

"BURIED" (WORKING TITLE)

FADE IN:

INT. UNKNOWN ROOM - NIGHT

Darkness. Silence. After a long beat, we hear movement, confined and contained.

We then hear the sound of a man, PAUL CONROY, groaning, making confused attempts at words. We hear his movement; short, abrupt shifting, ending almost immediately with the sound of his body banging against wood.

He groans, pained from a head injury. His mouth is muzzled, his hands tied. After attempting to sit up, he immediately bangs his head against something. It's terribly warm and his breaths are labored.

Something is very wrong, and he doesn't need to see to know that.

With great difficulty, and while still sitting in complete darkness, Paul soon wriggles his hands free and removes the muzzle from his mouth.

He attempts to move to his left and right, only to find that he is confined on those sides, as well. He frantically shifts about, only to discover, by touch, that he is encased in something.

PAUL

What...? What is this?

His words become almost unintelligible as he flails about, though fear is understood in his every utterance.

After a beat, he lights his Zippo cigarette lighter.

We see that he is lying in an old fashioned, wooden coffin. Realizing the same, Paul is struck by an overwhelming, instant panic.

He screams aloud, but his voice is captured by the coffin walls.

PAUL

Oh my God! Help me!! Help me!!

There is a large smearing of dried blood across the side of Paul's face, seemingly from a wound to his head.

He kicks and slams his hands against the top and sides of the coffin, all to no avail. His violent movements cause small grains of sand to trickle in through the space between the sides and top of the coffin.

Sweat cascades down the side of his neck, dripping from his dampened brow. The heat inside the extremely close confines of the coffin is stifling.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Somebody help me! Please!!

Paul continues with his futile efforts to pry off the top of the coffin. The sides, the top, the bottom - all are too thoroughly reinforced by the force of what surrounds the coffin. Sand. It becomes clear to him that he is buried.

He tries his best to calm himself, though he has trouble catching his breath. It takes him some time, but he eventually achieves some semblance of calm.

Getting a good look at him for the first time, we see that Paul is somewhere around 43 years old. Unshaven and physically unremarkable, he embodies the blue-collar American everyman.

He starts coughing. The minimal amount of oxygen in the coffin makes it hard for him to breathe.

The heat is unbearable. Paul takes off his button-down shirt, leaving him in a T-shirt. He fights the incredibly tight confines of the coffin every step of the way. His undershirt is drenched through with sweat.

Still trying to calm himself, but having little success in doing so, Paul looks around the coffin. His feet, though only his body-length away, seem miles from him.

He looks at the top of the coffin, and then back at his feet.

With great difficulty, he shifts his body so that his feet are pressed against the top of the coffin. He attempts to use his leg strength to push the top off of him, but it doesn't move even a millimeter.

After several failed attempts, and with his legs exhausted, Paul drops his feet from the top of the coffin. He lay for a moment in silence, followed by an outburst of crying.

He closes his cigarette lighter, extinguishing the flame. He continues to cry.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
What is this?

With his sobbing slowly subsiding, the coffin soon grows eerily silent.

The sound of Paul's labored breaths are all we hear, softened under the blanket of absolute darkness.

After a beat, the silence is interrupted by a jarring vibration. Strange, colored lights flicker in the coffin by Paul's feet. He is extremely startled.

The vibration continues, as does the splashing of light. He soon realizes that what he is hearing and seeing is the vibrating ring and LED features of an older model cell phone.

He frantically reaches for it, though the coffin is far too small for him to reposition himself so easily.

To his dismay, the phone stops ringing. But, his efforts to reach it continue. Paul again lights his cigarette lighter to illuminate the coffin. He then uses his feet to search for the phone. After some trouble finding the phone, he eventually locates it.

Clamping the phone together between his clasped feet, Paul then painfully angles his body so that he can reach his feet with his hands and grab it.

He is soon able to reach it. Immediately thereafter, he puts the receiver in front of him.

We see that there is a Text Message waiting for Paul on the phone. However, Paul barely notices.

The time on the phone reads 6:12pm.

What he does notices is that the phone barely has one bar of signal strength. Worse yet, there is only half of the battery life remaining.

He tries to remember the Safe Number he was given. With the phone open and ready to be dialed, Paul struggles to recall the information.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Come on, come on. What was it?

Getting only two digits into dialing the number, he cannot remember much more and closes the phone.

Paul reaches into his back pocket and removes his wallet. His license, his credit cards, his cash and, most importantly at that very moment, a piece of paper with the Safe Number written on it, are missing.

PAUL (CONT'D)

No. Where the hell is it? Son of a...Come on!

He screams aloud again, hoping greatly that someone can hear him.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Help me! Please! Somebody help me!

His words barely make it pass the coffin walls.

With the cell phone still in hand, and laboring to reclaim the breath he just expended, Paul turns to desperation. He dials the international code of 001, and then dials 911.

A FEMALE 911 OPERATOR answers almost immediately.

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR

911, please hold.

The Female 911 Operator places Paul on hold.

PAUL

No! Wait!

She quickly returns.

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR

(overlapping)

911. What is your emergency?

PAUL

Hello?

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR

911. What's the problem, sir?

Paul is so incredibly panicked that he has trouble remaining coherent.

PAUL  
I'm buried. You have to help me.  
You have to help me, I can't  
breathe...

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR  
Sir...

PAUL  
(overlapping)  
...I'm buried in a coffin. Please  
help me! Send someone to find  
me...

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR  
Sir...slow down. What is your  
name?

PAUL  
Paul. Paul Conroy.

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR  
Okay, Mister Conroy. Can you tell  
me your location?

PAUL  
I don't know. I'm in a coffin. I  
don't know where. I'm scared.  
Please help me.

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR  
You're in a coffin?

PAUL  
Yeah, it's, like, one of those old,  
wooden ones.

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR  
Are you at a funeral home?

PAUL  
No. I don't know. No.

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR  
How are calling me right now?

PAUL  
What?

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR  
If you're buried in a coffin, where  
are you calling from?

PAUL

A cell phone. There was an old cell phone in the coffin.

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR

You're calling from your cell phone?

PAUL

Yes. No. It's not mine, but yes, I'm calling from a cell phone.

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR

There was a cell phone in the coffin when you climbed in?

PAUL

I didn't climb in.

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR

How did you end up in the coffin, sir?

PAUL

I was put here.

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR

In the coffin?

PAUL

Yes. Please send help.

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR

And you're saying the coffin is buried?

PAUL

I think so. It's...it's hot in here. I can't breathe.

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR

Do you know your location, sir?

PAUL

I told you, I don't know. But it's somewhere in Iraq.

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR

Iraq?

PAUL

Yes. I'm a truck driver, an American. I work for CRT.

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR  
Are you a soldier, sir?

PAUL  
No. Please, please listen to me.  
I'm a truck driver. I work for  
CRT. I'm a civilian contractor  
working in Iraq. We were attacked  
in Baqubah, they...they...  
(starts crying)  
...shot them. All of them.

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR  
They shot who, sir?

PAUL  
All of the other drivers.

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR  
And you're saying this happened in  
Iraq? The country?

PAUL  
Yes. Please, you have to help me.  
They gave me a safety number to  
call, but I had it stored in my  
wallet.

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR  
Mister Conroy, this is 911  
emergency in Youngstown, Ohio.

PAUL  
Ohio?

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR  
Yes, sir. I'm not sure exactly how  
you called here if you're in  
another country, but if you'd like,  
I can patch you through to the  
Sheriff's Department.

PAUL  
Sheriff's Department? No...you  
don't understand.

Realizing that his conversation is both lengthy and useless,  
Paul checks the battery life on the phone. It still holds  
steady at two bars.

He ends the call. He immediately dials another number, one  
that he can recall with ease.

He again enters the 001 international code before making the call.

Paul then dials his home phone. It rings several times, so far unanswered.

PAUL  
Come on, come on. Pick up.  
Please.

After sitting through the agony of a few more rings, Paul is met with the answering machine.

The voice of his young son, SHANE, is heard on the answering machine greeting.

SHANE  
*Thanks for calling the Conroy's.  
We're not home right now. Please  
leave a message at the beep.  
Thanks.*

At the sound of the Beep, Paul leaves a frenzied, rambling message.

PAUL  
Linda, honey, it's me. Listen, I need you to contact the National Guard right away. Or the Pentagon. Tell them we were attacked in the Diyala Province, in Baqubah. They have to find me. Please help me, baby. Please help them find me.

Paul hangs up. He dials his wife's cell phone right away.

After several rings, her cell phone voice mail picks up. We hear the sound of Linda, Paul's wife, on her outgoing message.

LINDA  
*Hi, this is Linda. Please leave a  
message. Thanks and have a great  
day.*

The Beep sounds and Paul immediately tears into his voice message.

PAUL  
Linda, it's Paul. I need you to call me right away. This is an absolute emergency. Call the number that comes up on your phone.

(MORE)



PAUL (cont'd)  
Call me at that number. If I don't  
answer, call the Pentagon or the  
F.B.I. I don't know what the hell  
is going on, but I'm buried in a  
box. I can't breathe in here.  
Make sure you call me right away.  
Please, baby, please call me.

Paul ends the call. He nervously looks at the amount of  
battery life remaining on the phone. Still holding strong at  
two bars.

He begins to hyperventilate. He knows that preserving oxygen  
is paramount, so he does his best to calm himself.

He again enters the overseas dialing code, this time dialing  
411 information.

The 411 OPERATOR answers.

411 OPERATOR  
What city and state, please?

PAUL  
Um...I don't know. The F.B.I.,  
wherever they are.

411 OPERATOR  
Do you have a specific city you'd  
like to be connected to, sir?

PAUL  
I don't care, any city. Just  
connect me to the F.B.I.

411 OPERATOR  
Sir, I have F.B.I. field offices  
listed in Boston, New York,  
Philadelphia, New Haven, Los  
Angeles, Chicago, Denver...

Paul cannot bear to listen any further to this list that  
seemingly never ends, so he interrupts the 411 Operator.

PAUL  
Anywhere! Any city, just connect  
me, please!

