

FADE IN

EXT. ZAGROS MOUNTAINS - NIGHT

SUPER: "ZAGROS MOUNTAINS 687 AD"

Three Muslim exorcists (Raqi) are squatting next to a young man tied spread eagle on the ground. The young man moans. Nearby a tar-like substance bubbles in a pot.

FIRST RAQI

Say, Oh Prophet, 'I seek refuge in
the Lord of daybreak, from the
evil of whatever He has created
...

The FIRST RAQI picks up a clay pot and puts it on the young man's chest. The Raqi are passing their hands over, but not touching the young man.

SECOND RAQI

... and from the evil of the night
when it grows dark ...

THIRD RAQI

... and from the evil of those
witches casting spells by blowing
onto knots ...

FIRST RAQI

... and from the evil of the
envier when they envy.'

Green glowing gas rises from the man's chest into the clay pot. The First Raqi slides a lid underneath it, turns the pot sideways. Second Raqi grabs a ladle.

INSERT - LADLE DIPS INTO BUBBLING LIQUID

The Second Raqi pours the liquid over the seam between the pot and the lid until the seam is completely filled.

ALL RAQI

(simultaneously)

I seek refuge in the perfect words
of Allah from the evil of that
which he has created.

First Raqi flips the pot upright and marches to a hole in the ground. He puts the pot in the hole and the Raqi cover it with dirt.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EXT. FORWARD OPERATING BASE (FOB) COMANCHE - DAY

In the foothills of the Zagros Mountains in Northeast Iraq. Hesco barriers, barbed wire, and guard towers enclose temporary buildings, vehicles, and equipment.

SUPER: "FORWARD OPERATING BASE COMANCHE

ZAGROS MOUNTAINS 2010"

Three Soldiers march past a temporary building. In the background, a Soldier stirs a burn pit. Smoke rises.

INT. SMALL ROOM WITH A COT - MORNING

INSERT - FRAMED PHOTO OF WOMAN WITH TWO YOUNG CHILDREN ON UPTURNED WOODEN BOX NEXT TO THE COT.

BACK TO SCENE.

PLATOON SERGEANT CHARLIE "GRAMPS" HENDERSON, tall, mid-thirties sleeps on the cot, blanket on top of him.

DREAM - BACK OF AN M1224 MAXXPRO MRAP

Five Soldiers seated in the back of the vehicle. Charlie and EMILIO "FLACO" PEREZ, are seated on one side. ERIC "WISE GUY" WHITE, is seated across from them.

CHARLIE

(shaking his head)

Wiseguy, you couldn't pour piss
out of a boot if the instructions
were on the sole.

Flaco and Wise Guy laugh.

FLACO

I bet that donkey . . .

EXT. CITY STREET, MOSUL, IRAQ - DAY

IED explodes. The vehicle travels twenty feet in the air, rolls once and rear ramp springs open. Charlie and Flaco struggle out covered in blood, ears RING.

CHARLIE

Are you alright?

Flaco touches both ears and shakes his head indicating he cannot hear.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Charlie points to Flaco and flashes an OK sign. Flaco nods his head and points at Charlie. Charlie nods his head and signals OK. Charlie turns to the vehicle.

CHARLIE

Wiseguy!

Charlie and Flaco see Wiseguy unconscious in the vehicle bleeding. The other two Soldiers are dead. Charlie hauls Wiseguy out blood spurting from his missing his leg.

CHARLIE

Hang in there Wiseguy! You hear me? You're going to be ok!

Charlie kneels and cradles Wiseguy's head in his lap. Flaco grabs a med kit from the MRAP rummages through the bag and pulls out a tourniquet.

CHARLIE

You're going to be alright!

Bubbly blood gurgles from Wiseguy's mouth. Flaco works to put the tourniquet on Wiseguy when the stump stops spurting. Flaco shakes his head.

FLACO

To late.

Flaco reaches up and touches Charlie's shoulder. Charlie looks up. Flaco shakes his head and points to the stump no longer spurting. Wiseguy has bled out.

CHARLIE

(looks at Wiseguy)

No! . . . Damn it! . . . No!

Charlie lowers Wiseguy's head, stands up and goes to the front of the vehicle. The driver and front passenger are dead. Other Soldiers start converging on the scene.

