

THE LONG ROAD **HOME**

Episode 101

"The Road to War"

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March 20, 2003.

A year and a half after 9/11, the United States invades Iraq.

42 Days later, President Bush declares "Mission Accomplished," an end to all major combat operations in the war.

March 31, 2004.

The First Cavalry Division from Fort Hood, Texas, arrives to take over peace-keeping duties in an impoverished sector of Baghdad called Sadr City.

The area, without incident for a year, is known as the "safest place in Iraq."

What follows is a true story.

ACT ONE

1

EXT. CAMP WAR EAGLE - NIGHT (APRIL 4, 2004)

1

FOLLOW FROM BEHIND as A SOLDIER IN BLOODIED FATIGUES walks amid what looks like a scene from The Inferno:

WOUNDED MEN lie naked and bleeding on the desert sands around him, moaning in pain, bodies mauled by bullets and shrapnel.

Our focus is fragmented, distorted, the night filled with CHAOTIC NOISES, shouted ORDERS, SCREAMING...

Titles reveal this to be...

Super: **APRIL 4, 2004.**

CAMP WAR EAGLE, SADR CITY.

BLURRED ACTIVITY ahead, lit by the high-beams of vehicle headlights...

A WOUNDED MAN reaches for our soldier as he passes, tugs at the pant leg of his bloody fatigues.

The soldier halts for a moment. We still don't see his face. A pain-filled whisper:

UNKNOWN WOUNDED MAN
There were... hundreds... of them...

As our soldier continues to walk on, MATCH DISSOLVE TO--

2

EXT. FORT HOOD STREET - SUNDOWN (TWO WEEKS EARLIER)

2

A SOLDIER, also seen from behind, in clean, neatly pressed fatigues. He's walking down what looks like a small town street.

Around us: modest ranch houses with pick-up trucks and children's bikes parked outside, chalked hopscotch grids.

The scene is filled with golden light, idyllic, but the shadows growing long and deep.

SOLDIER
Raina, Elijah!

TRACK AROUND to reveal our soldier is LIEUTENANT SHANE AGUERO.

30 years old. Handsome Hispanic features, lean build, with glasses suggesting the nerdier side of his nature.

Easy-going and rarely fazed, tonight Aguero looks a little worried. He comes to an intersection.

AGUERO
Come on, guys!

REVEAL the road here is larger, quiet, no traffic... but lined as far as the eye can see with

ENDLESS LOTS OF HEAVY ARMY VEHICLES. Hundreds of them.

Super: **FORT HOOD, TEXAS.**

AGUERO (CONT'D)
Daddy's serious! It's time to come home.

Aguero's eyes then stop on a field of BRADLEY ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS. Off his face--

A CARD on a black screen: **AGUERO.**

3

EXT. MOTOR POOL ROAD - FORT HOOD - SUNDOWN - RESUMED

3

Aguero crosses into the field of Bradleys. The massive carriers have thick armor and tracks similar to tanks. The vehicles tower over Aguero as he looks around amid the deepening shadows.

AGUERO
Where are you...

The setting sun comes in star bursts between vehicles as Aguero searches.

Then, a flash of SMALL RUNNING FEET. Giggles-- a girl's voice.

Aguero smiles a little, relieved.

He listens to the patter of feet, moves silently-- and soon catches his son ELIJAH (6), trying to make a dash for it between vehicles, grabs him--

AGUERO (CONT'D)
Gotcha!

Elijah squirms and moans in protest as Aguero's daughter RAINA (4 and adorable) jumps out and hugs her dad from behind.

RAINA
You found us, Daddy!

AGUERO
You two rascals... Sun's almost down. Didn't you hear me calling?

ELIJAH
(sullen)
We were just playing...

RAINA
Nuh-uh-- he made us run away!

The kids settle into "No I didn't." / "Did too." Agüero still holds his son, looks at him kindly:

AGÜERO
Elijah?

Elijah wriggles free.

ELIJAH
What do you care? You're leaving.

He starts stomping toward home. Agüero looks after, this clearly not unexpected. He rises calmly, offers Raina his hand:

AGÜERO
Come on, Raina....

They start to walk home amid the shadows, Raina holding her father's hand.

He looks at her, studying the fading light on her features, knowing it will be some time until he'll see her again.

Elijah keeps walking ahead, alone.

4

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - THE AGÜERO HOME - FORT HOOD - LATER

4

AN ARMY DUFFEL is getting stuffed as Agüero packs.

Elijah stands at the door, holds a small football. Agüero's wife, AMBER (29), is nearby. She's pretty, seasoned at deployments, spitting image of Piper from "Charmed."

Agüero pats the bed for Elijah to come sit. He finally does.

AGÜERO
I know you're upset buddy, but
remember we talked about it?

Elijah says nothing. Agüero gently takes the football.

AGÜERO (CONT'D)
It's a little like football. I'm the
team Captain, and we've all been
training really hard, and now it's
time to go play in the big game.

ELIJAH

But you've never been to war before.

AGUERO

It's not really war. You know how Daddy's been to places like Panama and Korea? We're just going to help people.

Elijah takes his football back.

ELIJAH

Then you don't have to go. Soldiers only go to wars.

The logic makes Amber smile.

AMBER

Sometimes, they go for peace, too.

ELIJAH

But why?

AGUERO

It's my duty to go.

ELIJAH

What's that?

AGUERO

Duty's something you do because it's right, and because you promised. My Platoon, my guys... they're family, too. I gotta keep 'em safe.

ELIJAH

You like them better than us.

AGUERO

It's not like that--

Elijah suddenly gets up, throws the football hard at his dad, storms out of the room:

ELIJAH

I hope you never come back!

Aguero moves to go after-- not angry, just wants his son to really understand. Amber gently stops him.

AMBER

Let him go, let him get it out. Talk to him in the morning. He'll be fine.

Aguero finally nods.

5

INT. LIVING ROOM - THE AGUERO HOME - FORT HOOD - NIGHT

5

Night, just Aguero and Amber now. They're on the couch as he plays "Champions of Norrath" on PlayStation: Level 19.

ON SCREEN

Aguero's mythic warrior character wields a flaming sword as he fights forward in a cavernous maze, battling monsters.

Amber smiles as she watches her husband's intense features as he plays-- his way of dealing with the pending separation.

ON SCREEN

Aguero slays an enemy troop, comes to a crossroads.

AGUERO

Left, right, or forward?

AMBER

Your call, Lieutenant.

Aguero chooses a path, but monsters FLOOD it. He tries to make a dash for it, but is overrun.

The monsters have him. Game over.

AGUERO

Obviously not a wise choice...

AMBER

Nobody survives that last run.

AGUERO

You have.

AMBER

Well. That's because I'm supremely talented and full of magic...

Aguero smiles, lets go of the controller, pulls Amber close.

AGUERO

Now that is true...

A beat. Amber looks at him. Serious now:

AMBER

You really aren't worried?

AGUERO

There's only been one incident in the entire city in the last year, and they say it's only getting calmer. We aren't even bringing the heavy armor. Someone shoots a gun over there, probably just some fool celebrating a Cowboys game.

*
*

AMBER

Never hurts to be extra-sure...

She brings out a home-made NECKLACE. Aguero frowns amusedly.

AGUERO

What's this...

He sees the necklace is made of ROSARY BEADS, a CROSS, half of a Hebrew MIZPAH, the Buddhist OM... and AN AMULET made from Dungeons & Dragons GAME PIECES.

AGUERO (CONT'D)

Well, if this doesn't all keep me safe... Even an Amulet of Natural Armor...

AMBER

The most important one...

She smiles, touches his chest gently.

AMBER (CONT'D)

...because I'm really gonna need all this back unharmed, Lieutenant. Every last bit.

AGUERO

(teasing)

Every last bit? You wanna show me which bits in particular...

They kiss, fall deeper into each other, soon making love. On the TV screen, the 'dead' Aguero in Norrath glows in soft focus.

6

EXT. COOPER FIELD - FORT HOOD - THE NEXT MORNING

6

A crisp spring morning, few clouds as Aguero and Amber cross the base's large central field.

Everywhere, SOLDIERS and FAMILIES have gathered to say good-bye: WIVES, CHILDREN, and PARENTS hugging and kissing UNIFORMED MEN.

