DEDICATION

This story is dedicated to all Navy Corpsmen—past, present, and future—who stand in harm’s way and selflessly honor their vow to care for those wounded during combat, either in body or spirit.
AUTHORS’ NOTE

*The Docs* is the story of four Navy Corpsmen deployed to Iraq. While some events in the novel are specific to Operation Iraqi Freedom, this graphic novel is not intended to depict any specific time period or conflict. Rather, it represents a more general view of military life within a combat zone. The intent is to highlight challenges faced by Corpsmen in all wars. The commitment of Corpsmen to meeting these challenges is, like the story itself, timeless.
CONTENTS

Part 1: Saying Goodbye
page 9

Part 2: Settling In
page 33

Part 3: Outside the Wire
page 57

Part 4: The Price of Freedom
page 99
CONTENTS

Part 5: Lives in the Balance
page 135

Part 6: Voices of Support
page 163

Part 7: Returning Home
page 175

Part 8: Epilogue
page 185

Resources
page 199
PART 1

Saying Goodbye
Man, here we go again—back to the sandbox.

Yeah, Groundhog Day.
HM3 Jason Banks
USN, Kilo Company,
Marine Infantry Battalion
Age: 19

DON’T KNOW. COULD TAKE A WHILE. THEY HAVE TO GET ALL THESE GUYS CHECKED IN.

LET ME GRAB ONE OF MY BRIDAL MAGAZINES SO I’LL HAVE SOMETHING TO READ WHILE I WAIT.

YOUR MOTHER SENT YOU ONE OF HER CARE PACKAGES. SHE’S SO SWEET. I DON’T KNOW WHERE SHE FINDS THE ENERGY.

Yeah, she’s great. Always taking care of somebody. I don’t know how she does it, especially now with her chemo going on.

I’m worried. Without Dad, there’s no one back home to help her out while she’s getting her treatments.

I’ll call her as much as I can.

She’ll like that.

You can wait with the other family members over at that open hangar. I think they have some chairs set up. I’ll be there as soon as I can.

OK. See you soon.

How long will you be, Jason?

Don’t know. Could take a while. They have to get all these guys checked in.

Your mother sent you one of her care packages. She’s so sweet. I don’t know where she finds the energy.

Yeah, she’s great. Always taking care of somebody. I don’t know how she does it, especially now with her chemo going on.

I’m worried. Without Dad, there’s no one back home to help her out while she’s getting her treatments.

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You can wait with the other family members over at that open hangar. I think they have some chairs set up. I’ll be there as soon as I can.

OK. See you soon.
...MAN, DO NOT BRING UP THE DAMNED SCORPIONS AGAIN. I HATE THOSE THINGS!

DUDER, YOU'RE A U.S. MARINE. YOU CAN'T BE AFRAID OF A LITTLE BUG.

HEY, BRING ON THE INSURGENTS, BUT KEEP THE SCORPIONS AWAY. THEY'RE NASTY! WAIT TILL YOU FIND ONE IN YOUR BOOT.

HEY, DOC, YOU NEW AROUND HERE?

YEAH, NAME IS BANKS.

I'M EVERETT, JOHN EVERETT. FIRST TRIP TO THE DESERT, DOC?

YEP.

DON'T LET THOSE GUYS WORRY YOU. IT'S NOT SO BAD. BESIDES, YOU TAKE GOOD CARE OF US AND WE'LL TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOU.

SO, DOG, WHERE YOU FROM?

MISSISSIPPI.

I KNEW IT! I'M FROM ALABAMA.

SO, WHY THE NAVY? WHY NOT THE MARINE CORPS?

WHAT, DOC, DID YOU WANT TO WEAR THE CRACKER JACKS?

SO, WHY THE NAVY THEN?

MY GRANDFATHER WAS A CORPSMAN WITH A MARINE UNIT IN KOREA. WANTED TO SERVE MY COUNTRY AND BE A SAILOR LIKE HE WAS.

WELL, DOC, YOU'RE GETTING YOUR CHANCE. JUST DO WHATEVER WE DO, ALWAYS, AND KEEP YOUR HEAD ON A SWIVEL.
Sorry for the wait, Amanda.

Stay safe and come home soon.

Don’t worry. I’ll be fine. You worry about getting this wedding planned. I’ll be ready to go when I get back. I’ve got to get on the bus now. I’ll be in touch as soon as I can.

I love you.

I love you, too.
CHARLIE COMPANY, LINE UP! THESE SEA BAGS NEED TO BE ON THE TRUCKS YESTERDAY.

DANG, DOC. WE GOING TOO SLOW FOR YOU?

LAST ONE. DAMN, DOC. IT DOESN'T EVEN LOOK LIKE YOU WORKED UP A SWEAT.

THAT'S CAUSE DAWG HERE'S A BEAST!

DAWG?!
Holy shit! Darrell?! What are you doing here?
Shipping out, just like you!
What?!
Charlie Company, baby.

Man, I haven’t seen you in forever. No one has called me ‘Dawg’ in a long time.

Hey man, it was this or end up in a gang. Couldn’t do that to Lisa. What about you, you crazy squid?

Who you callin’ squid, jarhead? You mean you and Lisa got married?

Yup, right after high school. It’s been great, actually. We had a baby three months ago.

Come on over here. You've got to see my boy and say hello to Lisa. She won't believe it.

Hi, Lisa.

Lisa, look who I ran into.

Oh my god! Derek?

I don't know, man, he's so little.

Dawg, if you can take care of a whole company of Marines, you can hold a baby.

Yeah, Derek, it's fine.
Yeah, you know how my parents are. Pops would have come but Mom couldn't take it. So he stayed home with her. I'll leave you all alone. See you on the bus.

What's his name?

Darrell Jr. Heck, I wanted to name him after you but Lisa wouldn't go for the name 'DAWG'.

You here by yourself?

Charlie Company. Load up!

Save me a seat!
Yeah, good as I can be, man. Think how big he’ll be when I get back.

You OK?

Yeah, good as I can be, man. Think how big he’ll be when I get back.

I know, Darrell. But you’ll have access to the net over there. Lisa can send you pictures. Maybe she could even set up a webcam.

No way. Lisa can email and stuff but she doesn’t know that much about computers.

Hey, a friend of mine back on base is in I.T. He’s a computer wiz. I’ll get him to hook you up, he could do it easy.

Thanks. You’re the man, Dawg.
OK, that's it. Any questions?

Hm2, who's Miller?

He's a friend, a doc in Echo Company.

Yes, sir. I was wondering if you have any update on Petty Officer Miller's condition?

He's en route from Germany. I know that a lot of you know Miller and are worried about him. I've asked for an update and will let you know as soon as I hear something from Bethesda.

If there's nothing else, we're done here, so go home. See you all at 2100.
What happened? Damn, sorry.

RPG hit close to their barracks. Miller took some shrapnel to the neck. He’s alive but that’s all we know.

Damn, sorry.

He’ll make it.

Master Chief, check and see if there are any updates on Miller.

Wilco, sir. Good to get them news as soon as we have it, so their heads can get back in the game.

You think that Mendez is ok?

She’ll be fine. She’s solid. Just hits a little closer to home for her.

How so?

She and Miller went through school together. Plus, Mendez took shrapnel from an RPG herself during her first pump.
RUMBLE

MENDEZ IS HIT!

BUZZZZZ

LEAVING MTG NOW. HEADING HOME.

SEE YOU AT THE BEACH?

CHANGE FIRST, BE THERE IN 10.
Thanks for taking the day off today.

What do you expect? Our last run on the beach together for seven months.

How far do you want to go today?

Let's go long. At least 10. Want to burn off some of this stress.

So, how's the shoulder feeling?

Still stiff. Hurts a little but the orthopod says that it will take quite a while for that to go away.

Do me a favor would you? Keep your head down this time.

Yes, Sergeant.
I’m worried about you, once you get there.

Why?

The stress. It’s happening already. The closer you get to leaving, the less you sleep.

What do you mean? I sleep fine.

No, you don’t, Erica. Every time you’ve stayed at my place since you were told you were deploying, you’ve been up at 0200.

How’d you know that?

You really think I don’t notice when you try to tiptoe out of the room?

I’m OK. Bad dreams, that’s all.

See, that’s exactly what I’m talking about. It took you over a year to get past them when you came back last time. Now they’re back again.

Last time was different. I’m fine, really. Come on, let’s go. Gonna be dark soon.

You can’t just take care of your Marines over there. You’ve got to look out for yourself, too.

I will, I promise. You don’t need to worry, I’ll be fine.
Naval Mobile Construction Battalion, Naval Air Station, Florida
Mission: Support Construction Projects in Central Iraq
Hey, Doc. Are the records and supplies all set?

Yes, sir. Almost squared away.

Excellent. What about you? Are you ready to go back?

Well, for what it's worth, I'm grateful to have you with us. With so many guys getting out after we came back the last time, I can really use your experience.

Actually, that's exactly why I did stay...family. It may sound funny, but you guys, my 'bees, are my family, too.

If you don't mind me asking, why'd you re-up? After the mortar attack on our battalion during the last deployment...8 dead and 40 casualties...a family man like you could've said 'enough is enough' and walked away. But you didn't. Why not?

Well, like I said, I'm glad that you did. Now, finish up so you can get out of here and spend some time at home. I'll see you in the morning.

Oh, and John, say hello to Lindsay for me.
Later...

Hi, honey. Just wanted to let you know I dropped by the store real quick to check on things one last time... then I'll be right home.

Ok... see you about 6:00. The kids can't wait for you to get here. They have a little surprise for you.

GREAT! LOVE YOU. SEE YOU IN A LITTLE WHILE.

Hey, Tom, how's the inventory coming along? You get it finished up?

I'm glad you came by. I'm not sure the numbers are working out.