END OF DREAM.

INT. CHARLIE'S ROOM - DAY

Charlie's eyes open. He flings the blanket off, swings his legs to the floor and stands in gym shorts. He looks around, shakes his head and lets out a deep breath.

CHARLIE

I hate this damned war. . .
I hate this damned Army.

EXT. - FOB COMANCHE - DAY

Charlie fatigues, exits hut. He strolls toward building that displays a U.S. flag and guidon for First Squadron, Twenty-third Cavalry Regiment.

INT. HQ BUILDING - DAY

Charlie steps into the headquarters building and makes his way to STAFF SERGEANT BILL "SMITTY" SMITH standing behind a counter.

CHARLIE

Hey Smitty, any word on my orders?

SMITTY

Nothing yet Charlie.

CHARLIE

Dag nab it! I'm supposed to be going home.

SMITTY

Sorry.

CHARLIE

Please tell those clowns at Brigade that I'm leaving in thirty-two days with or without orders.

SMITTY

Will do. What are you gonna do when you get home?

CHARLIE

Hug my wife and kids a lot, avoid another deployment like this, and flippin' retire!

SMITTY

Sounds good. I'll let you know as soon as I hear anything.

Front door opens. SECOND LIEUTENANT ERIC MURPHY, a young Soldier who joined the unit as platoon leader two months ago pokes his head in the door and sees Charlie.

MURPHY

There you are platoon sergeant.
The SCO (Squadron Commander) wants to see us.

Charlie turns his head and looks at Murphy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHARLIE
(to Murphy)
Why, sir?

MURPHY
Don't know. I was told that you
and I are wanted now.

Charlie turns head back to Smitty and nods.

CHARLIE
Thanks.

SMITTY
Any time.

Charlie turns. He and Murphy march further back into the building and stop at LIEUTENANT COLONEL MARTINEZ'S office.

INT. MARTINEZ'S OFFICE - DAY

Martinez is seated at his desk, looks at a document, pen in hand, office door open. Murphy and Charlie appear at the door. Murphy knocks.

MARTINEZ
(does not look up)
Enter.

Murphy and Charlie step into the office and salute. Martinez looks up.

MARTINEZ
At ease.

Charlie and Murphy drop their salutes.

MURPHY
Sir. You wanted to see us?

MARTINEZ
Yes, Lieutenant.

Martinez looks at Charlie and nods.

MARTINEZ
Platoon sergeant.

CHARLIE
Sir.

Martinez rises from his chair.

(CONTINUED)

MARTINEZ

You two, come with me.

Martinez steps past them and out the office door. Murphy and Charlie fall in behind and glance at each other. Martinez opens the door to the S-2 (Intelligence) office.

CAPTAIN PAUL DAVIS snaps to attention and salutes.

DAVIS

Sir.

MARTINEZ

At ease. Lieutenant Murphy and Sergeant Henderson are here for the mission brief we discussed.

DAVIS

Yes sir. Sergeant, would you mind closing that door please.

Charlie closes door. Davis moves to a map on the wall showing the area around Comanche. Pins mark various locations. Martinez, Murphy, and Charlie gather around.

DAVIS

We've received a request to gather intelligence regarding activity .
. . (pointing at black pin
northeast of Comanche) . . . at
this location.

Davis look at Martinez, Murphy, and Charlie.

MURPHY

What's there?

DAVIS

(to Murphy)

Unknown. That's why we're sending your platoon.

CHARLIE

(to Davis)

Sir. What about satellites, a recon flight, or a drone.

DAVIS

(to Charlie)

I'm told the location of interest is located in a very narrow canyon.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MURPHY

So?

DAVIS

Neither satellites nor recon flights have the right angle to get coverage.

Charlie frowns.

DAVIS

And, no drones. Higher wants our interest in this area to remain strictly confidential.

MURPHY

Why?

DAVIS

I don't know Lieutenant. They want to make sure the bad guys don't know we're snooping around.

MURPHY

Yes sir.

DAVIS

Higher made it clear you cannot reveal your presence. If discovered, the mission is blown.

CHARLIE

(to Davis)

Sir, that area looks pretty rough. How far are we talking about?