411 OPERATOR  
I'm sorry, sir, but I'm not allowed  
to do that.

PAUL  
Fine, um...Chicago. Okay?

411 OPERATOR  
Please hold for your number.

Paul is transferred to an AUTOMATED MESSAGE.

AUTOMATED MESSAGE  
The number you requested, 312-421-6700 can be connected for an additional charge of twenty-five cents by pressing the number one.

Paul writes the number of the F.B.I. field office on the coffin wall with his pen. He presses the number one and is connected directly.

After a few rings, SPECIAL AGENT HARRIS answers.

SPECIAL AGENT HARRIS  
Chicago field office. Special Agent Harris.

PAUL  
Hello? Is this the F.B.I.?

SPECIAL AGENT HARRIS  
Yes it is, sir.

PAUL  
I'm calling from Iraq. I'm buried in the desert somewhere. I need you to help me...

SPECIAL AGENT HARRIS  
(overlapping)  
Whoa, whoa, sir. Slow down. When were you in Iraq?

PAUL  
Now. I'm there now. I'm a truck driver for CRT. I've been here for nine months.

SPECIAL AGENT HARRIS  
Can I have your name please, sir?

PAUL  
Paul Conroy.

SPECIAL AGENT HARRIS  
(saying it as he writes it down)  
Paul Conroy.  
(back on the phone)

(MORE)

SPECIAL AGENT HARRIS (cont'd)  
Okay, Paul, explain to me what's  
going on.

Paul attempts to center himself so that he can accurately  
tell his story.

PAUL  
Alright. Me and a convoy of other  
drivers were delivering kitchen  
parts to a community center. As we  
got closer, a bunch of kids started  
throwing rocks at our trucks. Then  
an IED went off up ahead and blew  
up one of the other trucks. These  
guys came out from behind the  
houses with guns and started  
shooting everybody right there on  
the street.

SPECIAL AGENT HARRIS  
Were you shot at?

PAUL  
I don't know. I was way in the  
back of the convoy. I must of got  
hit in the head with one of the  
rocks and got knocked out. That's  
the last thing I remember. But now  
I just woke up, and I was tied up  
and buried in a coffin.

SPECIAL AGENT HARRIS  
Who put you there?

PAUL  
I don't know. I guess whoever  
ambushed us.

Special Agent Harris sounds slightly skeptical of Paul's  
claims.

SPECIAL AGENT HARRIS  
A bunch of kids?

PAUL  
No, you're not listening. The kids  
threw the rocks at us, but then  
some Iraqi guys - maybe insurgents -  
popped out of nowhere and started  
shooting at us.

SPECIAL AGENT HARRIS  
I thought you said they didn't  
shoot at you.

PAUL  
They didn't, I don't know. But  
they shot them.

SPECIAL AGENT HARRIS  
Hmmm...

PAUL  
Can you trace my call? GPS or  
something?

SPECIAL AGENT HARRIS  
Why is it that they didn't shoot  
you?

PAUL  
I don't know. They didn't, that's  
all I know.

SPECIAL AGENT HARRIS  
What's your social security number,  
Paul?

PAUL  
Why? Who cares? I'm buried in the  
middle of the fucking dessert! Who  
cares what my social security  
number is?! I'm an American  
citizen. Just send someone to find  
me!

SPECIAL AGENT HARRIS  
Do you know where you're  
...lo...if...dy..

The cell phone starts breaking up.

PAUL  
Hello? What? I can't hear you.

SPECIAL AGENT HARRIS  
Bet...un...near...

Suddenly, Special Agent Harris is not heard at all.

PAUL  
Hello?! Hello?!

Paul checks the phone's display, where he sees that the call  
has been lost.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Shit!!

Cell phone service temporarily goes down. He tries to make a call, but nothing happens.

He shakes the phone, moves it around the coffin, all in desperate hope that he will get a signal. He soon does.

He looks at the number for the F.B.I. that he has written on the wall, thinking about calling them back. He then checks the battery life on his phone, which remains at two bars.

Paul then decides to make a different call, this time to a phone number he has committed to memory - his employer back in the U.S., Crestin, Roland and Thomas (CRT).

After a few rings, a CRT OPERATOR answers.

CRT OPERATOR  
Thank you for calling Crestin,  
Roland and Thomas. How may I  
direct your call?

PAUL  
Help me. Please, I need to get out  
of here!

CRT OPERATOR  
Who is this, please?

PAUL  
Paul Conroy. I'm a driver for you  
guys. I'm calling from Iraq. My  
convoy was attacked.

CRT OPERATOR  
Sir, if this is a crisis situation  
you need to contact the Safety  
Number your were provided.

PAUL  
I know, I know, but I don't have  
it. They took it.

CRT OPERATOR  
Who took it, sir?

PAUL  
The Iraqis, I think. I don't  
remember, I blacked out.

CRT OPERATOR  
I'm going to put you through to  
Alan Davenport.

PAUL  
Who's that?

CRT OPERATOR  
Please hold.

Paul is placed on hold. Synthesized soft rock plays in the background of the phone, maddening Paul further. Over the music, a CRT SPOKESMAN is heard, speaking a recorded testimonial during the on-hold message.

CRT SPOKESMAN  
*At CRT, we work with our clients to  
provide effective and sustainable  
solutions to the challenges they  
face in our fast-growing, global  
economy. As the premiere...*

The message is interrupted by Alan DAVENPORT's outgoing voice message.

ALAN DAVENPORT  
*You've reached Alan Davenport,  
personnel director at Crestin,  
Roland and Thomas. Please leave  
your name and number at the tone  
and I will return your call as soon  
as possible.*

The BEEP sounds. Paul is confused as to why he was patched through to someone in human resources, but leaves a message nevertheless.

PAUL  
This is Paul Conroy, I'm from  
Hastings, Michigan. I'm a driver  
for CRT, and my convoy was  
ambushed...by insurgents or  
terrorists. I don't know. I don't  
know who it was. I'm stuck in the  
ground, buried in a coffin and I  
need help. Please send help. I'm  
begging you. I think I'm in  
Baqubah in the Diyala Province.  
Please send help right away. I  
can't breathe in here. I  
can't...please. I'm begging you.  
I don't know who else to call.  
I...

Paul notices that his phone has again lost signal.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
(exasperated)  
...fuck.

Paul hangs up and drops the phone to his side.

He explodes with a mixture of rage and fear. He screams and flails his feet and hands wildly, banging them against the walls of the coffin.

After taking a few moments to catch his breath, Paul looks again at the cell phone. He remembers receiving a Text Message.

The icon on the phone's display indicates that he does, in fact, have an unread Text Message waiting for him.

Paul quickly scrolls through the phone's menu until he reaches the Text Message. Opening it, he sees a series of ten numbers.

Removing a pen from his pocket, he scribbles the numbers into the walls of the coffin. Noticing that his phone has again picked-up a signal, he dials the number.

It rings once, but then the reception begins to falter. After only two rings, the call is ended. Paul's frustration mounts, though he is barely able to fight off another fit of hysterics. He dials the number again.

It rings once. A second ring. In the middle of the third ring, someone answers - though they do not say anything.

PAUL  
Hello? Hello? Is anyone there?  
Hello?

After a beat, Paul hears breathing on the other end of the phone. He also hears a discordance of background sound; the din of a room filled with Arab-speaking men.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Hello? Who are you? Please, you  
have to help me.

Still, Paul's words are only met with slow, measured breaths. His instincts soon tell him that the person on the other end of the phone has no interest in helping him.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Who is this? Hello?

The person on the other end eventually speaks. An Iraqi man, JABIR, talks forcefully and aggressively in broken English.

JABIR  
Breathe no breathe, American? Ah?  
Breathe no breathe?

PAUL  
What? I don't know what you're  
saying. Who is this?

JABIR  
Infidel American can breathe no  
breathe?

PAUL  
No, I can't breathe. Please let me  
out of here.

JABIR  
Let out?

PAUL  
Yes, please let me out. I didn't  
do anything.

JABIR  
Soldier.

PAUL  
No, no I'm not a soldier. I'm a  
truck driver. That's it. I'm not  
a soldier. I'm a contractor.

JABIR  
Contractor?

PAUL  
Yes, that's right. A contractor.  
Not a soldier.

JABIR  
Blackwater.

PAUL  
No, not for Blackwater. I'm not a  
security contractor. Truck driver,  
I'm a truck driver. That's all.

JABIR  
You are American.



PAUL

Yes.

JABIR

Then you are soldier.

PAUL

No, I'm not. I'm here unarmed.  
But, you still shot at us.

JABIR

In head and in throat, so you tell  
no more lies.

PAUL

I'm not lying! We were all  
drivers.

JABIR

Drive what?

PAUL

Trucks. The big trucks you see  
driving around with the supplies?  
That's us. That's me. We're not  
soldiers.

JABIR

Five million money.

PAUL

What?

JABIR

Five million money tonight by nine  
PM or you stay. Buried like dog.

PAUL

Five million dollars? From who?

JABIR

Your family.

PAUL

My family doesn't have five million  
dollars. If they did, I wouldn't  
be here.

JABIR

From Embassy.

PAUL  
I don't know, yes, the Embassy will  
pay you. If you let me go, they'll  
pay you the money.

Silence on the other end of the phone.

JABIR  
(after a long beat)  
Nine PM, five million money.

Jabir hangs up the phone, forcing Paul to instantly come to grips with the fact that he is being held hostage.

He lays back in the coffin, shell-shocked.

FADE TO:

INT. COFFIN - MOMENTS LATER

Using his Zippo lighter to illuminate the inside of the coffin, Paul haphazardly positions himself so that his back is facing the top of the coffin.

His every move is arduous; the claustrophobic nature of the coffin bearing down on him.

Paul positions his bent knees underneath his chest, with his shins and feet pressed against the bottom of the coffin. Using the strength of his legs, he attempts to lift the top off the coffin with his back.

Trickles of sand fall in from the side of the coffin, sprinkling against the wooden base.

He fails, only to immediately try again. And again. And again. Exhaustion sets in.