A DOZEN BUSES wait to carry the several hundred soldiers to war. It's an overwhelming sea of emotion.

AMBER

Wow...

AGUERO

Whole battalion's leaving today. Let me just check on the guys...

Amber nods, waits as Aguero hurries to a nearby bus.

As Amber looks around, she sees Aguero's two commanding officers standing apart from the crowd: LT. COLONEL GARY VOLESKY (37) and CAPTAIN TROY DENOMY (29), with their wives, LEANN (38) and GINA (28).

The Denomys look frazzled, with a fussy newborn. The Voleskys are calm, used to these scenes.

Amber waves a hello.

Aguero then returns to her, gives a thumbs up to Denomy and Volesky to signal his Platoon is ready. With Aguero walk two team leaders, SERGEANTS ERIC BOURQUIN (23) and EDDIE CHEN (31).

AGUERO (CONT'D)

These two wanted to say goodbye...

Originally from Taiwan, Chen's voice carries an accent. He's hulking, an unassuming jokester, gives Amber an exaggerated bow.

CHEN

Your humble Knights, ma'am...

AMBER

Eddie, Eric, hey...

Amber gives both men hugs. Bourquin, one of Aguero's most trusted men, is 6'4", powerfully built, heavily tatted, eyes that rarely smile. He hugs stiffly, as if unused to affection.

AMBER (CONT'D)

Take care out there.

BOURQUIN

We'll try to watch out for this guy...

He means Aguero, who smiles. As Amber chats with the Sergeants, Aguero takes in the field of goodbyes, his last view of home.

And through his eyes, we hold on a few moments:

What we'll see are men who will play important roles in our series, but for now, the moments are just distant impressions... of tension, of heartbreak, of overwhelming love.

Not all the partings are happy here. Sound is distant as we see...

STAFF SERGEANT ROBERT MILTENBERGER (38) stands in bitter silence with his wife BELINDA (37), some heavy weight between them...

PRIVATE TOMAS YOUNG (24), a handsome red-head, argues with his mom CATHY (early 40's). She finally embraces him fiercely.

SPECIALISTS ISRAEL GARZA and ROBERT ARSIAGA (both 25 and best friends) joke around with their wives LUPITA and TRACIE (both 21) and large extended families. The two men look so similar they could be brothers. Lupita clings to Garza.

Aguero snaps back to as the BUS ENGINES ROAR TO LIFE, filling the field with sound.

It's time. Aguero and Amber look at each other. The moment makes their eyes well.

AGUERO

Thought we weren't gonna do the
whole crying thing...

They laugh and embrace hard, their voices lost as more ENGINES come on. From nearby, Bourquin and Chen watch.

BOURQUIN

Just us two going solo, huh, Chen?

Chen grabs him, his voice deadpan:

CHEN

Hold me, Sergeant Bourquin.

Bourquin shakes his head at Chen's antics.

The Agueros are kissing. Chen looks mock-longingly at Bourquin, who pushes him off with a laugh.

Chen then walks to the Agueros, who are still holding each other. He begins to serenade:

CHEN (CONT'D)

And I-i-i-i will always love you!
I will always love you...
I will always love you...

The Agueros part laughing: Really it's time to go.

AMBER

I love you.

AGUERO

I love you more.

A final kiss and he heads out.

Bourquin puts on earbuds, blasts heavy metal at deafening volume they climbs onto the bus.

Aguero gives Amber a final wave from the doors, boards.

The buses take off.

7 **EXT. MOTOR POOL ROAD - FORT HOOD - MOMENTS LATER** 7

We watch the buses head down the wide road lined by fields of FIGHTING EQUIPMENT... all being left behind here.

The sun at the end of the road flashes us to--

8 **INT. TRANSPORT PLANE - FLYING OVER KUWAIT - NIGHT** 8

A huge, windowless military transport plane. It's night, the cabin lit in red. Aguero has a seat against the side of the fuselage. Comms equipment and supplies arc all the way to the top, no low cabin ceiling here.

Bourquin makes his way to his seat. He and Chen flank Aguero. Chen is already asleep.

En route, Bourquin nudges a sleeping SPECIALIST in the wide center row. His rifle has slipped to the floor.

BOURQUIN
Mind your weapon, Specialist.

SLEEPY MAN
Sorry, Sergeant B...

Bourquin sees two more soldiers with askew weapons, wakes them:

BOURQUIN
You, too. And you: wakey-wakey.

Clearly not elite troops, just regular guys on their first tour. Bourquin takes his seat next to Aguero.

BOURQUIN (CONT'D)
You'd think after months of drilling, they'd at least remember to keep their weapon close.

AGUERO
They'll do fine, Eric. You've trained 'em well.

BOURQUIN
Anything on our duty assignment yet?

AGUERO

No, but it'll be one of the Four R's:
Rebuild, Restore...

BOURQUIN

...Reuse, Recycle?

Aguero smiles. The plane shakes in brief turbulence, strong enough to wake most of the men. But not Chen. Aguero looks on.

AGUERO

Now how the hell does a man just
sleep like that?

BOURQUIN

Chen could sleep through a nuclear
explosion...

PILOT'S VOICE (OVER SPEAKERS)

*First Cavalry be advised, we have
started our descent, we'll have you
on the ground in 45.*

AGUERO

Next stop, the great unknown...
How're you feeling?

BOURQUIN

Good. You?

Hold on Aguero as he considers. Then:

AGUERO

Ready... I feel ready...

Off those words--

MAIN TITLE: **THE LONG ROAD HOME.**

9

INT./EXT. AGUERO'S HUMVEE - DRIVING IN SADR CITY - AFTERNOON

9

A blast of sunlight, dust, and traffic noise. WIDEN FROM AGUERO in the shotgun seat of an ARMORED HUMVEE, amulet necklace on. We're in a crowded slum, which Aguero's baby-faced driver, SPECIALIST JONATHAN RIDDELL (19), does his best to navigate.

RIDDELL

This is insane, sir!

Riddell spins the wheel to evade collision with other DRIVERS, PEDDLERS, BEGGARS, FARM ANIMALS, and ABANDONED CARS... and of course STREAMS AND POOLS OF RAW SEWAGE that cover the streets, at times ankle deep.

Eddie Chen mans the machine gun turret of the vehicle. Two other men in the back seat:

SPECIALIST MATT FISK (31), Aguero's recorder, carries a small notebook to track their activity for a later field report. JASSIM AL-LANI (24), a short, young-looking interpreter, is in U.S. Army fatigues.

*
*
*
*

Aguero's is the lead vehicle of A SMALL CONVOY:

FOUR HUMVEES WITH 19 SOLDIERS escorting TWO IRAQI SANITATION TANKER TRUCKS. The soldiers are all in full combat gear.

Super: SADR CITY, BAGHDAD. APRIL 4, 2004. 16:55 HRS.

COMANCHE RED PLATOON. LT. SHANE AGUERO, COMMANDING.

DAY 4 IN IRAQ.

AGUERO

Just put some muscle into it, Riddell!

(at Fisk, resuming story)

...so we get to the meet, and in walks this huge dude with a foot-long beard, looks like fuckin' Hagrid from Harry Potter. And the Iraqis are all like, Lieutenant, this our Head of Security--

Riddell curses, swerves to avoid a donkey-drawn cart.

AGUERO (CONT'D)

You gotta let go of your polite Oregon hippie pinko manners, Riddell, this is the Middle East. I'm trying to tell Specialist Fisk a story.

(back at Fisk)

So anyway, 'Hagrid' comes over and says to me: "It's nice to meet you. I'm Chief Fahker."

FISK

No, he's not...

AGUERO

Swear to God. So I go: "Chief... Fahker?" And he's like: "Yes. Monther Fahker."

The men all burst into laughter, Chen joining in from the turret. Jassim gets the joke, too, makes a shy smile.

AGUERO (CONT'D)

I swear I could barely keep--

RIDDELL

Shit!

Riddell SLAMS THE BRAKES to evade collision with a HERD OF GOATS. He hits a POTHOLE that splashes up sewage-- almost catches Chen.

CHEN

What the-- You did that on purpose...
Monther Fahker!

