts to escort him
around this political landmine.

GEN. WESLEY CLARK
(waving him off)
You know, you're absolutely right. I
was asked about your son at my
appearance last night as well. And
I'm afraid I responded the exact same
way. I'd like to know more about it.

DANNIE
I can tell you General Kensinger was
at Pat's memorial knowing full well
it was fratricide. And he allowed
Pat's friend to tell a fraudulent
story at the same memorial suggesting
he was killed by the enemy. The Army
could've easily said it was a special
ops mission, and there was no
information available. But they
didn't. They lied to the American
people, and they lied my family.

GEN. WESLEY CLARK
(to his wife; dismayed)
We've known Phil for years. I can't
believe he would do that.

DANNIE
And there's a lot more to it than
that. Are you serious about wanting
to know more?

GEN. WESLEY CLARK
I am.

DANNIE
Then you should take a look at these
reports. It's all in there.

Dannie reaches into her purse and offers him a thumb drive.

DANNIE
It's time to hold them accountable.

EXT. MARIE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER

Marie stands outside her building, arm interlocked with Joe's. The moment of truth after a promising first date.

MARIE
When are you back from your trip?

JOE
Two weeks.

MARIE
Well, if you still want to see me in two weeks--

She faces him, moves in closer. Joe closes his eyes expecting a kiss.

MARIE
--call me.

She breaks away and walks up her building steps.

JOE
(calling after her)
You're cruel.

MARIE
I know.

INT. MIKE HONDA'S OFFICE - DAY

A portly Japanese man, 63, reads from an open binder. Beside a photo of him with the DALAI LAMA, a wooden nameplate reveals him as MICHAEL M. HONDA - U.S. House of Representatives. Honda is attentive and polite, a model player in a dirty game.

Dannie sits across from him, filling the silence with her work under a microscope.

DANNIE
We were a little limited because of how much was redacted.

A beat.

Honda closes the binder.

HONDA
Can I keep this?

DANNIE
Please.

HONDA
(removing his glasses)
Are you familiar with the 442nd?

Dannie shakes her head.

HONDA
It was the most decorated American regiment in World War II. Every time the 442nd was deployed, they were deployed to the front lines. Fourteen thousand men. Nine thousand purple hearts. Five hundred and sixty Silver Stars. Twenty-one medals of honor. They had to be replaced entirely twice over. They were cannon fodder, and they knew it. But even after displaying their fierceness in battle, the military refused to send them to the Pacific Theater. You see, the 442nd was comprised of second generation Japanese. The Nisei. But the Nisei never complained about their lot in life. They were determined to prove their loyalty. Even while their family members, and a hundred thousand other Japanese Americans were imprisoned by their own country.

(beat)
I don't remember much about my internment; I was only four years old then. But I do remember cold nights gathered around a fire, hearing the heroic tales of the 442nd. They made us proud. They gave us hope.

Dannie is stilled by his personal story.

HONDA
(tapping the binder)
And it appears to me that the brave actions of soldiers, and the continued mistreatment of those soldiers' families, hasn't improved much in sixty years.

(beat)
We have a duty to change that.

INT. MIKE HONDA'S OFFICE - STUDY - DAY

Now weeks later, HONDA'S ASSISTANT pulls binders out of a box and places them on the table in front of Dannie.

HONDA'S ASSISTANT
Better late than never, right?

DANNIE
(forcing a smile)
Yeah.

HONDA'S ASSISTANT
Well we appreciate your work. You're making the lives of the House Committee a thousand times easier.

DANNIE
And having the unredacted reports is making my life a thousand times easier.
(then)
OK if I come back to return these by Friday?

HONDA'S ASSISTANT
Oh. I thought you knew.
(beat)
They're not allowed to leave the office.

DANNIE
I see. Do you have a Xerox machine?
I'll pay for the copies.

HONDA'S ASSISTANT
(pained)
Actually... you can't make copies, either. The Pentagon only permitted they be read here. I'm really sorry, Mrs. Tillman.
(low to Dannie)
But there's nothing saying you can't compare these to your own.

Dannie nods. It's something.

DANNIE
Thanks.