Staring ahead, the phone sits in front of him. He notices that the battery life bars are still at one solid and one blinking.

He grabs the cell phone, staring at it, trying to think of someone else to call.

The battery life is limited. Every call has to count.

He tries to remember some phone numbers, but has trouble recalling the information.

PAUL  
(to himself)  
Come on, what's her number?

He cannot remember the number is thinking of.

Paul then dials the international code for the United States, followed by 411 information.

A MALE 411 OPERATOR answers.

MALE 411 OPERATOR  
What city and listing, please?

PAUL  
Hastings, Michigan. I'm looking  
for Donna Mitchell.

MALE 411 OPERATOR  
I have two Donna Mitchells, sir.  
One on Federal Road and one on  
Ardmore Avenue.

PAUL  
Ardmore Avenue...I think. Yeah.  
Shit, I don't know. Just give me  
that one.

MALE 411 OPERATOR  
Ardmore Avenue?

PAUL  
Yes, Ardmore Avenue.

MALE 411 OPERATOR  
Please hold for your number.

Paul is switched to an AUTOMATED MESSAGE.

AUTOMATED MESSAGE  
*The number you requested, 269-948-  
1998 can automatically be dialed  
for a charge of twenty-five cents  
by pressing the number one.*

Paul writes Donna's number on the wall of the coffin and then presses the number one. He is connected.

Her phone rings and rings. Paul's frustration is evident.

PAUL  
Come on! Where the hell is  
everyone?

The phone rings some more. Paul quickly checks the battery life - still at one and a half bars.

DONNA eventually answers.

DONNA  
*Hello?*

PAUL  
Donna, it's Paul.

DONNA  
*Hey, how's it going?*

PAUL  
Where's Linda? She's not answering  
her phone. I need to talk to her,  
I've been taken hostage by...

Donna interrupts. We realize, as does Paul, that her voice  
was actually coming from her answering machine.

DONNA  
(overlapping)  
*Fooled you. I'm not really home.  
But if you leave a message, I'll  
get back to you as soon as I get  
in. Bye-bye.*

His hand falls to his forehead, defeated.

PAUL  
Donna, I need to talk to Linda.  
It's an absolute emergency. Have  
her call me. Use star 69 and find  
out the number I'm calling from and  
have her call me...

Donna picks up the phone.

DONNA  
Paul?

PAUL  
Donna.

DONNA  
What do you want?

PAUL  
I need to talk to Linda. Where is  
she?

DONNA  
I don't know. I haven't talked to  
her all day. Call her cell phone.

PAUL  
Are you near a computer or  
something?

DONNA  
Uh...yeah. Why?

PAUL  
Turn it on.

DONNA  
It is on.

PAUL  
Look up the number for the State  
Department for me.

DONNA  
I was just heading out to the  
supermarket. I really don't have  
time...

PAUL  
(interrupting)  
Donna, please, please, please -  
just get me the number.

DONNA  
Is everything alright?

PAUL  
No! Everything is not alright!  
So, please, just look up the  
number.

DONNA  
Don't fucking yell at me, Paul.

PAUL  
I'm not yelling!

DONNA  
Yes you are. Just like you did  
last year at the cookout. I'm not  
going to tolerate it.

PAUL  
(exploding)  
Just get me the fucking number! Get  
me the number, get me the number!

Donna hangs up on him. Realizing this, Paul bangs his fists and claws at the top of the coffin, bloodying some of his fingers and knuckles in the process.

He violently tosses and turns and screams at the top of his lungs, like an animal trapped in a cage. Tears spray from his eyes as spit shakes free from his mouth by the force of his shudder.

He eventually calms quite a bit. Sniffing away tears and taking notice of the damage he's done to his hands, Paul slows his breathing as best he can.

He lies there, motionless.

The silence is almost comforting. Paul closes his eyes, regretfully accepting what appears will be his inescapable fate.

After a beat, he calls Donna back. Knowing it is Paul calling, she answers right away, attitude at the ready.

DONNA

What?

It takes every ounce of Paul's being to keep himself from going off the deep end. He takes a beat to compose himself and then finally offers a very delicate and deliberate response.

PAUL

Donna, I'm very sorry I yelled.  
But, I'm only going to ask you once more to get me this number. If you don't get me this number, I'm going to die.

DONNA

What?

PAUL

I don't have time to explain.  
Please...the number.

DONNA

(BEAT)

Hold on.

We hear Donna put down the phone. In the b.g., we hear the sound of keys being pressed on a computer keyboard.

After a beat, she picks the phone back up.

DONNA (CONT'D)  
Okay...it's 202-624-4750.

PAUL  
202-624-4750?

DONNA  
Yeah.

Paul writes the number on the wall of the coffin.

DONNA  
What the hell's going...

Paul hangs up on Donna mid-sentence. He dials the number the State Department right away.

A STATE DEPARTMENT REP answers after a few rings.

STATE DEPARTMENT REP  
United States Department of State.

PAUL  
I'm an American citizen, working in Iraq. I've been taken hostage. I need to speak to someone right away.

STATE DEPARTMENT REP  
Where are you calling from, sir?

PAUL  
From Iraq. I'm a truck driver for CRT: Crestin, Roland and Thomas. We were attacked and now I'm being held for ransom.

STATE DEPARTMENT REP  
Are the kidnappers with you?

PAUL  
No. I'm buried somewhere.

STATE DEPARTMENT REP  
You're buried?

PAUL  
Yeah, in a coffin, a wooden box. It's an old coffin, I think.

STATE DEPARTMENT REP  
Did you try contacting the military out there?

PAUL  
I don't have the number.

STATE DEPARTMENT REP  
What number?

PAUL  
I was given a number to call, a safety number. But the people took it.

STATE DEPARTMENT REP  
The people holding you hostage?

PAUL  
Yes.

STATE DEPARTMENT REP  
(disconcerted)  
I don't know...hold on. Let me connect you...hold on.

PAUL  
No. Wait...

Paul is placed on hold. As he waits, his eyes wander around the coffin. He looks at the numbers he has written on the walls.

After a moment, REBECCA BROWNING, a State Department official, picks up the phone.

REBECCA  
Rebecca Browning.

PAUL  
Hello?

REBECCA  
Yes, hello. I was just informed of your situation.

PAUL  
Yeah, my situation. I'm running out of time and you people keep putting me on hold. What the hell is wrong with you?

REBECCA  
I'm sorry.

PAUL  
Don't be sorry. Just help me.



REBECCA  
I just have a few questions for  
you, Mister Conroy.

PAUL  
You've got to be kidding me.

REBECCA  
It's important that I get this  
information. It will make a rescue  
attempt...

PAUL  
(interrupting)  
Wait, wait, wait...how did you know  
my name?

REBECCA  
I'm sorry?

PAUL  
I never gave you my name. I don't  
think I gave it to the other guy,  
either.

Rebecca is silent on the other end of the phone.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
What the hell is going on right  
now?

REBECCA  
(after a beat)  
We received a call from a  
representative at CRT. You left  
him a message?

PAUL  
Yeah...?

REBECCA  
He contacted us right away.

PAUL  
Well, since you know what the hell  
is going on, what have you done to  
get me out of here?

REBECCA  
There's little we can do from  
Washington.

PAUL  
So, that's it? I'm just supposed  
to rot in here because there's  
little you can do?

REBECCA  
No.

PAUL  
Then what?

REBECCA  
I need to know where you were when  
your convoy was ambushed.

PAUL  
In the Diyala Provence. In  
Baqubah.

REBECCA  
Okay. And has contact been made  
with the kidnappers?

PAUL  
Yes. The guy told me that he wants  
five million dollars by nine  
o'clock tonight.

REBECCA  
Or else...?

PAUL  
I'm not sure there's even enough  
air left in here to last until  
then. So, what do you think?

REBECCA  
We'll do everything we can.

PAUL  
So you'll pay them?

REBECCA  
(BEAT)  
No. That we can't do.

PAUL  
Wait...what?

REBECCA  
It's the policy of the United  
States government to not negotiate  
with terrorists.

PAUL

To hell with that! It's easy for you to worry about policy, you're sitting in an air conditioned office somewhere, probably finishing up your sandwich from lunch. You're not the one stuck in a coffin, buried in the God damn dessert!

REBECCA

I understand your frustration...

PAUL

(interrupting)

Frustration? Lady, I'm going to fucking die in here. Understand that!

Rebecca is silent on the other end of the phone. Paul wonders if she is still there.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Hello?

REBECCA

I'm here.

PAUL

Well, then say something. Tell me how you're going to get me out of here.

REBECCA

Take down this number.

Paul takes out his pen.

PAUL

Go ahead.

REBECCA

410-555-5453.

Paul writes the number onto the walls of the coffin.

PAUL

Who's that?

REBECCA

Dan Brenner. He's the commander of the Hostage Working Group over in Iraq.

PAUL  
Hostage Working Group?

REBECCA  
We formed it in 2004 to deal with  
situations such as yours.

Paul shakes his head in disgust.

PAUL  
Situations. I love how you keep  
calling it that.

REBECCA  
Call Dan Brenner. He should be  
expecting you.

PAUL  
What about the news? I'm going to  
call them.

REBECCA  
No. Do not, I repeat, do not  
contact the news.

PAUL  
Why?

REBECCA  
It will complicate things further  
and threaten your chances of  
rescue.

PAUL  
Yeah, but people need to know. You  
don't go looking for something if  
you don't know it's missing.

REBECCA  
That's why you need to contact Dan  
Brenner right away.

Paul still contemplates contacting the news, but soon  
acquiesces to Rebecca's pleas for him not to.

PAUL  
Fine.

Paul hangs up the phone and also closes the lid to his Zippo  
lighter, bringing darkness back into the coffin. We hear him  
take a deep, centering breath, followed by another.

After a beat, he reopens the phone and lights his lighter once again. He dials the number for Dan Brenner that is written on the wall of the coffin.

A few rings pass before DAN BRENNER answers.

DAN  
Brenner.

PAUL  
Dan Brenner?

Dan is quick to figure out who it is that must be calling him.

DAN  
Is this Paul Conroy?