As the others again laugh:

RIDDELL

I swear I didn't Sergeant!

AGUERO

Now that we're stopped... where are
we, Specialist Riddell?

RIDDELL

Sir, I believe we crossed Route
Aeros a few blocks back... Like, a
little while ago.

Aguero looks outside. The scenery appears the same in every direction: identical concrete buildings, busy trash-and-sewage strewn streets.

On most walls, GRAFFITI and GLUED POSTERS with a picture of a BLACK-CLAD CLERIC, his finger sternly pointed: MUQTADA AL-SADR.

AGUERO

And what Route would this be that
we're on?

RIDDELL

Well, sir, with no street signs,
it's a little tricky to... I...
(beat)
I have no idea, sir.

*

FISK

Should I note this for the log, sir?

*

*

Riddell gives him the finger. Aguero smiles.

*

AGUERO

Nah. Thankfully, the Army in its
infinite wisdom has provided us
with an excellent, high-tech
navigation system.

*

Aguero takes out a SMALL COMPASS and a CARD-SIZED, MAZE-LIKE MAP of the city, almost impossible to read: endless nameless streets and alleys laid over with a grid of American codenames: Aeros, Copper, Delta, Silver, etc.

CHEN

(from the turret)

Sir, I'd like to note a rooftop anomaly, three o'clock.

*

Aguero looks. A SMALL HERD OF MANGY SHEEP crowds a tiny roof, an incongruous sight even here.

AGUERO

Jassim, why are there sheep on that roof?

JASSIM

Where else would one put sheep to keep them safe?

AGUERO

You got a point...

He looks back to the map and compass.

AGUERO (CONT'D)

Okay: Looks like we're at... Routes Fox and Florida. We gotta back up, Riddell.

RIDDELL

Back up, in this?!

We see the armored Humvee has no rear windshield to look through, just a solid wall, only side mirrors to guide.

AGUERO

Don't shit your pants, Riddell.

Off the words--

10

EXT. AGUERO'S CONVOY - HALTED - A SHORT WHILE LATER

10

WIDEN FROM SHIT AND RAW SEWAGE being sucked up by the Iraqi tanker trucks. Aguero's convoy has halted for clean up near a MARKET.

The adjacent streets run ankle-deep with streams of sewage. More posters of Muqtada al-Sadr here.

Except for Chen and the other gunners in the turrets, the soldiers remain inside the vehicles, Jassim chatting outside with the workers.

11

EXT./INT. BOURQUIN'S HUMVEE - HALTED - SIMULTANEOUSLY

11

From the turret of the last vehicle, Bourquin watches Jassim with the workers, clearly not sure of the guy yet.

This is the other ARMORED HUMVEE of the convoy, the two middle VEHICLES light editions not meant for combat.

The driver is SPECIALIST CARL WILD (21), a short Texan. SERGEANT BEN HAYHURST (25), one of Bourquin's good friends, handsome Italian looks, has the shotgun seat.

In the back, SERGEANT STAN HAUBERT (24), lethal, war-hungry, and SERGEANT SWOPE (34), former Missouri farm boy, quiet.

Wild does not look well.

WILD

I think I'm gonna throw up.

BOURQUIN

Specialist Wild, do not throw up in my Victor, that's an order.

WILD

I'll try, Sergeant B.

Hayhurst sees something float past in a sewage stream.

HAYHURST

Holy shit, I think that was a goat's head. Maybe a sheep? Hard to tell with all the flies--

Wild throws up out the window as the others laugh. Bourquin shakes his head. Haubert stares broodingly outside.

HAUBERT

How is this warrior's work?

HAYHURST

Welcome to the new Iraq, Haubert.

Just then, Bourquin sees something approaching down a street in the distance: A VAN. He picks up binoculars.

BOURQUIN

Sergeant Hayhurst, advise the convoy we have a van approaching from five o'clock...

BOURQUIN'S POV: A DOZEN BLACK-CLAD MEN are hanging out from the van's doors and windows, holding flags.

BOURQUIN (CONT'D)
Iraqi national flags... looks like
a pep squad for Mookie al-Sadr.

HAUBERT
Maybe we'll get lucky and they'll
try a drive-by.

BOURQUIN
Yeah, I doubt it...

HAYHURST
(into radio)
All Comanche Reds, Red Four: be
advised we have a van approaching...

The men all get subtly ready, but no one is particularly worried. The Humvees have massive .50 cal machine guns, and the soldiers have on their Kevlar helmets, vests, and weapons.

12 **EXT./INT. AGUERO'S HUMVEE - HALTED - SIMULTANEOUSLY** 12

From their vehicle, Aguero and Chen watch, too. Fisk notes the time in his logbook. *
*

AGUERO
(into radio)
All Comanche Reds, Red One: be civil...

13 **EXT./INT. BOURQUIN'S HUMVEE - HALTED - SIMULTANEOUSLY** 13

The van halts near Bourquin's vehicle. He and his team watch as the men inside shake their flags, chant in unison: "*Muq-tada! Muq-tada! Down U.S.A.!*"

HAUBERT
(mutters)
Yeah, I'll give you U.S.A...

After more chanting, the van then just careens the other way.

HAUBERT (CONT'D)
Pansy-ass pussies...

HAYHURST
(into radio)
All Comanche Reds: the pep squad is
departing.

Wild looks at the stern cleric's face on a nearby wall poster.

WILD
So that's Mookie, their guy? What's
the draw?

BOURQUIN

The family name. Sadr City's named for his dad, a Grand Ayatollah Saddam had wasted some years back.

WILD

So what's he pissed at us for? We drop a bomb here or something'?

BOURQUIN

No. The Iraqis made this shithole themselves.

HAYHURST

Mookie just wants to rule over it, is all. Wants us out.

HAUBERT

And who's gonna do that for him? Those Haji ass clowns on the short bus? That's the big and bad Sadr Bureau? I think I want my money back...

Bourquin keeps watching after the van, now caught in traffic.

14

EXT. CAMP WAR EAGLE - OUTSIDE SADR CITY - ESTABLISHING

14

MATCH TO DIFFERENT TRAFFIC, at the American troops' home base on the outskirts of the city, a former Iraqi Army camp: dirt fields and paths, worn concrete buildings.

Super: CAMP WAR EAGLE. NORTHEAST CORNER OF SADR CITY.

LT. COLONEL GARY VOLESKY, COMMANDING.

The outgoing First Armored Division's colors are still flying, the unit readying to head home. The men from Fort Hood are still getting settled: vehicles, supplies, and equipment all scattered over the base grounds.

With no open barracks yet, men have to sleep under vehicles, sleeping bags and possessions spread out. A few lucky men have cots.

Almost all the vehicles, we see, are unarmored TRANSPORT TRUCKS and HUMVEES, only four heavier Bradleys. PAN ACROSS to the two-story COMMAND BUILDING.

DENOMY (PRE-LAP)

All incoming patrols report quiet...

Off a vehicle crossing the frame--

15

INT. TACTICAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - CAMP WAR EAGLE

15

--a map board crosses the frame, being carried past.

Busy transition here, too, COMPUTERS and RADIOS being switched out, First Cavalry's MAP AND ROSTER BOARDS being mounted.

Windows open toward the base grounds, and Sadr City beyond.

Aguero's bosses Captain Denomy and Colonel Volesky are meeting with their intel officer, CAPTAIN RANDAZZO (28) at a map table.

We saw both Denomy and Volesky briefly at the goodbyes scene, but this is our first real look at the commanders: Denomy looks stocky, more a desk warrior. Volesky has markedly gaunt features, but a warm demeanor. He's a man of unshakable faith, both in God and the Army.

DENOMY

...nothing out of the ordinary.

VOLESKY

Good. Once this business of transition is over, let's set meetings with all the local leaders, go over the status of our projects, any security issues. What're our guys seeing so far?

DENOMY

Main issue in the most depressed areas seems to be theft. One of my patrols saw two men on Route Texas yesterday trying to saw into a live main line to steal the wire for copper...

RANDAZZO

A live main? That's industrious.

DENOMY

Also, we got generators at two local hospitals failing because people are drilling into them, trying to siphon fuel.