Let me have a look. I can't head off to the other side of the world without this being straight.

Let's get busy, Lindsay and the kids are waiting for me at home.
Hi, honey.
I'm on my...

Sorry, I got caught up at the store. The inventory was all screwed up...

Where the hell are you?

CLICK
I'm sorry, honey. I lost track of time.

You lost track of time?! What do you mean, 'you lost track of time'? John... how could you do that? It's your last night before you leave for Iraq!

I don't know, Lindsay. I didn't mean to... I was trying to get the inventory straightened out.

You could have let Tom handle that.

Tom? Come on... you've got to be kidding. I tried. He's a hard worker but we only hired him a few months ago and it's slow going.
Lindsay, I told you I’m sorry. I was just trying to make sure that the store is OK while I’m gone.

Well, you should have thought of that earlier. You’ve missed the kids. They’re already asleep. They spent the whole day making those signs and baking you a cake.

That’s enough! You’ve made your point! I can’t believe that you’re giving me grief about this. It’s your father’s store.

Look, I loved my EMT job but gave that up so we could run the store for your father when he retired.

What? You’ve never said anything about being unhappy running the store.

I’m not saying that I’m not happy. Just that I gave up something to take it over. And now that we did, I have to make sure that it’s done right. That’s all I was doing tonight, making sure that things are done right.
That’s just great. Why don’t you tell that to our kids? Oh, that’s right, you can’t. They went to bed already... without seeing their dad the night before he heads off to a warzone.

That’s right, Lindsay; I’m the one heading off to a warzone. Doesn’t that count for something?!

Of course it does... but do you think that you’re the only one that’s affected? Do you know how many birthdays, school plays and recitals you’ll miss? Not to mention the bad dreams, the doctor appointments... homework?

You have no idea how much I’ll miss those things.

I need to get some air. I’m going to walk the dog.
Well, Charlie...I really messed this one up, huh? Not the way I expected my last night at home to go. You mad at me, too?

I’m sorry.

I love you, too. Come in. You’ll have time to talk to the kids in the morning.

Me too. I love you.
PART 2

Settling In
Marine Infantry Battalion, FOB, Western Iraq

Oh yeah. Home sweet home.

Doesn’t look so sweet to me.
EVERETT, I FIGURED YOU FOR AN ALABAMA FAN FOR SURE.

NO WAY, I’VE BEEN AN AUBURN FAN AS LONG AS I CAN remember. DRIVES MY DAD NUTS. HE GRADUATED FROM ALABAMA. THAT’S ALL I EVER HEAR, CRIMSON TIDE, CRIMSON TIDE...

MUST MAKE IT INTERESTING AROUND YOUR HOUSE DURING IRON BOWL WEEKEND.

OH YEAH, DAD CAN’T STAND IT THAT AUBURN’S WON IT SO MANY TIMES LATELY. WHAT ABOUT YOU, BANKS? WHAT’S YOUR TEAM?

MISSISSIPPI STATE BULLDOGS, BABY!

YOUR DAD A BULLDOGS FAN, TOO?

OH YEAH, HE WAS THE BIGGEST.

THAT’S HOW I STARTED LIKING THEM. MY DAD HAD BULLDOGS STUFF ALL OVER THE HOUSE. HE AND MOM HAD SEASON TICKETS FOR FOOTBALL AND DIDN’T MISS A GAME FOR ABOUT 10 YEARS IN A ROW.

...UNTIL LAST FALL WHEN HE PASSED AWAY.

DAMN, SORRY.

IT’S OK. BUT I’D RATHER NOT TALK ABOUT IT.

COME ON, I’M GETTING HUNGRY, LET’S HEAD OVER TO CHOW.
Damn, you’re killing me.

When we get back, you can come with me to visit my mom and have Sunday dinner with us.

Deal. If I don’t starve to death over here first!

I tell you what, I wish my mom were here to cook me some decent food.

What I wouldn’t give for my mom’s pork chops and fried potatoes!

My mom’s Sunday dinner, that’s what I miss. Baked ham, butter beans, mashed potatoes, and gravy, homemade pecan pie.

I tell you what, I wish my mom were here to cook me some decent food.

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Deal. If I don’t starve to death over here first!
DAMN, DAWG, YOU BEAST. DO YOU HAVE EVERY WEIGHT IN THE ROOM ON THAT BAR? THAT’S LIKE 450 POUNDS.

NAH, JUST 405.
Yeah, Darrell, feels like old times. So, how are things back home? You heard from Lisa? How’s Darrell Jr?

Yeah, I got a letter from her today. It’s only been three weeks since I left and he can sit up by himself already.

The thing is that I’m missing it all. Hell, he’ll probably be walking before I get back.

Yeah, Darrell, feels like old times. So, how are things back home? You heard from Lisa? How’s Darrell Jr?

That’s not the half of it. Lisa took a pregnancy test. Looks like I’m going to be a dad again.

No kidding?! Yeah, that’s awesome! Congratulations!

I don’t know, Dawg. To tell you the truth, it scares the shit out of me. Hell, having one kid scared the shit out of me, but now two?
Hey, Darrell,
speaking of my
parents, I’ve been
thinking. Would you
hold my letter
for me?

Sure, Derrek.

Well, like
I said, I think it’s
awesome, what could be
better than being a dad? I
can’t wait to be one some
day. Gonna be just
like my dad.

Yeah, Dawg,
your pops is
the man.

Do you know
that through all four
years of high school, he
never missed a football
game? If I was playing, he
was there. Even if he had to
work the midnight shift
to make up for it.

And your
mom sat in
the car in the
parking lot
’cause she was
too nervous
to watch!

Your old man
was in the Navy,
wasn’t he? He was
a corpsman in ‘Nam, right?

Yeah, two tours.
I guess that’s why I
signed up. He didn’t talk
about it very often but
I guess it sunk in.

To this day, he
still eyes the exits
every time he sits down
in a restaurant. Funny
thing is, he thinks that
I don’t notice.

Hey, Darrell,
speaking of my
parents, I’ve been
thinking. Would you
hold my letter
for me?
Ahh, another day in paradise. Oh, yeah.

What a dump. Everything is brown.

Hey, Mendez, brings back a few memories, huh?

Oh, yeah. Was it this hot the last time?
Morning, Master Chief.

Good morning. Go grab a seat. The brief with Lt Williams will start in a few minutes.

Morning, Master Chief.

Good morning. Go grab a seat. The brief with Lt Williams will start in a few minutes.

Listen up, everyone. Before Lt Williams gets started, I want to let you know that we just got word from Bethesda. Petty Officer Miller's going to be okay. He's being moved to Navy Medical Center San Diego and is expected to make a full recovery.

Yeah!

Sir, I'll go.

First, we've got a lot of unpacking to do here at the B.A.S. I want everyone back here at 1300 to get started. Any questions?

Tomorrow there's a convoy heading to Baghdad. Grunts need another doc. Do I have a volunteer?

OK, Mendez. Stop by my office afterwards and we can go over details.
Thanks for volunteering, Petty Officer Mendez. I know what happened on your last deployment and I want to check in with you, make sure you’re good to go for this.

I feel good, sir. Getting hit last time was bad luck, completely random. I can’t worry about it. Going back outside the wire is a part of my job. I’m fine.

Good to go, just wanted to be sure.

There’s a second doc coming from Charlie Company. HN Derek Jackson, supposed to be solid but is very green. You’re going to have to keep an eye on him.

Understood, Master Chief. I’ll catch up with him before the convoy rolls. Make sure he’s squared away.

There’s a second doc coming from Charlie Company. HN Derek Jackson, supposed to be solid but is very green. You’re going to have to keep an eye on him.

Understood, Master Chief. I’ll catch up with him before the convoy rolls. Make sure he’s squared away.

Actually, sir, I’d prefer to go help out. Better to keep busy.

Fair enough. Report to the staging area, 0400.

Yes, sir.

Take some time this afternoon. The others can handle unpacking.

Yes, sir.
Well, gentlemen, this is home for the foreseeable future.
WALLACE—Lingering Memories

SEABEES! GET YOUR GEAR STASHED AND MUSTER OUT HERE IN TEN MINUTES.

WILCO, SERGEANT. LET’S GO, ‘BEES. YOU HEARD HIM.

Yeah... Man, it’s just like it was yesterday.

GREAT TO BE BACK, HUH, WALLACE?
Several years ago...  

INCOMING!
HIT THE DECK!

WALLACE, THE MESS HALL TOOK A DIRECT HIT!

I’VE GOT TO GET OVER THERE NOW!
OH MY GOD.

CORPSMAN UP!

SOMEBODY HELP ME!

WHERE THE F--- IS THE DOC?

AGGHHH...

SHIT! I'M HIT!
CORPSMAN UP!

FLETCHER! SHIT, WALLACE, YOU’VE GOT TO HELP FLETCHER!

HE’S GONE.
Hey Wallace! You OK, man?

What?

Yeah, I’m OK. Just thinking about our last deployment. No problem.

Don’t leave me, Doc...

Get word to the surgical company. We’re inbound with 3... one most likely urgent surgical. Is the ambulance out front?

Yep, it’s right here.

There were so many...

So many I couldn’t save...

I felt so f---ing helpless.

Damn, I really thought that I had put all that behind me and one convoy brings it all back like it was yesterday.

Wallace. Wallace! Hey Wallace! You OK, man?
Hey, Wallace, they should have us working on the elevators, not the turbine. There must be a thousand stairs.

Maybe, but I don’t think I’ll ever get used to this smell. It’s like a million rotten eggs.

Nah, that was only about 300. You’ll get used to it.
The next day...

Oh, for Pete’s sake. Did you get a splinter in your finger, little fella?

Oh! Shit! Cut my damned finger. Hey, Doc, you got a band-aid?

No, man, it really hurts.

You’ve gotta be kidding me, Adkins.