PAUL  
(excited)  
Yes, yes it's me. It's Paul.

DAN  
Paul, I was informed of what's going on. I want you to know that we're already working on trying to get you out of there.

Paul is relieved. His first glint of hope has appeared. Tears of joy instantly escape his eyes.

PAUL  
Oh, thank you, God.

DAN  
I was told that we have until 9pm. Is that right?

PAUL  
That's what he said.

DAN  
Alright. That doesn't give us a whole lot of time. And just so I have this right, the kidnappers buried you in the ground?

PAUL  
Yeah, in an old, wooden coffin.

DAN

Okay. My guess is that since you're able to get a cell signal, you're no more than a few feet underground.

PAUL

I don't know. Maybe.

DAN

What about battery life? How much does the phone have left?

Paul looks at the display to find out.

PAUL

Less than half.

DAN

Okay. You have to conserve that battery. Our best bet of finding you is by tracking your cell signal.

PAUL

You guys have to hurry. Please...I'm running out of air in here.

DAN

We're working as fast as we can, Paul.

PAUL

Do you know if there were any other survivors?

DAN

From your convoy?

PAUL

Yeah.

DAN

I don't know. I'm sorry.

PAUL

I just wanted to do right by my family. That's all. I didn't know it was going to be like this over here.

DAN  
I don't think any of us did.

While on the phone with Brenner, Paul gets another call coming in. He checks the display and reads the number. Matching it against a number he wrote on the inside of the coffin, he sees that is Jabir calling.

PAUL  
It's him. He's calling.

DAN  
The kidnapper?

PAUL  
Yeah. What do I do?

DAN  
You know his number?

PAUL  
Yeah.

DAN  
Give it to me.

PAUL  
What about the call?

DAN  
Give me the number first.

The phone has rung several times. Paul fears that Jabir may hang up.

PAUL  
He's going to hang up.

DAN  
Take the call.

PAUL  
But...

DAN  
(interrupting)  
Take the call. Now.

Paul complies with Dan's demand and switches to the other line.

PAUL  
Hello.

JABIR  
Two hour, six minutes.

Paul looks at his watch. Indeed, he has but two hours and six minutes until the time reaches 9pm.

PAUL  
You have to give me more time.

JABIR  
You talk to embassy? They give money?

PAUL  
Yes. No. I talked to...someone. Government. They said that they won't pay the money.

JABIR  
No pay?

PAUL  
No. They said that they don't negotiate with terrorists.

JABIR  
Terrorists? I am terrorist?

PAUL  
Yes. You are terrorist, you son of a bitch.

JABIR  
You are terrified, so I am terrorist?

PAUL  
What did I ever do to you?

JABIR  
Ever do?

PAUL  
Yeah. I'm here because it's a job, to make money. That's it.

JABIR  
I have job until America come. Now, my family have nothing.

PAUL  
That's not my fault!



Jabir retorts with a spirited conviction similar to Paul's.

JABIR

Nine, one, one was not my fault,  
but still you are here! Saddam was  
not my fault, but still you are  
here!

PAUL

I told you, I'm only here to work.  
To help rebuild.

JABIR

Rebuild what you have destroyed.

Paul cannot handle his stress any longer. He begins to  
crumble under the pressure.

PAUL

Stop! Just, please, stop! I'm  
just a guy. I'm just a truck  
driver. Okay? I'm nobody that  
makes decisions about anything. I  
just want to go home.

Silence from the other end of the phone for an extended  
period of time.

JABIR

You make video, ransom video.

This surprisingly comes as good news to Paul, as it  
ostensibly will allow him to get out of the coffin.

PAUL

Yes. Please. Get me out of here  
and I'll make the video.

JABIR

No. You make video now.

PAUL

What...? How?

JABIR

You use video on phone.

Paul's hopes are dashed. His sanguine head falls back onto  
the coffin floor.

JABIR (CONT'D)

Near foot. You read note near foot  
in box.

Paul shines the flame of his Zippo lighter toward his feet. He can vaguely see the outline of a small metal box.

PAUL  
The video...if I make it, will you  
let me go?

JABIR  
Only if we get money.

PAUL  
Nobody's going to pay five million  
dollars for me.

JABIR  
We take less. One million money.

PAUL  
If they pay it, will you let me go.

JABIR  
(after a beat)  
One million money.

Jabir hangs up, ending the call.

Paul sits motionless for a moment, soaking in all that Jabir has just told him.

He again looks down toward his feet. He can see the metal box, but it's positioned in such a way that it will clearly not be easy for him to reach it.

Paul then tries to clasp the box with his feet, but after several unsuccessful attempts, he realizes that a new strategy is necessary.

He makes efforts to reposition himself in the coffin, so that his head and feet will ultimately switch places. He struggles, inch by troubled inch, to make this maneuver.

Sweat pours down the side of his face. The extremely tight quarters of the coffin make the repositioning nearly impossible.

After expending a great deal of energy doing so, Paul eventually completes the turn of his body. He examines the small, rusted metal box. On it is a cartoon picture of a small Arab boy and girl playing with a red rubber ball.

Skeptical at first, Paul carefully examines the box and shakes it gently. Items are heard rummaging inside.

He carefully opens it. A fluorescent green light shines from inside.

Paul looks inside and finds a lit, green glow-stick, fluorescing brightly and now illuminating much of the coffin. He removes the stick.

Looking into the small box again, he finds several other items: a candle, a lighter - which, after a few tries, Paul realizes doesn't work - and a jackknife. The last item he finds is a folded piece of paper.

He slowly unfolds the piece of paper. We see that his ransom message is written in an unintelligible mix of English and Arabic.

Paul shakes his head and lets out a sigh of disgust. He crumbles up the paper into a ball and listlessly drops it to his side. He covers his face with his hands, his labored breaths echoing in his palms.

Under the low-light of the green glow-stick, Paul picks up the phone and dials his home.

Per usual, he gets the answering machine. His son, Shane, is heard on outgoing message.

SHANE

*Thanks for calling the Conroy's.  
We're not home right now. Please  
leave a message at the beep.  
Thanks.*

Paul's eyes well up with tears. He smiles at the sound of his son's voice. The Beep is heard. Paul hangs up without leaving a message.

He looks at the time. It's 7:02pm. Battery life is holding steady at one and a half bars.

Fearful of wasting any additional battery, Paul does his best to resist the urge to make another call. He caves rather quickly and dials Dan Brenner.

After a few rings, Dan answers.

DAN

Paul?

PAUL

Here's his number...

DAN  
Hold on. Alright, go ahead.

PAUL  
It's 07902-24-921.

Dan says something to someone who is in the room with him, and then returns his attention to Paul.

DAN  
This is huge, Paul. Unless they're using a cloned line, we should be able to find where this is coming from in minutes.

PAUL  
What about me? Can you track my cell signal?

DAN  
We're having a lot of trouble with yours. Seems to be an EDS line, probably through one of the Egyptian carriers.

PAUL  
What does that mean?

DAN  
That...it's not going to be easy.

PAUL  
He wants me to make a ransom video.

DAN  
No. Hold off for as long as you can.

PAUL  
If it's going to get me out of here, I'm making it.

DAN  
The last thing we want is for this to end up all over al-Jazeera.

PAUL  
We?

Paul becomes angry, again sensing that more emphasis is being placed on containing the situation than rescuing him.

DAN

This can't turn into an  
international incident.

PAUL

That's all you people care about!  
But what about me? Don't you care  
about me?

DAN

We do. That's why we're...

PAUL

(overlapping)

No you don't! You people don't  
care about any of us. I've had  
eight friends killed out here, six  
of them today. We don't have any  
guns, any armor. Nothing.

DAN

You're not soldiers.

PAUL

Tell that to the people who put me  
in this box! Tell that to the  
people who shot my friends!

DAN

We're doing the best we can.

PAUL

Yeah, you're doing a great job.  
Meanwhile, guys are going home with  
gunshot wounds, PTSD and everything  
else, and they can't even get  
medical treatment. I know we're  
not soldiers, but we are Americans.  
We're out here risking our lives,  
too, just trying to make a living.

DAN

I know.

PAUL

No, you don't. All you people know  
about is your secret plans and your  
back room politics. If I were some  
diplomat or something, maybe even a  
hostage working group leader - or  
whatever your fancy title is, I'd  
be out of here by now. Wouldn't I?

(MORE)

PAUL (cont'd)  
But I'm not, so I'm just supposed  
to keep my mouth shut and die.

Dan's heard enough from Paul. He lashes back.

DAN  
You have no idea how much I'd love  
to spend the next hour explaining  
to you how my life has been a  
complete hell for the past three  
years out here, how my marriage  
ended over the phone, or how I only  
get about two hours of sleep every  
night because I know people are  
dead because I ran out of time.  
But, you know what? I can't. I  
can't explain all that to you  
because I have to spend the next  
hour doing everything I possibly  
can to find some guy I've never met  
in my life. To save him. So, you  
see, Paul, I earn my living, too.  
Just like you. Only, if I get  
shot, or if I get my legs blown  
off, or if I get taken, I've got  
nobody to call.

Paul does not respond at first. Dan's retort clearly has an  
effect on him.

PAUL  
Who are they? The people who put  
me here?

DAN  
They're just that - people. No  
different from you and me.

PAUL  
I'm no terrorist.

DAN  
Neither are they.

PAUL  
How do you know that?

DAN  
If you were homeless,  
starving...actually, I take that  
back. If your family was homeless  
and starving, what would you do for  
them?

PAUL  
I wouldn't kill someone.

DAN  
How can you be sure?

PAUL  
(getting frustrated)  
What difference does it make?

DAN  
They're criminals, desperate ones  
at that. They don't care about  
anything other than getting the  
money.

PAUL  
So pay them, then.

DAN  
Trust me, if it was an option, I  
would do that in a heartbeat.

PAUL  
How many others have there been?

DAN  
Since I got here? Hundreds.  
Journalists, contractors,  
soldiers...hundreds have been  
taken. It's one of the only  
functioning businesses out here.

PAUL  
How many have you rescued?

Dan is reluctant to answer the question.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
How many?