DAVIS

Fifty clicks from here. You'll be able to drive to this location.

Davis points to another pin on the map.

DAVIS

It's a dirt road, but passable. About thirty clicks from the target. Closest we can get you.

CHARLIE

(to Murphy)

So, we walk from there. Are we looking for anything specific?

(CONTINUED)

DAVIS

No. For now, just general recon - vehicles, personnel, weapons, activity, etc., the usual.

Charlie nods.

MARTINEZ

(to Murphy)

Lieutenant, I want you to assemble ten men and a translator from your platoon for a ten day patrol.

MURPHY

Yes sir. What about water?

MARTINEZ

Carry enough for at least three days. We can resupply by helo as needed except near the target.

CHARLIE

(to Martinez)

Sir, I'm scheduled to rotate home in thirty-two days.

Martinez looks at Charlie.

MARTINEZ

Sorry, Sergeant. Even if it's two weeks, the target is in an unknown area and stealth is crucial.

Charlie closes his lips and adopts a stoic look and posture.

MARTINEZ

You're the senior scout. You have the most combat experience in Alpha Troop.

Charlie draws up to attention and takes a deep breath through his nose.

MARTINEZ

You're also the only one in Alpha Troop with a LRRP tab (Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol). You're going. Clear?

CHARLIE

Yes sir.

Martinez points a finger at Charlie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MARTINEZ

Your men need you and your
experience to get them there and
back safely.

CHARLIE

Yes sir.

MARTINEZ

Lieutenant prepare your men. Let
the XO or staff know if you need
anything special.

MURPHY

Yes sir.

MARTINEZ

You head out no later than 0500
tomorrow. Good hunting.

CHARLIE AND MURPHY

(simultaneously)

Yes sir.

Charlie and Murphy march out of the S-2 office.

EXT. FOB COMANCHE - DAY

Charlie and Murphy are strolling back toward their
platoon area.

MURPHY

What do you think Platoon
Sergeant?

CHARLIE

Honestly? Permission to speak
freely sir?

MURPHY

Granted, please do.

CHARLIE

I think it's a load of stupid,
secret squirrel shit, sir. I'm
also pretty pissed.

MURPHY

Why?

(CONTINUED)

CHARLIE

You notice that other than a location we didn't get any details?

MURPHY

Yeah. So?

CHARLIE

So either they don't know what's there, or they don't want us to know.

MURPHY

Why is that a problem?

CHARLIE

It's more dangerous for us. There's no telling what we'll run into.

MURPHY

Are you always so suspicious and paranoid sergeant?

CHARLIE

It's how you stay alive sir. My gut tells me we're probably going to get screwed on this one.

INT. CHARLIE'S ROOM - DAY

Charlie packs his rucksack and talks to Flaco about the mission.

CHARLIE

I can't believe I'm going to have to go one more time for the greater glory of Raytheon.

FLACO

No sweat man. We got this. Just a nice mountain hike. Take some photos and come back.

Charlie pauses his packing and looks at Flaco

CHARLIE

You're sure about that, are you? You promise me I'm not gonna get killed so close to being done.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FLACO

(in a Spanish accent)
Well vato, I can't make any
promises. But I think the Lord
will have mercy on you.

CHARLIE

This is my last deployment, man...
It's just ever since Wiseguy
bought it last time we were here -

FLACO

(no accent)
I know. Mosul was rough. I miss
him too.

CHARLIE

Yeah, but this close to being done
with this bullshit war . . . I
don't want to go home in a bag.

FLACO

Everyone here deserves better than
that. Shit happens, but it's what
we signed up for. We'll be fine.

Charlie knocks on the wooden box next to his cot which
holds the photo of his family.

CHARLIE

From your mouth to God's ears.
Last thing I need is to buy it on
my LAST combat deployment.

FLACO

Which one is this for you, again?

CHARLIE

Five since '01. I promised my
wife to come home alive and in one
piece.

FLACO

Then keep your promise . . . We
got this. Easy-peasy.

EXT. - FOB COMANCHE - THE NEXT DAY

One M1151 Humvee and one M1078 LMTV exit Comanche's gate
and turn up the road. A gunner in the turret of the
Humvee mans the .50 cal machine gun.

LATER.