Oww! Shit! Cut my damned finger. Hey, Doc, you got a band-aid?

No, man, it really hurts.

You’ve gotta be kidding me, Adkins.

Thanks, Doc.

You were very brave, but I’m not kissing your boo boo for you, too.
Later...

WHAT’S UP WITH THIS HEAT? EVERYBODY TOLD ME IT WOULD BE COOLER UP HERE. I’M NOT FEELIN’ IT!

NO SHIT! I THINK THIS COUNTRY GETS HOTTER EVERY TIME I COME BACK.

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU BEEN OVER HERE?

THIS IS MY THIRD TOUR, SECOND FOR BROWN AND ISAAC.

HOW OLD ARE YOU?

22

20

20

SHIT. MY SON’S ALMOST AS OLD AS YOU GUYS. HE’S GONNA BE 18 IN A FEW MONTHS.

DAMN, GRAMPS! HOW OLD ARE YOU?

36

SAD THING IS, ADKINS IS THE YOUNGEST OF THE THREE OF US. I’M 38 AND FREEDMAN TURNS 40 NEXT MONTH.

OOH-RAH. DUDE, ARE DEPENDS STANDARD ISSUE IN THE SEABEES?
A little downtime...

Time to call it or we’ll miss chow. Next basket wins.

Don’t even think about bringing that junk in here, Wallace.

What are you going to do? You play defense like my grandma.

We’ll see about that! Bring it then.
What? Crap!

I told you not to bring that stuff into my house!

Right.

Doc, I gotta meet your grandma. She must have serious game.

Yeah, yeah, yeah.
PART 3

Outside the Wire
BANKS—On Patrol

So, I’m set up on the fourth floor, watching the intersection, and I see this a--hole turkey peeking around the corner of the building. I have the crosshairs right on his forehead and I’m getting ready to lay him down. But, right as I squeeze off the round, damned if he doesn’t drop his f---ing AK and bend down to pick it up. The round grazes the top of his head. I actually saw his hair fly up!

Dude, he must have pissed his pants!

Oh hell yeah! He f---ing freaked. I’ve never seen anyone move so fast in my life! Son of a bitch was out of sight before I could chamber another round.

That’s one lucky f---er!
WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED?

LOOKS LIKE AN IED.
CORPSMAN UP!

IT’S CLEAR, DOC. GET IN THERE!

WILCO, CORPORAL!

STAY STILL, PEARCE. GOT TO GET THIS BLEEDING STOPPED.

DOC, DON’T LET ME LOSE MY LEG! YOU CAN’T LET ME LOSE MY LEG! PLEASE!

TRY TO STAY CALM. WE’RE GONNA GET YOU OUT OF HERE AS SOON AS WE CAN. HELO’S ON THE WAY.
You’re gonna be OK, rice.

Your ankle’s broken, Drake. Not too bad.

Don’t worry about me, Doc. I heard you talking to Pearce. He gonna be alright?

His leg’s pretty bad. He’s stable, but we gotta get him outta here. Helo’s inbound.
The next day at the FOB...

ALRIGHT, EVERETT. YOU'RE GOOD TO GO. IT WAS A PRETTY NASTY BLISTER SO YOU NEED TO KEEP THE BANDAGE CLEAN...DON'T WANT TO LET IT GET INFECTED.

MAN, I'M EXHAUSTED...FEELS LIKE HALF THE BATTALION CAME THROUGH HERE TODAY...ALL OF 'EM WITH THE SAME NASTY CRUD THAT'S GOING AROUND.

CLINIC DUTY MUST SEEM PRETTY DULL COMPARED TO THE SHIT YOU DEALT WITH YESTERDAY. THAT WAS GREAT WORK.

THANKS, MAN. BUT I FEEL REALLY BAD ABOUT PEARCE’S LEG. GOT HIM STABILIZED BUT NO WAY HE'S KEEPING IT. WAY TOO MUCH DAMAGE.

HEY, DOC. DON'T CARRY THAT AROUND WITH YOU. YOU DID ALL YOU CAN DO. AT LEAST HE’S ALIVE, THANKS TO YOU. HE’LL FIGURE OUT HOW TO DEAL WITH IT.

A BUDDY OF MINE LOST BOTH LEGS AND AN ARM TO AN IED A WHILE BACK.

DAMN.

ACTUALLY, HE’S DOING ALRIGHT. HE’S AN INSTRUCTOR AT SOI. HELL, HE EVEN RUNS 5KS WITH HIS BIONIC LEGS.

IT’S ALMOST 1900, WE NEED TO HUMP IT OVER IF WE’RE GOING TO MAKE MAIL CALL.
Hey, Everett!

Who’s it from, your momma?

Nah, Spears, actually it’s from your momma.

Spears, dude, you just got served.

Lewis, Bruce... Jones, Tommy... Everett, John...

Hey, Everett! Who’s it from, your momma?

Cool. Mine... is... actually is from my mom. She’s telling me all about my great aunt’s gallbladder operation. I mean all about it.

Banks, Jason...

Sweet!

It’s from Amanda. My fiance, we got engaged right before I shipped out.

So, how are things with your fiance?

Cool. Mine actually is from my mom. She’s telling me all about my great aunt’s gallbladder operation. I mean all about it.

She’s good. A little lonely but handling things pretty well. She’s even picked out her bridesmaid dresses and the tuxes.
Hey, aren’t you supposed to pick out the tuxes?

Hell, it doesn’t matter to me as long as it makes her happy.

Dude, enjoy it now while you can. Wait till you get married. That’s when the shit starts.

Spears, I’m sorry man. You want to talk to someone about it?

I need to keep an eye on him and check back in a few days to see how he’s doing.

Sure, I’m gonna wait ’til I get back to my rack to finish this.

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Man, my wife’s lost her mind back home. She’s burning up the credit cards! She’s spending like a sailor on shore leave.

No offense, doc.

Out partying with her friends every night, leaving the kids with my mom.

It’s bullshit!

She got a f---ing DUI the other night and is gonna lose her driver’s license for sure. Then she won’t even be able to drive. How are my kids going to get to school?

Well, if you change your mind, let me know. Don’t let it build up.

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Dude, enjoy it now while you can. Wait till you get married. That’s when the shit starts.

Spears, I’m sorry man. You want to talk to someone about it?

I need to keep an eye on him and check back in a few days to see how he’s doing.

Sure, I’m gonna wait ’til I get back to my rack to finish this.

Hey, aren’t you supposed to pick out the tuxes?

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I need to keep an eye on him and check back in a few days to see how he’s doing.

Sure, I’m gonna wait ’til I get back to my rack to finish this.
Later...

Dear Grandma,

I can't believe that you're only 65. I love you and miss you more each day. I'm so glad you're still with us. I hope that you're well, just as you always are. By now, I'm sure that you're in the valley and that Pops is up there.

I want to hear how things are on the farm. I know that you're doing your best, and I know that you're happy. You're always happy. You're always doing your best.

With all the things that you're going through, I'm happy that you're able to take care of all the things that you need to do.

I wish you the best, and I wish you a happy life. I wish you a happy life.

With love,

Grandpa Jack.

Sometimes I don't know how you did it.
So, you good?

Yeah, guess so. Little edgy, but I'm OK. I must have reviewed things in my head a thousand times. Think we'll see any bad shit?

Hi, I’m Mendez. Erica Mendez. I’ll be on this convoy with you.

Good to meet you, HM2. What can I do for you?

Lt Williams asked me to check in to make sure that you’re good to go.

Checking up on the new guy, huh?

Yeah, guess so.

Hey, I understand. I’d be checking up on me, too.

Are you HN Jackson? That’s me.

Good to go?

So, you good?

Yeah, guess so. Little edgy, but I’m OK. I must have reviewed things in my head a thousand times. Think we’ll see any bad shit?

Maybe. Don’t worry. Trust your training and your instincts and you’ll do fine. But, most important—listen to your Marines. They know the drill.

Roger.
CONVOY
MOVE OUT!
Later...

Heads up, Thomas. Abandoned vehicle on your 2. Steer clear.

Wilco, Sergeant.
F---!! What was that?
Sgt Long’s Humvee’s hit. It’s on fire!

Alright, Marines, you’re cleared hot. Dismount and secure the area now! Move!
WHAT'S UP OUT THERE? WHERE AND HOW MANY?

LOOKS LIKE ABOUT 10 OF 'EM AT 6 O'CLOCK. SMALL ARMS ONLY.

WAX 'EM!

ROGER.
SHIT! I WANT THEM SUPPRESSED AND I WANT IT DONE NOW. WE’VE GOT WOUNDED BACK THERE. MENDEZ! WAIT FOR MY SIGNAL.

CORPSMAN UP!

WILCO.

YEAH, THAT’S RIGHT!!! RUN, YOU CHICKENSHTS!
GO, MENDEZ!

CORPSMAN UP!

JACKSON, I’VE GOT THIS ONE. GO CHECK ON THE OTHERS! START WITH THE THIGH WOUND -- RIGHT THERE!

WILCO.
SHIT! STAY WITH ME, CORPORAL!

JACKSON, HOW ARE YOU DOING??!!

I'VE GOT IT! DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME!

CORPORAL, YOU WILL NOT DIE ON ME. DO YOU UNDERSTAND?!

>GASP!<

>GHEEZE...<
Lost the pulse! How long till the MEDEVAC gets here?

Jackson, you OK?

Affirmative. Under control.

Helo's inbound in two mikes.

Dammit, I told you corporal, you are not f---ing dying on me. Not today. Do you understand me?

About ten mikes out.
Damn, am I glad to see you guys. He’s alive, but his pulse is thready. He has a Gucking chest wound with Shrapnel under his left arm.
Well done, Jackson. You can be proud of yourself.

Thanks. Now if I can just get my damned hands to quit shaking. They were fine while everything was going on, but now...