DAN  
(BEAT)  
Not many.

PAUL  
Tell me their names.

DAN  
Who?

PAUL  
Any of them. Make me know they  
really do matter to you.

DAN  
Mark White.

PAUL  
Who was Mark White?

DAN  
A kid from New Hampshire. Twenty-  
six years old. Med student. Came  
over here to help out local  
doctors.

PAUL  
What happened to him?

DAN  
Insurgents grabbed him.

PAUL  
When?

DAN  
About three weeks ago.

PAUL  
You remember his name.

DAN  
I remember all their names.

PAUL  
(afraid to ask)  
Did he...? Is he...?

DAN  
Yeah. Yeah, Paul, he's alive.

Hearing this affords Paul some semblance of relief.

PAUL  
Where is he?

DAN  
Home. Probably happy to be back at  
school.

PAUL  
I want to get out of here.



DAN  
We found him; we'll find you, too.

PAUL  
How?

DAN  
We already have a solid lead on the number you gave us.

PAUL  
You do?

DAN  
A unit's on it's way over there now.

This news calms Paul's nerves.

PAUL  
That's...that's good.

DAN  
Yeah.

PAUL  
What should I do in the meantime?

DAN  
I know it's hard, but try to relax. The more worked up you are, the more air you're going to use.

PAUL  
I can't help it. I'm always anxious. I take pills for it.

DAN  
Do you have them with you?

Paul checks his pants pockets. He removes a small, orange pill bottle.

PAUL  
Yeah.

DAN  
Take them. You need to preserve your oxygen level any way you can.

PAUL  
I feel nauseous.

DAN  
You have to calm down.

PAUL  
I'm trying.

DAN  
And you need to save that battery.  
I'll be back in touch.

PAUL  
Okay.

DAN  
Just hang in there, Paul.

PAUL  
Yeah. I'm trying.

Dan ends the call. Paul lets out a deep breath, finding it difficult to lay claim to its replacement.

He looks at his watch. It's now 7:18pm. The ticking sound of the second hand turning is inordinately loud, due to the extreme silence of the coffin.

Just then, the cell phone rings. Checking the number on the display, Paul sees that it is Jabir.

Paul answers.

PAUL  
What?

JABIR  
Did you make video?

PAUL  
No.

Jabir yells something in Arabic to the other Iraqi men we hear in the background.

Collectively, they do not sound pleased. Slightly panicked, in fact, though it is difficult to tell for sure.

JABIR  
(to Paul)  
You make video!

PAUL  
Let me out and I'll make it.

JABIR  
No! You make video now. In box.

PAUL  
I can't. I can't read the paper.

JABIR  
Make video now!

PAUL  
I can't. I don't know what you  
want me to say. I can't read the  
paper.

Jabir is heard speaking with the men we hear arguing in the background. Although they speak in Arabic, it is clear from their tone that they are becoming worried and increasingly hostile.

Jabir returns his attention back to Paul.

JABIR  
You make video now.

Jabir ends the call. Paul closes the phone to help conserve battery life.

He then reopens the phone and turns on the video function on the phone. He looks at himself through the viewfinder.

After a beat, he closes the phone, clearly frustrated and growing more panicked.

His panic begins to bubble up again. His breaths grow heavy and rapid, utilizing a great deal of oxygen.

PAUL  
I'm never getting out of here.

Paul begins to freak out, restlessly squirming inside the coffin and pressing against the sides and top to no avail.

In efforts to calm himself, he once again removes the orange pill bottle from his pocket. He pours two into his hand. He then removes a small, metal alcohol flask from his back pocket and takes a large swig, swallowing the two pills in the process.

Still, Paul's heavy, labored breathing continues. He drops four additional pills into his and swallows them with yet another generous swig from the flask.

PAUL

Did you get the flowers I sent a few months ago?

MARYANNE

Flowers?

PAUL

Yeah, I sent...never mind. Listen, I...I'm going to go now. I just wanted to talk to you, you know, just to say bye. I love you, Mom.

Maryanne doesn't respond.

PAUL(CONT'D)

Did you hear me? Mom? I told you...do you want to tell me you love...

MARYANNE

(overlapping)

Yes, dear. Your father and I have been playing gin rummy every night.

PAUL

(after a beat)

Okay, Mom. Tell Pop I said hi.

Paul ends the call and instantly begins crying his heart out.

He lays there, sobbing relentlessly.

After a long beat, the cell phone vibrates. Decidedly different than his past reactions to an incoming call, Paul seems hopelessly disinterested.

He eventually picks it up, but there is not anyone on the other end. It's then that he sees that it was not a call that came in, but instead was a picture message.

Pressing the Accept button, the incoming picture begins to download.

Several seconds later, the picture downloads and an image appears on the display of Paul's cell phone. It's of a woman - bound and gagged, a gun pressed against the side of her head.

PAUL

Oh no. No, no, no!

Paul frantically dials the number to reach Jabir. As soon as the phone connects, Paul frantically begins his plea.

JABIR  
Video make?

PAUL  
Let her go. Please. Please don't hurt her.

The Woman is heard in the background of Jabir's phone, crying muffled words through her muzzled mouth.

JABIR  
We shoot her if you no make video.

PAUL  
No! No, please no shoot. No shoot her.

JABIR  
You get money. American million.

PAUL  
I will, I promise. Just don't shoot her. She's a mother, she's got two kids.

JABIR  
Two kids?

PAUL  
Yes. She has two kids.

JABIR  
I have five. Now only two. You make video. Now!!

PAUL  
Wait...

JABIR  
No wait!! I give three seconds.

PAUL  
I can't read the paper.

JABIR  
Three...

PAUL  
No. Wait!

JABIR

Two...

PAUL

I don't know what you want me to say!

JABIR

One.

PAUL

Okay! Okay, I'll make the video.  
Just, please, don't shoot.

Jabir does not fire his gun. Paul attempts to catch his breath.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I need to hang up to make the video. Okay? Is that okay?

JABIR

You have three minutes to send video.

Jabir hangs up, ending the call.

Paul reaches for the balled-up piece of paper that has the ransom script written on it. It takes some trouble for him to grab it, but he is soon able to.

Placing the glow-stick next to the paper, Paul is again reminded of the incoherent nature of the script.

PAUL

(re: the script)

Fuck.

He drops the paper to his side and opens the phone, setting it to the video record function. He places the glow-stick close to his face so as to make his image more visible on the small, phone display screen.

He presses the record button.

PAUL

(speaking at the phone)

My name is Paul Conroy. I'm an American citizen from Hastings, Michigan. I'm a civilian truck driver for Crestin, Roland and Thomas.

(MORE)

PAUL (cont'd)  
I've been taken hostage somewhere  
in Iraq...and I need one million  
dollars by nine o'clock tonight,  
Baghdad time, or else I'll be left  
to die in this coffin I'm buried  
in. I've been told that if the  
money is paid, I will be let go.  
If it's not, I will die in here.  
These threats are real and will be  
followed through on.

Trying to think of more to say, Paul soon opts for not saying anything further. He saves the message and then sends it to Jabir.

We see that the screen says: Video Sent.

Paul places the phone on his chest. Still rubbing his temples, his eyes begin to flutter a bit. He tries to control his breathing and remain calm.

He opens the phone and displays the photo of the Woman. He stares admiringly at her, hoping dearly that she will not be harmed.

The effects of the anxiety pills finally taking effect, his eyes soon close and he drifts off to sleep.

FADE TO:

INT. COFFIN - LATER

Darkness once again. Paul slowly awakens. He feels pain, piercing his skin. He screams and writhes around, slapping his own body like a madman.

This continues in darkness until he finally lights his Zippo lighter, seeing that his body is covered by dozens of fire ants. The ants through climb en masse through the space between the coffin walls and its cover, all making their way toward him.

Paul wantonly swats at the ants, scraping them off himself as he does.

We see that he inadvertently knocks the cell phone down toward his feet as he tussles about.

He then unscrews his flask and dumps its contents onto the area from which the ants are invading. It seems to divert them.

Paul places the alcohol flask on the ground, but does not screw the cap on very securely. He then lights the candle and places it on the floor of the coffin.

With the fire ant situation seemingly handled, Paul takes a moment to feel around his body for any that may be remaining. Save for the many red bite marks scattered around his face and neck, he is okay.

It's then that Paul thinks of something. He looks for the phone, but he does not see it anywhere near him. He then sees that it is near his feet.

He makes several attempts to grab the phone with his feet, but he is unable to do so.

His next efforts involve repositioning himself in the coffin so that he completely turns to face the opposite end.

Struggling through each move, Paul painstakingly begins to turn himself. While turning, however, he unintentionally kicks over the candle and flask.

Unbeknownst to him, a small stream of alcohol slowly makes its way from the flask and toward the flame of the candle, threatening to set the coffin ablaze. Inch by inch, the flammable spirit gets closer.

Still in the midst of his attempt at turning his body position around, Paul looks back and sees the alcohol nearing the flame. In a panic, he attempts to reach over and move the candle. But, because he was still midway through his repositioning, he now finds himself stuck in the middle of the coffin. He can't budge either way.

Desperately straining every muscle in his body, he extends his arm backward toward the candle, hoping to move it away from the spilled alcohol. He still can't reach it, yet he tries with all his might.

He tries blowing at the candle, but his head is too far away and his breath is not strong enough to do much more than cause the candle to flicker.

With the alcohol now mere inches away from the flame, Paul reaches for his shoe. His odd positioning makes reaching his foot almost impossible. He struggles to undo the laces and remove it from his foot.

With his face beet red from the force of his strain, Paul finally removes his shoe and throws it blindly behind himself.



The trail of alcohol is just about to come into contact with the flame.

Fortunately, the shoe bounces off the side of the coffin and knocks over the candle, knocking out the flame in the process.

Paul breaths an enormous sigh of relief as he sits in darkness. He lights his Zippo lighter and starts to complete the turning of his body.

Just as he does and is about to grab the phone, he hears what appears to be the faint sound of a Muslim call to prayer being announced over the citywide PA system. The sound barely makes its way through the hundreds of pounds of sand that envelop the coffin.