A time-lapse as we watch Dannie manually transcribe THOUSANDS OF DETAILS from the unredacted reports onto her own.

Days, nights, and weeks pass.

Dannie copies and binds packets of information together on Pat's investigation. Her own version of CliffsNotes. Upon closer inspection, we see the envelopes she's stuffing are addressed to CONGRESSMEN on the House Oversight Committee.

Running on empty, Dannie licks and seals the final one. Adds it to the stack. Takes a deep breath -- her work finally done.

INT. RAYBURN BUILDING - HEARING ROOM - DAY

CHAIRMAN WAXMAN, 68, bald, caterpillar mustache, sits at the head of the panel, surrounded by Honda and the other HOUSE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MEMBERS. He swears in the witnesses--

CHAIRMAN WAXMAN

Do you solemnly swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Opposite him, Dannie, Kevin, and Jessica Lynch stand with right hands raised.

ALL

I do.

They take a seat behind their name cards on the table.

KEVIN

I want to thank Congressman Waxman for holding this hearing and the members of the committee for attending.

FLASHES pop from the kneeling PHOTOGRAPHERS in front of him.

KEVIN

(reading statement)

'Two days ago marked the third anniversary of the death of my older brother, Pat Tillman, in Afghanistan. To our family and friends, it was a devastating loss. To the nation, it was a moment of disorientation. To the military, it was a nightmare. But to others in the government, it appears to have been an opportunity.'

CUT TO:

As Jessica Lynch addresses the committee, we intercut between her and Dannie's statements--

JESSICA LYNCH

My parent's home was under siege by the media all repeating the story of the little girl Rambo from the hills who went down fighting. But it just wasn't true.

DANNIE

We have been asked over and over again, 'What can we do for your family? How can we appease you?' And it makes me sick. It is not about our family. Our family will never be satisfied. We will never have Pat back. But what is so outrageous is that this isn't just about Pat. This is about what they did to a nation.

JESSICA LYNCH

I have repeatedly said, when asked, that if the stories about me helped inspire our troops and rally a nation, then perhaps there was some good.

DANNIE

Pat died for this country, and he believed it was a great country with a system that worked. It's not perfect. No one has ever said that. But there is a system in place to allow for it to work, and your job is to find out what happened.

JESSICA LYNCH

I am still confused as to why they chose to lie and tried to make me a legend when my fellow soldiers that day were, in fact, legendary.

DANNIE

By making up these false stories, you are diminishing true heroism.

JESSICA LYNCH

The American people are capable of determining their own ideals for heroes and they don't need to be told elaborate tales.

DANNIE

It may not be pretty. It may not be like a John Wayne movie. But that's not what war is all about. It is ugly. It is bloody. It is painful.

INT. DANNIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Dannie sits on her couch surfing TV channels. For a brief moment, we catch a glimpse of Gen. Wesley Clark on *Countdown with Keith Olbermann*. She flips it back.

GEN. WESLEY CLARK (ON TV)

The truth on the Pat Tillman case is not yet out. If there's even a hint of something like a homicide or a murder in this case, it should've been fully investigated and proved or disproved. But we still don't know how far up it goes.

INT. HARRAH'S CASINO - LOBBY - DAY

Lt. Gen. Kensinger, polo and khakis, cuts through a maze of smoke and slot machine zombies. His cell buzzes.

GEN. KENSINGER

(answering with a smile)

Hey. Just thinking about you. What are your thoughts on getting Elvis to renew our vows?

KENSINGER'S WIFE (V.O.)

Phil, turn on CNN.

INT. PENTAGON - BRIEFING ROOM - DAY

Standing behind a lectern, ARMY SECRETARY GEREN, 55, glasses and cue ball head gleaming under the lights, delivers a statement to the assembled MEDIA.

ARMY SECRETARY GEREN

General Wallace concluded that Kensinger deceived investigators about what he knew and when he knew it. He made false official statements but his deception played no role in the key events, misunderstandings, and misinformation immediately following Corporal Tillman's death.

ARMY SECRETARY GEREN (cont'd)
 Kensinger failed in his duty to inform the family about the friendly fire incident in a timely manner as required by Army regulations.