Can’t get them to stop.

I know what you mean. Mine do the same thing.
I'm looking for two volunteers. You'll be escorted by a couple of squads of Marines. Wallace, you'll need to go along as well. Any takers?

OK, listen up. We just received a mission from HQ. 50 clicks to the north, a bridge along a main supply route is starting to become unstable. Master Chief's taking a team up there to check it out and report back to HQ so they can develop a repair plan.

Wow, you guys must be sick of sitting at this dam.

OK, Martin and Webster, you've got it. Stay behind after the briefing and I'll give you the details. You, too, Wallace.
The next day 0730...

Phoenix Actual, this is Phoenix Victor One. Patrol of friendlies turned off the MSR and the lead vehicle hit a mine. Two wounded personnel down inside the minefield. EOD is on site. Over.

Phoenix Victor One, this is Phoenix Actual...see if Wallace can help them out. Over.
We’ve got two Marines down in what looks like a hot minefield. They won’t let me go in until EOD clears a path.

Hello, I’m HM1 Wallace. What’s the situation?

Good to meet you, HM1. I’m Banks, HM3 Banks.

Sure. You didn’t think I was going to let you have all the fun of walking out into a minefield, did you?

Thanks. I can use the extra hands out there. When we get there, mind if I take the one on the right—Dawkins, and you take the leg wound—Fleming?

What about the second guy?

How bad are they?

Have a look. The one on the left, Fleming, looks like he has shrapnel wounds to his right thigh. Significant bleeding, but I don’t think it’s life threatening assuming we can get out there soon.

The big guy’s Dawkins. I’m more worried about him. I see that he’s breathing but he hasn’t moved much since the explosion.

I agree. We need to get to him soon.

We?

We?”
OK, DOCS... LISTEN CAREFULLY. WHATEVER YOU DO, FOLLOW EXACTLY WHERE I GO. YOU STEP WHERE I STEP AND NOWHERE ELSE. DO THAT, AND EVERYTHING’LL BE FINE. GOT IT?

ROGER THAT. I’VE GOT TO TAKE THIS STRETCHER. WHEN WE GET THERE, CAN YOU FIND ME A CLEAR SPOT TO SET IT UP?

NO PROBLEM.

OK, BANKS. IT’S CLEAR WITHIN 5 FEET ALL AROUND. YOU CAN PUT THE STRETCHER ON ANY SIDE. BUT DON’T GO OUTSIDE OF THAT.

FOLLOW ME, WALLACE.

OK... I’M GOOD HERE.
Wallace, You're clear in a 5-foot radius but stay close. I'll lead you out when you're ready. Doc, help me. Oh god, doc. It hurts. Please.

What??!! I gotta get out of here!

Fleming, right? Look at me... Right here... Look at me... Stay still... I'm giving you something for the pain. It won't take long to start working.

OK, doc.

Wow, doc. It's starting to work already.

Good. I've got to get the bleeding stopped some so I can get you out of here. The MEDEVAC is on the way.
Damn! Stay put, Fleming.

Hang on, Banks! I'm coming!

Gotta get out of here now!

Gotta get out of here!

Fleming, you should be fine... but don't plan on dancing for a while.

Thanks, Doc.

Gotta get out of here now!

Gotta get out of here!

No, Doc! Wait! Let me clear the way!

Dawkins, it's me, Banks! Lay back down! You're gonna get us both blown up!
Gotta get him strapped down. Help!

Outta here! Got to get out of here!

Calm down. It's OK. Just lie down and we'll get you out of here.
I’ll get an IV started here while you check out Dawkins for TBI.

Yeah, looks like he got his bell rung pretty good.

OK, marine. Can you tell me your name?

Huh? ...Um...Dawkins...Terrence Dawkins.

Can you tell me what happened?

No clue, Doc.

Alright, tell me what you remember.

Riding in convoy...headed to...???...Darn, doc, that’s about it...riding in the convoy...don’t even remember where we were headed.

It’s OK.

I’ll tell you one thing, Doc. You’re one crazy mother. You could have gotten your ass blown up.

It’s not my ass I was worried about.
Hey, HMI Wallace. Just curious...why'd you do it? Weren't you afraid you'd hit a mine?

Banks... to tell you the truth, I never even thought about it...didn't have time.

Well, whatever the reason...I'm glad you guys happened by...thanks.

No problem. See you around.

Mount up!
Hey, you hear the good news? Fleming's leg's looking good... he'll be back to the unit in a week or two.

Awesome. That should make him happy.

How so?

He's always said that if he got hit, he wouldn't wanna be sent home. Would wanna stay here with us... finish the tour.

I'm the same way. It may sound strange, but if I was going home, I'd feel like I was abandoning all the guys in the unit.

Man, I thought I was the only one who felt that way.

What do you mean?

My mom's cancer. Every time I hear that she's doing OK, I'm relieved, not just because she's not getting worse, but also because I don't have to leave you guys.
Messed up, isn’t it?

Yeah, you’d think that I’d do anything to get out of here and back to my family... but it just wouldn’t be right.

Yeah, I guess...

But I still worry about her. Somebody needs to take care of her and my brother just isn’t good at that stuff.

But, hey, that’s enough about me.

Her markers are good. But I don’t think she’s giving herself the attention she needs.

Ever since I got my deployment notice, she’s focused on that. Where am I? Am I OK? How long until I come home? It’s like it’s her way of coping with it all.

Maybe it helps her by keeping her mind off the chemo.

Yeah, I guess... but I still worry about her. Somebody needs to take care of her and my brother just isn’t good at that stuff.

But, hey, that’s enough about me.

Yeah, you’d think that I’d do anything to get out of here and back to my family... but it just wouldn’t be right.

Hey, what about Dawkins? How bad was his head injury?

He’s stable but it’s still pretty serious. He’s on his way to Germany...

Oh, yeah, I forgot. You don’t like to talk about it.

Well, sometimes it isn’t bad, I guess.

No shit.
OK, Marines, dismount. The buildings we have to clear are dead ahead. Stay focused! Like you heard in the briefing, this is a very hot area.

SHIT!

AMBUSH! TAKE COVER!
Small arms fire coming from third floor windows. Timmons, put some heat on the third floor windows -- 1 o’clock!

Wilco, Sergeant!

RPG!! Second floor balcony -- 10 o’clock!

Incoming!!!

Get down, Doc!
Holy shit, Doc! That was close!

Timmons, get more suppressing fire up there now!

Cpl Everett! Take Spears and Banks and secure our left flank.

Winters! You, Lewis and Peterson cover the right! We don’t want these bastards flanking us.
OK, boys, stay frosty. No surprises, OK?

ROGER THAT.

Cpl Everett, listen... it's quiet back toward the convoy. Must be over. Let's head back. Nobody's coming this way.

NEGATIVE, Spears. Not yet.

SHHHH. What's that?
Hey, Doc! Banks! You in there?!

Roger.

Alright. There's Spears. He's signaling us back to the convoy. Let's go.
Later, back at the FOB...

I guess so. It’s just... you know.

I don’t know, John... it’s just I never shot anyone before. I mean, I knew that it was probably gonna happen, but, man... I don’t know.

Hey, Jason. You OK? You haven’t really said a word since everything hit the fan.

Hey, don’t let it get to you. You did what you had to do, nothing more.

Dear Amanda,
I don’t really know how to begin to tell you what happened today.
PART 4

The Price of Freedom
We’re heading into Haifa for a cordon and knock. Oscar Mike at 0600 so I want everybody in full battle rattle and ready to roll by 0530.

Kickin’ down doors in Haifa, ooh-rah!!

Shit! Not Haifa! I hate going in there. I don’t want to get my ass shot off in Haifa!

Come on, Winters, embrace the suck.
WELCOME TO PURPLE HEART BOULEVARD.

Alright, Marines, dismount. We’ve got 6 houses to clear in this block. Stay sharp.

No answer. Break it in.

Roger, Corporal.

Damn, that’s a hell of an arsenal. Radio it in.

Banks, come with me. Let’s check upstairs.
DOC, YOUR 6!

HOLD ON, DOC!
Thanks, man.

Brownbag Two One, this is Brownbag Two One Actual. Be advised, we have one hostile down on the second floor. Repeat, one hostile down on the second floor.

No problem, doc, you ok?

I'll call it in.

Brownbag Two One, this is Brownbag Two One Actual. Be advised, we have one hostile down on the second floor. Repeat, one hostile down on the second floor.
Later, back at the FOB...

...then the door blasts open and he's right behind Doc...ready to pull the trigger.

I'm like, oh hell no...this is not good. But then, Doc pulls some serious ninja shit. He grabs the dude's arm and yanks him down, and they end up on the floor wrestling for the weapon.

Ooh-rah, Doc.

That dude's lucky I ended it quick. Doc was getting ready to go medieval on him.

You must have thought that you were wrestling one of those alligators back in Mississippi, Doc!

Yeah, right...

No way I was letting that arm go...
WHO YOU KIDDING, HUGHES? NO WAY AN UGLY MOTHER F---ER LIKE YOU HAS A WIFE WHO LOOKS LIKE THAT!

Hughes, Jackson, Eyes Left! Angry Crowd Ahead. Jenkins -- Stay Alert on That .50.

OH, THAT'S COLD!! COME ON, JACKSON, YOU GONNA LET HIM TALK TO ME THAT WAY?

HUGHES, JACKSON, EYES LEFT!! ANGRY CROWD AHEAD. JENKINS -- STAY ALERT ON THAT .50.

IN THE GREEN AT 10 O'CLOCK.

WHAT'S IN HIS HAND?!! WATCH HIM, JENKINS!

WILCO, CORPORAL!
Man, could be an IED!

Jenkins! He’s gonna throw it! Take him out!