A sign of hope, as well as a point of reference for his location - albeit a very vague one.

He listens further as the call to prayer continues.

Paul then opens his phone and navigates through the various display menus. He soon reaches the Tools menu. He becomes frustrated as he fails to find what he is looking for.

It's not long before he does. A smile crosses his face.

PAUL  
(re: the phone screen)  
There you are.

We see, on the display of the phone, that Paul has found the number of the phone he is holding.

He then scribbles the number onto the side of the coffin, not far from where the other numbers and names are written.

Paul dials his wife's cell phone. After only a few rings, he is met by her voice mail.

LINDA (V.O.)  
*Hi, this is Linda. Please leave a message. Thanks and have a great day.*

The beep sounds, and Paul frantically proceeds right into his message.

PAUL  
Linda, here's the number for the phone. I just found it out. It's 07902-42-884.

(MORE)

PAUL (cont'd)  
You have to use the international  
calling code first. Please call me  
as soon as you get this. I love  
you...I love you. Call me right  
away. Please.

Paul hangs up. He looks at the battery life left on the  
phone. One bar. He then checks his watch. It's 8:19pm.

Both are not good signs, and he knows it.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Oh shit.

He begins to panic. Grabbing the pocket knife that was left  
inside the metal box, he slides the blade in the space  
between the sides of the coffin and the top.

His efforts to use the knife as a fulcrum are futile. Still,  
he tries. Bending the blade well past its design, it nearly  
breaks off its handle.

With oxygen levels extremely diminished, efforts of this kind  
are all too much for Paul to take. He has to stop and try to  
catch his breath.

As he endeavors to get his wind back, the cell phone  
vibrates.

Not a call this time, but instead a video message. It has  
been sent by Jabir.

Paul's trepidation is evident. He fears what the incoming  
video may show.

After a beat, he presses the Accept button and the video  
downloads. Within seconds, the video plays on his phone  
display screen. We see, in the video, the American Woman  
that previously appeared in a picture message that was sent  
to Paul. She is still bound at her wrists, but her gag has  
been lowered.

She sits on her knees. Standing behind her are three men,  
all with their faces shielded by Arab headdresses. They each  
hold AK-47 assault weapons.

Paul watches in horror as the terrified woman speaks, through  
her tears, into the camera.

WOMAN  
My name is Pamela Gorham. I'm a  
food service worker at F.O.B.  
Anaconda, employed by Crestin,  
Roland and Thomas.

(MORE)

WOMAN (cont'd)  
My captors' requests for ransom  
have gone unanswered, and...

The Woman, Pamela, looks off-screen to her right. Someone is fast approaching her. She cowers; protectively holding her bound hands in front of her face as she screams.

WOMAN (CONT'D)  
(to the person)  
No...wait!! Please - no!!

Another Iraqi man steps into the camera's line of site, a handgun already brandished.

Without as much as a moment's hesitation, he fires two rounds directly into Pamela's head, killing her.

The video message ends immediately thereafter. Paul is in complete shock.

He screams aloud, slamming his closed fist against the bottom of the coffin.

PAUL  
No! No, no, no!!!

Still in the throes of emotional torment, Paul vomits on himself. He doubles over, only to vomit once again.

His body, taxed almost to the point of complete physical breakdown, gradually slows and levels itself. With his vomit-smeared face pressed cheek-down onto the bottom of the coffin, Paul stares into nothingness.

After a beat, his eye catches a glimmer of light; the candle's flame bouncing off the steel knife blade.

Paul reaches for the knife. Lying on his back, still suffering enormous mental strain, he places the cutting edge of the blade against his wrist.

His hand shakes, his lips tremble.

The hand that holds the blade tightens its grip on the handle, it too shakes.

Paul closes his eyes.

A small amount of blood begins to drip from the side of his wrist, where the blade of the knife rests, ready to open his veins.

After a great deal of consideration, Paul dilatorily removes the blade away from his wrist.

He then places the knife onto the floor of the coffin and slowly pushes it away from him.

He picks up the phone and dials Brenner. After one ring, Brenner answers. He's clearly not pleased. Paul, however, is still in shock.

DAN  
Why the hell did you make that video?

PAUL  
It's all a bunch of lies.

DAN  
What is? What are you talking about?

PAUL  
All of it.

DAN  
All of what?

PAUL  
Nobody gives a shit about any of us. We're nothing to you people.

DAN  
We're going to find you.

PAUL  
By looking the other way?

DAN  
You can't start breaking on me now, Paul. You have to stay strong.

PAUL  
You let her die.

DAN  
(after a beat)  
No I didn't.

PAUL  
They shot her...and you didn't do anything.

DAN  
We didn't even know she had been taken hostage.

PAUL  
She sent three videos.

DAN  
That's what they told her to say.

PAUL  
Why?

DAN  
I don't know.

PAUL  
What do you know?

DAN  
That your ransom video already has 47,000 hits on YouTube. And all the major networks are playing it, including al-Jazeera. So, now your captors have no choice but to follow through. I know that much.

PAUL  
I found out the number to this phone.

DAN  
How?

PAUL  
It's programmed in the settings. How come you didn't know that, either?

DAN  
Because I didn't, alright? I'm not some superhero or some genius that knows everything. Just like you and every other person on this planet, there are some things I know and some things I don't.

PAUL  
Then how are you ever going to find me?

DAN  
Their signal was cloned, like we figured, but we're close. Real close.

PAUL  
What about mine?

DAN  
We're working on that, too.

PAUL  
I'm near a Mosque. I could hear  
the call to prayer over the P.A.

DAN  
Good. That means that we're in the  
right area.

PAUL  
You're nearby?

DAN  
I spoke with soldiers from the  
third ID who were escorting your  
convoy.

PAUL  
They're alive?

DAN  
Not all of them. Both Bradley  
tanks were hit with IEDs. The rest  
got caught in small arms fire.

(BEAT)  
What the hell happened out there,  
Paul?

PAUL  
We had just left Anaconda,  
everything seemed okay. We knew  
that a bunch of our CB radios had  
been stolen and that the Iraqis  
were listening in, so we made sure  
to switch from our usual channels.  
Pam was riding with Jeff Breer, the  
convoy commander. She wanted to  
ride with me like she usually did  
when she hitched a ride from base,  
but it seemed safer for her to be  
with the C.C. As we headed down  
the road, all these kids came  
running into the street. Dozens of  
them. It almost seemed like they  
were expecting us, except we got  
there faster than they thought we  
would. So they run on up in front  
of me, and I slam on my brakes.

(MORE)

PAUL (cont'd)

The rest of the drivers were already further up ahead, so they kept going. Next thing I know, one of the lead trucks got hit by an IED. I hear Tommy Wilkes on the radio saying, Sandman's hit, Sandman's hit. He's...he's everywhere. That's when the Iraqis came out of their mud huts from the side of the road and started shooting everybody. I couldn't believe what was happening. It seemed like slow-motion, like I was watching it on TV. People - my friends - were getting killed, and all I could do is watch. I didn't even notice that the kids were throwing bricks and rocks at me until one split my windshield. Sort of snapped me out of my trance. But then, I guess I got hit in the head with a rock, 'cause I blacked out.

DAN

Do you happen to remem...mo...  
nea...

The cell phone service begins to cut out. Suddenly, the coffin begins to vibrate slightly, dropping sand granules through the crack and onto the wood bottom, followed by the faint sound of an explosion.

Within seconds, the explosions grow louder and more proximate, and the vibration becomes so intense that it violently shakes Paul around the coffin.

The sound of jet plane engines are heard coming from above, flying by as the massive explosions continue.

Sand seeps in through the crack between the top and sides of the coffin as it shakes. Paul does his best to brace himself, but the bombardment is far too powerful.

A large crack forms in the wooden cover to the coffin, spanning almost its entire length. Sand immediately pours through the concave shaped crack, seeping in onto Paul like an hourglass.

Fearing that the top of the coffin may collapse under the immense pressure from the sand above, Paul positions himself underneath it and presses with all his might.

The shaking soon stops, though the steady flow of sand continues.

In efforts to prevent the sand from filling the coffin any faster, Paul stuffs his shirt into the area where it enters with the greatest volume. This does very little to help.

He assesses his situation, noticing that the coffin is already filled with a small layer of sand; a situation that is only going to get worse with time.

PAUL

This can't be happening.

We see that Dan Brenner is no longer on the phone, and that the display on Paul's cell phone reads: NO SERVICE AVAILABLE.

Once he feels it is secure enough, Paul slowly moves his body away from the crack. Although slightly caved, it does not show any more signs of possible collapse.

Sweat drenches his face. His eyes affixed, in utter disbelief, on the sand as it spills into the coffin, filling in around him inch-by-inch.

He grabs the cell phone, only to see that he does not have a signal.

PAUL (CONT'D)

No. Come on. Please work.

He shakes the cell phone and moves it all around the coffin, hoping that it may somehow help. His efforts are futile.

Now facing the prospect of almost certain death, Paul cannot take any more of the stress. He crumbles under the pressure; a mental breakdown rapidly taking hold. He curls up into the fetal position.

Time passes, seemingly lasting forever to him. Still the sand continues to fall, drowning him deeper and deeper in a puddle of granules.

Then, very surprisingly, the cell phone rings. Paul wildly reaches into his pocket to remove and answer it.

PAUL

(frantically)

Hello? Hello? Who's there?

Alan Davenport answers calmly from the other end.



ALAN DAVENPORT  
Is this Paul Conroy?

PAUL  
Yes. Yes, this is Paul. Who are you?

ALAN DAVENPORT  
Paul, my name's Alan Davenport, I'm the personnel director here at Crestin, Roland and Thomas.

PAUL  
I left you a message.

ALAN DAVENPORT  
You did. I also heard from Rebecca Browning over at the State Department. Are you able to speak of the status of your situation?

PAUL  
It's worse. There was an explosion or something. The coffin's breaking, there's sand pouring in from everywhere. I only have a half an hour before...