He calls on a REPORTER with a hand raised.

REPORTER
 You've described a litany of errors over more than three years involving a lot of people. Yet all the blame falls on General Kensinger. He happens to be retired. Are we to believe that's a coincidence?

ARMY SECRETARY GEREN
 Had General Kensinger performed his job properly, we wouldn't be standing here today. He was the captain of the ship, and he ran that ship aground.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

Kensinger watching the broadcast in his hotel room. His cell lights up with texts. The Pentagon's pariah.

INT. DANNIE'S CAR - EVENING

As Dannie pulls up in her driveway, her cell rings.

DANNIE
 (answering)
 Hey, Nub.

KEVIN (V.O.)
 (reading)
 'I felt that it was essential that you received this information as soon as we detected it in order to preclude any unknowing statements by our country's leaders which might cause public embarrassment if the circumstances of Corporal Tillman's death become public.'
 (then)
 They knew. All of 'em.

DANNIE
 Kevin, slow down. What are you talking about?

KEVIN (V.O.)

General McChrystal sent a memo to warn the Pentagon and White House not to speak publicly about how Pat died. A week after he was killed. We always assumed their timeline was bullshit. Now we have proof.

DANNIE

McChrystal? I don't even know who that is.

KEVIN (V.O.)

He ran JSOC. We called him the pope.

DANNIE

Where are you getting all this?

KEVIN (V.O.)

The Associated Press just published the email. Someone must've leaked it.

DANNIE

About time one works in our favor.

KEVIN (V.O.)

So what do we do now?

HONDA (PRE-LAP)

A second hearing.

INT. RISTORANTE MACHIAVELLI - DAY

A rustic Italian bistro filled with D.C. power brokers and the lobbyists trying to peddle their influence. Congressman Honda and Chairman Waxman are mid-meal at a corner booth.

CHAIRMAN WAXMAN

For whom?

HONDA

The recipients of the memo.

CHAIRMAN WAXMAN

She wants us to subpoena three generals?

HONDA

And Donald Rumsfeld.

Waxman takes a sip of water to help digest this idea.

CHAIRMAN WAXMAN

So this is the hill you've chosen to die on?

HONDA

Henry, sooner or later, we all die on Capitol Hill.

INT. RAYBURN BUILDING - HEARING ROOM - DAY

Donald Rumsfeld, Gen. BROWN, GEN. ABIZAID, and GEN. MYERS sit before the House Oversight Committee.

From the back, the Tillman family watch CONGRESSWOMAN MALONEY, 61, white pearls and pantsuit, question Rumsfeld--

CONGRESSWOMAN MALONEY

When Corporal Tillman enlisted, it was acknowledged by many people. He was a professional football player. He was offered millions of dollars in a contract that he turned down to serve our country. And he captured your attention after he enlisted when you sent a high-priority email to Thomas White -- then Secretary of the Army. On June 25th, 2002, you wrote--
(reading)

'Here is an article on a fellow who is apparently joining the Rangers. He sounds like he is world class. We might want to keep an eye on him.'

(beat)

When Corporal Tillman--

CHAIRMAN WAXMAN

The gentlelady's time has expired.

CONGRESSWOMAN MALONEY

May I ask for an additional--

CHAIRMAN WAXMAN

--Were you leading to a question?

CONGRESSMAN MALONEY

Yes. I was.

CHAIRMAN WAXMAN

OK. Would you ask it quickly?

CONGRESSMAN MALONEY

When Corporal Tillman was killed, was it a blow to you when you heard the news?

Though he attempts empathy, Rumsfeld's words ring hollow--

RUMSFELD

Clearly it is a blow when you read of a death of a young man or a young woman who is serving our country in uniform. It is always a heartbreaking thing for anyone in a position of responsibility to read about.

CONGRESSMAN MALONEY

Thank you.

Dannie turns to Patrick and whispers--

DANNIE

That's all she's asking?