Just a bag, corporal.
Jenkings! Do it! You know the ROE. Man, you're gonna get us killed!

It's just a bag! They're just kids!

The rules of engagement are clear. Take him out. Now!
Hughes, take over the .50. Jenkins, get down out of there!

Told you, just a bag.

Ha! Ha!
Later, back at the FOB...

Man, I'm starved. Let's go to chow. Might as well, it'll be MRE's for weeks again soon.

Good idea.

Where's Jenkins?

He's just been sitting on his bunk since Gunny ripped him a new one.

Man, that was three hours ago!

Dawg, he shoulda known better. He knows the rules. Could have gotten us all killed.

You guys go ahead. I'll catch up. I'm going to check on Jenkins.

Man, I'm starved. Let's go to chow. Might as well, it'll be MRE's for weeks again soon.
OK, REMEMBER THE SEVEN C’S.

CHECK: "IS MY SHIPMATE OK?"

COORDINATE: IF NOT OK, GET HELP

COVER: GET SAFE

CALM DOWN: CONTROL BREATHING, HR, GET SLEEP

CONNECT: WITH OTHERS

COMPETENCE: RESTORE EFFIC-

CONFIDENCE: RESTORE SELF-ESTEEM

OK, remember the seven C’s. Was just a bag. Nothing in it. Just a bag.

Jenkin, you ok, man?
Jenkins, that was a bad situation today. I know you're having a tough time with it. To be honest, man, anyone would be, in your shoes.

I'll be alright. Just trying to get my head straight.

OK...
To tell you the truth, Doc, I don't know what to think.

I disobeyed a direct order and could've gotten a lot of guys killed. Gunny is pissed. So are the guys in the unit.

I don't know what happened out there...

Ok, he's not in immediate physical danger.

We're not in the field so check, cover and calm don't really apply any more.

I'm connecting with him right now...just have to decide whether to coordinate.

I can keep my eyes on him, help him work on the last two C's...

Jenkins?
Hey, man, I wonder if maybe you might want to talk to someone besides me?

Like who?

The Battalion Oscar psychologist.

A shrink?

I don’t need a shrink, Doc. I’m not crazy.

Don’t think about it like that. He’s just someone to talk to. It’s complicated stuff. You don’t have to figure it all out on your own. He deals with this kind of stuff all the time. I think he can help.
I don't know, Doc. I just feel all f---ed up.

Just give it a shot. I'm always here, too.

OK, doc. If you say so.

Yeah, he's cool. And he's out here with us. He knows what we're doing out here.

Later, Jenkins.

Later, doc.

OK, confidence. We're getting there.
Welcome back to Haifa.

By the time I got it working, it was too late.

SGt Riley... local in the road at your 10. Waving his arms.

Hey, Spears, you get through to your son last night?

Hell no, doc! Computer was all f---ed up... couldn't get Skype to work. My wife is gonna be so pissed.

No shit. My wife would kill me if I missed my daughter's birthday.

By the time I got it working, it was too late.

Damn, Spears, just tell her that the comm was busted.

Everett, you idiot... I can tell you aren't married. She doesn't give a shit about that.

Got Riley... local in the road at your 10. Waving his arms.
Brownbag Actual, this is Brownbag Victor Two. We have an Iraqi male, mid 30s...standing in the street...appears to be trying to get our attention.

Brownbag Victor Two, this is Brownbag Actual. Find out what he wants. Proceed with caution.

Everett, take Banks and see if you can figure out what he wants. Timmons, cover them with the .50.

Brownbag Actual, this is Brownbag Victor Two. Be advised, the Iraqi thinks that his sister's family may have been compromised by the local militia. Requesting that we check the house.

Kind of hard to understand him. He's scared shitless. Sounds like it's his sister and her family, something about her husband working as a translator for an American company.

Says he saw a group of men from the local militia going in their house. Wants us to go check it out and see if they're OK.

Better call it in.

Interrogative: How should we proceed?

Affirmative.
CPL EVERETT, YOU GLASS THE HOUSE?

YES, STAFF SERGEANT. I DIDN'T SEE ANY MOVEMENT AT ALL.

CPL CHAPMAN, TAKE YOUR TEAM AND GO AROUND TO THE BACK.

TIMMONS, I WANT YOU ALERT ON THAT .50.

OK, SGT RILEY, PROCEED WITH YOUR TEAM TO THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE.

STAY FOCUSED. YOU ARE CLEARED TO ENGAGE ANY HOSTILES. BUT BE CAREFUL; WE DON'T WANT TO SHOOT UP THIS FAMILY.

BROWN BAG TWO ONE TWO, THIS IS BROWN BAG TWO ONE. INTERROGATIVE: WHAT DO YOU SEE?

BROWN BAG TWO ONE, THIS IS BROWN BAG TWO ONE TWO. BACK OF HOUSE IS CLEAR.
BROWN BAG TWO ONE, THIS IS BROWN BAG TWO ONE TWO. FRONT OF HOUSE SECURE, PROCEEDING UP THE STAIRS.

OH, SHIT! DOC, GET UP HERE, NOW!

WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED IN HERE?

HOLY...

NO IDEA...
No use, Doc. They've all been executed. They're gone.

Help me check to see if any of them has a pulse.

Nothing here, Doc. Nothing here either. Help me clear some room. I'm going to try CPR!

Nothing here.

I'll call it in. Come on, let's clear out.

Oh my God!

What the f---?!! Who the f--- executes women and children?!!
Later, back at the FOB...

Amanda,

It was so good to get your letter-

It's great to hear that you-

It's going to be a rough-

I hope you are doing-

San Diego.

Keep in touch! I would love to hear from you.

I hate being so far away from you.

Mom and Dad miss you.

I'll be thinking of you.

Take care of yourself.

Love,

[Signature]
BEST DOC IN COUNTRY, THAT'S WHAT HE IS. NOBODY DOES IT BETTER THAN DAWG.

Don’t pay attention to Hughes. He’s full of it.

Seems like a good guy...

Heh, yeah. He’s an old friend.

Yeah, if things get hot, could be a lot for just the two of us to cover.

You’re gonna be up front.

If the front gets hit, you cover the wounded up your way and I’ll get there as soon as I can. Same for me in the back.

Roger that.
The next day...

Yeah, too quiet. Way too quiet. Where is everybody?

Man, it's quiet, dawg.

Yeah, too quiet, way too quiet. Where is everybody?

Brownbag Victor One, this is Brownbag Actual. Interrogative: What's going on up there? Why are we stopped?

Do not stop. Get those vehicles moving!

Brownbag Actual, this is Brownbag Victor One. The road is blocked. I repeat, the road is blocked. Clearing it now.

CRACK!
Shots came from the tall building on the right.

Somebody give me a location on that sniper -- ASAP.

Don’t know yet, Sergeant!

Where’s the doc? Where’s the doc?

Well, figure it out and do it now!

Wilco, Sergeant!

Samuels! Tall building at 3 o’clock. Take your team and clear that sniper.

Jenkins, get your .50 on that building. Light it up!

Corpsman up!!

Sergeant, get your .50 on that building. Light it up!
I gotta get to that guy now. He can't wait.

No, Dawg. Wait. Give 'em time to take out the sniper.

Can't wait.

No, Dawg. Stop!

Dammit, Dawg. Get down!

Call urgent surgical MEDEVAC now!

Doc.
Mendez, wait until the sniper is neutralized.

Affirmative. Hughes, where’s Jackson?!!

He’s out there.

I got you. Helo is on the way. We’ll have you out of here in no time.

But the sniper....

Dawg, get the hell out of there!
SECOND FLOOR WINDOW!

Stay here, Hughes!

There's nothing you can do.

F---, Dawg! NOOOOO!
wilco,
sergeant!
I'm going too.

Damn, Jackson...
Is he gonna be ok?

Roger that. OK, Mendez.
Sniper's down. Go ahead.

BrownBag actual, this is BrownBag Victor One. Threat is neutralized.

I'm going too.
I can't do anything to help him. I've got to move on.

Derek...

You gotta trust me on this, Hughes. There’s nothing I can do. I have to triage.

Let it go.

Doc, get back over here. He’s still alive. You can save him.

Where you going, Mendez? He’s not dead. You gotta do something!
MENDEZ—Putting it Away

REALLY, SIR, I’M FINE. I JUST NEED TO HIT THE RACK. I DIDN’T SLEEP TOO MUCH LAST NIGHT.

WHAT IT’S WORTH, I’VE GONE OVER THE MEDICAL REPORTS... YOU DID THE RIGHT THING. JACkSON’S WOUNDS WERE MASSIVE. THERE WAS NOTHING ANYONE COULD’VE DONE.

I THINK SO, TOO. BUT HOW CAN YOU KNOW FOR SURE? MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE AT LEAST TRIED...

DON’T SECOND GUESS YOUR TRIAGE, MENDEZ. A KID IS GOING HOME TO HIS FAMILY BECAUSE OF YOU. REMEMBER THAT. IF YOU’D TRIED TO SAVE JACkSON FIRST, YOU MIGHT HAVE LOST ‘EM BOTH. YOU MADE THE RIGHT DECISION.

JUST THE SAME, IT MIGHT BE GOOD FOR YOU TO TALK WITH THE COMBAT STRESS.

WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, SIR, I DON’T NEED TO. I’M OK. I’M PUTTING IT AWAY. LIKE I SAID, I JUST NEED TO GET A LITTLE SLEEP.
Two days later...

Mike, I thought I'd never catch you at home.

What do you mean?

Don't worry, I'm fine. It's just been a really long week.

This corpsman... he was... well, he was just a kid.

Mike, you know, can't talk about it...

What about him?

Erica, I'm so sorry.

Thanks... can't quite seem to get it out of my head... I'll be ok in a few days.

Erica, you OK?

What do you mean? Your voice. It doesn't sound right. Something going on?