VOLESKY

Let's tighten security at both locations and reinforce the tanks. Brother Randazzo, what do you have?

Randazzo sets intel memos on the table.

RANDAZZO

I'm a little concerned with the tone of some of these Friday sermons.

(MORE)

RANDAZZO (CONT'D)

Not just al-Sadr, but other mid-level clerics. There's been a marked uptick in anti-American sentiment, calls to end the occupation.

DENOMY

Is that so surprising? Al-Sadr blames us for all the problems, takes credit every time the power flicks on.

VOLESKY

All we can do is lead by example...

DENOMY

You think that'll do it, sir?

Volesky walks to the windows, looks toward the city.

VOLESKY

Think of it as drum beat, Brother Denomy. Every time we do something good here, it's a beat of that drum. We keep doing it, and soon that beat is going to get stronger and faster and drown out the negative voices. People are going to see amazing things from us here...

Denomy nods, wants to believe it. Volesky glances at the wall clock. Past five P.M.

VOLESKY (CONT'D)

...and in less than one hour, this place is officially ours for the year. How are the men settling in?

DENOMY

I'd say they're ready for barracks, access to the showers, the mess tent, the phones...

VOLESKY

Aren't we all...

He looks over the other STAFF in the room, setting up.

VOLESKY (CONT'D)

Duties permitting, I'd like everyone present for the command change ceremony. All our patrols back?

RANDAZZO

We have one still out. Aguerro.

16

EXT. AGUERO'S CONVOY - HALTED IN SADR CITY - SIMULTANEOUSLY 16

FOLLOW WITH AGUERO as he walks past a ROW OF LOCAL CHILDREN, all lined up to give him high-fives, which he returns in a wave. The kids are all dressed in rags, but smiling, calling out:

IRAQI KIDS
Good Mister! Good Mister!

Aguero smiles back, hands out candy, then walks to his lead Humvee. Nearby, the Iraqi tanker trucks are at work, a few soldiers fanned out for security, watching the crowds.

From Aguero's turret:

CHEN
Sir...

He gestures at A YOUNG IRAQI BOY (6), approaching the Humvee, carrying TODDLER (2). Both boys are also dressed in rags. The older one wears pink sandals clearly too big him. The toddler has no shoes.

The older boy is saying something in Arabic. Jassim translates:

JASSIM
He says his brother is injured.

Aguero sees one of the toddler's bare feet has a bad cut, clearly infected.

AGUERO
Guzman, come here a minute...

The Platoon's medic, PEDRO GUZMAN (21), black, from Brooklyn, double-times it over, winces a little at the sight of the foot.

AGUERO (CONT'D)
See what you can do.

GUZMAN
Yes, sir.

Guzman uses water from his canteen and an antiseptic pad to clean the wound. The toddler barely cries.

GUZMAN (CONT'D)
Tough kid. Guess they have to be.

The older boy gestures at a pair of ballistic sunglasses sticking out of Aguero's pocket, says something.

JASSIM

He'd like your glasses, Lieutenant.
It's said they have X-ray vision.

AGUERO

Yeah? I might have an extra pair...

He takes out a set of REGULAR RAY-BANS from another pocket, hands them to the boy. The kid looks thrilled. Chen grins:

CHEN

You know, you are a 'Good Mister,' sir.

Aguero smiles. His smile then fades, thoughts perhaps on his own son.

17

EXT. BOURQUIN'S HUMVEE - HALTED - SIMULTANEOUSLY

17

Sergeant Haubert has taken over the turret. Bourquin and Wild are smoking by the vehicle, watching the scene:

BOURQUIN

Think you could do it?

WILD

What?

BOURQUIN

Waste a kid.

WILD

Don't know. Hope I don't have to.

BOURQUIN

You'd let some little asshole put
a bullet in you?

WILD

Better than having to live knowing
I'd killed a kid...

Bourquin keeps watching the scene, eyes revealing nothing.

18

EXT. AGUERO'S HUMVEE - HALTED - SIMULTANEOUSLY

18

Aguero and Guzman are still with the Iraqi boys, when Chen suddenly notices something by the sewage tankers.

CHEN

What the hell-- Sir!

AGUERO

What?

CHEN

The tanker crew....

Aguero looks over, sees THE WORKERS are hastily pulling out their hoses and reeling them in. He checks his watch.

AGUERO

We got another 20 minutes...

But the workers just reel in the last hoses, start to board their trucks.

AGUERO (CONT'D)

Hey!

Aguero starts to run over, sees a worker give a fearful look as he climbs aboard the last tanker. The tanker trucks TAKE OFF.

AGUERO (CONT'D)

Son-of-a-bitch! All Comanche Reds, remount!

Guzman pats the kid to indicate they're done, runs for his Humvee.

As Guzman boards, the convoy takes off after the tanker trucks.

19

INT./EXT. AGUERO'S HUMVEE - DRIVING - A SHORT WHILE LATER

19

Riddell tries to gain on the trucks in Sadr City's maddening traffic.

AGUERO

You need to speed past them, cut 'em off.

RIDDELL

I'm trying, sir...

CHEN

(from the turret)

'The hell you think happened, sir?

AGUERO

Maybe this place is just insane like Riddell said. I swear it's gonna be the end of me...

*
*

On them, in the chase after the fleeing trucks, getting deeper into the maze of the city--

*
*

END OF ACT ONE

AMBER

But you gotta be ready in 10 minutes.

Elijah and Raina run to get ready.

AMBER (CONT'D)

I wanna see those teeth brushed...

As Amber readies to exit the room, she sees something fallen next to Elijah's bureau. She picks it up: A CRUMPLED-UP PHOTO. It shows the entire family on Halloween, beaming, happy.

Amber smooths out the picture.

22

INT. BATHROOM - FORT HOOD CHAPEL - MORNING

22

Two women stand by the childcare table. One is Denomy's wife, Gina, the other Volesky's wife, LeAnn, both of whom we saw briefly with their husbands at the field of goodbyes. Gina has pretty, sweet features. LeAnn looks tough, confident.

The Denomys' baby Merrick coos happily as Gina changes him.

LEANN

You're a pro already. Took me forever with Alex...

GINA

I don't feel like a pro.

LEANN

(sensing)
Nervous about today?

GINA

A little...

LEANN

Don't be. It's just an introduction.

Gina nods, puts the smile back on her face, fixes a little button on her lapel. It reads: "Ask me about Family Readiness."

23

INT. FORT HOOD CHAPEL - MOMENTS LATER - MORNING

23

The church is almost full as Gina and LeAnn take their seats. A few children nearby are playing, sword-fighting with palm reeds that decorate the interior. THE CHAPLAIN arrives, gives LeAnn a nod. She takes the lectern, speaks to a microphone.

LEANN

'Morning, everyone. If you don't know me, I'm LeAnn Volesky, one of the Family Readiness leaders.

(MORE)

LEANN (CONT'D)

I've asked to make a brief announcement: We're collecting supplies for care packages to Iraq. We've got bins in the back, or you can bring donations to the Center on Motor Pool Drive... I also want to introduce one of our new Care Team leaders, Gina Denomy.

Gina rises and comes to the lectern, leaving her baby with another mom in the pews. She starts, winces from the microphone echo:

GINA

Hi. I'm... new at this-- as you can see. Just wanted to say hello, and that I look forward to working with everyone... We're here for you if you need us-- when you need us.

LeAnn nods: finely done. Gina sits. LeAnn returns to the mic.

LEANN

Deployments can be hard in ways you don't expect. Always remember that you are not alone. We are a family. There are no ranks among us here, and I mean that. Flyers in the back have our numbers. Call us, day or night.

We see the pressure of that on Gina's face. Chaplain's turn now as LeAnn goes to sit.

CHAPLAIN

Thank you, LeAnn... It's wonderful to see you all here on this day that begins the most sacred week in our Church calendar... Palm Sunday marks Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, the city where despite a joyous welcome, he would soon be betrayed...

24

EXT. CAMP WAR EAGLE - AFTERNOON - SIMULTANEOUSLY

24

The Chaplain's voice continues to play as we see HANDS place a CAMEL SPIDER on a rucksack behind a LOUNGING SOLDIER. FOLLOW as the spider starts to crawl toward the unsuspecting man's neck...