ALAN DAVENPORT  
(overlapping)  
Okay, okay. Slow down. You should try to stay calm. Tell me something, Paul, who have you spoken to?

PAUL  
The hostage takers, Dan Brenner from the hostage working group...

ALAN DAVENPORT  
(overlapping)  
Okay, Paul. I'm with you. How about the media. I know your ransom video leaked, but have you spoken directly to anyone about what's going on?

PAUL  
No.

ALAN DAVENPORT  
That's good. It needs to stay that way.

PAUL  
What difference does it make?

ALAN DAVENPORT  
It's important that we keep this  
situation as contained as possible.

Paul finds Alan's obvious concern with doing damage control  
to be infuriating.

PAUL  
About three inches to my right,  
there's a wall. Three inches to my  
left, there's another wall. And  
about four inches above my head,  
there's a roof that's about to  
collapse and drown me in sand. So  
don't you worry, this situation is  
very contained.

ALAN DAVENPORT  
I know you're upset...

PAUL  
(interrupting)  
Help me! Help me! What are you  
going to do to help me?!

ALAN DAVENPORT  
I know you're upset, but there  
unfortunately is nothing we can do.

PAUL  
Bullshit.

ALAN DAVENPORT  
In all fairness, Paul, you were  
made aware of the dangers inherent  
to the position for which you were  
hired.

PAUL  
You mean when I came down there to  
Dallas and you guys said that all  
of the trucks would be armored and  
have bulletproof glass? You mean  
when you told us that things were  
safer than ever in Iraq? And that  
CRT would do all it could to keep  
its employees safe? Is that when I  
was made aware?

ALAN DAVENPORT  
Well, that's actually the reason  
why I'm calling.

PAUL  
(confused)  
What?

ALAN DAVENPORT  
As of one hour ago, your employment  
with CRT was officially terminated.

PAUL  
What are you talking about?

ALAN DAVENPORT  
It was brought to our attention  
that you were engaging in relations  
with a fellow CRT employee - Pamela  
Gorham.

PAUL  
No. Wait...

ALAN DAVENPORT  
Stipulated in your contract was a  
fraternization clause, in which it  
was stated quite clearly that any  
relationship, be it romantic or  
sexual in nature, deemed  
inappropriate by CRT senior  
officials is grounds for immediate  
termination.

PAUL  
We...we were just friends.

ALAN DAVENPORT  
I don't know what to tell you.

PAUL  
This is bullshit.

ALAN DAVENPORT  
I'm sorry.

PAUL  
What about my life insurance? My  
family will need that money.

ALAN DAVENPORT

Well, given that you were alive up until the termination of your employment...

Paul sees where Alan is going with this.

PAUL

(interrupting)

You son of a bitch. You can't do this.

ALAN DAVENPORT

It's purely a policy issue and it's an enforceable mandate, I'm afraid. My hands are tied on this.

PAUL

If, by some miracle of God, I get out of here, I'll tell the world the truth about you people.

ALAN DAVENPORT

I hate to say it, Paul, but you contract guys out there are shadows on the sun. The world barely knows you even exist.

Paul doesn't have anything more to say, so he hangs up.

He looks at the phone - it is still holding a steady signal. Battery life, however, is running quite low. All that remains is one blinking bar, indicating that Paul has very little battery life left.

He shakes his hand free of the pile of sand that now covers it and looks at his watch. It's now 8:31pm.

Wasting little time, Paul dials Jabir. The phone rings and rings, but Jabir does not answer. Checking to make sure the he dialed the correct number, Paul matches it against the phone number he wrote onto the wall of the coffin.

Seeing that he did, in fact, dial correctly, Paul again tries to call Jabir. Still, no one answers. Paul's disquietude is evident in his increasingly erratic behavior.

PAUL

Answer the phone!!

Paul tries Jabir once again, but still he does not answer the phone.

PAUL  
Why won't you answer?!!

It's then that something occurs to Paul. He stares at the crack in the top of the coffin and the sand that pours in at an alarmingly fast rate.

The aerial bombing. He wonders how it may have affected Jabir and, consequently, his own chances of survival. He places his hand under the point from where the sand pours in most, allowing it to collect on his palm and slip through his fingers.

The flickering candle flame tells of the diminished amount of oxygen.

Paul attempts to control his breathing, realizing full well that there are not many more he will be able to take.

He then calls Dan Brenner. After a few rings, Brenner answers.

Paul is surprisingly serene.

DAN  
Paul, is that you?

PAUL  
They're dead.

DAN  
How do you know that?

PAUL  
I just do.

DAN  
Three F-16s levelled parts of the city a few minutes ago.

PAUL  
I know. I felt it. Did they know I was here?

DAN  
(after a beat)  
Yeah.

PAUL  
Did they care?

Dan does not answer.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
These people that took me - if  
they're dead, they can't tell you  
where I am.

DAN  
(clinging to hope)  
We can...we can still try to track  
down your signal.

PAUL  
You tried that already.

DAN  
We can try again!

Paul appreciates Dan's effort, but he knows there is little  
hope left for him.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
It's over, isn't it?

DAN  
No.

Paul doesn't say a word. He knows that Dan is lying. After  
a beat, Dan comes clean.

DAN (CONT'D)  
Yeah.

PAUL  
What should I do?

DAN  
I don't know.

PAUL  
That's right - you're not some  
superhero genius that knows  
everything.

DAN  
No, I'm not. I wish I was.

PAUL  
Yeah...me too.

Paul ends the call. He forces a smile to his lachrymose  
face.

Utterly hopeless, he opens the phone and turns on the video feature. He turns the phone to face himself, projecting his image on the display.

He presses Record.

PAUL (CONT'D)

This is Paul Steven Conroy. Social Security number 048-32-1198, date of birth 3/19/64. This video will serve as my last will and testament. To my wife, Linda Conroy, I leave the seven hundred dollars in my personal savings and whatever I have left in my annuity. To my son, Shane Conroy, I...I don't know. I don't have anything else. My stuff, like, my clothes. I wish I had more...I wish I had done more. Your dad wasn't really much of anything, Shane, I'm sorry. Maybe if I was a famous baseball player, or a guy who wore a suit to work, I would have more to leave you. But, you can be one of those people if you want. You can be whatever you want. Just promise me that when you get older, you'll take good care of your mom. And promise me that you'll always try to do the right thing, no matter what. I love you very much, Shane. Maybe I never said that enough...maybe I did, I don't even know. That probably means I didn't.

(BEAT)

I'm sorry, Linda. I should have listened to you.

Paul ends the video and closes the phone. He carefully places the phone into his pocket, where it may hopefully be found if he ever is.

He lays back, with his eyes closed, as the sand continues to rain on him.

Down and down it pours, the sands of time passing might and main through the cracks.

Suddenly, from inside Paul's pocket, he feels a vibration. It is the cell phone ringing. He looks at the number of who is calling him. He cannot believe what he is seeing.

He looks at the number written on the wall of the coffin to confirm that it is Jabir calling.

Paul answers immediately.

PAUL  
You're not dead.

Jabir is heard speaking frantically in Arabic to the several other people in the room with him.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Hello? Hello?!

Jabir turns his attention to Paul.

JABIR  
Where is money?

PAUL  
I don't know.

JABIR  
What don't know?

PAUL  
I don't know where the money is.

JABIR  
Liar!

PAUL  
I'm not lying! I swear.

JABIR  
Swear?

PAUL  
I'm telling the truth.

Sounding panicked, Jabir again speaks in Arabic to the other people in the room with him. They respond accordingly.

Jabir returns his scornful attention to Paul.

JABIR  
From Embassy, you get money now!

PAUL  
I can't!

JABIR  
You will!!



PAUL  
I need more time. Please.

JABIR  
No more time!

PAUL  
There's sand pouring in here. I  
can't...it's everywhere. Please,  
let me out of here and I will get  
you the money.

Jabir utters something in Arabic to someone standing next to him, seemingly asking a question and getting an answer from the same individual.

Discomfited, Paul waits until Jabir gets back on the phone.

JABIR (CONT'D)  
You show blood.

PAUL  
What?

JABIR  
You show blood, they give money.

PAUL  
No.

JABIR  
You cut off thumb finger, send  
video.

PAUL  
I'm not doing that.

JABIR  
Yes!

PAUL  
No.

JABIR  
No?

PAUL  
That's right, no. You let me out  
of here, and then I'll do whatever  
you want.

Jabir again says something to someone in the room with him, returning to Paul after a brief moment.

JABIR  
You have wife?

Paul mistakes Jabir's question as a form of possible compassion.

PAUL  
Yes, I do. And a son. A young son. I want to go home...to see them. Please, sir.

JABIR  
Sir?

PAUL  
Yes. Sir. I say that out of respect...to you.

JABIR  
243 East Walnut Street. Hastings, Michigan. U.S.A.

PAUL  
(concerned)  
That's my...why did you say that?

JABIR  
You show blood...or they show blood.

PAUL  
That's...you're lying. You're nobody...all of you. You can't get to them.

JABIR  
No?

PAUL  
No. You're peasants, criminals, that's all. You don't even know where Michigan is.

JABIR  
Detroit. Ann Arbor.

Even this basic knowledge is enough to make Jabir's threats that much more real.

PAUL  
You looked at a map. That's all you did.

JABIR  
 You show blood, or they show blood.  
 Send video by five minutes.

Jabir ends the call. Realizing that Jabir is gone, Paul quickly dials his wife's cell phone.

After several rings, her voice mail picks up.

LINDA (V.O.)  
*Hi, this is Linda. Please leave a message. Thanks and have a great day.*

PAUL  
 (frantically)  
 Linda, listen to me - you and Shane have to go somewhere... anywhere. Don't stay at the house, whatever you do, do not stay at the house. The guy...the kidnapper, he knows our address. He stole my license and now he knows where we live. Go to the Sheriff's station if you have to, just don't go home.

Paul hangs up. He takes a moment to look around, noticing that the coffin is almost halfway filled with sand.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
 (re: the sand)  
 Holy God.

Paul then dials Dan Brenner. After only one ring, the call goes directly to voice mail.