Come on, Erica... I know that. But you can see someone and get some help.

You don't have to worry about me. I'm fine. I'll get some sleep tonight. I promise.

Can we talk about something else? How are things at home?

I don't know... really slept?... three or four days ago, maybe... I've gotten an hour or two here and there. That's all I need.

Erica, you can't keep going like that.

What am I supposed to do, Mike... make myself fall asleep?

I don't have to worry about me. I'm fine. I'll get some sleep tonight. I promise.

Can we talk about something else? How are things at home?
Later that week...

I've talked to her about it. She says she's fine, but I think you're right, sir. It hit her pretty hard. Give her a little time though. I think she can pull it together.

...I just want to make sure she's OK. She seems pretty withdrawn since Jackson was killed, and she hasn't said a word in any of the briefings. That's not like her at all. What do you think, Master Chief?

I don't know if you remember me, but I'm Jackson's buddy from high school.

Yes, I remember you, Hughes.

Excuse me, Doc?

Can I talk to you for a minute?

Sure.
Yes, I just came by to say thank you.

Thank you?

Yeah, for trying.

I understand you did all you could... you know, for Derek.

I'm sorry for your loss.

Yeah, me, too.
Look out, Wallace. Soon as I finish with Isaac and Brown, I’m coming for you!

I’m waiting, Lang.

Double kill!... Triple kill!

I’ll frag your ass straight into the old folks’ home!

I can’t be stopped!! Who wants some??!!

Alright, Wallace. Come to papa!

Dude, you’re on fire.

Oh, crap!

Pwned!

You’re right, Lang. You’re the man.

Well, this noob has to run. Gotta try to get a phone call home. Told my wife I’d call around 1900. They should be home by then.

So true, Wallace. You did ok for a noob.

Kiltrocit!

Killamanjaro!

Wallace, you did ok for a noob.
Surgery?!?! What the hell happened?!?! It was an accident. He fell off the slide at school. Calm down, John. The doctors say it went well.

How’s Jack?

He’s good. They had to put in four pins. You should see the cast...it goes all the way up to his hip.

Man... how long will he be in it?

At least 6 weeks. They’ll reevaluate at that time and see if he can go to a soft cast.

Wow. He really did it up right, didn’t he? How long is he out of school?

Probably a week. The doctors don’t want him out of bed that whole time.

Jack, in bed for a week?

Yeah, right... you know how he is. I’ll have to tie him to the bed! After that, no weight on it for at least 6 weeks. He’ll have to learn to use crutches.

Wow, you’re really going to have your hands full. I’m sorry I can’t be there to help.

Guess we don’t have any other choice. Hey, talk to Gene next door. Before I left he said his son was moving back home for a while and was looking for work. Maybe he hasn’t found anything yet.

Can I talk to Jack?

Sure. Let me take him the phone.

Hey, Dad.

Hey, bud. How’re you doing?

Pretty good.

You sound tired.

Yeah, they gave me some stuff at the hospital to make me go to sleep and I’m still sleepy.

Mom says I have to stay in bed all week. That stinks.

I know. But, you’ve got to let your leg heal.

But a whole week in bed?
Hey, look at it this way... no school and I bet your mom gives you all the ice cream you can eat. Maybe she can set up a TV in there. Then you could play video games and watch movies right in your room.

That would be cool.

The week will be over before you know it. Then, when you go to school, you can get all your friends to sign your cast. Mom says it's a big one so there's plenty of room for lots of signatures.

I'll tell you what, bud. When I get home, I'll give you $1.00 for every one that you get.

You bet!

Deal then. Listen, I have to get to work soon. Can you put your mom back on the phone?

YEP.

Really?!

Awesome!

Hey, bud... you hang in there, ok? I love you and miss you. I'll call soon to check up on you.

Sure.

OK, Dad. I miss you, too.

Love you. Here's Mom.

Wow, he certainly perked up. What did you tell him?

We just made a little deal, that's all. He can tell you about it.

Honey, I've got to run to chow and then to a meeting. I'll call back soon when Allison is home from school. Tell her I love her.

I'm sorry, Lindsay. I love you... bye.

I wish you were here.

I love you, too.
Later...

MAN, WHAT I WOULDN'T GIVE FOR MY WIFE’S LASAGNA.

I HEAR THAT, WEBSTER. I'D LOVE A LITTLE HOME COOKING ABOUT NOW.

WHAT ABOUT YOU, WALLACE? WHAT WOULD YOU ORDER FROM HOME?

WHAT'S UP?

I TALKED TO LINDSAY EARLIER. MY BOY FELL OFF A SLIDE ON THE PLAYGROUND AND BROKE HIS LEG IN THREE PLACES. HE HAD SURGERY TODAY TO PUT IN PINS TO HOLD IT TOGETHER.

THANKS. IT SUCKS. LINDSAY SOUNDED REALLY STRESSED ON THE PHONE. HERE I AM ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD AND CAN'T DO A DAMNED THING.

Hey, I know what you mean. I feel like shit when things are going on back home and I can't be there.

I'M SORRY, MAN.
No kidding. My son’s 12 and bullies keep picking on him at school. My wife can’t deal with it...she needs me for that kind of stuff.

Exactly! We own a pizza place and half of our employees aren’t showing up for work...hell, the ones who do are late all the time. They don’t pull that bullshit on me. It’ll be a miracle if we’re still in business when I get back.

My wife doesn’t have a clue about the Navy. She keeps saying ‘just tell them that you need to come home.’

Roger that, honey, I’ll get right on it!

You’re quiet, Martin...what about you? Everything perfect at home?

Nah, Webster, course not. But at least you can trust your wives. What do you mean?

I don’t know...something’s not right. The last two times I’ve called home, our neighbor’s been there. I’m beginning to think she’s f---ing him.

Nah, man, don’t think like that.

Can’t help it...just have this feeling...

Gotta remember to check back in with these guys...especially Martin. He might need someone to talk to.
Well, gentlemen, Martin and Webster did such a fine job of assessing the damage to the bridge up North, HQ's decided to reward us with the repair job.

Nice going, Martin and Webster.

Hey, it's beautiful up there, you're gonna love it. Right, Doc?

Oh, yeah, you bet.

HQ estimates a minimum of 30 days to make the repairs, so we'll be digging in. Bravo 3 Squad will accompany us.

Supply convoy will arrive on site next Monday. That gives us a couple of days to button things up here.

Right. The work on Level 4 has to be finished before we go. That'll mean some long hours for the next couple of days.

By then you guys will be ready to get out of this dam for a while.

But what'll I do without the smell?

Forget that. How will I sleep without the comforting hum of the generators?
0400 Monday...

Man, two months... as of today, two more months to go. I can't wait to get back to California.

What's the first thing you're gonna do, Lang?

I'm heading to 'In-N-Out Burger'. A double-double, Animal Style fries and a chocolate shake. I can't wait.

The burgers are great and all, but what about your girlfriend?

I gotta have it. She's gonna have to wait! What are you going to do, Brown?

Me, I can't wait to go surfing. I'm grabbing my board and heading straight to Gold Beach. Not coming in 'til it's too dark to see.

Gold Beach is sweet, but I like DMJ's better. I'm a goofy-foot, so the left off the sandbar is perfect for me.

Wow, Doc! You surf?!

Nothing complicated, just want to sit on my deck with my wife and kids and an ice cold beer. Maybe grill a few steaks.

I know exactly where I'm going, Lang.

Where's that, Isaac?

To your girlfriend's house while you're at 'In and Out Burger'!

Damn, if having kids means no more surfing then I'll pass on parenthood.

What about you then, Doc? Freedman? What do old men like you look forward to when you get home?

Hell, yeah!
Lot of work to do.

Yeah, we’ve really got our work cut out for us, especially in this heat.

Speaking of the heat...

Alright, listen up. We’ve got 30 mikes to secure the perimeter before the supply convoy gets here.

Wilco, Sergeant.

Roger that.

We know, Doc, hydrate. Too predictable, huh?
Later that week...

Man, I'm starving. How much longer till we break for lunch?

Fifteen minutes.

So, what do you make of that little kid? What's he up to?

I think his dad's a contractor. I saw Isaac buy a soda out of that cooler from him earlier. Gave him a dollar.

A dollar for a soda? I don't think so.

Unbelievable, Webster. You've got to be the cheapest guy on the planet. It's a buck.

Hey, Isaac... send the kid over here! Come over here.

Hey there, buddy. What's your name?

Raheem.

Hello, Raheem. My name's Wallace.

Well, Raheem, we all want sodas and Webster's buying.

That's Freedman and Adkins, and the really ugly one there's Webster. He's very thirsty.

A nice cold soda would be really good right now.

Hey, Isaac... send the kid over here! Come over here.

OK, Webster, get your money out, you cheapskate.

Here's a five, Raheem. Keep the change. Just make sure you're here every day with some cold ones. Wallace is buying tomorrow.

Thank you. Thank you very much.
WE’VE JUST BEEN GIVEN A NEW MISSION. A CHIEF OF THE IP WAS KILLED EARLIER THIS WEEK. HIS FUNERAL IS TOMORROW AFTERNOON.

IT’S A PRIME TARGET FOR MORE ATTACKS. WE’VE BEEN ASSIGNED TO PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR IP FORCES THAT’LL BE RUNNING SECURITY.

SIR, YOU’VE GOT TO BE KIDDING. IP? THOSE GUYS DON’T KNOW WHAT THEY’RE DOING. NO WAY THEY CAN CONTROL THAT KINDA CROWD.

SIR, THEY JUST... COMPLICATE THINGS. THIS WOULD BE SIMPLE IF WE WERE RUNNING THE SHOW.

OBVIOUSLY, SIR. YOU KNOW A LOT OF US FEEL WE CAN’T TRUST THEM.