CHAPLAIN'S VOICE (CONT'D)

As Jesus approached the city, the crowds stood waiting, and watching. And His disciples loudly called out...

The soldier feels the spider tickling his neck, turns, SCREAMS--

ARSIAGA
Jesus Christ!

--and we've never seen a guy get up that fast. REVEAL Robert Arsiaga, whom we saw briefly at the field of goodbyes.

We're in the motor pool area of Camp War Eagle, First Cavalry's makeshift housing, sleeping bags, and belongings around us.

This is Sergeant Miltenberger's troop, several of the guys also glimpsed at the goodbyes, among them Israel Garza and red-headed Tomas Young.

Miltenberger himself sits to the side, playing solitaire.

The guy who dropped off the spider is SPECIALIST RAFAEL (22), a tatted former gang member from L.A. -- now doubled over laughing.

RAFAEL
Arsiaga, your face...

ARSIAGA
You're an asshole, Rafael! Someone get that thing!

GARZA
I'm on it, bro.

Garza grabs a plastic knife from his MRE's and tries to approach the rucksack-- but the spider slips inside.

GARZA (CONT'D)
Oh, shit, it went in!

ARSIAGA
Fuck, man, no!

Young sets aside his MRE, walks over to the bag.

YOUNG
I got it...

ARSIAGA
What're you doing, Young? Get a knife or somethin'. Hell, take my rifle.

YOUNG
It's all right...

ARSIAGA
All right? You see the size of that thing? Rafael, I'm gonna kill you...

Young is slowly opening Arsiaga's rucksack, reaches his hand in, feels around. The guys all grimace in anticipation.

But Young's hand soon emerges with the spider crawling on it.

ARSIAGA (CONT'D)
Oh, God. Get it! Kill it!

YOUNG
Cool it. It's just a baby.

GARZA
That's a baby?

RAFAEL
They don't even bite...

Young sets the spider down and it scurries to safety. A beat. Then, Arsiaga is on Rafael, playfully wrestles him to the ground.

ARSIAGA
You're still an asshole! I'm gonna find a big one and feed it to you.

RAFAEL
Sorry, Holmes, a'ight? I give up!
Lemme go.

Arsiaga lets him go. He then settles back next to Garza, opens an MRE ration. At Rafael:

ARSIAGA
What're you doin' here, anyway?
Ain't you supposed to be on patrol?

RAFAEL
Missed the roll-out in the AM.
"Saddam's Revenge" got me on the toilet.

Garza is looking over Arsiaga's meal.

GARZA
Maybe you just ate one of these things. What the hell is that supposed to be? Chicken?

ARSIAGA
Damned if I know. Anyone got hot sauce or somethin'?

YOUNG
You don't want it, I'll eat it.

GARZA

You like this shit? You loco, Young?

Young is leaning back, savoring his ration.

YOUNG

I love it. I love everything about this place. I don't even want a bed, I wanna stay right here. We're in a war zone, gents.

MILTENBERGER

What do you know about it?

The men all look over at the gloomy tone. Miltenberger has halted his card game. He's a decade older than his men, with striking blue eyes, deep crows feet around his eyes.

MILTENBERGER (CONT'D)

You ever even been shot at?

RAFAEL

I have, how I became an O.G...

MILTENBERGER

Didn't ask you, Specialist. I asked PFC Young.

YOUNG

(beat)

No, Staff Sergeant, I have not been shot at.

MILTENBERGER

You ever fire your weapon at a human being?

YOUNG

No, sir.

MILTENBERGER

Then do me a favor and shut up. Ain't nothin' out there like you think it is, and ain't no trainin' gonna prepare you. There's no glory. Only two things in the end: death and rot.

ARSIAGA

(unnerved)

Man...

But Young is not discouraged, squints against the sun.

YOUNG

Forgive me for saying this, Staff
Sergeant Miltenberger, but is it
possible your stop-loss orders
may be coloring your perception
of the situation a bit?

Miltenberger just returns to his game. Garza sees his friend
Arsiaga watch wistfully after the outgoing troops.

ARSIAGA

Wish we were those guys...

GARZA

At least we escaped shit duty today...

Off the line--

25 **INT./EXT. AGUERO'S CONVOY - DRIVING - SIMULTANEOUSLY** 25

Aguero's lead Humvee finally CUTS OFF the fleeing Iraqi tankers
at an intersection.

The other Humvees move to BOX IN the vehicles, making it
impossible for them to escape.

The driver of the lead tanker blares his horn in futile protest.

Chen and the other gunners watch from their turrets as Aguero
and Jassim exit the lead Humvee.

26 **EXT. IRAQI TANKER TRUCKS - CONTINUOUS** 26

Bourquin joins Aguero and Jassim at the lead tanker truck.

The CREW FOREMAN (40's) is exiting, speaking Arabic in a rapid-
fire, agitated torrent. The emotion on his face is clear: fear.
Jassim translates:

JASSIM

He says you have to let them go.
They've quit. All of them.

AGUERO

Why?

The foreman explains in another torrent. Jassim translates:

JASSIM

A man came over at the last pump site
and told them they were going to be
killed-- them and their families--
that anyone working for the Coalition
was now an enemy of al-Sadr.

AGUERO

Ask him--

BOURQUIN

Hold up, sir. He left something out...

Bourquin repeats something the foreman said in perfect Arabic.
He then translates:

BOURQUIN (CONT'D)

"And we're tired of having targets
on our backs for the infidels." You
miss that part, Jassim?

JASSIM

(beat)

I was trying to be polite.

But Bourquin's suspicion is blooming. He towers over Jassim.

BOURQUIN

How about doin' your fucking job?

AGUERO

Eric...

Bourquin backs down, but looks at Jassim.

BOURQUIN

(in Arabic, subtitled)

*I lived in Jordan. I know your
kind...*

Aguero focuses on the foreman.

AGUERO

Jassim, tell this man he doesn't
have to be afraid. Our troops will
protect them.

Jassim relays that. But the foreman just shakes his head, more
bitter words. This time, Jassim translates exactly:

JASSIM

"You Americans say that. But how
will you protect us? How will you
protect us and our families
tonight, when you are back safe
behind your base walls? You can't.
And we have to live here after you
are gone."

Aguero doesn't have a counter to that. He and the others look on
as the foreman climbs back into his truck.

BOURQUIN

What do you want to do, sir?

AGUERO

Let them go.

27

INT. KILLEEN FOOD COURT - TEXAS - SIMULTANEOUSLY - MORNING

27

In a food court by the movie theater, Amber, Elijah and Raina are eating waffles. Raina looks around them.

RAINA

Is this really where you and Daddy met?

AMBER

We had our first date here. Six whole hours, and at the end of it, Daddy proposed. Mommy's just that cool.

Raina giggles. Elijah is not really eating.

AMBER (CONT'D)

Something you want to talk about, Elijah?

(beat)

It's okay... Wish you'd just tell me what you're feeling.

Elijah is silent for a long time.

ELIJAH

(quietly)

Is daddy still gonna come back?

AMBER

Of course, honey.

ELIJAH

Even though I said...

AMBER

Honey. Daddy knows you were just upset.

ELIJAH

But still. I never said sorry.

He's tearing up a little. Amber kisses his head.

AMBER

Why don't write an e-mail when we get home? Daddy will be so happy.

Elijah nods, wipes his tears, a little smile already.

AMBER (CONT'D)

But first: Scooby and the gang!

Amber sets money on the check and they head over to the movie.

Elijah and Raina happily bound ahead, other kids and families enjoying a carefree Sunday morning.

As they approach the theater, Amber takes out her cell phone, turns it off. Off Amber--

28 **INT./EXT. AGUERO'S HUMVEE - DRIVING IN SADR CITY - AFTERNOON** 28

--On Aguero as his platoon heads home to base. Fewer people on the streets now, the sun lower. Aguero is on with Denomy:

AGUERO

...that's what he said, that they and their families would be killed, that anyone working for us now was al-Sadr's enemy.

29 **INT. TACTICAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - WAR EAGLE - INTERCUT** 29

Denomy is on the radio, troubled by the report.