DAN  
*This is Daniel Brenner. Please leave a message at the tone.*

The beep sounds. Paul delivers a frenzied message.

PAUL  
 Brenner, where are you! He's alive! He just called me! Call me right away! The fucking guy is still alive!

Paul hangs up the phone.

Unsure what to do next, Paul's heartbeat races. He fidgets, nervously shaking and tapping his thumb against the phone.

He questions the validity of Jabir's threats toward his family.

PAUL  
(to himself)  
They can't find them.  
They...can't. There's no way.

Paul opens the phone and brings up the photo of Pamela, bound and gagged. The image causes Paul to second guess himself.

He then replays the video in which Pamela is seen being shot. Reliving the experience is extremely painful, though his concern is more on his own family at this point. However, the video is enough to convince Paul of Jabir and his cohort's convictions.

His breathing grows erratic and labored. His eyes dart from side-to-side, his throat groans involuntary noises of fear.

Paul then looks at the knife, and then at his watch. He has less than two minutes to send the video to Jabir.

Fearing for the safety of his family, he must meet Jabir's demands.

Paul opens the phone and sets it to take video. He places it flat onto the surface of the sand, which by this point is already filling the coffin halfway. He then reaches for the knife and slowly opens it.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Oh my God. Oh my God.

He places his hands against the side of the coffin, spreading his fingers. He stares intently at his thumb.

With the extremely sharp knife in hand, Paul slowly lowers it just above his thumb. He inhales and exhales deep breaths, almost hyperventilating.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Holy shit.

Paul then reaches into the sand and finds the expired glow stick. He shakes the sand off of it and places it across his mouth, biting into it hard.

His heart races, his breaths are the deepest he's ever taken.

He presses the record button on the cell phone.

Grinding his teeth into the glow stick and letting out a primordial scream, Paul closes his eyes and chops down with the knife.

We see, through the display screen of the phone, Paul sever his thumb with one, swift chop of the knife. A small spray of blood spatters onto his face as he screams out in unfathomable pain.

He falls to his side, still screaming and writhing. He reaches for his discarded outer-shirt, which is still stuffed in the crack to help slow the influx of sand. Removing the shirt from the crack instantly causes the sand to fall into the coffin more rapidly.

Paul wraps the shirt around his hand. The blood quickly soaks right through it.

He is fading fast. His blood loss is great. Shock sets in. He musters up the strength to send the video to Jabir.

To secure his shirt over the wound, Paul removes his belt from his waist and pulls it tight over his wrap.

Growing increasingly more pale, Paul teeters on the verge of consciousness. Everything becomes blurry to him.

The phone falls from his hand. He shivers. His lips turn a light shade of purple and his face ash white. Everything becomes more and more blurry. He fights with every last ounce of strength to remain conscious.

While laying against the side of the coffin, the phone rings once again. To Paul, the vibration against the wood seems so distant, so foreign. The vibrating grows louder and louder in his mind, sounding more and more like the sound of rotating helicopter blades.

He then hears what sounds like VOICES, yelling from on top of the coffin.

VOICE #1  
He's down here!

VOICE #2  
Get him out! Keep digging!

VOICE #3  
Paul, we're here!

The cacophony of voices form a mosaic of sound in Paul's head, each overlapping the other in distant echoes.

Shovels, digging deep into the ground, are heard banging against the top of the coffin.

The top of the coffin is torn open, sending a brilliant ray of white light onto Paul. He stares into the light, crying, smiling.

Suddenly, Paul is back in the same predicament. The voices, the shovels, the light - it was all a hallucination, brought upon by his loss of blood.

He's still alone. He's still in the coffin, which continues to fill up with sand and he is too exhausted to display his disappointment.

The phone continues to ring, still vibrating against the coffin. It soon stops ringing. Paul is in too poor condition to show any concern.

After a beat, the phone begins ringing once again. After several rings, Paul languidly picks it up. He barely recognizes the number through his extremely blurred vision.

He's so weak, he's barely able to formulate words. His mouth agape, he has to spit out the stray particles of sand that fall into it in order to speak.

PAUL

Yeah.

DAN

Paul, it's Brenner.

Paul doesn't have the strength to answer.

DAN (CONT'D)

Paul? Are you there? Paul?

PAUL

I'm...here.

DAN

We're coming for you now. You hear me? We know where you are.

This news serves as somewhat of an adrenaline rush for Paul, who musters up even the modicum of strength he seemingly did not have left in him.

PAUL

You are?

DAN  
We are, Paul. We're almost there now.

PAUL  
How do you know?

DAN  
Coalition forces picked up a Shiite insurgent just outside of Baghdad. Said he knew where an American was buried alive. He agreed to show us where if we let him go.

PAUL  
You're coming for me?

DAN  
Buddy, we're practically already there.

An impossible smile fights its way to Paul's lips. His momentary joy is just that, however, for the sand has almost completely filled the coffin by this point.

PAUL  
You have to hurry.

DAN  
We are.

PAUL  
No...you have to hurry. The sand...it's filling up fast.

DAN  
Just hang in there for three more minutes. This will all be over soon, I promise.

Paul is very hopeful that Dan is correct in his assumption.

PAUL  
Okay. I believe you. Thank you. Thank you.

DAN  
Three minutes. I'll call you when we're there.

Dan hangs up. Paul remains hopeful, despite the fact that he has a mere eight inches left before the entire coffin is filled with sand from top-to-bottom.

He holds the candle just above the top of the sand pile, allowing it to illuminate what little unoccupied area remains.

Surprisingly, his phone rings again. Excited that it may already be Dan Brenner calling, Paul is just as happy to see that it is his wife, Linda, calling.

PAUL

Linda.

Linda is in hysterics, which is evident in her speech.

LINDA

Paul? Paul is that you? Tell me it's you.

PAUL

It's me, sweetie.

LINDA

Oh my God, Paul! What are they doing to you? Please tell me you're okay.

PAUL

I'm...okay.

LINDA

I just saw the news. What...oh my God, baby.

PAUL

It's going to be okay now.

LINDA

I missed all your calls. I left my cell phone at home. I just found out what was going on.

PAUL

That's okay. It's all okay. They're getting me out.

LINDA

Who?

PAUL

The people. Americans. They found out where I am and they're on their way to get me.



LINDA  
(elated)  
They are? Oh thank God. Oh dear  
God, thank you.

PAUL  
It's all going to be okay.

LINDA  
How do you know for sure? Oh God,  
please tell me you're okay.

PAUL  
I'm okay.

LINDA  
I was so afraid I was going to lose  
you.

PAUL  
You're not.

Linda breaks down in joyous tears.

LINDA  
I love you so much. I love you so,  
so much.

PAUL  
(welling up)  
I love you too.  
(BEAT)  
I'm sorry. I should have listened  
to you.

LINDA  
It doesn't matter.

PAUL  
I should have never come here. You  
were right. I'm sorry.

LINDA  
Sweetie, I don't care. I just want  
you home. Please come home to me.

PAUL  
I will.

LINDA  
Swear it.

PAUL  
I will. I swear I will.

Paul then receives a call on the other line. He checks to see who's calling, seeing that it is Dan Brenner.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
They're here!

LINDA  
The people?

PAUL  
They're calling me right now. I have to go.

LINDA  
Call me right away.

PAUL  
I will. I love you.

LINDA  
I love you. Swear it again.

PAUL  
I swear. I have to go.

Paul clicks over to the other line, where Dan Brenner waits to speak with him.

We hear Dan yelling to people who are with him. A great deal of commotion and action is heard through the phone.

DAN  
Move! Move! Let's go.

PAUL  
Brenner?

DAN  
Paul? Paul?

PAUL  
It's me.

DAN  
We're here!

Dan yells to one of the soldiers who are with him.

DAN (CONT'D)  
Corporal, get your men over here!

Dan gets back on the phone with Paul

DAN (CONT'D)  
He brought us right to you.

DAN (CONT'D)  
(to the soldiers)  
Start digging! Let's go, let's go!

Meanwhile, the sand inside the coffin has almost reached the very top. It continues to pour in from the crack, seemingly faster than ever.

Paul struggles to keep his head above the sand, giving him only a few inches between his face and the top of the coffin.

PAUL  
You have to hurry. It's almost full.

DAN  
Just hang in there!

PAUL  
Hurry! Please!

DAN  
(to the soldiers)  
Dig! Dig! Dig!

Paul fights to keep his head above the sand.

PAUL  
I can't...are you close?

DAN  
We're almost there, Paul. We're almost there!  
(to the soldiers)  
Faster!  
(to Paul)  
We're almost there. We're right above you.

The level of sand grows even higher. Paul spits away falling sand that threatens to suffocate him.

PAUL  
I can't hear you! Where are you?

DAN  
We're almost there.

A SOLDIER is heard OFF-SCREEN in the b.g. of Dan's phone.

SOLDIER (O.S.)  
There it is!

DAN  
(to the soldiers)  
Keep digging!!

PAUL  
Hurry! Please!!!

DAN  
We see the coffin! Just hang in  
there!!

Paul coughs out sand. He has a mere inch left above his head. The flame of the candle is extinguished by the falling sand.

PAUL  
Hurry! Where are you? I don't  
hear you? Please hurry!!!

The Soldier is again heard OFF-SCREEN in the b.g. Of Dan's phone.

SOLDIER  
It's clear!

DAN  
(to the soldier)  
Open it!

Nondescript noise is heard through the phone, until it comes to an abrupt stop.

DAN  
(shocked)  
Oh my God.

PAUL  
What is it?!

DAN  
I'm so sorry, Paul.

PAUL  
What?!!

DAN  
It's Mark White. He brought us to  
Mark White. I'm...

PAUL  
(overlapping)  
You said...!

DAN  
(overlapping)  
...I know. I'm sorry.

PAUL  
No.

DAN  
I'm so sorry.

PAUL  
No!! No!! NO!!!

The battery life on Paul's phone runs out, causing it to power down and bringing the coffin back to complete darkness. As it does, the sand finally consumes the coffin, filling it completely.

We hear Paul's muffled screams emanate through the sand, until we no longer hear them at all.

FADE OUT.

THE END