CONGRESSMAN SHAYS, 61, fake teeth but a real asshole, delivers his remarks--

CONGRESSMAN SHAYS

Mr. Secretary, I want to thank you for rearranging your schedule to be here today. I want to say that I had chosen not to speak at the beginning of this hearing. I think this whole thing centers around two issues. Who knew what when and who did they tell? And those have been answered pretty quickly. So it's kind of like, you know, let's get on with it. I am hard-pressed to know how this is going to save one American life. I am hard-pressed to know how this is going to help us achieve the results we need in Iraq and Afghanistan. We asked some of our best and brightest to come and spend their time talking about this. And as far as I am concerned gentlemen, you answered every question. And I am particularly grateful, Mr. Rumsfeld, that you called their bluff. Because what they really wanted was for you not to show up. And then they could continue criticizing you.

INT. RAYBURN BUILDING - HEARING ROOM - LATER

The Tillmans remain in their seats as the hearing clears out. Rumsfeld and the generals are gathered around, smiling and slapping each other on the back. Another crisis averted.

In deliberate view of a CAMERA CREW, Congressman Shays offers his hand to Patrick like a used car salesman--

CONGRESSMAN SHAYS
Just wanted to say I'm proud of you.
And America is proud of Pat.

PATRICK
We'd like some privacy, please.

He continues, oblivious or indifferent, to his polite request--

CONGRESSMAN SHAYS
I'm sure it must be difficult losing
your son--

PATRICK
(locking eyes now)
--Get out of here. Right now. Get
away from my family.

Shays' smile fades as he senses the curtain fall on this final act of political theater.

INT. RAYBURN BUILDING - CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER

Chairman Waxman stands before the Tillman family.

KEVIN
My mom spent years piecing together
information for a day like today, and
that was the best you could do?

DANNIE
It seemed like no one thought it was
worth their time.

CHAIRMAN WAXMAN
I assure you that isn't the case,
Mrs. Tillman.

DANNIE
Congressman Shays flat out said so.

DANNIE (cont'd)

(then)

They had every opportunity to put the screws to them, and they weren't prepared to cross-examine. I expected more.

CHAIRMAN WAXMAN

I promise the committee will be better prepared at the next hearing.

(beat)

Should there be one.

Off Dannie realizing there won't be another--

INT./EXT. SUV - MOVING - LATER

A YOUNG MARINE drives the Tillmans in a government-issued Yukon, a somber mood over the family. Kevin puts a hand on Dannie's shoulder, riding shotgun, and whispers--

KEVIN

You did everything you could. Pat would've been proud.

Though Dannie nods, there is disappointment in her eyes.

PAT TILLMAN (V.O.)

Times like this you stop and think, not only how good we have it, but what kind of system we live under. What freedoms we're allowed. And that wasn't built over night. And the flag is a symbol of that.

Dannie stares out the window watching American flags lining the Pentagon vanish over the horizon.

CREDIT SEQUENCE - ARCHIVE FOOTAGE

A documentary interview of Pat Tillman inside the Cardinals clubhouse a day after 9/11.

PAT TILLMAN

My great-grandfather was at Pearl Harbor. A lot of my family has gone and fought in wars, and I really haven't done a damn thing as far as laying myself on the line. So I have a great deal of respect for those who have and what the flag stands for.

CARD #1: From 2004 to 2007, seven investigations were conducted into the death of Pat Tillman.

PAT TILLMAN

You take it for granted. Especially in the country we live in. We are such a free society, and I've always had a great deal of respect for the flag. But even for someone who considers themselves that way, you don't think about what it gives you. You don't think about how great a life we have over here.

Outside University of Phoenix Stadium, fans snap photos in front of a five-hundred pound bronze statue of Pat Tillman.

CARD #2: To date, no one has faced court-martial for their role in the fratricide or the subsequent cover-up.

On the ASU football field, fifteen-foot red balloons spell out "PAT'S RUN." Hundreds of runners, in identical shirts and race bibs, cross the finish line at the 42 yard-line.

CARD #3: In 2005, friends and family started Pat's Run, an annual race to raise money for the Tillman Foundation.

A mosaic images of real Tillman Scholarship recipients pieces together on screen.

CARD #4: The Tillman Foundation has awarded over 450 educational scholarships to soldiers and their spouses.

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END.