DENOMY

Copy that, Red One.
(beat)

Swing by the Sadr Bureau on your way back... Let's make sure nothing's brewing.

AGUERO (ON THE RADIO)

Roger that, Comanche Six. Red One out.

For a moment, we stay with Denomy, still troubled.

30 **INT. AGUERO'S HUMVEE - DRIVING - A SHORT WHILE LATER** 30

Aguero's lead vehicle nears an intersection. Crowds are ever thinner, the usual vistas of sewage, rusting cars, and trash.

RIDDELL

Looks quiet...

AGUERO

This is Delta, turn right here...

As they make the turn, all feels calm.

AGUERO (CONT'D)

Sadr Bureau's just up the road.

He picks up the radio.

AGUERO (CONT'D)

All Comanche Reds, Red One: keep your eyes open.

Everyone watches their sector. As they do:

FISK

Sir, should we try to get a group together for a game tonight?

AGUERO

Sure. Jassim, you interested?

JASSIM

What is this?

FISK

D&D.

JASSIM

What is D&D?

AGUERO

Dungeons & Dragons.

JASSIM

What is Dungeons & Dragons?

Aguero laughs.

31

INT. BOURQUIN'S HUMVEE - SIMULTANEOUSLY

31

Bourquin has the shotgun seat, earbuds on, heavy metal blasting as his vehicle makes the turn on Delta.

Suddenly, the driver Wild spots MOVEMENT:

A BLACK-CLAD FIGURE WITH AN AK-47, slipping out from an alley.

WILD

Sir! AK! 9 o'clock!

The earbuds are off in an instant.

Bourquin's head swivels over.

He sees THE MAN, slipping inside a building's courtyard.

BOURQUIN

(at Wild)

Whip us around. *

(into radio)

Red One, this is Red Four. We have
a potential hostile with an AK. *

Off Wild spinning the Humvee around--

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

32

EXT. AGUERO'S CONVOY - HALTED ON ROUTE DELTA - AFTERNOON

32

Aguero's convoy has pulled up outside the building in herringbone formation to guard their flanks. Aguero and Jassim exit the lead Humvee and walk over, Fisk close in tow. Aguero looks at the building, realizes:

*

AGUERO

Perfect, a mosque...

By the entrance, Bourquin is in an argument in Arabic with a CLERIC in traditional garb, Hayhurst and Swope nearby.

THE MAN WITH THE GUN looms behind the cleric in the courtyard doorway, FOUR OTHER ARMED MEN with AK's beyond him.

All Humvee gunners have their machine guns aimed, a tense stand-off. Aguero takes a breath as he approaches.

AGUERO (CONT'D)

Eric, let me take over...

Aguero makes the traditional Muslim greeting of peace at the cleric, right hand over heart.

AGUERO (CONT'D)

Salaam alaikum. Jassim, please translate: I'm Lieutenant Shane Aguero of the First Cavalry. Coalition rules prohibit possession and public display of weapons. These men must disarm and hand over their rifles. They must do this now.

Jassim translates, Bourquin listening. The cleric remains irate:

JASSIM

He says the weapons are authorized. That these men are guards.

AGUERO

Ask who're they affiliated with... Sadr Bureau, SCIRI, KDP?

Jassim asks. The cleric replies.

JASSIM

They are SCIRI. He says there is a rule that permits this.

Aguero considers, then looks to Bourquin.

AGUERO

Have your men take custody of the weapons.

Bourquin nods, signals Hayhurst and Swope, who get to task. Clamor among the Iraqis. But they have no choice but to comply.

AGUERO (CONT'D)

Let's call this in. Eric, Fisk...

*

As Hayhurst and Swope gather the weapons, Aguero and Bourquin head for his Humvee, Fisk following.

*

In his turret, Chen remains calm, confident.

Haubert looks to be on edge, wipes sweat from his eyes.

Aguero reaches the Humvee, grabs the radio handset.

AGUERO (CONT'D)

Lancer Mike, this is Comanche Red One.
I need Comanche Six or Lancer Six.

33

INT. TACTICAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - CAMP WAR EAGLE - INTERCUT

33

From the command room, Volesky is on, Denomy and Randazzo close.

VOLESKY

Lancer Six here, go ahead Red One.

AGUERO

Sir, we have a group of five armed men at the mosque on Delta, just south of the Sadr Bureau. They say they're SCIRI, permitted to carry per a Coalition agreement. What is your guidance?

DENOMY

That true?

RANDAZZO

There is a recent rule that allows for armed guards inside mosque perimeters. It was enacted after a string of Sunni bombings.

Volesky considers. Then, into radio:

VOLESKY

Red One, do you see evidence of hostile intent?

Aguero looks over. The men have relinquished their weapons.

AGUERO
Negative, Lancer Six.

BOURQUIN
Shane... the guy was on the street.

AGUERO
Lancer Six, Red Four reports one of
the men was on the street with his
weapon.

Volesky again considers. Finally, at Denomy and Randazzo:

VOLESKY
We have no evidence of hostile
intent. Let's try to keep the peace.
(into radio)
Red One: Return the weapons, and
advise the guards of proper
adherence to the rule or we'll have
to confiscate. Then return to base,
over.

AGUERO
Roger, Lancer Six. Red One out.

34

EXT. THE MOSQUE - ROUTE DELTA - AFTERNOON - MOMENTS LATER

34

Chen, Haubert, and the other gunners look on from their turrets
as Aguero leads the return of the weapons.

AGUERO
Jassim, tell them: Our mistake. But
they gotta stick to the rules. No
weapons outside, or we'll take 'em.

Jassim translates. Aguero still has reservations about the
decision. He looks at the Iraqis, some of whom seem emotionless,
others uneasy, some almost seem to feel bad for Aguero. Then:

AGUERO (CONT'D)
All Comanche Reds, remount!

The soldiers keep their weapons subtly at the ready as the
troops remount. Bourquin's face is gloomy as he boards.

BOURQUIN
This is bullshit.

HAUBERT
Yeah, we're the pussies now...

As Fisk boards the Humvee behind Aguero, he notes the time of the
incident in his book: Just minutes before six PM now.

*
*

35 **EXT. CAMP WAR EAGLE - AFTERNOON - SIMULTANEOUSLY** 35

At War Eagle, Arsiaga watches as the outgoing unit's THREE FLAGS are lowered. He and Garza stand by a bank of phones.

A soldier finishes a call. Garza picks up the receiver, dials.

36 **INT. FORT HOOD CHAPEL - INTERCUT** 36

The Palm Sunday service is still going when a cell phone rings.

Garza's wife Lupita, whom we saw at the Cooper Field goodbyes, fumbles to answer, breaks out in loud excitement.

LUPITA
Israel, baby! Sweetie!

She gets out of the pews with her sons, ISRAEL, JR. (4) and MICHAEL (2), walks to the hallway to talk.

LUPITA (CONT'D)
I can't believe it's you! I'm in Church, baby!

At War Eagle, Garza smiles on the phone, Arsiaga close by.

GARZA
Put Junior on for a sec, I wanna say hello. Got Arsiaga here, too.

Lupita leans down, lets Israel, Jr. and Michael say hello. Then:

LUPITA
You're okay? I've been so worried...

GARZA
You always worry too much, Lupe, they just opened the phones. Listen, I don't got a lot of time, but wanted to tell you about a dream I had last night, it was amazing...

He taps Arsiaga to make sure he is listening, too.

GARZA (CONT'D)
In it, I was already back, and we were all together, hugging and kissing... It was so real, I woke up hugging my rucksack. Lucky Arsiaga wasn't next to me or he woulda woken up to me tryin' to hump him.

Arsiaga smiles. In the church hallway, Lupita smiles, too.

GARZA (CONT'D)

I love you, baby. So don't worry.
 (grabbing Arsiaga)
 You hear me? We're gonna be fine.

37 **EXT. CAMP WAR EAGLE - AFTERNOON - SIMULTANEOUSLY**

37

Sitting in the shade of a suspended tarp, Tomas Young is writing a long letter home, using a "Heart of Darkness" paperback for support. He sees Garza and Arsiaga horsing around.

He notices Miltenberger just sitting, looking into the distance.

YOUNG

Staff Sergeant? They've opened the phones. Don't you wanna call home?