YOUR RESERVATIONS ARE NOTED, BUT THE MISSION REMAINS THE SAME. WE’LL SUPPORT THE IP. UNDERSTOOD?

AFFIRMATIVE.

GOOD, IF THERE’S NO MORE CONCERNS, LET’S GO OVER THE DETAILS...
The old man? Yeah, maybe.

Mother, this gives me the creeps.

Look at these clowns. They're barely patting down the men and are hardly even looking at the women.

Hey, you see that guy? Look at his bag. Look suspicious to you?

The old man? Yeah, maybe.

The IP let him go right by.

OK, Spears, let's go check him out. Banks, you stay here and monitor the gate.

Roger that.
Look, mister. I gotta see what's in the bag.

Spears, chill man, he doesn't understand you. We need a Terp.

Well, we don't have a Terp and this motherf---er's not blowing me up.

Geez, Spears, can't you tell he doesn't understand you?

Hey, the guy doesn't understand. Get a Terp!

Whoa, something's not right. Why's he wearing a heavy coat in this heat?
FORGET THE OLD MAN! CHECK THE GUY AT YOUR TWELVE!

EVERETT! LOOK OUT! TWELVE O’CLOCK!

WHAT?

NO!!!
Alright, Jason, you're OK. No major damage. Get up. You've got work to do.

Ahhhh... My head. What the hell happened?

Holy shit!

Hang on. I'm coming... Everett!... Spears! Where are you?

Corpsman up!
Must have twisted it in the blast. Come on, Jason, breathe. Get through it. They’re calling for you.

Corpsman up!

Spears!
OK, buddy, I’ve got you.

Oh, no, Spears... good-bye, my friend.

F---, my knee!
John...It's me, Jason. Hang in there.

John, I'm just holding pressure here, buddy. Try to breathe normal. You're doing great.

Corpsman up!

John, I'm just holding pressure here, buddy. Try to breathe normal. You're doing great.

Can't leave this one...get word we have an urgent surgical.
My knee? No big deal. Think I sprained it in the explosion. But I'm fine for now. Can deal with it later.

That's not a sprain. You need to lay down.

Banks, right? You gotta lay down. You're bleeding pretty badly. Don't know how you can even stand on it.

CORPSMAN UP! CORPSMAN UP! I've got to get back to work. WHOA, DOC! Not with that leg.

What the hell??!! I've got to get back to work.

Banks, right? You gotta lay down. You're bleeding pretty badly. Don't know how you can even stand on it.
Looks like he took some shrapnel just above the knee.

How is Everett? The guy I was working on?

No, what about Everett??!! I need to check...

He just lost consciousness. Need to get him back to surgical ASAP. He’s lost a lot of blood.

Gotta get you back to surgical. Gonna give you something for the pain.
A hard realization...

WHAT THE HELL? WHERE AM I? I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO SURGICAL?
What the...

Every sun has to set.

What??!!

You and all the Americans will die, just like your friend Everett. The sun will set for you all.

What??!!

This is not happening.

But it is. You're dying, just like your friend. You couldn't save him. You failed. You let him die.

Jason...

Jason...
How’s my friend Everett? We came in together...he had a shoulder wound and a crushed trachea.

What do you mean going home? I’ve got to get back to my unit.

Jason, I’m sorry. The surgeons tried so hard, but they couldn’t save your leg.

What???

No. Please leave. I just want to be alone.

Oh, no.

Jason, we’re all really sorry. If you want, we have someone you can talk to.

No, please leave. I just want to be alone.
Was it some kind of holiday?

No. His dad's not here either.

Weird, that's two days in a row. He hasn't missed a single day for over three weeks.

Master Chief said his dad and the other locals didn't show up for work yesterday either.

Was it some kind of holiday?

Yeah, maybe. But most of them are back today. Wonder why not Raheem and his dad.

Excuse me. Do you know where the boy is?

Raheem? He's dead. Insurgents executed him....

What?!!
160

What sort of animals would kill a six-year-old boy?
What's wrong with these people?
This is one f---ed up place.

They didn’t like us coming to work here, so they threatened us, told us to stop.
When we didn’t listen, they killed Raheem to show that they mean business.

His father, too?
No, he’s at home...in mourning.
I’m sorry.

I just can’t believe it.
Me, either.

What sort of animals would kill a six-year-old boy? What’s wrong with these people?

We...we can’t start hating them all.

Look at those who came back today even after what happened to Raheem.

This is one f---ed up place.

I’m sorry.

I just can’t believe it.

Me, either.

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This is one f---ed up place.
Later that week...

Yeah. That’s horrible. I’d like to get them all together as a group to help them work through it. The guys had gotten pretty close to him. It’s hitting some of them pretty hard. A few have come by to talk to me about it. I’d like to get them all together as a group to help them work through it.

Almost ready to go, Wallace?

Yeah, that’s horrible.

I’m sure you heard about the boy.

Yes, Master Chief.

It’s your call, Doc. If you think it will help.

It’s your call, Doc. If you think it will help.

I do.

OK, organize it as soon as we’re back at the dam.

Thanks, Master Chief.
MENDEZ—Back to Work

Master Chief, can I have a word?

Sure, Mendez. What do you need?

It’s about Bravo Company’s patrol tomorrow. I’m wondering why I wasn’t assigned. I’m next on the list.

LT and I thought it’d be a good idea to give you a little more time.

A little more time for what?

Come on, Mendez. You know we’ve all had your back since Jackson was killed.

Positive. I’m good to go. I’d tell you if I wasn’t. Wouldn’t jeopardize my Marines.

OK, Mendez. You’ve got it. I’ll make the switch. Check in with Sgt Walls. He’ll brief you.

All due respect, Master Chief. I told you before, I’m fine. I want to stay busy and do what I came out here to do. I’m ready.

You sure?

Roger.
1900 the next day...

Hey, Doc. Glad you were out there with us today.

Thanks, Sergeant.

Hey, Mendez. Nice work out there. Good to have you back.

I was never gone, Master Chief.

Heard over the com that you had to medevac a couple of Marines out today.

Yes, Master Chief. One with severe facial lacerations and the other a shrapnel wound to his left thigh. Just heading over to the hospital to check on ’em.

Roger that.
GOOD MORNING, JASON. HOW ARE YOU DOING TODAY?

PRETTY GOOD, MA’AM. LEG HURTS BUT NOT TOO BAD. WERE YOU ABLE TO CHECK ON MY FRIEND JOHN EVERETT?

YES, HE’S DOING OK. IT LOOKS LIKE HE WON’T LOSE THE ARM.

AWESOME. ANY CHANCE I COULD GO SEE HIM?

THAT’S OK. JUST WANT HIM TO SEE ME.

THE CRICK IS OUT, BUT HE STILL REALLY CAN’T TALK...

ALRIGHT, I’LL TAKE YOU DOWN THERE, BUT JUST FOR A FEW MINUTES. BOTH OF YOU NEED TO REST.

YOU DIDN’T MENTION MY LEG TO HIM DID YOU, MA’AM? DON’T WANT HIM WORRYING ABOUT ME RIGHT NOW.

THANKS. CAN YOU HAND ME THAT BLANKET? WANT TO COVER MY LEGS.

NO, I DIDN’T.
Roger that, Ma’am.

I’ll leave you two alone.

Hey, man, don’t try to talk. I know you can’t. Gotta tell you...you look a hell of a lot better than the last time I saw you...was afraid you were going to check out on me for a little while.

Thanks.

But I talked to your nurse. She says you’re going to be ok. You’ll be home before you know it. Oh yeah, couple of guys from the unit came by and...
Later...

...AND THEN HE SAYS...

ALRIGHT YOU TWO. TIME FOR BOTH OF YOU TO GET SOME REST.

...AND THEN HE SAYS...

JASON.

HEY, MAN, YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO...

JASON.

YOU'RE WELCOME, JOHN.

Damn, that was fast. I'll be back soon, buddy.
WALLACE—Support in Numbers

Look, I’m glad you guys decided to come. I thought maybe it’d be good to talk about what happened to Raheem. Seemed like it hit some of us pretty hard.

What’s there to say, Doc? It’s f---ed up. That’s it.

Yeah.

I know. We all agree. But it’s still my job to ask. How are you guys doing?
Come on, you can't own that, Webster.

Yeah, I was stressed out when my son broke his leg. Seems like nothing now.

I'm far from ok. I see that kid's face every time I close my eyes to go to sleep.

What if this is our fault? We were buying drinks from him. Did that get him up?

Yeah, know what you mean, Lang. He was the same age as my nephew.

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Yeah, know what you mean, Lang. He was the same age as my nephew.

That kid's poor father.

Yeah, I was stressed out when my son broke his leg. Seems like nothing now.

What if this is our fault? We were buying drinks from him. Did that get him up?

He's right. We were just trying to help out a kid who was doing something for his family. No way any of us could've seen this coming.

I guess. Still feel like shit about it....
Come on, you're with a group that gets it. Say whatever you want.

I'm pissed off that I let myself get attached...shoulda never let it happen.

Not me. That's why we're here, to help these people.

Exactly.

Oh, I'll help them, Martin, but I'll never get to the point where I care that much what happens to one again. Ever. Not worth it!

We've got a few weeks left. I'll do my job, keep to myself and get the f--- out of here.

You were with him more than anybody...how are you holding up?

Fine.

OK, Doc. You wanna know what will make me feel better? I'll tell you...revenge. That's what I want...revenge. Just head up there, drag every one of those motherf---ers out in the street and execute 'em just like they did Raheem. That'd make me sleep better.

What about you, Isaac? You haven't said a word.

Nothing to say...

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Nothing to say...

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Not me. That's why we're here, to help these people.

Exactly.
Hey, the Doc asked me.

Sorry, Doc, I got nothing else to say.

Hey, the Doc asked me.