MILTENBERGER

Already said everything I needed to before I left...

His eyes remain on the field, where the THREE FLAG POLES now stand bare, eerie echo of the crosses at Golgotha.

38 **INT./EXT. AGUERO'S HUMVEE - DRIVING IN SADR CITY- AFTERNOON**

38

The sun is low and harsh as Aguero leads the convoy back to base. Only a few people on the streets now.

AGUERO

Riddell, roll us past the Sadr Bureau and we're done. Eddie, you joining us for D&D after chow?

CHEN

Never again, sir. Definitely not.

Aguero laughs.

FISK

Come on, sir. Who'd Sergeant Chen even be?

AGUERO

A Bard.

FISK

A Bard? The Bards suck, sir.

AGUERO

I love the Bards!

From the turret, Chen's suddenly serious voice:

CHEN

Guys.

When Agüero looks ahead, the streets are UTTERLY DESERTED.

Not a single person or vehicle in sight, just a deathly still.

Prayer rugs flap in the breeze from balconies.

AGÜERO

Where the hell is everyone?

Sewage glistens. On a wall ahead, A HUGE MURAL OF MUQTADA AL-SADR looms over the city: The Sadr Bureau.

Suddenly, a SOUND behind them. *Pop. Pop. Pop.* Small, innocuous.

AGÜERO (CONT'D)

Is that--

39 **INT./EXT. BOURQUIN'S HUMVEE - DRIVING - SIMULTANEOUSLY** 39

ANOTHER SET OF BURSTS sounds here, then ANOTHER. Bourquin sees BULLETS impact the dirt street.

BOURQUIN

CONTACT LEFT!

(grabbing radio)

All Comanche Reds, Red Four: We have contact. Sounds like a lone shooter!

40 **INT./EXT. AGÜERO'S HUMVEE - DRIVING - SIMULTANEOUSLY** 40

Agüero follows the action through his side mirror.

AGÜERO

All Comanche Reds: move to Red Four's position, isolate and Disarm!

(at Riddell)

Get us back there.

Riddell slams the brakes and reverses, Chen holding on.

41 **INT./EXT. BOURQUIN'S HUMVEE - HALTING - SIMULTANEOUSLY** 41

The entire convoy is halting.

BOURQUIN

Dismount and take cover on this side!

The men dismount.

No fire now, only an eerie silence on the deserted streets.

In his turret, Haubert sweats, face flushed.

42 **INT. AGUERO'S HUMVEE - SIMULTANEOUSLY**

42

Aguero is on with War Eagle as his vehicle reverses back.

AGUERO

Lancer Mike, this is Comanche Red
One: We have received fire. Route
Delta, just south of the Sadr Bureau.

43 **INT. TACTICAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - WAR EAGLE - INTERCUT**

43

In the command room, Denomy's insides fill with sudden ice.
He grabs the radio.

DENOMY

Red One, Comanche Six: What type of
fire?

Aguero looks. Still no fire, the men on the street.

AGUERO

Comanche Six, unclear--

As Riddell halts the vehicle, Aguero opens his door to get out--

44 **EXT./INT. HALTED CONVOY VEHICLES - CONTINUOUS**

44

MASSIVE FIRING BREAKS OUT FROM BOTH SIDES OF THE STREET: At
least TWO DOZEN BLACK-CLAD SHOOTERS on rooftops and balconies.

CHEN

AMBUSH!!!

Aguero slams the door back shut as bullets zing off armor.

AGUERO

Son-of-a-bitch!

Above, Chen RETURNS FIRE, bullets pinging off the turret's
protective armored plates, his body reverberating with the
recoil of the deafening .50-caliber gun. Fisk is also firing,
his notebook forgotten.

*
*

This is our first view of the Platoon in battle, some men
calm, others on edge, all trying to remember their training.
A roar of overlapping voices:

SOLDIERS' VOICES

Sergeant, shithead in your 7 o'clock!
Hostile in four, 75 meters! Jesus
Christ, these guys are everywhere!

Aguero remains calm, calls out an order via radio:

AGUERO
All Comanche Reds, remount! Back in
the vehicles!

Hayhurst is moving back toward the rear Humvee when a bullet WHIZZES past his face. He startles, stops. In that moment, three THUMPS as rounds impact his plated Kevlar vest. Bourquin pulls his friend into cover by the Humvee.

HAYHURST
(stunned)
My plate caught 'em... It caught
'em.

BOURQUIN
Get in! Everyone remount!

In his Humvee, Aguero follows the activity via his mirror. The fire remains DEAFENING. He sees the last men climb in.

AGUERO
Hit it, Riddell! Punch us through!
(into radio)
All Comanche Reds, we are leaving,
time: Now! Head north!

45 **INT./EXT. AGUERO'S HUMVEE - DRIVING - CONTINUOUS**

45

Bullets continue to impact the ballistic windshield.

AGUERO
(into radio)
Comanche Six, this is Red One: We
are in renewed contact!

DENOMY (OVER THE RADIO)
Red One, how heavy is the contact?

A BULLET slams into the windshield, chipping ballistic glass. The roar of fire is deafening.

AGUERO
What?!

DENOMY (OVER THE RADIO)
How heavy is your contact?

AGUERO
Really fucking heavy! We are in a
complex ambush. Fire is heavy and
sustained!

But for the first time, fear flashes on Agueró's face.

48 **INT./EXT. UNARMORED MIDDLE HUMVEES - FOLLOWING - INTERCUT** 48

The two middle Humvees-- unarmored and with regular engines-- STRAIN to keep up with Riddell's driving.

49 **INT. FIRST UNARMORED HUMVEE - DRIVING - SIMULTANEOUSLY** 49

The driver, (PRIVATE PERRY), black, 19, skillfully navigates the burning maze, trailing Agueró.

Suddenly, A BULLET PIERCES THE WINDSHIELD. Glass cuts Perry's face. He screams, slams on the brakes.

50 **EXT./INT. SECOND UNARMORED HUMVEE - DRIVING - SIMULTANEOUSLY** 50

The Humvee behind Perry SWERVES to evade impact--
--and CRASHES INTO A LOW BARRICADE.

51 **INT./EXT. AGUERO'S HUMVEE - DRIVING** 51

Aguero continues racing forward, his view also obscured by the smoke and barricades. The fire continues heavy at them as he tries to consult the tiny map, finally just tosses it.

AGUERO

Fuck this! Make your next clear right.
We need to get out of this!

(into radio)

All Comanche Reds, Red One: ready for
a right turn, acknowledge! ...All
Comanche Reds, Red One: come in!

FISK

Where are they?!

Riddell tries to look in his mirror, but it's been shot off.

RIDDELL

My mirror's gone!

Aguero looks, sees his mirror, too, is gone.

AGUERO

Shit!

He again has to physically open the door a bit to peer back. Bullets strafe the ballistic window and door.

No one is following.

Aguero slams the door shut again.

AGUERO (CONT'D)
There's no one behind us!
(grabbing the radio)
All Comanche Reds, this is Red One:
Do you copy?!

Still nothing. Aguero's Humvee is now coming out of the fire, a turn approaching, smoke still around them.

CHEN
We're clear!

RIDDELL
Sir, do I take the turn?

Aguero's first momentous decision has come. Continue or go back?

RIDDELL (CONT'D)
Sir! Take the turn?!

AGUERO
(finally)
No. Do not take the turn... We
gotta go back.

Riddell slows to a stop. A median to their left.

RIDDELL
(fearful)
Can't we just... wait? They'll catch up.

AGUERO
Two of the Victors have no armor. One
could be down. Guys could be hurt.
They'd never leave us.

Riddell finally nods.

He puts the vehicle in gear, SWERVES them over the median, sends A BURNING REFRIGERATOR propped as a barricade FLYING.

In the back seat, Jassim continues praying as the vehicle heads back into the ambush zone.

BULLETS soon come at them again through the smoke.

AGUERO (CONT'D)
Can anyone see them?!

No view of the Platoon's vehicles.

Riddell evades an obstacle, but then CATCHES and starts DRAGGING DEBRIS, arching sparks. He swerves to get it off, sends it FLYING.

RIDDELL
How's my driving now, sir?!

Aguero can't help but grin. Then--

AGUERO
There!

He sees the vehicles ahead, men dismounted around them.

AGUERO (CONT'D)
(into radio)
Red Four, this is Red One. Red
Four, come in! ...What the hell is
wrong with our comms?!

FISK
Antennas must've gotten shot up!

Riddell halts them. Aguero thinks for a beat. Then:

AGUERO
Riddell, turn this vehicle around.
Wait here until I'm back.

RIDDELL
Back? Where are you going?!

Aguero steps out into the fire.

52

ON AGUERO - CONTINUOUS

52

FOLLOW HAND-HELD as AGUERO RUNS toward the vehicles.

BULLETS blast and impact around him in the smoke. It all feels surreal still, like being in a real-life videogame.

Aguero reaches Bourquin, who is outside his vehicle, still trying to use his heavier armored Humvee to push the stuck vehicle off the barricade. Bullets zing intermittently.

Guzman the medic is treating Perry, the injured driver, a few others with minor flesh wounds.

BOURQUIN
Sir! Where'd you come from?!

AGUERO
Long story! What's happening?!

BOURQUIN
Red Three's stuck on a barricade. Two's engine got shot out.

AGUERO
Please be kidding.

BOURQUIN
No. We're trying to push Three off.
Alright, Taylor, hit it again!

The driver of the other struck vehicle (PRIVATE TAYLOR) guns the gas, but the Humvee only strains with a piercing sound.

Suddenly, the ENGINE FALLS OUT BURNING onto the street.

Two vehicles are now dead.

AGUERO
This is un-fucking believable!

Bullets start to come closer, the enemy aiming at the burning engine through the smoke. At Aguero:

BOURQUIN
Whatever we do, sir, we have to get
the fuck off this street!

53

INT./EXT. AGUERO'S HUMVEE - CONTINUOUS

53

Aguero runs back to his Humvee to get on the radio. As he climbs in--

A sudden THUD and groan as EDDIE CHEN TAKES A BULLET IN THE TURRET and falls in the vehicle. His blood spatters the men.

AGUERO
Eddie! Where's he hit?!

Fisk rushes over. His hands come away wet with blood.

FISK
I can't tell! It's bad!

Chen's eyes meet Fisk's briefly. There's blood on his teeth.

FISK (CONT'D)
He's not breathing!

Aguero forces himself calm.

AGUERO
Jassim. Do you know CPR? Jassim!

The terrified young interpreter stirs.

JASSIM
Yes.

AGUERO

I need you to start! Fisk, get on the
.50 cal and return fire!

For a moment, Fisk hesitates. He looks up through the turret. Smoke swirls past, somewhere beyond it, a calm blue sky. Fuck it. He climbs up.

As Jassim begins CPR, Aguero grabs the radio.

AGUERO (CONT'D)

Comanche Six, this is Red One! We
need QRF support and an immediate
evac. We have an urgent surgical, two
vehicles down!

54 **INT. TACTICAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - WAR EAGLE - INTERCUT** 54

Shock inside the War Eagle command room as the sounds of gunfire and Aguero's strained voice blare over the radio.

AGUERO (OVER THE RADIO)

...Repeat, immediate evac!

For a moment, Denomy is silent, debates what to order.

DENOMY

Red One, Comanche Six: Abandon the
disabled vehicles and find a secure
defensive position. We're coming!

55 **INT./EXT. AGUERO'S HUMVEE - CONTINUOUS** 55

Aguero hangs up the radio, takes a breath. Looks to Riddell.

AGUERO

I'm gonna lead the guys on foot.
Ready to move on my signal!

Riddell nods. Behind him, Jassim continues CPR, his mouth and uniform stained red with Chen's blood.

Aguero kisses the amulets around his neck for luck.

56 **EXT./INT. THE HUMVEES - CONTINUOUS** 56

FOLLOW AGAIN HAND-HELD as Aguero returns to his men, bullets whizzing and impacting around him and the disabled Humvees.

AGUERO

Get all the sensitive equipment and
ammo out of these vehicles! Z-out
the radios!

(MORE)

AGUERO (CONT'D)

We'll use the armored Victors for cover, find a secure location and wait for extraction! Let's move!

His men do as ordered. Two men flick switches to permanently disable the fallen vehicle radios. In Aguero's Humvee, Riddell watches the process nervously.

RIDDELL

Come on, Come on...

Aguero knows they have to move.

AGUERO

Let's go! Cover your sectors and follow me!

Guzman grabs a final armful of medical supplies, raining other stuff in his wake.

The men move to the cover of the TWO SURVIVING HUMVEES.

Aguero signals for Riddell to start moving.

ON AGUERO

as he leads, searches the fiery maze for a defensive position. Bullets keep coming intermittently, blindly from above.

TWO ENEMY ON THE GROUND suddenly emerge into Aguero's view.

Aguero FIRES.

BLOOD BLASTS OUT from the men's chests as the BULLETS drop them. Aguero sees a ghastly smile on one of the attacker's faces as he falls.

Aguero's first kills. He feels nothing, keeps going.

Fire seems to be dying down a bit.

BOURQUIN

Sir...

AGUERO

There's gotta be something...

Bourquin and Hayhurst stay close to cover Aguero.

Aguero then spots A NARROW ALLEY ahead, almost tucked away.

He makes a hand-signal for Riddell to take the turn. Sound recedes as we hold on Aguero's face and CUT TO--

57 **THE NIGHT BEFORE DEPARTURE - THREE MEMORIES:** 57

AGUERO holding RAINA's hand, leading his children home...
 ELIJAH angrily throwing the football, running from the room...
 AGUERO playing Champions of Norrath, fighting his way forward...

Then--

58 **EXT. COOPER FIELD - FORT HOOD - MOMENT OF DEPARTURE** 58

Aguero's goodbyes with Amber, their last embrace as bus engines roar to life.

AMBER

I'm gonna miss you so much.

AGUERO

Me, too. I just wish Elijah...
 He wouldn't even say goodbye.

AMBER

He'll be okay. We all will...
 You'll be back before we know it.

She wants to say something, anything, to make this moment last.

AMBER (CONT'D)

(jokes)

You know... in every war, there's
 always that one platoon that gets
 pinned down... Don't be that guy.

AGUERO

I won't be that guy.

AMBER

Promise?

AGUERO

Cross my heart.

59 **CLOSE ON AGUERO - SADR CITY - RESUMED** 59

But now Shane Aguero is that guy as he heads down the smoke-shrouded alley. No fire now, his men following.

A THREE-STORY HOUSE ahead. Solid concrete walls, no windows facing the alley. A THICK METAL DOOR to a high-walled courtyard.

AGUERO

Eric, that black door...

Bourquin relays the same with hand signals.

60 **INT. TACTICAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - WAR EAGLE - SIMULTANEOUSLY** 60

In the chaos of the command room, Denomy pulls a dusty map off the wall, slams it on the center table.

VOLESKY

What is their current position?

RANDAZZO

Unknown.

VOLESKY

What do you mean? Don't the vehicles have trackers?

RANDAZZO

Not active yet. Computer's still connected to the outgoing unit.

*
*

DENOMY

How the hell are we gonna find 'em?

61 **EXT. SADR CITY ALLEY - AFTERNOON - RESUMED** 61

Aguero signals for the two surviving Humvees to take flanking positions around the heavy metal door. The vehicles pull in close together, forming a protective triangle around the entry.

*
*
*

Aguero nods to Bourquin and Hayhurst, who reach the door first. Bourquin bangs his massive fist against the metal.

*

BOURQUIN

(in Arabic, subtitled)

Open the door!

Nothing. He bangs his fist again, harder.

BOURQUIN (CONT'D)

(in Arabic, subtitled)

OPEN RIGHT NOW OR WE'LL KILL YOU!

In the back of Aguero's Humvee, Jassim continues CPR on a pale and ashen Eddie Chen. Both men look covered in blood.

In the alley, Aguero looks to Bourquin and Hayhurst.

AGUERO

Ready to clear? Go!

Hayhurst FIRES A BURST to take out the lock. Bourquin gathers momentum-- and KICKS IN THE DOOR.

BLACK SCREEN.

END OF EPISODE 101