Anybody else?

No one?

...Ok, I think we're about done here. Thanks for coming out. Remember, if you need anything, just give me a yell.

DOC, I'M worried about Isaac. He's been spewing that crazy talk ever since we got back. It's not like him. Sometimes I think he could go up there and kill the whole damned village.

Thanks, Lang. I'll keep an eye on him. You do the same.

Roger that.
Later...

MASTER CHIEF, I'M WORRIED ABOUT ONE OF THE GUYS.

OH?

IT’S ISAAC. HE REALLY WENT OFF IN THE MEETING TONIGHT. HE’S CARRYING AROUND A LOT OF HATE. TALKING ABOUT GOING BACK UP THERE FOR REVENGE. LANG SAYS HE’S BEEN SAYING THINGS LIKE THAT FOR A WHILE. I’M FEELING LIKE THIS MIGHT BE A LITTLE PAST MY ABILITY TO MANAGE.

OK, TELL YOU WHAT. I’LL TALK TO HIS GUNNY. SEE WHAT HE THINKS AND ASK HIM TO KEEP AN EYE ON ISAAC FOR A WHILE.

ISAAC?! HE’S A GOOD KID.

I KNOW. BUT IT SEEMS LIKE THIS INCIDENT HAS HIS HEAD PRETTY MESSSED UP.

THANKS. I WILL, TOO. IF HE’S NOT A LOT CALMER IN A FEW DAYS, I’LL WANT HIM TO TALK TO EITHER THE CHAPS OR COMBAT STRESS.

OK, WALLACE, YOUR CALL ON THAT. I’LL BACK YOU UP, JUST LET ME KNOW.

ROGER.
PART 7

Returning Home
BANKS—Best Man

Hey, man! You're looking better. I hear you can talk now, too.

That's great.

Jason, I'm really sorry about your leg. You okay?

How'd you know?

Good...I think. At least as good as I can be. I talked to Amanda. She said everything is fine, but I'm scared.

DID YOU THINK THAT I WOULDN'T ASK SOMEONE WHY YOU WERE IN HERE? SO, HOW ARE YOU DOING?

Scared of what...?

I don't know. She says it doesn't matter and I know she means it. But, I'm afraid when she sees me for the first time, it won't be.

Come on, that doesn't sound like the girl you bragged about for the past 7 months.

I know. But she never signed up for this.
What’s that?

Of course...

What’s that?

Believe me, I’m gonna be working hard everyday to make sure that I’m ready to walk down that aisle with my new bride.

Amanda and I are gonna wait for a while but I was wondering if you’d be the Best Man at our wedding?

Alright, Jason, time to go. Lots to do before you ship out.

If she’s half the woman you say she is, you have nothing to worry about.

Thanks, guess I’ll find out soon. Just got word, I’m headed for Landstuhl tomorrow. Hopefully I won’t be there too long before they send me home.

Sounds like you’re gonna be here a little longer. Doubt we’ll see each other again until we’re back in the states. Just wanted to say goodbye and ask you something.

No problem. John, take care of yourself. I’ll be checking your progress. I expect you back home soon. I’ll be right behind you.
As I’m sure you all know, we’re prepping to redeploy in two weeks. Meaning that we cycle back at the end of next week.

That only gives us a few days to finish any work on the turbines and get all the gear squared away.

Guys, we’re serious short timers now. Sit on our asses for a couple of weeks here in the FOB and we are out of here!

Dammit, Webster. Don’t even say something like that. It’s Murphy’s F---ing Law. You watch... they’ll send us out on another mission now.

Hey, Doc, it’s gonna be weird, after everything, to leave this place...

Yeah...
Hey, Doc.
You back for another ass-whipping?

No way, Lang. Just dropping by to say goodbye to you guys.

You're kidding me! You out of here already?

Yeah, we're shipping home end of next week.

You, too, Doc. Thanks for everything.

Yeah, Doc. You're pretty cool for a geezer.

Hey, if you're ever in Jacksonville, look me up at the store...Hudson's Hardware.

Well, despite having to change your diapers and wipe your noses for 7 months, it was an honor to serve with you.

Roger that, Doc.
you did good, doc.

Hey, Doc.

Damn, Jackson...

You did good, doc.

Hey, doc. Glad you were out there with us today.
It's so good to have you home.

It's so good to be home.

So many things I want to tell you about, but right now I just want to get home.
Well, thought this day would never come. I'm just happy that we're getting everyone back home in one piece. No kidding.
DADDY!
DADDY!

DADDY!

DAD!

WELCOME HOME, HONEY.

YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW HAPPY I AM TO SEE YOU GUYS. LET'S GO HOME.
PART 8
Epilogue
John, can we talk for a minute? At the cookout last night, I heard you talking to some of the guys about reupping. Isn’t that something we should talk about... as a family?

I know. He hasn’t sat still since the doctor took the cast off this morning.

Have you ever seen a happier kid?

Even the dog can’t keep up with him.

I’m not saying I don’t want you to stay in. Just that we should talk about it.

I had a feeling you might want to talk about that.
It’s the kids. It’s hard for them to not have their dad around. And, believe it or not, I miss my husband when he’s gone. Plus, that sinking feeling every time the phone rang... not knowing if something had happened to you, not sure I could have taken that another day.

Actually, the store wasn’t so bad. Tom has turned out great. He really did a good job.

But, I know how much you love it and it helps to have extra money. I just think you should take some time and think about it. Don’t rush into a decision.

So, see. You don’t even need me at the store. That’s not what I meant and you know it.

I know it was hard back here for you, especially with the store.

I understand, I really do.

I know...

Actually, the store wasn’t so bad. Tom has turned out great. He really did a good job.

OK, that sounds fair.

Really?
Sure. I don’t actually have to reup for a while. Let’s wait a few months and keep talking about it, then we’ll decide.

Thank you, John.
Whatever you do, don't zone out and go long like you do sometimes. You've got to be at the airport by 2:00 to pick up John. Don't want to leave your Best Man stranded at the airport.

Nope, just getting ready.

Don't worry, I won't.

Oh, hey. There you are. Was afraid you'd already left.

You're not going far, are you? It's a busy day.

No, probably just 3 or 4 miles.

Then, after you drop him off here, I need you to meet me at the caterer's by 4:00 so we can go over the reception menu one last time. Then, we're taking John to have dinner with your mom at 8:00.

You got it. Caterer's at 1600 and dinner at 2000.

Just so you know, I'll never use the military clock when I talk about time.
It's amazing... we've been planning for a year and it's still nuts at the last minute. So many details to keep straight.

You sure?

I'm positive. Trust me.

You're doing great. Don't worry. Everything is going to be perfect.

I love you.

I love you, too. See you at 4:00.
Mike, do you ever pick up your cell? Wanted to let you know that I need to push our run back to 1900. I’ve got something important that I’ve been meaning to do for a while. See you at the beach.
It's me, Hughes. Derek Jackson's friend.

Doc Mendez?

Yes?
I come here a lot. May sound weird, but I like to talk to him sometimes... tell him what’s going on. Just let him know we haven’t forgotten him. It’s just up that hill. I can show you.

That’s not weird...it’s loyalty. You’re a good friend.

Hi, Hughes. Sorry, didn’t even see you... was thinking about...

Yeah, I know. This is my wife Lisa... my son Darrell Jr. and the sleepy one is my daughter Beth.

Lisa, why don’t you stay here with the kids? I’ll show Doc where to go. I’ll be right back.

Hi, Lisa, nice to meet you. Hi, little Darrell...you look just like your daddy.

Hi, Lisa, nice to meet you. Hi, little Darrell...you look just like your daddy.

Thanks.
You know, I went through some messed up stuff over there, but the hardest thing I ever did was dropping his letter in the mail. Must have stood in front of that stupid mailbox for ten minutes.

I came today to tell him some big news. What's that?

He got the Silver Star for what he did.

That's great. He deserves it.

I know it won't bring him back, but I'm happy about the medal. Maybe it'll help his parents a little bit, too. They took it pretty hard.

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You know, I went through some messed up stuff over there, but the hardest thing I ever did was dropping his letter in the mail. Must have stood in front of that stupid mailbox for ten minutes.

I'm sure they did.

I know it won't bring him back, but I'm happy about the medal. Maybe it'll help his parents a little bit, too. They took it pretty hard.

I'm sorry.

Well, here it is. I'll leave you alone. I know he's glad you're here.

Thanks. Take care.
'LIVE FOR OTHERS SO OTHERS MAY LIVE.'

GOOD WORK, DOC. REST IN PEACE.

DEREK JACKSON
HN
US NAVY
MAY 22 19
JAN 20 20
OPERATION IRAQI FRE
The following resources were used in developing *The Docs*:


Technical consultant: Ben Beatty, PhD, MPH, CHES. Beatty is a veteran with 18 years of service: 12 years in the Marine Corps and 6 years in the Navy during his enlistment.

Photos of Hudson’s Hardware courtesy of Leigh Hudson, Garner, NC.

Photos of Marines coming home from Iraq to Camp Pendleton, CA, courtesy of Melinda Applegate, Tempe, AZ.

Iraq combat photos courtesy of William P. Nash, MD, CAPT, MC, USN (Ret.).

“There are Corpsmen and then there are ‘docs’. . . . A doc is someone you can count on. He’s someone in your platoon that when something happens to one of our fellow Marines, you can call on him and not have to worry. He’s your buddy, a comrade in arms, a person who you count on to cover your back, to lay down fire, dig fighting holes or do whatever the hell Marines are doing. That’s who a doc is.”

— Field Medical Service School (FMSS): The Making of a Fleet Marine Force Corpsman, Navy News Service
http://usmilitary.about.com/od/navytrng/a/fmss.htm

_The Docs_ deals with situations that are best understood by adults and is not meant for readers under 18 years of age.